SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE
OLDER PERSON’S STRATEGY

South Staffordshire Council
South Staffordshire - A District profile

South Staffordshire is a rural District covering an area of 101,000 acres on the south-western edge of the West Midlands conurbation. Despite having a population of 106,000 (2001 Census), there are no significantly sized towns in the District. Rather there is a collection of diverse settlements ranging from small hamlets to large villages with over 13,000 residents. The lack of a single dominant settlement is one of the defining features of both the District and the Council, which is aptly described as a community of communities.

Population

The demographic changes affecting the District are dramatic and are typified by the general ageing population, particularly the very old.

Graph Showing a comparison between our population groups and the UK average:

The blue line indicates the UK average for each age group, the blue bars are the number of males and the pink bars the number of females. The graph shows that we have lower than the national average numbers of men and women in the 20-35 age groups and above average numbers of men and women in the 50-70 age group. Current projections indicate a continuing rise in the District’s population of about 0.06% pa. It is projected that there will be around 2,265 more people living in the District by 2011 than in 2001. The highest rise will be in the 65+ age group particularly the over 85s who are predicted to rise from 1,777 in 2001 to nearly 2000 by 2011.

Key issue:

The District has an ageing population but of great significance is the increase in very elderly people (that is the 85+ age group).

Health

Health surveys indicate that residents have difficulty in accessing health services. Whilst South Staffordshire is seen as a relatively affluent area there are pockets of deprivation; using the multiple indices of deprivation Huntington is in the 10-20% most deprived wards nationally. In terms of access to essential services the “Indices of Deprivation Geographical Access to Services Domain” measures access to GPs, Primary Schools, Food Stores and Post Offices. Bishops Wood, Lapley and Trysull & Seisdon fall into the 10% most deprived listing and Acton Trussell, Pattingham & Patshull, and Lower Penn are in the 10-20% most deprived wards. (Figures obtained from the Index for Deprivation 2000). When compared to other areas, however, our residents’ life expectancy is slightly higher than the average; but obesity is a problem and death from heart disease and strokes is higher than the national average.

Key issue:

Increasing obesity and higher than expected death rates from heart disease and strokes.
**Economic Vibrancy**

The rural economy continues to face major changes as agriculture diversifies and the service sector including tourism continues to grow. The dominance of the Black Country as a source of jobs for residents will continue, though it is recognised that the Black Country needs to diversify its employment opportunities. Our Community Strategy explores ways to create a more vibrant and sustainable rural economy.

Unemployment remains a factor and 27% of our unemployed in the district are over 50.

The cost of housing is increasing as is the demand for housing. The Housing Requirements Assessment carried out in 2001 identified the need for an increase in the supply of sheltered housing for older people in both the social rented and owner occupied sectors as well as the need for accommodation for the frail elderly. The increase in the older population in South Staffordshire will put extra pressure on the demand for appropriate housing and support services. Our Older Persons’ Housing Strategy has as its three aims:

1. Enable older people to remain in their own homes.
2. Enable the provision of suitable accommodation to meet current and future needs of older people.
3. Enable the provision of suitable housing services for the current and future needs of older people.

The Council has committed to addressing this issue and there is provision within our capital scheme for a contribution towards a frail elderly scheme for the district in 2007/2008.

Due to the age of many of the properties in the district they may be expensive to heat and to maintain. For those dependent on a state retirement pension fuel poverty may be an issue.

Community cohesion remains a strong factor in the District and voluntary work is a strong facet. In addition 12,500 of our residents provide unpaid care for others, which is the highest proportion in the region. However, local facilities are under threat such as post offices, public telephones, local village pubs and many have already closed. Due to the geographical dispersement of settlements across the District, access to public transport is not always good, although new schemes have been developed, such as the volunteer driver scheme in some of our villages. Our concessionary travel tokens are accepted on local buses, by most taxi operators and are also accepted on most voluntary car schemes or can be forfeited in return for a seniors rail card which gives a third off most rail travel. We currently have 19,241 token users on our records of which 18,345 qualify solely on age grounds.

**Key issue:**

- Increasing demand for more affordable housing.
- Public transport within the District is problematic.
- There were estimated to be 2,260 60+ households at risk from fuel poverty in 2001.
- Some people are living in houses that they struggle to maintain both physically and financially

**Lifelong Learning**

Education and life skills in South Staffordshire are good but over three quarters of the resident workforce are currently uninvolved in any type of learning. Participating in lifelong learning opportunities can contribute towards an active retirement and help reduce the social isolation experienced by some of our older population. Learning should be a diverse and rewarding activity and can range from studying an online course to participating in a structured leisure activity.

**Key issue:**

Participating in learning activities helps to stimulate the mind and provides opportunities for social interaction.
Map showing the percentage of the population of each ward that is over the age of 50. (red figures show the percentage over 80)
The needs of the older population are increasingly at the forefront of the national agenda. This is partly due to rising demographic pressure and also due to the constant changes to the regulations of pension provision and pension schemes. The long term effects of these changes are that some people will not be as financially secure as they believed they would on retirement.

There have been several national initiatives around older people issues, the main one being the Better Governance for Older People.

Consultation has been carried out across the country and the following have been highlighted as the main concerns:

- older people want to live in a society which values them and does not discriminate against them on the grounds of age
- older people want to be involved in the decisions that are taken which affect their lives
- services need to be integrated; people want to ask for support from one organisation and know that requests will be rolled out to other partner organisations as necessary; similarly information needs to be shared which would prevent older people having to keep providing personal data to various organisations
- older people want to be assisted to remain independent, to remain in their own home for as long as possible and when it is no longer possible to make an informed choice from a list of options available to them
- older people want help in maintaining their well-being and remain as valuable members of society

Every three years the council is required to carry out a user satisfaction survey. The last one was performed in 2002-2003. The respondents are broken down into categories for analysis and the results for the 64+ age group reveal the following:

1) When asked what makes somewhere a good place to live the top 5 answers for older people were:
   - low levels of crime
   - accessibility of health services
   - clean streets
   - affordable decent housing
   - good levels of public transportation

2) What in South Staffordshire most needs improving:
   - level of crime
   - road and pavement repairs
   - public transport
   - activities for teenagers
   - level of transport congestion.
This older person’s strategy is developed within the context of the national agenda but we have also consulted our local older population to canvas their opinions of the key issues in the local context. This has been done by attending various community groups across the District and talking to older people about the issues which concern them the most. We have also consulted via our website and the South Staffordshire Carers’ Association newsletter. This strategy is written within the context of South Staffordshire Council’s Community Strategy and Corporate Strategy.

**Corporate Strategy**

This sets out the Council’s vision for itself and for the District.
It identifies the five aims of the Council:

- To be a Council which celebrates and improves South Staffordshire’s distinctive environment.
- To be a healthy and safe District in which to live, work and visit.
- To be a prosperous District with thriving communities
- To be a District which encourages and promotes lifelong learning opportunities.
- To be a well managed Council and community leader.

This Strategy is due for review in the summer of 2008.

**Community Strategy**

South Staffordshire’s Community Strategy has been produced by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The LSP is an umbrella partnership that brings together key local agencies from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, working within South Staffordshire.

The LSP has recently reviewed its structure in December 2004 and established five theme groups:

- Quality of Life
- Environmental Quality
- Economic Vibrancy
- Lifelong Learning
- Crime Reduction Partnership

The LSP has also decided on ten key priorities for 2005-2006 the first two of which are directly relevant to older people; these are listed below with relevant background details:

- **Headline Priority One**
- Creating Safer and Stronger Communities
1. Enabling Independent Living

The demographic profile of Staffordshire clearly shows that the number of older people have risen over recent decades and will continue to do so. The State of Staffordshire report notes “changing demographics present different pressures, while the increase in very elderly people living in the area are likely to increase demand on social services and heath care”

2. Increasing Support to Voluntary Carers

Based on national estimates, Staffordshire has an estimated 76,000 carers of which the majority are caring for older people. In South Staffordshire alone 12,500 people provide unpaid care which represents the highest proportion in the West Midlands region. A survey undertaken by the Planning and Partnership Team in 2001 identified that 86% of carers were living with the person cared for and that 31% of carers were themselves 65 years and over. This survey would strongly suggest that many older people are caring for other older people, likely to be a spouse or elderly parent, and often sharing the same house. The County Council recognise that the need to support these people in their caring role is an essential strand of Social Services strategy.

Other Council Strategies and how they link together.

The Council produces a number of other strategies such as a Crime and Disorder Strategy, Housing and Homelessness, Local Development Plan. The Older Person’s Strategy will bring together the key elements of our other strategies which are directly relevant to the older population and form the basis of our contribution to a further joining up of services provided by both the private and public sector within the district to help meet the LSP targets.

The Older Persons’ Strategy will also inform the review of the Community and Corporate Strategy.
The Strategy

Our commitment

All our services and activities which cater for older people will be provided in a manner which promotes dignity, independence, well being, choice, quality and equity. We have nominated a Member and an officer champion to maintain focus on issues affecting older people. They are the Leader of the Council Brian Edwards and the Deputy Chief Executive Steve Winterflood.

Themes

The following themes have been drawn up around the Council’s and local priorities and will be addressed within the Action Plan attached to this strategy:

- Staying independent, helping people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible. This will include action and advice on aids and improvements to the home, help with travel, advice on financial issues such as benefits.
- Living longer and healthier lives improving access to services and advice, enjoying the local area, leisure activities including sport, lifelong learning and enjoyment of the arts.
- Valuing older people and their contribution to our community volunteering opportunities, employment practices, older person’s forums
- Reducing the perception and fear of crime involvement in community issues, sharing information

Staying independent

It is important that we remember that the majority of our older residents do not require any assistance. Similarly of those that do require help and assistance the majority of it will be provided by unpaid carers often their partners or other family members

Research has also suggested that a relatively small amount spent on minor alterations to the home may substantially increase the length of time a person remains in it.

This is an area where we will work in tandem with our LSP partners to ensure that we take effective measures to help people remain in their own homes wherever possible.

Transport remains an issue for our residents, we are consulted by the County Council on transport needs but we are unable to dictate specific improvements. We are attempting to join our services to times when they are accessible by public transport, eg timing of activities in our leisure centres.

Living longer and healthier lives

The holistic view of health includes social and emotional well-being as well as physical. Access to leisure and recreational activities all help to keep people active and mobile. Part of the action plan will include the production of a directory of services which will include activities and voluntary groups in each area.

Valuing older people and their contribution to our community

Older people have a wealth of experience and knowledge that is a valuable commodity in developing the area. We need to develop schemes that can involve all members of the community sharing and teaching skills across the generations. The directory of services will also detail community groups run by volunteers will provide a resource for voluntary activity.

Reducing the Perception and Fear of Crime

A key issue for our residents is fear of crime many of the people that we have consulted say that they are too afraid to go out at night and whilst our actual crime figures are much lower than national rates and so we must look at ways to reassure our residents.
It is important to us as a Council that we take into account the views of our residents in all our major policies and strategies. To this end we have a residents panel which is surveyed on a quarterly basis on a range of questions about our services. There is also a link on our website where people can log their comments about our policies and services and key local issues.

The Senior Corporate Policy Officer has attended local clubs and societies to obtain confirmation that our priorities are the priorities of our residents. A summary of the issues raised is attached as appendix 1.

We wish to maintain these links and hope to establish consultation events in conjunction with the Fire and Police Services timetabled to coincide with the issue of concessionary travel tokens. This will enable us to promote the services we offer and also give people to give us feedback on how well we are providing those services and if we are doing so in a manner that is useful to them.
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<tr>
<td><strong>Housing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a frail elderly scheme within the local plan</td>
<td>Incorporated into capital programme</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Principal Housing Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage the supply of bungalows and smaller affordable homes in the private sector through the planning process</td>
<td>Our affordable housing supplementary guidance note will look at ways to increase the provision of affordable housing in the area.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Portfolio Manager Strategic Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage the supply of bungalows and smaller affordable homes in the public sector through working with Housing Associations</td>
<td>Work in partnership with South Staffordshire Housing Association to identify sites and also to apply for external funding</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Principal Housing Officer and the LSP</td>
<td>Continue to monitor the performance of the agency and the level of demand for services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a range of activities and advice through the establishment of a Home Improvement Agency to enable people to maintain their homes and adapt them if the need arises</td>
<td>Provide an assessment of a client's needs and assist client to compile a list of desired outcomes</td>
<td>Commencing in 2005-2006</td>
<td>Walbrook Care and Repair Agency</td>
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<td>Provide clients with information on the full range on options available to them to adapt and repair their homes including the provision of a handyman scheme</td>
<td>Provide advice on alternative housing options where appropriate</td>
<td>Commencing in 2005-2006</td>
<td>Walbrook Care and Repair Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide advice on energy efficiency and fuel poverty</td>
<td>Provide advice on fire safety and personal security in the home</td>
<td>Commencing in 2005-2006</td>
<td>Walbrook Care and Repair Agency</td>
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<td>Access to services</td>
<td>Leisure services are to investigate offering leisure activities at a time when there is a bus to them.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Senior Leisure officer (Communities)</td>
<td>Continue to examine ways of delivering access to services</td>
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Will contact providers of associated care and support services where appropriate and required by clients to ensure the client receives all care and support that they are entitled to.

The Agency will review the adequacy of its arrangements six months after their intervention.

The Agency will provide welfare benefits advice.

The agency will maintain a list of approved contractors.

Commencing in 2005-2006

Walbrook Care and Repair Agency

Walbrook Care and Repair Agency

Walbrook Care and Repair Agency

Walbrook Care and Repair Agency
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<tr>
<th>Use every opportunity to take information about our services to our residents</th>
<th>Combine with our strategic partners to provide information on a range of services when residents come to collect their concessionary travel tokens</th>
<th>October 2005</th>
<th>Head of Customer and Election Services in conjunction with other service areas and partner organisations</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Travel</strong></td>
<td>Concessionary travel scheme  Maintain links with our partners at the County to keep public transport issues in south Staffordshire on the agenda  Share the results of our consultation exercises so that they can help to inform the development of the Local Transport Plan.</td>
<td>January 2006  Ongoing</td>
<td>Head of Customer and Electoral Services  Portfolio Manager Strategic Services</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Continue to try to address problems connected with travel in the area</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Portfolio Manager Strategic Services</td>
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Living longer and healthier lives, including leisure, lifelong learning, social activities, community involvement

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<tr>
<td><strong>Leisure</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercise Referral</td>
<td>Via GPs and other health professionals</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Healthy Lifestyles Coordinator</td>
<td>Expand referring agents (eg. Health Visitors, Clinics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>Dances to be held at venues across the district</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Healthy Lifestyles Coordinator</td>
<td>Trial of Tea Dance at Wombourne Leisure Centre is being looked into. To be released Bi-annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energise Info</td>
<td>Small leaflet highlighting physical activity and healthy lifestyle issues.</td>
<td>Sept 2005</td>
<td>Healthy Lifestyles Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase IV Cardiac Rehab</td>
<td>For Cardiac patients initially referred from Stafford General Hospital(SGH)</td>
<td>Feb 2006</td>
<td>SGH Cardiac Rehab team/ Healthy Lifestyles Coordinator</td>
<td>Initially at Cheslyn Hay Leisure Centre. SGH staff to set up scheme SSDC &amp; PCT each to fund 1 new instructor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+ Exercise Ref Class</td>
<td>Low impact exercise class designed for the over 50s. Suitable for exercise referral clients.</td>
<td>Sept/Oct 2005</td>
<td>Healthy Lifestyles Coordinator</td>
<td>Exercise referral class at Codsall awaiting availability of studio/instructor.</td>
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<td><strong>Social activities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Promote local clubs and activities through the directory of services</strong></td>
<td><strong>By September 2005</strong></td>
<td><strong>Senior Corporate Policy Officer</strong></td>
<td><strong>Test the information annually to ensure that it remains relevant and up to date.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Retirement Courses</strong></td>
<td><strong>Peer Mentoring</strong></td>
<td>2006/07</td>
<td><strong>Healthy Lifestyles Coordinator</strong></td>
<td><strong>Active for later life – peer mentors delivering chair exercise in care/sheltered accommodation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volunteer Walk Leaders (VWL)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Training of mentors to deliver basic exercise</strong></td>
<td><strong>present</strong></td>
<td><strong>Healthy Lifestyles Coordinator</strong></td>
<td><strong>Target older people for walks and promote VWL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Carers Opportunities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Develop activities for carers during periods of respite</strong></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td><strong>Healthy Lifestyles Coordinator</strong></td>
<td><strong>No specific plans at present</strong></td>
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<td>Action</td>
<td>How</td>
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<td>Future plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Ensure that our own employment practices include examples of best practice</td>
<td>Ongoing.</td>
<td>Head of Personnel Services</td>
<td>To continue to explore the opportunities presented by the changes in legislation</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Through our equal opportunities and diversity scheme we will continue to explore opportunities for retaining and recruiting older people.</td>
<td>Ongoing.</td>
<td>Head of Personnel Services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Continue to explore improvements to flexible working patterns.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Head of Personnel Services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Consider running pre-retirement courses in conjunction with our partners.</td>
<td>To be developed.</td>
<td>Head of Personnel Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>To promote opportunities for volunteering across the District</td>
<td>September 2005</td>
<td>Senior Corporate Policy Officer</td>
<td>To be updated on an annual basis</td>
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<td>A directory of services will be produced which will include links to the voluntary sector and local groups</td>
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Reducing the perception and fear of crime,

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<tr>
<td>Involve local people in identifying and tackling</td>
<td>Through environmental action groups meetings and encouraging the sharing of information. Using these groups to spread information on actions taken</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership</td>
<td>Continue to develop avenues for information sharing and feedback</td>
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<td>crime hot spots</td>
<td>to tackle problems identified</td>
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<td>Take positive steps to</td>
<td>The National Reassurance programme is currently being piloted in Penkridge. This involves a local community police officer talking to people in a specific area identifying problems specific to that area and feeding back what is being done to tackle the problems identified and the results of any action taken.</td>
<td>Commencing in 2005</td>
<td>Via the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership</td>
<td>Roll out the programme to other areas.</td>
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<td>tackle crime in the area</td>
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<td>Share information via the environmental action</td>
<td>By asking the police to break down our crime statistics into the areas covered by the environmental action groups so that individual areas can identify improvements as a result of targeted action at hotspots.</td>
<td>September 2005</td>
<td>Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership</td>
<td>Take every opportunity to share good news stories relating to crime in the area</td>
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<td>groups</td>
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APPENDIX 1 – Results from the consultation

Shareshill Luncheon Club:
Reduce speed down Church Rd and there were also concerns about the level of traffic down this road
Issue around intimidation by and of local teenagers
They would really like a ring and ride scheme
Issues generally around transport from Shareshill to the High School
Transport links to New Cross Hospital
The timing of Cheslyn Hay 50+ swimming sessions
The car boot sale at Little Seisdon is charging 50p entry for all cars which is leading to traffic congestion
Car boot sale is also being blamed for an increase in break ins and theft from gardens. Also litter and dumping of gas bottles
No police at night- need to visit in the evening.
Identified that tokens can be used to get to Cannock but the taxi drivers in Cannock won’t accept them to come back

Kinver:
Difficulty in getting home help type services
Lack of evening activities – any activities would also need transport arranging from them.
Use travel tokens on the community bus.

Wombourne:
Lack of bus services around Pool House
Like to see a police officer from time to time but did acknowledge that have seen two community safety officers
Plenty of community groups in area
Why do bus passes have to stop at 3:30pm – want to stay out later
No direct bus service to Russells Hall hospital
Would like to have day time community classes in community centre with subsidised places
Non-benefit related handyman scheme or perhaps standing list with schedule of prices
Could more use be made of people doing community service what do they actually do
Community Safety Officers need to cover Pool House
County’s council tax excessive
Empty houses on Giggerty Rd
Need patrols in evening at bottom of Giggerty Rd not during the day
Also too scared to walk along banks of brook in evening shame as this is a pleasant walk and convenient cut through
Bushes at sides of Planks Lane are used to hide illegal activity

Penkridge:
Provision of key safes so that door can be left locked but carers can get in
Various other aids and adaptations which could be leased, subsidised, bought in bulk so cheaper
Luncheon clubs
Again the issue of taxi firms in Cannock not taking tokens
Home helps only available if have certain medical conditions being old and frail not one of them
Subsidised swimming sessions at Penkridge leisure centre – happy for these to move to accommodate schools provided told in advance
Toning tables excellent for people with reduced mobility could these be made available during the day at a subsidised rate
Classes available for fun items not just IT
Evening classes – need more of them, wider range of subjects and should be free to pensioners irrespective of age
Need more parks and play areas to take grandchildren to
Need consistency of policy and consistency of help
Initiative overdrive
If you would like to know more about any of the items included in this report please contact:

Fiona Cozens, Senior Corporate Policy Officer.
Tel: 01902 696114 or e-mail me at f.cozens@sstaffs.gov.uk