

## Delivering for the Eccleshall area

### Community News

*This Newsletter aims to bring together various pieces of topical, but local, news from across the Eccleshall, Swynnerton, Tittensor and Yarnfield areas – and all areas in-between. It is not designed to be an almanac of all the things that I have supported or been involved with or even the ‘most important’ pieces of work - as someone badly affected by one issue can often find that their voice is drowned out by all the other issues of the day.*

*In this fifth local Newsletter, it covers some of the work being undertaken on a variety of projects, issues of concern and things that matter most to local residents. Since the last newsletter in the Spring, I have tried to balance local community projects with supporting and encouraging other groups to deliver their aspirations for the local area, whilst also supporting some of the most vulnerable in the wider Stafford area to help them to have greater options.*

#### Staffordshire Women’s Aid -

##### Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service

Forty years ago Staffordshire Women’s Aid took their first flat to offer refuge for victims of domestic violence. It was a small two bedroom flat located over a butchers shop in Stafford, which looked out over the butchers yard with both the view and smell of offal from an active working butchers.



**Staffordshire Women’s Aid**  
Together Against Domestic Violence Since 1976

Rolling the clock forward some forty years to mid-October 2017 and Staffordshire Women’s Aid was being presented with – what is seen as an MBE ‘gong’ for the voluntary sector – in the splendour of the County Council chamber in Stafford town centre, in a very moving and poignant ceremony officiated over by Her Majesty the Queen’s representative in Staffordshire, HM Lord Lieutenant Ian Dudson.

Along the way, Staffordshire Women’s Aid has supported many victims, through their help line, face to face and group support and through the provision of refuge accommodation for those most at risk.

Their role in supporting victims, raising awareness, improving education and challenging the acceptability of domestic violence throughout this time has been highly influential in changing perceptions.

During the ceremony victims told of some of their first hand experiences, on their very real journeys from victim to survivor. Whilst volunteers talked about the experience that being involved had offered them.

#### Eight for Small Lane

One of the first things that faced every Councillor back in May was the parlous state of the roads across the county.

Eccleshall was no exception, following a period where the County Council’s budgets have been under severe pressure every year for most of the last decade, coupled to a massive rise in demand for adult social services and care for the elderly.

Staffordshire has a larger elderly population than most areas and the cost of care is only rising. In Staffordshire that accounts for a total of 15,000 people – or 2% of the population - but accounting for 80% of the County’s spend, with looking after our elderly properly a key priority.

The other factor is that Winter tends to be more aggressive on road structures. Small Lane in Eccleshall was a perfect example of the first hand impact, not helped by the road being the only access for the busy local doctor’s surgery used by young and old alike in cars and on foot.



*Crown Surgery on Small Lane, Eccleshall*

The road had become difficult to use for pedestrians unsure on their feet and had become an “it’s a knock-out” obstacle course for those driving, with eight potholes in one single 250 yard stretch of road.

The May elections brought a promise of additional funding into Highways maintenance and Small Lane was one of the first places to benefit as part of a £5m commitment to keeping Eccleshall (and Staffordshire) moving.

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**ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE ON THE COUNTY AND BOROUGH COUNCILS FOR THE WIDER ECCLESHALL AREA**

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**PLEASE PASS THIS ON TO YOUR FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES OR SUGGEST THAT THEY SUBSCRIBE DIRECT**

**For Further Details please visit :-**

[www.jeremypert.co.uk](http://www.jeremypert.co.uk)

**Responder’s High Praise**

Many voluntary sector groups operate supporting communities, out of the public gaze. Undertaking work day in day out quietly and competently and underpinning people’s lives and living.

Eccleshall First Responders are just such a group having given fifteen years of continuous service to local residents on a twenty four hours a day, seven days a week basis.



*Their work supports the ambulance service locally and saves lives.*

The network of community defibrillators locally is a testament to this, as without the drive and commitment of First Responder, Martin Watson, this would not be so comprehensive and well supported.

So being awarded the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service early in October recognises their service, hard work and dedication.

**Access To Council Services and Community Information**

For many residents, accessing Council services easily and fast can seem like a nightmare with Boroughs (and Districts) looking after the collection of bins, most planning and housing and with Counties looking after highways, schools and social care.



So introducing a web-based application to help navigate people to the right service in Staffordshire seems to have the popular feel, allowing better access to services and helping to share information more easily.

The web-based app can be downloaded from all the usual application media stores and online platforms or through the link below :-

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/MyStaffs-App/MyStaffs-App.aspx>

**Trip to EU Parliament .....**

The EU seems to not be far away from most people’s thoughts and lips these days. So going to see the workings of the Brussels Parliament first hand before it is too late seems at an opportunity too good to miss.



With this in mind one of our local MEPs Daniel Dalton will be hosting a visit to Brussels with an opportunity to look around the Parliament, undertake a tour and hear one of the few mini plenary debates held in Brussels rather than Strasbourg each year.

The group will leave Staffordshire on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> February and return on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018 and is open to anyone locally to join – on a first come first served basis.

For more details and costs please contact me directly, as I need to confirm final numbers by the end of the month (i.e. end of October).

For obvious reasons, this opportunity may never come up again so please feel free to join us, on what should be an educational and insightful trip.

**Makeover for Tittensor Pavements**

One of the first major highways schemes in the Eccleshall division - costing in excess of £200,000 - has been undertaken this summer in Tittensor, with the input of local residents.



Winghouse Lane in Tittensor

It has sought to improve the safety of the pavements and general area, whilst also providing improvements to car parking and the overall Streetscene and it is hoped will benefit the area for generations to come.

**Curry Sunday Fund Raiser**

The “Curry Sunday” is back on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2017 at the ever popular London House restaurant on the High Street in Eccleshall.

For the princely sum of £15 per head diners can get :-

- \* Poppadums,
- \* an assortment of Starters
- \* a variety of main course Curries, with rice and nan to share



Lunch is served from 12 noon, where the Mayor of Stafford Borough will be in attendance and further sittings at 5.30pm and 7.30pm.

With profits going from the meal to support the work of Staffordshire Women’s Aid.

Advance booking is highly recommended either to Jeremy on 07740 924659 or direct with the restaurant on 01785 850055.

It should be a fun occasion and the food is always great at London House, so please do see if you can join us whilst supporting such a good cause.

**HS2 Consultation**

Staffordshire, as a county, will feel the impact of HS2’s expansion north from Birmingham more than most, as it ploughs its groove through land, hillsides and woodland in its route north.

Even though the business case for this project is far from made, in my view, the finances underpinning the project have been approved in Parliament, which means that it is inevitable. Leaving the key elements to focus on minimising the impact on communities, whilst securing maximum compensation for those affected as early as possible, whilst maximising economic benefit from greater and faster transport connectivity.



*HS2 Ltd. consultation about proposals locally affecting residents*

Consultation responses have recently been submitted about the location of the proposed railhead at Yarnfield, which seems to me to be an inappropriate location for such a long term construction and engineering site, as well as improving road layouts at Swynnerton on the A51 and where Yarnfield Lane joins the A34. I have also lobbied for better HS2 connectivity with Birmingham and the Crewe interchange hub, as well as with Stoke-on-Trent, Macclesfield and Manchester.

**Who Looks After the Carers ?**

Nobody wakes up one morning and decides that they want to be a carer – instead it is usually something that happens out of necessity, with many carers not even seeing themselves as ‘a carer’.

Carers come in all shapes and sizes from teenagers through to spouses - accounting for approximately 8% of the population and supporting the voluntary sector economy to the tune of £60bn a year.

So supporting the opening of a Carers Café in Eccleshall – held once a month on the last Thursday from 10.30 – 12.30pm at the Community Centre on Shaws Lane, to support the needs of carers seemed an easy decision.



*With Mac Cock from CAS – The Carers Association*

The Café - run by CASS – the Carers Association – who are based in Stafford and have similar successful cafés in Tamworth and Penkridge –aims to help people to be able to live at home longer, supporting their loved ones.

**Volunteers Wanted – parkrun Stafford**

There were 668 parkruns across the UK last week, taking place on a Saturday morning at 9am, round the same 5Km course each week attracting a whole range of people – with an average attendance of 200. Local parkruns include Hanley Park and Cannock Chase, where they regularly get 300 - 400 people running.



Stafford will launch its very own parkrun in January 2018 – open to all and targeted at not just regular runners but anyone interested. It is ideal for anyone wanting to get active again or people who may be want to go from zero to a 5K over a number of weeks.

To facilitate the launch, volunteers are being sought to help launch the event and help marshal it.

Please contact me with any offers of help - please.



**Wider Council Work**

**Campaigning for Supported Accommodation**

All the narrative in the Press is about ‘Building More Houses’ to solve our ‘Broken Housing Market’ and yet things are slightly more complex than that.

Depending on which area of the country that you live in impacts the issues you are likely to face – in London and the South East for example it is definitely an issue of availability and affordability, issues that don’t affect Stafford in the same way.

Instead there are issues where the Local Housing Allowance has been frozen since April 2016 whilst rents and housing costs have continued to rise, making accommodation ever more unaffordable.

Equally with the loss of Supporting People funding, without anything to go in its place, many Supported Schemes have closed or been converted, whilst any new scheme has been shelved just about across the country.

So lobbying for a recognition of the issues affecting people and offering alternatives or solutions, with a sensible funding formula for the long term has been an ongoing campaign for the last few years, with whoever will listen including with the Local Government Association, MPs, Ministers of State and even the Secretary of State. And this continues to be the case.

**Say it with Flowers**

In July it was not just said with ‘one flower’ but instead 9,000, as a centrepiece flower bed in Victoria Park was created to celebrate Staffordshire Women’s Aid fortieth anniversary, which included Alternanthera, Echeveria and Senecio plants.



*Celebrating forty years of working in Stafford  
-Staffordshire Women’s Aid*

Victoria Park is Stafford Borough Council’s flagship park, holding a prestigious ‘Green Flag’ accreditation and was planted up for the summer with an exact replica of Staffordshire Women’s Aid’s logo, in what to many was the first view that people saw on entering the park.

The work to plant up the whole bed took place over ten days and is the forerunner to the complete make-over of the Park in 2018 with a £2.5m refurbishment programme.

**No One Wants to be Homeless – Housing First**

Rough Sleeping is at the extreme of being homeless and few areas are without anyone sleeping rough. Legislative changes coming about with the Homelessness Reduction Act being introduced from April 2018 will help improve the support and advice available to everyone.

In advance of the Act, Stafford Borough Council has continued to focus its housing work on prevention first and foremost. And where prevention has not worked the Council has worked with individuals to get them into housing at the earliest possible juncture.



*Housing First launch in Stafford*

However, for those entrenched rough sleepers the housing solution is often the least of the concerns, as it is more about being able to sustain the tenancy, which is where Housing First comes in.

Housing First is a model – from Finland where it has been in operation since 2007 – which provides more than just accommodation, with a layer of wrap around support for individuals to provide the supportive services and connections to the community that people need to keep their housing and avoid returning to homelessness

Stafford was one of the first – there are now 30 schemes across the UK – to adopt a Housing First model to support the needs of entrenched rough sleepers.

**Gold Standard Homelessness Support**

Stafford was the first housing authority across the Midlands



*Stafford Borough’s Housing team being presented with ‘Gold Standard’ by the National Homelessness Advice Service to be awarded the Gold Standard in homelessness prevention.*