

Stoke-on-Trent

ISSUE 20: MARCH 2011

Our City



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**EIGHT PAGE SPECIAL ON CITY COUNCIL
BOUNDARIES SHAKE UP**

£630 million of services will benefit whole city

By City Council Leader Councillor **MOHAMMED PERVEZ**



THE decision to protect children's centres from closure and maintain respite care services for the parents of disabled children showed our commitment to the most vulnerable people in our city in the face of the Government's savage spending cuts.

But we still needed to make almost £36 million of savings, and have had to make some very tough decisions to achieve this.

We have put together a budget which balances the books and makes sure we can deliver our priorities and continue to invest in the city's future.

The reality is that although we are cutting our spending by just under £36 million, we will still be spending over £630 million – providing a massive range of services, including schools.

Regeneration continues to gather pace, with the long-awaited start of work on the city centre's new bus station, progress on landmark buildings like health centres at Cobridge and Meir and the announcement of the new Centre of Refurbishment Excellence (CoRE), being built in the former Enson Works in Longton.

This new centre will provide training facilities to produce a new breed of tradespeople with skills in the most environmentally-friendly construction techniques.

With our partners in the police, fire service and NHS, we are working hard to pool resources to make the city healthier, safer and a better place to enjoy leisure and culture.

As a council, we are committed to driving forward all aspects of life in Stoke-on-Trent, providing facilities which are as good as any in the country.

Last year we unveiled a series of pledges which we said we would deliver before the end of March 2011.

This issue of *Our City* includes many stories highlighting progress – showing that although these are tough times for local Government, this city continues to move forward with exciting new initiatives which will benefit the people who live and work here.

Rest assured we will do all we can to ensure all our residents receive value for money services from the council.

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budget 2011-12

Government spending cuts make Stoke-on-Trent the **8th worst off** unitary authority in the country. Yet councillors have agreed a budget which protects services for the most vulnerable people in the city and continues vital regeneration. Here *Our City* reports on **Stoke-on-Trent's Budget 2011/12**.



INVESTING IN THE FUTURE...

Shane Lawes, 11, at the back with Bethany Day, 5, left and Danielle Bourne, aged 7, at the new Gladstone Primary School, Longton, which opened in September 2009 after being completely rebuilt.

Spending pledges continue vital regeneration projects

LONG-AWAITED multi-million pound building schemes which will change the face of Stoke-on-Trent have been given the green light in the city council's gross budget of £630 million, including schools, for the year from 1 April 2011.

Tax freeze helps hard-hit residents

THE council voted to freeze the level of council tax paid by the public in 2011/12.

The Police and Fire Authorities have done the same, which means all council tax bills in the city will be the same this year as they were last year. Almost 62 per cent of the population who live in Band A properties in the area will pay just £762.37 for the city council element of their council tax. Council Leader Councillor Mohammed Pervez said: "The cost of living is rising and we understand many people are feeling the effect of these financial pressures. We felt it was important to freeze the council tax to help families to make ends meet."

The transformation of the city centre by constructing a 21st Century bus station, refurbishment and building of new schools and the creation of a unique training centre at Longton are just a few of the major schemes being delivered by the city council over the next three years.

The Mitchell Memorial Theatre will host its first performances after a £4.3 million refurbishment and a further £3.2 million is being invested in the former Chatterley Whitfield site to create an attractive environment with thriving business and enterprise units.

The overall capital investment programme contained in the budget will see a total investment of around £450 million between now and 2013, on top of the important day-to-day services provided by the council.

It includes spending across the whole of Stoke-on-Trent, from the city centre and town centres through housing, waste management and neighbourhood projects to child development and adult social care.

Council Leader Councillor Mohammed Pervez said: "While these are difficult times for the council financially and we have had to make some tough decisions, we have worked hard to make sure there is progress across the board in the city.

"We have made a series of pledges to invest in our city's future. We have already

started to deliver on those promises and will continue throughout the coming years.

"Now the budget has been approved, we will be rigorously monitoring spending to make sure plans for saving and investment are implemented."

In spite of having to make much publicised cuts of £35.6 million as a result of the Government's spending reductions, the council will still spend around £630 million over the next 12 months to provide its massive range of services.

Spending in the budget reflects the council's strategic priorities to continue the regeneration of the city while protecting its most vulnerable residents.

Councillor Pervez said: "This has been one of the most difficult budgets the council has ever had to agree.

"We are elected by the public to deliver the services they need and have listened to them as we set out our plans for the next year.

"We have set a budget which balances the books but which enables us to protect the most vulnerable members of our communities while driving forward the regeneration of Stoke-on-Trent."

More information on the council's spending and investment promises is posted on the council's website. Visit stoke.gov.uk to find out more.

Live webcast of full council meetings

MEETINGS of the full council can now be viewed online. To see and hear the debates and decisions which affect life in Stoke-on-Trent, visit stoke.gov.uk and click on the council meeting webcast button. A list of dates and times of council meetings and committee meetings can be found on our website at stoke.gov.uk/meetingdates

Give us your feedback on this issue of **Our City** by emailing ourcity@stoke.gov.uk or write to: FREEPOST *Our City*.



budget 2011-12

Benefits Adviser Anjii Brown helps a member of the public at the Stoke Local Centre.

Efficiency measures save cash and boost services

EFFICIENT ways of working in the council's Benefits Service have saved hundreds of thousands of pounds while dramatically reducing the time it takes to process claims.

It is a process being repeated across the whole council to save money without having to cut front-line services.

The benefits team helps Stoke-on-Trent's 32,000 claimants receive their entitlement in Housing and Council Tax benefits worth over £100 million per year. But before the reorganisation, it was taking up to three months to process a new claim... a delay which could have meant unnecessary hardship for some city families.

Under the old system, claimants met customer service advisors, who took down all their details before passing on the information to colleagues who processed the claim, but never had any contact with the public.

This was contributing to the delays, because the assessors would frequently need additional information, so letters would have been written to ask the claimant for extra details. Now, the benefits staff are going out to council offices in the community, seeing customers face-to-face, and trying to deal with their claim there and then.

As a result, the average time it takes to process a new claim is less than ten days, a figure which is improving week-on-week as more staff are trained and more of them go out into council offices across the city.

Revenue and Benefits Service Manager Jayne Owens said: "Seeing people face-to-face is so much better as we can advise claimants on exactly what they need to make their claim.

“”
Seeing people face-to-face is so much better as we can advise claimants on exactly what they need to make their claim.

Jayne Owens
Revenue and Benefits Service Manager

"And because we are seeing people out in the community closer to where they live, if they are missing some information they can pop home quickly to get it.

"Our service is all about making sure people in Stoke-on-Trent receive the benefits they are entitled to.

"We are now doing that quicker and more efficiently, so our staff feel good and the public feel happy."

Making services work better is just one of the ways the council has been able to save money while protecting front line services.

Other efficiencies include a reduction in the number of senior managers in the local authority, looking at the way the council awards contracts to achieve better value for money, making better use of the buildings and land the council owns around the city and setting realistic charges for services like leisure facilities and parking.

● **Benefits advisors are being based at more and more council offices throughout the city. To find out where they are near your home, please call 01782 232982.**

Down Your Way

News from Western Neighbourhood

- ▶ **MIDDLEPORT:** Drink related antisocial behaviour is being tackled in a new multi-agency crackdown being led by the newly formed Burslem South Local Matters Team. Working closely with the community, evidence is being gathered for Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, Antisocial Behaviour Orders, Parenting Contracts and a Section 30 Dispersal Order. Alcohol is being confiscated and warning letters sent to parents of young people.
- ▶ **NORTHWOOD PARK:** Artist led charity Beaver Arts staged two "100 Stories" walks from the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery to the park as part of the Stoke Your Fires animation and film festival. Lighting, projectors and MP3 players were used during the walks to bring stories to life for those joining in as part of the celebration of the history and characters of the city.
- ▶ **SHELTON:** Residents-only parking has been introduced and environmental work carried out as part of a package of improvements for Squires View and Seven Arches Way. Grey railings have been replaced by black bow-topped fencing, shrubbery has been removed while old signs and coping stones have also been replaced. New trip rails and cycle racks have been installed.

- ▶ **HANLEY:** Grant aid of more than £10,000 is being applied for by Hanley One Residents' Association to try and protect Citizens Advice Bureau services from funding cuts. The association is trying to access cash from the Robbie Williams Give It Sum Fund. The idea is to provide advice sessions in the area at least once a week. Meetings involving all concerned are now being held to formulate a plan.

- ▶ **NORTHWOOD AND BIRCHES HEAD:** Improvements costing £40,000 have been unveiled at Holy Trinity Church Hall. Ward council budgets contributed £5,000 to a heating upgrade while money from the Coalfields Regeneration Trust paid for a new kitchen, toilets and flooring.

Thousands have their say on priorities

THE city's biggest ever budget consultation exercise saw thousands of members of the public giving their views on where cuts should be made and which services should be protected.

The *Let's Talk* process gave people the opportunity to comment on proposals to meet the Government's tough budget targets and meet face-to-face with the councillors who would make those difficult decisions. More than 1,000 responses were

received, members of the public lobbied council meetings and councillors heard passionate contributions from people who wanted to campaign to save the services which are most important to them.

Cabinet Member for Resources, Performance and Governance, Councillor Kieran Clarke, said: "We listened to all the feedback that had been gained during the consultation period and protected a



number of services which had been in the public arena for consultation.

"The financial pressure from the Government has meant difficult decisions have had to be made to enable the delivery of a legal and balanced budget.

"The process has not been easy due to the speed and scale of the cuts required."

Pirate ship drops anchor to make learning fun



SHIVER me timbers! A pirate ship has dropped anchor at Blurton Children's Centre to make learning magical and fun for the area's little buccaneers.

The wooden galleon has been custom-designed to help the development of pre-school children aged three and four and comes with a spiral slide, decking, rope ladder and sand pit.

It was paid for with funding from a Quality and Access Capital Grant after the city was chosen as part of a local Government initiative designed to help boys, in particular, learn through active play.

The ship was launched at a specially organised community event attended by about 250 mums, dads

and their tiny trainee pirates.

The centre's Play and Learning Co-ordinator Emma Keeling said: "This isn't your average piece of play furniture. We specifically wanted it designed to encourage risk but still keep children safe."

"The ship is now a huge asset for the centre and the local community. We've already organised sessions for schools in the area and are hiring it out for parties so it's become a revenue stream for us and helps us raise money towards our budgets."

Schools are already using the ship including Foundation 1 children from Sutherland Primary, where Jackie Reynolds has a supervisory role as an Early Years Practitioner.

She said: "When I first saw the pirate ship I just thought 'wow'. We love it. It's another stimulus as we broaden the horizons of children outside the school."



Pictured left dressed as a pirate is Play and Learning Practitioner Lisa Owens. Far left, with Charlie the parrot, are Tegan Waltho, aged six, and her three-year-old brother Owen Jones.



Floods Help us stop them

If you have a problem with flooding or a build-up of surface water please look at the questions below and send your answers to **FREEPOST Our City** or go online to respond at stoke.gov.uk/swmpflooding

- ▶ How does the build up of surface water or flooding affect you?
- ▶ Where does the surface water build-up or flooding take place? If possible, please provide the road name or the name of a nearby landmark.
- ▶ When does the problem occur? Does it happen throughout the year or is it seasonal?

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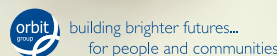
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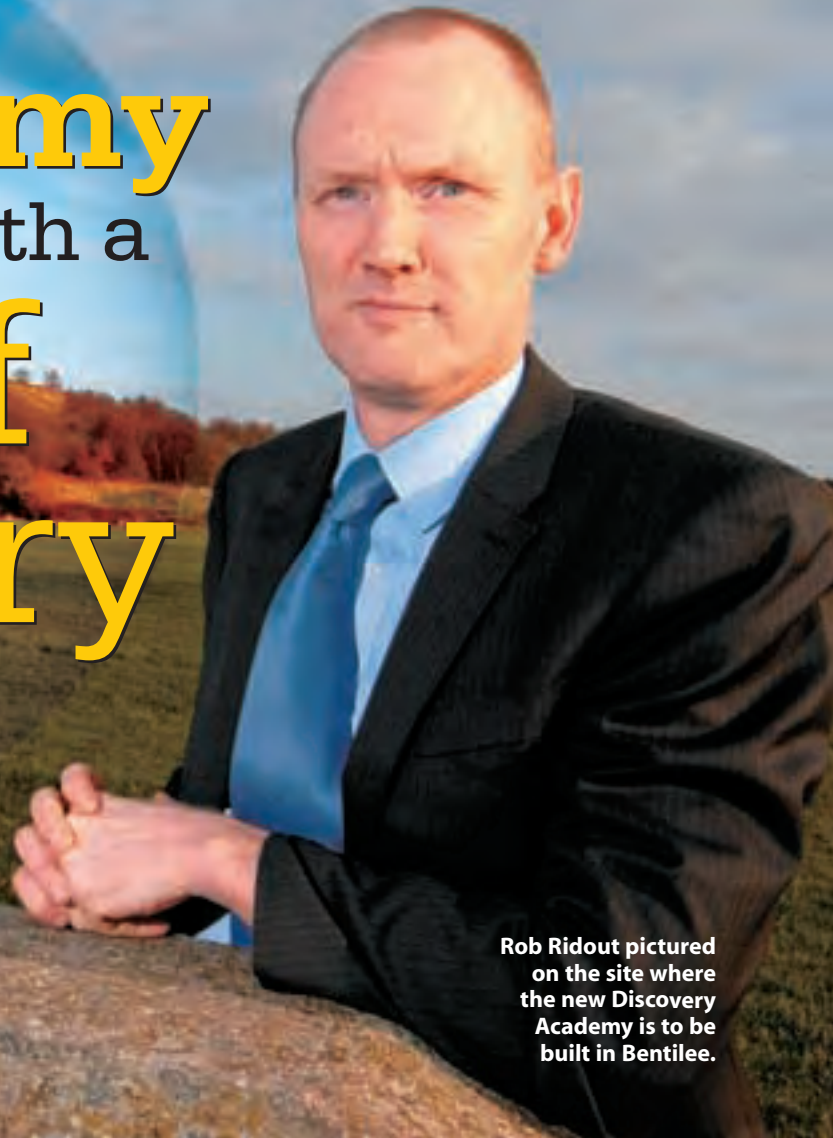


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New academy

provides pupils with a

world of discovery



Rob Ridout pictured on the site where the new Discovery Academy is to be built in Bentilee.

It's vital people exercise their right to vote



By City Council Chief Executive **John van de Laarschot**

THIS year is already proving to be a year of change, and the council will be a very different council following the elections in May.

Not only have we been faced with arguably the most challenging budget setting process this local authority has ever been through, we now face a period of significant political changes that will alter the way the city is governed.

The redrawing of the city's ward boundaries, which come into effect after the local elections on Thursday 5 May, mean that the majority of residents will now have one city councillor.

As Chief Executive of your council, I can't stress enough just how important it is that, regardless of your political viewpoint, you exercise your right to vote.

Local democracy can only flourish if you take the time to invest in politics and understand what it means both to be part of a city, and be represented by someone who cares about your community.

Who you choose to vote for at the polls in May will have a direct bearing on the future direction of Stoke-on-Trent, and how the city will be governed.

I would urge you all to be a part of that process and to find the time to examine what each candidate stands for, and then make your decision.

● To find out more about ward changes see pages 13-20.

Principal Designate has ambitious vision for the future

BUILDING work is yet to start on the city's new Discovery Academy – but Rob Ridout is already enjoying his job as Principal Designate of the £24 million seat of learning that brings together Mitchell Business and Enterprise College, in Bucknall, and Edensor Technology College, in Longton.

Rob has an excellent record as a headteacher and school leader and comes with a reputation for getting results. He is impressed by the talent and commitment of the teams who are already working hard to develop an "exciting curriculum" that will promote enjoyment and high quality learning for students through the academy's specialisms of technology, enterprise and innovation.

The new purpose-designed building with a capacity for 1,350 students is scheduled to open its

doors in September 2013 on land at the Willfield Centre in Lauder Place North, Bentilee.

In the meantime, the 11-16 Discovery Academy starts its first term in September this year, with students and staff working from their existing schools until they come together under one roof.

Rob already has a track record for improving the performance of under-achieving schools in areas as far apart as Herefordshire, Dorset and Cheshire – but taking on the leadership of one of the five brand new academies being built in Stoke-on-Trent, as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme, is a new and exciting challenge for him.

Enthusiasm

"The Discovery Academy is a once in a lifetime opportunity and is a fantastic addition to its local community," said Rob. "The academy brings together highly motivated and enthusiastic staff and students from two good schools. We will take the outstanding features from both to give our young people the best possible learning opportunities and prepare them for the world beyond the classroom.

"Teams have already started to prepare for next year and I am thrilled by the commitment, drive and enthusiasm shown by all. It will be great!"

Rob added: "Our aim is to provide young people with the qualifications and key skills, such as communication, numeracy and literacy, that they will need in the workplace. We will enable them to

take what they learn in the classroom and apply this in the outside world of work."

Maths, English and the sciences will be at the heart of the broad-based curriculum designed to meet the needs of all learners – and there will be lots more.

Courses will be offered across a wide range of subjects, including design, construction and the built environment, administration, finance and retail – all providing new and exciting ways of learning which combine classroom studies with real world activities.

Equipped with state of the art Information Technology and cutting edge facilities that will even allow students to create their own business ventures, Discovery aims to support the high aspirations of its young people and equip them with the skills and qualifications

they will need to be successful in tomorrow's world.

Stoke on Trent College is the academy's lead sponsor, so it is not surprising that academy students will have access to apprenticeship courses and other types of training at the college.

Discovery will also establish Further Education links with the city's Sixth Form College and the area's universities, as well as with local employers who will act as role models, offer career advice and provide work placements for students.

Sarah Robinson, Principal and Chief Executive of Stoke on Trent College, said: "Rob's professional skills, drive and vision will inspire the project team as well as the staff and students to secure the best possible education for learners in Stoke-on-Trent."



Principal Designate Rob Ridout with pupils from the two schools which will merge to form the new Discovery Academy.

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China Tales

By Placer



Doyens of local theatre – Mary Blakeman and Gordon Alcock.

Theatre's great traditions will be part of its exciting new era

WHEN the footlights go up for the first time at the gloriously refurbished Mitchell Memorial Theatre in early June, the atmosphere in the auditorium is sure to be charged with dramatic emotion.

As this exciting new era is about to begin, it is heartening to hear of appropriate reverence to the theatre's history and those who were a prominent part of its heritage.

At the back of the old auditorium were plaques commemorating the contribution made by two of the theatre's stalwarts and doyens of North Staffordshire amateur dramatics – Mary Blakeman and Gordon Alcock.

The plaque honouring Mary, who died a decade ago aged 88, was above her favourite seat, number P6, and was unveiled in 1997 by Dr Gordon Mitchell, son of aircraft designer Reginald Mitchell after whom the theatre was named.

Mary had been involved with the theatre since it opened in 1957 – and even before that she had been a supporter of the memorial building appeal fund since 1943. Countless times did she tread the boards at "the Mitch" and direct productions.

Gordon's plaque was erected soon after his passing away in 2006 at the age of 72. It was placed at the other end of the back row of

seats from Mary – creating an apt symmetry between the two tributes.

A talented actor and producer, he graced the Mitchell Memorial Theatre for decades with the Stoke-on-Trent-based theatre group, Studio One. His career also included professional appearances in London's West End and TV shows such as Bread, Coronation Street and The Bill.

Prior to work starting on the £4.3 million facelift, the plaques, along with other memorabilia adorning the walls, were taken down and safely packed away.

What will eventually be returned is a matter for the theatre trustees – and they have made an early decision that Mary and Gordon's plaque will be restored to a position of prominence.

"The plaques are part of the theatre's history and Mary and Gordon should be remembered as part of that history," said Councillor Hazel Lyth, a theatre trustee and Cabinet Member whose portfolio includes culture. "There are many who would like the plaque to go back in exactly the same place but that has yet to be decided."

The spirit of all those who helped to shape the theatre's first 50 years will undoubtedly be taken forward into the next half century – Mary and Gordon would have loved that.

Spirits meet special civic visitor

IN 25 years as a councillor, Lord Mayor, Councillor Denver Tolley, has seen some lively performances in the Council Chamber... now he has witnessed some deathly goings on as well.

He was invited by BBC Radio Stoke presenter Denholm Siegertsz to spend a night ghost-hunting in Hanley Town Hall, and ended up with a spooky night to remember. A medium picked up some spirit signs in the old Council

Chamber and the former Crown Court Chamber. But it was deep in the old law court cells that the spine-tingling really started.

"A spirit told us he was a mass murderer sentenced to hang in that very court in 1928," said the Lord Mayor.

Denver has vowed to research the identity of the mystery murderer, and to investigate more hauntings. A ghostbuster is born!



SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME: an artist's impression of how Burslem Park will look after the improvement work.

Volunteers join £2m park restoration

LOCAL people are joining the £2 million drive to restore Burslem's Victorian park to its former glory.

Teams of volunteers are working alongside the city council, heritage experts and Friends of Burslem Park to improve facilities and open up sweeping views across historic Burslem.

Over the last few years, £900,000 has been spent in the park. Now, the next phase of improvements is set to be completed by December 2012.

The major renewal programme includes:

- Restoring the lakeside rockery.
- Planting 35,000 plants, 6,000 shrubs and 72 semi-mature trees, including oak.
- Clearing around 100 existing trees which are dead, diseased or are damaging buildings.
- Replacing the 1950s tennis changing rooms with a new seating area and viewpoint. This will include displays which explain the significance of buildings on Burslem's historic skyline.
- Restoring entrances and putting in a new set of gates in Dartmouth Street.
- A cafe in the pavilion with a new outdoor terrace, improved toilets and baby changing facilities.
- The welcome return of drinking fountains in the rose garden and near the Moorland Road entrance.

Activities for children, community groups and families are being organised to allow as many people as possible to get involved in the park restoration.

A series of weekend and after-school initiatives starts in May and a Young Park Partnership is encouraging young people to apply for funds and run their own projects.

Volunteer Matt Bateman, 28, said: "The thing I'm enjoying most is looking after the gardens

Volunteer Matt Bateman pictured on the bandstand at Burslem Park.



and helping to bring them back to their best. It's great to get some fresh air, some experience and to meet new people."

Mike Watson, of the Burslem Park Partnership, said: "Burslem was the first park in the city to win lottery funding and we have shown what can be achieved by everyone working together."

"The park will be restored to how it was when it opened in 1894 and we hope it will still be in its original glory in 100 years' time."

Improvements are paid for by grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund Parks for People programme. To volunteer or find out more contact Mike Watson on 07890 966290 or Tom Pine 07787 005946.

Health and history walks

WEEKLY events taking place in Burslem Park include health walks every Tuesday at 9.15am and Friday at 1pm.

A History and Restoration Walk takes place every Monday, starting at 1pm. Walkers should meet at the park pavilion.

Further information is available online at stoke.gov.uk/burslempark and facebook.com/burslem.park or on new notice boards which are being put up in the park.

Family photos tell a story of special caring couple

THE framed “family” photos that seem to adorn every wall of Chris and Angela Doyle’s neat semi-detached house tell you that they are a special couple.

The pictures are a reminder of just some of the 50 or so children they have provided with a loving home since becoming registered foster carers ten years ago.

“To be honest, we’ve lost count of exactly how many children we’ve cared for over the years, but we remember every one,” said Chris, a 49-year-old support worker.

Over the years he and his 44-year-old wife have opened up their home and their hearts to a succession of boys and girls aged from newborn to 14 who, for one reason or another, could not be cared for by their own parents.

The caring couple have a daughter of their own – Gemma, now aged 20 – but it was the tragic death of their other daughter who had special needs that inspired them to help families in a similar position by providing respite for children with disabilities.

That led Chris and Angela to sign up as foster carers with Stoke-on-Trent City Council, becoming “mum and dad” to youngsters, many of them from broken homes or abusive backgrounds.

Fun day trips

At first they fostered children aged up to two, but now take in older ones and are currently fostering a 12-month-old baby girl, a brother and sister aged three and five, and a 13-year-old boy who has been with Chris and Angela for the past seven years.

“Sometimes we foster a child overnight or very short term, but others stay with us for much longer,” said Angela. “When they leave us they either go home or are placed for adoption. It can be quite a wrench when they leave because we get attached to them.”

She added: “When children come to us some are withdrawn, have attitude or behavioural problems or other issues. But we treat them like our own and they soon fit in.”

As well as treating their fostered children to fun day trips, Chris and Angela enjoy taking them away on holiday to the seaside.

The couple have their own support worker from the council’s Fostering Service and further back-up is provided by the Foster Carers’ Association.

“There is a growing need for foster carers,” said Angela whose own experience of spending much of her tender years in children’s care homes also



DEDICATED FOSTER PARENTS: Chris and Angela Doyle pictured at their house which has been home to more than 50 children who have been in their care.

motivated her to foster. “As soon as one of our children leave we are asked to take another. One day two children left in the morning and two others arrived that afternoon!

Positive difference

“But we don’t mind. We just love the challenge of meeting the different needs of those we foster and providing them with a stable loving environment that makes a positive difference to their lives.

“Being a foster carer is fulfilling and rewarding and we know those kids will never forget us. In fact some of them stay in touch and tell us how they are getting on.”

Paul Stokes, a Principal Manager with the city council’s

Fostering Service, said: “In Stoke-on-Trent our aim is that children in care are placed with foster parents in the community, rather than another part of the country, so that the children and their carers have access to local services.

“Chris and Angela are typical of the dedicated foster carers who do a wonderful job in providing vulnerable young people with a secure and caring environment.”

Paul added: “There is always a need for more foster carers in Stoke-on-Trent. They come from all backgrounds, ages and ethnic groups.”

For more details about becoming a foster carer phone 01782 234555.

Down Your Way

News from South Western Neighbourhood

- ▶ **FENTON:** Children from five primary and special schools have been taking part in a civic pride project funded by ward budgets. They learned how the city helped re-build the Czechoslovakian village of Lidice after it was razed to the ground during the Second World War. Local gallery Artbay staged presentations and is collating entries to Lidice’s annual art competition.
- ▶ **BLURTON:** CCTV cameras have been installed in the Pedley Court and Robinson Court flats on Ripon Road to improve safety and cut antisocial behaviour. It completes a system already operating in four blocks in the same road and at Witchford Crescent, Newstead. It has already led to convictions.
- ▶ **STOKE AND TRENT VALE:** Debt advice services are being launched by the Saltbox Christian Centre in partnership with the city council. Called Money Matters, monthly drop in sessions will cover a variety of financial issues. Advice training for community activists is being offered so they too can raise awareness.
- ▶ **HANFORD:** Pupils at Priory Primary School are working with the residents’ association to develop their allotments project. Vegetable beds are being renewed and a large composter installed. Volunteers who want to help out on the scheme during the summer should contact Charlotte Eccles on 01782 238463.
- ▶ **HANFORD:** Children are taking part in a project designed to stop illegal parking outside Priory and Ash Green primary schools. The youngsters are designing faces and messages to go on traffic cones, which will go on zig-zag lines. Ward budgets are paying for the scheme.
- ▶ **BASFORD** Community events can now be advertised in the area thanks to a new £4,000 notice board. The residents association accessed ward budget funding for the board, which is sited near the shops in Sackville Street.

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stoke.gov.uk/ payments

WHO says politics is boring? Certainly not the young people in Stoke-on-Trent's primary and secondary schools who are keen to learn about how their city is run.

Students are taught citizenship as part of the national curriculum for 11 to 16-year-olds, but many of them also enjoy getting out of the classroom to meet the decision makers and find out for themselves how the local democratic process works.

It is through activities like this that the adults of tomorrow are being taught about their responsibilities as citizens of their city and their country.

The boys and girls are guided through the corridors of power and the democratic processes that make local Government work by Michaleen Hilton and the Member Support Team.

The Lord Mayor regularly welcomes parties of pupils to the Civic Centre in Stoke to show them the Council Chamber where they are shown first hand how decisions that affect the lives of everyone in the city are made.

Some schools have even requested the opportunity for young people to cast their votes in a debate in the Council Chamber in Stoke for a realistic insight into the work of councillors and officers.

In addition, councillors visit schools located within their wards to be interviewed by students about their concerns, which might

Pupils enjoy lessons in local democracy

be as diverse as the provision of recycling facilities in their school and making sure they have safe routes for their journey between home and school.

Michaleen said: "Engaging young people with the work of local Government teaches them first hand how democracy works and how important it will be for them to use their votes once they are old enough to go to the polls.

Responsibilities

"There is a growing interest about how the council operates and how local Government functions.

"Young people are able to learn first hand what it is like to be a councillor, about their roles and responsibilities.

"Also, the 'Sending Your Councillor Back To School' initiative has worked really well in schools and this has sparked interest in lots of young people visiting the Civic Centre to learn more.

"This is a good thing for the future democracy in Stoke-on-Trent."

The council holds events to promote local democracy throughout the year and in



FINDING OUT ABOUT LOCAL DEMOCRACY: pupils Thomas McMullan and Alisha Key of Stoke Minster Primary School chat with Lord Mayor Councillor Denver Tolley – and get to see the civic limousine.

September will offer one lucky boy and girl the opportunity to be "Lord Mayor for a day" in a special competition.

People can find more information by visiting

stoke.gov.uk/localdemocracy or contacting Michaleen Hilton, Member Support Manager, by telephoning 01782 232638 or emailing michaleen.hilton@stoke.gov.uk

Partnership work drives down crime

MORE than 2,100 fewer crimes have been committed in Stoke-on-Trent according to latest figures.

The nine-month total for April to December 2010 was 17,755 compared to 19,856 for the same period in 2009.

Violent crime with injury, business crimes including shoplifting and reports of antisocial behaviour all came down while satisfaction rates with police performance went up.

The city's Local Police Commander, Superintendent Laurie Whitby-Smith, said: "We will continue to tackle local issues and crime. We've made a determined effort with our partners to listen to community concerns about antisocial behaviour problems and then solve them."

Satisfaction rates for antisocial behaviour victims have risen from 83.4 per cent in 2009 to 88.2 per cent in 2010 and 87.6 per cent of victims of crime say they are satisfied with the response of the police.

Fostering:

A career that changes lives of Stoke-on-Trent children



01782 234555
stoke.gov.uk/fostering



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preventing + protecting + responding

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MORE FREE Home Fire Risk Check
Call 0800 0241 999



Children discover city's magical wildlife

THOUSANDS of children in Stoke-on-Trent have discovered magical wildlife in the city, thanks to an imaginative Wildplay project launched three years ago.

A range of fun activities in wildlife areas, parks and other green spaces within the city's boundaries have introduced more than 4,000 young people aged between five and 14 to the wonders of the great outdoors. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust worked in partnership with the city



council to make a successful bid for a Big Lottery Fund grant which has made it possible for the Trust to deliver the Wildplay scheme for community groups, holiday and play groups, children's centres and families around the city.

They have spent school holidays, weekends and time after school at around 30 different venues including Westport Lake, Hartshill Park Local Nature Reserve and parks at Burslem and Hanley.

Through games, natural art and sensory activities, the youngsters have enjoyed exploring the wonders of wildlife and an array of habitats including brooks, wet

meadows and woodlands – often just a short distance from where they live.

Funding has now expired, but Wildplay has proved so popular that the city council and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust are looking at possibilities of alternative funding so that the project can continue.

Jenna Holford, the Wildlife Trust's Wildplay Officer for Stoke-on-Trent, said: "Stoke-on-Trent is one of the country's greenest cities and Wildplay has made young people aware of the wildlife on their doorsteps. One parent whose children took part in a Wildplay visit to woodlands only five minutes from where they live told me she hadn't realised they were there until attending the session!"

New £14m centre to boost community's health

A LONG-AWAITED £14 million health centre, which is now nearing completion after a 10 year campaign to get the project off the ground, has united a community in support.

The state-of-the-art facility, which is set to open on Elder Road, Cobridge, in late summer, brings together two local GP practices and a range of services, as well as an integrated sexual health unit.

NHS Stoke on Trent has consulted with residents and this has cemented relationships among local residents – young and old – as the centre has become a focal point for improving the area and people's health and wellbeing.

Bernard Wragg, who spent more than a decade campaigning for the new facility to be built, said: "The project has brought thousands of people together in the community, united behind one objective – that is to see the health centre come to fruition.

Sense of ownership

"NHS Stoke on Trent and the contractors have involved us at every stage of the development and it really feels like a community project in every sense of the word."

He added: "We have also been keen to engage younger members of the community. So with the help of the construction company Wates, we arranged poster competitions for the local schools.

"The winners get to see their artwork on display on billboards at the centre.

"It helps to create a sense of ownership and a sense of pride in the project that they will take forward into their adult life."

The centre will cater for around 12,000 GP patients, bringing together two existing local GP practices – Dr Uday Pathak's Surgery on Waterloo Road and the Aspley House Surgery. The three-storey building



OVERSEEING PROGRESS: city council Leader, Councillor Mohammed Pervez, right, and Patients Group Chairman Bernard Wragg, second right, are given an inspection tour of the Cobridge Health Centre construction site by Steve Warden, Project Manager for builders Wates, left, and Campbell Boyle, Chairman of Prima.

will house an on-site pharmacy, a chest clinic, an out-patients' clinic and a dedicated x-ray unit.

Bernard, who is Chairman of Dr Pathak's Patients Group, said: "Services like the x-ray unit will save patients having to travel to the University Hospital of North Staffordshire. In fact all the facilities will be second to none."

Bernard joined city council Leader Councillor Mohammed

Pervez and construction company representatives for a tour of the site to see how work was progressing. Councillor Pervez said: "This is a superb achievement and a fantastic facility that will serve the community for many years to come and have a marked impact on improving people's health and wellbeing."

NHS Stoke on Trent Chief

Executive Graham Urwin said: "It has taken a great deal of hard work from a number of different stakeholders to bring together such a wide range of services on one site.

"Not only will the residents in this locality benefit from a new state of the art health centre, they will also be able to access many more specialist services previously located at other sites."

Down Your Way

News from Eastern Neighbourhood

► **BENTILEE AND TOWNSEND:** Healthy eating sessions designed to encourage parents to prepare fresh food for their children are being staged at the Treehouse Children's Centre. The 12 week initiative involving NHS Stoke on Trent Community Health Services has been funded with £240 from ward budgets. The scheme, which is being run by health visitors, also teaches parents how to wean their children with nutritious food.

► **SNEYD GREEN:** Work has been completed to turn what was once a short cut and safe route to Sneyd Green Primary School into a surfaced path. The route between Repington Road and Ralph Drive used to turn muddy and slippery in the winter. Costing £21,500 and paid for by ward budgets, it now has an all-weather surface and is compatible with the Disability Discrimination Act.

► **SMALLTHORNE:** Six new lighting columns have been installed on the foot and cycle path between Leek New Road and Chetwynd Street. The previously unlit path, widely used by dog walkers and children attending Holden Lane High School, is now much safer. Ward budgets paid £17,000 for the scheme, which includes maintenance and electricity costs up to 2028.

► **ABBEY GREEN:** Long-awaited work costing more than £100,000 is being carried out at the frontage to the Abbots Road shops. Originally identified in the master plan for the area, the re-vamp includes block paving and trees. The work, which is expected to take between 12 and 15 weeks has been funded through the Neighbourhood Renewal team and ward budgets.

► **BERRYHILL AND HANLEY EAST:** Ten sets of double gates have been installed across four alleyways to improve security behind properties in the City Waterside area. Funding for the £30,000 scheme has come from ward budgets, Renew and the Safer City Partnership.

Boxing clever for charity

NEARLY £35,000 was raised at a police boxing event staged in Stoke-on-Trent for the charity set up by the officer blinded by Northumberland gunman Raoul Moat.

All 400 tickets were snapped up as 24 competitors took part to raise cash for PC David Rathband's Blue Lamp Foundation.

David's twin brother Darren, who once served as a police dog handler with Staffordshire Police, said: "You should all hold your heads very high. Top effort."

Views sought on proposals

PEOPLE are being asked for their views to help develop plans for the future of Tontine Street, Tontine Square and Fountain Square in the city centre.

Displays showing early stage proposals are at Tontine Square on 22 and 23 March, at the Victoria Hall and Indoor Market from 16 March to 31 March or online at stoke.gov.uk/citycentreconsultation

Census is the key to extra funding

STOKE-ON-TRENT could miss out on tens of millions of pounds worth of Government funding if residents fail to fill in their Census forms this month.

The national survey, which takes place every ten years, will take a snapshot of life in the city on Sunday 27 March.

It gives decision makers the statistical information they need to plan a whole range of services – from the number of hospital beds and school places to new homes, bus links, leisure facilities, the location of businesses and much more besides.

But personal information recorded in the Census remains confidential for 100 years, so it cannot be used by anyone, even the Government.

As well as recording general details about households, the Census forms also ask about everyone staying in a property on that night.

Stoke-on-Trent receives £2,580 per year in Central Government funding for every



Assistant Census Liaison Manager Will Griffin with some of the Census forms.

resident listed on the Census – money that helps run the NHS, fire and rescue service, policing and the local authority.

At the last Census in 2001 it was estimated that 9,625 people living in the city did not fill in their questionnaires, meaning the city missed out to the tune of over £240 million over the last decade.

Questionnaire forms have been posted out to every household in the city and should be kept somewhere safe until they are completed.

The Census can also be filled in online at www.census.gov.uk by logging in with a

unique identity code printed on the form. It should take around ten minutes to fill in.

In the lead-up to Census Day people will also be able to visit city libraries where staff will be on hand to offer help and advice on completing the questionnaire.

Will Griffin, the city council's Assistant Census Liaison Manager, said: "Filling in the 2011 Census questionnaire may not be the most interesting way to spend 30 minutes of your Sunday afternoon, but it is certainly a way to make a real difference and help to shape the future."

Stoke Know How

Children and Young People's Website



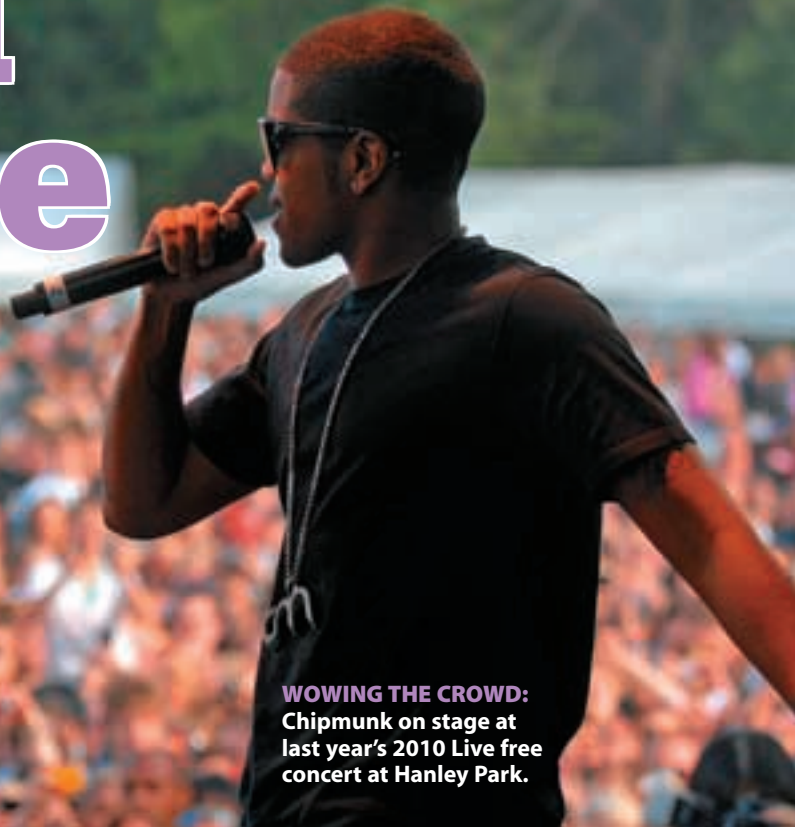
Search for local services and activities

Visit: stoke.gov.uk/stokeknowhow and click on the children's banner to access the site



family
Information Service

Get set for the grand finale



WOWING THE CROWD: Chipmunk on stage at last year's 2010 Live free concert at Hanley Park.

Rapper is headline act as Centenary celebrations climax

CHART-TOPPING rapper Chipmunk is to return to Stoke-on-Trent as the headline act in the delayed 2010 Centenary finale celebrations.

The show-stealing star of the free 2010 Live pop concert held in the park in June last year, will be joined by rising R&B singer songwriter Katy B and up and coming band Diagram of the Heart.

World-famous firm Walk The Plank will also stage a huge pyrotechnic display at the finale, which brings to an end the city's programme of events commemorating 100 years since the federation of the Six Towns

It was postponed back in December when severe snow hit the country and is now taking place on Saturday March 26 at Hanley Park

instead. Several thousand people are expected for the two-and-a-half hour event, which starts at 6pm.

Real family event

Lord Mayor Denver Tolley said: "The acts are all tremendous and the pyrotechnic display will be the best this city has ever seen. It promises to be a real family event and a great way to end the centenary celebrations. And it is free for everyone to enjoy!"

Walk the Plank is a Manchester-based organisation which produced displays for many top events.

Walk the Plank's Andy Stratford said: "Stoke-on-Trent deserves a magnificent show to mark the end of the centenary year and we hope our use of fire sculptures, fireworks and pyro effects with a specially-commissioned

soundtrack will create wonderful memories for the participants and audience."

Throughout the past 12 months events have taken place to celebrate the 100-year anniversary including the 2010 Live concert, the Tour Series, Tour of Britain, the Staffordshire Hoard exhibition, a visit by the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall and the arrival of the Archbishop of York for a faith event at the Kings Hall.

The Lord Mayor added: "It has been fantastic to see so many high profile events taking place in Stoke-on-Trent. It is important that we celebrate all this city has to offer and to show the rest of the country, and further afield as well, that we can put on really good events."

● **No tickets are required for the free event.**

It's a Rat Trap... and they've been caught

RAT Trap operations are being expanded by police in Stoke-on-Trent to target criminals who break into houses, garages and sheds.

It comes now successful operations being mounted across the city to tackle vehicle crime are already making thieves think twice before they tamper with motor cycles or break into cars and vans.

Chief Inspector Wayne Jones, who oversees the Rat Trap team, said: "Because of the success and flexibility of our tactics, we are able to target the small number of criminals involved in crime that affects our communities.

"I can't go into the details about the tactics we are using, but I can say they are very effective and deployments usually result in a conviction. Of course we never tell anyone where our Rat Traps are but

because of the dynamic way we plan deployments, almost every use results in a swift arrest and charge.

"We are constantly changing the locations and vehicles we use for Rat Trap operations so criminals never quite know if we're waiting to arrest them.

"Using Rat Trap allows us to present the very best evidence before the court and this has already resulted in dozens of offenders being prosecuted."

Best practice is now being passed on to other police forces as officers come to the city to learn from the Stoke-on-Trent Rat Trap team here.

Police meanwhile are urging residents to help them by taking normal security measures in their properties and to pass on any information, which could help officers target their traps.



Thieves who break into sheds in Stoke-on-Trent might find themselves caught by a police trap.

Down Your Way

News from Northern Neighbourhood

► **BURSLEM NORTH:** Port Vale Football Club is producing a community activity plan with £5,000 from ward budgets. Aimed at people living around the stadium, it could mean facilities for Burslem Park Veteran Snooker Club as well as the formation of flower, photography and family cooking clubs. A work club for unemployed people is also on the cards as well as a weekly multi sports evening to combat antisocial behaviour.

► **NORTON AND BRADELEY:** Improvements have been made to the former coal trucks at the gateway to Norton and at the Activity Centre on Ford Green Road. Staff and inmates from the Werrington Young Offender Institution painted the trucks – with funding from Moorlands Housing. In a ward budget funded project, repairs have been carried out on the entrance steps to the Activity Centre to improve access.

► **GOLDENHILL AND SANDYFORD:** A community notice board has been installed while the Goldenhill Out and About Club goes from strength to strength after celebrating its first birthday. With more than 100 members, it raised £3,000 to install two benches in the High Street. For information about club meetings and trips, call Christine Humphries on 01782 256247.

► **NEIGHBOURHOOD WIDE:** Four secondary schools staged information days as part of Be Healthy and Stay Safe Week. Partner agencies attended so pupils at James Brindley, Haywood Engineering College, St Margaret Ward and The Co-operative Academy at Brownhills could learn about topics such as drug and alcohol misuse, antisocial behaviour and teenage pregnancy.

► **CHELL AND PACKMOOR:** New seating is making life more comfortable for people in the area after requests for ward funding from both Brindley Ford and Packmoor Residents Associations. Two benches have been installed along the cycle path between those two areas and two on Turnhurst Road in Packmoor.



New map has 160km of cycling heaven

ALMOST 120,000 maps are being delivered with this issue of *Our City* to continue the cycling revolution in Stoke-on-Trent.

Research shows that more people year-on-year have taken to their bikes to travel around and explore the city since the CycleStoke initiative was launched three years ago.

Families all over Stoke-on-Trent are enjoying 160km of off-road and on-road cycle tracks and bike lanes. Now everyone who receives the new map can do the same.

As well as showing all facilities for cycling across Stoke-on-Trent, the fold out map also includes details of the Leisurely Cycle Rides route maps. Three new maps being launched soon bring the total number of routes encouraging use of the city's greenways to 11.

The 2011 cycle map also refers to bridge numbers on the canal network to help cyclists work out where they are.

Councillor Hazel Lyth, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, Sport, Leisure and Culture, said the increase in the number of people cycling reflected the city's status as one of the greenest in the UK.

She said: "We have almost 3,500 acres of parks and open spaces across the city, which truly challenges that tired old

perception that Stoke-on-Trent is a grey, dull place.

"We are delighted that more and more families are exploring the greenways, canal paths and open spaces on their bikes, seeing a side of the Potteries you just don't appreciate when travelling by car.

"Distributing the map to every household means we are spreading the word to hundreds of thousands of residents, encouraging them to get on their bikes and enjoy their surroundings.

"People can use their bike to travel to work, to do the school run with the children in a more sustainable way, to fetch the weekend papers or just to 'get away from it all'."

As well as providing maps and guides, in the last three years the CycleStoke team has provided cycle safety training to 8,500 children and adults.

Cycle training in the city has been given a big boost with news that the Department for Transport will fund Bikeability cycle training for children until at least 2015.

Anyone interested in joining a cycle safety course, or booking their child in for training, should email cyclestoke@stoke.gov.uk or telephone 01782 238692. For more information call the team or visit cyclestoke.co.uk



ON YOUR BIKES...
Bronte Latham, 10, and Luke Whittingham, 6 with their breakfast after cycling to Milton Primary School.

family Information Service

Your local Family Information Service provides free, friendly and impartial information, advice, assistance and signposting on a wide variety of subjects including:

- **Childcare** – we can support you through the whole process of choosing a childcare provider that is right for the needs of you and your family.
- **Family friendly financial benefits** – including what is available to help with childcare costs.
- **Parental rights and entitlements.**
- **Signposting** – advice on the many support services available across the city and much, much more.

So if you are responsible for a child or young person aged 0-19 and are struggling to find the answers to your questions, please call us free or email us at: fis@stoke.gov.uk

FREE
Support and advice for families

Find us on [Facebook](#) www.facebook.com
and search for Stoke Family Information Service

[twitter](#) www.twitter.com/StokeFIS

www.stokefis.blogspot.com

stoke.gov.uk

Work set to start on new city centre bus station

CELEBRATIONS will mark the long-awaited start of work on the city's new bus station on March 28. Grimshaw Architects, who designed the Eden Project in Cornwall and the international terminal at London's Waterloo Station, have drawn up the 21st century design for the site at John Street in the city centre. Council Leader Mohammed Pervez said: "At long last the people of Stoke-on-Trent

know their new, state-of-the-art, modern and fit for purpose bus station is within reach. "It is hoped the new bus station will be open at the end of 2012. "It will pave the way for the regeneration of the rest of the city centre's East West Development as a major new shopping centre." Councillor Mervin Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, added: "Delivery of the new bus



station is our number one priority as it is likely to unlock the door to future key regeneration projects in the city and to create further jobs. "It is fantastic news that we have such a highly celebrated architectural team delivering the scheme."

An artist's impression of an entrance to the new bus station.



New Wards



Spotlight on electoral reforms introduced after two year review

Public urged to vote after biggest ever shake-up

SWEEPING changes in the way city councillors are chosen come into force in May with the introduction of radically different electoral wards in Stoke-on-Trent.

The number of wards goes up from 20 to 37, but there is a reduction in the number of councillors being elected from 60 to 44, with most areas choosing just one member, five voting for two and one electing three.

The changes came about after lengthy consultation with the public and the council.

The electoral review started in August 2009, after a commission set up by the Government to strengthen politics in Stoke-on-Trent proposed significant changes to make the system running the council more effective, and the elected members more accountable to the public.

This year represents possibly the biggest ever change in Stoke-on-Trent's electoral system, and is the first time that a complete council of 44 members will be elected in an "all-out" poll.

This will mean a completely new council make-up, and could change the city's political landscape. Councillors will remain in place for four years, until the next all out election, unless any by-elections are needed in circumstances like the death of a councillor.



Assistant Director - Member Services Elayne Bates.

“““
As a city council we would always encourage voters to exercise their democratic right and turn out on polling day.

Future city council elections will take place in 2015 and 2019, after which it is likely there will be a further review and the system might be fine tuned.

Hundreds of representations were considered by the commission before its decision was made, including input from the public, MPs, councillors and the business community.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) described the new wards structure as a "fresh start for local government" in the city.

Now council officials are urging the public to use their votes to help shape the city's future.

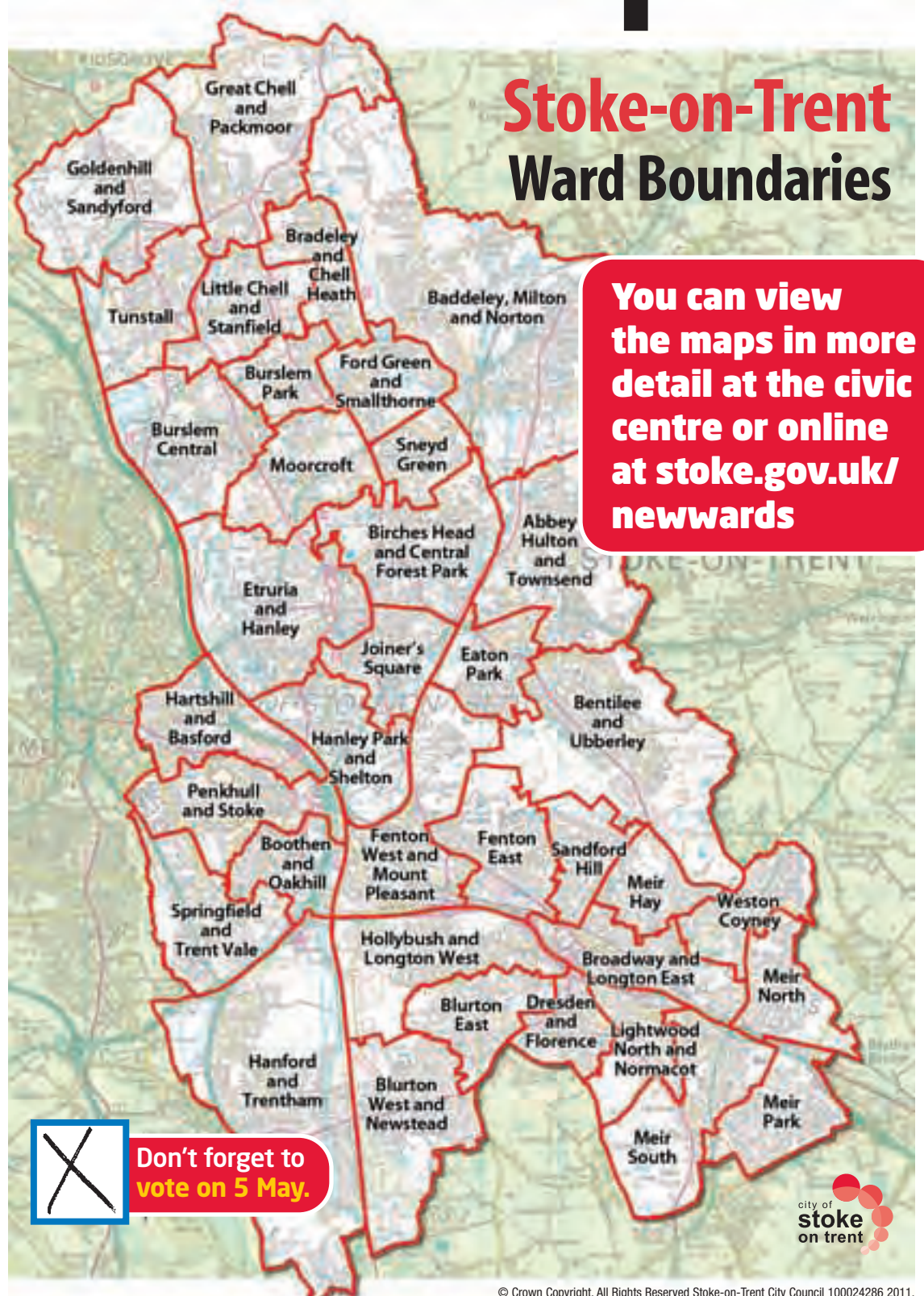
Assistant Director - Member Services, Elayne Bates, said: "Voting is an opportunity to assess and comment on the performance of a councillor.

"If a voter is not happy they can vote for change, but if they like what their councillor does their support could keep the member in post.

"As a city council we would always encourage voters to exercise their democratic right and turn out on polling day."

• This special eight page *Our City* supplement shows the new ward boundaries in detail, the number of electors in each ward and how many councillors they will be electing on May 5.

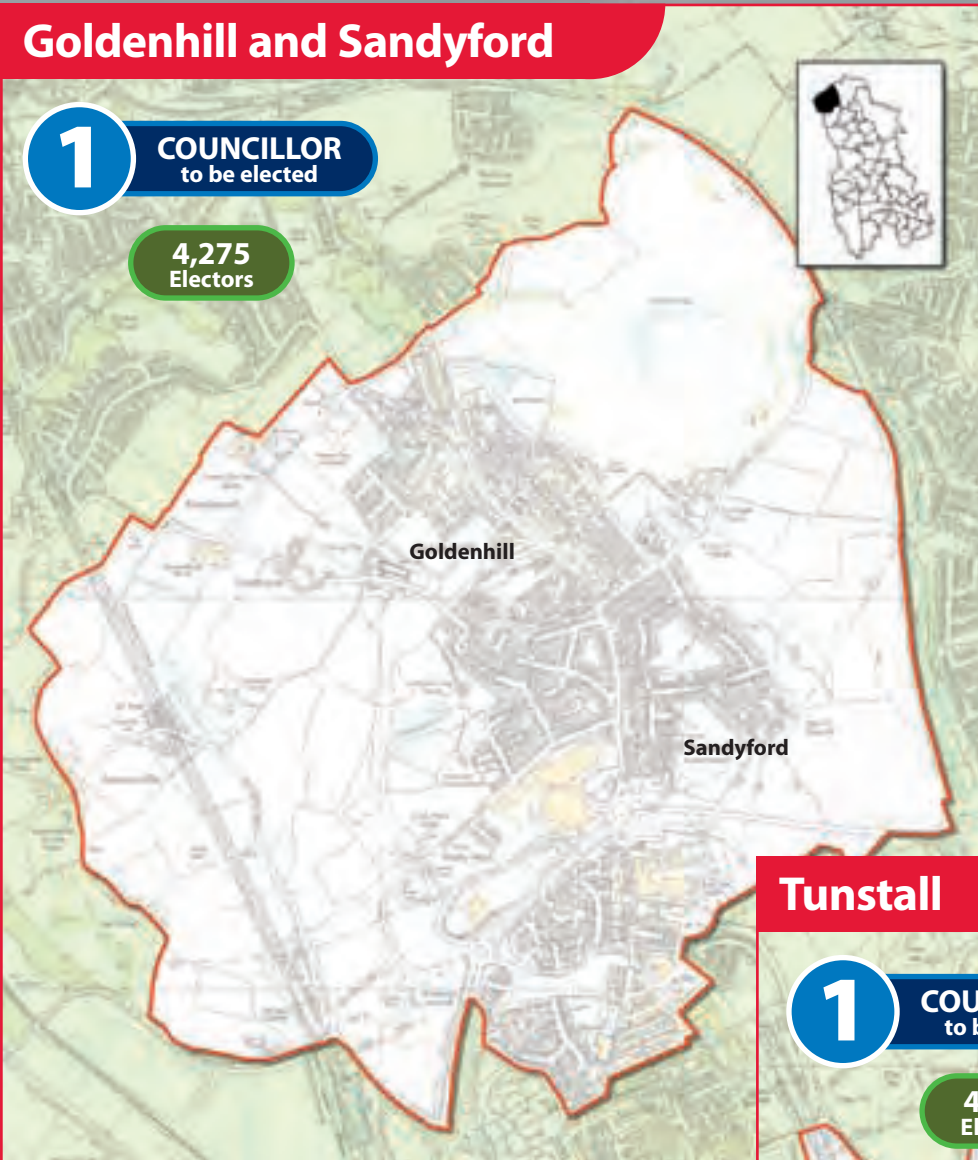
For more help finding out which electoral ward you live in, please visit stoke.gov.uk



Goldenhill and Sandyford

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

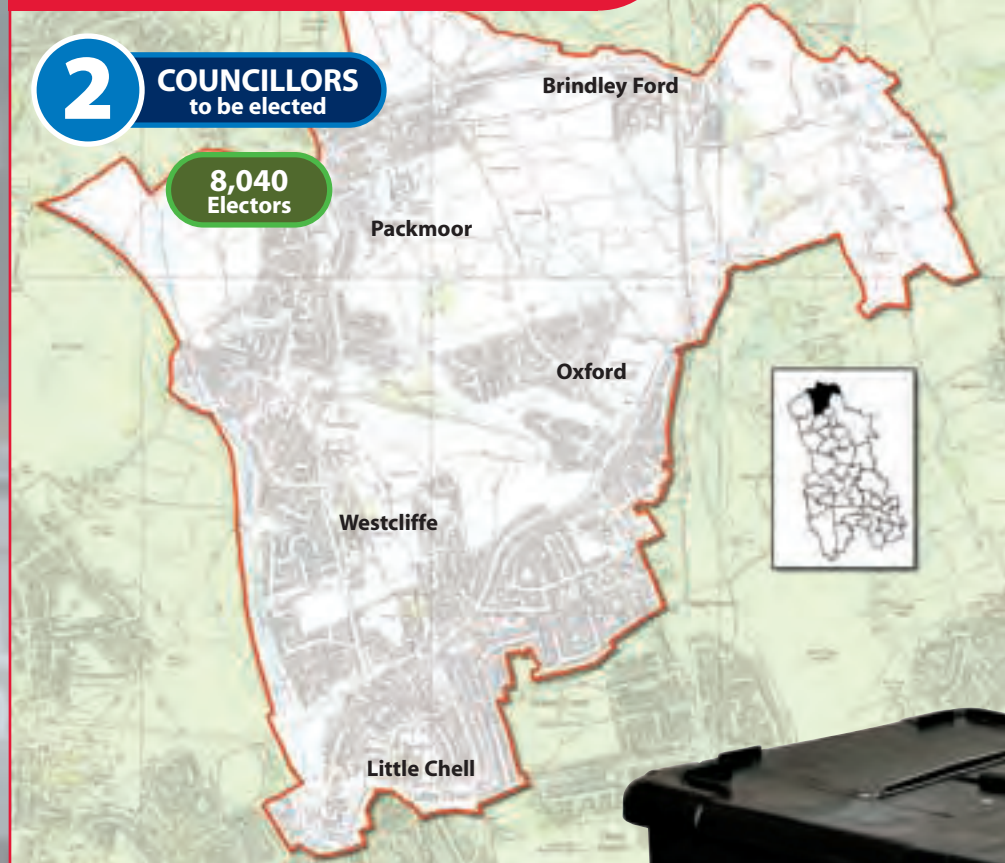
4,275 Electors



Great Chell and Packmoor

2 COUNCILLORS to be elected

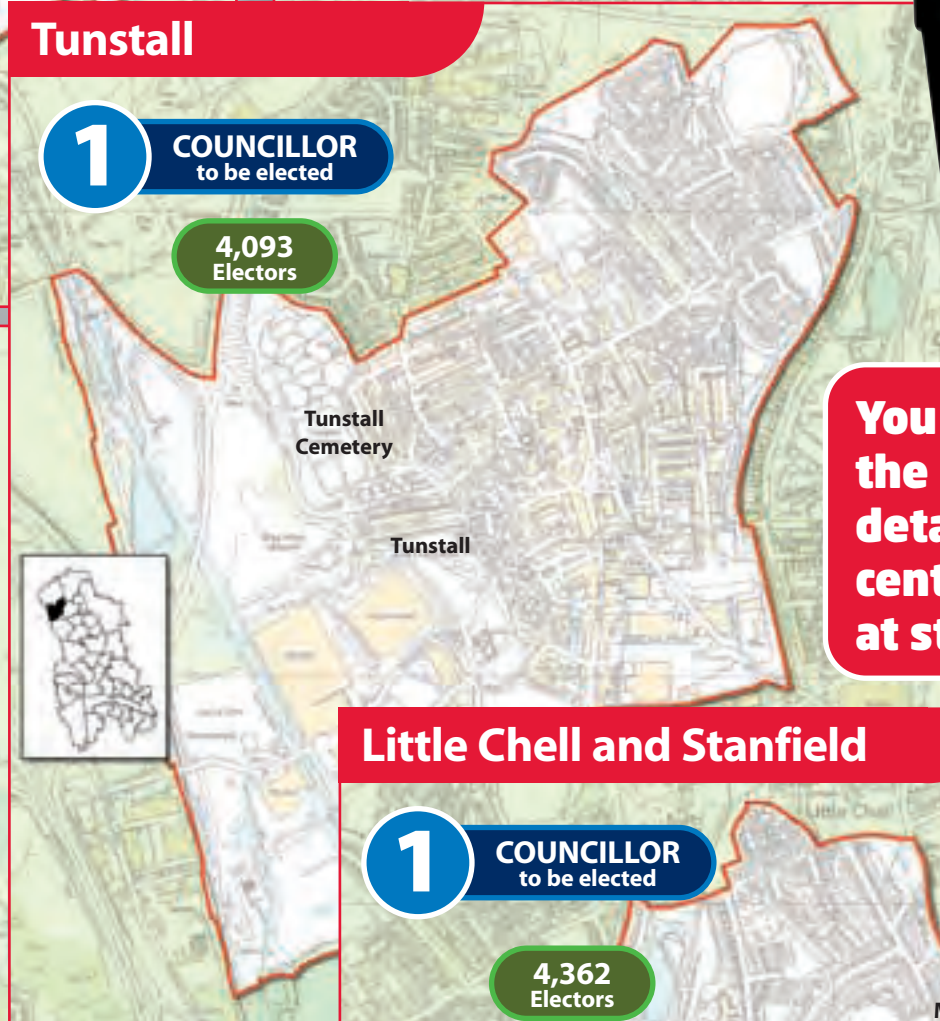
8,040 Electors



Tunstall

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

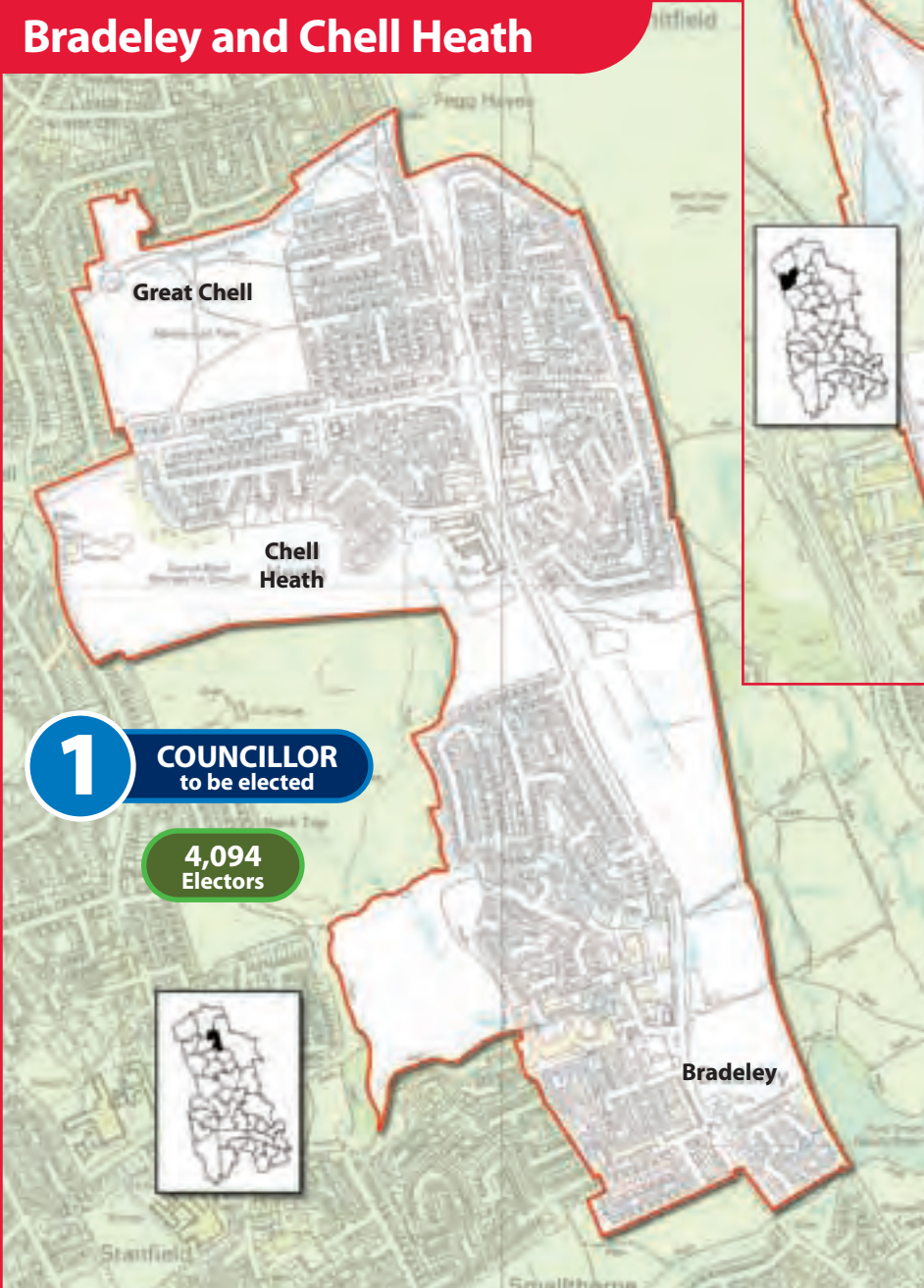
4,093 Electors



Bradeley and Chell Heath

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

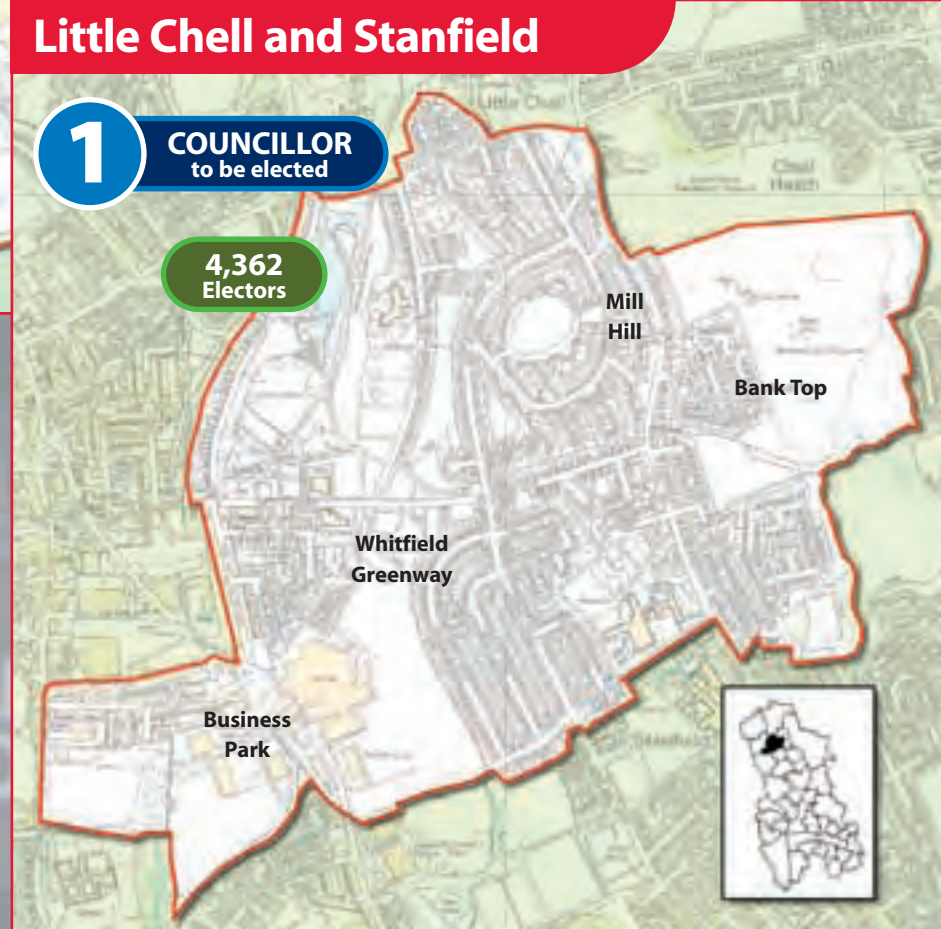
4,094 Electors



Little Chell and Stanfield

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,362 Electors



You can view the maps in more detail at the civic centre or online at stoke.gov.uk

1

COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,148 Electors

Stanfield

Port Vale Football Club

Burslem Park



Ford Green and Smallthorne

1

COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,510 Electors

Smallthorne

Cricket Ground



Moorcroft

1

COUNCILLOR to be elected

3,971 Electors

Sneyd Hill Park



Grange Park

Cobridge

Burslem, Tunstall and Chell



Don't forget to vote on 5 May.

Burslem Central

1

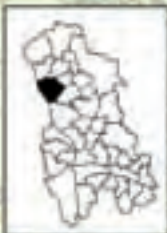
COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,495 Electors

Longport

Middleport

Burslem



Sneyd Green

1

COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,014 Electors

Holden Lane High School

Sneyd Green



Etruria and Hanley

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,458 Electors

Birches Head and Central Forest Park

2 COUNCILLORS to be elected

8,642 Electors

Penkhull and Stoke

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

5,099 Electors

Blurton West and Newstead

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,305 Electors

Hanley Park and Shelton

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

5,003 Electors

Hartshill and Basford

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,690 Electors

Hanley and Northwood



You can view the maps in more detail at the civic centre or online at stoke.gov.uk

Hanford and Trentham

2 COUNCILLORS to be elected

9,812 Electors

Fenton West and Mount Pleasant

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,695 Electors

Springfields and Trent Vale

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,916 Electors

Stoke and Penkhull

Joiner's Square

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

3,732 Electors

Boothens and Oakhill

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,366 Electors

Don't forget to vote on 5 May.

South of the A50/A500

Hollybush and Longton West

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,539 Electors

Blurton East

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,281 Electors

Dresden and Florence

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

3,875 Electors

Lightwood North and Normacot

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,044 Electors

South of the A50/A500
(continued)



You can view the maps in more detail at the civic centre or online at stoke.gov.uk

Meir South

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

3,998 Electors

Meir Park

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

3,969 Electors

Meir North

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,281 Electors

Caverswall Cricket Ground



Wood House Farm

Weston Coyney

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

3,825 Electors

Weston Coyney



Cinderhill Industrial Estate

Broadway and Longton East

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,190 Electors

Longton



Recreation Ground

Waterloo

Sandford Hill

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,590 Electors

TA Centre



Sandford Hill

Viaduct

Fenton East

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,587 Electors

Furnace House Farm

East of the City

city of **stoke on trent**

Fenpark Industrial Estate

Priors Fields

Timber Yard



Meir Hay

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

4,119 Electors

Park Hall Business Village



Meir Hay

Don't forget to vote on 5 May.

Changes add interest to May election

THIS year's city council election means new boundaries, fewer councillors and a new council when the dust settles on Friday 6 May.

Reforms of electoral wards detailed in this special publication have meant months of additional preparation to make sure all goes well in the city on polling day – Thursday 5 May 2011.

Principal Elections Officer John Hammersley said polling cards to be sent out in early April would have all the details of where and when votes should be cast.

Adding to the interest this year will be the national referendum on electoral reform called by the coalition government. This will offer voters a simple yes or no answer on a separate ballot paper.

In the council election most voters will have to choose one candidate to represent their ward. But some electors will have the opportunity to choose two or three council members to work on their behalf.

Results in the local authority election will be declared as soon as possible after the polls close on Thursday evening. The

referendum votes will be verified and counted on Friday as required by law.

John said: "This is the first chance for residents to vote in new administrative wards for the city. Elections staff will be available to help and give advice in the polling stations on the day.

"We have used our local knowledge, and feedback received in previous years to make sure the new system works even better for electors in Stoke-on-Trent."

● For more information about the election on 5 May please visit stoke.gov.uk



ALL SET FOR POLLING DAY... Principal Elections Officer John Hammersley in the city's store of ballot boxes.

Eaton Park

1 COUNCILLOR to be elected

3,813 Electors



Don't forget to vote on 5 May.

East of the City (continued)

Bentilee and Ubbberley

2 COUNCILLORS to be elected

7,787 Electors

Our New Wards

You can view the maps in more detail at the civic centre or online at stoke.gov.uk

Postal and proxy votes

THE deadline to register for postal votes is 14 April and for proxy votes 21 April. This can be done by going online to the council website at stoke.gov.uk or by calling the Electoral Office on 01782 232610.

city of **stoke on trent**

2 COUNCILLORS to be elected

7,501 Electors

3 COUNCILLORS to be elected

13,918 Electors

Abbey Hulton and Townsend

Baddeley, Milton and Norton

Multi-million pound fire stations boost regeneration

THE building of four new multi-million pound fire stations with community facilities in Stoke-on-Trent is making a significant contribution to regeneration in the city.

A £4.5 million state-of-the-art station at Sandyford, which opened last October, has already become a busy community hub. Two more station developments – a £5.5 million complex at Hanley and a £2.2 million scheme at Burslem – are under-construction and set to open at the end of August.

Now funding

approval has been given for the multi-million rebuilding of Longton Fire Station – work on which is expected to start next year.

Council Cabinet Member Ross Irving – who is Vice-Chairman of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority – said: “There is no doubt that the development of these modern fire stations is a big positive for regeneration.

“Not only is the investment creating construction jobs and work for suppliers but

it is also creating a feel-good factor as people see modern 21st Century structures taking shape, replacing the old, out-dated buildings.”

Councillor Irving said the community facilities in the new stations – designed to encourage engagement with local people – reflected changes in the fire and rescue service, which has become more proactive. “Great emphasis is now placed on prevention initiatives and making the public more aware of fire dangers,” he said.

“In this respect Staffordshire is regarded

as one of the top four services in the UK.

“We have a first-class capability to respond to emergencies but prevention is central to the overall strategy. Making these stations part of the community is an important step in raising public awareness and getting over our safety messages.”

The new stations have been funded by the Government through a private finance initiative provided by a consortium of several companies.



Councillor Ross Irving – Vice Chairman of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority – is given a tour of the new multi-million pound Sandyford Community Fire Station by Assistant Area Commander Glyn Luzny.

Museum has packed schedule

A POPULAR museum, which helps to bring the city's industrial heritage to life, has unveiled a busy spring and summer schedule of activities.

Etruria Industrial Museum – which is based at the junction of the Trent & Mersey and Cauldon Canals – is the last steam-powered potter's mill in Britain, and offers a family-friendly interactive exhibition.

This year, the museum will be throwing open its doors on 26 March for a felt making day and a guided walk around the canal network.

Then on 2 and 3 April, there will be special Mother's Day weekend with cream teas and card making on the menu.

One of the highlights of the year will be the annual Canal Festival on the weekend of 4 and 5 June, which attracts thousands of people.

For more details call the museum on 01782 233144 or go online to stoke.gov.uk/museum

Committed to local policing

POLICING in the city is being re-organised from 1 April with the establishment of three Local Policing Teams.

Each team area will be based on city council and community safety partnership boundaries and is designed to further strengthen local police links. Government funding settlements mean the force has to find countywide savings of £22 million.

Superintendent Laurie Whitby-Smith said: “We're committed to protecting neighbourhood officer and police community support officer numbers and improving their accessibility. As part of our review, opportunities have been highlighted to share buildings with our partners and reduce costs. However no buildings will close unless, or until, a replacement has been found in the heart of the community.”

Holocaust Day service spans the generations

THEY are generations apart but ten-year-old Rebecca Palser and the Lord Mayor, Councillor Denver Tolley, stood side by side to commemorate millions of victims who lost their lives in the Holocaust during the Second World War.

Rebecca, a pupil at St Augustine's RC Primary School, Meir, read a passage from the Bible during a moving Holocaust Day ceremony in Stoke-on-Trent, held on the 66th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau – the Nazi concentration camp where approximately 1.1 million men, women and children were killed.

Other schoolchildren also took part, performing songs and readings to mark the occasion and the Lord Mayor planted a Holocaust memorial tree during the ceremony outside the civic centre in Stoke.

It was the first of 100 memorial trees that were planted at schools across Stoke-on-Trent during the month after Holocaust Day.



Tesco's 'special offer' helps city jobless

IT was a superstore's "special offer" that was eagerly snapped up by a group of unemployed people from the Bentilee area of Stoke-on-Trent – the chance of a job with Tesco.

By working in partnership with the STAR project in Bentilee, the UK's largest supermarket chain with the famous "every little helps" slogan really has helped to get jobless people back into work at the recently opened Tesco Extra store in the City Centre.

STAR helps unemployed people in the Bentilee, Bucknall and Townsend communities to get back to work by providing education and training, help with interviews and CVs and other forms of support.

STAR approached Tesco and

through negotiations managed to secure nine guaranteed interviews for vacancies at the new city centre store. Applicants who live in Townsend and Bentilee had a pre interview to secure a place on the Pre Employment Training (PET) which was arranged to prepare applicants for the interview.

As part of the PET, STAR arranged an induction day during which a retail expert from South Cheshire College gave them an insight into Tesco's operation, the company's ethics and customer service policy as well as providing more general information about working in the retail sector.

As a result, five of the seven

applicants who successfully completed the PET were interviewed by Tesco and were offered jobs. They now work in parts of the store as varied as check-out, the café, shelf stocking and the mobile phone and IT department.

Moyra Postlewhite, Manager of the new Tesco Extra store, said: "We were more than pleased to offer to interview STAR candidates and the fact that we were able to offer jobs to five of the applicants shows how good the quality of those people was."

"As a business we try to recruit locally whenever possible and when we open a new store we look to help the long-term

unemployed to find jobs when we can."

STAR Team Manager Karen Kidd said: "The partnership with Tesco has been very beneficial. They have helped five unemployed people back into work and the chance to change their lives for the better."

Karen added: "This is just one way in which STAR works with local employers to provide guaranteed job interviews for unemployed of all ages, whether they are long-term unemployed or have recently lost their job."

STAR also signposts people to training that provides the qualifications and skills needed to find work in the construction industry, forklift truck driving, security, the care sector and many other areas.

STAR is based at 19, Brackenfield Avenue, Bentilee, so call in to find out more or phone 01782 236006.

EVERY LITTLE HELPS: the new Tesco Extra store in the City Centre has provided jobs for long-term unemployed people.

Club provide support for unemployed

WORK Clubs are springing up across Stoke-on-Trent in an initiative designed to support unemployed people back into jobs.

Eight local groups are already running in the city, providing places to meet and exchange skills, share experiences, find employment opportunities and offer mutual support.

They are there for everyone looking for work and Jobcentre Plus advisors are signposting customers to their local clubs.

Annette Summerscales, the Jobcentre Plus Partnership Manager for Staffordshire, said: "The clubs are community based and are great places to share experiences and the latest local news. No two Work Clubs will be the same as they should reflect the needs of the members and their community."

"Local knowledge is a powerful thing as lots of jobs are never advertised. Word of mouth is still a valuable way of learning about current and future work opportunities."

Work Clubs can come in all shapes and sizes and in a number of locations, including many in local libraries. A guide to setting up a work club is available on the Department of Work and Pensions website at www.dwp.gov.uk



Mum is back in work – thanks to STAR turn

Angela Ball's new job stocking shelves at Tesco has boosted her self confidence.

MOTHER of three Angela Ball had not worked for ten years while bringing up her family – and the long years spent at home robbed her of the confidence to seek employment.

Husband Matthew was already being helped by STAR and has since found work on a farm. Angela, who had worked in a call centre after leaving school, was so impressed with how the project was helping her husband that she decided to seek help for herself.

The result was an interview at Tesco and a job stocking shelves in the Health and Beauty section three nights a week between

10pm and 7am. The night work fits into the family life and means there is always a parent at home to look after their children Dylan, 15, Declan, 11 and three-year-old Grace.

Angela, aged 36, said: "The longer I stayed at home with the children the more I felt out of practice. I lost the confidence to go out there and find a job. It's not just the money – it's also lack of confidence and self-esteem."

"I went to STAR and told an advisor that shop work appealed to me. I was offered an interview at Tesco and the induction day beforehand prepared me one hundred

percent. I had all the right answers for the questions at the interview."

Angela added: "I love the job. It gives me a sense of purpose and has done wonders for my self-confidence. It's great to mix with colleagues and I also enjoy dealing with customers when they ask me about something they can't see on the shelves."

"Without the encouragement of the people at STAR I would never have dared to apply for this job. Help is there not just for people on Jobseekers' Allowance – it's for anyone who is unemployed and looking for a job."

Cancer survivor Roy has mission to spread the word

AS a volunteer for almost two years, Roy Tansley has talked to hundreds of people at supermarkets, libraries, health centres, leisure centres and many other types of venues where he sets up his stand to hold his "gigs".

The 64-year-old retired van driver was diagnosed with bowel cancer in 2006. After surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy, he was encouraged by his family and district nurse to join the volunteer programme.

Then three years after Roy's first diagnosis, a tumour was discovered on his left lung – and he underwent surgery for removal of part of the lung. Now he is back handing out leaflets and talking to anyone who will listen about the importance of recognising early symptoms of both types of cancer he has suffered.

Encouraged to join

Roy, who lives in Chell, said: "I got talking to a few people from my wife's church who had relatives with cancer and my wife and the district nurse said I should be doing this more often – so I was encouraged to join the volunteer scheme.

"I spend three or four hours a week at various venues in my area which covers Burslem, Norton and Bradeley and I'm looking forward to gigs further afield now we are going city-wide.



Cancer awareness initiative volunteers Roy Tansley and Sheila Malkin at one of their "gigs" outside the Home Bargains store at Burslem.

"A lot of people I speak to know someone with cancer who has passed away, but I tell them that eight out of ten people diagnosed in the early stages do survive. I really enjoy being a

volunteer because I am putting something back into the NHS whose treatment for me has been spectacular.

"It's very rewarding to know that in all three areas of the city

where we have worked so far, GPs are referring more patients with symptoms of cancer for further treatment. It seems that we are being successful in spreading the word."

Fairtrade event draws delegates from across UK

DELEGATES from all over the country will attend a national conference to explore the benefits of supporting Fairtrade producers in tough financial times.

A series of workshops and discussions will take place at the King's Hall in Stoke-on-Trent on April 6.

The aim is to encourage council officers and staff from other public services like the NHS, police and fire services to buy Fairtrade products.

Delegates will include councillors, representatives from all the public services and the voluntary sector. Local people who are interested in Fairtrade are also welcome to attend the conference, which costs £45, or £20 for campaigners or volunteers.

● Call 01782 233290 for more information or to book a place or visit stoke.gov.uk/fairtrade

Life-saving initiative is rolled out across the city

A LIFE-SAVING initiative that aims to make people in Stoke-on-Trent more aware about the early signs of some of the most common types of cancer has been expanded and rolled out across the city.

The Healthy Communities Collaborative scheme has been operated in three areas of Stoke-on-Trent to raise awareness of what may be symptoms of breast, bowel and lung cancer.

Now the programme has gone citywide and also includes a promotion to help men spot early signs of prostate cancer – the fourth most common form of cancer in the city.

The volunteers are all people who have suffered the kind of cancers included in the Healthy Communities Collaborative scheme, and since it was

launched two years ago the team has spoken to 7,500 people at more than 130 events to encourage them to recognise the early signs of cancer.

The awareness team are looking to recruit a Stoke-on-Trent man who has survived prostate cancer to be the face of the new campaign – and they also want to hear from people who would like to become volunteers.

Jill Davies, Cancer Awareness Project Manager for NHS Stoke on Trent, said: "We are delighted that the awareness scheme is being rolled out across the city.

"As a result of the fantastic work of our volunteers over the past two years, people have gone to their doctors and got their symptoms checked out early.

"The earlier cancer is

diagnosed and treated, the greater the chances of survival."

To find out more about the scheme go to www.stoke.nhs.uk/health/enjoytomorrow or to inquire about becoming a volunteer please contact Jill Davies on 01782 298064.

Make it

Click and Easy
stoke.gov.uk

▶ Watch a live webcast of full city council meetings
stoke.gov.uk

Down Your Way

News from South Eastern Neighbourhood

▶ **LONGTON:** Cigarette stub littering in the town centre and at the Longton Transport Interchange should soon be a thing of the past now 25 sleek stainless steel cigarette bins have been ordered. A sign will be sited near each bin warning smokers that dropping stubs carries an £80 fixed penalty fine. The Area Implementation Team, Longton traders and NHS Stoke on Trent have worked in partnership on the scheme.

▶ **WESTON AND MEIR NORTH:** Work has started to tackle traffic and parking problems in the Stanton Road area of Meir. The scheme includes a one-way system, residents parking scheme and improvements to junctions. RENEW North Staffordshire and the council's Neighbourhood Renewal and Area Implementation Teams spent 10 months getting feedback from residents on how best to solve the issues.

▶ **DRESDEN AND FLORENCE:** Activities for all ages will be laid on now Dresden Residents' Association has won more than £3,400 from the Robbie Williams Give it Sum Fund. The association is launching a Dresden and Florence Community Hub in the scout hall on Wise Street. The move to offer recreational and educational activities comes after public consultation.

▶ **MEIR PARK AND SANDON:** Twenty parking spaces are being created in a narrow one-way street with nearly £50,000 from the ward budget. The bays in Ridge Walk are being constructed on a verge using Grasscrete, pre-cast blocks which allow grass to grow through. There were no objections when the planning application was submitted.

▶ **MEIR NORTH:** Potholes, which have made alleyways behind four streets a virtual no-go area to vehicles, are being filled in. The work at the rear of Weston Road, Station View, Stanton Road and Penfleet Avenue is being funded by RENEW North Staffordshire.

MONEY matters

Is it time to seek help? some tell tale signs

- 1 Constantly worried about finances:** If money problems are affecting your work life, home life, relationships and leisure time then it is time to seek help.
- 2 You do not know how much you owe:** If you have lost track of how much you owe, this is a bad sign especially if you are spending large amounts.
- 3 Using a credit card to pay for everyday spending:** Using a credit card regularly to pay for necessities such as food and petrol and then not clearing the balance every month will drive you further into debt.
- 4 Regularly paying your bills late:** Failing to make bill payments on time or overspending on your credit card or overdraft will incur extra fees and charges from your bank. This will damage your credit rating.
- 5 You borrow more money to pay off your debts:** If you are borrowing money to meet your existing debt repayments you will get further into debt.
- 6 Making minimum repayment on your credit card:** Only paying the minimum each month means it is going to take a long time to pay off your credit card debt in full.
- 7 Spending more than you earn:** If you are spending more than your income or you are not sure whether your income is covering your expenses, you could be in serious trouble.
- 8 No savings:** If you have no savings and are unable to put a small amount of money aside each month because your debts are too high, that is not a good sign.
- 9 You find it hard to talk about your situation:** If you find it difficult to be honest about your debts or ignore help you could be in denial about your debt.
- 10 You have been rejected for credit:** This could be because you have too many credit cards, even if you no longer use them or because you have missed payments in the past. This can all affect your credit rating.



Jenny Gadd and Bev Platt from the Citizen's Advice Bureau in Hanley talk to a customer.

Dedicated CAB teams assist thousands over money worries

VITAL advice and support for people experiencing debt and financial problems is on offer from Stoke-on-Trent Citizens Advice Bureau.

A 14-strong team of debt experts assist the thousands of people who seek advice for money matters from the CAB each year.

Informal face-to-face meetings help the team of advisors get to the bottom of peoples' problems, whether they involve not having the necessary funds to pay priority debts or need advice on managing on a tight budget.

Jay Lowe, Debt Manager based at the CAB's main office in Cheapside, Hanley, said: "Last year we helped 2,500 people with debt problems – all of these face to face.

"The majority of the time we deal with

people who have problems with priority debts like mortgages or utility bills.

"We also try to deal with people who encounter non-priority debt problems. However, if we do not have the resources we signpost them towards national support organisations like Pay Plan and the National Debt Line, who offer free services, similar to ours.

"Our advisors then work with individuals to draw up budgets to prioritise payments, and use a range of strategies to help them make the most of their available income.

"Often the type of people we see are those who are already in difficulties and have been threatened with legal action or other action because they have not made payments.

"However, we also see people who realise they are starting to spiral into debt and want to prevent that happening."

One of the tools the CAB has at its disposal is helping people apply for a Debt Relief Order.

Jay added: "This is similar to bankruptcy but aimed at people who have debts below £15,000, do not own a property and have few other assets. It costs £90 to apply for one – much less than bankruptcy – and leads to an initial 12 month freeze on all debts. After this period the debts are written off."

"There is an effect on the individual's future credit rating, however the majority of people want to steer away from credit to avoid finding themselves in trouble again."

From April, the CAB's team is set to reduce significantly, however it will continue to provide the one-to-one support service on a more limited basis alongside other financial assistance.

For advice, visit Stoke-on-Trent CAB in Cheapside, Hanley or at Bentilee Neighbourhood Centre. Alternatively, call 01782 408600.

Faith group offers debt support

PEOPLE who have money worries, are struggling to pay bills or just need advice about finances can take advantage of free drop-in sessions organised by local faith organisations.

Free and confidential sessions are being staged at Stoke Baptist Centre in March and April – set up in conjunction with the Saltbox Christian Centre.

The aim is to signpost people to relevant, more in-depth support services depending on their circumstances.

This includes ongoing support called Money Matters, which helps budgeting, negotiating with creditors; advice on debt relief orders; representation in court; advice on other support services; alternative remedies to debt remedies and specialist help and support to local faith communities who want to provide a debt advice service

Marg Hardcastle, Minister at Stoke Baptist Centre said: "We are encouraging people to drop in and take full advantage of this free service whether they are a debtor or have worries of falling into debt.

"It gives an indication of the kind of problems people are facing and direct them towards the right kind of support."

• The next drop in sessions take place on 24 March and 21 April, from 11am – 2.30pm, at the centre, which is based on Foden Street, Stoke. For more details call Saltbox on 01782 207200 or visit the website – www.saltbox.org.uk



Money Matters advisor Anne Riddle helps a customer during a saltbox drop-in at Stoke Baptist Centre.

Help available on housing issues

HELP is on hand for people who need advice about housing issues.

For assistance regarding mortgage, rent and council tax matters, the city council's housing support team can provide invaluable assistance.

The service works closely with the Citizens Advice Bureau, Staffordshire Credit Union and colleagues across the West Midlands to help people stay in their current home despite financial problems.

For more information, contact the service on 01782 233696 or email housing.advice@stoke.gov.uk

LOVE
FOOD
hate waste • **.com**



Richard Jones, Head Chef at the Best Western Moat House, left, launches the Love Food, Hate Waste campaign with Port Vale striker Marc Richards, second left, and wingback Kris Taylor, watched by City Council Cabinet Member for Environment, Waste Management and Neighbourhood Services Councillor Terry Follows.

Food sense can save families a big helping of cash

COOKERY workshops and recipe suggestions are being promoted to encourage people in Stoke-on-Trent to reduce the amount of food they waste.

On average, a UK family throws away £50 worth of food each month... a staggering £12 billion in good food simply wasted each year.

Government research in 2009 showed that over eight million tonnes of food and drink is wasted in UK homes each year – enough to fill Wembley Stadium eight times over – perfectly good food

that ends up in the bin.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has linked up with 32 other local authorities for the West Midlands Love Food, Hate Waste campaign. It was launched in the city when Cabinet Member for Environment, Waste Management and Neighbourhood Services, Councillor Terry Follows, and Port Vale stars joined head chef Richard Jones at the Best Western Moat House Hotel, Festival Park, for a “ready, steady, cook” session, using leftover food to create a tasty meal.

Local authorities across the West Midlands want to help everyone in the region make the most of the food they

buy by not throwing it away. And using left over food is good for the environment too.

Stoke-on-Trent Waste Minimisation Officer Rachel Gumbley said: “We throw food out for two reasons: we cook or prepare too much, or food goes off before we’re able to eat it. Everyone can benefit from planning their meals when shopping and making more of the food they buy.”

If you want to take part in the campaign please contact recycling@stoke.gov.uk

● To find out more about making the most of the food you buy visit www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

Housemates’ diary aims to cut out waste

THREE young men mounted their own crusade to Love Food Hate Waste by starting a diary to make a record of everything they throw away.

The experiment is being carried out by James Barker, a technical support officer in the city council’s Waste Management Department and his house mates Adam Priekulis and James Mann, who live in Basford.

They will use a special diary, which can be downloaded from www.lovefoodhatewaste.com to make a note of every item of food they throw away, and the reasons for doing so.

After keeping the diary for several weeks they will use its information to help them reduce the amount of food they waste and make better use of leftovers.

James, who feeds his mates with signature dishes like chilli, curry and lasagne, said: “We do waste some food, especially vegetables and salad, which we could clearly use for something else.”

To find out how James and his friends go on, and for more tips on how to reduce waste and use up leftover food, see the next issue of *Our City*, out in May.



James Barker at work in the kitchen.

‘Monday hash’ recipe uses up those leftovers

CIVIC Centre chef Ian Woodhouse’s comfort food recipe for Monday Hash is a tasty way of using up left over food from a Sunday roast.

INGREDIENTS:

- One onion
- Two cloves of garlic
- A tablespoon of Worcestershire sauce
- A teaspoon of English mustard
- A tablespoon of olive oil
- Salt and black pepper to taste.
- Keep beef, ham, pork or chicken from Sunday, as well as green vegetables like cabbage and root vegetables like potato, swede or carrots.

METHOD:

- In a large frying pan, heat the oil and fry the garlic, onion and green vegetables until golden.
- Add the shredded meat, Worcestershire sauce, mustard, carrot or swede and warm through.
- Transfer to an ovenproof dish and cover with crushed boiled potatoes.
- Brush with butter and cook in a hot oven (180°, gas mark 7) until golden. Alternatively you can mix the potatoes into the mixture and shape the mixture into hash cakes – shallow fry them until golden and top with a fried egg.
- Serve the hash with rich onion gravy – made with a little left over red wine! Alternatively, if using ham, top with a soft poached egg.
- Vegetarians can just leave out the meat.

Ian said: “It’s a really tasty, wholesome meal that just goes to show you can cook up a really tasty treat with what’s left over from the Sunday roast.

“When we’ve had a roast dinner here at the civic centre we often put a hash on the menu the next day to use up any leftovers and from the speed at which it disappears it’s clearly a favourite.”

● Don’t forget if you are saving food from Sunday to cool it quickly, cover it and keep it in the fridge.

Green caterers offer useful tips

ENVIRONMENTALLY-friendly caterers Bushtucker Enterprises have come up with their own tips for making the most of the food you buy.

Project co-ordinator Jess Perkins – who helps run the social enterprise based at the Hollybush Centre in Blurton – said forward planning and good preparation could save money and make food go further.

Jess’s tips include:

● Make the most of “buy one, get one free” or “three for the price of two” offers by using the food you buy to make more than one meal and freezing portions. Vegetables can be blanched in boiling water for a few minutes, then frozen to be used again.

Make chilli, meatballs and bolognese sauce from minced beef; fish pie and fishcakes from fish or chicken pie and pasta sauce from chicken. Freeze them all and you’ve meals ready to use.

● Leftover vegetables are great to make soup by just whizzing them with stock in a food processor or blender.

Or mashed potatoes are a key ingredient in a gluten free lemon drizzle cake! Find the recipe at www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/5870/glutenfree-lemon-drizzle-cake

● Buy fruit in season when it is cheaper and freeze it on a tray before bagging it to use in healthy, tasty smoothies. Even peeled bananas can be frozen... they keep for up to two months and buying fruit cheap can save a fortune. Just plan ahead!



Creating a healthier and safer city



Lifeskills worker Wendy Freestone with a service user in an art session at Chepstow House.

Activity programmes reduce reoffending risk

A FREE service is providing essential help to women who want to move on with their lives after being involved in, or affected by, crime.

Chepstow House, in Hanley, helps women to draw up personal action plans tailored to their needs and based on what they want to achieve.

Lots of women with a variety of issues are supported, including those:

- in contact with the police, probation or court service
- coming out of prison and needing help moving back to the city
- in a relationship with someone who has committed a crime, or
- needing support after experiencing abuse, domestic violence or rape

The tailored plans include help to find and maintain a home, advice on claiming benefits, budgeting and support with children, family and relationships.

There is also help to find education and training activities and reducing the risk of reoffending.

The Safer City Partnership works closely with Chepstow House and refers women coming out of prison to the service.

- For an informal chat or a referral call 01782 208200.

Single point of contact for reporting hate crime

TWO organisations dedicated to combating hate crime and racist incidents are merging.

On 1 April, Challenge North Staffs (CNS) and PARINS (Partners Against Racist Incidents in North Staffordshire) will become CNS.

A hate incident is any incident which the victim, or any other person, thinks is motivated by prejudice or hate.

CNS accepts reports of incidents which have been motivated by hatred of someone because of their: disability (including disability due to mental health), race or origin, sexual orientation, sexual identity, gender, religion and age.

To report an incident or for more information

- Phone CNS on 0330 1111 999 (standard local rates apply)
- Fax 0330 1111 998
- Visit www.challengenorthstaffs.org
- Complete a form available at many outlets including Citizens Advice Bureau, libraries and council local centres. Forms can also be completed online.



An image from the national campaign warning of the dangers alcohol poses to children.

New guide spotlights the dangers of alcohol

A NEW resource has been produced to help parents better understand how drinking alcohol can affect their children.

The *Your Child and Alcohol* packs include information on a wide range of issues relating to alcohol, including the risks, what the law says, recommended guidelines for adults

and help available. The Safer City Partnership was keen to introduce a local resource to improve parents' confidence to talk about alcohol and the risks involved.

The packs produced by the partnership have been issued to the police, health professionals, schools and voluntary organisations who will all offer them to parents.

Hannah Cole, Project Officer for Substance Misuse, said: "Young people are much more likely to put themselves at risk when drinking alcohol and this pack will help parents talk about these issues, advising their children about staying safe. It's important to remember that there are no safe levels of drinking for children; there are physical, emotional and behavioural risks.

"Research shows that adolescents who binge drink are 50 per cent more likely to be dependent on alcohol or drug dependent by the time they are 30 years old."

● **Your Child and Alcohol packs are available from the Safer City Partnership. If you would like to request a pack please ring 01782 235708 or email safer.citypartnership@stoke.gov.uk**



Advisor Gemma Newitt with the new information pack which offers advice and support about underage drinking to parents.

A three-page special *Our City* report



Hi-tech property marking to beat sneaky thieves

INVESTMENT in the latest technology is helping the Safer City Partnership combat property theft.

Valuable electrical items such as mobile phones, laptops and iPads are targeted every day by opportunist thieves.

But thanks to a new £2,500 scanner and software bought by the partnership which is linked into a national online property register, people can use a unique barcode number to readily identify their property.

It means that police forces are able to use the register to identify the owner of lost and stolen goods thousands of times every day.

It helps to simplify insurance claims, combat the sale of stolen property and help police more readily prosecute offenders as they are able to identify the victims of crime and get statements from them.

Students moving to a university and a different area of the country are particularly prone to this kind of theft at the moment. So the Safer City Partnership and Staffordshire Police have carried out initiatives at Staffordshire University to



Respect Programme Leader for the Safer City Partnership Bill James scans history and politics student Phil Slater's phone at Staffordshire University with PC Keith Emery.

encourage people to register on the scheme.

Respect Programme Lead Bill James teamed up with PC Keith Emery to give students advice about the scheme and to help them scan and register their items.

● **To register items contact Bill James at the Safer City Partnership on 01782 236113. For more information log onto www.immobilise.com**



Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco Education Advisor Michael Coll, and competition winners Sophie Smith, left, and her sister Katie Smith with the successful designs.

New resource for schools' healthy living advice

DRUG, Alcohol and Tobacco Education advisors working in the Healthy Schools' Team have produced new education resource booklets for primary and secondary schools.

The resources include lesson plans providing innovative ways to communicate drug education (including medicines, alcohol and tobacco) and are in line with national guidance.

The Safer City Partnership funds the advisors, who offer support, training and advice on delivering effective drug and alcohol education, including how to use the resources. Parents and carers are encouraged to talk to their children about the prevention of substance misuse.

Children and young people were asked to design a front cover for the handbooks and two winners were chosen.

Katie and Sophie Smith designed a cover with the slogan "Hugs not Drugs". Harriet Ford, from Haywood High School and Engineering College, designed another, using the message "Don't be afraid to say no!"

Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco Education Advisor Mike Coll said: "We would like to thank all the schools and students who took part in the competition and designed such outstanding covers."

For more details about the resource booklet call Mike or Abi Little on 01782 231297.

Drugs team opens new centre in city

COMMUNITY drug service Roots to Recovery has opened a new base in the north of the city to help support people with drug-related problems.

The walk-in centre in Roundwell Street, Tunstall provides services for people who want advice or information for themselves, their friends and family.

The new venue adds to similar centres in Sandon Road, Meir, Hope Street, Hanley and Canal Arm, Festival Park. They all provide services including needle exchange, complementary therapies, day programmes, substitute medication, Hepatitis A and B immunisation and Hepatitis C testing and treatment. People are welcome to visit or phone any of the centres.

Vicky Yates, Adult Drug Treatment Programme Lead for the Safer City Partnership said: "These services help to improve people's health and wellbeing, reduce issues such as crime and antisocial behaviour and make neighbourhoods safer and more pleasant places to live."

● For more information or to make an appointment, telephone 01782 219777.

Respect in Sneyd Green

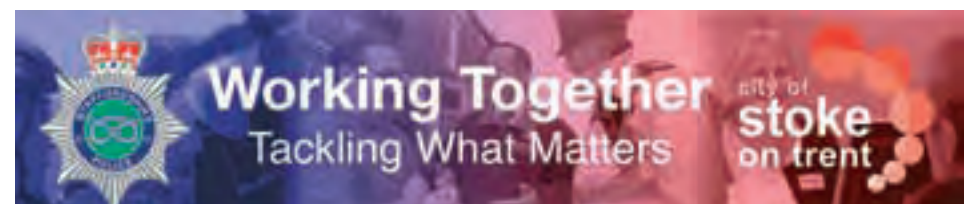


CLAMPING down on antisocial behaviour was at the forefront when Lord Mayor Councillor Denver Tolley officially launched the city's latest Respect Week.

The event was held in Sneyd Green during the last week in February and offered something for residents of all ages.

Council officers and their partners

from Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and other agencies were on hand at Sneyd Green Community Centre to give advice and support on everything from reducing the chance of burglary, fire safety tips for the home, providing free blood pressure checks and giving lifestyle advice.





Residents stand together over nuisance neighbour

RESIDENTS in Rothesay Road, Normacot joined forces with the Safer City Partnership and police to have an ASBO granted against a nuisance neighbour.

Tina Hazeldine, 22, caused misery by holding wild parties that attracted known drug users. Loud music was played at all hours, there was fighting in the street and residents felt threatened.

Worried neighbours met police and with the help of Safer City Partnership Officers they gathered evidence about the antisocial behaviour that was making their lives a misery.

The city council was granted a Closure Order on number 47 but Hazeldine kept returning to other houses in Rothesay Road, meaning neighbours had to endure more of her loutish behaviour.

Safer City Partnership Officer Di Davies, left, and Sergeant Andy Duffin pictured with residents in Rothesay Road.



Safer City Partnership Officers applied for an ASBO which was granted after the court heard Hazeldine had been responsible for 20 per cent of calls to police concerning Rothesay Road and that she had caused 24 incidents of antisocial behaviour in the previous six months.

The ASBO forbids Hazeldine, of Upper Normacot Road, Longton, from visiting Rothesay Road and the immediate area for five years.

Much of the evidence against Hazeldine was a diary kept meticulously for several months by one resident who listed every single antisocial incident in detail and attended court as a key witness.

The resident said: "I listed every incident day and night in a notepad which I always carried, so it could be used as evidence."

"Of course I was nervous about going to court, but unless someone stands up to people like this they think they can get away

with it and the problem will continue. Now things are much calmer and our road is a very quiet area once again."

Mohammed Hafeez was another resident who helped to gather evidence about the antisocial behaviour. He said: "Now Rothesay Road is very peaceful and a lot cleaner. The efforts to get number 47 closed and the ASBO has brought the whole community together and now everyone says 'hello' to each other."



Area Implementation Officer Rob Simms (standing) and Project Officer for Safer City Partnership Richard Marsland (seated) with, left to right, Kate Dale, 11, Aisha Ahmad, 11, Anderson Allcock, 11 and Chelsea Austin, 10, all from Ash Green Primary School.

Crew sessions teach students crucial lessons on staying safe

STUDENTS are taking advantage of events aimed at helping them keep safe into the future.

Crucial Crew is delivered for Year 6 students (10 to 11 year olds) and helps to raise each participant's awareness of threats and dangers in fun and interactive ways.

During the sessions they learn to react correctly to dangerous situations, avoid becoming a victim of an accident or crime, understand the role that the emergency and support services play and be aware of the consequences of their actions and how they impact on others.

The sessions are organised by the Safer City Partnership and involve presentations and role play situations arranged by organisations such as Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Territorial Army. Safer City Partnership Project Officer Richard Marsland said: "The Crucial Crew operates for five weeks in each academic year and more than 2,500 children attend."

"Presentations range from delivering messages about antisocial behaviour to what to do in the case of a fire to putting someone in the recovery position."

Crime fighting champion stands up for victims

THE city's champion for victims and witnesses of antisocial behaviour has made a real difference during her first 12 months in the role.

During that time Heleen Witte has handled 75 cases involving whole streets, families with children, couples or single people who have been subjected to antisocial behaviour and constant torment and fear by louts in their communities.

Heleen, who is employed by the national charity Victim Support and based within the Stoke-on-Trent Safer City Partnership, provides emotional support as well as practical advice by listening to victims referred to her by partners like the police, Victim Support and other agencies.

She said: "Many of the victims I have worked with had hardly ever talked to anyone about their feelings and frustrations."

"They thought they just had to suffer and put up with it because their problems would not be considered serious enough by the police or council for them to take action."

"I am raising awareness that antisocial behaviour of any kind is not something that has to be tolerated – and that victims are entitled to support from the police and court, but that in many cases,



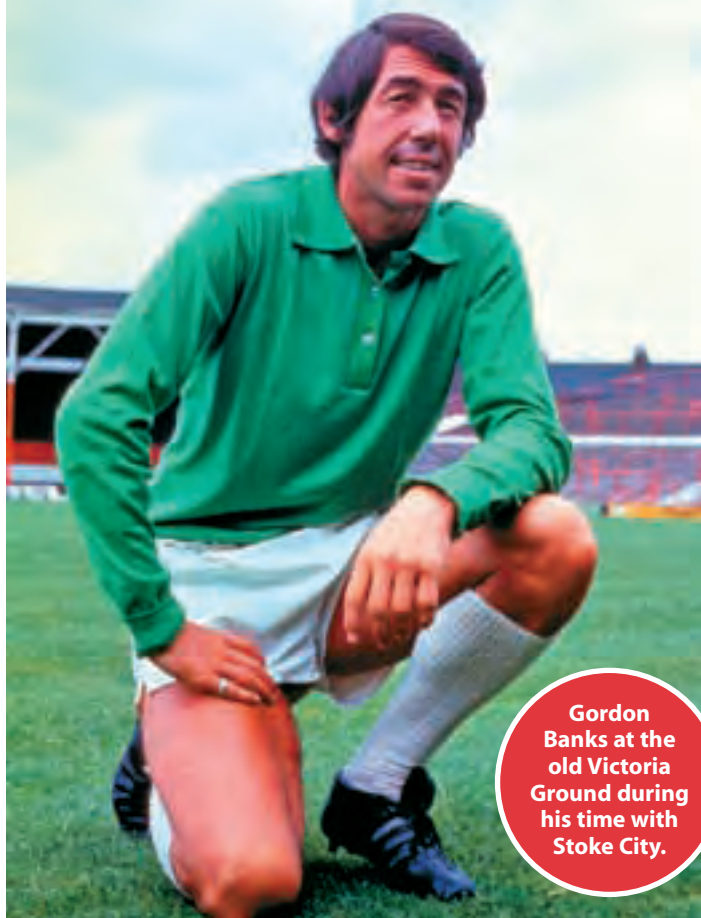
Victims and Witnesses Champion Heleen Witte with Burslem resident Norman Robinson, 83 who she helped deal with an issue of children playing football at the side of his house.

especially neighbour disputes, mediation is an excellent way to resolve the problems."

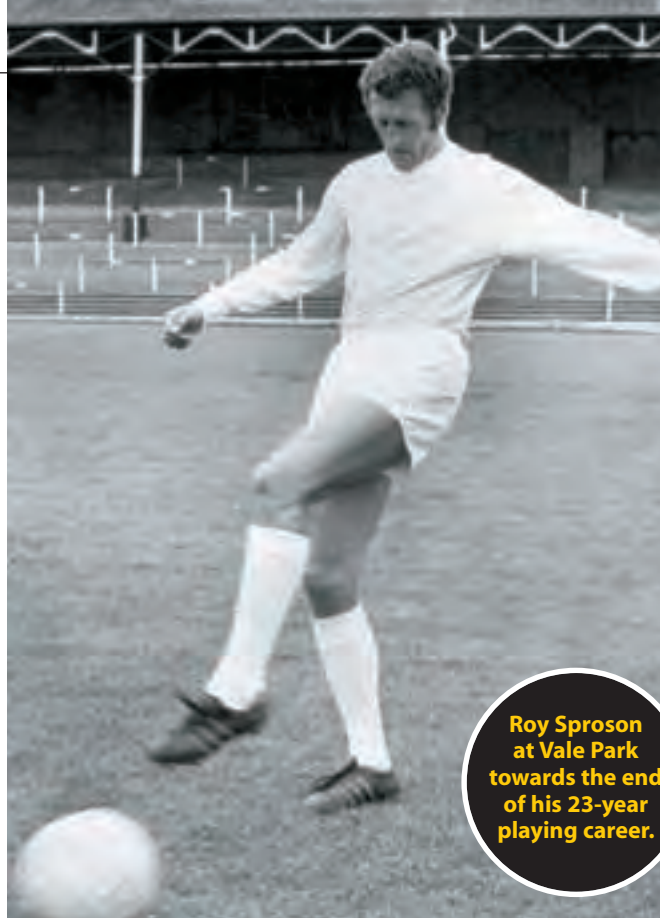
Heleen, a highly experienced case worker who completed a degree in criminology and psychology at Keele University, also supports witnesses who give evidence if a case of antisocial

behaviour goes to court.

Looking ahead to the next 12 months as a champion, Heleen is aiming to reach more vulnerable people – such as the elderly, those with disabilities and young women with children – and encourage them to take a stand against antisocial behaviour.



Gordon Banks at the old Victoria Ground during his time with Stoke City.



Roy Sproson at Vale Park towards the end of his 23-year playing career.

Stoke and Vale heroes join city's Hall of Fame

TWO of Stoke-on-Trent's soccer heroes have joined Sir Stanley Matthews in the city's Sporting Hall of Fame.

World Cup winning former Stoke City and England goalkeeper Gordon Banks OBE, and the late Roy Sproson, who played an astonishing 842 times for Port Vale, were honoured in a ceremony at the Civic Centre.

Their names have now been inscribed on a plaque, alongside Sir Stan and 15 times world darts champion Phil 'The Power' Taylor.

Gordon, 73, was a member of England's 1966 World Cup winning team and signed for Stoke City less than a year after the Wembley Final.

His save from a Pele header in the 1970 World Cup Finals in a match against Brazil is regarded as the best save ever seen in football.

Prestigious

Roy Sproson's achievement, while more humble, is no less spectacular.

Most commentators say had Roy been playing today he would be a Premier League star, yet he was a "one club man" who spent his entire career at the Vale and went all the way to the FA Cup semi final in 1954.

His playing career lasted from 1949 until he hung up his boots in 1972. He later went on to manage the team until 1977, after which he ran a local newsagents. Roy died in 1997.

His nephew Phil, himself a Vale legend with almost 500 appearances under his belt, received a Sporting Hall of Fame certificate on his uncle's behalf, watched by Roy's widow and members of the Sproson family.

Phil, 51, now a football agent, said: "To be handed a prestigious one like this makes the whole family and I really proud. You look at the names on that board, like Sir Stanley Matthews and Gordon Banks, and you realise what an honour it is for the family name to be up there.



NAMES IN THE FRAME: pictured with the Sporting Hall of Fame certificates are Gordon Banks and Phil Sproson, who accepted the accolade on behalf of his uncle Roy.

"He was an icon for the city, our family and the football club. He could have moved on for money, he could have gone on to play at a higher level, but his heart was always in Port Vale, and he was a Stoke-on-Trent man through and through."

Gordon Banks, who was born in Sheffield and started his football career with Chesterfield, is very much an adopted "Potter".

He said he was proud to be inducted into the city's Sporting Hall of Fame.

Gordon said: "To be recognised by the people of Stoke-on-Trent is amazing and I feel humbled by the experience. I've always been proud to be associated with Stoke-on-Trent. I played for lots of other clubs, but the Stoke team I played for at the time was exceptional. We reached two FA Cup semi-finals and lifted the League Cup, and I was so proud to represent the

city on the field. To be recognised for that makes me feel very honoured and tremendously proud to represent the football club and the city wherever I go."

Lord Mayor Councillor Denver Tolley praised both men for their contribution to local sport. He said: "I'm very proud to have such dedicated and loyal men as representatives of our city."

A 10ft statue of Roy Sproson leaping to head a ball has been produced and will be sited in a special landscaped area at Vale Park. Supporters have raised over £50,000 to create the bronze figure, and are now seeking donations to help put the statue in place. To make a donation please telephone Sproson Fund Treasurer Pete Williams, tel. 01782 661484.

JUSTICE SEEN JUSTICE DONE

Our City reports back on convictions secured to make Stoke-on-Trent safer for us all...

WESTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD:

Repeat offender Mark Holdcroft is back in prison for trying to carry out a robbery while on bail for threatening a woman with a knife. The 25-year-old from Ford Green Road,



Smallthorne made the threats just months after being released from jail on licence for an earlier robbery. Four months later he demanded £20 from a man in Hanley but the victim escaped and alerted a police officer. Holdcroft admitted affray, possession of an offensive weapon and attempted robbery and was jailed for 37 months.

EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD:

Three men have started lengthy jail sentences for stabbing a man to death in his Bentilee flat. The trio



left Robert Freeman in a pool of blood and went on the run before going to police. Gareth Dennis and Michael Grocott, both 29 and of Anchor Road, Longton, were convicted of murder and given life



sentences. The Judge set minimum tariffs of 17 years for Dennis and 15 years for Grocott. Thomas Boyd, 21, of Beverley Drive, Bentilee, was sentenced to seven years for manslaughter.

SOUTH WESTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD:

Shoplifter Jason Box hid a Stanley knife up his sleeve when he went out to steal from a shop. Box, who had a long-standing drug addiction at the time, was convicted at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court of stealing six jars of coffee from The Co-op in Newstead and having the knife. The Judge jailed Box, 37, of Ripon Road, Blurton, for 12 months and ordered the forfeiture and destruction of the knife. The court heard Box was undergoing drug rehabilitation.



NORTHERN NEIGHBOURHOOD:

Peacemaker Chris Moran, who is deaf, was knocked unconscious while trying to stop a fight outside a pub. His attacker, Ambrose Frost, got involved at some point and threw a single punch. Mr.



Moran suffered a fractured skull and bleeding to the brain. He was unconscious for about 10 minutes and lost his sense of taste for a while. He has still not regained his sense of smell. Frost, 20, of Sandy Road, Tunstall, was jailed for 13 months after admitting assault causing grievous bodily harm.

SOUTH EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD:

Five people had to be rescued by fire fighters after arsonist Kevin Waltho mistakenly targeted their home in Lightwood Road, Normacot. He had meant to scare somebody next door but set



fire to their carport instead, causing £12,000 damage. When police arrested him later he was carrying a knife. Waltho, 36, of Catherine Road, Chell, admitted setting the fire and possessing the knife and was jailed for three years. The court heard he had 25 convictions for 84 offences dating back to 1991.

New dental surgeries to tackle health inequalities



Mildred wins markets hamper competition

HUNDREDS of readers entered an *Our City* competition to win a £250 hamper courtesy of the city's markets.

Lord Mayor Councillor Denver Tolley invited lucky winner Mildred Dennis, 86, from Trent Vale to his parlour at Stoke Town Hall to receive her prize.

Market traders chose a selection of food so Mildred could make the most of her package of goodies.

To win the prize, Mildred correctly answered that there are 10 regular markets organised by the city council across Stoke-on-Trent.

Markets Manager Rob Nixon said: "Mildred is a regular at her local market and many of the traders at Stoke Market know her personally. It is always a pleasure to give one of the many prizes donated by the traders to one of our loyal customers."

● Pictured above is the Lord Mayor presenting Mildred with the hamper and a bouquet.

A DOUBLE dental whammy in Stoke-on-Trent is being tackled with the opening of two new NHS surgeries.

Like many other parts of the country, the city has suffered from a shortage of NHS dentists, meaning many patients have neglected to have regular check-ups because of the considerable cost of private treatment.

At the same time the levels of tooth decay and gum disease among people in Stoke-on-Trent are among the highest in England, while the city has one of the worst records of tooth decay among children aged under five.

Now access to affordable NHS care has been dramatically improved with the opening of the Genesis Dental Centre in Leek Road, Hanley, which has the facilities and staff to cater for as many as 7,000 patients.

The centre offers a high quality, modern service using state of the art equipment including digital X-ray facilities.

Experienced

Dr Shaam Shamsi, who leads the team of full time and part-time dentists at the new practice, said: "We aim to help people prevent tooth decay and gum disease. We've got a skilled and experienced team of staff who are all looking forward to working together to help reduce the dental health inequalities that exist in the area."

A second new NHS dental surgery will open on 1 April in Liverpool Road, Stoke, and will also offer places for 7,000 patients, who can pre-register by calling

0300 123 9134. Kate Taylor-Weetman, Consultant in Dental Public Health for NHS Stoke on Trent, said: "The new practices at Hanley and Stoke are targeting specific areas of the city where there are oral health problems as well as limited access to NHS



Dr Shaam Shamsi treats a patient at the new Genesis Dental Practice at Hanley.

dental care. Our aim is to make it easier for people in these areas to register with an NHS dentist and to improve their dental health.

"Dentists and their teams will help people to prevent tooth decay and gum disease so they will need fewer fillings, tooth extractions and complex dental work."

Genesis Dental Centre is open from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and is closed for lunch between 1pm and 2pm. To register or find out more go to www.genesisdentalcentre.co.uk or telephone 01782 280999 or 01782 379153.

For all city council services contact **234234**



Your HEALTH CENTRES

ABBEY HULTON (Main) Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service	0300 123 0976 0300 123 0987	NORTON	01782 534599
BENTILEE	01782 231300	PACKMOOR	01782 794600
BLURTON (Main) Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service	0300 123 0971 0300 123 0977	PICCADILLY CENTRE (Main) Sexual health helpline	0300 123 0985 0300 123 0970
BURSLEM	0300 123 0979	SMALLTHORNE	0300 123 0982
WHITFIELD VALLEY	01782 425720	STOKE Out of Hours District Nursing Service	0300 123 0986 0300 123 0989
FENTON	01782 743100	TRENT VALE	01782 425260
HANFORD (Main) Children's Airway Support Team	0300 123 0974 0300 123 0977	TUNSTALL (Main) Dental Advice Line	0300 123 0972 0300 123 0981
HANLEY	0300 123 0980	For more information and advice on health issues please call NHS Direct – 24 hrs a day	
LONGTON	0300 123 0993	0845 46 47	
LONGTON COTTAGE HOSPITAL	0300 123 0993	or visit www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk or www.nhs.uk	
MEIR	01782 425676		

Fire & Rescue contact numbers

S-O-T AREA COMMAND AREA COMMANDER Wayne Bowcock 01785 898894	ASSISTANT AREA COMMANDER - BURSLEM Ruth Watchorn-Rice 01785 898554	COMMUNITY SAFETY ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS Chris Thompson 01785 898883 Dave Gallimore 01785 898885 Paul Shaw 01785 898755	RISK REDUCTION OFFICERS Rehana Iqbal 01785 898891 Tracey Cresswell Longton 01785 898951 Neil Cheshire Burslem 01785 898498 Pete Hall Sandyford Station Neighbourhood Co-ordinator 01785 898886 07971 893263	RISK REDUCTION OFFICERS Mick Warillow Hanley 01785 898902
ASSISTANT AREA COMMANDER - LONGTON Glynn Luznyj 01785 898693	HEAD OF STOKE-ON-TRENT RISK REDUCTION Kelvin Knapper 01785 898882	RISK REDUCTION OFFICERS Donna Broadhead 01785 898904 Jim Taaffe 01785 898976	SAFER CITY PARTNERSHIP FIRE OFFICER Donna Broadhead 01782 235428 Donna.broadhead @stoke.gov.uk Mob 07967 573562	
ASSISTANT AREA COMMANDER - HANLEY Andy Leedham 01785 898765	ADMINISTRATION MANAGER Paula Goodwin 01785 898895			

In an emergency always phone 999 • To book your home fire risk check ring: 0800 0241 999

Your COUNCILLORS

Berryhill and Hanley East



RITA DALE
(City Independents)
(01782) 267451
rita.dale@stoke.gov.uk



ADRIAN KNAPPER
(Labour)
07714 334453
adrian.knapper@stoke.gov.uk



JOHN DAVIS
(City Independents)
(01782) 264126
07786 440876
john.davis@stoke.gov.uk

Burslem South



JAVID IQBAL NAJMI
(Labour)
07846 879920
javid.najmi@stoke.gov.uk



DEBRA GRATTON
(Labour)
07748 251695
debra.gratton@stoke.gov.uk



MOHAMMED PERVEZ
(Labour)
01782 232468
07919 917632
mohammed.pervez@stoke.gov.uk

Fenton



MICK BELL
(City Independents)
(01782) 847760
mick.bell@stoke.gov.uk



SARAH HILL
(Labour)
(01782) 845044
07584 607624
sarah.hill@stoke.gov.uk



PAUL SHOTTON
(Labour)
(01782) 434445
paul.shotton@stoke.gov.uk

Longton North



MARK DAVIS
(Labour)
07813 473625
mark.davis@stoke.gov.uk



TOM REYNOLDS
(Labour)
07850 828717
07712 350430
tom.reynolds@stoke.gov.uk



DENVER TOLLEY
(Labour)
(01782) 316815
07799 032939
denver.tolley@stoke.gov.uk

Northwood and Birches Head



DAVE SUTTON
(Liberal Democrat)
(01782) 542998
07512 564815
dave.sutton@stoke.gov.uk



JEAN BOWERS
(Liberal Democrat)
(01782) 262613
07712 350430
jean.bowers@stoke.gov.uk



KIERAN CLARKE
(Liberal Democrat)
(01782) 788010
07886 358143
kieran.clarke@stoke.gov.uk

Trentham and Hanford



TERENCE FOLLOWS
(City Independents)
(01782) 318127
07944 055379
terence.follows@stoke.gov.uk



MARK WRIGHT
(Conservative & Independent Alliance)
01782 657068
07814 744775
mark.wright@stoke.gov.uk



ROSS IRVING
(Conservative & Independent Alliance)
(01782) 335982
07900 135565
ross.irving@stoke.gov.uk

Abbey Green



ELLIE WALKER
(Community Voice)
(01782) 397870
07917 854352
ellie.walker@stoke.gov.uk



GWEN HASSALL
(Labour)
(01782) 263166
07851 751813
gwen.hassall@stoke.gov.uk



MELANIE BADDELEY
(BNP)
(01782) 763615
07979 508837
melanie.baddeley@stoke.gov.uk

Blurton



ROY NAYLOR
(Non-aligned)
(01782) 313975
07833 183922
roy.naylor@stoke.gov.uk



BRIAN WARD
(City Independents)
(01782) 312670
07879 115704
brian.ward@stoke.gov.uk



MARGARET BARBER
(Labour)
07825 882059
margaret.barber@stoke.gov.uk

Chell and Packmoor



TONY FRADLEY
(Labour)
07919 528515
tony.fradley@stoke.gov.uk



PETER KENT-BAGULEY
(Community Voice)
07773 464626
peter.kent-baguley@stoke.gov.uk



JANINE BRIDGES
(Labour)
(01782) 851842
07989 385631
janine.bridges@stoke.gov.uk

Hanley West and Shelton



ZULFIQAR ALI
(Liberal Democrat)
07838 262062
zulfiqar.ali@stoke.gov.uk



AMJID WAZIR
(Labour)
07747 830461
amjid.wazir@stoke.gov.uk



MOHAMMAD IQBAL
(Labour)
(01782) 266893
07792 071266
mohammed.iqbal@stoke.gov.uk

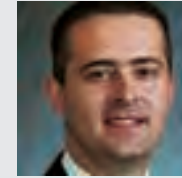
Longton South



BAGH ALI
(Labour)
(01782) 343246
07973 848428
bagh.ali@stoke.gov.uk



OLWEN HAMER
(Labour)
07538 697712
olwen.hamer@stoke.gov.uk



MICHAEL BARNES
(Community Voice)
(01782) 870065
07850 939611
michael.barnes@stoke.gov.uk

Norton and Bradeley



ALAN RIGBY
(Christian Independent)
(01782) 542364
07790 374152
alan.rigby@stoke.gov.uk



MICK SALIH
(Community Voice)
(01782) 533542
07977 843026
mick.salih@stoke.gov.uk



DUNCAN WALKER
(Labour)
(01782) 912422
duncan.walker@stoke.gov.uk

Tunstall



MEGAN RYAN
(Conservative & Independent Alliance)
(01782) 866761
07903 458768
megan.ryan@stoke.gov.uk



MOHAMMED MATLOOB
(Labour)
(01782) 577658
07811 147372
mohammed.matloob@stoke.gov.uk



MAJID KHAN
(Labour)
07989 441707
majid.khan@stoke.gov.uk

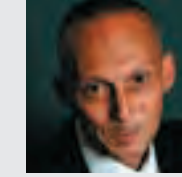
Bentilee and Townsend



STEVEN BATKIN
(BNP)
(01782) 859054
steven.batkin@stoke.gov.uk



MERVIN SMITH
(Labour)
(01782) 537211
07584 607623
mervin.smith@stoke.gov.uk



DAVID MARFLEET
(BNP)
(01782) 876661
07745 157918
david.marfleet@stoke.gov.uk

Burslem North



JEAN EDWARDS
(Labour)
(01782) 816171
jean.edwards@stoke.gov.uk

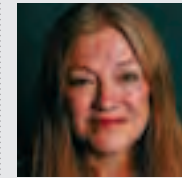


DAVID CONWAY
(City Independents)
(01782) 790922
david.conway@stoke.gov.uk



JOY GARNER
(Labour)
(01782) 768846
07986 442770
joy.garner@stoke.gov.uk

East Valley



HAZEL LYTH
(Conservative & Independent Alliance)
07825 732680
hazel.lyth@stoke.gov.uk



MATT WILCOX
(Labour)
07810 825600
matt.wilcox@stoke.gov.uk



JOANNE POWELL-BECKETT
(Cons & Independent Alliance)
07816 518275
joanne.powell-beckett@stoke.gov.uk

Hartshill and Penkhull



KASSEM AL-KHATIB
(Labour)
(01782) 849823
kassem.al-khatib@stoke.gov.uk



RANDOLPH CONTHE
(City Independents)
(01782) 256869
randolph.conthe@stoke.gov.uk



BARBARA BEESTON
(City Independents)
(01782) 612072
07729 896622
barbara.beeston@stoke.gov.uk

Meir Park and Sandon



CLIVE BRIAN
(Conservative & Independent Alliance)
(01782) 315702
07950 285366
clive.brian@stoke.gov.uk



JOHN BURGESS
(BNP)
(01782) 394397
07889 137308
john.burgess@stoke.gov.uk



ABI BROWN
(Conservative & Independent Alliance)
07793 844169
abi.brown@stoke.gov.uk

Stoke and Trent Vale



GAVIN WEBB
(Libertarian Party)
07949 026660
gavin.webb@stoke.gov.uk



JEREMY DILLON
(Labour)
07505 777571
jeremy.dillon@stoke.gov.uk



PAULINE JOYNSON
(Community Voice)
(01782) 413683
07813 836057
pauline.joynson@stoke.gov.uk

Weston and Meir North



MICHAEL COLEMAN
(BNP)
(01782) 311697
07926 532922
michael.coleman@stoke.gov.uk



JOHN DANIELS
(Conservative & Independent Alliance)
(01782) 396780
07885 894804
john.daniels@stoke.gov.uk



RUTH ROSENAU
(Labour)
(01782) 501940
07870 503575
ruth.rosenau@stoke.gov.uk

**FREE
EVENT**



1910 2010 Finale

Saturday 26 March

6pm - 8.30pm, Hanley Park

Pyrotechnic display and live performances from:

**Chipmunk • Katy B
Diagram of the Heart**



visit stoke.gov.uk for more information

The Sentinel

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city of
stoke
on trent

* artists may be subject to change