



City of
Stoke-on-Trent

POWERING UP STOKE-ON-TRENT

City Prospectus Update - May 2022



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FOREWORD

A year on from the publication of the Powering Up prospectus and the launch of the Stoke-on-Trent City Forum, we are finally emerging from the prolonged upheaval of the pandemic. The fact that our next City Forum meeting will be a face-to-face event is an enormously welcome and exciting change.

It is long overdue. While we have made phenomenal progress and demonstrated considerable resourcefulness and adaptability to produce two incredibly successful online conferences, it's fair to say that the City Forum was never envisaged as an online event. City Forum is about bringing the most engaged and influential partners and stakeholders together to share ideas, insights and inspiration; to harness learning and expertise, and to create the vital synergies and momentum that will power up our great city.

As you will see from this report, we haven't let the lingering disruptive effects of the pandemic interfere with our Levelling Up plans. The success of our capital funding bids at the end of 2021 demonstrated the credibility of our approach and our message to the Government. Our £56 million allocation captured the headlines, and rightly so – it was the largest single Levelling Up Fund award of any area in the UK. However, before the fanfare had subsided we were already getting to work to translate our exciting plans into actions. Much of this work is happening away from the spotlight of public attention – but it is most certainly happening, as shown by the recent approval of planning permission for The Goods Yard, along with numerous other developments.

We have already achieved so much in such a short time across so many areas of activity, but I want to focus our attention in the coming months on one particular area that I am closely involved in, which is culture. In April, I was among a handful of local government leaders who were invited to Westminster to give evidence to a parliamentary select committee on the importance of cultural placemaking in delivering the Levelling Up agenda. I made the case to MPs that Stoke-on-Trent is a cultural city – the city that makes art from dirt, with a proud industrial history and a stunning array of heritage assets. But I also pointed out that we haven't always received the funding and support that we needed to establish and grow our cultural offer.

For Levelling Up to deliver for our amazing city, we need to go beyond bricks and mortar and deliver less tangible assets such as creativity, inspiration, wellbeing and pride in place – characteristics which culture can directly influence. For us as a city, culture represents untapped potential. We have only scratched the surface of possibility, and there is so much more that could be unlocked with sufficient investment and collaboration. So when we reconvene the City Forum, I hope that you will bring all of your ideas, insights and expertise as we work together to focus on this important theme. It promises to be a very exciting and informative event, and I can't wait to see you all there.

Councillor Abi Brown
Leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Council

CITY FORUM

The Stoke-on-Trent City Forum meeting on 10 December discussed the city's successful bids for £56 million from the Levelling Up Fund, as well as more than £2.5 million from the Community Renewal Fund. Delegates heard from a diverse panel of keynote speakers, including Home Office minister Baroness Williams on the government department's anticipated move to Stoke-on-Trent, and former Staffordshire University vice chancellor Professor Liz Barnes on social mobility, innovation and the role of higher education in transforming life chances for city residents.

Councillor Dave Evans, the City Council's Cabinet member for Children and Young People, also spoke about the importance of creating opportunities and life chances for children in the city, and provided an update on the progress being made to improve Stoke-on-Trent's Children's Services following a critical Ofsted inspection in 2019. The meeting included a series of breakout workshop sessions which focussed on recent Levelling Up successes and potential approaches as the city moves onto the delivery phase.

Creating opportunities and life chances for children in the city



NATIONAL POLICY UPDATES

February saw the publication of the Government's **Levelling Up White Paper** and guidance relating to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The Levelling Up White Paper sets out how the Government aims to tackle local and regional inequalities and encourage greater private sector investment throughout the UK. It features a number of Levelling Up 'missions' to be achieved by 2030, which touch on aspects of productivity, living standards, community empowerment, local leadership, improving public services and pride in place. The document refers specifically to Stoke-on-Trent more than a dozen times, including references to:

- Efforts to encourage more flagship national cultural institutions to "support the strength of our historic cultural heritage in great cities such as Stoke";
- The planned Home Office innovation centre in the city, which will accommodate more than 500 staff by 2025;
- Bus improvement plans to enhance services and reduce fares in the city;
- The delivery of key road junction upgrades in Stoke-on-Trent as part of a £2.6 billion national road network investment strategy;
- The creation of a new Institute of Technology within the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP area;
- Arts Council England investment in the city as a 'priority place';
- The Levelling Up Fund allocation announced in October to deliver three major regeneration projects across Stoke-on-Trent.

The **UK Shared Prosperity Fund** (UKSPF) is designed to replace European Union structural funds such as the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund, which were discontinued after Britain left the EU. The fund is aligned to the same 'missions' as the Levelling Up White Paper, with a particular emphasis on improving pride in place by 2030 "such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community".

The UKSPF is allocated to all places in the UK and individual places are able to choose whether to invest this funding in communities and place, local businesses or people and skills. Stoke-on-Trent's allocation for 2022-25 is £9,447,820. In addition, the city has also been allocated £1,585,117 under the Government's national adult numeracy skills programme, Multiply.

PRIORITY ONE – TRANSPORT

Stoke-on-Trent has secured more than **£31 million of government investment** in the city's bus services as part of a national £7 billion programme to improve the quality and value of public transport. Ministers have said that the initiative aims to bring public transport systems across England up to the standard of services delivered in London by 2030. Funding will target places where government investment is likely to have the greatest impact on service improvements, including reducing journey times, increasing service frequency and reliability and cutting ticket prices to encourage greater usage. In April, Operators reduced the price of an all-day bus ticket in the city from £5.20 to £3.50 following the funding announcement. The Department for Transport has also indicated that money will be made available to support planned road network upgrades at key locations in the city.

Hanley Bus Station



PRIORITY TWO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has launched a brand new Levelling Up Prospectus to showcase investment opportunities in the city. The prospectus, which features leisure, office, residential and industrial investment opportunities worth more than £620 million, was unveiled to investors at the newly-opened Spitfire Gallery at the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery in February. The prospectus highlights Stoke-on-Trent's rapid and sustained economic growth since 2015, highlighting multiple key investment and development opportunities currently available in the city. Projects range from the flagship Etruscan Square development in the City Centre to opportunities involving Hanley Town Hall, Tunstall Library and Pool, the Spode Works, in Stoke, and Longton's Crown Works development. The City Council also shared the Levelling Up Prospectus with investors at a similar showcase event in London's Canary Wharf in February, as well as at the annual MIPIM property development and regeneration conference in Cannes in March.

The Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone continues to expand, with the recent agreement to create two additional large warehouses on the St Modwen Park site in Stoke-on-Trent. Developer St Modwen is working to deliver a 480,000 sq ft expansion to the existing 450,000 sq ft site in Festival Park, Etruria. PC and gaming business Overclockers UK will take ownership of a 99,000 sq ft distribution warehouse on the site, while a 250,000 sq ft unit will be occupied by National Veterinary Services, which is based in Talke Pits. Both firms are experiencing significant business growth and chose Stoke-on-Trent due to its strategically important location and access to national transport and networks, as well as the city's growing importance as a logistical and distribution hub.

Etruscan Square





The Goods Yard

Planning permission has been granted for the conversion of the former Swift House council building in Stoke into The Goods Yard - a heritage-led residential, commercial and leisure development. The £60 million project will create more than 170 apartments in a 10-storey canalside residential building, along with ground floor commercial units and a community-focussed café bar. Subsequent phases of development could also include a 150-bed hotel on the site. The Goods Yard is one of the city's flagship Levelling Up projects and attracted government investment of £16 million from the Levelling Up Fund in the October Budget. Work on the project is expected to commence before the end of this year.

Work has begun on a new project to restore historic buildings and shop fronts in Stoke town centre. The Stoke High Street Heritage Action Zone project is a joint initiative involving Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Historic England. Under the initiative, owners of eligible buildings can secure grants to cover up to 75 per cent of the cost of restoration works. Initial work will focus on individual buildings in Glebe Street and Church Street. The improvements will complement similar restoration work which is ongoing on part of the Spode site as part of the Heritage Action Zone programme in the city. The work, which is due to be completed in the autumn, will create a new IT business space in Spode building number five.

The City Council has published its new Housing Strategy for Stoke-on-Trent, setting out plans to raise the quality of new residential developments, encourage new custom and self-build housing and continue to improve the experience of tenants in private and social housing rented stock across the city. The new strategy outlines ambitious plans to meet the changing needs of our residents over the next five years by having the necessary framework in place to improve our housing offer, provide high-quality places to live and attract further investment in the city.

PRIORITY THREE: EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Stoke-on-Trent has been named as one of the Government's new Education Investment Areas aimed at improving educational outcomes and life chances for children and young people. The announcement, in February, signifies that the Government wants to build on the progress that has been achieved in recent years since the city was designated as one of 12 Opportunity Areas in England. Last year also saw the commencement of the Education Challenge Board's work in the city, which aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of education and school leadership to transform outcomes for pupils.

Staffordshire University has officially opened a brand new, high-tech facility to deliver higher-level apprenticeships to help meet employer demand for digital skills. The Catalyst opened its doors in March at the Leek Road campus. The £43 million, 8,800 sq metre landmark building provides state-of-the-art teaching and learning facilities, as well as events and community spaces and areas for socialising. The Catalyst will be used to deliver an estimated 6,300 higher degree apprenticeships by 2030. The Catalyst has also been chosen as the venue for the next meeting of the City Forum, allowing delegates to experience the impressive facilities for themselves.

Just around the corner, Stoke-on-Trent College has also celebrated the opening of its new Digital and Creative Hub. The purpose-built new facility will ensure that young people in Stoke-on-Trent will have the chance to secure the high-value, highly-skilled employment opportunities that the expansion of our digital sector will create. Stoke-on-Trent College was recently named as one of 62 further education institutions to receive a share of £400 million to deliver new educational facilities and courses. The college has been developing plans for a new IT academy, which will focus on improving adult skills, as well as supporting work around gaming and esports as part of the city's Levelling Up ambition to become a national hub for games development, visual effects and esports.

Staffordshire University VR Suite



PRIORITY FOUR: HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

Stoke-on-Trent has succeeded in securing a share of additional government funding to deliver vital support services to help vulnerable families in the city. The Department for Education confirmed in April that the city will be among 75 local authorities to participate in the Family Hubs programme and receive a share of £302 million of funding to deliver the programme. The hubs are designed to offer parents important advice on how to look after their children and keep them healthy and safe throughout their early years. Some of the funding will be used to provide dedicated key workers to help the most vulnerable families access practical assistance and reduce the number of children who end up in care. Additional support will also be provided to children and young people who do enter the care system, including practical advice on housing, finance and employment.

The City Council has agreed to extend its popular Holiday Activities and Food programme for another two years. The programme generated more than 40,000 opportunities for children and young people to participate in activities and access free healthy meals during 2021/22. The initiative, which has been funded by almost £1.5 million of government grant money, recognises that school holidays can be pressure points for some families due to increased costs and reduced incomes. Many local businesses have also supported the programme, including the Hubb Foundation, Port Vale FC, Stoke City FC, Alton Towers, Water World and Chester Zoo. During 2022 and 2023, the City Council will widen the initiative to work with even more schools in the city and ensure that more children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) benefit from the programme.

Holiday Activities and Food Programme



FOCUS ON.....CULTURE

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has established a new group to support its ongoing work to preserve and enhance the city's rich heritage. The Heritage Congress, which was launched in January, will bring together the public, private and community sector to promote enjoyment and understanding of historic buildings and work to ensure a future for the city's past. The Heritage Congress aims to bring together local and national heritage stakeholders, as well as private developers and heritage property owners. One of the group's first tasks will be to discuss and examine the formation of a Stoke-on-Trent Preservation Trust, which will be able to use its charitable status to access alternative sources of funding for heritage conservation projects.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Leader, Cllr Abi Brown, appeared before a Parliamentary select committee in April to talk about the importance of culture in relation to Levelling Up. She was questioned by members of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport Committee in connection with their inquiry examining the role of cultural placemaking in delivering the Levelling Up agenda. When asked for one piece of advice to ministers on the subject of local cultural policy, Cllr Brown said: "It has to be recognition that people from the place know their place best.... You have to go on a journey as a local authority to understand what it is that is important to you and how that fits in, but equally national and regional organisations have to also understand that you will know your place better than they do and you may have a slightly different view." She added: "[When] you can get into that space where you all agree on what is important to you, as the person from that place, and what is important to them, as the national organisation, that is where the magic happens." In written evidence to the committee prior to the session, the City Council had argued that cities like Stoke-on-Trent required sustained, longer-term funding to develop and deliver cultural activity and strengthen cultural infrastructure, in order to compete with larger metropolitan cities. The City Council had also told the committee that levelling up places would benefit from a broader definition of culture which would enable a wider range of organisations to secure vital funding and support.

Cllr Brown also told the committee about Stoke-on-Trent's innovative approach to strengthening cultural governance, through the establishment of the cultural forum, and subsequently Stoke Creates and the Creative City Partnership, to shape and coordinate cultural development and delivery of the citywide cultural strategy.

Spitfire Gallery at the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery





The Knife Angel

Leading figures from Stoke-on-Trent's creative sector have begun working with the City Council and national cultural institutions to refresh the city's cultural strategy. The Creative City Partnership, which includes representatives from Arts Council England, Historic England, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Canals and Rivers Trust, is the only body of its kind in the UK. The existing strategy was developed in 2018 to shape and drive the citywide approach to securing UK City of Culture 2021 status. Stoke-on-Trent was a runner-up and secured additional cultural funding of £100,000 through the nationwide contest, which was won by Coventry. The new strategy will aim to build upon the progress which was achieved as a result of the UK City of Culture bid, as well as a subsequent push to secure a Channel 4 production hub in the city. The new strategy will also strengthen the alignment between the City Council's Stronger Together priorities, the Government's Levelling Up agenda and the exciting work that is being delivered by artists and creative groups in the city. Having an up-to-date strategy which reflects current priorities and plans will also make it easier for cultural organisations to bid for vital funding to expand the city's overall cultural offer and deliver important benefits to local communities.

The Smithfield business district, in the City Centre, hosted a spectacular event to highlight the dangers of knife crime. The Knife Angel is a stunning contemporary 27ft, 3.5 ton, sculpture of an angel made out of 100,000 confiscated knives received from 43 Police Forces across the UK. It is on a tour of towns and cities around Britain raising awareness of the issues of knife crime and all forms of violence and aggression. About 1,800 of the knives used in the sculpture were actually provided from amnesties in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire during 2015 and 2016. Visitors to the Stoke-on-Trent civic launch of the Knife Angel, in April, also experienced the world premiere of The Angel's Message, an originally composed piece of music performed by the British Police Symphony Orchestra.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has approved a new Library Strategy, following public consultation, to set out how library services in the city are changing to meet the needs of local communities and to respond to the changing use of our library services. The new strategy builds on the knowledge that our communities value libraries as places where they can access traditional library services, but recognises that access to digital resources and wider support that libraries can provide is equally important. All libraries will continue to offer support to our communities in a variety of ways, providing broader advice, information and guidance to residents including IT access and support, job/work clubs, activities for children, young people and families. Although footfall in our libraries has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, memberships and issue of digital resources is increasing. Our flagship city central library (reopening in a new location in our Smithfield business district) will be open 6 days a week. We will also continue to provide a range of different library facilities in our local communities, including the 'street library' in Blurton, Trentham's community library, a brand new library in Tustall's refurbished historic town hall and a relocated library facility in Meir. Libraries will always be important to Stoke-on-Trent, the City Council values them, our communities value them and continue to need and use them. They are about much more than books in buildings, they are critical to connecting communities, and providing opportunities for learning and support. We are also actively engaging with Arts Council England about potential funding opportunities for our libraries recognising that local authorities alone can't find the necessary investment to make them the best they can be.

The City Council consulted on changes to its Museums service through the budget process in early 2022. This generated widespread public interest at national, regional and local levels and ultimately served to strengthen many relationships across the sector as partners recognised that the council was listening and responding to their views. Changes were made to the original proposals, particularly in relation to curatorial staffing. However the core proposal of creating a single team has been delivered to ensure our museums are stronger and more sustainable for the future.

Titanic Exhibition at the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery





Wizarding World Wand Installation

NEXT STEPS

The next City Forum meeting will take place on Friday 27 May, and will focus on the importance of culture and civic pride in relation to the Levelling Up agenda. The event, which will take place at Staffordshire University's newly-opened facility, The Catalyst, will involve a blend of face-to-face and online speeches and discussions. The invitation-only summit will also feature a number of workshops exploring how culture relates to the core Levelling Up themes of economic development, health, and education and skills. Keynote speakers at the event will include V&A Museum director and former Stoke-on-Trent Central MP Tristram Hunt, Arts Council England chief executive Darren Henley and New Victoria Theatre executive director Fiona Wallace. Delegates will also have an opportunity to question the speakers and have their say about how culture, heritage and creativity can help to support the city's Levelling Up approaches and transform outcomes for residents and communities.



City of
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