

Public Document Pack

Date of meeting **Wednesday, 14th March, 2012**
Time **10.00 am**
Venue **Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, Merrial Street,
Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs ST5 2AG**
Contact **Julia Cleary**

Cabinet

AGENDA

PART 1– OPEN AGENDA

- 1 MINUTES** **(Pages 1 - 4)**
To consider the minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 February 2012.
- 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
To receive declarations of interest from Members on items included in the agenda.
- 3 Financial and Performance Management Report to End of** **(Pages 5 - 14)**
Quarter Three (Dec) 2011
- 4 Communications Strategy 2012-2013** **(Pages 15 - 44)**
- 5 Stronger and Safer Communities Strategy 2012-2017** **(Pages 45 - 86)**
- 6 Locality Action Partnership (LAP) Review Update** **(Pages 87 - 92)**
- 7 Progress Report Regarding the Ryecroft Scheme and** **(Pages 93 - 96)**
Appointment of Retail Specialist Consultancy
- 8 Town Centre Partnership Development and Initiatives** **(Pages 97 - 104)**
- 9 Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures in** **(Pages 105 - 108)**
Newcastle-under-Lyme SPD
- 10 Response to Petition to Protect the Dogs of Lyme Valley Park** **(Pages 109 - 112)**
From Being Poisoned
- 11 Partnership Agreement With Newcastle Community and** **(Pages 113 - 118)**
Voluntary Support
- 12 Transportation of Material and Processing of Street Sweepings** **(Pages 119 - 124)**
- 13 Joint Housing Allocations Policy Review** **(Pages 125 - 130)**
- 14 Strategic Tenancy Strategy** **(Pages 131 - 144)**
- 15 Lettings of Surplus Office Space, Civic Offices, Merrial Street,** **(Pages 145 - 148)**
Newcastle

- 16 Kidsgrove Town Hall and Victoria Hall (Pages 149 - 152)**
- 17 Jubilee 2 Update (Pages 153 - 158)**
- 18 Chesterton Vision (Pages 159 - 162)**
- 19 Irrecoverable Items (Pages 163 - 164)**
- 20 URGENT BUSINESS**

To consider any business which is urgent within the meaning of Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

21 PART 2

22 DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

To resolve that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the report because it is likely that there will be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

23 Appendix A - Irrecoverable Items (Pages 165 - 168)

Members: Councillors S Sweeney (Chairman), R Studd (Vice-Chair), J Bannister, A Howells, N Jones and M Reddish

'Members of the Council: If you identify any personal training / development requirements from the items included in this agenda or through issues raised during the meeting, please bring them to the attention of the Committee Clerk at the close of the meeting'

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

CABINET

Wednesday 1 February 2012

Present:- Councillor Sweeney – in the Chair

Councillors Bannister, Howells, Jones, Miss Reddish and Studd

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2012 be agreed as a correct record.

3. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS AND COUNCIL TAX 2012/13

A report was submitted to enable Cabinet to recommend the 2012/13 General Fund Revenue Budget and the 2012/13 Capital Programme to Full Council in February 2012 and to consider the comments from the Transformation and Resources Overview and scrutiny Committee.

The Chair of the Transformation and Overview Committee was in attendance to feedback comments from the Committee meetings on 18 and 25 January 2012. The Committee had discussed many areas including the £523k budget shortfall gap and the impact of the £60k subsidy from the Government, the upkeep costs of Jubilee 1 and Knutton Recreation Centre and the maximisation of income streams from car parking and Jubilee 2.

The Council tax level was debated and concerns had been raised regarding the knock on effect of a 0% increase this year on future Council Tax levels. There was however no recommendation that Council Tax should be increased. The Committee had also requested additional information for its meeting on 25 January which included detail on the insurance fund, a breakdown of the 60 FTE jobs that had been removed from the Council's structure and information of the remaining potential savings identified in the service reviews carried out in 2010.

The Chair of the Transformation and Resources Committee thanked Officers for the provision of all the requested information and congratulated them on a well written and comprehensive report.

The good work and valuable contribution of the Scrutiny Committee was also noted.

Resolved:- (a) That it be recommended to Full Council that the revised minimum balances requirement be £1,500,000 with the excess of £350,000 above the current levels being transferred to the Contingency Reserve (£80,000), the Insurance Fund (£120,000) and the Provision for Bad Debts (sundry debtors) (£150,000)

(b) That the 2012/13 General Fund Revenue Budget and the Capital Programme 2012/13 as detailed in the report to Cabinet dated 18 January 2012 be recommended to Full Council for approval together with a recommendation that there be no increase in the Borough's council tax for 2012/13.

(c) That the contribution from the Budget Support Fund be £179,000.

4. SITE ALLOCATIONS AND POLICIES DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT - ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION PROPOSALS

A report was submitted requesting Cabinet to consider the timetable, likely scope and consultation arrangements for the site allocations and policies development plan document issues and options paper.

All Councils were required to have such a plan and the timetable for Newcastle would be extended to allow for a significant public consultation process following which a set of policies would be agreed. It was reiterated that no sites had been singled out yet and would not be until the consultation process had been completed which could be up to 2 and a half year in the future.

Resolved:- (a) That the revised timetable set out in Appendix A now be adopted.

(b) That Cabinet agree the consultation proposals set out in this report.

(c) That a further report be submitted in June/July to the Planning Committee with a revised Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document draft Issues and Options Paper for public consultation purposes, incorporating a set of generic development management policies and taking into account a revised Infrastructure Delivery Plan together with details of the public consultation arrangements.

(d) That a map be provided to all Members in June indicating all sites that formed part of the development plan document and a further and final map be produced for all members at the conclusion of the consultation process.

(e) That Cabinet receive in June/July the recommendations of the Planning Committee with respect to the above revised Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document Draft Issues and Options Paper, incorporating a set of generic development management policies and taking into account a revised Infrastructure Delivery Plan, for consultation purposes together with details of the public consultation arrangements.

(f) That at the above stage it be advertised that the entire process is open for public comment and a generic email address be provided for this purpose.

5. ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

A report was submitted to seek final approval for the Asset Management Strategy 2011/12 – 2012/14.

The Strategy had now been scrutinised by both the Economic Development and Enterprise Committee and the Transformation and Resources Committee and no

additional comments had been returned and it was therefore unnecessary to make any changes to the document that Cabinet had originally discussed and agreed at its meeting on 18 January 2012.

Resolved:- That the Asset Management Strategy 2011/12 – 2013/14 be approved.

6. REGISTER OF LOCALLY IMPORTANT BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES IN NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

A report was submitted requesting Cabinet to consider the recommendation of the Planning Committee to adopt the Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures in Newcastle under Lyme Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

A draft Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structure Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) had been agreed by Planning Committee in July 2011 for consultation purposes. The period for consultation had ended on 23rd September 2011. The buildings and structures on the list would be protected by the Council and would be at levels below those classed as listed. A preliminary list existed at the moment but it was very dependant upon local action and knowledge and it was agreed that all LAPS and Parish Councils be made aware of the list and requested to submit any buildings or structures that they were aware of for inclusion.

A standard approach was required for the additional of buildings and structures to the list and there would be a nomination process followed by assessment from an independent panel working from a standard set of criteria. Further discussions would be held regarding whether to release the current list at a future meeting.

Resolved:- That information be provided to LAPs and Parish Councils regarding the nomination process and that further discussion be held regarding the distribution of the current list.

7. LOW CARBON FUND

A report was submitted to update Cabinet Members of progress regarding the Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands Low Carbon funding in support of capital projects delivering carbon savings.

It was confirmed that the Council was on track to meet the April deadline for identifying areas for the funding and it was hoped that all orders would be in place by the end of March and work commencing.

Resolved:- That the actions taken to date be noted

S SWEENEY
Chair

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Agenda Item 3

FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT TO END OF QUARTER THREE (DECEMBER) 2011

Submitted by: Head of Finance and Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships

Portfolio: Customer Service and Transformation/Resources and Efficiency

Wards Affected: All

Purpose

To provide Members with the Financial and Performance Review for the 2011/12 Third Quarter.

Recommendation

That Members note the contents of the report and recommend that the Council continues to monitor and scrutinise performance alongside finances.

Reasons

These monitoring reports provide information about the performance of individual council services, alongside financial information.

1 Background, Issues and Options

- 1.1 This report provides Members with a detailed update on how the Council has performed during the Third Quarter of 2011/12 by presenting performance data set in a financial context.
- 1.2 The Council approved a General Fund Revenue Budget of £15,258,700 on 23 February 2011. The actual position compared to this budget is continuously monitored by managers in order to detect any significant variances of expenditure or income from the approved amounts contained in the budget. Regular reports are made available to members by the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Efficiency informing them of the current position, highlighting any significant factors giving rise to variances.
- 1.3 A Capital Programme totalling £21,638,800, covering the two years 2010/11 to 2011/12, was approved at the same Council meeting. Of this total, £10,374,500 was estimated to be spent in 2011/12.
- 1.4 This report also provides detailed analysis of performance in the third quarter, focusing on key performance indicators.
- 1.5 A summary of the overall picture is presented in section 5 of this report. This is a promising start, with the majority of targets currently met.

2. Revenue Budget Position

- 2.1 The overall position at 31 December shows an adverse variance of £90,000. At this point in the financial year, we would have expected to have spent approximately £5.911 million: we have actually spent £6.011 million. The variance is predominately due to sources of income such as land charges, planning fees, market stall rents, commercial property rents and car park fees, continuing to yield less compared to what we would, in the past, have expected to receive up to this point in the year. Because we anticipated economic problems would

continue in 2011/12 an allowance of £200,000 was included in the budget to help in covering these shortfalls. In addition, there has been a change in the regulations relating to business rates on empty properties in that the threshold above which rates become payable has been lowered, resulting in the Council incurring additional costs where it has empty properties, particularly within the commercial portfolio in between re-letting them to tenants. On the positive side, there have been savings on supplies and services across various services, additional income from cremation fees because the crematorium in Stoke was closed for a period and there are employee savings arising from factors such as the time-lag in filling vacant posts. The table below summarises the position, highlighting the significant variances:

Item	Variance
	£'000s
Income Shortfalls	
Land Charges Search Fees	-179
Commercial Portfolio Rents	-236
Markets Stall Fees	-54
Planning Application Fees	-111
Parking Services	-141
Positive Variances	
Cremation Fees Income	9
Litter Fines Income	20
Customer Services Income	11
Legal Fees Income	5
Pest Control Income	8
Members Allowances/Members Ward Fund	27
Print Room Paper and Equipment Hire	15
Emergency Planning Contributions	15
Legal Fees	13
Corporate Training	30
Conducting Elections	28
Computer Hardware and Software	57
Employees (allowance for pay award, vacant posts etc)	214
Income Provision (75% of £200,000 set aside)	150
Miscellaneous	29
Total	-90

3. **Capital Programme Position**

- 3.1 Approval for the acquisition of the former Sainsbury's site (Ryecroft area, 10-16 Liverpool Road, Newcastle) together with other changes in respect of carried forwards means that the revised capital budget for 2011/12 is £16,282,400. Of this £12,230,800 was expected to be spent by 31 December. Actual expenditure at this date was £11,594,000, a variance of £636,800. The variance is largely comprised of four projects, as set out below:

Project	Variance	Comments
	£'000s	
Jubilee 2	-162	Part of the contingency sum may not be required
Replacement Play Equipment	-177	£119k to be spent in 2012/13
EcoHomes	-100	Housing Association project, should be spent in 2012/13
Future Housing Projects – Beasley Place	-150	Payments to be made to developer on completion of project in 2012/13

4. **Investment Counterparties**

4.1 Investment counterparties with whom money is invested, as at 31 January 2012 are as follows (with the parent company shown in brackets, where applicable):

Halifax Bank of Scotland (*Lloyds Banking Group*)
Heritable Bank (*Landsbanki*)
Royal Bank of Scotland (*Royal Bank of Scotland Group*)
Nationwide Building Society

4.2 With regard to the Council's frozen investment in Heritable Bank, a further payment of £83,407 has been received from the bank's administrator since the Quarter 2 report, making the total amount repaid some £1,702,907, which is around 68% of the total that was frozen. The Administrators current prediction remains that at least 90% of the £2,500,000 invested will be repaid.

5. **Performance**

5.1 The Corporate Performance ('dashboard') report is attached as Appendix A.

5.2 The information is presented in sections for each portfolio holder.

5.3 There are measures detailing progress against our objectives and the number of quarterly indicators is 24. This is in line with a longer term aim – to identify and focus on key measures that we consider to be of a cross cutting nature. These measures have been designed to relate to areas of work that have an impact on a number of the council's responsibilities.

5.4 The appendix comments on individual indicators where they raise an issue or where either a target has been met, or the direction of travel is not positive.

5.5 This report will also be submitted to the Transformation and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

5.6 The proportion of indicators on target, based on data at the time of compiling this report, was 66.7%.

5.7 Positive performance can be seen in a range of services although it must be borne in mind that that the results later in the year can be different and that some services have seasonal factors.

5.8 There are a very small number of areas listed in this report which are not on target, though none causes concern at present. In all cases, the management of the service is aware of the

issues and are taking steps to deal with the situation. Further updates will be provided for Members in future reports.

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

6.1 All of these indicators link to corporate priorities. They are ordered by portfolio as in the Corporate Plan.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

7.1 The Council has a duty to set targets for performance of a range of functions and needs to monitor these closely.

8. **Equality Impact Implications**

There are no differential equality issues.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 Any positive variance for the full year on the General Fund Revenue Account will enable that amount to be transferred to reserves and will be available in future years for use as the Council considers appropriate. Conversely, if there is an adverse variance, the amount required to cover this will have to be met from reserves.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 The current economic situation represents the greatest risk to the revenue budget, particularly with regard to the impact it may have upon income receivable in relation to services where customers may chose whether or not to use Council facilities, such as car parking and other areas directly affected by the economic downturn, such as land charges and planning applications. The situation will be monitored through the normal budget monitoring procedures.

10.2 The capital programme will require regular monitoring to identify any projects which are falling behind their planned completion dates. This will be carried out by the Capital Programme Review Group, which meets on a monthly basis together with quarterly reports to Cabinet.

10.3 The above represents a high level view of risk. There are detailed risk registers available if members wish to see them.

11. **List of Appendices**

Appendix A - Corporate Performance (Dashboard)

12. **Background Papers**

Working papers held by officers responsible for calculating indicators.

Cabinet Performance Monitoring Report 2011-12 Quarter 3

Overall position

In quarter 3, 66.7% of the indicators are now achieving or exceeding their target. There are 24 indicators and the result is good, showing an improvement from 58% of indicators on target in quarter 2. The result for one indicator is unavailable at this time. Three others are collected by partners and have no targets set, so performance for this quarter is compared to the same period in 2010-11.

Already performing well

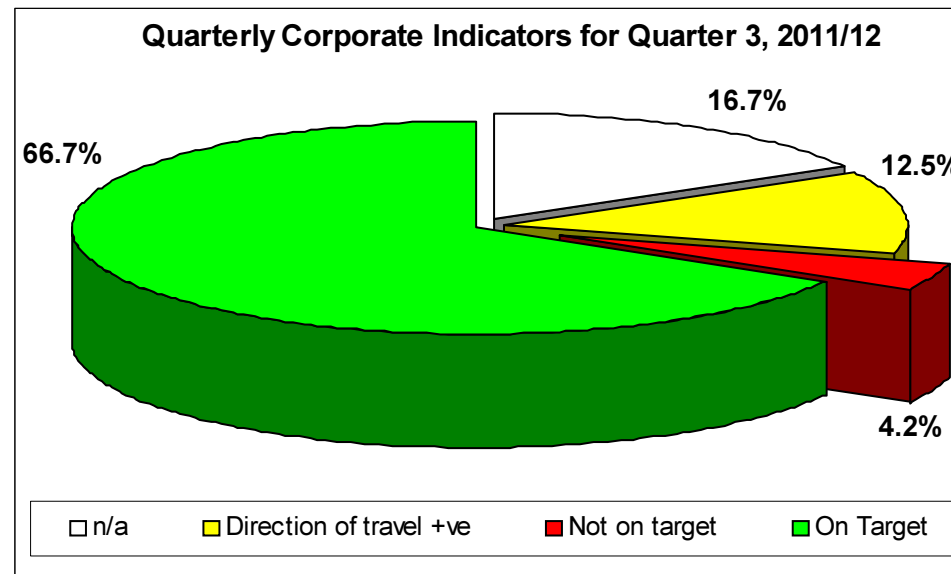
- RP1 % of investment portfolio (NBC owned) which is vacant.
- RP2 Number of cases where positive action was successful in preventing homelessness
- RP3, 4 & 5 % of Major, Minor and other Planning Applications determined within time
- RE1 Number of days lost, per employee, to the Council through sickness
- ER2 % of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting
- ER4 % category A+ B food businesses inspections completed in time
- ER1 Residual household waste per household -yearly target 450kgs
- CST1 % requests resolved at first point of contact
- CST2 % Unmet demand (number of calls not answered as a % of total call handling volume)
- CST3 % of Council Tax Collected

Areas for improvement

- CA1 Number of people accessing leisure and recreational facilities
- ER5 % of LAPC (Pollution) inspections carried out per annum from work plan

Improvement made

- RE2 Percentage of invoices paid on time (within 30 days)
- CST5 Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax new claims and change events
- ER6 % of licensed premises inspected per annum from work plan.








Safer and Stronger Communities

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Stephen Sweeney

Ref	What did we measure?	Qtr 3 Actual	Qtr 3 Target	How did we do in Quarter 3?	Achieved Target
SSC1	Violence with injury	190	TBC	From April to Dec 2011 the number of reported incidents is 516 this year, against 614 for the same period last year, showing a decrease on figures for 2012.	n/a
SSC2	Anti-social behaviour	957	TBC	From April to Dec 2011 the number of reported incidents is 3057 this year, against 3996 for the same period last year, showing a decrease on figures for 2012.	n/a
SSC3	Serious acquisitive crime	212	TBC	From April to Dec 2011 the number of reported incidents is 637 this year, against 711 for the same period last year, showing a decrease on figures for 2012.	n/a






Regeneration & Planning

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Robin Studd

Ref	What did we measure?	Qtr 3 Actual	Qtr 3 Target	How did we do in Quarter 3?	Achieved Target
RP1	% of investment portfolio (NBC owned) which is vacant.	13.3	15	The result remains within target in quarter 3 and there are 180 investment properties, which includes any land that is let out on a commercial basis, and 24 are currently vacant.	
RP2	Number of cases where positive action was successful in preventing homelessness (from the P1E)	109	75	Homelessness Preventions have again exceeded the target for the quarter and the NHA team are performing exceptionally well year to date, which suggests that the target for 2011/12 should be met comfortably.	
RP3	NI 157a Percentage of Major Planning Applications determined within time	78.9	75 (60)	The performance for major and minor planning applications have met the targets, For the category of "other" (NI 157c) the performance for this quarter was marginally below the target and demonstrates that a relatively small number of decisions issued out of time (3 in total) can have an adverse affect when the target is set as high as it is. The national target for NI 157c set by government is 80%. Performance has improved and the target was met by performance in quarter 3, with a result of 97%, however over the quarter the cumulative result is 94.4%. For the sake of clarity the national performance targets have been shown in brackets against our locally set targets. This demonstrates the Council's priority of aiming for excellence.	
RP4	NI 157b Percentage of Minor Planning Applications determined within time	94.3	85 (65)		
RP5	NI 157c Percentage of Other Planning Applications determined within time	94.4	95 (80)		



Customer Service and Transformation


Portfolio Holder: Councillor Nigel Jones

Ref	What did we measure?	Qtr 3 Actual	Qtr 3 Target	How did we do in Quarter 3?	Achieved Target
CST1	% requests resolved at first point of contact	98.57	70	Performance continues to be well above target.	
CST2	% Unmet demand (number of calls not answered as a % of total call handling volume)	4.8	10	Our performance is well above target. This is a reflection of the improved service now being provided since the recent telephony and process enhancements and the new departmental structure being in place.	
CST3	Percentage of Council Tax Collected (Cumulative)	78.5	76.1	Performance is above target.	
CST4	Percentage of NNDR collected	85.9	85.4	Performance remains above target.	
CST5	Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax new claims and change events	12.85	13	In Qtr 3 performance for this indicator has continued to improve reducing the time taken from 15.13 days for Qtr 1 to less than 13 days by December.	

Resources & Efficiency






Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ashley Howells

Ref	What did we measure?	Qtr 3 Actual	Qtr 3 Target	How did we do in Quarter 3?	Achieved Target
RE1	Average number of days lost, per employee, to the Council through sickness	5.09	5.33	For the third quarter the sickness absence remains within target.	
RE2	Percentage of invoices paid on time(within 30 days)	97.37	97	In the third quarter the result continues to be on target.	

RE3	% projected variance against full year council budget	0.3	No variance	Income budgets show significant adverse variances in areas affected by the economic recession. A provision of £200,000 is included in the budget for this.	
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Environment and Recycling

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Marion Reddish

Ref	What did we measure?	Qtr 3 Actual	Qtr 3 Target	How did we do in Quarter 3?	Achieved Target
ER1	Residual household waste per household -yearly target 450kgs	326.46 (105.15)	337.5 (112.5)kg	The figures are only estimates at this time as we are still awaiting some tonnage figures for December. Figures are cumulative and show the rate for year to date and are on target. The figures in () show the actual results for quarter 3.	
ER2	% of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	53.45% (50.48%)	52%		
ER3	% improvement in street and environment cleanliness	n/a		Second tranche inspections complete - awaiting results	n/a
	a) litter		9		
	b)detritus		9		
	c)graffiti		3		
	d) fly posting	1			
ER4	% category A+ B food businesses inspections completed in time.	100	100	Target achieved, 100% completion rate.	
ER5	% of LAPC (Pollution) inspections carried out per annum from work plan.	76	100	ER5 - LAPC (Pollution) inspections is below target due to availability of business representatives to hold inspection and two premises are not inspected as ceasing operations.	
ER6	% of licensed premises inspected per annum from work plan.	93	100	ER6 -Licensing Inspections have been prioritised in Q3 significantly increasing performance with a total of 70 premises now inspected. Officers are confident that any outstanding inspections will be undertaken by the end of Qtr 4, thereby achieving the annual target.	

Culture and Active Communities

Portfolio Holder: Councillor James Bannister

Ref	What did we measure?	Qtr 3 Actual	Qtr 3 Target	How did we do in Quarter 3?	Achieved Target
CA1	Number of people accessing leisure and recreational facilities	323664	405000	Figures are for the year to date and have been impacted on this quarter by a combination of factors including the closure of Kidsgrove Sports Centre Pools due to a structural building fault, the gradual decommissioning and closure of Jubilee Pool and Knutton Recreation Centre from 9 December 2011. Usage is broadly similar to the same period for the previous financial year (345,175) when also set against a backdrop of general decline in participation nationally. Improvement is anticipated with the opening of Jubilee 2 in January 2012.	
CA2	Number of people visiting the museum	52494	47250	The figure for the third quarter is 1000 higher than for that period in 2010. The actual figure for the quarter is 8866. The cumulative figure, 52494, shows a 4182 increase on 2010/11.	
Key	Performance information not available at this time	n/a			
	Performance is not on target but direction of travel is positive				
	Performance is not on target where targets have been set				
	Performance is on or above target.				

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COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2012-2015

Submitted by: Head of Communications

Portfolio: Customer Service and Transformation

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To seek Cabinet approval for the Communications Strategy which covers the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2015. This document outlines how the council will use good communications to build a stronger reputation, involve and inform residents, engage effectively with stakeholders and improve customer satisfaction.

Recommendation

That Cabinet approves the Communications Strategy 2012-15.

Reasons

Good communications can make an effective contribution to the overall performance of the council and it should be recognised as a strategic and core function. This strategy strengthens mechanisms already in place while introducing others which will allow the council to inform stakeholders of the services available to them – showing them where their taxes are spent and how they can get involved with Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, its services, events, policies and activities.

1. Background

- 1.1 The borough council's current Communications Strategy covers the period to the end of the current financial year. It has been in place for three years and has been used to provide a framework for communications activity at the council.
- 1.2 This replacement Communications Strategy not only continues that focus on the development of external and internal but also includes information to guide work in other associated areas such as consultation and engagement; marketing and sales; electronic communications.
- 1.3 Members are well aware that good communications has an important role to play in modern local government. Research from the Local Government Association (LGA) has shown a direct link between good communications and improved satisfaction levels among residents.
- 1.4 Good communications has also been shown to enhance stakeholder participation and engagement while also protecting and building reputation.
- 1.5 A detailed work plan for each year the strategy is in place will be produced annually as part of the Service Plan for the Communications Service. This will outline the milestones and work streams which are to take place on an operational level to ensure the key principles outlined in the strategy itself are delivered.

1.6 The strategy is supported by a range of other documents which are attached as appendices and include media protocols; a web content policy; corporate brand guide; Plain English guidance; an Equality Impact Assessment and a Risk Assessment.

2. Issues

2.1 During the life of the existing Communications Strategy there have been significant developments and changes in communications activity at the borough council. Some of the key highlights are outlined in the bullet points below.

2.2 The Reporter

2.2.1 Changes introduced by the Government in 2011 to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity saw changes to the guidance on the number of publications which councils should produce each year.

2.2.2 The Government now recommends no more than four each year and the council currently complies with this recommendation. Despite this substantial reduction from the 10 editions produced each year previously, recent research has shown the Reporter is still the most important single source which the majority of residents rely on for information about the council.

2.3 Social media

2.3.1 Although social media has been around for a number of years, these information platforms are still relatively new and uncharted territory for the public sector. However, they are constantly increasing in popularity and the council is now using them more effectively than ever before in communicating with residents.

2.3.2 Latest figures show around 1,000 people follow the council on Twitter and a similar number access information from us via Facebook.

2.3.3 The council has managed to treble these figures during 2011 and will continue to develop how it uses these and other channels such as YouTube and Flickr.

2.4 Media relations

2.4.1 The council has an excellent working relationship with the media and in particular the local media. During the last year it could be argued the council had the most positive coverage of any public sector organisation in Staffordshire.

2.4.2 The two main ways the council interacts with the media is through the production of press releases and through responding to media enquiries.

2.4.3 An evaluation of the financial worth of good media and public relations was carried out in 2011 and from this it is estimated the council achieved local media coverage during the last 12 months to the value of £293,834. When the national picture is added into the equation, it is estimated the council generates a further £15,000 a year in good media and public relations.

2.5 Marketing and sales

2.5.1 During 2010/11 the borough council increased its marketing and sales activities with a focus on giving appropriate support to several key service areas. The primary goal was to help

generate income – a key area for the council which is becoming increasingly important in the current economic climate.

2.5.2 In many of the areas where income generation has been identified as an issue and where some support has been given, current estimates suggest income levels will be either up on the same period for last year or indeed on a par with them.

2.5.3 The strategy outlines how the council will align lessons learned in this new area of work with making the best use of available corporate resources to ensure it makes the most of the marketing and sales opportunities available to us and continues to boost income levels.

2.5.4 The strategy also recognises the important role the council can play by using its marketing experience and resources in a more pro-active way to work with partners in promoting Newcastle town centre and the wider borough in a way which boosts the district's visitor economy.

2.6 Design and print

2.6.1 Flexible working practices have been introduced in this section in the last two years to ensure the team is best placed to meet the ebbs and flows of work. A recent independent assessment of the unit was carried out by a company of specialists on behalf of Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands and the experts who conducted the work described the unit as one of the best they had visited in the region.

2.7 Consultation

2.7.1 A series of best practice visits have been undertaken to see how beacon councils carry out customer engagement and consultation. This took place at the same time as the Government ended the Place Survey and urged councils to look again at how they engage with residents.

2.7.2 The borough council is now in the infancy of a new way of working modelled on beacon councils which involves more qualitative, face-to-face engagement and a focus on key front line services.

2.8 E-communications

2.8.1 The borough council's website is the top rated public sector website in Staffordshire at the moment according to the Society of Information Technology Management (Socitm) which carries out an annual assessment of all public sector websites nationwide. About 18,000 unique users do business with the council online each month.

2.8.2 The Communications Strategy makes it clear that the council intends to continue developing its website in recognition of the important role it plays in helping residents to business, and engage, with the council.

2.8.3 To support this development it is the council's intention to enhance the website's content management system arrangements – as resources allow – in the near future.

2.9 Internal communications

2.9.1 Significant strides have been taken to ensure staff at the council are kept involved and informed of key issues and decisions. This helps to ensure they are ambassadors and advocates for the council, its services, activities and events.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 Research carried out by the Local Government Association (LGA) and also organisations such as the pollsters Ipsos MORI has shown that councils have higher resident satisfaction ratings when residents feel they are kept informed.
- 3.2 Communications can therefore help to underpin much of the work carried out by service areas to deliver the borough council's priorities.
- 3.3 Good communications has been shown to ensure stakeholder engagement, involvement and awareness in council services, events and activities thereby nurturing a sense of satisfaction and value-for-money among residents. Therefore it is felt that the council's best option is to have a Communications Strategy in place.

4. **Proposal and Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 4.1 The Communications Strategy sets out a framework which could enable the council to continue to develop and enhance the way it involves and informs key stakeholders.
- 4.2 A clear, concise and effective Communications Strategy will:-
- Contribute to the delivery of the council's priorities.
 - Ensure the production of information about the council's services and activities which is up-to-date, accurate, relevant and in formats which are accessible by all residents.
 - Maintain or increase the percentage of residents who feel they are kept informed by the council and improve satisfaction levels with services.
 - Maintain or Increase the percentage of staff who feel they are kept informed by the council and improve satisfaction levels with working for the council.
 - Develop communication channels which seek to improve the way information is shared to all sections of our community.
 - Strengthen the council's image and increase public awareness and satisfaction of its services and activities through the use of consistent corporate identity and branding.
 - Engage more effectively with residents from all sections of our community.

5. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 5.1 Good communications can make a significant contribution in helping the borough council achieve the delivery of outcomes linked to the council's four corporate priorities and also the Sustainable Community Strategy.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 The council is under no legal or statutory duty to have a Communications Strategy in place.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment on the Communications Strategy has been completed.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 The Communications Strategy will help the council to make the maximum use of existing resources by ensuring a strategic approach to communications.

- 8.2 In recent years the Communications Service has been involved in a range of proposals which have contributed to the council's drive for more efficient and effective means of delivering services.
- 8.3 In July 2009 the annual budget for the Communications Service was just under £1.1 million. Following a restructure of the service and budget reviews, this has reduced to £708,140 in the current financial year.
- 8.4 And of this figure, a total of £188,400 is for corporate expenditure and includes the budget for all of the council's multi-functional print devices and the centralised print and publicity budget which pays for election materials, statutory advertising, recycling leaflets, signage for buildings and so on.
- 8.5 Further savings of £15,000 have been put forward for the 2012/13 financial year as the service continues to strive for more efficiencies while delivering effective ways of communicating with residents.
- 8.6 Contracts for the printing and distribution of the Reporter are due to expire at the end of the current financial year and a procurement exercise will be undertaken once the Communications Strategy is in place and agreed by Cabinet. Until that procurement process is undertaken it is difficult to be explicit over the financial implications but efforts will be taken to minimise those and a further report will be brought back to Cabinet in due course before any new contracts are put in place.

9. **Major Risks**

- 9.1 Risks associated with the Communications Strategy have been updated on the corporate system and will be periodically reviewed.

10 **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

- 10.1 Communications has already played a key role in raising awareness of, and also involvement in, the sustainability and climate change agenda both within the council and also with external stakeholders.
- 10.2 Significant sections of the Reporter have in recent years been devoted to efforts to encourage residents to support recycling and waste initiatives; there has been a "green issues" supplement; the council's website carries large amounts of information in a bespoke "climate change" section; information is regularly made available for staff to encourage them to embrace these issues.
- 10.3 As well as playing an important role in communicating information on sustainability and climate change issues, procurement practices undertaken by the service in the delivery of its corporate role also make a contribution.
- 10.4 For instance, paper from renewable sources is used to print the Reporter; the print company has its own environment impact strategy to reduce the harm paper requirements and chemical disposal have on the environment; paper purchased by the borough council for its design and print requirements is sourced from renewable sources where appropriate.

11. **Key Decision Information**

- 11.1 Whether to have a Communications Strategy is not a key decision as defined in the Council's Constitution. However, it has been included in the Forward Plan.

12. **List of Appendices**

Appendix A - Communications Strategy

13. **Background Papers**

None



**Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Communications Strategy**

(April 2012 – March 2015)

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Appendices

- A) Media protocols for Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
- B) Website Content Policy Statement
- C) Corporate style guide
- D) Plain English Guide
- E) Equalities Impact Assessment
- F) Risk assessment

Introduction

Communication is at the heart of everything we do as a borough council.

Not only is it key to strengthening links with local people, service users, partner organisations and staff, it is crucial to ensuring we deliver our priorities and our vision.

Our borough council is committed to providing high quality, planned and sustained corporate communications.

We invest in effective channels to communicate complex, sensitive and statutory information. These include corporate publications such as the Reporter, promotional campaigns, our website and media relations activity.

During 2011 the borough council arguably received the most positive media coverage of any public sector organisation in Staffordshire. Research carried out by the Communications Service suggests positive coverage worth in excess of £300,000 a year is being achieved for the borough council.

It's vital that we talk, listen and respond to local people's needs - shaping services when necessary and our messages so everyone is informed and empowered. We will endeavour to take opportunities for people to tell us what they think.

Good quality internal communications is also crucial. We value the contribution made by each of our employees and are committed to making sure they are well-informed so they understand our priorities and values.

And we will actively seek their ideas and views on how we can improve services and become an even better employer.

But it is not enough just to provide those services. What has consistently emerged over recent years is that a successful council also communicates well about its services, events, activities and policies.

Research by the Local Government Association has shown that the better informed people are about their council services, the more satisfied they feel. Therefore, communications can – and does - make an effective contribution to the overall performance of a council and it should be recognised as a strategic and core function.

Good communications are therefore vital if the council is to continue to build a strong reputation; effectively inform residents; engage and improve customer satisfaction and contribute to improved services provided by the borough council.

It should be recognised that the Communications Service now provides the major channel by which sections of the council communicate not only with the media but also the wider public.

This Communications Strategy is intended to provide the framework for a consistent approach to what we say, how we say it and when we say it. Work Plans to deliver the required outcomes of this strategy will be produced each year as part of the Communications Service Plan.

In addition, the strategy helps us to set a clear direction for communications and highlights the importance we place on good communication at Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.

Phil Jones
Head of Communications

Key principles, aims and messages

Key principles

- We recognise that good quality communications are essential for the effective delivery of our services.
- We are keen to be as transparent, open and accountable as possible.
- We will ensure information is shared, accessible and meets equality standards.
- We will monitor and measure the effectiveness of our communications.
- We will ensure that our work complies with relevant legal requirements and conforms to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.
- All our communications - spoken, written and electronic – will:-
 - (i) Be honest, accurate, timely and up-to-date.
 - (ii) Be clear, using plain English and easily understood.
 - (iii) Be consistent and suitable for the audience - including hard-to-reach groups.
 - (iv) Meet the corporate style and be clearly identified with Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.

Key aims

- To ensure the fullest take-up of all council services.
- To create a better understanding between the borough council and its various audiences.
- To help staff deliver services effectively, efficiently and to the best of their ability.
- To deliver key messages about the council, its services, policies and activities making full use of all appropriate channels of communication.
- To provide open access to information about the council and the full range of its services and activities.
- To support all councillors in their work as elected representatives for the borough.
- To improve accountability by ensuring accurate, timely and accessible information is easily available to the public.
- To monitor public perception and views about current and future services.
- To develop marketing and sales activities as appropriate.

Key messages

It is vital to the organisation that we all know why the borough council exists, what it is trying to achieve and how it is trying to achieve it. The Corporate Plan identifies our vision through the four corporate priorities and our three key values.

Supporting the delivery of these priorities and values is the most important reason for having a Communications Strategy in place.

Our priorities are:-

- Creating a cleaner, safer and sustainable borough.
- Creating a borough of opportunity.
- Creating a healthy and active community.
- Transforming our council to achieve excellence.

Our values are:-

- Putting people first.
- Make the best use of our resources.
- Delivering excellent and sustainable services.

External Communications

Key objectives:-

- Increase awareness, involvement and take-up of council services.
- Improve accountability by ensuring accurate, timely and accessible information is easily available to the public - including hard-to-reach groups.
- Actively promote Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council as an "excellent" council and provider of high quality, value-for-money local services.
- Secure wide coverage of council decisions, activities and services in the local, regional, national and specialist media.
- Ensure Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council has a strong and coherent brand and identity.
- Create a better understanding of the council's policies, services and achievements.
- Identify and develop new and creative communications opportunities.

Key actions:-

(1) Press and publicity

Media coverage has a role in shaping Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's reputation and therefore it is vital the council manages this relationship effectively.

The borough council will take an open, honest and, at times, forthright approach to its dealings and relationships with the media and manage all of its interactions to make the best of all opportunities available.

To ensure that this excellent position is maintained the borough council will:-

- ◆ Respond to journalists in full within four hours of an enquiry being received.

- ◆ Be helpful, polite and positive.
- ◆ Never say “no comment” unless an enquiry relates to “confidential” council business.
- ◆ Ensure any statements to challenging enquiries are cleared by the most appropriate person - Cabinet members, Executive Directors or heads of service – and keep written records of responses to journalists in such instances.
- ◆ Monitor response times to media enquiries and evaluate media coverage.
- ◆ Ensure an appropriate council spokesman/woman is fully briefed and available for interview if required.

(2) Media Protocols

The Communications Service at the borough council plays a central role in the way the authority deals with external communications.

In recognition of this role, a separate document outlining the council’s Media Protocols has been produced and is attached as an appendix to the Communications Strategy (see Appendix A).

(3) E-communications

- (i) www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk is the borough council’s corporate website and its importance as a communications channel – both in terms of doing business with the council and also as a means of receiving and giving information – has grown consistently in recent years.
- (ii) Around 18,000 unique users each month visit the council’s website which is on a par with the combined monthly total for phone calls made to the council and face-to-face visits.

In 2011 the borough council’s website achieved a three star rating from the Society of Information Technology Management (Socitm) which assesses all public sector websites. This made it the highest rated public sector website in Staffordshire.
- (iii) The Communications Service is responsible for:-
 - Managing the website Content Management System contract.
 - Technological development of the site.
 - Managing and editing content.
 - Ensuring responses are made to all website e-mail communications from residents.

(A Website Policy statement is attached to the strategy as Appendix B)

- (iv) Individual service areas are responsible for the content of their pages. Information on the website is diverse and often specialised which means responsibility for its authenticity, timeliness and accuracy and its

comprehensive nature must sit within service areas.

- (v) An e-Tracker system is in place to ensure content is monitored and content owners are reminded when information needs reviewing, replacing or removing. An escalation procedure is in place to ensure failure to act is reported to more senior officers.

This is important because by ensuring people have access to the right information and tools whenever they require them online, the council can reduce the occasions when customers have to make contact with us either on the telephone or face-to-face.

- (vi) During the life of this strategy, the council will commit itself to developing its website as part of a “Channel Shift” project which supports the Transformation Programme. This project will improve the quality and range of services, transactions and information available for customers who wish to deal with the council in this way.
- (vii) Increasingly, residents want us to provide services that reflect their lifestyles.

They want services that are contactable at weekends and in the evenings; that respond quickly to their query; are easy to get in touch with from home or work; and they want to be kept informed of the services we provide.

Where possible we will ensure that customers who want to interact with the council online will be able to do so from the beginning of a transaction right through to a satisfactory completion of that transaction.

- (viii) Our challenge in the next few years is to fully realise the benefits of cheaper forms of communication, such as the web, to allow services to concentrate scarce resources on those who really need, or want, face-to-face contact.

We will endeavour to put as many services and as much information online as possible so that customers who wish to deal with, and conclude business with, the council electronically can do so in a place and time which is suitable to them and their lifestyles.

- (ix) It is also our intention to support the development of the council's website by enhancing the content management system arrangements – as resources allow.

(4) Reporter

The council's newspaper is a key channel of communication between the borough council and the people it serves. It is written, designed and edited in-house and our goal is to circulate the Reporter at least

four times a year to all addresses in the borough.

The production cycle mirrors guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

The Reporter will:-

- Give residents an opportunity to shape content through an annual “Have Your Say” survey.
- Aim to keep residents involved and informed with a balance of news, features and information about the council, its services, policies and activities.
- Supplement this aim by regularly providing useful contact numbers and advice. Articles will also be provided on occasion by partner organisations where space allows.
- Play a key role in other areas such as promoting the work of partner organisations, the Third Sector and in providing a platform – where opportunity arises and space allows - for community news and information which cannot find a voice through other outlets.

There are five core communications actions which, when delivered well, have a marked impact on a council’s reputation and the perceptions of residents.

The Reporter contributes to three of these five areas – as outlined in the Local Government Association’s Reputation Campaign – which are:-

- (a) Councils should publish a regular council newspaper or magazine to inform residents.
- (b) Councils should provide information to residents outlining an A-Z guide to council services – the Reporter will do this at least once a year.
- (c) Councils will ensure the council brand is consistently linked to its services.

Surveys carried out in recent years show the Reporter has regularly been the single most significant source of information for residents about the council’s services and activities.

The challenge in the years ahead will be to continue producing a quality newspaper which enables residents to be kept informed over where their Council Tax is being spent and which keeps them informed and involved in council events, services and activities.

(5) Social media

This is a fast growing communications channel and harnessing its capabilities in an efficient and effective way is a challenge for the council.

If used appropriately, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, MySpace and many other platforms offer the council opportunities for sharing information, engaging with

hard-to-reach groups and consulting on some issues.

However, as part of this Communications Strategy the council will ensure:-

- Any proposals to set up sites to market and communicate the council's services or activities are still the responsibility of the council and must therefore be signed off by the Head of Communications before they are launched.
- Twitter works best when personalised. Few will engage with heavy-handed, corporate accounts overseen by cautious communications or marketing departments.
- Common sense prevails when using social media on behalf of the council. The council will avoid online arguments or confrontations; allow customers to have their say and to criticise; only correct misinformation; leave the politics to the politicians.
- Considerable care is taken to assess the type of information shared on social media.

Guidelines for using social media platforms are included in the Media Protocols which form Appendix A to this strategy.

In conjunction with these protocols, the council also has guidance in place for staff and elected members on the use of professional forums, professional and social networking and other third party websites such as blogs, microblogs and personal web space.

It must be remembered that publication on social media sites is no different to other forms of communication or marketing undertaken on the council's behalf and all our normal standards, policies and practices apply.

(6) Working with other e-communication channels SMS text messaging

The council introduced SMS text messaging several years ago and this has proved a useful addition to the channels the public use to contact the council.

Currently, texts sent to a designated text number are converted into e-mails and they arrive in the Webmaster e-mail box at the council.

Picture messaging services have also been introduced and a pilot scheme involving the council's dog wardens and the website proved successful.

Wardens take photographs of dogs they have taken possession of and these are immediately loaded on to the council's website using the camera facility on their mobile phones.

Owners are able to view rescued animals on the council website and can speak to staff in the council's contact centre about reclaiming their pet once some security issues over ownership have been dealt with.

The council's Communications Service acknowledges that the use of mobile

phone technology – both SMS text messaging and picture messaging - could be enhanced and where resources permit, work will go on with services to identify where this can bring the most significant benefits to residents.

Quick Response Codes

The council will also need to be able to respond quickly and appropriately to other emerging technologies such as QR (Quick Response). This is a matrix bar code or two dimensional code.

This is readable by only dedicated QR code readers or any mobile phones with a camera. Mobiles with camera facilities take a snapshot of the QR code and process it by a QR code reader application. The code can take the mobile phone directly to a web area.

This facility has already been used by the council in some areas of work with younger people, for instance encouraging students at Keele University to take part in elections.

Work will continue to ensure the council makes the best and most appropriate use of this new technology.



Bluetooth/Wi-Fi

The council has a Bluetooth/Wi-Fi transmitter and work will go on to ensure as many services as possible have access to this communications channel so they can deliver key messages as frequently and as widely as possible.

For instance, installing the mobile transmitter in recycling vehicles could ensure messages are sent to thousands of council service users in one day via their mobile phones.

Other areas which could undoubtedly benefit include community safety where the device can transmit to people involved in the town centre's night-time economy throughout a whole weekend without supervision.

Despite the UK population standing at around 61.5 million, there are in fact

almost 76 million mobile phones owned in the country. And in June this year, more than half of those are expected to be Smart phones.

That means an unprecedented level of access to mobile phone technology such as QR (see above), Bluetooth and Wi-Fi. Capitalising on this saturation of mobile phone availability is another key challenge facing communications at the borough council.

However, it could pay significant dividends particularly with younger people who tend to favour mobile phone communications more than any other channel.

Internal Communications

Key objectives:-

- To improve employee understanding and commitment to the council's vision and key themes.
- To improve and create effective and systematic channels of internal communication.
- To raise the level of communication skills across the authority.
- To involve employees in the improvement of their own and other council services.
- To develop more opportunities for staff feedback.
- To recognise, appreciate and embrace the contribution staff can make in shaping council policies and in delivering high quality services.
- To create an environment of trust, honesty and openness at and between all levels of the organisation.

Internal communications is the process through which the council shares information and knowledge with its employees and members in order to build the commitment necessary to achieve strategic and operational objectives and to assist in the management and implementation of change.

Good communications within the council can lead to greater commitment from employees, an improved customer experience and increased productivity, which all contributes to a positive brand image.

The council will promote excellent internal communications because:-

- (a) Staff are residents as well as employees – well-informed staff can be ambassadors and advocates for the council in the community.
- (b) People who work at the borough council should get news about things that affect their working lives and working environment from the council itself rather from a third party.
- (c) Communications is a two-way process – the council needs intelligence and

feedback from staff to improve services. It is not simply enough to deliver information - processes must be in place to receive information back.

- (d) Every member of staff employed by the borough council should know what the organisation stands for; its priorities and values.
- (e) Ensuring all elected members are kept informed and involved will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the council.

Therefore, the council will:-

- (i) Produce a regular Core Brief from Executive Management Team which will keep staff informed of key corporate messages. This brief will form one part of team meetings which all services and departments should organise on a regular basis.

A corporate agenda should be followed and this, together guidance on how to conduct briefs, is on e-Voice (the council's intranet system).

- (ii) Produce a staff magazine which focuses on staff excellence and achievement as well as key corporate messages.
- (iii) Hold Meet the Leadership/Walk the Job sessions each year to promote visible leadership; open up lines of communication at the council which are not only top down but also bottom up; identify and consider service improvements; encourage and support staff in delivering services.
- (iv) Produce news bulletins/executive bulletins on an ad-hoc basis to ensure the speedy delivery of key developments or urgent corporate messages.
- (v) Produce electronic summaries of Cabinet meetings (e-Cabinet) and also monthly round-ups of key service information (e-News). These will be circulated to staff and elected members.
- (vi) Design corporate screensavers for all PCs which are activated after a period of keyboard inactivity and are changed regularly. As well as highlighting the council's corporate priorities they can also be used to raise awareness of the corporate values.
- (vii) Produce a weekly media update for elected members which highlights coverage of the borough council locally. Councillors can follow links which enable them to look at council press releases, listen to the council's podcast and review articles online from the local media.

Intranet Strategy

In a previous inspection at the borough council, the Audit Commission recommended a central resource for planning and co-ordinating internal communications.

E-Voice – the staff intranet system – has since become that key platform.

Combining notice boards and other features, such as a revolving news/image banner, have helped to attract and build an audience so that other key corporate information can be shared effectively.

Further development work on e-Voice is vital if the council is to follow through its commitment to communicate openly and effectively with staff. As a result, the council will:-

- Ensure e-Voice remains as the default page when all PC users log on at the council. This practice will be retained as it ensures traffic is driven to an important internal communications tool.
- Further develop and enhance bespoke “knowledge hubs” – many of which are already in place on e-Voice such as Human Resources – to ensure vital information sources are available for staff.
- Develop systems which encourage staff to come forward with initiatives and ideas.
- Develop tools and mechanisms for e-Voice which are in line with best practice to ensure it continues to be a device which helps engage and involve staff; boosts knowledge transfer and efficient working; provides the tools and resources staff need to work efficiently and effectively.

The benefits of making the intranet available to staff are now well recognised:-

- Better internal communications.
- Improved processes.
- Sharing best practice.
- Improved efficiency.
- Reduction in paperwork.
- Avoiding duplication of effort.
- Information sharing/knowledge transfer.

The Communications Service will also continue to support development which ensures best use is made of the elected members’ internet area so information can be accessed and transferred in a safe and secure electronic environment.

Consultation

Key objectives:-

- To monitor the council's progress against its vision and key themes.
- To identify issues that are important to local people, partners and staff.
- To target individuals and key groups of service users to establish satisfaction levels.
- To direct changes to services and to service delivery.
- To prioritise council activity and make the best use of resources.

- To encourage participation and dialogue between the council and its stakeholders.
- To secure benchmarking information to measure performance against other local authorities.

Consultation Strategy

Introduction

Consultation with the public and stakeholders is now an integral part of how local authorities operate. It is the mechanism we use to establish what the local community is thinking and what it wishes the council to do on its behalf.

To support the delivery of this strategy, a Consultation Toolkit has been produced and has been placed on e-Voice within the “Research and Consultation” element of the Communications Service section.

This toolkit gives advice and guidance to service areas to help and support them in consultation or engagement activities they undertake.

The Government has given a very clear signal that it wishes to see local people involved in shaping the way their local council provides services to the community.

It has also signalled it wishes to see the end of the more traditional attempts at large scale consultation such as mass postal surveys. Indeed, it abolished the Place Survey and is encouraging councils to be more inventive.

Our approach

Visits to councils deemed as “beacon” authorities in consultation have indicated a heavy emphasis on face-to-face methods with events and engagement held in communities whether it is the local market, neighbourhood open day, summer fete or other attraction.

In other words, go to the community rather than expecting the community to come to us.

This emphasis on “qualitative” information on specific services and service areas can be crucial in helping to shape services and deliver the things which residents view as important to them.

The borough council commits itself to this “qualitative” approach in this strategy.

Key front-facing services will be encouraged to sign-up to this approach which will primarily involve the Communications Service with support from the services themselves to ensure robust, widespread and inclusive views of users are gathered.

The Communications Toolkit will be used as a support mechanism for services to ensure they are adhering to corporate standards and guidelines for harvesting information from service users and the wider public.

Aligned to this “face-to-face” approach will be the use of some other channels such

as the newly established E-Panel (which has replaced the People's Panel) and an annual survey which appears in the council's newspaper the Reporter.

Research Officer

All consultations carried out on behalf of the borough council must involve its Research Officer at the earliest opportunity.

This is to ensure national standards and guidelines are adhered to and current best practice is applied to ensure the maximum opportunity possible for specific stakeholders and also the wider public to be involved.

Major consultations

For any major consultation the council will follow current Government best practice which outlines seven criteria:-

Criterion One - When to consult - Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

Criterion Two - Duration of consultation exercises - Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.

Criterion Three - Clarity of scope and impact - Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

Criterion Four - Accessibility of consultation exercises - Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

Criterion Five -The burden of consultation -Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

Criterion Six - Responsiveness of consultation exercises - Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

Criterion Seven - Capacity to consult - Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

It is also recommended that to increase transparency, these criteria should be reproduced in consultation documents where possible.

Councillors

Elected members play a pivotal role in listening to the views of residents and acting on their behalf.

Therefore, it is essential that the council makes the best use of this resource and

therefore all consultations which begin during the life of this strategy should carefully consider the involvement of an appropriate scrutiny committee.

Corporate Plan and the Budget

Each year, Cabinet members will consider whether it is appropriate for a consultation process to take place in these two key areas and what format that consultation will take.

Staff

It has often been said that the council's staff are its greatest asset and it is vital their views are considered as we continue on our journey to excellence.

This recognition of our "Employee Voice" will be done through a combination of elements over a two-year cycle.

Year One

The council will take part in The Times Best Place to Work (Public Sector) survey. This will allow us to benchmark against other public sector bodies in quality research which is independent.

A "pulse survey" will be carried out in-house to gather information on team briefs, whether staff feel informed etc.

Year Two

The council will involve independent researchers to carry out focus groups with staff to delve below the surface of findings from The Times Best Place to Work (Public Sector) survey.

A "pulse survey" will be carried out in-house to gather information on team briefs, whether staff feel informed etc.

Internal communication channels will be used by Executive Management Team to communicate key messages to staff from the above.

Marketing and Sales Strategy

Key Objectives:-

- To raise awareness or build reputation.
- To change behaviour.
- To generate income.
- To better understand the needs of customers and use this understanding to design and develop services.
- Highlight what we do and where we do it.
- Celebrate success and achievement.

Why have a Marketing Strategy?

This strategy is important because:-

- (a) It will ensure people who live, work and do business in the borough can easily

and clearly identify services provided to them by the borough council using the Council Tax they pay.

- (b) It supports the priorities of the council by promoting change of behaviours and attitudes, for instance in recycling, community safety, health and well-being.
- (c) It helps services hit key targets such as income generation or participation levels.
- (d) It helps target activities to the most appropriate audiences.

Marketing our services

The council already uses a number of different methods and channels to promote services. Some of these involve marketing professionals in the Communications Service; some are carried out by staff for which marketing is one part of their job and in some specialist areas services are bought in.

Channels currently used include leaflets; posters; press releases/newspaper articles; events and exhibitions; social media; signage; civic gifts; mail shots.

However, consideration will be given to new and developing channels as they emerge.

During the life of this strategy, the borough council agrees to:-

- (i) Establish a marketing forum which will be chaired by the Head of Communications or his deputy.

The forum will be responsible for planning and reviewing all marketing and sales activities across the whole council. This forum will report to the Executive Management Team.

- (ii) Try to join up marketing activities and resources where appropriate to help build capacity, impact and income.
- (iii) Ensure all marketing is undertaken to professional standards.
- (iv) Ensure the borough council has a clear, strategic direction and focus for its marketing activities which support and promote services in their efforts to hit key performance measures in council priority areas.
- (v) Use council marketing experience and resources in a more pro-active way to work with partners in promoting Newcastle town centre and the wider borough in a way which boosts the district's visitor economy.
- (vi) Promote transparency and evaluation of all marketing expenditure.
- (vi) Make sure borough council produced information, our buildings and our services carry a consistent and recognisable corporate identity.

Corporate Identity

Key objectives:-

- * The council's brand promotes a visible link between the council and the services/activities it provides and ensures the council gains recognition of the services/activities it provides.
- * The style guide ensures consistency in use of the council's brand.

A council may be delivering excellent services but unless they are clearly branded and promoted, the authority and its elected members will not get the credit and recognition they deserve.

A strong brand for council services is essential to improve satisfaction, build relationships and trust with residents and to help people understand what their Council Tax pays for.

The council's corporate logo – produced by the Communications Service and agreed by Cabinet just over two years ago - is a strong, visual identity and the use of the castle has ensured a very visible link to Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and Newcastle-under-Lyme itself.



Rules on how this brand/logo can be used have been laid down in a corporate brand manual which will ensure branding is done in a corporate, consistent and high quality way.

Use of the logo by any external organisation, partner or interested party should be approved in the first instance by the Head of Communications as its use is covered by UK copyright law.

Copyright law originated in the United Kingdom from a concept of common law; the Statute of Anne 1709. It became statutory with the passing of the Copyright Act 1911. The current act is the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

The law gives the creators of literary, dramatic, musical, artistic works, sound recordings, broadcasts, films and typographical arrangement of published editions, rights to control the ways in which their material may be used.

The rights cover; broadcast and public performance, copying, adapting, issuing, renting and lending copies to the public.

Types of work protected include song lyrics, manuscripts, manuals, computer programs, commercial documents, leaflets, newsletters and articles, maps and logos.

Copyright is an automatic right and arises whenever an individual or company creates a work. To qualify, a work should be regarded as original, and exhibit a degree of labour, skill or judgement.

Names, titles, short phrases and colours are not generally considered unique or substantial enough to be covered, but a creation, such as a logo, that combines these elements may be.

(A Corporate Identity Style Guide is attached to this strategy as Appendix C)

The council has also endorsed plain English guidance to ensure information which is produced is delivered in a clear and concise manner.

This guidance has also been made available to staff through e-Voice. Training and refresher sessions are organised by the Communications Service in conjunction with Human Resources.

(The council's Plain English Guide is attached to this strategy as Appendix D)

Evaluation

Evaluation and the measurement of how successful initiatives have been – or otherwise – is fundamental to ensuring the council gets value-for-money and is effective and efficient in the communications tools it uses.

There are already a number of mechanisms in place which help us to evaluate what we are doing. The Communications Service will continue to use these mechanisms as part of its evaluation processes.

The Society of Information Technology Management (Socitm) website review is an annual assessment which looks at all public sector websites from the customers' point of view and rates them accordingly.

This enables the council to benchmark itself against the rest of the public sector.

An Insight Tool is used on the website to gather user comments on the usability, navigability and usefulness of the council's website.

An annual survey is published each year in the Reporter. This gathers information on a range of services including Customer Services; Recycling and Waste; Streetscene and Communications.

In the Communications element, questions are asked over whether residents feel the council keeps them informed, whether they require information in other formats or are aware of somebody who would benefit from this alternative method of communication, whether they would be interested in joining out E-Panel.

Face-to-face customer engagement takes place throughout the year to gather information on a range of services. One question which is present in all surveys measures customer satisfaction with the council as a whole.

This is a key evaluation tool because Local Government Association research has shown that the better informed residents are the more satisfied they are with their council and its services.

Staff are asked each year in an internal “Pulse Survey” a range of questions including – Does the council keep you informed? Do you have a monthly team meeting? Are you aware of the council’s priorities?

An annual survey is carried out with the council’s key media customers to ensure that the services being provided are sufficient to meet their requirements.

Ongoing monitoring also takes place which ensures media enquiries are dealt with inside a four hour period; the tone of coverage e.g. positive, negative or neutral. And work is carried out each year to assess the advertising equivalent value of media coverage of borough council related issues.

Monthly meetings with finance officers give an indication of how income levels are performing in areas where marketing and sales activity is taking place.

During the period covered by this strategy, the Communications Service will endeavour to undertake bespoke marketing and sales campaigns each year – where resources allow.

This will be new territory for the council and it is therefore imperative that appropriate evaluation measures are in place to measure effectiveness and value-for-money.

For these campaigns, evaluation will focus on a model pioneered by Westminster City Council called ROSIE:-

Research **O**bjective **S**trategy **I**mplementation **E**valuation

Legislation

The council’s communications activities must support the key priorities set out in the Corporate Plan. At the same time, the council must also fulfil its obligations, both legal and otherwise, in relation to a number of areas of legislation.

Requests for information

The Freedom of Information Act came into force on 1 January 2005 and it gives the

public the right to ask any public body for all the information they have on a wide range of subjects.

The Act covers almost all public authorities and is retrospective, which means it covers historical documentation as well as that generated after the Act came into being.

Similarly, the Data Protection Act 1998 gives people the right to access information we may hold about them. It does not matter if we are not using that information in any way other than storing it. The Act governs how we are allowed to use the personal information we hold and how we acquire it, store it, share it or dispose of it.

Freedom of Information Act requests and Data Protection Act matters have relevance to the Communications Services as both can lead to media interest and reputation issues for the borough council.

These processes are however dealt with principally by the Head of Central Services for Freedom of Information Act issues and the Head of Human Resources for Data Protection Act matters.

The council has a duty under the Civil Contingencies Act to produce information which helps to “warn and inform” the people of Staffordshire, its visitors and businesses on preparations for, and responses to, emergencies and major incidents within the county.

When considering all forms of communication with our audiences, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council should conform to the Government’s Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (made under the Local Government Act 2000).

This code covers the rules around content and style of publicity, advertising, promotion of individual councillors and restrictions during the election period.

Paragraph 20 of the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity says:-

“The main purposes of local authority publicity are to increase public awareness of the services provided by the authority and the functions it performs to allow local people to have a real and informed say about issues that affect them, to explain to electors and ratepayers the reasons for particular policies and priorities; and in general to improve local accountability.”

The Representation of the People Act 1983 prohibits expenditure on promoting or procuring the election of a candidate other than through an election agent.

It imposes on senior officers an obligation to broadly ensure that the council does not assist the election candidate with their campaign.

If senior officers cannot show that they have taken all reasonable steps to prevent the authority from providing certain forms of assistance to an election candidate, they will be charged with committing indictable criminal offences.

During the six-week period leading up to an election, care must be taken to ensure that laws surrounding local government publicity are not breached.

The Defamation Act of 1996 places a number of responsibilities on publishers of information including councils. It is important that knowledge of these responsibilities is always retained within the Communications Service.

Equalities and diversity

The council is committed to ensuring the fullest possible take-up of its services and benefits by local people. Clear, appropriate and timely communications can help to deliver this goal.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on this Communications Strategy to ensure that where this is practicable, it is taking place.

(The assessment is attached to this strategy as Appendix E)

(A corporate Risk Assessment is attached to this strategy as Appendix F)

Conclusion

Research carried out by the Local Government Association has found that the strongest driver of perceived value for money – and the primary driver of resident satisfaction with their councils – is providing effective information about council services.

Councils whose residents feel well-informed about services are the most popular.

And whilst we should obviously have a keen focus on external communications, the council will also bear in mind that internal communications and the way we give and receive information from staff is equally important for the impact it can have on morale and productivity.

This strategy is about keeping the council's stakeholders - residents, businesses, our staff, elected members and partners - informed and involved in what the council is doing for them and with them.

The challenge facing the council is how it can achieve this in an ever changing and evolving world.

Residents are becoming less reliant on more traditional communication channels and are increasingly getting their news and information from areas which have previously been uncharted territory for public sector organisations.

As well as the technological challenges, the council must also embrace the continuing change in the demographics of the borough to ensure all residents have equal access to authentic, accurate and up-to-date information.

This strategy outlines some of the effective initiatives already happening in the council's communications and sets a course for how further improvement will take place over the next few years to support the council as it strives for excellence.

Phil Jones
Head of Communications

STRONGER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES STRATEGY 2012 - 2017

Submitted by: Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships – Mark Bailey

Portfolio: Safer and Stronger Communities

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To provide the Cabinet with a draft of the Stronger and Safer Communities Strategy 2012-2017.

The Strategy has been developed in line with the other key Borough Council strategies on Economic Development and Health and Well-Being.

A version of this report was presented to the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 February 2012. Comments from the Committee are included in this report.

Cabinet is asked to consider these comments and also to approve circulation of the Strategy to partners and the community for further consultation.

Recommendations

(a) That the Cabinet notes the contents of the Strategy and notes the comments received from the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

(b) That the Cabinet makes any further amendments or suggestions to the content of the Strategy

(c) That the Cabinet requests circulation of the Strategy to partners and communities following this meeting and requests further updates on the Strategy's development at future meetings of the Cabinet.

Reasons

The Strategy provides the main framework for the work being done by the Borough Council in conjunction with its partners, communities and other key stakeholders in seeking to develop stronger and safer communities in the Borough and beyond.

The Strategy brings together previously disparate areas of work and provides a common basis for future work programmes as well as providing a set of key indicators and outcomes which those projects listed in the Strategy seeks to deliver.

It is proposed that the Strategy – as with the other key strategies mentioned above – will be subject to consultation with key sections of the Borough's population, together with partner organisations across all sectors.

1. Background

1.1 An initial brief for the Borough Council's Stronger and Safer Communities Strategy was presented to the Cleaner, Greener, Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2011.

1.2 At its meeting in November 2011, the Committee agreed to proceed with work on the Strategy and asked that an initial draft of the Strategy be presented to the Committee at its meeting on 29 February 2012. In line with this timeframe, the Strategy was presented to the Scrutiny Committee on this date. A number of comments were made by the Committee, including: -

- Greater reference is needed of the working being done in developing planning policies/urban design geared towards creating safer and healthier communities.
- A request was made to clarify issues around community engagement and, in particular, how LAPs and other bodies can raise concerns and where these concerns can issues go and how they are dealt with by public agencies and others.
- Concerns were expressed about the use of evidence and whether it could be used in a better way and whether issues can be dealt with in a more effective way by using evidence differently.
- The issue of fear of crime should be emphasised in the Strategy, together with actions designed to deal with it.
- A reference was made to dealing with violations of s.30 Orders and anti-alcohol abuse initiatives.
- A request was made to define vulnerability as a key concept and priority, by using the priority areas to set the boundaries for how the Strategy will tackle vulnerability in the future.
- The Strategy should focus on enhancing the role of Neighbourhood Watch in the Borough.

Where possible, changes to the Strategy have been made to reflect the comments made.

1.3 The Strategy is presented here in its latest draft form at Appendix A. It is planned that further work will take place with communities, partners and others to establish whether those areas included in the Strategy for delivery are achievable within the timescales (2012-2017) and whether any other aspects of the Strategy needs to be developed. Some of the work around health, for example, is generational and may require a wider focus as a result.

2. **Issues**

2.1 The Stronger and Safer Communities Strategy itself has been developed along a number of key lines of enquiry/development.

2.2 There are a number of key drivers listed in the Strategy, including: -

- National developments
- Evidence/data
- Other plans/strategies developed in the Borough
- Previous experience
- Resource issues/prioritisation

2.3 Based on these drivers and the clear focus on delivery now demanded by communities and partners, the Strategy is focused heavily on action planning, and Appendix B of the document provides the outline of these action plans.

2.5 As with the other key strategies being developed by the Borough Council, this Strategy responds to the issue often raised by the public and others that there are too many plans and too many strategies in place and not enough delivery. There are a range of existing plans in place for the Borough, including partnership plans and individual organisational plans. This Strategy seeks to codify large amounts of this work – putting the key areas in

one Strategy in order to focus attention on the key projects developed on the basis of evidence and political priorities.

- 2.6 It is clear that, with the economic downturn in recent years and the subsequent tightening of the public finances, not everything can be done in terms of addressing the issues of the Borough. As a result, a clear focus has been made in this Strategy on a clear set of objectives, allied to the key priorities identified by the Newcastle Partnership of economic growth and vulnerability. The next step will be to secure commitment from partners and others in terms of delivering the key aspects of the Strategy itself over the next 4-5 years.

3. **Options**

- 3.1 There are no options to be considered at this stage. Cabinet is asked to consider the draft version of the Strategy and to make any comments as required. Comments have been made during the scrutiny process and these are presented here, together with changes made to the Strategy where possible. Further consultation is due to take place with partners and other key stakeholders after this Cabinet meeting and a further version of the Strategy will be presented to Cabinet at a later date.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 It is proposed Cabinet consider the Strategy and make comments and changes, as set out in this report.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the Strategy becomes the overarching document for work in these key areas of activity over the five year period up to and including 2017.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 5.1 The Strategy has been developed in order to organise the work being done under the headings of 'Stronger' and 'Safer' communities. The Strategy has taken note of key drivers as set out in this report and has also taken into account the restrictions placed on organisations and individuals due to the prevailing economic situation. The Strategy forms the basis for ongoing work in these areas over the next few years and provides a structure and coherence which will assist in moving forward in the areas covered by the Strategy.

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

- 6.1 The Strategy has potential to help deliver key outcomes across all the priorities of the Borough Council and a number of the priorities set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy for the Borough.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1 None at present – there is no statutory requirement to provide this Strategy, although it remains a statutory requirement to produce a Sustainable Community Strategy.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is being developed for the Strategy.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 9.1 There are a range of resource implications in terms of delivering the Strategy and these have been referred to in this report and elsewhere.

10. **Major Risks**

- 10.1 The GRACE risk assessment for the Strategy is being developed. The key risks include not committing enough resources to these areas of work and the community and Borough continuing to deal with the ongoing issues as a result.

11. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

- 11.1 No direct implications, although these issues will be part of the projects set out in the Strategy.

12. **Key Decision Information**

- 12.1 This item is included in the forward plan.

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 13.1 Cleaner, Greener and Safer Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 9 November 2011

14. **List of Appendices**

Appendix A – Stronger and Safer Strategy 2012-2017
Appendix B - Action Plan

15. **Background Papers**

None

NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL STRONGER & SAFER COMMUNITIES STRATEGY 2012-2017

Newcastle under Lyme B.C. Stronger and Safer Communities Strategy 2012-2017**Introduction**

Developing and creating stronger and safer communities is the key to developing a Borough which is “a better place to live, work and invest” (as stated in the vision for Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council in its Corporate Plan).

This is a draft version of the Newcastle Borough Council Stronger and Safer Strategy, which aims to create a community centred around the Council’s vision – a community that: -

- Is strong, resilient and supportive and which encourages people to take responsibility for their own lives, whilst supporting them through the difficult times in their lives
- Is free from crime, disorder and danger
- Lives, works and studies in areas which are organised and planned effectively and therefore allow equal access to all services and facilities

This Strategy seeks to set out the main issues and drivers underpinning the work being done and planned by the Borough Council and its key partners in pursuit of delivering the vision and key objectives set out above.

In doing so, we aim to develop community capacity in the Borough, so they are better able to plan and develop approaches to identifying their own issues and priorities; deal with them in partnership with all public sector agencies and have the ability to react effectively to any issues they have to confront.

How this Strategy Works

The Council’s Stronger and Safer Strategy is the key document which sets out how the Borough Council and its partners will deliver key aspects of work relating to community development, community safety and community empowerment is seeking to deliver the vision of “a better place to live, work and invest”.

The Strategy, therefore, sets out those **issues** and **evidence** which are key for the Borough to deal with based on an overview of the Borough, including its key demographics and other key areas of data.

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Next, the Strategy details those **existing plans and initiatives**, which have formed the basis of the positive work done by the Council and its partners in addressing the challenges created by the major issues faced by the Borough. This information is included because it is the intention to build on this work, in areas such as locality working, for example.

Finally, the Strategy covers the **developing national agenda**, in vital areas such as community safety, localism, tackling troubled and vulnerable families and other key relevant areas such as reforms to the health service. In taking into account these national factors, together with the focus on local issues, it is envisaged that the Strategy will be effectively a synthesis of local and national priorities and factors and will be based on the strengths already found in partnership working in the Borough.

Based on each of these key drivers – key data/issues; national/local priorities; existing work in locality/partnership working, community safety and community development; and relating to other key strategies such as the Council's Corporate Plan; the Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy and Health and Well-Being/Economic Development Strategies, this Strategy outlines **the way forward** in terms of developing stronger and safer communities in the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Our focus is on **delivery**, so we will set out those actions identified to deliver our vision and key objectives and support these actions with plans which are measurable, accountable and which are open to scrutiny.

Overall, this Strategy is based on **evidence** – responding to and developing our key areas of policy and action. It takes account of the major risks facing the Borough and builds on our strengths.

It is also based on **experience**, building on what has worked well in the past as well as using good examples from elsewhere and developing our own innovative approaches.

Finally it will be based on **effectiveness** - focused on partnership working and community engagement (primarily through our Locality Action Partnerships – LAPs) and also focused on our collective priorities in partnership with other agencies and the community as a whole. Such engagement should clearly allow communities both to articulate their own vision for the future and communicate it to public agencies, and also receive effective feedback on the issues raised. Again, LAPs are seen a fundamental to this process in the Borough.

Our aim is to deliver positive outcomes for our Borough – delivering our key objectives by using evidence effectively to **enhance** the lives of the people we serve and represent.

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The Evidence Base

A key principle of this Strategy is that it is based on evidence. In order to better understand our issues, it is important we know what the key data tells us about our Borough and the communities within it. We recognise in making use of evidence, however, that it is not enough to use data and statistics as they often only tell part of a story – the need increasingly is to get behind this information and focus our information gathering and problem solving on communities, families and individuals based largely on their levels of vulnerability and the risks they are therefore exposed to.

This section of the Strategy, therefore, covers an overview of the Borough, including key demographics, and also covers more in-depth qualitative issues, before going on to link the Strategy with other areas of policy, including developing national and local (Staffordshire and Newcastle) priorities. A key example of the challenge we face in dealing proactively with our issues is that of fear of crime and levels of crime – the former remains high whilst the latter is decreasing. We as partners and individual agencies need to deal with issues like this and develop a greater understanding.

Background Analysis*Profile of the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme*

The Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme is in North Staffordshire and has, as its primary focus, the town of Newcastle-under-Lyme itself. The Borough is also made up of Kidsgrove (to the north of Newcastle-under-Lyme) and a number of villages and other settlements to the west and south of the two main towns.

The Borough is semi-urban (20% of the land and 80% of the population could be described as 'urban'), with the eastern part of the town of Newcastle bordering with Stoke on Trent as the major city in Staffordshire.

The Borough is also the location for Keele University, as well as Newcastle College of Further and Higher Education and a number of schools and other learning institutions.

Transport networks are reasonably good in the Borough, with the M6, A500 and A34 running through at least part of the Borough and train stations located nearby in Stoke on Trent and Kidsgrove.

The population of the Borough stands at around 125,000 and is projected to grow by over 7% to around 134,000 in 2033. This population is ageing - it is estimated that the number of residents over retirement age will increase by 46% over the next twenty years.

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*Major Issues/Trends***Deprivation**

Newcastle has several wards where levels of deprivation are high (within the top 20% most deprived in the country). Residents in these areas are experiencing higher levels of deprivation relating to income, employment, health and education than elsewhere in the Borough. Conversely, there are areas in the Borough where the levels of deprivation are some of the lowest in the country.

According to the IMD 2010, approximately 15,500 residents in Newcastle live in the top 20% most income deprived areas - approximately a quarter (4,200) of these residents are likely to be experiencing income deprivation.

Approximately 2,700 residents aged 0-15 live in the top 20% income deprived areas in the Country- around a half of these young people are likely to be experiencing income deprivation.

Around 1,000 older residents live in the top 20% most income deprived areas - just over a third of these people are likely to be experiencing income deprivation.

Worklessness/Economy

As at November 2011, the rate of Job Seeker's Allowance claimants in Newcastle was 2.8%. This was lower than the national rate of 3.8%, however there are variations across the wards and in smaller areas of the Borough. Cross Heath had a claimant count rate of 5.4% - and in one area in that ward the rate was as high as 10.3%. The rate of JSA claimants in Loggerheads and Whitmore was 1.6%.

Young people aged 16-24 are disproportionately suffering from unemployment across the country, and this is also true in some areas of Newcastle. The overall rate of youth unemployment in the Borough is 4.4%; this is lower than the Staffordshire rate 5.1% and the rate across the country 6.2%. However, the following five wards have significantly higher rates of youth unemployment:

Butt Lane	8.3%
Cross Heath	8.2%
Knutton & Silverdale	7.4%
Holditch	6.7%
Silverdale & Parksit	6.6%

Job Seeker's Allowance only gives us an indication of the number of people who are available for work but who cannot find a job. Worklessness due to incapacity is also an important measure and one which also gives an insight into the health of Newcastle's residents. In May 2011 the overall rate

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of people claiming benefits due to their incapacity to work because of ill-health* was 7.7%. As is the case with JSA, there are significant differences in the rate of claims across the Borough with rates ranging from 11.8% in Cross Heath, to just 0.4% in Keele. Generally between one third and a half of all claimants are receiving their benefit due to a mental health condition.

Health

People in Newcastle-under-Lyme generally consider themselves to be in good health. According to the 2001 Census, two thirds (66.1%) of people rated their health as 'good' compared to 68.8% for England as a whole.

However, there are harsh inequalities in health experience, illustrated most starkly by variations in life expectancy which is 9.6 years lower for men and 9.7 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Newcastle than in the least deprived areas (based on the Slope Index of Inequality published on 5th January 2011).

Most recent published data shows that teenage pregnancy rates in the Borough are higher than the national average with particularly high rates in Butt Lane and Cross Heath.

Alcohol-specific mortality rates in Newcastle are amongst the highest in the country for both men and women.

Finally, mental health remains a major issue in the Borough and elsewhere in Staffordshire, and is a major risk factor in relation to areas such as domestic abuse, offending and re-offending and anti-social behaviour.

Crime/Community Safety

Performance in the Borough in terms of crime is good, with many of the main crime headings seeing reductions in recent years.

Examples of these reductions include a 30% reduction in serious acquisitive crime in 2009/10 (compared to 2008/9); a 22% reduction in domestic burglaries and a reduction of 21% in reports of anti-social behaviour.

Despite these results, a wide range of challenges remain.

A key example of this is that fear of crime remains high, despite the reductions referred to above. In addition, and despite improvements, domestic violence remains a major issue in the Borough, as does anti-social behaviour.

* Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Employment Support Allowance as at May 2011. Source: NOMIS

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In responding to these issues, the Newcastle Community Safety Partnership uses the Newcastle Borough Community Safety Strategic Assessment 2011¹ to develop 'problem orientated' approach to determining the key priorities for the partnership for the coming financial year.

The current community safety priorities for the Partnership are:

- Tackling the harm caused by alcohol;
- A focus on locality working and vulnerable localities;
- Improving support for vulnerable victims;
- Improving offender management.

In addition, the focus of community safety work recognises that – whilst improvements have been felt across the board in terms of crime and disorder – hotspots remain and these hotspots have witnessed higher levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and misuse of alcohol and offending than other areas. The list includes: -

- Newcastle Town Centre
- Wolstanton
- Chesterton
- Kidsgrove

Vulnerable people and those susceptible to harm continue to be a priority in Newcastle. Deprivation remains a key factor in terms of offending and also in relation to being victims of crime. Figures from the Strategic Assessment show that 40% of all victims of domestic abuse tend to come from areas described as 'lower income'. Misuse of alcohol and drugs remains a key factor in relation to issues of 'hidden harm'. Overall, there remains a need to deal with actual crime and disorder issues, but also to help to keep the vulnerable members of society – children and adults – safe and also to work with families in tackling a range of issues faced by them.

Key Measures of Success

In addressing the key areas outlined in the previous section, we are seeking to achieve improvement in performance and delivery. To this end, we have – via a range of our already established strategies and work programmes – identified a number of key performance indicators which we would expect to see improvement in as a result of delivering the key aspects of this Strategy.

¹ <http://www.staffordshireobservatory.org.uk/IAS/strategicassessment2011>

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These include: -

- Reduction in the number of wards in the Borough in the top 20% most deprived areas in the country
- Reductions in the numbers of residents encountering deprivation, especially in relation to income
- Reductions in the numbers of residents aged 0-15 and also who over 65 and over encountering deprivation
- Reductions in the numbers of families claiming JSA and also reductions in the inequalities between different areas of the Borough
- Improvements in the levels of employment amongst younger people, aged 16-24
- Reductions in the levels of teenage pregnancy in the Borough
- Reductions in the numbers of young people not in employment, education or training
- Reductions in the number of violent crimes in the Borough
- Reductions in the levels of anti-social behaviour

Priorities

In addressing those issues presented to us by data and other sources of evidence and seeking to deliver improvements in the areas outlined above, we must accept that we cannot do everything.

In coming to this acceptance, most organisations have formulated a set of priorities for action within their own plans and strategies in recent years. In addition, central government has its own priorities. In so doing, each organisation recognises that their finite resources need to be directed into the most pressing areas, based on evidence and other key drivers, including political, financial, legislative and environmental factors.

In relation to this Strategy, there are a number of national and local (Staffordshire) priorities which have been taken into account in terms of developing the key actions. These include:-

- Developing a thriving economy (national/Staffordshire/Newcastle priority)
- Providing a safe and healthy place to live (Staffordshire priority)
- Focusing on families and their issues (National priority)
- Tackling vulnerability (Newcastle Partnership priority)
- Creating active and cohesive communities (Newcastle Borough Council priority)

These priorities form the basis for the focus of this Strategy and where resources will be directed in terms of the actions set out here.

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Based on our priorities and what we are seeing from research done both locally and at a county level, a number of areas of vulnerability can be identified and can also help us define what we mean by the term. These are: -

- Health issues – how our health can make us more vulnerable
- Age – that at certain times of our life we are more vulnerable than others
- Location – certain locations within the Borough are more vulnerable than others due to factors such as economic hardship or physical layout
- Lifestyle – the choices we make can increase our levels of vulnerability, e.g. around use of alcohol or drugs
- Economic factors – that we are more vulnerable due to economic issues such as levels of income
- Education – that a lack of education (formal and informal) can make people more vulnerable

Taken together with the information presented in this section, we can see that those communities, families and individuals who are deemed to be vulnerable in any of these areas of focus can therefore be at risk of criminal activity; decreased life expectancy; hardship; exploitation by others and being the victims of crime. The purpose of this Strategy is to seek to reduce or mitigate these levels of vulnerability so that people's lives are not harmed and also so that the decreasing resources available to the public sector can be directed at the areas of most need.

Context

This Strategy builds on previous work done by the Borough Council and its partners. This work has been in the form of previously developed plans and strategies and has also been in the form of projects and tasks completed which has both created the framework for dealing with the issues set out in the previous section and also has delivered improvements in the life of the Borough. This section sets out the main plans and strategies which this Strategy has been built on and which have also contributed to the main body of this Strategy – the key actions to take forward in the next five years.

The Local Context

This Strategy has been developed in part by referring to and building on existing and ongoing plans and strategies. It should be noted that some of these – the SCS, example – are currently under review.

Sustainable Community Strategy

The key over-arching document for the Borough has been the **Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)**. This was agreed by the then-Local Strategic Partnership in Newcastle-under-Lyme in 2008.

The SCS set out a triangulated approach to identifying priorities for the Borough, based on: -

- Community Priorities

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- Evidence Based Need
- Organisational Priorities

In focusing on these three areas, a range of consultation and research work was carried out in order to establish priorities for the Borough as a whole.

The priorities were then organised in the SCS under three headings: -

- People
- Places
- Prosperity

The final list of priorities under the three headings above included 21 priorities in all, covering a range of different areas of work and covering many different issues.

Corporate Plan 2012-13 to 2014-15

The Corporate Plan is the main planning document for Newcastle under Lyme B.C.

The Plan sets out the Council's vision – “making the Borough a better place, to live, work and invest”.

In seeking to deliver this vision, the Plan sets out four key priorities for the Council: -

- Creating a Cleaner, Safer and Sustainable Borough
- Creating a Borough of Opportunity
- Creating a Healthy and Active Community
- Transforming our Council to Achieve Excellence

The Plan is monitored by elected Members of the Borough Council to ensure that delivery against the objectives set out in it are being delivered.

Other Plans/Strategies

In addition to the major plans set out above, there are a number of other plans and strategies which are delivered by organisations both alone and in partnership. These include: -

- Newcastle Safer Communities Partnership Plan 2011-14
- Newcastle under Lyme B.C. Asset Management Strategy 2011/12-2013/4

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- Community Engagement & Involvement Strategy 2007-2011
- Third Sector Commissioning Framework
- Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy 2009-2012

This is not an exhaustive list, but does offer some idea of the work which is being done across a range of different areas of work. In addition to these plans and strategies, the Borough Council is also developing three overarching strategies for delivering improvements and support in key areas. This Stronger and Safer Strategy is one of these; the other two are the Health and Well-Being and Economic Development Strategies.

Key Tasks and Projects

These plans and strategies are only a part of addressing the key issues facing the Borough. The main focus is on delivery. A number of key areas have been delivered in recent years, including: -

- University of the First Age - offering young people the opportunity of being part of a 'university' at an early age to raise their aspirations and increase the likelihood that they will go on to further and higher education
- Staffordshire Youth Service have, supported by the Newcastle Partnership secured 'My Place' funding that will provide a state of the art Youth Service facility in Chesterton.
- The MACs Place project targeted teenagers not in education, employment or training (NEETs).
- Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service operated the Student Firefighter programme within Newcastle.
- Invested in the expansion of the provision of the Home Safety Equipment scheme in Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- The PCT offered Chlamydia screening for 15-24 year olds from pharmacies
- 11 pharmacies in Newcastle are trained to provide Tier two Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC) and one is trained to provide Tier one EHC
- NHS North Staffordshire commissioned a Cervical Screening Advance campaign which toured around target areas within Newcastle-under-Lyme to promote cervical screening amongst young women
- Community Pride events were held in a number of areas offering communities services around community safety including skips to clear waste and recycling, fly posting enforcement
- The Respect programme of work has been piloted in Knutton and Cross Heath with various work, drama and dance going into schools to provide alternative ways of educating local children around 'Respecting Others'
- Carbon Crush - a local community based initiative managed by Newcastle Countryside Project which offers energy themed workshops, energy and fuel saving ideas, support to plan community projects, and help to run the project
- Encouraged inward investment via initiatives such as the 'Make It' scheme

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As already said, this is not an exhaustive list and a number of these areas will be built upon by this Strategy and also pursued and developed by the Health and Well-Being and Economic Development Strategies referred to above.

The National Context

The Strategy should also be read in relation to the Government's developing national agenda around localism and the ongoing reforms relating to the health and community safety frameworks, as well as taking note of the economic circumstances facing the country as a whole and the focus of central government on particular issues – for example tackling troublesome families.

Legislative Framework

The major legislative developments which have influenced the policy framework underpinning this Strategy are: -

- Localism Act 2011
- Police and Social Responsibility Act 2011
- Best Value Statutory Guidance (DCLG, 2011)

These and other areas of legislation and policy at the national level provide the policy framework for this Strategy.

In the last 10-20 years, national government has viewed the development of communities and the need for partnership working to deliver safer and stronger solutions in different ways. The Governments of 1997-2010, for instance, introduced a range of different initiatives designed at ensuring that partnership working formed the basis of public sector delivery. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, for example, promoted the practice of partnership working in reducing crime and disorder and placed a statutory duty on police forces and local authorities to develop and implement a strategy to tackle problems in their areas, being required to work in partnership with a range of other local public, private, community and voluntary groups and with the community itself.

In addition, the Local Government Act 2000 set up Local Strategic Partnerships, whilst the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 placed increased emphasis on involving local communities and people in the design and delivery of local services, in particular through a 'duty to involve'.

Since the election of the national 'coalition' government in May 2010, there has been a change of emphasis in terms of the national drivers for safer and stronger work.

This change has been encapsulated in the two pieces of legislation set out above. In detail, these Acts have covered the following: -

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Localism Act 2011

Will devolve greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods and give local communities more control over housing and planning decisions.

Key areas

- Giving councils a general power of competence
- Giving residents the power to instigate local referendums on any local issue and the power to veto excessive council tax increases
- Allowing councils more discretion over business rate relief
- Providing new powers for local communities around, for example, the right to challenge local authorities over their services (Community Right to Challenge)
- Allow local authorities to discharge their duties to homeless people by using private rented accommodation
- Give local authorities the power to limit who can apply for social housing within their areas
- Amend the way in which a social tenant can make a complaint about their landlord
- Improve the ability of social tenants to move to different areas
- Amend the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which allows councils to charge developers to pay for infrastructure. Some of the revenue will be available for the local community
- Provide for neighbourhood plans, which would be approved if they receive 50% of the votes cast in a referendum
- Provide for neighbourhood development orders to allow communities to approve development without requiring normal planning consent

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

Covers five distinct policy areas: police accountability and governance; alcohol licensing; the regulation of protests around Parliament Square; misuse of drugs; and the issue of arrest warrants in respect of private prosecutions for universal jurisdiction offences.

Key areas

- Replaces police authorities with directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners, with the aim of improving police accountability
- Amends and supplements the Licensing Act 2003 with the intention of 'rebalancing' it in favour of local authorities, the police and local communities
- Enables the Home Secretary to temporarily ban drugs for up to a year and removes the statutory requirement for the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs to include members with experience in specified activities

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Policy Framework

Taken together, and including other initiatives such as the Troubled Family Initiative (developing approaches to dealing with issues created by 120,000 families across the UK); community budgets and guidance issued by government around how authorities should support and fund the voluntary sector (Best Value Guidance – September 2011), there is a clear signal from national government towards developing solutions which: -

- Are local, usually at the sub-local authority level;
- Are based on evidence and assessment of need;
- Involve engagement with local communities and consultation with key stakeholders;
- Place the community at the centre of policy development and delivery; and
- Recognise partnership working as the basis for service delivery and support for local communities

Other Key Areas

In terms of the key objectives of the Strategy, a key focus is on the development of effectively organised and planned areas, which are safer and healthier.

The planning context as set out by Government includes PPS1 (Delivering Sustainable Development), which says that development should promote communities which are inclusive, healthy, safe and crime-free, whilst respecting the diverse needs of the community and the special needs of particular sectors of the community.

In terms of these policies, therefore, PPS1 makes clear that a key objective for new developments should be that they create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion. Design and access statements for outline and detailed applications should therefore demonstrate how crime prevention measures have been considered in the design of the proposal and how the design reflects the attributes of safe, sustainable places.

A key desire of the Borough Council and partners, therefore, is that local policies and decisions contribute to crime reduction through the planning system.

Partnership Approaches

There are 2 key focus areas and mechanisms for the promotion of stronger communities in Newcastle-under-Lyme. These are partnership working and locality working.

In the case of partnership working, like all other local authority areas, Newcastle-under-Lyme established a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) following the process set out in the Local Government Act 2000 (amended in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007).

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The LSP, as originally constituted, was made up of an Executive Board, together with a Communities Forum and a Voluntary Sector Forum. Underneath this, there were five themes, represented as a series of standing groups – Children and Young People; Safer and Stronger Communities (also the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership); Economic Development & Enterprise; Healthier Communities and Older People; and Sustainable Development.

The LSP structure was reviewed in 2006, and was amended accordingly. In 2010, national government effectively abolished LSPs and – as a result – the structure in Newcastle-under-Lyme was reviewed again and simplified so as to remove the five theme groups and replace them with a much smaller set of standing groups. This structure was further reviewed in late 2011 and a proposal to develop a single Strategic Board (incorporating the former CDRP Board), together with a minimum of standing groups and a range of task and finish groups is currently being considered by partners.

Together with the partnership structure set out above, the Borough has also developed a locality working structure, based on the issues raised in the Borough Council's **Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy 2007-2011**.

The Borough Council, along with the other partners, is signed up to the **Staffordshire Compact** that sets out guidelines for the relationship between the public sector and the voluntary & community sector.

The locality based structure for the Borough was rolled out in April 2009, based on the successes of the Knutton & Cross Heath Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder.

The approach to locality working has focused on Locality Action Partnerships (LAPs). These may include: -

- Newcastle under Lyme B.C.
- Local Councillors
- Residents Associations/Community Groups/Individuals
- Community & Voluntary Organisations
- Staffordshire County Council
- Staffordshire Police
- NHS North Staffs
- Aspire housing
- Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service
- Parish/Town Councils (where applicable)
- Schools/College

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- Local businesses

This approach was designed to enable positive partnership working within localities (eleven LAPs were set up across Newcastle Borough). The LAPs were designed to provide the opportunity to identify issues based initially on primary evidence and create the environment to support communities.

Most of the intervention will be implemented at the level of need within each area - street/streets; estates; or any other locality.

As part of an ongoing desire to ensure that LAPs remain relevant and deliver against their aims, a review of locality working in the Borough took place from February 2010 onwards.

The review has included consultation and engagement with a variety of key stakeholders and has focused on a number of key areas including: -

- General functions of LAPs
- Resourcing LAPs
- Communications
- Community Pride
- Funding of LAPs
- Future Development

In a number of key documents, most notably the **Story of Our Place** – the LAPs review has looked at the fundamental structure of LAPs and has set out a range of changes in order to enhance their ability to deliver and also areas of potential future development, including the responsibilities set out in the 2011 Localism Act.

The partnerships and locality working ‘arms’ make up the framework for the Borough’s approach to developing ‘stronger’ communities. Further areas of work in this area include the Council’s innovative **Third Sector Commissioning Framework**, which was established in 2008 to provide a more robust approach to apportioning funding and other resources to third sector organisations by the Borough Council, based on the fundamental principles of performance management (investment v. output). This supplements the grants provided by the Borough Council to voluntary and community groups under a range of headings and administered by the Grants Assessment Panel of the Borough Council.

Outcome Focus

It can be seen that the existing work done by the Borough Council and its partners under the headings of ‘stronger and safer’ communities has relied heavily on the fundamental principles of partnership working and locality working.

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It can also be seen that this locality and partnership working has sought to recognise and build on examples of best practice, where available, and also to performance manage the work done in order to establish that the impact of various initiatives has been positive and is worth continuing with.

The intention is to continue to adhere to these key principles in moving forward.

Whilst building on the existing elements of its work in this way, however, the Borough Council and its partners have adopted priority based approaches to dealing with the key issues. This is recognition that no organisation or group of organisations can hope to do everything and – in an era of resource rationalisation – this especially rings true at the present time. It also recognises that very little can be done by one organisation alone without the input of others and also that the role of organisations will vary depending on the issue at hand. In addition, such priority setting can allow us to identify clearly where our main challenges lie in relation to vulnerability and what we can do to address these challenges.

Historically, this list of priorities for partnership and locality working in the Borough has been a relatively long one. As mentioned earlier, for example, the existing SCS has a list of 21 priorities underpinning it. In addition to the partnership priorities, the different organisations involved in the Newcastle Partnership (created following the demise of the LSP) each have had their own organisational priorities.

This potential for a lack of focus, lack of understanding and ‘anti-prioritisation’ through overloading priorities has been addressed in the various reviews of partnership and locality working outlined above.

The result of these reviews is that partners are now keen to have only two key priorities guiding their partnership working: -

- Economic growth; and
- Vulnerability

This much sharper focus is an explicit recognition from agencies that resources are tight and also reflects a desire to deliver positive outcomes based on the most pressing areas of need for the Borough.

Allied to a changed partnership structure, therefore, this reduction in the list of priorities is a key part of building stronger and safer communities in the short to medium terms for the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

This focus on two key priorities is also geared to identifying more easily those definitive risks in relation to not meeting priorities, identifying which partner will be responsible for managing the risks and also recognising any missed opportunities in terms of developing things further.

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The focus on prioritisation is clearly linked with delivering key outcomes for the Borough. In targeting scarce resources in particular areas, it is envisaged that this will have a positive impact on key outcomes. In terms of these outcomes, the following list provides a flavour of the areas covered by this Strategy: -

- Reduced deprivation and inequalities and increased social mobility
- Greater empowerment of communities
- More integrated and resilient communities
- Greater levels of participation in social action and decision making
- Increased social investment and giving
- Increased attractiveness of places to live, work and visit
- Increased volunteering and reciprocity
- Increased healthy life expectancy
- Reduced differences in life expectancy between communities
- Reductions in the levels of crime and the fear of crime
- Realising economic potential and better employment opportunities for young people
- Better educated and more skilled communities

This is by no means an exhaustive list, and should be read in conjunction with the key indicators provided on page nine of this Strategy, together with the key dimensions of vulnerability identified by this Strategy: -

- Health
- Age
- Location
- Lifestyle
- Economic Factors
- Education

It is envisaged that – under the vision for this Strategy and the key aims and objectives set out for this Strategy that delivery against these key outcomes will signify a measure of success for the approaches set out in this document.

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Objectives of the Strategy

The vision of this Strategy is taken from the Newcastle under Lyme B.C. Corporate Plan – “Making the Borough a better place to live, work and invest”.

This Strategy seeks to bring the vision to life and has a number of aims which it is seeking to deliver. These aim to create a Borough which: -

- Is strong, resilient and supportive and which encourages people to take responsibility for their own lives, whilst supporting them through the difficult times in their lives
- Is free from crime, disorder and danger
- Is made up of communities which live, work and study in areas organised and planned effectively and allowing equal access to all services and facilities

Whilst it is accepted that achieving all of these is not necessarily possible, even within the timeframe of this Strategy (five years between 2012 and 2017), it is important that any Strategy remains largely aspirational in nature.

Reflecting the evidence base already set out in this Strategy, therefore, and also reflecting the priorities set out previously, the Strategy has four main objectives in mind when seeking to order its actions for delivery.

These objectives are: -

- Creating a strong, resilient and supportive Borough and creating organised and planned areas - *building a strong community*
- Creating a Borough which is free from crime and disorder - *tackling crime and disorder*
- Creating a Borough which is free from danger - *developing a safe place to live*
- Encouraging responsibility, supporting people and allowing equal access to services - *protecting vulnerable people and families*

The Strategy’s main actions can be ordered under each of these headings.

Building a strong community

1. Developing communities around the localism agenda
2. Focus on dealing with troubled families and enhancing community involvement and self-reliance
3. Investigate opportunities to develop a Partnership Social Enterprise.
4. Complete review of locality working and Locality Action Partnerships
5. Further Community Pride events to deal with community issues

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6. Promoting community integration - enabling communities to live and work together effectively
7. Build on relationships with the voluntary and community sector in delivering key services to local people

Tackling Crime and Disorder

1. Improve support for potential and actual victims of anti-social behaviour and domestic violence
2. Introduce online reporting of anti-social behaviour incidents
3. Developing the existing multi-agency conference system to address the problems faced by vulnerable people
4. Tackling victimisation of vulnerable residents – working with partners and other organisations to tackle crime committed against the vulnerable including anti-social behaviour
5. Explore the potential for tracking perpetrators of domestic violence using the Integrated Offender Management Scheme
6. Continue to discuss trans-border cases with neighbouring authorities where relevant and appropriate, including anti-social behaviour and domestic violence cases.
7. Family Employment Initiative
8. Enhancing the Business Crime Initiative – working with local businesses and partners to deal with crime and to seek to prevent it
9. Tackling Hate Crime – working with partner organisations and key groups, together with communities to raise awareness of and deal with incidents of hate crime in the Borough and elsewhere

A Safe Place to Live

1. Develop our approaches to working with the new Police & Crime Commissioner in developing key areas of work in community safety in the future
2. Promoting good behaviour amongst tenants
3. Roll out prevention materials for all aspects of domestic violence and anti-social behaviour activity
4. Developing the Neighbourhood Watch scheme in the Borough
5. Raise awareness of Safeguarding Vulnerable Children and Adults across the borough.
6. Introduction of a Passport to Safety scheme for younger drinkers
7. Work with the Partnership Against Business Crime to enhance enforcement
8. Introduction of the Street Pastors scheme in the Borough
9. Encourage and enhance the provision of information to residents on how to avoid domestic fires – in conjunction with FARS and other partners
10. Develop the first aid triage process in the town centre and elsewhere for dealing with people injured or ill during nights out and at other times
11. Complete the gating off of problematic alleyways under the Green Routes scheme
12. Continue the I'll Be Des scheme designed to prevent drink driving

NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL STRONGER & SAFER COMMUNITIES STRATEGY 2012-2017*Protecting Vulnerable People and Families*

1. Rolling out the Let's Work Together project across the Borough, aimed at all organisations and individuals being able to refer cases of vulnerability
2. Develop approaches with the Families First teams at Staffordshire County Council to deal with issues of vulnerability affecting families in the Borough
3. Develop health promotion work in areas of greatest need.
4. Map vulnerability across the Borough and its neighbourhoods to target services more effectively
5. Continue to work on Financial Inclusion intervention with the joint Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme Financial Inclusion Group.
6. Introduce devices for vulnerable people to use in protecting themselves
7. Support winter car advice for young people in further and higher education
8. Develop educational approaches to dealing with areas of risk around behaviour and attitudes in young people
9. Supporting vulnerable residents in housing

Action Plans

In taking forward these areas, under each of the four main objectives for this Strategy, an action planning approach is to be utilised.

To this end, therefore, these areas can be found at Appendix b, organised into the main areas of focus for delivery.

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Objective		Key Subject Areas		Vulnerabilities	
<i>Building a strong community</i>		Localism Community Cohesion/Integration Locality Working Troubled families		Location Education	
Action	Lead Organisation	Others involved	Timeframe	Comments	
Developing communities around the localism agenda	Newcastle Borough Council	LAPs (Community Right to Challenge) Aspire (Tenancy Strategy) Parish Councils (Neighbourhood Plans)	Legislative timeframe (initially April 2012)	Developing policy approaches in key areas.	
Focus on dealing with troubled families and enhancing community involvement and self-reliance	Staffordshire County Council	Newcastle Borough Council Public Health/Combined Healthcare Staffordshire Police Staffordshire County Council ('Families First')	April 2012-April 2013 (initial milestone to establish processes and approaches)	To assess the evidence base and develop approaches to research and identification. To develop case conference approaches to family intervention, including prevention and education work as well as problem solving.	
Investigate opportunities to develop a Partnership Social Enterprise.	Newcastle Partnership	Partners to be involved where relevant	April 2014-April 2015 (establishment of social enterprise)	Meetings with Aspire and Fire and Rescue Service (who have developed a Social Enterprise/Community Interest Company). Discuss opportunities. Investigate funding available and support from partners	

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Complete review of locality working and Locality Action Partnerships	Newcastle Borough Council	Newcastle Partnership	May 2012	Constitution/Terms of Reference Agreed.
Further Community Pride events to deal with community issues	Newcastle Borough Council (although other partners could lead on some events, depending on the focus and location).	Newcastle Partnership Partners including Police, Aspire (key priority), Fire and Rescue Service and LAPs.	May 2012 (initial events to be organised)	Initial meeting with Environmental Action Group to develop plan on 22 February 2012. Review of approach to be carried out by April 2012. Events to be held throughout 2012/13. Review to focus on what Community Pride is; what the evidence is saying and how the events can be delivered effectively.
Promoting community integration - enabling communities to live and work together effectively	Newcastle Borough Council	Aspire Locality Action Partnerships (LAPs)	Ongoing –initial assessment at April 2013	Work across a range of areas, including a number of actions on this Action Plan. Initial assessment to be carried out, based on Staffordshire Observatory work. Actions to be developed.
Build on relationships with the voluntary and community sector in delivering key services to local people	Newcastle Borough Council	Voluntary and Community Sector.	Ongoing – initial assessment at October 2012	Review attendance at Voluntary Sector Forum meetings and voluntary sector LAP attendance Further LAP development and funding.

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				<p>Developing infrastructure support commissioned through the Third Sector Commissioning Framework</p> <p>Addressing issues of procurement and review of Compact working.</p>
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Objective		Key Subject Areas		Vulnerabilities	
<i>Tackling Crime and Disorder</i>		Anti-Social Behaviour Vulnerability Domestic Violence Safer Nights Business Crime Hate Crime Information Sharing		Health Age Lifestyle Education Economic Factors	
Action	Lead Organisation	Others involved	Timeframe	Comments	
Improve support for potential and actual victims of anti-social behaviour and domestic violence	Newcastle BC	Staffordshire Police Public Health Aspire Housing Staffordshire County Council	April 2012- April 2013	Continue to review and enhance the systems in place and refine where necessary Identify vulnerable people in terms of key areas such as health or lifestyle	
Introduce online reporting of anti-social behaviour incidents	Newcastle BC	Staffordshire Police	April 2012- April 2013	Work has started and will be going 'live' imminently. Review of system to be put in place (April 2013)	
Developing the existing multi-agency conference system to address the problems faced by vulnerable people	Newcastle BC	Public Health Staffordshire Police Staffordshire	April 2012- April 2013	Re-focus on vulnerable people Need to examine support	

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		<p>Probation Services</p> <p>Staffordshire County Council</p> <p>Aspire Housing</p> <p>Third Sector Providers</p>		<p>arrangements for these conferences</p> <p>May look to link in with other multi-agency approaches set out above</p>
Tackling victimisation of vulnerable residents – working with partners and other organisations to tackle crime committed against the vulnerable including anti-social behaviour	Newcastle BC	<p>Newcastle Borough Council</p> <p>Staffordshire County Council</p> <p>Public Health</p> <p>Mental Health providers (including the above)</p> <p>Third Sector providers</p>	April 2012- April 2013	<p>To build on existing initiatives around case conferences and multi-agency approaches</p> <p>To develop approaches to research and develop proactive approaches to problem solving</p>
Explore the potential for tracking perpetrators of domestic violence using the Integrated Offender Management Scheme	<p>Newcastle BC</p> <p>Staffordshire CC</p>	<p>Staffordshire Police</p> <p>Staffordshire Probation Service</p> <p>Third Sector Providers</p>	April 2012 to April 2015	<p>Explore feasibility through discussions with partners (April-Oct 2013)</p> <p>Initiate a pilot scheme (January 2013-June 2013)</p> <p>Evaluate success and explore potential roll-out</p>

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				<p>(June 2013- January 2014)</p> <p>Initiate programme across the Borough (January 2014- January 2015)</p> <p>Will link with national work ongoing under the national violence against women and girls programme including consultations on sharing details of previous offences with new partners.</p>
<p>Continue to discuss trans-border cases with neighbouring authorities where relevant and appropriate, including anti-social behaviour and domestic violence cases.</p>	<p>NULBC and Police</p>	<p>Partners relevant to the case</p>	<p>April 2012- April 2013</p>	<p>Agree parameters of joint working</p> <p>Maintain contacts through networking</p> <p>Ensure appropriate information sharing in line with protocols and good practice</p>

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<p>Family Employment Initiative</p>	<p>Newcastle BC</p>	<p>Coalfields Regeneration Trust European Regional Development Fund Staffordshire County Council Newcastle Business Community</p>	<p>April 2012- April 2017</p>	<p>Part of a wider national programme which works in some of the most disadvantaged former coalfield areas. Launched in February 2009 and has now helped more than 240 people into work and 480 into training. Seeking to continue to develop the scheme and promote it with partners in the Borough.</p>
<p>Enhancing the Business Crime Initiative – working with local businesses and partners to deal with crime and to seek to prevent it</p>	<p>Partnership Against Business Crime</p>	<p>Staffordshire Police Newcastle BC Newcastle business community</p>	<p>April 2012- April 2013</p>	<p>To initially liaise with the Business Crime Initiative and assess the existing situation in order to identify gaps in provision and ideas for dealing with these issues.</p>
<p>Tackling Hate Crime – working with partner organisations and key groups, together with communities to raise awareness of and deal with incidents of hate crime in the Borough and elsewhere</p>	<p>Challenge North Staffs</p>	<p>Staffordshire Police</p>	<p>April 2012- April 2013</p>	<p>Initial assessment/ research into the</p>

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		<p>Newcastle BC</p> <p>Staffordshire County Council</p> <p>Newcastle business community</p>		<p>issue to take place during 2012-13 including liaison with the key agencies.</p>
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Objective		Key Subject Areas		Vulnerabilities	
<i>A Safe Place to Live</i>		Prevention Safeguarding Engagement Commissioning Safety Treatment		Age Education Health Location Lifestyle Economic Factors	
Action	Lead Organisation	Others involved	Timeframe	Comments	
Develop our approaches to working with the new Police & Crime Commissioner in developing key areas of work in community safety in the future	Newcastle BC	All partners	April 2012- April 2013	Evaluate current approaches and services with a view to the future and value for money Identify and implement good practice Seek to engage and work in partnership	
Promoting good behaviour amongst tenants	Newcastle BC	Aspire Housing	April 2012 onwards	Reducing priority for re-housing and ceasing fixed term tenancies when anti-social behaviour occurs.	
Roll out prevention materials for all aspects of domestic violence and anti-social behaviour activity	Staffordshire County Council	Public Health Newcastle BC Third Sector	April 2012 onwards	Assess provision of materials currently and gaps in provision	

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		Providers		Work with Staffordshire County Council commissioners to develop further materials to aid promotion of activity
Developing the Neighbourhood Watch scheme in the Borough	Staffordshire Police	Newcastle BC Staffordshire CC Aspire Housing	April 2012 onwards	To examine the existing scheme and highlight areas for improvement. Work with residents and others to develop options for future development Examine possible funding streams Compare approaches in other parts of the country Re-organise scheme with key partners and organisations.
Raise awareness of Safeguarding Vulnerable Children and Adults across the borough.	Staffordshire County Council	Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board	April 2012 onwards	Raise awareness of referral pathways and

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		Let's Work Together Steering Group		criteria etc
Introduction of a Passport to Safety scheme for younger drinkers	Newcastle BC	Multiple Partners, including Staffordshire Police	April 2012- April 2013	Undertake development of the scheme in conjunction with partners. Assess the issues using evidence and data. Undertake a pilot approach initially.
Work with the Partnership Against Business Crime to enhance enforcement	Partnership Against Business Crime (PABC)	Newcastle BC Staffordshire Police Newcastle Business community	April 2012- April 2013	Undertake assessment of key issues. Work with developing Town Centre Partnership and PABC in identifying issues Work with partners to identify solutions and approaches
Introduction of the Street Pastors scheme in the Borough	Newcastle BC Street Pastors	Staffordshire Police Church leaders Ascension Trust	April to June 2012	Links to Safer Nights initiative above Initiation of pilot project (April

NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL STRONGER & SAFER STRATEGY 2012-2017

				2012) Ongoing evaluation of pilot Seek expansion if relevant and appropriate
Encourage and enhance the provision of information to residents on how to avoid domestic fires – in conjunction with FARS and other partners	Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service (FARS)	Newcastle BC Staffordshire County Council Staffordshire Police	April 2012 onwards	Assess provision of information and work with partners to identify gaps. Links to the Lets Work Together initiative.
Develop the first aid triage process in the town centre and elsewhere for dealing with people injured or ill during nights out and at other times	Newcastle BC St Johns Ambulance Red Cross West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS)	Public Health Staffordshire Police FARS Business community PABC	April 2012 onwards	Explore feasibility of enhancing the scheme with additional health professionals Explore potential funding streams Map key nights for 2012-13 that the service should be run, especially with a view to Football championships, Olympics and Jubilee

NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL STRONGER & SAFER STRATEGY 2012-2017

				Seek to pilot enhanced service offer
Complete the gating off of problematic alleyways under the Green Routes scheme	Newcastle BC	Staffordshire Police FARS Staffordshire County Council PABC Newcastle Civic Society Business community	March 2013	Complete this for identified Red Routes as far as possible
Continue the I'll Be Des scheme designed to prevent drink driving	Newcastle BC Staffordshire Police	Public Health FARS Staffordshire County Council	April 2012 - April 2013	Development of scheme, based on evidence of hot spots and key demographics. Undertake pilot of scheme Roll out scheme across the Borough by April 2014

NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL STRONGER & SAFER STRATEGY 2012-2017

Objective		Key Subject Areas		Vulnerabilities	
<i>Protecting Vulnerable People and Families</i>		Information sharing Families focused Education Promotion Protection		Education Age Location Health Lifestyle Economic Factors	
Action	Lead Organisation	Others involved	Timeframe	Comments	
Rolling out the Let's Work Together project across the Borough, aimed at all organisations and individuals being able to refer cases of vulnerability	Newcastle BC	Staffordshire County Council FARS Staffordshire Police NHS	April 2012 (start of scheme)	Currently being developed, based on pilot in Lichfield Will be rolled out in April 2012, with further reviews thereafter. Designed to ensure that home visitors refer individuals at risk to appropriate organisations.	
Develop approaches with the Families First teams at Staffordshire County Council to deal with issues of vulnerability affecting families in the Borough	Staffordshire County Council	Newcastle BC Staffordshire Police Staffordshire Probation Service NHS	April 2012 onwards	To work with the Families First team to identify key areas of risk and develop approaches designed to deal with these areas.	

NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL STRONGER & SAFER STRATEGY 2012-2017

<p>Develop health promotion work in areas of greatest need.</p>	<p>Newcastle Borough Council</p>	<p>Staffordshire Director of Public Health</p>	<p>April 2012- April 2013</p>	<p>Assess existing approaches and identify areas for development in the first instance</p> <p>Focused work through Newcastle Partnership Strategic Board.</p> <p>Closer working relations with Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Board and Clinical Commissioning Groups.</p> <p>Analysis of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.</p> <p>Dedicated resource from Newcastle Borough Council to the Staffordshire Public Health Team.</p> <p>Development of a Health and</p>
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NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL STRONGER & SAFER STRATEGY 2012-2017

				Wellbeing Strategy. Continued promotion of Jubilee 2.
Map vulnerability across the Borough and its neighbourhoods to target services more effectively	Staffordshire County Council	Newcastle BC Staffordshire Police NHS	December 2012 onwards	Work done by Staffordshire Observatory. Will continue to work together to develop evidence base for use in multi-agency approaches.
Continue to work on Financial Inclusion intervention with the joint Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme Financial Inclusion Group.	Newcastle Borough Council	Aspire Housing Staffordshire Credit Union Moneyline Pertemps Beat the Cold Warmzone Citizens Advice Illegal Money lending Team	April 2012- April 2013	Assessment of existing approaches and identification of opportunities for additional working and new initiatives. Work with other partners and organisations to identify solutions
Introduce devices for vulnerable people to use in protecting themselves	Staffordshire Police	Newcastle BC Staffordshire County Council FARS	April 2012- April 2013	Staffordshire Police are planning to review arrangements for these kinds of

NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL STRONGER & SAFER STRATEGY 2012-2017

				devices across county.
Support winter car advice for young people in further and higher education	FARS, through Road Safety group	Newcastle College Keele University Staffordshire County Council	Winter 2012-13	Identify potential locations and key audience Identify and secure funding for further winter advice sessions Deliver project Evaluate impact
Develop educational approaches to dealing with areas of risk around behaviour and attitudes in young people	Staffordshire County Council (schools)	Public Health Newcastle BC Newcastle College	April 2013 onwards	To identify opportunities for working with younger people and providing educational facilities. Working with schools in developing approaches to community based working to help young people.
Supporting vulnerable residents in housing	Newcastle BC	Aspire Housing	April 2012 onwards	Supporting vulnerable residents to move home when they are unable to afford their current properties.

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LOCALITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP (LAP) REVIEW UPDATE

Submitted by: Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships – Mark Bailey

Portfolio: Safer and Stronger Communities

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

This paper has been produced to provide an update on the progress of the Locality Action Partnerships (LAPs) Review and Development Plan.

The report builds on the work undertaken as part of the Borough Council's Transformation Programme, previous reports to Cabinet and the Locality Action Partnership Review and Development plan recommendations submitted to the Executive Management Team and Cabinet in October 2011.

Recommendations

- (a) That Cabinet notes the contents of the report.
- (b) That Cabinet supports the continued work and development of LAPs
- (c) That Cabinet further notes the potential issues relating to the full time LAP co-ordinator post and also issues around small projects funding related to the LAPs

Reasons

Cabinet approved the Locality Action Partnership review report – The Story of 'Our Place' on 7 September 2011 with the caveat that a development plan be put together to support the report.

The development plan was requested to enable actions, milestones, leads and timeframes to be clearly set out and to ensure that progress is made and monitored. The development plan was approved by Cabinet at their meeting held on 19 October 2011.

This report provides an update on the progress made to date.

1. **Background**

1.1 **Locality Action Partnership Review and Development Plan**

The LAP Review Development Plan was constructed around the priority review areas, as presented in the recommendation section of the full LAP Review: 'The Story of 'Our Place' report. The priority areas are: -

- **GENERAL FUNCTION** – Definition, constitution, terms of reference, roles and responsibilities, action planning, 'step-in' mechanism, branding, reward scheme and community engagement.
- **RESOURCE** – Chairs, community/residents, partners and Councillors
- **COMMUNICATION** – Partner, social media, website and newsletter.
- **COMMUNITY PRIDE** – Structured approach.
- **FUNDING** – Current, future, external and LAP Support.

- 1.2 A series of actions, milestones, lead/others involved and timeframes form key elements of the development plan. Many of the recommendations are the responsibility of Business Improvement and Partnerships but there are a number of actions that will require input from other Borough Council service areas and also from external partners.
- 1.3 There remain challenges in some of these priority areas as many of those involved in Locality Action Partnerships give their time on a voluntary basis and therefore some actions will need to be approached with caution.
- 1.4 The development plan was put together by request of Cabinet at their meeting on 7 September 2011 and incorporates many of the suggestion made throughout the review. This report was requested by Cabinet at their meeting in January 2012.

2. **Progress to Date**

2.1 **GENERAL FUNCTION**

The original deadline for the main actions within the general function section of the action plan to be achieved was December 2011. These dates, however, were amended in order to embed the Locality Action Partnership review within the wider review of Strategic Partnership Arrangements of the former LSP and now Newcastle Partnership.

This delay has enabled a constitution to be developed which clearly links LAPs with the wider strategic partnership. Documents in draft form to date include; definition of a LAP, Newcastle Partnership Constitution, Strategic Board Terms of Reference, LAP Terms of Reference and Roles and Responsibilities. Sign off for these documents is anticipated at April 2012 when the Newcastle Partnership Strategic Board holds their first meeting.

Action plans are now in place across ten of the LAPs and eight of the LAPs have developed a logo to use with promotional material – one LAP is currently working with a school to develop a brand and the other with Newcastle-under-Lyme College.

There remains some work to be carried out with two of the Parish Councils and this will need to be completed on a locally based arrangement. The Staffordshire Parish Council Association continues to discuss links between LAPs and Parish Councils, although this may change in the coming months.

In relation to community engagement, Aspire Housing have agreed to work with the Business Improvement and Partnerships Team to draft a community engagement strategy linked to the partnership and this is currently in development.

2.2 **RESOURCE**

Newcastle Borough Council is currently working with Staffordshire County Council Member Services to examine opportunities for sharing training. This piece of work has been linked to 'The Business of the Council' project internally at Newcastle Borough Council. The Borough Council's Member Services team are undertaking an exercise to determine and map training required for Borough Council elected members. An induction programme is being developed to include Partnerships and Locality Working as key topics and one session of "The Effective Ward Member" training has taken place.

The Business Improvement and Partnerships Team are working with Newcastle Community and Voluntary Support (NCVS) to map local third sector organisations and facilities and to increase the number of residents involved in LAPs. The delay in this piece of work has been

due to staff changes at NCVS. A letter is prepared and is to be sent to local education providers in the next few weeks to engage different age groups in the LAP process and the Partnerships Manager has met with Staffordshire Young People's Service Manager to investigate how the Newcastle Young Persons Association can work locally with the LAPs. A partnership group is currently looking at gaps in partner attendance at LAPs and Staffordshire LINK are attending the next LAP Chairs group to investigate and progress making links between LAPs and health-related issues.

A data profile template has been developed and has been presented and agreed by the LAP chairs at their meeting on 16 February. The profiles will now be populated with locality data for each of the areas and be presented to LAP chairs by the end of April 2012. The development plan outlined a number of areas for action within the Partnership Constitution that would enable clear rules and processes to be in place and these have now been included. There has been general recognition of the importance of the role of elected Members in driving the LAPs forward and developing them further.

2.3 COMMUNICATION

The Business Improvement and Partnerships team are currently examining the potential for community and partnership newsletters. The most recent edition of the Newcastle Partnership newsletter focused on LAPs and the progress and work developed by them. LAPs will remain a key feature of the Partnership Newsletter over the next 12 months. Two projects relating to communication were highlighted for development with Newcastle College – unfortunately the College were unable to progress this for the academic year but did suggest that this could be something for the next academic year. Keele University are also actively seeking new ways of getting involved with the local community and the Business Improvement and Partnerships team will therefore be approaching Keele to consider closer working relationships. A presentation has been delivered to the LAP chairs to promote use of the Partnership website.

2.4 COMMUNITY PRIDE

A number of events are planned to take place over the next few months, although there has been more requests from LAPs to focus on other areas of need – in particular health awareness raising events. A Financial Inclusion event linked to health, took place in the Town Centre during January 2012 and health events are planned for Knutton and Cross Heath and Silverdale during March 2012. Work has started on developing a 'how to' guide in putting on a community event which will be in draft by the end of April 2012. The Partnerships Officer (Projects) is attending the Community Safety Environmental group on 22 February 2012 to commence discussions on presenting options for a more structured approach to delivering Community Pride. This will include looking at other partners to lead on Community Pride events across the borough to enable an increased coverage of events over a 12-month period. LAPs continue to suggest events and projects that they would like to develop including Newcastle Rural LAP currently working on a project to look at skills sharing between different generations and a bid for this has recently been submitted to the Social Action Fund. Audley LAP is investigating the development of a 'be-frienders' service for the area.

2.5 FUNDING

Funding remains a key issue for the development of LAPs. There are a number of funding issues, for example, relating to the LAP co-ordinator post, which may have a significant impact on both the operation of LAPs and their continuing development. Additionally, funding for small projects for LAPs remains an issue, although if the Newcastle Partnership constitution is agreed and signed off in April 2012 this may provide alternative options for the

LAPs to apply for and hold external funds. An application to the Social Action Fund has provided the partnership with some potential options where funds can be applied for by a partner organisation, on behalf of the Partnership.

2.6 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

There remain a number of national developments that will link to the work of the LAPs, particularly the Localism Act 2011 and the Police and Social Responsibility Reform Act 2011. LAPs continue to be a fundamental structure that offers the Borough Council and the Partnership the ability to provide communities with the opportunity to get involved and be empowered, where appropriate.

3. Options Considered

3.1 Option A – to note the contents of the report.

4. Proposal

4.1 It is proposed that Cabinet notes the contents of the report and the progress made in implementing the proposals coming from the LAP review.

4.2 It is proposed that Cabinet notes, in particular, the funding issues relating to the LAPs Co-ordinator post and also relating to LAPs being able to use funds on small projects in their localities.

4.3 It is also proposed that Cabinet identify any additional areas of development that they feel may have been missed out of the report.

5. Reasons for Preferred Solution

5.1 Locality Working has operated in different guises over a number of years and LAPs have been under various review processes since 2007. The current review links into developing policy, strategy and legislation and therefore the recommendations are integral to the ongoing development of LAPs, to ensure delivery against the emerging agendas. Additionally, LAPs are part of the transformation programme and as such have already been highlighted for development.

5.2 The recommendations have been identified through detailed consultation with partners, LAP chairs, elected members and the community and attempt to meet a broad range of requirements.

6. Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities

6.1 Locality Action Partnerships were initially developed to deliver local solutions to both Corporate and Sustainable Community Strategy priorities. It is proposed that the LAPs continue to focus on local priorities and deliver against the local Sustainable Community Strategy priorities.

7. Legal and Statutory Implications

7.1 None at present although the review has established a widely acknowledged opinion that LAPs are a good structure for the emerging agenda. There may be future implications based around the proposed Localism Act 2011 and other statutory duties.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment of the review has been completed and is available. The review has not raised any specific issues relating to equality, however, the recommendations in the partnership report have areas of work that have potential relevance to equality and they will be identified and impact assessed.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 9.1 Locality Action Partnerships were allocated £5,000 each to develop local solutions to issues with the community. Funding was identified as a priority area as part of the review and therefore will need consideration, although it is recognised that this is a difficult issue at a time of uncertainty and retraction generally in public spending.
- 9.2 The review has a number of recommendations that require officer time both from the Business Improvement and Partnerships team and other departments across the borough council. Current administrative support to the LAPs is provided by a LAP Co-ordinator. This is a key role in supporting the future development of Locality Action Partnerships.

10. **Major Risks**

- 10.1 The GRACE risk assessment for Locality Action Partnerships is currently being reviewed and is being linked with the wider Newcastle Partnership risks. Two areas of potential future risk are the emerging gaps in Big Society and the delivery against the Localism Act 2011.

11. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

- 11.1 As one of the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities, where possible issues are identified by individual Locality Action Partnerships relating to sustainability and climate change and the work is subsequently linked to the Newcastle Partnership Sustainable Development group.

12. **Key Decision Information**

- 12.1 This item is included in the forward plan.

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

5 Sept 2007 – Partnership & Neighbourhood Working
20 February 2008 – Ward Councillors and community leadership
17 February 2010 – Developing Locality Working
7 September 2011 – Locality Action Partnership Review – The Story of ‘Our Place’
19 October 2011 – LAP Development Plan

14. **List of Appendices**

There are none.

15. **Background Papers**

None.

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PROGRESS REPORT REGARDING THE RYECROFT SCHEME AND APPOINTMENT OF RETAIL SPECIALIST CONSULTANTS

Submitted by: Neale Clifton, Executive Director - Regeneration & Development

Portfolio: Regeneration & Planning

Ward(s) affected: Town

Purpose of the Report

To advise Members of the progress made in relation to the Ryecroft redevelopment scheme and in particular to advise of the results of a tendering exercise for retail specialist consultants.

Recommendations

- (a) That Cabinet notes the progress made on taking forward the Ryecroft redevelopment scheme.
- (b) That Cabinet notes the Portfolio Holder's decision to award the retail consultancy contract to Cushman Wakefield as the most economically advantageous tender.

Reasons

To enable the Council to bring forward a comprehensive redevelopment of the Ryecroft area of the town centre, so assisting the Council to better shape the future development of the overall town centre (and, in particular, to promote its long term economic prospects as a viable and attractive retail centre).

1. **Background**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 29 June 2011 the Council agreed to take the necessary steps, in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council, to acquire the former Sainsbury's food store in Newcastle Town Centre. An additional resolution authorised officers to procure specialist advisors to assist the local authority partnership in finding a development partner with a view to securing the comprehensive retail-led redevelopment of the Ryecroft area.
- 1.2 In line with the said resolutions, your officers, working with Staffordshire County Council, completed the formal acquisition of the property and action was taken to enable the car park to be used for public parking (once health and safety issues had been addressed). Also steps have been taken to market the site relating to both the short term letting opportunity and the long term redevelopment ambition. More recently a competitive tendering process was undertaken, by way of a "restrictive procurement" procedure, to procure the specialist advisors to assist the Councils in achieving the latter objective.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 The tendering exercise was operated in line with the Borough Council's restricted tendering procedure, which consisted of a Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) followed by an Invitation to Tender.
- 2.2 The contract opportunity was advertised on the "My Tenders" website, on the Borough and County Councils' websites and in the Estates Gazette.

- 2.3 26 Expressions of interest were received resulting in 8 providers submitting completed PQQ these were scored by a panel of 5 officers (including two County Council colleagues) and 5 providers were shortlisted and invited to tender.
- 2.4 The 5 shortlisted providers invited to tender were evaluated on the basis of the 'most economically advantageous tender' (MEAT) based on a 60% : 40% (Quality : Price) ratio.
- 2.5 In order to expedite the next stage of work Officers proceeded to award the contract to the successful tenderer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, using the "urgent/non/controversial" provisions in the Council's scheme of delegation. This report seeks to draw this decision to Members' attention in view of the importance of the project.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 Do nothing – to do nothing (i.e. not to procure the specialist advice) would not drive forward the Councils' aspirations for the comprehensive re-development of the Ryecroft site.
- 3.2 To proceed with the procurement – this is in line with the Councils' aspirations for the comprehensive re-development of the Ryecroft site and the Borough Council's resolution to procure this advice.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 (a) That Cabinet notes the progress made on taking forward the Ryecroft redevelopment scheme.
- (b) That Cabinet notes the Portfolio Holder's decision to award the retail consultancy contract to Cushman Wakefield as the most economically advantageous tender.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 5.1 This opportunity has been offered to the market through a competitive tendering process. The selected consultancy – Cushman Wakefield has been jointly agreed with Staffordshire County Council as the most economically advantageous tender received.

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

- 6.1 This scheme is being pursued in support of the Council's regeneration objectives, 'Creating a Borough of Opportunity', specifically in order to promote investment growth and jobs in the town centre.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1 The proposal is consistent with the powers of the Local Authority.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 There would be no direct implications arising from this commission but clearly any redevelopment would be designed to meet the needs of all sections of the community by complying with the relevant legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 **Tender Results:**

Following assessment of responses to the Pre Qualification Questionnaire the following consultancies were invited to submit tenders for the service:

- (a) Provider 'A'
- (b) Provider 'B'
- (c) Provider 'C'
- (d) Provider 'D'
- (e) Cushman Wakefield

Tender values were returned as:

- (a) £54,975
- (b) £57,500
- (c) £69,000
- (d) £77,000
- (e) £90,000

Tenders were assessed on the basis of 'most economically advantageous' using cost (40% weighting) and quality (60% weighting) criteria. This weighting was utilised to reflect the greater importance of the qualitative aspect of the commission.

The assessment score for the successful tender was 84.43

The assessment scores for all the tenders were as follows:

- (a) 83.71
- (b) 80.13
- (c) 82.73
- (d) 79.72
- (e) 84.43

9.2 Both officers from Staffordshire County and your own officers are satisfied that value for money has been demonstrated through the competitive tendering of the service. In summary this means that whilst the tender price of the selected consultancy was the most expensive, the qualitative evaluation of their submission resulted in them achieving the highest score. Additionally it is noteworthy that the brief for this commission required interested parties to submit fee proposals which demonstrated their incentivisation to deliver a development partner.

9.3 The Borough Council's contribution of 25% for the cost of this service will be met from the existing capital budget allocation for the Ryecroft scheme; the County Council will meet the other 75% of the cost as required by the Joint Venture agreement between the partners.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 A full risk assessment for the Ryecroft scheme is being managed by the Project Manager, supported by the joint Staffordshire & Borough Council multi-disciplinary Ryecroft Steering Group.

11. **Key Decision Information**

- 11.1 This appointment decision will not involve significant expenditure for the Council. The decision is included in the forward plan for the period.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

Council, 23 March 2011

Council, 29 June 2011

14. **List of Appendices**

None attached

15. **Background Papers**

Strategic Investment Framework for Newcastle Town Centre

Prevailing national and local planning policies including the Joint Core Spatial Strategy

The Council's Asset Management Strategies 2012/11 and 2011/12

TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND INITIATIVES

Submitted by: Neale Clifton, Executive Director, Regeneration and Development

Portfolio: Cuts across most Cabinet Portfolios but predominantly focussed around Regeneration and Planning – Councillor Robin Studd

Ward affected: Town centre - directly with impacts upon wider areas of the Borough

Purpose of the Report

To update Members on the activities of the embryonic town centre partnership and seek approval for council involvement and / or action in respect of the following emerging initiatives:

- (a) The council becoming a director of the town centre partnership company (not-for-profit and limited by guarantee).
- (b) Submission of a bid in response to the Government's invitation to become a "Portas Pilot".
- (c) Taking part in national campaigns to support street markets and independent retailers.
- (d) Consulting users (and non-users) of Newcastle town centre as to why they do/do not visit the town and, in particular, the effect of parking charges on their decision.

Recommendations

(a) That Cabinet agree to Newcastle under Lyme B.C. becoming a director of the Newcastle town centre partnership company and authorises officers to take the necessary steps to facilitate the same; the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning would represent the Council on the company.

(b) That Cabinet agrees to officers working under the auspices of the Newcastle town centre partnership to prepare and submit a bid to become a "Portas pilot", in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning and for the Council to act as the accountable body for administering any grant.

(c) That Cabinet agrees to the Council's involvement in campaigns to support the safeguarding and growth of markets (e.g. Love your local market) and independent retailers (Independents' month in July) by running our own campaign themed around what Newcastle town centre has to offer for shoppers, visitors and those interested in starting a new business, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning.

(d) That Cabinet agrees to the preparation and execution of a town centre user survey, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning.

Reasons

Agreeing to all these actions will significantly strengthen the town centre partnership, assist the partnership in delivering actions of benefit to the town centre economy and further the aim of working towards the establishment of a Business Improvement District for Newcastle Town Centre. Applications to become a Portas pilot town have to be submitted by 30 March 2012.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The formalisation of a Newcastle Town Centre Partnership is a clear objective of the Council's Corporate Plan and Transformation Programme, the purpose of which is "to examine the case for establishing a Business Improvement District (BID) in the town centre

to provide additional resources/capacity to secure enhanced services (including the provision of marketing) and to improve the viability of Newcastle Town Centre for the benefit of both the businesses and residents.”

- 1.2 The Town Centre Partnership (TCP) pre-board was set up in 2011, in response to recommendations from the Strategic Investment Framework (SIF) for the town centre. At present the TCP comprises representatives from the Chamber of Trade & Enterprise, Partnership Against Business Crime, Newcastle under Lyme BC, the New Vic Theatre, the Roebuck Shopping Centre, Keele University, independent retailers and the commercial sector.
- 1.3 The TCP pre-board has identified a number of project areas, which it feels are significant to the future improvement of the town centre’s fortunes. These are;
 - setting up of a formal identity as a company limited by guarantee;
 - town centre events (establishing an annual programme to generate footfall);
 - the street market (re-invigorating it both in appearance and commodities);
 - parking (type, quality and cost considerations);
 - safety;
 - the development of the Ryecroft site;
 - communications (and marketing) and;
 - the involvement (and presence) of Keele University in the town.

Each area is championed by a member of the pre-board, with a link to the appropriate officer within the council.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 The TCP has reached a point where a number of actions need to take place in order for it to move forward. The first of these is incorporation, which means that the TCP can set up bank accounts, manage its own funding and begin to recruit members. However, the TCP feels that it is vital to have the full commitment of the Council and so is reluctant to proceed with incorporation unless the Council is able to become a director. Your officers consider the establishment of a formal company for the stated purposes would be consistent with the Council’s stated objective of pursuing a Business Improvement District set within the wider priority of “A Borough of opportunity”.
- 2.2 The TCP pre-board has discussed a number of initiatives that, if taken forward, could have a significant impact on the economic well-being of the town centre. For example, a sub-group set up to look at the issue of parking wants to survey users and non-users of the town centre about what influences their decision to visit the town, which will feed into the development of new projects. Any evidence gathered through such a consultation would assist the Council in reviewing matters such as the operation and management of its car parks but other lines of questioning would be included to enable consideration of wider issues.
- 2.3 Given the challenging current economic conditions and the limited availability of funding (from both the private and public sectors), a number of low-cost, innovative, ideas for increasing retail business start-ups are being explored. Also good progress has been made in establishing a programme of themed town centre events which aim to increase footfall and dwell time in the town centre in the expectation that visitors will spend more in the range of town centre businesses. The TCP has been established to strengthen the co-ordination and management of such events, involving both the private and public sector partners. It should be noted that, whilst there is a significant focus upon improving the town centre’s retail function, the TCP recognises the importance of broadening the appeal of the town centre by

seeking to enhance other social, cultural and employment opportunities in the town. At the time of writing an increasing range of interested parties from the public sector and third sector organisations have become involved in such initiatives.

- 2.4 Additionally the Government has announced a number of national initiatives which the partners are keen to review. Most notable is the Government's invitation to become a "Town Team" (a "Portas pilot"); up to £100,000 is available to support the establishment of 12 pilot schemes that will test the ideas in the "Portas Review" with the main objective being to strengthen the high street (town centre); applications have to be submitted by 30 March 2012.
- 2.5 Members can access the Portas Review online at www.communities.gov.uk/portasreview and the application form for the Portas Pilots is available at www.communities.gov.uk/publications/regeneration/portaspilotprospectus. Other initiatives include "Independents Month" (promoting local independent businesses) and a national campaign to promote Markets.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 Options considered for the Council becoming a director of the Town Centre Partnership
 - 3.1.1 No formal involvement with the company - the TCP is unlikely to go ahead as the other partners feel it is essential that the Council shows its full commitment to the partnership (not recommended).
 - 3.1.2 Become a member but not a director of the partnership – the Council will have no direct control over the decision-making processes of the partnership (not recommended).
 - 3.1.3 Become a director of the company – the Council has a seat on the board and can directly influence the decision-making processes (recommended). The related consideration would be to agree who would represent the Council; officers would recommend that it should be the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning with support provided by relevant officers.
- 3.2 Options considered for the submission of a Portas Pilot bid.
 - 3.2.1 Not submit a bid – miss out on the possibility of gaining up to £100,000 to improve the economic well-being of the town centre; indicate to potential members that the TCP is not capable of or not serious about effecting change in the town (not recommended).
 - 3.2.2 Submitting a bid – potential of becoming a Portas pilot with all the attendant benefits of galvanising the emerging partnership with some pump-prime funding (recommended). Involvement of an increasing range of partners, including the County Council (thereby demonstrating the strength of leadership in the 2-tier Local Government arrangement), should enhance the quality of any bid and enable any learning / experience to be rolled out into other parts of the Borough.
- 3.3 Options considered for taking part in national campaigns to support markets and independent retailers (Love your Local Market and Independents' Month)
 - 3.3.1 Not take part in campaigns – indicates to town centre businesses that the Council does not support activities to promote the town centre (not recommended).
 - 3.3.2 Take part in a limited way (using existing resources) – a small campaign taking advantage of two already planned events, supplemented by posters, press releases and social media

campaign could be carried out using existing resources (possible but recommended only if the third option is not agreed).

- 3.3.3 Take full advantage of the national campaign by running our own campaign themed around what Newcastle town centre has to offer for shoppers, visitors and those interested in starting a new business – this would include events, more significant promotion and business support activities specifically aimed at retailers and market traders. Funding for this campaign could be made available from the publicity budget in support of the ‘Borough of Opportunity’ priority (recommended). If any bid to become a Portas Pilot is successful it is anticipated that there would be a significant strand of activity around such campaigns.
- 3.4 Options considered regarding a survey of users (and non-users) of Newcastle town centre as to why they do/do not visit the town, including the effect of parking charges on their decision.
 - 3.4.1 Not conduct the survey – The idea for the survey has come from the TCP to help them better understand why people visit the town, including the effect that parking operation and charging has on the decision. If it is not carried out it may be difficult for the TCP to identify interventions that would improve the prosperity of the town (not recommended).
 - 3.4.2 Carry out the survey – will help to understand who uses the town centre, when they use it and why, and the impact of considerations such as parking charges on their decisions; will demonstrate that the Council as part of the TCP is committed to working with partners to find solutions to issues (recommended). For the sake of clarity it would be prudent to incorporate a range of lines of questioning relating to all aspects of the town centre offer.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 That the Cabinet agree to Newcastle under Lyme B.C. becoming a director of the Newcastle town centre partnership company and authorises officers to take the necessary steps to facilitate the same; the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning would represent the Council on the company.
- 4.2 That the Cabinet agrees to officers working under the auspices of the Newcastle town centre partnership to prepare and submit a bid to become a “Portas pilot”, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning and for the Council to act as the accountable body for administering any grant.
- 4.3 That Cabinet agrees to the Council’s involvement in campaigns to support the safeguarding and growth of markets (e.g. Love your local market) and independent retailers (Independents’ month in July) by running our own campaign themed around what Newcastle town centre has to offer for shoppers, visitors and those interested in starting a new business, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning.
- 4.4 That Cabinet agrees to the preparation and execution of a town centre user survey, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning.

5. **Purpose of Proposal**

- 5.1 Together these proposals will significantly affect the ability of the TCP to effect positive change in the town centre and demonstrate the commitment of the council to both the TCP and the future of the town centre.

6. **Outputs and Outcomes**

- 6.1 Becoming a director of the TCP – limits liability of the Council; positive impression of the Council.
- 6.2 Submitting a Portas Pilot bid – potential to gain up to £100,000 funding, plus additional benefits, for town centre activities
- 6.3 Campaign to support markets (Love your Local market) and independent retailers (Independents' month in July) – positive impression of Council, possible increase in business start-ups, more market traders, increased footfall in town, greater awareness of Newcastle as a place to start a business.
- 6.4 Survey of users (and non-users) of Newcastle town centre – valuable information about who uses the town centre, when they use it and why, which will provide an evidential base for future decisions related to town centre issues.

7. **Timetable for Actions**

14 Mar 2012	Cabinet decision regarding directorship of TCP
30 Mar 2012	Portas pilot bid submitted
30 Apr 2012	TCP company formed
Apr 2012	Begin promotion of Love Your Local Market and Independents month campaigns
Mid May 2012	Begin town centre users survey
End May 2012	Outcome of Portas Pilot bid
23 June 2012	Love Your Local Market fortnight begins
July 2012	Independents month
Mid Aug 2012	Conclusion of town centre users survey

8. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 8.1 Become a director of the company – the Council has a seat on the board and can directly influence the decision-making processes
- 8.2 Submitting a Portas Pilot bid – potential of becoming a Portas pilot with all the attendant benefits.
- 8.3 Take full advantage of the national campaign by running our own campaign themed around what Newcastle town centre has to offer for shoppers, visitors and those interested in starting a new business – this would include events, more significant promotion and business support activities specifically aimed at retailers and market traders. Funding for this campaign could be made available from the Publicity budget in support of the 'Borough of Opportunity' priority.
- 8.4 Carry out the survey – will help to understand who uses the town centre, when they use it and why, along with those who don't come into the town and should identify the impact of key factors, such as parking charges, on their decisions; will demonstrate to the TCP that the council is committed to working with the business community and other key partners to find solutions to issues.

9. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

9.1 Outcomes from these actions will significantly affect the 'Borough of Opportunity' corporate priority, and will have implications for the quality of life, regeneration, and sustainability of the town centre, the borough as a whole and ultimately North Staffordshire.

10. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

10.1 There is no statutory requirement to carry out these recommendations. That said the Council would have legal and financial responsibilities in acting as the accountable body for becoming a "Portas pilot" town.

10.2 The necessary legal provisions exist for the Council to become a Director of the company. In view of the not-for-profit, limited by guarantee, nature of the proposed company there would be limited exposure of the Council other than reputational risk if the company were to fail.

11. **Equality Impact Assessment**

11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out but the actions identified will help to make the town centre more able to meet the needs of both residents and the business community, in particular those interested in the possibility of starting their own business.

12. **Financial and Resource Implications**

12.1 **Directorship**

12.1.1 No cost to council and should limit any future liability by becoming part of a limited liability company

12.1.2 No additional HR requirements

12.2 **Portas Pilot Bid**

12.2.1 Potential to bring in up to £100,000 funding for town centre projects.

12.2.2 Officer time required to produce bid, but in-kind support from partners.

12.2.3 If successful, the Council would become the accountable body and various departments would be involved in the projects developed as a result of the funding. It is anticipated that the likely nature of projects can be assimilated into existing work programmes.

12.3 **Love your Local Market and Independents Month**

12.3.1 A low key campaign could be funded from existing budgets. A more intensive campaign could be funded through the Corporate Publicity budget.

12.3.2 Officer time will be required to develop the programme of activities and events but much of this will be of benefit to other mainstream work areas.

12.4 **Conducting survey**

12.4.1 Whilst the only additional cost implication in conducting the survey is a small amount of printing (the survey will be mainly electronic), there may be implications as a result of the findings.

13. **Major Risks**

- 13.1 Becoming a director – this limits rather than increases risk. Possible reputational risk if TCP fails but potential benefits outweighs the small risk.
- 13.2 Portas Pilot bid – raising expectations if bid unsuccessful. By including the TCP in the development of the bid, expectations can be managed. Not submitting a bid would be far more harmful to the perception of the council by partners.
- 13.3 Participating in Love your Local Markets and Independents' Month campaigns – limited impact, raising expectations. The TCP is fully supportive of the campaign and will help to manage expectation.
- 13.4 Conducting survey – raising expectations amongst residents and businesses with respect to parking charges. The survey has been designed so that, whilst it does contain specific questions about parking, these are part of a wider survey, which looks at other issues.

14. **Key Decision Information**

- 14.1 The Portas Pilot bid is a key decision.
- 14.2 This report has been included on the Forward Plan.

15. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 15.1 Previous reports relating to the Town Centre Strategic Investment Framework.
- 15.2 Previous reports relating to specific capital investments in town centre projects.

16. **List of Appendices**

There are none.

17. **Background Papers**

The Portas Review and Prospectus for Portas Pilots (see DCLG publications).
Newcastle Town Centre Strategic Investment Framework.
Emerging Economic Development Strategy.
Newcastle and Stoke on Trent Core Spatial Strategy.
Planning Policy Statement no. 4 relating to town centres.

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REGISTER OF LOCALLY IMPORTANT BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES IN NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Submitted by: Executive Director Regeneration and Development

Portfolio: Regeneration and Planning

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To consider the recommendation of the Planning Committee to adopt a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) relating to a Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Recommendation

That the Supplementary Planning Document relating to a Register of locally important buildings and structures be adopted.

Reasons

The consultation period relating to this SPD expired in September 2011, and officers reported the results to the Planning Committee on 6th December 2011. A revised version was submitted to that meeting and the committee resolved to recommend that the final version is now adopted, subject to minor drafting/textual corrections. As the SPD is not a "Development Plan Document" it falls to be adopted by the Executive (i.e. the Cabinet).

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's Planning Committee resolved to accept a Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures in October 2010. This Register was reviewed in summer last year and a revised Register approved in autumn 2011. A copy of the Register can be viewed at www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/localregister and will be available for inspection at your meeting.
- 1.2 A draft Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was agreed by Planning Committee in July 2011, for consultation purposes. The period for consultation ended on the 23rd September.
- 1.3 A final version of the SPD was submitted to Planning Committee on 6th December 2011, together with a summary of all comments made. The Committee recommended that Cabinet adopt the document as a formal Supplementary Planning Document within the Council's Local Development Framework. The content of the document agreed by the Committee is attached at Appendix A.
- 1.4 The SPD describes the formal process of how locally important heritage assets (buildings and structures which contribute significantly to the rich cultural heritage of the Borough) will be included on the Council's Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures.

- 1.5 Once adopted, the SPD will supplement the objectives and policies contained in the Joint Core Spatial Strategy and inclusion on the Register will mean that the contribution to the local area will be given additional weight in the determination of planning applications. Another key purpose of the SPD is to raise awareness of the importance of locally significant heritage assets.
- 1.6 Members will recall that this item was deferred at the last Cabinet meeting pending clarification about the existence of an initial Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures.

2. Consultation Results

- 2.1 Overall the consultation draft SPD received a relatively positive response from a wide range of practitioners, including English Heritage and Newcastle-under-Lyme Civic Society. It is considered that the experience from the first year of setting up the Register may have helped in this respect, as a number of issues had been fully considered prior to the drafting of the SPD. Furthermore the SPD follows best practice guidance from English Heritage.
- 2.2 There have been two key changes, firstly to make the purpose of the SPD clearer and secondly to amend the scoring system so that each criterion is now given an equal weighting.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 Once adopted, the SPD, together with a Consultation Statement, will be posted on the Council's website (Planning pages) and available in hard copy on request. Electronic copies of the SPD will be emailed to all those who participated in the consultation process.

4. Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The SPD will have a positive impact on the priorities of 'creating a cleaner, safer and sustainable borough' and 'creating a borough of opportunity'.

5. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 5.1 The Council has legal and statutory duties in relation to the production of the SPD to undertake public consultation as set out in its adopted Statement of Community Involvement under the Local Development Framework. The Consultation statement demonstrates that the Council undertook sufficient public consultations, using its best endeavours to consult and involve the community in the most effective way possible.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 The Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy, which this SPD supplements, has been subject to an equality impact assessment.

7. Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 The cost of preparing and adopting the Supplementary Planning Document has been met from the existing service budget.

8. **Major Risks**

8.1 The Borough Council will not be subject to major risks by adopting this SPD.

9. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

9.1 Planning Committee, July 2011

10. **List of Appendices**

10.1 The content of the SPD recommended for adoption by Planning Committee

11. **Background Papers**

Consultation draft SPD

Copies of all representations made on the draft SPD
(All filed within the Planning and Development Service)

The SPD Consultation Statement

English Heritage: Good Practice Guide for local listing: Identifying and Managing Significant Local Heritage Assets. Draft for Consultation February 2011. <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/local/local-designations/local-list/>

Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures

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RESPONSE TO PETITION 'TO PROTECT THE DOGS OF LYME VALLEY PARK FROM BEING POISONED

Submitted by: Joanne Basnett

Portfolio: Environment and Recycling

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To outline the Council's response to a petition seeking action by the Council to prevent dogs being poisoned.

Recommendation

To retain a suitable notice on the park notice board for a period of six months and that Officers review the requirement for further signs on a regular basis.

Reasons

A petition was received by Full Council on 14 December 2011. The petition includes sufficient signatures to trigger a debate at a Council meeting; however the petition organiser has agreed that it is appropriate for the issue to be considered at Cabinet. This report gives a brief explanation of the issues that have occurred and actions that have been taken by the Council and the Police. No further incidents have been reported since September 2011.

1. Background

1.1 At the meeting of the Council on 14 December 2011 a petition was presented asking the Council to take action against alleged dog poisonings that have taken place at Lyme Valley Park.

2. Issues

2.1 Between June and September 2011 three dogs died after ingesting a harmful substance. Each dog had previously been walked within the Clayton and Town ward areas, including the Lyme Valley Parkway. However, it has never been established exactly where the affected dogs ingested the substance which resulted in their deaths. Through the Council's Dog Warden service information was sought from local veterinary practices to confirm the cause of death was ingestion of a harmful substance. Due to the type of substance no treatment could be given to save pets or other animals that have ingested it. It is important to note that no further incidents have occurred since September 2011.

2.2 The Council has worked closely with Staffordshire Police to collate information on the incidents. The Police recognise that there have been three cases of fatalities to dogs in a relatively short period of time due to the ingestion of a harmful substance, suggesting that the events may have a common link/cause. However there is an absence of viable lines of investigation and evidence to take any case forward and no criminal prosecutions have taken place. The Police have kept records of the incidents and in the event of further incidents may be able to compile a case.

- 2.3 Council officers from the dog warden service have undertaken additional patrols of the area and spoken to local residents. Additionally officers from the Operations Service have been vigilant in checking the locality and ensuring that all litter is removed as soon as possible.
- 2.4 Of course increasing dog warden visits to this locality is to the detriment of other locations, and impacts adversely on a range of other duties performed by the team for the benefit of communities across the whole borough. Increased patrols on an ongoing basis are therefore not sustainable without additional resources.
- 2.5 At the time of the incidents the Council issued a series of press releases to provide information and advice to dog owners. The communications team also responded to comments posted on social media sites. Dog wardens increased the time they spent in the park, giving greater opportunity to talk on a one-to-one basis with dog walkers within the park. Park users were also encouraged to meet the wardens and discuss their concerns as part of the Midsummer Mayhem event, where they spoke with approximately 200 people.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 The Council considered the issues in conjunction with the Police and there are mixed views on how to tackle the problem.
- 3.2 The initial view was that creating publicity may encourage the offender to re-offend, particularly as some people take reward from seeing their actions cause distress to others. In addition the promotion of the offences can sometimes encourage other people to copy the actions.
- 3.3 The alternative view is that by promoting awareness of the offences that dog owners can be extra vigilant and take greater care over their dogs.

4. **Proposal and Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 4.1 Following discussion within the Council officers agreed to place signs in the locality notifying dog owners to take greater care. The posters say:

Information for Dog Owners and Walkers

It has been reported that between June and September 2011 three dogs were reported to have died as a result of ingesting a harmful substance following walking in this locality. No further reports have been received since.

Staffordshire Police are investigating the reports.

Dog Wardens regularly patrol the locality and provide advice to dog owners and walkers.

It is recommended that dogs are kept on the lead as a precaution during walks.

Dog owners should discourage their pets from eating discarded food, or drinking from discarded containers.

Please use the litter bins provided, or take your litter home.

To report any related issues call 01782 717717.

- 4.2 Officers recommend the removal of the current temporary signs from the locality if no further incidents occur within the next month; however it is proposed to retain a suitable notice on the park notice board for a period of six months. The requirement for further signs will be

reviewed on a regular basis. Additionally visits to the park by dog wardens will be reduced to normal levels, on a risk assessed basis. Finally the customer services teams will remain briefed in order that they may record associated customer contacts, and provide up to date information and advice as requested.

5. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 5.1 The provision of parks and open spaces and public realm for active use by residents including dog walkers contributes to the priority of creating a cleaner, safer and sustainable borough and the priority of creating a healthy and active community.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 As mentioned above the responsibility for taking action against criminal activity lies with Staffordshire Police. The Council promotes responsible dog ownership and promotes appropriate use of public realm and cleansing of these areas. The Council does have duties to provide services competently and:

- Under the Occupiers' Liability act 1957 to take such care as is reasonable for a reasonable owner of land to see that a visitor will be reasonably safe in using the land for the purposes they are permitted to be there; and
- Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to ensure so far as reasonably practicable the safety of the public.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 A Service Impact Assessment has been completed on Canine Control.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 The actions undertaken to date have been completed utilising existing resources.

9. **Major Risks**

- 9.1 This report is intended to explain the basic role of the Council and the Police in tackling alleged criminal activity taking place in the locality.

10. **Key Decision Information**

- 10.1 The petition is focussed on the Lyme Valley Park but potentially the issues could affect other publicly accessible areas and residents from other wards. In particular the petition highlights that several petitioners are not residents in the local wards and demonstrates the use of the Park by the wider community.

11. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

None.

14. **Background Papers**

- 14.1 Petition "To protect the dogs of Lyme Valley Park from being poisoned."

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PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH NEWCASTLE COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SUPPORT (NCVS)

Submitted by: Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships – Mark Bailey

Portfolio: Culture and Active Communities

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To provide Members with an assessment of a possible Partnership Agreement between the Borough Council and NCVS to help develop the voluntary and community sector response to the Council's Corporate Priorities, with a particular focus around delivering outcomes.

Recommendations

(a) Members consider the proposal for a Partnership Agreement between the Borough Council and the NCVS with specific reference to supporting the voluntary and community sector's contribution in delivering outcomes that support the Council's Corporate Priorities

(b) That, following this consideration, a Partnership Agreement is drafted and agreed in principle between the Borough Council and NCVS, with a view to further developing partnership working between the two organisations in a positive way prior to the re-commissioning of the 'Infrastructure Support' contract as part of the Third Sector Commissioning process and also taking into account the Staffordshire wide Public Sector Commissioning in Partnership (PSCiP) project, of which Infrastructure Support is a key element.

Reasons

NCVS is a key partner of the Borough Council in providing services to support and develop the voluntary and community sector in Newcastle.

It is proposed that a formal Partnership Agreement be drawn up to help cement this joint working and offer support to further development of voluntary and community sector work in the Borough.

The recent Partnership Agreement drawn up between the Borough Council and the New Vic Theatre could provide a template for a similar agreement with NCVS.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Borough Council recognises the positive contribution that the voluntary and community sector makes towards developing social capital (i.e. the achievement of common objectives between key agencies and communities) within the Borough and creating opportunities for engagement with local communities.
- 1.2 NCVS is the Local Infrastructure Organisation (LIO) for Newcastle-under-Lyme, and has a key role to play in partnership working between the Council and the voluntary and community sector operating in the Borough.
- 1.3 NCVS provides a range of services that supply access to help and support for all new and existing voluntary and community groups working in the Borough – please see the attached Position Statement for details.

1.4 NCVS is a partner in the Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Consortium of Infrastructure Organisations (SCIO). SCIO aims to co-ordinate the activities of the LIOs in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent to reduce duplication, and to manage activities and projects on a Staffordshire wide-basis.

1.5 As outlined in the attached Position Statement, there are also other organisations that provide services equivalent or similar to those that NCVS provide.

2. **Issues**

2.1 NCVS is currently commissioned, through the Third Sector Commissioning Framework, by the Council to provide Infrastructure Support services.

2.2 NCVS was the only organisation that submitted a tender for this contract. 2011/12 is the final year of the 3-year contract, although it has been proposed that a one-year contract be developed as part of the 2012 Third Sector Commissioning process.

2.3 Council, therefore, will shortly be seeking to commission Infrastructure Support services for 2012/13, albeit with some changes to the specifications and outcomes contained with the contract specification. It is reasonable to anticipate the NCVS will submit a tender for this contract.

2.4 This renewed contract will be for a 12 month period in order to allow for consideration of other developments (such as those set out below in relation to the Public Sector Commissioning in Partnership (PSCiP) and the ongoing Staffordshire County Council (SCC) review of this area of work).

2.5 There are two pieces of work currently being undertaken across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent that will significantly impact on the role of LIOs generally and NCVS in particular:-

- Public Sector Commissioning in Partnership (PSCiP) – looking at public sector agencies jointly commissioning services – one of the areas being developed by the PSCiP process is for a common 'Infrastructure Contract' across Staffordshire. The service outline is currently being drafted by partner organisations prior to going out to the marketplace.
- A review of feedback by Staffordshire County Council following a survey of infrastructure support in the region, the outcomes of which may impact on the overall service outline released to the marketplace for a delivery of services from 2013 onwards.

2.6 Taking into consideration these major pieces of work, and also the ongoing challenges faced by all sectors at present from an economic/delivery perspective. a Partnership Agreement with NCVS could be developed in order to take into account these developments by setting out what is the purpose of the partnership (i.e. what added value does it provide); what is expected of the main partner organisations involved; and providing a reiteration of the Borough Council's commitment to supporting the third/voluntary and community sector in delivering positive outcomes to the Borough in each of the main priority areas for the Council.

2.7 In developing such an Agreement, the Borough Council can utilise the experience gained from using a similar approach in relation to the ongoing partnership between the Borough Council and the New Vic (although there are differences between the two cases – especially around funding).

2.8 A Partnership Agreement with NCVS could provide an opportunity to promote positive working relationship between the two organisations and therefore be of mutual benefit prior to the re-commissioning of the Infrastructure Support contract under the Newcastle Third Sector Commissioning Framework and the longer term process of examining these arrangements as part of the PSCiP project across Staffordshire.

3. **Options Considered**

3.1 A Partnership Agreement with NCVS is developed outlining the manner in which the working relationship between the two organisations is managed, but with no specific link with funding.

3.2 A Partnership Agreement with NCVS is agreed, and that the Agreement is developed further to take into account issues of local commissioning and the wider PSCiP project/SCC review work.

4. **Proposal**

4.1 The principle of a Partnership Agreement between the Council and NCVS is agreed.

4.2 The Partnership Agreement between the Council and NCVS is developed as a complement to the Third Sector Commissioning Framework in Newcastle.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

5.1 A Partnership Agreement between the Council and NCVS could be a useful tool for both organisations and would be designed to strengthen partnership working between the two organisations.

5.2 The development of the Agreement is a key element in establishing good working relations between the Borough Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector and should form the basis for what is expected from the successful provider during the next round of the local Commissioning process with the Third Sector.

5.3 A Partnership Agreement between the Council and NCVS would need the agreement and approval, both to the principle and the details, of the NCVS Board.

5.4 The current round of local Infrastructure commissioning will run for 12 months, and any changes in the way in which Infrastructure Support services across Staffordshire are commissioned will take force in 2013/14. The development of a Partnership Agreement will play a key part in these commissioning processes in that it will help to establish clear expectations on both the part of the commissioning body/bodies and the supplier organisation, as well as emphasising the importance of partnership working in this area.

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

6.1 Infrastructure Support links to the following Corporate Priorities:-

CP1: Creating a cleaner, safer and sustainable Borough

Support to community and voluntary groups working on projects that aim to improve the environment will help achieve this

CP2: Creating a Borough of opportunity

Support to community and voluntary groups will provide opportunities to access funding to develop their own capacity and encourage service diversity

CP3: Creating a healthy and active community

The provision of opportunities for individuals to volunteer or engage with groups helps to develop social capital creating an environment that supports participation in community life

CP4: Transforming our Council to achieve excellence

The Council recognises that certain services are better delivered by the Third Sector and has therefore created a Commissioning Framework with, and for, the Third Sector that will ensure genuine maximisation of opportunities.

- 6.2 Third Sector Support services links in with a number of the Sustainable Community Strategy Priorities, most notably:-

PL02: To build stronger neighbourhoods enabling communities to actively participate and influence service delivery

The development of new and existing groups will increase opportunities for individuals to engage at a local level, actively participate and influence local services and help to build social capital

7. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 7.1 The Council is required to take into account all relevant matters, and not take into account irrelevant matters, and to otherwise behave reasonably. Failure to do so may lead to legal challenge
- 7.2 The Best Value Statutory Guidance issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government issued in June 2011 advised that Local Authorities do not, in response to public spending cuts, disproportionately cut funding to voluntary and community groups

8. Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessment to follow

9. Financial and Resource Implications

- 9.1 The proposal does not look at the budgets for Third Sector Commissioning generally, or for the Infrastructure Support Service. There are, therefore, no direct cost implications

10. Major Risks

Risk Assessment to follow

11. Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

None identified

12. Key Decision Information

The report is not a Key Decision as defined in the Council's Constitution

13. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

"Future Commissioning for Voluntary and Community (Third) Sector", 18 January 2012.

13.2 “Work of the New Vic Theatre”, 19 October 2011.

14. **List of Appendices**

There are none

15. **Background Papers**

NCVS Position Statement, October 2011 – updated February 2012

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TRANSPORTATION OF MATERIAL AND PROCESSING OF STREET SWEEPINGS

Submitted by: T Nicoll

Portfolio: Environment and Recycling

Ward(s) affected: None

Purpose of the Report

To inform Cabinet of the out come of the tendering Process for the contract for the Transportation of Material and Processing of Street Sweepings for Newcastle-under-Lyme BC - Tender Reference: NULBC/MTS-1.

To seek a decision from Cabinet regarding the award of the Contract.

Recommendation

That the contract for the Transportation of Material and Processing of Street Sweepings for Newcastle-under-Lyme BC - Tender Reference: NULBC/PFW-1 be awarded to H. Browns and Sons of Stoke on Trent as set out in the report.

Reasons

- (i) All the bids have been evaluated both on cost and quality. The financial evaluation has been undertaken for the first full year of service (2012-13), based upon the rates provided within the tender documents and the estimated tonnage figures. This evaluation indicates that H. Browns and Sons have provided the most economically advantageous tender and complies with the Councils Financial appraisal.
- (ii) The cost of this tender has been considered as one of the components of the integrated waste service and the estimated costs compared to the budget for 2012-13; this comparison indicates that the contract cost is within the available revenue budget for the integrated collection service.

1. Background

- 1.1 The councils current recycling and waste strategy has been prepared following the principles agreed by Cabinet in October 2007 and consultation with stakeholders. It sets out the direction for the Waste Management services up to 2016. The strategy was prepared taking account of national guidance (Waste Strategy for England 2007) and the 'principles and policies' set out in the Integrated Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (2020 Vision).
- 1.2 The Council operates a licensed waste transfer station at the Knutton Lane Depot to handle Streetscene and fly tipped waste. The site is not open to the general public. During 2011 approximately 560 container movements were undertaken from the depot to various locations.
- 1.3 During 2011 the Council undertook a trial to process inert street sweeping collected via the Council Streetscene operation. It is estimated that approximately 2,400 tonnage of sweeping are collected per year, historically this material was sent for landfill. The aim of this contract is for this material to be treated for reuse, so that is counted towards the Councils recycle rate, the cost of this treatment will be funded from the receipt of Recycling Credits from Staffordshire County Council.

- 1.4 The value of the contract was likely to exceed the threshold for service contracts set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 and has therefore been advertised through the European Journal (OJEU Notice reference TED62-2012-000013, dated 3 January 2012). The tender was undertaken using an open procedure which does not restrict the number of tender responses.
- 1.5 The contract shall be effective from no later than 2 April 2012 to 5 July 2014 with a possible extension of two, one year periods, upon satisfactory service delivery as deemed by the Council
- 1.6 Tender documents were available on 3 January 2012 for completion and return in accordance with the timescales set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2006. All tenders had to be received by 13.00hrs on 17 February 2012.
- 1.7 The tenders have been evaluated to determine the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT) based upon the following criteria and weightings, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1:

Criteria		Weighting Available (%)
Section 1	Company Information	Pass/Fail
Section 2	Financial Information	Pass/Fail
Section 3	Contractual Matters	Pass/Fail
Section 4	Health & Safety	10
Section 5	Quality Assurance	10
Section 6	Insurance	Pass/Fail
Section 7	Business Activities/Method Statements	30
Section 8	Business Continuity	10
Section 9	Equal Opportunities	Pass/Fail
Section 10	Crime & Disorder Act	Pass/Fail
Section 11	References/Experience	Pass/Fail
Section 15	Price	40

2. **Proposal**

- 2.1 Tenders have been received from 3 bidders
- 2.2 The tenders received have been evaluated on the financial costs of the treatment of the street sweepings and transportation of material, a summary of the unit cost for each tenderer is detailed in table 2 below.

Table 2:

Company	Treatment of Sweepings	Provision of Containers £ per day			Provision of transportation from Knutton Lane Depot £ per load			
		£ per Tonne	35yrd	18/25yd	8/14yd	Wednesbury	Newstead	Action
A	25.00	0.20	0.20	0.20	180.00	76.00	76.00	76.00
B	37.00	0.80	0.80	0.80	220.00	75.00	75.00	180.00
C	50.00	1.00	1.00	0.75	180.00	75.00	75.00	75.00

2.3 The tenders received have been evaluated on the quality of the treatment of the street sweepings and transportation of material. A summary of the quality scores for each tenderer is detailed in the table 3 below:

Table 3:

Name	Total Quality Score (max 60%)
A	32.2%
B	35.9%
C	35.4%

2.4 All of the bids have been evaluated and weighted in accordance with the values in table 1 above. Table 4 provides the outcome of the combined quality and financial evaluation:

Table 4:

Name	Total Quality Score (60%)	Raw Cost (£)	Adjusted Cost	Weighted Cost (40%)	Total Score	Rank
			(100 *Lowest raw cost/raw cost)	(Adjusted Cost * 0.4)	(Quality + Cost)	
A	32.2%	£103,926	100.00	40.0%	72.2%	1
B	35.9%	£154,512	67.26	26.9%	62.8%	2
C	35.4%	£165,029	62.97	25.2%	60.6%	3

2.5 The highest scoring tender based on the MEAT criteria was submitted by tenderer A H. Browns and Sons.

3. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

3.1 There are a number of reasons why H. Browns and Sons is the preferred bidder, these include:-

- They have provided a high quality bid.
- They are experienced in providing this service to Local Authorities.
- They are the only tenderer able to provide a processing site within the North Staffordshire.
- They have sufficient alternative treatment sites within their control to ensure business continuity.
- The site location will facilitate the generation of the least carbon miles.
- Provide a solution within budgetary constraints.

4. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

4.1 The proposal relates to the effective delivery of the Integrated Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Newcastle Borough Council, which would contribute to the following:

- Creating a Cleaner, Greener Safer Borough
 - Action to ensure waste is minimised, recycled and composted.
- Transforming our Council to Achieve Excellence
 - Action - manages its finances so that it has enough resources to deliver its priorities
 - Action - ensures that resources follow priorities

5. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

5.1 The procurement process is being conducted to meet the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006.

5.2 The draft contract document pertaining to this service has been prepared by Legal Services.

6. **Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 The companies expressing interest in the contract have been requested for information regarding their Equalities Policies, which have formed part of the evaluation.

7. **Financial and Resource Implications**

7.1 The process is a competitive one, designed to deliver value for money. The estimated cost of the tender submitted by H. Browns and Sons for the first full year of service (2012-13) is £103,926.00. This falls within the revenue budget for the delivery of the integrated waste management service.

7.2 Financial appraisals of all the tenderers are currently being undertaken by Internal audit.

8. **Major Risks**

8.1 The risks associated with this particular service are considered to have been identified and recorded on Grace risk management system, a copy is available on request.

8.2 The major risks associated with the decision regarding award of the Contract are considered to be:

- Failure to reach a decision on award may lead to the Contractor having insufficient time to mobilise the necessary resources to meet the contract start date, creating a loss of the recycling service for a period of time
- Contractor fails to provide required quality of service
- Contractor fails to deliver the commissioned services

9. **Key Decision Information**

- 9.1 Cabinet has approved the Integrated Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Newcastle Borough Council. This tender is one of the services contained in the strategy.
- 9.2 An OJEU advert was placed seeking interest from companies with the necessary capability, capacity and financial capability. An open procurement process was undertaken.
- 9.3 Evaluation of the tenders has been completed and H. Browns and Sons have provided the most economically advantageous tender based upon price and evaluation of the Value Assessment Documents.
- 9.4 The estimated cost of the tender submitted by H. Browns and Sons for the first full year of service (2012-13) is £103,926.00. This falls within the revenue budget for the delivery of the proposed integrated waste management service.

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JOINT HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW

Submitted by: Sarah Moore

Portfolio: Regeneration and Development

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To highlight that the current Joint Housing Allocations Policy with Aspire Housing has been reviewed and to enable Cabinet Members to consider the proposed final draft policy changes for adoption.

Recommendation

To adopt the revised Joint Housing Allocations Policy.

Reasons

In line with the existing policy, which was adopted in 2010 there was a commitment made to review the Joint Housing Allocations Policy after it had been in operation for 12 months. This Review was to be undertaken by Council Officers and Aspire Housing Officers and it is best practice for the Council to ensure that consultation is undertaken on the document before changes to the Policy are decided and prior to formal adoption.

1. Background

1.1 The existing Joint Housing Allocations Policy was developed in partnership with Aspire Housing as a mechanism to determine priorities for housing need in the Borough and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating accommodation to local residents approaching the Council through the Newcastle Housing Advice (NHA) service for assistance. The current Policy was approved by Cabinet in 2010 and a commitment was made to review the document after 12 months in operation.

2. Issues

2.1 It is recognised as best practice, that Policies and Strategies are reviewed on a regular basis so that any relevant changes in circumstances, guidance and legislation can be incorporated.

2.2 A Review Group consisting of Council Officers and Aspire Housing Officers was established and convened in Spring 2011 to co-ordinate the Review of the current Joint Housing Allocations Policy and in particular to:

- determine the success of the Policy to date
- identify areas for improvement
- identify blockages for service users
- consider changes in case law/legislation
- consider recommendations from government policy and guidance

2.3 Issues that were highlighted for consideration included:

- effects of the Sub Regional scheme being ended
- Eligibility – new powers from Localism Bill
- Local Connection
- Low Demand and Hard to Let properties
- Under occupancy and the impact of the Welfare Reform Bill
- Eligibility and Housing need
- Bandings – whether working efficiently
- Exclusions and Reduced Preference
- Unlimited Bids, Time Limits and Refusals
- Medical Assessments
- Equity
- Move on
- Adapted Properties

2.4 Following consultation with Stakeholders and Customers, a number of amendments have been proposed by the Review Group and can be summarised as follows:

- (a) Accept applications only from applicants with a local connection to the Borough, with the exception of applicants aged 55 or over who are eligible for bungalows and/or sheltered accommodation. Such applicants would be placed in Band 7 regardless of circumstances and be considered after all applicants who have a local connection.
- (b) Remove the education link for local connection from the Policy to align with the local connection for homelessness criteria;
- (c) Continue to permit applicants with no housing need to bid for properties advertised under the NHA Options Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme;
- (d) Permit applicants over the age of 55 years without a local connection to make a Housing Register applications and bid for properties advertised under the NHA Options CBL scheme.
- (e) Align the bedroom criteria and property eligibility for the scheme to the principles of the Welfare Reform Act (2012) to prevent future financial hardship for households *NB. This may be subject to change depending on the outcome of the consultation for the Welfare Reform Act proposals;*
- (f) Incentivise under occupancy of Aspire owned family sized accommodation to encourage down sizing and better use of property stock;
- (g) Revision of position relating to allocation of flats – align to Welfare Reform principles i.e. restrictions to the size of properties applicants are eligible for because of changes to benefits and effects of affordability to applicants *NB. this may be subject to change depending on the outcome of the consultation for the Welfare Reform Act proposals;*
- (h) Bandings amendments including:
 - Band 1 remove clauses relating to overcrowding, tenants requiring urgent repairs;
 - Band 2 remove cumulative need and move up Preference System Cases from the current Band 3 position and introduce applicants requiring a disabled facilities grant;
 - Band 3 – move applicants threatened with homelessness from Band 4, incentivise tenants who are under occupying by 2 or more bedrooms and introduce award for tenants whose fixed term tenancy is due to end in readiness for the proposed changes from the Localism Act;
 - Band 4 clarify position regarding applicants requiring additional bedrooms, incentivise tenants under occupying by 1 bedroom and remove clause relating to care leavers;
 - Band 5 amend clause relating to families in flats with young children from the current 12 years to 5 years in 2nd floor flats and above and to remove the

- clause relating to move on cases who are not considered ready to move on to general needs accommodation by their support providers;
- Band 6 introduce lower threshold of proof for reduced preference in line with guidance of Localism Act 2011 and reduced the equity threshold from £125,000 to £60,000
- Band 7 continue to place applicants with a local connection but no housing need and prioritise over applicants without a local connection who are over 55 years;
- (i) To permit NHA to make bids on the applicants behalf and make 1 offer for applicants in Band 1 to relieve urgent or acute housing need and to remove the reasonable time period and if the bids result in an offer and the offer is refused for NHA to reassess the applicant as threatened with homelessness in Band 3;
 - (j) For Band 2 applicants to be given 1 month to place bids and if there is no bidding in this time for NHA to place assisted bids on the applicants' behalf, in consultation with them and if the offer is refused for NHA to reassess the applicant to 2 bands lower, therefore Band 4
 - (k) For Band 3 applicants to be given 3 months to place bids and if there are no bids in this time for NHA to place assisted bids on the applicants' behalf, in consultation with them and if the offer is refused for NHA to reassess the applicant to 2 bands lower, therefore Band 5.
 - (l) To clarify the wording in the Banding clauses for awards for medical assessments as per recommendations is Allocations Review Report;
 - (m) To exclude means tested benefits (with the exception of working families tax credits and child tax credits) for the purposes of determining income thresholds for equity and reduced preference under the terms of the Policy;
 - (n) To retain the local connection requirement for households moving on from supported accommodation with the exception of using discretion for domestic violence cases, where it can be evidenced that it would be unsafe to return to the district of their previous origin;
 - (o) To ensure that adapted properties are advertised and allocated appropriately to ensure best use of property stock.

2.5 The above amendments have been incorporated into a revised version of the Policy, following consultation with partners, stakeholders and Elected Members and approval is now sought to adopt the Policy.

3. **Options Considered**

3.1 Officers considered the following options after the review of the Policy:

- (a) to keep the Joint Housing Allocations Policy as it is;
- (b) to consult on the changes proposed by the Review group and to seek to enhance the existing Policy;
- (c) to completely rewrite the Policy and make major changes.

4. **Proposal and Reasons for this Preferred Solution**

4.1 It is proposed that the content of the Joint Housing Allocations Policy Review Report is considered and that the amendments suggested by the Review group following consultation are accepted for adoption, as these changes have been deemed to be necessary to ensure that the Policy is able to continue to prioritise housing needs of local residents effectively in response to changes in government policy and legislation and challenges that faced in light of the current economic climate.

- 4.2 Through the Newcastle Housing Advice (NHA) service the Council has been operating the Joint Housing Allocations Policy with Aspire Housing since the launch of the NHA Options Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme in June 2010. It was therefore appropriate that the Council worked with Aspire Housing Officers to complete consultation on the Review of the current Policy and assess how the Policy operated over the last 12 months; to effectively determine the success of the Policy to date; identify areas for improvement; identify and address blockages for service users; consider changes in case law/legislation; consider recommendations from government policy and guidance. This enabled Officers to define Review recommendations to enhance and update the current Policy as appropriate.
- 4.3 The Policy Review and recommendations has been considered by the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny, their comments have been considered and minor amendments made as part of the consultation and overall they are supportive of the content and recommendations made. Amendments were requested by Scrutiny to provide clarity to the Policy position e.g. in relation to Local Connection and Domestic Violence (DV), where DV cases would override the Local Connection requirement where it can be evidenced that it would be unsafe for an applicant to return to the district of their previous origin. These amendments have been incorporated into the revised final draft of the Policy.
- 4.4 Other feedback from the consultation has been incorporated into the final draft Policy from partners and local stakeholders, much of which has sought to clarify the Policy position to the reader e.g. bullet points and references to previous sections in the document.

5. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 5.1 The Joint Housing Allocations Policy enables the Council to prioritise meeting the housing needs of local residents; this contributes to the delivery of the corporate priority of creating safe and sustainable communities.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 Housing Authorities are required by s.167 of the Housing Act (1996), as amended by the Homelessness Act (2002), to have an allocation scheme for determining priorities and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation. In framing the allocation scheme the Council need to ensure that reasonable preference is given to certain categories of people as set out in s.167(2) of the 1996 Act. Applicants who are not entitled to a reasonable preference cannot compete on equal terms with those who are.
- 6.2 The current Policy complies with the Housing Act (1996) (Part VI), as amended by the Homelessness Act (2002) and the Localism Act (2011) and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 The Council has an EIA for the current Joint Housing Allocations Policy and this will be updated in line with the adopted revised policy.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 There are no direct implications of the amendment and approval process for the Joint Housing Allocations Policy as it is planned to be met within the current budgets using existing resources.

8.2 Future cost implications of altering the ICT systems to deliver the amended Allocations Policy will be considered in line with the recommendations on the changes to the Policy at a future Cabinet. It is important to note however, that amendments to the Policy will have to be constrained to ensure that the ICT amendments can be delivered within the remaining Choice Based Lettings budget. Following payment of the Locata ICT licence costs there will remain approximately £17,000 to invest in ICT developments.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 The proposed changes are made as a result of the initial recommendations for the Welfare Reform Act, which is currently under consultation and due to come into force in 2013 and also the Localism Act (2011), which may be subject to change depending on the outcome of the consultations. The Policy Review was prepared using the most up to date recommendations of the Welfare Reform Act and guidance but at the time of writing some opposition has been raised to the stance regarding benefit payments for households under occupying their homes which may conclude in the Bill repealing some of sections and would in turn enable the Council to adapt and respond accordingly if necessary.

10. **Key Decision Information**

10.1 The adoption and the implementation of this Policy will affect all wards within the Borough.

11. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

11.1 Choice Based Lettings Update – Feb 2010

11.2 Joint Housing Allocations Policy Review – July 2011

12. **List of Appendices**

None.

14. **Background Papers**

Draft Joint Housing Allocations Policy Review Report 2011 – available on request from the Housing Strategy Team.

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STRATEGIC TENANCY STRATEGY

Submitted by: Caroline Abel

Portfolio: Regeneration and Planning

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To advise Members of the statutory duty Local Authorities now have to prepare and publish a Strategic Tenancy Strategy within 12 months of the publication of the Localism Act 2011. This duty applies to all Local Authorities whether or not they still retain housing stock and is seen as part of the authorities' strategic housing role, not their landlord role.

For Members to consider the final draft of Newcastle under Lyme's Strategic Tenancy Strategy, following its final round of consultation.

Recommendation

To adopt the Strategic Tenancy Strategy.

Reasons

Endorsing this Strategy will ensure that the Council is up to date with its strategic aims around the delivery of social housing in Newcastle under Lyme, it gives rise to fundamental social housing reform opportunities and will cover the whole of the Borough.

1. Background

- 1.1 On 15 November 2011, The Localism Bill received Royal Assent and become the Localism Act 2011.
- 1.2 The Act places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to prepare and publish a Strategic Tenancy Strategy. The Act incorporates many of the proposals contained in the DCLG's consultation paper Local Decisions: A fairer future for Social Housing. It devolves greater powers to Councils and neighbourhoods in order to give local communities more control over housing and planning decisions.
- 1.3 During the parliamentary process, whilst the Bill was progressing through Parliament, it was very clear that the proposed duty for Local Authorities to produce a Strategic Tenancy Strategy would remain and become part of the final Act. With this in mind the Housing Strategy team for the Council was keen to begin the implementation of this strategy and gained Cabinet approval on 20 July 2011 to commence work on the Strategy.
- 1.4 The Housing Strategy team began to work with partners on the proposals within the Act; this partnership process enabled the team to develop a Strategic Tenancy Strategy Statement. This document was a mix of background information, proposals, assumptions and questions. The statement was circulated amongst all partners and stakeholders to promote further discussion and feedback. The responses from partners on the issues raised within the Statement have been considered and used in the development of Newcastle's draft Strategic Tenancy Strategy.

1.5 Following Member approval for the Housing Strategy Team to commence their final consultation on the draft Strategic Tenancy Strategy, where appropriate stakeholder feedback has been incorporated into the final version of the strategy and it is now ready for adoption. The Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee have also reviewed the draft Strategic Tenancy Strategy and their comments have been incorporated into document.

2. **Issues**

2.1 Newcastle's Strategic Tenancy Strategy sets out the broad objectives to be taken into consideration by all individual Registered Housing Providers who operate in the Borough regarding the development of their future policies in the granting and reissuing of tenancies.

2.2 All Registered Providers will also be required to publish and follow their own policy on tenure, which meets the requirements of the Council's Strategic Tenancy Strategy. Our Strategic Tenancy Strategy makes clear the approach we wish Registered Providers follow in regard to the:

- The kinds of tenancies to be granted
- The circumstances in which a particular tenancy will be granted
- The use of Affordable Rents
- The national Mobility Scheme, and
- The discharge of Homelessness duty into the Private Rented Sector

2.3 Whilst it is clear that the Act enables Registered Providers substantial freedoms on the types of tenancy they may wish to provide, and to avoid creating bureaucratic structures which restrict the ability to respond creatively and sensibly to the particular needs of local communities and particular circumstances, these have to be balanced with consideration for local housing needs and circumstances. Our Strategic Tenancy Strategy will be the over arching document that will ensure that these alternative tenancy options are balanced against meeting local housing need in the Borough. Our Strategy highlights the importance of protecting those who are deemed as vulnerable and/or needing care and support services within the Borough, when operating under the new reforms.

2.4 Our Strategy also recognises that the reforms need to be seen in the context of the proposed welfare changes which when implemented may reduce the ability of those in housing need (and reliant on housing benefit) to secure alternative types other than social housing accommodation in the Borough. This will put greater emphasis on the existing social housing in the Borough; and we must ensure that it is used appropriately and is available to those with the greatest housing need.

2.7 The Council will need to ensure that the Strategic Tenancy Strategy is reviewed from time to time and that it is consistent with our Joint Allocation Policy and our Homelessness Strategy.

2.8 The aim is that the publication of this Strategy will provide transparency, by enabling local communities to clearly understand how the Council and Registered Providers are responding to local housing needs and priorities.

3. **Options Considered**

3.1 No other options have been considered as the requirement for each Local Authority to produce and publish a Strategic Tenancy Strategy is a statutory requirement.

3.2 The Strategic Tenancy Strategy needs to be in place 12 months from 15 November 2011, when the Act was published.

3.3 By producing and publishing our Strategic Tenancy Strategy early in 2012 the Council is able to give clear guidance to Registered Providers who are also commencing work on their own tenancy policies. The sooner these documents are in the place the better it will be for the Borough in relation the allocation of future housing stock to residents as the Council can be confident that all agencies are working towards the same aims and objectives.

5. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

5.1 Newcastle's Strategic Tenancy Strategy has the following aims:

- To encourage better use of existing social housing stock to meet housing need in the Borough.
- To tackle overcrowding and under occupation in social housing stock in the Borough.
- To contribute to balanced and sustainable and cohesive communities within the Borough.
- To protect and support vulnerable people who require housing in the Borough.

5.2 Implementation of the Strategic Tenancy Strategy will assist in the delivery of the corporate priority of creating safe and sustainable communities.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 Under the Localism Act it is a statutory duty for Local Authorities to produce a Strategic Tenancy Strategy, within 12 months of the publication of the Act.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 On 31 January 2011, the Government published its impact assessment document on the Localism Bill: A Fairer Future for Social Housing.

7.2 A Service Impact Assessment has been completed for the Strategic Tenancy Strategy.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 There are no direct implications and it is planned that the 'mainly electronic' consultation process will be met within the current budgets.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 Not having a Strategic Tenancy Strategy will leave the Council open to legal challenge for failing to produce a mandatory document.

10. **Key Decision Information**

10.1 Endorsing this Strategy will ensure that the Council is up to date with its strategic aims around the delivery of social housing in the Borough, it gives rise to fundamental social housing reform opportunities and will cover the whole of the Borough.

11. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 11.1 On 20 July 2011 Cabinet gave approval to commence work on the Strategic Tenancy Strategy in the Borough.
- 11.2 On 25 January 2012 Cabinet gave approval to commence the final phase of consultation of the draft strategy.
- 11.3 On 27 February 2012 The Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee have also reviewed the draft Strategic Tenancy Strategy and their comments have been incorporated into document.

12. **List of Appendices**

Appendix A - Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council's Strategic Tenancy Strategy.

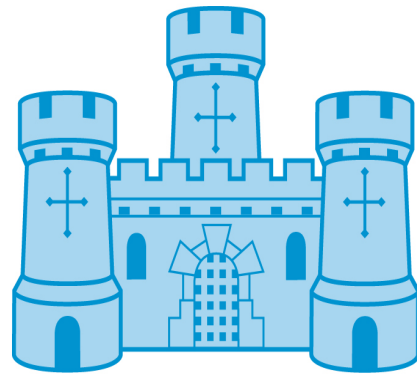
14. **Background Papers**

The Localism Act – plain English Guide

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localismplainenglishupdate>

The Localism Act 2011

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted/data.htm>



**NEWCASTLE
UNDER LYME**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council

Strategic Tenancy Strategy

2012

Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council's Strategic Tenancy Strategy 2012

Introduction

The Localism Act 2011 places a statutory duty on every Local Authority in England to prepare and publish a Strategic Tenancy Strategy. Each strategy will detail the broad objectives to which Registered Providers of social housing that operate in the Local Authority area are to have regard to, when formulating their own policies on the type of tenancies they grant. When producing the Strategic Tenancy Strategy each Local Authority must have regard for the aims and objectives of their Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and Allocation's Policy.

Background

Social housing provides around eight million people with a decent home in England. The Coalition Government identified a number of problems with the social housing system. It recognised that:

- Social housing is a scarce resource which is not being used as effectively as it could to meet housing needs.
- The rules were too rigidly set by central government, so Local Authorities found it hard to adapt to meet local needs.
- Some low income households, unable to access social housing are living in more costly accommodation e.g. temporary accommodation.
- The housing benefit bill is considerable and rising.
- There are high levels of unemployment in the social rented sector and in some cases social housing rules can trap people, making it hard to move for work.
- Social landlords didn't have enough discretion over how they managed their housing in the best interests of their local community.
- Social housing has a poor reputation amongst the public.
- New homes are desperately needed to meet housing need but there is a lack of public subsidy for new social housing supply.

In essence, the system was failing the very people it was designed to help. The Government's solution is to enable the housing sector, through a series of reforms to social housing policy and legislation, to resolve these problems at a more local level, in order to make the system fairer and more effective.

Social housing reform is intended to:

- Enable decisions about who lives where and for how long, to be taken on the basis of local need and circumstances.
- Result in a housing system that is better focused: protecting and supporting those who need it most.
- Shift the public's perception of social housing to it being a springboard into work and self sufficiency.

To order to achieve these outcomes the government, through the Localism Act has:

- Placed a duty on every Local Authority in England to publish a Strategic Tenancy Strategy.
- Given Local Authorities greater control of their waiting lists.
- Enabled Local Authorities to discharge their homelessness duty through accommodating households in the private rented sector.
- Given Social Registered Providers a range of new flexibilities that will allow them to.
 - Grant tenancies for a fixed length of time.
 - Determine the type of tenancies they grant.
 - Determine the circumstances in which they grant a tenancy of a particular kind.
 - Determine the circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy on the coming to an end of an existing tenancy.
 - Improve tenant's opportunities to move home.
 - Make better use of adapted accommodation.
 - Build new homes and re-let existing homes under the new 'affordable rent' tenure.

Context

The Government's objective is to ensure that Local Authorities develop strategies to assist people whose needs cannot be met within the wider housing market. There is no expectation that the authority will itself meet such needs directly but that, in its enabling role, it will involve other agencies as appropriate and use its power as a planning authority to seek to fulfil strategic priorities.

This Strategic Tenancy Strategy has been developed within the context of the overarching aims of Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council and will describe the broad objectives (matters) that Registered Providers should 'have regard to' in their own tenancy policies for our Borough. It has taken into account the aims and objectives of our Housing Strategy, our Homelessness Strategy and our Joint Allocation's Policy. The Government expects that each Strategic Tenancy Strategy will cover tenure only as rent setting is the responsibility of the landlord under the management of the housing register and any other issues as determined as relevant by each individual authority.

Considering the housing needs of our Borough this Strategic Tenancy Strategy aims to:

- To encourage better use of existing housing stock to meet housing need in the Borough
- To tackle overcrowding and under occupation in social housing stock in the Borough
- To contribute to balanced, sustainable and cohesive communities within the Borough
- To protect and support vulnerable people who require housing in the Borough

Use of Fixed Term Tenancies

The Localism Act has given Registered Providers the choice to no longer have to let a tenancy for life; they will now be able to let it on a fixed term. Registered Providers

*Newcastle under Lyme Strategic Tenancy Strategy – final draft
March 2012*

will generally be expected to offer a fixed term tenancies of no less than 5 years. In exceptional circumstances Registered Providers will be able to offer a fixed term tenancy for a minimum of 2 years; however those exceptional circumstances must be clearly set out in the Registered Providers Tenancy Policy. Registered Providers can also offer fixed term tenancies for longer and can still offer lifetime tenancies.

Where appropriate, we support the use of fixed term tenancies for new tenants as we believe that they provide an opportunity to address such issues as overcrowding, under occupation, promoting social mobility and better use of our affordable housing stock in the Borough. However Registered Providers should ensure that their tenancy policies guarantee that the most vulnerable tenants are provided with the level of stability they require. In fact a Registered Provider should not apply a fixed term tenancy where the household is deemed to have 'long term' vulnerability and identified as having 'long term' care and support needs.

We are keen for Registered Providers to utilise the new flexibilities in order to address current social housing issues. However we also recognise that as well as the potential opportunities these new flexibilities offer, many partners have concerns regarding the assessment of the personal circumstances of an individual household and the negative impact such an assessment may have both for the tenant and the registered provider. It is for this reason that we are not proposing to be prescriptive in terms of how long a fixed term tenancy should be or what percentage of stock each Registered Provider should operate as fixed term tenancies. Any decision made by a Registered Provider in relation to whether to offer a fixed term tenancy should be taken in the context of the personal circumstances of the household, the property, the capacity of the organisation and the levels of local housing need and supply within the area of the property.

When a fixed term tenancy has been granted and a review is due certain matters should be reviewed by the Registered Provider as a matter of course, these being:

- Household Profile – whether a change in that profile merits a move to alternative accommodation (e.g. household is smaller, larger, requires an adapted property).
- Household Vulnerability – whether a member of the household has support and / or care needs or is deemed to be vulnerable.
- Household Income and Circumstances – the housing income would enable the household to purchase a property outright (including opting to purchase under the right to acquire) or on a shared ownership/equity basis that met their needs. Where the household is not working, review work, training and volunteering options.
- Household Conduct – whether there has been anti social behaviour, rent arrears or property management issues. *NB.* when reviewing on this point consideration must be given on the three preceding points of profile, vulnerability and income circumstances.

Where a fixed term tenancy is granted the Registered Provider should commence and complete the review of the tenancy at least six months before the tenancy expires. This will enable adequate time for the Registered Provider to provide the household with appropriate advice and assistance to enable them to move into alternative housing. If no further tenancy is to be granted the Registered Provider must provide the notice in writing, stating that it does not propose to do so.

*Newcastle under Lyme Strategic Tenancy Strategy – final draft
March 2012*

Where a tenancy is not renewed the Registered Provider's advice and assistance services should be fit for purpose in order to facilitate appropriate move on. This advice and assistance should ensure that there are also no negative impacts arising for the Newcastle Housing Advice Service. It is not acceptable for a Registered Provider to end a tenancy on expiry of a fixed term tenancy, where there would then be a duty on the Borough Council (through housing and homelessness legislation) to provide accommodation without there being an agreed plan of action with Newcastle Housing Advice Service already in place. In these circumstances, Registered Providers must give Newcastle Housing Advice Service advance notice of the expiry of the tenancy (at the same time as notice is given to the tenant) and share with Newcastle Housing Advice Service relevant review information about the household if they do not wish to grant a new tenancy at the end of the fixed term.

Registered Provider's policies should outline what measures they will take to prevent a household becoming at risk of homelessness when a fixed term tenancy is due to end. The Council is committed to ensuring that the decision to terminate a fixed term tenancy does not lead to increased levels of homelessness in Newcastle under Lyme.

We are also in support of the Government's view that a fixed term tenancy may be preceded by a probationary tenancy. We see the use of probationary tenancies as an excellent tool for tenants (particularly young people) to demonstrate that they can successfully sustain their tenancy. Where appropriate, we would also expect probationary tenancies to be linked with packages of housing support, to maximise the potential for ongoing sustainment.

We anticipate that following the first review of a fixed term tenancy, the majority of tenancies may either be renewed or that a new review date would be set relative to the household's circumstances. Where a tenancy is renewed, we would support arrangements that provide the opportunity to review the rent level of the tenancy and the household's income to determine whether a rent increase is appropriate.

We recognise that there may also be circumstances where a guarantee of accommodation should be made "for life" but this guarantee shall not necessarily be in respect to the actual property that the tenant is currently occupying, as there may be particular circumstances where remaining in the same property is not on balance the best option for the tenant. Such examples of granting a tenancy for life may be tenancies granted to a tenant (alone or joint) in circumstances where the tenant or member of the household suffers from a long term illness or disability or has a need for secure accommodation on medical or welfare grounds, where the vulnerability of the tenant remains but personal circumstances change. We are also in the view that tenancies granted to a tenant (alone or joint) aged 60 years and over especially those residing in specific older person's accommodation such as sheltered housing or extra care accommodation will continue to be granted lifetime tenancies.

In respect to the transfer of secure and assured tenants, our current position is that Registered Providers will protect existing tenants' security as far as the regulations allows. Registered Providers should have a clear statement within their own tenancy policy regarding the security of tenure they would offer a tenant wishing to transfer.

Registered Providers should clearly set out in their Tenancy Policy the way in which a tenant or prospective tenant may appeal against or complain about the length of the fixed term offered, the type of tenancy offered and against a decision not to grant another tenancy on the expiry of the fixed term. Registered Providers will also be

responsible for dealing with any requests for a review of their decision on the above under Section 154, 107B of the Localism Act.

Succession

Prior to the Localism Act, when a tenant in a social housing tenancy dies various people in his or her household may have the right to continue to live there under that tenancy. Under the new rules the only person who will have the right to succeed the tenancy will be the partner of the tenant and in some cases the partner might already be a joint tenant. Once the partner has taken over the tenancy that will end the right to succession, i.e. the tenancy can not pass to anyone else in the household by right.

It will however be possible that Registered Providers could allow for another succession, for instance where an adult son or daughter has lived in the home. However the Registered Provider also has the choice to decide that the property is too big and ask the son/daughter to move to a more suitable home.

We support the approach of automatic succession being limited to the partner of the tenant, however would expect consideration to be given for an additional succession to another person, where a full assessment of housing need has taken place in respect of the person and that person has sufficient priority under our allocation scheme. Decisions over a further succession to a tenancy should recognise the vulnerability and housing needs of individuals within the household. Also the accommodation in question must be the principal or only residence of the survivor at the time of the tenant's death in order for the succession to occur.

It is imperative that when dealing with a succession case, the timescales take account of the added stresses that bereavement places on the surviving family. A succession of this type could take place in the same home or in suitable alternative accommodation.

Mobility

The Government is committed to introducing a nationwide social home swap scheme to ensure that social tenants wishing to move can maximise their chances of securing a suitable match.

We support this aim to make it easier for tenants to see possible exchange partners and to increase tenant's choices and control where they live. We believe that increased mobility can lead to better opportunities to meet people's housing needs. We would expect all Registered Providers to provide their tenants with access to a good internet based home swap service and ensure that appropriate support is provided for those tenants who do not have internet access.

We encourage home swaps particularly where these resolve a housing issue (under occupation / overcrowding) or where they provide opportunities for the households wishing to exchange (securing employment). We are mindful however that there must be sufficient regard given to those exchanges that place additional demands on other services within the Borough (for example health and social care).

Affordable Rents

The Government's Affordable Rent Programme is intended to deliver 'new' housing supply with a limited public subsidy. In order to support the development of new homes, Registered Providers in Newcastle will charge an 'affordable rent' on all new homes developed. The affordable rent can be up to 80% of the level of market rents being charged in the private rented sector and therefore will cost more than the current social housing rent for the same type of property. Registered Providers also have the option to charge affordable rents on a proportion of their existing stock when they are re-let. This will enable the extra money generated from the higher rents to be used for reinvestment and the development of further housing to meet local needs.

We support the use of the Affordable Rent Programme by our Register Providers as a means of leading to further development of housing stock in the Borough. However it is essential that in our Borough the affordable rents do in fact remain affordable and would like registered providers to ensure that the rents charged on affordable rented properties do not exceed the relevant local housing allowance (LHA) that is applicable for the property size at the time of setting the rent. The current rate for Local Housing Allowance can be found on the Council's Website, using the following link:

http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/advice_content.asp?id=SXB9BC-A7808196&cat=1340

From our initial calculations, we anticipate that affordable rent tenancies in Newcastle will fall below the LHA eligibility threshold and therefore will be available to all applicants on the housing register whether in receipt of benefits or working. However we would expect Registered Providers to continue to be mindful of the potential impact the proposed changes to the welfare system may have on affordability issues in Newcastle, with particular consideration being given to the introduction of the Universal Credit System in April 2013.

The Affordable Rent Programme is governed by the Homes and Communities Agency and they have provided detailed guidance on its operation to all Registered Providers.

Registered Providers should discuss with the Council their plans prior to adopting an approach in order that the benefits of creating affordable rents are balanced with the number of properties converted. Registered Providers should outline the extent of financial changes and how the funding can be allocated to local schemes to benefit Newcastle residents.

Discharge of Homelessness Duty

The Localism Act amends the Housing Act 1996 with regard to the discharge of homelessness duties to homeless persons by Local Authorities. Local Authorities owe a range of duties to homelessness people and in cases where the household is found to be in priority need and unintentionally homeless, the authority is obliged to find housing for them temporarily until they are re-housed in longer-term and appropriate accommodation.

Currently, this longer-term accommodation is usually social housing, although the duty can be met by providing private rented accommodation, with the consent of the

*Newcastle under Lyme Strategic Tenancy Strategy – final draft
March 2012*

applicant. The amendment will permit Local Authorities to discharge duty into the Private Rented Sector without the consent of the applicant, although:

- Tenancies must be for a minimum fixed term of 12 months.
- An offer of private housing will only bring the duty to an end if the accommodation is suitable for the whole household.
- The homelessness duty would recur if, within 2 years, the applicant becomes homeless again through no fault of his or her own and re-applies. The re-application duty will apply to any authority not just the authority who accepted the original duty.

We welcome this change in legislation which now enables us to discharge our homelessness duty through accommodating households in the private rented sector. As it should assist in preventing people having to spend long periods in temporary accommodation and increase the accommodation options available to us when helping someone who is homeless find accommodation. However, discharging the homeless duty into the private rented sector should only occur where it is deemed that the customer is capable of sustaining a private sector tenancy and that the accommodation is affordable and appropriate. When the homelessness duty is discharged into the private rented sector, the customer should be made fully aware of the roles and responsibilities involved in leasing a private rented sector property and the variations between private renting and social housing. A determining factor as to when we will be able to make use of this new power will be whether suitable affordable private sector accommodation is available at the required time for us to discharge our homelessness duty.

Monitoring and Review

In order for this strategy to be successful it is important that we have a framework for monitoring and reviewing progress.

We already have a number of active forums and meetings which are well represented by a wide range of our partner agencies, we propose to co-ordinate meeting timetables to enable the review of the success of this strategy within our Borough to be tabled at these meetings on an annual basis.

In addition to this the progress of this strategy will be monitored internally via the Housing Strategy Team within the authority.

What are your views?

We welcome your views and comments on this strategy.

Below is a feedback form for any comments you wish to make. On completion please return via email to caroline.abel@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk or post a copy back to Caroline Abel, Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council, Housing Strategy, Civic Offices, Merrial Street, Newcastle, Staffs, ST5 2AG.

Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council Strategic Tenancy Statement

Feedback Form

We value your feedback; please use the boxes to give us your views and opinions.

Name:

Organisation:

Address:

Email:

Telephone Number:

Comments:

Thank you for your feedback

On completion please return via email to caroline.abel@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk or post a copy back to Caroline Abel, Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council, Housing Strategy, Civic Offices, Merrial Street, Newcastle, Staffs, ST5 2AG

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LETTING OF SURPLUS OFFICE SPACE; CIVIC OFFICES, MERRIAL STREET, NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME

Submitted by: Executive Director – Regeneration and Development

Portfolio: Regeneration and Planning and; Customer Services and Transformation

Ward(s) affected: Town

Purpose of the Report

To update Members on the letting of surplus Civic office space to third party partner organisations.

Recommendations

(a) That Cabinet authorises officers to take the necessary actions to complete new leases with the Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Police Authority in respect of the Civic Offices premises.

(b) That Cabinet notes the actions taken by officers in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning in respect of the letting of office accommodation at the Civic Offices to Public Health partners.

Reasons

Following an accommodation audit and implementation of a rationalisation programme of floor space used by the by the Borough Council within the Civic Offices negotiations have taken place and lease terms agreed with third party partners for their use of the surplus accommodation arising. This approach is consistent with the Council's objectives about making the best use of resources and achieving efficiencies in operational activities without detriment to front-line services.

1. Background

1.1 Members will be aware that accommodation rationalisation is an important element of the Council's Transformation Programme (as part of a sub-programme called "The Way We Work"), with the original Transformation Programme key aims being to:-

- Deliver efficiency savings.
- Develop new ways of working.
- Improve performance.
- Improve customer service.

1.2 The results of an accommodation audit reported that by rationalising and making best use of existing floor space it would be feasible for the Council to reduce its overall space requirements. At the time of the report (finalised, September 2010) Borough Council usage of the Civic Offices accounted for 4,757 sq m out of a total of 5,288 sq m (or 90%) The balance of floor space, 531 sq m, was being occupied by Staffordshire County Council, Children's Services, on a nine year lease which commenced in June 2003.

NB. (All floor areas quoted are approximate and measured on a net internal area basis)

1.3 Over the past twelve months your officers have worked to identify where and how floor space usage could be rationalised, seeking to balance the objective of minimising detriment

to service delivery with optimising the space that might be attractive to a third party tenant(s). Officers have subsequently organised and implemented appropriate staff moves throughout the building creating approximately 1,318 sq m of surplus floor space. The relocation of Borough Council staff within the building will be completed by the end of March 2012.

1.4 In parallel with this rationalisation programme your officers have negotiated and reached 'heads of terms' agreement for new leases, at current market rents, with the following prospective tenants;

(i) Staffordshire County Council, Adult Services
Demise: 752 sq ms (on the first & second floors)
Term: 5 years, to commence 1 July 2012
Rent plus service charge.

(ii) Staffordshire Police Authority
Demise: 467 sq ms (on the lower ground floor)
Term: 15 years, to commence 1 April 2012
Rent plus service charge

(iii) Public Health
Demise: 99 sq ms (on the first floor)
Term: commencing 24 November 2011 and ending 31 March 2013 (the term commenced by way of a 'tenancy at will' with the formal lease still to be completed)
Rent plus service charge

1.5 All of the above transactions have been reported to and approved by the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration & Planning. Furthermore Legal Services have been instructed and draft leases have been prepared.

1.6 In the case of the existing lease (referred to at 1.2 above) with Staffordshire County Council, Children's Services, 'heads of terms' for its renewal are currently being negotiated.

2. **Issues**

2.1 In each of the above leases there will be a Council 'option to break' operable if the property is required for the proposed comprehensive retail-led Ryecroft redevelopment.

2.2 Your officers are working towards finalising these lease agreements, currently focusing on the Police as they require works to be undertaken to their proposed demise prior to taking occupation (target date of 1 April). Members should note that the County Council occupation is anticipated by the end of June 2012.

3. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

3.1 The disposal (by way of lease) of surplus Civic floor space will enable the Council to realise a revenue income stream that can be used to support service delivery. It will also reduce its share of running costs for the building (achieving a significant financial efficiency) and in consequence its own carbon footprint (consistent with the Council's Carbon management Plan objectives).

3.2 It is anticipated that the occupation by Staffordshire Police will contribute to the Council's priority relating to Safer and Stronger Communities by improving joined-up service delivery and similar service delivery outcomes are expected to emerge from the co-location of the County Council and health partners.

3.3 The letting of Civic accommodation will assist partner organisations in the delivery of their services/achievement of their strategic objectives.

4. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

4.1 All of these lettings will be subject to formal business leases.

5. **Equality Impact Assessment**

There are no direct implications arising from this report.

6. **Financial and Resource Implications**

6.1 Upon completion of the leases the Council will obtain a new rental income stream totalling £128,300 pa and a reduction in running cost expenditure, estimated to be £137,000; thereby equating to a total annual efficiency saving to the Council of about £265,000 p.a. (in a full year).

7. **Major Risks**

7.1 Until formal leases are completed there is a possibility that the prospective tenants may not take occupancy of the building. Thus the anticipated income streams would be deferred until such time as alternative/replacement occupiers can be found.

11. **Key Decision Information**

None

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 Insert key Cabinet reports re the Transformation Programme which referred to the accommodation rationalization project.

13. **Background Papers**

Shearwater Rock Space Utilisation report
Asset Management Strategy
MTFS and capital and revenue budgets

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KIDSGROVE TOWN HALL AND THE VICTORIA HALL.

Submitted by: Executive Director – Regeneration and Development

Portfolio: Regeneration and Planning

Ward(s) affected: Town

Purpose of the Report

To inform Members of the negotiations taking place with Kidsgrove Town Council in respect of formalising the ownership of the Town Hall and the Victoria Hall and to update Members as to the current situation in respect of the letting of surplus space to third party partner organisations.

Recommendations

That Cabinet approve the actions taken:

- (i) That an offer has been made to Kidsgrove Town Council in respect of formalising the freehold ownership of the Town Hall and the Victoria Hall.**
- (ii) That agreement for a lease has been reached with the Staffordshire County Council (who are in occupation) and negotiations are ongoing with Staffordshire Police Authority in respect of relocating to the Town Hall from the existing Police Station.**

Reasons

- (i) To formalise the ownership of the Town Hall to the Borough Council and the Victoria Hall to Kidsgrove Town Council.
- (ii) To continue with the rationalisation of the Council's property ownership which identifies surplus space and seeks to dispose of this space either by way of sale or letting where possible. This approach is consistent with the Council's objectives about making the best use of resources and achieving efficiencies in operational activities without detriment to front-line services.

1. Background

1.1 Members will be aware that accommodation rationalisation is an important element of the Council's Transformation Programme (as part of a sub-programme called "The Way We Work"), with the original Transformation Programme key aims being to:-

- Deliver efficiency savings.
- Develop new ways of working.
- Improve performance.
- Improve customer service.

1.2 As a result of the Local Government Act 1972 Kidsgrove Urban District Council was absorbed into Newcastle Borough Council and Kidsgrove Town Council was formed. At that time the Borough Council agreed that the Town Council would have the right to retain the Victoria Hall, part of Urban District Council's ownership of the joint Town Hall and Victoria Hall complex, although this was never legally formalised. Negotiations have taken place between your Officers and the Town Council and the following offer has been made by your Officers:

The Borough Council and Town Council in partnership will endeavour to register the freehold title at the Land Registry of the following:

- The Victoria Hall to the Town Council. (In recognition of the 1974 resolution by the Borough Council).
- The remainder of the site and the Town Hall to the Borough Council with joint ownership, of the ground floor toilets and current Town Council office, within the Town Hall.
- The Town Council require further office space within the Town Hall to include interview room 2 and the adjacent waiting area which will be let to them in exchange for the Borough Council having use of the office currently used by the Town Council.
- The Borough Council will have the use of the Victoria Hall in the event of a major emergency which renders the Civic Offices out of action.

1.3 The first floor of Kidsgrove Town Hall was vacated by Staffordshire County Council (social services team) some years ago. However your Officers have negotiated the re-letting of part of this space to Staffordshire County Council (Children's Services) on commercial terms approved by the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning. The remaining first floor space, part of the ground floor and a garage have been offered to the Staffordshire Police Authority and negotiations are ongoing.

2. **Issues**

2.1 Kidsgrove Town Council has not yet formally accepted the offer that has been made as described above.

2.2 The Police Authority has formally approved the relocation of the functions of Kidsgrove Police Station into the Town Hall consequently your officers can now finalise the negotiations in respect of this letting to the Police Authority.

3. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

3.1 The disposal (by way of lease) of surplus space will enable the Council to realise a revenue income stream that can be used to support service delivery. It will also reduce its share of running costs for the building (achieving a significant financial efficiency) and in consequence its own carbon footprint (consistent with the Council's Carbon management Plan objectives).

3.2 It is anticipated that the occupation by Staffordshire Police will contribute to the Council's priority relating to Safer and Stronger Communities by improving joined-up service delivery and similar service delivery outcomes are expected to emerge from the co-location of the County Council and health partners.

3.3 The letting of this accommodation will assist partner organisations in the delivery of their services/achievement of their strategic objectives.

4. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

4.1 These lettings will be subject to formal business leases.

5. **Equality Impact Assessment**

5.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

6. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 6.1 Upon completion of the leases the Council will obtain a new rental income stream totalling £14,500 pa and a reduction in running cost expenditure, estimated to be in the region of £40,000 per annum thereby equating to a total annual efficiency saving to the Council of approximately £54,500 p.a. (in a full year).

7. **Major Risks**

- 7.1 That the Town Council may reject the offer made to regularise the freehold ownerships with a consequence that any dispute will be subject to legal action.
- 7.2 Until formal leases are completed there is a possibility that the prospective tenants may withdraw from occupancy of the building. Thus the anticipated income streams would be deferred until such time as alternative/replacement occupiers can be found.

8. **Key Decision Information**

- 8.1 The decisions will enable significant financial efficiency savings to be achieved.

9. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 9.1 Minute 235/74 of Policy and Resources Committee – 13 March 1974

10. **Background Papers**

Asset Management Strategy
MTFS and capital and revenue budgets

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JUBILEE 2 UPDATE

Submitted by: Executive Director - Regeneration & Development

Portfolio: Regeneration and Planning/Culture and Active Communities

Ward(s) affected: All (particularly Town)

Purpose of the Report

To provide Members with information about progress relating to the capital build of the Jubilee 2 centre since you considered a report at your December meeting.

Recommendations

- (a)_ That Cabinet receive the information contained within this report.**
- (b) That Cabinet conveys its thanks to all partners involved in delivering this project, particularly those who contributed funding.**

Reasons:

- (i) To facilitate the decision-making and delivery processes regarding the provision of the Jubilee 2 health and wellbeing centre for the residents of the Borough.
- (ii) To ensure that the good practices adopted throughout the delivery of Jubilee 2 and the lessons learned are taken into account for the future projects that the Council may wish to undertake.

1. Background

- 1.1 In the spring/summer of 2008 Cabinet authorised officers to develop the brief for a new Health and Wellbeing Centre (now known as Jubilee 2) to meet the healthy and active lifestyle needs of the Borough's residents. At that stage the "preferred facility mix" included a 25m eight lane swimming pool, a training pool, eighty station fitness suite, two dance studios, health suite (including sauna and steam room), cafeteria, and other ancillary space including changing rooms, plant rooms; no specific requirement was made for sustainable energy solutions in the building.
- 1.2 Your officers sought specialist advice to determine the likely footprint of the building and the broad cost envelope for the project which was determined to be 4,000sqm and £14 million respectively. It should be noted that Cabinet acknowledged the potential requirement for additional "desirable facilities" including a moveable floor in the competition pool & training pool, an additional 20 stations in the fitness suite, and a climbing wall. None of the latter facilities were factored into either the original footprint for the building or the broad cost envelope for the project.
- 1.3 The brief for Jubilee 2 was developed throughout 2009 in consultation with key stakeholders including NHS North Staffordshire, Sport England, and the Amateur Swimming Association, the Carbon Trust, the users of Jubilee Pool & Knutton Recreation Centre and the wider community. As a result of this ongoing consultation Officers worked closely with the design team and professional advisors to incorporate the above-mentioned desirable facilities into the design for Jubilee 2, resulting in an increase in the footprint of the building to 4,300sqm.

- 1.4 Given the Council's strategic responsibility to reduce its carbon footprint a robust options appraisal of the available sustainable energy solutions was undertaken by the Council's professional advisors. This resulted in the following items being incorporated into the design for Jubilee 2: a combined heat a power unit; L.E.D lighting; photovoltaic cells; waterless urinals; heat recovery systems and; automated (PIR) lighting systems.
- 1.5 Throughout the design phase the cost plan for Jubilee 2 was continually refreshed to take account of the fluctuating market conditions, the availability of external funding and the design requirements of the building. This resulted in a revised broad cost envelope being established for the Jubilee 2 of £12.2million prior to freezing the main elements of the building design in the autumn of 2009 and submitting a Planning Application for the Council's consideration.
- 1.6 Following numerous detailed adjustments and refinements in the internal elements of the building design and the completion of a robust contractor procurement process (with Cabinet agreeing, in July 2010, to appoint Morgan Sindall to build the scheme) the anticipated total cost was envisaged to be about £10.5m. The contractor agreed to commence work with a target date for "practical completion" of 31 December 2011. Officers are pleased to report that Jubilee2 was formally handed over to the Council on 9 December 2011 and opened to the public on 12 December 2011.

2. **Issues/Progress Update**

- 2.1 Since the formal handover of the Jubilee 2 building your officers and professional advisors have been working towards establishing the final account for the construction element of the project. Given the large number of parties involved in this process (particularly the large number of sub-contractors) it is envisaged that this exercise will be completed within the next few months, however your officers and advisors are confident that the financial outturn costs of the overall project will be in the region of £10.2 - £10.3million.
- 2.2 On 7 January 2012 Jubilee 2 was formally opened in a public "come and try" event, by former Olympian Nick Gillingham and former Commonwealth medallist, David Moorcroft. The event was very well attended by key stakeholders, members past and present who have had a direct involvement in the project, members of the community who had received grants from the Newcastle Sports Council along with residents of the Borough. Members are advised that the centre will be the subject of a visit by the Princess Royal too, in April 2012, as part of the Queen's diamond Jubilee year celebrations.
- 2.3 Since Jubilee 2 opened, your Officers have undertaken an initial review of the performance and are pleased to report the following key outcomes:
 - (a) There have been in excess of new 1,000 customers taking up a fitness membership by direct debit (in addition to the 1500 existing customers).
 - (b) The operational hours of Jubilee 2 has increased by 11.5 hours a week when compared to the operational hours of the former Jubilee Pool.
 - (c) A robust exercise class programme of in excess of forty classes per week has been established at Jubilee 2, compared to a previous weekly class programme being delivered at Jubilee Pool and Knutton Recreation Centre of between 5 and ten classes.
 - (d) The availability of public swimming has increased from about 57% at Jubilee Pool to 96% of the operational hours at Jubilee 2.

- (e) The performance of the combined heat and power unit and photovoltaic cells since the opening of Jubilee 2 has meant that the Council has managed to reduce its carbon footprint by 30,308kgC when compared to operating without them in situ; this increased efficiency will have saved money too.

2.4 Since your meeting in December 2010 Officers have been evaluating the effectiveness of the project management arrangements for delivery of Jubilee 2, so that lessons can be learned for any future projects being undertaken by the Council. The key messages in relation to the delivery of Jubilee 2 that have been identified to date are as follows:

- (a) The importance of strong governance arrangements (including a member-led Project Board and a broadly-based officer steering group chaired by the key Portfolio Holder) and the realisation that such large-scale capital projects will typically require support from a variety of disciplines throughout the Council, as well as multiple Portfolio Holders. During the delivery of the Jubilee 2 project it required an input from officers representing in excess 20 separate disciplines within the Council, as well as all six Cabinet members, to ensure that Jubilee 2 was delivered on time and within budget. It is noteworthy that the main contractor found the Council a good client to work for because of both the knowledge available and the approach adopted at the monthly client/contractor project meetings.
- (b) The value of developing a detailed building specification upfront and allowing sufficient time to do this. The construction element of Jubilee 2 was tendered at RIBA stage F-G, where it is typical to go to tender at the earlier stage C-D when entering into a design and build contract. This allowed officers and the Council's professional advisors (representing key disciplines that we don't employ such as architectural services, M&E specialists, etc) to ensure that there would be greater cost certainty by affording limited scope for the contractor to change the specification and or make claims for additional costs.
- (c) Where projects require input from a number of external disciplines, where possible seek to appoint each discipline on an individual basis as opposed to appointing a consortium where others may work collaboratively to bring a team together. The key benefit of appointing each discipline on an individual basis meant the officers found that each discipline challenged the ideas of others, brought a greater wealth of experience to the project, ensuring a greater degree of cost control, whilst ensuring the final outcome met the Council's expectations.
- (d) The preparation and delivery of a robust communications plan. A separate working group was established within the governance arrangements for Jubilee 2 to undertake this role. This meant that relevant communications were issued to the wider community at an appropriate point of time and queries from the public and media were dealt with in a timely manner. As a result of this robust process officers are pleased to report that throughout the delivery of Jubilee 2 the Council did not receive any negative media coverage.
- (e) Broadly speaking the delivery of Jubilee 2 as a construction project was free of significant or unforeseen complications (largely for the reasons cited above). However officers felt that an improvement to the project could have been made though the earlier engagement of the Highway Authority when considering the requirements in relation to the S.278 works. This would have avoided complex negotiations with the main contractor and other statutory services concerning the dovetailing of various elements of the project in the later stages of the construction programme.

3. **Proposal**

- 3.1 That Cabinet receive the information contained within this report.
- 3.2 That Cabinet conveys its thanks to all partners involved in delivering this project, particularly those who contributed funding.

4. **Reasons for the Preferred Solution**

- 4.1 To acknowledge the key lessons learned from the project management arrangements and to ensure similar arrangements are put in place for any future projects undertaken by the Council.
- 4.2 To acknowledge the contribution of key partners who contributed to the successful delivery of the project.

5. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 5.1 It should be noted that the projected financial outturn for the project is anticipated to be £10.2-10.3 million against a revised cost envelope of £10.5million (compared to the original cost envelope of £14m).
- 5.2 Additionally the operating costs are forecast to be around £350,000 p.a. less than the joint running costs of the former Jubilee Baths and the Knutton Recreation Centre. compared to 2011/12 where a further £100,000 saving has already been delivered through a management restructuring in readiness for the hand over of Jubilee 2 in December 2011.
- 5.3 Members will recall that your Officers managed to secure external funding totalling £900,000 towards the capital cost for Jubilee 2, namely, NHS North Staffordshire £500,000, and Sport England £400,000. This means that the total cost to the Council will be around £9.4m. Additionally the operating costs are forecast to be around £350,000 p.a. less than the joint running costs of the former Jubilee Baths and the Knutton Recreation Centre.

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

- 6.1 The provision of accessible leisure facilities contributes to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. There will be a positive impact on those relating to health improvement, quality of life, and support for disadvantaged communities, community safety and broader regeneration objectives for the town centre. In particular it is anticipated that Jubilee 2 will assist the Council/Partners in achieving positive health outcomes thereby reducing health inequalities.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1 The Council has powers, under the Local Government Act 2000, to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Borough's residents. The Council has general powers to provide adequate resources are allocated for sport and recreation through the statutory framework of the core planning strategy and development plan documents. On a more specific note clearly it is vitally important that the Council procures appropriate and specialist legal advice to prepare the necessary contracts.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 8.1 Jubilee 2 has been designed to be as an inclusive facility that will seek to optimise access from all sections of the community. The inclusion of a "Changing Places" toilet has received

positive feed back form members of the community as it has will enhanced their experience of using the facilities at Jubilee 2. Officers are now in the process of registering the facility with MENCAP.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 A full risk assessment/log for the project has been completed in conjunction with the Council's Corporate Risk Manager and continues to be subjected to regular review. The latest version of this document is available upon request

10. **Previous Cabinet Decisions**

Cabinet 18 June 2008
Cabinet 10 September 2008
Cabinet 22 October 2008
Cabinet 26 March 2009
Cabinet 13 May 2009
Cabinet 29 July 2009
Cabinet 9 September 2009
Cabinet 21 October 2009
Cabinet 14 December 2009
Cabinet 13 January 2010
Cabinet 17 February 2010
Cabinet 24 March 2010
Cabinet 2 June 2010
Cabinet 28 July 2010
Cabinet 15 September 2010
Cabinet 2 November 2010
Cabinet 15 December 2010.
Cabinet 9 February 2011
Cabinet 17 March 2011
Cabinet 8 June 2011
Cabinet 20 July 2011
Cabinet 7 September 2011
Cabinet 11 October 2011
Cabinet 5 December 2011

12. **List of Appendices**

Risk Register – available on request

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CHESTERTON VISION

Submitted by: Executive Director, Operational Services – Dave Adams

Portfolio: Culture and Active Communities

Ward(s) affected: All (particularly Chesterton)

Purpose of the Report

To inform Members about a partnership opportunity with Staffordshire County Council at Chesterton Vision.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet authorise officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Member for Culture and Active Communities, to enter into a Service Level Agreement with Staffordshire Young People's Service for the Council's Leisure and Cultural Services to provide the operational management at Chesterton Vision, for an initial 12 months.

Reasons

We have the opportunity to raise our profile through association with the £4.4M new centre, which is in one of the most deprived wards in the Borough.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Chesterton Vision Young People's Centre is a new £4.4M centre, nearing completion, on London Road, Chesterton. The hand over date to Staffordshire Young Peoples Service (SYSPS) is being given as March 2012, with a proposed opening in April/May. The project has been financed by a grant to Staffordshire County Council after a successful application to the Government's 'MyPlace' programme administered by Big Fund (a subsidiary of BIG Lottery Fund to manage non-Lottery programmes).
- 1.2 The 'MyPlace' philosophy and guiding principles laid down in the grant specification can be summarised as:
 - That young peoples' involvement is integral to the planning, design, management and eventual running of the new centre.
 - That the centre will be primarily used for the benefit of young people.
 - That the centre will be of benefit for the local community with the views of local people being taken into account.
- 1.3 However, since the grant was awarded in 2009 there have been significant challenges and changes both within SYPS and partner organisations involved at the time. They have therefore been talking with partners to clarify what support they are able to give.

2. Issues

- 2.1 The key issue is that SYPS do not have the additional resource to operate the centre on their own.

2.2 The centre includes a 3 court sports hall, which with our involvement can provide the only publicly accessible sports hall in the borough that is available in the day, now that sports hall at Knutton Recreation Centre has closed.

2.3 Leisure and Cultural Services have the management expertise to operate the new centre, which is in an area where we already target our activity programmes.

3. **Options Considered**

3.1 The options are to either enter into an SLA for the management of the centre or not to enter into the agreement. Alternatively Members may wish to propose an alternative course of action.

4. **Proposal**

4.1 Discussions with SYPS have given rise for the opportunity for our Community Recreation Staff to be based at the centre both in a management capacity and to deliver some of their current work programme, with the support of the revenue funding provided by SYPS for the centre, rather than Leisure and Cultural Services budget.

4.2 To explore this further a draft Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been prepared and forwarded to SYPS for discussion. Whilst this has been received enthusiastically at this stage we have not had formal feedback.

4.3 The SLA covers one year only as SYPS are looking into management options that could release NNDR opportunities for reinvestment at the centre.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

5.1 We have the opportunity to raise our profile, at no cost to the Borough Council, through association with the £4.4M new centre, which is in one of the most deprived wards in the Borough.

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

6.1 Our involvement in the Chesterton Vision Centre will capitalise on the investment in that our priority of creating a healthy and active community will be reflected in the SLA.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

7.1 The Council has the power to enter into the agreement.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

8.1 A full equality impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the operational management plan for the centre.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 There are no direct financial or resource implications. Officers would be deployed to work from Chesterton Vision. The Borough Council would still be responsible for their employment costs and the County Council for the costs of operating the centre. Income generated at the centre would be paid to the County Council and any costs incurred by the Borough Council (other than our staff costs, referred to above) would be reimbursed.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 A risk log will be developed along with the SLA.

11. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

None

12. **Key Decision Information**

This is not a key decision

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

None

14. **List of Appendices**

None

15. **Background Papers**

None

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IRRECOVERABLE ITEMS

Submitted by: **Head of Revenues and Benefits**

Portfolio: **Customer Services and Transformation**

Ward(s) affected: **All**

Purpose of the Report

To consider items deemed irrecoverable.

Recommendation

That the items detailed at Appendix A be considered irrecoverable for the reasons stated and be written off.

Reasons

For a variety of reasons, from time to time, it is considered that certain items are unable to be recovered from debtors. When this occurs, it is necessary to write off these balances from the appropriate Council account records.

1. Background

1.1 For a variety of reasons, following the issue of accounts for amounts due to the Council, it is considered the debt is no longer able to be collected. Normally, these reasons follow from the debtor having been subjected to insolvency proceedings or other legal processes in respect of their debts or even the death of a debtor. There is then no further redress to recover the outstanding amounts and it is necessary to write off the outstanding balances from the Council's records.

2. Collection Procedures

2.1 Collection procedures in respect of business rates and council tax are operated in accordance with legislative guidelines. Other debts are collected by a variety of schemes suitable to the type of account involved. Open disclosure of this information may give potential defaulters an advantage in respect of when action is taken and therefore less incentive for them to pay in accordance with routine payment schedules.

3. Proposal

3.1 That the items listed at Appendix A be considered irrecoverable for the reasons stated and these balances be written off. Irrecoverable amounts are considered to be of a confidential nature and reports have historically been treated in this manner. This policy was last reviewed and endorsed by Cabinet in July 2008 and is common in the majority of local authorities and certainly other Staffordshire authorities. Further guidance obtained from the Local Government Association in May 2011 endorsed this methodology for dealing with irrecoverable items. It is used to ensure the principles of data protection are maintained. It would also obviously be inappropriate to disclose information for instance about deceased debtors, with the potential for causing further distress to bereaved family members. Where debts are in respect of commercial organisations, there is the potential in cases such as administration that disclosure could jeopardise the potential recovery of the business in the

long term. Items are only ever considered for write-off following robust adherence to the appropriate collection policy.

4. **Financial and Resource Implications**

4.1 The Council currently has the responsibility to collect business rates on behalf of Central Government; council tax on behalf of its precepting authorities i.e. Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Police Authority and Staffordshire Fire Authority as well as itself; and sundry debt in respect of services provided. The combined total of this is currently around £90m per annum.

4.2 The total being recommended for write off in Appendix A is £298,000 which represents only 0.3% of the total amount due for collection. This is comprised of business rates (£275,000); council tax (£15,000) and sundry debts (£8,000).

4.3 The overall impact of these write offs to the Borough Council is minimal as the write off of business rates is pooled nationally by central government and the writing off of council tax is shared between the precepting authorities – 12% of which is the Borough Council's share.

4.4 The Council makes provision for unrecoverable sums and the amounts recommended for write-off are within the current budgeted bad debt provision.

5. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

23 July 2008

6. **List of Appendices**

Appendix A - Irrecoverable items (Confidential)

Agenda Item 23

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