

Public Document Pack

Date of meeting **Wednesday, 25th March, 2015**
Time **7.00 pm**
Venue **Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, Merrial Street,
Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 2AG**
Contact **Julia Cleary**

Cabinet

AGENDA

PART 1 – OPEN AGENDA

- 1** **Apologies**
- 2** **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
To receive declarations of interest from Members on items included in the agenda.
- 3** **MINUTES** **(Pages 5 - 10)**
To consider the minutes of the previous meeting.
- 4** **Petition from Residents regarding Land at the Butts, Betley** **(Pages 11 - 18)**
- 5** **Establishment of a Cabinet Panel - Capital** **(Pages 19 - 22)**
- 6** **Establishment of a Cabinet Panel - Concurrent Funding** **(Pages 23 - 26)**
- 7** **Housing Allocations Policy Review** **(Pages 27 - 32)**
- 8** **Staffordshire Compact** **(Pages 33 - 38)**
- 9** **Financial Inclusion Update** **(Pages 39 - 46)**
- 10** **Communications Strategy 2015 -2018** **(Pages 47 - 70)**
- 11** **Newcastle Partnership - Accountable Body** **(Pages 71 - 88)**
- 12** **Newcastle Economic Development Strategy: Year Three
Review and Year Four Action Plan** **(Pages 89 - 96)**
- 13** **Locality Action Partnerships (LAPS) - Further Development** **(Pages 97 - 104)**
- 14** **Discretionary Rate Relief** **(Pages 105 - 112)**
- 15** **Irrecoverable items** **(Pages 113 - 114)**
- 16** **EXCLUSION RESOLUTION**

To resolve that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Appendix A of the Irrecoverable Items report because it is likely that there will be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

17 Irrecoverable Items Appendix A - Restricted (Pages 115 - 116)

18 URGENT BUSINESS

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

19 ATTENDANCE AT CABINET MEETINGS

Councillor attendance at Cabinet meetings:

- (1) The Chair or spokesperson of the Council's scrutiny committees and the mover of any motion referred to Cabinet shall be entitled to attend any formal public meeting of Cabinet to speak.
- (2) Other persons including non-executive members of the Council may speak at such meetings with the permission of the Chair of the Cabinet.

Public attendance at Cabinet meetings:

- (1) If a member of the public wishes to ask a question(s) at a meeting of Cabinet, they should serve two clear days' notice in writing of any such question(s) to the appropriate committee officer.
- (2) The Council Leader as Chair of Cabinet is given the discretion to waive the above deadline and assess the permissibility of the question(s). The Chair's decision will be final.
- (3) The maximum limit is three public questions at any one Cabinet meeting.
- (4) A maximum limit of three minutes is provided for each person to ask an initial question or make an initial statement to the Cabinet.
- (5) Any questions deemed to be repetitious or vexatious will be disallowed at the discretion of the Chair.

Members: Councillors Mrs Beech, Kearon, Turner, Stubbs (Chair), Williams, Mrs Shenton (Vice-Chair) and Hambleton

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.

CABINET

Wednesday, 4th February, 2015

Present:- Councillor Mike Stubbs – in the Chair

Councillors Mrs Beech, Kearon, Turner, Williams, Mrs Shenton and Hambleton

1. **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies

2. **MINUTES**

The Leader passed on his and other Members condolences regarding the sad passing of Cllr Mrs Heames.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources highlighted that an amendment was required in relation to the council tax base listed in the minutes for Loggerheads; the figure should have read 1859.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources also confirmed that where fees and charges required consultation this had concluded and all responses had been considered by the appropriate Committees. The original fees proposed in relation to private hire operator licences were reaffirmed by the Public Protection Committee.

Resolved: a) That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record with the highlighted amended.

b) That Cabinet note the decision of the Public Protection Committee in relation to the private hire operator fees.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **BUDGET PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 3 2014-2015**

A report was submitted to provide Cabinet with the Financial and Performance Review report - third quarter 2014/15.

The Financial and Performance Management monitoring reports provided information on a quarterly basis regarding the performance of individual council services, alongside related financial information on the organisation.

The report had originally been presented to the Finance, Resources & Partnerships Scrutiny (FRAPS) Committee meeting on 21 January 2015.

The relevant portfolio holders provided feedback on their areas including household waste figures and recent planning appeals.

Resolved:

(a) That Members note the contents of the attached report and agrees to the recommendation that the Council continues to monitor and scrutinise performance alongside the latest financial information for the same period.

(b) That Members note the comments made through the Scrutiny process and the responses from officers and others to these comments.

5. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS AND COUNCIL TAX 2015/16

A report was submitted to enable Cabinet to recommend the 2015/16 General Fund Revenue Budget and the 2015/16 Capital Programme to the Full Council, meeting on 25 February 2015.

The Leader introduced Cllr Paul Waring who was Chair of the Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee. Cllr Waring provided feedback from the Budget Scrutiny Café and the discussions held by the scrutiny committee in relation to the budget at meetings held on 16th December, 21st January 2015 and 13th January 2015.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report and thanked the scrutiny committee and Cllr Waring for all the work that had been carried out.

The Portfolio holder outlined a set of measures which had been considered to make savings in staffing related budgets. This was made up of the following specific savings:

Long service awards	£13,000
Evening meeting allowances	£18,000
Reduction of car mileage rates (to HMRC mileage rates)	£19,000
Staff car parking	£58,000 (based upon £1 per day charge)

It is the Cabinet's view that whilst making a car parking charge remains an option they are minded not to recommend this to Council as the required saving of £50,000 could be achieved from the other three measures.

The portfolio holder also thanked the Executive Director for Resources and Support Services and his team for their hard and productive work.

Resolved:

a) That the 2015/16 General Fund Revenue Budget as detailed in the report to Cabinet dated 14 January 2015 with the addition of the changes set out in paragraph 1.2 of this report and the package of measures in respect of staffing related budgets be recommended to Full Council for approval.

b) That the Capital Programme 2015/16 as detailed in the report to Cabinet dated 14 January 2015 be recommended to Full Council for approval.

c) That Cabinet recommend to Full Council that a budget of £139,280 be approved in respect of Keele master-planning costs to be funded from an earmarked reserve established by transferring an equivalent amount into it from the General

Fund revenue account, being the estimated council tax surplus of £139,280 which will be credited to the revenue account in 2015/16.

6. TEMPORARY EXTENSION TO MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL SERVICES CONTRACT

A report was submitted to report the decision of the Executive Director, Operational Services and the Portfolio Holders for Finance and Resources and Leisure and Culture to award a temporary extension to Lorne Stewart in relation to the mechanical and electrical maintenance contract at Jubilee2.

Resolved:

That Cabinet notes the decision of the Executive Director, Operational Services and the Portfolio Holders for Finance and Resources and Leisure and Culture to award a temporary extension to Lorne Stewart in relation to the mechanical and electrical maintenance contract at Jubilee2

7. DEVELOPMENT OF LOCALITY COMMISSIONING

A report was submitted to seek Cabinet approval for the in principle appointment of NULBC as the accountable body for locality commissioning in the Borough, involving a number of commissioning organisations from the public sector. The report also requested Cabinet approval for the development of a Memorandum of Understanding with commissioning partners setting out the details of the accountable body role in this context, pending a full risk assessment of the role. Finally, the report sought authorisation for the Chief Executive to agree to the transfer of Public Health funding from Staffordshire County Council under the terms of this in principle agreement.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

a) Approve the in principle appointment of NULBC as the accountable body for the purposes of locality commissioning as set out in this report, pending the development of a Memorandum of Understanding between partners and the completion of a risk assessment into the implications of assuming the role of accountable body in this context

b) Authorises the Chief Executive, on behalf of NULBC, to sign the letter dated 1st December 2014 from Staffordshire County Council (found at Appendix A), thereby authorising the transfer of £226,789 from SCC to NULBC for the purposes of locality commissioning, and adding to the other funding areas dedicated to locality commissioning (see Appendix B)

c) Agrees to the presentation of a further report at the Cabinet meeting of 25th March 2015 setting out the results of the risk assessment and proposals based on these results around NULBC becoming the accountable body for locality commissioning in the Borough. This will include a process for the review of locality commissioning before the end of the 2015/16 financial year to understand lessons learnt.

8. AWARD OF DOMESTIC ENERGY SAVING SERVICE CONTRACT

A report was submitted to seek approval to enter into a contract with Climate Energy Ltd to deliver a Domestic Energy Saving Service.

Cllr Naylor had submitted a question in relation to this item:

I welcome the proposal to enter a contract with Climate Energy Ltd to deliver a Domestic Energy Saving Service. As an early adopter of the Green Deal process I wanted to ask Cabinet about how the funding for householders wanting to get involved with Green Deal will be met

When I arranged a Green Deal assessment a few years ago it cost me £150. I'm assuming there is still the same need for this fee to be paid over to assessors.

Will this be paid on behalf of the householder? Would Climate Energy Ltd be paying all the Green Deal fees across the Borough?

The Portfolio Holder responded to the question and thanked Cllr Naylor for her support for the proposed contract to deliver a Domestic Energy Saving Service.

As indicated in the report the Service would, where possible, use government and energy company funds to provide subsidised energy improvements. The promotion of these grants to ensure residents are able to access them was a major objective of the scheme. Initially all customers would be offered comprehensive advice as to the most cost-effective option available to them to improve the energy efficiency of their dwelling. If they wished to take up any improvement measures a specialist energy surveyor would be required to visit and review the property resulting in the production of a report.

Where the improvements could be fully funded from grants the surveyor would provide an Energy Performance Certificate free of charge. It was expected that this would be the case for the majority of customers. However, where a customer was required to use their own funds and wished to apply for a Green Deal loan, the surveyor would need to produce a more detailed Green Deal Plan.

The cost of preparing a Green Deal Plan could be up to £150. Climate Energy, the service provider, had agreed to subsidise this and the cost would be £49. This, they suggest, would not deter genuinely interested customers but would reduce the risk of undertaking costly abortive surveys.

The Leader expressed his thanks for the report.

Resolved:

To award the Domestic Energy Saving Service contract to Climate Energy Ltd to start in February 2015 for a two year period with the option to offer two one year extensions subject to successful service delivery.

9. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR MIKE STUBBS

Chair

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NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO COUNCIL

25TH MARCH 2015

PETITION FROM RESIDENTS REGARDING LAND AT THE BUTTS

Submitted by: Chief Executive

Portfolio: Communications, Policy and Partnerships

Ward(s) affected: Thistleberry

Purpose of the Report

To inform Cabinet of the decision taken at the meeting of Full Council on 25th February 2015 in relation to a petition regarding Land at the Butts and matters relating to the Joint Local Plan and the Green Spaces Strategy.

Recommendation

- a) That Cabinet note the decision made by Full Council at the meeting held on Wednesday 25th February 2015.
- b) That Cabinet resolve to ask officers to review the matters raised by the petition and to bring a report for consideration at a future meeting.
- c) That the petition organiser be kept informed about the process to be undertaken.

Reasons

Resolution of Full Council on 25th February 2015.

1. **Background**

On 3rd February 2015, the Council received a petition from Mr Tim Cooper in relation to Land at the Butts and its inclusion in the Council's response to the Joint Local Plan Call for Sites.

The petition had been signed by 302 residents and due to the fact that it related to a local issue affecting no more than two electoral wards within the Council area it met the criteria to be considered by Full Council. The petition organiser attended the meeting of the Council held on 25th February 2015 and outlined the reasons for the petition to Councillors.

A copy of the detailed submission which was included with the petition is attached as Appendix A to this report.

Following consideration of the petition Council considered the following options:

- To take the action the petition requests
- To not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate; or
- to commission further investigation into the matter (for example, by a relevant committee).

Classification: NULBC **UNCLASSIFIED**

As the actions requested by the petition were not within the remit of the Council it was resolved that the matters highlighted be referred back to the Cabinet for additional consideration.

2. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

Resolution by Full Council on Wednesday 25th February 2015.

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

The Petition Scheme strengthens the accountability of the Council to the local community.

4. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

The Council is required by statute to have a Petition Scheme. Planning is delegated to the Planning Committee and Officers under the Council's Scheme of Delegations. The Council has various powers to own and control property rights, principally framed by provisions within the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

5. **Equality Impact Assessment**

There are no specific implications contained in this report. The Council's Petition Scheme allows all residents of the Borough to submit a petition, requiring the Council to consider and take appropriate actions on the request, whether in paper or electronic form. As paper petitions are acceptable, persons without access to the internet are not precluded from organising, signing or submitting a petition.

6. **Financial and Resource Implications**

None at this stage.

7. **Major Risks**

If the Council does not comply with its Petition Scheme and use its powers properly it may be guilty of maladministration with consequential damage to its reputation and call on its resources

8. **Key Decision Information**

This is not a key decision.

9. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

Asset Disposals: Cabinet meeting on 12th November 2014.

10. **Appendices**

Covering Letter from the petition organisers in support of the petition.

Tim Cooper

**The Willows
5, Berne Avenue
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffs
ST5 2QJ**

Email: arbitration@timcooper.co.uk

By hand to:

Councillor Mike Stubbs, The Leader
And, separately, Mrs Elaine Moulton, The Chief Planning Officer
Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Civic Offices, Merrial Street
NEWCASTLE
Staffs
ST5 2AG

Copies to:

Mr Roger Tait, Head of Operations [one page of petition only included]
Mrs Helen Beech, Head of Planning Policy [one page of petition only included]
Mr Mark Bailey, Head of Business [one page of petition only included]

Date 03 February 2015

Dear Mr Stubbs and Mrs Moulton

**Keele – 10.49 ha (25.92 acres) Land at the Butts ('The Butts')
Joint Local Plan, Green Space Strategy
Submission and Petition**

Content:

Reasons for this submission and petition -	para 1
This submission:	
(a) development, (b) JLP issues -	para 2(a) & (b)
This petition (with the 302 signatories to the petition) -	para 2(c)
Background -	para 3
Objections to development at The Butts generally -	para 4
Objections to development at The Butts specifically:	
Now and in the future (Summary at para 5.1.6)	para 5.1
The JLP (Summary at para 5.2 3)-	para 5.2
Submission summary -	para 6
Petition (with the 302 signatories) -	para 7
Acknowledgement, please -	para 8

'JLP' means Joint Local Plan

'NPPF' means National Planning Policy Framework

'PPG2' means Planning Policy Guidance 2

1. Reasons for this submission & petition: The Council, at its 12 November 2014 meeting, identified The Butts 'as appropriate for alternative use or development once key strategy documents have been finalised'. It is reasonable to infer that 'alternative use or development' involves development, a material change of use, of the current open space use. Local residents and others who use The Butts are strongly opposed to its development. It is appreciated that, in the Council's website 'call for sites', it says:

'The submission of sites owned by the council is different to the council's role as the local planning authority. It does not mean that a decision has been taken by the council to sell or redevelop any of the sites it is proposing to submit, nor has a decision been taken to favourably change their current planning policy status through the Joint Local Plan.

The objective of the Joint Local Plan is not to protect to the private interest of a few, including the council's interest's as a landowner, but to plan in the wider public interest. Therefore, the sites submitted by the council will be subject to the same assessments as sites put forward by other land owners, to ensure that the process is carried out in a fair and objective manner, regardless of who owns the land.'

Despite this, very many Newcastle residents are inferring a sale of The Butts and/or housing development on it could be anticipated; this results in serious concerns at the possible loss of this important amenity. Hence, this submission and petition.

2. This submission & petition: is made (with the 302 signatories to the petition):

(a) Submission: In connection with any proposed development at The Butts both before and after adoption of the JLP;

(b) Submission: On 'Issues & Strategic Options' in the production of the JLP; and

(c) Petition: To record objection to the Council's decision identifying The Butts 'as appropriate for alternative use or development once key strategy documents have been finalised'; by **petitioning** the Council to revoke its decision or confirm its decision but identifying The Butts 'as suitable for continuing open space/Green Belt', not 'as appropriate for alternative use or development'

3. Background:

3.1 In November 2014 the Council responded to the JLP 'call for sites' by identifying numerous sites in the Council's ownership, inferentially suitable for development. The Butts is included in the 'call'. The inclusion of The Butts has resulted in local residents inferring a sale of it and/or housing development on it could be anticipated, with the loss of its important amenity.

3.2 I write to you as a concerned resident of Newcastle and for and behalf of others affected by the Council's decision. I **attach** 'Petition' (16 pages), signed by 302 persons opposing possible development of The Butts - originals to Mr Stubbs, copies to Mrs Moulton. The brief reasons for the opposition to development and the 'petition to revoke' (see para 2(c) above) are stated in the petition.

3.3 It is appreciated that development of The Butts cannot occur without planning permission and the overriding planning criteria are in the NPPF.

3.4 Newcastle's website timetable, for the JLP, says the period for 'Stage 3 – Issues & Strategic Options' is current and ends at the end of the 2nd quarter in 2015. Accordingly, this submission is also made on 'Issues & Strategic Options'.

4. Objections to development at The Butts generally:

4.1 Now & in the future: As The Butts is currently in the North Staffordshire Green Belt, development inappropriate to the Green Belt should not be permitted now or in the future. The criteria in the NPPF does not exclude the Green Belt policy in PPG2 (see para 5.1.3 below and para 5.1.2, *Timmings*). The PPG2 guidance remains relevant. For specific objections see para 5.1.

4.2 The JLP: I submit The Butts should be retained as Green Belt in the JLP; it is currently within the North Staffordshire Green Belt. The Butts has provided (for many decades) and should continue to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation – evidenced by children's use, dog-walkers, walkers, sledging in the winter.

The Butts is an established significant and attractive natural landscape with important visual amenity and substantial biodiversity. For specific objections see para 5.2.

5. Objections to development at The Butts specifically:

5.1 Now and in the future:

5.1.1 The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions and The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The general extent of Green Belts across the country is already established (para 82 NPPF) - The Butts is currently in the North Staffordshire Green Belt. Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, ... (para 83). As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances (para 87). When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations (para 88) - I submit that, having regard to the important characteristic of The Butts (I refer to in para 4.2 above) and the availability of undeveloped land in the JLP area, 'very special circumstances' cannot be established.

5.1.2 The PPG2 guidance remains relevant. In the recent Court of Appeal judgment *R (Timmins & Anr) v Gedling Bor Council & Anr* [2015] EWCA Civ 10, Richards LJ at para 24:

'24. There is no dispute as to the correct general approach towards the interpretation of the NPPF. Policy statements of this kind should be interpreted objectively in accordance with the language used, read as always in its proper context, which is not to say that such statements should be construed as if they were statutory or contractual provisions (see per Lord Reed JSC in *Tesco Stores Ltd v Dundee City Council* [2012] UKSC 13, [2012] PTSR 83, at paragraphs 18-19). The NPPF is on the face of it a stand-alone document which should be interpreted within its own terms and is in certain respects more than a simple carry-across of the language in the guidance it replaced (see *Europa Oil and Gas Limited v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Others* [2014] EWCA Civ 825, [2014] JPL 1259, in particular at paragraphs 15 and 32). But the previous guidance, in this case the guidance on Green Belt policy in PPG2, remains relevant. In *Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Others v Redhill Aerodrome Limited* [2014] EWCA Civ 1386 the Court of Appeal rejected a submission that "any other harm" in paragraph 88 of the NPPF had a narrower meaning than in paragraph 3.2 of PPG2, which would have made it less difficult than under PPG2 to establish the existence of very special circumstances justifying a development. In so doing, the court said this (per Sullivan LJ at paragraphs 16-17):

"16. If it had been the Government's intention to make such a significant change to Green Belt policy in the Framework one would have expected that there would have been a clear statement to that effect. Mr Katkowski accepts that there is no such statement. In my judgment, all of the indications are to the contrary:

(i) While there have been some detailed changes to Green Belt policy in the Framework, protecting the Green Belt remains one of the Core planning principles, the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land open, the essential characteristics of Green Belts, and the five purposes that they serve, all remain unchanged. By contrast with paragraph 86 of the Framework, which does change the policy approach to the inclusion of villages within the Green Belt, paragraph 87 emphasises the continuation of previous Green Belt policy (in PPG2) in respect of inappropriate development: 'As with previous Green Belt policy'.

(ii) The Impact Assessment in respect of the Framework published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in July 2012 said that 'The government strongly supports the Green Belt and does not intend to change the central policy that inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be allowed'. Under the sub-heading 'Policy Changes' the Impact Assessment said that

'Core Green Belt protection will remain in place'. It then identified four proposed 'minor changes to the detail of current policy' which would resolve technical issues, but not harm the key purpose of the Green Belt, 'as in all cases the test to preserve the openness and purposes of including land in the Green Belt will be maintained'. On the face of it, paragraphs 87 and 88 would appear to constitute 'central policy' which the Government did not intend to change.

(iii) That there was no intention to change this aspect of Green Belt policy is confirmed by the Inspector's statement in paragraph 19 of her decision: that the *River Club* approach to 'any other harm' in the balancing exercise [i.e. the approach under PPG2] is reflected in decisions by the Secretary of State since the publication of the Framework. We were not referred to any decision in which a different approach has been taken to 'any other harm' since the publication of the Framework.

17. I readily accept that these indications are not conclusive. The Framework means what it says, and not what the Secretary of State would like it to mean However, if the Framework has effected this change in Green Belt policy it is clear that it has done so unintentionally. Mr Katkowski did not submit that there was any material difference between paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 of PPG2 and paragraphs 87 and 88 of the Framework. He was right not to do so. The text of the policy has been reorganised ... but all of its essential characteristics ... remain the same'

Timmins, at para 25:

'25 ... It is submitted that the policy of the former PPG2 with regard to inappropriate development has been carried over into the NPPF: there has been a process of condensation but the policy is unchanged (cf. the opening words of paragraph 87, "As with previous Green Belt policy ...") and the provisions of the NPPF should be read accordingly. The published Impact Assessment, referred to in the passage quoted above from the *Redhill Aerodrome* case, does not identify any relevant change of policy.'

5.1.3 Paras 2.6 & 2.7, PPG2 (PPG2 guidance remains relevant) say:

'2.6 Once the general extent of a Green Belt has been approved it should be altered only in exceptional circumstances. If such an alteration is proposed the Secretary of State will wish to be satisfied that the authority has considered opportunities for development within the urban areas contained by and beyond the Green Belt. Similarly, detailed Green Belt boundaries defined in adopted local plans or earlier approved development plans should be altered only exceptionally.

2.7 Where existing local plans are being revised and updated, existing Green Belt boundaries should not be changed unless alterations to the structure plan have been approved, or other exceptional circumstances exist, which necessitate such revision.'

5.1.4 The Butts has substantial and significant biodiversity, including wild birds. The NPPF, at para 109 says:

'109 The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
- recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
- minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;'

The NPPF, at para 119 says:

'119 The presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 14) does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directives is being considered, planned or determined.'

The European Directives include conservation of habitats and wild birds. Development of The Butts would be contrary to paras 109 & 119 NPPF and the relevant EU Directives.

5.1.5 Currently, the *Local Planning and Housing Bill*, sponsored by Sir William Cash, is before Parliament. Para 8 reads:

'8 Development on greenfield, green belt and brownfield sites

(1) Planning permission may not be granted for any greenfield or green belt sites unless all brownfield land in the relevant local authority area that is suitable for development has been developed and all necessary steps shall be taken to encourage the use of brownfield sites.

(2) The Secretary of State must make regulations defining "greenfield" and "brownfield" sites for the purposes of subsection (1).'

While not law, this Bill is evidence of intention in considering priority development of brownfield sites which is particularly relevant to planning policy in Newcastle and Stoke-on-Trent (the JLP area).

5.1.6 Summary of objections to development now and in the future at The Butts specifically:

The Butts has important and established recreational, landscape, visual amenity and substantial biodiversity facilities and features and is within the established North Staffordshire Green Belt;

The NPPF directs great importance to Green Belts, supported by PPG2;

Despite para 47 NPPF 'to boost significantly the supply of housing' this is in the context of 'as far as is consistent with the policies set out in [the NPPF]' which policies include attaching great importance to Green Belts and established Green Belts;

For these reasons development at The Butts should not be permitted now or in the future.

5.2 The JLP:

5.2.1 For the reasons I give, where relevant, in para 5.1 above (to avoid repetition) I submit that any suggestion that development of The Butts should be included in the 'second stage' (see *Solihull* below) would be inconsistent with the NPPF, specifically sections 9 (Protecting Green Belt land) and 11 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment).

5.2.2 I note that the Court of Appeal in *Solihull Metropolitan Bor Council v Gallager Estates & Anr* [2014] EWCA Civ 1610 centres on whether Solihull Council carried out an objective assessment of housing needs (the first step in a two-step approach required by para 47 NPPF 'to boost significantly the supply of housing'). The Solihull Council had not carried out such assessment; accordingly, the redrawing of its Green Belt to include two new Green Belt sites was unjustified. I submit that this judgment does not affect my submission that The Butts should be retained in the Green Belt in the JLP. The second stage, in the two-step approach, is to give effect of the first stage (boost housing supply) in the Local Plan save only to the extent that that would be inconsistent with other NPPF policies. The preparation of the JLP will include the first stage (boost housing supply) but I submit that, in the second stage (to give effect to the first stage), policies in sections 9 and 11 and conservation of habitats and wild birds override any allocation of The Butts different from open space/Green Belt.

5.2.3 Summary of submissions on the JLP, 'Issues & Strategic Options', specifically: *Solihull* provides guidance on the two-step approach but does not assist on the possible use of The Butts in the JLP, other than the importance of avoiding inconsistencies with NPPF policies after 'boosting housing supply' (the first stage). Any suggestion that possible development of The Butts should be included in the second stage (to give effect to the first stage) would be inconsistent with the NPPF,

specifically sections 9 (Protecting Green Belt land) and 11 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment).

6. Summary of this submission:

For the reasons submitted:

(a) Development: As The Butts is currently in the North Staffordshire Green Belt, development inappropriate to the Green Belt should not be permitted now or in the future, supported by sections 9 and 11 NPPF;

(b) The JLP: On 'Issues & Strategic Options' in the production of the JLP, The Butts should be retained as Green Belt in the JLP in implementing the second stage (giving effect to the 'boosting housing supply', first stage).

7. Petition (with the 302 signatories to the petition):

7.1 Newcastle Council is petitioned to revoke its decision to include The Butts 'as appropriate for alternative use or development' in the JLP 'call for sites' or to confirm its decision but identify The Butts 'as suitable for continuing open space/Green Belt', not 'as appropriate for alternative use or development'

7.2 The reasons for this petition are: (a) it appears the Council has had no regard, or insufficient regard, to sections 9 and 11 NPPF and PPG2; and (b) those reasons detailed in this submission

8. Acknowledgement: I invite you to acknowledge receipt of this submission, please; sae enclosed.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Cooper

Email: arbitration@timcooper.co.uk

ESTABLISHMENT OF CABINET PANEL - CAPITAL

Submitted by: Executive Management Team

Portfolio: Finance and Resources; Economic Development, Town Centres and Customer Services; Planning and Assets

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To establish a cross-party Cabinet Panel to make recommendations to Cabinet to consider the spending priorities of the council's capital programme and to review asset disposals required to meet future capital expenditure commitments.

Recommendations

- (a) That a Capital Programme Cabinet Panel be established with a membership of five appointed on the basis of political proportionality (Labour 3; Conservative 1; Liberal Democrat 1).**
- (b) That a portfolio holder be appointed to chair the panel.**
- (c) That the Group Leaders be requested to make nominations for membership of the panel from their respective groups in accordance with (a) above.**
- (d) That the Panel make recommendations to Cabinet in respect of the Council's future capital programme.**

Reasons

There is a need to establish a mechanism for Members to keep under review the council's capital programme both income and expenditure.

1. Background

- 1.1 At its meeting on 5 February 2014 Cabinet considered a report on the Newcastle Capital Investment Programme. The report detailed a number of strategies and actions that needed to be developed to deal with the shortfall of resources to meet the cost of the projected capital expenditure. These were:
 - A critical review of all the projected capital expenditure categorising expenditure as essential, desirable, long term etc. and developing a prioritised rating;
 - Rescheduling of projects being aware of dangers inherent in this such as possibly costing more in the long run, greater likelihood of unexpected breakdown/repairs; perpetuation of inefficiencies, health and safety implications, etc;
 - Prioritisation of projects;
 - Looking at opportunities in respect of "invest to save";
 - Exploring opportunities for alternative service delivery linked in with the revenue budget and the work being undertaken as part of the Newcastle 2020 project;
 - Seeking opportunities of working with others embracing one of the Council's priorities of a co-operative council;
 - Assessing any requirement for the use of temporary borrowing to cover shortfalls;

- Assessing any requirement for the use of Reserves to cover shortfalls with Reserves being “repaid” when resources become available (limited by availability of and amounts held in reserves)
 - Creation of rotating or sinking funds to provide for cyclical replacements eg vehicles;
 - Evaluating options for the leasing of items such as vehicles as an alternative to capital purchase.
- 1.2 The report proposed that the corporate Assets Review Group, comprising various officers from a variety of related disciplines, should develop these strategies and actions and that Cabinet should give consideration to the formulation of a cabinet panel to develop and oversee the process required. The Cabinet resolved, “*That a cabinet panel be developed to oversee the process required*”. In considering a report on the Council’s Capital Strategy at its meeting on 25 February 2015, the Council endorsed the recommendation for a cabinet panel to be established.
2. **Issues**
- 2.1 There is a need to establish a responsive, efficient and accountable mechanism for considering proposals for keeping the Council’s capital programme under review. The mechanism which is has been proposed by Cabinet and is supported by Council is for establishment of a cross-party Cabinet panel as detailed in the proposals section below.
3. **Proposal**
- 3.1 To establish a Cabinet Panel to oversee the process required to develop the strategies and actions to deal with the future expenditure and financing of the Council’s capital programme. The Panel will consist of five members with places being allocated in accordance with the political proportionality of the Council. The Group Leaders will be asked to make nominations for Members to serve on the Panel.
4. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**
- 4.1 The funding of key policy priorities and invest to save projects will contribute to all the council’s priorities as set out in the Council Plan;
- A clean, safe and sustainable Borough.
 - A Borough of opportunity.
 - A healthy and active community.
 - Becoming a co-operative council which delivers high quality, community-driven services.
5. **Legal and Statutory Implications**
- 5.1 The Local Government Act 2000 and the Constitution empowers the Executive to make these arrangements.
6. **Equality Impact Assessment**
- There are no differential impacts in this report.
7. **Financial and Resource Implications**
- 7.1 Full council on 25 February 2015 approved the Council’s capital strategy.

- 7.2 There are no direct financial implications from the establishment of the panel other than the officer time to support it. The Panel will make recommendations on priorities for the Council's future capital programme expenditure based upon resources available to it, mainly through income from capital receipts and existing capital provisions.
- 7.3 Officer support to the Panel will be provided by the Finance team and officers from departments which make capital expenditure and from the Property team who are responsible for disposal of surplus assets from which significant capital income is derived.

8. **Major Risks**

- 8.1 A full risk assessment in respect of the council's budget for 2015/16 was included as part of the budget report to full council on 25 February 2015.

9. **Earlier Cabinet/Council Resolutions**

Council 25 February 2015 – Capital Strategy.

Cabinet 15 October 2014 – Funding the Council's Capital Programme

Cabinet 5 February 2014 – Newcastle Capital Investment Programme

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ESTABLISHMENT OF CABINET PANEL – CONCURRENT FUNDING

Submitted by: Executive Director (Resources and Support Services)

Portfolio: Finance and Resources; Leisure, Culture and Localism

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To establish a cross-party Cabinet Panel to make recommendations to Cabinet regarding the concurrent funding paid to Parish Councils under Section 136 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Recommendations

- (a) That a cross party Cabinet Panel be established with a membership of five appointed on the basis of political proportionality (Labour 3; Conservative 1; Liberal Democrat 1).**
- (b) That the portfolio holder for Finance and Resources be appointed to chair the panel.**
- (c) That the Group Leaders be requested to make nominations for membership of the panel from their respective groups in accordance with (a) above.**
- (d) That the intention to put in place arrangements for the portfolio holder for Finance and Resources to make decisions in response to recommendations of the cross-party panel be noted.**
- (e) That it be noted that Part 3 of the council's constitution (Scheme of Delegation) will be amended to show the inclusion of this responsibility in the list of responsibilities for the exercise of Cabinet functions.**

Reasons

The Council resolved at its meeting on 25 February 2015 to set up a cross party monitoring group to monitor grant money paid to parish councils following a recommendation made by the Task and Finish Group that was established to review such funding.

1. Background

- 1.1 At its meeting on 25 February 2015 Council considered the Revenue and Capital Budgets and Council Tax 2015/16 report. One of the recommendations approved was:

“that option 4 of the report of the Concurrent Funding Task and Finish Group be implemented to “establish a more closely monitored system”. In particular: that a cross-party monitoring group be established. Prior to any grant money being issued in April 2015 individual Towns and Parishes would need to provide this group with proof that the grant for 2014/15 has been used in full and for its intended purpose. Failure to do so could result in an amount equivalent to any shortfall being deducted from the grant for 2015/16. AND that the cross-party group pursue other matters the group feels is of concern for future arrangements”.

- 1.2 Members will recall that a report was presented to Cabinet in February 2014 requesting agreement to a review of the existing funding arrangements to parish / town council concurrent functions. Cabinet agreed that this review would be carried out by the then

Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee (now the Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee (FRAPS)). FRAPS agreed to establish a Member Working / Task and Finish Group to examine this issue in more detail, in particular to understand concurrent funding of Town / Parish Councils in the Borough and to develop proposals around future arrangements.

- 1.3 Cabinet received the Task and Finish Group's findings at its meeting on 14 January 2015. This included various recommendations including option 4 (as shown in 1.1 above) that was subsequently approved by full Council on 25 February 2015.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 There is a need to establish a more closely monitored system in respect of the grant money spent by parish councils in respect of concurrent funding. The mechanism which was agreed at the full Council meeting on 25 February 2015 was to establish a cross-party monitoring group.

3. **Proposal**

- 3.1 To establish a Cabinet Panel to implement the recommendation of full Council to establish a cross-party monitoring group to which parish councils would need to provide proof that their concurrent funding grants for 2014/15 has been used in full and for its intended purpose before their grants for 2015/16 are paid. The Panel will also pursue other matters that it feels are of concern for future arrangements. The Panel will consist of five members with places being allocated in accordance with the political proportionality of the Council. The Group Leaders will be asked to make nominations for Members to serve on the Panel.
- 3.2 In order to expedite the making of decisions in respect of the panel's recommendations, it is proposed to put in place arrangements for the portfolio holder to make those decisions.
- 3.3 The Council's Executive Arrangements state (in Part 2, Section 7, paragraph 7.6 of the constitution) that all Cabinet decisions will be taken by the Cabinet acting collectively, with a number of exceptions relating to (a) finalising detail of in-principal decisions, (b) urgent matters and (c) "when the Leader has arranged for a Cabinet function to be discharged by a Cabinet committee consisting of Members of the Cabinet or a single Member or an officer by way of joint or local arrangements."
- 3.4 The constitution goes on to state, "The Leader will maintain a list in Part 3 of this Constitution (Scheme of Delegation) setting out which Cabinet committees, Cabinet members, officers or joint or local arrangements are responsible for the exercise of particular Cabinet functions."
- 3.5 It is the Leader's intention to make provision in the immediate future within the Scheme of Delegation, for the responsibility for making decisions in respect of the Cabinet Panel's recommendations to be exercised by the portfolio holder for Finance and Resources.

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

- 4.1 The recommendations set out in the report support the corporate priority of the Council to be a co-operative council, delivering high-quality, community-driven services.

5. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

5.1 The Borough Council is permitted to provide funding as it does currently under Section 136 of the 1972 Local Government Act, but there is no compulsion on the council to provide this funding.

6. **Equality Impact Assessment**

There are no differential impacts in this report.

7. **Financial and Resource Implications**

7.1 Full council on 25 February 2015 approved the recommendation to establish a cross-party monitoring group as part of its approval of the Revenue and Capital Budgets report.

7.2 The Borough Council provides funding of £63,000 per annum to town and parish councils in the Borough. This grant is calculated on the basis of a rate which is four times the Council Tax base.

7.3 There are no direct financial implications from the establishment of the panel other than the officer time to support it.

7.4 Officer support to the Panel will be provided by the Finance team.

8. **Major Risks**

8.1 A full risk assessment in respect of the council's budget for 2015/16 was included as part of the budget report to full council on 25 February 2015.

9. **Earlier Cabinet/Council Resolutions**

Council 25 February 2015 – Revenue and Capital Budgets and Council Tax 2015/16

Cabinet 14 January 2015 – Update on the Scrutiny Review of Concurrent Functions and Funding for Town / Parish Councils

Cabinet 5 February 2014 – Parish / Town Councils – Review of Concurrent Functions and Funding

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NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET

Date: 25th March 2015

1. **REPORT TITLE** **HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW**
- Submitted by:** **Amanda Boffey**
- Portfolio:** **Planning and Assets**
- Ward(s) affected:** **All**

Purpose of the Report

This report presents proposed changes to the Joint Housing Allocations policy

Recommendations

Cabinet members are requested to approve the revised Housing Allocations Policy

Reasons

The Review of the Joint Allocations Policy has been completed, having gone through a further 4 week period of consultation which ended on the 2nd March 2015. This report outlines the proposed changes to the policy and seeks the approval of the revised Housing Allocations Policy.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Joint Allocations Policy was launched in 2010 and has been a partnership approach to allocating social housing in the Borough together with Aspire Housing, the largest social housing provider. The Allocations Policy was reviewed during 2012 in response to the lessons learnt from the first 18 months, as well as to take into account some changes that had been introduced in legislation.
- 1.2 In 2014 Housing Officers together with Aspire Housing (the review group) identified that further amendments need to be made to the policy. These changes were required following the introduction of Aspire Housing's Allocation policy for their 25% of vacancies that are not subject to Council nominations and the transfer the Council's housing register to Midland Heart who operate the homesdirect system. The review also considered national and local issues that could affect the operation of the Housing Allocations Policy.
- 1.3 The review group were given strategic direction to conduct the allocations review following a report presented to Scrutiny Committee on the 3rd September 2014. A further report was presented to Scrutiny on 8th December 2014 to provide an update on the proposed changes to the policy, following the initial consultation, which ended December 15th. The proposed amendments to the policy were endorsed by the Committee.
- 1.4 The revised draft Housing Allocations Policy has now gone through a further 4 week period of consultation which ended on the 2nd March 2015.

- 1.5 Proposals on what to change in the reviewed policy were made in response to feedback from Members; from residents and stakeholders who responded to the consultation questions; the views of local housing and support providers plus the review group.

2. **Options Considered**

- 2.1 Under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011 on the 18th June 2012) local authorities are required to have an allocations policy and procedure in place in order to allocate social housing and under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002) to make provision for homeless households.

It is important that the Policy is regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and continues to ensure that the limited resource of social housing is allocated fairly, in line with legislation and with local and national priorities.

3. **Proposal**

- 3.1 The review did not propose to alter the overriding objective that the assessment and therefore prioritisation is based on housing need. As such it is proposed to retain the current 7 band system, with 1 being the highest priority banding assessment based on housing need, ranging to band 7, being the lowest banding assessment based on no housing need. The review does however propose minor changes to criteria within the bands which will widen priority to certain groups. These changes are as follows:

3.2 **The Priority Band Assessment System**

- 3.2.1 Proposed revisions within the Joint Allocations Policy included 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 tenant 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 tenant. Subject to approval this will result in the policy stating that:

Band 3 – 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

Band 4 – Registered Provider tenants who are under-occupying their home by one bedroom. All tenants (Social or Private) of households with children under 5 occupying a 2nd floor flat (or above) without a lift

- 3.2.2 Aspire Housing 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, Housing officers conducted a review of the current housing register of customers who are placed in this banding together with a review of customers who were housed. Officers also considered recent Government guidance including the Right to Move. The review concluded that Registered Provider tenants should be included in Band 7 if they wish to move for employment. Subject to approval this will result in the policy stating that:

Band 7 - Registered Provider tenants wishing to move for employment. Evidence of employment or offer of employment will be required and travelling from current address is unreasonable. Unreasonable would be no means of travel by either car or public transport

that would require multiple changes and any working commute that would be excessive in time (over 1 hour each way)

3.3 Proposed changes to administering the Housing Register

3.3.1 The move to the "Homesdirect" 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.

3.3.2 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.

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

3.4 Local Connection

3.4.1 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.

3.4.2 The current policy focuses on applicants with a local connection so that staff resources at Midland Heart can be targeted. 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.

3.4.3 Officers therefore recommend that the current local connection criteria is maintained and this is supported through the initial consultation responses.

3.5 Ex-Service Personnel

3.5.1 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.

3.5.2 **The continuation of this is recommended for the revised policy.**

3.6 Equity

3.6.1 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 housed from a lower band, therefore it is appropriate that those with financial assets are a lower priority than those without.

3.6.2 **The continuation of the Equity Protocol is recommended to remain without change for the revised policy. This is supported through the initial consultation responses.**

4. Reasons for Preferred Solution

4.1 The approval of the reviewed Allocations Policy will ensure that improvements are made in line with lessons learnt; updates in legislation and the latest government guidance to the allocation of social housing.

5. Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities

5.1 Having an effective housing register contributes to the Council's corporate priority of a Borough of opportunity and will have a positive impact on the Newcastle Partnership priority to tackle vulnerability.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

6.1 It is a statutory requirement that Local Authorities have an Allocations Policy place under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996.

7. Financial and Resource Implications

7.1 The implementation of recommended changes for the policy will require changes the Homesdirect ICT software. There is an existing capital allocation to fund the required changes identified. The estimated cost of the changes is £2,500.

7.2 Once the software has been updated officers at Midland Heart will have to ensure that applicants are correctly assessed against the revised policy.

8. Major Risks

8.1 Midland Heart are contracted to provide the housing register service, they have completed many changes to other housing registers therefore their experience of managing changes will minimise any risks of errors occurring. It is normal practice for Midland Heart to test any revised software prior to the system going live. The risk register has been completed and is available on request.

9. Key Decision Information

9.1 Yes – affects more than two wards.

10. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

10.1 The review was considered by the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September and December 2014.

11. **List of Appendices**

11.1 The revised Housing Allocations Policy is available in the Members Room or from the Housing Strategy Team on request.

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NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

REPORT TITLE **Staffordshire Compact.**

Submitted by: **Partnerships Officer (Community Development)**

Portfolio: **Communications, Policy & Partnerships.**

Ward(s) affected: **All**

Purpose of the Report

Newcastle Borough Council is a signatory to the current Staffordshire Compact, which sets out the principles of a good working relationship between the public and voluntary/community sectors.

An updated version of the Staffordshire Compact was drafted by VAST and went out for consultation during Autumn 2014.

Newcastle Borough Council had been asked to sign up to the new Compact in advance of it going out to consultation with a view to endorsing the general approach being taken.

Recommendations

That the Borough Council endorses the revised Staffordshire Compact

Reasons

- **The principles of the Staffordshire Compact are still relevant – there is no reason to change the Council’s support for them;**
- **The revised Compact updates the existing Compact and is more appropriate to the current situation;**
- **The Compact is consistent with the Co-operative Council concept and LAPs; and**
- **The Compact is consistent with commissioning and the Social Value Act 2012**

1. Background

- 1.1 The Compact is an agreement between the public and voluntary/community sectors that sets out how the two sectors should work in partnership, and there has been a national Compact since 1998.
- 1.2 A Newcastle Compact was agreed and signed by representatives of both parties in 2007 through the then Newcastle Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).
- 1.3 The Staffordshire Compact was agreed and signed in June 2009. It was also agreed that partners in Newcastle would sign up to the Staffordshire Compact.
- 1.4 The Staffordshire Compact is currently being reviewed and a new Compact 2014 went out for consultation in August 2014. A final version has been produced following consultation.

2 Requirements

- 2.1 VAST are leading on the development of the new Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Compact 2014.

- 2.2 VAST are asking for the Borough Council to consider the signing up to the new Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Compact 2014. This would involve agreeing that we:-
- Support the principles and ways of working of the Compact
 - Will use it as a framework for cross sector working
 - Will aim to create a more open, equal and constructive working relationship with other sectors (Public sector, Private sector and the voluntary & community sector)
 - Will promote Compact principles and develop better communication between all sectors
- 2.3 There are two main changes in the approach to the new Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Compact 2014:-
- a) A pan-Staffordshire Compact which reflects much of the cross-border work that takes place in the north of the county i.e. that covers both Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent; and
 - b) A Compact that recognises that the private sector has a role to play with, for example, support for the voluntary & community sector through Employer Supported Volunteering and Corporate Social Responsibility.

3. **What does the Council need to do?**

- 3.1 Consider the request to sign up to the proposed new Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Compact 2014 and the commitments as listed in 2.2.

4 **Why should the Council take action?**

- 4.1 The Council is signed up to the previous Staffordshire Compact. It would be inconsistent to not support the new Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Compact 2014.
- 4.2 The proposed changes (see 2.3) are consistent with the current climate in which we are operating.
- 4.3 The Compact is consistent with:-
- The Council's Co-Operative Council status;
 - The development of active and effective LAPs; and
 - The Council's approach to commissioning. and its commitment to the Social Value Act 2012.
- 4.4 The Compact provides a set of good practice guidelines to assist in managing the relationship between the Council and our voluntary & community sector partners. Under the previous Staffordshire Compact these were used in a number of ways including:-
- a) The co-development of the Council's Third Sector Commissioning process.
 - b) Managing grants for the voluntary & community sector in a manner consistent with good practice by, for example, be ensuring that the monitoring and evaluation requirements that we expect from recipients is proportionate with the level of grant funding.

- c) Collaboration with VAST in provision of support for and to LAPs through training & information sessions.
- d) Ensuring that consultations with the voluntary & community sector are carried out so as to allow sufficient time for partners to respond.
- e) The Council's development, with partners, of a Social Enterprise Toolkit – cited as a model of good practice.

4.5 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires public authorities to have regard to economic, social and environmental well-being in connection with public service contracts, and for connected purposes. Compact principles help the Council to meet its obligations thereof in respect of the voluntary & community sector.

5 **Proposal.**

5.1 The preferred option is that the Council signs the new Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Compact 2014, and the commitments thereof.

5.2 The Council could decide not to sign. This option is not recommended since it would be contrary to the Council's Co-Operative Council status, and commitment to partnership working.

5.3 The option to stick to the current Compact is not a viable one since the existing Compact will soon become redundant.

6. **Reasons for Solution**

6.1 The principles of the Staffordshire Compact are still relevant – there is no reason to change the Council's support for them.

6.2 The revised Compact brings it up to date (see 2.3) and will therefore be more appropriate to the current environment.

6.3 The Compact is consistent with, and supportive of:-

- The Council's Co-Operative Council status
- The development of active and effective LAPs
- The Council's approach commissioning and its commitment to the Social Value Act 2012

7. **Outcomes Linked to Corporate Priorities**

7.1 Voluntary & community organisations provide services that cover all Corporate Priorities. Therefore, support for positive relationships with the sector through the Compact will lead to outcomes linked to all Corporate Priorities.

7.2 There is a particular resonance to the Council's Co-Operative Council corporate priority and for LAPs.

8. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

8.1 The Compact is a voluntary agreement, and therefore there are no direct legal implications.

8.2 Having said that, there are a range of legal implications in relation to commissioning and funding with and for the voluntary & community sectors. These are covered by contract law and not directly affected by the Compact.

8.3 The Social Value Act 2012 sets out statutory obligations on local authorities in respect of commissioning. The Compact's principles are consistent with, and support the Council in meeting these obligations.

9. **Equality Impact Assessment**

9.1 The Compact supports positive cross-sector working relationships. Strong partnership working between the Council and the voluntary & community sector could have a positive impact on equalities in two specific ways:-

- Working with and supporting organisations that provide services for and with individuals and communities who experience inequalities; and
- Working with and supporting organisations that provide a voice for communities, geographical and of interest, who experience social, economic or financial exclusion.

10. **Financial and Resource Implications**

10.1 There are no financial or resource implications of the Council signing the new Compact.

10.2 The new Compact runs until 2018. It is not anticipated that there will be any financial or resource implications during that period.

11. **Major Risks**

11.1 Failure to endorse the approach to the new Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Compact risk damage to the Council's positive relationship with VAST and with the voluntary & community sector as a whole.

11.2 Failure to sign up to the new Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Compact risks damage to the Council's reputation.

11.3 Opportunities under the new Compact to build on the Council's positive partnership with the voluntary & community sector, and specifically to recognise and build on the role that the private sector can play thereof, through for example, Corporate Social Responsibility policies could be lost if the Council does not sign the new Compact.

12. **Key Decision Information**

12.1 This report is classed as a decision document as there are no legal implications linked to non-compliance.

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

13.1 Cabinet, 27th August 2006

13.2 Newcastle LSP Board, 11th June 2009.

13.3 Cabinet, Social Value Act 2012, 6th February 2012.

14. **Management Sign-Off**

Each of the designated boxes need to be signed off and dated before going to Executive Director/Corporate Service Manager for sign off.

	Signed	Dated
Financial Implications Discussed and Agreed <i>Lead Officer – Dave Roberts</i>		
Risk Implications Discussed and Agreed <i>Lead Officer –Annette Vacquier</i>		
Legal Implications Discussed and Agreed <i>Lead Officer – Mark Bailey</i>		
Equalities Implications Discussed and Agreed <i>Lead Officer – Jane Sheldon</i>		
Report Agreed by: Executive Director/ Head of Service		

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NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

25th March 2015

1. **REPORT TITLE** Financial Inclusion Update
- Submitted by:** Sarah Moore - Partnerships Manager
- Portfolio:** Communications, Policy and Partnerships
- Ward(s) affected:** All

Purpose of the Report

To advise members of the extent of financial exclusion and over indebtedness in Newcastle under Lyme.

To update members on work being delivered by the Council and its partners contributing to the financial inclusion agenda.

To seek approval for continuation and further development of work that will tackle both the causes and consequences of financial exclusion and over indebtedness in the Borough.

Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- **Continue to support Officers to represent the Council and contribute to the work of the North Staffordshire Financial Inclusion Group (FIG) in order to ensure that the Borough benefits from the work set out in the FIG action plan.**
- **Endorse Officers in continuing to build on the work already undertaken to address issues faced by some of our most disadvantaged residents and to help to address wider social issues leading to positive outcomes. This focus of this work can be categorised into the following priorities;**
 - **Planning and responding effectively to the challenges of welfare reform;**
 - **Contributing to and improving financial education**
 - **Improving the access to financial services and affordable credit**
 - **Improving the awareness of and access to quality debt advice and the promotion of savings and insurance.**

Reasons

Poor financial health exacerbates poverty and increases disadvantage. It can have a profound effect on life choices which in turn can lead to wider issues such as family breakdown, ill health and crime. Improving financial inclusion will not only bring better outcomes for individuals and families in the Borough but could also lead to benefits for the Council in terms of reduced costs in supporting those affected by crime and anti-social behaviour. Ultimately better financial health amongst residents could increase revenue for the Council as a result of higher council tax collection rates and a reduction in support for housing costs. The development of further work to contribute to the financial inclusion agenda contributes to all of the Borough Council priorities and the two priorities of the Newcastle Partnership Sustainable Communities Strategy 2014 -17, which are vulnerability and economic growth.



1. **Background**

- 1.1 There are many definitions of, and approaches to, financial inclusion across the UK. It is commonly defined as 'the ability of an individual or household to access appropriate financial services or products'. Lack of this access leads to people being referred to as 'financially excluded'.
- 1.2 Those who are financially excluded are often those who are in poverty or are experiencing disadvantage and as a result might:
 - not be able to access affordable credit
 - not want, or have difficulty in obtaining and maintaining a bank account
 - be financially at risk through not having home insurance
 - struggle to budget and manage money or plan for the unexpected
 - not know how to make the most of their money
- 1.3 Research suggests that around 8.8 million people in the UK are 'over-indebted'. These are individuals who have been at least three months behind with their bills in the last six months or have said that they feel that their debts are a heavy burden. This large and diverse group represents 18% of the adult population and comprises a range of different levels of knowledge and skills, and different attitudes and behaviours towards debt and seeking advice. Understanding these differences is key to providing appropriate advice, education and support to those dealing with problem debt.
- 1.4 This is a period of rapid change in providing services to residents, including reductions in public service funding, welfare reform and reductions in legal aid. Rising costs of living in relation to basic needs such as fuel and food, combined with high unemployment and housing costs amount to significant risks for many of our residents in respect to financial exclusion.
- 1.5 The Council currently commissions debt, benefit and consumer advice services through a collaborative arrangement with Staffordshire County Council at a cost of £131,386 per annum. The contract, with Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), ends on 1st March 2016 with an option to extend for a further two years. The CAB provides services from its district base in Newcastle and also via a telephone contact centre and through outreach sessions in Kidsgrove and Madeley.
- 1.6 There is a statutory duty for the Council to ensure that advice and assistance is available to households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The current contract for this service expires on 31st March 2015 and the Council is in the process of evaluating bids from interested parties submitted via the Newcastle Partnership Commissioning Prospectus to provide advice for two days a week from a town centre location at a cost of c£16,000 per annum.
- 1.7 There is a statutory duty for the Council to administer housing benefit and welfare services. Part of the government's long-term economic plan has involved a major overhaul of the benefit and pensions systems to make them fairer and more sustainable. These changes have included changes to council tax and housing benefit relief, the introduction of the Housing Benefit size criteria and the on-going introduction of Universal Credit. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggests that social housing tenants are finding these

changes particularly difficult to deal with financially and as a result many are cutting back on both fuel and food costs.

- 1.8 The UK Foodbank network was launched in 2004 and provides short-term support for people facing hunger as a result of a sudden crisis. Since 2008, reliance on Foodbanks has increased dramatically with over 900,000 people across the country receiving 3 days' worth of emergency food and support during 2013/14 compared to around 25,000 in 2008/09. The Newcastle Foodbank is based in Silverdale and operates distribution centres across the borough.
- 1.9 The Staffordshire Local Crisis Support Scheme assists people in Staffordshire who are in exceptional need in order to address immediate hardship where they are unable to access other types of support. The scheme provides assistance to those people over the age of 16 with the highest levels of need where they are unable to meet their immediate short term needs or where they require assistance to maintain their independence in the community.

Awards are not made in the form of cash, however if the applicant is assessed as needing help, support will be provided in the form of food, clothing, furniture, heating etc. and there is no expectation for the support to be repaid.

- 1.10 The Financial Inclusion Group (FIG) is a multi-agency partnership whose aim is to ensure that action is taken to address problems related to financial exclusion in North Staffordshire. Agencies involved in the Group include Stoke on Trent City Council, the CAB, the Credit Union, MoneyLine, Aspire Housing, Midland Heart and Severn Trent Water. The Council has been involved with the group for a number of years. The focus of the group is a partnership approach to tackling financial exclusion in the area with some specific actions around affordable credit, financial education and debt advice.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 Universal Credit goes live in Newcastle on 20th April 2015, it is anticipated that the most immediate impact will be for residents receiving housing benefit and their landlords as the benefit will be paid directly to the claimant. Residents who are already financially excluded are likely to find this change the most difficult, making the need for access to appropriate advice, education and support even more important
- 2.2 Prior to the introduction of welfare reform measures in 2013, the Council received around £38,000 in Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to support residents who were struggling with their finances. During 2013/14 funding for DHP increased to just over £135,000 – almost all of this funding was allocated.
- 2.3 Research from the Money Advice Service suggests that around 24.9% of adults (about 24,500 people) in Newcastle are 'over-indebted'. This percentage means that the borough has the highest percentage of over-indebted residents in the County.
- 2.4 Despite the significant level of funding available for debt advice services in the Borough, research from FIG partners suggests that there is an enormous gap in service provision compared to market demand.
- 2.5 Across the North Staffordshire area it is estimated that over 103,000 people are over-indebted, and from this there is anticipated demand for 35,000 loans per year. In contrast, the level of all 'money advice' services across the area offers the potential to support 15,000 clients and the two main community based lenders (Moneyline and Staffordshire Credit Union) have the capacity to offer 3,200 loans per year.

3. **Options Considered**

(i) **Withdraw funding for debt advice services, realising significant savings for the Council.**

Whilst the Council is under increasing pressure to realise more savings in order to meet budget shortfalls, withdrawing funding for debt advice would exacerbate the current situation and create further problems. Currently the services commissioned by the council provide advice for approximately 1,500 people on a quarterly basis. As previously mentioned, the current level of support provided in Newcastle only has the capacity to deal with a fraction of people affected by over indebtedness. (Not Recommended)

(ii) **Leave existing arrangements in place and do nothing.**

This would leave more residents vulnerable to financial exclusion. Whilst, as described above, the council is already addressing financial exclusion through its current activities, there is no doubt that more needs to be done. Without further actions such as those recommended in this report the situation for residents already dealing with over indebtedness could worsen and it is likely that the number of people affected will increase and the Council will be unable to address the existing shortfall in capacity. (Not Recommended).

(iii) **Implement the recommended actions detailed in this report.**

Continuing to build on the work already undertaken by officers will address the issues faced by some of our most disadvantaged residents. Good financial education, debt advice and income maximisation help to address wider social issues and could potentially lead to positive outcomes for the Council, as already described. (Recommended)

4. **Proposal and Reasons for Preferred Solution**

In order to strengthen the Council's approach to financial inclusion it is recommended that the following areas of work are developed:

- **Plan and respond effectively to welfare reform**

As discussed earlier in the report it is acknowledged that some of our most vulnerable residents have and will be affected most severely by changes to the welfare system. By responding appropriately the Council can help to mitigate this impact.

- The Council has already implemented changes to the welfare system including the introduction of the local council tax support scheme.
- It will be necessary to monitor and respond to the effects of the introduction of Universal Credit from April 2015.

- **Financial education**

Financial education is key to giving people the confidence to make informed decisions about their finances and helps build resilience to ensure that those affected by financial problems can respond appropriately.

- Provide links on the Council website to a range of appropriate financial support and advisory resources.

- Remove access to inappropriate money lending services from publically accessible computers.
- Revising criteria for the Council's community grants to ensure there is an increased focus on financial education.
- Support the implementation of preventative activities to ensure residents are less likely to be vulnerable to financial exclusion.
- Work with voluntary organisations to take financial education out into communities.
- Work with FIG partners to develop financial awareness training and products.

- **Access to financial services and affordable credit**

At a time of reducing income, individuals can become more likely to use high cost or illegal money lending. By supporting affordable loans the Council can give people helpful alternatives that do not result in a spiral of debt.

- Support the continued development of the Credit Union to enhance their sustainability and development.
- Work with FIG partners to develop fit for purpose affordable financial products.
- Explore the possibility of a financial inclusion hub for providers of financial inclusion services.

- **Access to debt advice and promotion of savings and insurance**

Free to access advice is key to supporting residents who are struggling with problem debt or are financially vulnerable. As previously discussed, these services are provided through the Council's third sector commissioning arrangements. Other areas for development include:

- Ensure that Council staff have the knowledge and information to enable them to refer customers to appropriate debt advice and support where appropriate.
- Develop marketing and promotional materials and information for residents regarding financial inclusion.
- Commission appropriate financial inclusion services with available funding.
- Work with appropriate partners to encourage and support savings and the take up of insurance services.

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

- 5.1 The recommendations above contribute to all of the Council's Corporate Priorities namely; Healthy and Active Communities, a Cleaner, Safer and Sustainable Borough, a Borough of Opportunity and Delivering a Co-operative Council.
- 5.2 The recommendations also contribute to the work of the Newcastle Partnership, for which the Borough Council is the lead partner. The Partnership's Sustainable Communities Strategy 2014-17 has two overarching priorities of tackling vulnerability and economic growth, which further development of financial inclusion activity supports.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 The recommendations in this report are within the general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. Under this power, Council's may do anything that will benefit the authority or its residents and service users, as long as the proposed actions are not forbidden by any legislation and are carried out in accordance with general administrative law principles. In the case of the recommendations set out in this report there is no legislation which would limit the use of this general power.

6.2 The Council has statutory duties in relation to housing and the prevention of homelessness and the administration of Housing Benefit (soon to be Universal Credit) and welfare services, all of which can be benefited by the further development of the financial inclusion agenda.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 An equality impact assessment (EIA) is currently being undertaken in order to identify any differential impact to protected groups who may be subject to financial exclusion.

7.2 It is likely that findings will show that those disproportionately affected are women (particularly lone parents who are female), older people and those with disabilities. There are also significant issues for those who are considered to be 'chronically excluded', for example homeless people.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 There are no additional specific financial implications or commitments required for the implementation of these recommendations.

8.2 There are resource implications for Borough Council Officers and Members as part of their substantive duties who will continue to provide support to contribute to the development of the financial inclusion agenda in relation to these recommendations. These implications include officer time in both the Business Improvement and Partnerships Team and the Benefits Team and also in other departments across the Borough Council.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 The recommendations in this report support the Council's corporate priorities and will support the resilience of the borough and its most vulnerable residents. There are potential risks relating to not developing our approach to financial inclusion and a full risk profile is currently in development.

10. **Key Decision Information**

10.1 This report can be considered key in the following ways: -

- It results in the Borough Council committing existing resources for the function to which the decision relates and;
- It is significant because it affects more than two or more electoral wards in the Borough.

11. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

11.1 None

12. **List of Appendices**

12.1 None

13. **Background Papers**

13.1 None

Implications included	Head of Service agreed report, signed & dated	Financial Implications signed & dated	Legal & risk implications signed & dated
Financial			
Legal			
Risk			
Director Sign Off			

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2015-2018

Submitted by: Head of Communications

Portfolio: Communications, Policy and Partnerships

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To seek Cabinet approval for the Communications Strategy which covers the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2018. This document outlines how the Council will use good communications to build a stronger reputation, involve and inform residents, engage effectively with stakeholders and improve customer satisfaction.

Recommendations

That Cabinet approves the Communications Strategy 2015-18.

Reasons

Providing information which is clear, accurate and authentic using channels which are extensive and inclusive can make a significant and effective contribution to the overall performance of the Council and should therefore be recognised as a strategic and core function. This strategy commits the Council to continue its provision of quality communications to ensure stakeholders are aware of how we spend public money and how they can get involved with, and feel informed about, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, its services, events, policies and activities.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Council's current Communications Strategy covers the period to the end of the financial year. It has been in place for three years and has been used to provide a framework for communications activities.
- 1.2 The new Communications Strategy and its associated appendices aims to build on the strong foundations which are in place at the Council for providing quality information to stakeholders in an extensive and inclusive fashion.
- 1.3 It also recognises that the "information landscape" continues to develop and change and if the Council is to maintain its stance of being as open and transparent as possible then quality communications which embrace all channels are vital.
- 1.4 Good communications have an important role to play in modern local government. Research from the Local Government Association (LGA) has shown a direct link between good communications and satisfaction levels among residents.
- 1.5 Good communications has also been shown to enhance stakeholder participation and engagement while also protecting and building reputation.

- 1.6 A detailed work plan will be produced annually during each year that this strategy is in place. This will form part of the Service Plan process for the Communications Service. This will outline the work streams, actions and milestones which will take place on an operational level to ensure the key principles outlined in the strategy are delivered.
- 1.7 The strategy is supported by a range of other documents which include media protocols (which form part of the Council's Constitution); a Website Strategy; Social Media Guide; Plain English and House Style Guide; Corporate Style Guide; Consultation Framework and Toolkit. All these background documents have been made available for consideration.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 During the life of the current Communications Strategy there have been significant developments and changes in the local, regional and national communications landscape. This is certain to continue in the future with the only uncertainty the actual pace at which changes will come.
- 2.2 Although the channels the Council uses may alter and change to meet these new challenges, the key principles outlined in the Communications Strategy will remain constant.
- 2.3 The new strategy sets out a "communications pledge" for the Council which is:-

We will communicate clearly, openly, accurately and regularly with our residents, with our partners and with each other, in order to promote mutual understanding and give a better service to the people of the borough.

- 2.4 It also clearly states the purpose of the strategy:-

To establish and maintain clear and relevant two-way channels of communication in order to create an informed and recognisable profile for Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and a positive image of the borough as a whole.

- 2.5 And it also outlines:-
 - a) What the Council will communicate.
 - b) How we will communicate.
 - c) Who we will communicate with.
 - d) How we will measure whether our communications are effective to ensure resources are being used in the most efficient way.

3. **Options considered**

- 3.1 Research carried out by the Local Government Association (LGA) and also organisations such as the pollsters Ipsos MORI has shown that councils have higher resident satisfaction ratings when residents feel they are kept informed.

- 3.2 Communications can therefore help to underpin much of the work carried out by services to deliver the Council's priorities.
- 3.3 Good communications has been shown to ensure stakeholder engagement, involvement and awareness in council services, events and activities thereby nurturing a sense of satisfaction and value-for-money among residents. Therefore it is felt that the Council's best option is to have a Communications Strategy in place.

4. Proposal and Reasons for Preferred Solution

4.1 The Communications Strategy sets out a framework to enable the Council to continue to develop and enhance the way it involves and informs key stakeholders.

4.2 A successful strategy will enable the Council to:-

- Maintain a culture of two-way communication with all our stakeholders.
- Keep Newcastle-under-Lyme residents informed.
- Raise awareness of the Council's priorities and vision.
- Address negative or potentially damaging information about council services.
- Support council staff in their roles as ambassadors for the organisation.
- Promote the Council as an employer of choice.
- Support elected members in their role as community leaders.
- Reach all sections of the community.
- Keep abreast of technological developments and embrace them where feasible and resources allow.
- Promote respect and trust between the Council and its stakeholders.
- Raise the regional and national profile of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

5. Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities

5.1 Providing accurate and authentic information for all stakeholders using channels which are as inclusive and extensive as possible makes a vital contribution to the delivery of all of the Council's corporate priorities.

5.2 Without the availability of accurate and authentic information, there would be reduced opportunities for stakeholders to be involved with, and informed about, our priorities and the services, events, actions and activities which contribute to the delivery of those priorities.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

6.1 The Council is under no legal or statutory duty to have a Communications Strategy in place.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment on the Communications Strategy has been completed and is among the supporting documents referred to in 1.7.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 The Communications Strategy will help the Council to make the maximum use of existing resources by ensuring a strategic approach to communications.

8.2 In recent years the Communications Service has been involved in a range of proposals which have contributed to the Council's drive for more efficient and effective means of delivering services. This has resulted in significant savings and subsequent reductions in the overall budget for Communications as outlined below (please note these figures are taken from the Council's Revenue Budget books which are available for public inspection on the authority's website and do not include internal service recharges):-

2010/11 - £775,710

2011/12 - £699,790

2012/13 - £669,590

2013/14 - £629,520

2014/15 - £569,860

8.3 The figures above show that during the last five financial years, revenue expenditure by Communications Services at the Council has reduced by 26.5 per cent.

8.4 It should be noted that further savings have been put forward by Communications for the next two financial years as the Council continues to try and plug the budget "gaps" identified in its Medium Term Financial Strategy.

8.5 The Communications Strategy sets out the means by which the continued production of targeted, quality information can help to sustain the "informed" and "satisfied" levels currently seen among key stakeholders in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

8.6 However, it also outlines in the section on the "Wholly Owned Company" for communication services a recognition that part of the changing landscape for the delivery of information will also involve the financial element.

8.7 The creation of the company is intended to provide a mechanism for the Council to reduce its demand and the associated costs of its communications service as the Council's budget reduces.

8.8 The Council will have an annual Service Level Agreement for communication services which it anticipates may well need to reduce as the Council's budget reduces.

8.9 Through the vehicle of the company, the capacity which is released will be traded. Over time it is accepted that the Council's demands upon the Communications Team are likely to reduce and the aspiration is that this will be balanced by growth in the traded element of the service through the company.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 Risks associated with the Communications Strategy have been updated on the corporate system and will be periodically reviewed with the relevant Risk Champion.

10. **Key Decision Information**

10.1 Whether to have a Communications Strategy is not a key decision as defined in the Council's Constitution. However, it has been included in the Forward Plan for information purposes.

11. **List of Appendices**

- Communications Strategy 2015-18
- Media protocols
- Website Strategy
- Social Media Guide
- Corporate Identity Style Guide
- Plain English Guide and House Style
- Consultation Framework
- Consultation Toolkit
- Equalities Impact Assessment

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April 2015

March 2018

Communications Strategy

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Introduction

Information is one of our most important “front line” services.

Ipsos MORI and others have carried out research which confirms the more informed residents are, the more satisfied they are with their council.

And if they aren't informed then the chances of them being involved with us – our services, our activities, our plans and proposals – reduce dramatically.

This means that communications and delivering quality, clear and accurate information to residents using channels which are as extensive and as inclusive as possible is absolutely vital.

Not only is this key to strengthening links with local people, service users, partner organisations and staff, it is crucial to ensuring we continue to deliver our priorities and our vision for the borough.

Our research shows that 80 per cent of residents questioned feel satisfied with the Council. The “Putting People First” survey carried out by the Local Government Association showed nationally the figure for district councils stands at 54.6 per cent.

Despite the ratings in Newcastle-under-Lyme being significantly above the national average, there is no room for complacency as there is obviously much which can still be done.

And for that to happen we need to make sure that, despite the difficult financial pressures which continue to impact on local government, our Council will carry on with its commitment to provide high quality, planned and sustained corporate communications. We want our residents to feel informed about, and involved with, our services, activities, events and policies.

*Cllr. Mike Stubbs
Leader of the Council
Cabinet member for
Communications,
Policy and Partnerships*



“
*Information is one
of our most important
front line services.*
”

Background

This strategy demonstrates our commitment to clear and consistent communications that meet our needs and those of all our stakeholders.

It's vital that we talk, listen and respond to local people so that they are informed and empowered.

We will endeavour to take opportunities for people to tell us what they think and we will support the consultation mantra – “you said, we listened, we did” wherever possible.

Quality internal communications are also crucial.

We value the contribution made by each of our employees and are committed to making sure they are well-informed so they understand our priorities and values and can transmit this understanding into the delivery of quality services which are used and valued by our residents.

We will actively seek residents' ideas and views on how we can improve services and become an even better employer.

Good communications are therefore vital if the Council is to continue to build a strong reputation; effectively inform residents; engage and improve customer satisfaction and contribute to improved services provided by us.

This Communications Strategy is intended to provide the framework for a consistent approach to what we say, how we say it and when we say it.

Work Plans to deliver the required outcomes of this strategy will be produced each year as part of the Communications Service Plan.

Supporting the main strategy document are a number of “sister” documents which have been attached as appendices.

These are intended to guide our activities in related fields such as website content, social media and brand management.

The full list of appendices is outlined on the right.



Appendices

- *Media Protocols.*
- *Website Strategy.*
- *Social Media Guide.*
- *Corporate Identity Style Guide.*
- *Plain English Guide and house style.*
- *Consultation Framework.*
- *Consultation Toolkit.*
- *Equalities Impact Assessment.*
- *Risk Assessment.*

Our pledge and our purpose

As a Co-operative Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme embraces the support and partnership of organisations and residents.

We work with people who use council services to explore different ways of providing and managing those services to the mutual benefit of everyone involved.

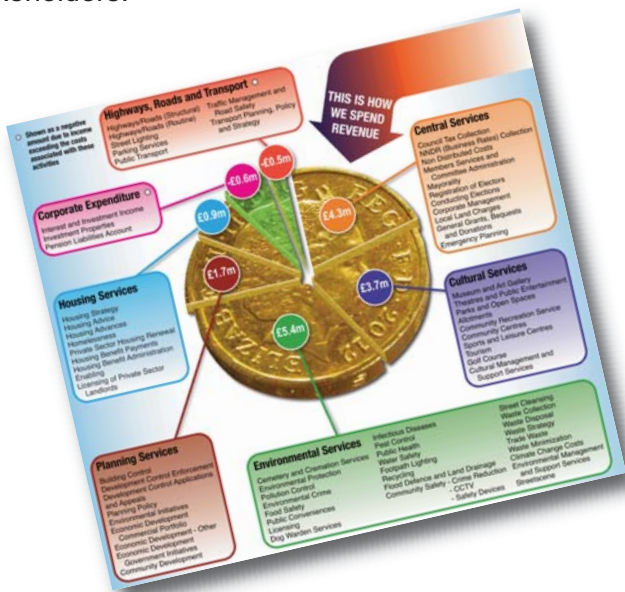
The Communications Strategy supports the Co-operative Council principles and communicates the Council's aims and achievements to all stakeholders.

Our communications pledge:-

We will communicate clearly, openly, accurately and regularly with our residents, with our partners, and with each other, in order to promote mutual understanding, and give a better service to the people of the borough.

The purpose of the Communications Strategy is:-

To establish and maintain clear and relevant two-way channels of communication in order to create an informed and recognisable profile for Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and a positive image of the borough as a whole.



Why we make a difference and measuring our impact

Communications needs to be able to prove its strategic importance in local government by showing the impact it has.

Paragraph 4 of the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2011 says that all publicity by local authorities should:-

- be lawful;
- be cost-effective;
- be objective;
- be even-handed;
- be appropriate;
- have regard to equality and diversity and,
- be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity.

Four of these principles - be lawful, objective, even-handed and be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity - are the responsibility of communications professionals who must ensure these are followed.

The other three principles - be appropriate, cost effective and have regard to equality and diversity - must be assessed using research evidence.

The continually evolving media landscape combined with difficult financial times for local government means that our communication/information resources – both financial and human – have to deliver outcomes.

This means there is no place for “SOS – Send Out Stuff” – communications in this strategy.

It is vital that with limited resources we understand why we are producing information, who our stakeholders are and to measure the impact of what we do with those stakeholders.

The purpose of this Communications Strategy is:-

- To establish and maintain clear and relevant two-way channels of communication in order to create an informed and recognisable profile for Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and a positive image of the borough as a whole.

A successful strategy will enable us to:-

- Maintain a culture of two-way communication with all our stakeholders.
- Keep Newcastle-under-Lyme residents well informed.
- Raise awareness of the Council’s priorities and vision.
- Address negative or potentially damaging information about council services.
- Support council staff in their roles as ambassadors for the organisation.
- Promote the Council as an employer of choice.
- Support elected members in their role as community leaders.
- Reach all sections of the community.
- Keep abreast of technological developments and embrace them where feasible and resources allow.
- Promote respect and trust between the Council and its stakeholders.
- Raise the regional and national profile of Newcastle-under-Lyme.



With all our communications activities our aims are to:-

- Maintain a strong and consistent identity for the Council.
- Raise awareness of council services in order to maximise access and involvement with them.
- Keep staff and elected members informed and promote understanding.
- Promote opportunities for residents, community groups and other stakeholders to engage with the council through partnership working.
- Support efforts to maintain high customer satisfaction levels with the Council.

The Communications Team will be committed to making all of its activities:-

- Two-way.
- Relevant and appropriate for their target audiences.
- Easily available.
- Easily understood.
- Consistent.
- Honest and accountable.
- Timely.

We will regularly monitor our communications activities in order to gauge their success. Where appropriate, we will adapt our methods and messages to ensure that we continue to meet our objectives.

Performance management mechanisms will indicate:-

- 1) The percentage of residents who feel the Council keeps them informed.
- 2) The percentage of residents who feel satisfied with the Council.
- 3) The number of media releases produced.
- 4) Percentage of media releases/activity which generates coverage.
- 5) Positive media coverage for the Council.
- 6) Annual value of council media actions.
- 7) The number of unique users visiting the Council's website each month.
- 8) Satisfaction with the Council's website.
- 9) The number of residents following the Council and accessing information via social media.
- 10) The percentage of residents who value The Reporter as their prime source of information about the Council, its services, activities and policies.
- 11) Annual rating of the Council's website from the Society of Information Technology Management (Socitm).



Who are our stakeholders?

A stakeholder is a person, group, or organisation that can affect, or be affected by, an organisation's actions, objectives and policies.

Stakeholders have varying needs and different stakeholders are entitled to different considerations. The Council will take these varying needs into account when considering how to share information and communicate with its stakeholders.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's stakeholders include:-

- Residents of the borough.
- People and organisations who use the Council's services.
- Borough council staff.
- Borough and county councillors.
- Newcastle-under-Lyme businesses and their staff.
- Visitors to the borough.
- The Council's partner organisations.
- Local, regional and national media organisations.
- The Third Sector.
- Local community organisations.
- Our neighbouring councils.
- Staffordshire County Council.
- The Local Enterprise Partnership.



How we will communicate

The Council uses a number of communication channels which include:-

- The Reporter.
- Our website www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk .
- Our customer service centres.
- Local, regional and national media.
- E-mail.
- Our corporate Facebook and Twitter profiles.
- Councillor surgeries.
- Monthly team briefings for staff.
- Neighbourhood forums.
- Consultation processes.
- Meetings with council staff.
- The intranet.
- Council meetings.
- Councillor surgeries.
- Reports and policy documents.
- Events, roadshows and displays.
- Leaflets, posters and pop-up banners.
- SMS text messaging.
- Our vehicles.



What we will communicate

We will actively engage with our various stakeholder groups about the Council's services and facilities. Information will be provided on:-

- a) What services the Council provides.
- b) Where and how to access these services.
- c) How we spend public money.
- d) Changes to services.
- e) How the Council works.
- f) Who local councillors are and what their role is.
- g) Where and how the Council can help and support stakeholders.
- h) Where to go if we can't help.
- i) How stakeholders are involved with the Council's services.
- j) What the Council's priorities, values and policies are.
- k) The Co-operative Council principles.
- l) Council events and activities.
- m) How stakeholders can influence the Council's policies, plans and activities.
- n) How to contact council officers and elected members.
- o) How to provide feedback and opinions on different council policies, decisions and activities.
- p) Who our partners are and how we work with them.
- q) The Council's role in the wider community.
- r) Achievements.



Consultation

Consultation with the public and stakeholders is an integral part of how Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council operates. It is the mechanism we use to establish what the local community is thinking and what it wishes the Council to do on its behalf.

To support the delivery of this area of activity, the borough council has a Consultation Framework in place as well as a Consultation Toolkit. Both are available on the Council's intranet system for staff to access.

The framework and toolkit give advice and guidance to service areas to help and support them in any consultation or engagement activities they undertake.

Our approach to consultation has been shaped from visits to councils deemed as "beacon authorities" in this field.

This places a heavy emphasis on face-to-face methods with events and engagement held in communities, whether it is the local market, neighbourhood open days, summer fetes or other attractions such as local shopping or leisure facilities.

In other words, going to the community rather than expecting the community to come to us.

This emphasis on "qualitative" information on specific services and service areas can be crucial in helping to shape services and deliver the things which residents view as important to them.

The Council commits itself to the "qualitative" approach in this strategy.

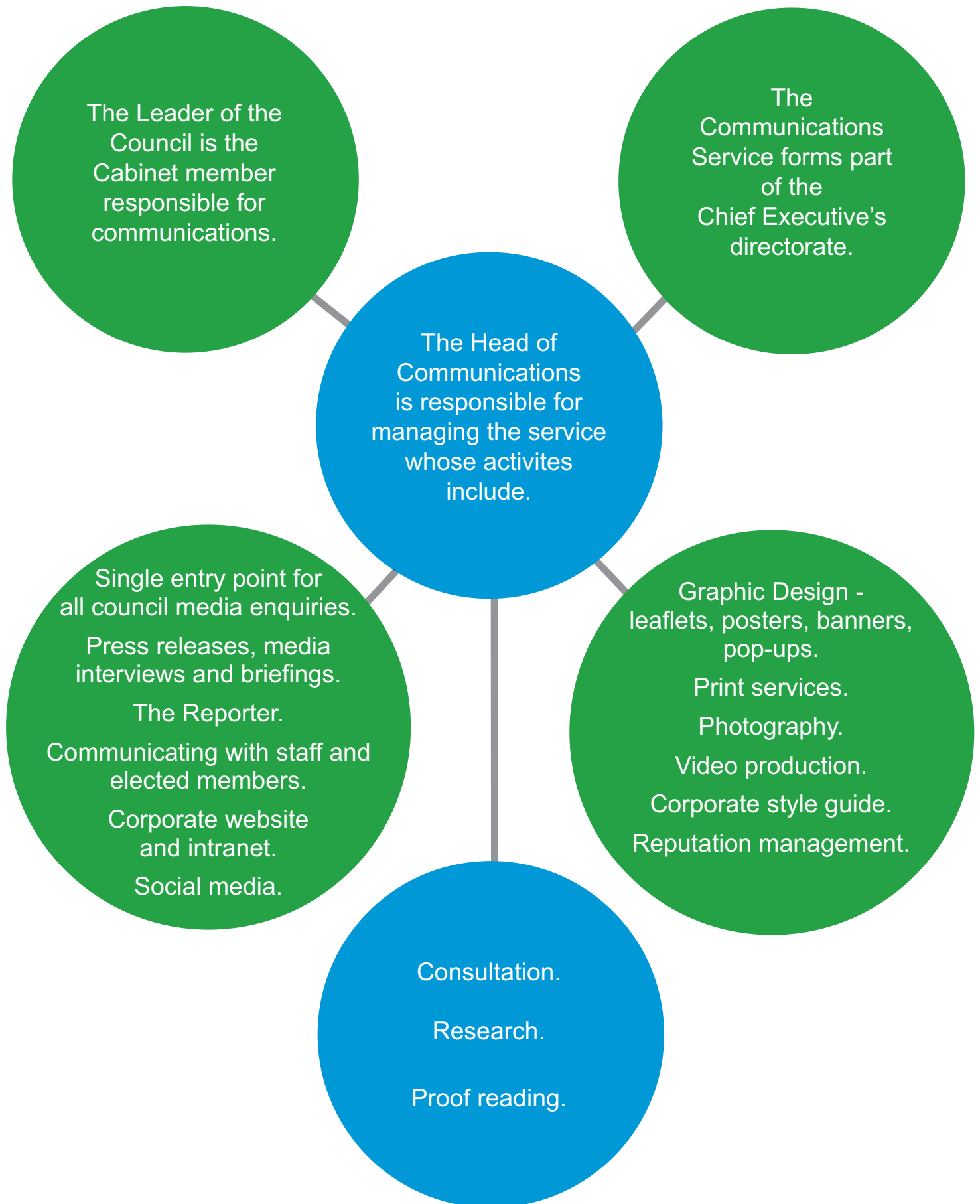
All consultations carried out on behalf of the Council must involve its Research Officer at the earliest opportunity.

This is to ensure national standards and guidelines are adhered to and current best practice is applied to ensure the maximum opportunity possible for specific stakeholders and also the wider public to be involved.

The Corporate Consultation Framework and Toolkit are attached to this strategy as appendices.



Corporate communications



Legislation, equalities and diversity

The Council's communications activities must support the key priorities set out in the Council Plan.

At the same time, the Council must also fulfil its obligations, both legal and otherwise, in relation to a number of areas of legislation.

The Freedom of Information Act came into force on 1 January 2005 and it gives the public the right to ask any public body for all the information they have on a wide range of subjects.

The Act covers almost all public authorities and is retrospective, which means it covers historical documentation as well as that generated after the Act came into being.

Similarly, the Data Protection Act 1998 gives people the right to access information we may hold about them.

It doesn't matter if we are not using that information in any way other than storing it. The Act governs how we are allowed to use the personal information we hold and how we acquire it, store it, share it or dispose of it.

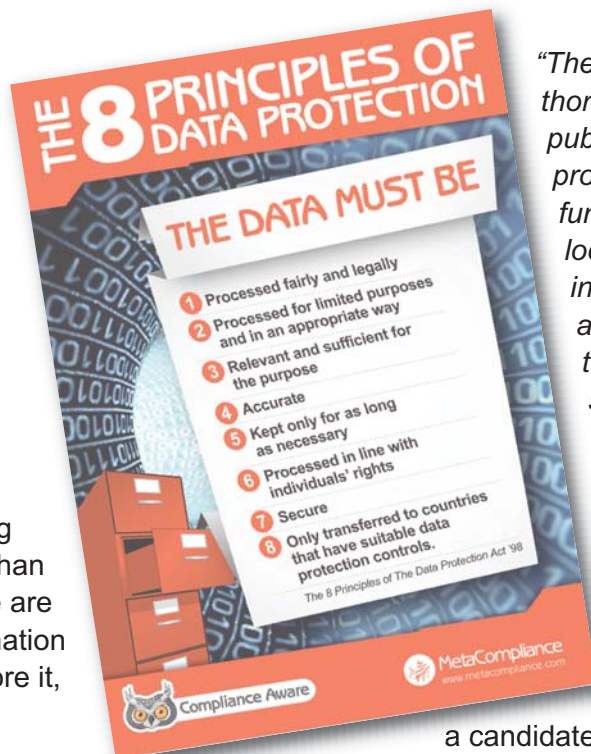
Freedom of Information Act requests and Data Protection Act matters have relevance to the Communications Services as both can lead to media interest and reputation issues for the borough council.

These processes are dealt with principally by the Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships for Freedom of Information Act issues and the Executive Director Resources and Support Services for Data Protection Act matters.

The council has a duty under the Civil Contingencies Act to produce information which helps to "warn and inform" the people of Staffordshire, its visitors and businesses on preparations for, and responses to, emergencies and major incidents within the county.

When considering all forms of communication with our audiences, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council should conform to the Government's Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (made under the Local Government Act 2000).

This code covers the rules around content and style of publicity, advertising, promotion of individual councillors and restrictions during the election period. Paragraph 20 of the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity says:-



"The main purposes of local authority publicity are to increase public awareness of the services provided by the authority and the functions it performs to allow local people to have a real and informed say about issues that affect them, to explain to electors and ratepayers the reasons for particular policies and priorities; and in general to improve local accountability."

The Representation of the People Act 1983 prohibits expenditure on promoting or procuring the election of

a candidate other than through an election agent.

It imposes on senior officers an obligation to broadly ensure that the council does not assist the election candidate with their campaign.

During the six-week period leading up to an election, care must be taken to ensure that laws surrounding local government publicity are not breached.

The Defamation Act of 1996 places a number of responsibilities on publishers of information including councils.

It is important that knowledge of these responsibilities is always retained within the Communications Service.

The Local Government Transparency Code 2014 has been introduced to meet the Government's desire to place more power into citizens' hands to increase democratic accountability and make it easier for local people to contribute to the local decision making process and help shape public services.

Transparency is the foundation of local accountability and the key that gives people the tools and information they need to enable them to play a bigger role in society. The availability of data can also open new markets for local business, the voluntary and community sectors and social enterprises to run services or manage public assets.

The Government believes that in principle all data held and managed by councils should be made available to local people unless there are specific sensitivities, for example, protecting vulnerable people or commercial and operational considerations, to doing so.

It encourages councils to see data as a valuable resource not only to themselves, but also their partners and local people.

The Council is committed to ensuring the fullest possible take-up of its services and benefits by local people. Clear, appropriate and timely communications can help to deliver this goal.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on this Communications Strategy to ensure that where this is practicable, it is taking place.

The assessment is attached to this strategy as an appendix.

Risks associated with this strategy are on the corporate risk system and will be reviewed and monitored regularly.



Wholly Owned Company

The Council gave approval during 2014-15 for a Wholly Owned Company to be set up for communications services.

SubLyme Creative Solutions Limited has now been established and formally registered with Companies House.

This year (2015) will be the first full year of trading for the company.

The creation of SubLyme Creative Solutions Limited is intended to provide a mechanism for the council to reduce its demand and the associated costs of its communications service as the council's budget reduces.

A Service Level Agreement is in place between the council and its Communications Service. It is anticipated this will need to reduce as the council's budget reduces.



Through the vehicle of the company, the capacity which is released will be traded.

Over time it is accepted that the borough council's demands upon the Communications Service will reduce and that this will be balanced by growth in the traded element of the service through the company.

The Service Level Agreement between the Communications Service and the council gives indicative periods for when surplus capacity may be used for trading purposes.

In addition, it confirms that the council only has finite communications capabilities stemming from the resources it makes available.

Therefore it is absolutely vital that the council fully utilises those resources to achieve the outcomes woven into this strategy.

Establishing a trading company for communications services using the model outlined previously to Cabinet is a significant step forward for the borough council.

There are significant benefits as the company will be a trading shell with no full-time staff or assets in the initial stages.

This means there are no TUPE issues or liability risks to the council as the sole shareholder.

It also means that the primary focus can remain on providing core communications services to the Council through the Service Level Agreement while using any spare capacity to trade services in a way which allows staff to learn how to run a business, take commercial decisions and find their feet in a completely new environment.

Over time, as business confidence grows, opportunities should arise for developing income streams.

If this is successful then longer-term aims – say over the next five years or so – could see a new model develop such as an employee-led mutual, arm's length trading company or a staff buy-out.

The formation of a wholly owned company for communications services will allow the Council to explore trading in a way that optimises expertise, skills and resources within the Council's current staff.

It will also be an opportunity for staff to develop greater business and associated technical skills which will benefit the council, their careers and promote the professional "can do" attitude which is already widespread within the authority.

SubLyme Creative Solutions Limited will initially operate by using existing staff resources from the Communications Service at the Council. Their services will be contracted on an hourly rate or commission basis between the council and the trading company.

This removes the complications around the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) and directly employed staffing (HR, payroll, pensions etc) as the staff will remain in the employment of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.

SubLyme will have its own operating strategy which will be considered by the board of directors as part of the business planning process.

However, it should be stressed that income targets will only be achieved if:-

- The Service Level Agreement is adhered to.
- Additional requirements which are added would impact on periods allocated for trading purposes.
- Corporate support for securing external work with partners is delivered.
- Officers in the Communications Service successfully make the transition to securing and delivering work for clients.
- Marketing and promotion activities support efforts to generate business.



Conclusion

Research carried out by the Local Government Association has found that the strongest driver of perceived value for money – and the primary driver of resident satisfaction with their councils – is providing effective information about council services. Councils whose residents feel well-informed about services are the most popular.

However, in this age of austerity, other issues are becoming increasingly important, such as trust in the Council to spend taxpayers' money wisely and ensuring residents are involved in decisions made in their local area.

Another important factor in boosting trust is whether residents feel involved in decisions the council makes in the local area. Residents who feel involved are significantly more likely to trust the Council to spend taxpayers' money wisely than those who do not feel involved.

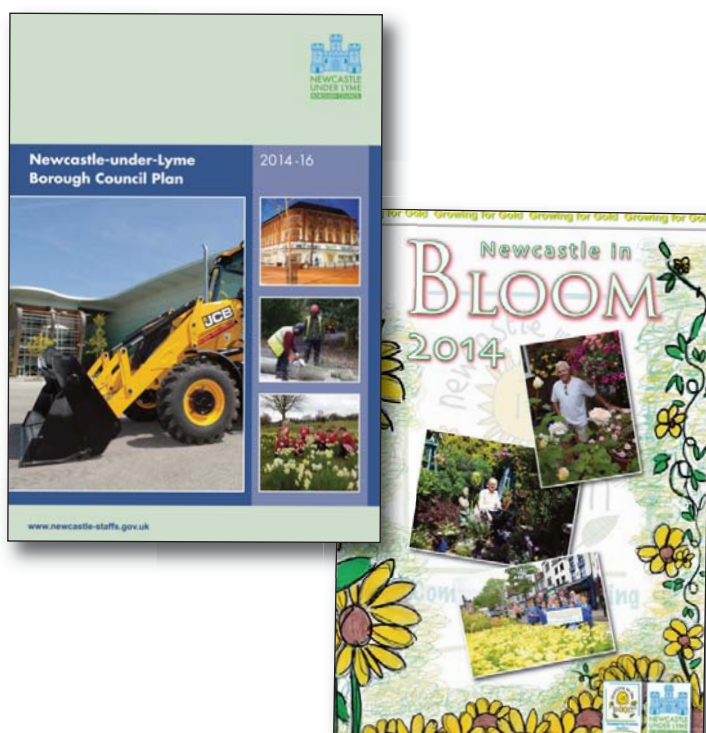
In order to maintain reputation, councils must be seen to be on the side of residents and working to improve their everyday lives. Engagement is core to increasing trust and by creating opportunities for involvement local authorities can make their residents the decision makers, rather than council officers.

Quality information, which is clear and understandable and delivered using methods residents can access easily, is the way in which our council will continue to inform, involve and engage local people.

This strategy outlines some of the effective initiatives already happening as part of the Council's communications and sets a course for how further improvement will take place over the next few years to support the council as it strives for excellence.

Phil Jones
Head of Communications

“
... our council will
continue to inform,
involve and engage
local people.
”



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NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

25th March 2015

Title: Newcastle Partnership – Accountable Body

Submitted by: Sarah Moore – Partnerships Manager

Portfolio: Communications, Policy and Partnerships

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

Following the report to Cabinet in February 2015, this report presents recommendations for approval to formalise the Borough Council's role as accountable body for the Newcastle Partnership.

This approval will enable the Partnership to progress locality commissioning activity on behalf of public sector partners in the Borough for the period 2015/16 and beyond.

Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to endorse the proposed 'Newcastle Partnership – Locality Commissioning - Roles and Responsibilities' document and accompanying letters of commitment from the County Council to therefore approve the formal appointment of the Borough Council as the accountable body for the Newcastle Partnership for the purposes of locality commissioning and as currently exercised under the Local Government Act (2000) relating to leading the co-ordination of Local Strategic Partnerships activity.

Cabinet is also requested to authorise the Chief Executive, on behalf of the Borough Council, to sign the letter dated 27th February 2015 from Staffordshire County Council (SCC) (found at Appendix C), thereby authorising the transfer of up to £141,000 from SCC to the Borough Council for the purposes of locality commissioning and sign the 'Roles and Responsibilities' document at Appendix D.

Reason

To enable the locality commissioning to progress and for awards of contracts to be made by the Borough Council on behalf of the Newcastle Partnership, using public sector pooled funds that have been dedicated by partners to address shared priorities and identified areas of need.

1. Background

- 1.1 Members will recall that a report was presented to Cabinet in October 2014, setting out the results of a review of the Newcastle Partnership and the reasons for the changes proposed as a result of that review.
- 1.2 Members will also recall that a further report was presented to Cabinet in February 2015, seeking approval in principle for the Borough Council to become the accountable body for the Newcastle Partnership, pending the development of a Risk Assessment and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

- 1.3 Officers explored the creation of an MOU to set out the roles and responsibilities, detailing the relationship between the partners which are pooling resources, namely the Borough Council and County Council. After further enquiries it was concluded that an alternative solution would be more appropriate to support the locality commissioning process, which would be consistent with the approach adopted by other Districts in the County who had entered into a similar local commissioning arrangements with the County Council.
- 1.4 Officers have therefore produced a Risk Assessment for the local commissioning process which can be seen at Appendix A. This document alongside the accompanying letters of commitment from the County Council (Appendices B & C) and the 'Roles and Responsibilities' document (Appendix D), formalises the relationships between partners and enables the Borough Council to become accountable for administering the use of the pooled funds on behalf of the Partnership for the first phase of the commissioning process.
- 1.5 After the first phase this solution may need to be reinforced and/or revisited, as the locality commissioning arrangements mature over the next 12 months, to ensure that any additional contributing partners to the process are included and further roles and responsibilities are clarified.

2. Issues

- 2.1 Changes have been made previously to the governance of the Newcastle Partnership which focused on expanding the scope of the then Partnership Delivery Group (PDG) to include the commissioning role and being re-named as the Partnership Delivery and Commissioning Group (PDCG) following agreement by the Newcastle Partnership Strategic Board in September (chaired by the Leader of the Borough Council) and endorsed by Cabinet in October 2014.
- 2.2 Cabinet are asked to formally approve the Borough Council as the accountable body for the Partnership in terms of Locality Commissioning as set out in this report. This means that the Borough Council will use powers under the Local Government Act 2000 and the Localism Act 2011 to manage finances on behalf of the Partnership, as well as lead on aspects of performance management. This role has previously been undertaken by the Borough Council, so Cabinet are being asked to specifically extend the role to include the locality commissioning function.

3. Options for Cabinet

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to endorse the proposed 'Roles and Responsibilities document' (Appendix D) and accompanying letters of commitment from the County Council (Appendices B & C) and thereby approve the formal appointment of the Borough Council as the accountable body for the Newcastle Partnership for the purposes of locality commissioning and as currently exercised under the Local Government Act 2000 relating to leading the co-ordination of Local Strategic Partnerships activity.
- 3.2 Cabinet is also requested to authorise the Chief Executive, on behalf of the Borough Council, to sign the letter dated 27th February 2015 from Staffordshire County Council (SCC) (found at Appendix C), thereby authorising the transfer of up to £141,000 from SCC to the Borough Council for the purposes of locality commissioning and sign the 'Roles and Responsibilities' document at Appendix D.
- 3.3 Cabinet can decide not to approve this recommendation, but this would risk not completing the implementation of this locality commissioning work and could therefore endanger future funding streams and future co-operation with partners.

4. Outcomes Linked to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The recommendations set out in this report support all of the Borough Council's corporate priorities.
- 4.2 The recommendations set out in this report contribute to the delivery of the Newcastle Partnership's priorities which are tackling vulnerability and economic growth.

5. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 5.1 This report requests that Cabinet formally approve the request for the Borough Council to act as the accountable body for the Newcastle Partnership in relation to locality commissioning. It should be noted that the Borough Council has effectively acted as the accountable body for the Local Strategic Partnership since its inception, under powers granted to it under the Local Government Act 2000, and as part of its own constitution.
- 5.2 A Commissioning Prospectus has been produced by the Newcastle Partnership, setting out a number of 'lots' and service outlines for service providers to submit proposals for delivery. The deadline for submission of applications was 4th February 2015 and since then panels have evaluated the submissions to determine which prospective contracts will be awarded. A further round of commissioning is planned for the summer, using any underspend from (this) the first round.
- 5.3 There are no current TUPE and employment related issues (e.g. redundancy) that have been identified and which will need to be managed from the initial round of commissioning activity but this is something that may need to be considered in future commissioning rounds and has been identified in the accompanying Risk Assessment at Appendix A. Partner support and advice will be sought to manage any HR or related issues that may arise.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is being developed for this area of work.

7. Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 This report confirms the request for the Borough Council to assume the role of the accountable body for locality commissioning. A key part of this role will be in relation to the managing of the Partnership's finances relating to commissioning.
- 7.2 The principles underpinning the locality commissioning approach is to enable public sector partners to better co-ordinate decisions on commissioning priorities and how to collectively use their resources to achieve them.
- 7.3 The approximate funding identified to meet the two priorities of the Newcastle Partnership for 2015/16 is as follows:

Police & Crime Commissioner funding	£68,000
Building Resilient Families and Communities (BRFC - SCC)	£141,000
Public Health funding	£226,789
NULBC Third Sector Commissioning funding	£64,000
Total	£499,789

- 7.4 The Borough Council already receives the Police and Crime Commissioner funding and already holds the budget for the former Third Sector Commissioning funding. The

Borough Council has invoiced the County Council for the BRFC and Public Health funding highlighted above, following the decision by Cabinet of 5th February 2015, authorising officers to do so and a new cost centre has been established by the Borough Council to host this partnership funding.

- 7.5 It should also be noted that additional Borough Council officer time in Business Improvement, Partnerships, Housing & Regeneration Services and Finance will be required to support the commissioning process and to support contract and performance management requirements. This requirement will be met using existing officer time, but these commitments are difficult to evaluate at this time as this is the first such exercise.
- 7.6 Following resource contributions to the initial round of commissioning from the County Council, partners need to negotiate and agree further resource contributions for future rounds of commissioning activity.
- 7.7 As stated in this report, for any future single commissioning exercise managed by the Borough Council, this will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations/Standing Orders (Contract Procedural Rules). At this point in time it is expected that the value of the pooled budget will be around £500,000 over the first year of the contracts, with the option to extend for a further year based on satisfactory performance and subject to additional budget availability.

8. **Major Risks**

- 8.1 Significant risks include the following:
- Availability of funding to meet commissioning contracts could be a significant risk but has been mitigated by ensuring that the transfer of funds is made from the County Council to the Borough Council prior to contracts being awarded.
 - Availability of future funding to meet commissioning commitments could be a significant risk to the Council as all contracts will effectively be between the provider and NULBC. However, in order to mitigate this risk and subject to the procurement process, break clauses have been included within the contracts/tenders.
 - In relation to the previous point, partners will be expected to engage fully in the process and inform the Borough Council of any funding changes in sufficient time (6-12 months prior) to enable the Borough Council to notify contractors accordingly and action the appropriate break clauses/decommissioning.
 - There are no current TUPE and employment related issues (e.g. redundancy) that have been identified and which will need to be managed from the initial round of commissioning activity but this is something that may need to be considered in future commissioning rounds. Partner support and advice will be sought to manage any HR or related issues that may arise.
- 8.2 A risk register has been created and will be monitored and managed by the Business Improvement Team at the Borough Council for the Partnership's locality commissioning activity in order to seek to mitigate risks and limit liabilities for the Borough Council.
- 8.3 Each service commissioned and awarded will also support an individual risk assessment.

9. **Key Decision Information**

- 9.1 This report can be considered a key decision in the following ways: -
- It requires the Borough Council to commit existing and additional resources for the function to which the decision relates and;

- It impacts on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral wards in the Borough.

10. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

- 10.1 Cabinet Report - Newcastle Partnership Review – 24th October 2014.
- 10.2 Cabinet Report - Development of Locality Commissioning – 5th February 2015.

11. List of Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix A – Newcastle Partnership Risk Assessment 2015-17.
- 11.2 Appendix B – Letter from Staffordshire County Council, Public Health confirming financial contribution and support for the joint commissioning process.
- 11.3 Appendix C – Letter from Staffordshire County Council, District Commissioning Lead confirming financial contribution and support for the joint commissioning process.
- 11.4 Appendix D – Newcastle Partnership Locality Commissioning ‘Roles and Responsibilities’ document.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 None.

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Partnership Commissioning and Delivery Group

Risk Champion: Annette Vacquier; Final Risk Rating is at or greater than Low Green 1, Final Risk Rating is at or less than High Red 9

Risk	Risk Description	Risk Rating	Existing Control Measure	Description	Final Risk Rating	Further Action Required	Description	Action Plan Owner	Target Date
<i>Items in Group: 16</i>									
Partnership Commissioning and Delivery Group [Risk Champion: Vacquier, Annette] [Risk Champion: Vacquier, Annette]									
Apathy of Providers	Providers in the marketplace fail to engage on receipt of the prospectus	9	Publicised Prospectus	The prospectus shows the intent of collaborative partners to commission services and be bound through the accountable body	5				
			Publicity	Partnership Commissioning and Delivery Group have publicised and launched the prospectus in the local media, and nationally.					
Business Failure	Successful Service Provider business fails.	6	Ongoing Contract Management to be implemented.	On award of contract officers will meet with the successful service providers agreeing KPIs that will be reported on a quarterly basis and agree a time table for ongoing contract management reviews.	6	Ongoing Contract Management and performance reporting.	On award of contract officers will meet with the successful provider to agree KPIs and a formal timetable for contract management reviews.	Cleary, Beverley (Business Improvement Officer (Performance & Procurement))	31/03/2015
			Prospectus outlines	The prospectus identifies the budget limit for requested service deliveries and available budgets for other areas of provision					
			Standard application process	Application form in a standard format with clear instructions					
Challenge Contract Award	Potential for challenge against the contract award by unsuccessful service providers.	9	Standard evaluation and subsequent moderation processes used.	Commissioning prospectus identifies the evaluation criteria officers will use to assess and award contracts. Submissions will be assessed by a panel of officers experienced in assessing such proposals. Moderation process will also be used following panel evaluation.	5	Monitor contract award process.	Administrative support in place to support the evaluation and moderation process. This support should also be utilised to monitor any challenges and the reasons for such utilising this information to reduce/minimise the chances of future challenges as part of the ongoing commissioning process.	Cleary, Beverley (Business Improvement Officer (Performance & Procurement))	31/03/2015
			Disputes & Complaints procedure in place.	An overview of the disputes & complaints procedure has been included as part of the commissioning prospectus.					
			Standard application process	Application form in a standard format with clear instructions					
			Prospectus outlines	The prospectus identifies the budget limit for requested service deliveries and available budgets for other areas of provision					

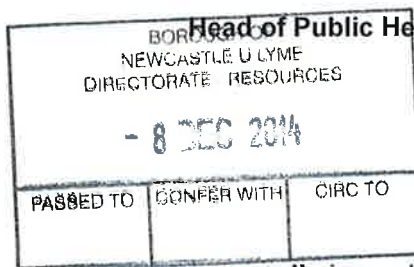
Risk	Risk Description	Risk Rating	Existing Control Measure	Description	Final Risk Rating	Further Action Required	Description	Action Plan Owner	Target Date			
Conflict of Interest	Conflicts of interest may exist from members of the Newcastle Partnership and Officers of the Borough Council when bidding to deliver commissioned service contracts.	5	Standard application process	Application form in a standard format with clear instructions	2	Minimise the potential for conflicts of interest.	Officers to ensure as part of the evaluation process that any conflicts of interest are raised by evaluation team members and where this occurs take appropriate measure to minimise / eliminate such by substituting officers to offer an unbiased approach to evaluation. Each member of the relevant evaluation panel will be requested to complete and sign a conflict of interest statement prior to commencing evaluation.	Cleary, Beverley (Business Improvement Officer (Performance & Procurement))	20/03/2015			
			Prospectus outlines	The prospectus identifies the budget limit for requested service deliveries and available budgets for other areas of provision								
Failure to Inform Members	Cabinet and relevant Scrutiny Members are not informed of the outcome of either the commissioning process or ongoing contract management and service outcomes.	5	Formal Constitution	Provides a formal framework for the group to work collectively in partnership	5	EMT & Cabinet Report	Report to both EMT & Cabinet following the successful conclusion of each commissioning process.	Bailey, Mark (Head of Business Improvement, Central Services & Partnerships)	31/03/2015			
			Website	Dedicated web pages that shows who to contact with questions and details of how to engage		Report to appropriate scrutiny committee (FRAPS - Finance, Resources & Partnerships Scrutiny Committee)				Officers report to Finance, Resources & Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on the successful conclusion of the commissioning process, identifying the services commissioned and the service providers the contracts were awarded to.	Bailey, Mark (Head of Business Improvement, Central Services & Partnerships)	31/03/2015
			Publicity	Partnership Commissioning and Delivery Group have publicised and launched the prospectus in the local media, and nationally.								
Formal Contracts	Contract template is unacceptable or not proportional to the value / risk of the service being commissioned.	5	Tentative agreements for funding	The collaborative partners have tentatively agreed to provide funding for the commissioned services. Officers have mapped the allocated funding that supports the current published commissioning prospectus.	2	Review of Formal Contract Template	Assess if contract may be modified to support proportionality.	Cleary, Beverley (Business Improvement Officer (Performance & Procurement)) Johnston, Jackie (Secretary/Admin Assistant) Sowerby, Simon (Business Improvement Manager) Washington, Paul (Principal Solicitor)	30/06/2015			
			Standard contract template	This template has been made available at the commencement of the process								
			Standard application process	Application form in a standard format with clear instructions								
			Publicised Prospectus	The prospectus shows the intent of collaborative partners to commission services and be bound through the accountable body								
			Prospectus outlines	The prospectus identifies the budget limit for requested service deliveries and available budgets for other areas of provision								
			Formal Constitution	Provides a formal framework for the group to work collectively in partnership								

Risk	Risk Description	Risk Rating	Existing Control Measure	Description	Final Risk Rating	Further Action Required	Description	Action Plan Owner	Target Date
Formal contracts not being signed	The formal contracts awarded are not signed prior to the commencement of the commissioned service by the successful party	9	Standard contract template	This template has been made available at the commencement of the process	6	Planned contract meetings	On formal award on the contract each provider will given a timetable for attendance at contact and performance meeting where the KPI's and future milestones will be identified and agreed for inclusion in the contract	Cleary, Beverley (Business Improvement Officer (Performance & Procurement))	31/03/2015
Insufficient interest from local funding partners	Of the local partners who are signed up to the Newcastle Partnership Commissioning and Delivery Group, only a few partners have currently engaged with the Commissioning and provided funding.	9	Formal Constitution	Provides a formal framework for the group to work collectively in partnership	6	Review of Roles & Responsibilities	Once Roles & Responsibilities are drafted in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council, legal to review and comment.	Washington, Paul (Principal Solicitor)	27/03/2015
Insurance of Partnership	The Newcastle Partnership Commissioning & Delivery Group as a body does not hold public liability insurance.	2	Roles & Responsibilities	Roles and Responsibilities (with the support of Staffordshire County Council) to be drafted, agreed and signed by collaborating partners enabling the Borough Council to be the accountable body. It is then envisaged that the Borough Council's insurance will then apply.	1	Roles & Responsibilities	Review and ensure that the Roles & Responsibilities clearly states the implications on Public Liability Insurance and the Accountable Bodies commitments to such.	Bailey, Mark (Head of Business Improvement, Central Services & Partnerships) Vacquier, Annette (Business Improvement Officer (Risk & Insurance))	31/03/2015
			NULBC Public Liability Insurances	The Borough Council of Newcastle-under-Lyme has appropriate levels of PL insurance in place.		Public Liability Insurance	Review with current insurers that the current schedules of insurance appropriately covers the undertakings of the Newcastle Partnership Commissioning & Delivery Group.	Vacquier, Annette (Business Improvement Officer (Risk & Insurance))	31/03/2015
			Standard contract template	This template has been made available at the commencement of the process					
			Formal Constitution	Provides a formal framework for the group to work collectively in partnership					
No formal approach to contract management agreed	No formal approach to contract management agreed by the collaborating partners following award of contracts.	6	Council account support	The council's accountants have identified service requirements and relevant financial codes for each project	2	Agree a formal approach to contract management.	On award of contract meet with the successful providers and establish and agree KPI's and contract management time table for review meetings.	Cleary, Beverley (Business Improvement Officer (Performance & Procurement))	31/03/2015
			Formal Constitution	Provides a formal framework for the group to work collectively in partnership					
			Prospectus outlines	The prospectus identifies the budget limit for requested service deliveries and available budgets for other areas of provision					
			Standard contract template	This template has been made available at the commencement of the process					

Risk	Risk Description	Risk Rating	Existing Control Measure	Description	Final Risk Rating	Further Action Required	Description	Action Plan Owner	Target Date
Non-agreement of Roles & Responsibilities	There is a possibility that interested collaborative partners find the content of the roles & responsibilities unacceptable and fail to comply	6	Formal Constitution	Provides a formal framework for the group to work collectively in partnership	5	Review of Roles & Responsibilities	Once Roles & Responsibilities are drafted in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council, legal to review and comment.	Washington, Paul (Principal Solicitor)	27/03/2015
			Publicised Prospectus	The prospectus shows the intent of collaborative partners to commission services and be bound through the accountable body					
Quality of Submissions	Submissions received are poor and or unacceptable	9	Standard application process	Application form in a standard format with clear instructions	6				
			Publicised Prospectus	The prospectus shows the intent of collaborative partners to commission services and be bound through the accountable body					
			Website	Dedicated web pages that shows who to contact with questions and details of how to engage					
Submissions exceed proposed service budget	Risk that applicants costings exceed the identified budget available for each service	6	Prospectus outlines	The prospectus identifies the budget limit for requested service deliveries and available budgets for other areas of provision	2				
			Website	Dedicated web pages that shows who to contact with questions and details of how to engage					
Transfer of Partner Funds and rejection of Newcastle Borough Council as the accountable body	Failure to of collaborative partners to transfer agreed funds to the accountable body in a timely manner.	6	Formal Constitution	Provides a formal framework for the group to work collectively in partnership	5	Review of Roles & Responsibilities	Once Roles & Responsibilities are drafted in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council, legal to review and comment.	Washington, Paul (Principal Solicitor)	27/03/2015
			Tentative agreements for funding	The collaborative partners have tentatively agreed to provide funding for the commissioned services. Officers have mapped the allocated funding that supports the current published commissioning prospectus.					
			Council account support	The council's accountants have identified service requirements and relevant financial codes for each project					
			Publicity	Partnership Commissioning and Delivery Group have publicised and launched the prospectus in the local media, and nationally.					

Risk	Risk Description	Risk Rating	Existing Control Measure	Description	Final Risk Rating	Further Action Required	Comment	Action Plan Owner	Target Date
TUPE Implications	Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) may apply to certain services being commissioned. Whilst the onus is on potential service providers to review such implications, prior to submitting applications to deliver services, the collaborating partners need to be aware that such issues have been compliantly addressed	5	Formal Constitution	Provides a formal framework for the group to work collectively in partnership	2	TUPE - Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)	Review applications from prospective service providers to ensure that they have reviewed and addressed TUPE implications.	Cleary, Beverley (Business Improvement Officer (Performance & Procurement)) Moore, Sarah (Partnerships Manager) Sowerby, Simon (Business Improvement Manager)	31/03/2015
			Prospectus outlines	The prospectus identifies the budget limit for requested service deliveries and available budgets for other areas of provision		Strategic Support - TUPE	Staffordshire County Council to support officers in any review of TUPE as part of the Roles & Responsibilities which are in the process of being drafted, legal to review and comment on completion.	Bailey, Mark (Head of Business Improvement, Central Services & Partnerships) Johnston, Jackie (Secretary/Admin Assistant) Moore, Sarah (Partnerships Manager) Sowerby, Simon (Business Improvement Manager) Washington, Paul (Principal Solicitor)	31/03/2015
			Standard application process	Application form in a standard format with clear instructions					
			Standard contract template	This template has been made available at the commencement of the process					
Withdrawal of funding	One or more of the collaborating partners is unable to sustain or withdraws supportive funding.	5	Tentative agreements for funding	The collaborative partners have tentatively agreed to provide funding for the commissioned services. Officers have mapped the allocated funding that supports the current published commissioning prospectus.	5	Newcastle Partnership Delivery and Commissioning Group	Newcastle Partnership Delivery and Commissioning Group meets regularly, ongoing performance monitoring (by exception) is likely to form part of the agenda. This will allow any issues of funding sustainability to be raised.	Bailey, Mark (Head of Business Improvement, Central Services & Partnerships) Moore, Sarah (Partnerships Manager) Sowerby, Simon (Business Improvement Manager)	30/06/2015
			Standard contract template	This template has been made available at the commencement of the process					
			Formal Constitution	Provides a formal framework for the group to work collectively in partnership					
			Council account support	The council's accountants have identified service requirements and relevant financial codes for each project					

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John Sellgren
Chief Executive
Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Civic Offices
Merrial Street
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire
ST5 2AG

Your Ref: JS / PHCP2014

Date: 01 December 2014

Dear John

Re: Localities Commissioning for Improving Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes – Funding for Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council Population Area

I am pleased to confirm that Staffordshire County Council (the 'County Council') has assigned the overall sum of £226,789 to help in the local commissioning for Public Health Outcomes, specifically to improving behaviour changes and better lifestyle (increasing physical activity, healthy eating & nutrition, and reduce alcohol consumption).

This assigned sum has been identified from existing contracts and agreements that are or will be coming to an end in March 2015 and July 2015.

Given that this approach is about getting the best value from various sums of money, with dual or joint outcomes to be delivered, the County Council believe for audit purposes, it is best for the County Council to give its commitment of spend by way of this letter at this time. Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council will act as the Accountable Body for the Locality Commissioning Board (the "LCB") and will put together tender documents to commission the outcomes of the County Council and other relevant organisations and the required outcomes for public health will be highlighted during the production of the prospectus as you have many detailed specific outcomes.

The County Council will need to agree the prospectus of outcomes to go out with the tenders to ensure it meets the required outcomes. This is largely for audit purposes as the County Council would expect to then be able to be appraised of any performance monitoring via the County Council's representative(s) on the LCB. The County Council hope this approach will

- (1) give some assurance of money available and then;
- (2) create a fast track for money to be transferred to the Accountable Body as soon as possible, but with the aforementioned audit trail.

Once Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council has identified providers through the tendering process who will deliver the outcomes required by the County Council; Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council will invoice the County Council. Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council will only

John Sellgren,
Newcastle Borough Council,
Civic Offices,
Merrial Street,
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire,
ST5 2AG

Date: 27th February 2015

Dear John,

Re: Commissioning for Building Resilient Families and Communities and Young People's Positive Activities

I am pleased to confirm that Staffordshire County Council (the 'County Council') has assigned the overall sum of £59,954.79 to help in the local commissioning for young people's positive activities and Building Resilient Families and Communities. This is to cover the first round of successful applications but it has been agreed that the total amount allocated to the commissioning prospectus would be £141,000.00.

This assigned sum has been identified from monies generated from the Building Resilient Families and Communities Payment by Results Monies.

Give this approach is about getting the best value from various sums of money, with dual or joint outcomes to be delivered, the County Council believe for audit purposes, it is best for the County Council to give its commitment of spend by way of this letter at this time. Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council will act as the Accountable Body for the Locality Commissioning Board (the LCB) and will put together tender documents to commission the outcomes of the County Council and other relevant organisations. In doing so the required outcomes for Building Resilient Families and Communities and Young People's Positive activities will be highlighted during the production of the prospectus and subsequent award of contracts.

The County Council will need to agree the prospectus of outcomes to go out with the tenders to ensure it meets the required outcomes. This is largely for audit purposes as the County Council would expect to then be able to be appraised of any performance monitoring via the County Council's representative(s) on the LCB. The County Council hope this approach will

- (1) Give some assurance of money available and then;
- (2) Create a fast track for money to be transferred to the Accountable Body as soon as possible, but with the aforementioned audit trail.

Once Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council has identified providers through the tendering process who will deliver the outcomes required by the County Council; Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council will only invoice the County Council for the funding to meet the young people's positive activities and Building Resilient Families and Communities which have been identified.

Finally the County Council recognises and accepts that such activities to support delivery of the outcomes may be wide in nature but of course still need to deliver young people's positive activities and Building Resilient Families and Communities outcomes. However the overall benefits will be expected to be shown to the reasonable satisfaction of the LCB/Strategic Partnership Board (as applicable) at the end of the financial year, however supported by quarterly monitoring of activity linked to the outcome areas. It is also expected that the County Council will be kept apprised of spend outcomes at the LCB/Strategic Partnership Board (as applicable).

Yours faithfully



Mark Hewitt
District Commissioning Lead

We confirm that we agree to and accept the above terms for and on behalf of

Name of Organisation:

Name of Representative:

Position:

Date:





Locality Commissioning: Roles and Responsibilities statement

Statutory duties: each organisation in the partnership remains responsible for its duties as defined in statute.

Funding partners: funding partners will make over monies to the accountable body acting on behalf of the Newcastle Partnership prior to any contracts being awarded

Financial controls: each organisation will maintain appropriate financial control mechanisms for funds received from local taxation, general and specific grants and similar sources.

The Newcastle Partnership: the Newcastle Partnership shall be responsible for operating a commissioning process in accordance with the procedures of the accountable body. The members of the Partnership shall be collectively responsible for the decisions made to award contracts. The Partnership shall agree performance management arrangements for each contract with lead commissioners.

Accountable body: within the Partnership the accountable body will be nominated to administer the distribution of funds at a locality level. This accountable body will hold funds on behalf of the funding partner and will allocated monies in accordance with decisions made by the Partnership. The accountable body will ensure that appropriate financial controls are applied to ensure effective stewardship of all monies. The accountable body will also ensure that in undertaking locality commissioning robust procurement and contracting procedures have been applied.

Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE): The County Council is seeking legal advice on this matter on behalf of all partners. Until this advice has been received, considered and agreed any TUPE liability remains a matter between the appropriate funding partner and any provider performing a service under contract.

Confirmation of commitment to the above on behalf of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council:

Name:

Position:

Signature:

Date:

Confirmation of commitment to the above on behalf of Staffordshire County Council:

Name:

Position:

Signature:

Date:

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NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET

25 March 2015

<u>Title:</u>	Newcastle Economic Development Strategy: Year Three Review and Year Four Action Plan
<u>Submitted by:</u>	Neale Clifton
<u>Principal author:</u>	Kim Graham
<u>Portfolio:</u>	Economic Development, Town Centres, Business and Customer Services
<u>Ward(s) affected:</u>	All

Purpose of the Report

To review progress made in taking forward the Borough's Economic Development Strategy, in particular by reviewing the progress in Year Three and considering the actions proposed in the Year Four Action Plan.

Recommendations

That the review of the Economic Development Strategy Year Three Action Plan be noted and that the Year Four Action Plan be approved following consideration of the Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendations.

Reasons

By reviewing progress against last year's action plan and proposing an up to date prioritised range of actions for the forthcoming year the Council can ensure that the aims of the strategy are converted into deliverable actions. The proposed action plan has been subjected to scrutiny by the Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee and appropriate recommendations will have been put forward to Cabinet before the final Action Plan is approved.

1. Background

- 1.1 Cabinet agreed the Economic Development Strategy for the Borough in 2012 following consultation with partners and the local business community on an earlier draft. Printed copies of the strategy, illustrated with plans and photographs, have since been widely disseminated, including to Cabinet Members. The approved strategy has a five year timescale (2012-17) and included the preparation of an Action Plan for Year One (2012-13) which identified a number of concrete actions which could be taken in a shorter time scale.
- 1.2 This report provides a review of the Year Three Action Plan (2014-15) and (in part informed by this) sets out a Year Four Action Plan (2015-16) for your consideration and approval. By

its nature this Action Plan is fairly detailed and for this reason is contained in appendix form. The draft action plan is to be considered by the Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee on 18th March and a supplementary report will be given on any recommended revisions they may make.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 Strategy is inherently about making choices – making the case for why certain actions should be prioritised over others and to what intended effect. The annual action plans on the other hand are more about adding the practical delivery detail to those priorities, setting out what actions are to be taken, so that the actions proposed can be seen in the context of the broader objectives. The annual review also provides an opportunity to consider any new initiatives from Government or a key partner or changes in the economic or financial landscape and seek to capitalise on them. It may also suggest changes in emphasis or priority (and perhaps what might no longer be pursued so that new things might be tried).

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 When the preparation of a new Economic Development Strategy was first discussed, it was initially proposed to provide a ‘mid-term report’ half way through the five year horizon of the strategy to review progress made and consider whether any changes in emphasis (or even direction) were required. Cabinet instead requested an annual review in the form of an annual Action Plan in which progress made in the previous year’s Action Plan was reviewed and a detailed Action Plan for the following year drafted and agreed. This report follows that approach.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 The appendix to this report contains a review of the Year Three Action Plan (2014-15) and sets out a proposed Year Four Action Plan (2015-16) for your consideration and approval. The annual Action Plans set out in more detail how the aims and objectives agreed will be carried out. These are based around the four themes of:
- Promoting enterprise and supporting local businesses to grow;
 - Improving the skills of the local workforce;
 - Marketing and development, and;
 - Strengthening the vitality and appeal of the town centres.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 5.1 To continue to act as a basis for dialogue with other partners to encourage complementary action and to direct the activity of the Regeneration and Economic Development Team.

6. **Outcomes Linked to Corporate Priorities**

- 6.1 The Economic Development Strategy falls within the Borough Council’s corporate priority of ‘Creating a Borough of Opportunity’.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1 It is not a statutory requirement on the Council to prepare an Economic Development Strategy though it is good practice to do so and to take decisions against the background of agreed priorities, up to date data and following consultation with partners. In view of the relevant powers and duties placed upon Local Authorities in relation to economic well-being it is appropriate for the Council to have an up to date action plan.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

8.1 No differential impact has been identified. Specific actions which are designed to improve the prospects of particular sections of the community (for instance, those without work) will be subject to subsequent reports, which may themselves require an EIA.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 Where actions are proposed which require proposals for expenditure these will be the subject of specific reports to Cabinet.

Key actions highlighted within the Action Plan include some committed Council expenditure:

Action	Budget
Support for the TCP Enterprize competition	£7k in business rate support has been budgeted for.
Training and Business Support for existing market traders	Market Support Budget.
Work in partnership with Make It to attract new employers to the Borough and support existing businesses to expand	£13,000 contribution from service budget.
Secure agreement with HDD for the development of the Ryecroft site	Budgetary provision has been made for the necessary work to bring the project forward to the stage of a developer agreement; should the scheme proceed further funding may be required and this would be subject to further Cabinet approval.
Procure external advice to carry out Keele Options appraisal and master planning study	Up to £139,280 is allocated for the Council's contribution.
Use of the Enjoy website and promotion for tourism from the Destination Management Partnership	£3,000 contribution from service budget.
Support NTCP to apply for further funding from Arts Council England for an event in 2015	£1,000 match-funding from the Strategic Investment Framework.
Work with the County Council to refurbish two town centre subways – Friar Street and Pool Dam	S106-funded from the development of Aldi.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 These will be considered on a project by project basis.

11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 The strategy will affect more than two wards of the Borough. Approval for specific expenditure will be subject to more detailed later reports.

12. **Earlier Cabinet Resolutions**

- 12.1 At its meeting on 14th March 2012, Cabinet considered the draft strategy; following final modifications the final strategy was adopted by Cabinet in May 2012.
- 12.2 At its meeting in September 2013 Cabinet adopted the Year One Action Plan Review 2012-13 and Year Two 2013-14 Action Plan.
- 12.3 At its meeting 18 June 2014 Cabinet adopted the Year Two Action Plan Review 2013 -14 and Year Three Action Plan 2014 – 15.
- 13. **List of Appendices**
 - 13.1 Year Three Action Plan Review 2014-15 and Draft 2015-16 Action Plan.
- 14. **Background Documents**
 - 14.1 Newcastle Economic Development Strategy 2012-17

Newcastle Economic Development Strategy 2012-2017 Year Four Action Plan 2015-2016

Promoting Enterprise and supporting Local Business to Grow

Action taken in Year Three (2014-15).	Action proposed in Year Four 2015-2016 (Bold indicates priority action)
<p>Successfully delivered the Newcastle 'Business Boost' competition, including securing new sponsors, introducing new prize categories and holding an awards ceremony in October 2014. Supported NTCP to introduce a town centre business awards scheme through the Business Boost competition, celebrating the 'best of Newcastle' in a variety of categories.</p> <p>Worked with the Newcastle TCP through the Business Boost competition and explored a second, possibly biannual approach, 'Enterprize' competition to encourage new retail start-ups in Newcastle Town Centre. Opportunities to mirror this in Kidsgrove Town Centre (with the KTCP).</p> <p>Due to market refurbishment it was not possible to run schools/youth markets in 2014/15.</p> <p>Continued the management of the Business pages on the Borough Council website to ensure that businesses are provided with up to date relevant information.</p> <p>Continued signposting of businesses to sources of assistance, in particular via the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) business helpline and the 'Make It' Inward Investment Service.</p> <p>Work had commenced with the Aspire Group and the County Council to provide standard tender documents, the first one being a common pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) to be used by all three organisations. Since this action was agreed there have been changes to the national processes with the Revised Public Procurement Regulations coming into effect on February 26th affecting the public advertisement of tender opportunities over £25,000 and recommending a prequalification process.</p> <p>Continued to provide active support for Finest, including the popular 'Meet the Chief Exec.' event.</p> <p>Continued to work with the LEP and Staffordshire Economic Development Officers Group (SEDOG) to secure investment from the European Union (EU) for funding for business support and development and to provide input to a Strategic Economic Plan to guide investment to meet priority needs.</p> <p>Worked with the Newcastle Enterprise Coach and Business Enterprise Support to encourage unemployed people into self-employment.</p> <p>Worked with the National Association of British Markets Authorities (NABMA) and The Source Skills Academy to explore support for new market traders and provide support for up-skilling existing market traders to improve the overall performance of the outdoor market.</p>	<p>Planning for Business Boost 2015 to begin in April 2015. The amount of sponsorship will determine whether it will go ahead and in what format. Explore further opportunities for town centre business awards through Business Boost competition 2015.</p> <p>Work with the NTCP to explore options to run a second 'Enterprize' competition to encourage new retail start-ups in Newcastle Town Centre and the opportunities to mirror this in Kidsgrove Town Centre (with the KTCP), taking account of lessons learned from the previous competition.</p> <p>Make full use of the newly refurbished Newcastle Market to encourage more involvement of young traders, run further schools / youth markets in Newcastle Town Centre in 2015 and explore the possibility of a youth market in Kidsgrove. As part of the 'Love your local market' fortnight, the 'Trade for a Tenner' scheme will be reprised in May 2015 with the emphasis on getting more young people involved.</p> <p>Revamp of Business section during 2015/16 in line with council website redesign.</p> <p>Signposting activities to continue in 2015 and further support to be given through the 'Enterprise Round Table' group which brings together business support agencies from across the county.</p> <p>We will also ensure that procurement opportunities are publicised adequately so that local businesses know about the tenders and where to find out more. The Staffordshire Procurement Group will consider the requirements to establish standardised approaches.</p> <p>Continue to provide active support for Finest to include hosting the annual 'meet the CEO'.</p> <p>Continue to work with the LEP and SEDOG to secure external investment in the Borough.</p> <p>Continue to support the Newcastle Enterprise Coach to provide awareness sessions, business coaching, workshops and enterprise clubs to encourage unemployed people into self-employment.</p> <p>Offer further training and business support for existing market traders to improve their business on Newcastle Market</p>

Newcastle Economic Development Strategy 2012-2017 Year Four Action Plan 2015-2016

Improving the skills of the local workforce

Action taken in Year Three (2014-15).	Action proposed in Year Four 2015-16 (Bold indicates priority action)
<p>Worked with partners in the LEP Education Trust to set up a North Staffs Education Business Partnership (NSEBP), Education Locality Project and appointed a full time coordinator funded through Stoke on Trent City Council.</p> <p>Continued to work with the LEP and local partners to provide employment and training support across the borough based on successful previous initiatives such one to one support, advice and guidance and whole family approach focusing on people furthest away from the jobs market.</p> <p>Continued to implement the 'memorandum of understanding' (MOU) actions with PM Training and the Aspire Group to promote opportunities for work placements through the Council and apprenticeships through the Council's supply chain and explore joint procurement for delivery of goods and services. It was decided not to subscribe to Social Enterprise West Midlands at this stage due to costs.</p> <p>Continued to work with the LEP Education Trust (NSEBP) to establish initiatives to develop a skilled workforce by delivering higher level and employability skills, improving careers advice and guidance, increasing business engagement in learning and skills and developing high quality education and training facilities.</p> <p>Worked with Talent Match to identify alternative routes - such as mentoring, community buddies and creative routes such as digital media, performance and participatory arts - into training and employment for those who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs). Full time Newcastle coordinator appointed January 2015.</p>	<p>Continue to work with the NSEBP to take forward the LEP Education Trust Locality Project working specifically with five Newcastle schools - St John Fisher, Wolstanton High, Clayton Hall, Blackfriars and Madeley.</p> <p>Continue to work with partners to further develop the employment and skills offer across the Borough and to explore opportunities for a consortia approach through the Newcastle Employment and Skills group to secure additional funding and resource for the area.</p> <p>Implement opportunities for structured work placements at the Council.</p> <p>Continue to represent the Council on the LEP Education Trust (NSEBP) steering group and at specific events to improve the prospects of young people being better skilled / qualified to meet the needs of businesses.</p> <p>Continue to work with Talent Match to help 18-24 years (NEETs) into training, volunteering, work placements and apprenticeships in order to help their journey into work.</p>

Marketing and development

Action proposed in Year Three (2014-15).	Action proposed in Year Four 2015-16 (Bold indicates priority action)
<p>Continued to work with the Make It inward investment team to attract prospective investors and employers to the area and secure more jobs including the publication of new 'North Staffordshire development sites' brochure specifically aimed to publicise investment opportunities in Stoke and Newcastle.</p> <p>Successfully lobbied the Government (BIS) to ensure that the new Assisted Areas Map is drawn in such a way as to help promote the Borough's industrial development sites effectively for both inward investment and to encourage local growth.</p> <p>The Council responded to the Government consultation on the proposed HS2 route by saying that it wanted to be satisfied that the potential economic benefits would outweigh environmental harm. In addition the Council Leader requested that proper consideration should be given to the alternative proposal from Stoke on Trent City Council to site a station in the heart of the city to drive the economic development of North Staffs.</p> <p>Successfully marketed the Ryecroft development opportunity in the town centre to secure interest from a number of developers prepared to bring forward a significant retail-led redevelopment scheme in the town centre. Henry Davidson Developments (HDD) has now been chosen as 'preferred developer' for the schemes and a Co-operation Agreement has been signed between the parties to facilitate negotiations to refine the financial offer and aspects of the scheme content.</p>	<p>Continue to work in partnership with Make It to attract new employers to the Borough and support existing business to expand.</p> <p>Represent the Borough at relevant Make It events.</p> <p>Action complete; ongoing promotion of Assisted Areas status to optimise the prospects of business growth.</p> <p>Consider further response to any future HS2 consultation to ensure that the Borough can benefit from any associated economic growth (balanced with consideration of environmental impact mitigation)..</p> <p>Secure agreement with HDD for the development of the Ryecroft site which meets the expectations of the two Councils with regard to occupier content, scheme design and financial return and, if so, to proceed towards completion of a formal Development Agreement.</p>

Newcastle Economic Development Strategy 2012-2017 Year Four Action Plan 2015-2016

Provided help to local firms seeking to expand with advice on land and sources of available public funding.

Continued work with the LEP to secure investment in the Borough and across Staffordshire through European funding and Government funding such as the Regional Growth Fund (RGF), the Growing Places Fund (GPF) and the Local Growth Fund (LGF).

Undertaken feasibility studies for a number of sites close to the A500 corridor to the west of Chatterley Valley to help identify a preferred 50/60 ha employment site to be put forward in the new local plan.

Continued to explore options to bring forward an appropriate scheme for redeveloping the site of the former Knutton Recreation Centre site.

Continued discussions with partners Keele University, the HCA, Staffordshire County Council and Make It to promote the opportunities for further technology-based companies to locate in the science park.

Worked with developers and landlords to encourage more use of space over shops in the town centre (specifically premises in Nelson Place, on Hassell Street and above Rare on the Ironmarket) to be used for housing and so bring more footfall into the town centre.

Worked with Keele University and Staffordshire County Council to develop a brief for the Master planning of a possible western expansion of the urban area to accommodate a sizeable portion of the Borough's growth needs over the next 20+ years.

Worked with Staffordshire University and private sector partners to explore the potential for creating a co-working space in the town centre to include small scale digital and creative industries.

Worked with partners with the aim of securing the refurbishment of the former Maxims and to explore options for the suitable redevelopment of adjoining land.

Provided help to local firms seeking to expand with advice on available premises, development land and sources of public funding.

Worked with web design company Pikemere to design and develop a Kidsgrove Town Centre website.

Provided greater promotion of the canal through Kidsgrove to both visitors and to local people as part of the wider Kidsgrove Waterfront project (ongoing from April 2014).

Worked with the County Council, East Midlands Trains and Network Rail to bring forward an emerging comprehensive set of proposals to improve the accessibility of Kidsgrove Railway Station and to establish a transport hub.

Worked with the Destination Management Partnership (DMP) to promote Staffordshire as a tourist destination, particularly for short breaks, promoting the accommodation offer via the 'Enjoy' website, business tourism via the Conference Bureau and using the DMP PR agency to promote town centre events.

Continue to promote the area for inward investment and continue to assist local companies to expand.

Work with the LEP to plan for and help shape the new European funding programme and sources of Government funding, develop potential projects within the Borough which might benefit from such funding and promote the inclusion of a number of projects in these programmes which will directly benefit the economy of the Borough, local companies and its workforce.

Complete technical studies and detailed physical and market assessments on the potential sites for consideration of designation as a new Strategic Employment Site in the north-west of the urban area to recommend for inclusion in the emerging Draft Local Plan.

Secure the satisfactory and comprehensive redevelopment plans for Knutton Recreation Centre and its environs following public consultation with the aim of enhancing the built environment of Knutton High Street. .

Facilitate the potential of Keele University to develop IC5 at Keele Science Park and support them through the LEP and other avenues to attract further investment into the Science Park.

Procure expert external advice to carry out the options appraisal and master planning study for the potential western expansion of the urban area and report this for Cabinet consideration to input to the Local Plan process.

Progress plans for the creation of a co-working space in the town centre to include small scale digital and creative industries with Staffordshire University and private sector partner.

Continue to work with partners on the Maxims project with the aim of them bringing forward a comprehensive refurbishment and redevelopment scheme.

Support and facilitate proposals for the refurbishment of Blackburn House with its new owners.

Active promotion of website to businesses, residents and visitors, including signing up businesses as members of Go Kidsgrove (the KTCP).

Funding being sought to develop an interactive map to promote Kidsgrove heritage and services to canal users. Continue to seek sources of funding for other aspects of the Kidsgrove Waterfront Project.

Continue working with and supporting partners in the development of the project to bring forward comprehensive improvements at Kidsgrove railway station.

Ongoing use of 'Enjoy' website and PR opportunities to promote town centre events.

Newcastle Economic Development Strategy 2012-2017 Year Four Action Plan 2015-2016

Worked with Groundwork and other local partners to secure funding for the siting of the Miners' wheel on the Apedale County Park on the former Silverdale Colliery site. Silverdale Parish Council is now taking this project forward.	Action complete
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Strengthening the vitality and appeal of the town centres

Action proposed in Year Three (2014-15).	Action proposed in Year Four 2015-16 (Bold indicates priority action)
<p>Supported the Newcastle TCP and other partners to build on previous successful events programmes, such as the Lymelight Festival, The Homecoming, Paint the Town Pink and the Christmas lights Switch-on.</p> <p>Successfully completed the Newcastle Town Centre Public Realm project and the re-launch of the Market. Completed a mystery shopping exercise on the general market with the intent of improving the customer experience, this included individual feedback to each market trader.</p> <p>Helped to promote new retail businesses opening in the town centre, including the use of social media and the Council website.</p> <p>Helped Kidsgrove Town Team to formally launched its business plan (March 2014) including activities to encourage further footfall; also developed a project plan for the Kidsgrove Waterfront project and submitted it to the project pipeline for possible ERDF and LGF funding.</p> <p>Worked with the NTCP and Appetite Arts to successfully apply for funding from the Arts Council to deliver The Homecoming, a high quality art and cultural animation event in Newcastle town centre summer 2014.</p> <p>Worked with the Roebuck Shopping Centre to review and plan for new signage on the Midway Car Park which promotes the town centre to potential customers on the ring road. On-going action with the new owners of the centre. Undertook similar action with the new owner of The Square.</p> <p>Worked with the NTCP and KTCP to support local arts and cultural providers to apply for HLF funding for town centre based projects, this has resulted in a successful reminiscence project in 2015 run by a local arts company: Letting In The Light.</p> <p>Successfully refurbished two town centre subways working with the County Council and commissioned local arts organisation Creative Arts North Staffs (CANS) to produce designs for the Bridge Street subway community arts project. Local arts organisation Entrepreneurs to produce designs for the Liverpool Road subway, working with students from St John Fisher.</p> <p>Continued financial and staff support for NTCP and staff resource to support the KTCP.</p>	<p>Continue to support NTCP on town centre events in 2015-16</p> <p>Seek ways of linking new market traders to existing business support mechanisms in North Staffordshire to encourage successful new start-ups on the market.</p> <p>Continue to provide support for new retail business in the town centre via the Council web site and social media.</p> <p>Continue to develop projects which will encourage greater footfall in Kidsgrove Town centre.</p> <p>Support NTCP to apply for further funding from Arts Council England for an event in 2015.</p> <p>Continue to work with the TCPs and the Highway Authority to improve wayfinding in the towns, in particular the development of a signage strategy for Kidsgrove.</p> <p>Support KTCP to submit a funding application for at least one heritage project during 2015/16.</p> <p>Continue to work with the County Council to refurbish two town centre subways – Friar Street and Pool Dam and commission local arts organisations to produce designs for the subways.</p> <p>The Council committed to a 3 year funding of the Newcastle Town Centre Partnership which comes to an end in December 2015; the partnership will then need to become self-financing through a Business Improvement District (BID) or membership scheme. The Council will support the TCP to undertake a ballot for the proposed BID for July 2015. Officer support from the Regeneration and Economic Development Team will continue to be provided to both the TCP's based on one day per week.</p>

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

25TH MARCH 2015

Title: Locality Action Partnerships (LAPs) – further development

Submitted by: Sarah Moore – Partnerships Manager

Portfolios: Communications, Policy and Partnerships
Leisure, Culture and Localism

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

The report presents, following a previous report to Cabinet in October 2014, progress reports from each of the nine Locality Action Partnerships (LAPs), highlighting their achievements during the last twelve months in relation to the three key strategic themes prioritised by the Borough Council and its partners, namely:

- Health and Well-being
- Economic Development
- Stronger and Safer Communities

To seek Cabinet approval for the further development and ongoing support to LAPs in the nine localities across the Borough.

Recommendations

The report recommends that Cabinet:

- **Acknowledges and endorses the progress reports produced by each of the nine Locality Action Partnerships (LAPs), which highlights their achievements during the last twelve months.**
- **Continues to support the work of the LAPs in the nine localities across the Borough and assists in enabling them to continue to contribute to the delivery of the Council’s Co-operative Strategy through further development.**
- **Challenges the LAPs to;**
 - **proactively engage and contribute to Regeneration and Economic Development activity with Council Officers;**
 - **continue to share information, disseminate good practice and raise awareness of activity through the LAP Chairs group;**
 - **report further progress and activities back to Cabinet in 12 months to contribute to a further review of Council support.**

Reasons

One of the Council's key corporate priorities is becoming a co-operative council. A key element of co-operative working is focused on locality working – recognising diversity of the Borough’s different localities and working with these communities in understanding their needs and issues and developing solutions to address these needs and deliver practical solutions. In order to deliver this priority it is necessary to ensure that the Borough’s nine Locality Action Partnerships (LAPs) are supported to work effectively to facilitate local performance and delivery.

1. Background

- 1.1 Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council has committed to, as one of its four corporate priorities, becoming a co-operative council and wants to work with partners towards making Newcastle-under-Lyme a co-operative Borough.
- 1.2 The Co-operative Strategy outlines the community leadership role for the Borough Council, working with other agencies and communities to deliver change and to ensure that people are able to influence issues, priorities and activities in their localities.
- 1.3 The Council has placed locality working at the heart of its priority to work co-operatively, as locality working empowers communities to develop their own approaches to dealing with issues affecting their own localities and enhances partnership working.
- 1.4 In the Borough, the Newcastle Partnership is the local strategic partnership. The Partnership represents the different sectors in Borough and plays a vital role in bringing together a range of organisations with a shared purpose through co-operative and co-ordinated joint working that will improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing in the Borough.
- 1.5 Locality Action Partnerships (LAPs) represent the Newcastle Partnership's established infrastructure for the delivery of locality working and offer communities access to a range of partners to address and deliver against local needs and priorities. In addition, LAPs assist in community engagement and empowerment and play a part in the achievement of improved community cohesion. There are nine LAPs in the Borough, which are made up of a range of partners from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors with an interest in their local area.
- 1.6 Following a report to Cabinet in October 2014, LAPs were challenged to produce progress reports to highlight their activity over the last 12 months contributing to the strategic priorities for the Borough Council and its partners, which are;
- Health and Well-being
 - Economic Development
 - Stronger and Safer Communities
- 1.7 It was agreed that the progress reports would be reviewed by the Borough Council towards the end of the 2014/15 and a report would be brought back to Cabinet for consideration. It was also agreed that these reports would form the basis for the contribution to the further development of LAPs on the part of the Borough Council and its' partners in the Newcastle Partnership, including the LAPs future role in the administration of grants such as Community Chest.

2. Summary of LAPs Progress

- 2.1 Each of the nine LAPs produced a progress report as requested by the Borough Council, see Appendix A.
- 2.2 The key achievements for the LAPs during 2014 can be summarised as;
- Three of the LAPs have facilitated merges reducing the number of LAPs from eleven to nine.
 - All LAPs have had an AGM and confirmed the Chair/Vice Chair and signatory positions/arrangements.
 - Eight of the nine LAPs are fully constituted with bank accounts.
 - £76,851.48 external funding has been brought into the Borough by the LAPs.
 - Roadshows have been delivered in each of the LAP areas.
 - All of the nine LAPs have refreshed their Action Plans, into a consistent format, with actions identified following consultation.
 - One of the LAPs has piloted administering the Community Chest grants on behalf of the Borough Council via a sub group.
 - 5 of the nine LAPs have participated in training delivered by VAST which has included project planning and outcomes and funding, to assist with their role in delivering practical partnership solutions to address local needs.
- 2.3 It was reported that the following challenges have been encountered;
- Difficulties engaging with the wider community in a number of areas.
 - Lack of engagement in a number of areas from health partners.
 - Closure of community facilities e.g. libraries, youth centres and children centres.
 - Misunderstanding or lack of understanding of what LAPs do / unrealistic expectations.
 - Limited funding opportunities for some activities.
 - Responding to key issues and hotspots.
- 2.4 The LAPs reported the following regarding partnership participation;
- 2.4.1 Strengths identified included;
- All LAPs reported that they received support and involvement from key partners such as the Borough Council, County Council, Police, Aspire and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue.
 - LAPs reported that they received and provided support and involvement from Resident Associations, Schools, Councillors, local churches, local businesses and Town and Parish Councils.
- 2.4.2 Areas for improvement highlighted;
- Some LAPs reported the need to better engage with local businesses, schools, Councillors, community groups, doctors surgeries and other health professionals.
 - Some of the LAPs reported difficulties with relationships with their Parish Councils, which it was suggested was because of a misunderstanding of the role of a LAP.
 - The majority of LAPs reported the need to improve relationships in the localities with health partners.
 - The majority of LAPs agreed that more promotion of LAPs was required in their communities to raise the profile of their work.
- 2.4.3 It is clear that partnership participation varies in each of the nine localities and there are lessons learned which can be shared between the LAPs to enhance existing partnerships. Further support for the LAPs is required to nurture existing relationships

Classification: NULBC UNCLASSIFIED

and to instigate new contacts to assist in partnership working e.g. health providers, schools and faith groups.

2.5 The following activities were reported as having have been delivered by the LAPs during 2014;

Name of LAP	Health and Wellbeing	Economic Development	Stronger and Safer
Audley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WWI centenary event at Apedale. • African drumming project with schools. • Community consultation and open day at Audley Community Centre. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restorative Justice Project at Audley Allotments • Contribution to Community Safety awareness and ASB operations in Audley village • Community litter group • Responding to local community safety and environmental issues.
Betley, Keele and Madeley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health event to raise awareness of issues in the community and provide advice and signposting • Dog show event to raise awareness of the effects of dog fouling. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcycle project (with funding from the PCC) • WWI centenary event at RAF Cosford for young people • Responding to local community safety and environmental issues • Initiating activities for young people to prevent ASB.
Butt Lane and Talke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mucky ducky dog fouling campaign. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demolition of the Woodshuts pub. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demolition of the Woodshuts pub • Freeport Roadshow • Local Clean ups (see attached report at Appendix A) • Progress with Reginald Mitchell Peace • Responding to local community safety and environmental issues.
East Newcastle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gating project 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gating Project • Calendar • Responding to local community safety and environmental issues.
Greater Chesterton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooking on a budget • Fairy Jobmother • Lunchtime supervisor training • Fuel Poverty Advice Sessions • Range of volunteers' training • Community Newsletter • Health event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs Clubs • Money Advice Sessions • Fairy Jobmother • Fuel Poverty Advice Sessions • Cooking on a budget • Sponsorship to local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Litter picks • Estate walkabouts • Buzz in Fridays project • Community Safety equipment in response to crime hotspots e.g. purse bells, wheelie bin locks and window and door locks for reassurance.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love Parks event • Sports Day Chesterton Park • Neighbourhood advice surgeries • Community consultation at a range of locations to inform action plan. • Respect group established to plan and co-ordinate range of community events and activities with team of community volunteers. • Handball programme • Holiday club diversionary activity programme • Football and Dance sessions at the Vision • Christmas event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • groups via Community Chest and other partners • Credit Union project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halloween diversion activity project • Chesterton Dandelion project (outdoor play) • Community Tool hire scheme (PCC funding obtained). • WWI Memorial renovation. • Administration of the Community Chest on behalf of NBC. • Crime sub group establish to respond to Community Safety issues and hotspots in the Community • Responding to community environmental issues • Providing feedback to planning consultations.
Kidsgrove	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAP Roadshow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership working with Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Impact day – October 2014 • Birchenwood barriers • Community engagement events • Shed alarms project in response to Community Safety hotspots • Responding to local community safety and environmental issues..
Newcastle Rural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Youth Project 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to local community safety and environmental issues.
Newcastle South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warmth for all project – fuel poverty 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 a side football sessions • Boxing for young people • Community speed watch project • Responding to local community safety and environmental issues.
Partnership of Western Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community consultation at range of Community locations to inform the Action Plan. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Football and Health and Beauty diversionary activities for young People. • Pavillion Restorative Justice project and launch event. • Awareness raising for community safety hotspots issues • Responding to local community safety and environmental issues.

- 2.5.1 It is clear that the LAPs have previously focussed on activities around Health and Wellbeing and Stronger and Safer Communities, which may be attributable to the availability of funding and volunteers to assist in these areas. Another reason may be because of the availability of information through partners, media and formal statistics. A range of small grants are readily available to use to respond to well-being and community safety initiatives and the LAPs are able to influence the inputs and contributions of partners in responding to these community needs.
- 2.5.2 A lack of access to funding for economic development may be a reason for a lack of activity in this area over the last year. This may however improve over the coming months due to changes to the Welfare Reform environment and a focus from partners on the importance of the financial inclusion agenda, which may present opportunities for the LAPs to explore for the benefit of their residents, particularly for those some of the Borough deprived wards or those in a more rural location with access difficulties.
- 2.5.3 Although the LAPs have begun to seek and obtain funding to deliver activities in their own right, it is evident that there is much more work to be done. Activities over the last 12 months have focused on formalising the groups and focusing them on the task of delivery for the benefit of the wider community. That said, the LAPs now need to focus on responding to local needs and becoming more ambitious with obtaining and influencing additional resources at a local level. This will need further support from a range of partners to increase LAPs awareness and confidence for continued improvement.
- 2.5.4 It is important to recognise that the LAPs have and continue to evolve and develop at different paces, this may be attributable to differences in community leadership, partners involvement, appetite and involvement of the community and how local needs are being presented and considered. All of the LAPs have action plans for 2015 and beyond, which have been created in a consistent format so that areas of similarity can be brought together for further joint working if appropriate.

3. Options Considered

- 3.1 Option A - that Cabinet acknowledges and endorses the progress reports produced by each of the nine Locality Action Partnerships (LAPs), highlighting their achievements during the last twelve months and continues to support the work of the LAPs across the Borough to assist in enabling them to continue to contribute to the delivery of the Council's Co-operative Strategy (recommended).
- 3.2 Option B – that Cabinet does not endorse the reports and withdraws support for LAPs to continue to develop and deliver in their respective localities. This is not recommended because the Council would not have a mechanism to deliver the Co-operative Council objectives through locality working with communities.

4. Proposal and Reason for Preferred Solution

- 4.1 This report presents to Cabinet, the nine LAP progress reports produced by the LAP Chairs to demonstrate their contributions made to partnership working on the key strategic issues of health and well-being; economic development; and developing stronger and safer communities in the Borough.
- 4.2 This report recommends that a further commitment is made by Cabinet to continue to support the ongoing development of the LAPs, which will enhance consistency for residents and partnership working in the Borough.

- 4.3 This report recommends that a further challenge the LAPs should be made for them to;
- proactively engage and contribute to Regeneration and Economic Development activity that Council Officers are developing;
 - continue to share information, disseminate good practice and raise awareness of activity through the LAP Chairs group;
 - report further progress and activities back to Cabinet in 12 months to contribute to a further review of Council support.

5. Outcomes Linked to Corporate Priorities

- 5.1 The recommendations above contribute to all of the Council's Corporate Priorities namely; Healthy and Active Communities, a Cleaner, Safer and Sustainable Borough, a Borough of Opportunity and Delivering a Co-operative Council.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 6.1 There are no specific legal or statutory implications for consideration within this report.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1 There are no adverse equality issues identified as arising from this report.

8. Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1 There are no additional specific financial implications or commitments required for the implementation of these recommendations.

- 8.2 There are resource implications for Borough Council Officers and Members as part of their substantive duties who will continue to provide support to contribute to the development of the Locality Action Partnerships in relation to these recommendations. These implications include officer time in both the Partnerships Team and also in other departments across the Borough Council.

9. Major Risks

- 9.1 In the event of an adverse decision the Council may be unable to deliver the Corporate Priorities effectively without a mechanism to support the further development of locality working in the Borough.

10. Key Decision Information

- 10.1 This report can be considered key in the following ways: -

- It results in the Borough Council committing existing resources for the function to which the decision relates and;
- It is significant because it affects more than two or more electoral wards in the Borough.

11. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

- 11.1 Locality Action Partnerships (LAPs) – further development – October 2014

12. List of Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix A – Progress Reports for ;
- Audley LAP
 - Butt Lane and Talke LAP
 - Betley, Keele and Madeley LAP
 - East Newcastle LAP
 - Greater Chesterton LAP
 - Kidsgrove LAP
 - Newcastle Rural LAP
 - Newcastle South LAP
 - Partnership of Western Communities LAP

A copy of these is available on request from the Partnerships Team.

13. Background Papers

- 13.1 None

Implications included	Head of Service agreed report, signed & dated	Financial Implications signed & dated	Legal & risk implications signed & dated
Financial			
Legal			
Risk			
Director Sign Off			

MEETING BEING SUBMITTED TO: CABINET March 2015

1. **HEADING** Applications for Discretionary Rate Relief

Submitted by: Revenues Manager

Portfolio: Finance and Resources

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To consider the granting of Discretionary Rate Relief in accordance with powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

Recommendations

That, in accordance with Section 47 of The Local Government Finance Act 1988, Discretionary Rate Relief is either granted or refused in respect of the organisations and premises detailed in Appendix A of this report.

Reasons

To enable the Borough Council to provide financial assistance to charitable and not for profit organisations occupying business premises within the council area where it is deemed appropriate in accordance with regulations detailed in The Local Government Finance Act 1988.

1. **Background**

Section 47 of The Local Government Finance Act 1988 gives Councils the discretion to grant relief from the payment of business rates for charitable or not for profit organisations or in the case of charities already receiving mandatory charity relief, to grant additional discretion relief.

2. **Issues**

Section 47 of The Local Government Finance Act 1988 enables charitable or not for profit organisations to make application to the Council for consideration of assistance or additional assistance, with the statutory rates liability in respect of the premises they occupy for the furtherance of their activities. The cost of granting the relief is shared in accordance with the Business Rates Retention Scheme local and central share arrangements, which are currently 50% by central government, 40% by the billing authority (Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council), 9% by the County Council and 1% by the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Borough Council grants relief in accordance with the type and nature of an organisation's activity.

3. **Options Considered**

Not applicable

4. **Proposal**

That the discretionary relief set out in the attached appendix A be granted or refused as indicated.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

Legislation enables the Council to provide financial assistance towards the payment of business rates in respect of charitable and not for profit organisations. The roles these organisations carry out contribute to the health, wellbeing and activity of the area, often helping with the creation of opportunities for individuals and groups who would otherwise be unable to access such services. However, there is a cost to granting such relief and the Council needs to be mindful of this when deciding to grant any relief and assess the overall benefit provide in doing so.

6. **Outcomes Linked to Corporate Priorities**

Granting discretionary relief where appropriate fits well with the Council's corporate priorities of Creating a cleaner, safer and sustainable Borough, Creating a Borough of Opportunity and Creating a Healthy and Active Community.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

Section 47 of The Local Government Finance Act 1988 enables the Council to grant discretionary relief for the payment of rates in respect of business premises where it see fit.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

Not applicable

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

The cost of any discretionary relief is split between the national and local rating pools 50% each. The 50% cost to the local pool is then split 40%, 9% and 1% between Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council and the Fire and Rescue Authority respectively. Although the costs of any discretionary relief are shared, the decision to grant the relief or not lies solely with the billing authority.

10. **Major Risks**

Failure to provide assistance to these charitable or not for profit organisations may lead to undue financial pressures being placed upon them, risking their ability to continue with their activities. This could lead to the loss of important work being carried out on behalf of the wider community.

11. **Key Decision Information**

Not applicable

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

Not applicable

13. **Recommendations**

That, in accordance with Section 47 of The Local Government Finance Act 1988, Discretionary Rate Relief is either granted or refused in respect of the organisations and premises detailed in Appendix A of this report.

14. **List of Appendices**

Local Government Finance Act 1988 – Applications for Discretionary Rate Relief

15. **Background Papers**

Not applicable

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Appendix A

Local Government Finance Act 1988 – Applications for Discretionary Rate Relief

1 The Donna Louise Trust, 60 Ironmarket, Newcastle, Staffordshire, ST5 1PE

The Donna Louise Trust is a registered charity and as such already receives 80% mandatory charity relief. It occupied 60 Ironmarket as a charity shop with the aim of raising money to support its work providing respite and care to children and young people with life limiting and/or life shortening illnesses.

It is your usual practice to grant such an organisation 5% additional discretionary rate relief, to the mandatory charity relief it already receives.

The Donna Louise Trust have been in occupation of 60 Ironmarket since 19 September 2014. The gross rates payable for the current financial year will be £16,395.92. This amount has been reduced by £8,197.96 due to reoccupation relief and £6,558.37 due to mandatory charity relief leaving rates payable of £1,639.59.

Granting 5% discretionary rate relief would further reduce this amount by £409.90 to £1,229.69 at a cost of £204.95 to the DCLG, £40.99 to Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, £49.19 to the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Rating Pool and £114.77 to the Borough Council.

Recommendation: That additional discretionary rate relief at 5% is granted.

2 Butt Lane Community and Training Centre Lower Ash Road Kidsgrove, Stoke-On-Trent, ST7 1DG

Butt Lane Community Centre is a not for profit organisation with the aims of providing and facilitating a range of social and educational activities for the local community. It occupies Butt Lane Community Centre and Training Centre to provide a base for these activities.

It is your usual practice to grant such an organisation 95% discretionary rate relief.

Butt Lane Community Centre took over liability for National Non Domestic Rates for this property from Newcastle under lyme Borough Council from 1 April 2014. The gross rates payable for the current financial year will be £3,862.20. This amount has been reduced to £1,416.28 by Small Business Rates Relief.

Granting the 95% discretionary rate relief would further reduce this amount by £1,345.47 to £70.81 at a cost of £672.74 to the DCLG, £134.55 to Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, £161.46 to the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Rating Pool and £376.72 to the Borough Council.

Recommendation: That discretionary rate relief at 95% is granted.

3 **Crackley Community Centre, Birch House Road, Chesterton, Newcastle, Staffordshire, ST5 7BJ**

Crackley Community Centre is a not for profit organisation with the aims of providing and facilitating a range of social and educational activities for the local community. It occupies Crackley Community Centre to provide a base for these activities.

It is your usual practice to grant such an organisation 95% discretionary rate relief.

Crackley Community Centre Management Committee took over liability for National Non Domestic Rates for this property from Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council from 1 April 2014. The gross rates payable for the current financial year will be £4,662.90. This amount has been reduced to £3,031.79 by Small Business Rates Relief.

Granting the 95% discretionary rate relief would further reduce this amount by £2,882.20 to £151.89 at a cost of £1,441.10 to the DCLG, £288.22 to Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, £345.86 to the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Rating Pool and £807.02 to the Borough Council.

Recommendation: That discretionary rate relief at 95% is granted.

4 **Tom Lowe Amateur Boxing Club 22 Market Street, Kidsgrove, Stoke-On- Trent, Staffs. ST7 4AB**

The Tom Lowe Amateur Boxing Club is a not for profit club, registered with the British Amateur Boxing Association, providing boxing training and other keep-fit activities for all members of the community. It occupies 22 Market Street as a gymnasium for these activities.

It is your usual practice to grant such an organisation 80% discretionary rate relief and this relief has been granted since 2010. However the club has now applied for further relief arguing that the likely closure of other youth clubs in the area will increase the need for and use of their establishment.

For the current financial year the club already benefit from discretionary relief of £4,805.20 at the cost to the Council of £1,345.46 and the issues faced can be likened to other similar organisations

Granting of the further 20% relief would further reduce the rates payable by an additional £1,201.05 at the cost of £600.53 to the DCLG, £120.11 to Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, £144.13 to the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Rating Pool and £336.25 to the Borough Council.

Recommendation: That no additional discretionary rate relief be awarded.

5. **Silverdale Athletic Football Club Kents Lane Community Building, Sutton Avenue, Silverdale, Newcastle, Staffs, ST5 6TA**

Silverdale Athletic Football Club have been running this new Community building since it was completed on 14 February 2014 providing sporting and other facilities for the local community.

It is your usual practice to grant such an organisation 95% discretionary rate relief.

The gross rates payable since the building was completed will be £6,086.08. This amount has been reduced to £5,578.44 by Small Business Rates Relief.

Granting the 95% discretionary rate relief would further reduce this amount by £5,299.52 to £278.92 at a cost of £2,649.76 to the DCLG, £529.95 to Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, £635.94 to the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Rating Pool and £1,483.87 to the Borough Council.

Recommendation: That discretionary rate relief at 95% is granted.

6. **Knutton Community Centre Management Committee, Knutton Lane, Newcastle, Staffordshire, ST5 6HF**

Knutton Community Centre has been run by a Management Committee since 2004 and has previously been granted discretionary relief. They failed to make a claim in 2014/15 leading to the relief being removed and are now reapplying. Knutton Community Centre is a not for profit organisation with the aims of providing and facilitating a range of social and educational activities for the local community. It occupies Knutton Community Centre to provide a base for these activities.

It is your usual practice to grant such an organisation 95% discretionary rate relief.

The gross rates payable for the current financial year will be £4,380.30. Granting the 95% discretionary rate relief would reduce this amount by £4,161.28 to £219.02 at a cost of £2,080.64 to the DCLG, £416.13 to Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, £499.35 to the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Rating Pool and £1,165.16 to the Borough Council.

Recommendation: That discretionary rate relief at 95% is granted.

7. **Chesterton Community Centre, London Road, Chesterton, Newcastle, Staffordshire, ST5 7HZ**

Chesterton Community Centre has been run by a Management Committee since December 2003 and has previously been granted discretionary relief. However an error by the Valuation Office Agency led to the property being mistakenly removed from the Valuation list in 2010 and no claim for Discretionary relief has been made since this date.

Classification: NULBC **PROTECT** Management

Chesterton Community Centre is a not for profit organisation with the aims of providing and facilitating a range of social and educational activities for the local community. It occupies Chesterton Community Centre to provide a base for these activities.

It is your usual practice to grant such an organisation 95% discretionary rate relief.

The gross rates payable for the current financial year will be £6,240.75. Granting the 95% discretionary rate relief would reduce this amount by £5,928.71 to £312.04 at a cost of £2,964.36 to the DCLG, £592.87 to Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, £711.45 to the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Rating Pool and £1,660.04.16 to the Borough Council.

In addition the applicant wishes to be considered for relief for the years 2010-2014 where a similar reduction would reduce the total rates payable from £23,870.78 to £1,193.62 at a cost of £11,338.58 to the DCLG, £2,267.72 to Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, £2,721.26 to the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Rating Pool and £6,349.60 to the Borough Council.

Recommendation: That discretionary rate relief at 95% is granted.

CABINET MARCH 2015

1. IRRECOVERABLE ITEMS

Submitted by: Revenues Manager

Portfolio: Finance and Resources

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To consider items deemed irrecoverable.

Recommendations

That the items detailed at Appendix A be considered irrecoverable for the reasons stated and be written off.

Reasons

For a variety of reasons, from time to time, it is considered that certain items are unable to be recovered from debtors. When this occurs, it is necessary to write off these balances from the appropriate Council account records.

1. **Background**

For a variety of reasons, following the issue of accounts for amounts due to the Council, it is considered the debt is no longer able to be collected. Normally, these reasons follow from the debtor having been subjected to insolvency proceedings or other legal processes in respect of their debts or even the death of a debtor. There is then no further redress to recover the outstanding amounts and it is necessary to write off the outstanding balances from the Council's records.

2. **Collection Procedures**

Collection procedures in respect of business rates and council tax are operated in accordance with legislative guidelines. Other debts are collected by a variety of schemes suitable to the type of account involved. Open disclosure of this information may give potential defaulters an advantage in respect of when action is taken and therefore less incentive for them to pay in accordance with routine payment schedules.

3. **Proposal**

That the items listed at Appendix A be considered irrecoverable for the reasons stated and these balances be written off. Irrecoverable amounts are considered to be of a confidential nature and reports have historically been treated in this manner. Guidance obtained from the Local Government Association endorsed this methodology for reporting on irrecoverable items. It is used to ensure the principles of data protection are maintained. It would also obviously be inappropriate to disclose information for instance about deceased debtors, with the potential for causing further distress to bereaved family members. Where debts are in respect of commercial organisations, there is the potential in cases such as administration that disclosure could jeopardise the potential recovery of the business in the long term. Items are only ever considered for write-off following robust adherence to the appropriate collection policy.

4. **Financial and Resource Implications**

The Council makes provision for unrecoverable sums and the amounts recommended for write-off are within the current budgeted bad debt provision.

5. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

23rd July 2008

6. **Recommendations**

That the items detailed at Appendix A be considered irrecoverable for the reasons stated and be written off.

7. **List of Appendices**

Appendix A - Irrecoverable items

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 2, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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