

Council news round-up

Your weekly guide to the latest news

Issue 75

6 July 2018



This week's news from around the Council.

- **Hot weather**

Please see Government advice on how to deal with the hot weather [here](#).

- **Secure your vehicle!**

The Police are urging residents and business owners to be extra vigilant following a number of vehicle thefts and attempted breaks across the county. Reports have been received of both cars and vans being targeted. Owners are reminded to ensure their vehicles are locked and garaged wherever possible, or parked on a driveway or in well-lit areas.

Please ensure all valuables are removed when unattended - this includes tools and equipment, which are often targeted. Leave a sign in the window advising that no valuables are left in the vehicles. Store vehicle keys away and out of sight. Thieves will consider breaking into your home to steal the keys and the vehicle! If you have a keyless entry vehicle - ensure your car fob is stored away in a signal blocker pouch or container. Visit <https://www.staffordshire.police.uk/article/2320/Vehicle-Crime> or more information and advice.

- **National Democracy Week**

This week we have been supporting National Democracy Week, 2-8 July - a week-long celebration of democracy in society, celebrating progress and championing future democratic participation in this historic Centenary year of Suffrage

- **Record Number of Direct Debit Payments**

Direct Debit is by far the simplest way for the Council to collect regular payments from our customers. It saves time and significantly reduces costs to the Council. Thanks to the brilliant efforts of the Revenues team in promoting direct debits, the number of Council Tax customers on direct debit hit 34,637 at the end of June. This is the highest number on record!

- **Speed of Benefit Processing**

A key mark of performance for our benefits team is the number of days it takes to process New Claims and Changes in Circumstances for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. Our target for New Claims is 15 days and for Changes in Circumstances it is 8 days. In 2017/18, we achieved 13.1 days for New Claims and 2.7 days for Changes in Circumstances – this is the

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lowest number of days across the Staffordshire districts. Well done to the Benefits Team for their continued efforts to meet the targets.

- **30 Hours Funded Childcare Initiative**

Working parents in Staffordshire can receive 30 hours a week of funded childcare for their 3 and 4 year old children. This could save working families up to £5,000 a year in childcare costs. Children celebrating their third birthday this spring and summer should be signed up by parents for the 30 hours' funded childcare initiative taking place in Staffordshire.



Places are available from September 1 for children who celebrate their third birthday between April 1 and August 31 2018. To claim the funding parents must register at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk before the 31st August 2018. Parents who do not have internet access should contact the HMRC Customer Interaction Centre on 0300 123 4097.

- **Landlords Forum**

The Landlords Forum is held every 6 months at the Council Offices and is organised by the Housing Options team. Last night's meeting was attended by over 30 private landlords and 4 key speakers who provided topical updates. If you are a landlord of a property in South Staffordshire and would like to be included in further events please email your details to HousingServices@sstaffs.gov.uk

Regular information

- **Committee/Panel meetings**

Next week, the following public meetings are scheduled:

- Wellbeing Select Committee – 10 July 2018 – 5.30 pm – Council Chamber
- Licensing and Regulatory Committee – 12 July - 2.30 pm – Bill Brownhill Room

Everyone is encouraged to submit news items, please email: comms@sstaffs.gov.uk