

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM TO COUNCIL**

**27 July 2011**

**1. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE NEWCASTLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

**Submitted by:** Scrutiny Task and Finish Group

**Portfolio:** Regeneration and Planning

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Purpose of the Report**

The report sets out the findings of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group following its review of the Newcastle Development Programme.

**Recommendation**

**Council is invited to note the report and refer the findings to Cabinet on 7 September 2011 for a formal response.**

**Reasons**

To comply with the requirements of Appendix 6 of the Council's Constitution (paragraph 9.1 refers).

**1. Background**

1.1 On 28 July 2010 a report entitled 'Identification and Disposal of Surplus Land' was submitted to Council, which sought approval for the release and disposal of surplus parcels of land at a number of locations throughout the Borough. Having agreed to the proposal in principle, a further report was submitted to Cabinet on 15 December 2010 outlining progress to date on the project; now referred to as the Newcastle Development Programme.

1.2 The process by which the Programme was to be conducted led to concerns being raised by members of the public and, in response to those concerns, full Council on 23 February 2011 resolved to refer the processes relating to the operation of the Newcastle Development Programme for scrutiny.

1.3 A report was submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on 4 March 2011. The Committee resolved that a Task and Finish Group comprising 11 elected Members be appointed to carry out a strategic review of the policy context and operation of the Newcastle Development Programme, its recommendations to be submitted to Cabinet and Council for approval at the conclusion of the review.

**2. Methodology of the Review**

2.1 The Scrutiny Task and Finish Group first met on 20 April 2011 to set out the scope of the review; its remit being to provide a 'critical friend challenge' in order to evaluate the rationale of the Newcastle Development Programme.

2.2 To inform the review, it was agreed that four thematic reports would be submitted to the Task and Finish Group for consideration concerning Planning Policy, Housing Needs, Asset Management/Financial Strategy and Green Spaces. Independent third party experts were invited to appraise the policy framework applied to the Programme and to aid Members understanding of the topography of the Tranche 1 and 2 sites identified as 'surplus to requirements' under the Programme, the Task Group visited and spoke to residents at -

- Clayton Road, Westlands;
- Repton Drive, Westlands;
- Winchester Drive, Westlands;
- Clayhanger Close, Bradwell;
- Thomas Street, Talke;
- Pennyfields Road, Kidsgrove; and
- Shrewsbury Drive, Chesterton.

on 24 May 2011 and 22 June 2011 respectively.

2.3 To further understand the concerns of those directly affected by the Programme, residents from the Tranche 1 and 2 sites were invited to make representations to the Task and Finish Group in writing during the process via the [landsalescrutiny](#) web address and by telephone. Two presentations were also made to Members at meetings of the Task and Finish Group held on 15 and 28 June 2011 respectively.

### 3. **Current Position**

3.1 The Task and Finish Group has now completed its review and is in a position to consider its final report. This will be submitted to its meeting scheduled for Wednesday 20 July 2011 at which time the Group will reach its conclusions and make recommendations to Council and Cabinet on the Newcastle Development Programme.

3.2 The final report of the Task and Finish Group will be sent to all Members of Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council under separate cover for consideration at the Council meeting to be held on 27 July 2011.

### 4. **Recommendation**

4.1 Council is invited to note the report and refer the findings to Cabinet at its meeting on 7 September 2011 for a formal response.

### 5. **Reasons for Recommendation**

5.1 To comply with the requirements of Appendix 6 of the Council's Constitution (paragraph 9.1 refers).

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

6.1 The outcome of the review will impact on all four of the Council's corporate priorities

- creating a cleaner, safer and sustainable Borough
- creating a Borough of opportunity
- creating a healthy and active community
- transforming our Council to achieve excellence

### 7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

7.1 The legal and statutory implications of the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group will need to be considered by Cabinet and Executive Management Team.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

8.1 None have been identified.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 The financial and resource implications of the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group will need to be considered by Cabinet and Executive Management Team.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 Any risks associated with the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group will need to be considered by Cabinet and Executive Management Team.

11. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

11.1 The sustainability and climate change implications of the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group will need to be considered by Cabinet and Executive Management Team.

12. **Key Decision Information**

12.1 Not applicable.

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

24 March 2010	Cabinet (853/10)
28 July 2010	Council
15 December 2010	Cabinet
9 February 2011	Cabinet
23 February 2011	Council

14. **List of Appendices**

14.1 Overview and Scrutiny: Report of the Task and Finish Group Newcastle Development Programme to follow)

15. **Background Papers**

Copies of the documentation considered by the Task and Finish Group as part of the review is held on public deposit and a copy has been provided for Councillors in the Members' Room.

## **Leader's Report Council July 2011**

I am very pleased to make my first report as Leader of the Council. During the last few months there have been a number of important developments in the Borough which will put us in a strong position to deliver our corporate objective of making Newcastle a great place to live, work and invest.

At the Council meeting in June we approved the funding to enable this Council with the County Council to purchase the former Sainsbury's supermarket site and to use this as an opportunity to support a major redevelopment of the town centre. As Leader, I have represented the Council at a number of meetings to support taking this arrangement forward. I am confident that this, taken together with a proposal to improve the town centre through improvements to access, parking and development of the market will give a further boost to our town centre. I am also grateful for the support which the full Council gave in June to the completion of the works on the Midway Car Park which has been very well received by the town centre business community and again marks the commitment to this Council to promoting Newcastle as the major market town in North Staffordshire.

At the end of June, I attended the Local Government Association conference which was held in Birmingham. The conference was addressed by the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. Key messages to come from this conference was the Government's continuing commitment to localism and for changes to the system of local government finance which will lessen central control, including a return of business rates to local government. These changes will, however, mean that in the future the financial fortunes of the council will be far more dependant upon the success of the local economy, as our funding will be more directly linked to the success of our local businesses, through business rates and to the creation of new employment by the construction of houses and the funding which we will receive through the New Homes Bonus.

In June I was pleased to be present at the flag raising ceremony in the Queens Gardens which honoured the work of our armed forces on Armed Forces Day. This event was a reminder of the importance of our armed services and to the role which they play in defending the freedoms of our nation. This was also brought home when I attended the funeral of Private Bellingham with the Mayor. I am grateful to the large number of Members of this Council who showed their respects to Private Bellingham and to support his family and loved ones on that sad occasion. I know that I speak for the entire Council in offering our condolences to the Bellingham family on the loss of their son.

Many Members of the Council were in this Chamber on the 26 May for our annual Sports Council Awards. I was delighted to see the achievements of many of our local young people recognised in this way and also that of the very considerable number of volunteers who support them through coaching.

During the course of the last three months I have represented the council at the Staffordshire Leaders and Chief Executives meeting and as the north Staffordshire district council representative on the Stoke and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Board. I also attended the AGM of West Midlands Council representing the Council.

It is a great pleasure for all of us to have a vibrant theatre in our community. Whilst most will be aware of the outstanding reviews which productions at the New Vic Theatre continue to receive, perhaps a smaller number will know of the very extensive community work which the Theatre supports. Earlier this month I attended a Borderlines event with children of Langale Primary School and this once again highlighted the very considerable amount of work which the New Vic does to support the well-being of our local communities. The Borough Council remains proud to be a supporter of the New Vic and I wish to pay tribute to the very considerable work which they do in this community.

I end my report by noting that plans are now well advanced for staff from the police, public health and the county council to co-locate into the Civic Offices during the coming months. This will help give efficiency savings for all these organisations, including the Borough Council, by reducing premises costs. This will bring further benefits as it will provide an opportunity for our staff to develop further our joint working with these agencies. I am pleased to be associated with this development and am looking forward to seeing tangible benefits for the people of Newcastle as we develop even more effective joint working with partner organisations.

