

# Public Document Pack

**Date of meeting** Thursday, 27th July, 2017  
**Time** 7.00 pm  
**Venue** Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, Merrial Street,  
Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 2AG  
**Contact** Jayne Briscoe 2250



Civic Offices  
Merrial Street  
Newcastle-under-Lyme  
Staffordshire  
ST5 2AG

## **Cleaner Greener and Safer Communities Scrutiny Committee**

### **AGENDA**

#### **PART 1– OPEN AGENDA**

**1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**(Pages 3 - 4)**

To receive the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee.

**3 REPORT on SUBWAYS**

**(Pages 5 - 10)**

**4 WORK PLAN**

To discuss and update the work plans to reflect current scrutiny topics

**5 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Any member of the public wishing to submit a question must serve two clear days' notice, in writing, of any such question to the Borough Council.

**6 URGENT BUSINESS**

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

**7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 4 October 2017**

**Members:** Councillors Burgess (Vice-Chair), Dillon, P Hailstones, Jones, Mancey, Naylon (Chair), Panter, Reddish, Snell, Sweeney and G Williams

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

## **CLEANER GREENER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, 1st March, 2017  
Time of Commencement: 6.30 pm

**Present:-** Councillor Wenslie Naylor – in the Chair

Councillors Allport, Burgess, Cooper, Dillon,  
P Hailstones, Olszewski, Panter,  
Reddish and G Williams

Officers Jayne Briscoe - Scrutiny Officer

### 1. **APOLOGIES**

An apology was received from Councillor Mancey.

### 2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

### 3. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2016 be agreed as a correct record.

### 4. **DRAFT REPORT - SUBWAYS**

The Chair introduced the draft report on subways and invited members of the Scrutiny Committee to contribute their views and to amend the contents where it was felt appropriate.

Members made a number of suggestions which will be included in the final report to be presented for approval prior to consideration by Cabinet.

The Chair, in taking into account all of the suggestions and with a view to ensuring that the final version valued inclusion, asked members to reflect on the discussions and to contribute their own individual views and recommendations in respect of the 'conclusions' section of the report.

**Agreed:** That the report be amended in accordance with the suggestions made by members of the Scrutiny Committee.

That members of the Scrutiny Committee be asked to submit their views on the 'Conclusions' section of the report to the Chair/and or the Scrutiny Officer.

### 5. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

**6. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Business.

**7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that an additional meeting of the Committee be held on Wednesday 10 May commencing at 6:30pm. The purpose of the meeting was to agree the Final report for submission to Cabinet.

**COUNCILLOR WENSLIE NAYLON**  
**Chair**

Meeting concluded at 7.50 pm

Classification: NULBC **UNCLASSIFIED**

*Cleaner Greener and Safer Scrutiny Committee Report on Newcastle under Lyme Subways*

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Case Study of Artworks Initiative: Kim Graham (Regeneration and Economic Development Manager)

Scrutiny Methodology Subway Surveys and Evaluation

Local Policing Unit Observations

Recommendations

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Acknowledgements

Appendix

Subways Evaluation 2016/17: Chris Hewetson

*Membership* Councillors David Allport ( Talke); Sylvia Burgess (Butt Lane); John Cooper (Porthill) Laura Dillon (Ravenscliffe); P Hailstones (Seabridge); Chloe Mancey (Seabridge); Mark Olszewski ( Wolstanton); Barry Panter (Loggerheads and Whitmore); Marion Reddish (Thistleberry); Chris Spence (Holditch); Gill Williams ( Cross Heath).

*Advisers and Consultees*

Staffordshire County Council (SCC) Officers

Chris Plant James Bailey David Greatbatch Dave Walters

SCC Portfolio Holder Councillor Mark Deaville

Newcastle Borough Council Officers Graham Williams, Kim Graham Jayne Briscoe Chris Hewetson

*Future Partners suggested by Committee members*

Town Centre BID team for liaison between town centre businesses and operations staff at the Council

County Council Safer Routes to School team

Joint Operations Group can advise and sometimes fund initiatives that prevent crime, reassure the community and pilot projects that create environmental improvements

Classification: NULBC **UNCLASSIFIED**

Town Centre LAP could have a role in finding funds and dispersing information

Newcastle Sustainable Transport Group

Annabel Chell Senior Strategy Office at SCC

County Councillor for Town Ward; may be able to offer some funding and advice

#### *Chair's Foreword*

Underpasses, commonly called subways were seen as a good solution to the problem of separating pedestrians from fast moving traffic. In the decade of the 1960s many town highway engineers were attuned to the needs of through traffic. Ring roads were constructed; town centres bypassed and subways were constructed as part of the process. Newcastle under Lyme was no exception

The numerous (14) subways across the town, some not directly linked to a ring road, are useful in many ways. They offer ramps and steps and an easy way to cross busy roads. They have become a 'problem' as the funding for their maintenance appears to have been steadily eroded and with a divided responsibility between the Borough Council and the County Council the perception is that subways in our Newcastle public domain are progressively neglected

The Borough Council risks its reputation due to poor public experience in subways and the possible loss of Purple Flag award an accreditation awarded to towns and city centres that meet or surpass standards of excellence in managing the evening and night time economy. Newcastle has recently been through an assessment and retained its Purple Flag status

#### *Specific Issues Which the Scrutiny Committee Identified for Review*

- Risk to pedestrians from storm water flowing into subways and not getting away down drains due to infrequent attention to inadequately sized and sometimes blocked drains
- Impact of increasingly dirty barrel roofs and walls with patchy and dirty appearance largely due to the need to spray out offensive and unpleasant graffiti. Subways may be perceived as places to avoid and may increase the fear of crime
- High cost of continuing need to clean off graffiti. This can fall to the Borough Council if there is offensive material. Other graffiti in the public domain is left by the County Council for long periods of time as they have the responsibility for graffiti connected to 'highways' sites and may leave cleaning for long term maintenance programmes
- Lack of engagement with Councillors and members of the public about the issues. It is unlikely that residents of the Borough know there is divided responsibility for the public domain, subways included. The County Council takes total responsibility for these structures. The Borough Council only sweeps the ground surface of subways and collects litter

#### *Positive Actions*

There have been joint approaches to some aspects of subways in Newcastle. *Led* lighting has been installed resulting in much improved brighter lighting. So-called 'sacrificial light covers have been used to defray costs of replacement when damaged by graffiti. Roof barrels have been painted bright white

*Scrutiny Methodology: Subways Survey and Evaluation 2016 -2017*

Fourteen surveys have been completed by members of Cleaner Greener and Safer Scrutiny Committee on the 15 subways with more done for town centre subway arms than outlying ones. The survey format was set up by Chris Hewetson (Research Officer) of the Council

The subjective comments of Committee members surveying subways were as follows: they were generally litter free. At the time of the surveys there hadn't been heavy rain so the *drains blocked* issue was not observed. The lighting was just about adequate and walking surfaces were acceptable. All the subways were recorded to a greater or lesser degree as rendered unpleasant due to scrawls of graffiti some of it offensive or bordering on offensive. Most of the walls were shabby, dirty, patched up and giving an impression of neglect

The detailed results and evaluation of the survey written up by Chris Hewtson are given in Appendix at the end of the report

#### *Local Policing Unit Comments*

#### *Recommendations*

1 Engage further 'community payback' teams to start on a publicly visible and ongoing approach to cleaning off graffiti Ask partner organisations (see Section 1) for their experience with these initiatives indicating successes and limitations .Police Commissioner's Proceeds of Crime and People Power Funds may offer routes forward

2 Safer Routes to School initiative of the County Council could be seen as a driver to improving the environment of identified relevant arms of subways. No parent wants to be explaining offensive drawings and words on subways to children on their way to school. County Council to be engaged with this with a view to funding clean up schemes

3 Drains need more frequent suction. Responsibility and process mechanisms to be identified clearly and on a proper maintenance programme to be agreed between NBC and SCC Together with an agreed cleaning maintenance and renovation programme

5 Develop the idea of paid for advertising panels; this had been mooted by the County's portfolio holder as something to be trialled in Stafford. An example was cited; Newcastle College might wish to publicise courses in the subway arm nearest to it and where student footfall was at its highest. It could be that the college itself could fund or get sponsors for such an installation

6 Build on the popular 'Art in Subways' NBC/BID could work jointly to gain funding

7 Some subways could be gated off entirely. Start the process of identification. Whilst this is a costly process in the long term, it is a logical step and plans should be drawn up and agreed between NBC and SCC identifying where closure could take place, and what alternatives can be made available for pedestrians such as Pelican Crossings

8 The offer from the portfolio holder Councillor Mark Deaville at SCC to be taken up and agreed for the first of regular quarterly meetings An agenda item for the first meeting to be: discussion of County handing over responsibility and funding for complete maintenance of subways to the Borough Council

9 Council's website to allow reporting by members of the public on subway 'issues'

10. Probation Service Offer (Under discussion at present)

*Conclusion*

The current management of our subways is steadily failing the residents of Newcastle in respect of providing a pleasant experience to a necessary process: crossing a busy road

Despite a difficult economic climate, it is now time for the two Authorities and 'partners' to meet and come up with a satisfactory plan to address the recommendations in this report

The effort made to use the subways as 'canvases' for artwork is excellent. The themes already on colourful display are impressive with their references to the history; life and culture of the town and the great coverage of wall seem to deter graffiti

The longer-term future of underpasses is one of closure in the view of the Scrutiny Committee members in favour of overland pedestrian controlled crossings. It would make sense for the two Councils to begin that discussion

In the meantime, we ask the County Council to read this report's recommendations and help us move forward with a clearly defined and properly funded maintenance regime for subways in Newcastle

*Acknowledgements*

The Councillors on this Scrutiny Committee would like to thank Council staff in Newcastle Borough Council and Staffordshire Country Council named in *Membership and Partners* (page1) for their advice, information and willingness to help with questions

Thanks also to Councillor Mark Deaville, Portfolio holder (Highways and Transport) at Staffordshire County Council for his encouragement.

Appendix 1

Subways evaluation 2016/17





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