

Newsletter

The Lord Cormack



Patrick Thomas Cormack, Baron Cormack, DL, FSA, FRHistS has passed away, aged 84.

The Lord Cormack was a historian, journalist and author. He served as a Member of Parliament (MP) for 40 years, from 1970 to 2010.

The Lord Cormack was first elected to Parliament in 1970 (Cannock), then he was elected MP for South West Staffordshire three times (1974 - 1983) and as MP for South Staffordshire six times (1983 - 2010).

During his Parliamentary career, The Lord Cormack was Shadow Minister (Constitutional Affairs) 1 June 1997 to 1 January 2000 and Shadow Deputy Leader of the House of Commons (1 June 1997 to 1st January 2000).

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The Lord Cormack served on many committees, including Ecclesiastical Committee (Joint Committee), Panel of Chairs, Parliamentary Privilege (Joint Committee), Human Rights (Joint Committee), Consolidation etc Bills (Joint Committee), Liaison Committee (Commons), Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (Chair), Works of Art (Lords), EU Home Affairs Sub-Committee (Lords). He was also Chairman of the Editorial Board of The House Magazine (from 1976) and Life President of The House Magazine from 2005 and Chairman of the All Party Arts & Heritage Group (from 1979).

Sir Gavin Williamson CBE, MP for South Staffordshire said of The Lord Cormack “It is with real sadness that I have to inform you the Patrick The Lord Cormack has passed away. Patrick was a passionate and committed Parliamentarian and was always a strong advocate for Staffordshire being a Member of Parliament for the County for forty years and representing the seats of Cannock, South West Staffordshire and South Staffordshire.”

“I was very privileged to succeed Patrick and had a great deal of pleasure working with him over the years. We are all deeply indebted to his service and his commitment and my thoughts and prayers are with Mary and his sons and grandchildren.”

We're out campaigning locally

This year sees the **Police, Fire & Rescue and Crime Commissioner** election and very likely a **General Election** at some point. These are crucial elections and we're already working to support our excellent PFCC candidate, Ben Adams and our MPs. Here are some photos of our teams out and about.



If you'd like to join us, you're very welcome. Please contact Jonathan Price, Deputy Chairman Political on 07792 024858 or via email at contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk.

We need help delivering leaflets, collecting voting intentions and generally spreading the Conservative message in Staffordshire. So please get in touch if you can offer us some support.

MP NEWS

Bill Cash: A vote for Reform UK on Thursday will do only one thing – ease Labour's path to power

Please click the link to see Sir Bill's latest piece for Conservative Home:

<https://conservativehome.com/2024/02/12/bill-cash-a-vote-for-reform-uk-on-thursday-will-do-only-one-thing-ease-labours-path-to-power/>

Theo Clarke MP holds HS2 Compensation Debate in Parliament



The Rail Minister will personally investigate outstanding HS2 compensation cases and confirmed the Handsacre Link will be completed following a parliamentary debate on the rail project held by Stafford MP Theo Clarke on 18th January 2024. Ms Clarke organised the back bench debate as issues around compensation continue to drag on despite herself and other Staffordshire MPs consistently bringing the matter up in parliament.

She also told MPs that HS2 Limited was trying to silence those seeking compensation – something the minister said he would also look into and he agreed to visit Stafford.

“I have called this debate on High Speed 2 compensation as I am concerned about how my constituents in Stafford are still being treated by HS2 Ltd,” Mrs Clarke told the House of Commons. “I am calling for all outstanding HS2 compensation claims to be resolved. Let me start by thanking the constituents who have contacted me, sharing their stories and highlighting how HS2 is deeply affecting them. Several other constituents who previously asked me to raise their case have now asked me not to mention them by name today. I am outraged to discover they have been intimidated by HS2 to do this. I was told that a constituent was told, ‘It would not be good for you to get your MP involved, as that would be bad for your case’. This is completely unacceptable behaviour by HS2 Ltd and I want to call it out today. I want all those seeking compensation to know that they have not been forgotten. Since being elected as the Member for Stafford, I have raised the issue of HS2 compensation six times in this House and I have still not had all of my outstanding local claims resolved. That is not acceptable when HS2’s behaviour towards my residents has been shocking. In addition, I have contacted numerous relevant Ministers and spent hundreds of hours working on the issue, visiting affected constituents and advocating for them.”

The MP gave examples of local people waiting, including farmer Andrew Collier. MPs heard he is still owed hundreds of thousands of pounds to cover two years of lost harvests and other outstanding claims. Another example is Jean and Trevor Tabernor who own a farm, Ms Clarke explained.

“HS2’s route meant that their farm would be spared, but their farmhouse was demolished. Their new farmhouse is nearly completed, and they have been seeking the last instalment of money to finish the work. HS2 Ltd is literally the only thing standing between them and their new home. Again, I ask the Minister: what will happen to resolve that? It is affecting people’s lives and we simply cannot wait any longer for an answer.”

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In reply Huw Merriman said: “I readily acknowledge how important it is that those owed compensation, such as money for the purchase of their property or expenses or costs associated with such transactions, are paid in as timely a manner as is possible. When it comes to paying owners for title to properties that they have, in many cases, sold unwillingly, it is only right that those owners should receive recompense in full and as fast as is practicable. My honourable friend the Member for Stafford is a tireless advocate for the cases that have arisen in her constituency...She has cited some particular cases during the debate. I will write back to her with my latest understanding of where matters sit regarding her constituents Mr and Mrs Tabernor and Mr Collier. With regard to the point about intimidation...I will of course look at it and make sure that it is eradicated. I am determined that HS2 Ltd should continue to up its game in dealing with difficult and disputed cases, such as the ones that have been mentioned today and others that I am aware of.”

The minister also said: “I can confirm that the Government remains committed to delivering the Handsacre connection, as we are committed to delivering HS2 phase 1.”

You can watch the full debate here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001vkpw/house-of-commons-hs2-com...>

Theo Clarke MP Finalist ‘Political Speech of the Year’ Award



Theo Clarke MP is delighted to announce that her speech about her traumatic birth experience is a finalist for the ‘Political Speech of the Year’ Award, by Pagefield Parliamentary Awards with Dods. This recognition is testament to the importance of tackling birth trauma. “I dedicate this nomination to all the mums who have bravely shared their stories with me and this fight will continue.”

The winner of the award will be determined by a combined scoring system, with 50% of the vote based on the public’s choice and the remaining 50% decided by an independent panel of leading political journalists. The winners will be announced during the Pagefield Parliamentary Awards reception on 23rd April.

You can help decide the winner by voting [here](#). You can see the list of nominees [here](#).

You can read my birth trauma speech [here](#).

Gavin Pledges Support for Cancer Research UK Manifesto

Sir Gavin Williamson recently joined Cancer Research UK for a parliamentary event to discuss the charity's manifesto for cancer research and care in 2024.

The charity has suggested the government take in a national commitment to reduce the cancer mortality rate by 15% by 2040, which would prevent 20,000 cancer deaths every year. To do this, the charity outlined some of its mission statements, such as rebuilding the UK's global position in research, diagnosing cancers earlier and reducing inequalities in cancer consultations.

Sir Gavin was particularly keen to support the charity in its aims, as the West Midlands has long been a titan in cancer research. Researchers at Aston University for example, were the first to discover temozolomide, a drug now used worldwide to treat people with the most common type of brain tumour, glioblastoma. Currently, cancer research in the West Midlands is looking into how certain types of bacteria could be used as cancer therapies. Dr Kendle Maslowski at the University of Birmingham is studying how a modified version of the bacteria Salmonella could be used to limit the growth of tumours.

Sir Gavin said: "As an MP from a county that prides itself on its contribution to cancer research over the years, I'm keen to keep supporting these research groups where I can, and I'll continue my role in parliament to push for Cancer Research UK's manifesto ambitions. Around 33,800 people are diagnosed with cancer in the West Midlands every year. This is a cruel and senseless disease, and one day we will beat it. Let's make that day happen as soon as we can."



Gavin Supports Disposable Vape Ban to Protect Wildlife

Sir Gavin Williamson joined RSPCA and the Marine Conservation Society for a parliamentary event calling for legislation banning disposable vapes to be brought forward as soon as possible.

The event was organised by animal welfare groups in face of the impact that disposable vapes have on wild habitats and the environment. Disposable vapes are a diverse group of battery-powered devices that convert a liquid into an aerosol for inhalation. Vaping materials are made up of many different components including glass, plastic and metal, and a heating coil and lithium-ion battery. At the event, Sir Gavin was disturbed to learn of the dangers of disposable vapes for animals, particularly cats and dogs. Between 2017 and 2022, The Veterinary Poisons Information Service were informed with 680 reports of consumption of vape liquid products, resulting in 2 fatalities.

Moreover, the environmental impact of disposable vapes has been noted by the Marine Conservation Society's Beach Clean volunteers, who have reported an increasing number of single-use vapes turning up on beaches around the UK. The vapes contain plastics which degrade into micro-plastics, and these are dangerous to potential wildlife which might consume them, including seabirds, turtles, plankton and fish. It leads to the contamination of our food chain.

Sir Gavin said: "I'm keen that we maintain parliamentary momentum for the ban on disposable vapes. While it is reassuring to know that legislation is being carried out to ban the harmful vaping devices, the time for this legislation to pass cannot come soon enough. In our efforts to protect British species, we must first think about clearing up the excessive amounts of plastic in circulation."



Gavin Calls for Protection of Crooked House in Order to Re-Build

Sir Gavin Williamson attended the six-month anniversary of the fire at the Crooked House pub, taking action in the re-building project by nominating the site as an asset of community value.



The event was organised by Crooked House campaigner, Paul Turner, who wanted to mark the anniversary by holding a memory event, showcasing the meaning of the pub to the local community and the national culture. More than 100 people returned to the site to pin notes of their memories of ‘Britain’s wonkiest pub’ onto a pin-board erected near the ruins. The pub was the focus of national outrage in August 2023, when a fire destroyed the building, famous for its sloping walls and floors which had formed due to the subsidence of mining in the area. The unique landmark had been standing since the 18th century and attracted visitors from across the globe who came to experience the visual curiosity.

To take action on the Crooked House campaign, Sir Gavin has nominated the Crooked House as an Asset of Community Value. Once listed as an Asset of Community Value with the local authority, the local community will be informed when the site is listed for sale within the five year listing period. Locals could then enact the Community Right to Bid, which would see the Crooked House site being handed over to community efforts for its restoration. Support for a Community Right to Bid are demonstrable by a national campaign to see the pub rebuilt ‘brick by brick’, which has been signed by 35,000 people.

Sir Gavin said: “It is hard to think that it has been six months since we lost the Crooked House. It’s been a long journey, but the anniversary event showed us that people are willing to fight for re-building the landmark pub. By nominating the site as an Asset of Community Value, I’m hoping to provide the opportunity for the re-building to take place. What happened here will not be forgotten, and we’re doing all we can to bring back an important piece of Staffordshire heritage.”

Sir Gavin then met with Crooked House campaigner, Paul Turner, at South Staffordshire District Council, who said: “It’s a pile of rubble at the moment, but we know that this site has value historically. 1765 the house and pub was built there, it became crooked, and it’s been burnt and it’s been demolished. We’re now in a position where we’re aiming to get it rebuilt. We’ve been told by Westminster City Council that one of the first things they did with a pub called the Carlton Tavern which was demolished, is that they put an Asset of Community Value application in, and the reason for that was to increase its value and to push the legal case to get the government to agree to re-build it.”

Gavin Leads Call for British Service Personnel to be Recognised

Sir Gavin Williamson has called on the Secretary of State for Defence to consider presenting medallic recognition to the service men and women who served on HMS Diamond while stationed in the Red Sea.

As HMS Diamond is recalled from the Red Sea to be replaced by HMS Richmond, Sir Gavin has argued that now is the time to recognise the bravery shown by the service personnel on board, who were stationed on the British naval ship while she endured three attacks by Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. HMS Diamond has been relieved of her duties recently, returning to base so that she may be repaired and resupplied after being stationed in the high-threat area almost continuously since December when she joined Operation Prosperity Guardian. The crew have dutifully protected merchant ships in the area from attack, as well as defending the British naval ship itself from three separate attacks, successfully destroying nine drones using a Sea Viper missile system.



In a report on post 1945 medallic recognition protocols commissioned by the Ministry of Defence in 2012, it is stated that campaign medals should be awarded where deployed personnel have been exposed to a significant degree of risk to life and limb, in excess of what might be expected as part of normal service duties. Despite fulfilling this definition, the Ministry of Defence has yet to declare its intention to award campaign medals to those on HMS Diamond.

Sir Gavin said: “The service men and women aboard HMS Diamond have dutifully protected the shipping lane and civilians in the face of incredible dangers in the Red Sea, confronted by Iranian-backed insurgency, supplied with drones and ballistic missiles. Now that HMS Diamond has been temporarily relieved of her duties, it is appropriate to give our highest respects to those service personnel who have risked their lives to protect the road towards peace in the region. I am therefore calling on the Secretary of State for Defence to provide medallic recognition, an honour that has been indubitably deserved.”

Gavin Takes Action to Fix Blocked Stream in Stone

Sir Gavin Williamson accompanied Councillor Phillip Leason on a visit to the Scotch Brook culvert near Stone, which had received complaints about the build-up of waste and subsequent effects on the environment.

The culvert in question connects to the river Trent and regularly fills up with silt, already prone to overflowing in the case of torrential rain. It costs the Environment Agency around £100,000 every 18 to 24 months to remove the silt and debris. However, Sir Gavin and Councillor Leason were asked to visit the culvert to see that not only was the culvert blocked with silt and debris, but vast amounts of rubbish and plastic. Sir Gavin met with one of the volunteers who helped to litter-pick the area but found that more help was needed to restore the culvert to peak performance.

The culvert, which resembles a dumping ground, has caused concerns for environmental degradation as the waste poses an environmental hazard. As well as this, the blocked culvert could actually lead to real problems for townspeople. In 1987 the same culvert, blocked by rubbish, collapsed and the river flooded Stone town centre, leaving cars and houses under water.

Sir Gavin urged pro-active measures be taken to prevent this from happening again, calling on the Environment Agency to clear the stream and encouraging locals to help out with litter picking. Sir Gavin was pleased that his appeal for action resulted in success, as the Environment Agency rapidly cleared the blocked culvert and the surrounding debris, which is now fit for purpose again.

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Sir Gavin said: “I’m happy to announce that pushing for the authorities to be pro-active in dealing with the blocked culvert at Scotch Brook was successful. It is crucial that we think ahead with such issues. If I and others had not acted, we could have been in danger of repeating the floods of 1987, which were caused by waste build-up and resulted in damage to the environment and to the local town. It can also be incredibly dangerous. I’d like to thank the Environmental Agency for responding quickly to my call to keep the people of Stone safe.”

Gavin Fights to Block Battery Storage Facility in Featherstone



After listening to resident’s concerns, Sir Gavin Williamson is spearheading a campaign to put a stop to proposals for a battery storage facility in Featherstone.

Sir Gavin spoke ardently in both debates on behalf of Staffordshire residents, arguing in the first place that Network Sir Gavin is leading a campaign to block the plans which currently would infringe upon the residential areas of nearby Featherstone. Concerns have been raised by locals who fear that the high operating temperatures of such storage systems pose a fire risk which might endanger the public. The plans have already received at least 37 objections, however, the District Council has yet to block the proposals.

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The project has been put forward by Chiltern Green Energy, who want to install 80 batteries at the proposed site on New Road, Featherstone. The batteries would be 2.5 metres high and six metres long.

Locals are also concerned about the prospect that the site would take up land designated as the green belt. Residents are rightly angry that protected land is being used up by storage facilities that are industrial in size and disruptive to the local landscape. Sir Gavin has taken action in Westminster to call for an end to such proposals near residential sites, and on the green belt.

There are currently no restrictions on battery storage facilities infringing upon residential areas. Sir Gavin has demanded that the Secretary for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities place restrictions on battery storage facilities, by setting legislation that prevents them from being built within 500 metres of residential areas. Sir Gavin has also called on the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Steve Barclay, to clarify and potentially reform the process for companies to apply for land for such developments, as it should not be possible for companies to purchase land intended for inappropriate uses.

Sir Gavin said: “It is unacceptable that residents of Featherstone are being put at risk for the development of a battery storage facility on our green belt. The facility is a fire risk, and residents nearby should have been a priority considering this. Several towns in Staffordshire are also losing the green belt which surrounds them. This should be protected, and if we’re not careful, we will end up replacing it with an industrial park. I am determined to stop this from happening. I’m going to meet with Police and Fire Commissioner Ben Adams in Staffordshire to discuss what we can do to stop it.”

Gavin Assists Restoration Project for Historic Mausoleum in Stone

Sir Gavin Williamson has lent a hand towards restoring a site of local heritage, a mausoleum in the grounds of St Michael and St Wulfad’s Church in Stone.

The mausoleum houses a local family with a national legacy, the Jervis family, most notably Sir John Jervis, better known in history books as Admiral St. Vincent. The mausoleum has national significance because of Admiral St. Vincent’s illustrious career at sea, which began at the age of 10 when he ran away from home. His military accolades come from his success in preventing a Spanish invasion in 1797, when he led the defeat of a Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent. His legacy is enshrined in the mausoleum, which stands in honour of his service to his country. There is also a monument paying tribute to his life in St Paul’s Cathedral.

The mausoleum, which was built in the late 18th century, memorialises one of Stone’s greatest stories. However, the team of volunteers who have dedicated themselves to the careful maintenance and restoration work needed for the historic building are in need of further support. Sir Gavin is determined to help efforts for the restoration of the mausoleum and has pledged to find suitable government and charitable grants that will support the project.

Sir Gavin said: “The Jervis mausoleum is a valuable piece of Stone history and pays tribute to the extraordinary life of a local man who bravely defended British liberty. We must continue to preserve buildings that pay respect to our local heroes and heroines, so that their lives and legacies be protected for generations to come. I’ve called on various government and charitable grants to fund the restorative efforts, and I’m certain that we can save this little piece of local history.”

LOCAL NEWS SNAPSHOT STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Beaconfields School progressing well

Work is progressing well on Stafford's newest £7.6 million primary and nursery school.

Beaconfields Primary and Nursery School will be welcoming nursery and reception pupils from September 2024, with the capacity to increase numbers year on year.

Work started on the brand-new school in October 2023.

The school will have places for 210 pupils and 26 nursery children. When finished, it will boast nine modern classrooms, a library, catering facilities, and a school hall with acoustic panelling.



It is being built by constructors G F Tomlinson on behalf of Staffordshire County Council, with project management by Entrust. Once finished, it will be run by the Creative Learning Partnership Trust, which already runs several primary schools in Staffordshire.

Representatives from Staffordshire County Council, G F Tomlinson and MP for South Staffordshire Sir Gavin Williamson CBE visited the site to see how the brand new school is shaping up.

Staffordshire County Council Cabinet Member for Education Jonathan Price said:

“It’s been great today to see the progress being made on Stafford’s newest primary school. The building is shaping up well, and Beaconfields Primary School will be ready to welcome its first pupils in September.

“Over the years the county council’s extensive school building programme has ensured there are enough spaces to accommodate new housing developments all over the county. Planning ahead for school places is incredibly important, and we will continue to put plans in place to ensure there are enough school places to cope with increased demand.”

Sir Gavin Williamson said:

“I’m pleased to say that Stafford’s newest school is making excellent progress, and I’m excited about this project which will deliver a first-class primary education to over 200 young children. A child’s early years in school are so critical to the development of their behavioural patterns, attitude to learning, and cognitive skills. The directors of this project have outlined their intentions to develop an educational facility that will promote the value of hard work and aspiration.”

Chris Flint, managing director of G F Tomlinson, said:

“Works are progressing well for the Beaconfields School, providing much-needed local primary and nursery places. It was a privilege to see MP for South Staffordshire, Sir Gavin Williamson CBE, present at the school for his tour to see the benefits our continued partnership with Staffordshire County Council and Entrust is bringing to the County.

LOCAL NEWS SNAPSHOT STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Nominate a local foster carer for a special award

People in Staffordshire are being invited to nominate a local foster carer for a special award.

The first ever Fostering Star Awards will recognise and celebrate the support that foster carers provide to the children and young people in their care.

The awards are being organised by Staffordshire County Council's Fostering service, who want people to make a nomination.

Mark Sutton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People at Staffordshire County Council said:



“Our foster carers are invaluable and play a vital role in making sure that children get the best possible start in life.

“We want to be able to recognise and celebrate the fantastic job our foster carers do and our first ever Fostering Star Awards will help us do that. There's five categories in total, including rising star, and an award for those who inspire the young people they foster. If you do know a great foster carer in your local community, then please get them nominated.”

Carers can be nominated in five award categories including:

Rising Star - For carers who have fostered for less than 2 years who has made an impact on a child's life.

Inspirational Person - Someone who inspires the children in their care to achieve their potential.

Making a Difference – someone making a difference in the fostering community.

Above and Beyond - Someone who goes above and beyond to support the children in their care or to support other foster carers.

Makes Us/Me Smile - Someone who is always there for other foster carers, even on a challenging day.

[Further information on the awards and how to nominate are available here](#). Nominations close on 31 March 2024.

The awards ceremony will see the finalists and the person who nominated them, come together to celebrate their achievements on Thursday 23 May during Foster Care Fortnight.

[People interested in fostering for Staffordshire County Council can find out more on the Foster For Staffordshire website.](#)

LOCAL NEWS SNAPSHOT

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Experts sift through thousands of historical objects for new history centre display

With construction work well underway on the new Staffordshire History Centre, behind the scenes staff are going through the difficult process of identifying the items which will go on display when the centre opens in the Autumn.

The project has been made possible thanks to a grant of £4,858,699 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. It will see a new history centre on Eastgate Street in Stafford incorporating Stafford Records Office and the heritage building that formerly housed the William Salt Library.

Staffordshire has thousands of fascinating documents and objects in its museum, archive, and William Salt library collections, many dating back more than a thousand years.

Now, for the team, choosing the items which will appear in the modern exhibition space in the new centre is proving a challenging task.

Amongst the items making the shortlist is a Charles I Cap. This red silk undress cap is embroidered with gold and silver threadwork. Originally owned by Charles I and dating from the 1630s, it belonged to the Bagot family of Blithfield Hall.

A Spider Phaeton carriage from 1890 is also in the running. Made by Holmes of Derby and London, this Spider Phaeton comes from the collection of the 20th Earl of Shrewsbury and Talbot of Ingestre Hall. It's believed to have been built for the 20th Earl's planned road race with the Earl of Lonsdale, Hugh Lowther in 1891.

A notebook belonging to canal pioneer James Brindley from 1772 is also a favourite to go on display. This handwritten Survey book contains rough plans of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal from the junction with the Trent and Mersey Canal to Stourport Basin.

Other items including the Cannock Soldiers Club visitors book, a 16th century recipe book and oatcake making equipment are also being considered.

Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture at Staffordshire County Council said:

"We're incredibly lucky to live in a county like Staffordshire, that's steeped in history and our project will help us tell our amazing story and protect many of our valuable archives for generations to come. While the new centre will help showcase some of our amazing collections, I don't envy the teams job of choosing what items and objects will go on display. With thousands to choose from, it's a tough ask but I'm sure visitors to the centre when it opens won't be disappointed. We're all incredibly proud of the project and grateful for the funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and National Lottery players."

Running alongside the construction work and collections management, there is an exciting programme of outreach activities to promote the centre. Events in schools and libraries are all helping to raise awareness of the project, and shape plans for displays and exhibitions, ahead of the opening next year. Young people, community groups and focus groups have supported the development of displays by sharing their ideas and choosing their favourite items – the historic toys proved very popular with young visitors to libraries.

In addition to the Heritage Fund grant, Staffordshire County Council provided £2.1m and Stafford Borough Council has directed £250,000 of UK Shared Prosperity Funding towards the project.

Labour's Promises Fall Short as Council Tax rises in Stafford Borough

BY STEVEN WALLEY

Following on from the Labour led Stafford Borough Council increasing brown bin and parking charges, further tax hikes were inflicted on taxpayers across Stafford Borough this week with the news that council tax would increase by nearly 3%.

The near 3% increase completely contradicts pledges made in campaign literature that was distributed across Stafford Borough by the Stafford and Stone Labour party last year.

Back in October 2023, the Labour Party distributed leaflets across Stone and Stafford, promising to reduce the cost of living for residents. One of their key strategies to delivering on this pledge was a commitment to freezing council tax if they were to come into power.

The irony is clear. On one hand the local Labour party are campaigning widely on a platform of freezing council tax but the moment they get the opportunity to "put their money where their mouth is" they do the exact opposite and increase charges for residents.

The council tax increase was voted on at a council meeting on the 30th of January with the support of The Stone Independent Party and the Green Party.

This unnecessary decision to increase the cost of living for hard working families follows a similar decision back in December when the Labour led coalition voted to increase parking and brown bin charges and raises important questions about the Labour party's commitment to its campaign promises.

It's also noteworthy that the amount of the increase (2.99%) was fractionally under the amount needed to force a referendum. An increase of 3% would have required a public vote.

Adding to the controversy, it has also been revealed that the revenue raised by these council tax increases will not be spent on front line services and will just sit in the councils' reserves.

Since going into opposition, the Conservative group at Stafford Borough have consistently fought to freeze council tax and keep charges low for residents.

Conservative Councillor, Mark Winnington, proposed an amendment, seconded by Conservative group leader Jeremy Pert, that proposed to freeze council tax at existing levels. Councillor Winnington argued that prudent financial management under the previous Tory administration had resulted in a significant financial windfall that rendered the council tax increase unnecessary.

This windfall, totalling £2.3 million pounds, includes £1.6 million in interest payments from investments made by the Borough council under the previous Conservative administration and a revenue surplus of over £700,000, also generated under the previous Conservative administration.

Councillor Winnington's stance emphasized the principle that individuals are better equipped to decide how to spend their own money as opposed to that money sitting idly in council reserves.

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LOCAL NEWS SNAPSHOT

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The list of councillors who voted in favour of the council tax increase is telling. Surprisingly, all five of the Stone based Stafford Borough Independent Councillors also supported the tax hike. This raises further questions about the Stafford Borough Independents who classify themselves as a group of independent minded individuals free of the party politics of Westminster.

These council tax increases in Stone and Stafford have raised huge concerns amongst residents about the Labour Party's ability to deliver on its campaign promises. The contradiction between their commitment to freezing council tax and the subsequent increase has left residents questioning the sincerity of their intentions.

At a time when Kier Starmer is under constant scrutiny for the reversal of long-standing policies and pledges, voters are right to ask whether the Labour party can be trusted. On the evidence of what we have seen this week in Stafford Borough, the answer is a resounding **'NO'**.

Please donate to our campaign fund

Central Staffordshire Conservative Federation only exists because of the generosity of local members and supporters. We do not receive financial subsidies from Conservative Party HQ. All the funds we raise come from membership, local events, and donations. We can only continue to thrive and build a strong voice for local Conservatives with your help. Any donation will make a difference - especially this year when we have the PFCC and General election campaigns ahead of us. If you'd like to make a donation, please get in touch with Duncan Sandbrook, Chairman or see our website for details.

<https://www.centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk/make-donation>

Theo Clarke MP hosts Kemi Badenoch MP at Castle Street

Stafford MP, Theo Clarke invited local members to meet Kemi Badenoch, Secretary of State for Business and Trade, President of the Board of Trade, and Minister for Women and Equalities at Castle Street on 22nd February 2024.



The event, though arranged at very short notice, was well attended and Ms Badenoch answered a lot of wide-ranging questions from our members. To be sure of receiving invitations to similar events, please subscribe to our emails. **This event was arranged too late to invite members by postal invitation.**

LOCAL NEWS SNAPSHOT

Planting trees in Baswich

County and Borough Councillor, Ann Edgeller, along with many others from the local community recently planted 65 trees and 200 small bushes to create a hedge in Dawlish Park, Baswich.



Getting the message out in Holmcroft ward

Our local team helping get the message out in Holmcroft ward. Pictured: County Councillor Jonathan Price, PFCC Ben Adams, County and Borough Councillor Ann Edgeller, Borough Councillor Peter Edgeller, District Councillor Andy Adams and James Brampton.



Out on the doorsteps of Littleworth ward

Staffordshire PFCC, Ben Adams joined Paul Startin and our very own Carolyn Trowbridge, Constituency Officer for Stafford delivery surveys and canvassing residents in Littleworth ward recently.



It's not all hard work...

They say 'there's no such thing as a free lunch' but there is such a thing as 'a well earned lunch'. It was wonderful to have such a good turnout in Brewwood and Coven for one of our recent campaign sessions in support of Sir Gavin Williamson. Thanks also to Lazy Days, Brewwood for great hospitality.

If you're interested in joining one of our campaign action days, in support of our MPs, please get in touch.



COULD YOU CHAMPION YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY?

Do you want to stand up for your local community and the interests of local residents?



Central Staffordshire Conservatives are looking for Councillor candidates who want to serve a local community. We welcome all candidates who care about representing local people's views and looking after the interests of their local area.

You could be part of our strong, supportive and friendly team of Councillors and campaigners. If you are interested in finding out more about what might be involved, we want to hear from you. **The next COUNTY COUNCIL elections are on 1 May 2025.**

To find out more please email Central Staffordshire Conservative Federation or contact Jonathan Price, Deputy Chairman Political at contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk or call 01785 252 273

More information about being a councillor can be found at local.gov.uk/be-councillor



Conservatives

Who can stand?

To stand for your local council you must be over 18 years of age AND a British citizen; a Commonwealth citizen; a qualifying EU citizen; or an EU citizen with retained rights, AND resident in the UK.

In addition, one of the following criteria must apply to you:

You must be and continue to be a local government elector for the area of the local authority.

OR

You must have, during the whole of the twelve months preceding both nomination day and the day of the election, occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the area of the local authority.

OR

Your principal or only place of work in the twelve months preceding your nomination day and the day of the election must have been in the area of the local authority.

OR

You must have, during the whole of the twelve months preceding both your nomination day and the day of the election resided in the area of the local authority.

To find out more please email Central Staffordshire Conservative Federation or contact Jonathan Price, Deputy Chairman Political at contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk or call 01785 252 273

Do I know enough to stand for election?

Don't underestimate your own abilities. Each councillor will have something different to offer the council and you will not be expected to take direct responsibility for running the council on the first day that you are elected.

Your main qualifications are a genuine concern for the community and a willingness to learn. Knowledge and experience will soon follow.



Do I have the time to be a councillor?

The time commitment involved in being a councillor will vary depending on the responsibilities you decide to take on.

Many councillors have work and family commitments as well as other interests which they successfully balance with their role as a councillor.

More information about being a councillor can be found at local.gov.uk/be-councillor

IMPORTANT: MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you pay for your membership subscription by standing order or bank transfer, have you changed the payment amount and the bank details?

From 1st January 2024 the membership fees have increased. The new rates for all members are:

Standard: £39 per year
Armed Forces: £25 per year
Under 26: £10 per year

Our preferred method of payment is by direct debit. It means less administration for the local team and you benefit from the direct debit guarantee scheme. If you want to set up a direct debit for your membership subscription, please get in touch.

And, as we've mentioned in previous newsletters, the bank details for your membership subscriptions - if you pay locally - have now changed.

The new bank account details are:

Account Name: Central Staffordshire Conservative Federation
Sort Code: 30-98-00
Account Number: 00449122

Most importantly cheques need to be made payable to 'Central Staffordshire Conservative Federation' and if you were previously a member of the former **Stone** or **South Staffordshire** Associations and paid by bank transfer or standing order, **please remember the old bank account details you previously used are no longer valid.**

If you've set up a bank transfer or standing order, please change the details with your bank - and please remember to allow for the new membership subscription rates.

We cannot renew your membership if we receive less than the amount that is due.

If you have any queries about membership please telephone (01785 252 273) or get in touch by email to membership@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk

SUPPER CLUB IS BACK FOR 2024!

BOOKINGS NOW OPEN



The 2024 season of Conservative Supper Clubs at the Red Lion, Bradley, begins on **Thursday 14th March** (7PM for 7:30PM start)

TICKETS: £20 per person

To book: please contact the Federation office on 01785 252 273 or by email to contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk

PENKRIDGE SUPPER CLUB

Our friends at the Penkridge Supper Club are hosting their final supper club of the 2023/24 season on **Friday 22nd March 2024**.

Peace Memorial Hall, Penkridge

Doors open 6:30pm for 7:00pm

Tickets: £20 per person for members and £22.50 per person for visitors.

Please contact Mrs Christine Raven by Friday 15th March to reserve your place (or email the Federation Office on contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk)

100 Club

LAST MONTH'S WINNERS ANNOUNCED

1st Prize: **BARBARA CARTWRIGHT**

2nd Prize: **BARBARA RIDDLE**

3rd Prize: **JEAN TABERNOR**

CONGRATULATIONS!

Would you like to join?

Help support the Federation and have a bit of a flutter at the same time!
Subscriptions are just £4.34 a month or £52 a year for each number entered.

Join our 100 Club today and you could be our next winner.

Full details (application forms and other information including the terms and conditions) can be found on our website:

<https://www.centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk/100-club>

Our 100 Club helps raise funds to keep the Federation running.

If you can spare £4.34 a month or £52 a year, you could help us with keeping our Federation going...and you might win one of our prizes!

PLEASE JOIN TODAY

If you'd like to join, request an application form by calling 01785 252 273 or via email to contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk

Contacting the Federation

Your Federation is staffed by volunteers, the office is not permanently staffed. The telephone line is diverted to a mobile number and calls are answered if someone is available to take your call. But please remember that the volunteers who manage your Federation work full-time, so sometimes it's not possible to answer your calls and in these circumstances you are able to leave a voicemail and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

Please note that members can also contact the Federation by email (which is often a quicker way of getting a response) at contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk

Car Parking at our Castle Street HQ

The Federation generates important revenue towards the upkeep of our Castle Street HQ by renting car parking spaces to both members and non-members.

Occasional parking at our HQ remains free for members, but we would ask that members inform the office if you will be parking at HQ at least 24-hours in advance, with details of the car registration number so that you do not receive penalty notices. You can get in touch with the office to notify your intention to use our car park, by telephone to **01785 252 273** or by email to contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk

We would also ask that members please park with consideration for other car park users.

Parking is at the owner's risk. The Federation does not accept any responsibility for theft or any damage, intentional or otherwise, to vehicles or vehicle contents.

Upcoming events

14th MARCH - Supper Club at the Red Lion, Bradley - 7:00PM

22nd MARCH - Penkridge Supper Club at the Penkridge Peace Memorial Hall - 6:30PM

Key Contacts

Central Staffordshire Conservative Federation
Castle Street
Stafford ST16 2ED

Telephone: **01785 252 273**

Email: contact@centralstaffsconservatives.org.uk

Promoted by Duncan Sandbrook on behalf of Central Staffordshire Conservative Federation,
both at Castle Street, Stafford ST16 2ED