

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 28th November, 2012

Present:- The Mayor David Becket – in the Chair

Councillors Mrs Heames, Welsh, Mrs Johnson, Studd, Mrs Burnett, Clarke, Cooper, Mrs Beech, Hambleton, Howells, Cairns, Matthews, Olszewski, Mrs Hambleton, Wemyss, Wilkes, Mrs Williams, Williams, Fear, Allport, Eagles, Kearon, Taylor.J, Waring, Miss Olszewski, Lawton, Loades, Holland, Bailey, Miss Cooper, Jones, Miss Reddish, Robinson, Mrs Shenton, Mrs Heesom, Snell, Sweeney, Tagg, Mrs Bates, White, Miss Mancey, Mrs Burgess, Eastwood, Miss Baker, Mrs Peers, Stringer, Stubbs, Turner and Mrs Winfield

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs Cornes, Cllr M Taylor, Cllr Plant, Cllr Boden, Cllr Mrs Simpson, Cllr Miss Walklate, Cllr Mrs Hailstones, Cllr Hailstones, Cllr Bannister and Cllr Mrs Astle.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **SIGNING OF THE DISTRICT DEAL FOR NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME**

The Leader of Newcastle Borough Council introduced Cllr Philip Atkins, Leader of Staffordshire County Council. Cllr Atkins stated that the District Deal had so far been signed by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and South Staffordshire Council and outlined the work that had so far been undertaken in conjunction with the City Council and District Councils including attracting top names to the area such as Jaguar Landrover. Cllr Atkins also highlighted the close working partnership that the Borough Council and the County Council had recently embarked upon regarding the redevelopment of the Ryecroft site.

Cllr Sweeney welcomed the deal and stated that partnership working was the way forward and thanked Cllr Snell and Cllr Atkins for the work done in achieving the signing of the deal.

Cllr Studd also thanked Cllr Atkins and all Members who had been involved in negotiations and stated that he looked forward to the redevelopment of the Ryecroft.

Letters were exchanged regarding the District Deal by the Leaders of Newcastle Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council.

4. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL HELD ON 12TH SEPTEMBER 2012**

Cllr David Loades and Cllr Mrs Burgess stated that they had been present at the previous meeting of Full Council even though this was not reflected in the minutes.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 12th September 2012 be agreed as a correct record.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL 25TH SEPTEMBER 2012

Resolved: That the minutes be noted.

6. MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 1ST OCTOBER 2012

Resolved: That the minutes be noted.

7. MAYORS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor thanked everyone who had signed the petition to save the Staffordshires name and stated that he had received over 1300 signatures in total. The move to keep the name had now been agreed at regimental level and now had to be agreed by the War Office.

There would be a Fairtrade Christmas Fayre on Friday 7th December and Saturday 8th December in the Lancaster Buildings, Newcastle Town Centre.

The Mayors Carol Service would be held on 16th December in St Mary's Church, Betley at 6.30pm.

The Mayors Ball would be held on Friday 22nd March and tickets would be available from January.

The Mayor also informed Members that there would be a concert on 20th April by the Newcastle Male Voice Choir and that he was hoping to arrange a further two musical events in the near future.

The Mayor thanked everyone who had taken part in his sponsored walk and stated that the Mayoress had raised £800.

It was sadly announced that the son of former Councillor Mrs Freda Myatt had passed away and it was agreed that the Mayor would send condolences to Mrs Myatt and her daughter, former Councillor Miss Yvonne Burke.

8. STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

A question was raised regarding how many Community Centres would be closing as part of the Community Centre Review which had been discussed at the meeting of Cabinet held on 17th October 2012. The Portfolio Holder for Stronger and Active Neighbourhoods had circulated a letter to all Members that he had recently submitted to the Sentinel regarding the Review. This topic was currently being considered by a Member Working Group which had been set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee.

A question was raised regarding progress towards the Kidsgrove Town Centre Partnership. The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Town Centres had met with all Kidsgrove Members to help identify what the key issues were and who would be the key private sector workers required to help drive the initiative forward. Elements of best practice from the Newcastle Town Centre Partnership would also be incorporated and it was recognised that there was a great deal of potential in Kidsgrove that needed to be utilised.

The refurbishment of St Giles and St Georges was discussed and clarity was requested regarding the administrations visions for this area of the Town Centre taking into account that a new Aldi Store was due to open on the other side of the Town. The Leader confirmed that the issue had been considered by Scrutiny where many options had been discussed including the possible relocation of the Borough Museum to the site. Officers were currently carrying out soft market testing regarding what would be the best possible use of the site but the building itself was considered to be key and there was an overriding desire not to see it demolished. Third parties were being approached to gauge their interest in the site and building and Officers were looking into potential housing solutions for the building. Members welcomed the fact that third parties were again being approached regarding the building.

A question was raised in relation to the review of the integrated waste and recycling strategy regarding whether nominations for the Cabinet Panel had been received and when that panel would be meeting. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling confirmed that Group Leaders had been asked to provide nominations. A supplementary question was then raised regarding details of who had actually been nominated. The Portfolio Holder stated that the process was in hand and detailed would be released when the membership was finalised, details regarding how many members would sit on the panel from each party could be found in the report that went to Cabinet in October. The question was also raised as to why this approach to the review had been adopted and what status the Cabinet Panel would actually have. The Portfolio holder stated that she would provide a full written response to this question but that the aim was to look at different ways of providing recycling by 2016 and that the main role of the panel would be fact finding prior to submitting a report to scrutiny. The Portfolio confirmed that the written response would include information on the differences between a Cabinet Panel and the previous groups that had tackled the issue of waste and recycling. Members agreed that a timely start regarding this project was desirable.

Clarity was requested regarding the wording in relation to the Allotment Review. It was confirmed that the Council aimed to ensure that the maximum benefit was being achieved from the money it invested in allotments.

With regards to the Portas/Town Team Partner £10,000, it was highlighted that Newcastle could only have been selected as a Portas Partner Town if it had the support of the local Member of Parliament.

Following a question regarding the appointment of Matthew Ellis as the Police and Crime Commissioner the Leader stated that he looked forward to seeing how progress was made. The supplementary question was raised regarding whether the Leader welcomed the new Commissioners pledge to freeze the council tax element relating to his brief. The Leader confirmed that if policing levels could be maintained under those conditions and this was welcomed and that there could be some items for the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Scrutiny Committee to consider in the future.

Resolved: (a) That a written response be provided by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling regarding the Cabinet Panel

9. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

1. Question from Cllr Colin Eastwood

The Health Scrutiny Committee, along with I'm sure other members, are concerned about the shortage of funding in Social Care which will have a detrimental impact on other vital council services. Will the Leader support the Local Government Association's campaign 'Show Us you Care' to put pressure on the Coalition Government to provide adequate funding to support adult social care services.

Councillor Colin Eastwood (Wolstanton Ward) and Chair Newcastle Health Scrutiny Committee

I am happy to support the LGA's campaign to put pressure on the Coalition Government to adequately resource adult social care. Although this is a function which falls squarely within the County Council's purview, inadequate funding for ASC will have knock on effects to the services which we provide.

It would be helpful to me if the Health Scrutiny Committee could provide guidance on other actions that this council can do to support the work our County Council colleagues do with regards to ASC and correct resourcing.

Cllr Eastwood did not raise a supplementary question but stated that he was glad of the support from the Leader and that he would raise the concerns with the County Council Health Select Committee.

2. Question from Cllr Mrs Shenton

Can I ask why once again we are holding our Council meeting on the same evening as the switching on of the Christmas Lights in the Town Centre? Our local traders will be hoping that this year their till bells ring in the anticipation of a bright festive season, set against the current economic gloom. Do the Mayor and the Leader agree that we as elected members should have been there to show our support, rather than run the risk of being branded as having a 'Bah, Humbug!' attitude to the people and businesses of Newcastle?

Councillor Elizabeth Shenton (Town Ward)

The date chosen for the switch on of the Christmas Lights was done so independently of the Council. As a result of our greater partnership working and through the Town Centre Partnership, it is hoped that greater dialogue with the organisers can prevent such clashes happening in the future.

Supplementary Question:

Cllr Shenton raised a supplementary question regarding the timing of the Council meeting and queried whether in the future it could be moved to a Tuesday or Thursday in the same week.

The Leader stated that a written response would be provided to this question and that any other supplementary would also receive a written response.

The Mayor thanked the Deputy Mayor and Mayoress for attending the switching on of the Christmas lights in his absence.

Question from Cllr Loades

Can the leader inform this Council, if the Community Investment type company for the Newcastle Town Centre is now registered officially with the recognized body and all directors listed and declared?

Councillor David Loades (Loggerheads and Whitmore Ward)

I can confirm that all of the documentation for the registration of the Community Interest Company with Companies house and the CIC Regulator has been completed incorporating all the details of all of the Subscribers to the Company and the first Directors. Those documents are currently being circulated round the Subscribers and Directors for signature and once signed (anticipated within a few days) the formation of the Company will be complete.

In the meantime decisions can be taken but these will of course be subject to ratification by the Company.

Supplementary Question:

Cllr Loades requested information regarding the appointment of the Town Centre Manager and whether this could still go ahead if the Company had not yet been ratified.

A written response would be provided to this but the answer may also be covered in response to question 5.

3. Question from Cllr Sweeney

The current administration pledged to strengthen the council litter picking and enforcement team. Can the portfolio holder explain what action has actually been taken to deliver a better litter picking service?

Councillor Stephen Sweeney (Clayton Ward)

Steetscene are focussing on litter education, especially with schools. The Council is investing in staff training and cleansing vehicles, continuing to prioritise resources where needs are greatest and working very successfully with a growing number of local groups and organisations to improve the environmental quality of the Borough.

This recent survey has highlighted that in respect of detritus, graffiti and fly posting, they are broadly on or exceeding the targets. In respect of litter, this is slightly under target at 88% against the target of 91%. Officers are analysing the detailed results to identify where realignment of resources needs to take place to improve the level of overall cleanliness in these areas.

There was no supplementary question asked.

4. Question from Cllr Mrs Peers

Could the portfolio holder tell the Council what progress has been made on the recruitment and implementation of a town centre manager?

Councillor Tracey Peers (Loggerheads and Whitmore Ward)

The Town Centre Partnership has undertaken a recruitment process and at this stage has made an informal offer subject to references. It is anticipated that the Manager will be in post in January.

Supplementary Question:

Cllr Mrs Peers requested details regarding how much money had been contributed from Kidsgrove Town Council and other Parish Councils and whether all Town and Parish Councils had been asked to contribute to the Partnership.

A written answer would be provided.

5. Question from Cllr Miss Mancey

Can Cllr Kearon tell the Council how many residents have been assisted by the grant scheme put in place to help vulnerable and older residents with home security?

Councillor Chloe Mancey (Seabridge Ward)

Revival Home Improvement Agency has produced marketing literature, leaflets have been produced, information is available on-line and articles have been produced in the Reporter promoting the scheme. Officers have worked with the Police / Fire / Aspire and Revival in a joint initiative to target vulnerable properties and residents in high crime areas. The partnership has undertaken door knocking in the town ward to provide advice on home security and safety. To date no-one has taken up the offer of installation of home security measures.

However the future of the whole scheme is now under threat as the County Council has indicated that it intends to withdraw its core funding of £25,000 and therefore the additional funding we have already put in place will be needed to ensure the scheme remains affordable. Our officers are investigating a way forward that ensures those in need of support get it.

Supplementary Question:

Cllr Miss Mancey asked whether the Portfolio Holder thought the scheme could be viewed as a failure as no resident had yet been helped.

A written response would be provided.

Question from Cllr Howells

I see from the staff consultation that has just been launched that the council is expecting to save £78,000 from altering the car leasing scheme by 2013/2014. The target is to save £200,000. Is this a disappointing failure to meet the target, or was the original target wildly overambitious?

Councillor Ashley Howells (Loggerheads and Whitmore Ward)

The Car Leasing scheme costs the Council £204,010 per year in subsidy. As part of the on-going negotiations, the Cabinet are seeking to save £78,000 within the 2013/14 budget.

Supplementary Question:

Cllr Howells questioned the accuracy of the 2013/14 budget strategy but the Mayor stated that this was a matter for scrutiny to consider and not for discussion at Full Council

10. PROGRESS ON DEFERRED QUESTION AND PETITIONS

There were no further supplementary questions to those asked at the meeting held on 12th September 2012.

A report was submitted to advise Members of action taken by Officers in respect of the petition submitted by the Ravens Park Resident Association in relation to the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan.

Resolved: (a) That the action taken by officers in respect of the Ravens Park petition be noted.

(b) That the existence of the petition be reported to both the Planning Committee and Council in the context of the results of the full public consultation exercise, which has been recently undertaken in relation to preparation of the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan.

11. VERBAL UPDATES OF THE CHAIRS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Members received verbal updates from the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees. The minutes from all the Committees were available for view on the internet.

Following the update from the Chair of the Health Scrutiny Committee, the Leader thanked him and other Members of the Committee and stated that Newcastle appeared to be leading the way in the County regarding the carrying out of local health scrutiny.

Resolved: That the updates be received.

12. VERBAL UPDATES OF CHAIRS OF THE STATUTORY COMMITTEES

Verbal updates were received from the Chairs of the Statutory Committees.

The Portfolio Holder for Stronger and Active Neighbourhoods stated that he was very concerned regarding the amount of contaminated alcohol being found in the Borough and highlighted the need for close partnership working between the Council, Trading Standards and the Police.

The Chair of the Planning Committee thanked Planning Officers and Members of the Committee for their hard work and stated that it was unfortunate in the current economic climate that the number of applications for consideration was in decline.

The Chair of the Public Protection Committee confirmed that no response had been received from solicitors representing the Hackney Carriage Trade in relation to de limitation and that as such the removal of the limit was set to go ahead from 2nd December 2012.

Resolved: That the updates be received

13. REVISED GAMBLING POLICY DECEMBER 2012

A report was submitted to advise Members of the recommended changes to the Gambling Policy as agreed by the Licensing Committee on 8th November 2012.

Under section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 the Council has a statutory duty to review its Gambling statement set out in the Gambling Policy before the end of December 2012.

RESOLVED: (a) That the current Challenge 21 policy be replaced by a Challenge 25 policy in the Gambling Policy for Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council.

(b) That the revised Gambling Policy be agreed.

14. PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW CONSULTATION - REVISED BOUNDARIES OCTOBER 2012

A report was submitted to inform Members of the revised Parliamentary Constituency proposals for Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent.

Members agreed that the new proposals were an improvement on the previous submissions of September 2012 but were still flawed and as such could not be supported. It was recognised that the Boundary Commissions had taken the views and representations of Members into consideration and that an attempt had been made to try and preserve the identity of the Borough but that the changes were still not to be approved. Further dissatisfaction was voiced regarding the treatment of the rural wards in the new proposals.

There was no desire to submit any further representations but Members agreed that any communication with the Boundary Commission should be signed by both the Council Leader and the Mayor.

Resolved: That the new proposals were an improvement but that Members were still not satisfied with the treatment of the rural wards in Newcastle Borough.

15. MOTIONS OF MEMBERS - PROCEDURE RULE 12

There were no motions.

16. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

A report was submitted to inform Members of the actions to be taken on a petition submitted by a group of local residents and users of Seabridge Community Centre in relation to the inclusion of the site of the Seabridge Centre in the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

Resolved: **(a)** That the petition and the action taken by Officers be noted.
 (b) That the existence of the petition be reported to both the Planning Committee and Council in the context of the results of the full public consultation exercise, which has been recently undertaken in relation to preparation of the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan.

17. **URGENT BUSINESS - PROCEDURE RULE 7**

There was no urgent business.

THE MAYOR DAVID BECKET
Chair