

Leaders Report

What better time to take stock of this Administration's achievements, than on the evening of this Council's last meeting before the Election's.

The Newcastle-under-Lyme Labour Group Manifesto promised increased spending on Apprenticeship's and has over delivered in its promise. Working in collaboration with Newcastle-under-Lyme College and the Borough's employer's, hundreds of young adults have been given the opportunity to both study and learn 'on the job' and enhance their future job prospects and CV tenfold. Here at the Authority, we have played our part in this scheme, recruiting eleven apprentices, with a 100% retention rate and I'm extremely pleased to confirm the recruitment of a further six apprentices in the autumn.

This Administration was pleased to continue the on-going success story that is 'Britain in Bloom', winning its 13th 'Gold Standard', a true testament not only to the staff but the legion of volunteers across the Borough. Winning eleven Green Flag's for our Parks and securing our first Purple Flag for Newcastle Town Centre shows that this Labour Administration will protect the assets that residents hold most dear and they are safe in our hands.

The scourge of Domestic Violence blights us all and I am proud of this Labour Administration's commitment to reverse this worrying trend. Using both our own and external funding, we have boosted our Independent Domestic Violence Advisor Scheme's across the Borough, put additional funding into early intervention schemes and undertook extensive Domestic Violence campaigning not only across the Borough, but across North Staffordshire in tandem with Labour controlled Stoke on Trent Council.

Utilising a strong partnership, this Labour Administration, has produced the best Anti-Social Behaviour statistics across the whole of the County. A reduction of 21% against the previous year's figures shows that we are not afraid to tackle problems that previous Administrations hid away from and we will make the changes that are necessary. My thanks go to Sarah Moore and her Partnership's Team for the supreme effort they have put in; my Cabinet and I are in awe that such a relatively small team has yielded fantastic results for the Borough at large.

One of the highlights of our latest year in Administration was the completion of the Town Centre Realm project, something the previous Administration failed to deliver in its time in Office. Despite their botched promises and huge ill will this had created within the Town Centre, this Labour Administration completed the pedestrianisation of Hassell Street, installed the new market stalls, and watched over a fall in Vacancy rates across the Town Centre. Working with the private sector, new life has swept into Newcastle Town Centre and I look forward to new developments at sites such as Lymelight Boulevard, Blackburn / Keele House and the Jubilee pool site.

Continuing the regeneration theme, this Labour Administration has now identified a preferred developer to bring forward a commercially viable; retail led redevelopment of the Ryecroft site and started the business case for the potential reprovision of our Council Offices. Let me very clear though, whilst this Administration is a strong believer in Partnership working, this Labour Administration cannot, and will not, enter into any agreement which involves medium or long term borrowing to secure the site.