

# Public Document Pack

**Date of meeting**      **Wednesday, 23rd May, 2012**

**Time**                      **7.00 pm**

**Venue**                    **Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, Merrial Street,  
Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs ST5 2AG**

**Contact**                 Julia Cleary  
01782 742227

## **Cabinet**

### **AGENDA**

#### **PART 1– OPEN AGENDA**

- 1      MINUTES** **(Pages 1 - 8)**  
To consider the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2012
- 2      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
To receive declarations of interest from Members on items included in the agenda.
- 3      Amendment to the Corporate Complaints, Comments and  
         Compliments Policy** **(Pages 9 - 16)**
- 4      Economic Development Strategy Report** **(Pages 17 - 64)**
- 5      Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy - Progress  
         Report** **(Pages 65 - 72)**
- 6      Gypsy and Traveller Policy Review** **(Pages 73 - 76)**
- 7      Report relating to Kidsgrove Town Hall** **(Pages 77 - 78)**
- 8      URGENT BUSINESS**  
To consider any business which is urgent within the meaning of Section 100B(4) of the  
Local Government Act 1972.
- 9      Exclusion Resolution**

**Members:**      Councillors G Snell (Chairman), Mrs E Bates, Mrs A Beech, E Boden,  
                         T Kearon, M Stubbs & J Williams

**'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.

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## CABINET

Wednesday, 14th March, 2012

**Present:-** Councillor Stephen Sweeney – in the Chair

Councillors R Studd, J Bannister, A Howells, N Jones and M Reddish

### 9. MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012 be agreed as a correct record.

### 10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 11. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT TO END OF QUARTER THREE (DEC) 2011

A report was submitted providing Members with the Financial and Performance Review for the 2011/12 Third Quarter.

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Transformation stated that the Customer Services Department would shortly be reassessed regarding the Customer Services Excellence Award it had achieved in the previous year. There was no guarantee that this award would be re awarded but Members and Officers were certain that more improvements had been made.

The Portfolio holder for Regeneration and Planning applauded the work done by the Newcastle Housing Association Team which was evidenced by all targets having been met.

Section 4.2 of the report referred to the Council's frozen investment in Heritable Bank, the Portfolio holder stated that the Council would be reimbursed at least 90% of the money invested. It was also stated that the variance of 0.3% was also a good achievement even though the target showed as 0%.

The target listed under ER5 which referred to pollution inspections had been below target due to staff shortages and ER6 had suffered over the Christmas period with business preferring not to be inspected over the festive period. The Portfolio Holder the Environment and Recycling stated that both of these issues had now been resolved and the targets were now improving.

The Portfolio holder for Culture and Active Communities stated that CA1 was currently showing under target but that this was due to the transitional period between the closures of Jubilee 1 and Knutton Recreation Centre and the opening of the new Jubilee 2 Centre.

**Resolved:** That the content of the report be noted and it be recommended that the Council continue to monitor and scrutinise performance alongside finances.

**12. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2012-2013**

A report was submitted seeking Cabinet approval for the Communications Strategy which covered the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. The document outlined how the Council would use good communications to build a stronger reputation, involve and inform residents, engage effectively with stakeholders and improve customer satisfaction.

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

The borough council was now in the infancy of a new way of working modelled on beacon councils which involved more qualitative, face-to-face engagement and a focus on key front line services. The proposed changes were intended to help save approximately £15,000 for the 2012/13 financial year.

**Resolved:** That the Communications Strategy 2012-15 be approved.

**13. STRONGER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES STRATEGY 2012-2017**

A report was submitted providing Cabinet with a draft of the Stronger and Safer Communities Strategy 2012-2017. The Strategy had been developed in line with the other key Borough Council strategies on Economic Development and Health and Well-Being. A version of the report had been presented to the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 February 2012.

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

Members stated that the performance indicators listed on page 7 of Appendix A could be made clearer and that some benchmarks were required.

**RESOLVED:** (a) That the contents of the Strategy and the comments received from the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview & Scrutiny Committee be noted.

(b) That the list of Key Measure for Success on page 7 of the Appendix be made more clear and benchmarks added.

(c) That the Strategy be circulated to partners and communities and that updates on the Strategy's development be brought to future meetings of the Cabinet.

**14. LOCALITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP (LAP) REVIEW UPDATE**

Cabinet received a report which had been produced to provide an update on the progress of the Locality Action Partnerships (LAPs) Review and Development Plan.

The report built 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.

Cabinet had 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 enabled actions, milestones, leads and timeframes to be clearly set out and ensured that progress was made and monitored. The development plan had been approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 19 October 2011.

**RESOLVED:** (a) That the contents of the report be noted.

(b) That Cabinet support the continued work and development of LAPs

(c) That the potential issues relating to the full time LAP Co-ordinator post and issues around small projects funding related to the LAPs be noted.

(d) That Cabinet approve the continuation of the LAP Co-ordinator post to be funded through the Local Member Initiative Fund.

15. **PROGRESS REPORT REGARDING THE RYECROFT SCHEME AND APPOINTMENT OF RETAIL SPECIALIST CONSULTANCY**

Members received a report advising them 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.

The Council aimed 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).

Both officers from Staffordshire County and the Borough Council were satisfied that value for money had been demonstrated through the competitive tendering of the service. This meant 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 was noted that the brief for this commission required interested parties to submit fee proposals which demonstrated incentive to deliver a development partner.

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

**RESOLVED:** (a) That the progress made on taking forward the Ryecroft redevelopment scheme be noted.

(b) That the Portfolio Holder's decision to award the retail consultancy contract to Cushman Wakefield as the most economically advantageous tender be noted.

**16. TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND INITIATIVES**

A report was received updating Members on the activities of the embryonic town centre partnership and seeking 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.

**RESOLVED** (a) That Newcastle under Lyme B.C. becoming a director of the Newcastle town centre partnership company and officers be authorised 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 officers work 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 the Council be involved 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 its own campaign themed around what Newcastle town centre had 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 the preparation and execution of a town centre user survey be carried out, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning.

**17. REGISTER OF LOCALLY IMPORTANT BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES IN NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME SPD**

A report was submitted updating Members on 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. The list was provided to Cabinet Members and it was agreed that it be distributed to all Borough Councillors and comments invited.

**RESOLVED:** That the SPD relating to a Register of Locally Important Buildings and structures be adopted and distributed to all Elected Members for comments.

**18. RESPONSE TO PETITION TO PROTECT THE DOGS OF LYME VALLEY PARK FROM BEING POISONED**

Members received a report outlining the Council's response to a petition seeking action by the Council to prevent dogs being poisoned. The report gave a brief explanation of the issues that had occurred and actions that had been taken by the Council and the Police. No further incidents had been reported since September 2011.

**RESOLVED:** That a suitable notice be retained on the park notice board for a period of six months and that Officers review the requirement for further signs on a regular basis.

19. **PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH NEWCASTLE COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SUPPORT**

A report was submitted providing 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.

It was proposed that a formal Partnership Agreement be drawn up to help cement joint working and offer support to the 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 would provide a template for a similar agreement with NCVS.

**RESOLVED:** (a) That consideration be given to 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 be 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.

20. **TRANSPORTATION OF MATERIAL AND PROCESSING OF STREET SWEEPINGS**

Cabinet received a report informing it of the out come of a tendering Process for the contract for the Transportation of Material and Processing of Street Sweepings for Newcastle-under-Lyme BC - Tender Reference: NULBC/WTS-1.

All the bids had been evaluated both on cost and quality. The financial evaluation had 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. The evaluation indicated that H. Browns and Sons would provide the most economically advantageous tender and as such complied with the Councils Financial appraisal.

The cost of the tender had 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 indicated that the contract cost was within the available revenue budget for the integrated collection service.

**RESOLVED:** 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.

**21. JOINT HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW**

A report was submitted informing Members that the current Joint Housing Allocations Policy with Aspire Housing had been reviewed and to enable Cabinet Members to consider the proposed final draft policy changes for adoption.

**RESOLVED:** That the revised Joint Housing Allocations Policy be adopted.

**22. STRATEGIC TENANCY STRATEGY**

A report was received advising Members of the statutory duty Local Authorities now had to prepare and publish a Strategic Tenancy Strategy within 12 months of the publication of the Localism Act 2011. This duty applied to all Local Authorities whether or not they still retained housing stock and was seen as part of the authorities' strategic housing role, not their landlord role.

**RESOLVED:** That the Strategic Tenancy Strategy be adopted.

**23. LETTINGS OF SURPLUS OFFICE SPACE, CIVIC OFFICES, MERRIAL STREET, NEWCASTLE**

A report was submitted updating Members on the letting of surplus Civic office space to third party partner organisations. 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 had taken place and lease terms agreed with third party partners for their use of the surplus accommodation arising. This approach was 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.

**RESOLVED:** (a) That officers be authorised 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 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 be noted.

**24. KIDSGROVE TOWN HALL AND VICTORIA HALL**

Members received a report informing them 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 them as to the current situation in respect of the letting of surplus space to third party partner organisations.

**RESOLVED:** That the actions detailed below be approved:

- (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 Staffordshire County Council (who are in occupation) and that negotiations are ongoing with Staffordshire Police Authority in respect of relocating to the Town Hall from the existing Police Station.

**25. JUBILEE 2 UPDATE**

A report was submitted providing Members with information about progress relating to the capital build of the Jubilee 2 centre since the last update report considered at the meeting in December.

**RESOLVED:** (a) That the information contained within the report be received.

(b) That Cabinet convey its thanks to all partners involved in delivering this project, particularly those who contributed funding. Members specifically wished to thank North Staffs NHS Trust, Sport England, the Amateur Swimming Association, The Contractors, Robert Foster and Andy Arnott.

**26. CHESTERTON VISION**

A report was submitted informing Members about a partnership opportunity with Staffordshire County Council at Chesterton Vision. This opportunity would enable the Council to raise its profile through association with the £4.4M new centre, which was in one of the most deprived wards in the Borough. The Centre was available for children across the entire Borough and not just those resident in Chesterton.

**RESOLVED:**

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.

**27. IRRECOVERABLE ITEMS**

A report was submitted informing Members of items deemed to be irrecoverable. For a variety of reasons, from time to time, it was considered that certain items were unable to be recovered from debtors. When this occurred, it was necessary to write off these balances from the appropriate Council account records.

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.

The total being recommended for write off was £298,000 which represented only 0.3% of the total amount due for collection. This was comprised of business rates (£275,000); council tax (£15,000) and sundry debts (£8,000).

The overall impact of these write offs to the Borough Council was minimal as the write off of business rates was pooled nationally by central government and the writing off of council tax was shared between the precepting authorities – 12% of which was the Borough Council's share. The Council had made provision for unrecoverable sums and the amounts recommended for write-off were within the current budgeted bad debt provision.

**RESOLVED:**

That the items detailed in the Appendix be considered irrecoverable for the reasons stated and be written off.

**COUNCILLOR STEPHEN SWEENEY**  
**Chair**

## AMMENDMENT TO CORPORATE COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS & COMPLIMENTS POLICY

**Submitted by:** Executive Director Resources & Support Services

**Portfolio:** Customer Service and Transformation

**Ward(s) affected:** Non specific

### **Purpose of the Report**

To seek Cabinet approval to revise Section 9 the Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy (3Cs policy) to incorporate the latest Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) guidelines with regard to 'vexatious or serial complainants'; now referred to as 'unreasonable complainants'.

### **Recommendation**

**That Section 9 of the Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy (3Cs Policy) is revised, as set out in Appendix B of this report, to incorporate the Local Government Ombudsman new guidelines regarding 'unreasonable complainants'.**

### **Reasons**

1. The LGO has recently released new guidelines on how to deal with 'vexatious and serial complainants'; now referred to as 'unreasonable complainants'. Although the LGO recommendations are not statutory, many Local Authorities have already adopted the new guidance.
2. To ensure the Council is dealing with unreasonable complainants consistently, fairly and in line with LGO recommendations.

## 1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Council strives to deal with complainants in ways that are open, fair and proportionate. The current 3Cs Policy covers 'vexatious, professional and hobby complainants' and provides guidance on how to identify instances of, and deal with, these events. The latest LGO guidance goes much further by identifying and detailing what it now refers to as 'unreasonable complainant behaviour', which may include one or two isolated incidents, as well as 'unreasonably persistent behaviour', which is usually an accumulation of incidents or behaviour over a longer period. The LGO defines these as follows:

"For us, unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants are those complainants who, because of the nature or frequency of their contacts with an organisation, hinder the organisation's consideration of their or other people's, complaints."

- 1.2 The new guidance helps to ensure the right balance between dealing with the complaint and complainant fairly and effectively, and the level of resources being applied to achieve a conclusion.
- 1.3 The proposed changes will be of practical benefit and will assist the Council to deal with present and future cases falling within the LGO's new guidelines.

## **2. Issues**

- 2.1 Almost all complainants see themselves as pursuing justified complaints. A small number, under the new guidance, qualify as unreasonable or unreasonably persistent. A considered, policy-led approach to these complainants helps staff to understand clearly what is expected of them, what options for action are available, and who can authorise these actions. This information can be shared with complainants if they start to behave unreasonably and can assist in managing their expectations and their behaviour, as far as possible, while the substance of their complaint is addressed.
- 2.2 Section 9 of the current Policy is relatively brief. It covers high volume complaints from single individuals, extensive correspondence, simultaneous complaints to a range of officers, complaints being re-interpreted or extending and a reluctance to accept proposed resolutions. A review of the resultant workload is undertaken and the risks of compromising other workloads are considered.
- 2.3 The current Policy offers a resolution meeting to achieve a more manageable approach after which the Council will not engage in communication once an individual complaint is deemed to have been effectively dealt with through the complaints process. Section 9 of the current policy is attached at Appendix A.
- 2.4 The new guidelines from the LGO go further both in the identification and definition of unreasonable complaints and unreasonable behaviour, and in the range of actions which might be available to councils in such circumstances. A proposed revised Section 9 of the Policy, incorporating the new guidelines, is attached at Appendix B.
- 2.5 The new guidance also provides wider options for action for the Council to consider. Full details of the options are shown in Appendix B. It should also be noted that the Council's policies on equal opportunities, health and safety, and all other relevant policies will be considered in each case.
- 2.6 Although the LGO guidelines are not statutory, they are considered good practice. A number of these complaints will end up with the LGO. A complainant who has been treated as behaving unreasonably may make a complaint to the LGO about that element alone. The LGO is unlikely to be critical of the Council's action if it can demonstrate that it acted proportionately and in accordance with its adopted policy.

## **3 Options Considered**

- That the Council continues to operate its existing vexatious, professional and hobby complaints procedure within the 3Cs policy.
- That the Council revises Section 9 of the current 3Cs Policy in line with the latest LGO guidelines.

## **4 Proposal**

- 4.1 That the LGO guidelines be adopted as detailed in the revised Section 9 of the Council's Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy, shown as Appendix B.

## **5. Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- To follow the latest guidelines issued by the LGO
- To ensure the council is consistent and fair in its dealings with unreasonable complainants

- To provide a robust process of identifying and dealing with unreasonable complainants.

## **6. List of Appendices**

**Appendix A:** Existing - Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy Revised October 2011 Section 9: Vexatious, professional and hobby complaints

**Appendix B:** Proposed - Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy Revised May 2012 Section 9: Unreasonable Complaints and Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour

## **Appendix A - Existing**

### **Complaints, Comments, and Compliments Policy Revised Oct 11**

#### **Section 9**

##### **9. Vexatious, Professional and Hobby Complainants**

**9.1** It is possible for a small number of customers to generate a level of complaint workload which risks compromising either service delivery in the service being complained about or the Council's ability to respond to complaints received. These instances may involve:

- High volume of complaints submitted, often with a reluctance to accept resolution being offered.
- High volume of complaints, with complaints submitted simultaneously to various Officers.
- Extensive correspondence on individual complaints, with complaints being re-interpreted or extended.

**9.2** Such complaints need to be managed appropriately to:

- Avoid genuine, well founded complaints made by frequent complainants becoming 'lost' within the overall volume of that customer's correspondence.
- Avoid such complaints from having a negative impact on service delivery or general complaint management.

**9.3** The 2 Stage complaint process will minimise the negative impact of such complainants through avoiding engagement in lengthy exchanges of communications. However, where an Executive Director, Head of Service or the Customer Relations Officer becomes concerned that an individual complainant is generating a workload which risks compromising other areas of work, the Customer Relations Officer will review the volume of work being generated, the customer's expectations of the Council, and the nature of complaints made and responses received. Where the Customer Relations Officer judges that the complainant is generating excessive workload, the complainant will be invited to meet him/her to discuss the complaint/correspondence volume and the impact this is having with a view to agreeing a more manageable approach to addressing the customer's concerns.

**9.4** The Council will not engage in communication once an individual complaint is deemed to have been effectively dealt with through the complaint process.

## Appendix B - Proposed

### Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy Revised May 2012

#### Section 9

#### **9. Unreasonable Complaints and Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour**

**9.1** This element of the policy covers both unreasonable complainant behaviour (which may include one or two isolated incidents) and unreasonably persistent behaviour (usually an accumulation of incidents or behaviour over a longer period). Unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants are those complainants who, because of the nature or frequency of their contacts with an organisation, hinder the organisation's consideration of their complaints or other people's complaints.

**9.2** The following are examples of unreasonable actions and behaviours which can be time consuming to manage and can interfere with proper consideration of the complaint. These have been advised by the Local Government Ombudsman.

- Refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refusing to co-operate with the complaints investigation process.
- Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeking to have them replaced.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Denying or changing statements made at an earlier stage.
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant new information at a late stage.
- Raising numerous, detailed but unimportant questions; insisting that they are answered.
- Covertly recording meetings and conversations.
- Submitting falsified documents from themselves or others.
- Adopting a 'scatter gun' approach: pursuing parallel complaints on the same issue with a variety of other organisations or departments.
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff with lengthy telephone calls, emails to numerous council staff, or detailed letters every few days, and expecting immediate responses.
- Submitting repeat complaints with minor additions/variations that the complainant insists make these 'new' complaints.
- Refusing to accept the decision; repeatedly arguing points with no new evidence.

This list is not exhaustive.

These, and similar actions, which detract from the Council's ability to properly consider a complaint, will be deemed by Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council as unreasonable actions and behaviours and will be considered 'trigger' actions or behaviours which may cause the elements of this policy as set out in section 9.4 below to be invoked.

**9.3** Before any of these actions are invoked the complainant will be advised of this policy and warned that restrictive actions may need to be applied if their behaviour continues. If a decision is taken to apply restricted access, the Council will write to the complainant to explain:

- why the decision has been taken
- what it means for his or her contacts with the organisation

- how long any restrictions will last
- what the complainant can do to have the decision regarding their behaviour reviewed.

Any review requested by the complainant of the Council's actions or proposed actions under section 9 of this policy will be undertaken by the Head of Customer and ICT Services. The complainant will be informed of the outcome of that review.

**9.4** Where an Executive Director, Head of Service or the Customer Relations Officer identifies unreasonable actions and behaviours, the Customer & ICT Business Manager will review the volume of work being generated, the behaviour of the complainant, their expectations of the Council, and the nature of complaints made and responses received. Where the Customer & ICT Business Manager considers that the complainant is acting or behaving unreasonably as indicated in section 9.2 above, one or more of the following procedures may be adopted to bring the matter to a conclusion without further distractions:

- Placing limits on the number and duration of contacts with staff per week or month.
- Offering a restricted time slot for any necessary calls.
- Limiting the complainant to one medium of contact (telephone, letter, email etc).
- Requiring the complainant to communicate only with one named member of staff.
- Requiring any personal contacts to take place in the presence of a witness, and in a suitable location.
- Refusing to register and process further complaints about the same matter.
- Advising the complainant, after a decision on the complaint has been made, that future correspondence will be read and placed on the file but not acknowledged, unless it contains significant new material or information.
- Inviting the complainant to meet the Customer & ICT Business Manager or other senior officer to discuss the complaint/correspondence nature and/or volume and its impact with a view to agreeing a more manageable approach to addressing the complainant's concerns.

Decisions made and actions taken will be proportionate to the nature and frequency of the complainant's current contacts. Decisions will take the complainant's behaviour and individual circumstances fully into account. The Council's policies on equal opportunities, health and safety, and all other relevant policies will also be taken into account. In particular, the Customer & ICT Business Manager will ensure help is offered to find a suitable independent advocate, if the complainant has different needs other than those normally provided by Customer Services.

**9.5** Where the Council's consideration of the complaint is concluded, the Council may end all communication with the complainant on the issue and, where appropriate, refer the complainant to the Local Government Ombudsman. Before this action is taken the Head of Customer and ICT Services will review the handling of the complaint to ensure:

- the complaint has been investigated properly;
- any decision reached on it is the right one;
- communications with the complainant have been adequate;
- the complainant is not now providing any significant new information that might affect the organisation's view on the complaint.

**9.6** In exceptional circumstances, where the Council considers there may be nothing to gain from following through all stages of its complaints procedure, the Local Government Ombudsman may be asked by the Council to consider the matter before its own complaints procedure has been exhausted. The complainant will be notified of this request.

- 9.7** The Customer & ICT Business Manager will ensure a coordinated response is made where any cross-departmental issues are involved and ensure a single, coordinated response to the complainant.
- 9.8** The Customer & ICT Business Manager will keep adequate records to show when decisions are taken in pursuance of section 9 of this policy. The Customer & ICT Business Manager will also ensure any further communications from the complainant are checked to identify any significant new information. When complaints about new issues are made, these will be treated on their individual merits. Any restrictions previously applied may or may not be considered to be still appropriate or necessary. These restrictions (see section 9.4 above) will be lifted and relationships returned to normal unless there are good grounds to extend the restrictions. The Customer & ICT Business Manager will keep the application of any restrictions under review. The Ombudsman suggests a 3 month period of review. Any evidence will be gathered over the set period of review. If the unreasonably persistent complainant adheres to the restrictions they will be lifted and the complainant notified. In exceptional circumstances, restrictions could be permanent.
- 9.9** Should the Customer & ICT Business Manager be the subject of the complaint, another senior officer, not connected to the service, will be appointed by the Head of Customer and ICT Services to undertake the responsibilities of the Customer & ICT Business Manager in applying this Policy.

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# Agenda Item 4

## NEWCASTLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND YEAR ONE ACTION PLAN

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

**Principal author: Simon Smith, Regeneration Manager**

**Portfolio: Regeneration and Planning**

**Ward(s) affected: All**

### **Purpose of the Report**

To consider the new Borough Economic Development Strategy, as amended following consultation, and a first year Action Plan accompanying this showing the steps and resources required to take forward the Strategy.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. That the Economic Development Strategy and the first year Action Plan be approved.**
- 2. That arrangements be made to publicise the strategy.**

### **Reasons**

To ensure that the economy of the Borough is effectively promoted and to encourage common thinking and complementary action amongst local partners to help achieve this.

## **1. Background**

Cabinet has received a number of reports since last summer on the preparation of a new Economic Development Strategy for the Borough. At its last meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> March Cabinet received a report on comments which had been received on the draft Economic Development Strategy 2012-17, following consultation on the draft. The appendix to this report listed all the representations made (in summary form), set out your offices comments on these and whether (and how) the draft should be modified in the light of the comments received. It was agreed that the amended draft strategy would then be brought to the next meeting for approval. It was also agreed that the final version of the strategy be accompanied by a first year action plan demonstrating in more detail timescales, lead bodies and resource implications and that the approved version of the strategy be re-formatted with plans and photographs added and printed for wider distribution.

## **2. Issues**

The purpose of an economic development strategy is to consider the key issues facing the area, consider action which might address these, in the light of the strengths and opportunities the Borough has to offer and to work with partner organisations, including the local business community to agree a programme of action on the basis of jointly held priorities.

The consultation process, discussed at your last meeting, is an important part of this process, since it allows for challenge and also allows our won initial draft to be strengthened by the contribution of others.

### 3. **Options Considered**

In the nature of the drafting of a strategy and the consideration of all the comments received via consultation a huge variation of options have been considered, particularly in the case of how best should a particular objective be pursued. This discussion was the subject of much of your previous report.

### 4. **Proposal**

The amended Strategy and Year One Action Plan are appended to this report. Since your last report, the Strategy has been revised along two lines

- (i) Modifications and additions have been made following the consultation process as reported to your March meeting. This has strengthened the strategy since it has added detail which partners were able to put forward and has corrected (or refined) matters which consultees have brought to our attention.
- (ii) It is also slimmer. The draft strategy has, in effect, been split into a 'snappier' Strategy and a more detailed Action Plan (for Year One) which will be refreshed each year over the five year life of the strategy. So while it is intended that the broad thrust of the strategy will have a life of five years (in order to see demonstrable progress over a longer time horizon), the Action Plan(s) will reflect changing circumstances and (sometimes unforeseen) opportunities as they arise and should always be current.

### 5. **Implementation, Monitoring and Review**

A supplementary document to this strategy, an annual Action Plan, accompanies this strategy. While the strategy itself is intended to endure for the full five year period, hopefully demonstrating the effectiveness of the priorities which the Council and its partners have chosen to put their weight behind, the annual action plans will be prepared afresh each January / February for the following year (April to March).

The annual Action Plans will set out in more detail how the aims and objectives agreed will be carried out. Like the strategy itself, these will also be based around the four themes of

- Economy
- Place and Infrastructure
- People, and
- Image & Marketing

The Action Plans will identify lead bodies, timescales for implementation, costs (where appropriate) and how these will be funded.

At the end of each year the Council will publish an annual progress report, reviewing the year in terms of how well (or not) it has achieved the targets set as well as agreeing the action plan for the following year. The annual report will give decision makers in the Borough Council and their partners the opportunity to assess success to date, remind ourselves why initiatives are being pursued and the join-up between them. The review may also take the opportunity to consider fresh Government initiatives or changes in the economic or financial landscape and capitalize on them. It may also suggest changes in emphasis or priority (and perhaps what might no longer be pursued so that new things might be tried).

A fundamental question (as with all strategies) is what will success look like? This is answered in part through text (success in achieving the actions we have set ourselves) and in part through the

publication of a number of performance indicators appropriate to the four themes (business, skills etc).

At the end of the five year period covered by this strategy (2017), the Council will publish an evaluation report of the effectiveness of the strategy and assess the successes achieved and what might have been done better (or differently). This more detailed review will be undertaken after the period of the Strategy by which time changes in the economic and financial circumstances of the country (and the area) will be clearer and it may then be more appropriate to consider more fundamental changes in direction, including new initiatives.

6. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

To ensure a commitment to agreed objectives (the Strategy) while also ensuring that actions are flexible and reflect changing opportunities and circumstances (the Action Plan(s)).

7. **Outcomes Linked to Corporate Priorities**

An Economic Development Strategy falls squarely within the Borough Council's corporate priority of regeneration. It also makes some contribution towards the Council's priorities of housing quality and disadvantaged communities. Performance information in respect of planned targets and outcomes is included in the Year One Action Plan.

8. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

It is not a statutory requirement on the Council to prepare an Economic Development Strategy though it is good practise to do so and to take decisions against the background of agreed priorities, up to date data and following consultation with partners.

9. **Equality Impact Assessment**

No differential impact had been identified. Specific actions which are designed to improve the prospects of particular sections of the community (for instance, those without work), will be subject to subsequent reports, which may themselves require an EIA.

10. **Financial and Resource Implications**

The financial and resource implications which flow from the strategy are set out not in the strategy itself but in each annual Action Plan. There is not presumption that funding will be met by the inclusion of an action within the Action Plan and any action requiring Borough Council expenditure will be subject to its own report and justification.

11. **Major Risks**

These will be dealt with project by project.

12. **Key Decision Information**

This report has been included in the forward plan and the strategy will affect more than two wards of the Borough. Approval for specific expenditure will be subject to more detailed later reports.

13. **Earlier Cabinet Resolutions**

At its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2012, Cabinet resolved

- (a) That the draft strategy be amended in the light of comments received.

- (b) That Cabinet given further consideration to any other improvements / modifications Members wish to see made to the draft
- (c) That the modified (final) version of the strategy be reported to next meeting for approval.
- (d) That the final version of the strategy be accompanied by a first year action plan demonstrating in more detail timescales, lead bodies and resource implications.
- (e) That the approved version of the strategy be re-formatted with plans and photographs added and printed for wider distribution.

14. **List of Appendices**

Newcastle Economic Development Strategy 2012-17

Newcastle Economic Development Strategy 2012-17, First Year Action Plan 2012-13

# Introduction

## **Our Approach**

*In a nutshell:*

This strategy is about how Newcastle Borough Council, working with the business community and local partners can improve the economic prospects of the area. It has been shaped with the following aspects in mind:

The strategy has four themes, arranged in the following sections

- *'Business'* – Strengthening the business base
- *'Place and Infrastructure'* – Physical transformation
- *'People'* – Transforming ambition
- *'Image and Marketing'* – Transforming perceptions

The strategy will set the context for long-term investment. Each section sets out a series of actions the Borough Council proposes to undertake (or work with others to undertake) to take forward the stated objectives.

Each section looks at the **strengths** which the Borough has to offer and the **opportunities** which may be capitalised on and develops **proposals** which take advantage of these.

A number of **challenges** are identified relating to the economy/skills mix/image etc. and interventions to address or mitigate them.

Despite the present economic circumstances and the impact this has on public finances, the Borough Council will continue to approach this strategy with **ambition**. That is, we will set ourselves challenging goals and set out a programme of action which will seek to improve the economic fortunes of the Borough.

This will be done by building a broad **consensus**, through consultation with our partners and with the local business community who will both help influence the work that the Borough Council should undertake and will also play their own parts in delivering elements of this strategy.

A key element of the approach will be **prioritisation**. The Council (and public budgets in general) cannot do everything. It is important therefore to focus on the things which are going to have the greatest impact and which the Borough Council is best placed to influence. Where possible, we will follow the principal that 'resources follow priorities'.

Some of our priorities are sub-regional (rather than specific to the Borough) and here we will work closely with partners from throughout North Staffordshire.

The strategy is accompanied with an annual **action plan**. This sets out in greater detail who will lead on each activity, what it will achieve, what it will cost, how this will be funded together with milestones.

We will learn from past interventions and use this **experience** to overcome barriers to change; we will be open to external challenge and use this to learn from others' experiences too.

Much of what is discussed is about **change** – doing what we have done before may not be enough. The Borough Council and its partners have shown that they have the capacity to

effect change and this is shown by the achievements listed in the section on 'Building Prosperity' (the Borough Council's previous economic development strategy).

### **Transforming North Staffordshire**

'Transforming North Staffordshire' (North Staffordshire's Economic Development Strategy) was adopted by the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership (comprising the Borough Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and Staffordshire County Council) in 2008 following detailed economic analysis, optioneering, consultation and participation between principle authors, The Work Foundation and local partners. It provides the **sub-regional framework** for pursuing the economic development of the area as a whole.

This wider strategy provides much of the analysis, evidence base and rationale for this Borough-specific strategy. 'Transforming North Staffordshire' has a number of detailed recommendations, arranged by;

- Business
- Place and Infrastructure
- People, and
- Image and marketing

This format is adopted as an appropriate framework for this strategy, demonstrating how the Borough Council and its partners propose to take forward its recommendations with the specific objective of improving the fortunes of the Borough.

### **The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)**

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was established in 2011 following the Government's decision to disband Regional Development Agencies. Although including representation from local government and the two universities, it is private sector led (with a business majority on the Board) and its role is to act as the primary body working to advance the economic performance of the whole county. The LEP conducts much of its work through sub-groups dealing with Inward Investment, Enterprise & Skills, Land & Housing, Funding, Broadband, Planning, and Low Carbon. Several references are made to the LEP in the body of this strategy.

## Newcastle-under-Lyme: A Borough Profile in Figures (Data source NOMIS 2011, unless otherwise stated)

The Borough of Newcastle is based around the historic 800 year old **market town** of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Kidsgrove, six miles to the north, is the Borough's second town. The Borough is part urban (together with neighbouring Stoke-on-Trent forming the western part of the North Staffordshire conurbation) and part rural. The Borough is also home to the country's largest campus university, Keele University.

The town lies along the A34 and is well served by the M6, the A500 and the A50. Lying on the West Coast Main Line, four trains an hour connect Stoke-on-Trent Railway Station, 3 miles from Newcastle Town Centre, to London Euston (1 hr 27 minutes) and Manchester (37 minutes). Four airports, Manchester, East Midlands, Liverpool and Birmingham lie within 50 to 75 minutes drive.

The Borough's **population** has grown from 122,200 in 2000 to around 125,000 today and is projected to grow to 130,700 in 2025. There are currently 50,738 **households** in the borough and over the next five years it is planned that this will rise by 1591 to 52,329. Over the five year period 2005-10, 1485 new houses were completed, an average annual rate of house building of 297. The figure for Staffordshire as a whole over the same period was 13,580 (2716 p.a.)

Around 50,400 people **work** in the Borough, of which 6100 are self employed and 44,300 are employees. The 70:30 split between full-time and part-time employment closely reflects the national pattern. The level of self-employment (6.9%) is lower than the GB average of 9.1%.

Manufacturing accounts for 9.2% of **employment** (GB: 10.2%), retailing and hospitality 30.2% (GB: 23.4%), transport and communications 14% (GB: 5.8%), finance, IT and business services 12.4% (GB: 22.0%) and local government, education and health 25.5% (GB: 27.0%).

Amongst the Borough's more significant private sector **employers** are Phones 4U Ltd., Leoni Wiring, Ibstock Brick, Regina Plastics, Jacuzzi, science park companies such as Bio composites, Siemens Wind Power UK, Capita, GVA and Cobra Bio, engineering firms such as Converteam, KMF Engineering, Phoenix Dynamics and Simon-Hartley, in the logistics field, New Look, George, TK Maxx, Fedex and AAH, and a wide range of professional services firms including Knights, MHL, Hacking Ashton and The Aspire Group. Keele University and Newcastle College are significant employers in the Higher and Further Education sectors.

The local resident workforce is slightly more **qualified** than of the country at large, i.e. 32.5% are qualified to degree level (c.f. GB 31.3%, West Midlands region 26.0%), 53.5% have two or more A levels (GB 51.0%, West Midland region 45.4%), though the numbers with no qualifications (13.4%) is a little higher than GB (11.3%), but less than the West Midlands region (15.1%).

**Earnings** on the other hand fall behind the national average with the median annual pay for full-time workers in 2010 at £20,429, which is only 78.6% of the GB figure (and only 85.7% of the regional median).

**Job seeker** numbers in the Borough (2.6%) are below the average figure for GB (3.4%) but the numbers on Employment Support Allowance or Incapacity Benefits (7.3%) are higher (GB 6.6%). (All figures November 2010). At July 2011 there were 158 'NEETs' in the Borough (16 to 18 year old not in Employment, Education or Training), the wards with the highest numbers being Holditch (16), Chesterton (11) and Cross Heath (10). (In this case actual numbers rather than percentages are given to give a better feel for the scale).

Rates of **new business formation** (based on the number of new VAT registrations as a % of total stock) at 9.6% is a little lower than the national average of 10.2% but higher than the regional

average of 9.4%. 'De-registrations' (businesses folding) is 7.9% of the stock which is a little higher than the national (7.3%) and regional (7.2%) figures.

**Shop vacancy** rates in Newcastle Town Centre (11.1% in May/June 2011) are broadly the same as the average for town centres across the UK (11.2%).

As an indication of scale, Newcastle under Lyme Town Centre has a **commercial floorspace** of 105,343 m<sup>2</sup>. This compares with Stoke-on-Trent City Centre (203,077 m<sup>2</sup>); Stafford Town Centre (110,282 m<sup>2</sup>); Macclesfield Town Centre (96,680 m<sup>2</sup>); Stoke Town Centre (75,391 m<sup>2</sup>); Longton Town Centre 66,965 m<sup>2</sup>; and Leek (46,580 m<sup>2</sup>).

Over the ten year period 2000-2010, 89.3 hectares of **employment land** was developed in the Borough, an average annual rate of development of 8.93 ha p.a. Across Staffordshire as a whole 583.7 hectares were developed (58.3 ha p.a.)

Further information about the Borough can be found at [www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk)

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## **‘Building Prosperity’**

‘Building Prosperity’ was the title of the Borough Council’s Economic Development Strategy 2005-10. This was built around six core priorities;

- Creating a strong and vibrant town centre
- Encouraging the growth of high value business clusters
- Encouraging entrepreneurialism and the development of the small firms sector
- Demanding high quality built design and investing in the quality of the public realm
- Promoting the Borough
- Linking the benefits of new investment and new jobs to the less well off sections of the community.

Notable successes during this time were;

- Developing Jubilee 2, the £10.5 million new Health & Wellbeing Centre in the town centre
- Maintaining a strong independent retail sector in the town and a busy street market
- Refurbishing Lancaster Building (now partly re-let for offices), and the Guildhall, (now a customer contact centre)
- Enabling the development of the magnificent new Further Education College a short distance to the west of the town centre
- Developing an informal partnership with the business community that has delivered a programme of town centre events
- Developing a Strategic Investment Framework (SIF) for the town centre
- Successfully lobbying against the expansion of Tesco at Trent Vale to protect the vibrancy of Newcastle Town Centre
  
- Completing the site preparation and infrastructure for the 70 acre expansion of Keele Science Park
- Developing high specification innovation centres at the Science Park to encourage high value businesses to invest here
  
- Introduction of the ‘Business Boost’ competition – rewarding high growth potential
- Promoting ‘Enterprise in Schools’ (developing the ‘world of work’ programme with Finest, the Carousel of Opportunity in primary schools, support for the career academy at Newcastle College)
  
- Launch of the Town Centre shop-front grants award project in the town centre conservation area
- Established an annual Design Awards scheme led by the Civic Society
  
- Working with both Instaffs and Make it Stoke-on-Trent to attract new businesses to the area
- The completion of the Lymedale Park (3600 jobs) and High Carr Business Park (650 jobs) development schemes together with the smaller Knutton and Silverdale industrial estates
- Produced the Town Centre (‘New Opportunities’) investment brochure
- The significant housing development begun at the former Silverdale Colliery and former Collins & Aikman (Cross Heath) sites having secured considerable sums of external funding and investment in partnership work
- Secured substantial investment that delivered the ‘BREEAM Outstanding’ ‘Blue Planet’ development in the Chatterley Valley
- Newcastle Business Panel continuing successfully
  
- The successful delivery of the Housing Market Renewal Programme in Newcastle centred on the Knutton, Cross Heath and Silverdale areas (providing an injection of new housing, skills training, building facelifts and investment in public realm)

- The establishment of the Jobs, Employment and Training Scheme (JETS) and the Family Employment Initiative (FEI) supporting people into training and work.

These successes are important not only in their own right but also as a means of reminding and inspiring the Borough Council and our partners that things can be achieved over the long-term as long as we;

- Are clear about our priorities
- Are prepared to collaborate between our different organisations (and not be precious about allocating or claiming credit)
- Are prepared to commit time and the necessary resources
- Stick with it.

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## **The Strategy at a Glance**

### **Business – Objective: Strengthening the Business Base**

1. Developing a long-term economic strategy built on ‘diverse specialisation’, aiming to increase both the proportion of knowledge intensive employment and the proportion of high quality jobs in retail, leisure, tourism and distribution
2. Developing a co-ordinated enterprise strategy
3. Supporting development of emergent knowledge intensive sectors, building on higher and further education expertise
4. Supporting development of the professional and business services sector
5. Making the most of the Borough’s successful logistics sector
6. Seeking to optimise the benefit to local companies from public sector procurement.

### **Place and Infrastructure – Objective: Physical Transformation**

7. Drawing up a Masterplan to guide the future development of Newcastle Town Centre
8. Bringing forward proposals for retail and business accommodation in Newcastle Town Centre with priority placed on growing its professional services and a distinctive retail offer
9. Promoting the further development of Keele Science and Business Park
10. Enabling the development of higher quality housing for current and future residents, with an explicit aim to increase the attractiveness of North Staffordshire as a home to affluent residents
11. Bringing forward new sites for employment and housing through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document to enable the further growth of the Borough.

### **People – Objective: Transforming Ambition**

12. Raising skills, reduce worklessness and raise aspirations as a core element of all transformational strategies
13. Working towards getting the right skills mix to increase productivity
14. Stimulating demand for higher skills and create opportunities for people to acquire skills for current and future industrial structure

### **‘Image and Marketing’ – Objective - Transforming Perceptions**

15. Developing an external marketing strategy for the Borough
16. Improving the quality of life offer for current and future residents
17. Supporting the development of North Staffordshire’s ‘experience economy’
18. Using the Strategic Investment Framework as the basis for investment in the cultural and retail experience of Newcastle Town Centre.

## **Economy – transforming the business base**

### **1. Developing a long-term economic strategy built on ‘diverse specialisation’, aiming to increase both the proportion of knowledge intensive employment and the proportion of high quality jobs in retail, leisure, tourism and distribution**

The most successful places are those that build on their existing strength and develop diverse specialisms. This approach is adopted in this strategy as the Borough Council's approach to promoting the Borough, attracting new business and increasing employment opportunities. Whilst the Borough Council will continue to work with its partners in the LEP and North Staffordshire on sub-regional objectives, it will also promote Newcastle's distinctiveness, as reflected in:

- A differentiated town centre offer
- A strong professional and financial services sector
- Prospects for accommodating higher quality housing
- A thriving research based university and science park
- Borough-specific and town centre-specific marketing initiatives aimed at attracting inward investment.

### **2. Developing a co-ordinated enterprise strategy**

North Staffordshire has a strong network of business support providers who encourage the growth and development of new and existing enterprises. It also benefits from a network of enterprise centres which offer a supportive environment to new enterprises and in some cases the capacity to grow on to larger units where required. However, our business formation rate is still below the national average and business survival remains a challenge with a business failure rate that is slightly above the national average.

In 2011, the delivery of government funded business support changed with the national Business Link model changing to a web based service. Each local area was encouraged by Government to determine its own needs and demand for locally responsive face to face enterprise support.

The LEP is taking a lead role in creating the Enterprise Action Plan for Staffordshire, building on the actions that local partners are already undertaking and also ensuring that entrepreneurs are signposted to the support they need.

The LEP is developing a range of measures designed to put business first and they have already hosted a range of ‘access to finance’ events to connect businesses with sources of finance to support growth.

The LEP has stated that it will continue to develop a range of measures designed to put business first including:

- Promotion of the area as a premier investment location at a national and international level using the ‘Make it’ brand
- Introduction of a single point of contact for business
- Introduction of the Staffordshire Planning Charter
- Development of a business mentoring service
- Support to deliver broadband access and superfast broadband across the area
- Creation of a LEP growth fund to provide start up finance for business investment

Whilst the delivery of business advice, coaching or mentoring sits outside of the normal activity of the Borough Council we will support the services of our partners by signposting and promoting them to local businesses. Where we are able to add value, for example through co-ordination or hosting activity this will also be on offer. Although the opportunity to attract external funding is now much reduced, the Borough Council will support co-ordinated bids, where the opportunity arises, to attract funding for enterprise activity. To this end we will work with the local business community to develop through the Regional Growth Fund.

Developing entrepreneurs starts at an early age, and in addition to the actions that our partners already take to support enterprise in schools the Borough Council will continue to work with the District Employer Engagement Partnership (DEEP) to develop innovative ways to engage young people in enterprise and to seek ways to fund its continuance.

Further actions include:

- Working with Business Enterprise Support (BES) to help in the delivery of its enterprise support schemes, including the New Enterprise Allowance Scheme, setting up a network of volunteer mentors and ERDF funded business coaching in the Borough
- Continuing to promote enterprise in schools, predominantly through DEEP which brings together schools, colleges, training providers and local employers to influence educational delivery to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Supporting continuation of the annual Newcastle Business Boost competition. This brings together public, private and education sectors in support of local businesses and, since its inception in 2008, has provided in excess of £40,000 direct investment in their growth and development
- Continuing to signpost businesses to appropriate sources of assistance, including those offered by the Borough Council such as rates advice, licensing, waste disposal, planning and environmental health. We will ensure that advice on the council's website is kept up-to-date and includes links to appropriate partner sites
- Advocating for the delivery of Superfast Broadband in the key areas of Keele University & Science Park, Newcastle town centre and across North Staffordshire.

### **3. Supporting the development of emergent knowledge intensive sectors, building on higher & further education expertise**

North Staffordshire benefits from being home to both Keele and Staffordshire Universities who offer a range of science, creative, technology, business and humanities opportunities for research and study. These are the drivers of the area's knowledge intensive jobs both through enterprise support to graduates and through the accommodation and services offered to business. The Borough is also home to Newcastle under Lyme College, which is consistently in the national top 25% of further education colleges nationally for success rates in AS/A level and advanced vocational courses and has excellent progression rates to Higher Education. Additionally, the Staffordshire Business Innovation Centre (the BIC) provides support to innovators, entrepreneurs and small & medium sized businesses on new product and new business ideas.

Our challenge is to use this expertise to retain and grow employment in the Borough and drive a more prosperous economy.

### Specialist Business Accommodation

Keele University & Science Park is the Borough's flagship accommodation offer to knowledge intensive industries. Tenant businesses provide a variety of jobs spanning ICT, Medical Healthcare, low carbon and technology. The high specification of the Innovation Centre buildings and the strong links to the University naturally attracts businesses specialising in research and development and higher level skills.

Keele University Science Park continues to innovate its support for knowledge intensive businesses. The Nova Centre, which opened in April 2012 is designed to offer a follow-on support package for early stage companies who will benefit from a 2-year business growth programme and office accommodation. For those who are not ready to take business accommodation there is also a 'Virtual Office' offer. The Nova Centre targets businesses that can demonstrate plans for significant growth, employment opportunities, provision of new products and services, introduction of new skills to the area, or are highly innovative.

### Knowledge Transfer

The recently established Business and Innovation Group (BIG), a partnership between Keele University Science Park, Keele University, Staffordshire University and the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce will be the prime driving force to provide businesses with specialist and strategic advice. Targeted sectors will include professional services, creative, medical, manufacturing technology and environmental technologies and the group will work closely with the LEP to deliver the service.

### Low Carbon & Environmental Sustainability

Keele University and Science Park is the primary driver for growth in the environmental sustainability field, although it should also be noted that the Borough is also home to Converteam who provide valued jobs in this sector designing and manufacturing components for the wind turbine industry. In addition to the Science Park accommodation and business offer, the University is committed to developing an environmentally aware and outward facing campus with an extensive commitment to carbon reduction including plans to introduce renewable energy on campus and BREEAM 'very good' status to all new and refurbished buildings. The sustainability hub is also a living example of a sustainable building in action.

### Superfast Broadband

The LEP has recently celebrated a government award of £7.5 million to support broadband provision in Staffordshire. This will be matched by a £7.5 million investment from Staffordshire County Council which is designed to support the roll out of broadband to those areas that don't currently have it, upgrading of broadband speeds and also superfast broadband in the urban area.

### Manufacturing

Newcastle has a strong manufacturing base which employs a significant number of people. Support for this sector is principally delivered through skills development such as the Staffordshire STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) centre and through seeking inward investment of manufacturing companies and making suitable employment land available for development.

## Creative Industries

Our partners have identified that digital creative firms are a potential growth area for the Borough. Attracting this type of firm relies on the availability of superfast and reliable broadband, the right style of business premises and the opportunity to cluster with other digital technology firms. This support infrastructure is substantially provided by our partners as set out above and in other sections of this strategy.

Further actions include:

- Working with the LEP and its partners in the higher and further education sectors aiming to encourage the growth of creative industries, promote technology transfer and provide specialist business accommodation
- The Borough Council will support the re-use of existing property in the town for businesses such as graphic design, film and media, publishing, animation, music and computer/console games software development including, where suitable, its own premises
- The Borough Council will continue to work with Keele University and Science Park to encourage development of Keele Science Park Phase 3 and attract knowledge intensive businesses to Keele Science Park through marketing support, lobbying for infrastructure investment and planning advice
- The Borough Council is working with Keele University to explore means by which its business support model might be rolled out to suitable businesses in Newcastle Town Centre.

## **4. Supporting the development of the professional and business services sector**

Professional and business services are an important knowledge intensive sector that offers the potential for further growth in Newcastle. Our approach is based around three main activity areas:

- Ensuring the availability of appropriate accommodation (both commercial and residential), which is necessary to attract and retain highly skilled workers in these sectors. Proposals for new business accommodation in Newcastle Town Centre and new executive housing are contained in the Place and Infrastructure section
- Working with Finest, the North Staffordshire professional services network and host to future Finest, which aims to develop and create opportunities for future leaders of North Staffordshire. As Finest members, the Borough Council will continue to work with them in promoting networking, good practice, increasing business opportunities and by hosting events
- Supportive procurement practises – this is dealt with in more detail in section six.

## **5. Making the most of the Borough's successful logistics sector**

Logistics has been a major growth area in the North Staffordshire economy which is due largely to the good connectivity that the area enjoys and our position close to the centre of the country.

It is mistakenly believed that logistics employs fewer people per square metre of floor space than manufacturing, pays poorer wages and requires a lower range of skills. Recent research from Instaffs UK however has demonstrated the benefits of logistics

employment. For instance, three of the large distribution firms based at Lymedale Park, (New Look, TK Maxx and George) are national or regional headquarters and employ a considerable number of people in skilled technical and managerial roles as well as drivers and warehouse staff. These three firms employ around 2100 people between them and with the exception of high technology manufacturers; most manufacturing firms occupying similar sized buildings would not necessarily employ more people, offer better pay or require a greater range of skills than these.

- There are two large distribution buildings, Alto 415 at Lymedale and Blue Planet at Chatterley Valley (415,000 sq. ft and 385,000 sq. ft. respectively) which remain un-let. Both were commissioned in advance of the current economic downturn and the Borough Council will continue to work with their developers and agents to find suitable occupiers for these buildings (either logistics or manufacturing). Each of these, when occupied, could bring several hundreds of new jobs to the area
- The Borough Council plans to continue the development of Chatterley Valley on land to the west of the Blue Planet building, (described as Chatterley Sidings and Peacock Hay). In the absence of further financial support from Advantage West Midlands, the high cost of site preparation and off site highway improvements may now make this difficult to realise. We will work with the landowners and their agents to explore alternative means of bringing forward Peacock Hay for light industrial development without the need for such extensive ground modelling and highway investment as was previously envisaged.

## **6. Seeking to optimise the benefit to local companies from public sector procurement**

The Borough Council spends around £20 million each year on procuring goods and services. A number of actions have already been undertaken to make doing business with the Borough Council as easy as possible for local businesses. This includes a dedicated procurement section of the website, work undertaken with Finest to develop a 'Highway Code' for collaboration, and regular contact with local business organisations.

Sensitive procurement can have a positive effect on the local economy and the environment. Larger contracts frequently include a requirement for bidders to demonstrate how they would maximise economic benefit to the local area and minimize environmental impact. Information is also required on the sustainability of a provider's supply chain and sourcing arrangements. For example, the tender specification for the Jubilee 2 café required the identification of average food miles linked to the provision of the service and the use of local trainee placements and apprenticeships.

- The Borough Council will continue to support local people and businesses through its procurement policies. This will include;
  - Further improvements to the website and wider dissemination of relevant information through websites such as Build-up North Staffordshire (BUNS) and Think Local 4 Business (TL4B)
  - Supporting local people into jobs through use of the 'Public Procurement Framework for Jobs and Skills' which has several approaches to secure contractor support for training and recruitment initiatives with the aim of securing greater access to jobs and skills for local people.

- Subject to a successful ERDF bid, the Borough Council will support the development and launch of Platform as a North Staffordshire contracts portal covering all sectors, which will enable more local firms to access contract opportunities.

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## **Place and Infrastructure – Physical Transformation**

### **7. Drawing up a Masterplan to guide the future development of Newcastle Town Centre**

The Borough Council and its partners have developed a 'Strategic Investment Framework' (SIF) as a vision for the future development of the town centre and to frame a series of actions to raise the attractiveness and appeal of the town (see further 'Image and Marketing').

Taking its lead from the SIF the Borough Council commissioned a series of commercial and development options appraisals of sites in Newcastle Town Centre and this made a number of recommendations about the planning and development of the three key sites in the town, Ryecroft, Nelson Place and Blackfriars.

A key recommendation was that new retail led regeneration is the catalyst for further regeneration of the town centre and that;

- The Ryecroft site (based on the site of the former Sainsburys supermarket and land adjoining, including potentially that of the present Civic Offices) is identified as a priority develop site
- Nelson Place (including the former Jubilee Baths is identified as suitable for the creation of a new Civic Quarter and;
- Blackfriars (between Blackfriars Road and Pool Dam). A range of uses complementary to the town centre, including bulky goods retail; residential or civic uses are proposed. Retail development here would be considered to be in competition with, rather than complementary to the town centre.

The development options appraisal was based on optioneering and viability assessment against objectives for the town centre. The delivery strategy sets out the option of a development agreement approach (between the Council and a selected developer) to achieve the preferred form of development for Ryecroft and Nelson Place. Finally each site is subject to design briefs which set out the design principles which should be followed when developing proposals.

### **8. Bringing forward proposals for retail and business accommodation in Newcastle Town Centre with priority placed on growing its professional services and a distinctive retail offer**

Plans for Newcastle Town centre's retail and business accommodation are contained in the masterplanning work discussed in section seven.

#### **New Retail Development**

The Ryecroft site that includes the former Sainsbury's supermarket and the present Civic Office site is identified as the key retail opportunity in the town as this lies inside the town centre ring road and would therefore work with existing pedestrian shopping flows around the High Street, Castle Walk and Ironmarket.

The Ryecroft development strategy for the Ryecroft site envisages a development of around 150-180,000 sq. ft. of new retail space including a 60,000 sq. ft. department store to anchor the scheme and a 750 space car park. Only with this scale and level of ambition can the town achieve the necessary 'step-change' in its shopping fortunes and address the long-term loss of trade to out-of-town retail parks.

The Ryecroft scheme will accommodate retailers which have not yet been able to locate in the town due to the limitations of current property offer (typically historic, narrow, deep and multi-level). The

first step was made with the acquisition of the former Sainsburys site in July 2011 in partnership with Staffordshire County Council. The two councils are now working alongside a retail development consultant (Cushman Wakefield) to secure a development partner for the scheme.

Consideration will also be given to managing the change in the retail focus of the town centre which is likely to result from the Ryecroft scheme and the impact this may have on the more peripheral shopping areas of the town. For instance, a complementary string to the Borough Council's development strategy is to play to the town's strength in independent shops, many of which are clustered in areas like Bridge Street, Merrial Street, King Street and Lower High Street. It is anticipated that custom in these areas of town will be increased if and when the Ryecroft scheme is completed as a result of increased numbers of visitors to the town but in addition to this, these clusters of independent shops will be more actively promoted (see further 'Image and Marketing') as one of the town's distinctive attractions along with 'town centre events', 'where to eat', 'town centre trails' and 'the food market'. It is intended that making provision for some family friendly places to eat will also form part of the new Ryecroft development, again with the explicit intention of attracting more people to the town and providing reasons for shoppers and visitors to stay longer..

### New Business Accommodation

Town centres are the most sustainable locations for new office development as day time workers help to support nearby business in shop, leisure and food and drink businesses without the need to make additional journeys. The new National Planning Policy Framework (2012) requires a presumption in favour of locating new office development in town centres and this will be actively pursued in favour of unsustainably located out of town business parks.

The possible town centre based co-location of the Borough Council, Newcastle Police Station, the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and County Council staff is being explored. Depending on the outcome of the Ryecroft redevelopment, this could take the form of new consolidated offices providing substantial financial savings to all parties. Two town centre sites, already in public ownership, have been identified as prospective options for re-siting the Civic Offices in the event that a move is required. The County Council will also use this as an opportunity to bring a substantial number of staff currently dispersed around the borough into the town centre – so providing a greater presence in the town centre and with it, significantly greater footfall and spending.

In private-sector terms, there are a number of suitable development opportunities in the town, including land adjoining the new Travelodge, the former Maxims Nightclub site (together with land adjoining), the former Blackfriars Bakery site, land adjoining the new Sainsburys store and the site of the former Zanzibar nightclub in George Street. Achieving that investment will, of course, depend on the strength of market interest and the appeal of the sites available. The Borough Council will work closely with the 'Make It' Inward Investment Service to encourage office development to take place in the town centre.

Currently much of that interest is focussed not to Newcastle Town Centre or Stoke-on-Trent City Centre (the key development priorities for the two local authorities) but to out-of-town locations. With this in mind, sketch schemes have been prepared to demonstrate how office developments of between 8000 and 50,000 sq. ft. might be accommodated on four sites in Newcastle Town Centre, each capable of accommodating modern open-plan style buildings, generally of three storeys in height, each with plentiful car parking. These are illustrated below:

**IMPORT ARCHITECT'S DRAWINGS HERE**

## Complementary Interventions

Complementary factors in making Newcastle Town Centre a more desirable location for new retail or office investment are also;

- Investment in the quality of the public realm (see section 18)
- A better food and drink 'offer' (see section 18)
- Increased town centre living: a number of edge-of-town sites suitable for housing development exist (the former Titleys Fruit and Vegetable Warehouse in George Street, the First Bus Depot on Liverpool Road and the former Bristol Street Motors site off London Road). Developers will be encouraged to bring forward residential led schemes on these sites
- Management of town centre car parks (this could include a review of the pricing structure, pay-on-exit arrangements and payment by card)
- Creating a clearer 'sense of arrival' in the town centre through VMS (variable message signs) drawing attention to where to park.

Some of these actions are discussed in more detail in section 18.

## **9. Promoting the further development of Keele University Science and Business Park**

The Borough Council will continue to work closely with Keele University to realise its plans for the further development of its Science and Business Park, including the development for the next phase of the park, the development of a Conference and Training Centre, further Innovation Centres, and increased promotion and marketing for inward investment.

The science park to date comprises a Postgraduate Medical School and four Innovation Centres with a combined floorspace of 110,000 sq. ft. of high tech business space accommodating 50 technology-based companies employing around 700 people. Bio-composites, Erigal, Siemens Wind Power UK, Capita, GVA, Cobra Bio, Dermal Technology, Internet Central, Navman Wireless and Synetrix are amongst the firms based here. These represent high value, high growth, high tech businesses with first class pay, career prospects and skills requirements – opportunities for local people to aspire to (both as prospective employees and to establish like enterprises themselves) and as a magnet for attracting new people into the area.

Keele University Science and Business Park has established itself as UK Headquarters for a number of international environmental technology companies in recent years. Siemens Wind Power UK R&D has doubled the number of graduate recruits at the Keele site in the past two years and McCamley, suppliers of vertical axis wind turbines, have recently opened an office on the Science Park.

The next phase of Keele Science Park comprises 70 acres (28 ha) of prime development land adjoining Keele University and this is made up of 13 development plots which could potentially accommodate around 600,000 sq. ft. of new business space and around 2500 new jobs. Allied to increased marketing effect this site presents one of North Staffordshire's best opportunities of attracting new inward investment (as opposed to housing existing local firms seeking to upgrade their accommodation). The pace of development on the park will be increased through greater proactive marketing of the site using the host of blue chip companies located on the park as a key selling factor.

The key sectors which are likely to form part of the Science Park's' growth strategy includes:

- Medical and Healthcare
- Low Carbon and Environmental Sustainability
- Information Technology

- Media
- Design and Technology
- Engineering

The site's frontage plot is planned to be developed in 2012 as a Training and four star Conference Hotel and the existing Home Farm building, to be known as the Nova Centre and which opened in April 2012 for business occupation and graduate enterprise opportunities. With the support of Staffordshire County Council, the construction of a fifth Innovation Centre, 30,000 sq. ft. in size, is due to be started by the end of 2012 with a view to accommodating the needs of growing technology firms currently housed in smaller premises on the science park, as well as space for new businesses. Plans for a sixth and seventh Innovation centre are also being drawn up, though the timetable for their construction will depend on market demand.

The establishment of the hotel will help showcase the area, the Science Park and the businesses based here as well as hosting their international visitors. This would be a significant economic boost for the area (many business visitors currently often stay outside the area altogether e.g. near to Manchester Airport) as well as providing an important marketing tool for the area in its own right.

#### **10. Enabling the development of higher quality housing for current and future residents, with an explicit aim to increase the attractiveness of North Staffordshire as a home for affluent residents**

There would be considerable economic (and other) benefit to North Staffordshire if a larger proportion of the higher income people who work in the area chose to live in or close to the urban area. The impact would be felt in terms of the range of the local retail, food and drink and cultural offer of the area as well as the harder economic consequences of higher rate income and consumer spending. Importantly (in the context of an economic development strategy) housing high earners locally could also help to retain local entrepreneurs (and would-be entrepreneurs) and business leaders close to the area in which they work.

Currently around 13,000 professional people and senior managers commute to work in Newcastle or Stoke-on-Trent from the surrounding Districts of Stafford, Staffordshire Moorlands and (the former local authority districts of) Congleton, Crewe and Nantwich. There are many reasons why people chose to live a distance from their place of work including schooling, lifestyle, the environment, a certain retail offer and availability of the right type of property. These reasons provide the starting point for establishing what can be done to reverse or, reduce this.

In the 1930s Newcastle Borough Council established a residential area to the south west of the town centre (The Westlands) with the explicit objective of housing higher income groups. So it can be done. Recent research from consultants Arc4 suggests that the market for executive housing (of a value of £500,000 or more) across the whole of North Staffordshire may not be large and could be satisfied by the provision of 10 to 20 new build properties per year.

Housing high earners locally is a North Staffordshire-wide objective, not limited to the Borough alone and the Borough Council will work with our planning colleagues across the area to identify suitable locations for executive housing.

The Borough Council will shortly to prepare a Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) to identify suitable sites for new development in the Borough and one of its objectives will be to make some provision for higher value housing (see section 11). A clear pointer to geographical preference is illustrated by the fact that nearly half of all E to H banded residential properties in the Borough lie in just three wards, (Keele, Loggerheads and Whitmore, and Westlands).

One option the DPD may explore could be to permit the small-scale growth of established villages which have schools, shops and community facilities so allowing for a more sustainable form of development. Opportunities may also lie in the provision of development plots suitable for self-build housing.

## **11. Bringing forward new sites for employment and housing through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document to enable the further growth of the Borough**

The private-sector is the principal engine for growth; but that growth can be frustrated by a lack of suitable and viable development opportunities which are attractive to the market. This includes the availability of sites, modern infrastructure and a supportive and easy to use planning regime.

In the short-term there is sufficient land for new housing development and new employment development. The Site Allocations Development Plan Document (see section 10) will make provision for new land allocations up to the year 2026.

From feedback from the development industry it is clear that developers and their industrial clients (whether factories and logistics companies) are looking for sites which are relatively close to the principal road network (which in Newcastle terms means the A34 and A500) and in recent years the success of Lyndale Park, Parkhouse East and West and High Carr Business Park provides clear evidence of this.

Much of Newcastle's success in attracting new industrial employment in recent years can be attributed to a central location and good accessibility to the nation's motorway network via the M6 and A50. Connectivity via rail is also a key asset for the area's businesses with frequent direct rail services to London Euston. Long-term, the area may be served by the high-speed route, HS2, which will operate a 200 - 240 mph service between London and the north and midlands. There could be stations serving this route to the east of Birmingham and at Manchester Airport but it is not known whether this will make provision for a stop in North Staffordshire. If this cannot be secured, future Government lobbying will focus on retaining the quality and frequency of service to and from Euston that the area currently enjoys.

To complement the focus on Newcastle Town centre and Keele Science and Business Park (see earlier), the Borough Council in its role as Local Planning Authority aims to bring forward future land of this type to meet its future 'industrial' development needs.

The Borough Council has jointly commissioned (with Stoke-on-Trent City Council) an independent review of its employment land portfolio against the projected employment land needs for the next 15 years and the recommendations from this study will be used to inform decisions on future site proposals.

## **People – transforming ambition**

### **12. Raising skills, reduce worklessness and raise aspirations as a core element of all transformational strategies**

#### **Skills Gaps**

Skills gaps continue to be addressed in Newcastle through partners such as the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, Family Employment Initiative (FEI), Newcastle under Lyme College (NULC), PM Training the Social Enterprise arm of the Aspire Group, Newcastle Community and Voluntary Support (NCVS), Job Centre Plus and through The Work Programme. However, there are still many issues to address regarding the supply of readily employable people.

Since the launch of the project in February 2009 FEI working with JETs (Jobs Enterprise Training Services) have engaged with over 600 people, provided training for over 200 and supported almost 200 people back into work. Evaluation carried out by Ekosgen in July 2011 shows that FEI delivers good value for money with an average cost of £1,813 per client supported back into work. This compares very favourably with similar programmes and equates to a social return on investment of up to £22.28 for every £1 invested. Partners will continue to work together through the LEP in order to address these issues and to ensure that national initiatives add value to existing local programmes.

#### **Long-Term Worklessness**

There is a particular challenge in providing appropriate and accessible training for people who have been unemployed for a long period of time, especially those who have never worked. In February 2012, 2664 people (3.3% of the Newcastle population age 16 – 64) were claiming Job Seekers Allowance. However, in addition to this at August 2011, 5780 people were claiming Employment Support Allowance. These are the people who are furthest from the jobs market and who require more intensive support to get back into training and work

During 2004 – 2010 the then NSRP provided further opportunities for agencies to work together on a joined up approach to reducing long-term worklessness. The NSRP Employment and Skills Business Plan, which all partners signed up to, provided a clear direction and a range of mechanisms to address this issue.

A key initiative prioritised within the plan was the establishment of JETs which integrated worklessness support measures for those people furthest away from the workplace. In Newcastle, in addition to the JETs service, the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, Borough Council and Aspire worked together to establish the Family Employment Initiative (FEI), which has been based in Knutton since 2009.

#### **Apprenticeships**

It is widely recognised that apprenticeships provide people with the chance to learn and to gain nationally recognised qualifications whilst receiving a weekly wage. The Staffordshire Providers Association (SPA) provides a network of Staffordshire training providers many of which are based in Newcastle. Two of the main local providers are PM Training and Newcastle under Lyme College (NULC).

PM Training is the social enterprise arm of the Aspire Group based in Newcastle and is one of the largest social enterprises in the country. It aims to tackle worklessness among young people by offering those with limited or no formal qualifications an alternative route into employment. PM Training has recently established a new training centre in Chesterton. The centre will provide more opportunities for local young people to access training and apprenticeship opportunities. The centre

will help young people to develop essential skills in the construction and housing sectors. It is anticipated that the centre will create training for 150 young people every year and 100 of these are expected to take up apprenticeships.

NULC has a 30 year successful track record in delivering apprenticeships and has recently invested in establishing an Employment Training Centre opposite the main college site where all activity can take place. The college has a strategy to increase the number of apprenticeships being supported in local business and to support young people 16+ and adults 19+ to undertake apprenticeships with potential progression to other programmes including degrees.

The LEP Enterprise and Skills Implementation Group and the Newcastle Employment and Skills Group (NESG) provides the opportunity for all partners to share information on apprenticeships and further develop this area of work.

### Schools

Schools need to know what businesses are looking for and employers need input from schools to better understand how businesses can make effective contributions to the curriculum. In Newcastle schools the DEEP is a delivery mechanism for the Staffordshire Partnership, which has a county-wide responsibility for employer engagement with respect to work experience, work-related learning, the new Diplomas and professional development for teachers. The DEEP has developed an innovative approach to introducing the world of work to young people through the 'Carousel of Opportunity', which brings business and young people together to introduce the world of work, raise aspiration and explore options.

### Volunteering

As part of the route back into training and work it is widely recognised that volunteering can provide unemployed people with skills, experience and increased confidence. The Job Centre Plus 'Work Together' programme is a national initiative that aims to encourage unemployed people to consider volunteering as a way of improving their employment prospects while they are looking for work.

For people not eligible for the 'Work Together' programme, Staffordshire Moorlands CVS delivers a volunteering programme, funded through European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) on behalf of the three North Staffordshire authorities. This covers a wide range of people and can be directly influenced by the local authorities to ensure that priorities are met.

The Borough Council will;

- Continue to support the work of the DEEP group to raise ambitions of the young people in schools
- Continue to work in partnership to support the Skills Funding Agency's (SFA) aim to ensure that people and businesses can access the training they need to succeed, informed by the needs of businesses, communities, sector and industry bodies. This is through the LEP Enterprise and Skills Implementation Group
- Continue to work closely with the Staffordshire training providers to encourage apprenticeships and address worklessness
- Continue to work with the LEP Employment and Skills Implementation Group to address priorities identified in the E&SIG work plan
- Co-ordinate the local employment and skills network in order to ensure effective communication between service deliverers
- Work with partners to ensure join-up between existing initiatives and the Government's Work Programme
- Work with the FEI, PM Training, NULC, JCP, other partners and Staffordshire training providers, to address the worklessness agenda and in particular the promotion of apprenticeships

in line with the Memorandum of Understanding between the Borough Council and PM Training the Council will seek, whenever possible, to provide opportunities for work either directly or via the Borough Councils list of suppliers of services, sector firms and other third parties and, on their part, PM Training will seek to secure maximum local benefit from projects through the provision of training and supply of apprentices.

### **13. Working towards getting the right skill mix to increase productivity**

Skills are integral to accelerating economic prosperity; creating competitive business advantage and empowering individuals to change their lives for the better. Higher and further education plays a critical role in ensuring that we have the right skills mix to help build a stronger, evenly balanced and more vibrant economy.

The Borough Council will continue to work with the LEP who have identified three priorities;

- Developing a more enterprising culture both at school and beyond
- Ensuring that young people and adults are equipped with basic employability skills required by local businesses
- Ensuring we are delivering the education and skills needed to fill jobs now and in the future

These priorities will be progressed by the LEP Enterprise and Skills Implementation Group (E&SIG) through its annually updated work plan.

The local Universities of Keele and Staffordshire play a key role in addressing the LEP priorities through a range of professional development courses and training for industry, public-sector and a range of other organisations in a variety of study options. Many of the courses are accredited by professional bodies and count towards continuing professional development portfolios.

As well as having the right skills, employers require people with employability qualities and competencies, which include a positive attitude, professional approach and commitment to the work. This is echoed in the Staffordshire Employers Skills Survey 2010 (phase 1), which states that in some cases, depending on the level of the job, employability skills were considered to be of more importance than vocational and formal qualifications.

Locally, NULC Employer Engagement Team continues to work closely with employers to better understand their demands for skills and to ensure that the college delivers the correct training to meet their needs.

This work is supported by the Skills Funding Agency's (SFA), who invest £4billion annually into colleges, (including NULC) providers and other training organisations to provide the education and training needed by employers, employees and future employees to progress and improve what they do - increasing the chances of success for all.

The Borough Council will continue to work with partners through the LEP Enterprise and Skills Implementation Group to ensure that we are delivering the education and skills needed to fill jobs now and in the future as outlined in the annual work plan, and will continue to work in partnership to support Keele University, Staffordshire University, Finest and NULC to address skills gaps.

### **14. Stimulating demand for higher skills and create opportunities for people to acquire relevant skills for current and future industrial structure**

To stimulate demand and create opportunities for people to acquire higher skills, the Borough Council will continue to work with the LEP and to support the work of the lead organisations; Keele

University, Staffordshire University, the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce, Newcastle under Lyme College and Stoke-on-Trent College.

In line with the view of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) that employers are looking for more than just technical skills and knowledge, Keele University is committed to ensuring that in addition to subject knowledge, all students will acquire generic employability skills and have the opportunity to develop these further through the completion of a personal development portfolio, Keele Certificate of Employability and through work placements and internships.

This work is complemented by Finest, the professional services network. The Finest mission is to be a catalyst for the growth and development of member businesses and the professional services sector in North Staffordshire, its key objectives are the recruitment and retention of skills in North Staffordshire along with supporting and raising aspirations in all tiers of education

Gaps in training have been highlighted as an issue by the LEP and specifically, Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) as a career path has been highlighted as an important area for improvement. A key action of the LEP Enterprise and Skills Implementation Group Workplan is to ensure that training providers have the capacity to ensure that employer demands are met.

Evidence suggests that we don't have enough young people choosing science related subjects; consequently we cannot meet the demands of the sector. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has raised this as a serious issue for the UK and suggests that we need to double the number of new science graduates over seven years or see skilled jobs disappear.

The Borough Council will work with Keele University and Staffordshire University to identify opportunities for graduate placements, will continue to work with Finest focusing on support for the business and professional sectors and will continue to work with the LEP to provide more focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) to address current and predicted future skills gaps.

## Image and Marketing – transforming perceptions

### 15. Developing an external marketing strategy for the Borough

Much of this strategy focuses on making visible transformations. However, people need to be made aware of the changes taking place and the assets currently on offer, for this transformation to take effect. The Borough and the role it plays in the wider sub-region, needs marketing both as an inward investment location and a tourism destination with a clear focus on Newcastle town centre and Keele Science and Business Park.

#### Marketing Newcastle's assets as an inward investment location

Within North Staffordshire, enquiry handling and promotion of the area as an inward investment location is primarily carried out by the Make It Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire team. The Make It team has a county-wide remit but ERDF funding is allocated for North Staffordshire specific marketing activities. As far as the Borough is concerned the principal objectives of our marketing strategy are:

- To raise the profile and investor-awareness of Newcastle Town Centre, its qualities and development opportunities; this will include office development, leisure and retail, food and drink and residential development, all of which we will seek to bring in greater numbers to the town centre
- To promote Keele Science and Business Park for high tech inward investment including new Innovation Centres and a new Training and Conference Hotel
- To attract manufacturing and other employment investment to sites and premises around the Borough including land at Chatterley Valley, Chesterton, Lymedale Park, Cross Heath and Silverdale.

The Borough Council will work with our colleagues at Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council, and with agents, land-owners and intermediaries to identify prospective investors, present investment opportunities to them and help them to overcome obstacles which may stand in the way of their development intentions.

We will use digital media, including the Borough Council's own website and that of the 'Make it Newcastle' brand, as well as the printed media, including the preparation of a North Staffordshire focussed Employment Land Compendium. Regular dialogue with local and regional agents, architects and commercial advisors will also play a part in promoting the Borough and its investment opportunities.

The Strategic Investment Framework (SIF) provides a clear and strong framework around which to base town centre marketing Initiatives (see section 18). The emerging Town Centre Partnership will bring together partners, such as landlords and estate agents, to develop a coherent plan for marketing the town for inward investment.

The Borough will work closely with the LEP in marketing the area and will ensure that its voice is heard in the development of strategies and subsequent action plans.

### 16. Improving the quality of life offer for current and future residents

North Staffordshire needs to improve its quality of life offer based around different identified selling points for different groups. Newcastle has a key role to play in the differentiation of the sub-region and so it is vital to work with partners on the development of our offer. This will be achieved by;

### Developing offers for key target markets of high skill workers

Typically these might include young professionals seeking affordable housing and an easy commute or more experienced professionals looking for 'executive homes' and access to schools. However, before developing offers it is essential to define Newcastle's target markets. Therefore we will undertake a review of our existing 'customer' profile, identify any gaps and use this analysis to define appropriate target markets.

### Use the SIF to deliver 'quality of life' improvements in Newcastle Town Centre

The town centre is at the heart of the Borough community, and a key economic driver. Improvements here will demonstrate a shift in organisational and partnership culture towards a more creative, proactive and co-ordinated approach to delivering local quality of life. As well as the SIF, the emerging Town Centre Partnership we will be using recommendations in the December 2011 Portas review of The Future of the High Street. This aims to develop the distinctiveness of the place and create a balance of appropriate town centre uses that supports this distinctiveness. The main focus will be the cultural and retail offer but we will also seek to enable the development of new offices, leisure and housing.

We will aim to maintain and develop a complementary and distinctive offer to that of Stoke-on-Trent City Centre, consistent with the North Staffordshire brand.

We will specifically develop the town's role as a 'character centre', focussing particularly on revitalising the soul of the town centre, notably its street markets (The Stones) and marketplace.

We will promote Newcastle as an urban market town – a key part of the quality of life offer that in turn supports our longer-term aim of becoming more recognised as a 'University Town'.

We will promote, modernise and upgrade the quality of the street markets, keeping them relevant to our local community and develop a higher quality, sustainable market culture that is distinctive and, over time, attracts a wider range of visitors.

The Borough Council, working with the Town Centre Partnership, will also look at those areas cited by businesses as particular barriers to business growth in the town centre, such as the cost of parking, rents and rates.

## **17. Supporting the development of North Staffordshire's existing 'experience economy'**

The annual tourism economic impact assessment undertaken by the Enjoy Staffordshire Partnership shows that in 2010 1.7m trips were taken to Newcastle, with an estimated total spend by visitors of £92m. Furthermore, almost 2,500 jobs are supported by the tourism sector in the Borough. The assessment uses a model developed by Geoff Broom Associates in partnership with the Regional Tourist Boards and has been compiled and written by The Research Solution, an independent market research agency.

Gradually increasing affluence has led to the growth of the 'experience economy', whereby consumers are seeking added value from retail, leisure and tourism sectors. The economic downturn has further encouraged people to stay closer to home. There are many gems in the North Staffordshire experience economy, including theme parks, gardens, ceramics, canals, etc, all of which are easily accessible from Newcastle.

Tourism is an area where all local authorities in the sub-region benefit from working together to increase the proportion of visitors staying overnight and spending more money in the area. The LEP has identified a growing rural economy supported by tourism, with food and drink sectors being a

key attribute of the county. Furthermore, the LEP Board acknowledges its need to work with existing partnerships and specialist sector interest groups, one of which is the Destination Management Partnership (DMP). The DMP, known as the Enjoy Staffordshire Partnership, has made a significant contribution to tourism within the area but more needs to be done to create a clearer tourism offer.

As the recession continues and more people choose to holiday in the UK, the scope for attracting UK visitors to the Borough grows. The opening of the town centre Travelodge, plus plans for the Keele conference hotel has increased the number and range of bed spaces available to visitors.

Business tourism is another area for development and Keele campus is a consistently popular and award-winning destination for conferences and training.

- The Borough Council will;
  - Identify joint projects as a sub-region to develop local tourism
  - Support LEP marketing and tourism related initiatives to attract visitors, business tourism, inward investors and students
  - Continue to support the Enjoy Staffordshire Partnership and seek ways to play a more active role
  - Work with partners to bring the former St Giles & St George's school back into use for the benefit of the town centre and for the wider benefit of the local business community
  - Work with Keele University to promote the development of the Keele Sustainability Hub, based on the Home Farm site (see section 9)
  - Explore the wider use of the new Jubilee 2 leisure facility, the upper floor of which offers the opportunity to host large-scale town centre events and bookings.
  
- The emerging Town Centre Partnership will;
  - Work with Keele University to improve the student experience and links with the town centre
  - Investigate options for improving the quality of hotels, conference and eating/drinking facilities in the town
  - Develop a town centre website to highlight the features and benefits of the town
  - Improve the visitor experience within the town centre focussing particularly on the market, food and drink and events and festivals.

## **18. Using the Strategic Investment Framework as the basis for investment in the cultural and retail experience of Newcastle Town Centre**

Newcastle town centre plays a vital role in the economic future of the Borough. In response to this a Strategic Investment Framework (SIF) for the town centre has been developed with considerable input from partner organisations. The SIF provides a context for actions to improve the economic well-being of the town centre. Although the SIF represents a long-term commitment, the action plan is revised annually.

The main aim of the SIF is to develop the distinctiveness and character of Newcastle town centre. Pillar 1 of the SIF, 'Retail Remade', proposes actions to improve the core business of the town, significantly improving the retail offer, environment and experience by building on existing strengths and character. Pillar 2, 'town and culture' is about creating reasons to dwell in the town centre, specifically growing the leisure and cultural offer as well as housing.

Retail should continue to play a strategic part, particularly because it can contribute to the quality of life for visitors and for current and potential residents. Over the last two years, during the worst part of the recession, the vacancy rate within the town centre has consistently been lower than the national average. Whilst a number of high street chains may have disappeared, the independent sector has remained fairly robust, suggesting resilience amongst local businesses. However, the town currently lacks floor space of sufficient size to draw key multiples. Attracting large-scale developer investment into the town centre is covered in sections 7 and 8.

- Retail networking and communication

The development of the retail offer needs to be a partnership between all town centre stakeholders. Based on SIF recommendations, steps have been taken to set up a town centre partnership (TCP), to bring a wide range of partners to develop Newcastle as a destination, focussing on some of the recommendations of the December 2011 Portas review of The Future of the High Street. The TCP will oversee the setting up of a town centre website, listing shops, restaurants, etc. alongside other relevant visitor and investor information.

- Investing in the quality of public realm

The SIF recognised that there was a need to improve the environment within Newcastle Town Centre to improve its attractiveness to shoppers. The identity and performance of the street market is critical to this. Research conducted for the Borough Council has shown that the market suffers from a poor layout in the town and that the market stalls are urgently in need of replacement. The Borough Council, in partnership with Staffordshire County Council, has prepared proposals to close Hassell Street to through traffic in the daytime and re-align the street market whilst providing new modern market stalls and re-paving the Hassell Street/High Street junction to reinforce its status as a pedestrian area. Associated works will also take place to introduce a bus lane on Barracks Road and create a new taxi rank at the entrance to the Ironmarket. Following public consultation and Cabinet approval, the works on the scheme are due to begin in 2012.

- Shops for Art

A scheme will be developed in conjunction with relevant partners to make vacant shop units look more attractive. A trial has already taken place and it is planned to build on the work already undertaken. Typically this might include artwork displays and possibly other cultural uses such as 'shop front theatre'.

Pillar 2 of the SIF, 'Town and Culture', is about creating reasons to dwell in the town centre by developing the cultural and leisure offer. One of its key recommendations is consolidating and promoting the local food and drink offer within the town centre. In this respect, the Borough Council will;

- Work with partners, in particular 'Taste of Staffordshire' to develop the 'local food' offer for the town centre. This will include both short term and longer term actions encouraging market traders and other outlets to promote the origin of their produce and possibly organising a food festival
- Explore, in conjunction with partners such as the DMP, the possibility of setting up a local tourism group, to maximise the impact of the Borough's tourism offer.
- Develop the cultural offer. Tourism-related projects such as festivals and events were prominent amongst the innovative actions set out in the North Staffordshire Tourism Strategy 2004-2014. Events programming in Newcastle under Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent is a significant area of development for the city region - encompassing sports, cultural, business and other events - and will be a key area of our image-building work.

The Jazz & Blues festival which started in Newcastle town centre in 2006 provides an excellent example of how partnership working can develop and sustain a successful event. Furthermore, in 2010, a small amount of funding from Staffordshire County Council provided the opportunity for a number of successful town centre events aimed at raising the profile and increasing footfall. Some of the most successful have been repeated, such as the Oatcake Festival and the Breast Cancer Campaign 'Paint the Town Pink', with new events being added to the calendar.

- An events group was formed in 2011 as a sub-group of the town centre partnership and this group will develop an annual programme of events which will contribute towards the aims of the TCP. As well as building on the successful Jazz & Blues festival, other key events will be developed.
- The Borough Council, in conjunction with the Town Centre Partnership will market the town centre to supplement tourism and inward investment objectives.

DRAFT

## Implementation, Monitoring and Review

A supplementary document to this strategy, an annual Action Plan, accompanies this strategy. While the strategy itself is intended to endure for the full five year period, hopefully demonstrating the effectiveness of the priorities which the Borough Council and its partners have chosen to put their weight behind, the annual action plans will be prepared afresh each January / February for the following year (April to March).

The annual Action Plans will set out in more detail how the aims and objectives agreed will be carried out. Like the strategy itself, these will also be based around the four themes of

- Economy
- Place and Infrastructure
- People, and
- Image & Marketing

The Action Plans will identify lead bodies, timescales for implementation, costs (where appropriate) and how these will be funded.

At the end of each year the Borough Council will publish an annual progress report, reviewing the year in terms of how well (or not) it has achieved the targets set as well as agreeing the action plan for the following year. The annual report will give decision makers in the Borough Council and their partners the opportunity to assess success to date, remind ourselves why initiatives are being pursued and the join-up between them. The review may also take the opportunity to consider fresh Government initiatives or changes in the economic or financial landscape and capitalize on them. It may also suggest changes in emphasis or priority (and perhaps what might no longer be pursued so that new things might be tried).

A fundamental question (as with all strategies) is what will success look like? This is answered in part through text (success in achieving the actions we have set ourselves) and in part through the publication of a number of performance indicators appropriate to the four themes (business, skills etc).

At the end of the five year period covered by this strategy (2017), the Borough Council will publish an evaluation report of the effectiveness of the strategy and assess the successes achieved and what might have been done better (or differently). This more detailed review will be undertaken after the period of the Strategy by which time changes in the economic and financial circumstances of the country (and the area) will be clearer and it may then be more appropriate to consider more fundamental changes in direction, including new initiatives.

## Economic Development Strategy 2012-17 Year One Action Plan 2012-13

No.	Action	Lead Agency	Other Partners	Timescales/Milestones	Resources	Outcome	
<b>Business – Objective: Strengthening the Business Base</b>							
1	<b>We will develop a long-term economic strategy built on 'diverse specialisation', aiming to increase both the proportion of knowledge intensive employment and the proportion of high quality jobs in retail, leisure, tourism and distribution</b>	1.1 This objective cuts through the strategy as a whole and actions which flow from it are covered in the other sections	NBC	see column 2	see column 2	see column 2	The economic development of the Borough along lines which reflects its personality and make-up
2	<b>We will develop a co-ordinated enterprise strategy</b>	2.1 Produce 'route map' to setting up a business, concentrating on council services	NBC		Information on website June 2012, active promotion July 2012	NBC officer time	Better informed business start-up community,
		2.2 Seek funding to ensure continuation of North Staffordshire District Enterprise & Education Partnership group (DEEP)	DEEP	NBC, local businesses, Staffordshire Partnership, Finest	Partner funding secured April 2012, School charging schedule finalised June 2012	£1.5K from partners and schools	DEEP group continues to link schools and employers for mutual benefit
		2.3 Pilot single telephone contact point for local business support and link from Stoke & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership; (The LEP) website	The LEP	North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NSCCI), Stoke-on-Trent City Council (SoTCC), Staffordshire County Council (SCC)	Pilot ends July 2012 LEP to review effectiveness of the pilot September 2012	Partners' staff time	Better informed business community
		2.4 Develop innovative ways of engaging young people in enterprise activities	DEEP group	NBC, local businesses, Staffordshire Partnership	Improvements to primary level 'job carousels' June 2012, Adapt 'Job Carousel' offer for secondary schools Sept 2012	DEEP members time	Innovative actions to develop enterprise skills in young people

2.5 Continue to grow and develop the Newcastle Business Boost competition	Newcastle Business Boost Steering Group	Business Innovation Centre (BIC), SCC, local businesses, NBC	2012 competition launch June 2012, selection of finalists Sept 2012, Awards event Oct 2012, Review of 2012 competition Nov 2012, planning cycle for 2013 begins Feb 2013	C. £10k cash and in-kind support from partners	Stronger businesses supported by robust business plans
2.6 To provide business events in line with The LEP with the aim of unlocking the potential of the private sector	The LEP	The LEP partners a range of event providers private sector sponsors	Schedule of 2012-13 LEP events to be developed.	Varied according to type of event LEP Capacity Fund to be sought	Economic growth of The LEP area
2.7 Actively manage business pages of NBC's website	NBC	All agencies providing business assistance	Ongoing	NBC	Better informed business community
2.8 Introduce Planning Charter Mark	The LEP	All LEP area local authorities	Feb 2012 The LEP launch of planning charter mark.  March 2013 Planning Charter Mark awarded to those local authorities who have met the relevant criteria.	Varied	Operation of a business friendly planning system

	2.9 Delivery of faster and more reliable broadband across Staffordshire	The LEP	Broadband providers	Broadband Delivery UK official agreement to the broadband delivery plan April 2012.  Communities encouraged to register demand for broadband services June 2012  Complete negotiations with broadband providers to improve services to residents in worst affected areas of the County December 2012	£15.94m of which £7.44m Government funding and £7.5m from Staffordshire County Council	Improved connectivity for businesses and residents	
	2.10 Establish business enterprise coach in Newcastle. Initially focusing on unemployed people.	LEP Business Support and Innovation Group	Business Enterprise Support (BES), Family Employment Initiative (FEI), Aspire, NBC	April 2012 onwards for one year. Minimum of 10 contacts per month	ERDF, City Council and BES (approx £50K annually)	Increase in number of business start ups	
	2.11 Set up Newcastle Partnership Social Enterprise	Newcastle Partnership	Partnership members and NBC	Investigate setting up options by July 2012. Establish Social Enterprise by March 2013	Staff time from all partners	Model of good practice established that others can use to support Social Enterprise set ups	
	2.12 Work with local business community to develop proposals for funding from the Regional Growth Fund	NBC	SCC	Round 1 awards from The LEP Board April 2012	NBC staff time; up to £7.6m available from the fund across Staffordshire as a whole	Economic growth; unlocking stalled development projects, promoting enterprise	
<b>3</b>	<b>We will support development of emergent knowledge intensive sectors, building on higher and further education expertise</b>	3.1 Develop the Business and Innovation Group (BIG) to support high growth companies	Keele Science and Business Park (KSBP), Keele University (KU), Staffordshire University (SU), NSCCI	The LEP; Local technology based firms including those on the Science Park	Action through the year including holding tailored business support events and seeking funding through BIS, ERDF or the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFC)	Partners' staff time	Expansion of the high-growth business sector

3.2 Mentoring & work placements for students wishing to pursue a science based career	NBC & KSBP	Local technology based firms, including companies based on the Science Park	Ongoing	Staff time	Encouraging careers in the sciences
3.3 Use 'Career Academies' to raise aspiration and attainment for young people	NBC	NBC, Finest, local employers	Six week Internships begin for the 2011/12 cohort in July 2012, the cohort for the 2012/13 programme starts in September 2012	In-kind support and paid internships from local employers	Better skilled and more employable young people
3.4 Attract more young people into education, training and employment through the STEM sectors	The LEP	Employers, County and City Council, Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) providers	Recruitment, training and employment of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Ambassadors in 50% of schools and colleges from April 2012	Grant from BIS to Staffordshire STEM centre	More young people choosing science, technology, engineering or maths as a career path
3.5 Promote Keele University as an exemplar of environmentally aware and sustainable campus to demonstrate the expertise offered and grow the low carbon & environmental sustainability expertise in the Borough	KU, KSBP	Make It; NBC; The LEP	Ongoing		Raise profile of the area (as well as the university). Raise local aspirations

4	<b>We will support development of the professional and business services sector</b>	4.1 Continue the development of Finest as the region's leading professional services network	Finest	Finest member companies, potential sponsors	Maintenance & development of services and events to engage an optimum number of members and potential members.  Maintenance and development of membership levels  Delivery of a minimum of 20 events per calendar year	Finest members' time  Membership subscriptions  Event sponsors	To act as a catalyst for the growth and development of member businesses and the professional services sector in North Staffordshire; Enhanced local procurement opportunities
		4.2 Bring forward suitable business accommodation in Newcastle Town Centre. See also 8.4, 8.5 and 8.6	NBC and site owners		Develop detailed briefs for town centre sites (see further 8.4) and work with the Make It team and site owners to promote them, from July 2012 onwards	Staff time; marketing budget	Greater professional services employment located in the town centre
		4.3 Encouraging local procurement of professional services	NBC and all other local partners		For details see 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 below	As left	A stronger local professional services sector
5	<b>We will make the most of the Borough's successful logistics sector</b>	5.1 Marketing the Borough for inward investment	Make It (The North Staffordshire Inward Investment Service) See further section 15	NBC both as planning authority and in terms of supplementary marketing activity	Ongoing / through the year	£13.5K marketing budget plus staff time and resources	Successful occupation of existing premises (such as 'Blue Planet' - potential new jobs 400 - 600, and 'Alto 415' - potential new jobs 200 - 300)
		5.2 Exploit the PR value to the Borough of the outstanding environmental standards attained by the Blue Planet building	as above	NBC	Once occupied	Staff time	profile raising value
6	<b>We will seek to optimise the benefit to local companies from public sector procurement.</b>	6.1 Make more use of the Think Local for Business (TL4B) website to promote business opportunities	TL4B partnership	NBC plus all district and county councils	TL4B website live Apr 2012, targeted mail shots ongoing from April 2012, review of progress October 2012	c.£20K from district and county councils, private sector and advertising	Better informed business community, increased business opportunities
		6.2 Set up procurement hub on council website for lower value contracts	NBC		Complete by April 2012	Minimal cost to NBC	Local businesses can easily access opportunities

6.3 Set up internal 'gate keeping process' to provide assistance to officers preparing larger contracts	NBC		Ongoing but training to commence June 2012	Minimal cost to NBC	Tenders are designed to encourage local businesses to apply
6.4 Development of 'Platform' as a North Staffordshire contracts portal covering all sectors	The LEP; Stoke on Trent City Council	NBC	Announcement on results of ERDF bid. May 2012 and (subject to success of above) Launch Platform September 2012	£150K ERDF £150K match funding from other sources	Local firms able to bid for more work in North Staffordshire More business for local firms in North Staffordshire

**Place and Infrastructure – Objective: Physical Transformation**

7	<b>We will draw up a Masterplan to guide the future development of Newcastle Town Centre</b>	7.1 Further development of the Newcastle Town Centre Strategic Investment Framework (SIF) - see further Objective 18	NBC	Newcastle Town Centre Partnership (TCP)	See further objective 18	For detailed projects see objective 18	Increase in level of activity, footfall and perceived attractiveness of the town centre, leading to increased expenditure with town centre businesses and retailers
		7.2 Bringing forward the development of a major new retail scheme for the Ryecroft site (further detail see 8.1)	NBC	Staffordshire County Council (SCC)	Selection and appointment of a developer by March 2013	£90K in retail development consultancy fees; £10K in planning consultancy fees and costs associated with additional land assembly (not here quantified)	Start on the development of approx 160,000 sq. ft. of new retail development by 2015
		7.3 Bringing forward the development of a new Civic Quarter potentially on council owned land at Nelson Place or the Ironmarket	NBC	SCC	Optioneering and cost estimates completed July 2012 with a view to a firm development decision October 2012	To be agreed	Completion of the construction of new civic office space housing both NBC and SCC staff by 2015 Relocation of significant numbers of SCC staff into the town centre from elsewhere in the borough
		7.4 Securing the satisfactory redevelopment of the former Blackfriars Bakery site, Pool Dam	Morston Assets	NBC	Investigate funding opportunities from Regional Growth Fund May 2012; development will depend on private sector interest	Private sector funds	To support footfall and the economy of the town centre
		7.5 Adoption of design briefs for each of the town centre's three key development sites (see 7.2, 7.3, and 7.4 above) as agreed planning policy	NBC		July 2012	Staff time	Clear communication of the Council's design and development objectives for the three sites and the encouragement of good quality design and development standards are achieved

8	<b>We will bring forward proposals for retail and business accommodation in Newcastle Town Centre with priority placed on growing its professional services and a distinctive retail offer</b>	8.1 See also 7.2: Procure development partner for the Ryecroft scheme (ensuring that the partners' Development Agreement makes provision for elements which play to the town's qualities (a department store, a quality food store, family friendly eateries/ restaurants); ensure scheme design encourages the circulation of retail footfall around the town).	NBC	SCC and Cushman & Wakefield (Retail Development Advisors)	Finalise development brief, launch marketing campaign (April 2012); invite and review submissions (July 2012); evaluate prospective candidates, public consultation, selection of preferred development partner, Heads of Terms agreed (November 2012); negotiate development agreement (March 2013)	see 7.2	see 7.2
		8.2 Town centre promotion (including that of its independent shops offer) see further Objective 18	NBC	Newcastle Town Centre Partnership	Food festival May 2012, Music Festival June 2012, Independents month July 2012, Pink week Oct 2012	To be agreed	Increase business for the town's independent retailers
		8.3 Develop a new Civic Centre with co-located services between NBC, SCC and the PCT	NBC	SCC and the Primary Care Trust (PCT)	Establish client requirements and make firm decision on whether to move, November 2012	Not yet known	Significant annual cost savings in terms of running costs; public service benefits of co-location
		8.4 Market key town centre development sites for office development	NBC	Make It Inward Investment Service	Prepare detailed site particulars; agree programme with site owners, create uniform offer with SoT City Council (July 2012)	Within £13,500 marketing budget	Elicit greater developer / occupier interest in town centre sites and slow the rate of business leakage to out of town sites
		8.5 Bring Blackburn House back into use	Morston Assets		Develop bid for funding from Growing Places fund; support from The LEP Board April 2012; begin refurbishment October 2012	£4.3m (of which £1m as a LEP loan)	Re-provision of 47,000 sq ft of modern business floor space

		8.6 Market Lancaster Buildings for office occupation	NBC	Daniel and Hulme	Ongoing	Within the budget for refurbishment of the building	The full occupation of this landmark town centre building
		8.7 Undertake complementary investment in the town centre to attract further developer interest, in line with the Town Centre Strategic Investment Framework (see further objective 18)	NBC	Newcastle Town Centre Partnership	Ongoing (detailed programme see further Objective 18)	See further Objective 18	Attracting greater town centre footfall and developer / occupier interest
9	<b>We will promote the further development of Keele Science and Business Park</b>	9.1 The development of further Innovation Centres and the Conference Hotel	KSBP	Staffordshire County Council; Keele University	Start on site by end 2012 (in each case)	Not yet known	Up to 450 new jobs, prestige for the area, significant conference expenditure in the area, retention of existing growing high tech firms
		9.2 Marketing of the Science Park for inward investment of further high tech businesses	KSBP	Make It Inward Investment Service	Ongoing; preparation of new customised marketing material and website overhaul by July 2012 Exploit/use the Marketing Suite at the Nova Centre to host/court prospective companies	To be met within Make It's core marketing budget	Significant growth in high tech employment in the area (up to 2500 new jobs when the Science Park is fully developed)
		9.3 Successful occupation of the Nova Centre by graduate enterprises and other businesses	KSBP	Make It Inward Investment Service	Ongoing; preparation of new customised marketing material and website overhaul by July 2012 Explore sponsorship opportunities, May 2012	Not known	Graduate retention; new high value business development
10	<b>We will enable the development of higher quality housing for current and future residents, with an explicit aim to increase the attractiveness of North Staffordshire as a home to affluent residents</b>	10.1 Identify housing development sites specifically for 'high earners' in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document	NBC	Site owners	DPD agreed in draft July 2012	Staff time	Retention of more high earners within the Borough

11	<b>We will bring forward new sites for employment and housing through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document to enable the further growth of the Borough.</b>	11.1 Identify an appropriate and attractive range of new employment sites in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document to replenish the supply of development land in the Borough	NBC	Site owners	DPD agreed in draft July 2012	Staff time	To enable long term development and growth
<b>People – Objective: Transforming Ambition</b>							
12	<b>We will raise skills, reduce worklessness and raise aspirations as a core element of all transformational strategies</b>	12.1 Equip young people and adults with basic employability skills required by local businesses based on research into local employers needs	LEP Enterprise and Skills Implementation Group (E&SIG)	The LEP E&SIG partners	Further develop links between employers/schools/colleges and training providers to ensure that Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) promotes new opportunities to work together Series of LEP sponsored events throughout the year in line with LEP E&SIG action plan	LEP partners' staff time	Reduction in worklessness, increase in skills and aspirations, improved links between employers, schools and colleges
		12.2 Provide a programme of support and training back into work to reduce worklessness	Coalfields Regeneration Trust (CRT)	JETs for Business, NBC, Job Centre Plus (JCP), Newcastle College (NULC), Newcastle Employment and Skills Group (NESG),	Annual programme of outreach work, monitored monthly. Estimate 10 people into training and 10 into jobs per month	Funded by CRT, NBC, JCP and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) NBC estimate £10K per year (from initial £50K investment), CRT to fully fund 5 X FTE staff base plus training costs (no figure provided by CRT)	Reduction in worklessness and increase in skills and aspirations
13	<b>We will work towards getting the right skills mix to increase productivity</b>	13.1 Identify business growth sectors over the next 5-10 years and identify the specific skills required within these sectors.	The LEP E&SIG	Partners which are signed up to The LEP, Skills Funding Agency, training providers and employers	Identification of growth sectors (over next 5 -10 years) by August 2012, work with employers, Sector Skills Councils and training providers to identify specific skills requirements	£35K LEP Capacity funding and staff time	Correct local skills mix to help local firms to grow and local people into jobs

14	<b>We will stimulate demand for higher skills and create opportunities for people to acquire skills for current and future industrial structure</b>	14.1 Increase the number of people in Stoke and Staffordshire qualified to graduate level and above	The LEP and especially Staffordshire and Keele Universities	Employers, County and City Council, FE and HE providers, Voluntary Groups	Annual programme of work with schools, colleges, universities and employers	Staff time from all partners and possible seed funding through The LEP	More people qualified to graduate level and above
<b>'Image and Marketing' – Objective - Transforming Perceptions</b>							
15	<b>We will develop an external marketing strategy for the Borough</b>	15.1 Support the work of the 'Make It' team	Make It Staffordshire team	NBC, County Council, The LEP, Keele University	Fortnightly contact meetings between NBC and Make It staff members. Joint action over responding to development enquiries. Joint preparation of marketing collateral	NBC, SoTCC, SCC, The LEP, KU, ERDF, staff time and marketing budgets	Greater awareness of the borough as an investment location and increase in inward investment in all sectors
		15.2 Produce North Staffordshire Employment Land Compendium	NBC	Make It, SCC	September 2012	NBC staff time & Make It funding	To better present development opportunities to the market
		15.3 Actively develop links at strategic and operational levels with The LEP	NBC	The LEP	Leader and Director level involvement at monthly board meetings	NBC staff time	Newcastle interests strongly represented
16	<b>We will improve the quality of life offer for current and future residents</b>	16.1 Confirm existing customer profile of town centre users to see if any changes since previous surveys carried out	NBC	SCC, Destination Management Partnership (DMP), TCP	Desktop research begins June 2012, completion Dec 2012	Staff time NBC, SCC, DMP	Updated knowledge of town centre customer base
		16.2 Identify gaps from the research and define target market for marketing campaigns	NBC	SCC, DMP, TCP	Process begins January 2013, completion April 2013	Staff time NBC, SCC, DMP	Target market for marketing materials defined
		16.3 Develop appropriate marketing material for town centre assets	NBC	SCC, DMP, TCP, Make It	Ongoing from Apr 2012	Variable costs covered by funding from SCC, DMP, TCP, Make It	Better informed residents, visitors and employees

		16.4 Develop marketing strategy for Newcastle Town Centre and the market	NBC	TCP	Firm up proposals for 'Love Newcastle' summer promotional campaign May 2012  Establish Newcastle TCP website September 2012  Prepare for launch of revamped market March 2013	NBC, TCP	Greater visitor and consumer awareness of what Newcastle town centre has to offer.
		16.5 Complete public realm works	NBC	SCC	Completion of new taxi rank in Ironmarket May 2012  Completion of Barracks Road bus lane and bus station changes June 2012  Completion of lower High Street taxi rank August 2012  Completion of repaving works to Hassell Street November 2012  Complete installation of new Market stalls March 2013	NBC, SCC combined investment of £1.2m	A more pleasant pedestrian experience in the town centre
17	<b>We will support the development of North Staffordshire's 'experience economy'</b>	17.1 Continue to work with the Destination Management Partnership (DMP) to make the Borough a more attractive prospect for visitors, including business tourism	NBC	DMP, SCC, local businesses	Publication of 'Out & About guides Mar and Sept 2012, annual economic impact survey Dec 2012	c. £10K contribution from NBC, similar contributions from other districts, c.£300K from SCC, potential £800k over 3 years from ERDF bid	Strengthening of borough tourism offer. Increased visitor numbers, increased overnight stays, increased expenditure on leisure

17.2 Work with Keele university and Keele University Students' Union to bring more students into town	NBC	Keele University, KUSU, TCP, SCC	TCP involvement ongoing, student hub set up in library Jun 2012, Freshers Fair Sep 2012 and Jan 2013	Mainly officer time NBC, KU, KUSU	Students more aware of town centre assets and making more use of facilities Greater footfall, patronage and trade
17.3 Work with DMP to encourage more take up of membership by Newcastle businesses	DMP	NBC, local businesses	Promotion at Food festival May 2012	Officer time DMP, NBC, membership contributions by businesses	Increased visitor numbers and prosperity for local tourism businesses
17.4 Bring St Giles & St Georges back into use	NBC	Choices Housing	Complete scheme design and costings April 2012. Agree terms and sign contract for lease June 2012	Costs yet to be established	Key local landmark building comprehensively refurbished and brought back into use
17.5 Encourage greater use of Jubilee 2 (J2) conference facilities	NBC	Business Panel, TCP	Business Panel meeting April 2012; and Pink Week October 2012 to be held at J2	NBC staff time	Increased use of J2 conference facilities and footfall into town
17.6 Promote the Borough's qualities to existing and potential visitors and residents	NBC	TCP, Chamber of Trade, DMP, SCC	Town centre website set-up ongoing from April 2012, programme of events ongoing from May 2012, 2013 events programme to be set in October 2012	c.£8K NBC for website, funding for events from variety of sources	Greater awareness of what borough has to offer, increase in footfall and more business for local retailers
17.7 Develop better links between the town centre and the New Vic Theatre	NBC	New Vic	Involvement in TCP ongoing, Music festival Jun 2012, other events to be determined	Funding from a variety of sources depending on event including NBC, New Vic and potentially the Arts Council	Improved cultural offer leading to increase numbers and diversity of visitors
17.8 Improve/diversify the cultural offer within the town centre	NBC	TCP, New Vic, Newcastle School, Borough Museum, BArts	Food festival May 2012, Music Festival June 2012, Heritage open days Sep 2012, Newcastle School drama Dec 2012	Funding for events from variety of sources	Improved cultural offer leading to increase numbers and diversity of visitors

18	<b>We will use the Strategic Investment Framework as the basis for investment in the cultural and retail experience of Newcastle Town Centre</b>	18.1 Set up a Town Centre Partnership	NBC	Local businesses, Partnership Against Business Crime, Chamber of Trade	Company set up April 2012, additional members recruited ongoing from May 2012 outcome of Portas Pilot application June 2012	In-kind support from group members, c.£5k from NBC	Town centre stakeholders working closely together to support a revival of fortunes of the town centre
		18.2 Set up Town Centre website	TCP	Local businesses, police, NSCCI, NBC	Website set-up ongoing from Apr 2012	c.£8K from NBC, partner time in keeping site updated	Better informed residents, visitors and businesses, greater use of town centre assets
		18.3 Develop a viable scheme for using vacant shop units to enhance the visitor experience in the town centre	NBC	B Arts, NBC, KU, New Vic	Portas pilot bid outcome June 2012, shop front theatre piece Dec 2012, identify potential funding streams ongoing	No funding at present, officer and partner in-kind support	Empty shops enhance the appearance of the town rather than detract from it and are used to add to the cultural offer of the town
		18.4 Develop a Food Festival for the town centre	TCP	NBC, local businesses, KU, local schools	Food Festival promotion Apr 2012, Food festival takes place May 2012, review and preparation for 2013 event begins Sep 2012	c.£3K from NBC plus costs to participating outlets	Food festival becomes part of annual calendar of events raising awareness and increasing footfall to town
		18.5 Explore possibility of setting up local tourism group	DMP	NBC, local businesses	Initial contact with local tourism businesses by Oct 2012	Mainly officer and partner time	Strengthening of tourism offer
		18.6 Continue to develop events to increase footfall and raise awareness	TCP	NBC plus all TCP members	Food Festival May 2012, Music Festival Jun 2012, Historic Frolic/Love your Local Market fortnight Jun 2012, Independents Month/Window dressing comp July 2012, Heritage open days Sep 2012, planning for 2013 begins Sept 2012, Pink Week Oct 2012, Christmas events Dec 2012	c. £12,000 from NBC, plus in-kind support from participating outlets and partners	Improved cultural offer leading to increase in numbers and diversity of visitors

18.7 Undertake a review of parking in the town centre	TCP	NBC	Survey undertaken from May 2012, Analysis of results September 2012	Officer time NBC, in-kind support from TCP board	Results will inform development of a parking strategy
18.8 Look at the impact of rents and rates on businesses	NBC	Aspire, SCC	Submission of Portas Pilot bid Mar 2012, Portas Pilot bid outcome June 2012, business survey Mar 2013	NBC, Aspire, SCC	Results will feed into town centre development discussions and influence possibly lobbying activities
18.9 Encourage more retail start ups through 'Independents Month' and 'Love Your Local Market' campaigns	NBC	TCP, Aspire, KU, NULC, local businesses (as mentors), BES	New Start-up section of NBC website launched Jun 2012, business support activities Jun/Jul 2012,	NBC officer time, in-kind support from mentors, retail coaching from BES	Local people better equipped to consider starting their own businesses, increase in number of businesses, including market stalls, in town centre
18.10 Market the town centre through a variety of electronic and written media	TCP	NBC, local businesses	Town centre website set-up ongoing from Apr 2012, event marketing literature ongoing from Apr 2012, explore production of a town centre app Dec 2012	c.£8k from NBC, partner time in keeping site updated, funding will be sought from other sources as necessary	Better informed residents, visitors and businesses, greater use of town centre assets

### Acronym Table

BES	Business Enterprise Support	LEP E&SIG	LEP Enterprise and Skills Implementation Group (E&SIG)
BIC	Business Innovation Centre	NBC	Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council
BIG	Business Innovation Group	NESG	Newcastle Employment and Skills Group
BIS	Business Innovation Skills	NSCCI	North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CRT	Coalfields Regeneration Trust	NULC	Newcastle College
DEEP	North Staffordshire District Enterprise and Education	PCT	Primary Care Trust
DMP	Destination Management Partnership	SCC	Staffordshire County Council
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund	SIF	Newcastle Town Centre Strategic Investment Framework
FEI	Family Employment Initiative	SoTCC	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
HEFC	Higher Education Funding Council	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
JCP	Job Centre Plus	SU	Staffordshire University
JETs	Jobs, Enterprise and Training	TCP	Newcastle Town Centre Partnership
KSBP	Keele Science and Business Park	TL4B	Think Local for Business
KU	Keele University		
LEP	Stoke & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership		

Acronym Table	
BES	Business Enterprise Support
BIC	Business Innovation Centre
BIG	Business Innovation Group
BIS	Business Innovation Skills
CRT	Coalfields Regeneration Trust
DEEP	North Staffordshire District Enterprise and Education Partnership Group
DMP	Destination Management Partnership
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
FEI	Family Employment Initiative
HEFC	Higher Education Funding Council
JCP	Job Centre Plus
JETs	Jobs, Enterprise and Training
KSBP	Keele Science and Business Park
KU	Keele University
LEP	Stoke & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership
LEP E&SIG	LEP Enterprise and Skills Implementation Group (E&SIG)
NBC	Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council
NESG	Newcastle Employment and Skills Group
NSCCI	North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry
NULC	Newcastle College
PCT	Primary Care Trust
SCC	Staffordshire County Council
SIF	Newcastle Town Centre Strategic Investment Framework
SoTCC	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
SU	Staffordshire University
TCP	Newcastle Town Centre Partnership
TL4B	Think Local for Business

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## URBAN NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE GREEN SPACE STRATEGY ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

**Submitted by:** Head of Operations – Roger Tait

**Portfolio:** All

**Ward(s) affected:** All Urban Wards of the Borough

### **Purpose of the Report**

To inform Members of progress made with the implementation of the Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy and the associated Action Plan.

### **Recommendations:**

**That the report be received and progress noted.**

### **Reasons**

To ensure that the green space asset base in urban North Staffordshire and in particular Newcastle, fulfils its potential to deliver a wide range of environmental, economic and social benefits through a strategic approach to planning and management.

## 1 **Background**

1.1 At the meeting of the Cabinet of 7 September 2011 a report was considered which detailed the findings of the Newcastle Development Programme Scrutiny Task and Finish Group in relation to the Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy. It was resolved:-

“That Officers be instructed to undertake an annual review of the progress made with implementation of the North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy and the associated Action Plan to ensure that objectives are being met”.

1.2 The Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy was formally adopted by the Cabinet of the Council at the meeting of 2 December 2009. Prior to this, at the meeting of 21 May 2008, Cabinet had approved the draft final Strategy and Action Plan for consultation with key stakeholders and adopted the local standards for green space and the calculation for developer contributions. Since this resolution in May 2008, work has been progressing with delivering the actions identified in the Action Plan programme and in developing processes and mechanisms to deliver the aims and objectives of the Strategy.

1.3 The Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy was scrutinised in detail during the summer of 2011, when the Newcastle Development Programme Scrutiny Task and Finish Group considered evidence from officers and external experts.

The evidence reviewed a number of key lines of enquiry in relation to national, regional and local policy, financial and legislative drivers, community needs assessment, consultation and community involvement.

The evidence concluded that the strategy had been prepared in accordance with available best practice guidelines and that it was fit for purpose.

## 2.0 **Issues**

- 2.1 The Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy promotes the environmental, economic and social benefits which green space brings to parallel strategic regeneration initiatives and to the Council's corporate priorities and core values. The Strategy demonstrates how good quality green space supports economic regeneration and provides opportunities for people to live a healthy and active lifestyle in a clean and safe environment. It also demonstrates the positive impact green space has on carbon reduction.
- 2.2 The Strategy aims to ensure that the residents of the Borough have the right amount of green space to cater for their needs in terms of parks, play, sport, nature and green routes. The Strategy seeks to provide these sites in places which are accessible and easy to reach for as many people as possible and by grouping facilities together into larger, multi-functional high quality green spaces.
- 2.3 To achieve these aims, the Strategy includes a phased and prioritised Action Plan programme to strategically manage the Council's green space assets to ensure that they deliver a wide range of environmental, economic and social benefits and that the financial and community value of green space is recognised and reflected in the way the Council sets priorities and allocates resources.
- 2.4 Significant progress has been made in delivering the Action Plan for the Strategy and a progress report is attached to this report at Appendix 1.

### Key Achievements To Date Include:-

- (a) In the last four years a total of over £3.4 million in external funding has been secured towards delivering the projects in the Action Plan and a number of key capital development projects have been completed or are in progress to provide and improve community green space provision.
- (a) Implementation of the Streetscene Service to deliver the cleaner, safer and sustainable agenda and neighbourhood working.
- (b) Review of potential surplus green space assets incorporated into the asset management process.
- (c) Green Space Strategy embedded into Local Development Framework process and validated as evidence base of the Core Strategy.
- (d) Consistent high performance and achievement of highest quality standard in Britain in Bloom campaign and Green Flag Awards.
- (e) Projects have been completed or are currently in progress to create or improve facilities at Brampton Park, Wolstanton Marsh, Bathpool Park, Lyme Valley, Birchenwood Playing Fields, former Silverdale Colliery, Westlands Sports Ground, Keele Cemetery, Silverdale Cemetery, Chesterton Memorial Park, The Wammy, Silverdale Park, Cotswold Avenue, Thistleberry Parkway and the Castle Motte in Queen Elizabeth Park.

- (f) Programme of work ongoing to maintain the Council's playground stock and green space footpaths/roads in a safe condition.
  - (g) Review of staffing structures and working methods to achieve savings of £ in the last four years.
  - (h) Launched the Community Engagement and Participation Framework to enable and support residents to take an active role in looking after their neighbourhood.
- 2.5 The Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy and its Action Plan programme is designed to be delivered over a fifteen year timescale, ending in 2022, following which the Strategy should be reviewed and developed for the future. The Strategy and Action Plan are designed to be flexible in order to accommodate changes in residents' needs and priorities over the fifteen year life of the document and in recognition of the financial and staff resource constraints which may influence its delivery. However, the Strategy sets out a framework and core principles for green space management which, if followed, will assist in ensuring that it's main objectives continue to be met throughout periods of change.
- 2.6 Your officers have reviewed the current policy, legislative, financial and demographic influences which affect North Staffordshire, and in particular Newcastle, in relation to green space provision, management and maintenance.
- 2.7 Whilst there are some minor changes to these factors which would normally be expected and are allowed for in the strategy, there is no material change which would necessitate a review of the strategy in it's current form and it is therefore considered to continue to be fit for purpose.
- 2.8 Further work is underway to identify and bid for funding to deliver other projects prioritised in the Action Plan programme. These projects, and their proposed funding mechanisms, will be the subject of future reports to Cabinet at appropriate times.
- 2.9 Work is also underway with partner agencies to investigate the potential to jointly deliver initiatives identified in the Action Plan programme. The outcome of this work and any associated resource implications will be reported at appropriate times.
- 2.10 It is proposed that progress with delivery of the Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy is formally reported to Cabinet on an annual basis and that reports on individual actions and projects are brought forward for approval at the appropriate time.
- 2.11 The Active and Cohesive Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested the opportunity to scrutinise this report prior to consideration at your meeting. At the time of writing, there was no scheduled meeting of the Active and Cohesive Communities Overview Committee prior to your meeting. However the report was sent to the Member Services team for distribution to members of the Active and Cohesive Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any comments received will be verbally reported at your meeting.
- 3.0 **Options Considered**
- 3.1 Options for delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan are detailed in the Strategy document.

#### 4.0 **Proposal**

4.1 It is proposed that the report be received and progress with the delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan be noted.

#### 5.0 **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

5.1 To ensure that the green space asset base in urban North Staffordshire and in particular Newcastle, fulfils its potential to deliver a wide range of environmental, economic and social benefits through a strategic approach to planning and management.

#### 6.0 **Outcomes Linked to Corporate Priorities and the Sustainable Community Strategy**

6.1 Creating a cleaner, safer and sustainable Borough.

6.2 Creating a Borough of opportunity.

6.3 Creating a healthy and active community.

6.4 Transforming our Council to achieve excellence.

#### 7.0 **Legal and Statutory Implications**

7.1 The Council has various powers and duties relating to green space provision and management, set out in statutes relating to open space, public health, miscellaneous provision and well being.

#### 8.0 **Equality Impact Assessment**

8.1 It is considered that the Strategy has a positive impact on equality issues.

#### 9.0 **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 Financial and resource implications have previously been considered.

#### 10.0 **Major Risks**

10.1 Major risks have previously been considered.

#### 11.0 **Earlier Cabinet Resolutions**

11.1 Cabinet: 09 February 2005 – Resolution No. 761

Cabinet: 03 August 2005 – Resolution No. 285

Cabinet: 21 May 2008 – Resolution No. 39

Cabinet: 02 December 2009 – Resolution No.

Cabinet: 07 September 2011 – Resolution No. 13

#### 12.0 **List of Appendices**

12.1.1 Appendix 1: Action Plan Progress Report

#### 13.0 **Background Papers**

13.1 Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy.

13.2 Report to Newcastle Development Programme Scrutiny Task and Finish Group – Green Space Strategy Theme Paper (6<sup>th</sup> July 2011)

**URBAN NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE GREEN SPACE STRATEGY**  
**PROGRESS REPORT: MAY 2012**

<b>Ref:</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Status</b>
GA1	Establish strategic business unit responsible for green spaces	Operational Services/Streetscene Division set up and delivering a cleaner, safer, sustainable agenda
GA2	Develop a funding strategy to deliver the Action Plan programme	Framework for funding strategy devised
GA3	Develop strategy for supporting and involving community groups in green space provision at non-strategic level	Community Engagement and Participation Framework launched and Community Development Officer recruited. Support mechanisms for community groups in place.
GA4	Create database of community volunteers and skills and develop recruitment and training plan	Database set up and recruitment in progress through Community Engagement and Participation Framework.
GA5	Identify appropriate partners to deliver projects within the Action Plan programme	Work in progress to allocate projects to appropriate partners as opportunities and funding programmes arise.
GA6	Identify a Green Space Champion	Portfolio Holder for Culture and Active Communities appointed as Champion
GA7	Establish consultation and review mechanism to gauge level of use, visitor opinion and satisfaction level	Annual Parks and Green Spaces Consultation ongoing.
GA8	Create design briefs for all green space improvement projects	Briefs prepared as part of individual project inception and feasibility – standard format to be developed
GA9	Adopt Green Space Urban Taskforce principles for planning, design, management and maintenance	Initial work underway to embed principles – further research on implications required
GA10	Prepare Communications Plan and Marketing Strategy	Initial work in progress via Britain in Bloom campaign and Green Flag Award Management Plans – further work required to develop strategy
GA11	Investigate potential for Public Art and Cultural Activity Strategy	Public art and cultural activities incorporated into green spaces – further work required to develop strategy
GA12	NSRP to establish schedule, nature and extent of strategic green space projects	NSRP no longer in existence
GA13	Establish lines of communication with North Staffordshire tourism functions	Incorporate into Communications Plan (action GA10)
GA14	Implement visible patrol of parks in partnership with the Police	Targeted patrols implemented at hotspot sites
GA15	Set up rapid response teams to deal with fly tipping, broken glass, graffiti and vandalised equipment	Integrated into Streetscene (Operations and Performance) set up
GA16	Undertake safety audits of green spaces	Pilot audit undertaken at Chesterton Park – programme to be rolled out to other green spaces where necessary
GA17	Facilitate youth and play work in green spaces to help combat	Big Lottery Children's Play Programme portfolio of projects

	anti-social behaviour	completed. Ongoing work with Staffordshire Youth Service to provide targeted interventions.
GA18	Establish a commitment to ring fencing a proportion of capital receipts and income from green spaces for reinvestment in green space	Approved by Cabinet May 2008
GA19	Consider creation of semi natural areas within green spaces of other functions	Trees not Turf and wildflower meadow creation programme completed. Further projects ongoing as resources allow.
GA20	Produce a Management Plan for each strategic open space and generic Management Plans for non-strategic green spaces	Management Plans completed for strategic (District level) parks and other strategic green spaces.
GA21	Review maintenance procedures and set up multi skilled area teams	Integrated into Streetscene (Operations and Performance) set up
GA22	Review surplus green space sites to determine appropriate alternative use	Initial review undertaken and integrated into asset management plan and site allocations DPD.
GA23	Prepare an Allotment Strategy	Work in progress to review strategy.
GA24	Investigate mechanisms for joint authority co-ordination of green space maintenance	
GA25	Establish neighbourhood management arrangements for management of non-strategic green space	Integrated into Streetscene (Operations and Performance) set up
GA26	Establish forums for partners to identify and deliver strategic and non-strategic green space projects	Community Forum to be launched in May 2012. Further work required to establish forums with other partners.
GA27	Set up joint authority green space information hub	Work on NBC website in progress.
RA2	Review sites where function is unclear to determine future use and maintenance regime	Review in progress and ongoing
RA3	Ensure remaining amenity space designated as LAP is fit for purpose	Sites identified and improvements ongoing as resources allow.
OS2	Create Sports Village at The Wammy	Project re-profiled to Health and Well Being Centre (completed December 2011) and The Wammy Neighbourhood Park (Phase 1 completed, Phase 2 in progress)
OS3	Improve tennis courts/pavilion at Westlands Sports Ground	Project completed 2009
OS4	Improve drainage/pavilion at Birchenwood	Project completed August 2008
OS5	Improve sports pitch provision at Wolstanton Marsh	Project programmed for Summer 2012
PP6	Improve Wolstanton Park/Marsh	Footpaths improved via Section 106 Agreement. Funding secured for further improvements via Section 106 Agreement. Programmed for summer 2012.
PP7	Improve Bathpool Park (District)	Phase 1 completed March 2008
PP8	Improve Lyme Valley Parkway (District)	Phase 1 completed March 2006

PP9	Improve Brampton Park (District)	Phase 1 completed March 2009
PP19	Improve Cotswold Avenue/The Wammy (Neighbourhood)	Phase 1 completed March 2008
PP20	Improve Thistleberry Parkway (Neighbourhood)	Phase 1 completed 2009
PP22	Improve Brampton Recreation Ground (Neighbourhood)	Phase 1 completed December 2007
PP23	Improve Chesterton Memorial Park (Neighbourhood)	Phase 1 completed March 2009 Phase 2 (new pavilion) completed 2010
PP24	Improve Silverdale Park (Neighbourhood)	Phase 1 completed March 2009
PP25	Improve Queen Elizabeth Park (Neighbourhood)	Phase 1 (Castle Motte) in progress, completion May 2012
PP27	Improve Loomer Road (Neighbourhood)	Phase 1 completed March 2006
PP53	Create fourteen LEAPs in accordance with Policy for Play	Section 106 Agreement funding secured for one LEAP
SN1	Declare local nature reserve at Bradwell Woods	Declaration completed December 2007
SN2	Declare local nature reserve at Bathpool Park	Management Plan completed and Natural England approval granted. Declaration scheduled for summer 2012.
SN3	Create local nature reserve at Westomley Wood	Work to commence on Management Plan in summer 2012.
SN4	Improve local nature reserve at Pool Dam Marshes	Section 106 Agreement secured
SN7	Improve semi-natural at Waterhays open space, Chesterton	Management Plan implemented
SN11	Improve Newcastle Greenway	Section 106 Agreement secured. Completed December 2009
SN21	A Biodiversity Management Plan should be developed (referring to SBAP) for non-strategic semi-natural green spaces	Initial scoping in progress and resources being sought.
SN22	Develop Biodiversity Management Plan for each local nature reserve and large semi-natural green space	4 LNR Management Plans prepared
GC1	Create greenway extension at Pool Dam Marshes	Completed in SCC NTADS Programme 2011/12
GC2	Create greenway extension at Lyme Brook	Completed in SCC NTADS Programme 2011/12

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## **GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS POLICY REVIEW**

**Submitted by:** Abid Razaq

**Portfolio:** Regeneration and Development

**Ward(s) affected:** All

### **Purpose of the Report**

To outline that the current Gypsies and Travellers Policy has been reviewed and consulted upon. To provide an update to the Cabinet on the outcome of this open consultation.

### **Recommendations**

**To adopt the Gypsies and Travellers Policy.**

### **Reasons**

In line with the existing policy, which was adopted in 2010 there was a requirement to review the policy. A review was to be done by representatives from various internal departments. Subsequently, a consultation was undertaken from Monday 23rd January 2012 to the Monday 9th April 2012.

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The existing policy was formulated by a special task and finish group and views of stakeholders were sought. Based on the views obtained, the Gypsies and Travellers Policy was approved by Cabinet in January 2010.
- 1.2 The existing policy was publicised to internal departments and stakeholders. It has been made available on the website of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.
- 1.3 The requirements within the existing policy; the Code of Conduct and the Welfare Assessments have been followed by the internal departments since 2010.
- 1.4 It is recognised as best practice, that policies and strategies be reviewed. As policies are predicated on circumstances and realities, they should be reviewed regularly so as to incorporate any changes in circumstances.
- 1.5 An internal grouping consisting of representatives from Housing, Planning and Operational Services was convened in September 2011. This group was responsible for reviewing the Gypsies and Travellers Policy.
- 1.6 The changes that have been made to the policy have been made to reflect the internal working practices of the Council and to ensure that the policy is an accurate reflection of the services that are and will be given to the Gypsies and Travellers communities.
- 1.7 The revised policy was sent out for consultation. The views of the stakeholders who work with the Gypsies and Travellers were sought by e-mail and by placing the new draft policy on the website.

## 2. **Issues**

- 2.1 The consultation was placed on the Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council's website. An email was circulated to stakeholders, organisations and individuals that work with the Gypsies and Travellers Community to inform them of the draft policy and the consultation.
- 2.2 The consultation was from the period of Monday 23rd January 2012 to the Monday 9th April 2012.
- 2.3 Three responses to the consultation from the website were received. These were from i) Thistleberry Residents Association ii) The Gypsy Council and iii) Staffordshire Fire Service.
- 2.4 A number of points were raised, which have been responded to and a reply sent to each of the consultees. The issues raised within the consultations did not necessitate that any changes be made to the draft policy.
- 2.5 On the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2012, a site visit was made to Cemetery Road, Silverdale Site and a notice was displayed on the site notice board to alert the residents to the Policy with contact details, allowing residents wishing to comments on the policy to do so.
- 2.6 On the 1st May 2012, a further consultation was undertaken. Officers from the Borough Council accompanying the Site Manager approached the residents of the Silverdale Site to seek their views on the Gypsies and Travellers Policy. A total of eight residents were spoken to and the outline of the policy was explained to them. However, no residents had any comments about the Policy and no further changes were recommended.

## 3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 To adopt the Gypsies and Travellers Policy.

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

- 4.1 It is proposed that the policy be adopted. The adoption of a policy will ensure that the Council could not be criticised for the way it deals with Gypsies and Travellers, and will also show to the resident communities that the Council is adopting a balanced approach.

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

- 5.1 This policy fits within the corporate priorities of Creating a Cleaner, Greener and Safer Borough and Creating a Healthy and Active Community.

## 6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 confers a legal duty upon Public Authorities, which is highlighted by the Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing. There is a general duty to have 'due regard' to eliminate unlawful discrimination, and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people from different racial groups.

## 7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 Gypsies and Travellers are regarded as a distinct BME group and the Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on this policy and any negative impacts have been justified. This is being updated in line with the suggested changes to the policy.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 There is no financial and resource implications at this stage, as the policy is an expression of the current working practices of the Council and the services conferred on the Gypsies and Travellers Communities. However, it is envisaged that the approach within this policy framework could reduce overall financial costs, for example by avoiding the need for legal eviction processes and clear up operations.

9. **Major Risks**

- 9.1 Without the adoption of a policy, the Council risks being criticised strongly from a number of perspectives, for their treatment of Gypsies and Travellers.

10. **Key Decision Information**

- 10.1 The adoption and the implementation of this policy affect all wards within the borough.

11. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 11.1 Gypsies and Travellers Policy - 25 March 2009  
11.2 Gypsies and Travellers Policy – 13th January 2010

12. **Recommendations**

- 12.1 **To adopt the Gypsies and Travellers Policy.**

13. **List of Appendices**

- 13.1 None.

14. **Background Papers**

- 14.1 Draft Gypsies and Travellers Policy November 2011

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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:** Kidsgrove

### **Purpose of the Report**

To update members of the current situation in respect of negotiations that have taken place with Kidsgrove Town Council in respect of formalising the ownership of the Town Hall and the Victoria Hall.

### **Recommendation**

**That Cabinet approve the formalisation of the freehold ownership of the Town Hall and the Victoria Hall as set out in this report.**

### **Reasons**

1. To formalise the ownership of the Town Hall and the Victoria Hall and the associated facilities in the interests of both the Borough Council and Kidsgrove Town Council.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 At your meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2012 you made resolutions relating to the terms which the Borough Council had proposed to Kidsgrove Town Council to formalise the ownership of Kidsgrove Town Hall and the Victoria Hall. The Town Council considered these terms at its meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2012 and resolved not to enter into a joint ownership agreement with the Borough Council in respect of the ground floor toilets, corridor and the current Town Council office. Kidsgrove Town Council's view is that these rooms should belong to them with the Borough Council having rights to use this space/facilities.

## **2. Issues**

- 2.1 The toilets serve the ground floor of the Town Hall building and the office is currently used by Kidsgrove Town Council. The only known reference to the transfer of the Town Hall/Victoria Hall buildings is the minutes of the Borough Council's Policy and Resources Committee of 13<sup>th</sup> March 1974 which indicates that the Victoria Hall was to be retained by Kidsgrove Town Council who were to have regard to the adjoining Town Hall which passed to the District Council. The Town Council were required to enter into an agreement to cover the joint uses of certain accommodations and the provision of common services. This minute does not refer to a specific plan which delineated the agreement between the parties as to the ownership or configuration of the rooms linking the two buildings together.

## **3. Options**

- 3.1 To do nothing – this is not a reasonable option because it provides for ongoing uncertainty between the parties.
- 3.2 To seek formal recourse through the courts – this is likely to be wasteful of resources and divisive.

3.3 To achieve a mutually-agreeable compromise position – this option would expedite the matter and help to strengthen the relationship between the parties.

4. **Preferred option**

4.1 Option three is preferred; your Officers have considered the Town Council's response to the Borough Council's proposal and in order to bring this matter to a conclusion that is acceptable to the Town Council and to finally resolve the ownership issues, your Officers recommend that the freehold ownership of the toilets and office be registered to Kidsgrove Town Council subject to the Borough Council having a permanent legal right to use these rooms.

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

There are none.

6 **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 The freehold ownership of these premises will be registered as set out in the report to Cabinet of 14<sup>th</sup> March 2012, as revised by the contents of this report.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 There are no significant resourcing implications arising from the recommended course of action.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 There are no significant risks arising from the recommended course of action.

9.2 If the recommended course of action is not taken there is a risk that both parties will suffer reputational damage and incur unnecessary financial costs by embarking on a legal process.

10. **Key Decision Information**

None

11. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

235/74

12. **Background papers**

Asset Management Strategy  
MTFS and capital and revenue budget.