# **Public Document Pack**

Date of meeting	Monday, 20 May 2013
Time	7.00 pm
Venue	Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, Merrial Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 2AG
Contact	Louise Stevenson ext 2250

# Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## AGENDA

### PART 1 – OPEN AGENDA

#### 1 Apologies

#### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations of interest from Members on items included in the agenda.

#### 3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

#### (Pages 1 - 4)

To consider the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee held on 7 March 2013.

#### 4 THE REPORTER

To receive a report updating the Committee on developments regarding the council's newspaper 'The Reporter'.

#### 5 FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT, (Pages 15 - 26) QUARTER 4 2012/13

To receive the Financial and Performance Management Report for the last quarter of 2012/13.

#### 6 BUDGET PREPARATION, SCRUTINY AND APPROVAL (Pages 27 - 30) PROCESS 2014/2015

To consider a report outlining the process whereby the 2014-2015 budget will be prepared, scrutinised and approved.

#### 7 CONSTITUTION WORKING PARTY

To receive a briefing note to update the Committee of the current position of the working group.

8 Modernisation of the Post Office Network (Pages 33 - 60)

#### (Pages 5 - 14)

#### (Pages 31 - 32)

#### 9 KEELE GOLF COURSE - INTERIM MAINTENANCE AND (Pages 61 - 66) MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND LONG TERM OPTIONS

This item has been included on the agenda to keep Members informed of the current position.

#### 10 COUNCIL PLAN 2013-16

For information only

#### 11 WORK PLAN

### (Pages 95 - 96)

(Pages 67 - 94)

To discuss and update the work plans to reflect current scrutiny topics and to consider potential scrutiny topics for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

#### 12 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 Burgess, Cairns, Clarke, Fear, Hambleton, Mrs Hambleton, Mrs Heames (Vice-Chair), Howells, Jones, Mrs Peers, Mrs Shenton (Chair), Stringer and Waring

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

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

#### TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 7th March, 2013

**Present:-** Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Shenton – in the Chair

Councillors Mrs Burgess, Clarke, Hambleton, Mrs Heames, Howells, Mrs Peers, Stringer and Waring

#### 1. APOLOGIES

#### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

#### 3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

**Resolved:-** That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 January, 20123 be agreed as a correct record subject to Councillor Stringer being noted as present.

#### 4. FLEXIBLE WORKING FOR BOROUGH COUNCIL EMPLOYEES

Consideration was given to a report updating Members on the current position in regard to flexible/homeworking by officers.

The number of officers working from home had increased over time, with at present, 182 officers being able to access remotely. It was stated that the number of log-ins did increase during inclement weather.

On 14 March, there would be a 'work from home' day for all of those on the scheme. This was to test out the system for business continuity should the need arise. The test would also include a period whereby the system would switch to Kidsgrove.

**Resolved:-** That the information be received.

#### 5. UNIVERSAL CREDIT/WELFARE REFORM

Members received a presentation from the Council's Head of Revenue and Benefits, David Baker on Universal Credit/Welfare Reform. A copy of the presentation was handed to Members at the meeting.

A discussion followed with questions being raised by Members:

Members were advised that the anticipated collection rate for 2013/14, with the updated system would be 98%.

The officers in the Revenues and Benefits Section were facing a huge task with the changes. They had agreed to work extra hours where possible.

A request was made that the information, contained within the presentation be made available to all sixty Members of the Council.

Once the implementation of the changes was underway, Mr Baker would report back to this Committee with any issues that may require scrutiny.

Members were advised that there was a national guide on the Reform which could be localised and given to Members for reference.

**Resolved:-** (a) That the information be received.

- (b) That all Members receive information on this issue.
- (c) That an information sheet be produced for Members.

(d) That a report on the implementation of the changes be brought to a future meeting.

#### 6. **CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP**

The Chair gave a verbal report to Members on the current position regarding the Constitution Working Group.

One of the elements that the Working Party has been tasked with is to consider the saying of prayers at Full Council. A questionnaire was issued to all elected Members and responses were collected on the evening of the Full Council meeting on 27 February 2013 with a few received later that week.

Eighteen responses were received, giving a return rate of 30%. A simple breakdown for each question is as follows:-

What did those responding consider to be the start of each Full Council meeting?

- After prayers have been said and the announcement of the first agenda item - 7 (38%)
- The entrance of the Mayoral party and prayers being said signified the start of the meeting – 11 (62%)

When asked about whether a reasonable approach would be a district session for prayer 15 minutes prior to each Full Council meeting, the responses were similarly split:

- Yes 9 (50%
- No 7 (39%)
- Not answered or no opinion 2 (11%)

Regarding the effect of a decision being taken about prayers, which the respondent was not happy with extracted a varying response:

- No effect 11 (62%)
- Withdrawing prayers at 7pm would have a negative effect 3 (16%)
- Keeping prayers at 7pm would have a negative effect 2 (11%)
- Not answered 2 (11%)

Finally, suggestions for other elements for the Working Party to consider included:

Finally, suggestions for other elements for the Working Party to consider included:

- Any minutes silences to be held after the apologies.
- Prayers should not be confined to Christian themes.
- Established Case Law.
- Human Rights
- Secular Principals of Government
- Working Group established to look at prayer content.

The Constitution Working Party's next meeting is on Monday 11 March and feedback from the Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be considered.

In addition, the Constitution would require further updating to include areas such as the Staffing Committee, Cabinet Panels etc.

The issue of appointing substitute Members for Committees during periods of long absences would also be considered. This could not be done for Regulatory Committees however.

**Resolved:-** That the information be received and the comments noted.

#### 7. WORK PLAN

Members considered the Work Plan for this Committee. There should be an update on the Post Office network for the May meeting. In addition, the Council plan went to the meeting of the Cabinet last night therefore at the next meeting of this Committee there should be more detail.

**Resolved:-** That the information be received.

#### COUNCILLOR MRS ELIZABETH SHENTON Chair

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# Agenda Item 4

#### THE REPORTER

#### BRIEFING NOTE FROM THE HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS TO TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES OSC 2 MAY 2013

#### Purpose of the Briefing Note

To update the Scrutiny Committee on developments regarding the council's newspaper The Reporter. This follows comments made by members when the committee considered the procurement proposals for the Reporter in September 2012.

#### Recommendations

- a) Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee accepts the information included within the report.
- b) The committee considers what comments it would like to make to the portfolio holder responsible for Communications, Transformation and Partnerships on future developments in relation to The Reporter.

#### Reasons

To keep the Scrutiny Committee informed of developments and actions following their previous consideration of matters relating to the council's newspaper the Reporter.

#### Background

In March 2013, contracts awarded to two separate companies for the print and distribution of the borough council's newspaper the Reporter expired. These contracts had been in place for four years. They were initially for a two-year period with options for negotiations with the contract providers for two separate 12-month extensions – both of which were taken up.

On 3 September 2012, Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a copy of a report which was to be considered by Cabinet on 19 September 2012 which confirmed a procurement process had taken place to recruit new service providers for print and distribution.

The report confirmed that although that process had resulted in a distribution provider being secured, only one company had come forward for the print element and because of this there were concerns that the council may not be able to demonstrate it would be getting value for money if it proceeded to appoint.

Cabinet were therefore to be asked to agree for a second print procurement process to go ahead at the earliest opportunity and for the results of that process to be reported back in due course.

This was done on 14 November with Cabinet accepting the appointment of new print and distribution providers.

Cabinet was told that trying a new approach on procurement had been very successful with nine print companies coming forward to supply tender documents. Cabinet noted that the agreement which had been secured with the Yorkshire Web print company would ensure an increase of around 30 per cent in the number of pages printed in the Reporter each year without the need to increase the Reporter print budgets.

#### Issues

At its meeting on 3 September 2012, the Scrutiny Committee raised a number of points which it asked officers to consider. Those points are addressed below and the information provided will hopefully enable members of the scrutiny committee to consider any further comments they would wish to make to the relevant portfolio holder.

#### Staffing

Members questioned whether there would be any impact on staff as a result of the new contracts agreed for 2013/14.

The Head of Communications can confirm that the agreements will not impact on staff. When the council took a decision to produce 10 editions each year, a freelance writer was brought in on a casual basis to produce additional material as and when required. This represented better value for money for the council as the freelance was self-employed and therefore the council did not have to meet any on-costs.

When the Government reviewed its guidelines on local authority publicity and said councils should produce no more than four publications each year, the agreement with the freelance was brought to an end at no cost to the council. All current research, writing, page design photography and advertising sales commitments for the Reporter are currently met in-house.

#### Different formats

Members asked whether producing The Reporter in a format different to a tabloid newspaper would help to reduce costs.

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The most popular alternative to a newspaper format is an A4 magazine style format similar to Staffordshire County Council's "Your Staffordshire" magazine which residents in the borough should have delivered to their homes. Stoke-on-Trent City Council's "City Life" was produced in a similar A4 magazine format.

This type of format has been considered previously for the Reporter but was dismissed because production prices were actually higher than a tabloid newspaper.

Further research has recently taken place following the questions raised by scrutiny committee. And this has shown the price differential is still in the market place.

Quotes from service providers show that for 57,000 copies of a16-page A4 magazine similar to "Your Staffordshire" would cost the borough council around £5,200 to print per edition or £20,800 a year.

The contract negotiated with Yorkshire Web – the council's new print provider - for 57,000 copies of a 16-page tabloid newspaper is around  $\pounds 2,000$  per edition cheaper - equivalent to  $\pounds 8,000$  a year.

There are several reasons for this. Principally, news print is still cheaper to buy than the higher grade paper which publishers of A4 magazines use.

Secondly, news print companies buy their paper in enormous volumes and can pass on some economies of scale to customers.

Thirdly, different finishing techniques are used for A4 magazines which can add costs. For instance, the county council's magazine is spine glued and rotary trimmed to a finished specific size.

#### Advertising

Members questioned whether the number of external advertisements had increased or decreased in recent years.

Figures show revenue from external sources in the last three financial years as:

2012/13 - £8,208 2011/12 - £16,834 2010/11 - £9,838 Some analysis of the figures has taken place and this would suggest a gradual reduction in the placement of advertisements by external parties.

In 2010/11, the council was involved in an agreement with a private company which sold advertising space on its behalf. Revenues were split on a 50/50 basis which means the total revenue for that year was £19,676.

That company ceased to trade at the beginning of the 2011/12 financial year and the sale of advertising space and the associated graphics work was taken in-house despite a reduction in staffing levels in the Communications Department and concerns over a lack of expertise in this specialist sales area.

Sales did fall and it can be seen that revenue went down by around 20 per cent and this downward trend has continued in the current financial year.

It should be noted that four publications a year adheres to the Recommended Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity which was revised by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in 2011.

#### Online v hard copy

Members asked whether there could be a greater focus on an online Reporter and if this could help to reduce the number of printed copies produced for each edition.

The Reporter is placed online after each edition is produced. Page turning technology is used to make this a very user-friendly experience for residents.

There are a number of difficulties with trying to focus on reducing hard copies and encouraging residents to get Reporter news purely online.

They are:-

- a) Management of a delivery database this would be a huge task with almost 55,000 addresses in the borough. Maintaining an up-to-date resource for which homes have opted for online news alone would be a monumental task as it would have to be refreshed four times a year.
- b) A different delivery mechanism would have to be introduced which would involve the council paying for hard copies to be delivered as second class mail. This would cost far more than the current system which involves the council using the Royal Mail "walk sort" arrangements where all postal staff deliver en masse to homes in the borough during a six day delivery window.
- c) Costs the staff costs and distribution costs associated with this idea would far outweigh any financial savings. Members should bear in mind the new Reporter contracts recently negotiated will mean that in the year ahead it will cost around £5,800 to print and then deliver a Reporter to all homes in the borough.

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#### Change of design style

Members questioned whether the style of the Reporter could be revamped.

Over the years the look of the Reporter has changed significantly as you can see in Appendix A which accompanies this report.

This continual development and re-design is often only really noticed once editions which reflect changes of style and design are placed alongside each other.

Since the Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee raised the issue at its previous meeting there have been further changes to reflect comments and indeed, these have been noticed by some senior elected members who have contacted the Communications Department to pass on their comments and favourable views over how the council's newspaper currently looks.

Some of the most recent production changes include:-

- A change to the type of news print used for the Reporter. The new type of print is 60gsm and is 100 per cent recycled improved news print.
- A review of working practices in the Communications Department to increase the time devoted to design/production processes. This has resulted in an improved design quality on pages which helps the reader access information.
- Increased training and new working practices for the in-house photography.

Some of the most recent style/design changes are intended to give a cleaner, modern up-todate look to pages. They include:-

\* Fewer heavy boxes around content and the removal of boxes around photographs; greater use of subtle tints and colour blocks to differentiate new items. This creates a lighter, more cohesive look.

- \* A fine rule is used to separate certain features and advertisements.
- \* Cut-out photographs with pull quotes used to highlight and break-up text.
- \* A cleaner masthead and "inside panel" introduced together with re-designed "footers" that link pages and promote key messages.
- \* To create a more consistent feel, headlines are restricted to 60pt and straplines (in colour) are 18pt.

\* A cleaner, easy to read font family was selected to give variety and emphasis - bold and medium sans and sans serif fonts are used for text. The general size used is eight and a half point to give more characters to a line and therefore more text to a page whilst remaining very legible and easy to read. Introduction paragraphs to main stories are in 10pt.

\* The overall colour scheme uses blue and green to reflect the council's own corporate colours. The use of actual corporate colours are reserved for council ads and logos etc.

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#### Reporter 1989



Reporter 1993





#### Reporter 1997





ging from a new business park to improved training are

**Bid success** for partners OPEN COOR

First-year projects



Young citizens hold civic Question Time

Reporter 2002



# Community groups hit the bullseye **D-Day** looms over Local Plan

WHAT YOU WILL PAY



Investment helps maintain services **Borough tax rise** pegged to 5.5%

Flower beds turning gold

Referendum's key



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Reporter 2012



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# Agenda Item 5

#### 1. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT TO END OF QUARTER FOUR (March) 2013

Submitted by:	Head of Finance and Head of Business Improvement & Partnerships
Portfolio:	Communications, Transformation & Partnerships; Finance and Budget Management
Wards Affected:	All

#### Purpose

To provide Transformation and Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee with the Performance Review for the 2012/13 Fourth Quarter (January-March).

#### 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 a new style of performance report to be further developed for 2013-14 as detailed in line with the Performance Management Framework Review and the Council Plan 2013-14 to 2015-16.
- (c) That Members feedback their views and comments to members of Cabinet prior to the May meeting where this appendix will also appear in the Financial & Performance Management report.

#### Reasons

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

#### 1. Background, issues and options

- 1.1 This report provides Members with a detailed update on how the Council has performed during the fourth quarter of 2012/13 by presenting performance data set in a financial context.
- 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 fourth quarter, focusing on key performance indicators.
- 1.5 A summary of the overall picture is presented in section 5 of this report. Performance is progressing well, with the majority of targets currently met.

#### 2. Revenue Budget Position

- 2.1 The outturn is not yet available because, although the 2012/13 accounts now include all the payments that have actually been made and all of the cash actually received up to and including 31 March 2013, there are still a number of adjustments and accounting entries which remain to be made in order to complete the year's accounts. These adjustments will be finalised over the next few weeks.
- 2.2 Current indications are that the final revenue budget outturn will be in line with the approved budget.
- 2.3 The Square, High Street, Newcastle is let to Gatedale Limited (in liquidation) on a 125 year lease which commenced in 1998. Since July 2001 the tenant has been paying £100,000 per annum to the Council. The rent review provisions within the lease provide that as from September 2005 a minimum of £100,000 per annum is to be paid to the Council and dependant on the income and expenditure in respect of the car park, shopping mall and cinema an extra payment may be payable.

Following prolonged negotiations with the LPA Receiver appointed to act for Gatedale's creditors, your Officers have provisionally agreed that an additional sum of £393,278 is to be paid to the Council for the period 2005 to 2012 (end of).

#### 4. Investment Counterparties

4.1 Investment counterparties with whom money is invested, as at 31 March 2013 are as follows (with the parent company shown in brackets, where applicable):

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

4.2 With regard to the Council's frozen investment in Heritable Bank, the total amount repaid now amounts to some £1,937,728, which is around 77% of the total that was frozen. The Administrators current prediction is that 86-90% of the £2,500,000 invested will be repaid.

#### 5 Performance

- 5.1 The Corporate Performance ('dashboard') report is reported in a new format attached as Appendix \*\*\*.
- 5.2 The information is presented in four sections against each priority.
- 5.3 There are two sets of symbols to show improvement and achievement :
  - One set of symbols (arrows), show whether performance has improved or worsened since the last time each indicator was reported
  - Second set of symbols (smiley faces), show whether performance is currently on target or not.
- 5.4 An overall status of performance against each priority is also stated.

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- 5.5 The intention is to further develop the format of performance reports ensuring suitability and clear communication of progress with outcomes for members and officers of the council.
- 5.6 In the appendix there are measures detailing progress against our priorities and outcomes and the number of quarterly indicators is 27.
- 5.7 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.
- 5.8 The proportion of indicators which have met their targets, based on data at the time of compiling this report, was almost 74%.
- 5.9 Positive performance can be seen in a range of services although it must be borne in mind that the results later in the year can be different and that some services have seasonal factors.
- 5.10 There are a 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.

10.1 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

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

#### 12. Background Papers

Working papers held by officers responsible for calculating indicators.

#### 13. Management sign off

Each of the designated boxes need to be signed off and dated before going to Executive Director/Corporate Service Manager for sign off.

	Signed	Dated
Financial Implications Discussed and Agreed		
Risk Implications Discussed and Agreed		
Legal Implications Discussed and Agreed		
H.R. Implications Discussed and Agreed		
ICT Implications Discussed and Agreed		
Report Agreed by: Executive Director/ Head of Service		

# Newcastle Borough Council – Qtr 4 Performance Report 2012-13

This corporate quarterly report is a collection of our key performance indicators and the tables below provide a summary of performance to date.

#### Key to the symbols used in this report

This set of symbols show whether performance has improved or worsened since last time each indicator was reported:



Performance has improved



Performance has stayed the same



?

Performance has worsened

Comparison to last time is not possible at the moment

This set of symbols show whether performance is currently on target or not.



Achieving target



Just short of target but plans are in place to overcome these problems



?

Significantly missing target and so may not achieve its goals

Either the performance or the target is missing at the moment

There is a tabled section for each of our four priorities containing indicators measuring our achievement in that area.

### **Priority 1**

- A clean, safe and sustainable borough

- Our streets and open spaces will be clean, clear and tidy:
- 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

- 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 communities.

Ref	Indicator	Qtr 4 Result	Qtr 4 Target	How have we performed?	Target Achieved?				
1.1	Number of food establishments which are broadly compliant with good hygiene law	91	85		$\odot$				
	The majority of Food business operators are complying well with legal requirements. This has been assisted by the launch of the national food hygiene rating scheme and the publication of the premises rating score.								
1.2	Violence with injury	680 (cumulative total)	N/A		?				
	Violence with injury incidents have in 2011-12.	reduced by 7.9 %	% compared with	n the year to date	e figure of 738				
1.3	Anti-social Behaviour	3831 (cumulative total)	N/A		?				
	The number of incidents of ASB ha 4063 in 2011-12. The number of in recorded in Qtr 3 (802).								
1.4	Serious acquisitive crime	773 (cumulative total)	N/A	Î	?				
	The result for the Serious Acquisitive Crime indicator is down on the result of the previous year by 5.3% compared to the year to date figure of 813 in 2011-12.								
1.5	% of investment portfolio (NBC owned) which is vacant.	7.8	12		$\odot$				
	The percentage for this quarter is within target and given the current economic climate is a positive result. 14 out of 179 properties are vacant of these 6 are retail units within the Town Centre which has been particularly badly affected by the recession. A further 4 properties require substantial work prior to a tenant taking occupation of the property we are corrently seeking funding to enable works to take place.								

Ref	Indicator	Qtr 4 Result	Qtr 4 Target	How have we performed?	Target Achieved?				
1.6	Levels of street and environment cleanliness								
	a) litter	15	9%	$\Box \rangle$					
	b) detritus	15.02	9%	Ţ					
	c) graffiti	1.17	3%	Î					
	d) fly-posting	0	1%		$\odot$				
	Sites for the surveys are randomly commercial, housing, industry, hig Council is responsible, and land in street cleansing responsibility. The true picture across the spectrum is have deteriorated slightly in this la 12.5% and 11.67% respectively. are achieving the acceptable stand 2 categories are broadly on or exc	hways, recreat n private/other of e sites change s reflected. The st quarter; how It should be not dard for litter le	tion) and include ownership for wh for each tranche results in this th rever the overall ted that for the ye	both land for whi ich the Council d of surveys to ens ird survey for litte results for the 20 ear 87.5% of site	ch the oes not have sure that a er and detritus 12-13 are s surveyed				
	Analysis of the results has identified take place to improve levels of struc- case of litter, resources need to be obstruction housing, highways and be targeted towards high obstruction areas include significant areas of cleansing responsibilities, and in the enforcement approach to seek to be	eet and enviror e targeted towa d recreation are ion housing, ind land for which t hese cases the	iment cleanliness irds retail and con eas. In the case of dustry and wareh he Council does council will ado	s in the surveyed mmercial areas, of detritus, resour ousing and high not have direct s pt an education a	areas. In the high ces need to ways. These treet				
	How the indicator is collected: T undertaken in quarters 2, 3 & 4 of number of sites surveyed which fa are analysed and the findings use	2012-13. The sall below the "ad	score is expresse cceptable" standa	ed as a percentaç ard. The results	ge of the total				
1.7	The amount of residual household waste per household	104.08kgs	112.5kgs	Î	$\odot$				
	Performance better than expected 423.92kg's per household.	l, residual wast	e levels continue	to drop. End of	year total is				
1.8	Percentage of household								
	Quarter 4 performance lower than target mainly due to poor weather conditions with very little garden waste being collected particulty during March when normally yields are high as the growing season starts in earnest. However the end of year target has only missed narrowly with an outturn of 51.82% against the target of 52%.								
1.9	Measure missed bin collections on all our routes	35.48	100	Î	$\odot$				
	The number of missed bins for Qtr 4 is well within target. The overall trend on the year show continued improvement with a cumulative result of 40.01 (2011/12 result was 45.90).								

### **Priority 2 – A borough of opportunity**

- 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

Ref	Indicator	Qtr 4 Result	Qtr 4 Target	How have we	2012/13	Target Achieved
		Result	rarget	performed?	Target	Achieved ?
2.1	Number of cases where positive action was successful in preventing homelessness (from the P1E)	111	125	Ũ	500	$\odot$
	The NHA team have worked well ag below the quarterly target, the overa			•	-	
2.2	Continued engagement with the Family Employment Initiative (FEI)	175	135		540	
	The cumulative result at Q4 is 585 p date. The details of engagement are 142 inc 5 into voluntary work) Trainin per month (Qtr 4, 10). Q4 is just und staff working at the FEI)	e as follows	s: Engag per mor	ement target 2 hth (Qtr 4, 23)	27 per mon <sup>.</sup> , Employme	th (Qtr 4, ent target 9
2.3a	NI 157a Percentage of Major Planning Applications determined within time (cumulative)	66.7	75 (60)	Ţ	75 (60)	<b></b>
	This indicator and the next two are c applications in 2012/13 has not met count towards this indicator made be the national target by 6.7%. Perform taken to achieve decisions within 13 and complaint from applicants.	the local ta eing within ance is be	arget witl 13 weeł ing close	h 12 out of the ks, however pe ely monitored	e 18 decisio erformance and all pos	ns which still exceeds sible steps
2.3b	NI 157b Percentage of Minor Planning Applications determined within time (cumulative)	88	85 (65)		85 (65)	$\odot$
	The performance for minor application 3% and 23% respectively.	ons has ex	ceeded	both the local	and nation	al targets by
2.3c	NI 157c Percentage of Other Planning Applications determined within time (cumulative)	92.8	95 (80)		95 (80)	$\odot$
	For the category of "other," the performance for this quarter was marginally below the locally set target but exceeded the government target of 80% by 12.8% and so is still performing well. For the sake of clarity the national performance targets set by government have been shown in brackets against our locally set targets.					

### **Priority 3**

### A healthy and active community

- 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

physical activity							
Ref	Indicator	Qtr 4	Qtr 4	How have we	2012/13	Target	
		result	target	performed?	Target	Achieved?	
3.1	Number of people accessing leisure and recreational facilities (cumulative)	579,575	570,000		570,000	$\odot$	
	The figures for usage of 166,157 users record Centre and Jubilee2.						
3.2	Number of people visiting the museum (cumulative)	51,634	63,000	$\square$	63,000		
	Many visits to the museum are combined with visits to the park and therefore the poor weather, particularly the wet summer, had an adverse effect on numbers coming through the doors. The service had also experienced an initial drop in schools visits as schools focussed on the Olympics and the Jubilee in 2012 and school budgets again were tightened. We have worked hard to re-establish the schools programme at the museum, initially by sending our education staff into schools. By proving our relevance to the curriculum we are now seeing school visits increase again to near previous numbers. Figures from museums across the country are showed a downward trend of up to 20% in 2012 - a museum we use to benchmark with reports a drop in numbers of 22%, reasons citied being the weather and the effect of the Olympics. The figure here represents an 8% decrease. The programme of events and activities on offer also continues to adapt to develop existing and new audiences with April 2013 showing an increase of 500 visitors compared with the whole month of April 2012.						

### **Priority 4**

Becoming a Co-operative Council delivering high quality, communitydriven services

- 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 undertaking regular consultation with its residents and listens to their views

Ref	Indicator	Qtr 4 result	Qtr 4 target	How have we performed?	2012/13 Target	Target Achieved?	
4.1	Average number of days lost, per employee, to the Council through sickness (cumulative)	8.06 days (long term 5.08 days: short term 2.98 days)	6.90	Ţ	6.9		
	The indicator has performed well previously but has been off in 2012/13 due largely to the effect of a number of long term sickness cases. In 2011/12 the annual figure for long term sickness was 3.74 days and short term sickness was 2.99 days. All sickness absence is continuing to be pro-actively managed with HR support and has seen a significant increase in the number of Occupational Health referrals and also the number of employees being referred for counselling support where relevant. A review of both the Attendance Management and Capability Procedures is scheduled in 2013/14.						
4.2	Percentage of invoices paid on time(within 30 days)	97.85	97	Î	97	$\odot$	
	Performance continues t	o be above ta	rget		I		
4.3	% projected variance against full year council budget	Not available	No variance	?	No variance	?	
	The outturn figure will no the accounts have been		until the fina	al accounting enti	ries have be	en made and	
4.4	% requests resolved at first point of contact	96.8	75	Ţ	75	$\odot$	
	Performance continues to be well above target and telephone contact has increased by 10% through the addition of some leisure services calls. The target will be reviewed in line with best practice.						
Ref	Indicator	Qtr 4 result	Qtr 4 target	How have we performed?	2012/13 Target	Target Achieved?	

4.5	% Unmet demand (number of calls not answered as a % of total call handling volume)	7	10	Î	10	
	Performance is above implementation of the r system.	-	•	-		
4.6	Percentage of Council Tax Collected (Cumulative)	97.3	97.5	Û	97.5	$\bigcirc$
	Performance achieved	against wha	t is still a d	ifficult national e	economic si	tuation.
4.7	Percentage of NNDR collected	97.5	96	Û	96	$\odot$
	Performance achieved	against wha	t is still a d	ifficult national e	economic si	tuation.
4.8	Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax new claims and change events	9.32	10	Î	10 days	<u>.</u>
	Target processing times	achieved.				

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#### Classification: NULBC UNCLASSIFIED

# Agenda Item 6

#### BUDGET PREPARATION, SCRUTINY AND APPROVAL PROCESS 2014/15

Submitted by: Head of Finance

Portfolio: Finance and Budget Management

Ward(s) affected: All

#### Purpose of the Report

To outline the process whereby the 2014/15 budget will be prepared, scrutinised and approved.

#### **Recommendation**

#### (a) That members note the content of the report.

#### <u>Reasons</u>

To keep members informed with regard to the process which will be followed in compiling the 2014/15 budget.

#### 1. Background and Issues

- 1.1 Initial work on the preparation of the 2014/15 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 continuing to work on identifying efficiencies and other savings.
- 1.2 The background against which the budget is being compiled continues to be challenging, with further reductions in central government grant support at the same time as many costs are increasing, plus the economic recession continues to affect income.
- 1.3 The Council Plan was approved by Full Council on 24 April 2013. In order to reflect the Council 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 was established to oversee the preparation of the current 2013/14 budget, 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. The Group continues to meet and will perform a similar role in relation to the 2014/15 budget preparation process.

- 2.2 The Group carried out an exercise to determine the relative priorities of services, based on their fit with the priorities contained in the draft Council Plan. The Group will revisit this exercise early in the process of compiling the 2014/15 budget to ensure consistency with the approved Plan.
- 2.3 A comprehensive service challenge process was conducted, by the Budget Review Group, as part of the preparation of the 2013/14 budget with the participation of Cabinet Portfolio Holders and Heads of Service. All services were potentially subject to challenge but the process particularly concentrated on those with the potential to deliver significant improvements in the priority areas. Heads of Service 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, was provided and considered for each service. The opportunity was also taken to consider savings which may be made in cross-cutting areas, such as procurement. The Budget Review Group will revisit and build upon these reviews in relation to the 2014/15 budget.
- 2.4 A range of budget options, consistent with the Council Plan, will be determined by the Budget Review Group, following the identification and analysis of potential efficiency and other savings either via a service challenge process or an informal process carried out by service managers. Account will also be taken of the results of the service prioritisation exercise. These options will form the basis for the formulation of a range of budget options, consistent with the draft revised Council Plan which can then be subject to consultation.
- 2.5 A consultation process will be undertaken, seeking 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 Council Plan, to which the budget is closely linked, as well as the budget options put forward. Last year's process in respect of the 2013/14 budget consisted of an extensive public consultation exercise, beginning with a special budget edition of the "Reporter", which invited readers to complete a brief guestionnaire setting out their views concerning options for the 2013/14 budget. There were also pages within the Council's website devoted to budget consultation, including an online version of the questionnaire. Following on from this, a number of meetings were held at various locations across the Borough, giving opportunities for residents to contribute their views. In addition, Cabinet members and officers were available on a number of days, situated in gazebos in the town centres, to answer questions concerning the 2013/14 budget and to receive the views of the public. The Council's e-Panel was also consulted. It is expected that similar means of consultation will be employed in relation to the 2014/15 budget. The exact form of consultation will be agreed by the Budget Review Group during the summer with the exercise commencing in late summer/early autumn, allowing time for the results to be available for consideration when compiling the draft budget.
- 2.6 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 when it finalises the budget for recommendation to Full Council on 26 February 2014. A special event styled "scrutiny café", facilitated by the Chair of this Committee, was held on 17 January 2013, to which all members were

invited. This took the form of a workshop, attended by Cabinet members and appropriate officers, where members were able to discuss and raise issues regarding the draft 2013/14 budget to be subsequently considered by the Cabinet. It is intended to repeat this event in January 2014 to enable a similar exchange of information to take place.

- 2.7 The Committee will have a number of opportunities to scrutinise the budget proposals and to feedback views to Cabinet, beginning with consideration of the draft MTFS, including the assumptions made therein about price and other changes affecting 2014/15 and later years. The MTFS will identify the "gap" between projected net spend and the resources available over the five year period commencing in 2014/15 and put forward options for closing the "gap" for each of the years 2014/15 and 2015/16. At this meeting you will also be updated regarding the proposed process of public budget consultation. The results of the public consultation process will be considered by your committee. This occurred last year via a special meeting on 10 December. Whether a special meeting will be desirable this year will depend on the progress made in compiling the consultation results or whether these are available in time to fit in with one of the scheduled meetings. At the meeting on 22 January 2014 feedback from the scrutiny café will be considered, together with the Cabinet's budget proposals approved by it on 15 January.
- 2.8 To assist members in their review of the budget, training sessions will be arranged for members, in September, covering local authority finance generally, the budget process and an explanation of the contents of the budget.
- 2.9 The Budget Review Group will also consider the capital programme for 2014/15 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 <u>Timetable</u>

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	5 September
Agree budget options after identification of Efficiency Savings/Service Challenge Process	Budget Review Group	September
Consideration of proposed consultation process	Cabinet (no TROSC meeting scheduled in July)	17 July
Public Consultation	Stakeholders	October/ November
Consideration of MTFS	Cabinet	16 October
Consideration of MTFS	TROSC	6 November
Review of consultation feedback and initial budget strategy and savings options	TROSC	Early December (special

### Classification: NULBC UNCLASSIFIED

		meeting?)
Review of consultation feedback (Chair of TROSC	Cabinet	11 December
to give verbal feedback at the Cabinet meeting)		
Scrutiny Café	All members	14 January
Draft Budget proposals including options approved	Cabinet	15 January
Scrutiny of draft budget	TROSC	22 January
Budget proposals recommended for approval by Full	Cabinet	5 February
Council		
Full Council to approve Budget	Full Council	26 February

Note: TROSC = Transformation & Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee

# Agenda Item 7

#### Constitution Working Party Briefing Note to Transformation and Resources OSC 20 May 2013

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Constitution is the set of rules that describe and constrain how the Council operates, how its decisions are made and the procedures to be followed.
- 1.2 On 24 April 2013, Council resolved to adopt amendments to the Constitution recommended by the Working Group and that the Group should carry out a continued review of the Constitution.
- 1.3 The approach taken by the Working Group continues to be to:
  - (i) Remove obvious duplications;
  - (ii) Identify contradictions and remove the parts that do not accord with local practice or law;
  - (iii) Remove obsolete, inaccurate or unnecessary references to law or processes;
  - (iv) Change dates and time specific items;
  - (v) Use the up to date officer and committee structures and be clear about, for example, job titles;
  - (vi) Simplify wording and improve the indexing;
  - (vii) To use flowcharts rather than narrative where appropriate;
  - (viii) Take best practice from a number of other Constitutions.

#### 2. Current Issues Under Consideration

#### Substitute Members

- 2.1 Council has approved in principal the use of substitutes and asked the Constitution Review Working Group to continue their work. Members were invited to contact the Working Group with their thoughts on this matter.
- 2.2 Many local authorities operate a substitute system, which provides for the attendance at a committee or sub-committee meeting of a substitute Member whenever a regularly appointed Member cannot attend. It is helpful to ensure a quorum and political balance which in turn avoids decisions which are liable to be overturned or against the wishes of the majority. On the other hand, it is against the general principle of fixed membership and Members may have limited knowledge of the work of the particular committee.
- 2.3 The Constitution Review Working Group have considered different ways of allowing substitutes but are not yet ready to bring forward a full recommendation. Ideas under consideration currently include:
  - (i) Substitutes could be provided for by authorising an officer to make changes to the standing appointments of committees and sub-committees on the instruction of the political groups. It would be recommended that at least 24 hours notice be given by the Group to allow the papers to be sent to the substitute in time for them to be read.
  - (ii) Alternatively, the Council could appoint substitutes for each committee or sub-committee, probably at the same time as it appoints the regular Members.

These substitutes could build up knowledge and this then would allow for the maintenance of an accurate committee membership register. If substitutes were to be allowed, it would be recommended that 24 hours notice be given by the Group to ensure that papers are received (as above), and to avoid confusion with the original Member who would not then be eligible to attend that meeting as a Member.

- (iii) Any Substitutes provision would not be allowed for any Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs.
- (iv) Substitutes for Regulatory Committees would be required to undergo specific training before carrying out their substitute roles.
- (v) Substitutes would not be allowed for Full Council for obvious reasons.

#### **Cabinet Panels**

2.4 The Constitution Review Working Group has explored the introduction of Cabinet Panels to understand how they are covered by the Constitution. Council agreed that the Constitution Review Working Group continue to review the requirement for a distinct section within the Constitution covering the role and work of Cabinet Panels.

#### **Scrutiny Arrangements**

2.5 The Constitution Review Working Group is exploring the role of Health Scrutiny, as the very important work that this committee undertakes is not recognised in the Constitution alongside the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Appendix 10 of the Constitution will be reviewed in totality, as there has been no review since the current scrutiny arrangements were first introduced in 2007.

Cllr Elizabeth Shenton Chair, Constitution Working Party

# Agenda Item 8

#### THE MODERNISATION OF THE POST OFFICE NETWORK

Submitted by: Executive Director – Resources and Support Services

<u>Portfolio</u>: Communications, Transformation and Partnerships / Stronger and Active Neighbourhoods

Ward(s) affected: All

#### Purpose of the Report

To review the enclosed joint report entitled "The Local Authority and Post Office Ltd. Pathfinder Programme" – An Evaluation of Strategic Engagement" recently issued by the Local Government Association, Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Post Office Ltd.

#### **Decision Required**

Does the committee wish a scrutiny brief to be produced and included as part of their future work plan?

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 At its meeting on 19 November 2012, the committee received a presentation from Richard Lynds, Senior Stakeholder Manager for the Post Office in order to consider the modernisation of the Post Office network, in particular the possibility of partnership working, as a potential new scrutiny topic for the committee.
- 1.2 To remind members of the discussion that took place, the minutes of the meeting were:

The modernisation programme would create two types of branches: larger main branches and smaller local models. There would be no branch closures and it was hoped the number of branches would increase as they became more profitable. Half of the Borough's branches would be modernised, with any changes communicated to the Council in advance. Two branches within the Borough had indicated that they wished to be part of the modernisation programme and it was expected that in the next twelve months another ten would be added to them. It was requested that the contact details for all Parish Councils within the Borough be provided to Richard Lynds to allow him to pass communications to them.

The Post Office was looking at how they could work with local government and in the last twelve months had worked with 25 pathfinder councils. They had a good I.T. platform and infrastructure that could work well with both local authority and customer systems. A tender from the Post Office to a Council would depend on the services required by the Council, and could be a single item tender or a framework agreement. Some services could be implemented immediately, whereas others could be developed. In Birmingham, a customer facing computer room had been installed in a Post Office to enable public access to the Council's website and online forms. Members highlighted that some members of the public did not have internet access. The Post Office wished to help the eight million people in the country who were not online, and were encouraging and assisting people to do so.

Members questioned how new services would be incorporated into Post Office franchises; would the Post Office or the franchise fund them. It would depend on the facility, but the Post Office would provide the products, computers, kits etc. There was a transactional link between the Post Office and the franchises, with a small fee based upon the transactions conducted being received from the franchises. The difference between Newcastle-under-Lyme and the London authorities the Post Office was working with was noted by Members. The Borough Council was a two-tier authority with Staffordshire County Council, with different services provided by the two authorities and Members questioned how services delivered by the Post Office would work. It was for the Council to specify what they would like the Post Office to help them with. For example if a bin collection had been missed, the Post Office could provide an online notification. The Post Office was working with county councils and in Warwick there was a branch in a library.

Members noted that if the Post Office was to take on Council work this could have implications for Council employees. Some of the suggestions made would take away frontline staff, but it would be up to the Council to respond to this in a way that they saw fit. Members considered it was a topic the Committee may very well wish to investigate further, but that employees would look on it with trepidation. At other councils there had been a shift from frontline to back office staff to support the digital delivery of services.

The Local Government Association was undertaking a piece of work with around 25 councils regarding the issue, the results of which were expected to be published imminently. The Committee would await the results of this work before moving forward with scrutiny. If it was considered prudent to proceed, then a scrutiny brief would be provided at a future meeting of the Committee.

1.3 The final paragraph of the minutes refers to work that the Local Government Association was doing. This work was undertaken with the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Post Office, and a joint report entitled "The Local Authority and Post Office Ltd. Pathfinder Programme – An Evaluation of Strategic Engagement" has recently been published. This is attached as an Appendix .

#### 2. Report Overview

- 2.1 Officers have reviewed the report and would summarise the main findings as follows:
- 2.2 The authors of the report feel that the Pathfinder Programme demonstrates the value of closer working relationships between Post
Office and local authorities. It welcomes the assurance given by Post Office through its plan to invest, maintain and modernise its current network of no further closures.

- 2.3 The programme is based around the premise that many councils do not provide frontline services in the community and that the location of post offices "at the heart of the community" make them ideal to be used where these frontline services do not currently exist.
- 2.4 The programme seems to be more successful in large conurbations, covering a wide area where outreach to council services can be best served by existing Post Office facilities rather than a council starting to invest in additional staff and buildings.
- 2.5 There are no examples of Post Office working with local authorities to co locate in existing council offices, or where Post Office has joined local authorities frontline services where they are already provided across community areas.
- 2.6 The main service benefits provided by Post Office seem to be in areas such as Social Services eg carers payments and payments to vulnerable clients.
- 2.7 The indicative pricing and services the Post Office can provide is unclear.
- 2.8 There may be a case for the council to provide limited services at small sub post offices in hard to reach areas to supplement the customer service centres but clarity of cost would be required.
- 2.9 The report recognises and accepts that each Post Office and local authority relationship will be different.

#### 3. Decision Required

3.1 Members are requested to review the document and discuss their ideas for a scrutiny brief to be produced, if desired.

**Appendix** – "The Local Authority and Post Office Ltd. Pathfinder Programme – An Evaluation of Strategic Engagement".

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### The Local Authority and Post Office Ltd. Pathfinder Programme

## An Evaluation of Strategic Engagement

A joint report by BIS, LGA and the Post Office



Department for Business Innovation & Skills



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#### **FOREWORDS**



#### JO SWINSON MP

Minister for Employment Relations and Consumer Affairs, Department of Business, Innovation and Skills

The Post Office is not only a cherished national institution and a vital part of our local communities, but is also an ideal place for local services to be delivered. Working together, local authorities and the Post Office can serve local communities and deliver value for council taxpayers. The good progress highlighted by the local authority Pathfinders in this report provides a valuable template for future engagement between the Post Office and the wider local authority sector.



#### **CLLR PETER BOX CBE** Chair, Economy and Transport Board Local Government Association

Councillors up and down the country are passionate about their local Post Offices, reflecting the views of their residents. With both councils and Post Offices looking at ways to respond effectively to the needs of local people and adapt to the current economic climate, it makes sense for us to explore what could be achieved by working together. This report demonstrates the value of strategic engagement on the ground and the potential to build on that engagement to help shape a local Post Office network that best serves the interests of people while assisting councils to make savings and improve access to services.



### PAULA VENNELLS

#### Chief Executive Post Office Limited

The Pathfinder Programme has demonstrated the clear value of developing and maintaining strong relationships between the Post Office and councils in order to serve the needs of local communities. We are immensely grateful to the 25 councils that have been involved and to colleagues at the Local Government Association and the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills for their advice and support. We look forward to building on the lessons learnt from this process as we continue our historic programme to transform the Post Office network and develop our services.

### **CONTENTS**

#### Executive summary

Chapter 1: Background to the Pathfinder programme

Chapter 2: Activities within the Pathfinder programme

Chapter 3: Findings from the Pathfinder experience

Chapter 4: A relationship model between local authorities and Post Office Ltd

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Annex





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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Pathfinder Programme has involved Post Office Ltd, the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Local Government Association (LGA) working together to look at the benefits of enhanced relationships between Post Offices and local authorities.

The focus has been on developments with 25 'Pathfinder Councils' but there have also been important advances with a range of further councils across the country and these are also covered in this report.

This work has been undertaken against a backdrop of Post Office plans to maintain and modernise its network and to develop products that enable Post Offices to be an efficient, accessible 'Front Office' connection between people and Government. It has also taken place in an environment whereby councils face significant financial and policy challenges as they work to deliver services.

The report finds that, over the past 12 months, relationships have been developed between Post Office Ltd and virtually every council in the country. This is a major advance, creating better mutual understanding and creating the conditions for effective joint work. The report identifies the developing 'content' of these stronger relationships. This includes helping to maintain and modernise the Post Office network in the council area, increasing 'transactional' service provision via Post Offices, creating the conditions to explore more 'transformational' approaches to service provision and the promotion of actions to support financial and digital inclusion.

The report also illustrates examples of the benefits these enhanced relationships have already delivered – involving a range of Councils such as Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham, Sheffield, Ryedale, Birmingham and others.

There is also recognition that benefits can take time to emerge. Further work is necessary – for Post Office Ltd to develop helpful solutions to the significant challenges that councils face in looking at future service delivery and as they develop new approaches in service procurement processes such as joint procurement and frameworks.

The report concludes, however, that the necessary condition for effective future joint work between Post Offices and councils is the formation of effective relationships. The Pathfinder Programme has both illustrated and accelerated this.

The Pathfinder work has created a platform which can now be developed. There has been a step change in the quality and quantity of relationships between Post Offices and councils and an understanding of what they can achieve. Initial examples of progress are identified within the report together with a commitment to realise the future benefits of more effective, better partnerships. "As public services move online, there is a role for Post Office branches in face-to-face transactions for those who can't or won't go online or where the transaction involves a face-toface element."

> Strategic Relationships: Post Office sustainability through partnership (Sheffield City Council Post Office and National Federation of Subpostmasters, 2012).

#### Chapter 1

#### BACKGROUND TO THE PATHFINDER PROGRAMME

In November 2010, the Government announced that Sheffield City Council would participate in a pilot partnership arrangement with Post Office and the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters (NFSP). The pilot explored the relationship between the Post Office and the local council, and how Post Office branches might become a front office for local government in the city.

Findings from the pilot suggested that councils could develop engagement with local Post Office branches to deliver savings and improve access to services.

The pilot also demonstrated the fundamental importance of Post Office and local councils establishing an open communication channel, built on a strong platform of mutual understanding, to achieve their respective aims and objectives.

To develop these ideas further, in November 2011 the Government announced the establishment of the Post Office and local government Pathfinder Programme.

The Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, Post Office Ltd and the Local Government Association (LGA) agreed to support a 12-month programme of engagement. Twentyfive local councils, representing a cross-section of all different types of councils (rural and urban; large and small; county, metropolitan and district), were invited to participate.

The background context to this work included the Post Office investment and modernisation programme and the service delivery and budget challenges currently faced by local government. (Further details are included in the Annex).

The Pathfinder work posed key questions:

- How might effective relationships between the Post Office and local councils be developed?
- How can these relationships be used to provide the benefits to local residents, local councils and the Post Office?
- What is the nature of these benefits?

In parallel to this work with the Pathfinder councils, wider relationships between the Post Office and other councils outside the Pathfinder group have continued to develop across the UK. These have emerged as opportunities arose and have benefitted from the focus upon, and the learning from, the Pathfinder Programme.

### **KEY ENGAGEMENT DATES**

#### • November 2010

A year-long Partnership pilot between Post Office Limited, Sheffield City Council and the NFSP begins. BIS commits to supporting greater involvement of local authorities in its Post Office policy statement.

#### • September 2011

Discussions between Post Office Ltd, BIS and LGA on how to build upon the Sheffield experience. Initial discussions for four trial councils are expanded to include up to 25 councils.

#### • November 2011

The Sheffield partnership concludes, and the Council, Post Office and NFSP brief BIS on the benefits of partnership, but also the lessons that need to be learnt.

These are published in a joint report, which says: "As public services move online, there is a role for Post Office branches in face-to-face transactions for those who can't or won't go online or where the transaction involves a face-to face element." Strategic Relationships: Post Office sustainability through partnership (Sheffield City Council Post Office and National Federation of Subpostmasters, 2012).

Rt. Hon Ed Davey MP, the then Minister, writes to the Leaders and Chief Executives of the 25 Pathfinder councils, asking them to support the engagement with Post Office.

#### • January 2012

Round table between Ed Davey MP, Paula Vennells and senior LGA representatives to discuss the Pathfinder programme, and wider local government engagement.

#### • March 2012

First Forum held for the Pathfinder Councils at BIS and chaired by Cllr Box, attended by Paula Vennells and Norman Lamb MP, the new Postal Affairs Minister. A number of the Pathfinder councils present to the group.

#### • June 2012

Second Pathfinder Forum, timed to coincide with the LGA conference held in Birmingham. Further presentations from local authorities.

#### • November/December 2012 Review of Pathfinder experience commences including a round-table event with BIS, LGA, Post Office Ltd and a number of Pathfinder Councils.

• January/February 2013 Development of Pathfinder evaluation report and approach for future engagement.

#### ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE PATHFINDER PROGRAMME

The activities in the Programme have been built around three key areas:

#### Establishing relationships between Post Office Ltd and local authorities

The Post Office and local councils have historically had intermittent contact and relationships. There has been a growing recognition of the need to explore more progressive and structured relationships to better understand and exploit the mutual opportunities that exist (for example around service delivery and financial savings).

#### Developing the network

The Post Office is undertaking an investment programme to transform up to half its network by 2015. This investment will see the introduction of around 6,000 new Post Office Local and Main branches, offering improved customer service including modern environments and extended opening hours.

As part of this programme, Post Office has sought to engage with councils to:

- Explain the programme
- Provide reassurance that it will not involve closures
- Gain an understanding of potential input from the council (e.g. aligning with local economic regeneration plans).

Post Office network transformation will sometimes include a change of location for a branch. The opportunity exists to align Post Office modernisation with major council plans, for example around town centre regeneration. In these circumstances consideration needs to be given to ensuring decisions best serve the interests of local communities by maximising convenience and access.

As well as helping proactive network development, good communication between the council and the Post Office can also help to resolve potential service issues. Examples include helping to find a new branch location to replace one that has unexpectedly closed, or supporting temporary facilities while a Post Office branch is refurbished.

### Post Office as a front office for government service delivery

A key part of Post Office strategy, backed by the Government, is to enhance its role in delivering public services, both locally and nationally. Typically, these services include:

- In-bound payment (e.g. council tax, business rates, housing rents and service charges, parking penalty charges)
- Applications (e.g. parking permits, blue badge)
- Out-bound payment (e.g. rebates).

These are commercial arrangements that need to make economic sense for both councils and the Post Office. For councils, this may mean being able to improve access to services and make cost savings by using Post Office branches instead of council premises. Similarly, Post Office needs to cover its costs and provide a revenue stream for subpostmasters who operate the vast majority of local branches.

"As well as helping proactive network development, good communication between the council and the Post Office can also help to resolve potential service issues."

#### The following table shows the Pathfinder councils and activity under way.

Pathfinder council	Council type	Number of Post Office branches	Post Office network transformation engagement	New locals and mains models introduced by early 2013	Transactional services available at the Post Offices in the council area
Barnsley	Metropolitan	44	<b>v</b>	5	<b>v</b>
Birmingham	Metropolitan	122	<b>v</b>	2	<b>v</b>
Devon	County	266	<b>v</b>	17	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Doncaster	Metropolitan	54	<b>v</b>	5	<b>v</b>
Durham	County	131	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>	3	<b>v</b>
East Devon	District	41	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>	5	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Essex	County	241	~	10	
Hammersmith & Fulham	London Borough	17	<ul> <li></li> </ul>	1	V
Hertfordshire	County	153	<b>v</b>	12	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Hounslow	London Borough	20	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>	0	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Kent	County	251	<b>v</b>	8	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Kingston upon Thames	London Borough	15	<b>v</b>	0	
Lancashire	County	203	<b>v</b>	4	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Lancaster	District	32	<b>v</b>	0	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Leeds	Metropolitan	105	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>	1	<b>v</b>
Liverpool	Metropolitan	48	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>	2	<b>v</b>
Maidstone	Borough Council	29	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>	0	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Castell-nedd Port Talbot – Neath Port Talbot	Unitary	42	~	1	<b>~</b>
Northumberland	Unitary County	109	<b>v</b>	4	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire	County	143	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>	4	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Reading	Unitary	17	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>	0	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Rotherham	Metropolitan	40	<b>v</b>	2	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Ryedale	District	26	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>	0	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Sheffield	Metropolitan	79	<b>v</b>	4	<b>v</b>
Wakefield	Metropolitan	64	<ul> <li>✓</li> </ul>	3	<b>v</b>

#### Westminster City Council

Pursuing its ambition to go 'cashless', Westminster sought to partner with a trusted service provider that could increase access to services for residents. In 2011 it signed a contract with Post Office: residents can now use 26 Post Office branches (instead of previously just three council front offices) to make a range of applications and payments including council tax, business rates, parking permits, parking fines and casual street trader licences.

Both network transformation and front office service activities support one another. A network with longer opening hours is more attractive as a place to transact council services. Discussions about these two issues can often generate additional potential areas for partnership for example in regard to digital inclusion, social housing or financial inclusion. As councils review and seek to reform the delivery of their local services, potentially in partnership with other public sector providers, this can also present an opportunity to explore the potential role of their local Post Office network.

#### Birmingham

Post Office can help councils to move services online. It can do this by helping people who are not online get online, by signposting residents to local internet training or free internet access. It can also provide council services digitally in-branch.

Birmingham City Council and the Post Office are undertaking a trial to make council services that are available digitally, accessible within the Post Office branch.

The council is keen to progress with making its services available online while at the same time maintaining access across the community. This poses a challenge when faced with a significant part of the local population lacking internet access. One potential solution is to make available online access to council services within Post Office branches.

In the Birmingham trial customers can come into the pilot branch to use a dedicated terminal to carry out their transaction. Post Office staff are on hand to provide support.

The trial will run until April 2013.

### Current position: in the Pathfinder councils

Across all 25 Pathfinder councils there now exists a range of engagement and other activities.

A good relationship has been established with each of the Pathfinder councils and they have all engaged positively with the Post Office on local network issues. The resulting communications channels and relationships will be sustained beyond the Pathfinder Programme and throughout the Network Transformation Programme.

Investment in Post Office Local and Mains branches has now been undertaken in almost all Pathfinder areas. This process is accelerating as the pilot phase for these new operating models concludes.

Some Pathfinder councils have reached agreement to offer a widened range of transactions through the Post Office. Examples include Hammersmith & Fulham and Ryedale, while others continue to develop and discuss their requirements.

Closer engagement has also helped Post Office become more informed about the challenges facing councils in regard to the introduction of Universal Credit. Post Office is now in contact with a number of Pathfinders and other councils about how it can help them respond to Social Fund changes. The Post Office is also now an approved identity assurance provider for DWP and other Government departments, so is better placed than ever to respond to such challenges.

BIS, LGA and Post Office, have maintained regular contact and co-ordination of the programme. Three meetings of the Pathfinder councils have been held (London and Birmingham), supported by ministerial and chief executive involvement, to review progress, share feedback and develop collaborative working.

Post Office has worked closely with the LGA's Local Government Delivery Council and has exhibited and held a seminar at the LGA's Annual Conference in Birmingham (June).

#### Hammersmith & Fulham

In May 2012, Post Office was awarded a framework contract with London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham. It enables residents to access a range of council services from any Post Office branch. It can also be extended to include services such as parking permits and outbound payments, supporting residents without bank accounts.

The new contract is expected to save Hammersmith & Fulham taxpayers an initial £90,000 a year (from 2013). As a framework, the contract also provides other London councils with an opportunity to use the Post Office network without having to go through a lengthy and expensive public procurement process.

#### Beyond the Pathfinder councils

The past year has seen a level of engagement and activity between local authorities and Post Office that far surpasses anything seen before. Over 400 councils in England and Wales have now established channels of communication and relationships with Post Office. Typically these are focused on network transformation opportunities, but also relate to delivering local services. Over 300 or around 75% of all councils in the UK already use Post Office branches to support various simple transactional services including bill payments.

Post Office remains keen to improve its understanding of the local government landscape and explore opportunities for more involved partnership and joint working. In addition to the Pathfinder Programme, it has commissioned three research bodies, (New Local Government Network, Localis and CentreForum), to examine a range of key challenges and opportunities, including identifying the potential barriers towards further partnership and how Post Office can assist the delivery of digital local services.

Consideration is also being given to other areas of local service provision which Post Office could potentially support, for example working with housing associations (Post Office Ltd now has contracts with a significant number of housing associations to help collect rent payments).

The extent of this work in parallel to the Pathfinder Programme, means that relationships between councils and Post Office across the UK, not just within the Pathfinder group, are helping to shape the overall conclusions and proposed ways forward in this report

#### Hampshire County Council

Hampshire approached Post Office seeking a solution to payments to vulnerable clients, largely managed through third-party care organisations. Post Office has implemented a scheme that allows carers to collect money for their clients, following the production of a dedicated identity card.

#### Collaboration on network issues

• The Post Office and a district council were able to compare regeneration plans to ensure that the proposed large investment into modernising a branch would be co-ordinated over the next four years with the council's plans.

- The Post Office and a unitary council are working together to joint fund the move of a local branch to a new location as part of a major high street regeneration programme. This will ensure the branch is in a position that offers great customer access to a number of services including banking. With the development putting the Post Office at the heart of the community, it will help to attract new businesses to the area.
- The Post Office was struggling to find a new location to replace a branch where the current operator had resigned. The only option appeared to be to move the branch half a mile away which was not easily accessible for customers. However, the local district council generated interest from a convenience store in the district and this will result in the branch remaining in the heart of the local community.

### Responding to Social Fund changes

As a result of the relationships established. Post Office is better placed to understand the developing needs of councils. It is in contact with almost half of the Pathfinders and over 50 other councils, to explore how it can help them respond to the Social Fund changes by using its branches to make a variety of outbound payments to local residents, including local welfare assistance, for example. Over 30% of the councils that expressed an interest in this service so far, will be taking it up.

#### FINDINGS FROM THE PATHFINDER More detailed points from councils **EXPERIENCE**

#### The local government perspective

Councils are very supportive of Post Office network transformation and have welcomed the assurance that there will be no further programme of closures. This provides a stable and constructive basis for developing strong and beneficial relationships.

Establishing a clear relationship channel involving a named 'account manager' who has oversight of the relationship between the council and the Post Office, is seen as critical. This helps to facilitate the sharing of information and improves co-ordination between network investment from the Post Office and local regeneration plans for example - which councils have welcomed. It can also help the effective handling of operational issues, for example in helping locate new premises or a temporary location for a Post Office branch, if required.

Local councils have a strong interest in opportunities for co-location, including making better use of council assets by locating Post Office services within them. With the potential for Post Office branches changing location within their communities over the next three years, there is potential to align the needs of both councils and the Post Office. Each case needs to be treated on its own merits however, with the aspirations and needs of the council, the Post Office and Subpostmaster (who is typically running an independent local business), given full and proper consideration.

include<sup>.</sup>

- Different councils have different needs with respect to a relationship with the Post Office. There is a desire for flexibility rather than 'one size fits all' approach. This feedback has helped to develop the 'relationship model' approach presented later in this report.
- Councils have sought greater clarity on the transactional services available from local Post Office branches. This has helped Post Office to develop 'suites of services' (such as those taken up by Hammersmith and Fulham).
- Some councils urged Post Office to work with other companies who already provide services. The Post Office is developing commercial relationships accordingly.
- Some councils expressed an interest in new approaches to running Post Offices such as shared locations or social enterprises. The Post Office is looking to see if the network transformation programme provides any opportunities for such local developments.
- One council felt that overall Government strategy towards the Post Office should be reviewed, emphasising the importance of setting up a 'Postbank'. While the Government's strategy and funding with respect to the Post Office is established for the period to 2015 and does not include a Postbank, Post Office has continued to expand the financial services and access to banking services it offers. The Post Office now has three million financial service customers and with the recent agreements with HSBC, 95% of UK current accounts will be accessible at Post Office branches.

#### **Oxfordshire County Council**

#### Background

In April 2011, Oxfordshire unanimously passed a motion to explore joint working with the Post Office. In November, it was invited to become a Pathfinder Council. Its expectation was simply to start a dialogue about building a strategic relationship with Post Office, explore how the network can develop locally and to what extent branches could become a delivery channel for public services.

#### Approach

The council identified services at both county and district level such as customer service, property and planning and began a series of working groups involving the Post Office.

#### Main findings

The council decided to explore opportunities for co-location and front office service delivery on a case-by-case basis. This has been useful in offering an indication of the potential scope and challenges. Discussions are under way regarding potential re-location of at least two branches, with others coming live.

#### Key lessons – assets

- Commercial confidentiality can make communication slow and indirect
- The Post Office aim is to protect existing services, so 'new' locations will only be served if an existing branch is willing to relocate
- Progress depends on the willingness of a subpostmaster to re-locate or co-locate
- The details of need and offer must match

   that includes the timing of opportunity, location, footfall, access, space and other facility needs, as well as sufficient income streams from the combined service offer
- Funding for modernising branches under the Network Transformation Programme requires matched funding from subpostmasters, and potentially co-located services.

#### Key lessons - service

Council customer service leads have been interested in understanding the details of the Post Office offer. The aim of the Post Office is to steer customers to interact using online methods within branches (e.g. self-service machines) and develop digital champions. Also, providing a faceto-face service fits well with the council's work to encourage channel shift improvements.

Detailed discussions have started on looking into a business case for the Post Office to deliver specific services for councils.

#### Conclusions

Direct lines of communication are in place. The council is in a good position to respond to future opportunities:

- Co-location where subpostmasters express an interest in changing premises
- Co-location as part of local regeneration programmes or master planning
- Service delivery where councils are considering whether to further develop, integrate and/or diversify their customer service offer
- Service delivery though introduction of Universal Credit.

#### Summary – key messages

- It is important to understand each other's business, to be clear about needs and offers and to identify key contacts as a basis for discussion
- Opportunities for co-location and delivery of transactional services will arise, and need to be explored, on a case-by-case basis
- Success will depend on a commercial business case that works for all partners.

#### **Ryedale District Council**

Ryedale commissioned a review of the Post Office network in August 2010. Its aim was to:

- Improve the availability of services in local communities
- Provide an evidence base from which to influence any future proposed closures or reductions in level of service
- Consider the options for delivering these services in the future.

The review involved meetings with local subpostmasters and Post Office Ltd, surveys of branch customers and general public to understand how communities use and value Post Office services. It also tested whether people would consider accessing council services through the Post Office. External research was also analysed.

The review found:

- Post Office branches are highly valued and seen as a vital community asset
- Communities value their local Post Offices and want us to help make the network more sustainable
- People would consider accessing transactional council services through the Post Office.

Subsequently, the council decided to withdraw from its current area office provision and migrate customers who currently undertake financial transactions through the area office to the Post Office. This increases access points for payment of bills to the council from the four under current arrangements to 27 (26 provided by the Post Office, one at council offices).

This has a number of advantages for the council and its residents:

- Residents and businesses can pay bills issued by the council in any Post Office through the use of a bar code on every bill issued
- The council will save £50k a year through withdrawal from the area offices, with no compulsory redundancies
- Increasing footfall through existing Post Office branches in anticipation of any future changes to the way the network is configured, such as the introduction of Post Office Local model, thereby helping to sustain the viability of the network and local assets such as the local shop
- Helping to ensure the maximum collection rates for localised council tax and business rates from April 2013.

#### **Sheffield City Council**

In December 2012, Sheffield City Council will start an innovative scheme whereby the Post Office 'payout' service will be used to help young adults leaving care to access support payments at local Post Offices. This will be more convenient for the young adults and assist their ability to budget and it is an efficient approach for the Council. The scheme is an example of how an ongoing relationship can develop and yield mutually beneficial results over time.

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#### The Post Office perspective

The Pathfinder Programme has successfully established an open channel, and relationships between Post Office and the local councils, are based on a better mutual understanding of needs and aspirations.

This helps the process of developing the network to serve the needs of customers and helps inform discussions about investments within the Network Transformation Programme. There can also be joined-up response to any temporary problems in the network – for example, if a branch shuts unexpectedly for reasons beyond Post Office's control.

Post Office now has a much better understanding of the diverse needs of local councils, in particular the budgetary and service challenges they face. This has provided it with a more informed position from which to develop and tailor its product and service offerings.

There are important commercial lessons for the Post Office:

 Procurement exercises with individual local authorities are resource-hungry for Post Office and need to be balanced against the potential returns from winning the contract. Resource realities inevitably focus interest towards larger councils offering potentially greater revenue opportunities. Consideration of wider procurement approaches – such as framework contracts or across groups of councils – and a willingness by councils to use these places is therefore important. The Londonwide framework established by the Hammersmith & Fulham provides a potential example.

- Local authorities identified a desire for a simple articulation of available services with indicative pricing and expressed some frustration that this wasn't readily available. This requires the Post Office to understand potential demand levels to develop a pricing structure that is commercially viable. The Pathfinder programme has helped Post Office develop its thinking to establish such a model.
- There is an important ongoing role for both 'transactional services' that deliver improved efficiencies and financial savings for local councils, and an 'invest to save business case'. In many cases a wholesale change is required in the way the services in question are delivered. This takes time, requiring a business case and ultimately council cabinet approval.
- The Pathfinder engagement has strengthened Post Office's belief that the opportunity exists to develop long-term strategic partnerships with councils, beyond a collection of front office transactions. Leveraging the full range of its multi-channel capabilities, Post Office sees potential in supporting transformation of

service delivery to the digital councils of the future.

- It is also clear that councils have a distinct interest in how Post Office branches can assist with the financial and digital inclusion agendas in their areas. Post Office branches are a key part of the infrastructure in many deprived areas and are regarded by customers as a 'universal space'. The customer base can include those who are financially and digitally excluded – so harnessing the interest of local authorities and the capabilities of the Post Office has potential for these customers.
- The LGA argues that in order to secure the significant public sector savings required now and in the future, councils and their local partners (Police, NHS, etc), will need to fundamentally reform how their services are delivered – with much closer partnership. Notwithstanding the scale of the challenges for councils, the Post Office can have some part to play. It is increasingly focused on becoming a front office for government and actively supports the delivery of digital public services. Increased engagement with councils and other public providers, such as housing associations and has demonstrated the potentially important role of the Post Office in helping such bodies deliver greater efficiencies in the future.

#### **A RELATIONSHIP MODEL**

A relationship model between local authorities and Post Office Ltd.

Each local authority has its own characteristics, challenges and approaches that reflect its local community. In turn, each council area has a distinct network of Post Office branches. So each Post Office-council relationship will be different.

The Pathfinder Programme has however enabled us to identify some common themes in these relationships. This supports the development of a model which identifies the key issues that shape a relationship. This model can help define the current state of a relationship. It also enables assessment and evaluation of progress over time.

#### Establish the relationship

You need to start by opening communication and then maintain it. This requires awareness and understanding

The model identifies the need to first establish and maintain a relationship between Post Office and the local council.

Each relationship will be shaped by specific factors emanating from both Post Office and the individual local council. Each relationship will therefore be a unique mix of the following:



- Procurement approaches
- Government policy towards Post Office
- Network transformation: Liaison about the investment being made to develop local branches through to 2015.
- Transactional services: Potential provision by local Post Office branches to do straightforward transactions on behalf of the local authority (e.g. council tax).
- Transformational services: Where a local authority is fundamentally rethinking its service provision approach and local Post Office branches are being considered for a role (e.g. identity verification or a role in end-to-end service provision).
- Financial inclusion: Where it is desired to improve financial inclusion in an area, work between a local authority and Post Office can assist (e.g. investment in a branch providing key services to a deprived area or the provision of services via Post Office branches to promote inclusion).
- Digital inclusion: Where it is desired to develop the digital council of the future, local Post Office branches can provide information to help people to get online, they can assist those who are not online to still access services conveniently and they can help in areas where face-to-face activity is still needed (e.g. verifying identity).

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#### **CONCLUSIONS**

Pressures on public finances are expected to continue for the foreseeable future, increasing the need for new, innovative ways to deliver more public services more efficiently.

Post Offices are an important part of the social and economic infrastructure in every local council area.

A constructive dialogue between local councils and the Post Office is therefore underway across the country enabled by the Pathfinder programme and the wider Post Office modernisation programme. This will create more effective liaison on the maintenance and development of Post Offices in the local area and exploration on new solutions for public service delivery.

Establishing an open channel of communication between every council and the Post Office is a pre-requisite for making progress.

The Post Office has established an account management team that includes 10 regionallybased stakeholder managers. These managers are responsible for maintaining positive, open relationships with every UK council. Over the past year, relationships have been established with over 400 councils.

For relationships to flourish and be productive there needs to be mutual understanding of circumstances and priorities. With its regional teams

"Establishing an open channel of communication between every council and the Post Office is a pre-requisite for making progress."

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actively pursuing relationships with all councils, Post Office and councils are now able to work better together, for example as the Post Office modernises branches and in local regeneration activities.

Significant opportunities exist for using Post Office branches to deliver local public services.

The Post Office network is being used to deliver a growing range of public services. The Pathfinder Programme has helped focus attention on the particular opportunities and challenges facing councils and Post Office in delivering local services.

There exists a keen desire on the part of many councils to use Post Office branches to deliver more services. Post Office is keen to take on this type of work. However, the Pathfinder Programme has highlighted the need to develop appropriate services and prices that reflect the often small-size of council contracts and particular service needs. It can help where councils choose to procure jointly.

Despite this, Post Office is providing a growing range of front office transactional services for councils across the country. It has also recently developed a new product for councils to support Social Fund payments.

Post Office is also developing its promotion activities to improve relationships and increase awareness across local government of its modernisation programme. In a developing field, it is critical to continue exploring the policy and practical issues surrounding how the Post Office infrastructure in an area can best help with the provision of cost effective local public services. Post Office has commissioned three independent organisations - Localis, Centre Forum and the New Local Government Network - to work with councils to examine a range of issues. These include identifying and removing some of the barriers and exploiting the opportunities of digital delivery.

In summary, the focus and energy created by the Pathfinder Programme has helped lift the relationship between councils and the Post Office to a new, positive level. Critically, relationships have been formed across the country with a better understanding of how those individual relationships can be developed in recognition of the often differing needs and priorities of individual councils. With the Government's continued support underpinning Post Office modernisation, and the widespread support for Post Offices to be utilised as a 'Front Office' for government service provision, the potential for greater collaboration between councils and Post Office in supporting local communities looks increasingly positive.

### "Demand for Post Office branches to deliver public services is increasing."

#### ANNEX

Post Office Ltd is now an independent organisation, newly separate from Royal Mail. It is focusing on its key markets of mails, financial services and, especially relevant here, government services.

Post Office has a clear strategy, supported by government, to maintain the size and current geographical accessibility of its network (more than 11,500 branches across the UK). This involves an investment strategy through to 2015 that will assist around half of its branches to modernise their branches, improving the customer environment and increasing access and convenience by offering longer opening hours.

Post Office branches are generally regarded as providing convenient, universal and trusted access to public services. Around 20 million people and half of all small businesses visit the Post Office every week. Post Office branches are typically run by small local businesses, at the heart of the communities and close to the customers they serve. They are widely seen as a key part of the local social fabric. Independent studies have suggested the 'social value' of the Post Office Network is worth more than £2.3bn a year to the UK. Understandably, local authorities have always been keen to ensure that Post Office branches in their area remain trading and viable.

## Annex

In an increasingly digital world, the Post Office provides a 'human touch'. It has the proven capability to handle complex and sensitive transactions on behalf of local and central government. It provides a secure, trusted face-to-face interaction with customers when the process demands it and supports improved efficiencies by sharing information securely, digitally and efficiently with government back offices. The Post Office Network partners with public service providers to ensure universal and convenient access to high quality, digital public services.

Demand for Post Office branches to deliver public services is increasing. For more complex and sensitive online transactions, a face-to-face element is needed, for example to provide identity assurance (through biometric data capture and/or document checking). There is also a need to provide support for those people who are not online, or not confident of conducting transactions online. Supporting transactions on behalf of public service providers enables improved efficiencies to be achieved through economies of scale and rationalisation

Local authorities face immense challenges in delivering cost savings. Councils are seeking to cut costs by reducing unnecessary face-to-face contact in managing customer contact and transactions, whilst helping to ensure that people who may struggle to access services online can still be supported effectively.

Councils have wider responsibilities for delivering localism, promoting social value and cohesion, supporting local businesses and economic regeneration. All this must be done in a manner that meets modern customer service expectations about accessibility, choice of channel and ease of use.

It is a daunting and unprecedented task. Local councils are approaching these challenges in many different ways.

The challenge and the opportunity is whether the relationship between Post Office and local councils can be developed to meet these new realities.

- By working together can Post Office branches and local councils enable customers to retain accessible, trusted, universal access to local service provision?
- Can this be done in a way that both improves council efficiencies and reduces cost, while simultaneously enhancing Post Office sustainability?

The starting point is to explore how Post Office and local councils develop relationships from which the answers will flow. This is the challenge the Pathfinder Programme sought to address.

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Department for Business Innovation & Skills



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## Agenda Item 9

#### NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

#### EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO THE CABINET

#### Date 22 MAY 2013

- 1. KEELE GOLF COURSE; interim maintenance and management arrangements and long term options
  - Submitted by:Executive Management TeamPortfolio:Culture and Leisure; Regeneration, Planning and Town<br/>Centres; and Finance and Budget Management

<u>Ward(s) affected</u>: Keele, Silverdale and Parksite

#### Purpose of the Report

- a) To appraise members of interim management arrangements that have been established to facilitate ongoing provision of the municipal golf service at Keele Golf Course following actions taken by the liquidator to disclaim the lease of the property and to seek members' endorsement of related decisions.
- b) To appraise members of the long-term options for ongoing provision of municipal pay-as-you-play golf at this location and to seek approval for a preferred course of action.

#### **Recommendations**

- a) To note the actions taken by officers to facilitate ongoing provision of the municipal golf service at Keele, in particular the award of interim contracts for up to 6 months for both maintenance of the golf course (18-hole and 9-hole) and management of the operation to Glendale Managed Services Ltd.
- b) Further to recommendation (a) to seek members' approval for the setting of associated fees and charges as set out in the report (to follow).
- c) That members instruct officers to proceed with a formal, competitive twostage marketing process with the aim of securing a tenant who can deliver a commercially viable municipal golf offer at Keele Golf Course by way of a commercial lease on the basis set out in the report.
- d) That officers be authorised to prepare the necessary draft lease document in accordance with a specification that shall have been agreed by the Portfolio Holders for Culture and Leisure; Regeneration, Planning and Town Centres; and Finance and Budget Management.
- e) That officers report back the outcome of the overall marketing process to enable a final decision to be made about the award of any long term lease.

#### <u>Reasons</u>

It is necessary to advise members formally about the interim maintenance and management arrangements. Additionally it is important to provide members with information to enable decisions to be made about the preferred medium to long term option for the site.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Council managed and operated a municipal golf activity at Keele up to 2003 when it was considered appropriate to seek commercial interest in the service by way of a commercial lease.
- 1.2 Following several years of difficult trading conditions Keele Golf Centre Ltd. was placed into a Creditors Voluntary Liquidation arrangement on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2013, notification of which was received by the Council shortly afterwards. The Liquidator, in discharging his responsibilities, took steps to formally disclaim the commercial lease in relation to the golf course with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2013.
- 1.3 Officers briefed Cabinet Members about the emergent position and it was agreed as appropriate to establish interim arrangements to enable ongoing pay-as-you-play municipal golf.
- 1.4 In terms of course maintenance a contract has been let to Glendale Managed Services Ltd.. This situation arose following a meeting with the company (they are the council's current grounds maintenance contractor for cemeteries and crematorium) on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2013 to follow up on an initial approach made to the contractor to establish interest/appetite for a short term grounds maintenance contract (up to 6 months) for Keele Golf Course (once it became clear that the previous lease had been disclaimed). The critical issue was to balance the necessity of securing practical arrangements at very short notice with the importance of achieving good value for money (see section 9).
- 1.5 With regard to overall operational management of the golf facility a contract has been let to Glendale Managed Services Ltd . This management contract provides for the management support that the course needs to operate. This includes taking bookings, collecting and accounting for fees and charges, the supply and sale of sundry items, marketing, and other associated course management issues to meet the demands of the operation. Direct costs associated with the operation are either paid for directly by the Council (for example NNDR, utility costs, building repairs and maintenance etc) or recharged by the operator (for example, where appropriate, direct staff costs, buggy hire).

#### 2. Issues

- 2.1 There are two key issues arising from the current situation:-
  - Clarification of the present position and for members to note the reasoning for officers' actions;
  - The necessity to consider medium to long term actions, including an assessment of the Council's broader policy aims and objectives and taking account of financial/resource issues.

#### Present position

- 2.2 Members will note, in section 1 of this report, the steps that have been taken by officers in consultation with Cabinet Members in order to facilitate ongoing pay-as-you-play municipal golf at Keele. Officers can confirm that the steps taken were compliant with provisions made in the Council's constitution and Scheme of Delegation relating to urgent action.
- 2.3 The justification for maintaining service provision on an interim basis includes the following key points:
  - to safeguard the service as a benefit to the local community;
  - to protect the asset from a broader asset management perspective;

- there was sufficient evidence to indicate that an interim arrangement should be financially viable and;
- to avoid prejudicing the long term position whilst options are properly explored.

#### Medium to long term position

- 2.4 it is vitally important that the Council takes the opportunity, afforded by the unfortunate demise of the previous operator, to review the long term options properly. At section 3 there are three simple options for Members to consider. The following key issues should be taken into account in identifying a preferred solution:
  - i) the strategic case for the long term provision of municipal golf in this location (including any health and wellbeing issues); and
  - ii) strategic asset management considerations (set out in the context of current and emerging planning policies).
- 2.5 The Council's current Asset Management Strategy includes a series of generic policies and clarifies the Council's property-related asset management objectives. The critical policy states that "the Authority will only hold sufficient property to meet a service need or strategic objective".
- 2.6 In this case it may be argued that an accessible outdoor leisure facility of the kind provided at Keele Golf Course contributes to the Council's strategic priorities around the promotion of active and healthy lifestyles. Golf contributes to health and wellbeing by providing a stimulating sporting challenge combined with a healthy walk in pleasant surroundings and can be played by people of all abilities and ages, both individually or in a team. It may be a casual pastime or a competitive activity. A walk round Keele Golf Course covers approximately four kilometres, which if done regularly provides good exercise.
- 2.7 With regard to the need to provide a municipal golf facility there is anecdotal evidence that private members clubs serving our community are increasingly providing options for non-members to play on a casual basis (as well as offering innovative membership packages to make it more affordable). At the same time there is evidence that the Keele Municipal Golf Course facility remains popular.
- 2.8 Your officers feel that to undertake a strategic review of golf provision/demand may prove a little inconclusive and therefore fail to provide Members with a clear sense of future need. It may be preferable at this stage to combine the evidence that we glean from the interim management arrangement which, combined with any market interest in the facility, should help to inform the long term stance.
- 2.9 From a broader asset management perspective, should it become evident that the ongoing provision of municipal golf is unviable then the Council would have to consider alternative uses and possible disposal. As Members will be aware, the Keele Golf Course facility lies in the Green Belt and the current national/local planning policies presume against "inappropriate development". In summary this means that the current recreation use is acceptable (as would be uses such as agriculture, etc). The corollary being that there is no policy support for development in this location at this time. Nevertheless taking account of wider and future corporate priorities, and the medium term potential for changes in the planning policy framework, the Council should consider protecting its long term interests by given careful consideration to the terms and time period relating to any new lease of the land.

#### 3. Options Considered

3.1 To mothball the course whilst the Council consider long term options – this could be regarded as a low cost option that would enable a strategic review to be undertaken from both a service and asset management perspective. However this option is likely

to be seriously harmful to the long term prospects of municipal golf provision in this location because of the damage caused to the course through lack of proper maintenance and loss of loyalty/good will from the existing customer base.

3.2 To establish ongoing interim maintenance and management arrangements whilst the Council considers long term options – this option presents the short term benefit of keeping the course in operation although this has been balanced with the aim of minimising financial risk to the Council. The second strand of this option (and the previous one too) demands consideration of whether the Council wishes to take the opportunity of:

(a) undertaking a strategic review of the activity (i.e. municipal pay-as-you-play golf) in advance of a strategic asset management review (the latter in the context of current and emerging policies). This approach would tend to direct the Council towards letting short term maintenance and management contracts awaiting the outcome of a strategic review; or

(b) the alternative to this approach would be to test the market interest in operating a municipal golf activity in the long term prior to making any decision to proceed. Such an approach would tend towards a commercial lease as the vehicle to achieve the Council's objectives. This would involve a two-stage process that would provide the Council with an early indication of market interest through an "Expression of Interest" stage. As indicated above it would be appropriate to set the terms of any lease on a relatively short term basis, say up to five years. However there is a risk that such a time period may have a significant adverse effect upon the market interest and value of such a lease. For the latter reason it would be advisable to invite interested parties to submit an alternative bid for longer time periods to be agreed by officers in consultation with Cabinet members before the marketing process begins.

#### 4. <u>Preferred option</u>

- 4.1 In view of the considerations set out above option 3.2 (b) would appear to be the most appropriate at this stage.
- 4.2 In terms of a timetable for such a process your officers consider that it is realistic to complete the first stage (seeking Expressions of Interest) within 6 weeks with the overall selection process of securing a preferred operator taking up to 4 months.

#### 5. **Recommendations**

5.1 See first page of the report

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

6.1 Clearly the greatest alignment lies with the Council's priority relating to Healthy and Active Communities.

#### 7. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 7.1 Whilst there is no statutory obligation for the Council to provide municipal golf facilities it does have powers to do so if it so wishes (under the Local Government Misc. Provisions Act 1976).
- 7.2 The Council has powers to dispose of land (under the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)); any decision to "dispose" of the facility by way of a commercial lease (or otherwise) has to meet the test of achieving "best consideration" for the Council (in relation to the commercial value of the asset).

7.3 There is a range of other provisions in relation to the ownership of premises of this nature, including health and safety responsibilities and statutory provisions relating to matters such as public rights of way.

#### 8. Equality Impact Assessment

8.1 At this stage no formal assessment has been undertaken but officers can confirm at this stage that measures will be put in place in any long term arrangement to minimise the risk of inequalities arising for any client group.

#### 9. Financial and Resource Implications

- 9.1 No provision has been made in either the capital or revenue budgets for 2013/14 (or in the MTFS) to support municipal golf provision at Keele.
- 9.2 From evidence available to officers at this stage it is envisaged that the cost of interim maintenance and management arrangements described earlier should be covered by income generated from fees and charges. However, income can be severely affected by adverse weather conditions so close monitoring of all income and expenditure will be undertaken.
- 9.3 With regard to the interim maintenance and management contracts it is important for the Council to satisfy itself that value for money can be demonstrated. In terms of the grounds maintenance contract Glendale Managed Services Ltd have provided a cost estimate (based on the work programme from the previous grounds maintenance contract for the golf course from the late 1990s) for a 4-month period for 27 holes, with the potential for 2 x 1 month extensions should the council require this option.
- 9.4 The estimate has been initially benchmarked against the contract rates from the 1990s with inflationary uplifts and the additional 9-hole course (which didn't exist at the time of the previous contract) included and the estimate is considered to represent value for money when benchmarked against a quotation from another prospective contractor.
- 9.5 Glendale Managed Services Ltd has agreed that the work can be instructed as a variation to the existing cemeteries and crematorium contract as the most appropriate method of securing the work.
- 9.6 Like the maintenance arrangements it has been necessary to establish an interim management contract at short notice. Again, officers have taken steps to ensure that value for money can be demonstrated in the letting of this short term arrangement.
- 9.7 With regard to fees and charges your officers have set these on the basis of those that were in place prior to the previous operator's business going into liquidation (exercising urgency provisions in the scheme of delegation included within the Council's Financial Regulations. Certain issues around charges are still being clarified with the previous operator and others associated with the previous operation. Full details of all charges will be the subject of a supplementary appendix that will be circulated prior to the meeting.
- 9.8 In terms of the longer term arrangements it is envisaged that a commercial operator will be found through a competitive tendering process on the basis of no subsidy from the Council and no capital contribution.

#### 10. Major Risks

- 10.1 The most significant risk lies in the Council's ability to secure a commercial operator who is capable of delivering municipal pay-as-you-play golf at this location at no direct cost to the Council. The two-stage process described above should enable the Council to consider alternative options should this exercise prove to be fruitless.
- 10.2 With regard to operational risks a full range of service/maintenance checks were undertaken on the first day of ownership. Additionally a comprehensive risk log has been undertaken which will be made available upon request.
- 10.3 At this stage income estimates have been based upon historic usage and limited information gleaned over recent weeks from those associated with the previous operation. As indicated above it will be necessary to closely monitor income over the period of the interim arrangements in order that any mitigating actions may be taken to minimise the risk of significant financial losses being accrued.

#### 11. Key Decision Information

11.1 The matters raised in this report, at this stage, do not constitute a key decision. The letting of any lease or contract in due course would amount to a key decision and the appropriate notification will be made in the Forward Plan.

#### 12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

12.1 None relevant to the matters raised in this report.

#### 13. List of Appendices

13.1 None.

#### 14. Background Papers

14.1 Contract documents held in office files.

## Agenda Item 10

#### Council Plan 2013/14 to 2015/16

Submitted by: Head of Business Improvement and Partnerships

**Portfolio:** Communications, Transformation & Partnerships

Ward(s) affected: All

#### Purpose of the Report

For information only

#### **Recommendation**

• That the report be received

#### <u>Reasons</u>

The Council Plan underpins the whole planning structure of the Authority and should be the document which clearly informs the organisation and acts as the major driver behind any budget proposals, longer-term strategic plans and also the service planning process. By monitoring of the plan the council is able to evidence its impact over time against the planned outcomes and identify areas of improvement. The Council plan was approved by Cabinet at its meeting in March and recommended that it be adopted by council.

#### 1. Background and issues

- 1.1 A new style Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Plan for the period 2013/14 to 2015/16 was proposed which replaces the Corporate Plan document due to be refreshed at this time. The council took the opportunity to develop the plan to reflect some of the changes in our political and economic environment and the work undertaken in the Performance Management Framework Review. The plan has two sections and is attached in its entirety at the appendix to this report. The second section details the measures and activities in order to monitor progress of the plan.
- 1.2 The plan sets out the new vision for the Council: To create a borough that is prosperous, clean, healthy and safe.
- 1.3 The priorities proposed 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 adopted approach for the new plan was to be outcome-focused but ensuring strong links to the four priorities
- 1.5 As well as forming the basis for corporate, strategic and service planning, the proposed Council Plan 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 <u>Development of the Council Plan and the additional Monitoring Section</u>

- 2.1 Officers have developed the new Council Plan, its content and layout, taking in to consideration the findings and information from the work undertaken earlier this year in the Performance Management Framework Review. To ensure the document reflects the overall ambition of the council over the next three years, the following was necessary:
  - a review of the plan structure;
  - involve stakeholders in the process
  - review the vision of the council;
  - review the four key priorities to be relevant and meaningful;
  - review and challenge the outcomes ensuring they are linked to the priorities;
  - ensure the strategies of the council are linked to the plan;
  - acknowledge any drivers for change which impact on the content and reflect the developments;
  - workshops and one-to-one meetings with officers held to determine monitoring activities and measures.
- 2.2 The Plan renews the existing vision for the Council, with the new vision expressed as "to create a Borough that is prosperous, clean, healthy and safe".
- 2.3 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".
- 2.4 The Plan also details a new set of seventeen outcomes and the accompanying measures and activities to measure and monitor the impact upon these desired outcomes.

#### 3 <u>Consultation and other influences</u>

- 3.1 The vision, priorities and outcomes have been considered through various meetings and workshops undertaken in the Performance Management Framework Review and further work to complete the second section, the monitoring of the outcomes, was undertaken in planned workshops in September.
- 3.2 Ongoing consultation administered and analysed by the Borough Council Communications Section in 2011/12 and 2012/13 has been used in the development of the plan. Also services undertake satisfaction surveys in-house on a regular basis to inform the management of service delivery.
- 3.3 Demographic and other "profile" data, and changes observed that suggest trends, are covered in the section of the plan entitled "drivers for change". These drivers can be summarised as:
  - Our area and its people;
  - The Welfare Reform Act;
  - The Localism Act;
  - Our local strategies;
  - Performance Management Review;
  - Making good use of public money.
  - The Way We Work;

#### 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 should be the document which clearly informs the council and should act 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 which was approved by Cabinet at the meeting 6 March 2013 and recommended that it be adopted by council.
- 4.4 In considering the Plan/report, Members can: -

### • Option 1: Accept and approve the adoption of the new style Council Plan and its contents as provided

(This is the recommended option, albeit with further modifications and additions to be made as required by council)

## • Option 2: Request significant further changes to the Plan before the document can be approved and adopted

(This is 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 service planning for 2013/14 onwards)

#### 5. <u>Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy Priorities and Corporate</u> <u>Priorities</u>

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.

#### 9. <u>Major risks</u>

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

Draft Council Plan.

#### 12. Background Papers

Working papers held by officer in Council Plan 2013/14 files.


### Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Plan

### 2013 - 14 to 2015 - 16









www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk

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Published by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council - April 2013

## Message from the Leader of the Council Councillor Gareth Snell



Councillor Gareth Snell Leader of the Council

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.

The Newcastle-under-Lyme 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 three years and how we are going to turn a plan into reality. ... 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-under-Lyme 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 Council 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.

# Ive, work and visit with long-term crime rates falling

over the last few years

#### **Priorities**

### A clean, safe and sustainable borough

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

#### Becoming a co-operative council which delivers high quality, communitydriven, 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.



### 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 the planning and delivery of 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.

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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 decisionmaking 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 five per cent of residents are from BME communities, compared with around two 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 Newcastleunder-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 remains a problem.

Business start up rates in Newcastle are relatively 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 was to focus resources and energy on four key projects in order to achieve efficiencies:-

- 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 included:-

- Expand home working opportunities for staff to deliver more efficiencies.
- Improving mobile working by giving officers in the field access to the right technology.
- Improving our Civic Hub to make public services more accessible and joined up.
- Reducing paper by scanning documents and using/storing them electronically.
- Becoming more energy efficient.

Work undertaken beneath the TWWW heading is now being taken forward in relation to a new programme of work focused on how we work with our customers and respond to the government's Welfare Reform agenda.

### 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 undertake a strategic review of our assets working hard to keep Council Tax low, maximising our resources and seeking efficiencies in everything we do.

#### Performance Management Review

The council is always looking to improve the way it delivers services and will make the best use of information to target services to groups and individuals in our communities in the most efficient and effective way. To do this effectively we need to ensure that we are clear about what specific outcomes we want to achieve.

We have recently reviewed our approach to performance management to ensure that we focus much more on the outcomes that we want to achieve, and how we measure our progress.

# Priorities, Outcomes and Activities

n 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.
- Newcastle will be safer with vulnerable victims of crime and disorder receiving 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.



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.
- Local communities are engaged and able to shape and deliver services which impact on their lives.
- Increasing the resilience in communities by building effective and strong partnerships across the borough and utilising public and community resources.



#### Outcome 1.1

Levels of safety will have improved, along with standards of public health

#### Why are the improvements needed?

The council has a duty to protect the public's health and improve the general quality of life where possible.

#### We know that . . .

- people are injured on the roads
- people suffer food poisoning
- past historic industries may have caused contaminated land

#### You told us that . . .

- you want safer places to eat
- you are concerned about the danger of unrepaired housing
- you want roads that are safe for the everyone to use

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Respond to outbreaks of food poisoning to try to prevent spread and reoccurrence
- Contaminated land strategy reviewed and published in 2013
- Continue to inspect food businesses in our planned programme to ensure they are safe to eat
- A new Public Health Strategy to be produced

### Performance indicators to measure success in delivering the outcome

- Number of people killed or seriously injured on the borough's roads (1.1.1)
- Percentage of food premises that have a zero or one national food hygiene rating. (1.1.2)
- The amount of contaminated land that has been remediated and is now in use (1.1.3)
- Percentage of Category 1 housing disrepair hazards concerns brought to the attention of the Council that are investigated and addressed (1.1.4)
- The number of food establishments which are broadly compliant with good hygiene law (1.1.5)

#### Outcome 1.2

Newcastle will be safer with vulnerable victims of crime and disorder receiving high quality support

#### Why are the improvements needed?

To offer an optimum service to reassure, support and protect vulnerable people in the borough.

#### We know that . . .

- too many people suffering from incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour are vulnerable because they are subject to this repeated behaviour
- some victims are more vulnerable than others and need more support
- early intervention is key in tackling and positively resolving incidences

#### You told us that . . .

- you want to live in a community where you feel safe
- you want to know that services are available to support and help when needed

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Review Anti-Social Behaviour policy 2013
- Work with partner organisations and key groups, together with communities to deal with crime and raise awareness of support services for the public
- Domestic Violence Early Intervention Worker recruited to support services
- Continuation of funding for Anti-Social Behaviour Victims Worker
- Develop the existing multi-agency conference system to address the problems faced by vulnerable people

### Performance indicators to measure success in delivering the outcome

- Level of satisfaction with the support provided to vulnerable citizens (1.2.1)
- Number of interventions to support vulnerable citizens and victims of crime (1.2.2)
- Reduction in incidents of violence with injury, anti-social behaviour, serious acquisitive crime and domestic violence (1.2.3-6)

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#### Outcome 1.3

The negative impact that the Council, residents and local businesses have on the environment will have reduced

#### Why are the improvements needed?

#### We know that ...

- too many carbon emissions is harmful to the environment and impacts on the quality of life for residents and visitors alike
- to reduce excess waste the council needs to work with residents and businesses to minimise residual waste year on year

#### You told us that . . .

- you are concerned about the future of the environment
- you want to maintain the level of the council's national award winning recycling service
- you would want recycling to be reprocessed in the UK
- you would also like to see other types of recycling introduced such as small appliances

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Continue to monitor air quality in the borough, consult with residents on findings and devise plans for monitoring and control of air quality
- Continue to investigate and take action in respect of nuisance identified in the borough
- Investigate and implement the kerbside collection of small electrical appliances and batteries
- Establish a trial recycling service for businesses and community buildings

### Performance indicators to measure success in delivering the outcome

- The amount of residual waste per household (1.3.1)
- Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting (1.3.2)
- The amount of carbon emissions by the Council (1.3.3)
- The number of non-residential collections covered by the trade waste recycling scheme - includes Council properties and schools (1.3.4)
- The level of air quality (1.3.5)
- Number of general nuisance complaints (1.3.6)

#### Outcome 1.4

Our streets and open spaces will be clean, clear and tidy

#### Why are the improvements needed?

Research has demonstrated that there are clear crosscutting links between local environmental quality and other policy agendas;

- Clean, safe, green infrastructure has a vital role in ensuring mental and physical health.
- Good design and high standards of maintenance and cleansing are vital in reducing anti-social behaviour and other environmental crime

#### We know that . . .

 too much litter and detritus in the area does not attract people to live, work and invest in the area

#### You told us that . . .

 you are generally satisfied with the cleanliness of our streets and parks and open spaces but there are "hot spots" which need to be improved

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Local Environment Quality (LEQ) surveys (3 per year) and resultant action plan to tackle hot spots
- Environmental Education and Enforcement Action Plan
- Community engagement and participation in caring for local green spaces and neighbourhoods
- Service challenge and review to ensure resources are deployed effectively and efficiently to tackle cleanliness issues

- Levels of street and environment cleanliness (LEQ survey) free / predominantly free of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly-posting) (1.4.1)
- Number of community volunteer groups/hours spent caring for their local green spaces and neighbourhoods (1.4.2)
- Quality standards achieved eg Britain in Bloom, Green Flag Awards (1.4.3)
- Satisfaction with cleanliness of streets and green spaces (1.4.4)
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#### Outcome 1.5

Town centres across the borough will be sustainable and safe

#### Why are the improvements needed?

The town centres within the borough play a vital role in providing employment, local services and entertainment for residents and visitors. The challenge is to ensure each centre remains sustainable and safe despite any economic downturn. For economic growth there is a need to work with other agencies and partnerships to keep the town centres as safe as possible and that crime is kept at a low level.

#### We know that . . .

- you value the town centres and want the council to ensure they remain vibrant and attractive - visually and economically
- it is important to develop town centres for the future

#### You told us that . . .

- regeneration for the borough's town centres is important to you
- you are concerned about levels of crime
- you are also concerned about visiting the town centre at night

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Town centre partnership established in Kidsgrove and Newcastle and town plans developed
- Scoping exercise to be undertaken of footfall within the town centre
- To take forward the retail-led redevelopment of the former Sainsbury/Ryecroft site.
- Completion of public realm improvements in the town centre and introduction of new market stalls
- Complete the gating off of problematic alleyways under the Green Routes scheme
- Attain a purple flag for the safety of night time economy

### Performance indicators to measure success in delivering the outcome

- Town centre vacancy rate (1.5.1)
- Percentage of investment portfolio (NBC owned) vacant (1.5.2)
- Levels of crimes in our town centres (1.5.3)
- Level of safety of town centres as indicated by residents (1.5.4)
- The level of town centre attractiveness as indicated by residents (1.5.5)



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#### Outcome 2.1 Levels of worklessness will have reduced

#### Why are the improvements needed?

The level of unemployment in the borough is 2.6% at November 2012 which is lower than the regional and national rates. Amongst people aged 18 to 24 years the level increases to 4% (compared to 8.7% in the West Midlands and 7% in Great Britain).

#### We know that . . .

- it is key to raise skill levels to help drive enterprise, to create more and better jobs
- training opportunities for people to develop and gain confidence is essential

#### You told us that . . .

 you are concerned about levels of worklessness in the borough

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Plans to encourage enterprise wthin the borough to be developed
- Town Centre Partnership action plan
- Work with the "Make it" initiative
- Support given to unemployed by the Newcastle Business Enterprise Coach

### Performance indicators to measure success in delivering the outcome

- The level of employment in the borough (2.1.1)
- The number of jobs created by Council-backed initiatives in the borough (2.1.2)
- The percentage of people of working age claiming benefits (2.1.3)
- The level of NEETs (2.1.4)

#### Outcome 2.2

Local people will be able to access opportunities for personal development and growth

#### Why are the improvements needed?

The council understands the importance of working wih partners to ensure there are opportuninties available to access to support development.

#### We know that . . .

- it is important to provide a wide range of activities to support our communities
- volunteering activities need to be encouraged and supported

#### You told us that . . .

• you are concerned whether opportunities will be limited in the future

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

 Work with Newcastle Employment and Skills Group (NESG) to identify areas for improvement and further opportunities

- The number (or percentage) of people obtaining NVQ levels (2.2.1)
- The number of people gaining additional educational qualifications as a result of Council-backed initiatives (2.2.2)
- The number of volunteers used by the council/taken on by the council who go on to gain employment (2.2.3)
- Narrative on the impact of the Council's role as employer of volunteers (2.2.4)
- Number of organisations working with the council to take on volunteers (2.2.5)
- Number of hours worked by volunteers in council co-ordinated activities (2.2.6)

#### Outcome 2.3

Housing will be available and accessible to meet a range of diverse needs

#### Why are the improvements needed?

Housing is most frequently cited in terms of its appropriateness and affordability.

Appropriate housing meets the needs of residents in terms of size, physical attributes and location. Affordable housing includes affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to specific eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. With many local residents unable to access a home that meets their needs, it is important that the council works with local housing providers to deliver needed accommodation.

#### We know that . . .

- there is a lack of suitable available housing in the borough
- there are nearly 3,000 households on the housing register wanting affordable housing

#### You told us that . . .

- you prefer affordable longer term tenancies with greater security
- you are concerned about homelessness
- you are concerned about increasing fuel bills and want to be able to keep your home warm

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Partnership working with Registered Providers and the Homes and Communities Agency to deliver new affordable housing in line with the Local Investment Plan
- Delivery of new homes at Charter Road
- Encouragement and support to private home owners to return their empty properties back into use
- Development of Eco brokerage service

### Performance indicators to measure success in delivering the outcome

- The number of affordable homes provided as a result of partnership working with Registered Providers and the Homes & Communities Agency (2.3.1)
- The net number of additional homes provided (2.3.2)
- Number of empty properties brought back into use (2.3.3)
- Percentage of referrals for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) approved within six months (2.3.4)
- Percentage of minor adaptations delivered within four months (2.3.5)
- Number of homelessness cases prevented (2.3.6)



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#### Outcome 2.4

Key parts of the borough will have been regenerated and there will have been overall economic growth

#### Why are the improvements needed?

To enable further growth of the borough, the council needs to attract inward investment from the private sector. To facilitate this the Council will work with the private sector and partners to bring forward suitable and viable development opportunities.

#### We know that ...

• to provide more employment opportunities, more suitable development sites to attract investment are needed

#### You told us that . . .

regeneration in the borough is important to you

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Work with Make It inward investment service for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire to promote the area for inward investment
- Bring forward attractive development sites
- Marketing of specific development opportunities
- Work with Business Enterprise Support (BES) to help in the delivery of its enterprise support scheme
- Delivery of the Annual Newcastle Business Boost competition
- Consultation to be undertaken by the council with communities on a draft Site Allocation Policies Local Plan
- Develop coordinated enterprise strategy
- Support development of the emergent knowledge intensive sectors
- Support development of professional and business services sectors
- Make the most of the Borough's successful logistics sector
- Promote further development of Keele Science and Business Park

- Level of economic health across the borough (2.4.1)
- Percentage of investment portfolio which is vacant (2.4.2)
- Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) showing employement growth (2.4.3)
- Buildings within the built heritage asset register improved and no longer at risk (2.4.4)
- Number of proposed jobs from successful planning applications (2.4.5)
- Rate of new VAT business registration (2.4.6)
- Average stall occupancy rate for markets (2.4.7)



#### Outcome 3.1

People who live, work, visit or study in the borough will have access to high quality facilities

#### Why are the improvements needed?

The Council is committed to ensuring there are high quality facilities available to residents and visitors to the borough. Significant capital development at J2 has resulted in increased participation and substantial operational revenue savings.

#### We know that . . .

- it is important to recognise the vital role that being active plays in the lives of everyone
- access to well equipped and safe facilities is important

#### You told us that . . .

- you want quality and affordable leisure services
- you want open spaces and parks to be safe places to visit

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Full feasibility study developed for the refurbishment/ replacement of Kidsgrove Sports centre
- Complete the review of community centres
- Develop outline business case for future management/ governance of leisure and cultural services

### Performance indicators to measure success in delivering the outcome

- Number of parks which have green flag status (3.1.1)
- Level of satisfaction with Council-run parks and open spaces (3.1.2)
- Level of satisfaction with Council-run a) leisure and b) cultural services (3.1.3)
- Level of satisfaction with Council-owned car parking facilities (3.1.4)
- Levels of satisfaction with bereavement services (3.1.5)
- Level of service quality of the two main Council information centres – Guildhall and Kidsgrove (3.1.6)
- Percentage of town centres public toilets that meet the Council's minimum standard for quality and cleanliness (3.1.7)
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#### Outcome 3.2

Levels of cultural activity and participation in the arts will have increased

#### Why are the improvements needed?

Involvement in artistic and cultural activities is beneficial physically, mentally and emotionally for young and older people.

#### We know that . . .

- the cultural facilities contribute significantly to the economy of the borough
- it is important for the council to encourage cultural activity in the borough to ensure people can enhance their life experiences

#### You told us that . . .

 the availability of local events and facilities to visit are important in your lives

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Programme of cultural events and exhibitions
- Development programme for volunteers
- Multi-agency Arts Strategy to be developed
- Feasibility study into the development of the museum to meet future aspirations

- Visitor satisfaction (3.2.1)
- Number of people visiting museums (3.2.2)
- Number of people attending local theatres (3.2.3)
- Economic impact of visitors to museums (3.2.4)
- Impact of volunteer development programme (3.2.5)
- Impact of community-run cultural events and people attending (3.2.6)

#### Priority 3: A healthy and active community

#### Outcome 3.3

There will be a range of healthy lifestyle choices, resulting in an increase in participation in sport and physical activity

#### Why are the improvements needed?

The council wants to encourage people to adopt healthier lifestyles.

#### We know that . . .

- too many people do not exercise on a regular basis
- well equipped, accessible and affordable facilities are necessary

#### You told us that . . .

leisure facilities and play areas are very important to you

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Sportivate programme to encourage younger people to participate in physical activities
- Sportmakers programme to increase adult participation
- Healthy walk programme
- Delivery of programme of healthy initiatives with partners including:
  - GP referral scheme
  - Cardiac rehabilitation scheme
  - Joint/muscle mobility exercise
- Allotment policy review
- Delivery of improvement projects to outdoor sport facilities

- The percentage of primary school children who are categorised as obese (3.3.1)
- The number of referrals from GPs to organised sporting activity (3.3.2)
- Percentage of people referred for exercise by GPs whose health improves (3.3.3)
- The number of teenage pregnancies (3.3.4)
- The number of premature deaths (3.3.5)

# Priority 4: A co-operative Council, delivering high-value, community-driven services

#### Outcome 4.1

The Council will have increased the capacity and skills of its workforce

#### Why are the improvements needed?

In order to maintain high levels of service and deliver efficiencies, the capacity and skills of our existing workforce need to continue to be developed.

#### We know that ...

- our customers expect a high standard of service when they contact the council
- our customers want easy access to multiple agency services at convenient locations. Joint working and engagement with partners in day to day service delivery provides a valuable learning environment that improves the skills of the joint workforce

#### You told us that . . .

 you are concerned that services may suffer as a result of the economy

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Delivery of the Workforce Development Plan
- Develop a Shared Apprenticeship Scheme with partners
- Development of e-learning facilities
- Increasing the ways in which customers can contact us, by providing greater choice - developing self service, web services, SMS, email and other means of contact linked to customer need
- Deliver further customer service training to continue to meet Customer Service Excellence standards.
- Programme of skills development for ICT to ensure we maximise the benefits of existing and new technology

### Performance indicators to measure success in delivering the outcome

- Number of apprenticeships/shared apprenticeship placements offered (4.1.1)
- Percentage of workforce with completed learning and development plans (4.1.2)
- Percentage of staff who have completed accredited training courses (4.1.3)
- Number of e-learning modules completed (4.1.4)
- Percentage of staff who feel they have the necessary Pkills/competencies to do their job effectively (4.1.5)

#### Outcome 4.2

Councillors will be community champions and powerful community advocates

#### Why are the improvements needed?

Communities need representation and support in order to empower their communities.

#### We know that . . .

 Good communication is necessary to understand the needs of communities of the borough and also to ensure that the council delivers clear, transparent messages of what they have achieved or want to improve upon

#### You told us that . . .

 you want to know what is planned which will impact upon your community

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Delivery of Scrutiny work plan
- Training programme for members

- Percentage of elected members who have a personal development plan (4.2.1)
- Impact of actions from the work plan (4.2.2)
- Percentage attendance at planned meetings by members (4.2.3)
- Number of issues raised by members (4.2.4)
- Percentage of candidates and agents satisfied/ very satisfied with electoral service (4.2.5)

#### Priority 4: A co-operative Council, delivering high-value, community-driven services

#### Outcome 4.3

The Council will have delivered further efficiencies

#### Why are the improvements needed?

We want to ensure services are delivered efficiently and of high quality to its customers. The council strives to deliver effective services within the restraints of its budget.

#### We know that . . .

• the economic downturn may impact upon the council and add further pressure to its budget with a greater demand for its services.

#### You told us that . . .

• you are concerned about the council being more efficient and effective

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy reviewed annually and reported
- Monthly budget monitoring programme
- Delivery of the Procurement (Strategic) work plan

- Percentage of planned procurement efficiencies achieved (4.3.1)
- Percentage projected variance against full year council budget (4.3.2)
- Average number of days per employee lost to sickness (4.3.3)
- Percentage of residents who feel that the Council is providing value for money (4.3.4)
- Achieving a balanced budget (4.3.5)
- Percentage return on council investments (4.3.6)
- Ratio of planned versus responsive maintenance expenditure on all Council owned buildings (4.3.7)
- Net income collected from Council assets (4.3.8)

#### Outcome 4.4

Local communities are engaged and able to shape and deliver services which impact on their lives

#### Why are the improvements needed?

To impact on solving problems of everyday life in local communities, the people need to be able to see how their views can shape the solutions that will make a lasting difference in the way services are delivered. In doing this the Council will be an open, honest and transparent organisation which undertakes regular consultation with its residents and listens to their views.

#### We know that . . .

- different communities have problems to face unique to their neighbourhood
- support is necessary to encourage engagement
- communication within a community and involvement of stakeholders is key to solving solutions

#### You told us that . . .

 you do not always feel you have the confidence or skills necessary to be involved or influence decision making in your community

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Support to groups from funded infrastructure project
- Develop communities around the localism agenda
- Focus on dealing with troubled families and enhancing community involvement and self-reliance
- Further Community Pride events to deal with community issues

- Level of satisfaction with the role of the Council in supporting communities to solve local problems, as indicated by local people (4.4.1)
- Level of satisfaction with the Council's support to communities, as indicated by partner organisations (4.4.2)
- The impact of the Council's support in empowering communities to solve specific local problems (4.4.3)
- The overall level of satisfaction with the Council as a provider of services (4.4.4)
- Percentage of people who feel that they can influence Council decisions (4.4.5)
- Level of satisfaction with the support provided to LAPs and other community groups to improve their organisational strength (4.4.6)
- Increase the number of residents, community and voluntary groups engaged with LAPs (4.4.7)
- Percentage of requests resolved at first point of contact (4.4.8)

# Priority 4: A co-operative Council, delivering high-value, community-driven services

#### Outcome 4.5

Increasing the resilience in communities by building effective and strong partnerships across the borough, and utilising public and community resources

#### Why are the improvements needed?

In order to deliver appropriate and optimum services to the people of the borough it is necessary for the council to continue to work with existing partners and develop strong new partnerships across all sectors. Also, the Borough Council recognises that the priorities set by the council cannot be delivered by the council alone.

#### We know that . . .

 strong partnerships are necessary to progress our outcomes effectively

#### You told us that . . .

 you would like to see more partnership working involving the council

#### Activities aimed at delivering the outcome:

- Investigate opportunities to develop a Social Enterprise with key partner agencies
- Build on relationships with the voluntary and community sector in delivering key services to local people
- Deliver the Lets Work Together (LWT) project in partnership with others
- Develop and implement a Co-operative Strategy for the council with other key stakeholders
- Develop health promotion work in areas of greatest need
- Map vulnerability across the Borough and its neighbourhoods to target services more effectively
- Welfare reform to be delivered with partners

- Community/citizen satisfaction levels increased (4.5.1)
- Communities feel they are able to influence decisions (4.5.2)
- Engagement with LAPs increased (4.5.3)
- Quality of service delivery (4.5.4)
- Knowledge amongst public about co-operative approaches (4.5.5)
- Decrease in anti-social behaviour levels and domestic violence linked to LWT project (4.5.6)
- People feeling safe in their homes and fear of crime lessened (4.5.7)

### Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Plan

### 2013 - 14 to 2015 - 16



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Title	Forward Plan Item?	Scrutiny Method	Progress to Date/Actions from Last Meeting	Expected Completion Date	Expected Outcomes/Date for Progress to be assessed
Revenue and Capital Budget	Yes	Full Committee	Report outlining timetable and scrutiny process to be received 20.05.2013	Feb 2014	Scrutiny undertaken annually by TROSC
Capital Strategy	Yes	Full Committee	Expected December 2013	Feb 2014	Scrutiny undertaken annually by TROSC
Treasury Management Strategy	Yes	Full Committee	Expected November 2013	Feb 2014	Scrutiny undertaken annually by TROSC
Scale of Fees and Charges	Yes	Full Committee	Expected January 2014	Feb 2014	Scrutiny undertaken annually by TROSC
Asset Management Strategy	Yes	Full Committee	Expected December 2013		
Financial and Performance Management Report <b>(GREEN)</b>		Full Committee	<ul> <li>Continue to monitor and scrutinise performance alongside finances &amp; that quarterly reports are provided to TROSC</li> <li>To include J2 figures (income over target)</li> <li>Quarter 4 2012/13 report expected Q1 13/14</li> <li>New style performance report expected in Sept</li> </ul>	Rolling Scrutiny	Report received on a rolling quarterly basis
Review of the Constitution (AMBER)		Working Group: Cllrs Shenton, Holland & Snell	<ul> <li>To remain as a living doc to be kept under review</li> <li>Report from wg received at Council on 24.04.2013</li> <li>Update report from wg to be received 20.05.2013</li> </ul>	Rolling Scrutiny	
Modernisation of the Post Office Network	No	TBC	<ul> <li>To consider modernisation of the Post Office network &amp; the possibility of partnership working</li> <li>Presentation received from PO rep 19.11.2012.</li> <li>TROSC have awaited an LGA report before proceeding. LGA report now published and to be discussed 20.05.13, with view to identifying elements for a scrutiny brief.</li> </ul>		
Universal Credit			• Presentation received from Head of Revs & Bens 07.03.2013. This was made available to all ClIrs on 22.04.2013.		
Τ			• Further update expected Q3 2013/14.		

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#### TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES OSC WORK PLAN

<b>O</b> uncil Plan 2013-14 to 2015-16	Yes	Full Committee	•	Presentation received 24.01.13 prior to March	
(AMBER)				Cabinet	
ത			•	Expected at future meeting with more substantial	
				document	

Pa