

Public Document Pack



PLEASE NOTE THAT PRAYERS WILL BE HELD AT 6.50PM BEFORE THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL.

THE MAYOR REQUESTS THAT ANY MEMBER WISHING TO PARTICIPATE IN PRAYERS BE IN ATTENDANCE BY NO LATER THAN 6.45PM.

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Dear Sir/Madam,

You are summoned to attend the meeting of the Borough Council of Newcastle-under-Lyme to be held in the **Queen Elizabeth II & Astley Rooms - Castle House, Barracks Road, Newcastle, Staffs. ST5 1BL** on **Wednesday, 22nd November, 2023** at **7.00 pm**.

BUSINESS

8 STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (Pages 3 - 6)

To receive a statement by the Leader of the Council on the activities and decisions of Cabinet and items included on the Forward Plan.

9 REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (Page 7)

A report is attached for the Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee

A verbal update will be given for the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee. The Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee has not met since the last meeting of Full Council.

10 REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEES (Pages 9 - 10)

Reports are attached for the following:

- a) Licensing and Public Protection Committee
- b) Audit and Standards Committee

11 QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS (Page 11)

Yours faithfully

Chief Executive

NOTICE FOR COUNCILLORS

1. Fire/Bomb Alerts

In the event of the fire alarm sounding, leave the building immediately, following the fire exit signs..

Fire exits are to be found at the side of the room leading into Queens Gardens.

On exiting the building Members, Officers and the Public must assemble at the statue of Queen Victoria. DO NOT re-enter the building until advised to by the Controlling Officer.

2. Mobile Phones

Please switch off all mobile phones before entering the Council Chamber.

3. Notice of Motion

A Notice of Motion other than those listed in Procedure Rule 14 must reach the Chief Executive ten clear days before the relevant Meeting of the Council. Further information on Notices of Motion can be found in Section B5, Rule 4 of the Constitution of the Council.

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

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL – 22nd NOVEMBER 2023

Submitted by: Councillor Simon Tagg

Portfolio: All

Wards affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To provide an update to Members on the activities and decisions of Cabinet, together with the Forward Plan.

Recommendation

That the statement of the Leader of the Council be received and noted.

Reasons

To update Council Members on the activities and decisions of the Leader and Cabinet and to allow questions and comments to be made on the Statement.

1. **Cabinet Meetings**

Cabinet met on 17th October 2023 and 7th November 2023, detailed below is a selection of decisions and other actions of the Leader and Cabinet since the last Leader's Statement.

2. **Walleys Quarry update**

Cabinet has continued to receive regular reports detailing the position regarding the odours from Walleys Quarry. In October the Environment Agency (EA) revealed that there had been a problem identified with the Hydrogen Sulphide levels recorded by the Mobile Monitoring Facilities (MMF), which have been recording and reporting erroneous data throughout the whole period of community concern regarding Walleys Quarry. Though this issue has now been rectified, the EA are now undertaking work to establish whether the previous data, stretching back a number of years, can be re-calibrated. Central to this work will be determining whether the health risk assessments which were based on this data need to be materially changed given the under reporting that has come to light. At time of writing we still await the outcome.

In response to the EA's data inaccuracies, officers have undertaken odour assessments around the landfill site to provide some real time information about the likely community odour complaints. These assessments reflect the complaint data which continue to show a steady reduction in issues, albeit with occasional spikes.

Follow the announcement of the problem with the MMFs, I joined with the Leader of Staffordshire County Council and wrote to the Secretary of State requesting a public inquiry into what we see as the latest EA regulatory failure. Regrettably, the DEFRA Minister responsible for the EA has declined this request.

Officers continue to monitor the situation, and to engage with the site operator and with partner agencies, to ensure ongoing improvement of this situation.

3. **Newcastle Town Centre Regeneration**

Momentum continues to build around plans for the multimillion-pound regeneration of Newcastle Town Centre with the prospect of McCarthy Stone, Aspire Housing, and Capital and Centric involvement in the long awaited Ryecroft redevelopment. Accor Hotels' Ibis Styles have also been selected as the brand for a 100-bed hotel on the site.

The mixed residential housing and apartments for the over-55s and social sector proposed by McCarthy Stone and Aspire Housing, along with Capital & Centric's expertise in transforming neglected spaces into vibrant hubs, coupled with their environmentally sustainable approach, could help increase foot fall, bolster local retail businesses and further build a dynamic and thriving community in our Town Centre.

Newcastle's historic market is set for a substantial investment with a £390,000 investment via the Future High Streets Fund. The works are scheduled for completion by next spring and include new stalls, renovation of existing ones, and enhancements to public spaces, including an entertainment area. The proposal also includes short-stay parking bays, a digital advertising screen, a newly created public space along the lower High Street and the provision of rent-free stalls for traders on Mondays. This initiative aims to preserve and enhance the market's position at the heart of town centre.

4. **Sustainable Environment**

The Council has reached an important milestone in its goal of reaching net zero carbon emissions as an authority by 2030, hitting the 50% reduction mark for the first time.

Cabinet received a report highlighting progress made through its Sustainable Environment Strategy highlighting the council's shift to more energy-efficient buildings and the implementation of enhanced heating, lighting, and insulation across properties have contributed to this achievement. Additionally, converting council vehicles to Hydrated vegetable oil (HVO) and replacing diesel in HGVs have significantly reduced emissions.

The Cabinet endorsed a roadmap which will focus the council's further effort to reach net-zero by 2030.

Another milestone will be reached this winter as an urban tree planting initiative will reach its 25,000th tree. Over three years, the council has planted 14,947 trees across 21 green spaces, while community engagement, including residents and businesses, has contributed 9,995 saplings through the Britain in Bloom campaign.

Plans for the next planting season aim to break the 25,000 mark but also emphasises the council's commitment to maintaining the health of existing trees. This investment in the future looks ahead two or three decades, anticipating the maturation of these trees, enhancing landscapes, and significantly contributing to carbon capture. A new Tree & Biodiversity Management Plan, with a focus on the right trees in the right places, will promote the planting of native broadleaf, woodland, and fruit trees and this program aligns with the council's pledge to safeguard over 60 green spaces across the borough from development.

Cabinet received a scoping report about a potential solar energy production array on land adjacent to Keele Cemetery with the aim of not only powering the cemetery building but also potentially supplying clean renewal energy to a local business. Income generated from this initiative would be reinvested and drive the council towards its net zero goal. Further reports will be brought to Cabinet, a business case and planning permission would be required for the project to proceed.

5. **Borough Local Plan Update**

Cabinet received an update following the extensive eight-week consultation on the new draft Borough Local Plan, which invited residents to have their say on potential locations for residences, businesses, community amenities, and preserved green spaces. The plan also seeks to accommodate growth, promote investments, and secure spaces for leisure, healthcare, education, and transport facilities into the 2040s.

Over 1,200 responses via the online portal letters, emails, and drop-in sessions are currently being analysed by Officers before a further report is submitted to Cabinet and Scrutiny in the new year.

The Council is following the government set out procedure for implementation of a new Local Plan and Full Council will be asked to support the final draft subsequent to another public consultation before being submitted for Planning inspectors evaluation before the end of 2024.

6. **Town Deal update– Projects in Knutton**

Cabinet endorsed a report detailing the multi-million-pound regeneration of Knutton village. The Council, Aspire Housing, and Staffordshire County Council are working together on this transformative project, a cornerstone of the Newcastle Town Deal programme, enabling significant investments, job opportunities, housing, and leisure facilities in Knutton. The plan includes an expanded enterprise centre for starter businesses, a new village hall, residential development, and green spaces.

Supported by £3.5 million from the governments Town Deal funding, this initiative aims to bolster the local economy, provide employment opportunities for local people and help to put the heart back into Knutton .

7. **Temporary Accommodation Policy**

Cabinet agreed a new Temporary Accommodation Policy to assist individuals and families seeking temporary housing due to homelessness in the Borough. There is currently increased demand, particularly from families, due to escalating rental costs, reduced housing supply, and other cost of living issues.

Providing short-term shelter for a family of four can incur expenses of around £900 a week, creating a substantial deficit as only £140 can be reclaimed from the Department of Work and Pensions.

The council, in collaboration with other Councils, is seeking further financial support from the central government. The Deputy Leader has written to the Chancellor and local MPs to lobby to this end.

The Council has committed to purchasing a property to establish a secure emergency accommodation hub by 2025, aligning with the government's goal to eradicate homelessness.

8. **Financial & Performance Review Report – Second Quarter 2023-24**

Cabinet received a report detailing second Quarter performance. At the end of September 2023, the Council had 79% of measures on track to meet the 2023-24 target.

The Council continues to show strong performance across its suite of performance indicators running above target for both the percentage of Council Tax collected and the percentage of NNDR collected; in a similar vein, the performance of the councils commercial portfolio is strong, with less than 7% vacancy – well down on this time last year. Membership at Jubilee 2 continues to grow. Additionally, in our Town Centres for All priority, we are seeing year on year increases in the number of tickets purchased for car parking, year on year increase in town centre footfall, and good performance in terms of market occupancy.

Sickness absence continues to be a priority area for improvement. The Finance & Assets Scrutiny Committee received a detailed report at its October meeting and endorsed the Council's approach to tackling absence issues.

Cabinet has approved the re-procurement of the Occupational Health Service which is crucial to supporting staff back into work. I'm also pleased to report that the Council has received Bronze accreditation for the THRIVE programme, which indicates a supportive culture within the Council.

9. **Success in Britain in Bloom**

I am pleased to report that the Borough in its 850th anniversary year has clinched the prestigious Royal Horticultural Society Britain in Bloom award for the entire country for the first time, capping a remarkable year of achievements. After securing the top spot as the best 'small city' in the UK, and earning a Gold Award for its exceptional entry, the Borough went on to triumph as the overall winner announced on BBC's One Show.

This followed hot on the heels of successes earlier this year at the Heart of England in Bloom awards where the Borough claimed first place in the small city category, garnered its 21st consecutive gold award, and received recognition for outstanding achievement.

This remarkable feat, a first-time win for the top national prize, was testament to the collaborative efforts of Community Groups, schools, businesses, individuals, dedicated volunteers and council staff.

This year's entry showcased an array of sustainable gardening practices, earning it a certificate of Achievement in Sustainable Gardening, while impressing judges with its diverse plant species, ecological initiatives, and tree planting as well year-round volunteer engagement. of participating in 'In Bloom' awards in fostering community spirit and enhancing the local environment.

A big well done to everyone involved!

10. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan can be found at: -

<https://modern.gov.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/mgListPlanItems.aspx?PlanId=152&RP=118>

Councillor Simon Tagg
Leader of the Council

SCRUTINY COMMITTEES CHAIR'S REPORTS

Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee

The last meeting of the economy and place scrutiny committee was held on Thursday, the 21st of September at 7 pm.

The committee received an update from cabinet, an update on the future High Street fund and Town deal's update.

They then received the latest housing task and finish working group report, and finally an update on the Borough local plan.

The next meeting is scheduled for the 7th of December 2023

Cllr Gary White
Chair of Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee.

This page is intentionally left blank

REGULATORY COMMITTEES CHAIR'S REPORTS

Licensing and Public Protection Committee

The Licensing and Public Protection Committee met on the 24th October 2023 and the following items were discussed and considered:

The Committee received Licensing reports for:

- Fees to be charged for the Licensing of Scrap Metal Dealers, Gambling & Sexual Entertainment Venue 2024-25
- Gambling Act 2005 Consultation: Measures Relating to the Land Based Gambling Sector
-

Members noted the contents of both Licensing reports

The Committee then received Public Protection reports for:

- Public Space Protection Order-Parks and Open Spaces
- Clean Air Act 1993-Consultation on the Revocation of Existing Smoke Control Areas and Declaration of a New Borough Wide Smoke Control Area
- Private Hire & Hackney Carriage Fees & Charges 2024/2025
-

The committee agreed and noted the recommendations that were set out in the Public Protection reports

There has been one Licensing sub-committee and two Public Protection sub-committee meetings since the last Full Council meeting and the minutes will be made available at the next main Licensing and Public Protection Committee meeting

Cllr Andrew Parker
Chair

Audit and Standards Committee

The Committee met on 28th September and 13th November 2023.

28th September meeting

Members were asked to review the Corporate Risk Management Report and noted the overdue risks, together with the increased-level risks. It was agreed that risks relating to the Sky building would be looked at in more detail at the next meeting. John Benbow then presented the Internal Audit Update Q1 2023/4 detailing the progress made to date in relation the internal audit.

Andrew Smith of Grant Thornton presented the final accounts for the financial year 2022/23 and the audit findings report for the same period. It was noted that there was a still work to done in relation to pensions as the report from Staffordshire Pension Fund had yet to be received, but there was only one audit recommendation. Members were informed that the audit had gone well and the working papers had been to a very high standard. Officers were thanked for their efforts and congratulated on the quality of the work presented.

Members resolved to give the Service Director for Finance and the Chair delegated authority to sign off the Statement of Accounts, following completion of the Staffordshire Pension Fund Audit and receipt of the report.

The Chair informed members that it may be necessary to move a future meeting to accommodate receipt of the value for money report from the auditors, when it is complete.

13th November meeting

The first substantive item on the agenda was the Treasury Management Half yearly report for the period to 30th September. Members were pleased to note that no borrowing had yet taken place during the year and it is currently anticipated that no external borrowing will be required for the rest of the financial year. The council is and will remain within its operating guidelines and will benefit from significant interest income.

Our new Service Director for Legal and Governance presented the Q2 Corporate Risk Management report and members were asked to note a number of pieces of information. There have been no risk level increases and there are no risks more than 6 months overdue for review.

Clare Potts then introduced the Q2 Internal Audit Progress Report. It was noted that a number of audits were in progress at the end of the quarter, but that these had since been completed, but of the three audits completed during the quarter, two had been classified as good and the other, satisfactory (positive result).

Cllr Paul Waring
Chair

QUESTION 1

To the Leader of the Council:

Does the Leader/Portfolio Holder agree that the revival of Newcastle-under-Lyme Civic Society would be an appropriate way of marking the Borough's 850th anniversary celebrations. Please could he report the action the Council has taken, or proposes to take, to encourage the re-launch of the Civic Society?

Cllr Richard Gorton

QUESTION 2

To the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing:

Can the Portfolio Holder please update the Council, as winter approaches, on the work being carried out to reduce rough sleepers in the town centre and how many rough sleepers were there at the last count?

Cllr Andrew Parker

This page is intentionally left blank