

12 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Any member of the public wishing to submit a question must serve two clear days' notice, in writing, of any such question to the Borough Council.

13 URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any business which is urgent within the meaning of Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972

14 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 18th March 2015, 7.00pm, Committee Room 2

Members: Councillors Baker, Holland, Loades, Matthews, Owen, Mrs Simpson, Stringer (Chair), Wallace, White, Wilkes and Mrs Williams (Vice-Chair)

PLEASE NOTE: The Council Chamber and Committee Room 1 are fitted with a loop system. In addition, there is a volume button on the base of the microphones. A portable loop system is available for all other rooms. Should you require this service, please contact Member Services during the afternoon prior to the meeting.

Members of the Council: If you identify any personal training/development requirements from any of the items included in this agenda or through issues raised during the meeting, please bring them to the attention of the Democratic Services Officer at the close of the meeting.

Meeting Quorums :- 16+= 5 Members; 10-15=4 Members; 5-9=3 Members; 5 or less = 2 Members.

Officers will be in attendance prior to the meeting for informal discussions on agenda items.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 3rd September, 2014

Present:- Councillor David Stringer – in the Chair

Councillors Holland, Loades, Matthews, Owen, Mrs Simpson and Wallace
Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Assets and Planning

Officers Executive Director of Regeneration and Development
Head of Housing and Regeneration Services
Head of Planning Services
Scrutiny Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Miss Sophia Baker, White and Wilkes

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 2nd July 2014 were agreed as a true record.

4. NEWCASTLE HOUSING ADVICE SERVICE

The Chair welcomed David Taylor from Midland Heart Limited to the meeting.

Midland Heart Limited were awarded the Newcastle Housing Advice (NHA) contract, which commenced on the 1st April 2014 for a period of three years, with the possible extension of a further three years following evidence of satisfactory performance and funding.

The NHA service was now delivered from the ground floor shop of 61-63 Lower Street, Newcastle.

Prior to the commencement of the contract, work began with the Council's Communication Department to market the new service at its new address, an 0300 telephone number for users, email addresses, web site information and all correspondence linking to the NHA service.

An official launch of the NHA service was scheduled for 24th September 2014.

The Chair asked if all Members had been advised of the latter. The Head of Housing and Regeneration Services advised that invitations were sent to all Members to attend a drop in session during April and it was attended by ten Members. The Chair advised that a flyer be distributed to Members informing of the official launch.

An online housing option advice toolkit and online registration for housing applications would commence with a new Choice Based Letting (CBL) system called "Homes Direct", from the 1st August 2014. This system would enable customers to register and update their housing register application directly, allowing for registrations to be made live immediately following registration. Every customer who registers online would have an ID number.

It was asked if the existing register of users was entered onto the system. David Taylor replied it had, but the objective was to get applicants to register on line.

Following implementation of Homes Direct by Midland Heart, the current Housing Allocation Policy would be reviewed by Officers of the Borough Council and a service level agreement would be agreed following engagement with Aspire Housing and other Registered Housing providers within the Borough.

Members discussed the monitoring statistics that were attached; one question asked related to the large number of exclusions (132 for quarter 1). It was confirmed that the reason for the exclusions was that 114 were excluded for no local connection to Newcastle, as per the eligibility criteria in the policy.

When Aspire Housing managed the housing register they also had a list for all their properties so they accepted applications for Stoke-on-Trent Housing and their new properties that they acquired in Stafford. When Midland Heart took over the contract to manage the Council's housing register, some of the customers for Stoke-on-Trent and Stafford were still coming to NHA. These people, with no local connection, were excluded as per the Council's local connection policy. This had been clarified with Aspire Housing and they were now marketing their own Home Hunt applications process to their customers, resulting in a likely decrease in the number of exclusions in the future quarters.

It was requested that these figures are brought to the Committee quarterly and for Midland Heart to be invited back to Scrutiny on 18th March 2015.

RESOLVED:-

- (a) That the Head of Housing and Regeneration Services distribute flyers to Members informing of the launch on the 24th September 2014.
- (b) That Newcastle Housing Association monitoring statistics are submitted to Scrutiny quarterly.
- (c) That Midland Heart is invited back to the meeting to be held on the 18th March 2015.

5. JOINT HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW

The Head of Housing and Regeneration Services advised on the review of the Joint Housing Allocations Policy and the reasoning behind it.

The Joint Allocations Policy had been operating effectively with Aspire Housing since 2010 and allowed for 75% of Aspire Housing stock to be made available through a Choice Based Letting system. Aspire Housing had made the decision to devise their own policy with their aim to let homes quickly and to offer choice to customers by giving them an opportunity to express their preference for the area and type of housing that they want to live in.

The Policy would still enable an existing Aspire Housing customer, in housing need, to apply to the revised policy and be given reasonable preference.

Concerns were raised about a perception that Aspire Housing were “breaking away” from the Borough Council. It was agreed that these concerns would be raised with Aspire Housing.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Assets advised that he was a Member on the Aspire Board and advised that Aspire Housing wanted to make properties available for single or joint working as a private landlord. It was purely a commercial decision that they chose to not pursue a bid for the NHA contract.

Housing register applications within Homes Direct would be reviewed annually, on the anniversary of their application. Under the current policy, applications were reviewed every six months.

Weekly information on forthcoming vacancies would be published “on line” through the advertisement of properties.

Customers would have the ability to make three bids per weekly cycle with the Homes Direct system. This allowed better management of customers’ applications and monitoring of nominations.

A Member asked what offences would exclude an applicant.

The Head of Housing and Regeneration Services advised that according to legislation certain types of anti-social behaviour, for example, arson would exclude an applicant from applying.

The Localism Act 2011 enabled Local Housing Authorities to better manage their housing register by giving them discretion to determine who could qualify for social housing within their area. For example, soldiers who have left the armed forces within the last two years could apply.

It was proposed that the review of the Joint Allocation Policy be undertaken by a policy review group set up by Officers. The Policy review was scheduled for completion by January 2015. The working group would include Aspire Housing and other Registered Providers within the Borough.

RECOMMENDED:- That Committee receive the report.

6. TOWN CENTRE PARKING

In 2013 the Council received a number of approaches from the business community (via the Town Centre Partnership) to review its town centre parking charges in the hope that concessions may help to generate greater footfall with the consequent benefit to businesses and the overall town centre economy. The Council considered it appropriate to review options and decided upon a range of actions to strike a balance between the potentially adverse impact upon the Council’s revenue budget and the expectation of direct benefit being achieved by town centre businesses.

The Council approved 3 key initiatives; Nipper Parking, Double Ticket refund scheme and Enhanced Free parking days. Alongside an offer from a national supplier of car

park management systems to install, as a 12-month trial, cashless parking with an ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) systems at no cost to the Council.

Members were asked to consider the following alternative options for concessionary parking:-

- a) Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoons requires 23 half days (equivalent to 11.5 days).
- b) Wednesday after 2.00pm could be promoted to tie into the promotion of Christmas late night shopping. This required six full days and six afternoons, however offering the Saturday mornings would be most expensive as this was the peak period. An estimation of the costing was in the region of £10k which would need to be found from another budget.
- c) Every afternoon after 3.00pm could be offered, this would require 35 sessions, there would be a marketing logic to this as it could be easily advertised and understood by customers. There would not be a significant impact on the budget.

Resolved:-

- (a) To extend the successful Double Ticket Refund Scheme on Council maintained car parks.
- (b) That the Town Centre Partnership should be allowed to offer free parking after 3.00pm in the run up to Christmas.

7. THE STOKE-ON-TRENT AND STAFFORDSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP PLANNING CONCORDAT

A report was submitted to advise Members that LEP launched a Planning Charter Mark initiative in February 2012 to encourage its Local Planning Authorities to demonstrate a proactive and business-focussed approach to planning applications.

No formal award of the 'Charter Mark' was subsequently made to any of the Staffordshire Authorities that were part of the LEP. In July 2013 the LEP commissioned the Planning Co-operative consultancy to undertake a review of planning policies and practice across the county. The consultants' final report and recommendations went before the LEP Board at its meeting on the 11th July 2014 and are understood to have been approved.

Members were asked to focus on the four recommendations of the LEP

- Agreeing to actions to undertake those elements of the Concordat which are not currently being provided and implementing these within an agreed timeframe, probably within six months.
- Setting in place monitoring arrangements to provide data, including business customer satisfaction information
- Participating in annual reviews of actions and outcomes

- Contributing to case studies of examples of where a positive and helpful approach had been taken to development proposals.

A Member advised that certain recommendations made by LEP were good

The Executive Director of Planning and Regeneration advised that LEPs were set up as a business-led response to aid economic recovery following the recession caused by the global banking crisis in 2008. The Concordat was an initiative to demonstrate that local the planning authorities are supportive of business growth as a matter of principle (in the manner in which they delivered the service) and that this should be reviewed annually.

The Chair advised that training is vital to every Member not just those on the Planning Committee and everyone should know about planning for their particular area.

Resolved:-

That the LEPs Planning Concordat be commended to Cabinet.

8. NEWCASTLE TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

The latest trading and footfall figures for the Town Centre Partnership were presented, but these statistics were indecipherable to the Committee so it was agreed to postpone discussion to the next meeting.

Resolved:-

That the Town Centre Partnership Manager be invited to the next meeting on the 3rd December 2014 to provide an update on the key performance indicators.

9. KIDSGROVE TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

The revised Action Plan for Kidsgrove Town Centre was presented. However despite requests for attendance neither the Borough Council's representative on the CIC nor the Chair of the CIC were present. As a number of Members had expressed a wish to ask questions of clarification it was decided to postpone discussion on this item to the next meeting.

Resolved:-

- (a) That the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning and Assets ask the Leader of the Newcastle Borough Council to liaise with the Chair.
- (b) That the Chair of Kidsgrove Town Centre CIC be invited to attend the next meeting to be held on the 3rd December 2014.

10. HS2 WORKING GROUP

The Head of Planning Services provided the Committee with a brief update of developments with respect to HS2 Phase 2.

HS2 Limited would be receiving a summary of the different issues the consultation responses contained which they would then use to look at any possible changes to the proposed route before making recommendations to the Secretary of State for Transport. A final route for phase 2 is expected to be announced by the end of 2014.

Resolved:-

To retain the HS2 Working Group and for the Group to meet with Stoke-on-Trent City Council regarding the progress of its proposal for an alternative route.

11. WORK PLAN

Resolved:-

That the following items are added to the work plan:-

Wednesday 3rd December 2014

- Newcastle Town Centre Partnership (Newcastle Town Centre Partnership Manager to be asked to attend)
- Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership (The Chair of Kidsgrove Town Centre Community Interest Company to be asked to attend)
- Councillor Terry Turner (Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic, Regeneration, Business and Town Centres) to be invited for Portfolio Holder Question Time.
- Newcastle Housing Association Quarterly Statistics
- Joint Housing Allocations Policy
- Review of Newcastle's of the World Alliance

12. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions had been received from the public.

13. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

14. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 3rd December 2014, 7.00pm in Committee Room 2.

COUNCILLOR DAVID STRINGER
Chair



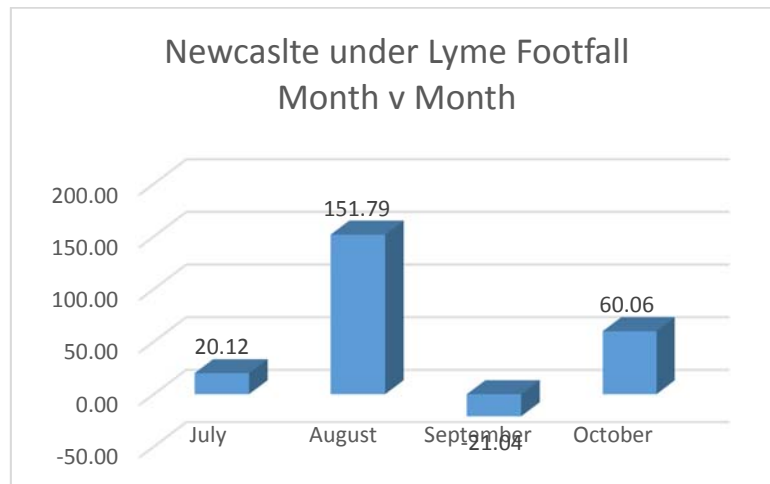
Chairs Report

2014

Quarter 3

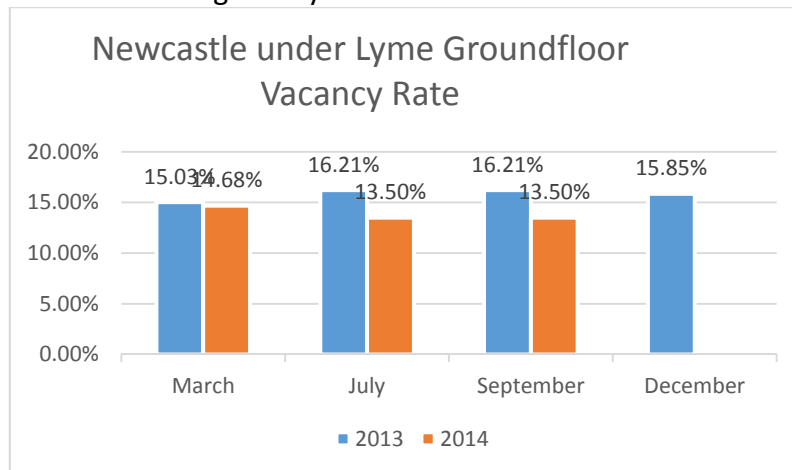
Footfall Monitoring

Newcastle under Lyme Town Centre Partnership footfall counters were fitted in Quarter 2, on the corner of the Iron Market and Castle Walk as this is the first year therefor figures are compared to the previous month.



Property Vacancy Rate

Newcastle under Lyme Town Centre Partnership works closely with landlords, estate agents and Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council on looking at ways to fill vacant units.



The towns' property vacancy rate has seen figures drop by 2.71% in Quarter 3 compared to the same quarter in 2013.

Dragons Den



Natalie Davie, of Newcastle, was given the chance to start her own business after winning Enterprize, a Dragon's Den-style competition run by Newcastle Town Centre Partnership.

Despite various setbacks, the entrepreneur hopes The Grind – an artistic cafe in York Place - has opened in Quarter 4 along with a number of “Pop-up” Stores.

Business Engagement

Town Centre Businesses are kept up to date of all the Newcastle under Lyme Town Centre Partnerships activities via the Talk of The Town Newsletter. This assists businesses in knowing what is coming up and allowing them the opportunity to capitalise on the events as well as getting involved.



Retail Index Scheme

Town centre businesses are encouraged to partake in the retail index scheme allowing them to benchmark themselves against other town centre businesses as well as the national average. This quarter has seen an increase in the number of businesses participating in the scheme.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
CENTRE AVERAGE	91.76	91.29	91.09	91.23	91.85	91.42	90.62	90.56	90.28
NATIONAL AVERAGE	102	100	100	102	101	100	101	102	100

CATEGORY	Jan - Sep Cumulative
CARD RETAIL	98.54
TELEPHONE / ELECTRICAL	100.65
FASHION / CLOTHING	100.05
JEWELLERY	100.56
STATIONERY STORES	100.28
TRAVEL	100.00
FOOD / BAKERY	99.59
HEALTH / TOILETRIES	99.89
SPECIALIST STORES	100.97
MAJOR STORES	101.84
TOWN CENTRE AVERAGE	91.12
NATIONAL AVERAGE	100.88

Newcastle under Lyme Town Centre Partnership Initiatives

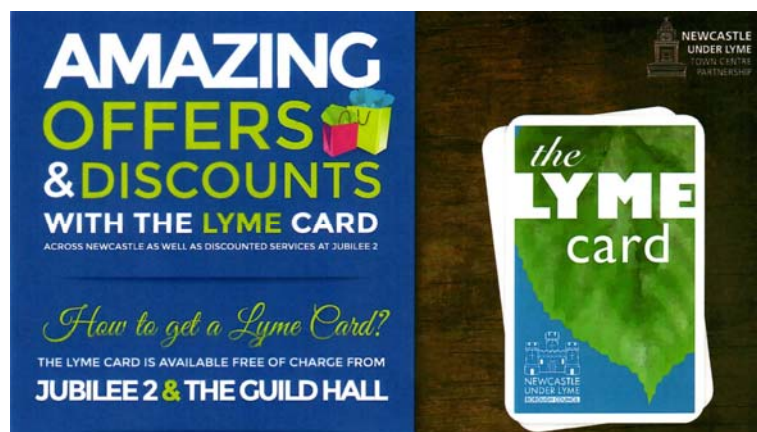
Bottlecap Film Festival

The Town Centre Partnership repeated this popular event with the addition of workshops on film and animation which was attended by four high schools and Newcastle College, a “Hush Hush Cinema” event which saw an attendance of 80 and a sold out awards evening with over 100 people.



Lymecard

The town centre partnership has worked closely with Newcastle Borough Council team in developing and expanding the already existing Lyme Card into a town centre loyalty card. The loyalty card scheme was launched with 22 businesses, and received positive media coverage in Sentinel and Radio Stoke. It is expected to see some additional promotion of the scheme in December.



Newcastle under Lyme Christmas Spectacular

The town centre partnership secured some additional sponsorship from local businesses to deliver what has been perceived by businesses as the best Christmas Event yet. The free parking all weekend strapline saw car parks across the town filled with assistance being provided by Sainsbury's in taking the overflow. Town Centre businesses who opened on the Sunday reported that sales figures exceeded last year's event. The atmosphere created from the event has generated an incredible amount of positive feedback from businesses and visitors to the town centre.

The launch of the Winter Wonderland on the Ryecroft developments opening coincided with the town centre switch on event. The feedback from the event was that it generated a flow for things to do across the whole town. The winter wonderland team reported that they were still busy when the fireworks were launched.



This page is intentionally left blank



Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership Update for Scrutiny December 2014

MARKETING

Regular Newsletters continue to be hand-delivered to every business in Kidsgrove town centre and Butt Lane shops as well as being sent electronically to an e-mailing list of about 80 stakeholders.

Social Networking - a key part of our marketing strategy and we already have over 500 likes for the Go Kidsgrove Facebook Community page and over 110 Go Kidsgrove Twitter followers.

Place Branding Support – following on from our successful application to the Association of Town and City Management (ATCM) for place branding support we are working to develop the 'Go Kidsgrove' brand and are using it across all media platforms wherever possible. Based on their initial research, ATCM identified three key words – leisure, heritage, community - to consider when developing any promotional material.

Website –<http://www.gokidsgrove.co.uk> is now live and the KTCCIC will be canvassing local businesses to become members asking them to pay a £5 annual membership to get an enhanced listing on the website.

EVENTS

Independent Christmas Shopping Challenge 2013 was popular with all participating businesses. A second challenge was also run at Easter. Businesses in Kidsgrove felt that it did have a positive impact on raising awareness about their business and some reported a direct impact in terms of sales. The 2014 Christmas shopping challenge is running from 29th November to 23rd December.

Vintage and Crafts August 2014

Following on from many requests for an Artisan type market in the town centre KTCCIC teamed up local business Lula Bop Vintage to host a Vintage and Craft market on King Street Car Park in the town centre. The event was sufficiently successful to warrant doing it again. The Town Council is considering running a regular craft market at the Victoria Hall so the two organisations will need to work together to maximise the benefits for the town.

Heritage Walks September 2014

We were made aware of Heritage Open Days and with being a town centre packed with heritage we were keen to do something and we felt the best person the job is local published historian Philip Leese and we worked with Philip to host Heritage Walks around the town and along the canal which proved popular. Philip was also involved in the Halloween Trail on 31 Oct and 1st Nov which involved storytellers based in several locations in the town centre telling spooky stories.

Event Promotion

We also continue to promote events by other organisations and we receive regular updates from Kidsgrove Town Council, Kidsgrove Rotary, Kidsgrove Library and Kidsgrove Athletic FC. We have also captured approximately 100 email addresses to circulate regular event updates to.

ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Waterfront Project

From some of our very first meetings it became clear that a project to improve the canal waterfront should be a local priority and we were given Jon Honeysett MBE's plan he developed to provide more moorings, improve lighting and security and access to the towpath. We will be developing these plans through a partnership approach to take forward a scheme.

This project would be consistent with the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Urban Design Guidance that there is a need to 'address and exploit the canal frontage' and 'improve and enhance the quality of pedestrian links to the railway station and canal'.

We have since prepared a clear list of short, mid and long term projects and identified some basic costings and the project has now been put forward for European Regional Development Fund and Local Growth Fund.

Market Street

We were asked from the start to look into the feasibility of making Market Street one way in order to solve the traffic problems along there and after consulting with Staffordshire County Council Highways we have begun the initial consultation with all traders and residents along Market Street to see whether they would be in favour or opposed to a one way system being introduced. If everyone is on favour then we will obviously look into what can be achieved and liaise further with relevant Members and Officers the County Councils Highways department.

Christmas Lights

We have been asked to consult on Kidsgrove's Christmas lights and we have big plans to ensure longevity and growth. We propose to purchase our own lights for the town with funding from local traders and other organisations; this will mean they will be with us year on year and we aim to procure more year on year too. We also propose to use a local company to install and maintain the lights for the festive period making it more sustainable. Also, we propose to add more festive lights in the town centre adjacent to the King Street precinct and a permanent tree in the town centre which will be illuminated during the festive period.

We have started consulting with residents to see whether they would like to sponsor a bulb for £1 in memory of a loved one on the new tree in the town centre and we have already received a lot of positive feedback to this idea; this will obviously provide an income which can be used towards Christmas lights in future.

Agenda Item 5

Newcastle Housing Advice Monitoring – Summary Observations update to Quarter 2 2014/15

Year 2014/15	Q1	Q2
Access		
Calls to service	2481	2975
Housing Options enquiries @ reception	448	415
Housing Register enquiries @ reception	876	1012
Emergency out of hours calls	11	7
Interviews - appointments	143	155
Interviews – walk ins	20*	18
Enquiries/homeless applications	36*	28
Homelessness Decisions	29 (100% in target 33 days)	26 (100% in target 33 days)
Homelessness Preventions	234	143
Temporary Accommodations	3	1
Service standards		
Letters received and responded to within 10 days	21 (100% on target)	21 (100% on target)
Emails received and responded to within 10 days	451	442
Total Housing Register applications received	737 Waiting List 598 Transfers 139	571 Waiting List 365 Transfers 206
Housing Register applications processed in 10 days	100%	100%
Housing Register applications processed in 5 days	n/a	n/a
Housing Register Appeals	14 (100% on target)	10 (100% on target)
Homelessness Decision Appeals	1	1
Complaints	0	1
Medical Applications	72 (100% on target)	42 (100% on target)
Register/ lettings		
Waiting List Applicants	1907	465
Transfer Applicants	398	295
Total Applicants*	2305	760
BME Applicants	95	47
Lettings	196	232
Lettings to BME households	22	20
% of nominations being let	87%	93%
Exclusions	132	39
Sensitive Lets	2	0

* Homes direct CBL introduced 1.8.14 – This total is from the HD system at 1.10.14 following phase 1 of re-registration. Higher exclusions in quarter 1 were due to applicants not having a local connection and being signposted to apply direct to Registered Providers.

Focus is on supporting older people to apply for housing on-line.

This page is intentionally left blank

Report to the Report to the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3rd December 2014

Report on Joint Housing Allocations Policy Review Progress



Report Author: Joanne Halliday
Job Title: Head of Housing and Regeneration
Email: joanne.halliday@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk
Telephone: 01782 742451

Introduction

In September Scrutiny Committee Members approved a review of the Joint Housing Allocations Policy. This report provides an update on the review progress and outlines the main findings.

Background

Under Part V1 of the Housing Act 1996 local authorities are required to have an Allocations policy and procedure in place to allocate social housing and under Part V11 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002) to make provision for homeless households.

The Housing Allocations Policy is used alongside the newly implemented Homes Direct, ICT system to determine how social housing to which the Council has nomination rights is allocated.

Questions to be Addressed

Consultation

As part of the September Scrutiny meeting it was agreed that officers would seek a range of views on the Allocation Policy to take account of views of partners, members and customers. Officers have been involved in detailed discussions with Registered Providers to which the Council has nomination rights; this has included one to one meetings and a group discussion at the Lettings Forum. Agencies which support vulnerable people to access housing have also been consulted including a discussion at the Homeless Forum. Consideration has also been given to recent case law on allocations and recent requests for register reviews to ensure the review covers the relevant areas.

An on-line survey has also been developed to seek views this has been promoted to partner agencies and is on the Homes Direct website so that customers see this when they are looking for housing. The information outlined below includes the initial findings from this survey, which concludes on 15th December.

Proposed revisions within the Joint Allocations Policy

A) Fair assessment of Aspire Tenants and other Registered Provider Tenants

Changes have been requested that the policy would still enable an existing Aspire Housing customer in housing need to apply to the revised policy and be given reasonable preference; however they would not be given any additional priority and would be banded like any other Registered Provider customer, for example, a Staffordshire Housing Association customer needing a new home.

Following discussions with registered providers this is seen to be the most equitable approach and can be easily explained to all customers in that all tenants of affordable housing are assessed on an equitable basis and that they are prioritised under their own landlords transfer policy.

Subject to approval this will result in the policy stating that:

- ❖ Registered Provider tenants who are under-occupying their accommodation by two or more bedrooms or who have an adapted property that they no longer need
- ❖ Preference System customers with enhanced banding (all Registered Provider tenants will be assessed equally)
- ❖ Registered Provider tenants who have been assessed and notified at the end of their fixed term tenancy due to inappropriate size of accommodation
- ❖ Registered Provider tenants who are under-occupying their home by one bedroom
- ❖ Registered Provider tenants households with children under 5 occupying a 2nd floor flat (or above)

Aspire Housing also requested the removal of their tenants who had no housing need from band 7. This aligns to the Aspire preferred approach to managing their stock effectively and prioritising those in need. Whilst this is supported by Aspire Housing, officers would like to see the final outcome of the survey to ensure the views of tenants are taken into account and whether other Registered Landlords also wish the policy changes to include their tenants.

B) Proposed changes to administering the Housing Register

The move to the "Homes Direct" system in August 2014 enabled officers to review some of the administration processes of the Housing Register. One of the key issues for the consultation is the extent of choice of accommodation, i.e. the number of properties an applicant can express interest in per week. The present Joint Allocation Policy gives applicants the freedom to make unlimited bids, which allows applicants the ability to express interest in all properties. The new system does however have the ability to make three bids per weekly cycle; this may allow better management of customers applications and monitoring of nominations. Officers have investigated the issues surrounding this and the

new system has one main advantage in that once someone has been offered a property they are then unable to see further vacant properties. This means that it is clear to the staff which properties are ready to offer to the applicants and correct advice can be given to applicants. This will reduce the likelihood of complaints or dissatisfied applicants pursuing their case with the ombudsman as previously occurred on occasions.

Officers therefore believe that offering unlimited bids should continue within the new policy, this is supported through the initial consultation responses.

C) Member request – Local Connection

The Joint Allocation Policy is fully compliant with current legislation however there has been recent guidance to suggest that Local Authorities review their Local Connection criteria. The current policy has local connection criteria, with only applicants requiring sheltered accommodation and may need to move closer to the Borough to receive support being allowed onto the register in band 7.

This issue has been included in the consultation survey, whilst some may see that there are advantages in the Council accepting applicants without a local connection and that they should be allowed to access housing which local people don't want there is an important resource issue. The current policy focuses on applicants with a local connection so that staff resources at Newcastle Housing Advice can be focussed. If the policy was to be extended then these resources would need to be shared across the range of applicants resulting in local people receiving less of a service, It may also result in Midland Heart requiring additional contract fees to cover the costs of assisting a new group of non-local customers.

At present those without a local connection are advised to apply to Registered Providers directly, this is in line with most local authority policies and this approach can continue.

Officers therefore recommend that the current local connection criteria is maintained.

D) Member requests – Ex-Service Personnel

The Council supports the Armed Forces Community Covenant which seeks to support Ex-Service Personnel settle back into the community following active service. The covenant seeks to aid rehousing including those repatriating back to the area. Officers have reviewed the current allocations policy; this covers service personnel and enables the appropriate banding to meet their housing needs. The continuation of this is recommended for the revised policy.

E) Member requests - Equity

At the Scrutiny meeting Members requested that the review consider the Equity approach and to assess if the equity thresholds should be amended. As part of the review officers have considered complaints and operation of the thresholds, where there are greater housing needs such as health and safety risks due to tenants living in a home with serious disrepair then individual cases can be assessed. Officers believe that the number of people affected is minimal and that often they can be rehoused from a lower band, therefore it is appropriate that those with financial assets are a lower priority than those without.

Outcomes

Members of the Scrutiny Committee are requested to provide comment on the Allocation Policy Review progress and are requested to direct any further comments or questions to Officers of the Borough Council.

Constraints

The Council has the option to adopt changes to the policy and supporting policies and protocols that will assist in the operation of Newcastle's Homes Direct scheme.

It is not intended to complete a wholesale review of the policy and as such there has been no additional funding allocated. Officers and Midland Heart will be discussing issues raised through the consultation to ascertain whether it is possible to make minor changes to the policy without incurring financial costs with the Homes Direct ICT system provider (Abitas).

Conclusions

Subject to Members views officers will commence discussions with Midland Heart and Abitas to ascertain whether there will be any financial implications of the proposed changes. These will need to be taken into account prior to any Cabinet review of the recommendations.

Relevant Portfolio Holder(s)

Councillor John Williams – Planning and Assets

Councillor Tony Kearon – Safer Communities

Background documentation

The survey is available on the Homes Direct website or from Housing Strategy on request.

Report to the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3rd December 2014

Review of Newcastle's of the World Alliance



Report Author: *Joanne Halliday*
Job Title: *Head of Housing and Regeneration*
Email: *joanne.halliday@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk*
Telephone: *01782 742451*

Introduction

The Council has been a member of the Newcastle's of the World Alliance since inception and in March 2013 agreed to contribute up to £2,500 per annum towards the costs of a secretariat to coordinate the work of the alliance at and between summits (met from the existing budget).

In light of the Council's broad financial position it is important to ensure that resources are directed to activities which deliver priority outcomes consistent with corporate objectives. It is therefore appropriate that the Scrutiny Committee reviews the membership of the Alliance.

Background

The Council has been a member of the 'Newcastles of the World' partnership since 1998 and has attended the biennial summit on most occasions since. Prior to the 2012 summit, very little practical action has taken place to establish tangible benefits from the participants' involvement, other than the biennial gathering which has tended to focus upon cultural, educational and tourism issues. The most notable activities have related to pockets of activity in relation to educational links.

However, Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council sought to re-energise and re-focus the Alliance in response to the "Joint Declaration" that was signed at the end of the 2012 summit. Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council has provided a secretariat role, setting up a website (www.newcastlesoftheworld.com), producing a quarterly newsletter and creating a Facebook page and Twitter account.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council also produced a development plan indicating the minimum recommended requirements to underpin success in delivering the aims of the Alliance as follows:

- A regularly updated website supported by other social media – (in place but needs to be promoted more and the functionality improved)
- A regular newsletter (which includes stories from the Borough)
- Regular contact between the political leadership
- A contact person responsible for regular communications and links, and whose work is endorsed and supported by the political leadership.
- A Newcastle's of the World central coordinator to link the leaders and contacts, and to oversee the work of the alliance.

- Champions, or lead members, for each major initiative or project.
- Regular funds that can be drawn upon to support activity.
- A forward programme for the hosting of future summits.

The Newcastle's of the World Alliance Declaration 2014 highlights nine key commitments:

1. To implement the paid secretariat to take forward the actions.
2. To share information and best practice on a range of common issues including employment, young people, affordable housing, older people, town centres, historic buildings and sustainability.
3. To improve communications between the Newcastles
4. Create a shared tourism strategy and city branding
5. Encourage opportunities between businesses
6. Pursue EU and international funding
7. Support youth involvement through the youth conference
8. Develop educational, cultural and business links
9. To welcome and accept the invitation by Newcastle, Ontario to host the tenth conference in 2016.

Questions to be Addressed

In line with the 2012 and 2014 Declarations there was a commitment to have a paid Secretariat commencing early 2015. The Secretariat role based on 15 hours per week enables clear accountability for delivering the bi-annual summit event and the range of activities listed in the declaration have greater likelihood of being delivered with a paid officer. Without the services of a formal secretariat, it is unlikely that the Alliance can progress any actions (a view that is corroborated by the limited evidence of tangible outcomes before 2012).

The Council has committed to the first years membership in 2015. If the Council were to consider a second year's payment in January 2016 this would need to be considered by Cabinet in February as part of the 2015/16 budget setting process. This would mean that Scrutiny would be reviewing whether the Council should continue supporting the paid Secretariat, prior to commencement on the post. Officers have therefore requested that the first years payment covers 2015/16 and thus enabling Scrutiny to have a more thorough review in December 2016.

The indicative amounts from each Newcastle so far (expressed in Euros) are:

Switzerland 8000€

SA 5000€

Germany 1500€

Japan 1500€

Newcastle on Tyne 3000€ (plus administrative support and on-costs such as office accommodation)

Latvia 1000€

Nove Hardy 1000€

Newcastle-under-Lyme 3000€

A response from Canada is expected shortly

The Alliance has asked the Council to consider the above development plan and 2014 Declaration in order that we can prioritise actions for the Secretariat. By highlighting which areas of work the Council considers to be important or of added value this will enable the Council to review progress in the December 2015 review.

Scrutiny may consider that the potential benefits are in sharing information and best practice, and maybe developing some collaborative work in the following areas:

- Maintaining the vitality of our town and district centres
- Challenges of an ageing population
- Strengthening civic identity
- Affordable Housing
- Reducing inequalities and improving cohesion between communities
- New uses for old and/or historic buildings
- Environmental sustainability including increasing recycling
- Connecting with citizens to improve communication, involvement and support (including young people)
- If the Alliance was able to develop suitable EU funding applications then the benefit could be greater and more direct.

Membership of the Alliance needs to take into account the potential outcomes and the resource implications, set in the context of the Council Plan, Service Strategies and Plans and associated revenue budgets. Clearly with all areas of work there is a decision as to what level of resources are invested and this usually takes into consideration the likely outcome and benefits. The review may also wish to consider the different approaches taken by other Newcastle and if those investing greater resources receive proportionally more benefit or if those smaller Newcastle investing less are treated equally.

To assess whether this should be a corporate priority and represents value for money then Members may consider the extent to which the main aspects benefit the Council. In terms of economic development it is very difficult to assess if any business has or would be set up between one or more of the Newcastle as the reasons for trade are much greater than any good will created through such twinning arrangements. Clearly there are some educational benefits and the Alliance is capable of generating and sharing learning about culture and geography, however education is not a responsibility of a Borough Council. Outside of the summits there is potential to market the areas for tourism, through a well presented linked website there may be opportunities to encourage residents of other Newcastle to visit our Borough; the number of visits generated through this mechanism may however be small. The Alliance does provide cultural links and raise awareness of our heritage; the Alliance may therefore be comparable with agencies supported through cultural grants. Cultural grants have been reduced to be a maximum of £1,200 and have to take place within the borough to ensure that there is a local benefit for the financial investment.

Subject to Members views there are 2 main questions:

- 1) Does the Council want to honour the commitment to the first year's membership and complete a proper review of the paid secretariat in December 2015 or do Members wish to cease membership now.**
- 2) If a review in December 2015 is preferred, what actions do Scrutiny wish the Secretariat to focus upon and is membership at £2,500 considered to be an appropriate contribution?**

Members are asked to consider if these options are appropriate so that the Alliance can be notified early in 2015.

Outcomes

It is anticipated that the views of the Scrutiny will be taken forward to a future Cabinet meeting for a formal decision to be made as to whether the Council should remain an active partner within the Alliance.

Constraints

The main constraint is resources.

At present there is budgetary provision of £3,000 in the council's base revenue budget. There would be a modest in-kind cost of providing ongoing officer support which would be achieved by re-prioritising the work programme of the Regeneration team. There has been some in-kind support provided by past Mayors and, on two occasions, by his partner but that cannot be assumed or relied upon for future years.

The part-time secretariat from Newcastle-upon-Tyne of 15 hours per week would cost this Council £2,500 p.a. This cost is calculated based on the size of the town, with larger donations from Switzerland, South Africa and continuing in-kind support from Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

The Council has previously committed to the first year's membership and officers have requested that although the money is from the 2014/15 budget that this is carried forward to the 2015/16 year to enable the Secretariat to commence in early 2015 and for the evaluation to include a period where the post has been operation. In these circumstances there would be no additional budgetary requirement for 2015/16.

As part of the 2014 Declaration it was agreed 'To implement the funding arrangement, as agreed between us, at the earliest possible date which will provide resources to establish a paid secretariat - responsible for taking forward this agreed plan of action'. In order to progress this, the alliance is looking for a 4 year commitment with right to review mid-term, however officers have discussed the need to complete a review prior to paying the second year's fees (i.e. before the 2016/17 budget setting).

In terms of involvement with the bi-annual Conference the main costs comprise the delegate fee of about £700 along with the cost of transport (in most cases likely to involve flights). In the past this Council has generally funded two or three official delegate places although some representatives have self-funded their attendance.

Conclusions

Does Scrutiny wish to review the progress of the Secretariat in December 2015 to enable an assessment after 6 months of operation?

Relevant Portfolio Holder(s)

Economic Development, Planning and Town Centres

Local Ward Member (if applicable)

N/A

Background documentation (available on request)

Newcastle's of the World Alliance Declaration 2014
Job description of the Secretariat

Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee – 3 December 2014

Portfolio Holder Question Time

The following information outlines the main activities that the Portfolio Holder has chosen to highlight as having been undertaken over the past year. Members are asked to submit any questions to the Scrutiny Officer (Member Services team) at least **3 days prior to the Scrutiny meeting**.

1. Newcastle Town Centre Public Realm (Street Market) project – this year has seen the completion of the scheme with the successful pedestrianisation of Hassell Street to improve the pedestrian movements to the lower end of the town along with the introduction of a day time taxi rank. In conjunction with this the Council has delivered the key element of the scheme, the new market stalls, in a consolidated section of the High Street which not only provides new structures for market trading but has greatly enhanced the visual appearance of this part of the High Street. A market fun day was held in September to promote the new market and to celebrate the history of the market charters.
2. Ryecroft retail-led redevelopment scheme – the Council continues to work with the County Council to secure a long term use for the Ryecroft site as this is a key site for the future economic well-being of the town centre. Through utilising specialist advice the Council has undertaken a procurement process which is leading to the selection of a preferred developer. To deliver a successful redevelopment will require significant resources and time for the preferred developer to secure planning permission and a construction contract. This matter is the subject of a separate specific agenda item at this meeting.

In the meantime an opportunity has arisen to utilise the vacant site of the former store building (following its demolition) to support the town centre and encourage footfall to local businesses. Temporary permission has therefore been granted to a private company to operate the Winter Wonderland. This is a new initiative for the area and complements the Christmas activities operating in the town centre.

3. Town Centre Partnerships – the Council has continued to actively support both the Newcastle and Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnerships and members will note that there is a separate agenda item providing more detailed information about the performance of the said partnerships. Nevertheless I have summarised some key headlines below:

The Newcastle TCP has delivered a wide range of activities in line with their business plan; this has included the Jazz and Blues Festival, Lymelight Music Festival, Global Groove and a weekend of activities around the Christmas Lights switch on. Working in partnership the Council has allowed free parking for major events and after 3pm for Christmas and a new customer loyalty scheme has been launched with the Lymecard.

Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership has established a membership scheme and is launching a website. They have developed the “GO Kidsgrove” brand and delivered Christmas, Easter and Halloween events linking to local businesses.

4. The Homecoming new circus event – specific Council support was given to deliver this event. Officer time was supported the Newcastle Town Centre Partnership with a successful Arts Council bid which helped to deliver a totally different visitor experience and cultural offer for local residents. By offering some officer support and minimal financial support (£1,000) this demonstrated that such events (costing nearly £20,000) can be delivered by effective partnership working.
5. Business Boost competition 2014 – another successful competition and awards event was held at the Keele Sustainability Hub. By using Council officer resources the Business Boost awards are able to offer advice and financial support through private sponsorship, to local businesses that show the potential to develop. This year the scheme was expanded to include a town centre customer excellence award. The Business Boost scheme gives a unique opportunity to promote and support Newcastle based businesses.
6. Town Centre subway improvements – through section 106 agreement funding structural repairs and visual improvements have been made to two key subways in Newcastle town centre. Ryecroft subway refurbishment has been completed with modern colourful artwork through design workshops with St John Fisher School and completion of Bridge Street subway has been painted with heritage murals which has generated great local interest.
7. Education Business Partnership – through the Council’s aims to support local business growth and ensure young people can access employment opportunities the Council is seeking to strengthen links between educational establishments and employers. Working with the City Council and the LEP there are plans to establish a North Staffordshire Education Business Partnership. Locality projects will be established with local schools to link them to local businesses, thus increasing the aspirations of the young students to seek a career with a local business and to consider more appropriate and targeted qualifications.
8. Inward Investment – seeking inward investment is a key priority for the Borough and by working with the Stoke and Staffordshire Make It team the Council is able to have inward investment brochures and advice to companies looking to relocate or develop within the area.
9. Business support – working with Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce to signpost businesses to the Business Helpline and access to Advisors on 0300 111 8002. The Chamber can direct businesses to training and support plus any regional or national funding opportunities such as the current Regional Growth Fund which will provide gap funding for existing companies that wish to expand or invest to create sustainable jobs, where this investment would otherwise not happen due to lack of available finance.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank



Members: Robert Wallace, Sophia Baker, Sandra Simpson, William Welsh, Mark Holland, David Loades, Ian Matthews, Ian Wilkes and Ken Owen

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

Chair: Councillor David Stringer
Vice Chair: Councillor Mrs Gill Williams

Portfolio Holder(s) covering the Committee's remit:

Councillor Terry Turner (Economic Regeneration, Business and Town Centres)
Councillor John Williams (Planning and Assets)

Work Plan correct as at: Friday 21st November 2014

Remit:

Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee is responsible for:

- Building Control
- Design and Heritage Champion
- Economic Development
- External Regeneration Funding
- Housing and Homelessness
- Inward Investment/Marketing
- Land and Property (Asset Management)
- Local Enterprise Partnership
- Planning Policy and Development Control
- Transport Strategy and Policy (Planning)

Date of Meeting	Item	Reason for Undertaking
2nd July 014 (agenda dispatch 20th June 2014)	Superfast Broadband	Paul Chatwin to attend to advise on progress
	Town Centre Partnership Plans	To be given an update on the Newcastle and Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership's Business Plans as agreed on the Action Plan (10.09.13)
	Ryecroft	To provide a written position statement on developments
	Newcastle Economic Development Strategy – Year Three Action Plan and Year Two Review	To receive feedback from the Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday 18 June 2014
	Work Plan and Scrutiny Topics for 2014/2015	To discuss the work plan and potential topics that Committee members would like to scrutinise over the forthcoming year
3rd September 2014 (agenda dispatch 22nd August 2014)	HS2 Working Party	Response to the Government consultation on High Speed Rail: Investing in Britain's Future – Consultation on the route from the West Midlands to Manchester, Leeds and beyond (HS2 Phase 2). Recommendations of the Working Group were submitted to Council on the 27 November 2013
	Newcastle Housing Advice Contract Progress	The service was contracted to Midland Heart from 1 April 2014, it is appropriate that Scrutiny consider the progress made in implementing the new service
	Housing Allocations Policy Review	The Council had a joint allocations policy with Aspire Housing, they have now implemented their own Policy and it is appropriate for Scrutiny to consider reviewing the Council's Policy and if to commence consultation on possible changes
	Local Enterprise Partnership Planning Charter	To provide an update on the proposals on the steps that were likely to be required to achieve Planning Charter Mark Status in 2013
	Newcastle Town Centre Partnership	That the Key Performance Indicators listed below are presented to the next Scrutiny meeting on Wednesday 3 September 2014:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footfall monitoring • Property Vacancy Rate • Trading figures
	Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership	That a report is submitted by the Council's Board of representative for Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership outlining progress to date on the projects discussed at Scrutiny on 2 July 2014

Date of Meeting	Item	Reason for Undertaking
3rd September 2014 (agenda dispatch 22nd August 2014) Con t'd ...	Town Centre Parking	The Council approved a range of car parking schemes in 2013 to support the economic development of the town centre. It is appropriate that Scrutiny considers progress in implementing these and makes recommendations to the October Cabinet on car parking concessions going forward
	Work Plan and Scrutiny Topics for 2014/2015	To discuss the work plan and potential topics that Committee members would like to scrutinise over the forthcoming year
3rd December 2014 (agenda dispatch 21st November 2014)	Newcastle Town Centre Partnership	That the Key Performance Indicators listed below are presented to Scrutiny:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footfall monitoring • Property Vacancy Rate • Trading Figures
	Kingsgrove Town Centre Partnership	That the Chair of Kingsgrove Town Centre CIC be invited to discuss progress
	Review of Newcastle's of the World Alliance	As a member of the Newcastle's Alliance it is appropriate that the Council considers priorities for the forthcoming Business Plan and future membership
	Newcastle Housing Advice Contract Monitoring	The quarterly performance statistics are reported for information and any variances will be highlighted for consideration
	Joint Housing Allocations Policy Review	In September Scrutiny Members approved a review of the Joint Housing Allocations Policy. An update on the review progress and outline the main findings are to be reported for consideration
	Ryecroft Regeneration and Redevelopment Project	To provide a written position statement on developments
	Portfolio Holder Question Time	Councillor Terry Turner invited to attend. An opportunity for the Committee to question the Portfolio Holder on his priorities and work objectives for the next six months and an opportunity to address any issues or concerns that he may currently be facing. It is also an opportunity for the Portfolio Holder to flag up areas within his remit that may benefit from scrutiny in the future
	Work Plan and Scrutiny Topics for 2014/2015	To discuss the work plan and potential topics that Committee members would like to scrutinise over the forthcoming year

18th March 2015 (agenda dispatch 6th March 2015)	Newcastle Economic Development Strategy – Year Four Action Plan and Year Three Review	
	Newcastle Housing Advice Contract Progress	A representative from Midland Heart to be invited to provide an update on the service
	Newcastle Housing Advice Contract Monitoring	The quarterly performance statistics are reported for information and any variances will be highlighted for consideration
	Newcastle Housing Advice Service	The Head of Housing and Regeneration Services to provide quarterly monitoring statistics
	Housing Capital Programme	Each year the Council considers which housing schemes to allocate funding to, it is appropriate for Scrutiny to consider the draft proposals prior to Cabinet
	Work Plan and Scrutiny Topics for 2014/2015	To discuss the work plan and potential topics that Committee members would like to scrutinise over the forthcoming year
	Annual Work Plan	To receive outcomes and recommendations of the topics reported during the past twelve months

Task and Finish Groups:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HS2
Future Task and Finish Groups:	
Suggestions for Potential Future Items:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Infrastructure Levy • Superfast Broadband (Paul Chatwin to be invited back to the first meeting of 2015)

DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS:	Wednesday 3 rd September, 7.00pm in the Committee Room 2
	Wednesday 3 rd December 2014, 7.00pm in the Committee Room 2
	Wednesday 18 th March 2015, 7.00pm in the Committee Room 2

ADDITIONAL/JOINT MEETINGS:	Joint meeting with Finance, Resources and Partnership Scrutiny Tuesday 16th December 2014, 7.00pm, Council Chamber to discuss the Asset Management Strategy
-----------------------------------	---

	Joint meeting with Finance, Resources and Partnership Scrutiny to be arranged to discuss the Ryecroft Regeneration and Redevelopment Project
--	--

DATES AND TIMES OF CABINET MEETINGS:	Wednesday 18 June 2014, 7.00pm, Committee Room 1
	Wednesday 23 July 2014, 7.00pm, Committee Room 1
	Wednesday 10 September 2014, 7.00pm, Committee Room 1
	Wednesday 15 October 2014, 7.00pm, Committee Room 1
	Wednesday 12 November 2014, 7.00pm, Committee Room 1
	Wednesday 14 January 2015, 7.00pm, Committee Room 1
	Wednesday 4 February 2015, 7.00pm, Committee Room 1 (BUDGET)
	Wednesday 25 March 2015, 7.00pm, Committee Room 1
Wednesday 24 June 2015, 7.00pm, Committee Room 1	

This page is intentionally left blank