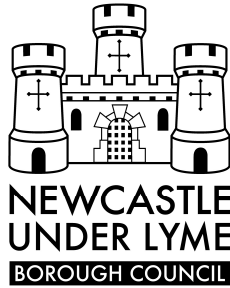


Public Document Pack



This meeting will commence as soon as the Special Meeting regarding electoral arrangements for the Borough has concluded.

Dear Sir/Madam,

You are summoned to attend the meeting of the Borough Council of Newcastle-under-Lyme to be held in the **Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Merrial Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 2AG** on **Wednesday, 26th November, 2014.**

BUSINESS

- 1 **Apologies**
- 2 **Declarations of Interest**
- 3 **MINUTES** (Pages 5 - 8)
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting.
- 4 **Mayor's Announcements**
- 5 **Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme** (Pages 9 - 16)
- 6 **Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places** (Pages 17 - 32)
- 7 **STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL** (Pages 33 - 34)
To receive a statement by the Leader of the Council on the activities and decisions of Cabinet and items included on the Forward Plan.
- 8 **REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES** (Pages 35 - 36)
Chairs are requested to submit written reports to the Democratic Services Manager at least 2 days before the meeting.
 - a) Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee
 - b) Active and Cohesive Communities Scrutiny Committee
 - c) Cleaner, Greener and Safer Communities Scrutiny Committee
 - d) Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee
 - e) Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
- 9 **REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEES** (Pages 37 - 40)

Chairs are requested to submit written reports to the Democratic Services Manager at least two days before meeting.

- a) Audit and Risk Committee
- b) Planning Committee
- c) Licensing Committee
- d) Public Protection Committee

10 QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

In accordance with Procedure Rule 11, questions must be submitted at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting. Any questions considered urgent will only be accepted with the agreement of the Mayor prior to the meeting.

11 MOTIONS OF MEMBERS

A notice of motion other than those listed in Standing Order 19 must reach the Chief Executive ten clear days before the relevant Meeting of the Council.

12 RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

To receive from Members any petitions which they wish to present to the Council.

13 STANDING ORDER 18 - URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any communications which pursuant to Standing Order No18 are, in the opinion of the Mayor, of an urgent nature and to pass thereon such resolutions as may be deemed necessary.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. M.', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Chief Executive

NOTICE FOR COUNCILLORS

1. Fire/Bomb Alerts

In the event of the fire alarm sounding, leave the building immediately, following the fire exit signs. Do not stop to collect personal belongings, do not use the lifts.

Fire exits are to be found either side of the rear of the Council Chamber and at the rear of the Public Gallery.

On exiting the building Members, Officers and the Public must assemble at the car park at the rear of the Aspire Housing Office opposite to the Civic Offices. DO NOT re-enter the building until advised to by the Controlling Officer.

2. Attendance Record

Please sign the Attendance Record sheet, which will be circulating around the Council Chamber. Please ensure that the sheet is signed before leaving the meeting.

3. Mobile Phones

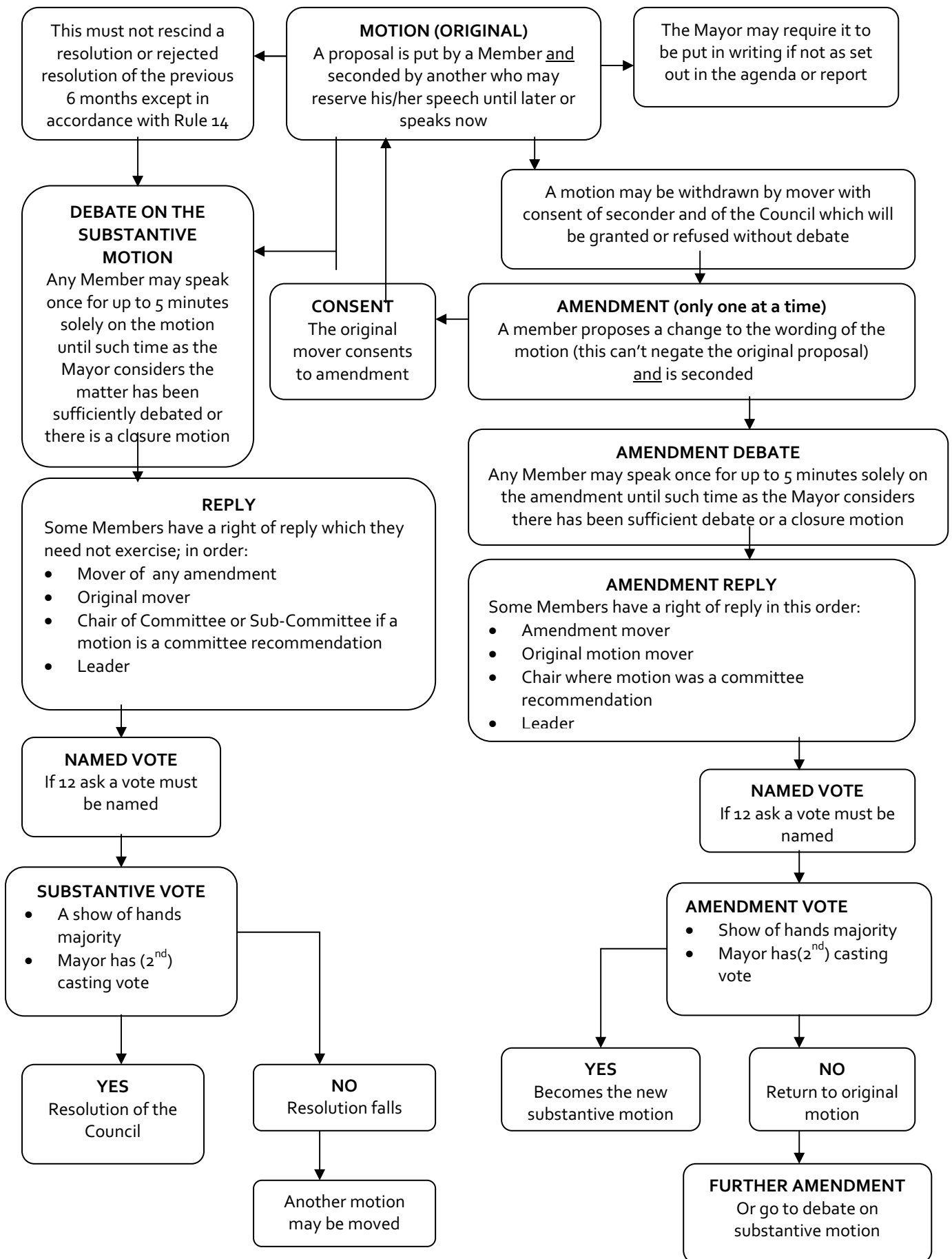
Please switch off all mobile phones before entering the Council Chamber.

4. Tea/Coffee

Refreshments will be available at the conclusion of the meeting, or in the event of a break occurring, during that break.

5. Notice of Motion

A Notice of Motion other than those listed in Standing Order 19 must reach the Chief Executive ten clear days before the relevant Meeting of the Council. Further information on Notices of Motion can be found in Section 5, Standing Order 20 of the Constitution of the Council.



COUNCIL

Wednesday, 17th September, 2014

Present:- The Mayor, Councillor Mrs Linda Hailstones – in the Chair

Councillors Miss Walklate, Mrs Heames, Mrs Johnson, Mrs Burnett, Cooper, Becket, Mrs Beech, Hambleton, Matthews, Mrs Hambleton, Wemyss, Wilkes, Mrs Williams, Williams, Mrs Astle, Fear, Hailstones, Allport, Eagles, Kearon, Taylor.J, Waring, Miss Olszewski, Loades, Holland, Bailey, Miss Cooper, Jones, Miss Reddish, Robinson, Mrs Shenton, Mrs Simpson, Mrs Heesom, Sweeney, Tagg, Mrs Bates, White, Mrs Burgess, Eastwood, Baker, Stringer, Stubbs, Turner, Mrs Winfield, Rout, J Tagg, Harper, Huckfield, Naylon, Northcott, Owen, Proctor, Mrs Braithwaite and Wallace

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest stated.

19. MINUTES

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on the 16 July be agreed as a correct record.

20. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor thanked everyone who had attended the Rabble Rousers event which had raised over £500 towards her Charity Fund.

The Mayor reminded Members about the Remembrance Day Parade in November.

21. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

A report was submitted requesting that Council agree to the requested changes to the membership of the Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee, Audit and Risk Committee and Planning Committee.

- Resolved:-**
- (i) That Cllr Simon White stand down as the Vice Chair of the Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee but remain as a member.
 - (ii) That Cllr Billy Welsh be replaced by Cllr Mrs Gill Williams on the Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee.
 - (iii) That Cllr Mrs Gill Williams be appointed as Vice Chair of the Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee.

- (iv) That Cllr Mrs Sandra Hambleton be appointed to the Audit and Risk Committee.
- (v) That Cllr Billy Welsh replace Cllr Simon White on the Planning Committee.
- (vi) That Cllr Mrs Sandra Simpson be appointed to the Planning Committee.
- (vii) That Cllr Bert Proctor be appointed as Vice Chair to the Planning Committee.

22. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT

A report was submitted to receive the Treasury Management Report for 2013/14.

- Resolved:-**
- (i) That the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2013/14 be received.
 - (ii) That the actual Prudential Indicators contained within the report be approved.

23. COUNCIL PLAN 2014-16

Consideration was given to a report on the proposed new Council Plan for 2014-16. The Plan had previously been considered by the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 17 June and again on 1 September following its consideration by the Cabinet on 23 July, 2014.

Two options were proposed:

- To accept and approve its adoption
- Request significant further changes prior to its approval and adoption.

Resolved:- That the Council Plan for 2014-16 be approved and adopted.

24. MATTERS ALREADY CONSIDERED BUT REQUIRING RATIFICATION BY THE COUNCIL

Consideration was given to a report that had been recommended by the Licensing Committee following consultation with all relevant parties.

The Policy had been brought to council purely for ratification as it was simply renewing an existing Policy.

Resolved:- That the Policy in Relation to the Licensing of Sex Establishments be adopted.

25. STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

A report was submitted by the Council Leader to provide an overview of the actions of the Cabinet and individual portfolio holders since the last full meeting of the Council.

Resolved: That the report be noted

26. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Resolved:- That the reports and information be received.

27. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEES

Resolved:- That the reports and information be received.

28. QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Five questions had been put forward by Cllrs' Sweeney, Loades and Holland.

Question 1

Cllr Sweeney asked 'Would the Portfolio Holder explain the statement that had appeared on the Cabinet agenda for 23 July (item 18) Contract for Corporate Cleaning Services'.

Response from Cllr Hambleton: The cost of cleaning the none public areas had been reduced and a saving was still being made.

Question 2

Cllr Sweeney asked if the Portfolio Holder could update Council on the latest position regarding the overtime budget being overspent.

Response from Cllr Mrs Shenton: Negotiations with the Trade Unions were still taking place and therefore it would not be appropriate to comment at the present time.

Question 3

Cllr Loades asked if the Portfolio Holder could confirm that the current skilled staffing in Streetscene was adequate.

Response from Cllr Mrs Beech: Yes!

Question 4

Cllr Holland asked a question regarding three Council staff being employed on zero-hour contracts (when, according to the Sentinel on 21 August, the Council had phased them out).

Response from the Leader: There were no zero-hour contracts at the Borough Council.

Cllr Holland asked if a list could be drawn up of all past zero-hour contracts.

Response from the Leader: He would go back to the beginning of his Term of Office.

Question 5

Cllr Holland asked when the Leader would be moving from the City of Stoke on Trent to the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme?

The Leader responded by stating that he had a full-time job in Newcastle and also owned property there.

Resolved:- That the comments be noted.

29. MOTIONS OF MEMBERS

No motions had been submitted.

30. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

31. STANDING ORDER 18 - URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

THE MAYOR, COUNCILLOR MRS LINDA HAILSTONES
Chair

COUNCIL 26 NOVEMBER 2014

1. LOCALISED COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

Submitted by: Benefits Manager

Portfolio: Finance and Resources

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To approve a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the borough area for the financial year 2015/16.

Recommendations

That the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council area as detailed is adopted for the financial year 2015/16.

Reasons

The Welfare Reform agenda replaced Council Tax Benefit with Localised Council Tax Reduction with effect from 1 April 2013. Localised schemes need to be approved by the 31 January before the start of the new financial year to which the scheme applies.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, substituted by section 10 of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 requires each billing authority in England to make a Localised Council Tax Reduction scheme, specifying the reductions which are to apply to amounts of Council Tax payable by persons or classes of person whom the authority consider are in financial need.
- 1.2 Any scheme needs to be approved by the 31 January before the start of a new financial year or a default scheme prescribed by regulations will be imposed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. A default scheme would involve expenditure at a higher level than the available central government funding.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 Payments made by local authorities under Council Tax Benefit regulations were fully funded by central government and paid via the Department of Work and Pensions to local authorities. Localised Council Tax Reduction has been the responsibility of the Department for Communities and Local Government since April 2013 when funding for localised schemes was cut by approximately 10% of the previous amounts available. Funding levels have been set centrally for the first two years of Council Tax Reduction, so there is no increase in 2015/16 for inflationary factors over and above 2014/15.
- 2.2 In 2011/12, the last full year for which figures were available to make the calculation for the first year of a Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme, £8,348,768, was paid in Council Tax Benefit to residents of the borough, the cost of which was attributed proportionately as follows:

• Staffordshire County Council	70.5%
• Staffordshire Police Authority	12.2%
• Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council	12.1%
• S-o-T & Staffordshire Fire Authority	4.6%
• Parish Councils	0.6%

The value of Council Tax Benefit paid in respect of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council in 2011/12 was therefore £1,010,201. The proposed 10% reduction in funding would therefore cost this Council in the region of £100,000. The other bodies will be affected in proportion as shown above. Overall, a 10% reduction for all these organisations equates to approximately £835,000.

- 2.3 Although termed a 'localised scheme', central government still stipulate in respect of certain classes of claimant the level of entitlement they should receive. For example, claimants of pension age must continue to receive assistance at the same level under the Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme to that which they received under the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme. Newcastle has a 51% pensioner caseload meaning the cost of any reductions made within the local scheme will fall on the remaining none protected claimants.
- 2.4 To avoid making cuts in other service provisions to finance the budget shortfall between the old Council Tax Benefit scheme and the proposed local scheme, savings were made in the amounts of help some claimants received in 2013/14 and 2014/15 and this will need to be continued in 2015/16.
- 2.5 Before establishing a local scheme, billing authorities were required to consult with major precepting bodies and other interested organisations and individuals. If any fundamental changes were to be considered in year three of the local scheme compared to year two, there would be the need for further consultation, either on the change if it were fairly minor or on any proposed new scheme if the changes were complex or wide ranging.
- 2.6 This Council meeting is the last scheduled meeting to obtain approval for a local scheme for 2015/16. Should there be any material announcements around this subject area following this meeting, in consultation with the Mayor and the portfolio holder, there would be the opportunity to convene a further special meeting prior to the 31 January deadline if required to further review the position.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 You will recall that as far as possible the original intention had been to introduce a common reduction scheme across the whole of Staffordshire including Stoke-on-Trent. Unfortunately, the different demographics of the various city and district councils meant this was not achieved. However, a framework of options for individual authorities to choose those areas best suited to their own requirements was devised.
- 3.2 From this framework, officers considered the impact of each option for claimants within the borough area and a scheme was established that offered a package of measures that generated the required budgetary savings whilst impacting as little as possible on claimants and offering the necessary incentives to encourage claimants back into work.
- 3.3 In considering a scheme for the 2015/16 financial year the Council is able to continue with a similar scheme to 2014/15, to modify it by either relaxing some of the qualifying criteria or introducing further restrictions on entitlement. Finally, the Council could consider adopting the central government default scheme but this option would be at significant extra cost because it would not recoup any of the 10% cut in central government funding.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 At the time of compiling this report, Council Tax Reduction had been operational for just over eighteen months. Expenditure was running at 95% of anticipated maximum capacity. In such a short timescale it is difficult to form any firm conclusions and any conclusions that can be drawn would obviously not currently reflect any normal seasonal variations in claimant demand.
- 4.2 The scheme approved for 2014/15 was based on sound principles following analysis of previously held Council Tax Benefit data and an extensive consultation exercise around exactly what was possible within the financial limits available.
- 4.3 Elements of assessment criteria are based around central government applicable amounts. Applicable amounts are elements of benefit entitlement to cover various specific claimant circumstances based on essential core needs. These are normally linked to increases in the Consumer Price Index but are currently limited to 1%.
- 4.4 The proposal for 2015/16 would therefore be to continue with the 2014/15 scheme with the updated applicable amounts. The outline of the proposed 2015/16 scheme is shown at Appendix A to this report.

5. **Reasons for the Preferred Solution**

- 5.1 To make fundamental changes to the scheme would entail further consultation. The extent of any further consultation would be a judgement call based to the level of change anticipated. In conjunction with other Staffordshire authorities, legal opinion has been sought that the proposal at 4.4 above would not need any further consultation.
- 5.2 Based on information currently available, the modest increase in applicable amounts would still be affordable within the financial constraints of reduced central government funding and current claimant levels.
- 5.3 Whilst representing a significant change for many claimants, the introduction of Council Tax Reduction has not seen the widespread challenges to its introduction that were anticipated. Many claimants have pro-actively adjusted their circumstances by entering in payment arrangements to cover any shortfall in assistance to that previously given. Obviously, there have been increases in claimant contact to facilitate this but with sympathetic treatment, the majority of people are aware of the wider welfare reform agenda and are attempting to adapt. For those who have some underlying grievance, there are two appeal routes available, these are by the Tribunal Service where a claimant thinks an assessment has been made contrary to the adopted scheme regulations and through the courts by means of judicial review where a claimant believes the scheme is incorrect in some material way. So far, only one claimant has challenged the current scheme and this was via the Tribunal Service route. This appeal was heard at a hearing on 23 January 2014 and found in favour of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council. This is in line with previous appeals traffic considered under Council Tax Benefit regulations which would indicate there are no major points of concern with the current scheme within the environment claimants now find themselves.
- 5.4 The statistical information available to date does not indicate the need to make any significant alterations to the 2014/15 scheme. The scheme is within budget and is running at a capacity that still provides a small margin of resilience.

5.5 Continuing with a basically unaltered local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2015/16 enables a degree of stability for claimants in what is very much a changing environment for the wider welfare reform agenda.

5.6 Central government funding constraints do not allow for any relaxation in the sums available for Council Tax Reduction for 2015/16. The funding situation for 2016/17 is currently unknown. When these details do become known, a better picture will emerge on any changes that will then be required. It is worth noting that future funding is unlikely to become more generous than that currently available. This may mean further constraints on entitlement levels.

6. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

6.1 A Localised Council Tax Support Scheme contributes towards creating a healthy and active community.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

7.1 Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, substituted by section 10 of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 requires each billing authority in England to make a Localised Council Tax Support scheme.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

8.1 In designing our Council Tax Support scheme, consideration was given to the implications for vulnerable people, with particular attention to

- Equality and Diversity
- Child poverty
- Homelessness
- Disability

8.2 A detailed Equality Impact Needs Assessment identified any adverse implications for particular groups. It was recognised that the introduction of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme would have an impact on some of the most vulnerable households in the district. This impact continues to be monitored.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 Localised Council Tax Support is treated as a discount on the Council Tax bill, much like Single Persons Discounts. This means that the Council Tax base will be smaller than would otherwise be the case. In order to avoid significant increases in the Band D figure arising from having a smaller tax base, the government funding will be treated as income that reduces the amount to be raised from Council Tax. However, this government funding will be 10% lower than the equivalent amount received under previous Council Tax Benefit regulations.

9.2 Recouping amounts outstanding generated by the lower funding levels in the design of a local scheme is likely to impact on Council Tax collection rates and costs, with more small value bills needing to be administered, resulting in additional pressures on the Revenues and Benefits Section. So far, this has manifested itself by way of increased claimant contact. Significant recovery measures have not so far been considered for the majority of claimants but this is likely to impact over the next few months.

9.3 Central government have provided funding under its new burdens scheme for Localised Council Support. Payments have already been made to local authorities and will continue over the first two financial years of Council Tax Reduction Schemes.

9.4 There are no plans for central government to repeat the grant offered for 2013/14 to approve a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme which was compliant with Department of Communities and Local Government restrictions on where budget savings could be made.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 Any scheme which does not fully pass on the loss of government grant to claimants will require the Council to identify alternative funding. The choice of scheme could, therefore, impact on the Council's future budget plans.

10.2 Council Tax payers could see their bills increase if the funding loss is not passed on to claimants.

10.3 Any increase in the number of Council Tax accounts to be administered could result in additional administrative costs, particularly in relation to debt recovery. This could have a knock on effect on the overall Council Tax collection rate.

10.4 Failure to adopt a Localised Council Tax Support scheme by the 31 January 2015 will result in the default scheme being imposed, resulting in financial loss to the Council and all its precepting bodies.

11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 Not applicable.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 Cabinet 19 September 2012:

(a) That the draft Newcastle-under-Lyme Council Tax Support Scheme be approved for consultation purposes.

(b) That the Executive Director – Resources and Support Services be authorised to initiate the statutory consultation process.

12.2 Cabinet 12 December 2012:

(a) That the consultation results be noted and used to help formulate the Localised Council Tax Support scheme for the borough area.

(b) That it be recommended that protection be drawn into the final scheme regarding protection for recipients of War Disablement Pensions, War Widows Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments.

12.3 Council 23 January 2013:

That the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for the Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council area as detailed is adopted for the financial year 2013/14.

12.4 Council 27 November 2013:

That the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for the Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council area as detailed is adopted for the financial year 2014/15.

12 **Recommendations**

13.1 That the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for the Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council area as detailed is adopted for the financial year 2015/16.

14 **List of Appendices**

14.1 Appendix A – Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Tax Reduction Scheme Summary

15. **Previous Reports**

15.1 Cabinet 19 September 2012 – Localised Council Tax Support

15.2 Cabinet 12 December 2012 - Localised Council Tax Support Consultation

15.3 Council 23 January 2013 – Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme

15.4 Council 27 November 2013 – Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Appendix A

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2015/16

Claim Type	Council Tax Support Scheme
Pensioner Claimants	
No scope for changes within LCTS	Up to 100% of Council Tax Bill
Working Age Claimants	
Claims will be based on a max of 80% Council Tax Liability (unless in a protected group)	Up to 80% of Council Tax Bill
Properties in bands higher than Band D will be based on 80% Band D Council Tax	Up to 80% of band D rate
Second Adult Rebate will not be retained in the Local Scheme	Nil
Capital Cut off at £6K (non-passported)	No Council Tax Support if capital exceeds £6K
Earnings Disregards	Flat rate of £25 if claimant working.
Claimants who are eligible to Severe Disability Premium (SDP)	
May allow up to 100% LCTS as protected group	Up to 100% of Council Tax Bill
Claimants who are eligible to receive War Disablement Pensions, War Widow's Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Payments	
May allow up to 100% LCTS as protected group	Up to 100% of Council Tax Bill

Discretionary Payments

The Council has discretion to award Council Tax Support, in excess of the amounts determined by this framework, where it is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist.

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REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND PLACES

Submitted by: Returning Officer/Democratic Services Manager

Portfolio: Communications, Policy and Partnerships

Wards Affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To report on the review of polling districts and polling places that has been carried out.

Recommendations

- (a) That the changes to the Thistleberry polling districts I0001 and I0005, as outlined in the report, be approved.
- (b) That the existing polling districts be confirmed as per the maps provided during the consultation exercise (available in the members room).
- (c) That Council refer the recommendations relating to polling stations to the Returning Officer for consideration.

Reason

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 placed a duty on the Council to carry out a review of all polling districts and places in its area before 31 December 2014.

1. Background

The statutory responsibility for reviewing UK Parliamentary polling districts and places rests within each relevant local authority in Great Britain for so much of any constituency as is situated in its area.

The Council's constitution states that it is the responsibility of Full Council to divide the constituency into polling districts.

A. Polling Districts

A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary election. The Council must keep Polling Districts under review and seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in its area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.

In England, each parish is to be a separate polling district unless there are special circumstances.

B. Polling Places

A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district. The Council's Constitution states that the polling place for all polling districts be defined as the polling district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly out of the district.

C. Polling Stations

A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election.

Consultation

- a) The notice of Review was published on 18th August 2014 and questionnaires sent out to the following:
 - All presiding Officers
 - All Premise Managers
 - VAST (information included on the VAST website and sent to 412 email contacts)
 - Neighbouring Local Authorities and Returning Officers
 - The Returning Officer for Newcastle under Lyme
- b) Leaflets and posters were sent out to all elected members, parish councils and LAPS.
- c) Leaflets and posters were distributed to community centres, libraries and contact centres in the Borough.
- d) An email regarding the review was sent out to all Parish Councils and LAPs.
- e) A briefing was given by the Democratic Services Manager at the Parish Council Forum and information distributed including posters and leaflets.
- f) An online consultation form was designed and published on the Council's website and a link sent out to all elected members. Officers from the Council's GIS department also provided up to date maps showing the current polling districts and polling stations which were included on the webpage.

Results of the Consultation

116 questionnaires were returned and 11 responses were submitted through the online web form.

Most of the responses were favourable in relation to the current arrangements. Areas highlighted for further investigation and discussion are detailed below.

The full response to the consultation from the Retuning Officer is attached at Appendix A to this report.

2. Issues

Recommendation to alter Thistleberry Polling Districts (map attached)

A representation from a ward councillor has requested Council to consider an alteration to the current polling district boundaries for the Thistleberry polling districts I0001 and I0005 as there is now a footway and cycle path between the Harriet Higgins Centre and the new estate. As can be seen from the attached map this would appear to be in the best interests of the electors on the new estate.

That the following streets be moved from polling district I0005 to I0001:

Street	Postcode	Properties	Current Station	Proposed Station
Snowgoose Way	ST5 2GA	53	The Bridge Room, Newcastle Golf Club (I0005)	The Harriet Higgins Centre (I0001)
Brent Close	ST5 2GD	19	The Bridge Room, Newcastle Golf Club	The Harriet Higgins Centre
Reedmace Walk	ST5 2GE	22	The Bridge Room, Newcastle Golf Club	The Harriet Higgins Centre
Galingale View	ST5 2GQ ST5 2GR	87	The Bridge Room, Newcastle Golf Club	The Harriet Higgins Centre
Gadwall Croft	ST5 1GL	41	The Bridge Room, Newcastle Golf Club	The Harriet Higgins Centre
Greylag Gate	ST5 2GP	25	The Bridge Room, Newcastle Golf Club	The Harriet Higgins Centre
Barnacle Place	ST5 2GS	16	The Bridge Room, Newcastle Golf Club	The Harriet Higgins Centre
		263		

This will result in an additional 263 properties for the Harriet Higgins Centre.

If it is assumed that on average each property has two eligible electors which equals a total electorate of 1621 for the I0001 polling district which is within the guidelines set by the Electoral Commission.

2.1 Representations from the consultation and recommendations to the Returning Officer relating to polling stations

Most stations have been in use for many years and changes have only been made when absolutely necessary and care has been taken to try and avoid unnecessary confusion to voters. Changes or closures have generally been as a result of buildings closing or being unavailable.

The Council currently makes use of 3 mobile units at election time, one at the junction of Harper Avenue and Bentley Avenue (Cross Heath ward), one on the Co-op car park Water Hayes (Chesterton Ward) and the other at the play area Moreton Close (Ravenscliffe ward). These stations are costly, both in terms of hire charges and officer time awaiting delivery of units and portaloos and connecting the cabins to generators. Ideally it would be better if alternative locations could be found but no alternatives have yet to be identified.

The comments made by the Returning Officer in relation to the mobile units can be found at **Appendix A**.

The following polling stations have been highlighted through the consultation exercise as requiring additional investigation.

a) The Zoe School Pool of Dance, CC001

Concerns were raised regarding the lighting and the small size of the building. It is thought that the premise may be suitable for future local government elections but is too small for a combined parliamentary election. The Jubilee Library, Eccleshall Road Loggerheads has been suggested as an alternative venue for a polling station.

The Returning Officer has mentioned this polling station in his response to the consultation:

The dance studio at Loggerheads is a facility not well suited to use as a polling station owing to the poor level of natural light and I would recommend use of my power as Returning Officer to require the school which was formerly used as a polling station be reinstated.

Recommendations:

- i. That the Returning Officer and his staff assess the suitability and availability of the Jubilee Library as a polling station.
- ii. That should the Jubilee Library not be suitable or available that the Returning Officer requires the use of the Hugo Meynell Primary School as a polling station.

b) The Lodge, Wolstanton High School, D0001(map attached)

Concerns have been raised regarding the remoteness of this polling station and the presiding officer reported a number of 'lost' voters who turned up on polling day who were not registered to vote there. There are also concerns regarding the size of the station especially for a combined parliamentary election. A mobile unit was previously

used for this polling district which was deemed unsatisfactory and before this a room in the school was made available.

A suggestion has been made that the care home on Hempstalls Lane be investigated as an alternative venue. Officers have made initial contact with the Care Home but the Manager has indicated that it will not be suitable for polling purposes. A suggestion has also been put forward regarding the Cricketers Pub on Alexandra Road which Officers will investigate further.

The Returning Officer states:

As you will be aware I have considered using my statutory power to require a polling station at Wolstanton High School. With the support of officers at the County Council we have worked with the school and on this basis have used The Lodge. I am aware that the location of this polling station is not ideal as it is located outside the polling area and access is made more complicated by its proximity to the main school gate and the related parking restrictions. It would be my strong desire to find a polling station within the polling area, but I am aware that efforts on the part of you and your staff and local councillors have not come up with a suitable alternative. Prior to our use of The Lodge the polling station was located in a portakabin located on Wolstanton Marsh. My comments above regarding portakabins apply but in this case the situation was made worse by the portakabin being located outside the polling area. Having looked at the geography of the polling area it is evident that it is an area predominately of housing and seems not to contain venues within it which might be considered as polling stations. I would urge that we keep this matter under review with the objective of securing a polling station within the polling area, even if this is a portakabin, but ideally of finding a suitable building. I would request that we again make a call in that community for any local knowledge of potentially suitable venues.

Recommendations:

That the Returning Officer and his staff investigate alternative polling stations for the D0001 polling district, including the Cricketers Arms and request information on any other possible venues from elected members and member of the public.

c) Holy Trinity Scout Hut, at Rear of Holy Trinity Centre, Off Grosvenor Road(H0003)

Concerns were raised regarding the situation of this new polling station, that additional signage was required and that the trees had obscured the entrance to the station. Many complaints were received on polling day regarding the situation of the station. Previously the Baptist Church Hall on London Road had been used as a polling station but this had become unavailable this year. Reports have now been received that the overgrown trees have been cut back to allow visitors to see the signage to the venue.

The Retuning Officer states in his response to the consultation:

Following the Baptist Church Hall being put up for sale we relocated the polling station to the Scout Hut off Grosvenor Road. I would wish to recommend that we monitor this situation and seek to negotiate access to the Church Hall on London Road with the new owner provided that its future use is appropriate. In the meantime I would request that we consider alternative locations for this polling station and that if this is not possible that additional signage be provided to ensure that electors unfamiliar with the vicinity can identify the location of the Scout Hut.

Recommendations:

That as per the response from the Returning Officer, the situation be monitored and officers seek to negotiate access to the Church Hall on London Road with the new owner provided that its future use is appropriate. In the meantime consideration be given to alternative locations for this polling station and that if this is not possible that additional signage be provided to ensure that electors unfamiliar with the vicinity can identify the location of the Scout Hut.

d) Youth Centre, Clough Hall School

Building and demolition work is scheduled to be carried out by the school in 2015 so an alternative polling station may be required.

Recommendations:

That the Returning Officer and his staff investigate whether the youth centre will remain available and if not identify an alternative polling station.

e) St George's Church Room (H0002)

One comment was received on polling day regarding the use of a place of worship as a polling station.

The Returning Officer has also made the following comments regarding this:

We use a number of venues as polling stations which are linked to places of worship. In the vast majority of cases we use the non-consecrated areas of these venues. It is important that we respect religious observance and diversity and I would therefore wish to recommend that where a suitable non-consecrated space is available that this is used in preference to a consecrated space.

Recommendation:

That where possible a suitable non-consecrated space is used in preference to a consecrated space.

f) Newcastle Golf Club Bridge Room

Concerns were raised prior to the elections in May regarding the distance that some electors had to travel to reach this polling station and requests were made that we use Newcastle Community High School again.

The Returning Officer states:

Newcastle Golf Club is in most regards a suitable polling station but is not as preferable as Newcastle Community High School. I would recommend use of my power as Returning Officer to require the school which was formerly used as the polling station to be reinstated as the polling station.

Equality issues

Local authorities must also comply with the following access requirements. As part of the review, they must:

- a) Seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
- b) Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled

The council must have regard to the accessibility to disabled persons of potential polling stations in any place which it is considering designating as a polling place or the designation of which as a polling place it is reviewing.

3. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 (Part 4) placed a duty on Councils to carry out a review of all of its polling districts and places before 31 December 2007.

Local authorities must comply with the following legislative requirements regarding the designation of polling districts and polling places:

- a) Each parish in England and community in Wales is to be a separate polling district, unless special circumstances apply,
- b) The council must designate a polling place for each polling district, unless the size or other circumstances of a polling district are such that the situation of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors,
- c) The polling place must be an area in the district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district (for example, if no accessible polling place can be identified in the district,)
- d) The polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station.

Use of schools

It should be noted that for the purpose of taking the poll in England and Wales, the (Acting) Returning Officer is entitled to use free of charge schools maintained or assisted by a local authority as well as those schools that receive grants made out of moneys provided by Parliament. This includes academies and free schools.

4. **Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no cost implications identified in this report but there have been resource implications in carrying out the review outside existing budgets, which have been absorbed into day to day duties

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Response from the Returning Officer
Appendix B – Map for Thistleberry Polling Districts
Appendix C – Map for May Bank

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Response from the Returning Officer to the Review of Polling Areas and Polling Places.

I am pleased to submit my responses as Returning Officer for The Borough of Newcastle under Lyme and as Acting Returning Officer for the Parliamentary Constituency of Newcastle under Lyme.

As you will be aware, during recent elections I have visited all of the Polling Stations. I am also aware that you keep this matter under review and that as a result of this in general we have polling districts and places which are proportionate for the current geographical distribution of the electorate and that polling stations are located in a geographically central location of these.

I also confirm that in general polling stations have been selected which conform to the best practices of being convenient and accessible for the electorate. However, my most recent round of polling station visits has confirmed certain cases where I consider reassessment should be made. Specifically these are:

The dance studio at Loggerheads is a facility not well suited to use as a polling station owing to the poor level of natural light and I would recommend use of my power as Returning Officer to require the school which was formerly used as a polling station be reinstated.

Newcastle Golf Club is in most regards a suitable polling station but is not as preferable as Newcastle Community High School. I would recommend use of my power as Returning Officer to require the school which was formerly used as the polling station to be reinstated as the polling station.

Following the Baptist Church Hall being put up for sale we relocated the polling station to the Scout Hut off Grosvenor Road. I would wish to recommend that we monitor this situation and seek to negotiate access to the Church Hall on London Road with the new owner provided that its future use is appropriate. In the meantime I would request that we consider alternative locations for this polling station and that if this is not possible that additional signage be provided to ensure that electors unfamiliar with the vicinity can identify the location of the Scout Hut.

You are aware of the measure which I have taken as Returning Officer to keep to a minimum the use of mobile units. I am pleased that by working with a number of other venues we have been able to reduce by half the number of mobile units now in use. I have considered carefully and discussed with the relevant Presiding Officers and my staff the three remaining mobile units. I am satisfied that there are not alternative build facilities which we can use as viable polling stations in these polling places. Of the three units the nature of the topography at Moreton Close means that access to the mobile unit by people having limited mobility remains a challenge. However, I would request that these locations are kept under review and should new facilities become

available which meet the criteria of accessibility, that these are considered as alternatives to mobile units. The mobile unit at the co-operative store, Barbridge Road is considered by the staff and public to be a conveniently sited polling station and that this outweighs the marginal inconvenience of a mobile over a fixed premises facility.

As you will be aware I have considered using my statutory power to require a polling station at Wolstanton High School. With the support of officers at the County Council we have worked with the school and on this basis have used The Lodge. I am aware that the location of this polling station is not ideal as it is located outside the polling area and access is made more complicated by its proximity to the main school gate and the related parking restrictions. It would be my strong desire to find a polling station within the polling area, but I am aware that efforts on the part of you and your staff and local councillors have not come up with a suitable alternative. Prior to our use of The Lodge the polling station was located in a portakabin located on Wolstanton Marsh. My comments above regarding portakabins apply but in this case the situation was made worse by the portakabin being located outside the polling area. Having looked at the geography of the polling area it is evident that it is an area predominately of housing and seems not to contain venues within it which might be considered as polling stations. I would urge that we keep this matter under review with the objective of securing a polling station within the polling area, even if this is a portakabin, but ideally of finding a suitable building. I would request that we again make a call in that community for any local knowledge of potentially suitable venues.

I would like to make some observations in regard to certain specific polling stations which have been reviewed during my period as Returning Officer.

We have considered at length the polling station to serve the 00002 electoral area of the Keele Ward. In view of the size of the catchment voter population and the importance of promoting electoral turnout amongst the student population it is desirable that this polling place be retained on the Keele University campus. I have discussed that matter with the Vice Chancellor on a number of occasions and he has been supportive of the actions we have taken to secure a polling station tailored not only to the student population but to staff and others living on the campus and to the off-campus population also served by this polling station. At the May 2014 election we located the polling station in the Student Union building. This is the venue used for the student elections which take place at Keele University and therefore has an existing association and identity with the electoral process. The venue is centrally located on the campus, has level access and is also accessed without the need for voters to pass through the reception of the building. The University authorities were kind enough to designate an area for parking directly across from the access point and to permit use of the drop off point located adjacent to the access ramp. I recommend that with the support of the Vice Chancellor that this be retained as the polling station.

At the May 2014 elections we re-located the polling station M0004 in the Silverdale and Parkside Ward to the Kents lane Community Building. This is a

new facility and is built to the current building regulations meaning it meets relevant accessibility requirements. This polling station is better located within the polling district to take account of recent new developments and it was notable that turnout at this station was higher than in previous years. I would recommend that this be retained as the polling station.


I would also wish to make an observation regarding the use of venues which are linked to places of worship.

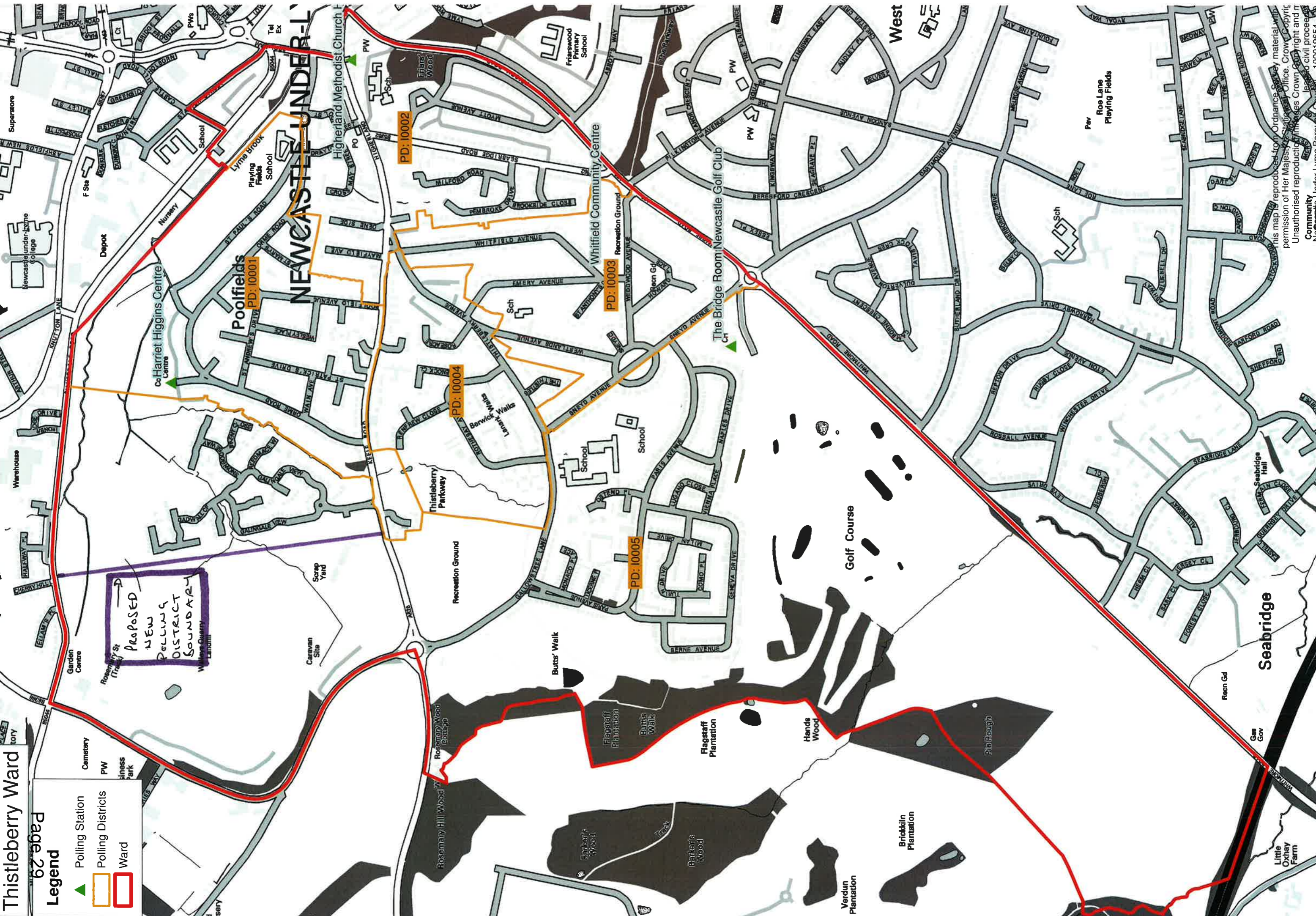
We use a number of venues as polling stations which are linked to places of worship. In the vast majority of cases we use the non-consecrated areas of these venues. It is important that we respect religious observance and diversity and I would therefore wish to recommend that where a suitable non-consecrated space is available that this is used in preference to a consecrated space.

John Sellgren
Returning Officer

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Legend

-  Polling Station
-  Polling Districts
-  Ward

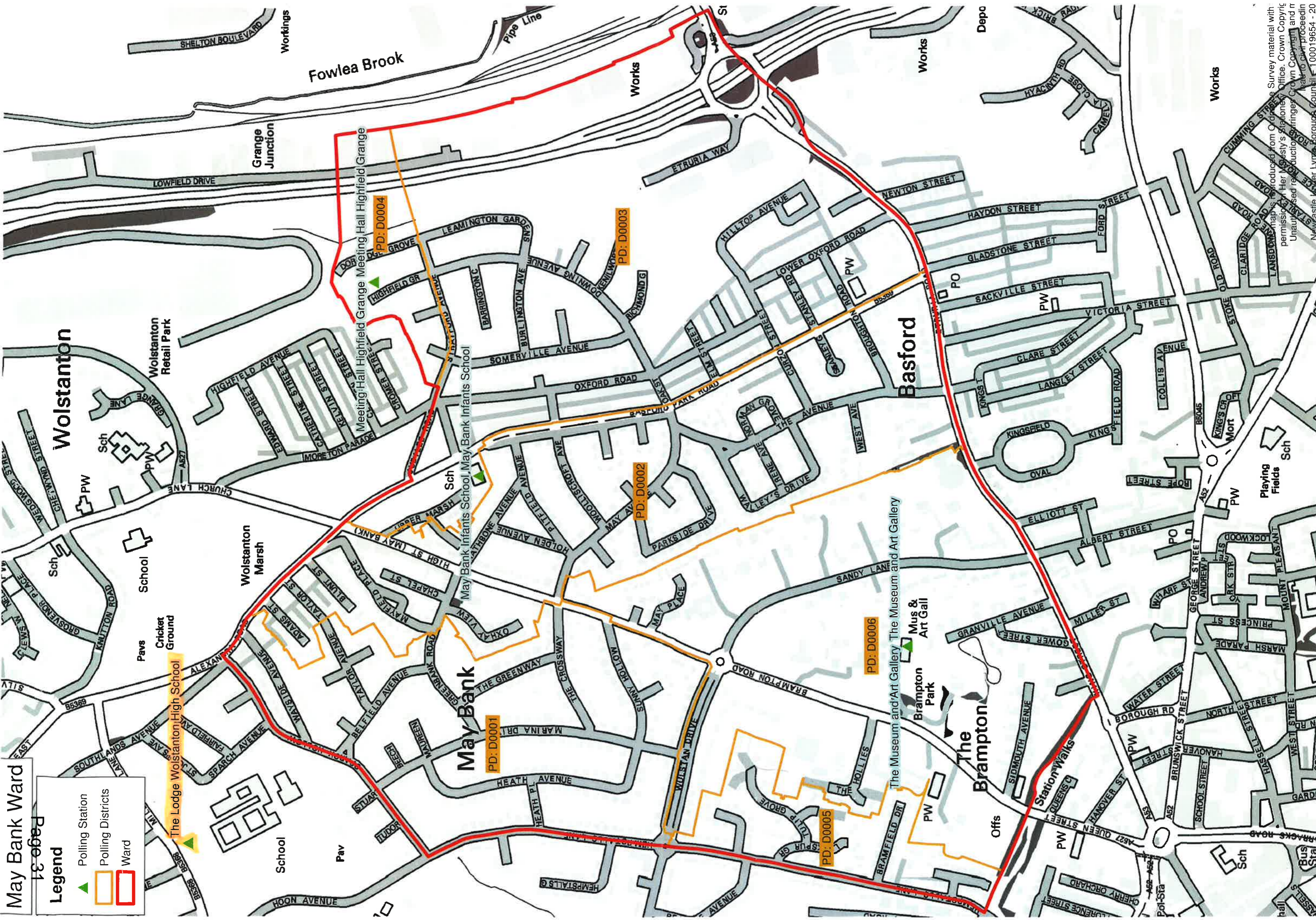


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Legend

-  Polling Station
-  Polling Districts
-  Ward



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Classification: NULBC UNCLASSIFIED

Report to Full Council

It would be remiss of me not to start this report with the sad passing of former Councillor George Cairns whose funeral I attended, with many Councillors across the political spectrum, on the 31st October.

George's record was second to none, including a year as the Mayor of Newcastle in 1996/97, Chairing both the Active & Cohesive (July 2011 – May 2014) and the Joint Parking (November 2011 – May 2014) and sitting on various other committees such as Financial, Resources and Partnerships, Economic Development, Sports Council, Planning and with much tongue in cheek, the Standards Committee from July 2011 to May 2014. More recently George was fundamental in instigating a review of the allotments policy, the final version of which was agreed at the last cabinet meeting. Whilst many will have clashed with George over his two decades in the chamber, I'm sure no one will ever doubt his enthusiasm for his role and we should all be thankful for his service to Newcastle-under-Lyme during that time.

Moving to Executive matters, I was pleased to attend the first meeting of the Joint Advisory Group, (a Member / Officer Group formed to oversee the progress of the Joint Local Plan). A new Chair for the Committee was appointed, the Terms of Reference for the Committee was approved but most importantly a Draft Statement of Community Involvement was circulated and approved. This piece of consultation will allow anyone, be it Members of the Public, LAP's, Parish Councillors or indeed Stakeholders to shape the way in which we will consult with the wider populous throughout the Local Plan Process. Can I urge all members to encourage their residents to take part in this first piece of consultation which opened to the public on Monday of last week.

I'm also happy to confirm that the Newcastle Strategic Partnership goes from strength to strength having chaired a meeting recently. The Partnership, ever aware of changing conditions, has recently reviewed its practices and a new Terms of Reference was circulated alongside commitments to closer align with bodies such as the Stoke and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the Staffordshire Health and Well Being Board and the Staffordshire Police and Crime Commissioner's Office. As an open and transparent Council, I was also pleased to take the opportunity to share a refreshed version of the Sustainable Communities Policy with partners which was warmly received. My thanks go to the Partnerships team for their work on this document.

During the last Month I was also honoured to attend, alongside the Deputy Mayor and Chief Executive, a royal visit at Keele University. In October 2013, Keele's new state of the art £2.8million extension of the Anatomy Training Facilities was opened allowing the School of Medicine to join a select group of institutions offering leading edge facilities attracting surgeons from across the UK. One Year on, the University and I were pleased that the Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO included in his busy schedule, the official opening of the facility, another shining example of the strides Keele University has made in the last few years.

Economic Development is key to the future of Newcastle-under-Lyme and as part of our commitment to this; I was pleased to confirm that this Authority will become the Sponsor of 'Business of the Year' at the Sentinel Business Awards in 2015. Our continuing investment in Newcastle Town Centre, the continued support to both Town Centre Partnerships and with the

introduction of this Award, it is clear to see that the prosperity of the Borough is paramount and this Administration will not leave any stone unturned in spreading that message.

Eleven thousand new jobs are set to follow in Staffordshire within major business and supporting transport development in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire after one of the largest Government Growth Deals in the country after I attended the signed of the Deal in October.

Government cities minister Greg Clark signed the £82.2million deal with Local Enterprise Partnership chairman David Frost and other Council Leaders at Keele University Science and Business Park. Much is made of the Borough's position with regard to its near neighbours but surely not one Councillor would wish that we didn't work in Partnership with the whole of the County, especially putting at risk major investment here in Newcastle, a lesson some councillor's should learn quickly.

In closing, I, the Deputy Leader and the three Leaders of the opposition met with the chairman and new Chief Executive of the Boundaries Commission to discuss possible changes to the size and structure of the Authorities political structure. As you will see on the Agenda tonight, I have asked the Chief Executive to form a working group to look at the possibilities that have been laid before us and this group will report back directly to Full Council with its findings and any recommendations it feels appropriate. By tabling a report this evening, this will allow us to cancel the Special Meeting of the Council in December and move the process forward much quicker.

Classification: NULBC UNCLASSIFIED

Cleaner Greener and Safer Communities Scrutiny Committee Wednesday 1st October 2014.

Councillor Tony Kieron portfolio holder for Safer Communities and Councillor Ann Beech portfolio holder for Environment and Recycling Attended the meeting.

Both gave a detailed report on the work they had been doing.

The Senior Partnerships officer gave an update on the funding received by the Newcastle Partnerships from the Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Ellis.

To deliver a set of priorities and actions set out in the Local Police and Crime plan 2014/2017 The Newcastle Partnership as been allocated £110,635 for the financial year 2014/15 with a commitment to provide funding for three years.

An update on the Anti - Social Behaviour Crime and Disorder Act 2014 including the Borough Councils role in delivering appropriate responses to these changes.was received from Mark Bailey Head of Business Improvements Central Services and Partnerships.

The Scrutiny report provided an overview of the changes introduced by the Anti- Social Behaviour Crime and Disorder Act 2014 including the Borough Councils role in delivering appropriate responses to these changes.

The Portfolio Holder For Environment and Recycling Councillor Ann Beech introduced the proposed Intergrated Waste and Recycling Service. A Consultation Exercise ran from April 2014 and a report went to Cabinet on the 23rd July 2014. The new Service will commence July 2016.

A lot of hard work as gone into these reports I would like to thank our officers and Portfolio holders for there hard work Councillor Gill Williams Chair Cleaner Greener.and Safer Communities.

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Report Licensing Committee.

At the last Licensing Committee meeting it was agreed that we must have a quorate of 3 for all sub-committee meetings. (Reviews). We also agreed that there would be a committee member on standby in case of illness of one the sub-committee members.

Several members of the committee attended a one day National training course for

Councillors of Licensing Committee in Birmingham.

The Crewe Arms, Madeley.

Punch Taverns disagreed with the sub-committee's decision to revoke the licence for alcohol and entertainment. There had been long standing problems and residents had complained about noise and our Environmental Department monitored the noise levels. The Police had also wanted a review. Punch Taverns were going to take our decision to the Magistrates Court. However, after negotiations between Punch Tavern's legal team and Newcastle Borough Council's Legal team it was agreed to revoke the licence until January and the present Designated Premises Supervisor will be given notice to quit by end of December.

The Robin Hood Inn, The Rookery, Kidsgrove.

A review of licence was requested by the police on grounds of the Prevention of Crime and Disorder and the Prevention of Public Nuisance. A review was arranged and several days before the review the Police and the Designated Premises Supervisor came to an agreement to which the sub-committee agreed.

The Cricketers Arms, May Bank, Newcastle.

On Monday November 17th the sub-committee will be reviewing the licence. The Designated Premises Supervisor has requested longer opening hours. Local residents have objected to this request.

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Public Protection Chairs Report

Control of Direct Debit Face to Face fundraisers – 22.09.14

Unlike street or door to door collections, which the Borough Council has powers to grant permission for, there are no current provisions to regulate face to face (direct debit) fundraisers who tend to operate on the street in locations such as town centres.

Local Government is encouraged to sign up to The Public Funding Regulatory Association (PFRA). The PFRA is a charity led organisation and a self regulatory body for all types of fundraising. The PFRA acts as a bridge between councils and charities practising face to face fundraising, maintaining professional standards and ensuring fair allocation of fundraising activities on the ground. If the Council were to sign up to the PFRA, there would be a particular burden on officer time.

Face to face fundraisers are present in Ironmarket, Castle Walks and other streets within Newcastle town centre. The majority of fundraisers already act in a professional manner and do not cause problems for shoppers in the town centre. There have been only two incidences of aggressive face to face fundraisers raised with the council in recent times.

The committee resolved that the council continues to permit self regulation of direct debit face to face fundraisers. If a problem does arise in the future, the council could revisit this matter for further discussion and action. It was felt that whilst the PFRA could be useful, only the charities that are signed up to them are monitored. There are thousands of charities that are not signed up to the PFRA and are not accountable to that organisation. Therefore the council would still not gain any new powers to tackle those outside of the organisation. It was also noted that the council would find it difficult to give officer time to such a project in times of financial constraints.

Draft Taxi Licensing Policy for Newcastle-under-Lyme – 22.09.14

The committee gave consideration to an emerging draft taxi licensing policy and was asked to make comments and recommendations having regard to the representation received from the taxi and private hire trade in the borough and to agree a timetable for implementation of the policy.

The committee was also asked to provide feedback and suggestions on the draft document to assist with the production of an updated draft policy that, it was proposed, would go out for consultation on 1st November 2014. Specifically the committee was invited to comment on options for a vehicle age policy and tinted windows on vehicles.

In respect of the vehicle age policy the committee expressed a preference to introduce a system whereby that a pre-test by an independent practitioner would need to be passed prior to an operator presenting a vehicle that is over eight years old for testing at the depot. An independent contractor could be another garage or an organisation such as the AA or RAC. The cost of this process would have to be met by the owner of the vehicle.

The committee resolved that the draft policy and comments and recommendations made by representatives and private hire trade in the borough be noted. The committee agreed to the timetable set out in the officer's report for implementation of the policy. It was also decided that the public protection committee meet on extra dates in October 2014 and February 2015. In light of

what was agreed above, it was decided the previous policy resolution relating to the age of hackney carriage vehicles, as agreed by Council on 16th April 2014, be not implemented on 1st January 2014.

Age Limit for Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Vehicles – 20.10.14

The committee received a report requesting members consider additional recommendations in relation to the age policy for Private Hire and Hackney Carriage vehicles operating in the borough.

Following the decision of the Public Protection Committee at its meeting on 22nd September a letter had been received from representatives of the Private Hire trade requesting that, as a result of the resolution passed on 22nd September 2014, the age limit of eight years for Private Hire vehicles was also suspended pending implementation of the new Taxi Licensing Policy in March 2015. The committee agreed that parity needed to be maintained between the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage vehicles.

After much discussion, the committee agreed that any Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licenses issued to vehicles over 8 years of age from 21st October 2014 will only continue to a full twelve month period if they meet any 'exceptional circumstances' conditions that may be continued within the final Taxi Licensing Policy. Any vehicles falling into that category will have until 31st March 2015 to meet any "exceptional condition" standards that may be contained in the final Taxi Licensing Policy. In the case that a vehicle fails to meet the 'exceptional circumstances' conditions, the license will be deemed expired and a refund would be made.

Draft Taxi Licensing Policy for Consultation – 20.10.14

The committee agreed to include the "exceptional conditions" age policy for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles in the councils Draft Taxi Policy Document before being sent out for full consultation. There was general agreement between members that a blanket cut off policy was not a way forward. Many members of the committee stated they would be making individual representations during the consultation period.

The committee agreed to send out the Draft Taxi Licensing Policy on 1st November 2014 and the public will be given 3 months to respond. The committee will then review the responses and hopefully adopt a new policy in February 2015. The new policy will take immediate effect at the February meeting.

Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Fees 2015/16 – 03.11.14

The committee considered a report with regards to the raising of fees for the trade. Most fees cover administration and process costs and the committee agreed that there had already been an in-depth look at fees in 2013/2014. Therefore it was agreed that prices should just increase with inflation, but the final decision would have to be made by the cabinet.