



STAFFORD BOROUGH

PROSPERITY STRATEGY 2013 - 2018

DRAFT March 2013

Contents

		Page
1.	Purpose and Vision	3
2.	Economic Priorities	4
3.	Borough Profile	5
4.	Alignment to strategic priorities	15
5.	The Strategy	18
6.	Capacity to deliver	37
7.	Engagement and Consultation	37
8.	Monitoring and Evaluation	37
	Appendix A Equality Impact Assessment	38

1. Purpose and Vision

“To promote economic and social regeneration to improve the quality of life for our community”

The Prosperity Strategy guides the economic development, business support and regeneration activity of the Borough Council at a time of economic austerity, ongoing efficiency savings being required in the public sector, a period of restructuring for business sectors, difficult trading conditions for retail and the context of closer working with neighbouring authorities through the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

This document is intended to update the previous Prosperity Strategy (entitled “Towards a Prosperous Stafford: A Strategy for Prosperity”) and to ensure that the Corporate aims and objectives of the Council are properly reflected as a basis for delivering economic development and regeneration across the Borough.

The previous Prosperity Strategy was prepared in 2004 and reflected the Corporate priorities of the Council at that time. The Audit Commission inspected the regeneration function of the Council in 2005 and concluded that the service was “Good” (with two stars) with “Promising” prospects for improvement. The inspection did however identify that the prosperity strategy did not contain a full set of challenging, longer-term milestones to monitor progress.

This new Strategy has been prepared in a completely different context which can be summarised as follows:-

- The demise of Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands and support organisations including Business Link and Connexions
- The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), with closer working with Stoke-on-Trent and other districts across the County
- The Borough has a high dependency on public sector (and related) employment at around 40%, which is vulnerable at a time of efficiency savings
- The Borough population is aging with a resultant long –term decline of the workforce (without intervention)
- The Borough (and especially Stafford itself) retains a growth agenda within the LEP area with significant investment underway or planned on Town Centre developments, new housing and employment sites and an expansion of MoD Stafford.
- The disparity between urban and rural areas in terms of ease of access to employment and services and in terms of housing affordability needs to be addressed.
- Opportunities for growth in higher-value-added sectors, especially environmental technologies where the Borough currently employs three times the national average, manufacturing, media & IT, logistics and professional services.

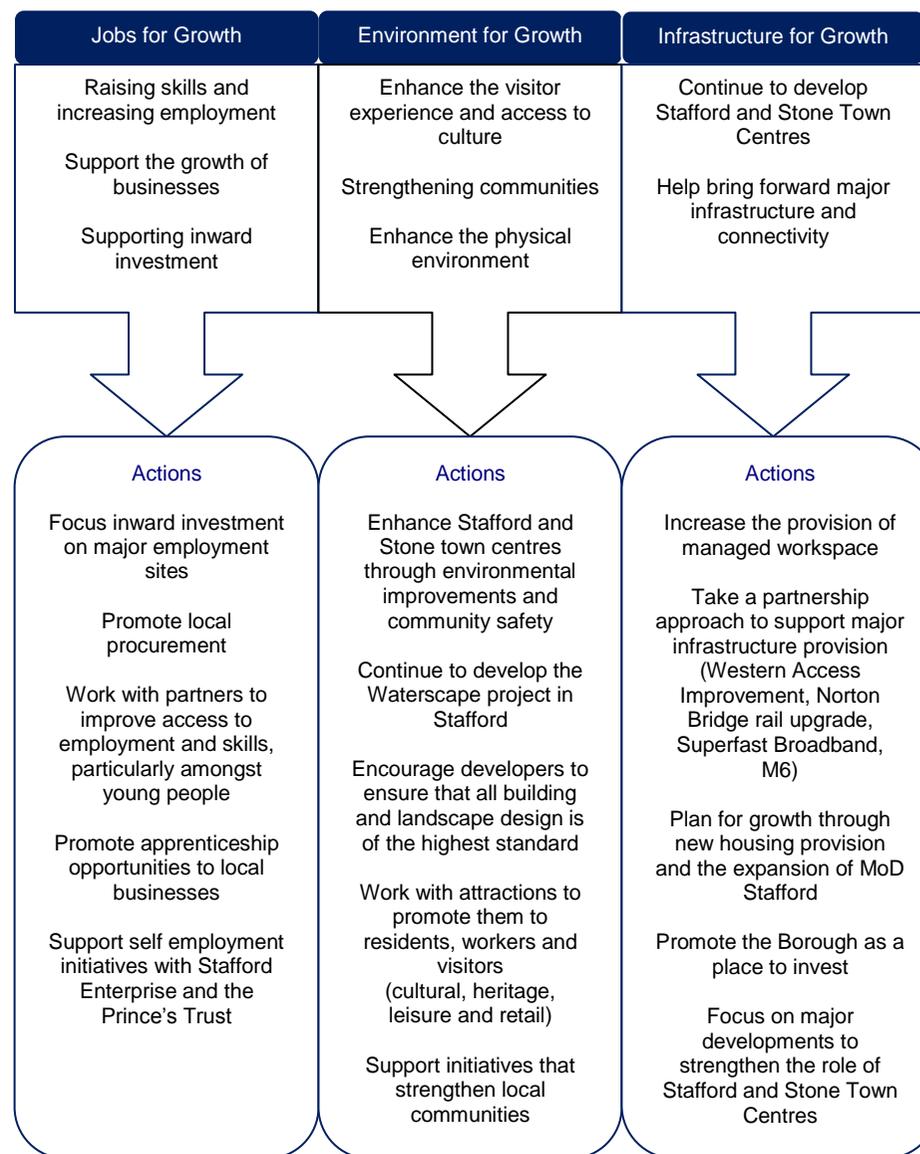
This Strategy will be used to seek commitment and resources from the Council and partner organisations to tackle these key issues.

2. Economic Priorities

Stafford Borough continues to develop with an emphasis on increased economic and housing investment to provide for the future needs of our communities. The Borough has an ongoing multi-million pound investment programme in Stafford Town Centre, National Affordable Housing Programme projects, proposals for significant investment in MoD Stafford and related infrastructure through “Project Borona” (which will bring in an additional 1,200 service personnel), and delivery of Growth Point projects. Stafford Borough is also one of the highest performing districts in terms of Key Stage 4 skills attainment and recent research undertaken by Experian for the BBC lists the Borough in the top 10% of districts in England in terms of qualifications held.

The opportunities and challenges that the Borough faces have been recognised by the Borough Council and its partners on the Stafford Strategic Board and in the Spring of 2012 resulted in new economic priorities being agreed which promote growth in terms of job creation, infrastructure and the supporting environment.

These priorities and actions apply equally to urban and rural contexts and to all ages and sectors of the community. They also underpin the economic Strategy for the Borough which is detailed in Section 5.



3. Borough Profile

Stafford Borough is a very attractive place to live, work and invest with a high quality natural environment and excellent transport and communication links. It is centrally located in England and covers an area of 230 square miles with large rural areas as well as the main settlements of Stafford and Stone. It is also one of the most self contained communities in the West Midlands region with the West Midlands Regional Observatory Lifestyle Survey showing that 73% of the Borough's economically active population live and work within its boundary.

The economy of Stafford Borough was traditionally based around public administration, manufacturing and engineering. As the administrative centre of the County, the public sector has been vital to the Stafford economy and currently around 40% of employees are employed in the public sector.

However in recent years there has been a significant re-structuring of the local economy with the loss or contraction of major manufacturing companies. Indeed on one measure of economic performance (% loss of employment 1998-2003) Stafford had the third worst performance of all the English Local Authorities (Source: Local Futures Group).

Despite these setbacks there has been a considerable fight back through the Single Regeneration Budget Round 6 Programme, the Stone Market Town Initiative, Growth Point and other programmes to provide a strong and prosperous local community for the future.

The economic turnaround has been evidenced by:-

- 2006-2009 Stafford Borough was the 12th, 1st and 5th best performing English District in the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive scheme (LABGI)
- The Council became a Beacon Authority for "Raising Economic Prosperity through Partnership" (2009/10)
- Stafford becoming a "Settlement of Significant Development" and a Regional Growth Point in 2009
- Low shop vacancy rates in Stafford (at around half the national average)
- The second lowest job seeker allowance claimant rate in the County at 2.4% (October 2010)
- Alstom being offered Regional Growth Fund assistance to support major research and development investment
- Expansion of Beacon Business Park and creation of Redhill Business Park (from 2013)
- £70 million new investment in town centre development taking place in 2013
- The Borough forming part of the negotiations in the second wave of City Deal areas announced by the Government in February 2013

In February 2011 there were 60,700 employees in the Borough, higher than any other Staffordshire district, and the Borough has a very self contained local economy (it is the only Staffordshire district to have greater average workplace based earnings than its resident based earnings in 2009).

In 2009 the Enterprise Rate for the Borough (the rate for new businesses registering for VAT and PAYE per 10,000 population) was slightly above the Regional average at around 41% and innovation related to the design of new products is particularly important for the Borough. In February 2011 the Borough had the highest rate in the County for employment in knowledge intensive services (52.3% of the workforce) and the Borough has developed as a cluster for environmental technologies (in 2008 employing nearly three times the national average in this sector at 3.8%).

The strengths outlined above can be considered against potential weaknesses and threats which are set out in a SWOT analysis.

The challenge for this Strategy will be to build resilience through positive actions to bring forward investment, social and transport infrastructure and to provide business support to enable long term private sector growth.

Despite having a strong basis on which to finance the local economy and a drive for growth, it is important to understand some underlying trends which could, without intervention, negatively impact on the regeneration of the Borough.

The Borough has an aging population which in the longer term will reduce the overall labour force and see a shift to a greater emphasis on part-time employment. The skew to older age groups is also likely to have implications on health and social care although there will be opportunities for growth in this sector.

Strengths

- Strong local skills base and wider education attainment
- Established employment base in the environmental technology cluster (such as Alstom and Shott)
- Accessible location – 3 junctions to M6 and on West Coast Mainline Rail
- Stafford town is very self contained and has its own travel to work area
- Businesses in the Borough have been shown to be adaptive during recent recession

Weaknesses

- Dependence on several larger employers in vulnerable sectors (especially public sector)
- Decline in private sector employment over last decade including manufacturing
- Graduate retention is relatively weak
- A current lack of floor space for large footprint developments

Opportunities

- Higher education presence from Staffordshire University (potential for spin outs)
- Growth Point status and funding and
- Potential for new transport infrastructure to open up employment opportunities
- Opportunities for high value added manufacturing and engineering
- Opportunities to develop new local employment sites
- Think Local for local business support, networking and procurement
- Investment and employment through the City Deal

Threats

- Public sector spending cuts
- Growth needs to be balanced (between housing and employment)
- The recession has impacted on the delivery of some town centre projects
- Ongoing sustainability issues for surrounding rural communities
- Lack of Government funding for infrastructure
- Investment in competing economies and Enterprise Zones (although this can also offer supply chain opportunities)

There has also been a period of decline in the manufacturing sector which has resulted in the loss of 1,700 manufacturing jobs between 2003 and 2008. Long range forecasting provided by Staffordshire County Council using the Cambridge Econometrics model suggests that this decline in the manufacturing sector is set to continue to 2026 and overall employment is expected to decline by 9,800 jobs (a 14.4% decline). This partly reflects the contraction in the labour force mentioned above.

Forecasts also suggest that the financial and business sector of the economy is set to become more important and there is also likely to be a small rise in employment in the construction and electricity, gas and water sectors.

40% of jobs in the Borough (and over 50% in the Stafford Town urban area) are in the “Public Administration, Education and Health” Sector. The vast majority of these jobs are in the public sector and are potentially vulnerable to future spending cuts. This vulnerability impacts upon the resilience of the local economy as identified in research undertaken in 2010 by Experian for the BBC. Experian ranked the overall resilience of the Borough as 162 which is at the median of all local authorities and it is considered the second most resilient district in Staffordshire (behind Lichfield). However this overall score hides some areas of concern, notably the number of employees who are in vulnerable sectors and business insolvency.

Stafford’s resilience score is also influenced by positive factors including adaptive capacity, a strong proportion of employment in resilient sectors and the propensity of sectors in the local economy to export. Stafford also scores highly in terms of the level of earnings, the availability of brownfield land ready for reuse, access to green space and, as previously mentioned, Borough people are generally well qualified (with the ranking for people with no qualifications being 31 out of 324 (in best performing 10% of districts in England)).



Demographics

The table below identifies through recent household projection figures from the Government that the population of Stafford Borough will increase by 15%. Within the County only East Staffordshire (20%) has a higher rate of population growth.

Population Projections 2006–2031 for Stafford Borough

	Population Projections 2006 – 2031 (Thousands)						
	2006	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031	% Change 2006-2031
Stafford	123	127	131	135	139	142	15%

Source: Office of National Statistics

A particular aspect of growth in Stafford is the presence of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) at Beacon Barracks. Following the run down of the DESA operating at the former RAF Stafford, the two Councils formed a Task Force to work with the military to ensure a continued presence in the town. An early success has been the decision to locate 22 Signals Regiment (800 personnel) to MOD Stafford. Through Project Borona it is proposed to relocate up to 1,200 service personnel and their dependents by 2016. This greater military presence in Stafford will also require more houses to provide Service Family Accommodation.

Stafford has a significant University campus, which forms part of Staffordshire University. The Borough Council has existing partnership arrangements with the University and has been in regular discussion with the University with regard to expanding the number of students at Stafford by up to 25%. The Borough Council has also supported the proposals by Stafford College to redevelop facilities on its town centre campus. Growth in the Further Education sector will complement the wider regeneration programmes set out in the Local Investment Plan.

Economic Indicators

As of January 2011¹, Stafford Borough was home to some 60,700 employee jobs (the highest number of the eight district council areas in Staffordshire). The following table highlights the levels of employment by broad industrial group in the Borough, and how this compares to the situation in Staffordshire, the West Midlands region and Nationally.

Stafford has a proportionally very large concentration of its employee jobs in the public administration, education and health sector (39.6% or 24,100 jobs) than those comparison areas. This

extremely high level of employment can be attributed to the fact that Stafford is the main location for central jobs of Staffordshire County Council, whilst also having significant employment provided by Stafford Borough Council and in the health sector through Mid Staffordshire General Hospitals NHS Trust. Employment in the education sector is provided by the local schools and further boosted by the presence of the campus of Staffordshire University and Stafford College of Further Education. Therefore, while the Borough has a good concentration of quite stable service sector employment, it is potentially vulnerable to any major changes which could occur within these sectors, particularly in the light of the new coalition Government's budget deficit reduction programme.

Employment by Broad Industry Group

	Stafford Borough (Number)	Stafford Borough (%)	Staffordshire County	West Midlands Region	Great Britain
Manufacturing	6,500	10.8	14.5	13.8	10.2
Construction	1,800	3.0	5.5	4.9	4.8
Distribution, hotels and restaurants	13,100	21.5	25.4	23.6	23.4
Transport and communications	3,200	5.2	7.5	5.8	5.8
Banking, finance and insurance,	8,100	13.4	15.8	18.6	22.0
Public administration, education & health	24,100	39.6	26.0	27.0	27.0
Other services	2,300	3.8	4.7	4.6	5.3
Total	60,700	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: NOMIS, Annual Business Inquiry, January 2011, Crown Copyright

Notes: Information relating to Agriculture and Fishing, and Energy and Water Broad Industry Groups has been excluded from this table due to disclosure controls issues. The rounded figures may not sum to the table.

¹ Annual Business Inquiry January 2011. NOMIS

Although Stafford Borough currently has proportionally less jobs than comparison areas of Staffordshire County and the West Midlands Region in the manufacturing sector, (10.8% of all employment at January 2011 or 6,500 employee jobs) the sector is still more important proportionally than for Great Britain as a whole.

Stafford Borough has seen one of the greatest levels of decrease in employment among the manufacturing sector of any district in the West Midlands Region. Between 2001 and 2006 some 3,900 manufacturing jobs were lost in the district (a -32.5% decrease in employment in the sector). It is important that the employment land lost as a result of such cyclical changes in the local economy is used to its best potential, whether that use is for new employment land, housing or a mixture of uses.

After the public administration, education and health sector, the second most important sector locally for employee jobs is the distribution, hotels and restaurants sector which provides 13,100 employee jobs or 21.5% of the employment in Stafford Borough. Recent developments taking advantage of the Borough's good links to the M6 motorway in particular suggest that the market for further development in the distribution and warehousing sector could potentially expand further.

The banking, finance and insurance sector employs proportionally less people in Stafford Borough than for Staffordshire County, Nationally or the West Midlands Region. There is therefore potential for some growth in these sectors. In order to develop its economy further into the future, growth in the financial and business sector will be important.

Representing 3.0% of all employee jobs, Construction employs a proportionally lower level of people against the comparison areas. The Transport and Communication Sector is also under represented in Stafford Borough, accounting for 5.2% of employee jobs in the Borough compared with 7.5% in County as a whole.

Migrant Employment

Stafford Borough has quite a varied and diverse migrant community. Levels of migration in the area are affected by a number of factors including the opportunities for employment here.

In 2002 the number of economic migrants registering for a National Insurance Number in Stafford stood at 190 people (shown in the table below), since then this increased considerably and by 2007 the number of registrations reached 930. The number of National Insurance Registrations by overseas migrants has increased in every local authority area in Staffordshire between 2002 and 2007.

Registrations in Stafford dropped to 860 for 2008 and again in 2009 to 790. This is most likely due to the economic recession.

National Insurance Registrations for all adult overseas nationals entering the UK (Data extract June 2010)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 (not comp-ete)	TOTAL
Stafford	190	360	540	550	560	930	860	790	220	5000
Total for Chase Division	280	520	730	800	820	1210	1060	950	290	6660

Figures rounded to the nearest ten so may not round to the total shown.
Source: 100% extracted from NI Recording System.

Stafford has four soft fruit farms, which employ workers from overseas on a seasonal basis. These workers are usually from the new European Union member states and the workers mostly originate from Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Bulgaria. Since the recession, the number of Polish nationals coming to the Borough to work has decreased.

The soft fruit farms each employ around 250-350 workers between the months of May - October. They are mainly young, healthy adults and they travel without dependants due to the nature of the work.

Stafford hospital draws workers from abroad, and the NHS is reliant on medical professionals from overseas. The Beacon Barracks also provides another employment opportunity for the Nepalese community, as it is home to 22 Signal Regiment (the Ghurkhas).

Retail

Stafford Borough's town centres are the key focus for shopping, accessing key services and facilities as well as increasingly being seen as places to live. Stafford is the Borough's strategic town centre and a principal shopping destination serving a large and diverse economic hinterland with large scale retail developments within and adjacent to the town centre.

However in recent years national trading conditions for the retail "high street" sector have become extremely hard, particularly as a consequence of the growing role of internet shopping and several notable stores have closed including Jessops, HMV and the Cooperative Department Store. Stafford has begun to fall behind other competing centres across the region in terms of its retail offer which needs to be addressed in order to support the future communities. The town centre therefore needs to be ready to accommodate major new developments to enhance the retail offer, bringing new national names to the Borough where possible and ensuring existing retailers have the opportunity to access trading floorspace which meets their long terms needs.

Across the Borough area other centres including Stone, Eccleshall, Gnosall, Great and Little Haywood provide more localised services and facilities for their communities. In recent years a number of these centres have experienced a reduction in the range of services and facilities leading to greater car travel to other larger centres. In

the future these local rural centres need to be protected and enhanced so that they can continue to meet the needs of the community and reduce the need to travel.

Household Income

Stafford Borough had the third highest level of household income in 2010 out of the Staffordshire districts at £41,510 which is above the County, sub-national and national averages. The Borough tends to have higher actual numbers of higher income households compared to the other districts in the County. For example the Borough has the highest overall number of households earning £50,000 and above at 15,181.

Unemployment and Economic Inactivity

In recent years the Borough Council has coordinated partnership activity to help reduce the number of working age people on out of work benefits under National Indicator 152. The measure of NI 152 includes claimant information for Job Seekers Allowance, Incapacity Benefit/Employment Support Allowance, Lone Parents and other income related benefits.

Through the Employment Opportunities Action Group the Borough Council and partner organisations have sought to:-

- Identify target areas for locality working
- Produce profiles of target areas, including existing initiatives and resources
- Focus on hard-to-reach, identifying barriers to employment
- Develop an action plan that identifies routeways to delivery

Current data provided by Nomis (for May 2010) show that the percentage of people on key out of work benefits was 9.8%. This is higher than the pre-recession figure of 8.1% but the trend shows that this gap is closing.

Whilst the Borough is generally prosperous there remain pockets of deprivation and 6 areas in particular which remain a focus as they

have out of work claimants rates exceed 20% of the working age population. These 6 Lower Super Output Areas are:-

- Highfields and Western Downs (E01029716)
- Highfields and Western Downs (E01029717)
- Holmcroft (E01029720)
- Manor (E01029727)
- Penkside (E01029734)
- Tillington (E01029752)

The Penkside area has in the last year become a focus in Staffordshire for multi-agency partnership working as it scores relatively highly on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation on a range of socio-economic issues including unemployment, anti-social behaviour, child well-being and teenage pregnancy. The locality work in this area involves the public and voluntary sectors and is ongoing through the time period of this Local Investment Plan.

In terms of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants – which has seen the most responsive fluctuations through the recent recession – is relatively low in Stafford Borough as can be seen in the following table. The claimant rate of 2.4% (in December 2010) is the second lowest in Staffordshire and well below the regional and national rates.

Across Staffordshire there has been a decrease in the JSA claimant rate however the rate of decrease has slowed in Stafford Borough when compared to most other districts.

Comparison of JSA Claimant Rates

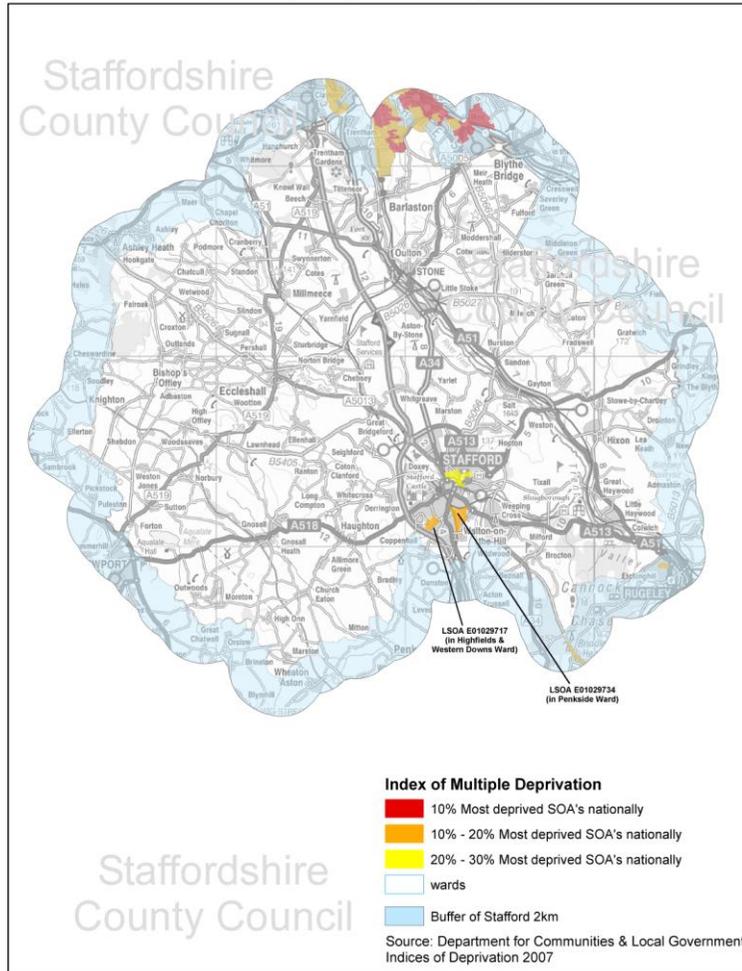
Source: NOMIS

¹ The claimant rate is the proportion of the working age population claiming Job Seekers Allowance

In terms of the overall 2007 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, the Borough had two Lower Super Output Areas within the 10 to 20% national quintile, these are in Penkside and Highfields and Western Downs. In addition, part of the Littleworth Ward is within the 20-30% most deprived quintile.

Area	December 2010		Annual Change (%)	Quarterly Change (%)	Monthly Change (%)
	No. of claimants	Claimant Rate (%) ¹			
Great Britain	1,368,310	3.7	-9.6	-0.9	0.9
West Midlands	153,040	4.6	-13.0	-2.5	0.5
Staffordshire	14,095	2.8	-22.2	-3.9	1.3
Cannock Chase	2,313	3.9	-22.0	1.4	4.0
Tamworth	1,713	3.6	-24.8	-7.1	-0.8
Newcastle-under-Lyme	2,210	2.9	-20.7	-8.5	-0.4
East Staffordshire	1,699	2.6	-30.7	-10.1	0.7
South Staffordshire	1,710	2.7	-20.9	-4.4	-0.6
Lichfield	1,469	2.5	-19.6	-0.9	-0.4
Stafford	1,789	2.4	-16.9	-2.6	2.2
Staffordshire Moorlands	1,192	2.1	-19.8	5.8	4.1

Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007 - The Most Deprived Lower Super Output Areas in Stafford



This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey Material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (C) Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Staffordshire County Council 100019422. 2007

Produced by the Research Unit, Development Services Department, Staffordshire County Council, 2007.



Infrastructure

It will be necessary to ensure that new housing and employment development is supported with strategic improvements to our transport and communications infrastructure. A key element of the strategic highway network is the proposal for the Western Access Improvement route around the north western edge of Stafford Town Centre.

It will also be important that major development occurs near to existing services and facilities, supported by accessible, frequent and good quality public transport. There are areas across the Borough with poor levels of transport infrastructure such as walking and cycling routes which should be improved through new investment, for example with £4.1m through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund.

Although Stafford and Stone are well served by fast and frequent rail links, other settlements across the Borough have less reliable public transport services which creates a greater reliance on the use of private cars and increased isolation for those without a car.

The Borough Council will seek to implement a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on development to ensure that local neighbourhoods share the advantages of development by receiving a proportion of the funds raised from developers. These will be passed directly to the local neighbourhood so community groups can spend the money locally on the facilities they want. The CIL might contribute to larger improvement projects or equally may help to deliver smaller local projects depending upon the requirements of the community.

Superfast Broadband coverage and speeds are important for the long term growth of our economy. Stafford is benefiting from investment in new optic fibre broadband but there remain issues, particularly in rural areas, where broadband services are poor or non-existent.

Leisure and the Visitor Economy

The Stafford Borough Tourism Economic Impact Assessment (2010) identifies the importance the visitor economy plays in the Borough whether these visitors are coming to the larger attractions like Shugborough, Stafford Castle and the Trentham Estate, the theatre, friends and family, conferences and events or visitors to our businesses.

The Assessment identified that in 2010:-

- 2.7 million trips were undertaken in Stafford Borough – 2.6 million day trips, and approximately 0.1 million overnight stays
- The overnight trips account for a total of 0.5 million nights in the area
- During their visit to Stafford, tourists spend approximately £119 million. On average, about £10 million is spent in the local economy each month
- Overnight visits generated approximately £17.5 million in the area, compared with £101.3 million from irregular day trips

This spend supports approximately 2,308 direct tourism related jobs, with an additional 581 non-tourism jobs dependent upon multiplier spend from tourism.

The Borough Council is a member of the Destination Staffordshire Partnership and financially contributes to the Stafford Tourism Bureau. The Borough Council also continues to invest in cultural assets such as Stafford Castle, the Ancient High House and the Gatehouse Theatre.

There are a number of private led proposals to invest in the visitor economy, including the further phases of investment at the Trentham Estate which include a new hotel.

Leisure and recreation facilities are an important factor to attract major inward investment to the Borough and complement investment in new housing, business parks and town centre infrastructure.

The Borough Council has undertaken significant investment in improving sport facilities with the new Stafford Leisure Centre, improvements to Rowley Park. The new £600,000 play facilities at Victoria Park are highly acclaimed and further improvements to this important Town Centre asset are planned.

The Borough Council works closely with developers to maximise the benefits of the planning process by justifying the inclusion of recreational facilities and the Council works closely with the education sector including Staffordshire University, SCOFE and local schools to maximise inward investment wherever practical.

4. Alignment to Strategic Policies

The Prosperity for All Strategy will deliver the economic, business support and regeneration objective's of Stafford Borough Council's Corporate Plan and the wider total place objectives of the Local Investment Plan. The Strategy also provides the opportunity to anchor Stafford Borough as an area for economic growth and prosperity within the wider Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise area.

The Corporate Plan also emphasises the importance of partnership working, particularly with the Stafford Borough Strategic Board to ensure that local community needs are being met.

In turn, the Prosperity Strategy provides the context for a series of sub-strategies being for specific aspects of economic regeneration.

Delivering the Plan for Stafford Borough

Stafford Borough Council is in the process of preparing a new Development Plan ("The Plan for Stafford Borough") which will guide future development across the Borough. It is important that new development meets local needs whilst protecting and enhancing the existing high quality of life in the Borough and initial consultation on these "local choices" for development was undertaken during the winter of 2011.

The actions contained in this Strategy have been developed to complement and take forward the emerging polices of the new development plan, particularly with regard to employment land provision and creating sustainable town centres.



Local objectives ...

Local partners' economic ambitions for Stafford Borough include:

- Maintaining Stafford Borough's self sufficiency by supporting existing businesses and employers as well as delivering high quality premium employment land for new research and development facilities with growth opportunities to provide new businesses for graduates.
- Delivering new mixed use town centre proposals to make Stafford a regionally significant centre for retailing, leisure and cultural attractions with an emphasis on non-car modes of transport provision.
- Supporting and enhancing the role of public sector agencies who have their headquarters or a significant presence in Stafford including Staffordshire University, Stafford College, Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service, the Ministry of Defence, the Prison Service, the Primary Care Trust and two Foundation Trusts. Work with local partners will be crucial through the Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Delivering the Big Society...

The Government White Paper: "Local Growth realising every places potential" which was first presented to Parliament in October 2010, identified that there should not be uniformity in economic growth across the Country and that there should be shift in power to local communities and businesses to deliver local growth and prosperity.

Achieving the local ambitions set out above will depend on a range of public, voluntary and private funding programmes, which embrace the intentions of the "Big Society" approach and private developer contributions, which will be incorporated in the Investment Plan.

The Coalition Government is committed through the Big Society initiative and the Localism agenda to providing greater control to local communities including decisions on housing and planning matters. The Borough Council will continue to have a strategic development plan, however local communities will be encouraged to deliver neighbourhood plans and decide on investment priorities in their local area.

Contributing to the Local Enterprise Partnership objectives ...

The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was established in October 2010 and is led by a Board comprising public and private sector membership.

The LEP covers the traditional boundaries of the County of Staffordshire and the Stafford Borough Prosperity for All Strategy is ideally placed to contribute to and influence LEP priorities in relation to business support, economic growth, enterprise, inward investment and physical regeneration initiatives.

The LEP priorities are:-

- Drive enterprise and innovation
- Generate fast returns at low unit cost
- Engage with and gain leverage from the private sector
- Create growth which is economically and environmentally sustainable.

Stafford has an important opportunity to act as a central growth area at the heart of the Staffordshire economy and, with LEP endorsement, to seek and secure investment through all available

Government funding streams which will contribute to the wider regeneration of the LEP area.

5. The Strategy

Stafford Borough has a mix of important urban and rural communities. The County Town of Stafford is the most important location for sustainable growth in the future, however the rural hinterlands have particular economic and housing needs which must be addressed to provide affordable housing and a sustainable local economy.

The following strategic priorities have been led by the Borough Council's Corporate Plan and will tackle the needs and opportunities identified in the preceding sections of this document.

It is intended that consultation on these priorities will take place with key partner organisations and private businesses and, if generally accepted, a more detailed, flexible, responsive and specific Action Plan will be produced. The Action Plan will identify timescales and resources for delivery as well as setting out outputs, outcomes risks and project leaders.

In summary the strategic priorities are:-

- A. **Enable future population growth through housing, employment and town centre development**
 - 1. Support developers in bringing forward identified development sites
 - 2. Continue to develop Stafford and Stone town centres
 - 3. Supporting a vibrant night-time economy
 - 4. Effectively market and promote our Borough to businesses
 - 5. Provide a red carpet service to inward investment
 - 6. Provide a long term inward investment strategy for Stafford Town Centre
- 7. Raise skills and reduce worklessness, particularly amongst young people
- 8. Help bring forward major infrastructure
- 9. Support a transition to a more balanced public/private workforce
- 10. Generate sustainable rural economies and services
- 11. Implement the Local Investment Plan to ensure affordable and relevant houses for the present and future Borough community
- 12. Plan for an aging population
- B. **Support new and existing businesses**
 - 13. Assisting businesses to access support and funding opportunities
 - 14. Work with relevant business support organisations to generate business growth
 - 15. Supporting our growth sectors and major employers
 - 16. Maximising the opportunities that expansion of MoD Stafford will bring
 - 17. Bringing forward premises for business start-ups and growth
 - 18. Promoting local procurement and business-to-business trading
 - 19. Provide support and guidance on business rates
 - 20. Focused, straightforward regulatory services for our business community
- C. **Promote environmental quality as an economic asset**
 - 21. Work with developers to ensure that all building design is of the highest standard
 - 22. Continue to develop the Waterscape Project and undertake other environmental enhancements within the Borough
 - 23. Supporting the visitor economy and leisure facilities

A. Enable future population growth through housing, employment and town centre development

1. Support developers in bringing forward identified development sites

- Maintain an Employment Land Review of available sites
- Prepare planning briefs and supplementary planning documents where appropriate
- Engage developers, stakeholders and residents in the preparation of development frameworks major regeneration sites
- Through the LDF allocate 63 hectares of new employment land serving Stafford town and sufficient expansion land to serve Stone up to the Year 2031
- Investment to bring forward the Redhill Strategic Development Site

The development of Primepoint at M6 Junction 14 and Staffordshire Technology Park has demonstrated Stafford's adaptability and ability to attract new employment growth, but there needs to be a continuing supply of good quality and sustainable employment land which primarily serves the expanding town of Stafford.

The Borough Council is helping the County Council to bring forward the strategically important Redhill development site on the northern edge of Stafford town with investment through the Growth Point programme.

The Borough Council maintains an Employment Land Review of available sites as part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

Further support provided by the Council to bring forward development sites, for example with assistance on funding bids, is covered separately over the following pages.



2. Continue to develop Stafford and Stone town centres

- Investment in Stafford Market
- Promotion and Events with the Town Centre Partnership
- Work with developers, land owners and agents to secure long term inward investment
- Provision of background economic and demographic data
- Applying Government guidance as appropriate following the Portas Review
- Undertake a programme of environmental improvements
- Fund business support for Stafford Town Centre small, independent retail businesses

Stafford Town Centre is undergoing a multi million pound investment programme which involves improvements to infrastructure and new development on key sites across the centre.

The Borough Council will continue to work with developers and agents to ensure that continued investment takes place. Support will be through the provision of available economic and demographic data, by examining how any public land holdings could form part of development sites, assisting developments at the planning application stage and through the promotional work of the Town Centre Partnership.

Research has identified that there is a requirement for Stafford Town Centre to accommodate an additional 39,000 sq m (net) floorspace in comparison (non food) retail uses by 2026. This will be accommodated by new private sector-led investment which will complement significant recent investment from Staffordshire County Council in the Staffordshire Place development.

The £70 million redevelopment of the Kingsmead and Riverside sites will provide an 18-unit retail development of over 190,000 sq ft and a new supermarket to complement and strengthen the town centre economy. The new multi storey car park will provide over 1000 spaces with ground floor retail and leisure units facing the river.

The Council will continue to promote the Market Town of Stone as a centre for independent retailers and food and drink establishments. The Council provides the popular monthly Farmers Market and will support locally led regeneration initiatives which will increase footfall and prosperity of the Town Centre economy.



3. Supporting a vibrant night-time economy

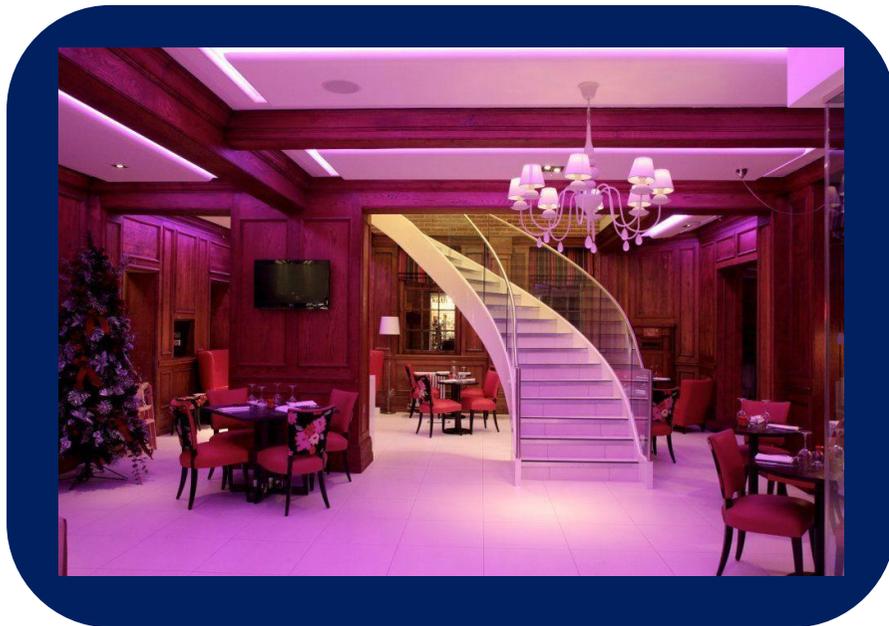
- Managing the Town Centre at night so that it remains vibrant, safe, attractive, prosperous and is inclusive for all residents and visitors
- Deliver events
- Encourage investment which brings positive change to broaden the appeal of Stafford Town Centre at night

Attracting more people into the Town Centre at night can help to raise economic prosperity and complement the mainly retail and office day time economy. Increasing footfall at night can give greater investor confidence and be used to encourage further developments and to encourage continued investment in privately owned business premises.

The Council will encourage developers to bring a diverse range of investments which will help to broaden the appeal of the Town Centre at night with investment in good quality “sit-down” restaurants (for example the recent Posthouse restaurant development), a new cinema and hotel development.

The Council and its partners also has an important role to play in managing the night time environment in terms of street cleansing, food hygiene, monitoring and addressing noise pollution, reducing crime through the BARCS initiative, tackling disorder and anti social behaviour, assisting access to taxis through a marshalling scheme and encouraging responsible management of licensed premises through the Best Bar None scheme.

The Christmas Lights Switch on event and associated firework display is the main evening event organised by the Council which adds vibrancy to the night-time economy.



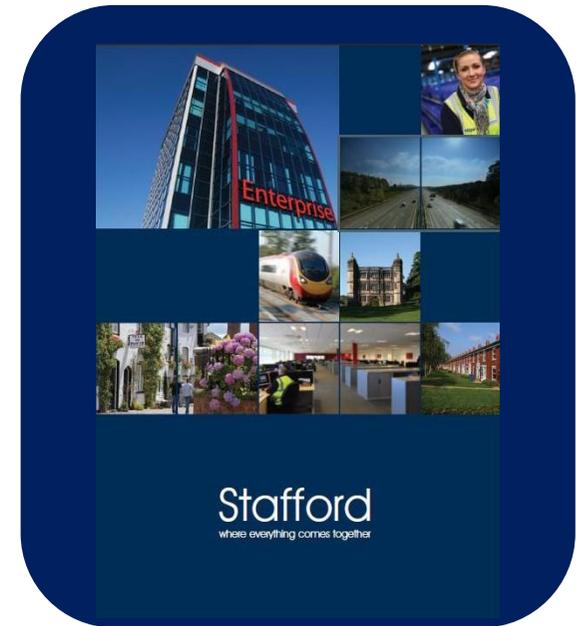
4. Effectively market and promote our Borough to businesses

- [Stafford Eye online newsletter](#)
- [Inward Investment and Professional Services brochures](#)
- [Staffordshire Technology Park Website](#)
- [Advertising and press releases](#)
- [Business and Town Centre events](#)

The Borough Council will continue to maximise funding and available resources to promote the Borough as a location to bring and expand businesses and jobs.

The messages given out frequently promote the wider lifestyle and social benefits of the Borough in terms of high quality of life, access to leisure and affordable, good quality housing etc.

Increasing use of the website and e-marketing will be explored to maximise the reach of our advertising in a cost effective manner.



5. Provide a red carpet service to inward investment
 - Hand-holding investors and businesses to sites and premises in liaison Make It Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire service
 - Assist investors and developers to access other Council services to enable them to become established in the Borough at the earliest opportunity

The Borough Council works with partner organisations to ensure that investors and potential investors are provided with information and support to assist in finding sites and to assist them in making investment decisions.

Support given includes:-

- a) Information on available sites and premises
 - b) Indicative information on business rate, salary and rental costs
 - c) Advice on wider benefits such as housing, proximity to retail centres, schools leisure facilities etc
 - d) Signposting to any Council services that may be required including business rates, regulatory services, development and building control
 - e) Signposting to general sources of funding and further business planning advice.
6. Provide a long-term inward investment strategy for Stafford Town Centre
 - To give investment confidence and a vision for the long term growth and prosperity of Stafford Town Centre

The Borough Council is providing a package of initiatives which will complement new retail-led investment in the Riverside area of the

town centre. One of these measure is the provision of a long term vision to guide and define the consolidation and development of the town centre in the long-term.

This work includes:-

- a) Identification of potential new development areas
- b) Where new land uses could be located
- c) A strategy for architecture and public realm
- d) A visitor strategy
- e) A parking strategy
- f) Identification of key access routes
- g) A report on a strategy for retail expansion, and types.



7. Raise skills and reduce worklessness, particularly amongst young people
- Support Job Centre Plus and Work Programme providers to best link employment, training and volunteering opportunities with targeted communities and individuals in the Borough
 - Attend and assist in the organisation of job fairs and similar events
 - Provide apprenticeships and actively promote apprenticeship opportunities to businesses in the Borough
 - Work with higher education providers on specific initiatives to enhance skills and employment opportunities
 - Addressing the skills gap and raising attainment in young people
 - Support the Staffordshire Employment and Skills Group

The Council monitors the out-of-work claimant rate for the Borough and supports collaborative projects with partner agencies that help bring forward employment opportunities which bridge the gap to the harder to reach people and communities.

Recently the Council has provided funding to assist people in the Penkside area to access numeracy and literacy training and through the Transition Fund Programme has funded an XL Club for excluded young people with the Princes Trust in the Highfields area. A further initiative has seen the provision of skills for work training for Ghurkha wives and partners with Stafford College.

The Council is an employer of apprentices and, with partners, has promoted the benefit of apprenticeships to local businesses and attended jobs fairs.

The proportion of young people participating in higher education 2 years after leaving school has decreased in Stafford, from 30.5%

amongst 2007 school leavers, to 29.9% for 2008 school leavers. This trend mirrors other Staffordshire districts but in 2008 it was the second highest rate in the County and is an issue which needs addressing if a greater proportion of the Borough population are to achieve higher level skills. The key role in addressing this trend lies with the County Council and higher education establishments.

The Borough Council will continue to support the Staffordshire Employment and Skills Group and partner initiatives which seek to raise skills and develop better links between education and enterprise (for example the Higher Education Innovation Strategy of Staffordshire University).

8. Help bring forward major infrastructure
- Western Access Improvement
 - Local Sustainable Transport Fund
 - Norton Bridge Rail Upgrade
 - M6 Capacity
 - Superfast Broadband

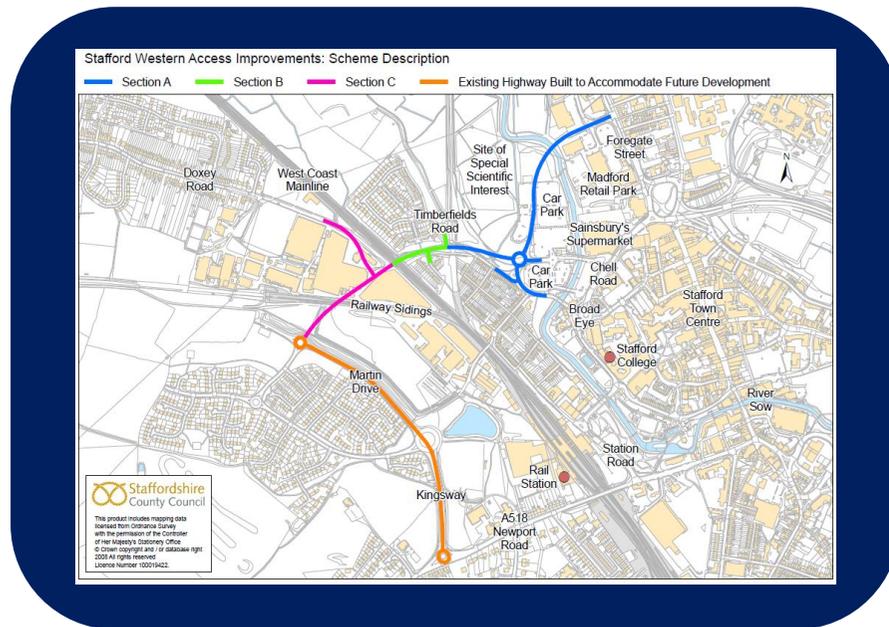
The Borough Council is working with strategic agencies to help bring forward long standing infrastructure requirements for the Borough – particularly in terms of major road and rail proposals Key projects include the Western Access improvement which will alleviate traffic in Stafford Town Centre and open up development land to the west of Stafford and the Local Sustainable Transport Fund which is investing over £4 million to improve routes for walking, cycling and public transport in the north eastern quadrant of Stafford.

The Council is supporting the Staffordshire wide Broadband project being operated by the County Council through the Local Enterprise Partnership. This initiative is investing over £14 million to develop

Superfast broadband infrastructure and the Borough Council has a specific role to play in promoting broadband take-up through events and other marketing material and to help raise the profile of broadband to businesses across the Borough (and especially to those in more isolated rural communities).

9. Support a transition to a more balanced public/private workforce

- Help to bring forward new employment sites
- Support self employment
- Promote inward investment and indigenous business growth
- Signposting business to funding



The Borough Council has a high dependency on a public sector workforce which leaves it vulnerable to ongoing efficiency savings. The need to rebalance this economy is therefore a specific priority for the Borough Council and the means to achieve this involves a combination of measures contained in this Strategy.

The key priority is to support private businesses to grow by assisting to bring forward new employment sites, signpost to funding sources such as the County Council's Staffordshire Business Support Fund and advice provided by Stafford Enterprise. The Borough Council also promotes apprenticeships to businesses as a means to achieve their expansion plans.

10. Generate sustainable rural economies and services

- Encourage, where possible, sustainable rural employment sites
- Promote access to Superfast broadband
- Help to bring forward affordable housing in rural areas
- Continue to support local community groups access funding through the Communities Mean Business Leader + Programme

The Borough is largely rural in nature and the Mosaic Public Sector Index, 2010, identified that 9% of residents live in isolated rural communities. Clearly access to traditional services (such as Post Office and health centre) is an issue for pockets of our rural residents – particularly those without access to private transport.

The benefits of access to Superfast broadband will therefore be proportionately more important people in rural areas and may represent that only real opportunity to access certain services.

The Borough Council has in the past looked at opportunities to support farmers to diversify and create appropriately scaled employment sites by converting redundant farm buildings.

Certain rural Wards within the Borough are also eligible to receive European funding through the Communities Mean Business Leader + programme. This fund is administered by the County Council and the Borough Council (along with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council) is a partner in the programme and has helped community groups to secure funding for a range of projects. This fund is available up to December 2013.



11. Implement the Local Investment Plan to ensure affordable and relevant houses for the present and future Borough community

- Affordable housing, especially in rural areas
- Supported and specialist housing
- Aspirational housing to meet the growth of the Borough

The growth agenda for Stafford is being led by the private sector and it is expected that the rate of house building will return to pre-recession levels as the market becomes more buoyant.

New developments are being taken forward including 245 units at St George's Park on the edge of Stafford Town Centre by Bovis

Homes. Other schemes which have the benefit of planning permission include Baswich House, the site of the former Staffordshire Police Headquarters in Stafford (potentially up to 191 units).

The growing County Town of Stafford will accommodate a greater proportion of new housing units compared to Stone and the rural parts of the Borough. This growth is likely to be directed mainly to the north and west of Stafford.

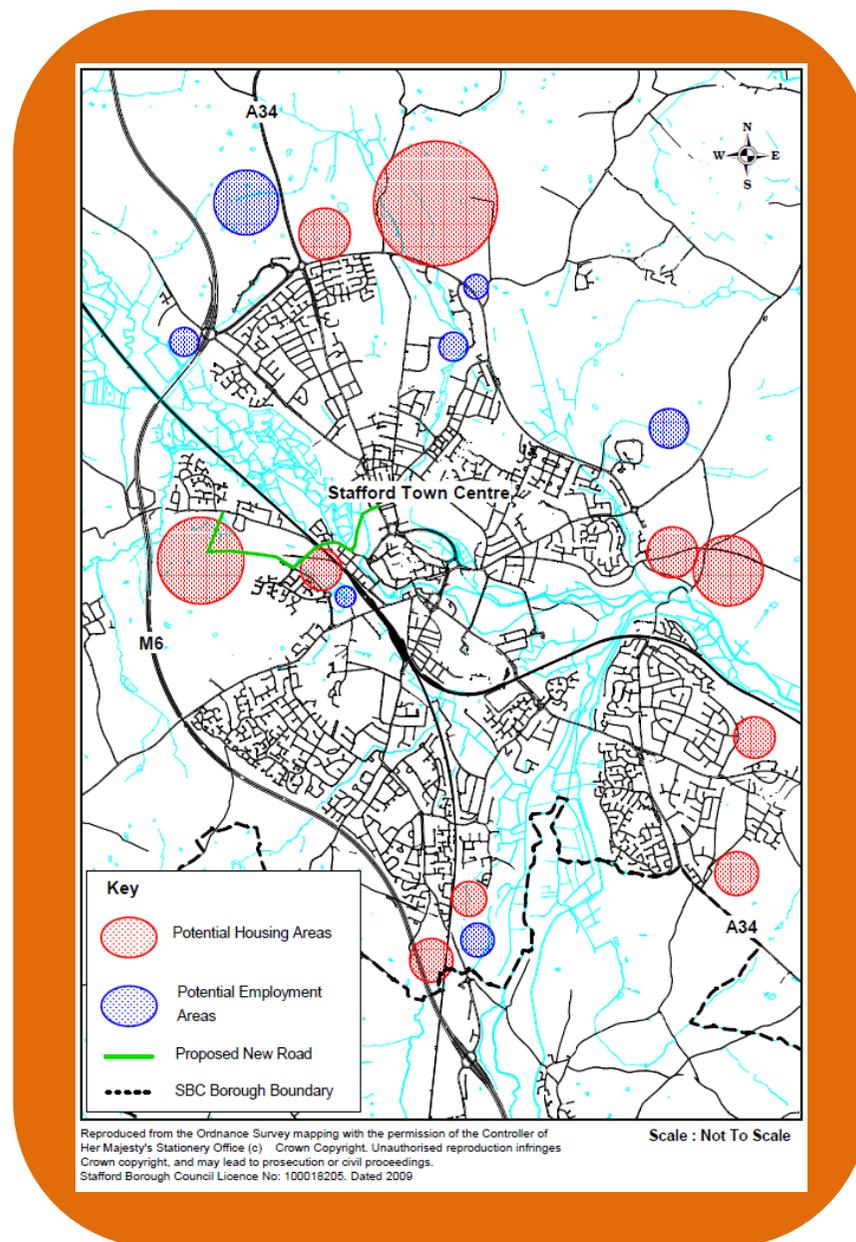
Current development proposals for 50 or more housing units which either have outline or full planning permission or subject to the signing of Section 106 agreements are:-

- Brunswick Terrace, Stafford 59 units
- UCM, Doxey Road, Stafford 145 units
- Alstom, Fairway, Stafford 270 units
- Baswich House, Stafford 191 units
- Stonefield Works, Oulton Road, Stone 120 units
- Yarnfield Park, Yarnfield 300 units

Specialist Housing

In 2010 Stafford Borough had an over 65 aged population of 24,800 people, the highest figure of all the Staffordshire districts. This figure is also predicted to increase by 57% over the twenty year period from 2010 to 2030.

Flexicare Housing is a type of specialised housing that provides independence and choice to adults with varying care needs, particularly the elderly and enables them to remain in their own home.



Lifetime Homes

The Council will expect all new housing development to adopt lifetime homes standards, unless it can be demonstrated that it is not technically feasible or will render the development unviable. The principle is that new homes should be designed to meet the varied and often changing needs of occupiers over time.

The standard comprises 16 design features; the features apply to both the interior and exterior of the home.

Affordability

Data sourced from the Office of National Statistics shows that Stafford Borough is the third most expensive area in Staffordshire to live; it has an affordability ratio of 5.44 for lower quartile house prices. The West Midlands has an affordability ratio of 5.43, making Stafford Borough less affordable than the rest of the region.

A household would need a deposit of £12,250 and an income of approximately £37,000 per annum to afford a house in the lower quartile house price range. This assumes the household does not have any other debts.

A single person household on an average income would only be able to borrow £82,000 from a high street mortgage lender. This is not enough to afford a property in the lower quartile house price range in the Borough.

Social Housing Need

On 1st April 2009, there were 2,168 households listed on the Housing Register. This has increased to 3,212 as at 1st April 2010 through a combination of factors including a fall in lettings, the introduction of choice based lettings and a higher demand for social housing due to the economic downturn.

Prior to the introduction of Choice Based Lettings in October 2009, 50.4% of households registered to be placed in urban areas and 49.6% in rural locations.

Although demand is comparable, supply is not. During the financial year 2008/09, 317 Registered Provider properties were let in urban areas. This is markedly higher than the 85 rural properties that were let during the same period. The lack of rural lets available may well have triggered a higher demand for urban areas.

The average waiting time for social housing in urban areas is 341 days, compared to 552 days in the rural areas of the Borough.

This shows that the demand for social housing in both urban and rural areas of the Borough is equally high. It should, however, be noted that, on average, people wanting to live in rural areas of the Borough are having to wait an extra 7 months for a property, compared to those wanting to live in urban areas, with the majority of housing supply being in the urban areas.

12. Plan for an aging population

- Lifetime homes
- Flexicare housing
- Growth of social care sector
- Support Staffordshire Circle scheme

The aging population in the Borough is set to rise and is predicted to lead to an increasing number of people living with long term conditions.

The development of the County Council's Staffordshire Circle scheme (which has a pilot project with the Baswich Community Group) aims to harness the skills and resources of local citizens, and to provide support to local older people and vulnerable adults to improve their health and community wellbeing through better connected people, places and communities.

The Borough Council is working with the County Council to help bring forward the regeneration of the Cooperative Street area of Stafford which includes proposals for Flexicare housing and other specialist housing provision.

The aging population presents opportunities for a growth of the health and social care sectors within the Borough and the Borough Council will continue to work alongside higher education providers and Job Centre Plus to help ensure that the long term employment opportunities are linked to the skills and qualifications of local residents.



B. Support new and existing businesses

13. Assisting businesses to access support and funding opportunities

- Contribute and complete Government funding applications
- Signposting businesses to advice and guidance
- Think Local 4 Business website
- Stafford Eye e-mail promotions

The Borough Council provides direct assistance to businesses by raising the awareness of Government funding streams and helping them to make the necessary applications for this. Key examples of this are with regard to supporting new Research and Development facilities at Alstom through a Regional Growth Fund bid and assisting the expansion of Beacon Business Park with Growing Places funding.

The bi-monthly Stafford Eye online newsletter promotes business support measures and keeps businesses updated on issues which will help them to prosper in the Borough.

Further information for businesses is provided in the Borough Council and the Think Local 4 Business websites.

14. Work with relevant business support organisations to generate business growth

- Local Enterprise Partnership
- Stafford Enterprise
- Stafford Town Centre Partnership
- Stafford Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Princes Trust
- Young Enterprise
- Business Enterprise Support
- Staffordshire Business and Environment Network (SBEN)

The Borough Council has a long standing record of working in partnership with other organisations and this was recognised in 2009 when the Council was awarded a Beacon award for “Raising prosperity through partnership”.

The partnerships developed with business support organisations cut across many of the Borough’s economic priorities and play a major role in moving towards a more balanced, less public sector focused, economy in the future.



15. Supporting our growth sectors and major employers

- Promoting green technology and energy efficiency in businesses through membership of the Staffordshire Business Environment Network (SBEN)
- Market and promote growth sectors – distribution, manufacturing, environmental technologies, transport and hotels

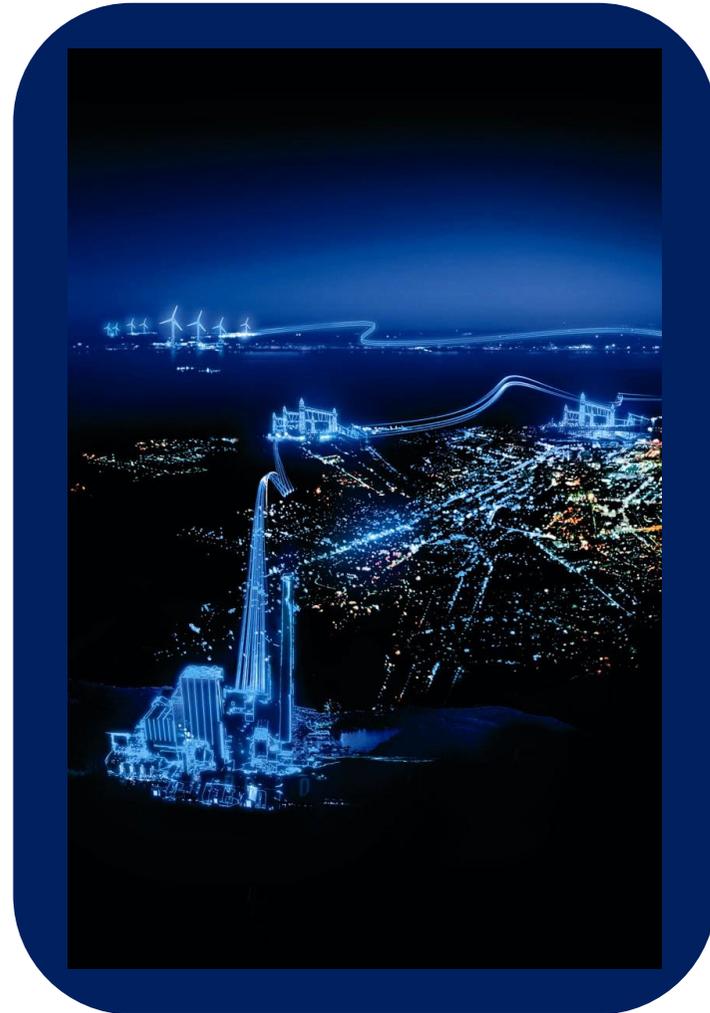
There has been much restructuring in the economy in Stafford Borough in recent years. These changes are likely to be, in part, a consequence of the economic downturn. The number of employee jobs reduced by 8% or 4,800 jobs between 2006 and 2010 which was the third largest reduction in Staffordshire, and greater than the County (5%) and regional (4%) reduction.

There has been an emergence of mining, quarrying and utilities businesses within the borough, as well as transport and storage and wholesale industries.

Alstom Grid is the largest private employer in the Borough with over 1,400 people and the company specialises in turnkey projects for power transmission and power electronics based utility applications with extensive expertise with renewable energy as well as integrated SmartGrid systems.

The Alstom Engineering Centre of Excellence at St Leonards Avenue, Stafford, is being developed to meet the anticipated growth in the global HVDC market and will consist of the provision of three bespoke research and development and test facilities providing a combined area of 10,188 sq m.

The Borough Council has supported the company to secure £4 million of Round 1 Regional Growth funding to help bring forward these important research and development facilities.



16. Maximising the opportunities that expansion of MoD Stafford will bring

- £151 million investment
- New Housing
- Impact on wider economy supply chains
- Opportunities for spend in the local economy
- Impacts for local schools and social infrastructure
- A pool of skilled workers

Major proposals are being brought forward by the Ministry of Defence to create part of a Midlands Super Garrison at the Beacon Barracks in Stafford. This would involve the relocation of 1,200 service personnel and their dependents with a requirement to create operational facilities as well as new family housing of 400 units which are expected to be located “outside the wire” within Stafford.

The investment has wider implications for infrastructure and services in the area, particularly with regard to education and healthcare facilities which are being developed in partnership with the County Council.

The MoD investment which is being made through “Project Borona” has been subject to the national Defence spending review by Government, but is still expected to come forward by 2016 during the lifetime of this Local Investment Plan.

Total investment proposed by the MoD is of the order of £151 million, making this one of the key projects in the growth agenda for the County Town.



17. Bringing forward premises for business start-ups and growth

- Research need and demand for start-up and grow-on space
- Identify locations for provision
- Identify delivery mechanisms and funding

The need to ensure that business growth can be properly accommodated goes hand-in-hand with the overall desire to encourage new business creation and support the overall growth agenda in the Borough.

Through the Single Regeneration Budget Programme several initiatives were progressed to deliver supported, small workspace units at Staffordshire University Business Village and the Business Innovation Centre (both on Staffordshire Technology Park) and at

St Alban's House. In addition complementary private sector provision has been created through the United Business Centre.

The Borough Council had research undertaken in 2009 to examine the opportunities for further managed workspace and "grow-on" space to accommodate growing companies. This work identified scope for medium sized units to be created in Stafford and in the north of the Borough to be delivered in partnership with the private sector.

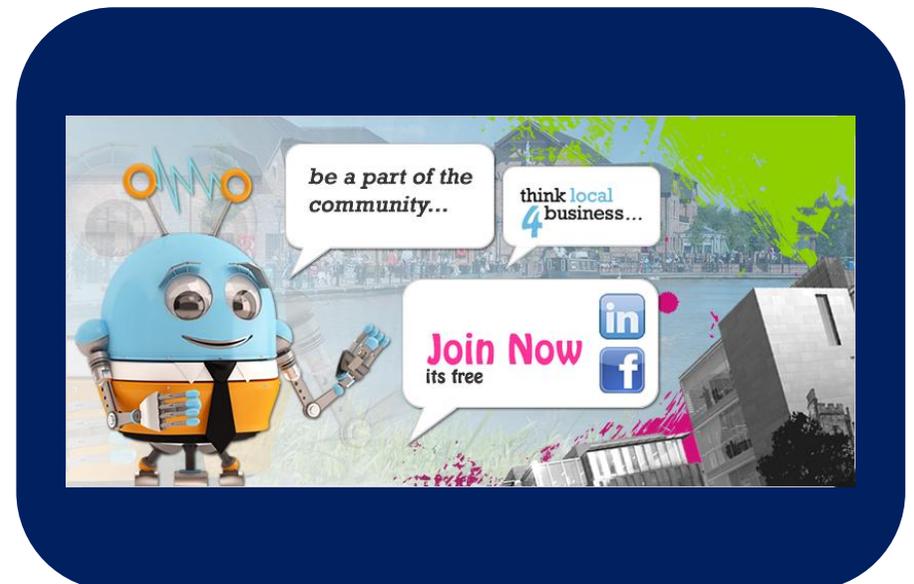
The current, post recession, need and demand for such units needs re-examining and the Borough Council will work with the County Council to identify and take forward a sustainable mechanism for the delivery of the next generation of managed workspace units.

18. Promoting local procurement and business-to-business trading

- Focus activity through Think Local 4 Business and complementary events and promotions

The Borough Council is a Director of Think Local 4 Business, the primarily on-line resource for businesses to encourage inter-trading opportunities and opportunities to become aware of, and bid for large contracts in the local area.

The above work is supplemented with the delivery of targeted "Meet the Buyer" events and additional promotion of the Think Local 4 Business brand.



19. Provide support and guidance on business rates

- Billing and collection of Business Rates
- Awarding rate relief, discounts and exemptions
- Advising of any rate relief or reductions available to business rate payers

Certain types of business property qualify for rate relief. Some types of relief are prescribed by Government (mandatory), and some are awarded by the Council (discretionary). The main types of relief are identified below:-

Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) - There are two elements to the relief:-

- The charge calculated using the small business rate multiplier of £ 0.45 (as opposed to the national multiplier of £0.458).
- Sliding scale of relief up to 100%, based on the rateable value of the property,

Where a company occupies a single property within England and the rateable value is less than £18,000, entitlement to relief will be as follows (for 2012/13):

£1 - £6000	Business rates will be entitled to 100% relief
£6001 - £12,000	Business rate calculated using the small business rates multiplier and relief declining on a sliding scale of 1% for every £60
£12,001 – 17,999	Business rates calculated using the SBRR multiplier.

Applications received within the 5 year period 1st April 2010 – 31st March 2015, will be able to have relief backdated where applicable, regardless of when the application is received.

In addition, in 2012/13 businesses with a Rateable Value of below £18,000 have automatically had their business rates bill calculated using the SBRR multiplier.

Transitional Relief - After each revaluation there is a period of transition. No bill is allowed to increase or decrease by more than a set percentage. Any property with a large increase or decrease in its rateable value will therefore come under the transitional relief scheme, which has the effect of phasing the valuation in over a period of time.

Charity Relief - properties used wholly or mainly for charitable purposes are automatically entitled to an 80% reduction on business rates (mandatory relief). In addition, the Council may award discretionary rate relief for all or part of the remaining 20% of the bill (discretionary relief). If the property is a charity shop, the property must be wholly or mainly used for the sale of goods donated to the charity and the proceeds must be applied to the purposes of the charity. Discretionary relief may also be considered for other non-profit making organisations.

Rural Rate Relief - If a business is in a rural village with a population below 3000, and it is one of the following types of business:

- The only village general store or post office, and the rateable value of the property is less than £8,500.
- A food shop with a rateable value of less than £8,500. (Restaurants & take-away premises are not included).
- The only village pub, or the only village petrol station with a rateable value of less than £12,500.

The above premises are entitled to a 50% reduction in the Business Rates bill (mandatory relief), or more if the Council awards discretionary rate relief for all or part of the remaining 50% (discretionary relief).

If a business is located in a qualifying rural village with a rateable value of less than £16,500, the Council may decide to award up to 100% (discretionary) rate relief, as long as the business is of benefit to the community.

Hardship Relief - Businesses suffering severe hardship and cannot pay their Business Rates bill may be awarded up to 100% (discretionary) rate relief by the Council. The Council will only do this in extreme cases of hardship and for businesses which are particularly important to the local community.



20. Focused, straightforward regulatory services for our business community

- Licensing
- Food Business Advice
- Assisting and guiding businesses with legislation and best practice

The Borough Council supports and encourages businesses to comply with a range of Government legislation and encourages them to set high standards when delivering services to customers. This is particularly important to the business in the food and drink sector where the Council provides advice and enforcement on matters such as food hygiene, food labelling, statutory nuisances, health and safety, storage and disposal of waste and licensing.

The Borough Council is the licensing authority for the administration and enforcement of the Licensing Act 2003 and associated orders and regulations within its area. The Act regulates:-

- the sale of alcohol
- the supply of alcohol by or on behalf of a club
- the provision of regulated entertainment
- the provision of late night refreshment

The Borough Council also licences a range of other activities including hackney carriage and private hire taxis, late night refreshment houses, amusement centres, street trading and scrap metal dealers.

C. Promote environmental quality as an economic asset

21. Work with developers to ensure that all building design is of the highest standard

- Production of a draft Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document
- Meeting with developers at the start of the planning application process
- Holding Developers Forums
- Producing site specific briefs and strategies
- Strategic Frameworks being developed with ATLAS for major areas of housing growth in Stafford

Principles and standards for the design of new development are set out in a draft Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document and, for appropriate sites, the Council will provide further guidance through the production of planning briefs.

Of key importance are the major directions of housing growth to the west, east and north of Stafford and the Council is working with the Homes and Communities Agency's Advisory Team for Large Applications (ATLAS). This will lead to the creation of strategic frameworks which will have had the input from the local community and will provide further guidance on urban design standards.

22. Continue to develop the Waterscape Project and undertake other environmental enhancements within the Borough

- Undertake further improvements to the Waterscape Path alongside the Civic Centre
- Develop further improvements where opportunities arise for example along the Pearl Brook and along the Trent and Mersey Canal Towpath between Stone and Barlaston
- Improvements to street furniture, benches and signage in Stafford Town Centre
- Christmas Lights improvements in Stafford Town Centre
- Supporting local environmental improvement initiatives in Stone, Eccleshall and villages across the Borough

The successful Waterscape project has delivered improvements to sections of the River Sow path running from Fairway to Queensway and from Millbank through Victoria Park. The next section of works will improve the section of path in central Stafford between Bridge Street and the new Riverside development area. Design work for this section will be progressed in 2012/13 with physical improvement taking place in the following year.

The Borough Council has successfully developed proposals with the County Council and the Canal and River Trust to deliver improvements to the Trent and Mersey Canal towpath between Stone and Barlaston. This work will complete improvements to National Cycle Network Route 5 as it runs through the Borough.

The Borough Council recognises the value a high quality, rich, diverse environment can play in promoting the wider economic prosperity of the Borough and encouraging people to live, work and visit the Borough. This relates to both natural habitats as well as creating high quality town centre environments.

The Borough Council is currently delivering a three year programme of environmental improvements in Stafford Town Centre which have provided new benches, information boards and a replica Georgian clock. The next phase of work will deliver new finger post signs across the centre.

In Eccleshall support is being provided to improve the paving in Castle Street and in Stone the Council is supporting a community initiative to improve a garden area alongside the St Dominic's Social Club.

The European funded, Leader Communities Mean Business Programme, has enabled support to be given to a range of environmental improvement projects across the Borough, including cycleway and environmental sustainable projects in Derrington and well dressing in Croxton.

23. Supporting the visitor economy and leisure facilities

- Develop the Borough's visitor economy through the Staffordshire Destination Partnership and the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- Encourage visitor related investments to come forward
- Support the Stafford Tourism Bureau
- Continued investment in our cultural and leisure assets

The Borough Council will continue to invest and secure funding for our leisure and cultural events and facilities including Victoria Park,

Gatehouse Theatre and Ancient High House. Proposals will also be examined, in consultation with local users, to improve leisure facilities serving the north of the Borough.

The visitor economy is important and will be developed with available funding through the Destination Staffordshire Partnership.

6. Capacity to Deliver

The economic priorities of the Plan will be delivered by a range of organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors in partnership and will be coordinated through the Stafford Borough Strategic Board with scrutiny from the Growth Point Governance Board.

The Borough Council's contribution will impact upon several service areas and in particular the following teams:-

- Economic Development
- Forward Plans
- Development Control
- Revenues Team
- Health and Housing Services Group
- Community Services
- Regulatory Services Group

7. Engagement and Consultation

The Borough Council is keen to ensure that the draft Prosperity Strategy undertakes a full period of consultation which is summarised as follows:-

January – March 2013	Internal Borough Council Departments
March – June 2013	County Council Stafford Strategic Board Homes & Communities Agency Stafford Chamber Stafford Enterprise Stafford Town Centre Partnership Town and Parish Councils Neighbouring Councils Local Enterprise Partnership Members of the public
August 2013	Approval by Borough Council Cabinet

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Prosperity Strategy is intended to be an evolving document which will be constantly monitored to ensure that it remains relevant and responsive to the need of the Borough's economy and in seeking Government and other investment to drive forward regeneration initiatives.

Appendix A Equality Impact Assessment

Stafford Borough Council
Equality Impact Assessment Form (EIA)

See Guidelines on completing Equality Impact Assessment Forms

Equality Impact Assessment	
1	Title of Function or Policy to be assessed: Stafford Borough Strategy
2	Date:
3	Name of Lead Officer: Robert Gatensbury
4	EIA Team:
5	Head of Service: Ted Manders
6	Existing, new or review: This is a new strategy which updates an earlier version

7	<p>Set out the aims/objectives/purposes/outcomes of the function or policy, and give a summary of the service provided:</p> <p>The Priorities of the Strategy are:</p> <p>The Objectives of the Strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
8	<p>Linked policies, functions: Are there any other functions, policies or services, which might be linked with this one for the purposes of this exercise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stafford Borough Council’s Corporate Plan 2010 – 2016 • Planning and Regeneration Service Delivery Plan • Stafford Borough Council’s Local Plan 2001
9	<p>Who is it intended to affect or benefit (the target population):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens seeking employment • Customers (inward investors, businesses) • Potential customers • Elected members • Partners organisations and other key organisations (Staffordshire County Council, Local Enterprise Partnership, Stafford Enterprise, Ministry of Defence) • Voluntary groups

10	Within this table, state whether the policy or function will have a positive or negative impact across the following factors and provide any comments.			
		Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Comments
	Age			
	Disability			
	Gender			
	Race			
	Religion/belief			
	Sexuality	Neutral		
	Socio Economic			
11				
12. From evidence given at Q.11 what actions, if any, will you need to take against each of the following equality strands:				
Disability:				

Race:
Gender:.
Age:
Religion/belief:
Sexuality:
Socio Economic:
13. Briefly explain how the policy or function contributes to Community Cohesion by answering the following questions:
14. Consultation:



e:
 h the results of this EIA
 l be referred to within Service Plans and targets built around these.
 I agree to review the Action Plan after 12 Months

ad of Service:

he Toolkit:

Action Plan

Please list on this sheet the nature of any issues and any recommendation for actions that you plan to implement as a result of undertaking this Impact Assessment

Issue Identified	Action to be taken	Name Lead	Date to be Achieved	Outcomes