

Public Document Pack

Date of meeting	Wednesday, 19th September, 2012
Time	7.00 pm
Venue	Kidsgrove Victoria Hall, Chairmans Room, Liverpool Road, Kidsgrove, Stoke on Trent, Staffs, ST7 4EL
Contact	Julia Cleary 01782 742227

Cabinet

AGENDA

PART 1- OPEN AGENDA

- 1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
To receive declarations of interest from Members on items included in the agenda.
- 2 MINUTES** (Pages 1 - 6)
To consider the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th July 2012.
- 3 Financial and Performance Management Report to the End of Quarter One (June) 2012** (Pages 7 - 18)
- 4 Newcastle Borough Council Plan 2013/14-2015/16** (Pages 19 - 34)
- 5 Budget Consultation Process** (Pages 35 - 42)
- 6 Developing a Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership** (Pages 43 - 46)
- 7 Proposed Declaration of Bathpool Park as a Local Nature Reserve** (Pages 47 - 52)
- 8 Proposals for the Redevelopment and Disposal of the former Knutton Recreation Centre** (Pages 53 - 60)
- 9 Localised Council Tax Support - Consultation** (Pages 61 - 70)
- 10 Borough Health and Wellbeing Strategy** (Pages 71 - 78)
- 11 Westlands Sports Ground Pavilion** (Pages 79 - 82)
- 12 Supply of Spring and Summer Bedding Plants and Weed Control Contracts** (Pages 83 - 88)
- 13 Procurement of the Reporter** (Pages 89 - 96)
- 14 URGENT BUSINESS**
To consider any business which is urgent within the meaning of Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Members: Councillors Mrs Bates, Mrs Beech, Boden, Kearon, Snell, Stubbs and 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.

CABINET

Wednesday, 18th July, 2012

Present:- Cllr Snell – in the Chair

Councillors Mrs Beech, Boden, Kearon, Snell, Stubbs and Williams

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs Bates.

2. MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 20th June 2012 be approved as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Leader stated that he was a member of Silverdale Parish Council which related to item number 5 on the agenda.

4. NEW PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

A report was submitted summarising the findings of the latest stage of the performance management framework review which was designed to focus on outcomes. Members thanked Phil Morgan from the Audit Commission for his work on the project.

Resolved: (a) That Cabinet notes the review findings as set out in the attached report.

(b) That Cabinet offer any suggestions or changes to the proposals set out in this report where necessary

(c) That Cabinet authorise officers to use the framework to develop performance management across the authority in time for the reporting of the new framework at the next meeting of Cabinet in September

(d) That further reports are provided to Cabinet on performance, using the new framework as the basis for this information

5. DEVELOPING THE TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP WITH SUPPORT FOR THE PORTAS PILOT APPLICATION AND A TOWN CENTRE MANAGER

Cabinet received a report to update it on progress with the setting up of a town centre partnership for Newcastle-under-Lyme town centre. To outline proposals for continuing support from the Council, specifically a proposal for the Partnership to have a Town Centres Manager. The report also provided an update to members on progress made with developing plans for supporting the development of the town centre which formed the basis of the revised submitted Portas Pilot bid.

The Leader brought Members attention to paragraph 4.6 of the report which highlighted that where appropriate and possible, some of the initiatives would be replicated in Kidsgrove Town Centre and that it could be appropriate to work alongside the Town Council and LAP in order to secure complimentary support.

Resolved: a) That Members agree to support the emergent Town Centre Partnership with the allocation of £30,000 in the current financial year for the recruitment of a Town Centres Manager and £5,000 to support the establishment of a website, both from the re-allocation of existing budgets.

(b) That Members agree to the short term secondment of the current Business Development Officer on a 0.5 FTE basis to support the business community with town centres development activities / initiatives.

(c) That officers be authorised to proceed with the formal establishment of the town centre partnership based around a Community Interest Company model (or similar entity), including the appointment of Directors, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Town Centres.

(d) That Members agree to the continued provision of in-kind support to the town centre partnership to assist with the following activities:

- (i) Recruitment of a town centres manager;
- (ii) Formalisation of the town centre partnership;
- (iii) Preparation of an action plan for at least the next 12 months and;
- (iv) Exploration of options for establishing a sustainable funding model for the TCP.

(e) That Members note the plans included in the revised submitted Portas pilot application.

6. SILVERDALE COMMUNITY FACILITY

A report was submitted to inform Members how the Council had been working with a range of partners for several years to develop a community scheme as part of the development on the former Silverdale Colliery site. This report outlined progress with the plans and sought approval to enter into a range of agreements in order to facilitate the development.

Cllr Cairns as ward member for Silverdale and Parksite thanked Officers for their hard work on the project.

Resolved: (a) That Cabinet approves the transfer of land at the former Silverdale Colliery from the Homes and Communities Agency to the Borough Council (in accordance with the requirements of the S106 agreement dated 7 April 2010).

(b) That Cabinet approves the principle of minor revisions being made to the design of the Community Facility as agreed by the Silverdale Community Facility Steering Group and that the necessary planning permission is sought.

(c) That Cabinet accept Thomas Vale Construction (the lowest tenderer) as the main contractor to carry out the Community Facility building works.

(d) That Cabinet gives approval to enter into a s185 agreement with Severn Trent Water Ltd in order to progress the sewer realignment.

(e) That Cabinet authorises officers to complete the ongoing discussions with partner agencies to meet the requirements of the s185 agreement and supply of services to the community facility.

(f) That Cabinet approves the proposed management arrangements for the facility.

7. **SURPLUS LAND - PROPOSED NEWCASTLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME DISPOSALS**

A report was submitted by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Town Centres outlining why the Council should not proceed with any plans to dispose of the seven sites referred to in the report and that the Council advise the local planning authority to remove these sites from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).

The Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities confirmed that the recommendations had been endorsed by overview and scrutiny and he thanked members of that Committee for their hard work.

The Leader confirmed that the Land at Coalpit Hill, Talke included the entrance at Thomas Street. The Leader also thanked officers and residents for the time and effort given to the project and sated that he was pleased to see proper public engagement.

Resolved: That the Council not proceed with any plans to dispose of the seven sites referred to in the report and that the Council advise the local planning authority to remove these sites from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).

8. **SITE ALLOCATIONS AND POLICIES DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (DPD) DRAFT CONSULTATION ISSUES AND OPTIONS REPORT**

A supplementary report was submitted stating that:

*'Should Cabinet resolve **not to proceed with any plans** to dispose of the seven NDP sites then reference to the sites would be removed from the SHLAA on the basis that as the sites are no longer available they cannot be regarded as "developable".'*

Members confirmed that consultation would continue on the remaining sites and all processes would be kept open and transparent and all members of the public would have the opportunity to become involved in the consultation process. The Portfolio Holder for safer Communities reinforced that all consultation would be open and transparent and that feedback from the Communities and residents was essential for the process to be successful.

The Leader confirmed that he would attend all of the pubic consultation meetings along with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration and Town Centres. The Leader also thanked Cllr Loades for his work with the Scrutiny Group.

A representation had also now been received from Madeley Conservation Group who stated that they, and they understood, Madeley Parish Council, wished to express the utmost concern at the totally undemocratic proposal to eliminate seven sites in

the urban area before all the remainder were considered. This would evidently put more pressure on the remaining sites, which should all be considered on their merits.

As no communication had been received directly from Madeley Parish Council officers had spoken to the Clerk who had confirmed that his Council had not formally adopted a position in this matter.

As Cabinet had resolved (with respect to the preceding item No. 6) that the Council not proceed with any plans to dispose of the 7 sites referred to in the report on that item, and advised the Local Planning Authority to remove these sites from the SHLAA, the following revised recommendations were **resolved**:

- a) That Cabinet agree to rename the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document as the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan
- b) That Cabinet agree to approve the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan Draft Issues and Options Paper set out in Appendix A, as amended to exclude the 7 Newcastle Development Programme (NDP) sites referred to in the previous item, and to give authority to officers to make minor drafting and editorial corrections to the Paper, in consultation with the Planning, Regeneration and Town Centres Portfolio holder
- c) That Cabinet agree to the draft consultation arrangements set out in Appendix B, subject to any revised arrangements being made by officers in consultation with the Planning, Regeneration and Town Centres Portfolio holder
- d) That Cabinet agree to receive a future report setting out the recommendations of the Planning Committee on the results of the first stage of public consultation with a view to approving the next steps

9. **REVIEWING THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF HS2**

A report was submitted highlighting the Government's progress with their plans for a High Speed Rail link (known as HS2) and to consider whether the Council should lobby for a local station should the line proceed.

The Government had agreed to go ahead with HS2. Whilst the Council could consider it appropriate to continue with a holding objection to the scheme, the Council could decide to take the position that if it was to go ahead then there should be a local station in order to improve the economic fortunes of the sub-region.

Resolved: (a) That the Council modify its stance to offer support for the principle of HS2 as long as the potential economic benefits for North Staffordshire can be demonstrated to outweigh the environmental consequences, in particular whether such benefits would be derived from a local station being provided to serve this area.

(b) That the Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny and Overview Committee be asked to continue to scrutinise the plans for HS2 with the Task and Finish Sub Group reconvening when the Government Consultation commences, with a particular focus upon whether the provision of an intermediate station in the North Staffordshire area would strengthen the case on economic grounds sufficiently to outweigh potentially adverse environmental consequences.

10. **APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITIES**

A report was submitted reviewing options to provide apprenticeship opportunities for young people in the Borough.

Resolved: (a) That Cabinet note the existing apprenticeship and training opportunities within the Borough.

(b) That officers are authorised to investigate in further detail opportunities to provide additional apprenticeship places within the Borough Council.

(c) That officers are authorised to investigate the feasibility of working with a specialist local training provider to increase apprenticeship opportunities.

(d) That a report is brought to a future meeting of the Cabinet detailing the outcome of the above actions.

11. **SUPPORT FOR HOME SECURITY CHECKS, ADVICE AND SECURITY MEASURES FOR VULNERABLE RESIDENTS**

Members received a report outlining the current services that were available to vulnerable residents from a range of partner agencies to advise and assist on home security issues. It was recognised that more could be done to promote the schemes, specifically the handy person service so that vulnerable people were aware of the support available. The report outlined why some vulnerable people did not take up the current services and proposed ways in which this could be improved with further financial investment. Ultimately the report sought a decision, in principle, to implement additional measures to support the most vulnerable households.

Resolved: (a) That the Council proceed with the principle of the additional home security measures summarised in the report?

(b) That officers report back with options to reduce the handyperson charging policy to make the home security material provision and / or labour charge free or 50% subsidised.

12. **LOCAL ENVIRONMENT QUALITY AND CLEANLINESS OF THE BOROUGH**

A report was submitted that responded to the new administrations stated priority for a clean and tidy Borough, setting out the current activity and approach to achieving Local Environmental Quality and cleanliness, and it's effectiveness.

Cabinet welcomed the good work that Street Scene had carried out over the previous year, doing an excellent job and saving £56,000 over the last 4 years.

Resolved: a) That the information be received.

(b) That the improved level of performance in respect of Local Environmental Quality and cleanliness be noted.

(c) That the current approach to achieving Local Environmental Quality and cleanliness be endorsed, and ongoing initiatives be supported.

(d) That performance in relation to Local Environmental Quality and cleanliness is regularly reported to Cabinet as part of the emerging corporate performance management framework.

13. STAFFORDSHIRE LOCAL NATURE PARTNERSHIP

A report was submitted to inform Cabinet of the formation of the Staffordshire Local Nature Partnership, its purpose and aims and to seek authority for the Borough Council to be represented in the partnership.

The Partnership would ensure that the Borough Council's interests were represented in the Staffordshire Local Nature Partnership, in relation to the natural environment. To enhance the Council's ability to influence development of habitats, demonstrate an ambassadorial role in protecting and enhancing bio-diversity, strengthen external funding bids and secure support and advice from other organisations in the partnership

Resolved: a) That the report be received.

(b) That Cabinet endorses the purpose and aims of the proposed Staffordshire Local Nature Partnership.

(c) That authorisation is granted for appropriate Borough Council officer representation on the proposed Staffordshire Local Nature Partnership to aid its establishment and to support and contribute to the delivery of its objectives.

14. CEMETERIES MEMORIAL SAFETY PROGRAMME 2011-2015

Cabinet received a report informing it of the revised British Standard in relation to Memorial Testing and to seek authority to amend the Council's policy to bring it in line with the British Standard.

Resolved: That the Council's policy in relation to Memorial Testing is amended to align with the revised British Standard.

15. ICT SOFTWARE CONSOLIDATION - LICENSING

A report was submitted to inform Cabinet of the award of a contract for ICT licensing software following a competition within a Government Procurement Services framework.

The contract would save the Council £30,000 over the next three years, the Leader that the Head of ICT and Member Services for her work in achieving this.

Resolved: That Cabinet notes the award by the Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) of a three year contract to Civica UK Ltd for the supply of ICT software for the Council's Licensing Service.

16. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

Chair

FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT TO END OF QUARTER ONE (JUNE) 2012

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

Portfolio: Communications, Transformation and Partnerships/Finance and Budget Management

Wards Affected: All

Purpose

To provide Cabinet with the Financial and Performance Review for the 2012/13 First Quarter (April –June).

Recommendations

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

(b) That Members note that the appendix is an interim performance report to be further developed as detailed in the Performance Management Framework Review. The intention is to report performance information in a new format as the work is progressed in each subsequent quarter.

Reasons

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

1. Background, Issues and Options

- 1.1 This report provides Members with a detailed update on how the Council has performed during the first quarter of 2012/13 by presenting performance data set in a financial context. The report has previously been presented at the Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September.
- 1.2 The Council approved a General Fund Revenue Budget of £14,260,980 on 22 February 2012. The actual position compared to this budget is continuously monitored by managers in order to detect any significant variances of expenditure or income from the approved amounts contained in the budget. Regular reports are made available to members by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Budget Management informing them of the current position, highlighting any significant factors giving rise to variances.
- 1.3 A Capital Programme totalling £18,480,100, covering the two years 2011/12 to 2012/13, was approved at the same Council meeting. Of this total, £4,457,200 was estimated to be spent in 2012/13.
- 1.4 This report also provides detailed analysis of performance in the first quarter, focusing on key performance indicators.
- 1.5 A summary of the overall picture is presented in section 5 of this report. This is a promising start, with the majority of targets currently met.

2. **Revenue Budget Position**

2.1 The overall position at 30 June shows an adverse variance of £19,000. At this point in the financial year, we would have expected to have spent approximately £1.894 million: we have actually spent £1.913 million. Contributing factors to the variance include:

- sources of income such as land charges, planning fees, market stall rents, commercial property rents and car park fees, continuing to yield less compared to what we would, in the past, have expected to receive up to this point in the year. Because we anticipated economic problems would continue in 2012/13 an allowance of £200,000 was included in the budget which will help to cover these shortfalls.
- A small number of service over spends have occurred, primarily Kidsgrove Sports Centre due to the part closure of the facility as repair works are being carried out to the roof of the swimming pool.
- On the positive side, there have been a small number of income sources whereby income has exceeded what we would have expected to receive up to 30 June, these include litter fines, Jubilee 2 income and burial and cremation fees.
- There are also savings on some supplies and services and employee savings arising from factors such as the time-lag in filling vacant posts.

2.2 With regard to Jubilee 2, the positive position recorded in the first few months after the centre opened up to the end of the previous financial year has continued. Last year income totalled £377,508 compared with the estimate of £340,142. Up to the end of period 4 this year, income totals £462,649, compared to the budget of £399,533, whilst expenditure totals £407,445, against expected spend at this point in the year of £373,106.

3. **Capital Programme Position**

3.1 The Capital Programme approved by Council in February 2012 has been updated to take account of slippage in 2011/12. Where planned expenditure did not occur last year, this has been added to the budget for 2012/13 (apart from any cases where costs have been reduced or expenditure will no longer be incurred). The revised budget for capital projects in 2012/13 totals £5,418,300. The Capital Programme Review Group has considered and agreed the revised Capital Programme at its meeting in early July and monitoring is now being carried out against this revised Programme.

3.2 £1,351,900 of the revised budget was expected to be spent by 30 June. Actual spending was £742,800. The variance of £609,100 is almost entirely accounted for by variances in relation to two projects, Beasley Place Housing Scheme (where the contribution of £300,000 is now due to be made in September) and Section 106 Works Lowlands Road (where revised environmental works remain to be agreed with Stoke on Trent City Council).

4. **Investment Counterparties**

4.1 Investment counterparties with whom money is invested, as at 17 August 2012 are as follows (with the parent company shown in brackets, where applicable):

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

4.2 With regard to the Council's frozen investment in Heritable Bank, the total amount repaid now amounts to some £1,869,521, which is around 74% of the total that was frozen. The

Administrators current prediction is that at least 90% of the £2,500,000 invested will be repaid.

5. **Performance**

- 5.1 The Corporate Performance ('dashboard') report is attached as Appendix A.
- 5.2 The information is presented in four sections against each priority.
- 5.3 There are measures detailing progress against our priorities and outcomes and the number of quarterly indicators is 27. This is an interim performance report which will be progressed and developed for quarter two in line with a longer term aim – to identify and focus on key measures that we consider to be of a cross cutting nature and ensure progress against our outcomes over the coming years. The measures to be used in forthcoming reports for 2012-13 will be determined at outcome-focussed workshops held with relevant officers of the council in August and September.
- 5.4 The appendix comments on individual indicators where they raise an issue or where either a target has been met, or the direction of travel is not positive.
- 5.5 The proportion of indicators which have met their targets, based on data at the time of compiling this report, was 85%.
- 5.6 Positive performance can be seen in a range of services although it must be borne in mind that that the results later in the year can be different and that some services have seasonal factors.
- 5.7 There are a very small number of areas listed in this report which are not on target, though none causes concern at present. In all cases, the management of the service is aware of the issues and are taking steps to deal with the situation. Further updates will be provided for Members in future reports.

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

- 6.1 All of these indicators link to corporate priorities.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

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

8. **Equality Impact Implications**

- 8.1 There are no differential equality issues.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

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

10. **Major Risks**

- 10.1 The current economic situation represents the greatest risk to the revenue budget,

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

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

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

11. **List of Appendices**

Appendix A - Corporate Performance ('dashboard') report is attached as Appendix




12. **Background Papers**



Working papers held by officers responsible for calculating indicators.

Newcastle Borough Council – Quarter 1 Performance Report

Priority 1 - A clean, safe and sustainable borough where:




- Levels of safety will have improved, along with standards of public health:
- Vulnerable citizens and victims of crime will be provided with high quality support:
- The negative impact that the Council, residents and local businesses have on the environment will have reduced:
- Our streets and open spaces will be clean, clear and tidy:
- Town centres across the borough will be sustainable and safe:
- Working in partnership to support victims of anti-social behaviour, crime and domestic violence:
- Focus with partners on empowering local people in communities:



Indicator	Qtr 1 result	Qtr 1 target (if applicable)	2012/13 Target	Comments	Target Achieved
Number of food establishments which are broadly compliant with good hygiene law	91%	85%	85%	Food Business operators have demonstrated good compliance with legal requirements, the launch of the national food hygiene rating scheme and publicising hygiene scores have assisted in improving standards across businesses.	
Violence with injury	168	N/A	N/A	Violence with injury and Serious Acquisitive Crime is down on the previous quarter, the Qtr 4 results were 222 and 185 respectively. Results for Anti-social behaviour were not available for the whole of the first quarter and at the time of report not obtainable.	N/A
Anti-social Behaviour	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A
Serious acquisitive crime	182	N/A	N/A		N/A
The amount of residual household waste per household	107.31kgs	112.5kgs	450kgs	For the first quarter of the year the results for these indicators are well within target	
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	55.8%	52%	52%		

Indicator	Qtr 1 result	Qtr 1 target (if applicable)	2012/13 Target	Comments	Target Achieved
Measure missed bin collections on all our routes	54.76	100	100	The number of missed bins continues to be well within target.	
% of investment portfolio (NBC owned) which is vacant.	10%	12%	12%	The target for 2012/13 was previously set at 14% which was 1% less than the 2011/12 target of 15% but after review the target has now been reduced to 12%. There are a total of 18 properties vacant from a total portfolio of 180 properties and the vacancy rate of 10% is well within target.	
% improvement in street and environment cleanliness	N/A	N/A		The surveys are undertaken in the second, third and fourth quarters so there are no results for this quarter.	N/A
a) litter			9		
b) detritus			9		
c) graffiti			3		
d) fly-posting			0		

Priority 2 – A borough of opportunity where:



- Levels of worklessness will have reduced
- Local people will be able to access opportunities for personal development and growth
- Housing will be available and accessible to meet a range of diverse needs
- Key parts of the borough will have been regenerated and there will have been overall economic growth

Indicator	Qtr 1 result	Qtr 1 target (if applicable)	2012/13 Target	Comments	Target Achieved
Number of cases where positive action was successful in preventing homelessness (from the P1E)	180	125	500	The NHA team have worked well this quarter, with the number of service users receiving homelessness prevention assistance from the service exceeding the target.	
Continued engagement with the Family Employment Initiative (FEI)	136	135	540	Engagement target 27 per month (Qtr 1, 79), Training target 9 per month (Qtr 1, 28), Employment target 9 per month (Qtr 1, 29).	
NI 157a Percentage of Major Planning Applications determined within time	50	75 (60)	75 (60)	The performance for major applications has not met the target this quarter with 3 decisions made out of a possible 6. Although the numbers involved are limited this is due principally to difficulties that have been experienced with the securing of planning obligations within the timeframe of the target period.	

Indicator	Qtr 1 result	Qtr 1 target (if applicable)	2012/13 Target	Comments	Target Achieved
NI 157b Percentage of Minor Planning Applications determined within time	87.5	85 (65)	85 (65)	The performance for minor applications has met the target. For the category of “other,” the performance for this quarter was marginally below the locally set target but exceeded the government target of 80%. For the sake of clarity the national performance targets set by government have been shown in brackets against our locally set targets.	
NI 157c Percentage of Other Planning Applications determined within time	93.4	95 (80)	95 (80)		





Priority 3 – A healthy and active community where:





- People who live work, visit or study in the borough will have access to high quality facilities
- Levels of cultural activity and participation in the arts will have increased
- There will be a range of healthy lifestyle choices, resulting in an increase in participation in sport and physical activity
- Local people will be more able to work together to solve local problems
- Council services will be influenced by resident engagement, enabling local communities to shape services which directly affect their lives

Indicator	Qtr 1 result	Qtr 1 target (if applicable)	2012/13 Target	Comments	Target Achieved
Number of people accessing leisure and recreational facilities	131551	142500	570,000	The usage figure for the service has not met the target as forecasted. The figures for the Kidsgrove centre are lower than forecasted, due to the essential repair works underway by the County Council which are to be completed by the end of September when we will be in a position to determine how to best re-commission the pools.	
Number of people visiting the museum	13482	15750	63,000	The quarterly figure is down due to poor weather particularly during the Easter and June half term holidays which has affected the attendance figures.	

Priority 4 – Becoming a Co-operative Council delivering high quality, community-driven services where:

- The Council will have increased the capacity and skills of its workforce
- Councillors will be community champions and powerful community advocates
- The Council will have delivered further efficiencies
- High performing services will be provided for all residents and customers
- The Council will be an open, honest and transparent organisation which undertakes regular consultation with its residents and listens to their views

Indicator	Qtr 1 result	Qtr 1 target (if applicable)	2012/13 Target	Comments	Target Achieved
Average number of days lost, per employee, to the Council through sickness	1.62	1.72	6.9	This indicator is on target for the first quarter.	
Percentage of invoices paid on time(within 30 days)	96.24	97	97	Slightly below the target which is set very high.	
% projected variance against full year council budget	0.1%	No variance	No variance	There was a £19,000 adverse variance as at 30 th June.	
% requests resolved at first point of contact	94.35	75	75	Our performance is well above target.	

Indicator	Qtr 1 result	Qtr 1 target (if applicable)	2012/13 Target	Comments	Target Achieved
% Unmet demand (number of calls not answered as a % of total call handling volume)	4.8	10	10	Our performance is well above target. This is a reflection of the improved service now being provided since the recent telephony and process enhancements.	
Percentage of Council Tax Collected (Cumulative)	26.89	24.12	97.5	A good start with both indicators exceeding the target in the first quarter.	
Percentage of NNDR collected	25.74	25.11	96		
Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax new claims and change events	11.37 days	13 days	10 days	Progress in the first quarter has started favourably with performance on target.	

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COUNCIL PLAN 2013/14 TO 2015/16

Submitted by: Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships

Portfolio: Communications, Transformation and Partnerships

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To consider the draft Council Plan for the period 2013/14 to 2015/16.

Recommendations

- (a) That Members note this report and the draft copy of the Council Plan for 2013/14-2015/16 (found at Appendix A).
- (b) That Members approve the adoption of the Council Plan for 2013/14 to 2015/16.
- (c) That Members note that the monitoring section of the plan is being progressed via senior officer workshops in order to determine the relevant measures/indicators in order to monitor improvement against the priorities and outcomes being developed as part of the Council Plan.

Reasons

The Council Plan underpins the entire planning structure of the Authority and informs the organisation by acting as the major driver behind any budget proposals, longer-term strategic plans and the service planning process. By monitoring the Plan the Council is able to evidence its impact over time against its stated outcomes and identify areas of improvement.

1. **Background and Issues**

- 1.1 A new style Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Plan for the period 2013/14 to 2015/16 is proposed which replaces the existing Corporate Plan document. The Council has taken the opportunity to develop the Plan in order to reflect changes in the political and economic environment of the Borough. The Plan also reflects the work undertaken as part of the recent Performance Management Framework Review.

The Plan itself is made up of two sections, with the first section of the draft Plan attached at Appendix A. The second section is to be produced once details of the measures and indicators – designed to monitor progress against the outcomes which underpin the Plan – are known and agreed with key stakeholders.

- 1.2 The Plan sets out the new vision for the Council, which is *to create a borough that is prosperous, clean, healthy and safe*. This vision replaces the previous vision and forms the basis for the new Council Plan.
- 1.3 The new priorities set out in the Plan are proposed as: -
 - A clean, safe and sustainable borough,
 - A borough of opportunity,
 - A healthy and active community and

- Becoming a co-operative council delivering high quality, community-driven services

- 1.4 The draft plan attached at Appendix xx, and has been reviewed to check for Plain English.
- 1.5 As well as forming the basis for corporate, strategic and service planning, the proposed Council Plan is also plays a significant role in the development of the Council's budget over the period covered by the Plan, as it sets out the priority areas and the desired outcomes for the organisation against which budget decisions can be made as part of the process of putting the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) together.

2. **Development of the Council Plan**

- 2.1 The draft Council Plan, including its content and layout has been designed in order take into consideration the findings and information from the work undertaken earlier this year in the Performance Management Framework Review and also is a reflection of the ending of the National Performance Framework, which provides local authorities with the opportunity to set their own local outcome measures and indicators to reflect local issues.
- 2.2 The Plan is also a reflection of the changed political landscape of the Borough since the May 2011 local elections.
- 2.3 The Plan is a reflection of national issues and key pieces of legislation but is more geared towards recognising local issues and setting out how these will be tackled, via the new outcome-based performance framework.
- 2.4 The Plan also reflects the overall ambition of the Council over the next three years in a number of key areas of work.
- 2.5 The Plan is a key tool in the development of the Council's budget in the medium-term as outlined in the previous section.
- 2.6 In order to take into account these changes, therefore, the following was necessary in terms of reviewing the existing Corporate Plan: -
- A review of the Plan's structure.
 - Involvement of key stakeholders in the review and drafting process.
 - A review of the vision for the Council.
 - Review of the four key priorities, in order to gauge their ongoing relevance and meaning.
 - To review and challenge the developing outcomes in order to ensure they are linked to the Council's priorities and also to ensure that they reflect the issues faced by the Borough.
 - To ensure that the key strategies of the council are linked to the plan and contribute to it.
 - To acknowledge the key drivers for change which impact on the content and reflect the developments set out in the Plan and which are the main immediate challenges for the Council to deal with in conjunction with its communities and partners.
- 2.7 The Plan also renews the existing vision for the Council, with the new vision expressed as "to create a Borough that is prosperous, clean, healthy and safe".
- 2.8 Finally, the Plan articulates a change from the previous priority of "transforming our council to achieve excellence" by a new priority "becoming a co-operative council delivering high quality, community driven services".

3. Consultation and Other Influences

- 3.1 The vision, priorities and outcomes set out in the Plan have been considered via various forums undertaken as part of the ongoing Performance Management Framework Review process, with further work needed during September 2012 to complete the performance structure underpinning each outcome. A further report will come to the next Cabinet setting out the result of this work.
- 3.2 Ongoing consultation commissioned and analysed by the Borough Council's Communications and Business Improvement and Partnerships Departments in 2011/12 is used in the development of this Plan together with data from service-based satisfaction surveys, undertaken in-house on a regular basis to inform the management of service delivery.
- 3.3 The Plan is also a key part of the ongoing budget setting process underpinning the development of the new MTFs. The Plan sets out the key areas of focus for the Council based on the main drivers shaping the Council's future development (including the financial issues facing the organisation) and therefore provides the framework for ongoing budget decisions for the financial year 2013/14 and beyond.
- 3.4 Finally, demographic and other "profile" data contained in the Plan has been updated to reflect the emerging Census 2011 information. Further changes to the previous Plan have also been made as part of the "drivers for change" section of the Plan, including: -
- Demographic information.
 - Legislative development e.g. Welfare Reform and Localism Acts.
 - Information on the key 'local' strategies which have informed the Plan extensively.
 - Changes made due to the work done as part of the Performance Management Review.
 - Relevant aspects of the 'The Way We Work' Programme.
 - Details of initiatives around ensuring the good use of public money – especially relevant during the current challenging economic times.

4. Options, Proposal and Reasons for Preferred Solution

- 4.1 Effective strategic planning benefits from a single document outlining issues and assumptions and stating the general direction for the organisation in question – the attached draft Council Plan is designed to achieve this for the future development of Newcastle under Lyme B.C.
- 4.2 The Council Plan is therefore the document which clearly informs the council and acts as the major driver behind any budget proposals, longer-term strategic plans and also the service planning process.
- 4.3 Members are asked to consider the Plan and this covering report.
- 4.4 In considering the Plan/report, Members can: -
- Option A - accept the draft layout and its content as provided plus the addition of the monitoring section once determined (recommended, subject to further modifications and additions to be made as required by Cabinet).
 - Option B - request significant further changes to the Plan (also recommended, although Members should be aware that this will delay the process of publishing the

Plan and will also have an effect potentially on other related processes such as setting the budget for 2013/14 onwards).

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

5.1 This document identifies the corporate priorities of the Authority aligned to those of the Sustainable Community Strategy, linked to expected outcomes.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

Officers have drafted this plan in line with current codes and legislation.

7. **Equality impact**

There are no differential impacts in this report.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 The plans in this report are to be considered against the overall Budget Strategy of the Council and play a key role in the development of the Council's budget from 2013/14 onwards.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 The plans in this report are to be considered against the overall Risk Strategy of the Council. This is done as part of the Service and Financial Planning process.

10. **Key Decision information**

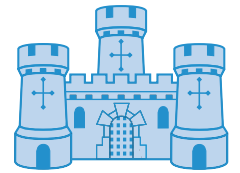
10.1 This report is in the Forward Plan.

11. **List of Appendices**

Appendix A - Draft Corporate Plan

12. **Background Papers**

Working papers held by officer in Corporate Plan 2012/13 files



**NEWCASTLE
UNDER LYME**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Plan

2013 -14 to 2015 -16



Message

from the Leader of the Council

Councillor Gareth Snell



**Councillor
Gareth Snell**

Leader of the Council

The Newcastle Borough Council Plan serves as the basis for everything we do as a council. The services we provide to our residents and the way we go about improving the borough are all determined by this plan and is empowered by the mandate the current administration has from the people of the borough.

With bold and ambitious plans to make the borough the best it can be, the plan sets out what we hope to achieve over the next 3 years and how we are going to turn a plan into reality.

Councils continue to have their funding cut by Government and legislative changes to the responsibilities of local councils means there will be some tough decisions ahead in the near future. This plan demonstrates our commitment to protecting vital public services and addressing the needs of local people while keeping Council Tax as low as possible during these difficult times.

Overall this plan is everyone's plan. The outcomes and priorities are derived from the mandate the Labour Party received at the ballot box and reflect the promises we made to everyone. However, this plan is a living document and we want to encourage local people to help shape our borough by improving opportunities to get involved and have a real say in the decisions that affect their lives.

To ensure the success of the council and delivery of our Council Plan, we want to make it easier for everyone to find out about their council, talk to their councillors, help develop their local services, and help us tackle the issues that are really important to you.

***. . . using
resources well
to provide good
public services***

***. . . targeting
support for
those who need
it most***

***. . . local people
involved and
having a say***

Welcome

from the Chief Executive

We want to make the borough a better place to live, work and invest.

Our Newcastle Borough Council Plan sets out how the council will seek to achieve this over the next three years.

In these challenging economic times it is important that we use resources prudently and effectively. In producing this plan we have reviewed the way we do things and considered what is important for the borough.

Our plan focuses on doing those things which will deliver our priorities and ensure that we continue to deliver high quality services for our customers.



John Sellgren
Chief Executive

This Corporate Plan takes account of several drivers for change:-

- **Our area and its people**
- **The Welfare Reform Act**
- **Localism Act**
- **Our Local strategies**
- **Performance Management review**
- **The Way We Work**
- **Making good use of public money**



Our vision

.... is to create a borough that is prosperous, clean, healthy and safe



We want Newcastle-under-Lyme to be a borough in which people are proud to live, work, visit and do business. Moreover, we want the borough council to be an open, honest and transparent organisation which is accountable to local people and which, through co-operation with partners, will work together to improve where we all live. By trying to deliver better services, focused on the needs of local people, we aim to create a council which is responsive and in touch with the people it serves.

A borough of opportunity

We will work with our partners to maximise investment and encourage enterprise and employment - generating activities that will create opportunities for improving the wealth, prosperity and housing choices of our residents.

A healthy and active community

We will work with partners to make sure residents and visitors are able to access a range of facilities and support activities that will enable them to improve their health and quality of life.

“ safer place to live, work and visit with long-term crime rates falling over the last few years ”

Becoming a co-operative council which delivers high quality, community-driven, services.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council is working towards being a co-operative council which means we are working together with our residents, partners and local organisations to collectively deliver the best we can using the resources we have.

Priorities

A clean, safe and sustainable borough

We will improve the environment so that everyone can enjoy our safe, sustainable and healthy borough.



**“ Newcastle
is a
co-operative
council ”**

**What is a
co-operative council?**

We are working to:-

- Bring more public services together so that people get what they need at the right place and the right time.
- Encourage more involvement from local people and our staff in planning and running services.
- Support our communities better and encourage people to do more to help their own communities.

Whilst we still face budget cuts, the council is making sure local people are more involved in reducing our costs and challenging what we spend.

We are involving the community and business leaders in developing our future plans, drawing on the skills and expertise that exists in the borough.

**Working with our
communities**

The Newcastle Partnership works with 11 Locality Action Partnerships (LAPs) across the borough in offering opportunities for residents and communities to get involved in activities, engagement and decision-making in their area.

LAPs represent the Partnership’s established infrastructure for the delivery of locality working and offer communities enhanced and focused access to a range of partners in order to address and deliver against local priorities.



**. . . projects
taking place
in partnership
with the
community**

**. . . LAPs
or 'Friends of'
groups**

**. . . collaborative
working with
our strategic
partners**

**. . . partnerships
and commissioning
arrangements
with the
third sector**



Drivers for change

We have many things to consider when delivering a service to residents.

Our area and its people

Recently released figures from the 2011 Census tell us that Newcastle's population has grown by 1.5 per cent since 2001 and there are now an estimated 123,900 residents in the borough.

Our population is ageing, with about 14 per cent more residents aged over 60 than in 2001. The biggest increase has been amongst people aged over 85 and this is expected to grow further in the coming years. This increasing old-age dependency ratio will have wide ranging implications on the economy of the borough.

Newcastle-under-Lyme continues to become more diverse, estimates suggesting that around 95 per cent of residents are white, compared with around 98 per cent at the time of the 2001 Census.

Our borough is becoming a safer place to live, work and visit, with long-term crime rates falling over the last few years. Reports of anti-social behaviour have also been falling steadily over the past four years.

Residents are happy with Newcastle-under-Lyme as a place to live but in some areas the fear of crime remains a concern despite falling crime rates.

The economic downturn has meant that there has been a seven per cent reduction in the number of jobs in the borough between 2006-2010, meaning that there are now around 3,200 fewer jobs.

Despite this, the rate of unemployment is not particularly high when compared to the national picture. However, long-term worklessness and benefit dependency due to ill-health are major issues in some areas.

Business start up rates in Newcastle are particularly low, but survival rates for those that do get off the ground are relatively good.

“ Residents are happy with Newcastle as a place to live ”

The Welfare Reform Act

The Act provides for the introduction of a Universal Credit to replace a range of existing means-tested benefits and tax credits for people of working age, starting from April 2013.

This is the Government's proposals for reforming welfare to improve work incentives, simplify the benefits system and tackle administrative complexity. Besides introducing Universal Credit and related measures, the Bill makes other significant changes to the benefits system.





Localism Act

The Localism Bill was introduced to Parliament in December 2010 and shifts power from central government into the hands of individuals, communities and councils.

Localism isn't simply about giving power back to local government but to individuals, neighbourhoods, professionals and communities as well as local councils and other local institutions - close to the people who are affected by the decisions.

The Localism Bill includes five key measures that underpin the Government's approach to decentralisation:-

- **Community Rights**

New community rights will ensure that community organisations have the Right to Challenge by expressing an interest in the running of a local authority service. Communities can also bid to take over land and buildings that are important to them through the Right to Bid.

- **Neighbourhood Planning**

New rights will allow local communities to shape new development by coming together to prepare neighbourhood plans.

- **Housing**

This will mean that more decisions are taken locally, allowing councils to decide how best to help their homeless people, improve their housing allocations and give direction to providers on the type of tenancies suitable to better meet local housing needs.

- **General power of competence**

Councils will be able to take action and get on with things they think will benefit their local area. The new power will give councils the freedom to work together to improve services, drive down costs and enhance their local area.

- **Empowering cities and other local areas**

The Act enables the transfer of public functions to local authorities in order to improve local accountability or promote economic growth.

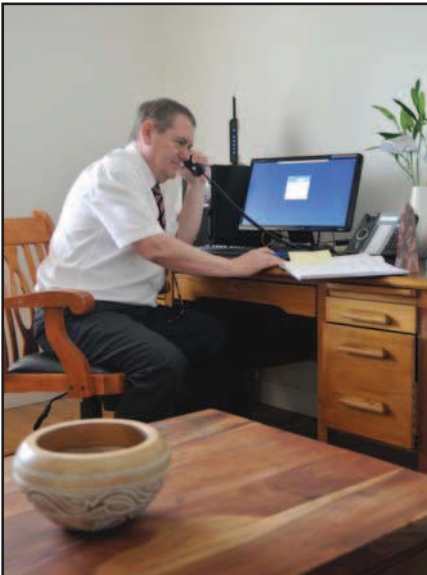


Local Strategies

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council has three main strategies linked to its priorities:-

- Economic Development Strategy
- Stronger and Safer Communities Strategy
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy

These strategies show how the council is planning to work with partners and other organisations to improve and develop local communities to deliver our vision for the borough.



The Way We Work (TWWW)

This project was established in January 2011 and stemmed from the council's Transformation Programme. Our aim is to focus resources and energy on four key projects:-

- Review the way the council uses its accommodation/offices.
- Home working.
- Flexible working.
- Electronic document and records management system.

Examples of areas of work within these projects include:-

- ❑ Expanding home working opportunities for staff.
- ❑ Improving mobile working by giving officers in the field access to the right technology.

- ❑ Making better use of our accommodation and encouraging partners to occupy spare office space at the Civic Offices.
- ❑ Reducing paper by scanning documents and using/storing them electronically.
- ❑ Becoming more energy efficient.

Making good use of public money

Having to do more with less means we will be looking more creatively at how we provide, and deliver, our services over the next four years - on our own and together with our partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors. We will be taking a radical look at our assets - working hard to keep Council Tax low, maximising our resources and seeking efficiencies in everything we do.



Priorities, Outcomes and Activities

In this section we have set out, under each of our priorities, the outcomes that we are committed to delivering.

For each of the outcomes you will find:-

- An explanation of why improved outcomes are needed.
- Activities we will be undertaking over the next three years to achieve improvements.
- Performance indicators we will use to measure our success.
- A list of targets, linked to each indicator, showing how we propose to deliver the improvements over the next three years.

By 2016 the borough will look and feel like this:-



A clean, safe and sustainable borough

Outcomes:-

- Levels of safety will have improved, along with standards of public health.
- Vulnerable citizens and victims of crime will be provided with high quality support.
- The negative impact that the council, residents and local businesses have on the environment will have reduced.
- Our streets and open spaces will be clean, clear and tidy.
- Town centres across the borough will be sustainable and safe.



A borough of opportunity

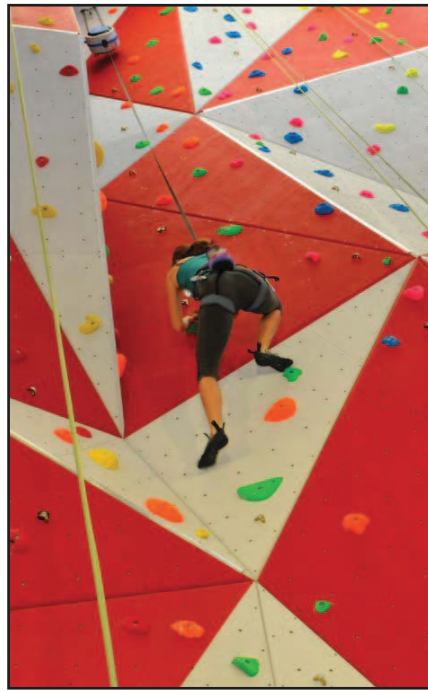
Outcomes:-

- Levels of worklessness will have reduced.
- Local people will be able to access opportunities for personal development and growth.
- Housing will be available and accessible to meet a range of diverse needs.
- Key parts of the borough will have been regenerated and there will have been overall economic growth.

A healthy and active community

Outcomes:-

- People who live work, visit or study in the borough will have access to high quality facilities.
- Levels of cultural activity and participation in the arts will have increased.
- There will be a range of healthy lifestyle choices, resulting in an increase in participation in sport and physical activity.
- Local people will be more able to work together to solve local problems.
- Council services will be influenced by resident engagement, enabling local communities to shape services which directly affect their lives.



A co-operative council delivering high quality, community-driven, services.

Outcomes:-

- The council will have increased the capacity and skills of its workforce.
- Councillors will be community champions and powerful community advocates.
- The council will have delivered further efficiencies.



- High performing services will be provided for all residents and customers.
- The council will be an open, honest and transparent organisation which undertakes regular consultation with its residents and listens to their views.



Priorities	1. Promoting a cleaner, safer and more sustainable borough	2. Promoting a borough of opportunity	3. Promoting a healthy and active community	4. Becoming a Cooperative Council delivering high quality, community-driven services
<p>Our vision is to make the borough a better place to live, work and invest</p>	<p>We will improve the environment so that everyone can enjoy our safe, sustainable and healthy borough.</p>	<p>We will work with our partners to maximise investment and encourage enterprise and employment – generating activities that will create opportunities for improving the wealth, prosperity and housing choices of our residents</p>	<p>We will work with partners to make sure residents and visitors are able to access a range of facilities and activities that will enable them to improve their health and quality of life.</p>	<p>We want to become a modern, streamlined, effective Council which delivers a range of excellent services that the public need. We will do this by working in partnership, wherever appropriate, to maximise the resources at our disposal.</p>
<p>Outcomes</p> <p>These outcomes describe the improvements that we want to see</p>	<p>1.1 Ensure high standards of safety and public health</p> <p>1.2 Ensure sustainable initiatives for the environment</p> <p>1.3 Ensure streets and open spaces are clean and clear</p> <p>1.4 Offer high-quality support to vulnerable citizens and victims of crime</p> <p>1.5 Achieving a thriving and safe evening and night-time economy across the borough</p>	<p>2.1 Ensure a good range of housing is available</p> <p>2.2 Aim to reduce levels of worklessness through educational achievement and skills development</p> <p>2.3 Promotion of economic growth in all service delivery</p>	<p>3.1 Provide high quality facilities for those who live, work, visit or study in the borough</p> <p>3.2 Promote cultural activity and participation in the arts</p> <p>3.3 Promote healthy lifestyle choices, encouraging participating in sport and physical activity</p> <p>3.4 Make the town centre more vibrant and attractive</p> <p>3.5 Building relationships so that people work together to solve local problems</p>	<p>4.1 Develop staff and members</p> <p>4.2 Delivering efficiencies and cost savings by ensuring that resources follow priorities and by improving procurement and other cost saving practices</p> <p>4.3 Developing an improved scrutiny process</p> <p>4.4 Engaging with residents to ensure that services are provided, either by ourselves, in partnership with others, or by other organisations, which are more responsive to the specific needs of individuals and communities</p> <p>4.5 High Performing services for all residents and customers</p>
<p>Measures</p> <p>We will know that we are achieving our outcomes by measuring the things listed here</p>	<p>Outcome 1.1 Number of people killed or seriously injured on the borough's roads</p> <p>Number of people contracting food poisoning from eating at food outlets in the borough</p> <p>Outcome 1.2</p> <p>Outcome 1.3</p> <p>Outcome 1.4</p> <p>Outcome 1.5</p>	<p>Outcome 2.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • <p>Outcome 2.2</p> <p>Outcome 2.3</p>	<p>Outcome 3.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • <p>Outcome 3.2</p> <p>Outcome 3.3</p> <p>Outcome 3.4</p> <p>Outcome 3.5</p>	<p>Outcome 4.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • <p>Outcome 4.2</p> <p>Outcome 4.3</p> <p>Outcome 4.4</p> <p>Outcome 4.5</p>

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BUDGET PREPARATION, SCRUTINY AND APPROVAL PROCESS 2013/14

Submitted by: Head of Finance

Portfolio: Finance and Budget Management

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To outline the process whereby the 2013/14 budget will be prepared, scrutinised and approved.

Recommendation

That Cabinet approve the budget preparation, scrutiny and approval process as set out in the report shown at Appendix A.

Reasons

To agree the process which will be followed, particularly since there will be some changes compared with previous years.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report concerning the arrangements for the preparation, scrutiny and approval of the 2013/14 budget at its meeting of 3 September 2012. A copy of this report is reproduced at Appendix A. This matter is now referred to Cabinet for approval of the arrangements set out.
- 1.2 A summary of the comments made by the Committee is shown at Appendix B.

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BUDGET PREPARATION, SCRUTINY AND APPROVAL PROCESS 2013/14**Submitted by:** Head of Finance**Portfolio:** Finance and Budget Management**Ward(s) affected:** All**Purpose of the Report**

To outline the process whereby the 2013/14 budget will be prepared, scrutinised and approved.

Recommendation

That Members note the content of the report.

Reasons

To keep Members informed with regard to the process which will be followed, particularly since there will be some changes compared with previous years.

1. Background and Issues

- 1.1 Initial work on the preparation of the 2013/14 budget has been underway for sometime. In particular, the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is being updated and service managers, in conjunction with relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holders, are carrying out work, described later, to assist in prioritising services and identifying efficiency and other savings.
- 1.2 The background against which the budget is being compiled continues to be challenging, with further reductions in grant support at the same time as many costs are likely to increase year on year, plus the effects of the economic recession continue to make themselves felt particularly on income.
- 1.3 The corporate plan is currently being revised and is likely to incorporate revised priorities consequent upon the change in political control of the Council in May this year. In order to reflect the corporate plan and the priorities expressed in it, it may be necessary to refocus some areas of the budget so that resources are put into these priority areas, with others which do not contribute as strongly to the achievement of priority outcomes seeing a reduction in resources allocated to them.
- 1.4 There is also a commitment by the Cabinet to consult widely upon budget proposals, including providing the opportunity for stakeholders to give their views concerning options being considered both to refocus on priority areas and to achieve savings to balance the budget.

2. Outline of the Process

- 2.1 A Budget Review Group has been established, chaired by the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Budget Management. The Council Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Town Centres are group members, together with the Chief Executive and Executive Director of Resources and Support Services and other appropriate finance and corporate support officers. The remit of the group is to oversee all aspects of the budget process, including service review and challenge, longer term planning,

development of budget options, agreeing consultation arrangements and consideration of feedback and seeking to deliver service models that drive improvement to front-line services whilst offering value for money. Initial work to prioritise existing services has been carried out and is now being refined.

- 2.2 A service challenge process, to be conducted by the Budget Review Group, has been initiated in which Cabinet Portfolio Holders and Heads of Service will participate. All services are potentially subject to challenge but the process will particularly concentrate on those with the potential to deliver significant improvements in the priority areas. Heads of Service have been requested to put forward options for improved service delivery and efficiency savings together with suggestions for “invest to save” proposals whereby continuing increased efficiency can be obtained in return for a proportionally modest initial outlay. Performance and benchmarking data, where available, will also be provided and considered for each service. The opportunity will also be taken to consider savings which may be made in cross-cutting areas, such as procurement.
- 2.3 When the results of the challenge process have been obtained and analysed these, together with the results of the service prioritisation exercise, will form the basis for the formulation of a range of budget options, consistent with the draft revised corporate plan which can then be subject to consultation.
- 2.4 A consultation process is being developed which will seek to gain views through a variety of means, both by face to face contact and electronically, from a broad range of stakeholders. The consultation will incorporate the Corporate Plan, to which the budget is closely linked, as well as the budget options put forward. It is intended to agree the form of consultation by early October and have considered the results by early December.
- 2.5 Members will be an important element in the scrutiny process, particularly through this committee but also as a whole. Budget documents, including the draft budget book, will be available to all members so that they are able to carry out an informed examination of the budget and its contents and thereby can provide feedback for consideration by your committee and the Cabinet on 6 February when it finalises the budget for recommendation to Full Council on 27 February. A special event styled a “scrutiny café” will be held on 17 January, to which all members will be invited, which replaces the programmed meeting of this committee that night. This will take the form of a workshop, attended by Cabinet members and appropriate officers, where members will be able to discuss and raise issues regarding the draft budget which will have been considered by Cabinet on 16 January.
- 2.6 Your Committee will have a number of opportunities to scrutinise the budget proposals and to feedback views to Cabinet, beginning with a special meeting on 30 October to consider the draft MTFs, including the assumptions made therein about price and other changes affecting 2013/14 and later years. The MTFs will identify the “gap” between projected net spend and the resources available over the five year period commencing in 2013/14 and put forward options for closing the “gap” for each of the years 2013/14 and 2014/15. At this meeting you will also be updated regarding the process of public budget consultation. There will be a special meeting of your committee on 10 December, which will consider the results of the public consultation process. At your meeting on 23 January feedback from the scrutiny café can be considered, together with the Cabinet’s budget proposals approved by it on 16 January. The arrangements outlined above have been discussed and agreed with the chair of the committee.
- 2.7 To assist members in their review of the budget, there will be a training session for all members in the evening of 13 September covering local authority finance generally, the budget process and an explanation of the contents of the budget.

2.8 The Budget Review Group will also consider the capital programme for 2013/14 and beyond and the resources which may be available to finance it. There will be the opportunity for members to review and comment on this during the scrutiny process outlined above.

3. **Timetable**

3.1 The timetable as regards member involvement and the completion of key stages in the process is set out in the table below.

Event	Body Affected	Date
Budget and local authority finance training	All Members	13 September
Service Challenge Process	Budget Review Group	September
Consideration of MTFS plus outline of consultation process	TROSC	30 October
Public Consultation	Stakeholders	October/ November
Review of consultation feedback	TROSC	10 December
Review of consultation feedback (Chair of TROSC to give verbal feedback at the Cabinet meeting)	Cabinet	12 December
Draft Budget proposals including options approved	Cabinet	16 January
Scrutiny Café	All members	17 January
Scrutiny of draft budget	TROSC	23 January
Budget proposals recommended for approval by Full Council	Cabinet	6 February
Full Council to approve Budget	Full Council	27 February

Note: TROSC = Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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APPENDIX B

The Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on Monday 3 September. We received a report which outlined the process whereby the 2013/14 budget will be prepared, scrutinised and approved. Due to a prior engagement, the Portfolio Holder was unable to attend, however the committee had the opportunity to question the Leader on the outline budget process. The committee endorsed the process set out in the report and agreed the scrutiny work programme timetable, which whilst stretching will still be achievable. It is perhaps for Cabinet to note that for a variety of reasons there were a higher number of apologies than usual, with 6 councillors unable to attend; however, the committee was quorate and agreement on the above was unanimous from those present.

I welcome the invitation from Cabinet to attend and speak in person on this item, however, due to the approval of the process, I do not feel it necessary on this occasion. I would request though that as the budget scrutiny process continues I am able to attend future meetings to keep the Cabinet fully informed.

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DEVELOPING A KIDSGROVE TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

Submitted by: Joanne Basnett

Portfolio: Regeneration, Planning & Town Centres

Ward(s) affected: Primarily Kidsgrove and Ravenscliffe

Purpose of the Report

To outline proposals for continuing support for town centre development, specifically highlighting ways in which support can be maximised in Kidsgrove with the development of a Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership.

Recommendation

That officers be authorised to proceed with the process of establishing a Kidsgrove town centre partnership based around a Community Interest Company model (or similar entity), including the appointment of Directors, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Town Centres.

Reasons

In March 2012 Cabinet agreed to the Council becoming a director of the Newcastle Town Centre Partnership, in July 2012 there was an allocation of funding to this partnership to establish a Town Centres Manager and provide interim support for the partnership.

This report outlines an option to consider supporting the development of a specific Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership to further engage and support the Kidsgrove local businesses.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's new administration has made it very clear that it wishes to prioritise the development/improvement of town centres (both Newcastle and Kidsgrove); this is exemplified in the re-naming of the key portfolio as "Regeneration, Planning and Town Centres". It is anticipated that this will involve some re-alignment of resources in order to demonstrate the Council's commitment to improving the economic fortunes of the centres, working in harness with private sector investors.
- 1.2 In July 2012 Cabinet received a report outlining progress made in developing a Newcastle Town Centre Partnership (TCP). The decision was made to formalise the TCP based around a Community Interest Company model and importantly support the partnership with funding for the recruitment of a Town Centres Manager and continued interim assistance from existing Council resources.

2. Issues

- 2.1 Kidsgrove is an important town centre within the Borough and it is appropriate that the Council seeks ways in which to support the development of the area. The approach taken within Newcastle Town Centre may be appropriate in that it seeks to engage local businesses in the development and delivery of a town centre action plan. It is recognised that without the joint working of local businesses and other major stakeholders there will be limited successes in attracting people to visit, stay and buy in the local area.

- 2.2 Some of the plans for the Newcastle Town Centre may be suitable for replication in Kidsgrove and wherever possible officers recommend that best practice is shared and that local businesses are supported to learn from each other. For example the development of web based technology (accessible from 'smart phones') for marketing and promotion is likely to be a useful tool in any town centre.
- 2.3 Not all plans and partnerships should follow the same approach. It is important that local people with local knowledge of their businesses and opportunities are able to influence and direct the development of their area. For this reason it may be seen to be beneficial to have a separate Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership. This report does not seek to list out the opportunities and differences between the areas, but one example of where the approach would vary could be the development of marketing for the canal users to attract them into Kidsgrove. Clearly this type of promotional work would not be relevant for the town centre and bringing in partners with knowledge of water way users may be a priority for Kidsgrove.
- 2.4 In terms of the parties interested in the development of Kidsgrove clearly there is an important role for the Town Council. Whilst this report does not seek to limit the options for the potential development of a Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership, it is recommended that any partnership does specifically include representation from the Town Council. In addition officers recommend that the Borough Council supports a community consultation and engagement event to bring Kidsgrove representatives forward to be part of the founding partnership. In tandem with this specific approaches could be made to local businesses in the area to secure their involvement.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 The Council could decide that the current support offered to the development of Kidsgrove Town Centre is appropriate or Members could consider that as the economic development of the town centres are key priorities that it is appropriate to offer additional support to enable the development of a Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership.

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

- 4.1 The new administration has identified the development/improvement of the two main town centres (both Newcastle and Kidsgrove) as a clear priority. In particular they wish to demonstrate that the Council is able to support and develop the town centres as vibrant places where people want to visit, work, invest and shop. Consequently it is appropriate that the Council seeks to work in partnership with the local businesses to develop a Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership.
- 4.2 At this stage the Council's preference is for the establishment of a Kidsgrove TCP as a Community Interest Company that will enable broad engagement of the business community, including key strategic partners. As highlighted above specific support could be directed to delivering community engagement to secure the founding members of the partnership including local businesses.
- 4.3 As part of the development of the Newcastle TCP it was recognised that where appropriate and possible, some of the initiatives would be replicated in Kidsgrove town centre. It was recognised that this could include sharing resources including an appropriate proportion of the Town Centres Manager and working alongside the Town Council and the LAP in order to secure complimentary support (this should include a financial contribution towards the post in due course).

4.5 Like the Newcastle TCP it is appropriate that the Kidsgrove TCP explores the potential opportunity for the establishment of a Business Improvement District to provide long term funding for the costs of any contribution to the Town Centres Manager and a range of initiatives/activities.

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

5.1 Outcomes from these actions will significantly affect the 'Borough of Opportunity' and Promoting Healthy and Active Community corporate priorities, and will have implications for the quality of life, regeneration, and sustainability of the town centres, the borough as a whole and ultimately North Staffordshire.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 There is no statutory requirement to carry out these recommendations. The establishment of the Kidsgrove TCP as a formal legal entity will be undertaken with due regard to the associated legal implications.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

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

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 Subject to Members and Partners views it may be appropriate for the Newcastle TCP and the Kidsgrove TCP to discuss joint investment and sharing of resources for the planned recruitment of the Town Centres Manager. This approach may also be relevant for future development of the TCP website.

8.2 As part of the Newcastle TCP plans the Council has committed to provide interim management support (0.5 FTE Business Development Officer) which is being achieved by re-prioritisation/re-profiling of the economic development team's activities to avoid the need for incurring extra costs. This resource can also assist with the Kidsgrove TCP.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 There is a risk that the Town Centre Partnership will fail leading to reputational damage however the potential benefits of the partnership succeeding in contributing to the economic development of the area outweigh the risks.

10. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

10.1 Mar 2012 - Cabinet agreed to Newcastle under Lyme B.C. becoming a director of the Newcastle town centre partnership company and authorises officers to take the necessary steps to facilitate the same.

10.2 Mar 2012 - Cabinet agreed to officers working under the auspices of the Newcastle town centre partnership to prepare and submit a bid to become a "Portas pilot", in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning and for the Council to act as the accountable body for administering any grant.

10.3 July 2012 – Cabinet agreed:

- (1) That Members agree to support the emergent Town Centre Partnership with the allocation of £30,000 in the current financial year for the recruitment of a Town Centres Manager and £5,000 to support the establishment of a website, both from the re-allocation of existing budgets.
- (2) That Members agree to the short term secondment of the current Business Development Officer on a 0.5 FTE basis to support the business community with town centres development activities/initiatives.
- (3) That officers be authorised to proceed with the formal establishment of the town centre partnership based around a Community Interest Company model (or similar entity), including the appointment of Directors, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Town Centres.
- (4) That Members agree to the continued provision of in-kind support to the town centre partnership to assist with the following activities:
 - (a) Recruitment of a town centres manager;
 - (b) Formalisation of the town centre partnership;
 - (c) Preparation of an action plan for at least the next 12 months and;
 - (d) Exploration of options for establishing a sustainable funding model for the TCP.
- (5) That Members note the plans included in the revised submitted Portas pilot application.

6. **List of Appendices**

None.

7. **Background Papers**

None.

PROPOSED DECLARATION OF BATHPOOL PARK AS A LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Submitted by: Head of Operations, Roger Tait

Portfolio: Environment & Recycling

Ward(s) affected: Ravenscliffe, Talke and Butt Lane

Purpose of the Report

To seek to secure the long-term future of Bathpool Park for nature conservation and an informal community education and recreation resource.

Recommendation

That Bathpool Park be formally declared as a Local Nature Reserve under the provisions of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Reasons

- To increase people's awareness and enjoyment of the natural environment.
- To protect wildlife habitats and natural features.
- To demonstrate the Council's commitment to nature conservation.
- To contribute to meeting the Council's performance targets.

1. Background

- 1.1 Bathpool Park is a large area (62.8 ha) and lies to the north of Newcastle and The Potteries, stretching south to north for 2km along the valley between Peacock Hay and Acres Nook. South via the canal corridor it is linked with Bradwell Woods and at the northern end with other nearby ancient woodland and SBI designated areas. The Newcastle Way runs through the park, providing a pedestrian link between the Birchenwood and Apedale country parks.
- 1.2 Bathpool is easily accessible on foot from nearby suburbs (Acres Nook, Clough Hall and Talke Pits), with a ½ mile walk to the nearest bus route along First Avenue, Kidsgrove. There are two car parks and wheelchair access through the length of the park. There is a network of informal paths through the woods, also a bridle route, with orienteering, BMX and other recreational activities permitted.
- 1.3 There are a large number of regular users including daily walkers, joggers, and young families using the playground. Several recreation and amenity groups are based in the park. There are two secondary and seven primary schools within a couple of miles radius.
- 1.4 Bathpool Park and related woodland and open spaces provides an essential green lung for the local population.

2. Issues

- 2.1 The Council currently works with Newcastle Countryside Project to manage and promote the site.
- 2.2 Newcastle Countryside Project have prepared a management plan for the site, which aims to:

- Maintain a mosaic of habitats to enhance and maintain its biodiversity.
- Maintain habitat in a favourable condition for BAP species.
- Maintain the biodiversity of non-BAP species.
- Maintain and improve footpath access for recreation.
- Maintain and improve the quality of the landscape.
- Develop awareness of understanding the site, its history, and natural history.
- Support the participation of the local community.

A copy of the management plan will be on display at your meeting.

- 2.3 Your officers have been liaising with Natural England regarding the eligibility of Bathpool Park for declaration as a Local Nature Reserve and, have agreed a management plan for the park.
- 2.4 Natural England formally support the declaration of the site as a Local Nature Reserve, stating that it meets the following criteria:
- The requirements for consultation contained in Section 21(6) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended).
 - Accords with the LNR selection criteria.
- 2.5 Your officers are of the view that it would be appropriate to declare the site as a Local Nature Reserve as it would demonstrate the Council's commitment to nature conservation, increase public awareness of the natural environment, and secure the long-term future of its wildlife habitats and natural features. The proposal is in line with the Urban North Staffs Green Space Strategy Action Plan, to declare Bathpool Park as a Local Nature Reserve.
- 2.6 Under section 21 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, the council has the power to provide or secure the provision of nature reserves on any land in their area as to which it appears to the council expedient that it should be managed as a nature reserve.
- 2.7 In order to progress the declaration it is necessary under the provisions of Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, to place a public notice in the local press and to place notices at the entrances to the site to make the public aware of the declaration.

3. **Options Considered**

3.1 Do not declare the site as a Local Nature Reserve:–

- Long-term future of site for nature conservation and public enjoyment of nature not secured.
- No contribution to Local Area Agreements and Corporate Targets.
- No raising of public awareness of nature conservation.

3.2 Declare the site as a Local nature Reserve:-

- Long-term future of site of nature conservation and public enjoyment of nature secured.
- Contribution to meeting Corporate Targets.
- Public awareness of nature conservation issues raised.
- Demonstration of Council's commitment to nature conservation issues.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 Purpose of proposal: It is proposed to formally declare Bathpool Park as a Local Nature Reserve under the provisions of Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
- 4.2 Outputs and outcomes: Fulfils the proposal set out in the Green Space Strategy and items set out in 3.2 above.
- 4.3 Time scale: It is proposed to complete declaration by November/December 2012. This will be undertaken by the Landscape Development team.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 5.1 To increase people's awareness and enjoyment of the natural environment.
- 5.2 To protect wildlife habitats and natural features.
- 5.3 To demonstrate the Council's commitment to nature conservation.
- 5.4 To contribute to meeting Local Area Agreement and Corporate Performance Targets.

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

- 6.1 The proposal is inline with the following Corporate Objectives:
- creating a cleaner, safer and sustainable Borough
 - creating a Borough of opportunity
 - creating a healthy and active community
- 6.2 Designating Bathpool Park as an LNR will help to address the commitment to provide good quality open space as described in the SCS. "Good quality open space is an important resource for local people and improving access to it can have a positive impact on people's health and well-being. The focus on providing well-maintained, clean, and safe open spaces will continue to ensure increased recreational use of these areas which offer opportunities for play, exercise and social interaction.
- 6.3 The designation of Bathpool Park as an LNR will help towards the above and the generation of a sense of community pride as set out in Sustainable Community Strategy PL01, PL02, and PL03. The designation of Bathpool Park as an LNR will ensure that the natural landscape of the borough plays an essential part in making Newcastle-under-Lyme an attractive place to live and do business.
- 6.4 Bathpool Park fulfils the commitment set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy: "Families will be supported to live healthier lifestyles and be given more opportunity to take part in leisure and cultural activities, particularly children and young people, in order to improve their long term health". Through the parks outdoor gym and the extensive footpath network provision.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1 The Council is under no duty to declare the site as a Local Nature Reserve, but in doing so will confer upon the site some statutory control in land use planning terms and make it possible to apply by-laws to help manage and protect the site if necessary

7.2 The park is being designated under the provisions of section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

8.1 There are no adverse impacts towards equality relating to this proposal. Due to the open nature of the park, there is equal opportunity for all people to take advantage of the park and the proposal allows for improving access and interpretation to the park.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 There will be a small cost incurred in placing the required public notice in the local press, which can be met from existing approved revenue budgets.

9.2 The change to the existing management regime of the park to fit inline with the agreed LNR management plan can be accommodated within the existing revenue budgets.

9.3 The estimated cost of the capital elements of the proposal are £86,300 and works to implement the capital elements of the project will be undertaken when resources / funding is available, subject to further approvals.

9.4 There are no ICT implications related to this report.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 A risk assessment is attached to this report.

11. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

11.1 Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council already recognises that the global services provided by biodiversity are the life-support system for human beings and has signed the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership's Biodiversity Pledge. One of the most effective, and cheapest, ways to both mitigate against climate change, and adapt to it, is to have a healthy green environment. Planning for Green Infrastructure gives a permeable network of nature reserves, parks, local wildlife sites, gardens, allotments, and green spaces, linked by wildlife corridors, rivers, and canals, with street trees, and buildings, which incorporate green roofs and walls. Species can move as climate changes and they need to find different habitats.

11.2 Green Infrastructure mitigates against extremes of temperature, offering shade in summer and a windbreak in winter, lessening energy use for air conditioning or heating in nearby buildings. Trees absorb particulates on their leaves, and produce cleaner air. Grass will provide a lower temperature than hard surfacing, and will provide drainage and water storage, mitigating flooding risk.

12. **Key Decision Information**

12.1 This report is a key decision as defined in the Council's constitution and is included in the forward plan for the period in which it is due to be reported.

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

There are no previous reports associated with this matter.

14. **List of Appendices**

Risk Assessment.

15. **Background Papers**

There are no background papers associated with this report.

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PROPOSALS FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT AND DISPOSAL OF THE FORMER KNUTTON RECREATION CENTRE

Submitted by: The Executive Director, Regeneration and Development

Portfolio: Regeneration, Planning and Town Centres

Ward(s) affected: Knutton and Silverdale

Purpose of the Report

To seek Members' views on the preferred way forward for the disposal and redevelopment of the Knutton Recreation Centre and adjoining land.

Recommendations

That Members authorise officers to proceed with the process of disposing of the former Knutton Recreation Centre and adjoining land through a joint disposal process (comprising land owned by both the Borough and County Councils) facilitated by a thorough public consultation process as described in the report..

Reasons

In June 2011 and subsequently in October 2011, following Scrutiny review, the Cabinet approved the disposal of the Knutton Recreation Centre as part of the planned programme to develop the Jubilee 2 Centre. At that time it was agreed that the existing '3G' football pitch should be retained and that the bowling green should be retained or relocated.

New information and other relevant considerations have come to light since members considered this matter last year that warrant further review by Members before officers can proceed with any public consultation or marketing. Importantly it is now appropriate that Members review the development and investment options for sites in Borough and County Council ownership in the centre of Knutton Village with a view to securing a more comprehensive regeneration scheme (in light of the County Council's stated intentions to provide a new, fit-for-purpose, Enterprise Centre at a nearby location, thereby facilitating the clearance of the existing, out-dated, Enterprise Centre at High Street). Also the Council is on the cusp of undertaking a comprehensive review of community centres which may have implications for the Knutton community. Additionally it is necessary to consider the likely financial implications of this matter in the context of known/emerging capital programme commitments.

1. Background

- 1.1 Jubilee 2, the new Health and Wellbeing Centre, has in conjunction with other recently-built facilities at the Gordon Banks centre (at Newcastle College) and Chesterton New Vision provided better indoor recreation facilities than the previous ageing Jubilee Swimming Baths and Knutton Recreation Centre. Once Jubilee 2 had opened it made the core function of the former Recreation Centre redundant. Realising a capital receipt from the sale of the site was expected to contribute towards delivery of the Council's capital programme. Full details of the justification for this approach were outlined in 15 June 2011 Cabinet report, the outcome of which was to proceed with the closure of the existing centre and to dispose of the surplus asset.
- 1.2 Cabinet received a further report on 19th October 2011 regarding the outcome of a call-in and Scrutiny review. The October Cabinet resolved that 'Members reaffirm the Cabinet decision made on 15 June 2011 with the additional recommendations to: commit to undertaking a

rigorous public consultation process, supported by any preferred purchaser, prior to the submission of any planning application for development of the subject land; that any marketing particulars clarify the Council's expectation of compliance with the current policy regarding the provision of affordable housing (in compliance with Council policy); the potential for inclusion of a convenience store and; that the outcome of the public consultation process be reported back to Cabinet as part of any final report to dispose of the subject land.

- 1.3 The above Cabinet decision was predicated upon the expectation of achieving a comprehensive treatment of the former Recreation Centre site and surrounding area. There was agreement that any redevelopment of the site should be housing-led, including provision for the retention or relocation of the Bowling Green and 3G pitch (with the proviso of local community-led management)
- 1.4 The above option was preferred because it was considered to strike a balance between the simple realisation of a capital receipt with the longer term improvement and sustainability of the Knutton village community. Taking these issues into consideration it was agreed that engaging suitably-qualified specialist advisors to prepare both marketing particulars for sale of the subject land and a planning brief was the most appropriate way forward.
- 1.5 Redevelopment of this site provides an opportunity to continue the investment which has taken place in the Knutton/Cross Heath area in recent years (including refurbishment of the Knutton Terraces, the new Children's Centre, Millrise Extracare, and Charter Road redevelopment together with associated environmental improvements and significant investment in The Wammy).
- 1.6 Officers could now undertake a 'soft market testing' exercise with a number of housing developers to see what appetite there is for housing development on the site once cleared. Potential developers could then, potentially in conjunction with the Council, undertake public consultation in advance of firm plans being drawn up to establish the strength of local opinion about the form of re-development which might take place here. There is a market view on this as well as a community view as these factors each have a bearing on the viability of a development scheme and one of the tasks facing the developer is to explain what community benefits can realistically be afforded by a housing scheme.
- 1.7 It remains vitally important to achieve a balance between the potential regeneration legacy / community benefits of any redevelopment scheme at Knutton and the implications on the Council's capital programme priorities of a potentially reduced capital receipt.
- 1.8 It is important to note that the interim management of the former Recreation Centre premises – in order to support the operation of the three-quarter size 3G pitch – is proving challenging because, from time to time, it has attracted anti social behaviour. Additionally members should be aware that utilisation of the pitch and the associated income has dropped dramatically since the end of the football season. Members will be aware that the pitch hire is in direct competition with full size pitches at Newcastle College and Chesterton Community Sports College.
- 1.9 Finally members should be aware that the County Council – prompted by a strategic review of its property interests – has agreed to explore the potential for relocation of the current Enterprise Centre premises (which adjoin the former recreation centre site) in order to facilitate a more comprehensive redevelopment scheme. Preliminary consultation has been undertaken with tenants and the objective would be for a new purpose-built centre to be developed within a convenient distance from the current site. Such a scheme should improve the quality of the business premises offer (more efficiently designed).

2. Issues

- 2.1 There are a number of issues which need to be explored further to ensure that the appropriate balance is struck between not only community aspirations and regeneration benefits but the financial considerations. Consequently a report was presented to the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28th June 2012 framed around a number of key lines of enquiry which officers felt were the most salient. For the sake of consistency this report is framed in a similar way in this section of the report. Members will note the comments made by the Scrutiny Committee at para. 2.1.10.
- 2.1.1 *To what extent does the Council wish to prioritise the maximisation of receipts from the disposal of its land, or to maximise the opportunity to regenerate Knutton through investment in retail, community, recreational and environmental investment?*
- 2.1.1.1 Unavoidably there is a tension between community ambitions / regeneration and realising a receipt for the land and this can only be resolved by agreeing the weight that the Council places on these objectives. For instance, the Council may wish to link the disposal of the site with the provision of some community benefits, such as the inclusion within the housing scheme of a re-sited bowling green or the retention of the existing provision. It should be noted that the most recent Cabinet resolution provided for the latter along with retention or re-siting of the 3-G pitch, subject to local (community-led) management arrangements.
- 2.1.1.2 At this stage Cabinet might prefer to await the outcome of both the community consultation and corporate budget-setting processes before making any firm decision in this regard.
- 2.1.2 *What level of community provision (both in terms of public meeting space and recreational facilities) is required in Knutton, given the level of provision of such facilities within the wider catchment area?*
- 2.1.2.1 This will be informed by the borough-wide review of community centres, shortly to be undertaken. It is recognised that any loss of facility, not replaced may be opposed by the local community, but again this matter can be brought out in the planned public consultation.
- 2.1.3 *If the Council proposes to consolidate or establish a community hub of the village, would this be better located off the High Street (i.e. as part of plans for this redevelopment), or would it be better to use part of the receipt from the disposal of the site for housing to invest in the refurbishment of existing facilities (such as the community centre at the junction of Knutton Lane and Lower Milehouse Lane)?*
- 2.1.3.1 This is partly a finance/value for money issue and partly a locational issue; again it is considered that the outcome of the public consultation, community centres review and wider capital programme planning will all need to be weighed before a firm decision can be made.
- 2.1.4 *Would the inclusion of a small retail unit enhance the High Street or would the possible impact this may have on existing small shops be too great a price to pay for this?*
- 2.1.4.1 The main consideration here is whether the Knutton High Street would benefit from the provision of a small convenience store (of the Spar, Co-op, Circle K variety) to help give the village a greater sense of focus with a small commercially-led centre or would members consider that this might damage the viability of existing local shops. Of course the inclusion of such provision within any scheme might adversely affect the marketability of a housing scheme. The existing Cabinet resolution allows for this matter to be tested through the public consultation and developer engagement process.

- 2.1.5 *Would the Council be able to secure greater interest in the site for housing development if part of the required number of affordable housing properties (25% of the total) were to be provided on other Council-owned site(s) nearby?*
- 2.1.5.1 Officers consider that it might assist in the discussions with prospective developers if additional land were scoped into this development opportunity in order to provide greater flexibility in any preferred scheme. A further issue in terms of new housing provision is whether there are any particular types of properties that are required by the local community which might lend themselves to alternative sites. There could be townscape benefits of including under-utilised sites too.
- 2.1.6 *Would the existing 3G pitch be better re-located from the site to another site in the wider Knutton area (e.g. The Wammy or beside the community centre)?*
- 2.1.6.1 There would, of course, be a cost to its re-location but, equally, its retention within a new housing development would impact adversely on the marketability and amenities of the site and therefore any receipt that the Council might expect from the disposal of the site. In theory the same question could be posed in relation to the bowling green, though this would not have a similar negative impact on the marketability of the site for housing development. At this stage, given the apparent under-utilisation of the facility (given the availability of numerous alternative pitches) officers feel that this matter should be included within the public consultation supported by factual information about alternative provision and any evidence of strategic needs.
- 2.1.7 *The value (and future management) of the 3G pitch.*
- 2.1.7.1 There is still a claw back of around £75,000 by the Football Foundation if the Council were to close it down. An option could be for the Council to contact the Football Foundation to see if they would revise the agreement (approximately 14 years remain) if the facility was used by the community, but not in accordance with the grant conditions until the possibility of new community facilities being provided either on or off site was resolved. The other comments in the preceding paragraph apply too.
- 2.1.8 *Would the Borough Council be advised to market its landholding jointly with that of the County Council in order to secure a more comprehensive scheme?*
- 2.1.8.1 There is an appetite from the County Council to work with the Borough on such an approach in order to promote a form of development that has a much more beneficial impact on the townscape/urban form of this central part of the village. Of course a significant consideration would be for the County Council to satisfy itself that there is a business case for the re-provision of the Enterprise Centre (officers have been advised that initial indications, from a desk-top exercise, suggest that this would be feasible). An additional factor to weigh here is the market response to the scale of housing land potentially coming on to the market at more or less the same time.
- 2.1.9 *What is the best way to consult the public over the Council's plans for the area (given the Council's clear 'interest' in promoting the development of land in its own ownership)?*
- 2.1.9.1 Recent discussions with Staffordshire University indicate that there would be an opportunity for them to support such a process in order that it is seen as more objective and independent.
- 2.1.10 The Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered this matter on 28 June 2012, in summary:
- (a) they reinforced the decisions made in 2011 regarding the need to have proper community consultation and supported the proposal to utilise an independent body;

- (b) supported the joint working with the County on the understanding that the enterprise units would be re-provided;
- (c) recognised the need to maximise the receipt to support regeneration in the area;
- (d) requested that some of the receipt be utilised to reinvest in the existing Community Centre subject to the Community Centre Review;
- (e) highlighted the need for the playground to be retained within the site;
- (f) highlighted that subject to the eventual planning process that it would be preferable to have a good quality housing scheme rather than retail or industrial use.

These resolutions arose from consideration of the issues listed above; however resolution (d) was suggested by Scrutiny as a fresh issue. In considering whether some of the receipt should be retained for reinvestment into the existing Community Centre, consideration needs to be given to the future use of the centre along with the likely demands and priorities within the Council's overall capital programme.

Cabinet members will need to consider whether there are compelling arguments to address this matter at this stage. It may be considered premature to be contemplating the redistribution of any receipt from the disposal of the Council's land/property interests without the benefit of a properly costed development appraisal and a clear understanding of any capital investment needs of this particular centre.

At this stage officers would recommend that any capital funding requirements for the Knutton Community Centre should be considered as part of a future report which will review, comprehensively, the issues and factors relating to the long term provision and management of all Community Centres across the borough.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 Through considering this report it is intended that Members give their views in order to give direction to the development of the plans and the process by which the potential schemes are taken forward.
- 3.2 Subject to members views the Council could continue with the approach of seeking interest from private house builders to undertake community consultation. An alternative would be for the Council to proactively commence consultation with the community with the support of external agencies.
- 3.3 Staffordshire University have offered themselves as a potential 'honest broker' between the landowners/developers (both of which might be seen as profit driven) and the local community to develop an approach to engaging local people and other stakeholders about regeneration plans for the area.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 It is proposed, subject to Members views, to investigate the prospects of taking forward a joint disposal process (comprising land owned by both the Borough and County Councils) supported by a public consultation process led by an external agency such as Staffordshire University. In line with procurement regulations this support will be competitively tendered.

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

- 5.1 Proposals for the redevelopment of this site fall within the Council's priority of 'Creating a Borough of Opportunity'. It will also have implications for the Council's policies on the environment and sustainability.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 The Council is not under any statutory duty to act but is under a duty to seek 'best consideration' when disposing of any land.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 No discernable differential impact has been identified by the possible disposal of this site. There will be a requirement that 25% of any housing built on the site shall be 'affordable'.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 At the time that Cabinet decided to dispose of the former recreation centre site it was expected that the capital receipt from the sale of the site might realise around £1million gross, subject to addressing restrictions that the County Council retain over the site and any costs arising from other constraints (including retention or provision of recreation facilities, inclusion of affordable housing), all of which would reduce any receipt significantly.
- 8.2 There is a claw back clause associated with the 'Football Foundation' grant for the Astro turf (3G) pitch (on a sliding scale over 21 years). If the pitch was to be removed this currently stands at around £75,000 and therefore your officers have assumed that it should remain in order to improve the viability of any redevelopment scheme. The three key issues that will inform members' decision about retention or removal of the pitch will be: (a) the appetite of local community groups to take responsibility for the long term maintenance and management of the facility (b) any prospective developer's view in this regard and (c) whether there is any evidence of ongoing need for this facility.
- 8.3 There would be a cost to commissioning the preparation of any site-specific brief and marketing particulars; at the time of the original decision to dispose it was intended that these costs would be met from any subsequent capital receipt. The Council now has approximately £25,000 "Transition Funding" from the former Renew Programme which could be used to pay for the costs of market testing and local consultation.
- 8.4 Clearly there would be capital costs arising from any decommissioning/demolition works as well as for the establishment of any interim use. There may also be interim costs arising from holding the redundant asset (e.g. NNDR). All such details would be the subject of a later report as the programme for redevelopment is formulated.
- 8.5 The other consideration relates to the matter raised during the recent scrutiny review process which identified the desirability of directing part of any capital receipt into the refurbishment of the existing Knutton Community Centre. As described above any such decision could be regarded as pre-emptive in relation to any identified priorities within the Council's future capital programme. In short any decision to direct funds in this manner would reduce the availability of funding for other capital projects. Also any such decision would be premature in advance of the outcome of the comprehensive review of Community Centres provision.

9. **Major Risks**

- 9.1 The key risk is the uncertain level of demand for the redevelopment of the site. This will have three main consequences – a delay in providing the Council with a capital receipt; a delay in delivering regeneration in the centre of Knutton and; the potentially damaging effect on local morale of prolonged land vacancy (including the ongoing site management issues including matters such as anti-social behaviour, site security, etc).

10. **Key Decision Information**

- 10.1 This proposal has the potential to generate a significant capital receipt for the council to support the execution of the Council's Capital programme and to continue the regeneration of a key neighbourhood of the Borough.

11. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 11.1 Cabinet resolved on 15 June 2011

(a) That officers be authorised to take the necessary steps, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to dispose of the Knutton Recreation Centre site for redevelopment as soon as practically possible after the new Jubilee 2 centre is completed.

(b) That the redevelopment of this site should be primarily housing-led with provision also made for a replacement bowling green and pavilion and the potential for a small convenience store.

(c) That, in principle, the existing '3G' football pitch should be retained and options for its future local/community-led management arrangements be explored (including the bowling green), the outcome of which would be reported to Members.

(d) That consideration be given to the inclusion of adjoining land in the Council's ownership in order to optimise the prospects of securing a comprehensive redevelopment scheme.

(e) That officers be authorised to engage suitably qualified specialist advisors to prepare both marketing particulars for sale of the subject land and a planning brief.

- 11.2 The Cabinet decision was called in and the Overview and Scrutiny Co-coordinating Committee (19 September 2011) reviewed the decision made by Cabinet. They requested that Cabinet consider: The block booking of the Gordon Banks Sports Centre, the mix of affordable and social housing, full consultation with residents, users and other interested parties, the impact of a convenience store, parking provision and concerns at Jubilee 2.

- 11.3 The October Cabinet resolved that 'Members reaffirm the Cabinet decision made on 15th June 2011 with the additional recommendations:

(a) that the Council commits to undertaking a public consultation process supported by any preferred purchaser prior to the submission of any planning application for development of the subject land;

(b) that any marketing particulars clarify the Council's expectation of compliance with the current policy regarding the provision of affordable housing and the potential for inclusion of a convenience store.

(c) that the outcome of any public consultation process be reported back to Cabinet as part of any final report to dispose of the subject land.

- 11.4 The Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered this matter on 28 June 2012, in summary:

- (a) they reinforced the decisions made in 2011 regarding the need to have proper community consultation and supported the proposal to utilise an independent body;
- (b) supported the joint working with the County on the understanding that the enterprise

- units would be re-provided;
- (c) recognised the need to maximise the receipt to support regeneration in the area;
- (d) requested that some of the receipt be utilised to reinvest in the existing Community Centre subject to the Community Centre Review;
- (e) highlighted the need for the playground to be retained within the site;
- (f) highlighted that subject to the eventual planning process that it would be preferable to have a good quality housing scheme rather than retail or industrial use.

12. **List of Appendices**

None.

13. **Background Papers**

None.

LOCALISED COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

Submitted by: Head of Revenues & Benefits

Portfolio: Communications, Transformation and Partnerships

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To allow Cabinet Members to consider a draft Localised Council Tax Support scheme to enable a period of statutory consultation to begin.

Recommendations

(a) To approve, for the purposes of consultation, the draft Newcastle-under-Lyme Council Tax Support Scheme.

(b) To authorise the Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) to initiate the statutory consultation process.

Reasons

The Welfare Reform agenda will see the current Council Tax Benefit scheme replaced by Localised Council Tax Support with effect from 1 April 2013. Localised schemes need to be approved by 31 January before the start of the new financial year to which the scheme applies, following consultation with interested groups and individuals. To allow for an adequate period of consultation prior to the approval of a localised scheme, a draft scheme needs to be in place to engender appropriate comment and feedback.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Local Government Finance Bill was introduced to Parliament on 19 December 2011. The bill makes provision for the localisation of council tax support by imposing a duty on billing authorities to make a localised council tax reduction scheme by 31 January 2013 and to consult with major precepting authorities and such other persons as it considers likely to have an interest in the scheme.
- 1.2 As announced in the 2010 Spending Review, support for council tax will be localised from 1st April 2013 and national expenditure incurred to fund the scheme will be reduced by 10%. Currently, any council tax benefit awarded by the Council to residents is covered in full by Government subsidy.
- 1.3 The Local Government Finance Bill is still being considered by Parliament, but the Department for Communities and Local Government has provided a statement of intent for the regulations to be introduced under the bill in respect of Council Tax Support and has provided draft regulations. To assist councils in developing their schemes, guidance has also been provided covering various aspects of what should be considered in the schemes design.
- 1.4 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 contains the provision for the abolition of Council Tax Benefit.

2. **Issues**

2.1 In 2011/12 £8,348,768 was paid in Council Tax Benefit to residents of the borough, the cost of which can be attributed proportionately as follows:

• Staffordshire County Council	70.5%
• Staffordshire Police Authority	12.2%
• Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council	12.1%
• S-o-T & Staffordshire Fire Authority	4.6%
• Parish Councils	0.6%

The value of council tax benefit paid in respect of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council in 2011/12 was therefore £1,010,201. The proposed 10% reduction in funding would therefore cost this Council in the region of £100,000. The other bodies will be affected in proportion as shown above. Overall, a 10% reduction for all these organisations equates to approximately £835,000.

2.2 Although termed a 'localised scheme', central government will still place restrictions on certain classes of claimant. For example, claimants of pension age must continue to receive assistance at the same level under the new scheme to that which they received under the current Council Tax Benefit scheme. Newcastle has a 51% pensioner caseload for Council Tax Benefit claimants, meaning the cost of any reductions made within a proposed local scheme will fall on the remaining none protected claimants.

2.3 Where a billing authority fails to approve a Localised Council Tax Support scheme by the 31 January, central government will impose a default scheme that is likely to be the existing Council Tax Benefit scheme and this will not generate any savings. This would mean the 10% cut in funding would require financing by alternative means.

2.4 It is universally acknowledged that the timeframe for the design and implementation of Localised Council Tax Support is challenging. This will potentially mean that schemes will evolve over a number of years whilst they adapt to the needs of the local community.

3. **Options Considered**

3.1 Introducing Localised Council Tax Support leaves the potential for a 'post code lottery' to be developed and as far as possible this was thought to be undesirable. For this reason the Staffordshire Leaders and Chief Executives Group agreed to the establishment of a county wide working group to include all the district councils, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, County Council, Police and Fire services to come up with a standardised scheme for the whole county. This group was to report progress to the Staffordshire Chief Finance Officers Group and was tasked with achieving the required 10% savings from within anticipated revised Localised Council Tax Support budgets. Final details of the funding available for 2013/14 will not be known until shortly before the deadline for adopting a new scheme on 31st January 2013.

3.2 From an early stage, it was apparent that a truly common scheme across the whole county was unlikely to be achieved because of the different demographics of the benefit caseload for each area. However, the group have successfully identified a common framework, against which an individual local authority will be able to select elements which best meet their requirements. This draft framework is attached at Appendix A.

3.3 As previously noted, at this time, some of the legislative framework required to implement Localised Council Tax Support has yet to be enacted. This means that suppliers of all

benefits software systems, including ours, will be faced with very tight timescales to make their systems legislatively compliant in time for the new schemes coming into force by 1 April 2013. In reality, new year Council Tax bills for 2013/14 will need to be calculated and issued, taking account of any new scheme, between late February and mid March 2013. To mitigate these problems, software suppliers have been liaising with their customers on potential schemes and this process is ongoing. However, it is likely that some proposals may not be achievable in year one of Localised Council Tax Support because of restrictions with the software. Further development work will hopefully resolve these problems for year two. From the information currently available, it is believed that this will not directly impact on our proposed scheme.

- 3.4 By their very nature, means tested benefits are an ever changing picture as claimants circumstances alter. During the last three years the caseload for Newcastle has fluctuated by 7.5% and any scheme approved will need to anticipate such variances because once approved, the scheme can not be amended until the next financial year. To assist with this both the Department for Communities and Local Government and several commercial organisations have produced modelling tools to help to calculate the effects of any proposals for a localised scheme. Unfortunately, the modelling tool supplied by the Department for Communities and Local Government lacks the sophistication of those available commercially and use has been made of two, one common across the county wide group and another specifically designed for use with our core benefit software. The continued use of these tools to confirm initial findings and to identify where schemes may need refining in the future will be an important and regular operational task.
- 3.5 The Council has a statutory duty to consult on its proposed scheme and to ensure that a full range of views are obtained through the consultation process. There is a duty to consult with the major precepting authorities: Staffordshire County Council; Staffordshire Police Authority and Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority. As previously mentioned these organisations are included in the county wide working group and are represented at the Staffordshire Leaders and Chief Executives Group and the Staffordshire Chief Finance Officers Group where reports regarding the county wide framework for the Council Tax Support scheme are discussed. Other groups who will need to be consulted include:
- Existing Council Tax Benefit claimants
 - Wider Council Tax payers
 - Advocacy/welfare groups representing potentially affected groups
 - Partner organisations which may be affected directly and/or indirectly
 - Parish councils

This list is obviously not exhaustive and consultation will be co-ordinated through the county wide working group, with the assistance from the Communications Section at each district council. The actual consultation plan is currently being finalised and a draft of the consultation questionnaire and related documents will be available prior to this Cabinet meeting.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 Appendix B shows a draft Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Tax Support Scheme. Its proposed savings and costs for elements from the framework would achieve the required budgetary reductions for Newcastle and its precepting authorities and takes into account the core principal of incentivising work and is mindful of other issues around vulnerability and child poverty. The table also details the number of claimants affected by the proposals.

4.2 Consultation needs to be started as soon as possible following this meeting to allow for an adequate timeframe to receive and analyse responses and to allow for any necessary scheme adjustments identified to be included in the final scheme for approval before the 31st January 2013.

5. **Reasons for the Preferred Solution**

5.1 The business area affected is a statutory function and the Council must have in place the necessary local scheme before 31 January 2013 or face the imposition of the default scheme, over which it would have no adequate financial control.

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

6.1 A Localised Council Tax Support scheme will replace the existing Council Tax Benefit but will continue to contribute towards creating a healthy and active community.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

7.1 Draft regulations and several statements of intent have been issued by the government to indicate that Council Tax Benefit will be replaced by Localised Council Tax Support with effect from 1 April 2013. In order to comply with the timescales of approving a local scheme by 31 January 2013, going through the required consultation process this needs, it is not possible to wait until the actual regulations have been enacted. Localised Council Tax Support is a key element of the Welfare Reform agenda and it is most unlikely there will be any significant variance from the draft regulations already supplied.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

8.1 In designing our Council Tax Support scheme, consideration must be given to the implications for vulnerable people, with particular attention to

- Equality and Diversity
- Child poverty
- Homelessness
- Disability

8.2 A detailed Equality Impact Needs Assessment is being prepared to identify any adverse implications for particular groups. It is recognised that the introduction of the Council Tax Support scheme will have an impact on some of the most vulnerable households in the district. The Assessment will identify any mitigating actions that may be required.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 Localised Council Tax Support will be treated as a discount on the Council Tax bill, much like Single Persons Discounts. This means that the Council Tax base will be smaller. In order to avoid significant increases in the Band D figure arising from having a smaller tax base, the government funding will be treated as income that reduces the amount to be raised from Council Tax. However, this government funding will be 10% lower than the equivalent amount currently received.

9.2 Recouping the lower funding levels in the design of a local scheme is likely to impact on Council Tax collection rates and costs, with potentially many more small value bills needing to be administered, resulting in additional pressures on the Revenues and Benefits Section.

9.3 Central government are to provide some funding under its new burdens scheme. Software suppliers will be required to make significant changes to accommodate the introduction of Localised Council Tax Support but at this point are unable to confirm exactly how much these changes will cost, although it is likely to be significant. However, it is anticipated that the new burdens funding will be sufficient to cover these costs.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 Any scheme which does not fully pass on the loss of government grant to claimants will require the Council to identify alternative funding. The choice of scheme could, therefore, impact on the Council's future budget plans.

10.2 Council Tax payers could see their bills increase if the funding loss is not passed on to claimants.

10.3 Any increase in the number of Council Tax accounts to be administered could result in additional administrative costs, particularly in relation to debt recovery. This could have a knock on effect on the overall Council Tax collection rate.

10.4 Council Tax Benefit is currently administered alongside a claim for Housing Benefit. If vast differences are created between the two schemes, this will increase the administration requirements of making an assessment of entitlement.

10.5 Failure to consult on Localised Council Tax Support may result in the Borough Council being subject to judicial review.

10.6 Failure to adopt a Localised Council Tax Support scheme by 31 January 2013 will result in the default scheme being imposed, resulting in financial loss to the Council and all its precepting bodies.

11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 The move from Council Tax Benefit to a Localised Council Tax Support scheme represents a change in the delivery of a statutory function. A significant minority of our residents will be directly affected by this change, while all will potentially have an opinion on what should and should not be included. Our local scheme needs to deliver assistance to those who most need it at a cost that is acceptable to the majority.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

None

13. **List of Appendices**

Appendix A – Draft Staffordshire Localised Council Tax Support Framework
Appendix B - Draft Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Tax Support Scheme

15. **Background Papers**

Localising Support for Council Tax: A Statement of Intent -

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

Localising Support for Council Tax Vulnerable People – key local authority duties –

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

Localising Support for Council Tax: Funding Arrangements consultation -
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/2146644>
Localising Support for Council Tax – Taking work incentives into account -
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/lscworkincentives>

APPENDIX A

Staffordshire Billing Authorities Local Council Tax Support Scheme Model for 2013/14

	Current Council Tax Benefit Scheme	Proposed Draft Council Tax Support Scheme
<u>Pensioner Claims</u>		
No scope for changes within LCTS	Up to 100% of CT Bill	Up to 100% of CT Bill
<u>Working Age Claims</u>		
Claims will be based on a max of 80% Council Tax Liability (unless in a protected group)	Up to 100% of CT Bill	80%
Properties in bands higher than Band D will be based on 80% Band D Council Tax	Up to 100% of CT Bill	Up to 80% of band D rate
Second Adult Rebate will not be retained in the Local Scheme	Up to 25% of CT Bill	Nil
Capital Cut off at 6K (non-pass ported)	Capital cut off £16k	No CTS if capital exceeds 6K
Treatment of Child Benefit (CB)	CB not included as income	CB will be included as income
Treatment of maintenance payments	Maintenance payments not included as income	Maintenance payments will be included as income
Treatment of Child Care Costs	Child Care Costs deducted from income	Child Care Costs deducted from income
Earnings Disregards	Variety of disregards according to claimant type	Flat rate of £25 if claimant working.
<u>Claimants Who Are Eligible to Severe Disability Premium (SDP)</u>		
May allow up to 100% LCTS as protected group	Up to 100% of CT Bill	Up to 100% of CT Bill
<u>Claimants Who Have a child under the age of 5</u>		
May allow up to 100% LCTS as protected group	Up to 100% of CT Bill	Up to 100% of CT Bill

APPENDIX A

	Current Council Tax Benefit Scheme	Proposed Draft Council Tax Support Scheme
<u>Non- Dependant Deductions</u>		
No non dependant deduction as within current CTB rules	Nil	NIL
Lower Charge if the Non-Dependant is not working	£3.30	£5 p/w
Higher Charge if the Non-Dependant is working	Between £3.30 & £9.90	£10 p/w

Discretionary Payments

The Council has discretion to award Council Tax Support, in excess of the amounts determined by this framework, where it is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Draft Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2013/14

	Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme	Saving/(Cost) over current Council Tax Benefit Scheme (£)	Number of claimants affected
Pensioner Claims			
No scope for changes within LCTS	Up to 100% of CT Bill	Nil	5,528
Working Age Claims			
Claims will be based on a max of 80% Council Tax Liability (unless in a protected group)	Up to 80% of CT Bill	843,830	5,183
Properties in bands higher than Band D will be based on 80% Band D Council Tax	Up to 80% of band D rate	15,657	38
Second Adult Rebate will not be retained in the Local Scheme	Nil	11,014	44
Capital Cut off at 6K (non-pass ported)	No CTS if capital exceeds 6K	27,982	136
Earnings Disregards	Flat rate of £25 if claimant working.	(29,394)	358
Claimants Who Are Eligible to Severe Disability Premium (SDP)			
May allow up to 100% LCTS as protected group	Up to 100% of CT Bill	Nil	52
Total		869,089	

Discretionary Payments

The Council has discretion to award Council Tax Support, in excess of the amounts determined by this framework, where it is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist.

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BOROUGH HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

Submitted by: Executive Director – Operational Services

Portfolio: Stronger and Active Neighbourhoods

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To provide Members with information relating to the changes within the National Health Service and the development of a Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the Borough.

Recommendations

(a) That Cabinet accept the key messages contained in the report as important evidence against which the Borough's Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be developed

(b) That Cabinet agree to receive a future report on progress made in the development of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the Borough

Reasons:

To assist the Council and its partners in achieving community priorities, working together for a borough in which local people can enjoy better health and wellbeing through the addressing of health inequalities.

1. Background

- 1.1 A Draft Borough Health and Wellbeing Strategy is being developed to support the Staffordshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy which under the Health and Social Care Bill is a statutory requirement for each Health and Wellbeing Board to develop in order to set the strategic vision and priorities that will inform the commissioning of Health Services in a locality.
- 1.2 The Health Scrutiny Committee has been kept informed of the developments arising from the Health and Social Care Bill in relation to the County Council's duty to establish a Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) and is aware that this is now in place in Shadow form. One of their early tasks is to collaboratively develop a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which will become a statutory requirement of every local Health and Wellbeing Board from April 2013, once the Health and Social Care Bill is enacted
- 1.3 Staffordshire County Council have reviewed and revised their Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and shared with us the Health and Wellbeing profile for the Borough. With input from Leisure and Cultural Services, Strategic Housing, Partnerships and Environmental Health, since receiving this information in May 2012, good progress has been made in developing a draft Borough Strategy to take the health and wellbeing needs of our residents forward. Our aim is to work with both existing and new partners towards shared outcomes. At the present time, however, there is considerable change and uncertainty for many. For example, local GPs in their new clinical commissioning role, public health in its transition from the NHS to the County Council, LINK in its recreation as local HealthWatch.

2. Issues

- 2.1 The Health and Wellbeing profile for the Borough has been the subject of discussion at an Officer Strategy Group, who is now considering/ developing the following priorities areas:
- Alcohol and substance misuse
 - Smoking
 - Employment
 - Housing
 - Physical activity, healthy weight and nutrition
 - Mental wellbeing
- 2.2 When considering these priorities for the Borough, it is important to recognise that they are designed to capture and summarise high-level, and most probably, long-term challenges for the health, social care and the wider 'wellbeing' economy in Staffordshire. They are also issues which cannot be 'solved' by a single organisation but require integrated and co-operative action across the entire County if we are to have a tangible impact on these issues in the coming years.
- 2.3 The development of the Boroughs Health and Wellbeing Strategy is being driven by the Executive Director – Operational Services supported by the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, with regular updates being provided to the Cabinet Member with a responsibility for Stronger and Active Neighbourhoods. However it should be noted that and input has been received from:
- Housing
 - Environmental Health
 - Business improvement and Partnerships
- 2.4 The analysis of the Health and Wellbeing Profile for Newcastle has identified key messages as out lined below:
- Population projections for Newcastle from 2010 to 2035 suggest there will be a growth in population (12%).The population is projected to see significant growth in people aged 65 and over (54%) and in particular those aged 75 and over (73%).
 - Mosaic Public Sector 2009 allows populations to be segmented in terms of individual's demographics, lifestyles and behaviours. This allows interventions to be targeted more effectively in an appropriate style and language suited to the different lifestyle groups. Around 65% of the Newcastle population falls within one of five Mosaic groups: Ex-Council Community (18%), Industrial Heritage (15%), Suburban Mindsets (12%), Small Town Diversity (10%) and Professional Rewards (9%).
 - The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 (IMD 2010) is a way of identifying deprived areas. There are 12 lower super output areas (LSOAs) that fall within the most deprived national quintile in Newcastle, making up 14% of the total population. These areas fall within Cross Heath, Knutton and Silverdale, Chesterton, Butt Lane, Kidsgrove, Silverdale and Parkside, Town, Holditch and Thistleberry.
 - The child wellbeing index (CWI) 2009 provides useful information at a small area level for the wellbeing of children. In Newcastle, only five of the 81 LSOAs fall within the fifth most deprived areas in England making up 7% (about 1,500 children) of the child population (aged under 16) falling within Chesterton, Cross Heath, Kidsgrove and Knutton and Silverdale.
 - In 2009, nearly one in five children in Newcastle were defined as living in poverty. This is lower than the national average although it varies significantly across the district from 3% in Keele to 36% in Knutton and Silverdale

- The number of Jobseeker's Allowance claimants in Newcastle has increased between 2008 (1,500 claimants) and 2012 (2,600 claimants). In addition there are inequalities across the district with high proportions of claimants in Cross Heath, Silverdale and Parkside, Town and Knutton and Silverdale wards.

2.5 As our general population lives longer and puts pressure on public sector spending, the gap between the most deprived wards and those that are more affluent is likely to widen, unless we tackle identified inequalities now. Some of the specific health and wellbeing issues are highlighted below.

2.6 Specific issues have been identified around infant mortality:

- Within Newcastle there are around 1,220 live births annually and fertility rates are lower than the national average. Fertility rates in Knutton and Silverdale ward are higher than the England average.
- Rates of perinatal mortality and infant mortality in Newcastle are higher than the England average whilst stillbirth rates are similar to national levels. Stillbirth rates are showing a steady upward trend while both perinatal mortality and infant mortality in Newcastle saw a significant increase between 2004-2006 and 2006-2008, although rates do appear to have reduced slightly (not significantly) in 2008-2010. In Newcastle during the period 2008-2010 there were in total 23 stillbirths, 46 perinatal deaths and 34 infant deaths.
- More mothers in Staffordshire continue to smoke throughout their pregnancy than the England average (15% compared to 14% during 2010/11). Various estimates suggest that 17% to 20% of pregnant women in Newcastle continued to smoke throughout pregnancy, higher than the England average. Ward data for smoking in pregnancy suggest Knutton and Silverdale, Cross Heath, Holditch and Chesterton wards have high rates of smoking at delivery.
- The proportion of babies born with a birthweight of less than 2,500 grams in Newcastle is 8%, which is higher than the national average of 7%. Butt Lane, Holditch and Audley and Bignall End wards have a particular high level of babies born with a low birthweight.
- A model by the Network of Public Health Observatories suggests that around 67% of mothers in Newcastle initiated breastfeeding in 2009/10 which is lower than the England average of 74%.
- Data from the West Midlands Perinatal Institute also suggests that initiation rates in Newcastle are low (60%) and highlights that Silverdale and Parkside, Cross Heath, Holditch and Chesterton wards have particularly low levels of breastfeeding initiation rates (all below 50%).
- Provisional data from child health information systems in Staffordshire has been used to provide some analysis at district level. This shows that Newcastle also has a particularly low breastfeeding prevalence rate at six to eight weeks.

2.7 Life expectancy is also varies widely locally:

- The gap between the ward with the lowest life expectancy and the ward with the highest life expectancy is nine years for men and 13 years for women. Men and women in Bradwell, Cross Heath, Knutton and Silverdale and Town wards all have shorter life expectancy than the England average. Men in Ravenscliffe ward and women in Holditch also have shorter life expectancy.
- Around 1,220 Newcastle residents die every year, with the most common causes of death being circulatory diseases (390 deaths, 32%), cancers (330 deaths, 27%) and respiratory disease (190 deaths, 16%).

- The rates of people dying before the age of 75 (which are considered to be preventable) continue to decline in Newcastle.. However there are inequalities within Newcastle, with Cross Heath, Holditch, Knutton and Silverdale, Town, Silverdale and Parkside and Bradwell wards having particularly high levels of premature mortality. Butt Lane ward has a high premature mortality rate for cardiovascular disease whilst Knutton and Silverdale and Holditch wards have high premature cancer mortality rates.

2.8 Mental health - key messages:

- The estimated numbers of people suffering mental ill-health in the community is between 27,000 and 32,200 people. Levels of severe mental illness (defined as people with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and other psychoses) recorded on GP disease registers in Newcastle are significantly lower than England with approximately 800 people on a register in 2010/11.
- In Newcastle, there are approximately 10 suicides per year accounting for about 1% of deaths, with rates being similar to the England average. During 2010/11 there were also around 240 self-harm admissions in Newcastle with rates being similar to the England average.

2.9 Accidents – key messages:

- Accidental deaths account for around 30 deaths per year in Newcastle with rates being similar to the England average. Common causes of accidental mortality are falls (68%) and road traffic accidents (15%). However death rates from accidental falls and accidents in people aged 65 and over are particularly high.
- During 2010/11 there were over 1,390 admissions to hospital in Newcastle due to unintentional injuries (accidents). Hospital admission rates from unintentional injuries in Newcastle are lower than the national average.
- Over 450 people aged 65 and over in Newcastle were admitted to hospital for a fall-related injury during 2010/11, with rates being similar to England.
- National research indicates that only one in three people who have a hip fracture return to their former level of independence and one in three have to leave their own home and move to long-term care (resulting in social care costs). During 2010/11, there were 140 hip fracture admissions to people aged 65 and over in Newcastle with rates being similar to the England average.

2.10 Long-term conditions – key messages:

2.10.1 Children with disabilities or limiting long-term conditions:

- There is no dataset that provides us with a complete picture of the number of children who are disabled or who have a limiting long-term illness. Figures from a variety of sources estimate that the numbers of children with a disability in Newcastle range between 700 and 4,900.

2.10.2 Adults with long-term conditions:

- The 2001 Census found that the proportion of people with a limiting long-term illness in Newcastle was higher than the England average. Levels in most areas (17 of 24 wards) are also higher than England.

2.10.3 Disease:

- The numbers of patients recorded on general practice disease registers when compared with the expected numbers of people on registers with specific conditions, shows that there are potentially large numbers of undiagnosed or unrecorded cases, especially for chronic kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, dementia, heart failure, hypertension, learning disabilities and obesity. Higher numbers of cases on the registers than would be expected are recorded for hypothyroidism and severe mental health.
- Analysis of 2008 data from a sample of practices revealed that at least one in four people have a registered disease with one tenth of the population having more than one condition. Of all patients with a specified registered disease, around one third are also obese, around 14% are smokers and 19% are ex-smokers.
- With an ageing population, Newcastle is also predicted to see an increase in numbers of long-term conditions. This will place an increased burden on future health and social care resources.

2.11 Excess winter deaths – key messages:

- There is some evidence to suggest that some deaths that occur during the winter months are preventable. National research shows that winter deaths increase more in England compared to other European countries with colder climates. This suggests that it is more than just lower temperatures that are responsible for the excess mortality. The excess winter deaths index (EWD index) indicates whether there are higher than expected deaths in the winter compared to the rest of the year.
- There are on average 70 excess winter deaths annually in Newcastle, mainly amongst older people. During 2005-2010 the EWD index in Newcastle was similar to England.

2.12 Adult immunisation – key messages:

- The proportion of people aged 65 and over who have been vaccinated against flu in 2010/11 was slightly higher than the England average of 73%. However, lower proportions of other people eligible for the vaccine actually received it, i.e. those aged under 65 at risk, carers and pregnant women. Pneumococcal vaccine coverage in Newcastle is similar to the Staffordshire average (both 66%).

2.13 Smoking – key messages:

- It is estimated that there are approximately 300 children aged 11-15 who are considered regular smokers.
- The latest data from the Integrated Household Survey suggest that the smoking prevalence in Newcastle was 22% - meaning 22,600 people aged 18 and over smoke. Estimates suggest that this percentage varies across areas of Newcastle from 12% to 37% and that the percentage of the routine and manual groups that smoke is about 39%, thus contributing to increases in health inequalities.
- Smoking-attributable admissions in Newcastle were similar to the England average. However, smoking-attributable deaths in adults aged 35 and over were higher than the national average.
- In 2010/11, 1,750 people accessed stop smoking services in Newcastle and 800 people quit at four weeks. The numbers of people accessing stop smoking services in Newcastle per 1,000 smokers is lower than the England average. Quit rates at four weeks are also lower than England.

2.14 Alcohol and substance misuse – key messages:

- A local Staffordshire survey found 11% of children aged 11-15 across Staffordshire reported drinking alcohol in the week prior to interview, similar to the national average of

13%. The survey also found that drinking alcohol was more prevalent with boys and older children. Over a three year period (2007/08-2009/10), there were around 35 alcohol-related admissions in children and young people under 18 in Newcastle, with rates being similar to the England average.

- Estimates suggest approximately 20,600 (20%) adults in Newcastle consume alcohol at 'increasing risk' and a further 6,300 (6%) at 'higher risk'. Estimates also suggest that 21,600 (21%) adults are binge drinkers. Across different areas of Newcastle the proportion of combined 'increasing and higher risk' drinkers ranges from 17% to 29%.
- Alcohol-specific mortality rates for men in Newcastle are higher than the England average and similar for women. Alcohol-attributable mortality rates for men and women in Newcastle are similar to the England average. In Newcastle, there were 2,600 alcohol-related admissions in 2010/11. The rate for the last three years remains similar and is lower than the England average.
- During 2010/11, levels of alcohol-related crime in Newcastle were lower than the England average and alcohol-related violent crime was similar to the England average.
- Nationally, the prevalence of drug use amongst 11 to 15 year olds has fallen from 29% in 2001 to 18% in 2010. Applying national estimates to the Newcastle population it is estimated that approximately 410 children aged 11-15 used drugs in the last month, 780 used drugs in the last year and 1,130 had used drugs at some time.
- According to Home Office figures it is estimated that there are around 680 problem drug users, defined as opiate and/or crack cocaine users aged 15-64 in Newcastle. The percentage of these estimated to be in effective treatment (47%) is lower than the England average.

2.15 Obesity, healthy eating and physical activity – key messages:

- Using national estimates, about 2,900 children aged two to 15 are obese with a further 2,600 children thought to be overweight.
- Using figures from the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP), the proportion of obese children in Reception year in Newcastle is similar to the England average (9%). Levels of obesity are much higher (19%) for children in Year 6 and although not significantly, have risen slightly in the past year. Chesterton and Kidsgrove have high proportion of children in Reception who are either overweight or obese. The prevalence of children who are either overweight or obese in Year 6 is higher than the England average in Knutton and Silverdale ward.
- Estimates suggest that levels of adult obesity in Newcastle are 26%, which is similar to the England average of 24%. The prevalence of obesity across Newcastle varies with the percentage estimated to range between 16% and 30%.
- In Newcastle consumption of five or more portions of fruit and vegetables by adults is estimated as 26%, similar to the England average (29%). There are inequalities in consumption in Newcastle with estimates for areas ranging from 18% to 35%.
- In Newcastle, less than half of children (45%) spend at least three hours of high quality PE and school sport within and beyond the curriculum per week. This is the lowest level in Staffordshire and is significantly lower than the national average.
- Adult activity levels are significantly lower. Data from the Active People Survey (2009/10) shows that only 11% of men and women in Newcastle achieved the recommended levels of physical activity, which although similar to the national average is still too low. In addition, over half (53%) of men and women were inactive, which is higher than the national average.

2.16 Teenage pregnancy – key messages:

- Between 1998 and 2010 under 18 conception rates across Newcastle have reduced by 35% compared with a 14% reduction across Staffordshire and a 24% reduction across

England. The teenage pregnancy rate in Newcastle between 2008 and 2010 was higher than the England average. Knutton and Silverdale, Cross Heath, Butt Lane, Silverdale and Parkside and Holditch all have higher rates than the national average.

2.17 Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) – key messages:

- The number of diagnoses of new STIs is falling in Staffordshire compared to a rise nationally. It is not known if this reflects less disease in the community or if it is due to issues with data, access to services or case finding. The overall rate for acute STIs in Newcastle is lower than England.
- Data from 2010/11 shows that 25% of young people in Newcastle were screened for chlamydia, lower than the England average and falling slightly short of the 35% target. Of the 4,580 young people living in Newcastle who were screened approximately 230 (5%) had a positive result.

2.18 Physical Activity – Key Messages:

- There is little local data for levels of physical activity in children. An indicator that is often used is the proportion of children who undertake at least three hours of high quality PE and school sport within and beyond the curriculum per week. This shows that in Newcastle, only 45% of children achieve this level. This is the lowest in Staffordshire and lower than the national average
- The Active People Survey (APS) includes 250 sport and recreation activities and now includes dancing and gardening. From APS 4 (2009/10) data, only 11% of men and women in Newcastle achieved the recommended levels of physical activity which although similar to the national average is too low. In addition 53% of men and women were inactive, which is significantly higher than the England average (Table 61).
- Synthetic estimates at MSOA level suggest that the proportion of adults who undertake at 30 minutes of activity at least three times a week ranges between 16% and 26%

3 **Proposal**

3.1 That Cabinet agree to the recommendations set out within this report.

4. **Reasons for the Preferred Solution**

4.1 To assist the Council and its partners in achieving the community priorities, working together for a Borough in which local people can enjoy a better health and wellbeing through addressing the health inequalities that currently exist within the Borough.

5. **Financial and Resource Implications**

5.1 It should be noted that the Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be developed within existing resources.

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

6.1 There will be a positive impact on those relating to health improvement, quality of life, and support for disadvantaged communities, community safety and potentially broader social regeneration objectives for the Borough.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

7.1 The Council has powers, under the Local Government Act 2000, to improve the social,

economic and environmental well-being of the Borough's residents.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

- 8.1 As part of the development of a Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the Borough an equalities impact assessment will be undertaken. Overall any changes will be made in accordance with the Council's equal opportunities policy and procedures to enhance community cohesion.

9. **Major Risks**

- 9.1 A full risk assessment/log will be developed in conjunction with the Council's Corporate Risk Manager and will be subject to regular review.

10. **Key Decision Information**

- 10.1 The emphasis of the strategy will be on prevention, helping individuals. Local communities and organisations to understand what they can do to promote positive health and wellbeing. It is expected that there will be a marked increase in the Boroughs residents accessing health information and making positive choices to improve their health as a result of the development of a Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the Borough. This should be reflected by an increased number of the Boroughs residents participating in sports, health, and physical activity programmes, which in turn should lead to improvements in individual life expectancy and the reduced burden of disease or ill health.

11. **Previous Cabinet Decisions**

None

12. **List of Appendices**

None

WESTLANDS SPORTS GROUND BOWLS PAVILION

Submitted by: Head of Operations – Roger Tait/
Head of Assets and Regeneration – Jeff Hamnett

Portfolio: Environment and Recycling

Ward(s) affected: Thistleberry, Westlands

Purpose of the Report

To seek the approval of Cabinet in principle to the replacement of the bowls pavilion at Westlands Sports ground.

Recommendations

- (a) That Cabinet approve in principle the replacement of the bowls pavilion at Westlands Sports ground.**
- (b) That officers are authorised to provide project management support to Westlands Bowling Club to facilitate the replacement of the bowls pavilion.**
- (c) That officers are authorised to draw up an appropriate agreement with Westlands Bowling Club for project delivery and funding.**
- (d) That a report is brought to a future meeting of the Cabinet seeking approval of the final detailed scheme.**

Reasons

To facilitate the procurement of a replacement bowls pavilion which will improve the recreational offer available at Westlands Sports ground.

1. Background

- 1.1 Westlands Sportsground is situated on Wedgwood Avenue in the Thistleberry ward of the Borough and is a formal park containing 14 tennis courts with an associated pavilion and car park, and 2 bowling greens with an associated small pavilion.
- 1.2 A local bowling club, Westlands Bowling Club, are based at the site and use the bowling greens and pavilion for competitive league matches.

The greens and pavilion are also available to the public on a “pay and play” basis.
- 1.3 The bowls pavilion is approximately 50 years old, and whilst it is in reasonable condition for a building of this age and type, it is in need of modernisation to be deemed fit for modern day purposes.
- 1.4 The Council owns the building and is responsible for its maintenance, cleansing and running costs although the bowling club help out with additional cleaning when matches are held at the site, and informally manage the building by unlocking it for member’s use.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 Westlands Bowling Club has been bequeathed a sum of money from a former member of the club who passed away recently.

It is the wish of the club that the money is used to improve or replace the existing pavilion on the site, and the club has approached the Council to request that a project be approved to facilitate this.

- 2.2 Your officers have attended initial meetings with the club and have provided advice and guidance on options available and on the requisite planning application process.

- 2.3 The club has developed a proposal for a replacement timber frame and oak clad pavilion which would provide an appropriate, modern, energy efficient facility, compliant with current building control standards. The club also proposes to construct a small additional storage building adjacent to the pavilion, in the same style and materials.

The club has negotiated a price with a specialist contractor for the works and it appears that the project can be delivered within the budget available.

- 2.4 The club wishes to commence the demolition of the existing pavilion in the autumn of 2012 and to construct the new pavilion, subject to planning permission and approval from the Council, immediately thereafter.

It is intended to complete the project by the spring of 2013, in time for the start of the summer bowling season.

- 2.5 If approval for the project is granted in principle, it is considered appropriate for your officers to assist the club in providing project management input, to protect the Council's interests and ensure that the replacement pavilion is delivered to the required standard.

Assistance would be provided mainly from the Facilities Management team in the Assets and Regeneration Service as follows:

- Prepare and submit planning application (Westlands Bowling Club to pay fee)
- Prepare and submit building regulations application (Westlands Bowling Club to pay fee)
- Scrutinise and approve drawings and specification for the new pavilion (Westlands Bowling Club to provide information from preferred contractors)
- Scrutinise and approve contractor's arrangements for compliance with Health and Safety requirements, site access, programme of works, certification of applications for payments, practical completion, snagging, defects liability period and commissioning and handover of the building
- Appointment and management of Planning Supervisor if required (Westlands Bowling Club to pay fee)

Assistance would also be provided from the Operations Service as follows:

- Internal liaison with officers in Legal Services and other relevant teams to draw up an appropriate agreement between the Council and the club relating to project delivery and handover.
- Liaison with the club, contractors and Facilities Management officers regarding the management of Westlands Sports ground during the project construction phase.
- Management arrangements for the pavilion post completion.

3. **Options Considered**

3.1 **Do nothing**

- This would fail to take advantage of the opportunity to secure a modern replacement pavilion and would not assist Westlands Bowling Club in achieving their aims.

3.2 **Approve the project in principle**

- This would support Westlands Bowling Club in developing a scheme to replace the pavilion and utilise the funds which have been bequeathed to them.

4. **Proposal**

4.1 That Cabinet approve in principle the replacement of the bowls pavilion at Westlands Sports ground.

4.2 That officers are authorised to provide project management support to Westlands Bowling Club to facilitate the replacement of the bowls pavilion.

4.3 That officers are authorised to draw up an appropriate agreement with Westlands Bowling Club for project delivery and funding.

4.4 That a report is brought to a future meeting of the Cabinet seeking approval of the final detailed scheme.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

5.1 To facilitate the procurement of a replacement bowls pavilion which will improve the recreational offer available at Westlands Sports ground.

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

6.1 Creating a cleaner, safer and sustainable Borough.

6.2 Creating a healthy and active community.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

7.1 It will be necessary to draw up an appropriate agreement between the Council and Westlands Bowling Club to ensure that the project is delivered to the required standard.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

8.1 The new pavilion would be constructed to modern building regulations standards and would be accessible to all.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 Westlands Bowling Club has been bequeathed a sum of money which is sufficient to cover the capital construction and project management costs of the project. Therefore there would be no financial implications for the Council in terms of capital investment.

9.2 The Council is currently responsible for the revenue costs associated with the existing pavilion and provision is made in the General Fund Revenue Programme to meet these costs on an annual basis.

This will continue and there will be no additional requirement over and above the current level of provision.

9.2 There will be a staff resource requirement to assist the club in managing the project as detailed in section 2.5 of this report. This will be absorbed into existing work programmes.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 The major risks and control measures associated with the project are as follows:

Risk	Control Measures
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Bowling club fail to pay for the building work carried out which imposes a liability on the Council 2. The building is not handed over to the Council up on completion. 3. Appropriate statutory requirements are not met – No planning/Building regs etc... 4. Health and Safety practices are not followed. 5. The building is not completed to the appropriate standard specified. 6. The money bequeathed is not forthcoming once the building work commences. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An appropriate legal agreement is put in place which clearly stipulates contractual obligations between the Council, the bowling club and the builders. 1. A formal JCT building contract is entered in to between the bowling club and the builders. 2. A legal agreement is entered into with the bowling club which legally transfers the ownership to the Council is entered in to prior to commencement of the works. 3. Facilities project manage the works to ensure that statutory requirements are met. 4. Facilities project manage the works and ensure that appropriate risk assessments/method statements are provided by the builder. 5. Facilities project manage the work to ensure compliance with specifications. <p>As 1 above, plus a legal agreement is put in place between the bowling club and the administrators of the will.</p>

11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 The project will not entail significant expenditure on savings for the Council and will impact on no more than 2 wards. It has been included in the Forward Plan.

SUPPLY OF SPRING AND SUMMER BEDDING PLANTS AND WEED CONTROL CONTRACTS

Submitted by: Head of Operations – Roger Tait

Portfolio: Environment and Recycling

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To consider options for the future procurement of the Weed Control Contract.

To consider options for the future procurement of the Spring and Summer Bedding Plants Supply Contract.

Recommendations

(a) That Cabinet authorises the Head of Operations to seek tenders for the supply of spring and summer bedding plants for a 5 year period commencing December 2013, and following consultation with the Portfolio Holder, accept the most economically advantageous tender within the existing budget provision.

(b) That Cabinet authorises the Head of Operations to undertake an appropriate procurement exercise for the supply of summer bedding plants for summer 2013 and spring 2014 only, following the demise of the current contractor who will be unable to meet the Council's requirements for period.

(c) That Cabinet authorises the Head of Operations to seek tenders for the Weed Control Contract for a 5 year period commencing April 2013, and, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder, accept the most economically advantageous tender within the existing budget provision.

(d) Simultaneously to (iii), that the Head of Operations explores the feasibility of delivering the weed control work using the Council's Streetscene Business Unit and, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder, set up the necessary arrangements to implement the work if cost effective to do so.

(e) If option (iv) proves to be the best option for the Council, that the procurement exercise in option (iii) is cancelled.

Reasons

To secure continuation of the supply of spring and summer bedding plants for the Council until November 2018.

To secure the continuation of the weed control works within the Borough until March 2018.

1. **Background**

1.1 **Weed Control Contract**

Following a competitive tendering exercise in 2007 a contract was entered into with Gibson and Faulding Ltd for all weed control works within the Borough's allocated area. This contract was broken into three main categories:

- highway weed control
- obstacle weed control within grass areas
- other associated weed control

Highway weed control is the responsibility of the Highway Authority (Staffordshire County Council). The contract for this work is currently managed by the Borough Council on an annually approved basis as part of a package of highways grounds maintenance work provided to the County Council by the Borough Council.

Highway weed control treatment is carried out on 2 occasions per year: April/May and July/August in all areas of the Borough north and east of the M6 corridor. The remaining areas to the south and west of the M6 corridor are managed by the County Council. The contract includes the chemical herbicide spraying of the road kerb edges, footpaths, adopted rear alleyways, and the boundary edges of the footpaths. The estimated cost of this work is around £49,000.

Obstacle weed control is carried out on all grass areas which are regularly mown, including highway verges, parks, sports grounds and green spaces. This weed spraying facilitates more efficient mechanised bulk grass cutting operations. The estimated cost of this work is around £23,000.

1.2 **Spring and Summer Bedding Plants Contract**

Following a competitive tendering exercise in September 2007 a contract for 5 years was entered into with Greenhouse 2000/Stoke City Council for the supply of spring and summer bedding plants and hanging baskets within the Borough.

The estimated number of bedding plants purchased last year was around 150,000. This has reduced since the last tender process in 2007 by approximately 40%, which has been replaced with more sustainable planting such as herbaceous and shrub material.

Due to the need to plan bedding plant displays 9 -12 months in advance of the planting dates, the contract allows for the nursery to grow the plants from seeds, plugs or cuttings and in the case of dot plants an 18 month period is allowed. This is why the contract dates vary by 18 months from award of contract (January 2013) to the first season of supply (summer 2014).

1.3 **Issues in connection with the Weed Control Contract**

There are 3 general options for the future procurement of these contracts as follows:

- (i) **Enter into a new contract with the existing contractor**
This would preclude an external tendering exercise and necessitate the waiving of Standing Orders. The Council would need to be satisfied that it was complying with all relevant legislation and achieving value for money if this was selected as the preferred option.
- (ii) **Expose the work to a competitive tendering process**
This would result in a new and currently unknown contract cost and necessitate a set timetable for the tender process.
- (iii) **Incorporate the work (weed killing contract only) within the remit of the Council's Streetscene Business Unit**
This would result in a need for additional seasonal staff resources in the Streetscene Business Unit. However, it is envisaged that these costs would be met from the

existing budget provision for weed control provided by Staffordshire County Council and the Council's own revenue budget.

1.4 **Issues in connection with the supply of bedding plants**

In respect of the supply of bedding plants contract, there are 2 general options for the future procurement of this contract as follows:

- (i) **Enter into a new contract with the existing contractor (for a further 5 years)**
In July 2012 the existing contractor (Greenhouse 2000/Stoke on Trent City Council) notified the Council that it was closing down its operation and would be unable to meet the contractual requirement for the final round of bedding plant supply for summer 2013 and spring 2014. The Council will therefore need to undertake a procurement exercise to source a supplier for plants for summer 2013 and spring 2014 in addition to a larger procurement exercise to source plants for the subsequent 5 year period. Therefore, the option of entering into a new contract with the existing contractor is not available.

In the meantime, it will be necessary to procure summer bedding plants for summer 2013 and spring 2014 as an interim measure and a "one-off" procurement exercise will be undertaken to achieve this.

The existing contractor will, by failing to deliver plants for the whole of the contract period, be in breach of its obligations under the contract. It is therefore likely that the contract will be terminated and the Council will have to consider its rights under the Contract including the right to recover any damages the Council incurs from sourcing replacement plants for the remaining period of the contract from the contractor.

- (ii) **Expose the work to a competitive tendering process**
This would result in a new and as yet unknown contract cost and necessitate a set timetable for the tender process.

2. **Proposal**

- 2.1 It is proposed to seek tenders for the provision of the Weed Control Contract through a competitive tendering process, the new contract commencing in April 2013 for a period of 5 years.
- 2.2 Simultaneously to 2.1, it is proposed to explore the feasibility of the weed control work being undertaken by the Council's Streetscene Business Unit, and if it proves beneficial, to set up the necessary arrangements to implement the work starting in April 2013.
- 2.3 It is proposed to seek tenders for the Supply of Spring and Summer Bedding Plants through a competitive tendering process, the new contract commencing in December 2013 for a period of 5 years.
- 2.4 It is proposed to undertake an appropriate procurement exercise for the supply of replacement bedding plants for summer 2013 and spring 2014 only as an interim measure.

3. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 3.1 To secure continuation of the supply of spring and summer bedding plants for the Council until November 2018.
- 3.2 To secure the continuation of the weed control works within the Borough until March 2018.

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

4.1 Creating a cleaner, safer and sustainable Borough.

4.2 Creating a Borough of opportunity.

5. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

5.1 Highway weed control is the responsibility of the Highway Authority (Staffordshire County Council). The Borough Council currently carries out this function on behalf of the Highway Authority and is reimbursed annually for the work.

5.2 There is no statutory duty to provide bedding plant displays.

6. **Equality Impact Assessment**

6. In seeking to protect and improve the quality and sustainability of the environment to the benefit of all residents there are no identified differential equality impacts.

7. **Financial and Resource Implications**

7.1 **Weed Control Contract**

The cost of the works is met from within the approved General Fund Revenue Programme for the Community Business Unit (Parks and Open Spaces), and the highway element of the work is recharged to the County Council's Highways Department.

In 2011 / 2012 the total value for the weed control contract was £72,000. This figure has been adjusted annually to include the inflationary uplift. Of this sum, £49,000 is funded by Staffordshire County Council and the remaining £23,000 is funded by the Borough Council.

If the work was exposed to a competitive tender process, there would be an additional resource requirement of staff time involved in the process of writing, advertising and preparing a tender package should this option be chosen.

If the work was to be delivered by the Streetscene team, there would be an additional seasonal staff resource requirement to carry out the work. It is envisaged that this cost would be met from the existing budget provision for weed control provided by Staffordshire County Council (£49,000) and the Council's own revenue budget (£23,000).

7.2 **Supply of Bedding Plants Contract**

The cost of the works is met from within the approved General Fund Revenue Programme for the Community Business Unit (Highways Amenities, Town Centre/Roundabout Planting), within which the purchase of bedding plants costs are included.

In 2011/2012 the contract value for the purchase of the bedding plants and hanging baskets was £47,000. This figure alters marginally each year according to the type and numbers of plants that are required.

There would be an additional resource requirement of staff time involved in the process of writing, advertising and preparing a tender package should option (i) be chosen.

8. **Major Risks**

8.1 **Weed Control Contract**

Option (i)

- The decision not to tender open to external challenge.
- The existing contract rates may not be cheaper than those gained from a competitive tender process.
- Limited opportunity to alter existing methods of operations.

Option (ii)

- The new contract price may exceed current budget.
- Committed to a similar level of expenditure for the contract period.

Option (iii)

- Risk of placing additional pressure on other core services provided by Streetscene Business Unit if all Grounds Maintenance work is in-house.
- The Council must take proper account of the protection of employment rights provided by the Transfer of undertaking Regulations in assessing the options.

8.2 **Supply of Bedding Plants Contract**

Option (i)

- As the current contractor is closing down it's operation, Option 1 is not available

Option (ii)

- The new contract price may exceed current budget.
- Committed to a similar level of expenditure for 5 years.
- The Council must take proper account of the protection of employment rights provided by the Transfer of undertaking Regulations in assessing the options.

9. **Key Decision Information**

- 9.1 The decision involves major expenditure, will impact on more than 2 wards, and has been included in the forward plan.

10. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 10.1 Cabinet Decision 2007

11. **List of Appendices**

None

12. **Background Papers**

Contract Documentation

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PROCUREMENT OF THE REPORTER

Submitted by: Head of Communications

Portfolio: Communications, Transformation and Partnerships

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To inform Cabinet of the outcome of a procurement process for the distribution and printing of the council's newspaper the Reporter.

Recommendations

- (a) Cabinet notes the outcome of the Reporter procurement process.
- (b) Cabinet endorses proposals to run a second procurement process to appoint a company to carry out the Reporter print contract and for the outcome of that process to be reported back to Cabinet.
- (c) Cabinet authorises the portfolio holder for Communications, Transformation and Partnerships to consider with the Head of Communications appropriate measures in response to proposals from the Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Reasons

The outcome of the tender process has to be reported to Cabinet in line with the borough council's Standing Orders in Relation to Contracts' section 10 (Standards and Award Criteria) paragraphs (e) and (h).

1. **Background**

- 1.1 In May 2009, Cabinet received a report outlining the results of a procurement process for the print and distribution of the borough council's newspaper the Reporter.
- 1.2 Contracts were awarded to two separate companies – one to provide print services and the other to provide distribution services. These contracts were for an initial two-year period with the option for negotiations with the contract providers for two separate 12-month extensions.
- 1.3 These options were exercised with both providers and this has therefore meant that the same print and distribution companies have been involved with the borough council for the last four years.
- 1.4 The contracts with both service providers – Harmsworth Printing (Staffordshire Sentinel Newspapers) for print and The National Leaflet Company for distribution - expire when the March edition of the Reporter is printed and distributed in 2013.
- 1.5 With distribution providers in particular, bookings need to be secured significantly in advance of the dates required and therefore to ensure the council could secure appropriate bookings both for 2013/14 and also for the following financial year, it was decided to carry out this procurement process well in advance.

1.6 There are some companies which provide both distribution and print services and it was therefore decided that for the purposes of this procurement process both elements would be advertised at the same time. However, the council made it clear that companies could put forward tenders for either print or distribution or bid to provide both.

2. **Issues**

2.1 The Reporter is one of the main communication channels which the borough council uses to involve and engage residents with its services, decisions, policies and activities. Annual surveys carried out by the Communications Department show that it is still the single most popular mechanism for residents to get information about the council.

2.2 It is not the sole means of communicating with residents but is an integral ingredient in the “communications mix” which the council currently uses and includes its website, social media (Twitter and Facebook), elected members, leaflets, posters, brochures and documents, press and public relations, face-to-face.

2.3 In 2011, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government revised the Recommended Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity. The revised Code makes it clear that local authorities are not expected to produce more than four editions of their publications each year and content should be focused on council news, information and events.

2.4 Prior to the revision of the Code by the Secretary of State, the borough council had produced 10 editions each year of the Reporter. In 2011/12 and also in the current financial year the council is following the guidelines in the Code. In the current financial year four editions will be produced – May, July, November 2012 and finally February/March 2013.

2.5 Specifications sent out as part of the current procurement process have continued to follow the frequency guidelines for local authority publications as outlined in the Code.

2.6 Officers from the council’s Business Improvement and Partnerships Department and also the Audit Department have worked alongside and supported officers in the Communications Department to ensure the procurement process for the print and distribution of the Reporter has complied with all financial and procedural regulations and followed due process.

2.7 It was agreed to place a notice on the MyTenders website and this also feeds through to “Contracts Finder” which is the Government’s recommended portal for advertising all contracts which are below the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) thresholds for procuring public sector services.

2.8 Ten companies responded to the first part of the procurement process – five were interested in print, three in distribution and two in both print and distribution – and they were all sent a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ). This process is used to gauge whether a company is capable of meeting the council’s contract requirements.

2.9 Five PQQs were returned and as a result of the reduced interest, the Head of Central Services, officers from the council’s Business Improvement and Partnerships Department and also the Audit Department were approached for advice by the Head of Communications.

2.10 It was agreed that the contracts had been advertised appropriately and due process had been followed therefore it was appropriate to continue with the procurement process. All five companies who had returned the PQQs were sent formal “Invitation to Tender” documents.

- 2.11 Only three tenders were received back by the council by the specified deadline date of Friday, 22 July and one was received after that date.
- 2.12 Two of the tenders returned to the council were for distribution services. Another tender for distribution services arrived after the deadline and this late submission was dealt with according to Section 19 (parts A and B of the council's Standing Orders). This tender was opened and noted but was not included in the process. Only one tender for print services was returned to the council.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 An evaluation of the returned tenders has taken place within the Communications Department in line with the details outlined in the specification documentation – *“The tender evaluation will involve a single stage process which will be a desk-based evaluation of the ITT responses using a balance of 50 per cent price: Compliance with specification – 30 per cent; Customer support – 10 per cent; Environmental factors - five per cent; References – five per cent.*
- 3.2 As far as the distribution element of this process is concerned, the return of two tender documents combined with a third out-of-time document – which was still noted – means the council can feel confident it has sufficient evidence to justifiably appoint a service provider.
- 3.3 With regard to print services, an evaluation process has been carried out on the returned tender documentation, however, a single return raises concerns over value-for-money.
- 3.4 There are a number of options which have been considered with regard to the Reporter in light of the results of the procurement process. These are:-
- (a) Appoint print and distribution providers for the Reporter in line with the results of the evaluation process which has been carried out. The newspaper will be produced with the current revised Recommended Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity in mind which suggests four editions each year.
 - (b) Only appoint a distribution provider for the Reporter at this stage for a minimum of two years with the option of two potential 12-month extensions and carry out a further procurement process to ensure value-for-money with regards to the print element.
 - (c) Carry out a complete new process for both distribution and print procurement services.
- 3.5 **Option A**
- (i) Produce four editions each calendar year – February, May, July, November.
 - (ii) Appoint the preferred distributor and the single responder to the print procurement. Scaling back the number of pages in the Reporter by around 10 per cent to 40 per year - two x eight page editions and two x 12 page editions - would enable the council to keep expenditure within existing Reporter budgets.
 - (iii) The responder to the print contract has indicated it would be seeking six-monthly price reviews of paper costs during the contract. This is a reflection of the very volatile nature of the paper market. At this stage it is impossible to say how this would impact on budgets but there is little room for manoeuvre in the Reporter budgets as they stand and additional pressures may result in an overspend.
 - (iv) An external typesetter is used for the Reporter and at proposed pagination rates this would add up to £2,800 per year. The external typesetter is used as there is no newspaper typesetting experience in-house and reduced staffing levels in the design service means it would be unable to cope with additional demands on its resources.

- (v) There is currently £31,120 allocated in the council's budgets for producing the Reporter and the proposals outlined above would mean expenditure would be kept marginally within existing budgets at the outset of the contracts.
- (vi) Proposed pagination levels outlined in (ii) would result in 40 pages of Reporter information produced each year compared to a proposed 44 in the current financial year and 48 produced in the previous financial year.
- (vii) Pagination figures for previous years cannot be compared as at that time the council produced 10 editions each year.

3.6 Option B

- (i) Four editions produced each calendar year – February, May, July, November.
- (ii) Many distribution companies have long lead-in times for their work programmes and this means bookings very often have to be placed around 8-12 months before a distribution is actually required. With this in mind any delay in pressing ahead with appointing a suitable distributor could cause the council difficulties in the long-term.
- (iii) Print companies have a shorter requirement for booking in work and as a result a delay in this part of the procurement process would not have such serious implications for the council and the additional time would allow the council more time to satisfy itself it is getting best value-for-money for local Council Taxpayers.

3.7 Option C

- (i) As highlighted in points 2.5 and 2.6, due process has been followed and expert advice taken as the process has moved forward.
- (ii) Organising and running another complete process would be time-consuming and would cost the borough council – and tenderers – in terms of human resources. In light of the earlier comments about distribution contract lead-in times it may solve one problem – surrounding print – but create another around distribution.

3.8 Members of the Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered this report at their meeting on Monday, 3 September.

3.9 The committee supported the procurement proposals for the Reporter and asked for further consideration to be given to a range of associated issues connected to the council's newspaper including income generation, design and content.

3.10 The Chair of Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to report comments and observations to the Leader of the Council who is the also the portfolio holder for Communications, Transformation and Partnerships. And in light of the scrutiny committee's consideration of this matter an additional recommendation has been added as Recommendation (c) to the report which Cabinet is now considering.

4. Proposal and Reasons for Preferred Option

4.1 It is proposed that the National Leaflet Company be awarded the contract for the distribution of the Reporter under the terms outlined in the respective tender documents and schedules. Their pricing proposals for eight, 12 and 16 page editions can be delivered within the proposed Reporter budget for distribution services from 2013/14 which is £15,800.

4.2 The National Leaflet Company is the current service provider for distribution of the Reporter and they have provided a consistently efficient and effective service for the borough council. They also scored highest in the evaluation process.

4.3 The company is the market leader in door-to-door distribution within the public sector with 120 public sector clients.

- 4.4 They use the Royal Mail door-to-door service to deliver the Reporter and offer a minimum coverage of 96 per cent across the borough. Some councils do improve on this figure by sending every one of their publications using second class post. This does guarantee a 100 per cent penetration rate but would cost around 95p per unit and with current budgets this simply cannot be afforded in Newcastle-under-Lyme four times a year.
- 4.5 Agreed monitoring and complaints procedures are in place for non-delivery but because door-to-door does not guarantee a 100 per cent penetration rate, single complaints cannot be investigated. Additional telephone back-checks are available but they cost 40p per check.
- 4.6 It is also proposed that the Head of Communications carry out a second procurement process for the print requirement of the Reporter and the outcome of this process be reported back to Cabinet at the earliest opportunity. This will be done in conjunction with procurement staff in the council's Business Improvement and Partnerships Department.
- 4.7 To stimulate more market interest, this second process will involve talking to other local authorities about their print providers and then contacting them to discuss this council's requirements as well as exploring new advertising opportunities within the trade press.
- 4.8 The company which was the sole responder to the first procurement effort will also be contacted to take part in the second process.
- 4.9 Research by the Local Government Association has found that where residents feel they are kept informed by their council they are far more likely to be satisfied with their council.
- 4.10 There have been significant changes in the local media landscape in recent times which has resulted in less coverage of the council, its policies, services and activities. There is little sign of this changing and for that reason it is vital the council retains channels which allow it to inform and involve residents with the services and activities their Council Tax pays for.
- 4.11 The borough council's website continues to develop and improve and the council is also reaching more people than ever before through social media and face-to-face engagement. However, evidence suggests the Reporter continues to be an extremely important part of the communications mix for the council.

5. Outcomes linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities

- 5.1 The Reporter is a key communications channel which engages, involves and informs stakeholders about policies, services, events and activities delivered in support of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the borough council's corporate priorities.
- 5.2 Not sharing this information could have a detrimental impact on delivery of the Strategy and the corporate priorities.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 6.1 There is no legal or statutory duty on the council to produce a civic newspaper.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment which covers the Reporter has been produced as part of the council's Communications Strategy which was approved by Cabinet in March 2012.

8. Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1 It is four years since the appointment of the National Leaflet Company to the Reporter distribution contract.
- 8.2 Price proposals submitted as part of their tender documentation suggests increases of below 10 per cent on all paginations which when one considers inflation has risen by an average of around four per cent a year during the term of the contract, that represents good value-for-money for the council.
- 8.3 The current annual Reporter budget is £31,120 and it is important in the current difficult financial situation that distribution, print and typesetting services stay within that financial envelope if at all possible. This factor will be taken into consideration when the second procurement process involving print is undertaken.
- 8.4 Cabinet should note though that additional financial pressures may need to be responded to during the two-year initial agreement with the National Leaflet Company although it is impossible to gauge what these pressures may be at this moment in time.
- 8.5 The National Leaflet Company will be subject to price pressures from the Royal Mail although processes will be put in place for negotiation and discussion before any price changes are implemented.
- 8.6 One of the key changes to the Reporter in recent times has been the introduction of some paid-for commercial advertising from local businesses as well as some paid-for content from partner organisations.
- 8.7 Together these two areas generated £16,834 in external income during the financial year 2011/12 – more than half the total Reporter costs for the year. Another £3,992 in internal income was generated.
- 8.8 Deducting the external income generated by the Reporter of £16,834 from the £32,125 spent in the last financial year on print, distribution and typesetting leaves a total of £15,291. This means the net cost to each household in the borough for each edition of the Reporter during the last year was around seven pence.

9. **Major Risks**

- 9.1 There are no major risks associated with the proposals included in this report at this stage. However, the potential risks associated with progressing or not progressing the proposals are:-

Risks if not progressed

- Resident “satisfaction and informed” levels throughout the borough could be adversely affected if the Reporter is not produced and distributed free of charge to the majority of households in Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- Involvement and engagement with council services and activities could be impaired.
- Key information is not widely distributed among residents.

9.2 Risks if progressed

- Pressure on Reporter budgets from service providers.
- Reputation damage to the council if – in the current difficult economic times – service providers succumb to pressures and go out of business resulting in no production of the Reporter.
- Qualified and trained council staff leave and are not replaced resulting in a skills gap around Reporter production.

11. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

There are no earlier Cabinet/Committee resolutions relevant to this report.

12. **Background Papers**

The Pre-Qualification Questionnaire distributed to interested parties is available on request from the Head of Communications.

The Invitation to Tender documents (Part One and Part Two) are also available on request from the Head of Communications.

The evaluation report is confidential as it contains commercially sensitive information. However, it is available for Cabinet members on request from the Head of Communications.

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