Endon report **November 2026** **Cllr Christina Jebb**

Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day I attended the Remembrance service at St Luke's Church and war memorial, as an Alderman of Staffordshire and a member of the Royal British Legion and I have been invited to attend SMDC's Armistice Day in the same capacity. I was the first person from the Moorlands to become a Staffordshire Alderman in 2013.

Devolution - An elected Mayor for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (Mayoral Strategic Authority) The Government has confirmed its intention to establish a Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Mayoral Strategic Authority. This would create a directly elected Mayor responsible for strategic functions across the whole area, including economic growth, transport, skills and investment. The authority will also receive a share of income tax growth generated within the area.

The proposed authority would operate alongside local councils at a strategic level and would not replace parish, or any other councils. Instead, it would provide strategic leadership and bring additional devolved powers and funding into Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. The Government says the devolution package includes substantial long-term investment funding from Government and is intended to provide greater local control over key decisions affecting the economy and public services.

Local Government Reorganisation - Separate proposals from the devolution proposals say that the Government is continuing its review of local government structures. In July, the Government announced their preferred reorganisation structure for local councils in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. However, Ministers have now confirmed that these July decisions for ourselves have been formally withdrawn and will be reconsidered. Ministers have said they will use the coming weeks to undertake further consideration before reaching final conclusions.

They say that they remain committed to creating unitary authorities across England and expect to confirm decisions no later than early 2027. The Government has also reaffirmed its intention to introduce its programme of Neighbourhood Governance next year.

2027 Local Elections Timetable - The Government has now confirmed that elections scheduled for May 2027 will proceed for the existing district and borough councils, although they had previously cancelled these. Parish council elections were due to take place anyway in May and these will go ahead as well. **SMDC will hold a briefing in March for clerks and prospective candidates for Parish and District elections.**

What Does This Mean for Parish and Town Councils? - There are no immediate changes to the powers, structure, duties or responsibilities of parish and town councils. However, if Local Government Reorganisation does go ahead, parish and town councils are likely to become increasingly important to local residents, as the tier of local government closest to them. For the new parish councillors elected in May and any continuing councillors, much more will be expected of parish councils and their councillors by local communities, as has happened elsewhere. Training in their new responsibilities will become a priority. **Do we have a training budget and how much is that?**

Election costs to the council. It is important to maintain sufficient financial reserves ahead of the 2027 elections and for any potential by-elections in the future, to ensure that adequate funding is available to meet election related costs for our two wards. **How much is in the budget for this?**

Citizens Advice North Staffordshire are offering free Fraud Awareness sessions to community groups across Staffordshire Moorlands. The sessions cover

- Common scams and frauds
- Keeping yourself and others safe
- Fraud prevention tools and tips
- Reporting fraud
- Support available for victims

Would this be helpful for the council to offer a session to our own residents? Limited sessions are available.

Shepherd's hut/Lodge holiday let in Ball Lane. I called this in for the committee to consider how it was able to contribute to SMDC's Tourism Strategy priorities. These aim to encourage more day visitors to stay overnight in the district for two or more days as a boost to our local economy. The committee approved the application. Sadly, recent changes in government policy mean that local councillors can no longer call in applications to committee on behalf of residents from November. Officers will decide whether to make a delegated decision or to send an application to committee. This attack on democracy and local representation was debated at a recent SMDC meeting. The council has written to government ministers to strongly protest about it and ask them to reconsider.

Future Builds free app Residents often tell us they only find out about a development once it's well advanced. The planning system can be hard to follow and recent government decisions have removed the opportunity for councillors to call in an application to committee. This decision now rests with a nominated planning officer. Future Builds app gives people the opportunity to receive the following information on their mobile phones:

- Get free notifications for planning applications within 500m of their home
- Receive push alerts when nearby applications are submitted or decided
- Go straight to the application on the council's own Planning system, without navigating portals
- See images and links that developers add to their schemes, so proposals are easier to picture and respond to.

Leek's Nicholson Institute has reopened following work to modernise and enhance the library and museum, and to bring the lower floor back into use. SMDC led the project using government funding as part of the wider regeneration of Leek Town centre. The art gallery has also been refreshed and the Robert Timmis mural has been restored as part of the project. It looks stunning.