

### **Report to Full Council**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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