

# Council staff are overpaid by £250,000

Dozens of council staff were overpaid last year leaving the authority having to claw back nearly £250,000. Some cases at Birmingham City Council concerned people who had left the organisation but continued to be paid due to managers failing to inform payroll properly.

In 2018 to 19 there were 30 salary overpayments worth more than £3,000 each with a combined value of nearly a quarter of a million pounds. They typically occurred due to failures to record absence, reduction of hours worked, accumulated long term sickness absence, maternity leave or contract terminations.

All the overpayments were revealed in the council's annual fraud report.

It said: "The circumstances surrounding each overpayment have been investigated to verify that the payments were not fraudulent and appropriate management action has been taken, particularly in respect of any code of conduct issues."

# Action plea on plan for playing field

Residents are urging a council to seek a judicial review following a controversial decision to allow a care home to be built on a playing field.

Stafford Borough Council approved the proposals for a 66-bed care home on land at Tilling Drive, Stone, earlier this month.

But the council was ordered not to issue planning permission without specific authority to do so after the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government was urged to call in the application for consideration.

"Last week the council was advised that the application would not, however, be called in by the Secretary of State, despite third party requests to do so.

A letter to the borough council said it wanted to give more power to communities. Stone residents have fiercely opposed Stafford Borough Council's proposal to sell off around a third of the playing field area at Tilling Drive for development.

# A fair chance for everyone to be greener

The Greener Living Fair is returning to a town hall next month.

The fair, which is being organised by Wyre Forest District Council, is due to take place at Kidderminster Town Hall on Saturday, October 5, between 10.30am and 2.30pm.

A range of organisations will be on hand to provide information and advice on all things green. These will include foraging, cutting out single use plastics, electric bikes, beekeeping, and saving water and energy.

There will also be an opportunity for residents to bring along broken, damaged or torn items for free advice by the volunteers at the Repair Cafe.

There will be plant-based food by the Vegan Caterers and free Fair-trade tea, coffee and hot chocolate will also be available.

Activities for children include recycled arts and crafts, henna tattoos and face painting.

Visit [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/greenerlivingfair](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/greenerlivingfair).

## STEM CHALLENGE



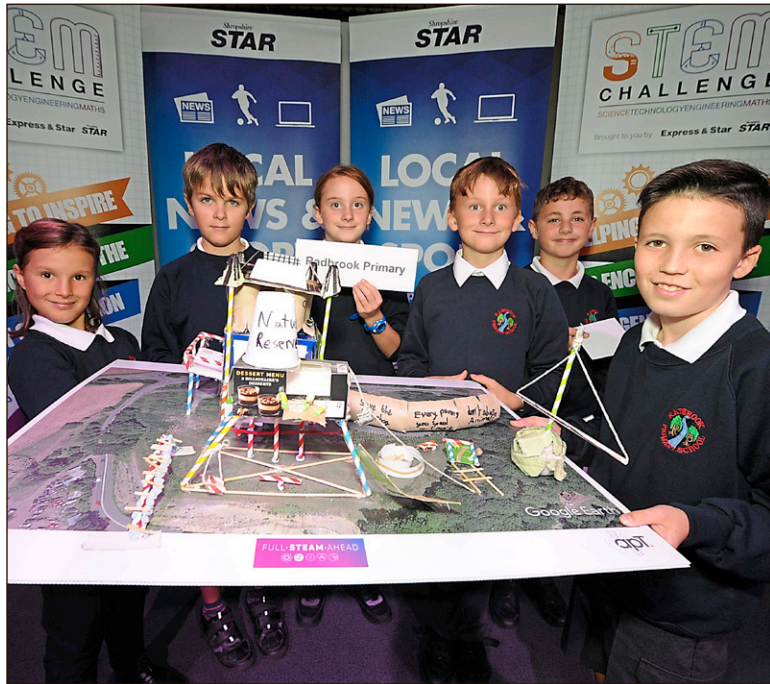
Best Design winners – Youngsters from HLC Primary School in Telford



Best Problem Solving winners – The team from Lawley Primary School



Best Planning winners – Students from Apley Wood Primary School



Best teamwork winners – Pupils from Radbrook Primary School

# Engineers of the future



**STUDENTS** showed off their potential as engineers of the future at the 2019 STEM Challenge.

The Shropshire Star competition, involving teams from nine primary schools, tasked pupils with coming up with a wildlife centre which would be open to visitors all year round, and creating a model to show how their creation would work.

They were given the day to come up with the design in a challenge intended to test their skills under pressure, including budgeting and 'purchasing' the materials required from a 'shop' set up for the competition.

The overall competition was won by John Randall Primary School from Telford, with judges saying that the six-pupil team had "thought of everything" with their design.

Stephanie Dowley, headteacher at the school, said they were thrilled at the pupils' achievement. She said: "We are incredibly proud of them. The teacher that accompanied them said they understood the brief very quickly and used problem solving skills to understand what was required and wasn't required. We are all so proud of them for what they have done."

Ms Dowley explained that STEM skills form a key part of the learning at the school as they prepare their pupils for the future.

She said: "We have been working with a STEM specialist for about a year now as we recognise the importance of science and design and we know our children will be doing jobs that have not even been invented yet, so we want them to have the clear analytical skills and scientific thinking they will need to succeed."

There were a number of other awards handed out on the day with Apley Wood Primary School taking the prize for best planning, and Lawley Primary School recognised for best problem solving.

The award for best teamwork was



Pupils from John Randall Primary School celebrate after being named the overall winner of the Stem Challenge event

taken by Radbrook Primary School, with the best design category being claimed by Hadley Learning Community Primary.

Other schools taking part on the day were Donnington Wood, Our Lady & St Oswald's, Stoke-on-Tern, and Wrockwade Wood Junior School.

The event was sponsored by Telford & Wrekin Council, bit, and apt.

7 Video also filmed at the event for a film that will be featured on the Shropshire Star website and social media channels in the near future.

Key to the event was the support of Northwood Hygiene Products, which provided some of the materials used by the children in their designs.



The Stem Challenge was hosted by the Enginuity technology centre in Coalbrookdale



Students collect material to create a concept model



Fun and thought-provoking – The Stem challenge encourages children to think about engineering while working together as a team



Fun and thought-provoking – The Stem challenge encourages children to think about engineering while working together as a team



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**With special thanks to all the companies that helped make the day possible for over 50 Shropshire children...**

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