Stoke-on-Trent Our City

ISSUE 28: JULY 2012

Victorian splendour rejuvenated

Restoration project heralds new era for Burslem Park

SEE PAGE 17
 council leader Councillor MohammeD Pervez

It is a year since we launched our ambitious Mandate for Change with its clear top priority of creating jobs for the people of Stoke-on-Trent.

It was important at this stage to invite our partners, residents, the business community and the voluntary sector to give us their feedback on the first year.

We wanted to see where the Mandate for Change has already had an impact (see the feature on the opposite page) but also to find out what we need to do more, what we need to do less and what we need to do quicker.

It is important that we make sure everybody understands what Mandate for Change is all about, so we can encourage them to participate – because each and every resident, business and organisation has a role to play.

Now we need everyone to realise this, and join in.

This is how we will accelerate the progress being made in our city.

We must not forget that these are very difficult times for councils, and that the austerity measures announced by the Government look like continuing for some time to come.

It is a tribute to the hard work and commitment of councillors, officers and our partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors that so much is being achieved in terms of regeneration.

It is astonishing, when we have had to cut our budgets by around £60 million over the last two years, that we are talking about stepping up the pace of change to improve quality of life in our city.

But we must keep up that momentum, in spite of the fact that council finances will continue to be under significant pressure.

It’s clear that we will not be able to sustain and grow the number of jobs in the public sector, so we must attract even more private sector jobs.

We have started the process and won’t stop until we succeed.

This one is a link to the city council’s main homepage, but a QR code can be produced to link to any site online. All you need to do to use the QR code is download a free app to your smartphone or tablet. Take a photograph or scan the QR code using your phone and the app will take you online.

It is a year since we launched our ambitious Mandate for Change with its clear top priority of creating jobs for the people of Stoke-on-Trent.

By City Council Leader Councillor MOHAMMED PERVEZ

Progress will benefit every resident... so please join in

ITALKS are already under way to start the ball rolling on a massive redevelopment of Stoke town centre including job creation and regenerating derelict sites.

It is aimed at “filling the gap” left when the city council transfers its main offices to the city centre in 2015 to kick start the huge Central Business District there.

One of the city’s biggest employers has already expressed an interest in moving into one of the offices which will be vacated by the city council.

And an exciting plan is also being hatched to transform the site of the former Spode factory into a 21st Century learning, training and leisure development... a landmark for the city and visible to thousands of motorists passing every day on the A500.

Work has already started to clear the land at the Central Business District, which will eventually provide office space for around 8,500 workers as well as a gym, cafes and bars.

As the so-called anchor tenant, the city council will move into a 140,000 sq ft two storey office development, complete with a customer hub where the public can access a whole range of services and a new central library.

Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Councillor Mark Meredith said: “The Central Business District will not only boost our city’s economy but will also provide an opportunity for the city council to reduce the number of buildings it occupies to save money.

“We are also working hard to support the economy of Stoke town centre by filling buildings which will become empty, with workers who will spend money in local shops, cafes and other businesses.

“Part of our Mandate for Change is to attract jobs and investment. We have already had positive talks to attract investment to Stoke. We are following up a number of expressions of interest, some of which we received during the MIPIM regeneration event in the South of France.

“And developing the Spode site is an important part of our strategy for the town.”

Stoke-on-Trent’s Inward Investment Team is currently working on 24 active opportunities that will lead to an investment decision in the next 12 months.

Stoke could also be at the centre of plans to make the city energy self sufficient, with the civic centre and other buildings heated using surplus warmth from other buildings.

Cabinet Member for Green Enterprises and City Services Councillor Andy Platt said: “We’re looking at how a number of projects around the Stoke town plan can be implemented.

We’re not simply writing off Stoke. We’re investing in Stoke.”

Plans in the pipeline for big Stoke boost

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Mandate challenge now is to speed up successes

Business leaders and community representatives have challenged the city council to step up the pace of its Mandate for Change and drive forward the city’s regeneration even quicker.

An event staged to mark the first 12 months of the ambitious programme celebrated success across areas including:

- Securing 500 new jobs via help from inward investment and increasing the number of new businesses.
- Setting up an inward investment team to roll out the red carpet to companies wanting to locate in Stoke-on-Trent.
- Working with partnerships to increase the number of apprenticeships offered in the city from 2,600 in September 2010 to 3,900 in November 2012.
- Delivering adult and family learning to over 5,000 people.
- Streamlining the planning service to say “yes” to good development.
- Working with partners to include energy efficiency measures at over 5,500 homes.
- Installing solar panels at 568 homes across the city.
- Cleaning up busy junctions on the A500 and A50.
- Helping 19 local companies bid for £15million from the Regional Growth Fund.
- Continuing the £270million Building Schools for the Future initiative to rebuild or remodel 13 secondary schools and five special schools.
- Helping over 28,000 people tackle potential health problems early on.
- Building 17 new homes to high eco standards in Chell Heath.
- Council Leader Councillor Mohammed Pervez said: “We’ve been busy for the last 12 months and the list of achievements proves it. But there is lots more to do.

We agreed that our number one priority was to create jobs by encouraging new businesses to locate in the city and helping new start-ups, and by making sure that our existing businesses are supported in their growth and expansion plans.

We also pledged to be an effective council and we are rapidly getting our own house in order, being open and transparent with public money, streamlining our systems and processes to make them more efficient and by

School governors wanted across our city

Members of the public are being urged to help their local schools by signing up to join their board of governors. Governors play an important role in school life, with responsibilities including setting targets for pupil achievement, managing the school’s finances, making sure the curriculum is balanced and broadly based, appointing staff and reviewing staff performance and pay.

Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Alan Dutton said: “If you can question, challenge and scrutinise then you could have an important future as a school governor. We’re looking for people from all sorts of backgrounds and professions to strengthen the teams of governors at a time when we are investing around £270million in rebuilding our schools. We want to give all our young people the very best start in life and school governors have a vital role to play.”

Anyone interested in becoming a school governor should contact the city council’s Governor Support Unit on 01782 236889 or email gsu@stoke.gov.uk

Call to report hate crime

Anyone who has been a victim of hate crime or who knows a victim is being urged to report it.

This means anyone who has been targeted on the grounds of race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender, or disability.

Hate crime in any form is wrong. That’s why it’s important when hate crime happens it is reported.

Help Staffordshire Police to tackle hate crime:
- Report it online – www.report-it.org.uk
- Report it to your local police – call 101
- In an emergency, always dial 999
Celebrations are already planned for the Tour of Britain's fifth visit to Stoke-on-Trent in September.

The world's top cyclists – many of them fresh from the London 2012 Games – will compete in a gruelling road race on 13 September. Teams include Endura Racing, Team Sky, Garmin Sharp, Node4 Giordana Racing, and Rapha Condor Sharp.

The Stoke-on-Trent Stage of the Tour of Britain was officially launched at the Italian Gardens in the Trentham Estate. During the launch the Tour of Britain route was revealed to guests including local school children who were also entertained by BMX stunt rider Norbert Onodi, and they shared a birthday cake.

Stage 5 will once again start from the Italian Gardens. Entertainment and the race warm-up starts from 9.30am, where spectators can enter free of charge, finishing in the city centre from 1.45pm after almost 150 kilometres.

Councillor Mark Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development for Stoke-on-Trent City Council said, “Our city has rightfully earned the prestigious reputation for staging world class sporting events like this one. The positive economic and ‘feel good’ impact it has on the city is very exciting and we welcome this opportunity to be the host for the fifth time.”

For more information on the Tour of Britain visit tourofbritain.com

Amateur cyclists will also have the chance to experience The Tour of Britain first hand, as the highly popular Tour Ride Stoke-on-Trent returns on Sunday 23 September.

This also starts in the Trentham Estate but offers a choice of a 98km Challenge or a Full Pro Ride of 169km. More details will be available via tourride.co.uk soon.

Tour 2011 factfile...

33,000 spectators were in the City Centre to watch the finish of the Tour of Britain.
Overall 110,000 spectators attended Stage 3 of the Tour.
14,000 tweets were sent on the stage day mentioning the tour and Stoke-on-Trent.
Over 500 Stoke-on-Trent schoolchildren came along on the day.
592,000 people tuned into ITV4 to watch the Stoke-on-Trent Stage of the TOB highlights – The highest of all the TOB stages.
Academy building to create five schools in one

The Academy building is right on target with pupils set to transfer into the impressive new building in September next year. The ambitious development on the Sixth Form College’s former site at Fenton is part of Stoke-on-Trent’s £270 million Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme – the city’s biggest ever investment in education infrastructure.

Sponsored by the Church of England’s Lichfield Diocese and Woodard Schools, the iconic three storey building will provide 21st Century facilities for 1,200 students aged 11-16 who are currently on sites at Penkull and Bucknall.

The Academy is committed to providing a “world class education” within a clear Christian ethos, reflecting the sponsors’ vision of “an Academy at the heart of the city with faith at the heart of the Academy”. Specialist ICT, media, business and technology facilities will enable the delivery of excellent educational provision and allow for a high quality, personalised and rigorous education.

The design of the building takes into account that the school will be arranged into teaching chapters – five small schools within a school – which are centred on a dramatic, full height central forum space.

There is also a bigger-than-normal assembly, performance and sports hall with seating for 1,350 people.

There will be ample open spaces for lecture-style lessons, project-based work, small group learning and work rooms for one-to-one mentoring and support. Gardens are being planted to provide an outdoor area for teaching, relaxing and reflection.

Creating the distinctive chapters is part of the Academy’s commitment to each student to have the highest quality pastoral care and to be personally known, valued and supported to achieve maximum potential. Each chapter will be overseen by a senior leader called Head of Chapter.

The Academy’s central location within the city will also ensure that students have excellent opportunities to move on to higher education through close links with the Sixth Form College and the University Quarter.

In addition to the academic areas, the Academy will have what will be among the best school sports facilities in the UK including a six court sports hall, grass and all-weather football pitches, a grass athletics track, changing facilities and plans for a cricket pitch.

The changing facilities will be shared with the adjacent Fenton Manor Sports Complex and the Sixth Form College providing the city with another first class sports hub. The Academy will also be able to make use of Fenton Manor’s facilities including the swimming pools which are the largest in Staffordshire.

BSF Project Director Tracy Penrose-Gould said the relatively short time available for construction had made the St Peter’s Academy one of the most challenging BSF projects, but contractors Thomas Vale/Wates were making great progress and meeting all their targets. She said: “St Peter’s Academy is an exciting project and shows yet again that BSF is the building superb educational facilities for today’s students in Stoke-on-Trent.”

Public urged to report nuisance illegal motorcycling

People with quad bikes or minimotors are being told to drive their machines only on a legal site with the landowner’s consent, to make sure they wear a helmet and safety clothing and to visit the Auto Cycle Union (at acu.org.uk) to find out about established clubs in the area.

A police spokesman said: “We are committed to facilitating a better quality of life for everyone and will continue to work together to combat the problem of illegal motorcycling on our greenways, parks and greenspaces.”

The public can report incidents and are being asked to provide information of riders’ names, ages and addresses (where known), descriptions of riders and their motorbikes.

To report an incident phone the Antisocial Behaviour Hotline on 0800 561 5610, or email cdrp@stoke.gcsx.gov.uk

Public urged to report nuisance illegal motorcycling

By City Council
Chief Executive
John van de Laarschot

Our Mandate for Change – launched 12 months ago to make Stoke-on-Trent a great working city – has already achieved a great deal.

The list of progress is too long to print here so please take a look at page three or visit stoke.gov.uk/mandate to learn more about our commitment to the city and to hear from local people and businesses about the difference that the Mandate for Change has made to them.

But Mandate for Change is not a year long initiative – the physical improvements and culture change will continue over many years to come.

What we want to do now is to make more and more people aware of all the positive things that are happening and what each and every one of you can do to help drive the city forward.

Chief Superintendent Bernie O’Reilly summed it up very well when he said the change was to get the Mandate for Change into everyone’s DNA!

We are doing all we can to raise aspirations of those who live here, improving the city centre, our schools, our environment and our infrastructure.

Progress is also being made to ensure there are real opportunities for training and jobs, not just for our young people but for all ages.

We are doing lots more to attract professional wealth to the area – people who will spend their money in city shops and restaurants.

Last month we launched our custom home build competition for those who want to buy plots of land and design and build their own executive homes.

Attractive locations in the historic village of Penkull and the popular suburb of Hanford, together with support in design, planning and finance, were an immediate hit.

In fact, over 90 people expressed an interest at our recent event for 22 plots, and we have since had over 40 further enquiries! The project will not only attract people to Stoke-on-Trent who may previously have considered Cheshire or Shropshire but also widens our housing offer.

Due to the incredible success of this project, we are now looking at other attractive sites across the city and if you want to find out more about available plots, guide prices, how to finance your home and construction options, why not get in touch.

We want everyone in Stoke-on-Trent to share our passion and understand how working together can drive our city forward.

Over the coming months, we will spread this message across the city and explain how you can get involved. We look forward to your active participation to make our city one of which we can all be proud!
Tribute to an inspirational man

Born in 1852, the son of a coal miner, Enoch was deeply religious and his Methodist morals were a strong influence on his public life work. An indication of the great esteem in which he was held, was after his death in 1912 the North Staffordshire Miners Federation produced a medal, pictured above, in his honour.

Principal construction contractor Vinci had originally scheduled the opening for autumn of this year but work has been slowed down by the discovery of 15 underground cellars on the site. The cellars – the remains of terrace houses previously on the land – were not on any site investigation drawings and had to be excavated and filled. It also meant further ground stabilisation work needed to be carried out.

Councillor Ruth Rosenau, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Transport, and Simon Hourihan, the council’s Project Manager for the bus station development, make a site inspection. In the background the distinctive wave-form design can be seen to be taking shape.

Gilded bowl holds a tasty treat

Gilding is a technique that has been used for centuries and it is still going strong. As VIP gifts go it took some beating... former Lord Mayor Terry Fellows had done his research when looking for a momento to present to the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Davy Wootton, as he left after a day-long visit to the Potteries. The gilded, enamel bowl showed scenes of The Thames, emblems of the London Boroughs and even Alderman Wootton's beloved rowing. And to cap it all, the icing on the cake, a dozen oastcakes, neatly packed and ready for the kitchens at the special visitor’s official residence, the Mansion House. A tasty reminder of a successful visit (see page 10).

New bus station set for early 2013 opening

“WE agreed to wait until early in the new year for the opening so as not to disrupt retailers at their busiest time of the year – a decision which has been welcomed by traders.”

The opening of the new bus station clears the way for the massive City Sentral retail and leisure development at the former East West Precinct. When the first buses pull into bays at the new station, demolition work will begin shortly after on the 1960s old bus station.

Birmingham-based Reals Estates are pumping around £350 million into the scheme which will see a new flagship M&S department store – three times bigger than the existing city centre M&S – and a Vue multiplex cinema surrounded by 80 stores, 11 food and drink units, an 80-bed hotel and parking for more than 1,000 cars.

Technical experts to help harness hot water energy

AMBITIONs plans to use waste heat and underground hot water to create an energy self-sufficient city took a step forward with the appointment of an expert partner to help deliver the initiative.

Plans to harness surplus energy from large manufacturing plants, and even to use hot water in old mine workings deep beneath the ground, to heat buildings in the city, were unveiled at the launch of Mandate for Change. Now technical experts AECOM, who have a global track record of innovative energy work, including London’s Olympic Park, have been brought in to help the city council make the projects work.

Councillor Andy Platt, Cabinet Member for Green Enterprises and City Services, said: “We said in our Mandate for Change that we want to make Stoke-on-Trent a great working city and the place to bring business, and with innovative steps like this we can not only achieve that, but can also become a leader in green energy worldwide.”
Five more councillors speak to Our City for the latest in our on-going series where we delve into their backgrounds to find out what makes them stand for election in the first place and what makes them serve the city and its people.

COMMUNITY is everything to me. I went to school here and have always lived in the area. I’ve been involved with the Residents Who Care Residents’ Association for 16 years and I’ve been chair for 15 years. My family has always been heavily involved in the area. My nanne and granddad ran a youth club and jazz band, my mum and dad ran a dance troupe and still help out with the association luncheon club. My husband, sister, brother, sister-in-law and both my daughters are on the committee.

People are always coming to me for help. When they suggested I stand as a councillor I thought if I can make a difference I’ll give it a go. It’s hard work and very time consuming but very satisfying.

For me it’s not just about my area but the whole city. I have many contacts at other residents’ associations so that’s a good thing.

I have a family history of community activism. They’re trade unionists and my gran was a parish councillor during the miners’ strike. I was chair of the Labour Club at Keele University and worked with the local Labour Party on campaigns. After I’d graduated, I worked for a few years as a researcher for MP Rob Flello. The Labour Party gauged my interest in running as a councillor when I was 23 but I didn’t think I’d stand a chance because of my age.

When the Longton branch selected me it was a surprise and I was lucky enough to go on and win. I’ve been a councillor for over four years now and I’m chair of the development management committee. My real passion is devolving council services to the community. For instance I’d like to see leisure services run as a co-operative with far more community involvement.

I have lived in the city for most of my life and had become increasingly critical of the council. The imposition of the Governance and Performance Transition Board was the final insult.

MY global business background stretching back 20-odd years has given me invaluable experience as I and my fellow councillors work hard to regenerate the city and attract new jobs.

I’ve always been a Labour Party member and my dad Dennis was a councillor in the same area as me for 40 years. I decided I too could make a difference when I took stock nine years ago. So despite my very busy life, I stood. Now I’m Deputys Council Leader and passionate about improving Stoke-on-Trent for all.

With my business knowledge, I’m able to deal with senior council figures on their level and talk to businesses who want to come to the city. With the City Sentral development, the business district and building work well advanced on the new bus station, this city is moving forward. The current Cabinet is dedicated to making the city better not only in the UK but also in Europe.

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Neighbourhood Watch brings community together

A

S Neighbourhood Watch celebrates its 30th anniversary, community spirited Graham Simm continues to be the driving force behind the scheme that keeps his street safer in Hartshill.

The 74-year-old retired music teacher and former Special Constable set up the Watson Street scheme 12 years ago and has been the co-ordinator ever since.

Covering 30 properties, Graham keeps in touch through leaflets and emails as he alerts his neighbours to specific problems.

Graham, who is also vice chairman of the Hartshill and Harpfields Residents’ Association, said:

“I’d joined a neighbourhood watch scheme a couple of years after retiring from the special constabulary and decided we needed one for my own street.

So I pushed notes through letter boxes and about half said yes.

“We got some advice from the city’s Neighbourhood Watch Manager and off we went. Almost half the households are now members. I produce leaflets myself and print them off before delivering them and liaise closely with the Neighbourhood Watch Manager who alerts me if there are any particular issues or problems.

“It’s been quite successful and I get a lot of satisfaction out of it – a feeling that I’m helping the neighbourhood. It’s important for the community and has helped bring us closer together as people look out for their neighbours.

“I’m pretty active so I’ll keep going as long as I can, maybe another 74 years,” joked Graham.

Dave Twist, Staffordshire Police Crime Reduction Manager, said: “We’re encouraging people of all ages to join existing NHW schemes or to set up a new police registered scheme in their area.”

Events mark city’s response to Lidice atrocity

Hanley, featuring music from the Ceramic City Choir and The Florence Brass (miners) Band. The Mayor of Lidice, accompanied by three survivors of the tragedy, will also visit the city to mark the 70th anniversary of the launch of The Lidice Shall Live campaign.

Last month, Lord Mayor Councillor Terry Crowe visited Lidice, the latest in a long line of events connecting the city to the village, spanning the last seven decades.

On 6 September 1942, city councillor Barnett Stross – who later became Stoke-on-Trent Central MP – founded the Lidice Shall Live campaign, which led to the rebuilding of the village. The fundraiser was backed by local coal miners who donated a week’s wages. The campaign raised significant sums (equivalent to approximately £1 million in today’s money).

This funded more than 150 modern state-of-the-art homes. In 1955 Barnett led an initiative to construct the world’s largest rose garden with 23,000 roses donated from around the world.

The rose garden formed a bridge between the site of the old village and the new Lidice. In 1966 Barnett Stross initiated the Lidice Art Collection.

Tickets are now on sale for the concert on 8 September at the Victoria Hall box office priced at £5 each.
Health services are closer to home

COMMUNITY health facilities which enable patients to be treated closer to where they live have been officially opened.

Her Majesty’s representative in Staffordshire Lord Lieutenant Ian Dudson CBE cut the ribbon the £14 million Cobridge Community Health Centre as well as the Integrated Sexual Assault Referral Centre which provides genitourinary medicine, contraception services as well as HIV counselling and the Sexual Assault Referral Centre which supports the victims of sexual assault and abuse on the same site.

Work on the development started in June 2010 and the impressive new centre has brought together two local GP practices – the Dr Pathak surgery and Apsley House Surgery, which were based on Waterloo Road.

Other facilities include district nursing, health visiting and school nursing teams, a range of outpatients services, including a chest clinic, a pharmacy, X-ray services and blood testing.

It is the culmination of years of tireless campaigning by local residents and volunteers who worked with the PCT and city council to bring the ultra-modern facility to fruition.

Staffordshire PCT Cluster Chief Executive Graham Urwin said: “I am delighted that the Lord Lieutenant has opened the community health centre and the integrated sexual health unit.

It has given the community the opportunity to celebrate the hard work that has gone into making these developments a reality. “We expect in excess of 160,000 patients to use the Community Health Centre every year.”

Councillor Adrian Knapper, the council’s Cabinet Member for Health, said: “Centres of this nature provide an extremely important service to people who need immediate support in times of extreme difficulty. “In Stoke-on-Trent we are dedicated to supporting people who’ve been the victims of sexual crimes and, as outlined in our Mandate for Change, we want to promote independent living and healthy lives within the city and these centres will be at the forefront of that vision.”

To celebrate the building of the health centre, a community arts project was launched, which saw five artists create three pieces of work that have been prominently displayed in Cobridge.

Holding a pottery plaque to commemorate the official opening of the Cobridge Community Health Centre and Integrated Sexual Health Unit are Her Majesty’s representative in Staffordshire Lord Lieutenant Ian Dudson CBE, who performed the opening ceremony, and Staffordshire Chief Constable Mike Cunningham. Looking on are Staffordshire PCT Cluster Chief Executive Graham Urwin, second left, and John Taylor, Chairman of Prima 200, the company which project managed the construction of the new buildings – pictured in the background.

Thought you couldn’t afford a home of your own? Think again!

LORD Mayor Terry Crowe cut the ribbon and starts the Olympics excitement

LORD Mayor Terry Crowe joined more than 240 high school pupils at Northwood Stadium for an early taste of Olympic excitement. The city’s First Citizen cut a ribbon to officially open the Discovery Academy’s very own version of the Olympic Games.

There were 10 forms of Year 7 students – 11 and 12-year-olds – from the Academy and each form represented a different competing nation.

The Lord Mayor said: “It was great to see the youngsters entering into the spirit of the Olympics with the flags and colours of competing nations.”

The Discovery Academy – which has replaced the former Edensor and Mitchell High Schools – will move into a new £23 million complex at Bentilee in September 2013, as part of Stoke-on-Trent’s Building Schools for the Future programme.
Public urged to report the Cheaters

FRAUDSTERS are being targeted in a £21,000 City Council ‘Spot the Cheater’ campaign. The crackdown is concentrating on housing tenancy and benefit fraud, council tax evaders and those who misuse the blue badge scheme for people with mobility problems. Posters, parking tickets, billboard and bus adverts are urging the public to report any cheats they suspect.

Corporate Fraud Manager Paul Bicknell said: “It’s not just the city council being ripped off; it’s the citizens of Stoke-on-Trent.”

Deputy Council Leader Paul Shotton said: “Cheats need to know they can run but can’t hide. People can contact us in total confidence and their information investigated.”

Reports of potential fraud have doubled so far. Anyone who suspects fraud can call 01782 236800 or visit stoke.gov.uk/reportfraud.

Simple steps to tackle car crime

POLICE are urging residents to take simple crime prevention measures to deter would-be thieves who target vehicles with valuables left on display.

Most thefts from a vehicle occur when they have been left insecure. Preventions include:

- ALWAYS ensuring the vehicle is locked and secured.
- ALWAYS removing bags and valuables from view.
- NEVER leaving keys in the ignition while paying for fuel or popping to a shop.
- ACTIVATING security devices when leaving the vehicle. Suspicious activity should be reported to Staffordshire Police by calling the non-emergency number 101, or CrimeStoppers on 0800 555 111.

Open days at the Bethesda

A historic chapel, known as the Cathedral of the Potteries will be throwing open its doors to the public each month to show off restoration progress.

Bethesda Chapel, in Albion Street, City Centre, is open between 12 and 3pm on the second Saturday of each month, when its organ can be heard and visitors can see the stages works have reached.

The roof, windows, pulpit and communion rails have been restored and the beautiful ceiling and stained glass windows replaced.

Funding sought for ceramic skills academy

A BID to set up a Ceramic Skills Academy in Stoke-on-Trent, to fill skills gaps in the pottery industry, has been submitted.

Outline funding of around £20,000 has been granted to allow a comprehensive bid for £1.5 million to be submitted to the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES).

North Staffs Chamber of Commerce and the British Ceramic Confederation, on behalf of the industry, now have three months to state the case for the prestigious academy.

It comes as our city’s world famous ceramics industry enjoys a resurgence based on the quality of ware produced here and the traditional skills of the workforce.

But once companies try to grow, they are experiencing a shortage of people who either have the skills they need, or even want to work in a ceramic factory.

Work together

Amazingly the bid for the academy was being put together as the idea was discussed during a VIP visit by the Lord Mayor of London. Alderman David Wootton came to Stoke-on-Trent, where his father lives, and visited several pottery factories as part of a commitment to help promote the industry.

He chaired a luncheon hosted by the City Council which was attended by industrialists, senior councillors, regeneration experts, the media and educationalists to discuss what could be done to build on growth in the ceramics industry as part of the city’s regeneration.

Councillor Mark Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said: “The ceramic industry has started to grow again in the area as demonstrated by the success of companies like Steelite, Portmeirion and Emma Bridgewater.

“To ensure future growth is secured both traditional and new skills will be required, this bid should give both the means to deliver them and send a clear message about the exciting potential for growth in the ceramic industry in our city.”

Talks are now underway between the partners to produce a structure for the learning opportunities and to involve more ceramics companies in offering different parts of the training.

The Rt Hon The Lord Mayor of London, Alderman David Wootton said: “I am delighted to hear that plans are afoot to create a Ceramic Skills Academy in Stoke-on-Trent. When I visited the Potteries and met leaders of the ceramics sector in May this year, it was apparent that a skills shortage was one of the biggest threats facing the industry.

“We discussed an innovative, industry-led, ‘modular approach’, which would inspire a new generation of ceramicists and enable students to gain ‘hands on’ experience and qualifications.

“I was struck by the industry’s energy and commitment to develop and realise these plans, and am encouraged to see how far they have progressed. A Ceramic Skills Academy is an excellent, effective, essential step towards regenerating and revitalising this important industry.

“I commend the vision and leadership of the British Ceramic Federation, North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Staffordshire University, Stoke on Trent College, Stoke-on-Trent City Council – and the region’s pottery and ceramic companies.”

‘Don’t get burned’ warning for summer funseekers

Fire chiefs have sent out a summer safety message... in spite of it being the wettest May and June for decades. Any spell of hotter weather means it’s out with the barbecues... and an increased safety risk.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue’s Head of Risk Reduction, Glynn Luznyj said: “We want people to have fun but we also want them to celebrate safely – we don’t want to turn up to save their bacon!”

The summer months also bring other potential fire risks and the service always sees an increase in grass fires during warmer weather.

“Through the majority of grass fires are deliberately started something as simple as throwing a cigarette from a car window or leaving a glass bottle on the floor can accidentally start a grass fire.”

Glynn Luznyj added: “We ask that people take care when they’re outside enjoying the nice weather and simply ensure that cigarettes are appropriately extinguished and disposed of and that litter is put into bins provided or taken home with you.”

For more information about celebrating safely this summer, including a list of tips for people organising street parties, visit staffordshirefire.gov.uk. Also follow Staffs Fire on Twitter and Facebook for regular updates throughout the summer.
Government backs city bid to support the iPad generation

Government funding for hi-tech equipment has recognised pioneering work in Stoke-on-Trent’s Children’s Centres to help parents understand the way their children learn.

Less than a handful of local authorities across the country – including our city – were successful in applying for funds from the Trialling New Approaches for Free Education programme last year.

The city council bought iPads to help parents across the city study and understand how their children learn through play.

The powerful computer tablets enable staff in the children’s centres to film children learning, and instantly review the videos with their parents.

Play and Learning Team Lead for the South Locality Jacqui Higginson said: “Previously we had to shoot video on a camera and transfer it to a laptop, which could take up to an hour and lose the impact. Now we use the portable iPads to film children and instantly review their play with parents.

“It is far more practical and means we can concentrate on involving parents in their children’s development by helping them to understand how children learn and develop through play.”

Children’s centre teams in Stoke-on-Trent deliver a parenting programme called PICL (Parents Involved in Children’s Learning) which looks at how children learn and helps professionals and parents understand how to support children’s learning.

OFSTED inspectors who saw the initiative in action at the Crescent Children’s Centre in Meir said: “Videos are used to record parent and child interaction which has a tremendous impact on their parenting skills.

“Children are notably more able to socialise. The improvement in learning is clearly evident when they start full time nursery aged three, compared to those who do not attend the children’s centre.”

Council Leader Councillor Mohammed Pervez, whose portfolio includes communications, said: “This is a great example of our city leading the way in giving children the very best start in life.

“The Government asked local authorities to put forward their ideas for innovative uses of technology to make a difference in children’s lives. Stoke-on-Trent was one of only a handful of councils which were successful in being granted funding.

“The iPads are a very practical yet powerful tool and are helping our children’s centres engage parents in their children’s learning and bring families together.”
PULL OUT GUIDE TO CHILDREN’S CENTRES ACTIVITIES

Families welcome to take part in packed activity programme

Our City p12-13  19/7/12  16:23  Page 1
Centre support helps Charlotte turn life around

Charlotte Chawner came close to experiencing every mother’s nightmare – being separated from the daughter she loves.

As she went into a spell of depression following a break-up with her partner, the 26-year-old Burslem single mother was reaching the point of asking her parents to look after little Amelia.

But help was at hand from Burslem Children’s Centre, where Charlotte had already enrolled her daughter in the Mother and Baby group because she felt lonely and isolated.

The mum was introduced to a family support worker and she began to see light at the end of the tunnel.

Qualified nursery nurse Charlotte was given help to build back her confidence, and received advice on how to move forward, including the suggestion that she should discuss her depression with her doctor.

“The children’s centre helped me so much when I was feeling down,” she said. “I had got to the point at home where I was crying in one room and Amelia was crying in another.

“It hadn’t been for the supportive staff at the centre, I don’t think I would still be with my daughter – she would be with my mum and dad.”

Charlotte’s confidence continued to improve as she attended the Family Links and Triple P practical parenting programmes at the children’s centre, which is located at Port Vale Football Club.

“I am now feeling so much more positive – I am even volunteering to help out with running courses such as the Cook and Eat healthy eating sessions,” she said. “We try to encourage parents to move away from fast food meals to foods like quiche, and sweet potato and carrot chips.”

Amelia, who is now three, attends the crèche at the centre when Charlotte is volunteering.

Midwives enable centre to engage parents-to-be

A team of midwives based at Blurton is helping children’s centre staff engage new parents even before their baby is born.

The fourteen midwives meet at the centre every morning to allocate workloads. As well as staging clinics at the centre every Monday and Wednesday, they reach out to communities across the city and out into the Staffordshire Moorlands with antenatal sessions and home visits.

The fact that midwives are permanently based in a room there also helps them forge stronger links with other professionals like health visitors and the children’s centre staff themselves.

The midwives’ Community Team Leader Julie Day said: “Being based at the centre makes us more visible to the public as well as giving us spontaneous face-to-face contact with parents, health visitors and centre staff.”

Nadine Massey, South Locality Co-ordinator for Children’s Centres, said: “Mums and dads to be, visit the midwives at the centre, which gives us a chance to talk to them and explain what we have to offer before we would normally get the chance to meet them.

“We can engage virtually every new parent in our catchment area before their baby is even born.”

FOR a quick and healthy alternative to a takeaway, why not try the Children’s Centres’ recipe for Summer Risotto?

Ingredients: 2 pints of vegetable stock or chicken stock; 1 onion finely chopped; 1 garlic clove crushed; 1tbsp olive oil; 1oz parmesan cheese and the knob of margarine; Salt/freshly ground pepper.

Method: Bring stock to the boil, add one or two ladlefuls of hot stock and simmer, stirring all the time until it has been absorbed. Then add another ladle of stock. Continue to add a little stock at a time and simmer until the rice absorbs the liquid before adding more, stirring frequently. After 10 minutes add the courgette and tomato. When all the stock has been added and the rice is cooked (around 15-20 minutes) stir in the parmesan cheese and the knob of margarine. Season to taste.

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**Energise leisure card scheme now even better value**

Energise, the city council’s leisure card scheme for sports and leisure services, has been relaunched so customers receive even more value.

Cardholders can now collect points against purchases they make and use them for other offers and products at council sport and leisure venues. They will also get exclusive offers and discounts from selected partners. The Energise card is free while Energise Plus costs £5.75 a year for eligible individuals and comes with additional benefits. Points can be used to buy swim sessions, casual and holiday activities and exercise classes as well as parties. Chris Austin, the city council’s Events and Commercial Manager, said: "We are really excited about Energise. It will give real rewards to our customers and add even more value to the time they spend with us. "It’s also an opportunity for us to ask all of our services together whether it be sports venues, coaching courses or outreach sessions.”

Eligibility criteria apply to Energise PLUS. To find out more about Energise and its benefits go to stoke.gov.uk/energise, alternatively, call 01782 234957 or email energise@stoke.gov.uk

**Schools fly the flag for Fairtrade**

COMMUNITY organisations, workplaces, colleges and schools are being urged to support the use of Fairtrade goods.

Stoke-on-Trent is one of over 750 Fairtrade towns and cities in the UK – and the city council uses the growing number of products in meetings, schools and retail outlets. People can instantly recognise a Fairtrade product by looking out for the distinctive blue and green branding. Products are available in major supermarkets, independent shops, cafes, restaurants and through catering suppliers, wholesalers and online shopping channels. Items range from coffee, cocoa, rice and spices to wine, beauty products and even gold.

Fairtrade protects workers’ basic rights – health and safety standards, freedom of association, and no bonded or illegal child labour. The Fairtrade Foundation licenses use of the FAIRTRADE Mark on products in accordance with internationally agreed Fairtrade standards. The Foundation was established in 1992. Many schools teach pupils about Fairtrade products and how they promote ethical buying and sustainability.

Tracy Brennan, Sustainable Schools Officer said: “Fairtrade ensures producers receive a price which covers the cost of sustainable production, as a minimum.

It also pays a premium for investment in social, environmental and other economic development projects – and this funds improvements in education and healthcare or is used to increase income.”

“People can get involved at work, school, college, university, places of worship and other community organisations by supporting, selling or serving Fairtrade products.

● For more information visit fairtrade.org.uk

To get involved locally contact Fairtrade Action in Stoke-on-Trent (FAST) through the Trade Aid Centre, located at The Methodist Book Centre, Gitana Street, Hanley, ST1 1DY. Open Monday to Saturday 10am-4pm. Or call 01782 212146.

**Minister praises city’s job initiatives**

GOVERNMENT Business and Enterprise Minister the Rt Hon Mark Prisk MP has praised Stoke-on-Trent’s Mandate for Change drive to attract investment and create jobs.

He visited the area to see regeneration in action at Middleport Pottery – which is being developed as a visitor attraction with £1.7million from the Government’s Regional Growth Fund – and the modern manufacturing facilities at Michelin Tyre Plc in Trent Vale.

Mr Prisk had been invited by the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in which the city council plays a leading role.

He said: “The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP is driving economic growth. There are business success stories right across the region and it is fantastic to see ambitious firms growing, creating jobs and demonstrating that this is a great place to do business.”

LEP Chairman Maitland Hyslop said: “We offer a red carpet approach to potential investors in addition to our ongoing support for established business and those starting out.

“Through this visit we were able to demonstrate projects which will make a real difference to our economy.

“They will create jobs, attract further investment and enhance our reputation as a centre for business.”

**Partners planning for emergencies**

SUMMER floods have highlighted how emergency planning by local authorities can help avert disaster – and Stoke-on-Trent is just as ready through the partnership work it does day in day out.

As a member of the Staffordshire Resilience Forum, the city prepares alongside partners from other organisations like the emergency services, the Environment Agency and health organisations to deal with anything from severe weather to terrorism and industrial accidents.

The work is co-ordinated by the Staffordshire Civil Contingencies Unit, which works closely with the city council to make sure all involved are prepared and ready to respond.

Information and guides on how to deal with the unexpected are published as people are urged not to panic but make sure they are prepared.

To download guides and information go to staffsfireprepared.gov.uk or call the Civil Contingencies Unit on 01785 898618 for a paper copy.

You can follow the day-to-day work of the Unit by following @StaffsPrepared on Twitter.

**Loans for businesses**

BUSINESSES struggling to raise finance from the banks can apply for funding from a £200,000 cash pot set up by the city council.

Loans between £10,000 and £50,000 could be made available to businesses whose applications have been rejected by mainstream lenders.

Councillor Mark Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said: “This is about providing Stoke-on-Trent business talent with the support it needs.”

For more information call 0845 3138410 or visit bcrs.org.uk
Stoke-on-Trent’s successful fostering programme is committed to placing Stoke-on-Trent children with local families. Here, Our City talks to experienced foster parents who agree with helping young people stay local...

**Fostering is so rewarding**

Foster carers Linda and Phill Oliver have devoted their lives to their own children and their wider family and have no plans to give up any time soon.

The former childcare professional and her husband, both now 52, have looked after more than 20 children since they first started fostering 17 years ago, helping the young people to stay local.

Linda said: “I spotted the city council’s fostering ad one day. I asked Phill if he fancied giving it a go. We spoke to our children Craig and Mandy and they were happy about the idea so we applied.

“We were really chuffed when the panel said we’d been accepted and very soon afterwards we had our first child – an 11-year-old girl who used to stay at weekends.”

Since then the couple’s three-bed semi in Blurton has been home to babies, teenage girls, and other children who have come on short and long term placements. With six grand children as well life is never dull in the Oliver household.

“We once had three siblings aged three, seven and nine who stayed with us for four years. They all left but one came back after two years. He’s just gone and he was 19,” said Linda.

“Many of the children we’ve fostered stay in touch and it’s great to work with their families. We once had 18 people at our house for Christmas dinner. We’ve got two foster children at the minute so we’re always doing the school run or taking them to clubs as parents do.

“Fostering is so rewarding. People ask us how we do it all but to us it’s just normal. I’d be boring if we didn’t do it and we wouldn’t know what to do with ourselves.

“It keeps us young and we get a tremendous satisfaction from seeing children coping on their own and getting on with their lives. I’d recommend it to anyone and if we can help children stay local, so much the better.”

**Keeping children in the city... Where they belong**

Could you foster a local child?

Please call 01782 234555 or visit stoke.gov.uk/fostering

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**Outstanding service launches ‘close to home’ campaign**

Keeping children in the city where they belong is at the heart of the latest fostering campaign just launched in Stoke-on-Trent. The city council’s Fostering Service commissioned commercial radio ads and giant billboard posters as it urges more interested carers to come forward.

Up to 40 people have already responded to the campaign ads as well as road shows staged during Fostering Fortnight at venues as diverse as Fenton Manor Sports Complex and the North Staffs African Caribbean Association.

Experienced carers were on hand to pass on their experiences of being involved with a service rated Outstanding in 2010.

Adrian Sewell, the council’s Principal Manager – Fostering, said: “It’s vital that we keep as many children as we can in the city so they can maintain family links, keep their friends and stay at schools they know.

“So we’re working hard with more potential carers from all sorts of backgrounds so that we can provide children with the loving, caring and stable support they have been lacking.”

To find out more information about fostering please visit stoke.gov.uk/fostering
A packed year of events and activities is being planned at the newly restored Burslem Park – with organisers predicting visitor figures are set to swell to more than 280,000 over the next 12 months.

A £2 million overhaul has seen the Victorian park brought back to its former glory and a celebration day last month to mark completion of the work attracted a 5,000-plus crowd.

The scheme – paid for by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund Parks for People Programme – has included the restoration of the ornate pavilion, the terrace gardens, paths, gates, balustrades and two terracotta fountains which are now working for the first time since 1895.

More than 50,000 plants, 7,000 shrubs and 72 trees have been planted to transform the formal gardens, creating a haven for wildlife. “It’s a wonderful place to be – in every corner there is a blaze of colour,” said Mike Watson, volunteer Project Manager for the Burslem Park Partnership which campaigned to secure the funding for the project with support from the city council.

Mike, a 68-year-old retired pottery technical manager, now dedicates more than 40 hours a week to promoting the park – including leading popular tour talks highlighting its history.

“It is the pearl of the city’s parks and, in my opinion, the quality is on a par with Trentham Gardens,” he said. “The park is somewhere all ages can enjoy and we are organising activities and events for all ages. There will be a lot more use of the park. Over the past year there have been around 240,000 visitors and this could well increase to over 280,000 over the next 12 months.”

Events already on the calendar include the Swan Bank Church Adorations Festival, Moorpark Primary School’s Picnic in the Park, a gala day for nursery schools from across the city and brass band concerts. The park celebration day will be held again next year and there will be the return of the Music Festival with up to 30 live bands next August.

Mike said the Burslem Park Partnership intends to continue to improve the park’s facilities and one of the first projects will be a makeover for the bandstand which they hope to carry out later this summer.

Councillor Ruth Rosenau, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Transportation, said: “The park restoration is another piece in the jigsaw for the regeneration of Burslem. It is a big asset and will undoubtedly help to attract more people to the Mother Town.”

For more details or to volunteer call Urban Park Ranger Tom Pine on 07787 005946 or visit stoke.gov.uk/burslempark

Kaia Perry of Moorpark Junior School with the new Mayfly sculpture. Local pupils were encouraged to leave positive messages on the artwork which can be seen here.

True community artwork

A newly-erected steel sculpture, called Mayfly, is an eye-catching feature in Burslem Park.

It has been positioned at the same spot as a statue of a water nymph which went missing half a century ago.

The water nymph was donated to the park in 1894 by benefactor Sir Donald Doulton – but it disappeared through an act of vandalism in the early 1960s.

Creating the new artwork has been real community effort involving the council, Burslem Park Partnership, pupils from Haywood Engineering College, Moorpark Junior School and Jackfield Infant School, trainees from PM Training and artists Phil Hardaker and Andrew Edwards.

Phil worked with the pupils to produce ceramic jewellery for the Mayfly’s wings and tiles to top the original terracotta plinth.

He said: “The work embraced listening to the community and local children to create a truly unique and stunning new addition to the restored park.”
Blinds risk: understand the danger

FRESH warnings have been issued about the dangers of looped blind and window cords as the city’s Safeguarding Children Board continues to raise awareness.

The Board continues to back a campaign by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents as it urges parents, carers and people working with young children to better understand the risks.

A leaflet reveals it can take just 20 seconds for a child to die from strangulation if they get caught and struggle to get free.

So the Board’s website is signposting people to the RoSPA ‘Make it Safe’ pack which contains a leaflet, a blind cord cleat to help tie cords up safely and a warning tag advising what to look out for when buying window blinds.

To find links to the RoSPA pack and to download the Board’s own campaign leaflets on the dangers go to safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk and follow the links from adults to child safety and then blind cord danger.

MAKING sure our children are safe can be everyone’s responsibility, from youngsters themselves to parents, friends, carers and professionals. Here, Our City reports on an online resource to help them all find the information and support they need.

PARENTS with new babies are again being reminded about best practice to make sure their new arrival sleeps safely. It comes after a hard-hitting radio campaign in the city hammered home the key message that the best place for a baby to sleep is in a cot with their feet to the bottom.

The Safeguarding Children Board worked very closely with health colleagues to promote a number of Sleepsafe leaflets which urge mums and dads or carers never to fall asleep with a baby on a sofa, armchair or couch. Safe sleeping, or co-sleeping as it is sometimes called, refers to the different ways infants sleep with a parent or someone who is looking after them. It is important to be aware that adult beds are not designed to ensure infant safety.

Board Manager Carole Preston said: “It is everyone’s responsibility and if you are worried and not sure what to do, please don’t hesitate to get advice.”

To get that advice, visit safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk

Safeguarding services explained in detail

KEY information designed to help keep children safe throughout Stoke-on-Trent has been brought together on one easy to use website.

Aimed at children, young people, families, parents, carers and professionals who live or work in the community, the Safeguarding Children Board site brings together a wealth of information, best working practices and contact details to help people go directly to where they can get support or advice.

Children and young people can access advice and help on abuse, drugs, alcohol, forced marriage, being a young carer or even if they are thinking of running away.

For adults, there are sections on childcare and safety, how to deal with the death of a child, mental health issues, domestic abuse and children who go missing.

Professionals are signposted to issues like child sexual exploitation, homelessness and they can also access the very latest government guidelines, policies, procedures and training opportunities.

The Safeguarding Children Board works in partnership with lots of agencies throughout the city, including statutory agencies, the voluntary sector and private sector.

More information on partners and the work they do together is available at safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk

The site is already getting positive feedback.

One member of the public said: “I found it very easy to search for the information I was looking for as the front page had all the links. “I had looked at other websites but found Stoke’s to have the most up-to-date information and it looked the most attractive which encouraged me to want to use it.”

A professional said: “The Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board website is a hub of opportunity for multi-agency professionals to find guidance, up-to-date policies and procedures for safer working practices.”

Carole Preston, the city’s Safeguarding Children Board Manager, said: “We are really excited about the development of our website which has lots of helpful information and contact numbers for children, young people, parents, carers and professionals.

“Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility and if you are worried and not sure what to do, please don’t hesitate to get advice.”

For more information and a full list of the dos and don’ts, follow the child safety links on safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk
Spotlight on Meir Community Education Centre

Dedicated centre staff boost skills and fitness

A community education centre that was originally built to house adult education courses has turned itself into a multi-purpose venue that welcomes visitors of all ages.

Meir Community Education Centre can be hired out for parties, functions and weddings while it also features a gym, a nursery and classrooms.

Meir Fitness Centre is located in the building, and the centre’s two halls are used for a variety of purposes – the large one for exercise classes, circuit training and Zumba, the small one for pre-school play activities.

Four small rooms can be hired and are suitable for people who want to take advantage of an IT suite, sewing facilities or cooking equipment.

On the educational front, Meir Community Education Centre offers a wide variety of courses through Adult and Community Learning, Workers Educational Association, University of the Third Age and self-financing classes.

Courses for 2012 being run by Stoke-on-Trent City Council include Creating With Ceramics, Painting With Oils/Pastels, Youth Work Skills, Rug Rug Making and Counselling Skills together with several courses on computers and sewing.

Self-financing courses include Patchwork and Quilting, Card Crafts, Keep Fit and Line Dancing.

“Meir Community Education Centre is extremely adaptable,” said Janine Cartlidge, Stoke-on-Trent City Council Business Support Manager. “It’s really accessible in Pickford Place, close to the A50, and there’s good parking. The surroundings are pleasant and quiet.

“Meir Fitness Centre is a friendly venue, popular with many who are long-term members.

The gym, equipped with weights, cycles and a variety of resistance machines, is staffed by an instructor at all times.

To find out more about the equipment and help on offer, as well as the circuit training class, phone 01782 235177.

The Fitness Centre has an impressively loyal membership. Rob Charlton, aged 39, said: “The gym changed my life. I went down from jeans size 46 to 30 and lost six stones within a year, allowing me to run the Ashbourne half-marathon.”

There are also sporting facilities, like bowls and aerobics, which run in the main hall.

To book on to any of these courses or for further information on courses or room hire, call 01782 235150 or visit stoke.gov.uk and search for Meir Community Education Centre.
Mentors help provide service

THE successful T3 Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service has completed its first round of peer mentor training and appointed its first successful recruit to the scheme. The service aims to help young people achieve their goals with regard to controlling their substance misuse. Part of the outcome is about making a positive contribution which the peer mentoring programme achieves.

The round of training has provided a wealth of knowledge and provided a firm foundation for future development.

The first mentor is Emma* who is now in her early 20s and worked with the service a few years ago.

Since her successful exit from treatment, she has gone on to find full time employment and had her first child. Despite her work and child care commitments, she has given up one day a week to attend the training course with other young people. She successfully completed the course and has also attended a consultation event with local commissioners regarding young people’s delivery planning in Stoke-on-Trent.

Progress into a job

Emma is now working with the service and gaining lots of experience in the hope that she will progress into a job within the drugs field.

Diane Harper who runs the Peer Mentor Training Programme said: “Emma is a valuable asset to our service. The fact that she sacrifices one day’s salary a week to work on a voluntary basis helping other young people is a clear reflection of her commitment, dedication and enthusiasm. The whole team is delighted to have her on board, and her first-hand knowledge of a service user’s experience is crucial.”

Emma said: “I have really enjoyed the training course, and now that I am working with the T3 team I am realising my ambition to work effectively in this exciting field. I am fortunate to be in a position to be able to ‘give something back’. I would recommend this route to other people wanting to work in the field of drugs and alcohol use.”

The peer mentoring programme is ready to start the next round of recruitment. Mentors will need to be able to commit to attending every Tuesday over 10 weeks for the initial training, which takes place in Hanley. Applications are welcome from anyone who has first-hand experience of the service or an avid interest.

Contact Diane or Beck on 01782 221090 or 07507 411733 or email Stoke.T3@cri.org.uk

*The peer mentor’s name has been changed to protect her identity.

A recovery academy has been launched in the city to help former addicts with their rehabilitation.

The academy established by adult community drug service provider CRI offers structured support as well as informal drop-in sessions, aimed at helping former victims of substance misuse remain drug free and lead a healthy lifestyle.

The new facility, which is funded by the Safer City Partnership, is based at Canal Arm, Festival Park, but is also available through three outreach hubs in Meir, Tunstall and the City Centre.

It works in partnership with a number of agencies and organisations, including the NHS and Stoke on Trent College, who provide a range of educational courses in areas such as basic health and hygiene and IT.

Recovery Academy Services Manager Debbie Arnold said: “The new academy provides vital after care support for our service users and helps to promote drug free lifestyles.

“It also complements the work we do in terms of detox programmes and structured intervention. We are working with a number of partners who can provide expert help in a number of key areas such as health and education.

Accessible to anyone

“Many people attend the courses or the more structured parts of the programme, while others just like to drop in to use the kitchen facilities to make their lunch or access the internet.

“The outreach hubs make the facilities more accessible to everyone in the city.”

CRI Stoke-on-Trent Community Drug Service provides a range of community based services for people with substance misuse problems.

Many service users attend voluntarily but others are obliged to do so as part of a court order and as an alternative to prison.

These services are geared towards supporting individuals to successfully overcome substance misuse problems and lead stable crime-free lives.

For more details about the service contact 01782 212800.
STOKE-on-Trent’s groundbreaking Community Alcohol Service is now being spearheaded by a Midlands-based charity with decades of experience.

Aquarius has been supporting people affected by alcohol, gambling and substance misuse issues for 40 years and has helped numerous people reduce their consumption of alcohol, abstain completely and rebuild their lives.

The effective service will continue to be operated from a central base at Balwant House in Shelton. There will also be outreach venues geographically spread throughout the city to ensure easier access to offer support to any person affected by alcohol misuse, whether increasing risk, higher risk, dependent or a concerned other.

Aquarius have pledged to offer smoother pathways through treatment for dependent drinkers and an enhanced focus on linking service users into continuing care and support after their treatment.

365-days-a-year

The service, which is funded by the Safer City Partnership, will offer counselling and home detoxification and deliver the Alcohol Treatment requirement project in partnership with the Probation Service.

It will be open Monday to Saturday, including two evenings, and will operate a 24-hour 365-days-a-year telephone support service.

Senior Manager Paul McTague said: “We aim to build on the performance of current services and improve the treatment and longer term outcomes for service users.”

Additionally, the Alcohol Brief Interventions Service will also be delivered by Aquarius. It is also based at Balwant House but will predominantly operate on an outreach basis.

The service offers drop-in sessions and support to organisations in identifying alcohol misuse and a scheme, which diverts people from criminal justice into support for alcohol misuse.

The Safer City Partnership is continuing to support the revised service with complementary artwork and promotional literature. This includes leaflets, posters and mouse mats carrying alcohol safety messages.

To enquire about support or for more information call the service’s new number – 01782 283113 or email stoke-on-trent@aquarius.org.uk

Respect Day clean up makes impact

All the stops were pulled out for the latest Respect Day held in the city. Refuse collection vehicles, fly-tipping teams, the city council’s environmental crime unit, police and fire officers and Street Pastors all worked with residents to clean up the Hoskins Road estate in Tunstall.

The big clean up events are staged once a month up and down the city and are having a positive effect on neighbourhoods. Bill James, Respect Programme Lead for the Safer City Partnership said: “All the organisations involved really pulled the stops out to make this one of the biggest and best Respect Days yet. Residents really joined in on the day and we are making a significant impact on the cleaning up of Stoke-on-Trent.”

How do your drinks add up?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drink Type</th>
<th>ABV (%)</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PINT CIDER</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RED WINE</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROSECCO</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAGER</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEER</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHISKEY</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Service users are guaranteed a friendly, supportive welcome.

Work given a national accolade

SPECIALIST work undertaken by the Safer City Partnership to help young people with drug and alcohol problems has been cited in a national good practice guide.

With help from the Centre for Public Innovation, the Safer City Partnership introduced an outcome-focused and payment by results service model for T3, the specialist young people’s drug and alcohol service, in 2009.

Service provision was changed to fit a commissioning model with a clear focus on positive outcomes for young people. The initiative has now been cited in a Compendium of Good Practice Guidance on integrated care for children and young people up to 18 years of age who misuse substances.

Lauren Eastlake, Programme Lead for Children and Young People, said: “We are delighted to be referenced in the Compendium of Good Practice and wish to thank T3 Young People’s Drug and Alcohol Service for their hard work in implementing the service model over the last three years.”

For advice and support on cutting down, contact 01782 283113
Working with you for a better Stoke-on-Trent

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny is about councillors working with local people, the community, council teams and other organisations to improve the quality of life for everyone in Stoke-on-Trent.

How do we do it?

There are four Overview and Scrutiny Committees:

- Adults and Neighbourhoods: Hospitals, Police, Social Care, Social Housing
- Business Services and Chief Executive’s: Staffing, IT, Buildings
- Children and Young People: Learning Services, Vulnerable Children, Education
- City Renewal: Regeneration, Planning, Transport, Property

Public Spend

- Schools £198m
- Health £502m
- Council £324m
- Police £37m
- Fire £8m

Cabinet make Decisions

Overview and Scrutiny ensures that they are held to account for delivering them and that any public concerns are represented.

Activity 2011/2012

Work Programme

Asking questions of those in power.

PERFORMANCE: Are services fit for purpose and on budget?

POLICIES: Do our plans and partners plans support a great working city?

CALL IN AND PETITIONS: Are new issues being addressed? Is the big decision the right one for the city?

COUNCILLOR REVIEWS: New ideas and service improvement to support Mandate for Change.

Cabinet Budget proposals

1. Proposals for savings or investments
2. Public and Overview and Scrutiny Response to Proposals
3. All councillors decide budget

Call In

Call in is the process where cabinet proposals can be questioned by a minimum of three councillors. Nine councillors sit on the O and S committee and vote to support or reject the decision in question.* There have been three call-ins this year.

*The cabinet is not bound by a vote to reject the proposal but must say why if they choose to uphold it.

Big 5 Reviews

- Better working with local business
- Better ways of collecting money
- Options for sports and leisure
- Options for Council Tax
- Better theatre entertainment

Health Spotlight

- Performance of new A&E facilities and waiting times
- Health of the city – Annual Report
- Soundboard on proposal to a change in service (eg mental health services)

Petitions

- 14 Granted
- 5 Granted in part
- 1 Response Issued
- 13 Declined

A large proportion (one third) of petitions related to local parking, highways, or passenger transport issues. The petition requesting a review of homecare services attracted the highest number of signatures (6,275), the lowest just 5.

Do you want to know more?

stoke.gov.uk/scrutiny

Read our internet pages – suggest topics, give views, know what is going on, ask a question, contact a councillor

Read a petition

BIG QUESTIONS

Q. Can a cabinet member carry out overview and scrutiny?
A. No – they are separate roles.

Q. Are there more answers to popular questions on our webpages (see link right)

Out of 44 councillors, 34 can take part in Overview and Scrutiny

- Cabinet
- Non-Executive

mandate for change

Attend open public meetings

Read free reports including our big 5 reviews

Schools/businesses: want to learn more? Take part in free training (who makes the big decisions?)

Ask questions of those in power.

PERFORMANCE:

- Are services fit for purpose and on budget?

POLICIES:

- Do our plans and partners plans support a great working city?

CALL IN AND PETITIONS:

- Are new issues being addressed? Is the big decision the right one for the city?

COUNCILLOR REVIEWS:

- New ideas and service improvement to support Mandate for Change.

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Read our internet pages – suggest topics, give views, know what is going on, ask a question, contact a councillor

Read a petition

Big Questions

Q. Can a cabinet member carry out overview and scrutiny?
A. No – they are separate roles.

Q. Are there more answers to popular questions on our webpages (see link right)
Information on city councillors was correct at the time of going to press.

FORTHCOMING PUBLIC MEETINGS AT THE CIVIC CENTRE, STOKE:
Cabinet meetings are scheduled at 5.30pm:
- 6 and 30 August 2012, 27 September 2012 and
Full City Council meetings are scheduled at 5.30pm:
- 5.30pm: 6 September 2012, 18 October 2012
- 6 and 30 August 2012, 27 September 2012 and
For more information on your councillors go to stoke.gov.uk/councillors
Councillors can also be contacted through the Councillor and Civic Support Team who can take messages and forward them on. They can be contacted on 01782 231922 or 231924.
Biggest ever Hoard show has unseen treasures

ORE than 200 eye-catching artefacts from the world-famous Staffordshire Hoard have gone on display at the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery... the biggest-ever exhibition of the exciting find.

The event, running until September 2013, is the first time ever in the UK that individual artefacts from the 3,500 piece collection have been seen fitted together – restored to their Dark Ages glory for the first time in over 13 centuries.

The exhibition is being funded by a £40,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and will feature new items such as a Seax handle – a knife or short sword – which has been carefully reconstructed after being discovered in several pieces. It will feature new interpretation boards and interactive displays to help bring the items to life and set them in context for visitors.

Principal Collections Officer Deb Klemperer said: “This is a truly fascinating exhibition which will give members of the public more of an insight into these items.”

“Following extensive research, work has been carried out to very carefully clean and fit together some of the pieces and these have been put on display for the first time in the UK.”

The world-famous treasure – which is the biggest and most valuable hoard of Anglo-Saxon gold ever found – wowed the crowds in Washington DC when it went on display at the National Geographic Museum earlier this year.

The pieces returned to the UK in March to be further tested ahead of the summer exhibition. Visitors to the museum will be in for another treat – they will be greeted by a nine-foot-tall Anglo-Saxon warrior statue which has been erected in the reception to “stand guard” over the Hoard.

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Splashing way to raise cash for hospital

PEOPLE are being urged to take the plunge and support a charity swimathon to raise money for the University Hospital of North Staffordshire (UHNS). The five-kilometre fundraiser will take place at Fenton Manor Sports Complex on 24 August at 4pm. It has been organised to support the hospital’s Accident and Emergency Department and arranged in conjunction with the Shapes Health and Leisure Club team.

Participants will need to swim 150 lengths of the pool and many are already in training for the big day.

Council Tenant Involvement Officer Linda Davies, who is taking part in the event, said: “We are looking for people to come forward and take part in the swim or help by pledging sponsorship or a donation.”

“It is for a fantastic cause that affects everyone in the city in some shape or form during their lives, so we hope this will inspire people to help out.”

The swim is one of four events that form a summer challenge of fundraising. Others being staged include a Three Peaks challenge, a sponsored sky dive and a Zorbing event, which involves people being strapped into giant spheres and being rolled downhill at speed.

To take part in the swim email amanda.burston@uhns.nhs.uk or to donate log onto virginmoneygiving.com/landseaair