**Milwich Borough Council Ward Member Report to Parish Councils**

**for members, meetings and wider distribution. November 2021**

In no particular order as ever:

**Community Fund – Sports Fund, Stafford Borough.**

Stafford Borough Council allocates funds to talented sports performers, local sports clubs and local sports coaches. They have three different pots available for people to apply to, depending on their requirements.  Information regarding the three funding pots are available below.  Applicants must live within Stafford Borough or be a member of a sports club that is situated within Stafford Borough. The Community Foundation for Staffordshire administer this fund.  For more information or to apply for any of these funds please visit [Stafford Borough Sports Grants - The Community Foundation for Staffordshire](https://staffordshire.foundation/grants/sbcsports/?doing_wp_cron=1636443028.0223910808563232421875). This round ends March 20th, 2022.

Coaching: This fund is to assist individuals coaching within the Borough with the costs involved in undertaking a coaching certificate.

Grant Aid / Loan Aid Local sports clubs and organisations can apply to this fund if they require money for things such as new equipment or improvements to their buildings or facilities.

Scholarship Fund the Scholarship fund is in place to offer financial support to individuals who are in full time education and live within Stafford Borough and compete at county level or above in their chosen sport.

**Stafford Western Access Route (SWAR):**

From Doxey to Stone Road to ease town congestion, it is opening fully on November 19th.

**Fees and Charges**:

Fees and charges have largely gone up by inflation only, other than for garden waste, land charges, parking fees, market rents, which have all been frozen.

**Business**

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| Rural business grants have opened @ £2k - £10k for eligible businesses developing new products and services to support their recovery. They need to show a loss of turnover and viability. £500k is available under the Additional Restrictions Grant to support the hospitality sector, with a grant up to £5k. That is open until 1st March and aims to boost visitor numbers to the borough. In total over £47m has now been distributed for financial hardship.  **Stafford Local Plan**  Three evidence-based reports on landscape, ecology and heritage which provide detailed assessments for sites being considered for the Preferred Option stage, are now on the borough council website. We are mindful of the likely imminent progress of the Environment Bill to Royal Assent; and the Planning Bill, which may each influence the direction of the borough local plan. The preferred options stage should come out shortly. |

**LGA Guidance on Good Standards**

I am repeating this note, in the light of ongoing problems periodically experienced by county and borough councillors, officers and Parish councillors. Following recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the LGA recently developed a national model code of conduct for councillors. Each local authority across the country can consider whether to adopt the new code as an alternative to their current local code of conduct. The Council’s Standards Committee recommendations are now adopted. In addition to developing a national model code, the LGA is looking to develop supporting on-line guidance materials. You may find the following link useful: <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/civility-public-life>.

In particular, some of the guidance refers to appropriate use of social media by councillors (e.g. see sub-headings under the document “Councillors Guide to Handling Intimidation”).

**Planning application Delays**

These are coming down now, though there are some continuing delays and a continuing high number of applications. Staff are coming into the office on a staggered timetable, which is helping. Covid 19 has been a particularly difficult time for the planning service, working from home, largely without recourse to the large-scale maps and unable to undertake site visits. We are still seeing an unhelpful number of applications sent in incomplete by householders, mostly those without using agents.

**Staffordshire University Centre for Health Innovation**

Located at the institution's Centre of Excellence in Healthcare Education, on Blackheath Lane, the facility features cutting-edge clinical simulation suites which will be used to upskill existing professionals and train future generations of NHS employee. The facilities will support healthcare professionals in exploring and developing new techniques in collaboration with the institution’s staff and students. It is supporting 500 healthcare professionals a year through a £2.89 million Getting Building Fund investment. It will see Stafford become a national hub of clinical training, teaching advanced clinical techniques with world beating technology. The centre aims to contribute to the long-term sustainability of the NHS and the modernisation of its workforce, delivering an additional 500 skilled nurses, midwives and allied health professionals every year.

**Christmas arrangements**

Stafford Christmas Lights Switch On resumes this year on Saturday 27th November. The panto is Snow White at the Gatehouse, which has been beautifully refurbished during the past year – worth a visit. There will be an Ice Rink on Victoria Park for young and old and a treasure trail from the park into Town with clues and prizes along the way.

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