

**11 REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY
 COMMITTEES**

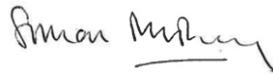
(Pages 23 - 24)

A written report is attached for the Licensing and Public Protection Committee.

The Audit and Standards Committee has not met since the last meeting of the Full Council.

A Verbal update will be given for the Planning Committee.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Simon Murray". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Interim 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.

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NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S

REPORT TO COUNCIL

10 April 2024

Report Title: **Walleys Quarry – Odour Issues and Breach Notice**

Submitted by: **Interim Chief Executive**

Portfolios: **Sustainable Environment; One Council, People & Partnerships**

Ward(s) affected: **All**

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	
To update Council on the latest position regarding the problematic odours in the Borough associated with Walleys Quarry.	
<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Key Decision</u> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Council is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the contents of this update report. 2. Note the breach of the Council's Abatement Notice. 3. Note that the Council has issued a letter to Walleys Quarry Ltd notifying them of the breach of the Abatement Notice. 4. Note that the Council will continue dialogue with Partners via the Strategic Coordinating Group regarding any further enforcement activities to seek to alleviate the suffering of the community. 5. Note that the Council's legal team have been instructed to prepare appropriate legal proceedings in line with the above. 6. Note the £300k Walleys Quarry Reserve to undertake the above and if additional funds are required, a separate report will be brought to Council in due course. 	
<u>Reasons</u>	
To ensure that Council is kept updated on the ongoing work regarding the problem odours associated with Walleys Quarry Landfill Site.	

1. Background

1.1 For a number of years, parts of the Borough have suffered from foul odours from the Walleys Quarry Landfill Site in Silverdale operated by Walleys Quarry Ltd, part of the RED Industries group of companies. The Environment Agency (EA) is the lead regulator for such sites, testing and enforcing compliance with the permit under which the site operates. The Council also has a role in influencing the operation and performance of such sites, where an operator fails to comply with actions required under an abatement notice issued by the Council in relation to any statutory nuisance caused by the site.

- 1.2 In March 2021, Council held an extraordinary meeting to receive the report of the Economy, Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee review into the Walleys Quarry issues, and to debate a motion demanding the immediate suspension of operations and acceptance of waste at the Walleys Quarry Landfill site.
- 1.3 Following extensive work, officers determined that the odours from the Walleys Quarry site amounted to a Statutory Nuisance and, on 13 August 2021, served an Abatement Notice on Walleys Quarry Ltd. (WQL). Following an appeal by Walleys Quarry Ltd, and a successful mediation process, His Honour District Judge Grego approved the settlement that the parties had reached and issued a court order upholding the Abatement Notice and dismissing WQL's appeal on 6 October 2022.
- 1.4 The Council continues to assess the prevalence of odours off site. If there are further instances of statutory nuisance identified which amount to a breach of the Abatement Notice, the Council's Enforcement Policy will guide the process to be followed [Reference: [Environmental Health enforcement policy – Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council \(newcastle-staffs.gov.uk\)](https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)]. This would determine what action the Council would take, and whether that would be formal or informal. Enforcement is usually considered sequentially but should the circumstances or nature of the breach be such, escalation direct to prosecution is possible. The Council would need to obtain the consent of the Secretary of State before it is able to prosecute an offence of breaching an abatement notice, as the site is permitted by the Environment Agency.
- 1.5 Officers maintain an ongoing dialogue with Walleys Quarry Ltd, and with other agencies involved with the issue. Cabinet has received monthly updates on the issues relating to the odours, and Council has also been regularly updated.
- 1.6 A special meeting of Council was held on the 14th February 2024 regarding the Walleys Quarry situation. A motion was passed and endorsed with a number of actions one which was the setting up of a Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny 'Committee of Inquiry' as a public hearing. A report outlining a proposal was presented at Health, Wellbeing & Environment Scrutiny Committee on 26th February 2024, this can be found at [WQ Scrutiny post Council.pdf \(newcastle-staffs.gov.uk\)](https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk) The recommendations were endorsed.
- 1.7 The Committee of Inquiry members have been selected and arrangements are in place for this scrutiny exercise to commence. The first meeting is scheduled for the 9th April.
- 1.8 The Committee of Inquiry will submit a report to the Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Council setting out the inquiry findings and recommendations.

Progressing the Abatement Notice

- 1.9 The Council secured an Abatement Notice in relation to the Walleys Quarry site and, if necessary, now has the power to take enforcement action in relation to odours from Walleys Quarry, subject to establishing a breach of the notice and obtaining Secretary of State's permission.
- 1.10 In order to consider any breaches of the Abatement Notice, it is useful to revisit the relevant requirements of the abatement notice. The requirements are detailed below, with the italic bold text reflects the requirements or text used within the abatement notice:
- 1.11 ***Satisfied of the existence of smell amounting to a statutory nuisance under section 79(1)(d)*** – This was considered against the issues of frequency, intensity, duration and offensiveness and location (the FIDOL factors). Such factors would have to be established in determining a breach of the notice. Although much of the

monitoring relates to hydrogen sulphide, this is not the only odorous compound and any in relation to any future breaches, all smells could be considered.

- 1.12 **Premises (including land) falling wholly or partially within the area encompassed by the boundary line identified on the attached plan reference NULBC02**- An area of land where the nuisance exists was defined in order ensure that the notice was clear and specific in nature and to enable the Council and Walleys Quarry Ltd to be able to assess compliance. Any breach would have to be substantiated within this area.
- 1.13 **To abate the nuisance** - There are numerous different options that abate the nuisance, which are not prescribed. Additionally, the Notice provides an ongoing responsibility for Walleys Quarry Ltd to comply with the terms of the abatement notice and not create or allow a further statutory odour nuisance. Any breach would have to demonstrate that the nuisance had not been abated.
- 1.14 Officers have continued to use both air monitoring data, complaint data, and odour assessments to identify whether the Abatement Notice has been breached. At this stage, now the rectified air quality data had been published alongside other data sources, the officer assessment is that the recent odours amount to a breach of the Abatement Notice.
- 1.15 Critically, under the law, whilst odours may exist off site at levels which could be considered a breach of the notice, that breach would be unenforceable (or a defence against creating a statutory nuisance) if the operator can show that Best Practical Means (BPM) are routinely deployed in the management of the site. Whilst the existence or not of BPM can be debated, it would be a court which would determine whether BPM was in place at the time of the breach. That said, prior to entering into any formal legal action it is necessary for the Council to formulate a view with regard to this matter, this is ongoing.
- 1.16 The decision on next steps depends on how best to deploy the Council's powers to improve the experience of local residents. This is reflected in the sequential process for enforcement outlined below, and also in the risks associated with progressing enforcement action, particularly given that the Environment Agency is the primary regulator of this site and should reasonably be relied upon to take all necessary enforcement action, negating the need for the Council to act.
- 1.17 The Council's enforcement policy involves a sequential approach to enforcement. In order to progress any enforcement action in relation to the Abatement Notice, there is an established process to be followed, and the thrust of any action taken in relation to the policy is to bring about an improvement in the odour for the community. The progress of the Council through this process is summarised in the table below:

Receipt of odour complaint	Complaints have increased in the winter of 2024, as set out in various reports to Cabinet and Council.
Evidence gathering - around the odour event to establish elements of FIDOL.	Officer assessments have been undertaken to establish the elements of FIDOL.
Engagement with Operator	In addition to regular meetings with the operator, Officers have formally requested information from WQL about the situation in

	<p>January and February and any remedial action that they intend to undertake.</p> <p>The operator has responded to these requests and are taking action following the joint meeting of experts.</p>
Determining whether odours off site are consistent with a breach of the Abatement Notice	The decision in relation to the existence of a breach of the Abatement Notice is determined on the evidence obtained.
Consideration of BPM defence	Information through engagement with the operator will provide an initial view on BPM. An experts view on BPM at the time of the breach is advisable to determine whether a defence is held.
Operators Right to reply	This would be through a formal interview under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act
Collation of Case file	A case file would include all evidence and material in relation to the case. This would include witness statements, the Councils expert's reports and the operator's defence.
Review against Enforcement Policy	Upon completion of the case file a further review against the enforcement policy is undertaken to determine the most appropriate enforcement action.
Request permission from Secretary of State to take legal action	This stage is necessary in relation to this case, as the sites principal regulator is the Environment Agency. In order to proceed approval needs to be obtained from the Secretary of State. There is no fixed stage in the process where this has to be undertaken.
Cabinet / Council Decision	The decision in relation to the existence of a breach of the Abatement Notice is determined. There are many elements that would follow from making such a decision, which would need to be considered by members, such as the endorsement of a breach and approval to progress enforcement action, with the necessary approval of funding.
Commencement of Legal action	This stage would normally be through the issue of summons to WQ Ltd for a breach of the Abatement Notice.

- 1.18 At the core of next steps are two issues – whether the action taken by the Environment Agency as the primary enforcement agent for this site have been successful in remedying the issues; and whether a defence of BPM exists. Where either of these are

assessed to be in place it would not be in the public interest for the Council to pursue this matter further.

1.19 It should be noted that during the same period as the breach works have been completed on site to comply with the Suspension Notice. Data since the works have been completed does show an improvement, however it is too early to say whether this is coincidental, due to the works or weather.

1.20 In terms of the salient points identified in the correspondence from WQL, they confirm they are operating and managing the landfill to BPM, in fact they go slightly further in saying “The measures deployed, representative of BPM and delivered willingly by WQL ahead of any published guidance or best practice will ensure that the capping, containment and extraction systems, methodologies and practices employed at the facility remain exemplary.” They also confirm that through their investigations “Thus far, no one area has been identified as having impacted odour at the WQ boundary and its immediate environs. We will be continuing our investigations, including but not limited to, GUP performance and expert analysis.”

2. **Proposal**

2.1 Council is recommended to:

- Note the contents of this update report.
- Note the breach of the Council’s Abatement Notice.
- Note that the Council has issued a letter to Walleys Quarry Ltd notifying them of the breach of the Abatement Notice.
- Note that the Council will continue dialogue with Partners via the Strategic Coordinating Group regarding any further enforcement activities to seek to alleviate the suffering of the community.
- Note that the Council’s legal team have been instructed to prepare appropriate legal proceedings in line with the above.
- Note the £300k Walleys Quarry Reserve to undertake the above and if additional funds are required, a separate report will be brought to Council in due course.

3. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

3.1 To ensure Council is kept updated of the ongoing work to address the issues associated with the odours from Walleys Quarry landfill and to keep under review opportunities to further action.

4. **Options Considered**

4.1 To provide regular updates to Council.

4.2 Having determined that the Abatement Notice has been breached, the Council has considered a variety of potential legal options including:

- Take no action
- Take enforcement action against Walleys Quarry for Breach of the Abatement Notice
- Recognise that the Environment Agency is the lead regulator for the site, and use the evidence collected to support the Agency in its enforcement action;

5. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

5.1 Part III of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 is the legislation concerned with statutory nuisances in law. This is the principal piece of legislation covering the Council's duties and responsibilities in respect of issues relating to odour nuisance:

- The Environmental Protection Act 1990, section 79 sets out the law in relation to statutory nuisance. This is the principal piece of legislation covering the Council's duties and responsibilities in respect of issues relating to odour nuisance.
- The relevant part of Section 79 defines a statutory nuisance as any smell or other effluvia arising on industrial, trade or business premises which is prejudicial to health or a nuisance. The Council is responsible for undertaking inspections and responding to complaints to determine whether a statutory nuisance exists.
- Where a statutory nuisance is identified or considered likely to arise or recur, section 80 of the Act requires that an abatement notice is served on those responsible for the nuisance. The abatement notice can either prohibit or restrict the nuisance and may require works to be undertaken by a specified date(s).
- It is then a criminal offence to breach the terms of the abatement notice. Because the site is regulated by the Environment Agency under an Environmental Permit, the council would need to obtain the consent of the Secretary of State before it is able to prosecute any offence of breaching the abatement notice.
- The Act provides powers in respect of a breach. If a person on whom an abatement notice is served, without reasonable excuse, contravenes or fails to comply with any requirement or prohibition imposed by the notice, they shall be guilty of an offence. If this is on industrial, trade or business premises shall be liable on conviction to an unlimited fine. It is a defence that the best practicable means were used to prevent, or to counteract the effects of, the nuisance.

6. **Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 The work of the Council in this regard recognises that the problematic odours in the area may impact on some groups more than others. The work is focussed on minimising this impact as soon as possible.

7. **Financial and Resource Implications**

7.1 Funding will be provided through the Walleys Quarry Reserve £300k which was approved at Full Council in February 2024.

7.2 Should further funding be required, up to £300k can be made available through the transfer of useable reserves (£100k from the Borough Growth Fund and £200k from the Budget and Borrowing Support Fund). These funds can be transferred without Council approval.

7.3 Should proceedings regarding the breach of the Council's Abatement Notice exceed £600k, a further report will be presented to Council in order to seek approval to utilise funds from the General Fund Reserve.

8. **Major Risks**

8.1 A GRACE risk assessment has been completed including the following main risks:

- Failure to achieve a reduction in odour levels;
- Community dissatisfaction at odour levels;
- The ability to take enforcement action against abatement notice;
- Failure to evidence a breach of the abatement notice;
- Secretary of State refuses permission to undertake prosecution proceedings.

8.2 Controls have been identified and implemented in order to control these risks; the main controls include:

- Provisions in settlement agreement ensures greater transparency for public;
- Provisions in settlement agreement ensures regular meetings with Walleys Quarry which enable issues to be discussed;
- Dedicated officer resource for Walleys Quarry work has been secured;
- Continued air quality monitoring provision;
- Robust procedure for investigating complaints with experienced officers;
- Specialist expert advice maintained;
- Multi-Agency partnership working continues.

9. **UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**



10. **Key Decision Information**

10.1 This is a Key Decision.

11. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

11.1 This matter has been variously considered previously by Economy, Environment & Place Scrutiny Committee, Council and Cabinet on 21 April 2021, 9th June 2021, 7th July 2021, 21st July 2021, 8th September 2021, 13th October 2021, 3rd November 2021, 17th November, 1st December 2021, 12th January 2022, 2nd February 2022, 23rd February 2022, 23rd March 2022, 20th April 2022, 7th June 2022, 19th July 2022, 6th September 2022, 18th October 2022, 8th November 2022, 6th December 2022, 10th January 2023, 7th February 2023, 13th March 2023, 5th April 2023, 6th June 2023, 18th July 2023, 19th September 2023, 17th October 2023, 7th November 2023, 5th December 2023, 16th January 2024, 6th February 2024, 14th February 2024, 19th March 2024.

12. **List of Appendices**

12.1 Appendix 1. - Letters

Our ref:

Your ref:

Date: 27 February 2024



Mr Philip Duffy
Chief Executive
Environment Agency

Castle House
Barracks Road
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire
ST5 1BL

cc Ian Jones

By e-mail only via enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Dear Mr Duffy

Walleys Quarry, Newcastle under Lyme

On 14th February Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council held a special meeting to consider the latest position on the foul odours emanating from the Walleys Quarry site, and to debate a motion concerning the next steps which the Council should take. This was the second special Council held on this matter, the first one being in March 2021 following a particular bad period of pollution from the site. It was not lost on members that almost three years had elapsed since that first meeting, and still this issue dominates so much of the work of the Council and remains a key issue of concern in the local community.

My purpose in writing to you today is to make you aware of the Council's position following that debate.

It will come as no surprise that the Council is exasperated with the ongoing situation and the associated annoyance and risk to health for local residents. It therefore resolved to support a call for the Environment Agency to use the powers available to it to issue a Closure Notice in order to bring forward resolution of the Walleys Quarry issue.

Additionally, arising from concern about the error in data collection from the Mobile Monitoring Facilities sited in the community around the quarry, Council resolved to call on the Environment Agency to publish immediately a full 365 days' air monitoring data set to examine the impact against the chronic-term health guidelines.

In addition to these specific actions for the Environment Agency the Council resolved to commission a public hearing on Walleys Quarry and its impacts on the community through its scrutiny committees and will, in due course, issue an invitation to the Agency to contribute to this.

I trust you will be able to give these matters due consideration and revert in due course

Yours sincerely

Martin Hamilton
Chief Executive

martin.hamilton@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk

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Martin Hamilton
Chief Executive
Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Castle House
Barracks Road
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire
ST5 1BL

Our Ref: 21285
Date: 07 March 2024

Dear Mr Hamilton,

Walleys Quarry

Thank you for your letter dated 27 February 2024 asking the Environment Agency to consider issuing a Closure Notice at Walleys Quarry, and seeking publication of ambient air quality monitoring data from February 2023 to February 2024. I assure you that I recognise the significance of the extraordinary meeting of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council (NuLBC) on the 14 February 2024 and appreciate the frustration amongst both your members and the wider community.

I continue to give close attention to Walleys Quarry, including frequent updates to Minister Moore (Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Defra) and the local elected Member, Aaron Bell MP. I know my teams are also fully engaged in the local response, including through the Strategic Coordination Group. I acknowledge that the recent increases in hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) emission levels, and consequent levels of odour, have caused concern for local residents and elected members. I agree that the impact on the community is unacceptable – I can assure you that the Environment Agency is committed to addressing the cause.

On 1 March 2024 we issued a Suspension Notice ('the Notice') to Walleys Quarry Ltd (WQL). The Notice required WQL to immediately stop the acceptance and disposal of waste, with the exception of inert wastes as these do not contribute to landfill gas emissions. The Notice requires WQL to:

- install additional gas extraction infrastructure in the operational area of the site by 17 March 2024;
- to connect the installed gas extraction infrastructure to the operational gas control system and place under extraction by 24 March 2024;
- and to install additional temporary capping in 2 other operational areas, by 24 March 2024.

We issued the Notice now because recent high levels of fugitive landfill gas emissions required immediate action to remove the risk of serious odour pollution.

I recognise that NuLBC have called for closure of the site rather than for operations to be suspended. A decision to issue a Closure Notice involves a lengthy and complex process. As we have explained publicly, we can legally only issue a Closure Notice as a last resort, having exhausted all other enforcement and regulatory options. I appreciate how close you and your teams have been to the issue and that all parties understand the complexities of early closure, as the landfill remains partially filled and has not reached the final levels favourable for restoration, nor those required by the planning permission. We continue to keep our position and WQL's response under review, and to consider what further regulatory

Chief Executive's Office, Environment Agency
Seacole Block, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF
Chief.Executive@environment-agency.gov.uk
<http://www.gov.uk/environment-agency>

action may be appropriate. As the Chief Executive of a public body, I know you will appreciate that it is not appropriate to pre-determine that specific action will be taken but I can assure you that my teams will continue to work alongside yours to secure a long term, robust and sustainable resolution.

We are not currently able to share the data in the form that you have requested. However, our available air quality monitoring data is accessible [here](#). As we explain there, H₂S data obtained before September 2023, when we updated the H₂S analyser calibration procedure, is likely to have a greater degree of uncertainty than previously understood.

You will be aware that the method the Environment Agency has developed to adjust the historic H₂S data is subject to an independent peer review led by Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser. Whilst we expected the group to complete its work by the end of January 2024, there has been a short delay. We anticipate that the group's findings will be published by Defra soon. Once the report is published, we will share the findings with partners so that all can provide the best information, advice and support to the community as quickly as possible.

I hope you are reassured that we continue to work hard to require WQL to reduce the risk of emissions and return longer-term to the much-improved performance seen before September 2023.

If you have any specific questions, I suggest that you address them to Andrew Hitchings, Walleys Quarry Project Executive, who will be happy to speak to you. You can contact Andrew via email at Andrew.Hitchings@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Philip Duffy
Chief Executive, Environment Agency

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL – 10th APRIL 2024

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 6th February and 19th March, detailed below is a selection of decisions and other actions of the Leader and Cabinet since the last Leader's Statement

2. **Newcastle & Kidsgrove Regeneration update**

Regeneration across the borough continues to gather pace:

- **Town Centre Future High Streets Fund** – investing £11m of capital grant in redeveloping key town centre sites including the 450-space Castle car park at the Ryecroft, redevelopment of York Place, and rejuvenation of the historic market.
- **Newcastle Town Deal** – investing £23.6m of capital grant in strategic developments and projects including the redevelopment of the Midway car park, active travel links, digital infrastructure, Astley Centre for Circus, Keele In Town as well as regeneration projects in Knutton and the Wammy.
- **Kidsgrove Town Deal** – £16.9 million invested in delivering the refurbishment of Kidsgrove Sport Centre, enabling the building of Chatterley Valley West with the aim of creating up to 1,700 jobs, improvements to the train station and the creation of a single public hub in the town centre, opening up the access to the Trent & Mersey Canal towpath and making the route into town more attractive to visitors.
- **UK Shared Prosperity Fund** – investing £4.8m of revenue grant on projects that will deliver programmes of interventions to people and skills, businesses and communities and places, including Keele University's provision of digital skills training for the public in the town centre along with community and environmental projects.

Brochures highlighting what's happening in Newcastle and Kidsgrove town centres have been launched to promote Levelling Up in the Borough and can be viewed here: <https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/news/article/234/new-brochures-promote-investment>

3. **Procurement of Streetscene and MMF Vehicles & Plant**

Cabinet gave the go ahead for significant investment to aid the sustainable transition of the Council's grounds maintenance operations to electric vehicles, aligning with our ambitious net zero carbon emissions target by 2030.

The decision to replace the aging Streetscene fleet with electric pickups demonstrates a commitment to reducing emissions and investing £420,000 in six replacement EV pickups is a crucial step towards decarbonising the council's vehicle fleet.

The recent decision to take over highway grass-cutting operations on behalf of the County Council, in response to residents' requests for more frequent verge maintenance, demonstrates our dedication to meet the communities' aspirations and good environmental stewardship. With Newcastle-under-Lyme being the current Britain in Bloom overall national champion, the council is determined to uphold its reputation for well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing parks and green spaces in the borough.

4. **Newcastle Town Deal Digital Infrastructure Project update**

Cabinet endorsed a proposal that will bring gigabyte capacity broadband connections to areas of Newcastle to help connect businesses, homes and community centres within the Town Deal area.

This will involve laying up to 50km of fibre network and establishing 'distribution hubs' at community centres allowing free Wi-Fi access to be provided to those with limited or no internet access. The initiative aligns with the aim of the government's levelling up agenda aiding the regeneration of communities and to stimulate economic growth as part of the Town Deal investment by providing open access infrastructure.

5. **Electric Vehicle Charging Points for Castle Car Park**

With construction of the new Castle Car Park now underway, Cabinet awarded a contract for the provision of electric vehicle (EV) charging points.

The initial installation of 22 charging points on the ground floor of the car park is designed to meet demand as there becomes a greater number of electric vehicles. In addition to visitors to the town, the car park will cater for the new residential developments and the potential hotel development planned for the Ryecroft site.

6. **Tree & Biodiversity Management Plan**

Cabinet approved the adoption of the Tree and Biodiversity Management Plan which sets out the Council's approach to managing its current and future tree stock as well as planted meadowland and other environmental improvements.

A key part of the Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy is protecting and enhancing biodiversity which will play a major part in tackling climate change. Since 2018 the Council has focused work programmes such as tree planting through its urban tree planting strategy and planting wildflower meadows on the council's green spaces including over 60 preserved as carbon capture areas.

To date nearly 15,000 trees have been planted in the first four phases of the strategy with phase five currently underway. As agreed at Full Council in February, the strategy is being rolled out to rural villages in the borough.

7. **Sport England Swimming Pool Support Grant to Kidsgrove CIO**

Kidsgrove Sports Centre is to benefit from Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund to install solar panels and a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) unit in the centre. The Trustees believe the grant allocation of £235,375 will help to reduce high energy costs which have increased since the start of the war in Ukraine.

The Sports Centre continues to go from strength to strength with membership buoyant and good community use of the building since it reopened in July 2022.

8. **Museum wins awards**

Brampton Museum's all-round excellence has been recognised with a top award. The museum took first place in its category at the Enjoy Staffordshire Tourism and Good Food Awards. In addition to winning the 'Small Visitor Attraction of the Year' category, the Brampton took two bronze and a 'highly commended' in three other classes.

Figures comparing spring 2023 to the year before showed a 62 per cent increase in visitors, with numbers boosted by the museum's series of events celebrating the Borough's 850th anniversary.

Congratulations to the dedicated staff and volunteers as the 'best of class' in Staffordshire, the Museum will now go forward to the national competition.

9. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan can be found at: -

<https://moderngov.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/mgListPlanItems.aspx?PlanId=157&RP=118>

Councillor Simon Tagg
Leader of the Council

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SCRUTINY COMMITTEES CHAIR'S REPORTS

Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee

The Committee met on 26 February, 2024 and the following matters were considered:

- The regular reports from the County Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Police, Fire and Crime Panel and notes of a meeting with the Integrated Care Board were considered.
- The Committee considered the latest report to Cabinet on odour issues at Walleys Quarry.
- Youth Health and Wellbeing and Play Provision
- Review of the 850 Celebration Year
- Biodiversity and Tree Management Plan
- The Work Programme was discussed and Members requested that the following items be added to the Work Programme:

-A53 Bus Gate – Final Business Case

-Kidsgrove Care Solutions – Supporting People with Learning Disabilities

Cllr Ian Wilkes

Chair

Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee

The Economy and Place Committee sat on the 18th March and considered the following topics -

1. The Borough local plan - of which there were seven questions raised in advance by the public and discussed on the evening
2. The Knutton Master Plan
3. The town deal and future high street fund update

The next meeting in June will also incorporate the annual scrutiny of HS2 activities in the Borough following the announcement of the cancellation of phase 2A

Cllr Gary White

Chair

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REGULATORY COMMITTEES CHAIR'S REPORTS

Licensing and Public Protection Committee

The Licensing and Public Protection Committee met on the 12th March, 2024.

At the meeting Members, received the following Licensing reports:

- REVIEW OF THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT;
- HOME OFFICE CONSULTATION-AGE VERIFICATION AND REMOTE SALES;

The Committee discussed a number of aspects of the reports and agreed to the proposed recommendations that were set out in those reports.

The Committee also received the following Public Protection reports:

- UPDATE ON RESULTS OF TAXI LICENSING APPEALS;
- CONSULTATION ON REVOCATION OF THE MAYBANK, WOLSTANTON AND PORTHILL AQMA

Members had a brief discussion on those reports and the Committee agreed and noted the contents of those reports.

Since the last Full Council meeting both the Licensing Sub Committee and Public Protection Sub Committee have met once

The minutes for the Public Protection Sub Committee held on 17th January were received and noted as a correct record

Cllr Andrew Parker
Chair

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