



City of
Stoke-on-Trent

POWERING UP STOKE-ON-TRENT

City Prospectus Progress Report



FOREWORD

It is now just over four months since we published Powering Up Stoke-on-Trent, our City Prospectus, declaring Stoke-on-Trent to be the litmus test for the Government's levelling-up ambitions and setting out clear priorities for action. So much has happened since we published the prospectus. We wanted to share progress with you all as well as set out some next steps, so that you can understand the road ahead and see how far we have already come.

Our work is increasingly informed by our new City Forum and our key strategic partnerships across the city. The forum met for the first time in May and we have published a separate report of that meeting and the additional actions that were agreed.

Stoke-on-Trent is the national litmus test for the Government's levelling up ambitions

It's just amazing that the city is achieving so much while continuing to deal with the impact of the enduring pandemic. The fact that we are still making great progress on our ambitions for the city is testament to the hard work and dedication of so many people and organisations.

A massive thank you.

We are always looking to involve more people and organisations in the work of improving our city. That is why we have set up the Creative City Partnership to bring cultural and heritage leaders together, and also why local partners have set up 'Made in Stoke-on-Trent' to tap into the great diaspora of talented Stokies who want to give back to the city of their origin.

I hope that you find the short report useful and can see where you and your organisation fit within these plans, and how you can help the city achieve its goals.

Councillor Abi Brown

Leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Council

PRIORITY ONE – TRANSPORT

The development of our refreshed Transport Strategy is underway, informed by feedback from the City Forum. This will set out a full plan for an integrated, high performing transport system to connect residents and businesses to the many economic opportunities that the city is creating as well as enhancing wider access on the national road and rail network. It will include our ambitions to establish a light rail system for the city.

In the meantime, we are cracking on with improvements. The development of the Etruria Valley Link Road is underway and is due to complete in December 2022. We are tackling key pinch-points in the city such as Bucknall New Road corridor, Waterloo Road / Cobridge Road Junction and the recently completed roundabout works at Joiners Square. We are investing more than ever before in maintaining and improving the road network, with £13.17 million being invested this year that will deliver 60 miles of resurfaced carriageway.

Joiner's Square roundabout





We are taking the first steps to improve our bus network with 50 vehicles being upgraded to high environmental standards. We have recently published our commitment to create an Enhanced Bus Partnership for the city that will allow us to improve the planning of routes and timetables, and plan for the continued upgrade of the vehicle fleet, including the potential introduction of hydrogen technology to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality. The first stage of this will be the development of a Bus Service Improvement Plan by October.

Reflecting the importance of our bus network, we have dedicated a large part of one of our four Levelling Up bids to key improvements across the city including better access, digital information and improved traffic flow to reduce journey times.

Work to improve our rail network is also underway. This includes the centrepiece renewal of Stoke station and its environs to create an integrated transport hub for the city, with support from the Government's Transforming Cities Fund. We are in close dialogue with the HS2 team to ensure that the city secures maximum benefit from being part of that network. Proposals are also being developed for possible new rail stations at Etruria, Meir and Trentham, alongside reopening of the Stoke to Leek line.

We are acting on our commitment to support active travel. There will be improved cycling links between the city centre and both Stoke Station and Festival Park, and also along Shelton New Road. Our transport Levelling Up bid includes a further exciting scheme, to provide a dedicated cycling/walking route from Middleport to Etruria Valley, connecting residents directly to job opportunities. A new Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan will identify future priority investment as part of the Transport Strategy work.

PRIORITY TWO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We are determined that the city will recover quickly from the pandemic and return to the levels of economic growth being enjoyed by the city in recent years. It is excellent to see the welfare claimant count already reducing and job vacancies rising. We are committed to playing our part in ensuring that the city's residents are best placed to take the jobs that are being created.

Our success in attracting commercial developers and occupiers has continued with planning permission being granted for employment use for the last 12 months totalling 1,071,299.7 sq ft.

Under the banner of Stoke-on-Trent Regeneration Ltd, our joint venture with St Modwens, we are ready to develop a further 131,000 sq ft of floorspace at Etruria Valley. We have attracted exciting inward investment into some of the completed developments with 158,155 sq ft of floorspace being successfully let at Etruria Valley and over 100,000 sq ft of lets in new developments at Trentham Lakes. New occupiers at Trentham Lakes include E.on, Neida Products (Engineering) and Planova.

Much of this success is down to the Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone, which is why the city council and the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Enterprise Partnership have committed to extend the business rate discount incentive scheme for another five years, to give ourselves every chance of developing out the remaining sites. It also comes as planning approval has been granted for Tunstall Arrow Phase 2, providing an additional 109,250 sq ft of industrial workspace on a 7.3-acre plot. The scheme will not only see remedial work to repurpose this brownfield land but is expected to attract further inward investment and provide over 200 new job opportunities in the local area.



Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone - Tunstall Arrow

Our plan is very much about small businesses too. Over the course of the pandemic, we have distributed £96,050,963 of resources to businesses to help them through. Most recently, we have supported 150 companies to make digital improvements so they are ready to trade in the changed operating environment post-pandemic. And through the Get Building Fund we are providing 30,250 sq ft of new workspace in six different buildings in different parts of the city including at Longton Town Hall and at the Centre of Refurbishment Excellence (CoRE).

We were delighted by the recently announced decision of the Home Office to create an Innovation Centre in the city, creating 500 new skilled jobs, including a number of apprenticeships and digital roles, over time. We will be working with this major Department of State and our universities to ensure that we maximise the potential of this Government investment.

Regeneration of our town centres is equally important to the future prosperity of the city, making best use of the wonderful heritage that characterises our different towns including the multi-million-pound restorations of Tunstall and Longton Town Halls. That is why we have dedicated one of our Levelling Up bids to Government to the renewal and repurposing of key heritage buildings in three of our town centres – Tunstall Library and Baths, the Crown Works in Longton and the next phase of the Spode Works in Stoke. This includes developing the new Gaming Hub. While we await the outcome of those bids we continue our existing programme of improvements including Tunstall and Longton Town Halls, and the Heritage Action Zone works in Stoke and Longton. At the same time, we're progressing with the £10 million Housing Infrastructure Fund in Burslem, with the first developments now on site, and the building of 135 new, high quality homes in Fenton as part of a wider £18 million investment in the area.

We also continue to deliver on plans for the regeneration of the city centre. Following the completion of the private rental scheme Clayworks and the Hilton Garden Inn at Smithfield, we have extended our focus to the City Centre Regeneration Area aiming to redevelop the seven-acre derelict site which housed the old bus station to the south. We have dedicated one of our Levelling Up bids to Government to our plans for a mixed-use development for the site, anchored by an entertainment arena and with high quality residential development, hospitality venues and new car parking.



The city has already invested £6 million in site assembly, essential clearance and infrastructure on the site.

Equally important is the further development of the Cultural Quarter and the great news is that we are nearing completion of the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery extension. The Spitfire WW2 Plane is already back in the city and its new home is being fully prepared to receive visitors from the autumn.

We have made significant strides on the delivery of our flagship Goods Yard development in Stoke, announcing our development partner, Capital & Centric, and submitting a comprehensive Levelling Up bid to government for the funds to help us to rapidly accelerate our already progressing plans in this area.

The city's housing programme continues to deliver well despite the pandemic. 917 new homes were completed last year, 99.7 per cent on brownfield land. Fortior, the council's own housing company is delivering excellent and popular schemes, with the flagship Clayworks development almost fully let. We are developing a fresh housing strategy that we will publish later in the year, with a commitment to provide increased choice of new housing that will enable people to get on in life. We have a strong pipeline of brownfield sites ready to bring forward, in partnership with Homes England and others.

In our prospectus we pledged that creativity and culture would be at the heart of our plans. We have therefore included in our bid package for the Community Renewal Fund, one of the first Government initiatives to be rolled out under their Levelling Up agenda, a plan to create cultural zones for each of our city and town centres. This will bring forward an immersive programme of activity for each place that reflects their unique identities and will hopefully kindle new uses for both indoor and outdoor spaces, including a new artisan market set to take place in the city centre.

In support of all of this renewal, we have proudly completed the first city-wide gigabit full fibre network in the country, providing the platform for an extensive 5G network for the city and supporting our Silicon Stoke plans to become a Smart City where digital enterprise can thrive.



Priority Three: Education and Skills

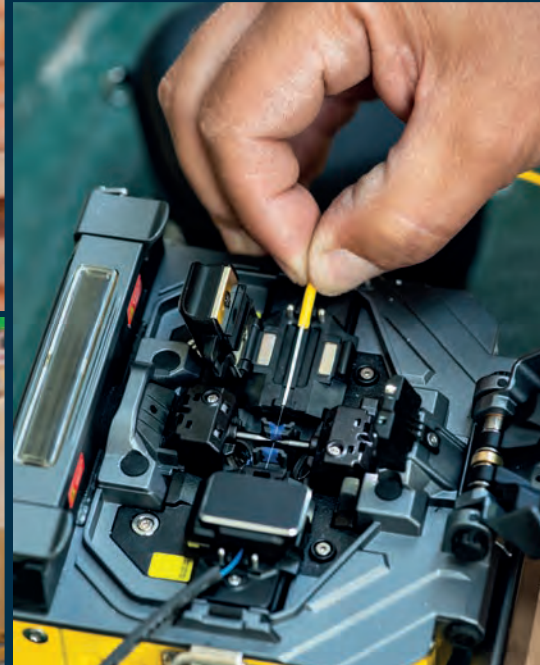
After launching the Prospectus, we swiftly published our Education Improvement Strategy for the city. We are determined to improve our educational outcomes and with the Regional Schools Commissioner will be establishing an Education Challenge Board in the Autumn, both to help schools to succeed and to encourage high performing trusts to help run our schools where that would bring benefit. This builds on the successful trusts already within the city and encourages better partnership working across Stoke-on-Trent. The Government has announced a fifth year of the Opportunity Area programme that is supporting improvements in maths, science and English learning, and progression for our young people beyond school.

We were very pleased that the Secretary of State for Education has recently confirmed that the new Florence MacWilliams free school can proceed to opening in Longton. We are considering exciting options for a specialist digital free school that can be submitted into wave 15 of the free school programme when that round opens. In the meantime, it is excellent that the Sixth Form College has secured Digital Schoolhouse status to act as a specialist spoke for improving teaching in digital skills across our schools.

We want all of our young people to be the best that they can be. That is why we are bringing forward a fresh Special Educational Needs (SEN) Inclusion strategy this autumn and have already started making improvements to our offer to these young people and their families. Our plans have attracted a £10 million revenue investment from the Department for Education and we have submitted exciting capital plans to extend our special education needs offer in the north and south of the city, meaning far more children can be educated here, rather than having to travel long distances out of the city every day. We have recently just been advised that £7.5 million is to be made available from government to create a satellite to Watermill School which will allow us to directly support more children with special education needs in the city.

Helping our SEN students stay in the city





To be successful we need far more of our children to be ready to start school. That is why we will be the first place in the country to host a Thrive at Five partnership, working with key national organisations to address the life chances of some of our most disadvantaged young children, levelling the playing field for them. This programme will be focused on the communities of Abbey Hulton and Bentilee.

In a fast-moving global economy, we have to ensure our whole population can gain the skills they need to access opportunity. That is why we are working hard to ensure that we have the right type and quality of provision in place across the city. Our Community Renewal Fund bid to Government includes exciting programmes to support young people to access employment and to support people to train for work.

There are two projects in our Community Renewal Fund portfolio that will increase digital literacy. And working with Stoke-on-Trent College, VX Fiber and Serco, we have developed a Full Fibre Academy to provide vocational training in this growing labour market, that will be based on the college's Burslem campus.

At a higher level, we have attracted all the funding needed to deliver the Gaming Hub as part of the Spode site in Stoke, a dedicated space to enable individuals and enterprises to learn, create and collaborate as we seek to expand the city's growing competence and capacity in digital and creative production. The Hub will open at the start of 2022.

PRIORITY FOUR: HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

The Health and Wellbeing Board, now under the chairmanship of the Leader of the Council, has signed off the promised Health and Wellbeing Strategy and is pursuing the priority actions, called our obsessions, the four areas that we're particularly focused on making a difference with over the next year to eighteen months. These four obsessions for the first year include: early years and best start; economic growth and social inequalities; lifestyle and health inequalities; and mental health. We've already started work on how to make a difference on our obsessions, through four task and finish groups bringing together a number of partners involved with the Health and Wellbeing Board. The conversations underway around this are exciting to hear, and the enthusiasm of all involved is palpable.

The city will be driving forward its ambitions to integrate health and care at the community level, working through our developing Integrated Care Partnership across North Staffordshire and more widely through the Integrated Care System. This will involve close work between primary care, community health, mental health and social care services, with a priority to offer better support to those with complex needs and the clinically frail to enable them to maintain independence. Working with a specialist national organisation, National Development Team for inclusion (NDTi), we are pioneering new ways of working, first in Burslem, then in Blurton and then in Bentilee.

We are determined to tackle the health barriers that prevent too many people in the city from working. From this summer, the city council will be delivering the Department for Work and Pensions Restart programme, operating out of three hubs – north, central and south, for the longer term unemployed in the city. As part of this programme, we are committed to working with health providers and the voluntary and community sector to address mental and physical health issues that are preventing people getting and staying in work. As part of our Community Renewal Fund proposals we have placed a specific emphasis on supporting those that are disabled to access work.

Supporting people into employment





Better mental health is another key priority for the Health and Wellbeing Board. The city council has extended its commitment to the 24/7 Covid emergency mental health response service. We have been awarded £333,142 from the Public Health England Prevention and Promotion Fund for Better Mental Health 2021-22. The aim is to support residents from Disproportionately Impacted Groups (DIGs) and Under-Represented Groups (URGs) who have been most severely impacted by COVID-19. The support will all be focused at community level and will include specific support for perinatal mental health, suicide prevention for middle aged men, black and ethnic minority and LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning) communities, school age children and also debt management advice and support. The overall aim is to improve resilience and help residents return to work or school and/or to remain in work or school.

Using the Thrive framework, local partners are making improvements to the mental health offer for children and young people, including more support available in schools and colleges. We will also be bringing forward different ways of improving population mental health in the city's population, including promoting more physical activity, working with key partners on awareness raising and group support, and strengthening our suicide prevention work.

Improving the quality of our green spaces and waterways is an important contributor to health and wellbeing. Following the successful completion of the works at a number of the city's civic parks, including Hanley Park, we are continuing the restoration of the River Trent through Stoke, through the SUNRISE project with the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Enterprise Partnership which recently featured on Countryfile on BBC One. The council has also recently pledged £750,000 to support tree planting across the city, a key element of the plans to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee next year. This is in addition to over a million pound's worth of investment in playgrounds across Stoke-on-Trent over the next two years.



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