

our city

**Firing
links**
to create
**NEW
JOBS**

SEE FOUR-PAGE
MANDATE FOR CHANGE
SPECIAL



Public urged to have say on vision for city's future

By City Council Leader Councillor **MOHAMMED PERVEZ**

COUNCILLORS face a historic four year term during which we are determined to revise our city's fortunes and drive forward its regeneration.

Stable leadership created by the electoral system introduced in May means we have an unprecedented opportunity to achieve this... and deliver on our promises.

We have not wasted any time. In this issue of *Our City* we unveil our *Mandate for Change*. It sets out four strategic priorities which we believe are the key to a better future for everyone who lives and works in our city.

We believe the actions contained in the document will attract much-needed jobs to the city, and will support existing businesses to keep on growing.

We also believe that helping the people of Stoke-on-Trent lead independent lives is the key to focusing services to the most vulnerable, where they are really needed.

By delivering on promises and improving quality of life, we will make Stoke-on-Trent the best city to live in.

We unveil these priorities against a background of the biggest economic challenge in living memory.

To meet this challenge we will focus on our number one priority: "To make Stoke-on-Trent a great working city."

We want to work with the public and our partners to deliver this vision. In *Our City* we share this exciting vision with you, and give you the chance to say how you think we should move forward.

Please read the document. Details of how you can get in touch and give us your views are on page 14.

Elsewhere in the magazine is more evidence of our commitment to real improvements in the city. In just one day of action we cleaned and greened around 18 important locations around the city, cutting back vegetation and picking up litter. We also feature an investment to clear our pavements of unsightly chewing gum.

The point is that small things matter and we will always commit to these initiatives which make a difference to the public. But at this vital stage in the city's history, we also believe the big vision we unveil this week is a significant step forward.

Quit smoking targets surpassed to give health a boost

PUBLIC health in Stoke-on-Trent received a major boost with news of the city's best ever performance to tackle the UK's biggest killer.

NHS targets were smashed when 2,457 people in the city quit smoking, sailing past their aim of 2,095. Smoking kills an estimated 500 people in Stoke-on-Trent every year.

The city's Stop Smoking Service has been making huge strides to support residents who want to stub out their cigarettes for good.

Support groups

Over the last 12 months a Tobacco Control Alliance has seen a range of partners working together to tackle smoking and introduce support groups at locations across the city.

The city's Acting Director of Public Health Dr Zafar Iqbal said: "To have a record-breaking year is absolutely fantastic news as the service does a tremendous amount of work to support those people who want to quit smoking.

"I'd like to say a huge congratulations to all those people who have quit and managed to stay quit.

"Stopping smoking can not only improve your health but can also help you save £2,000 a year if you smoke 20 a day.

"The Stop Smoking Service can provide free support and medicines to help you quit for the cost of a prescription. The service will do all it can to further improve on these figures so the hard work does not stop here."

The NHS Stop Smoking service offers:



Terry Lymer, who quit smoking in 2011 after 30 years. He said: "The support of the group around me was brilliant and now I feel more alive."

- One-to-one and group support.
- Free, friendly advice on preparing to quit, quitting and staying quit.
- Stop smoking medicines such as patches or gum, which are available for the cost of a prescription or free to those who do not pay for their prescriptions.

Stop smoking support is also available in a range of places, including GP surgeries,

pharmacies and community settings, and even Port Vale Football Club.

Councillor Olwen Hamer, the council's Cabinet Member responsible for Adult Social Care, Health and Commissioning, said: "The negative effects of smoking are well known and we are proud to be working with the NHS to help reduce the number of people in the city who do smoke. To have this level of

response is outstanding and shows that the message of healthy living is getting out to our city's residents.

"However, we cannot be complacent and need to ensure that this downward trend continues as we strive to make Stoke-on-Trent a smoke-free city."

To contact your nearest stop smoking advisor please call freephone 0800 085 0928.

Former chain smoker Terry tells of the 59th birthday he never thought he'd live to see

CHAIN-SMOKING over 30 years took its toll on Terry Lymer's health and he knew he would have to quit or suffer the consequences.

He started smoking in his 20s and soon had a 30-a-day cigarette habit with cigars thrown in for good measure when he was out with his mates.

The previously healthy 59-year-old once worked as a miner and was forced to give up his retail job about five years ago when he started getting short of breath and a foot

condition badly affected his mobility.

Terry, who lives in Penkhull, said: "I couldn't get up the hill with the shopping without having to stop every five minutes. It was terrible. So I went to my doctor and she told me I had all sorts of smoking related problems I wasn't aware of like high blood pressure and high cholesterol."

A referral soon followed and Terry found himself at Stoke Library for an hour a week with a group of other smokers on a 12-week Smoking Cessation course.

"It was tough at first, but I used nicotine patches for about eight weeks and that helped. The support of the group around me was brilliant and now I feel more alive," said Terry, who has not had a cigarette since.

"I celebrated my 59th birthday in June and my brother Michael sent me a card which said 'Congratulations - You're Still Alive'. He didn't think I'd make it this far so I took it along to show the group. The course was really helpful and to be honest anything is better than smoking yourself to death."



COVER IMAGE: Pressure Cast Operator Ray Nicklin at work in Wade Ceramics' state-of-the-art new £7.5 million factory at Etruria Valley. The company's relocation, which enabled growth in production and secured jobs, was supported by the city council.



Our City is printed on recycled paper. When you have finished with this publication please help the environment by passing it on to a friend or recycling it.

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 webcasting. 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.



Better services which cost less and meet customers' needs are recipe for an 'excellent council'

MOHAMMED PERVEZ



Council Leader

PAUL SHOTTON



Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources

SARAH HILL



Cabinet Member for Finance

RUTH ROSENAU



Cabinet Member for Regeneration

JANINE BRIDGES



Cabinet Member for City Services

STOKE-on-Trent's new Cabinet has pledged to drive forward the city's regeneration through tough times ahead after historic local elections gave councillors a four-year term.

Council Leader Councillor Mohammed Pervez put together the group of politicians who will create policies to develop and improve the massive range of services offered by the council.

Each of the ten members has their own portfolio, or special area of interest, and will work closely with other councillors, teams of council officers, and the council's partners, to deliver the policies they set.

The Cabinet meets regularly and in public to make important decisions about issues as diverse as economic development and housing, regeneration and children's services.

Important business already completed since the Cabinet was formed in May

Cabinet promises progress in tough times ahead

includes engaging partners and communities to create the Mandate for Change vision for the future which will create a great working city.

The Cabinet is also working on tough decisions to implement further Government cuts for the 2011/12 budget.

Councillor Pervez said: "Given the challenges facing the council over the next few years I need a strong and decisive

Cabinet supporting me. I feel I have achieved this.

"Cabinet members have diverse backgrounds and bring skills and experience to help and support me in leading the city through the tough times ahead. The reality is the council needs to change, rethink and remodel how we deliver our services.

"We have started a revolutionary and

innovative change programme and we will continue this. Four years of political stability will allow us to implement our strategies and plans so the people of Stoke-on-Trent can see actual physical change.

"This, combined with better quality services costing less money and focused on customer needs, will see Stoke-on-Trent well on its way to becoming an excellent council."

MARK MEREDITH



Cabinet Member for Economic Development

GWEN HASSALL



Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods

OLWEN HAMER



Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Commissioning

ADRIAN KNAPPER



Cabinet Member for Transport and Planning

DEBRA GRATTON



Children's Services and Life Skills

**Palace date
a birthday
day out**

RESIDENTS' association stalwart Ethel Harris, pictured, enjoyed a right Royal 80th birthday present when she was a guest at a garden party in the grounds of Buckingham Palace.



Ethel, part of the neighbourhood team working tirelessly for the community in the Casewell Road area of Sneyd Green, was invited to the three hour summer gathering by Her Majesty The Queen.

She said: "It was a lovely day out and really special to see the Queen."

Now the association's hard work continues with, among other things, plans for Christmas visits by Santa Claus to local schools.

Packed day of citywide action *tidies up eyesores*

ANOTHER citywide clean up has taken place as part of Stoke-on-Trent City Council's ongoing Clean and Green initiative.

After the success of three previous one-day tidy ups, staff from the council's environmental services team joined forces with volunteers and residents associations to trim, prune and plant.

Teams started work at 7.30am, targeting overgrown hedges, trees and shrubbery while also sweeping pavements, removing graffiti and picking up litter.

They were out in several areas including Chell, Abbey Hulton, Bentilee, Fenton and Longton. Tree cutting and shrub planting was carried out on Parkhall Road while an overgrown area on the A34 in Trent Vale was also tackled.

Councillor Janine Bridges, Cabinet Member for City Services, said: "Clean and Green days have proven very successful so far, not only in improving the areas where work is done, but also in strengthening links with local

residents and businesses who have taken part.

"It's about giving people a sense of pride in their surroundings and making sure that people know the area where they live and work is being looked after.

"We also need the public to help us. While we can do lots of cutting back and planting, litter remains a serious problem. Our Environmental Crime Unit does a tremendous amount of work in changing the mindset of people who litter drop. We need the public to think twice before dropping litter and to help us keep Stoke-on-Trent a clean and safe city."

"It's about giving people a sense of pride in their surroundings and making sure that people know the area where they live and work is being looked after."

– COUNCILLOR JANINE BRIDGES



Countryside Team Leader Helen Meharg and Countryside Operative Andy Campbell from the Country Parks Team hard at work at Holden Lane Pools.




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Summer in the City

Find out what's happening across the city throughout the school summer holidays



stoke.gov.uk/summerevents





Emily Robinson, aged 21, of Clayton, checks out train times to London which could be slashed if Stoke-on-Trent were linked to the proposed high speed rail network.

Great working city would benefit all who live here and put us on map

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



YOU will no doubt have seen the words "Mandate for Change" appear in the centre pages of this edition of Our City. That phrase, at the moment, might not mean a lot to you, but over the course of the coming months and years, it will form the bedrock of how Stoke-on-Trent City Council works and what it stands for. The city faces unprecedented economic challenges in the future, and we must be equipped to meet these challenges head on. To do that, we need to change the way the city council, and the city itself, functions.

We need to make Stoke-on-Trent a great working city, one where jobs are plentiful and the city operates as efficiently as a Swiss clock. To enable this, we are promoting four strategic platforms built on an effective and confident council. The four key areas are making Stoke-on-Trent attractive for new businesses; supporting existing businesses; promoting healthy and independent lives and making the city a great place to live.

The overriding factor in all of this is a goal to create more jobs in the city – from which everything else can flourish. More jobs mean more income, better standards of living, improved quality of life and better choices of places to live. The potential for an Enterprise Zone makes the city more attractive for new businesses to relocate here, but we need to do more to market the city on the international stage and offer support to firms that want to come here. Existing companies will be able to benefit from increased financial advice and support, access to business coaches and recruitment. Helping to develop new local businesses is a key part of what we want to do.

Effective and confident

In creating and bringing new jobs to the city, we can make people more financially independent, and that will allow us to make sure the resources we have can be targeted in the right way. We can then do more to help those in need and help them gain a higher level of independence. In that respect, we also need to build an effective and confident council, making ourselves leaner and in a better position to put our resources to good use. By prioritising our services, we can ensure we get to help the right people, while continuing to offer great value for money.

The end result of all of this is making Stoke-on-Trent a great place to live. Creating a better choice of housing, improving our open spaces, and maximising the attractions we already have. We are the World Capital of Ceramics, home to the world famous Staffordshire Hoard, we host Premier League football and the Tour of Britain cycle race, and we will be a host city for the Olympic Torch Relay in 2012. All of this makes us proud, but with this "Mandate for Change", we will have even more to celebrate. This city deserves no less. Help us make it happen.

Council presses for high-speed hub

THE council is putting forward Stoke-on-Trent's case to benefit from the Government's proposed High Speed Railway phase 2 (HS2) that would link London with the Midlands and the North of England.

An interest in securing an intermediate station in the North Staffordshire area as part of the rapid rail link has been confirmed by Stoke-on-Trent City Council in its response to the Government's HS2 consultation. The council believes that a sub regional station in or near Stoke-on-Trent would bring new business opportunities and economic growth to the city.

The Government is proposing to construct a new Y-shaped high speed rail network, with an initial line between London and the West Midlands and onward legs to Leeds and Manchester.

It is forecast that the new network, expected to cost £32 billion to construct, would generate benefits nationally of around £44 billion as well as more benefits totalling a further £27 billion. By expressing a strong interest in the HS2 project, the council is trying to ensure that the city benefits from that investment. If HS2 is approved,

construction could begin in 2017 with the first trains running by 2025. At present the only high speed route in Britain is HS1 – the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.

Council Leader Councillor Mohammed Pervez said: "I believe there is real potential for significant regeneration benefits if we are part of HS2. If we had an intermediate station it would open up national and international markets for businesses in our city.

Huge advantage

"We know HS2 would bring Manchester within 75 minutes of London and we would be even closer. Shorter journey times to Heathrow would be a huge advantage, providing real sustainable economic growth for our region."

Councillor Pervez added: "We must make our city the place to bring business and a sub regional station would definitely enhance the attraction of Stoke-on-Trent

and the rest of the area for inward investment as well as providing rail connectivity. "In a time when demand on rail networks is steeply rising we need to ensure we are linked into projects like HS2."



A map showing the route of the proposed HS2 rail link which could bring massive benefits to the city's regeneration if the council's bid were successful.

Make it

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stoke.gov.uk

► Report a housing repair:
stoke.gov.uk/housingrepair

China Tales

By Placer



Paul Hackney with his book *Growing Barn Owls in My Garden*.

Love affair with barn owls is a publishing hoot for Paul

A WORD to the wise... if you spot a barn owl in North Staffordshire it's probably due to the dedicated efforts of Paul Hackney. Paul is the Assistant Director of Legal Services, heading up the city council's legal services team.

Away from his eyrie in the Civic Centre, the legal eagle became more of a mother hen as he kept breeding pairs of barn owls in captivity in order to release their offspring into the wild.

Now Paul has burst into print to recount how his conservation efforts helped to re-stock the local environment with around 250 of the magnificent creatures that were once close to extinction in this part of the world.

The title of his colour illustrated tome – *Growing Barn Owls In My Garden* – nicely sums up Paul's wildlife crusade during which he set up ideal barn owl breeding facilities in the garden of his home. The book includes the photo, below right, first seen in *City News* – forerunner of *Our City* – 15 years ago showing Paul with a tame female barn owl that became his close companion.

"I've always been keenly interested in natural history. It's thanks to some naturalists in the Lake District where I come from, that I got involved in efforts to re-stock the barn owl population, and it just snowballed," recalled Paul. "Apart from my tame owl, I could not allow myself to become attached to the birds because they had to be released. However, I still

monitor the release sites and it gives me great pleasure to see wild barn owls still in the area up to 10 generations later."

Paul wrote the book over a four-year period in between commitments of work and raising a family. As the city's Returning Officer he is a familiar face on TV as the man who announces the results at local and general election counts.

Now the city's expert on barn owls is planning another swoop on the literary world. Paul has penned the first few words of his second book he describes as a "prequel" about his passion for nature before the owls took over his life – and his garden.

● ***Growing Barn Owls In My Garden*, by Paul Hackney, published by Whittles Publishing £16.99. Available from good bookshops and online from Amazon or whittlespublishing.com**



HEATED DEBATE...
Overview and Scrutiny Manager John Ross and secretary Tracy Roberts act out the role of city councillors discussing a big decision in the council chamber.

Residents can become a councillor for a day

RESIDENTS can play the role of a city councillor to learn how important decisions are made in Stoke-on-Trent and how the public can influence them.

Fascinating sessions on how the council works are encouraging residents to get involved in improving their neighbourhoods and shaping Stoke-on-Trent's future.

The free events, entitled 'Who makes the big decisions?', aim to increase awareness among residents and community groups of how the council goes about its business, and how the public can influence it.

Residents will learn more about the role of the Cabinet and other

councillors, including how the public are informed about what decisions the Cabinet will make, petitions and consultation.

After being given information on the workings of the council, people who attend practice being either a cabinet member whose job is to make big decisions, or a councillor who is part of the overview and scrutiny process, who must ask questions to explore whether those decisions are right.

The practical, role-playing hour-and-a-half sessions are based on one of the actual big decisions the Cabinet needs to make.

The initiative is run by the authority's Overview and Scrutiny Team, which also supports councillors who monitor and challenge what the council does,

to improve services and make sure they respond to customers' needs.

For a long time the team has urged residents to get involved in council business by giving their views on consultation exercises or reporting any issues or concerns to their ward councillors.

Now it is hoped the 'Who makes the big decisions?' sessions will encourage more and more people to take part.

Overview and Scrutiny Manager John Ross said: "They really are fascinating sessions and the people who take part leave with a clearer understanding of how the council works."

"Often we are able to answer basic, but very important questions and misconceptions."

"For instance, we are sometimes asked if residents can ask their local councillor for help if they didn't vote for them, and, of course, the answer is yes."

"Some people also say they feel decisions at the council are made in secret and without notice. We signpost them to the Cabinet's Forward Plan, which is published on the council's website in advance."

"It goes to show that you can never take anything for granted, and that people who understand the council's processes are more likely to get involved."

New committees now in business

STOKE-on-Trent's new scrutiny committees have started meeting, and agendas are being posted on the city council's website at stoke.gov.uk

Chairs of the committees are Councillor Bagh Ali (Adults and Neighbourhoods including Statutory Health), Councillor Andy Lilley (Business Services), Councillor Dave Conway (Children and Young People) and Councillor Matt Wilcox (City Renewal).

Please check the current topics pages or updates on new reviews and ways to get involved log onto stoke.gov.uk/scrutiny or call 232956.

Fraud team uncover 1,600 people making false claims

FRAUD investigators at Stoke-on-Trent City Council have tracked down 1,616 people responsible for false claims worth £1.2 million over the past 16 months.

And a special project set up in May 2008 to tackle so-called "living together fraud" is now beginning to bear fruit with 46 prosecutions and the discovery of overpayments of £1.5 million. One individual had falsely claimed £63,626.

Housing and Council Tax Benefit fraud since April 2010 alone has cost the council £712,181. More than 190 people faced sanctions and cautions while 78 were prosecuted. Nine of them went to prison and a further 13 received suspended jail sentences.

Overpayments

Another 1,421 people claimed £519,415 in Single Person Discount from Council Tax which they were not entitled to. These cases were not treated as fraud but as errors.

Investigators turned the spotlight on housing tenancy fraud from March this year. The team is uncovering cases of properties lying empty when there are thousands on the council's waiting list who could be housed. There are also cases of tenants illegally sub-letting their council homes for profit.

There are 55 on-going investigations in this area and six properties have been recovered. Benefits overpayments of £17,000 have been identified as legal proceedings are considered.

Direct payments have also been investigated and a case uncovered in which a man continued to submit expenses claims and receive



SHOP THE CHEATS: Someone in your neighbourhood could be falsely claiming benefits and discounts to which they are not entitled.

payments for the care of his terminally ill father even though he had died some months before.

Corporate Fraud Manager Paul Bicknell said: "My team of 10 is doing a fantastic job of identifying the cheats and bringing them to justice. Benefit fraud affects us all because the con artists are taking money we

as a council could be spending elsewhere – so we have a zero tolerance policy. Our message to the fraudsters is clear.

"We will find you and when we do, we will prosecute you and bring the full weight of the law to bear, which may result in prosecution and even a prison sentence.

"We can't catch people on our own so we'd encourage anyone who has information about a fraudster to get in touch with us."

To report benefit fraud simply call the hotline at Stoke-on-Trent City Council on 01782 236800 or email fraud@stoke.gov.uk

Chance for the public to inspect accounts

RESIDENTS are being offered the chance to inspect the council's accounts as part of an ongoing commitment to increase transparency.

The period of public inspection is arranged on an annual basis and lasts for 20 working days. This year it began on Monday, 4 July and will continue until Friday, 29 July.

Individual inspections can be arranged by calling the council's financial service team to book a date and time.

Councillor Sarah Hill, Cabinet Member for Finance, said: "We are committed to increasing transparency at the council and we have already been publishing items of spend over £500 on our website since January this year.

"I would encourage any person who has a question about our accounts to contact Peter Bates, Assistant Director Financial Services on 232736 to arrange their individual inspection.

"It really is a valuable way for people to question or understand better the workings of the council and our accounts."

PUBLIC NOTICE

STOKE-ON-TRENT CITY COUNCIL

NOTICE OF NON-STATUTORY PUBLIC INQUIRY SECTION 15 OF THE COMMONS ACT 2006

Application to register land as a new Town or Village Green in respect of:-

- Land known as part of Park Hall Country Park and Golf Course, Hulme Road, Park Hall, Stoke-on-Trent
- Land off Anchor Road, Adderley Green, Stoke-on-Trent

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that an Inspector has been appointed by the Commons Registration Authority for Stoke-on-Trent to hold a non-statutory Public Inquiry into the following applications made under section 15(1) of the Commons Act 2006. The Inspector will attend:-

The Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 1HH

On Monday 8 August 2011 at 10.30am

To hold a non-statutory public inquiry into the applications.

The inquiry for the application in respect of Land off Anchor Road, Adderley Green is expected to run for up to two days.

The inquiry for the application in respect of land known as part of Park Hall Country Park and Golf Course, Hulme Road, Parkhall is expected to run for up to three days.

Any person wishing to view the documents relating to this application which the Applicant and Objector intends to rely upon may do so after 29 July 2011 by appointment if they contact Zoe Carr, Senior Legal Officer, Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 1HH (Tel: 01782 233744).

Civic Centre
Glebe Street
Stoke-on-Trent
ST4 1HH

Paul Hackney
Assistant Director (Legal Services)
Dated: 15 July 2011
Business Services

Don't miss out on free early education places

PARENTS across Stoke-on-Trent are being reminded that free part-time early education places are available to all children before they go to school.

The places beginning in the term after a child's third birthday are provided in a variety of voluntary, independent and private childcare settings.

Full-time nursery provision meanwhile is provided by the city council at most of its primary schools with applications for places for children born between 1 September, 2008, and 31 August, 2009, being taken from October this year to start nursery in September next year.

Parents can register their interest in a nursery place at their preferred school, which will then send out an information pack at the appropriate time. Online applications can also be made from 1 October through the council's website at stoke.gov.uk

Rowena Watkins, the council's School Organisation Manager, said: "Parents

need to be aware that as nursery education is not compulsory, not all applications will result in a place in one of our nursery classes.

"So it's a good idea to check the free part-time places also available and contact the Family Education Service for more information.

"Reception class admissions are entirely separate from nursery class admissions so it's worth reminding mums and dads that they will need to re-apply for a reception class place. Attending a nursery class won't guarantee a place in reception."

• For more information about the free Early Education Entitlement and a list of childcare settings who deliver early education contact the Family Education Service on 0800 015 1120.

For more information of how to make an application, families can also email the council's admissions team on admissions@stoke.gov.uk

NURSERY FUN:
four-year-old Freya Cope and her mum Kath in the Crescent pre-school nursery, Meir.



Stoke-on-Trent Housing Society Chairman Trevor Jones hands over the keys to Vikki Cave, the first customer at Garibaldi Close, with Stoke-on-Trent Lord Mayor Councillor Terry Follows and Lady Mayoress Jacqueline Pearson looking on.

New homes cut city's waiting list

LORD Mayor Councillor Terry Follows helped hand over the keys to the first resident of a £2.5million eco-friendly housing development.

Mum-of-two Vikki Cave, 28, has moved into the scheme at Garibaldi Close, Etruria, which has been built by Stoke-on-Trent Housing Society.

There are 21 two and three bedroom properties – all well-designed with eco-friendly features – 18 of which are for rent and three for shared ownership.

The homes are being let and sold by Newcastle-based Aspire Housing, although Stoke-on-Trent City Council has the right to nominate people from its housing waiting list to live there.

Senior Housing Needs Officer Hayley Prime said: "We have a very close working relationship with the housing associations developing new properties in Stoke-on-Trent and the council has agreements in place to nominate customers from our waiting list into those properties."

"This is great news as it not only enables us to reduce the waiting list, but also gives customers more choice."

Stoke-on-Trent Housing Society Chairman Trevor Jones said: "We have regenerated a run down area, providing better quality homes for the local community."

"The unique design of the properties has made the area more attractive as well as improving insulation and reducing heating bills."

"We hope to build on this and develop more new properties and increase social housing in Stoke-on-Trent."

Vikki, who will live in the property with her children Daniel, seven, and Charlie, five, said: "I'm very excited to be the first person to move into this development."

It is so much better than any other property I have seen by a mile and is safe for the children.

"It's in a good location and I love the design of the houses – especially the large windows."

Delighted Vikki Cave with the keys to her new home in Garibaldi Close.

“It is so much better than any other property I have seen by a mile and is safe for the children. It's in a good location and I love the design of the houses – especially the large windows.” – VIKKI CAVE

Know someone selling fakes?



Call the fakes hotline anonymously on

01782 238444
stoke.gov.uk/fakes



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OPEN DAYS

Sunday
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Cabinet members Councillor Mark Meredith (Economic Development) and Councillor Adrian Knapper (Transport and Planning) with the Home to Work travel packs which will help people travel to their jobs.

£50 voucher up for grabs in mag survey

£50 worth of vouchers to spend in the city's popular markets are up for grabs for people who help the council to improve *Our City*.

The magazine, which was named the UK's Best Council Publication in 2008, aims to include as many people as possible in promoting everything good about Stoke-on-Trent and telling residents how they can access the public services they need.

But in a bid to make the magazine even better, and help it reflect what the city's people want to see, *Our City* wants readers to answer the following questions:

- What do you like best about *Our City*?
- Is there anything you don't like?
- What would you like to see more of in the magazine?

Send your answers by email to ourcity@stoke.gov.uk, or write the answers on a postcard including your name and contact details and send to Freepost *Our City*.

All answers will be entered into a prize draw and the first pulled out of the hat on 26 August will receive vouchers to the value of £50 to spend in the city's markets.

Learning about other cultures

SCHOOLCHILDREN and their teachers have been exploring the diverse contributions refugees bring to the UK as part of a week-long celebration.

Pupils worked with officers from the Narrowing the Gap team within the council's Learning Services.

They raised awareness about arts, music, food and culture and the difficulties facing asylum seekers.

The team also worked with schools to raise awareness about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month.

Jo Softley of the Narrowing the Gap Team said: "Stoke-on-Trent is a city rich in culture and the team support schools in raising the achievement of children and young people from a range of religious, social and cultural backgrounds."

"We have been working with schools to raise awareness of Refugee Week and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month by delivering workshops to children and staff."

Transport to work gives big jobs boost

A NEW scheme has been launched that is designed to help people in Stoke-on-Trent overcome transport difficulties they may encounter when trying to access employment opportunities.

Home to Work – which is jointly funded by the city council and the European Regional Development Fund – offers cost-effective support and advice regarding the best transport options.

The help depends on needs and circumstances, but will include:

- A travel information package – highly individualised advice and information giving tailored door-to-door travel information
- Public transport tickets – if appropriate – for example those who apply could be offered a bus pass.
- Car share – the Home to Work team will try to arrange a scheme, which will allow those

using the service to share the cost of travelling to work.

The aim of providing the support is to encourage people to eventually sort their own travel arrangements while giving them any support needed in the meantime. Different levels of support are available depending on specific needs.

Work with employers

The project will also work with employers in the city and across North Staffordshire to encourage sustainable travel among their workforce.

To be entitled to support from the Home to Work scheme people must:

- Live in Stoke-on-Trent.
- Be applying for a job, have a job or a job offer in the North Staffordshire area.
- Be aged 16 or over.

Councillor Adrian Knapper, Cabinet Member for Transport and Planning, said:

"The Home to Work team will work closely with our existing staff to ensure the whole of the transport network is available to people who are having difficulty getting to work, or difficulty getting a job where they would need to travel.

"It will hopefully increase accessibility for people looking for work who are being limited by their lack of transport, and help others find alternative, sustainable ways of getting to their current job."

Councillor Mark Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said: "Giving people more ways to get to work, or helping them with transport so they can get a new job, is part of the city council's role in helping local employers maintain a reliable workforce."

"By encouraging people to use different types of sustainable transport, we can open up the job market to people who are restricted in how they can get to work."

For more details about Home to Work call 01782 235367 or email H2W@stoke.gov.uk

Enterprise Zone bid to kick start city economy

BUSINESSES located in North Staffordshire's proposed Enterprise Zone (EZ) will be entitled to a whole raft of incentives, which are aimed at stimulating the economy and job creation.

If given the green light, the EZ would be spread over three development sites locally – and companies situated in one of the areas would benefit from tax breaks, relaxed planning rules and superfast broadband.

The target is to create up to 14,000 jobs in a number of different sectors by attracting potential inward investors, offering a range of ready-made sites, all with something unique to offer. The three EZ areas are based at Etruria

Valley, Hadleigh Business Park, in Blythe Bridge, and Keele Science Park in Newcastle.

The proposed EZ covers approximately 150 hectares and the majority of the land is ready to build on.

Hadleigh Business Park is seen as an important location for large logistics companies, while Keele is ideal for creating knowledge-based and business service jobs.

Maitland Hyslop, Chairman of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) – which is business-led and supported by the city council and Staffordshire County Council – said: "Twenty one Enterprise Zones are being set up

by the Government as a way of encouraging development. They will benefit from simplified planning rules, discounted business rates of up to £275,000 over five years and funding for superfast broadband."

A total of 29 LEPs are bidding for the second round of 10 EZs. However, the North Staffordshire site has received the support of the Prime Minister David Cameron.

City council Leader Mohammed Pervez said: "It is our intention to make Stoke-on-Trent a working city again and this kind of major project is exactly the kick start the city desperately needs."

BEFORE

AFTER



Pavements in Burslem town centre which were given the Schmidt treatment.

Hot-stuff Schmidt cleans up on town centre pavements

PAVEMENTS across Stoke-on-Trent are getting a hot wash now a £100,000 machine is working its magic as part of a new citywide cleaning regime.

The Schmidt Hotjet was being used mainly in the City Centre when Environmental Services Manager Andy Chesworth took on the service and decided to expand it to transform all town centres and public areas.

He said: "The machine wasn't being used to its full potential so now it is cleaning more areas to make the city more attractive for residents and

visitors alike. Three operatives have now been trained to use the machine all year round unless frost stops us, and the hotjet can now be seen going around the city giving a hot wash and scrub to all block paved and paved areas."

Town centres in Tunstall, Burslem, Stoke, Longton, Fenton, Meir and Hanley are now on a rota for a regular clean from Monday to Friday while the area around Stoke Station is also included as a main gateway into the city. Paved areas around all

monuments are also included.

Andy said: "We were determined to make the city a much more welcoming place and the hotjet is playing a major role in that. Our main operative Dean Parry, pictured, is bringing faded, dirty paved areas back to their original gleam and he has already started to brighten up the city."

● Do you know a pavement the Schmidt could clean up? Write to Freepost Our City or email ourcity@stoke.gov.uk

Starting grass fires is no game.

FLAMES AREN'T GAMES GRASS FIRES KILL



If our Firefighters are putting out a grass fire caused by a child, it means they can't be at the real emergencies - like house fires where people may be at risk of dying or being seriously injured.

Tell your child not to play with fire - it can turn into arson.

www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk

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for every fire that you see

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
preventing • protecting • responding



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Looking for work?

We'll help you gain the confidence and skills you need to get a job.

- Assess your skills
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www.jet2work.org.uk
email jet@stoke.gov.uk or call
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for more information

jet
jobs enterprise training



New housing development, Tunstall



Cauldon Ceramics Limited, Tunstall

Mandate for Change



Stoke-on-Trent is facing a challenging economic period and needs a clear plan focusing on "a working city".

This four page pull-out sets out our mandate for change, based on four strategic aims all underpinned by an effective and confident council.

- Make Stoke-on-Trent the place to bring business.
- Support and develop existing business.
- Work with people to promote independence and healthy lives.
- Make Stoke-on-Trent a great city to live in.

Working with our partners, we will deliver this plan over the next four years and we are starting now. We want to share this exciting journey with you and we want you to get involved.

Bringing skilled work to Stoke-on-Trent



Distilling equipment, Ceram Research, Penkull

Stoke-on-Trent has a proud industrial heritage of hard working people producing first-class products to a world market. But the industrial landscape has changed and the city is now suffering from a lack of job opportunities.

More jobs mean:

- More income for the city and its residents;
- Better standards of living and better quality of life;
- Better choice of places to live, and
- More things to see and do.

If we create more jobs in Stoke-on-Trent, things will get better – it's as simple as that. We need to make Stoke-on-Trent a GREAT WORKING CITY.

Mandate for Change

Mandate for Change... the four strategic priorities

► Make Stoke-on-Trent the place to bring business

The best way to create more jobs in the short term is to encourage businesses to locate here. The city has a tremendous amount to offer.

We need to target big businesses and show them why they should come to Stoke-on-Trent. This means improving the way the city looks, marketing ourselves on the international stage and working hard to develop a world-class Enterprise Zone with an attractive offer of incentives and support. We will continue to improve the City Centre, promoting our retail offer and the Central Business District.

We want to be a leader in the green revolution encouraging businesses by promoting self-sufficient, sustainable low carbon energy across the city with the aim of offering stable energy prices.

We will make the gateways to the city loud and proud - you will know when you have arrived in Stoke-on-Trent!

We have a diverse range of land and buildings available for development. Come and talk to us. We want to do business with your business.



Etruria Valley, potential Enterprise Zone site

...make Stoke-on-Trent the place to bring business

...make Stoke-on-Trent a great city to live in

Make Stoke-on-Trent a Great Working City

...support and develop existing business

...work with people to promote independence and healthy lives



Michelin, Trent Vale

A 'red carpet' approach to inward investment

Stoke on Trent can provide:

- An extensive and available workforce
- Excellent connectivity to the rest of the UK – with quick and easy access to major motorways and rail networks
- Green, low-cost energy provision
- A possible Enterprise Zone which provides incentives for businesses to trade here
- Plentiful brown-field land available for development



Emma Bridgewater, City Waterside

► Support and develop existing business

We need to support our existing businesses and help them to grow which will create more jobs for our local people. This means making it easier for businesses to operate by having an open approach to planning.

We will also support businesses by ensuring they have access to good advice and finance packages as they look to expand and by offering a range of different accommodation options, access to business coaches and recruitment. We will also provide support to people who want to set up new businesses and help those looking for work to develop their skills to fit the needs of local employers.

Working closely with local agencies such as the Chamber of Commerce, we will identify and support fast growing enterprises by helping to remove barriers to success.

We will boost the North Staffordshire economy by giving local businesses the support, information and contacts they need to pitch for and win major contracts.



Steelite International, Burslem

We need to ensure that businesses can reach their customers. We need to improve the flow of traffic through our road network and invest in better linkages from our major railway station to the City Centre.

We need to focus on developing skills by setting children on the right path, helping people back into work and enabling those already working to grow to their potential. This means aligning our schools and universities to focus on the skills that local businesses want.



Vodafone, Etruria Valley



Supporting our vulnerable children to reach their full potential

► Work with people to promote independence and healthy lives

With fewer resources available we need to make sure that money and services are targeted at those most in need and to work with people towards greater levels of independence.

Creating new job opportunities will mean that more people can be financially independent. By tailoring our care services we can help people to take more responsibility for their own needs.

Our offer will include access to personalised services which meet individual needs and our aim will always be to have people back in their own homes as quickly as possible.

We need to help our communities work together to improve their own lives



Providing green healthy spaces



Enabling independent living

Working closely with our partners, sharing information and resources, we will continue to protect the most vulnerable in our communities.



Working towards a healthy lifestyle

Tackling child poverty and supporting our older people towards greater independence will remain key priorities.

Through education and support we will work with parents and families to ensure that children reach their potential. A secondary schools modernisation plan will deliver new schools and upgrades across the city.

We will work to ensure that families of all ages are encouraged to live healthy lives.

► Make Stoke-on-Trent a great city to live in

We want to make Stoke-on-Trent a great city to live in. We can do this if we create a better choice of housing to suit everyone's needs, improve our open spaces and the look and feel of the city and if there are exciting things for people to do in their free time.

Stoke-on-Trent is home to two football clubs – the 2011 FA Cup finalists Stoke City FC and Port Vale FC, winners of the Football League Trophy in 1993 and 2001.

We are the World Capital of Ceramics and residents and visitors can enjoy our factory tours, world class museums, shops and city parks. We are home to the Staffordshire Hoard – the country's largest and most valuable collection of Anglo-Saxon gold ever found.

In 2008 Stoke-on-Trent was awarded cycling city status for its network of greenways and beautiful countryside. New cycle routes, bike hire centres

and training courses have been created to get people out on their bikes. Our commitment to cycling has seen the city host the Tour of Britain – the biggest free-to-view professional sporting event in the UK – for the past three years, and will be back in 2011.

In May 2012 we will be a host city for the Olympics Torch Relay and evening celebration – a wonderful opportunity for Stoke-on-Trent.



Regent Theatre, City Centre

Mandate for Change

But we will need to get tough too. We will no longer tolerate:

- Antisocial behaviour
- Crime and disorder
- Benefit fraud
- Council tax arrears
- Housing rent arrears
- Fly tipping

Mandate for Change

Develop an effective and confident council

In order to deliver our four strategic aims and to support the fundamental changes to the city, the council itself needs to change. It needs to deliver more for less in different and innovative ways.

We have already begun to make the council leaner and more efficient. We need to continue the journey by being careful about the way we spend every penny of public money and by using the right technology to support our services.

Working together with our partners our Mandate for Change means we will do the best we can for Stoke-on-Trent



Stoke City FC fans at the FA Cup Final 2011

Picture courtesy of Staffordshire Sentinel News & Media



Cleaning and greening Stoke-on-Trent



Section of the Centenary oil painting of the Council in 2010 by Rob Pointon

Thank you for reading this Mandate for Change for Stoke-on-Trent.

We now have a four year period of stable political leadership which will be crucial in shaping Stoke-on-Trent and what the city can offer to its communities and its businesses.

Our aim is to bring the economy of Stoke-on-Trent alive again.

Our journey has begun and in the face of significant financial challenges we have successfully reduced our costs whilst protecting the most vulnerable in our society.

Work has started on the new city

centre bus station, our University Quarter is expanding, a new sixth form college has been built and development continues at City Waterside (new housing developments). We also have a Centre of Refurbishment Excellence (CoRE – a unique scheme showcasing best practice in refurbishment) and we are also creating a central business district and a new shopping centre aligned to the bus station.

Working in partnership with private, public and voluntary organisations, we have a dedicated team of councillors and officers in place to transform our city.



Port Vale FC, Burslem

Picture courtesy of Staffordshire Sentinel News & Media



Tour of Britain, Stoke-on-Trent 2010



Artists impression of East West Precinct, City Centre

Now we need you. We have to get this right and we need to know what you think.

So tell us! Here's how you can get in touch:

Please write to Freepost *Our City*, or you can email us at: mandate@stoke.gov.uk

You can fill in a form online at: stoke.gov.uk/mandate

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with us. We will publish your views over the next few months.

Councillor Mohammed Pervez
Leader of the Council

John van de Laarschot
Chief Executive



TLC Responder Paul Gallagher is one of the staff available around the clock to help members of the scheme.

Lifeline offered all day, every day

AN emergency response service that offers a lifeline to elderly and vulnerable people who fall ill or are injured in their homes is now providing around-the-clock support.

The Response Service – which is part of the Telecare and Lifeline Service – is now accessible any time of the day and night, including bank holidays.

Clients are issued with pendants that they press if they feel unwell. A responder – who is trained in First Aid, moving and handling and fire and home risk assessment – can be with them quickly to get them back on their feet and deal with the problem, without an unnecessary hospital visit.

It is free to people who pay for the Lifeline Service (which costs 51p per day), or who receive Telecare support following a social care assessment.

Telecare Manager Peter Ball said: “We have about 1,000 clients registered for the Response Service and even before going 24/7 the team handled at least 50 call outs per month.

“These were dealing with falls, carrying out welfare checks and even administering first aid on occasions.

“Every month, the combination of telecare and emergency responder prevents dozens of hospital admissions and helps people to stay safe at home.”

● For more details about the Telecare, Lifeline or Response Service log onto stoke.gov.uk/telecare or call 01782 234545.

Close team leads the battle against litter and dog fouling

AS an Investigations Officer for the city’s Environmental Crime Unit, Dominic Gratty is used to his fair share of verbal abuse from angry and frustrated members of the public.

Issuing fixed penalty notices for littering and dog fouling is not the easiest job in the world – particularly as people do not always see the bigger picture and understand why a zero tolerance approach is necessary.

“People will ask me ‘What is the harm in dropping a cigarette butt?’ or ‘There’s a lot worse crime out there – why are you fining me for this?’ They don’t think they are doing any damage,” he said.

“However, the fact is we have to have a zero tolerance approach. People need to know that littering and dog fouling will lead to a fine in all circumstances. The vast majority of people know that it is wrong and illegal and we will enforce this.

“Dropping litter soon adds up too – and then the cost to the city in terms of cleaning up all the mess really starts to rise.

“It eats away at precious resources that could be better spent elsewhere.

“That’s the message we are

trying to get across and that’s why we work with the public to ensure they know that littering and dog fouling is not just bad for the environment it also impacts on the local economy.”

Being part of a small team, Dominic and his colleagues very much depend on the vigilance of members of the public in order to help them carry out their job.

They are on the look out for everything from people discarding cigarette butts in the streets to those who unscrupulously fly-tip large amounts of waste.

Tip-offs are lifeblood

He said: “Stoke-on-Trent is a busy area to cover for a team of just eight people so there is only so much we can observe ourselves.

“That is why we work closely with residents’ associations, businesses and individuals who act as our eyes and ears.

“Tip-offs and calls from the public are our lifeblood and we always welcome people calling us to give us information.”

Dominic’s role comes with the powers to issue fixed penalty notices of £80 for anyone found littering and £50 for dog fouling.

He also works closely with Staffordshire Police, the city council’s CCTV control centre

and other organisations when the need arises.

He added: “Verbal abuse is a day-to-day occurrence and we tend to deal with that by talking things through with the person involved.

“But sometimes members of the public will give us false names or details to attempt to avoid the fine.

“This in itself is an offence and by working with the police and other organisations we are able to track them down and take court action.”

The partnership approach paid dividends earlier this summer when the team’s work resulted in 22 successful prosecutions against people who failed to pay the notices for littering or dog fouling – totalling £6,300 in fines.

Where possible the Environmental Crime Unit try to



Working together to clean up the neighbourhood... Dorothy Matthews, of Tunstall North Residents’ Association, acts as the council’s eyes and ears by pointing out a clean-up issue to Investigations Officer Dominic Gratty.

take a proactive and educational approach, by working with members of the community as well as businesses and organisations.

A good example was the Eco-School event held in June. This involved representatives from 100 schools around the city taking part in an educational workshop at the King’s Hall, Stoke, highlighting the issues surrounding dropping litter.

“Our role is two-fold,” added Dominic. “First it is to re-educate people and to get them to understand why littering and dog fouling can not be taken lightly, and secondly it is enforcement – where and if it is needed to issue the fixed penalty notices to reinforce the message.”

● To contact the Environmental Crime Unit with any information call 01782 232233.

Support turns lives around

THOUSANDS of vulnerable people in Stoke-on-Trent are turning their lives around thanks to the city council's Supporting People Programme.

Ex-offenders, people at risk of domestic abuse, older people, refugees, those with mental health needs or drug or alcohol problems, learning disabilities or people with HIV/Aids are just some of those who receive support that helps them live independently.

A network of council services, agencies and voluntary sector organisations are commissioned by the team to provide support which is usually housing-related but can also provide help in other ways like benefits advice and access to training and employment.

During the year 2010/11 alone, more than 1,700 people were supported with short-term services, while many others are helped on a longer-term basis.

Supporting People helped people achieve more than 8,000 outcomes in 2010/11 – including helping them move on to independence, manage debt, maximise income, attend training or education and find a job.

Samantha Williamson, Research and Development Officer with the Supporting People Team, said: "The emphasis on what we do is to help vulnerable people to lead independent lives, or to provide older people with support to continue to live independently in their own home."

● For more information or to get involved in the Independent Advisory Team phone 01782 232123 or email supporting.people@stoke.gov.uk

Heads take on UK roles

HEADTEACHERS Rachel Beckett and Dianne Mason have been selected for leading UK-wide roles in supporting schools in challenging circumstances.

They are two of only 100 to be appointed to the role of National Leader of Education (NLE) in its latest recruitment.

Rachel – Headteacher at Sandon Primary School in Meir and Executive Headteacher at Hollywall Primary School – and Dianne – Executive Headteacher at St. Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School, Tunstall and St. Peter's Catholic Primary – will gain training to drive forward improvements in schools from the National College for Leadership in Schools and Children's Services.

Ethan Hoskins, 10, of St. Joseph's at Goldenhill, and Keeley Reynolds, 10, of Goldenhill Primary School.



Pupils forge fun links with local firefighters

COMMUNITY relationships at the new Sandyford Fire Station really are growing in more ways than one – especially now local children have teamed up with firefighters to tend four allotments at the site.

The £4.5 million facility is already proving a big hit after it opened as the city's first ever full-time community station in October last year.

Several organisations and groups use it for meetings, one-off open days have been staged there and local people even use the state-of-the-art gym facilities.

Now four schools have joined forces with the four different watches at the station to grow fruit and vegetables in plots on the site.

One and a half hour sessions are staged for youngsters from Haywood Engineering College as well as younger pupils from Goldenhill, Summerbank and

St. Joseph's Catholic primary schools.

Watch Manager Pete Hall, who is also Neighbourhood Co-ordinator, said: "We look at Sandyford as a community facility with a fire station attached so we're trying to break down barriers. In the past people just walked past the bay doors.

"Now we get all sorts of people in. It really is the bees knees. Two scout groups have their meetings here, Approach staged an Alzheimers open day and the Kidsgrove Wheelers are based here too.

"Our community room is fantastic. But for our latest initiative we decided to go outside and set up the allotments.

"The kids learn about road safety as they come down here and all sorts of other things while they're weeding, planting and growing, like measuring and maths.

"We are also hoping to tie in healthy cooking and cooking safety, adding some simple fire safety messages."



Harriet Hockins, aged 9 and Ryan Taylor, 10, from St. Joseph's of Goldenhill, tend to the runner beans.

Children aged eight to 11 from Goldenhill Primary School are among those enjoying getting their hands dirty.

Assistant Head Teacher Sarah Howson said: "We're trying to get our Eco Silver Award at the moment so we were looking at a large initiative to help us do this."

Two classes have already been to the station armed with seeds

and planted their L-shaped plot with runner beans, lettuce, herbs, a pumpkin, courgettes and even strawberries.

Children take turns and go along four times a term, though the school is considering five termly trips instead.

"They love it and it's been really useful helping them learn about the life cycle of plants. Some children don't know where their food comes from so this is a lovely experience for them.

"They also like getting their hands dirty," said Sarah.

"It's a wonderful place and the firefighters are so helpful.

"The community room has an interactive white board so we're able to take lessons down there.

"Altogether it's been very good and one of the watches looks after our allotment in between times.

"They really do look after us which is great – just so long as they don't eat all our strawberries!"

Cyclists think station is wheely great

A NEWLY-FORMED cycling club has very close links with Sandyford Community Fire Station and credits Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service with helping them to get started.

Members of the Kidsgrove Wheelers, formed in 2007, started staging their monthly meetings at Sandyford as soon as the station opened in 2010.

They use the community room for free each month and up to 16 members attend 'turbo training' with their bikes one night a week during the winter off-season.

Club Treasurer Pauline Wilkinson said: "The lads attach their bikes to the turbo machine, which

measures their performance, and they get instructions from a DVD on the community room's TV screen.

"The firefighters at Sandyford are brilliant. Everyone takes care of us and it's a massive help to us that it's free. We didn't have much money when we first formed the club so it's a real asset that we don't have to pay."

The club recently took part in a family fun day at the station and is using it as the start and finish point of its Hill Billy 50 mile challenge ride on 4 September.

● Partner and community groups can book the facilities by ringing 01785 898897 during office hours.

Public asked to vote for their school patrol champ

THE hunt is on for Stoke-on-Trent's next School Crossing Patrol Warden of the Year.

Parents, children and even motorists are being urged to nominate their favourite as the event, which recognises those who help pupils across roads near schools, enters its sixth year.

Kath Steele, the council's School Crossing Warden Area Manager, said: "We have 84 wardens who cover between 80 and 90 schools, making sure our children stay safe, come hail, rain or shine.

"And we think it's important to recognise their fantastic contribution so we want you to tell us about the qualities of your favourite. Whether they're really cheerful and friendly, fantastic communicators or just really hot on road safety, write in and tell us."

Two wardens won last year, Roy Baggaley, of Norton Primary School, who has been triumphant three times so far, and 59-year-old Sheila Walker, who works at the junction of London Road and Rookery Lane in Stoke near Oakhill Primary School.

Sheila, who has been a warden for 11 years, said: "I couldn't believe it when I won last year. It was brilliant.

Big smile on face

"I really enjoy my job. I know most of the names of the little ones. Those I've seen through nursery are leaving this year so that's a little sad but mostly it puts a big smile on my face. I've got one little lad who brings me bunches of privet leaves as a present.

"The other day he brought me a stick!"

Nominations for this year's award should include the name of the warden if known, and the location where they work.

The letter should say, in no more than 30 words, why the nominated warden deserves to win.

Entries will close on 9 September and a panel of judges will announce the winner in October before handing over the winner's shield and a certificate. Send your nomination to School Crossing Patrol Warden of the Year, PO Box 1855, Cromer Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 6YS.



Last year's champion school crossing patrol Sheila Walker, pictured at work outside Oakhill Primary School.

JUSTICE SEEN JUSTICE DONE

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

MOST-WANTED ARRESTED IN TENERIFE:

It took two years but Jonathan Lejman was eventually tracked down to a beach on the holiday island and extradited back to Stoke-on-Trent to face justice. The 30-year-old of no fixed address had gone on the run after carrying out a masked knife attack during a break-in at a house in Tunstall. His victim suffered a fractured cheekbone and knife wound to his face. Mobile phone records and bloodstains linked Lejman to the incident and he was jailed for six years and eight months at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court for aggravated burglary.



STREET ATTACK PAIR LOCKED UP:

Two men who kicked and clubbed another man with a metal bar have been sent to a young offenders' institution. John Leyland and Craig Gaunt, both aged 20, targeted their victim amid claims he had been at a party where there had been a dispute over money for alcohol. He was tripped up, kicked about five times, struck with the bar around ten times and needed stitches in hospital. Leyland, from Carson Road, Stanfields, was sentenced to 30 months after he pleaded guilty to wounding with intent. Gaunt, of High Street, Tunstall, admitted unlawful wounding and was given eight months.



REPEAT CAUGHT ON CCTV:

Burglar Mark Cookson, who has been in trouble since he was 14, has been jailed for three years for his latest crimes. Security cameras captured the 39-year-old climbing a wall and trying to get into a house in Sneyd Green. Minutes later he stole gardening equipment from a nearby garage. When neighbours confronted him, he was wearing a jacket he had just taken. Cookson, of no fixed address, admitted four offences in court and asked for a shop theft to be taken into consideration. The court heard he had 51 previous convictions for 149 offences.



HEROIN DEALER JAILED:

Police found more than £10,000 cash and 12 wraps of heroin during two car searches and two raids on Derek Beech's home. He was first stopped in May last year and his address in Newchapel Court in Tunstall was searched. His home was again raided in September and his car searched 12 days later. Beech, aged 56, was convicted at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court on three counts of possessing heroin with intent to supply and was jailed for six years. The court was told he was a prolific gambler with losses of £16,000 on bets placed totalling £147,724.



Foster carers... our city needs you all year round

FOSTERING Fortnight is over for another year but foster carers are needed in Stoke-on-Trent all year round.

So people interested in providing a home and helping local children stay local are again being urged to come forward.

Did you know that:

- There are around 400 children in care in Stoke-on-Trent
- There are 189 foster families.
- There is no such thing as a typical foster family - they are as diverse as the children they care for.

Keeping children local is important. Paul Stokes, Principal Manager, Fostering, at Stoke-on-Trent City Council, said:

"Fostering for Stoke-on-Trent is not just about working for an outstanding service, it is about working with the children of our city.

"We need to encourage local people to come forward to look after the young people of Stoke-on-Trent so they can retain vital contacts with their communities, continue to attend the same schools and see their friends and families.

"We want to help them live life as normally as possible even though they're not waking up in their family home."

Stoke-on-Trent Fostering Service, which was rated outstanding by Ofsted inspectors in October 2010, provides full training and support for its foster carers.

It also operates Friday morning drop-in sessions so people can talk to team members about fostering.

- Interested? Call 01782 234555, contact duty.fostering@stoke.gov.uk or visit stoke.gov.uk/fostering



Mums-to-be offered help and support

THE Safer City Partnership is funding a service that helps mums-to-be who have substance misuse issues.

The Pregnant Drug User Clinic, which is run by CRI, is based at the antenatal clinic at the University Hospital of North Staffordshire's Maternity Unit.

A team of community nurses, midwives and other health and wellbeing experts work with women through all stages of their pregnancy offering specialist advice and support.

They look at all aspects of their lives including health problems related to drug misuse that might be affecting the unborn babies, as well as the wider social picture.

Community Nurse Kerri Bates said: "We look at all aspects of their lives from health problems to social problems and any issues that might be affecting them, such as domestic abuse."

"We also work with other agencies such as Adsis and the Womens Project, and where possible we refer the women into their services."

Kerri added: "We have recently encountered a general increase in the number of women referred to the clinic."

"They are engaging really well with us and in most cases are focussed on moving on putting their drug use behind them so they can look after their new-born child."

"Our role is to aid them in this recovery."

● For more information about the Pregnant Drug User Clinic call 01782 212800.



Actors take part in one of the innovative Chapter 2 workshops at the New Vic Theatre and, inset, Jamie Sherratt with his certificate of achievement.



Cast of ex-offenders start a new chapter in their lives

OFFENDERS took to the stage in an innovative theatre project designed to offer them a positive new beginning.

The group of 17 actors, who are or have been under the supervision of Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust, starred in the play For Better or Worse, performed in front of a 100-strong audience at the New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Most members of the Chapter 2 theatre group had a history of re-offending and at least two of them were facing court appearances with the risk of being sent to prison in view of their criminal records.

However the courts were impressed with the positive impact of the project – a partnership between Stoke on Trent College's City Break initiative and the New Vic Theatre's Borderlines Theatre Company community scheme. Both of

them supplied the courts with character references with the result that none of the offenders were given a custodial sentence.

Before going into the spotlight, the cast attended a series of half-day workshops over 12 weeks, during which, each participant made a promise which was played over loudspeakers during the performance. At the centre of the play's theme of "new beginnings" was the wedding of two characters whose choices are affected by the people around them.

Change their behaviour

City Break works with key companies and organisations to support individuals with a history of re-offending but who want to change their behaviour. The award-winning Borderlines community programme works with some of North Staffordshire's most disadvantaged communities.

The Chapter 2 project was jointly funded by Stoke on Trent College and The Manchester College's On Trak project, with support from the YSS voluntary organisation.

Stoke on Trent College Project Coordinator Mike Thornley, who also acted in the play, said: "I'm so proud of the whole group. Their diligence, character and personalities shone through. For most of them this is just the beginning. The New Vic say this was the one of the best collaborations they have had."

"We will shortly be looking to develop a similar programme and use some of the original participants to support the new group."

One of the cast, 25-year-old offender Jamie Sherratt who is currently on probation, said: "It was a brilliant experience and one I will never forget. It has had a positive effect and I feel that what has happened will change my life for the better."

Volunteers help victims find justice

A PROJECT is underway to support volunteers to tackle antisocial behaviour.

The volunteers have been trained by North Staffordshire Mediation Service to deliver restorative justice and family group conferencing. This is an approach that focuses on the needs of victims and offenders, instead of punishing the offender.

Victims take an active role in the process, while offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions, repairing the harm they have done by apologising, returning stolen money, or through community service.

The volunteers encourage dialogue between victims and offenders, leading to the highest rates of victim satisfaction.

Jon Connolly, who is the Antisocial Behaviour Lead from the Safer City Partnership, said: "It is pleasing that we have excellent people who are committed to improving communities."

"These volunteers are highly motivated people. I am looking forward to them working to resolve issues around antisocial behaviour and being able to help resolve issues that affect victims and communities."

Volunteer Chris Smith has been working with the Safer City Partnership and Staffordshire Police to tackle graffiti in Burslem Park.

He said: "I hope the project is successful in giving victims the opportunity to receive reparation and an apology."



Helping victims and cutting antisocial behaviour are, left to right, Restorative Justice volunteers Mark Cotton, Margaret Billingham, Emma Barbour, Laura Paterson, John Mosley and Amanda McDonald.

Opportunity to sign up to train as a sports coach

INTERESTED in being a qualified sports coach volunteer?

The Safer City Partnership is now recruiting for Tunstall, Burslem, Goldenhill and Sandyford, Joiners Square, Blurton West and Newstead.

For more info email david.hardwick@stoke.gov.uk or tel 01782 235001 or visit 'Streetgames Stoke-on-Trent' on Facebook.



Open day sheds spotlight on Alcohol Service launch

MEMBERS of the public and professionals attended an informative open day which promoted a new integrated community alcohol service.

The new service – which is funded by the Safer City Partnership – brings together the work of alcohol support agencies including Adsis and North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare Trust.

It provides seamless support for people referred for support for alcohol misuse.

Integrated

The launch comes after the partnership significantly expanded its alcohol treatment services last year and secured a new central base in Havelock Place, Shelton.

Suzie Kelly, Safer City Partnership Alcohol Programme Lead said “The open day highlighted how the new, co-ordinated service operates and how it works with other support services.

“It also demonstrated the kind of training and care that is provided. From a professional point of view it was a useful networking event and showed agencies how they could interlink with the service.

“From a member of the public perspective it explained the variety of support on offer and how people can access it.”

Also being demonstrated was a new alcohol harm



Above, visitor Steven Smith receives advice from an Adsis expert. Right, Safer City Partnership Alcohol Programme Lead Suzie Kelly with one of the new toolkits.

reduction toolkit.

It is available to professionals and provides service information, statistics and resources including a unit measure, screening tools and posters.

● **The Safer City Partnership funds a range of services to support people wishing to reduce their alcohol intake or become abstinent. To access any of the services mentioned, please contact Adsis on 01782 271096.**



Detox programme gives Julie her life back

AS a 16-year-old, Julie started drinking because she lacked confidence and felt alcohol was just the boost she needed.

That crucial teenage decision 30 years ago, was something that almost went on to destroy her life. Over the next three decades she used alcohol as a coping mechanism during stressful situations and found herself turning to the bottle more and more.

By the start of 2010 the 46-year-old mum was at her wits end. She had lost her driving licence, was heavily dependent on alcohol and her relationship with her partner and children had become confused.

Then last April, she was offered a home detoxification by community nurses. Their helpful, re-assuring and understanding approach got her life back on track.

Unfortunately, it did not last. Just before Christmas she attended a party and thought

she was strong enough to have a “social” drink. The first drink quickly led to another, then another and soon she was drinking as much as before.

Julie said: “I really thought I could cope. I thought I had cracked it and had had no cravings of alcohol since the detoxification.

“But I soon found myself dependent on alcohol again. I had to have a lot of time off work and it was affecting the family financially. I knew I needed help again.”

Julie attended a drop-in session at Adsis, was referred to the community nurses and was offered a second home detoxification.

She said: “I felt ashamed and worried about what people would think of me. But the nurses put me at ease. From day one of the detoxification the nurses were so kind and understanding. I can’t stress how much they helped me.

“The first couple of days were scary but they visited me twice a day and were always at the end of a phone to support me with any problems. The nurses also offered support to my family with any concerns they had. Their care was second to none.”

Following the detoxification Julie was prescribed anti-craving drugs and now attends Adsis groups for relapse prevention.

A month after the detoxification Julie is happy that life is good again. Her relationship with her partner and children is back to normal and she is back at work, easing their financial situation.

She said: “It’s hard to believe that only weeks ago I was an alcohol-dependent emotional wreck. I can’t thank the nurses enough for giving me and my family our lives back. I would recommend a home detoxification to anyone.”

Funding secured for more popular Respect weeks

FUNDING for Respect Weeks and Days of Action in neighbourhoods has been secured by the Safer City Partnership for the rest of the year.

So far events have been held in the Portland Street and the Elder Road areas of Cobridge.

Residents identified environmental issues such as litter and fly tipping problems.

As a result, skips were provided on the estates so residents could dispose of their bulky waste – and over 30 tonnes were collected over the three days.

In addition, overhanging trees were cut back, grassed areas trimmed and trip rails repaired. All the work was overseen by the council’s Environmental Services Team.

Staffordshire Police and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service were on hand to offer crime prevention and fire risk advice and Street Pastors engaged with residents and provided support and advice.

Meanwhile, following the complaints, the Environmental Crime Unit is also actively pursuing lines of enquiry in order to prosecute offenders for fly-tipping.

Bill James, Respect Programme Lead for the Safer City Partnership, said: “By working in partnership on those matters that are important to communities we are determined to make a difference to the quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors to the city.”

Now more initiatives will be held in communities and on estates through the year as part of an ongoing schedule.

Residents ask for cold calling zone

THE latest in a series of highly-successful No Cold Calling Zones has been launched following a number of doorstep crimes.

Lord Mayor Councillor Terry Follows officially launched the new zone, which covers two sheltered housing schemes – Doris Robinson Court and Sandon Court, Meir, as well as adjacent Viscount Walk and Dentedale Close.

It was set up after a consultation with residents came back with a 100 per cent approval rating, due to a spate of doorstep crime.

Councillor Gwen Hassall, Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods said:

“Doorstep crime is a serious issue that is now being addressed by the number of No Cold Calling Zones we have across the city.

“We work closely with the police so we are aware of when incidents are reported and we are then in a position to do something about them. In this case, all the residents we spoke to were in favour of setting up a No Cold Calling Zone so we’re answering their concerns.”

MONEY matters

Contacts for help and debt advice

FOR more information about managing finances or dealing with debt log onto stoke.gov.uk
Other useful contacts include:

National Debtline
www.nationaldebtline.co.uk 0808 808 4000 – free independent advice.

Payplan
www.payplan.com
0800 716239 – for debt calculating, debt solutions and budgeting.

Shelter
www.shelter.org.uk
0808 8004444 – housing advice, including rent and mortgage arrears repossessions and eviction.

Turn 2 Us
www.turn2us.or.uk
0808 802 2000 – offers benefits advice and details of grant-giving charities.

Financial Services Authority
www.money.made.clear.fsa.gov.uk – interactive tools for budgeting and borrowing, information and leaflets.

Support available on housing

HELP is available for people who need advice and support about housing issues.

The city council's Housing Solutions Service team can answer queries in relation to a range of issues from mortgage problems to debt or arrears.

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



Executive Support Manager Annette Lees with posters which warn the public not to get bitten by a loan shark.

Training prepares partners to fight illegal lending rackets

SPECIALIST training has been taking place as the city council and partner agencies in Stoke-on-Trent target loan sharks.

Up to eight awareness sessions on illegal money lending will have been staged by the end of August for more than 100 people.

Frontline council employees from services including revenue and benefits, housing and social care have all taken part.

Third sector partner organisations including Gingerbread, ARCH and Rethink also joined in as well as representatives from housing

associations, Staffordshire Police and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The training, delivered by the Birmingham-based Illegal Money Lending Team, was designed to help those taking part to better spot the symptoms of illegal money lending and signpost victims to support services.

Designed to help everyone

The idea for the sessions came from the city's Financial Inclusion Group and were organised by the city council's Executive Support Manager Annette Lees. She said: "The two-hour sessions were designed to help everyone taking part spot

the signs when speaking to customers and clients so they could then offer them support and signpost them to investigators.

"It was by invitation only but still massively over subscribed so we organised an extra session for August.

"In these tough times, the vulnerable are more at risk from loan sharks than ever before so its vital we do all we can to prevent them from falling into the clutches of sometimes dangerous people.

"This training means another 100 people involved in frontline services now have the knowledge to intervene and offer help."

Special investigators can bite back at loan sharks

LOAN shark victims across Stoke-on-Trent are being reminded they do not have to suffer in silence – specialist investigators working in partnership with the city council can help.

The England Illegal Money Lending Team is based in Birmingham, but, working in partnership with local Trading Standards, is on hand to deal with any complaints and cases reported by people in the city.

The team works alongside Trading Standards Officers at the council and supports other agencies like housing associations, credit unions,

Staffordshire Police, the Citizens Advice Bureau and other debt advice services to tackle illegal lending activity.

Tony Quigley, Head of the England Illegal Money Lending Team, said: "People turn in desperation to loan sharks. Quite often loan sharks start out friendly but their behaviour changes if a payment is missed.

"There's mostly little or no paper work involved, they refuse to tell the borrower the interest rate, how much they owe or how long they'll be paying back.

"They even take items like

passports or bank cards as security.

"We've seen cases where the annual percentage rate (APR) rose as high as 131,000 per cent.

"Sometimes the lenders resort to extreme methods to reclaim these illegal debts, such as violence or blackmail.

"Remember debts are illegal and not enforceable through the courts."

The Illegal Money Lending Teams investigate and prosecute illegal lending and any related activity, which can include threatening behaviour, violence, intimidation, drug offences, kidnap and even rape.

The teams are making a difference. Latest national figures show they have helped 16,000 victims and prosecuted at least 190 people.

Those cases have resulted in jail sentences totalling 107 years.

● A 24-hour a day, seven day a week confidential hotline has been set up so people can report illegal lending. You can speak to a trained investigator by calling 0300 555 2222. You can also text 'loan shark' plus your message to 60003 or email reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk

GOOD NEWS FOR THE 'MITCH' AND BETHESDA... CULTURAL QUARTER ICONS

Curtain up as new facilities unveiled at stunning theatre complex

SHOWTIME is back at the Mitchell Arts Centre now a £4.3 million re-vamp has transformed the iconic community and performing arts venue into a theatre fit for the 21st Century.

The new look 'Mitch' is already getting a massive thumbs up from audiences and performers alike and advanced bookings mean shows are already planned until December 2012.

Two dance shows were staged in the opening weeks with The Angela Beardmore School of Dance getting the honour of christening the stage for the first performance in two years.

Executive Officer Ian Hutchinson, who ran Plymouth Arts Centre for 10 years before taking up his appointment in the City Centre, said: "It's been a brilliant start and people who knew the old 'Mitch' can't believe the transformation.

"It's great to come to a city where regeneration puts a theatre like this at the heart of its cultural life. It really is a fantastic thing."

Mitchell Memorial Youth Art Centre Trust Chairman Fred Hughes said: "It really is one of the best community performance venues that I've seen in a very long time.

"It's state-of-the-art and also has excellent conference and corporate facilities. We're planning a massive event in September at the start of Battle of Britain Week so watch this space."



WHERE SPITFIRE MEETS SPACE AGE...
Mitchell Arts Centre Executive Officer Ian Hutchinson outside the new-look, fully refurbished building. Below, rehearsals underway in the revamped auditorium.

New look facilities include a 1,000 square foot dance studio, updated toilets, dressing rooms, a new balcony, a roof terrace and a glass-fronted café.

● Bookings for facilities at the arts centre can now be made by calling 01782 409307.



Support helps 16 people into employment

A TRAINING, mentoring and work experience programme which has helped more than a dozen unemployed people so far into sustainable jobs in adult social care in the last eight months has been relaunched.

The 13-week Stoke-on-Trent City Council-led programme provides people with mentoring, and the opportunity to develop the skills, behaviour and experience to gain long-term employment. 16 of the 20 people who have already completed the training are now in sustainable employment in the adult social care sector. And half the people who are due to finish an existing training programme next week have already secured permanent employment, as have 20 per cent of those due to finish in September.

Councillor Olwen Hamer, cabinet member for adult social care, health and commissioning, said: "This initiative can rightly be celebrated as a success. It is proving very popular with local people and employers alike."

● Employers interested in how the scheme could help with their recruitment, or people looking for a career in adult social care can call the team on 01782 235300 or email sasces@stoke.gov.uk.

Software to target parking problem areas

A NEW parking enforcement car thinks for itself to target areas of the city with the biggest problems.

The vehicle, which records the details of offenders outside schools, hospitals and other illegal parking hotspots, now needs just one person to drive it round the city. Previously there was an operator too.

Cabinet Member for City Services Councillor Janine Bridges said: "It's useful where people block a road near a school or hospital, preventing essential access or potentially causing an accident.

"The camera car has so far generated about £120,000 as a result of enforcement action, but, of course, it is only penalising people who have contravened motoring restrictions."

Friends celebrate windows, pulpit and organ bringing chapel back towards its former glory



CATHEDRAL OF THE POTTERIES...
Deputy Chair of the Friends of Bethesda Chapel John Booth as restoration work continues in the background.

A CELEBRATION day has been staged to mark the completion of the second phase of repairs costing £620,000 at the historic Bethesda Methodist Chapel in the City Centre.

Latest work included the repair of a suite of stained glass windows and the famous mahogany pulpit with its double flight of stairs, the reinstatement of the ceiling and the installation of an historic organ to replace the badly vandalised original.

Floor tiling has been repaired while attention has also been paid to structural timberwork supporting the galleries. Decorative railings and gates, made to the original pattern, have been installed outside in Albion Street.

Money for the repairs came from the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage and various grant-giving

trusts with an additional £20,000 from Friends of Bethesda.

Sir Alan Beith MP, the chairman of the Historic Chapels Trust who acquired the building in 2002, attended the celebrations along with Bethesda Friends, Lord Mayor Councillor Terry Follows and the Lady Mayoress Jacqueline Pearson.

There was a blessing, organ recitals, choral performance and the chapel was then opened to the public.

A third phase of repairs, likely to cost £1 million, is due for completion in 2013 and will include modern services such as toilets, heating, lighting and sound and visual systems. When restoration is complete, the chapel will be used for a wide range of community events like concerts, exhibitions and civic functions.

Make it

Click and Easy
stoke.gov.uk

► Find out about events in the city:
stoke.gov.uk/events

Summer break warning issued over grass fires

YOUNG people are being warned ahead of the school summer holidays about the devastating and expensive consequences of deliberately starting grass fires.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service want to cut down on the dozens of fires that are started during the summer break – often by teenage boys.

Not only do they endanger lives but put an unnecessary strain on the services' emergency resources.

Grass fire hot spots in Stoke-on-Trent include Berryhill Fields and Parkhall Country Park.

Posters warning about the dangers of setting fires have been distributed to schools to spread the safety message.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service's Prevention Manager Mick Daniel said: "Young people who start grass fires seem oblivious to the fact that they are endangering their own lives as well as firefighters.

"A grass fire can quickly spread and it does not take much for clothing to set on fire and before you know it, you have horrific burns which could claim your life."

He added: "For every call we receive about a grass fire there could be a person desperately trying to get out of a burning building or trapped in a car crash in urgent need of our assistance."

● For more details log onto staffordshirefire.gov.uk



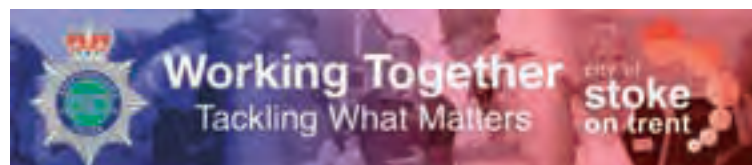
Chief Inspector Jeff Moore takes part in an afterschool sports training session with 13-year-old Lauren Austerberry.

£10,000 funding pots given to student innovators

SCHOOLS have benefited to the tune of thousands of pounds through a scheme to reward innovative sporting, social and health projects chosen and devised by pupils.

During a year-long initiative, students at three schools – St. Thomas More in Longton, Sandon Business and Enterprise College, Meir, and Edensor Technology College, Longton – were invited to develop ideas and put in bids.

The top two ideas from each



school went forward to a presentation at the King's Hall last May. Pupils were then given 15 minutes to make their pitch to an audience of professionals from partner organisations and school council representatives.

The best three projects were awarded £10,000 each and the runner up £4,000. The project was co-ordinated by Staffordshire Police and the council and funding came from the two organisations along with the Take Part initiative.

The winning projects, each receiving £10,000, were:

- St Thomas More – assessment of activities to create an after school sports programme.

- Sandon Business and Enterprise College – production of a DVD to explore the myths surrounding antisocial behaviour
- Edensor Technology College – improvements to multi-access centres (MACs) and the production of an explanatory booklet.

Tapping potential

Chief Inspector Jeff Moore, Commander of the Central Local Policing Team in Stoke-on-Trent, said he was delighted by the enthusiasm and response to the project. He said: "This is the culmination of 12 months work where we have liaised closely with the schools and pupils and got

some fantastic results. The project is about tapping into the potential of young people – encouraging them to come up with ideas and solutions to tackle the things that are important to them.

"They have put a great deal of effort in over the last 12 months and it was inspiring to see 12 to 16-year-olds stand up in front of a room of more than 100 peers and adults and speak so well and passionately."

Lisa Whitemore, Head of PE at St Thomas More, also praised the success of the scheme. She said: "The money has been used to explore the popularity of all kinds of sporting activities and then lay these on in an after-school sports programme.

"It means we can offer everything from kick boxing to juggling and give the pupils a chance to take part in more niche sporting activities. It has been a great success and the hard work of the pupils has really paid off."

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 PACKMOOR	01782 534599 01782 794600
BENTILEE	01782 425900	PICCADILLY CENTRE (Main) Sexual health helpline	0300 123 0985 0300 123 0970
BLURTON (Main) Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service	0300 123 0971 0300 123 0977	SMALLTHORNE	0300 123 0982
BURSLEM	0300 123 0979	STOKE Out of Hours District Nursing Service	0300 123 0986 0300 123 0989
WHITFIELD VALLEY	01782 425720	TRENT VALE	01782 425260
FENTON	01782 743100	TUNSTALL (Main) Dental Advice Line	0300 123 0972 0300 123 0981
HANFORD (Main) Children's Airway Support Team	0300 123 0974 0300 123 0977	For more information and advice on health issues please call NHS Direct – 24 hrs a day 0845 46 47 or visit www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk or www.nhs.uk	
HANLEY	0300 123 0980		
LONGTON	0300 123 0993		
LONGTON COTTAGE HOSPITAL	0300 123 0993		
MEIR	01782 425676		

Fire & Rescue contact numbers

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**IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 999 AND
ASK FOR THE FIRE SERVICE**

To book your home fire risk check ring: 0800 0241 999



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FORTHCOMING PUBLIC MEETINGS AT THE CIVIC CENTRE, STOKE:

- Cabinet meeting is scheduled for 25 August at 5.30pm.
- Full city council meetings 8 September at 2.30pm and 20 October at 2.30pm.

For more information on your councillors go to stoke.gov.uk/councillors

Sports coaching sessions break down prejudice

WHEELCHAIR athletes are coaching non-disabled youngsters in a range of paralympic sports to help fight prejudice towards people with disabilities.

Members of Stoke Spitfires Wheelchair Basketball Team are working with Stoke-on-Trent City Council to raise awareness among 11 to 16-year-olds through Project Spitfire made possible by a £23,717 Big Lottery Fund award to the council.

Two day-long events will be held each year over the next five years at Dimensions Leisure Centre with the aim of attracting around 50 young people.

They will have the opportunity to participate in sports for disabled people – such as wheelchair basketball, new age curling and sitting volleyball.

Lesley Brownsill, of the city council's Access Team, who is working in partnership with the Stoke Spitfires, said: "The idea is to show that sports for people with disabilities are just as tough and challenging as those for non-disabled people. Project Spitfire aims to dispel myths and break down barriers by showing youngsters what people with disabilities can do instead of what they can't do."

Young people who attend the activity days will also have the opportunity to be trained in areas such as deaf awareness, British sign language and visual awareness – skills they will have for life.

Lindsay Leighton, Development Officer for Stoke Spitfires Wheelchair Basketball Team, said: "We are excited about this project as we are a community-based organisation. We look forward to sharing our experiences as disabled people and as sports men and women."

● **The first activity day will be on Wednesday 3 August followed by another on Thursday 25 August. For more information contact the Access Team on 01782 232236 or 01782 236667 or email spitfire@stoke.gov.uk**



Lindsay Leighton, Stoke Spitfires Development Officer, lines up a shot at the hoop on court at Dimensions Leisure Centre.

No excuse to be bored as council lays on packed events programme

PACKED programmes of summer events will keep the school holidays buzzing for youngsters in 2011.

A host of free events mean children and young people have no excuse to be bored over the six-week break.

A huge range of events and activities will be staged at parks, recreation grounds, sports facilities, libraries, youth centres and children's centres across the city.

Art Brasil will run lively dance and drumming workshops, while the aptly named Circusology will stage plate spinning, juggling and stilt

walking workshops. Other attractions include a roller disco, trampolining, basketball, football, archery, street dance mini beast bug hunts, pond dipping, art and crafts, bush crafts and cycle training.

And one of the highlights will be a set of oversized board games, featuring Connect 4 and Twister.

The summer of fun will end with a big finale event at Northwood Stadium on Friday 2 September from 3-7pm.

For more information check out the city council's website at stoke.gov.uk/summerevents



Stoke-on-Trent archer Rebecca Martin, who hopes to represent Great Britain in the 2012 Olympic Games, pictured in the City Centre with a prototype of the Torch which will be used in next year's relay.

Local heroes needed to bear Olympic Torch through city

PEOPLE are being urged to nominate their local sporting and community heroes for the chance to be an Olympic Torchbearer during the exciting build up to next year's London Games.

The iconic Torch will be paraded in Stoke-on-Trent on Wednesday, 30 May 2012 as part of a UK-wide relay.

Now the search is on to find inspirational people of all ages for a "once in a lifetime" opportunity to bear the famous symbol of the Games during the 70-day nationwide parade.

Stoke-on-Trent Olympics Co-ordinator Vanessa Darlington said: "This is a wonderful opportunity to put someone's name forward to mark their achievements."

Contribution to community

"Nominees have to be aged 12 or over and have to demonstrate they have made a contribution to their community. This could be a coach for their dedication supporting young athletes, a neighbour who is always helping others or a young person achieving their personal best."

"Although many nominations have been submitted there is still time throughout the summer to put someone's name forward."

Among those who have already been nominated locally are archer Rebecca Martin, local historian Fred Hughes, STAR Angling Team member Sonia Bee, athletics coach

George Cooper and Chair of Lads and Dads football Clive Dean.

A total of 8,000 people are due to carry the Olympic Torch around the UK before it heads to London on 21 July ahead of the Games' Opening Ceremony on 27 July.

Up to half of the places will go to those aged between 12 and 24 years and judging panels will be set up in each region to select the successful Torchbearers.

People can nominate through schemes set up by the official Torch Relay partners Coca-Cola, Lloyds TSB and Samsung.

Coca-Cola have launched a national search to find the UK's Future Flames which is looking for young people with a passion for sport, physical activity, music and dance, community and the environment. Nominations can be made by logging onto www.cokezone.co.uk. The deadline is 5 September 2011.

Lloyds TSB have also launched their national campaign to find 800 Torchbearers to carry the Flame.

The organisation is looking for people who have made a difference in their local community and whose story will inspire others. Nominations can be made at www.lloydstsblondon2012.co.uk/carrytheflame until 12 September 2011.

Samsung has also launched their campaign and people can nominate online by logging onto www.samsung.com/london2012. Nominations close on 30 September 2011.