



City of
Stoke-on-Trent

Our City, Our Wellbeing

Creating Shared Wealth, Reducing Inequality

Stoke-on-Trent City Council Corporate Strategy 2024-28



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Foreword

When I became Leader of the City Council, following the May 2023 local elections, I was determined that my administration would put the needs of its citizens first. This strategy sets out our vision for raising the quality of life for everyone and so preventing social problems before they happen. By making our city greener, cleaner, safer, healthier, wealthier and fairer we can enable more people to benefit from an improved feeling of wellbeing. We want families in our city to know there is always the chance of getting on in life.

I am passionate about our city and I truly believe that Stoke-on-Trent is a unique and amazing place, but one which suffers from some significant problems and often loses out to other places when it comes to investment. We urgently need to reverse the damaging cycle of declining resources and worsening deprivation and inequality. Only through a serious and sustained focus on improving the quality of life for our residents can we hope to ensure that our children and grandchildren have access to the same opportunities as those in other parts of the country. Our goal is to help families to lead more fulfilled lives and enable our businesses to get on, grow and employ more local people in decent jobs.

However, we must also acknowledge the fact that, like many other councils, our spending power is not what it used to be. The proportion of our funding that comes from central government has been declining steadily in recent years, leaving us without sufficient money to meet our city's needs. The financial reality that we face underlines the need for close collaborations with our partners and stakeholders, including local businesses, voluntary and community organisations, and most importantly, our residents. We also know that the council does not hold all of the answers to our city's challenges, and that we may not be the best-equipped to exploit emerging opportunities. The City Council therefore has a vital role to play in marshalling energy and resources to improve people's lives and give families and communities reasons to be optimistic about the future.

That is why this strategy is not just a vision for change; it is above all an invitation: to share knowledge and expertise, to help us to make vital changes to improve life chances and create opportunities, and to help eliminate the terrible inequalities which hold our city back. I invite you to work with me and use your voices, your energy and your influence to help us unlock important and lasting improvements for everyone who lives and works in Stoke-on-Trent.



Cllr Jane Ashworth

Leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Introduction

This Corporate Strategy sets out Stoke-on-Trent City Council's vision and priorities for the next four years. It explains how we will improve the wellbeing of our residents by making our city healthier, greener, safer, wealthier, cleaner and fairer.

We are immensely proud of our city and its people. Stoke-on-Trent is a fantastic place to live, work and visit. But as a city, we also face many disadvantages and barriers. This strategy is therefore grounded in hard reality, based on a sober assessment of the main challenges and opportunities that we expect to deal with over the next four years and beyond.

This strategy is first and foremost an invitation. We believe fundamentally that people and communities know the most about their own needs and about their priorities for change. We want the next four years to be marked by a redistribution of power in this city, whereby communities themselves get to contribute to decision making. So, while this strategy provides an overall vision and a framework, the detailed strategies and plans will be developed with local people, businesses and organisations. We will dedicate time and resources to listening to people, so that the right things get done. It will then be our job to show how we are aligning our resources, delivery plans, supporting strategies and operational activities to achieve those shared priorities.

The strategy has been developed in the context of the most severe resource constraints facing local government. This has particularly impacted those authorities with more deprived populations as the gap has grown through years of austerity between the needs of local people and the resources available to local councils. Unless and until this situation is addressed by central Government then our financial position will impact on our ability to deliver this or any progressive strategy for our population.

The strategy has also been developed amid the Cost of Living crisis. Our city suffers more acutely than most places because we are less economically resilient due to our relatively low wage economy and the high number of households dependent on welfare support.

Over time, our aim is that this Corporate Strategy evolves into a City Strategy that has much wider ownership, so there is alignment not just between our plans and those of the NHS, the police, our educational bodies but also with voluntary and community organisations and cultural bodies as well. Right now, we need to build these alliances into more trusting and collaborative relationships.

The Strategy will be used to inform the scope and overarching aims of the council's core policies (e.g. Medium-Term Financial Strategy, Children & Families Strategy, Housing Strategy), as well as relevant delivery plans and strategies for specific service areas and initiatives. It will be underpinned by a performance framework consisting of measures and indicators which align closely with the corporate priorities and objectives.

A City of Strength, Kindness and Creativity

Stoke-on-Trent is a unique and wonderful place. It was forged through its industrial past, built on layers of enterprise and craftsmanship, and infused by waves of migration. It is a tightly woven city where the importance of family, community and place all contribute to a strong sense of personal and collective identity. It is a city of unusual kindness, where care for one another runs deep. It is a green city with a superb network of parks and open spaces, traversed by the waterways that once connected our pot-banks to the great ports.

Stoke-on-Trent is the key centre of The Potteries, the only region in the country to be named to this day after the product for which it is best known. Today, North Staffordshire has a highly diverse economy, backed up by the research and innovation provided by its two excellent universities, Staffordshire and Keele.

Over the last ten years, the city has experienced economic growth from a low base, taking advantage of its location as a crossroads in the North West Midlands. Through the development of its Enterprise Zone it has benefited from significant expansion in its logistics and distribution sector. It retains a strong manufacturing base, combined with growth in the creative tech sector and the benefit of having anchor companies such as Bet 365 located in the city.

The city has also striven to be a first mover with respect to some of the global opportunities and challenges that exist. It was the first city in the country to develop a city-wide, gigabit-enabled full fibre network. It has started to address the challenge of achieving zero carbon through early development of a District Heat Network.

And yet, despite this economic growth and an enduring spirit of innovation, the city has remained relatively deprived compared to the rest of the UK. Since the 1990s its position has actually worsened as it slipped from 39th to 14th most deprived district in England. This is despite having multiple Government programmes directed at the city over this period. Frankly, none of them have been able to successfully address the underlying issues that the city faces.

That is why this strategy seeks to adopt a radical and different approach, based on community-led development of prevention, support and enterprise activity. What gives us confidence that over time this change of direction will work is the evidence from the people themselves. Given opportunity and resources, history shows us that Stoke-on-Trent citizens and communities do amazing things.

The Key Challenge – Persistent Inequality and Consequent Low Wellbeing

For more than a generation, a multitude of factors have conspired to hold back our city and harm the life chances of many residents. Significant gaps between outcomes for people in Stoke-on-Trent and those in other parts of the UK have continued to exist, and in some cases have actually widened in recent years.

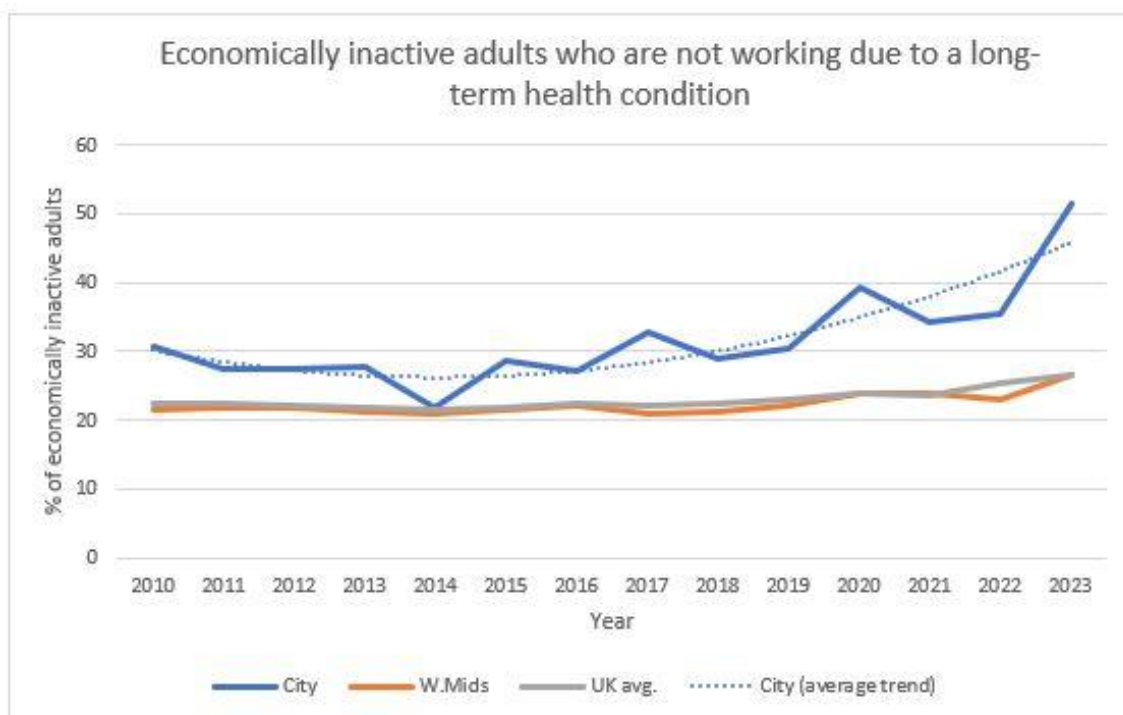
These persistent inequalities contribute to the hardship and deprivation that continues to blight lives and communities throughout our city. The most serious inequalities relate to gaps in outcomes for life expectancy, educational attainment, the development rates for young children, economic productivity rates, wage levels and numbers of children in local authority care. The table below highlights the scale of the gap between Stoke-on-Trent and average levels for the UK as a whole:

Indicator	Gap between city and UK average levels (2023)
Healthy life expectancy	6.9 years shorter (men); 8.5 years shorter (women)
Health-related unemployment	24.8 per cent higher (4,530 more adults out of work)
Educational attainment at GCSE	7.7pts fewer
Adults who achieve Level 3 qualifications	22,000 fewer
Children who are school ready at five years old	3.9 per cent fewer
Economic productivity	£4,888 less per capita (£1.263bn in total for the city)
Gross full-time pay (by place of residence)	£90.20 less per week
Children in Care	709 more children

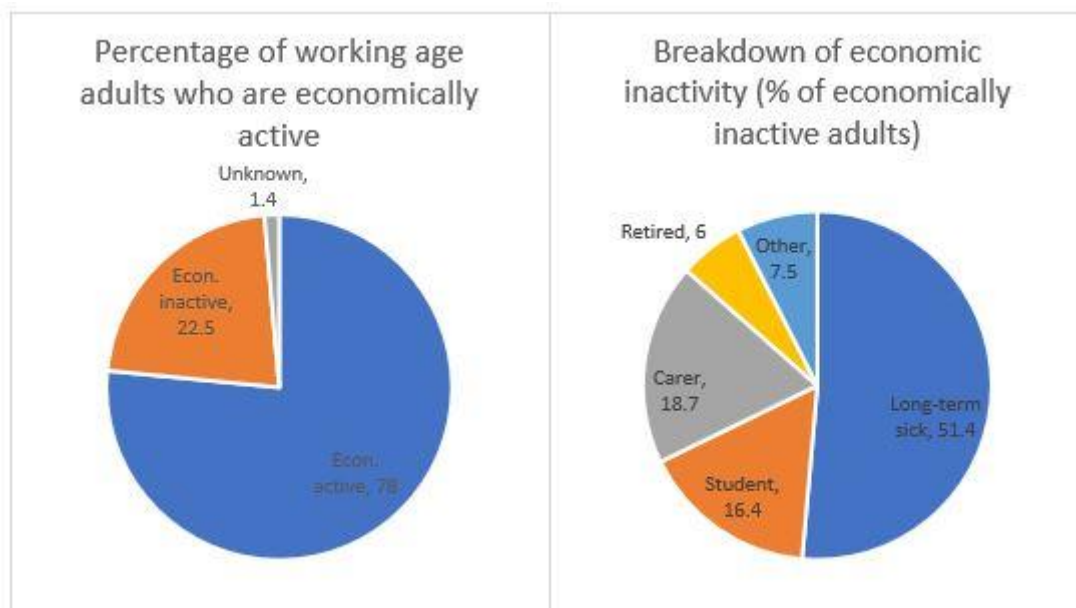
Earnings



Health- related economic inactivity



(The dotted line in the table above shows the average trend for Stoke-on-Trent over time. This provides a more reliable indicator, as the data for economic inactivity is drawn from a relatively small sample and can be prone to minor fluctuations).



One of the most important aims of this Corporate Strategy will be to explore and address these discrepancies and ensure that most people in Stoke-on-Trent can benefit from the same opportunities and outcomes as those living elsewhere in the UK. This requires a city-wide response. Our aim is to strengthen our community organisations so that they can get alongside people who are struggling and help them address their problems and get back on an even keel, as well as enable people to create a bridge to opportunities that allow them to achieve their ambitions for themselves and their families. It is not only the people who find themselves at the bottom on the pile who will benefit from this strategy. It is our ambition to raise the standard of life for all our residents – including those held back by the consequences of Covid-19 and the Cost of Living crisis.

Our Vision

That is our challenging context, stated plainly. But we believe in our city. We see the creativity, fortitude and industry of our residents and the ambition and innovation of our businesses. The central aim of this Corporate Strategy is to harness these great strengths and break the vicious cycle that thirteen years of austerity has created.

We will do this by developing an environment in which people and institutions can work together to improve the wellbeing of all residents.

By 'wellbeing' we do not just mean good health, important though that is. We all know wellbeing is so much more than that. It is about having a decent life, with access to good amenities and opportunities, and having enough money and time to do the things that really matter to us. It is about having pathways to realise ambitions at individual, family and community levels. It is also about considering the needs of future citizens, for example, in prioritising the drive to achieve zero carbon and promoting the mental health of our young people

It also means we have to work very hard to unlock what we know to be the key enablers of improved wellbeing. In Stoke-on-Trent, one of those critical success factors is improved connectivity, particularly developing a much improved and affordable local public transport system. Another is promoting nature recovery, both for the overall sake of our planet but also for its therapeutic benefit in a city where too many residents struggle with their mental health.

We can only achieve this vision by working in partnership across sectors and with communities. We want to amplify the voice of citizens and communities, so that how we achieve this vision is based on their lived reality of what works and what doesn't. And that will differ to some extent from place to place. That is why we will seek to devolve resources down to the neighbourhood level, using tools such as place-based budgeting to ensure the public £ has maximum effect at the local level.

In pursuing this vision, we will be joining a growing community of places, both nationally and globally, which are finding the right balance between traditional productivity-based economic models and more wellbeing-centred approaches to economic development, placemaking and environmental stewardship. These are places that have realised that the current rat race generated in the wake of globalisation is actually just a race to the bottom for too many people, with only a small few benefiting from ever increasing wealth. We want to ensure that the wealth we create stays in our city and benefits the many, not the few.

Investing in Prevention

In pursuit of greater wellbeing, we will have an unrelenting focus on increasing preventative activity deep in communities that stops bad things happening to people. We will make a deliberate and permanent shift towards investment upstream in activity that helps people to say well, to develop themselves and to collaborate with others.

We will always start from the perspective of understanding the strengths of people and communities, rather than just seeing their needs. That means looking for the positive foundations on which we can build resilience and growth.

Working with our partners, including crucially, voluntary, community and faith organisations, we will invest in early support services, getting alongside people in their communities and giving them the tools to deal with the challenges they face. That might be help to maximise their welfare support or access to some training that will enable them to get back in the job market. Or it may be the chance to set up a small enterprise or help to parent children who have additional needs. This extends to those who are homeless or addicted; working with them without judgement to address root causes of their difficulties while dealing with behaviours that are unacceptable such as anti-social behaviour and violence.

The good news is that, when we give power away to communities and trusted local organisations, it enables them to develop the solutions that make sense to them, because they know their communities better than anyone else. And we are not just talking here about geographical communities. We are also talking about communities of interest such as parents of children with special educational needs, or adults with autism, or a group of market stallholders, to give just a few examples. Our instinct going forward will be how do we give power away to these communities to help them develop better solutions for themselves and others.

This shift to a preventative model of local democracy is how we will also get out of the current vicious circle that sees ever-increasing amounts of local tax-payers' money spent on crisis care. The aim is to work together to stop those crises happening in the first place.

Our Priorities

To achieve our vision, we will organise our plans against six themes, each of which will contribute to improved community wellbeing. We will develop baseline indicators of current levels of wellbeing so that we can track the programme we make, including the contribution of each of the six themes. Later in the strategy, we set out the main actions we will pursue under each essential theme.

1. Healthier

Creating a healthier standard of living for all our citizens

4. Greener

Conserving our environment and living more sustainably

2. Wealthier

Reducing hardship and enabling greater shared prosperity

5. Cleaner

Working together to clean up our city and our communities

3. Safer

Building empowered communities, safe from the threat of harm

6. Fairer

Tackling inequality and improving life chances for everyone



Addressing the Critical Issues

The citywide responses to the Covid-19 pandemic and more recent cost of living pressures have highlighted the importance and effectiveness of working collaboratively with engaged and influential partners and stakeholders and pooling knowledge, expertise and precious resources to maximise potential positive outcomes for residents, communities and businesses throughout the city.

This strategy represents a holistic approach, setting out a range of activities aimed at influencing all of the main factors which contribute to, or impact upon, wellbeing in our city. Some of the most important challenges that we face as a city cut across several workstreams and they will receive special strategic attention. They are:

Supporting Family Life - We will prioritise working with the NHS, the voluntary and community sector and others to ensure families are helped to give their children the best start in life including better housing, improved education, increased income and help when things start to go wrong. That help will be available wherever possible in the communities in which those families live.

Reclaiming our Streets – We will enable residents to take back ownership of our streets and public spaces by having a zero-tolerance approach to those who would seek to damage enjoyment of our local environment through anti-social behaviour, illegal dumping and the like.

Addressing Hardship and Poverty – At the same time as working hard to improve the local economy, we will organise special support for those who have the least, helping those residents secure better jobs and higher wages, helping them maximise welfare entitlement and tackle debt, and ensuring access to a decent home.

Ensuring Decent Homes for All – Living in inadequate housing is a major contributor to poor physical and mental health and wellbeing outcomes for both adults and children. Too many households are living in fuel poverty, in poorly insulated homes that they cannot afford to keep warm. We will use our influence and strong partnerships to address persistent and harmful problems such as fuel poverty, damp and mould. And we will enable people to achieve their housing ambitions, including home ownership.

Supporting People to Live Independently - Too many people from our city end up in institutional care when they could be supported to live in our communities. This includes people with physical and learning disabilities, those with long term mental health conditions and older people becoming frail. We will work with our partners to change this, including providing a better choice of supported accommodation.

Our Values

If the City Council is to be successful in achieving this strategy we have to evolve the way we work. With very limited resources and a need for us to deliver our legal responsibilities, we are wholly reliant on working with all partners if this strategy to be achieved. Sometimes the Council will be the direct deliverer of important services, such as in our role as housing landlord for many households in the city. But we can be equally powerful and effective when we play an enabling and supporting role. Over the lifetime of this strategy, we expect to develop these values into shared statements and commitments with other agencies and with the voluntary community sector.

In this changed landscape, we commit to the following key values:

Empowerment: To the extent that the authority has powers and resources, we will look wherever possible to use these with and for the benefit of communities, including enabling communities to guide our decisions about how best to improve local areas. It also means using the Stoke-on-Trent public £ wisely, keeping as much of the money as possible circulating in the city through the way we recruit our workforce and buy our goods and services.

Openness: We will be very clear about the challenges that the Council is facing and about how we are going to address them. We will publish the data that shows both where we are starting from and whether we are making progress. We will always be open to new and better ideas, and will proactively ask residents, communities and partners to engage with us in solving the problems we face as a city.

Respect: Our corporate instinct will be to care deeply about our residents, particularly those who need the most help and support. When people fall on hard times, we will not judge but look to support them to recover. We will always look to find the strengths in any situation and will work tirelessly to make our city a better place to live and work. And when people disagree with us or need to complain, we will take their concerns seriously.

Stewardship: As the City Council, we are guardians of our city, chosen by the people to represent their interests. This is a huge responsibility and privilege that we take very seriously. It is a role that includes protecting what is important from our past, our built and cultural heritage, as well as forging opportunities for future citizens in a world threatened by climate catastrophe.

Partnership: We will be strong partners to all those who want to make our city a better place. We will forge strong relations with our local NHS, education sector, business sector, the police, and the voluntary and community sector. We will seek to develop shared objectives and to pool our resources for the benefit of those we serve.

Accountability: As an organisation and on an individual level, we will take ownership of our commitments and responsibilities, be honest about where we can do better and present clear evidence to demonstrate the progress that we achieve in our approaches to delivering the priorities and objectives set out in this strategy.

Representation: Everyone who leads and works for the City Council is an ambassador for the city that we serve. While presenting clearly the needs of our city, we will always speak positively about its people and our shared heritage. We will strive to secure additional resources and opportunities for the city, including inward investment and high-quality development.

Measuring Progress

If the key objective of this strategy is improved wellbeing, we have to know whether we are making progress. We will therefore need a core set of indicators of wellbeing that we can track over time. We will produce a set of indicators that we propose to measure, first by setting a baseline and then by updating regularly. Some of these will be national indicators for which we can access Stoke-on-Trent data, some will be local measures we already collect, and others will require local surveys.

THE SIX PRIORITIES TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Priority 1 – A Healthier City

Stoke-on-Trent will be a city in which everyone can benefit from a healthy standard of living, including good quality housing, affordable healthy food and the development of healthier and more sustainable communities. Improving community wellbeing will be the overarching goal behind everything that we do. The City Council will work with the NHS and other local partners to provide effective preventative approaches to ill health and seamless care and support services for all who need them.

Key challenges:

- Poor rates of life expectancy and healthy life expectancy in the city.
- Higher rates of obesity and lower levels of physical activity.
- High numbers of adults and children with poor mental health.
- Poor lifestyle choices contribute to premature death and chronic ill health.
- Poor physical and/or mental health lead to high levels of economic inactivity.
- Inadequate housing contributes to poor health outcomes for vulnerable residents
- Tackling loneliness and isolation.

Supporting data:

Indicator	Local data	National average
Male average life expectancy	77.9 years	79.4 years
Female average life expectancy	79.7 years	83.1 years
Male average healthy life expectancy from birth	55.9 years	63.1 years
Female average healthy life expectancy from birth	55.1 years	63.9 years
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	6.5	3.9
Suicide rate (per 100,000 population)	16.4	10.4
Adults with a common mental health disorder	17.4 %	12.3 %
Percentage of adults who are overweight or obese	69 %	63.5 %
Adults doing recommended physical activity levels	57.5 %	65.8 %
Premature mortality (preventable deaths per 100,000)	215.1	142.2

Indicator	Local data	National average
Adults who smoke regularly	25.7 %	14.5 %
Over-65s receiving long-term adult social care	5.4 %	5.3 %
Economically inactive adults who are long-term sick	39.6 %	25.4 %

A Healthier City

Objectives

Reduce existing health inequalities.

Enable more older people to live independently at home.

Promote and enable a healthier standard of living for citizens of all ages.

Develop and invest in preventative approaches to physical and mental ill health.

Target outcomes

Health and care integration provide a seamless service for all who need support.

More children get off to a good start in life.

More residents regularly take part in minimum recommended levels of exercise.

Residents are able to benefit from a healthier standard of living.

More of the city's housing stock complies with decent home standards.

Actions

Integrate health and care services to provide seamless approach to those who need support.

Address premature frailty and enable people to stay active later in life.

Embed Healthy Start in Life within new Families and Communities Support Offer.

Overhaul leisure service to provide broader access to activity for all, including preventative programmes for older people.

Build health education into relevant education and skills programmes, including adult learning – focus on healthy, home cooking and reducing excessive alcohol consumption.

Ensure provision of decent, warm homes across all tenures and stock types.

Possible indicators

- Access and waiting times for mental health support.

- Percentage of residents receiving care who are satisfied with their care and feel safe.

- Rates of smoking and alcohol consumption (including focus on maternity).

- Numbers taking part in minimum recommended levels of healthy activity.

- Numbers of residents who say they care about their health and know how they can look after/improve it.

Objectives	Target outcomes	Actions	Possible indicators
Create healthy and sustainable places and communities.	All residents have access to affordable, healthy food.	Ensure that securing access to affordable, healthy food is a key goal in all relevant strategies, including the Local Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of housing stock that meets decent home standards.
	People feel safe walking and cycling in their local communities	Re-balance the city's transport strategy to improve access to safe walking and cycling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rates of walking and cycling.
	People are able to contribute to their community if they want to.	Focus on supporting and empowering communities to make improvements to their areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rates of participation in community life.
Reduce the number of adults who are economically inactive due to long-term health problems.	Health-related economic inactivity levels fall into line with the UK average.	Work with health partners and employers to develop effective approaches to prevention, support and rehabilitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers of people of working age who are unable to work for health reasons.

Priority 2 – A Wealthier City

Stoke-on-Trent will be a place where every resident has an opportunity to prosper from the city’s economic growth through access to higher levels of skills, qualifications and pay, and where more of the money that is created in the city stays within the city to sustain our businesses and communities. We do this by building community wealth, stimulating micro-enterprise, improved educational standards, enabling people to gain new skills and fostering collaboration through shared workspace and cluster development.

Key challenges:

- Stoke-on-Trent remains among the most deprived places in England.
- Disparity between positive GVA growth and worsening financial hardship.
- Persistent gap between local and national average wage levels.
- Stoke on Trent has some of the highest rates of debt and insolvency in the UK.
- Increasing levels of reliance upon emergency support.
- City has second highest level of fuel poverty in England.
- The city’s productivity gap to the rest of the UK will take decades to close.
- Difficulty of attracting private investment and high-growth, high-value employment sectors.

Supporting data:

Indicator	Local data	National average
Children living in poverty (after housing costs)	43.2 %	30.0 %
Households experiencing fuel poverty	21.8 %	13.4 %
Gross weekly pay by area of residence	£552.00	£642.20
Avg. gross disposable household income (per head)	£15,455	£21,978
Percentage of residents who are living in the most deprived 10 % of areas in England	32 %	-
Proportion of adults who don’t own a car or van	30.9 %	25.8 %
GVA per capita (economic productivity)	£24,175	£31,138

A Wealthier City

Objectives

Establish an economic development model which prioritises community wellbeing and promotes community wealth building.

Target outcomes

Stoke-on-Trent becomes a city where most residents are able to secure good work locally that enables them to live healthy, safe and comfortable lives.

Culture is able to play a key role in influencing placemaking and community wellbeing.

Meaningful participation in society and local communities increases across all age groups.

Actions

Develop a new Economic Development Strategy spanning business support, skills development, employment support, social enterprise, tourism, community asset development and inward investment.

Deliver a partnership Cost of Living Plan to address the causes and impacts of financial hardship and provide targeted support to vulnerable residents and communities.

Roll out and embed a Social Value Strategy across the city's anchor institutions.

Roll out new grass-roots cultural programmes across our communities, working with the Arts Council and Stoke Creates.

Create inter-generational opportunities for transfer of knowledge and skills, including increased volunteering.

Possible indicators

- Percentage of local residents who are positive about their wellbeing.
- Percentage of council (and other anchor institutions) contract/spend in Stoke-on-Trent
- Levels of poverty
- Level of unclaimed benefits

Objectives**Target outcomes****Actions****Possible indicators**

Enable and encourage alternative business models, including community ownership and social enterprise.

The city's approach to community wealth building leads to a proliferation of alternative commercial ownership models.

Create a clear plan for all our valued heritage assets, alongside creation of Heritage Preservation Trust and a prioritised programme of restoration and re-use, including community asset transfer where desirable.

Promote community wealth building and support the development of community micro-enterprises.

- Levels of community asset ownership.

Work with educators and employers to transform education and skills outcomes for residents of all ages.

A higher proportion of adults achieve Level 3 qualifications or higher.

Deliver the Education Improvement Programme, working with schools and colleges to raise educational standards, ensure the right learning pathways are available for all learners, teach life skills and improve work readiness.

Develop a Skills Strategy that ensures the skills match the future needs of employers, with particular focus on digital skills.

- Percentage of population achieving level 3 qualifications.
- Percentage of young people who are NEET.
- Numbers of apprenticeships.

Objectives**Target outcomes****Actions****Possible indicators**

Objectives	Target outcomes	Actions	Possible indicators
		<p>Ensure there is effective employment support offer, addressing barriers to employment such as lack of self-confidence, poor mental health.</p> <p>Embed the expanded Family Learning programme within our Families and Community Support offer.</p>	
<p>Support high quality regeneration, with a focus on delivering more homes across tenures and high-quality business environments.</p>	<p>Stoke-on-Trent's housing development strategy improves the availability of affordable, high-quality housing.</p>	<p>Design and implement a transparent process to determine priorities for capital investment, with decisions driven by community perspectives.</p>	
<p>Support existing businesses to achieve their potential and attract inward investment.</p>	<p>More businesses are established in the city and survival rates improve.</p>	<p>Use the Shared Prosperity Fund to develop an enhanced business support offer, including help for social enterprises and community micro-businesses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Levels of growth of target business sectors.• Numbers of new small businesses and social enterprises.

Objectives**Target outcomes****Actions****Possible indicators**

Support more residents to secure higher-value jobs in the city.

Average wages increase, closing the gap to the regional and national averages.

More adults in Stoke-on-Trent earn more than the National Living Wage.

Residents can access cheaper and more reliable bus services to more parts of the city.

Develop a new Economic Development Strategy spanning business support, skills development, employment support, social enterprise, tourism, community asset development and inward investment.

Improved and cheaper Bus Services through delivery of Bus Improvement Plan and development of plans for future Rapid Bus Network.

- Percentage of working age population in employment.
- Average wage levels by area.
- Welfare dependency across communities.

- Percentage of population with access to a decent bus service.

Priority 3 – A Safer City

Stoke-on-Trent will be a city where residents, workers and visitors should feel safe at all times, where vulnerable people are protected from the threat of harm and where communities are able to help to shape local services and environmental improvements. We will do this by giving people more ownership of local buildings and spaces, ensuring that it is safe to get around the city and by tackling low-level anti-social behaviour.

Key challenges:

- Fear of crime and anti-social behaviour deters visitors and makes residents feel unsafe in their own communities and in our City Centre.
- Rough sleeping is still too prevalent, putting vulnerable people at risk of harm and affecting perceptions of our city as a safe place to work, live and visit.
- Too many children are living in unsafe environments, putting them at risk of ending up in our care or being placed on the child protection register.
- High levels of domestic abuse and violence are preventing adults and children from feeling safe in their own homes.
- Too many residents with social care needs do not feel safe.

Supporting data:

Indicator	Local data	National average
Recorded crimes (per 1,000 pop.)	128	58
Recorded violent crimes (incidents per 1,000 pop.)	81	31
Antisocial behaviour incidents recorded	Down 22 %	Down 27 %
Levels of domestic abuse (cases per 1,000 adults)	31.7	30.3
Proportion of adult offenders who reoffend	33.4 %	27.9 %
Level of alcohol-related hospital admissions (per 100,000 population)	2,180	1,500
Adults who are opiate users (per 1,000 pop.)	14.7	8.9
Children in need of safeguarding	5,900	3,520
Level of people with social care needs who feel safe.	75.5 %	70.2 %

Priority 4 – A Greener City

Stoke-on-Trent will be a pioneer of green energy innovation and environmental sustainability, delivering vital skilled jobs, reducing pollution, substantially reducing fuel poverty and creating an environment that promotes widespread community wellbeing. We will empower communities to reduce their carbon footprint and to become more eco-friendly, including through improving access to high quality green space.

Key challenges:

- Reducing air pollution levels, particularly around key highways junctions.
- Creating a circular economy which encourages recycling and reduces waste.
- Creating adequate 'green economy' employment and skills opportunities for residents
- Maximising the environmental and economic benefits of green energy innovation.
- Using green energy innovation to reduce fuel poverty throughout the city.
- Delivering the infrastructure to enable wider use of electric vehicles.
- Enabling nature recovery, including crucial role of trees and green spaces and corridors.
- Ensuring that green and blue spaces can form or contribute to networks for travel, leisure and access to nature.

Supporting data:

Indicator	Local data	National average
Total gas consumption per year (gigawatt hours)	2,302	2,149
Total electricity consumption per year (GWh)	317.5	470.4
Average CO ₂ emissions per head of population	4.9 tonnes	4.1 tonnes
Adults who walk or cycle for transport (combined)	11.4 %	17.4 %
Forecast employment levels in green industries by 2050 (total number of people directly employed)	3,362	7,484

Priority 5 – A Cleaner City

The environment in which we live and work is a key factor affecting community wellbeing, which is why we are determined to make our city a cleaner and more attractive place for everyone. We all have a responsibility and shared duty to look after our streets, parks and neighbourhoods. We will support our communities to take greater ownership of their places and take firm action against the scourges of litter, vandalism and illegal dumping which tarnish our city and inflict misery on communities. We will strive to ensure that all residents can live in dignity.

Key challenges:

- High levels of illegal waste dumping blight communities and harm internal and external perceptions of Stoke-on-Trent.
- The City Council lacks sufficient resources to maintain all public land in Stoke-on-Trent to a high standard.
- Recycling rates must improve in order to meet our environmental obligations.
- Environmental problems are often viewed as ‘council problems’ rather than issues that communities can address through supported and coordinated voluntary action.

Priority 6 – A Fairer City

Tackling persistent inequalities and improving support for vulnerable residents will help to ensure that people in Stoke-on-Trent are able to access the same opportunities to live healthy and productive lives as those living elsewhere in the UK. One of the key factors holding our residents back is a legacy of comparatively poor educational attainment and skill levels which prevent them from securing higher-value, better-paid jobs.

Key challenges:

- Too many adult residents are trapped in low-paying, insecure work.
- Deprivation and financial hardship are stunting life chances and inflicting unnecessary harm on families and individuals.
- Outcomes for looked after children and care leavers are not good enough.
- Educational attainment is lower than in most other places.
- Too few residents gain high levels of skills or go on to higher education.

Supporting data:

Indicator	Local data	National average
Percentage of school-ready children aged four to five	61.3 %	65.2 %
Children eligible for, and claiming, free school meals	24.5 %	17.0 %
Children with learning disabilities or difficulties (per 1,000 pupils)	62.0	34.4
Adults with at Level 3 qualifications or higher	50 %	61.5 %
Adults with at Level 4 qualifications or higher	28.3 %	42.9 %
Adults with no formal qualifications	12.4 %	6.2 %
Key Stage 4 educational attainment score	43.2	50.9

HOW WE WILL DELIVER THIS STRATEGY

Supporting Strategies and Plans

The implementation of the Corporate Strategy will be supported by a number of key policies, strategies and programmes of work, some of which will be developed following the adoption of this strategy in order to address specific priorities and objectives. These supporting strategies and plans fall within several groups:

Budget and policy framework – mandatory and discretionary policies and strategies relating to specific areas of activity where the City Council has a statutory duty to provide services (e.g. finance, planning, licensing, children’s and adults’ social care, community safety, equality and diversity, transport, waste management and health and wellbeing).

Delivery strategies – support and enable the effective delivery of targeted approaches to specific challenges and objectives which are relevant to the priorities and objectives contained in the Corporate Strategy (e.g. Energy and Carbon Reduction Strategy, Cultural Strategy, Economic Strategy, Cost of Living Plan).

Operational strategies – Strategies which aim to enable the City Council to improve performance or enhance service provision in relation to a particular area of day-to-day service delivery. These strategies will necessarily reflect the relevant priorities and objectives contained within the Corporate Strategy (e.g. Customer Services Strategy, Digital Strategy, Library Strategy, Green Space Strategy).

The Operating Framework

The Operating Framework is designed to ensure that every team across the organisation is always focused on what it needs to do to improve its offer to residents, partners and other parts of the City Council, and that service teams have the confidence to develop and transform their services to meet this requirement. To be able to do this with confidence, the Council also requires a clear system of accountability that ensures priorities are being delivered and money is being spent wisely. The Operating Framework is intended to provide a system of development and assurance that should give Members confidence that the Council is performing at a high level.

There are five elements to the Operational Framework: Operating Plans, performance management, assurance model, governance for delivery and organisational development. All of these elements play a part in ensuring that the organisation is able to deliver the Corporate Strategy effectively. Two of the most important elements are:

Operating Plan: The annual plan translates the Corporate Strategy into priorities for delivery and improvement, setting out the allocation of resources in line with the Budget, key performance measures, efficiency and productivity requirements, identified key risks and mitigations and details of key enablers of continuous improvement.

Performance Management: Delivery of the Corporate Strategy will be underpinned by a set of carefully chosen performance indicators which will be closely aligned to the priorities and objectives set out in this document. These performance measures, which will be largely taken from the indicators set out against the six priority themes, will enable us to gauge the effectiveness of our approaches and assess whether our actions are having the desired impact in relation to the challenges highlighted in this document.

The City Council is also investing in new approaches to **data collection and visualisation** which will strengthen our ability to gather and analyse a wide range of performance data and use them to inform and improve decision making throughout the organisation. Enhanced data collection and visualisation will enable us to achieve a much more detailed understanding of the causes and impacts of the problems which affect residents and communities in Stoke-on-Trent and devise more effective strategies to address them.

Developing Our Organisation to Deliver

We know from experience that to deliver a strategy as ambitious as this one we have to invest in our workforce and supporting infrastructure, including digital assets. This will be difficult given our financial position but it is essential. The way we can square the circle is to rationalise our property base and reinvest some of the proceeds back into the development of the Council. The priorities for that investment will be:

Training and development: Our staff are going to need new and improved skills, and to some extent a different way of going about their work, such as embracing partnership models of delivery and learning how to empower residents and communities. Some of this work has already started, using the idea of restorative practice, but we can go much further.

Recruitment and retention: We are operating in a very competitive market where we can never take our workforce for granted. We need to make sure that we are not only fair on pay and conditions, but also that our staff really feel like they are supported to give their best in the crucial roles that they undertake. We also want our workforce to be reflective of the community they serve, with increased diversity at all levels of the organisation.

Digital opportunity: While digital functionality will never be a substitute for some of the crucial services that the Council provides, such as personal care, it can do some of the heavy-lifting for us in terms of simpler, transactional services. It can also reduce back office costs, releasing more resources to frontline delivery of essential services.

Use of our property: The Council still owns too many buildings that it is not making the best use of. It therefore needs to divest of some of these buildings, including through community asset transfers, and then maximise use of those it retains, including inviting partners and communities to make use of them as well.