

HEALTH, WELLBEING & ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 15th September, 2025
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present:	Councillor Rupert Adcock (Chair)		
Councillors:	Barker MBE Beeston	Dymond Northcott	Reece Whieldon
Apologies:	Councillor(s) Richards and Wright		
Officers:	Nesta Barker Darren Green Craig Jordan Roger Tait	Service Director - Regulatory Services Service Director - Planning Service Director - Neighbourhood Delivery	
Also in attendance:	Councillor Gill Heesom	Portfolio Holder - Community Safety and Wellbeing	

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were shared as listed above.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12th June 2025 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

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4. DISTRICT AND BOROUGH HEALTH SCRUTINY ACTIVITY

The Chair reported having attended the meeting of Staffordshire County Council Health and Care Overview Scrutiny Committee in July featuring a discussion on the efficiencies of the Integrated Care Board and how these would affect the services on the front line.

Information about work of mental health support teams in schools had also been received inviting him to a meeting on family hubs in November.

The Chair introduced County Councillor Adam Griffith who would be acting as liaison between the Borough and County Council health committees.

Cllr Reese asked if a breakdown of what was happening at county level could be provided to members.

The Chair confirmed more information would be shared at a later stage.

Resolved: That the verbal update on the latest district and borough health scrutiny activity be noted.

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5. WALLEYS QUARRY ODOUR ISSUES

The Service Director for Regulatory Services presented the update report on Walleys Quarry. Complaints had reduced significantly, along with the gas levels recorded by monitoring stations now down to zero percent.

The Environment Agency was continuing work on site to prevent further pollution including capping and water surface management.

Cllr Whieldon noted the absence of response from the Secretary of State in relation to paragraph 1.6.3 and wondered if this would need to be followed up.

The Service Director for Regulatory Services advised she would liaise with the Leader.

Cllr Whieldon also enquired about a public meeting due to be held by the Environment Agency at the end of September.

The Service Director for Regulatory Services said she would chase this up.

The Chair echoed Cllr Whieldon comments and stated that the public enquiry requested by the Council was awaited as a matter of urgency.

The Chair also suggested to reach out to the new Minister in charge of waste, landfills and environment to ask for their position on the matter.

The Service Director for Regulatory Services responded that a follow up request would be sent to the appropriate Minister.

Resolved: That the contents of the update report be noted.

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6. CIVIC PRIDE (EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITIES) STRATEGY

The Service Director for Neighbourhood Delivery presented the report on the Civic Pride (Empowering our Community) Strategy.

Cllr Whieldon wished to pass on her thanks to everyone involved in the launching event that took place in Thistleberry.

The Service Director for Neighbourhood Delivery emphasized the intention for the community to take ownership of the implementation of the strategy and for events to be community led rather than organised by the Council.

Cllr Reece enquired about the investment fund and options for volunteer groups who did not operate as a legal entity.

The Service Director for Neighbourhood Delivery advised that groups would need to form a structure and get a bank account to access the funds. They could also be provided with equipment such as bags and litter pickers.

Cllr Whieldon asked if the Council would consider late applications would there be any fundings left.

The Service Director for Neighbourhood Delivery responded that a second round of applications would be reviewed in December. So far £5,000 had been allocated to projects out of the £22,000 available.

The Chair thanked everyone who took part in the launching events of which the one in Silverdale which he attended and was yet another good example of community engagement with the Council leading from the front and volunteers as well as the police joining in.

Resolved: That the draft Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy 2025-28 be considered and feedback be provided in advance of adoption.

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7. REVIEW OF PARKS TASK & FINISH WORKING GROUP FINAL REPORT

The Streetscene Business Manager presented the report on the work undertaken by the Review of Parks Task & Finish Working Group.

Cllr Reece wondered about the chances for the proposals to be followed through and their financial viability.

The Streetscene Business Manager responded that the financial viability of the projects had been assessed by contacting regional contractors who provided quotations. Smaller scales painters and decorators had then been targeted and the cost difference suggested a local provision of the services would be the way to go. Mitigating the risks associated with local providers could be done by spreading the work among two or three contractors.

Cllr Reece enquired about the location of the 11 playgrounds identified as in need of immediate refurbishment.

The Streetscene Business Manager advised that the list could be shared after the meeting. Complaints had come up through residents and play areas inspectors had confirmed that they were in a poor and deficient state.

Cllr Northcott welcomed the contingencies towards refurbishment and repairs.

Cllr Whieldon thanked officers for their involvement and for the map provided to the working group showing the location of the various play areas. This had been particularly useful and made it easier to bring the information to the attention of other committees.

The Chair suggested that would the recommendations be adopted the information could be shared with parish councils whose contractors and ground teams might be interested in helping out.

- Resolved:**
1. That Cabinet adopts a revised policy for unsupervised children's playgrounds, be proposed.
 2. That a more frequent review of facilities and their management, such as every 5 years, be considered.
 3. That the development of a programme of playground painting refurbishment be proposed, and that budget authority be delegated to the Service Director for Sustainable Environment and the Streetscene Business Manager
 4. That the procurement of EzyAsset be acknowledged to enable the enhanced management of the playground facilities.
 5. That future consideration be given for adult exercise equipment in a prime location as a pilot initiative.

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8. **REVIEW OF ANIMAL WELFARE CHARTER**

The Service Director for Neighbourhood Delivery gave a verbal update on the Review of the Animal Welfare Charter, a statement of support from the Council towards animal welfare rather than an action plan.

Small things had been done such as writing to allotment holders to warn them against the risks of pesticides however the powers and duties around neglect and animal cruelty were in the hands of other bodies such as the police and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA).

The Chair said feeling proud of the work achieved by the Committee in establishing the Charter and thanked officers for the update.

- Resolved:** That the verbal update be noted.

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9. **COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP**

The Service Director for Neighbourhood Delivery presented the Community Safety Partnership and Action Plan highlighting the Council's statutory duty to work with partners – the Police being one of them.

Priorities and hot spots were identified every year with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Office leading to pulling out resources to tackle problems. This was done successfully with funding received from the Government and data showing that crimes were reducing.

Cllr Reece welcomed the trend and asked if the strategy to reduce violence against women and girls had played a role in the reduction.

The Service Director for Neighbourhood Delivery confirmed that it had been a focus for the Police who was keeping the Council up to date on it. A safe place was also run by volunteers on Friday night at the Iron Market and work had been done with street medics and businesses operating at nighttime to reduce the occurrence of violence even further.

Cllr Whieldon commented on the fact that it was a growing phenomenon requiring vigilance.

Cllr Reece enquired about knife crime and if knives were voluntarily deposited.

The Service Director for Neighbourhood Delivery responded that data could be provided and that the problem lied mainly in carrying knives and bladed weapons rather than using them.

Cllr Barker enquired about empty buildings that the community worked hard to get and were property of Staffordshire County Council in Chesterton. A local youth club had closed which she thought was unfortunate.

The Service Director for Neighbourhood Delivery and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing advised that this was not within the remit of the Council and should be taken to the County Council.

About the closure referred to there was a Youth project funded by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, that had been run in Chesterton and Kidsgrove. This was still ongoing and may have moved to another venue.

Cllr Dymond confirmed that one such project run by volunteers had just started in Kidsgrove where a room had been made available.

Cllr Whieldon commented that a Youth venue had indeed been closed in Chesterton and suggested that it may be a good thing to contact the County Council towards keeping young people off the street.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing acknowledged the suggestion, meanwhile noting that while the County Council may help those projects required volunteers to run them.

Cllr Whieldon wished to add that board games clubs may be another option worth considering.

The Service Director for Neighbourhood Delivery advised that those ideas could be floated to the Joint Operation Group.

The Chair reiterated that volunteers were needed to run youth projects and concluded by welcoming the pro-active approach taken by the police in relation to drug related offenses.

- Resolved:**
1. That the report be received and the successful outcomes achieved in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as the work in progress to continue to tackle the strategic priorities, be noted.
 2. That the updated Local Crime and Police Plan in line with the Strategic Assessment priorities for 2025/26 be received and noted.

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10. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair stated that a more detailed update on the District and Borough Health Scrutiny activity would be provided at the next meeting.

Cllr Whieldon reiterated her request that the Environment Agency be contacted to clarify the situation in relation to the public event that was supposed to be held at the end of September.

Cllr Reece asked about the former A53 bus gate scheme. An update would be sought and provided at the next meeting.

Resolved: That the work programme be noted.

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11. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions were received from members of the public.

12. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: That the next meeting be held on the 24th November 2025 at 7pm.

**Councillor Rupert Adcock
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 7.57 pm