

# Public Document Pack

**Date of meeting** Wednesday, 8th July, 2020  
**Time** 2.00 pm  
**Venue** Cabinet - Virtual Meeting - Conference  
**Contact** Denise French 742211



**NEWCASTLE  
UNDER LYME**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Castle House  
Barracks Road  
Newcastle-under-Lyme  
Staffordshire  
ST5 1BL

## Cabinet

### 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 A PREVIOUS MEETING** (Pages 5 - 10)  
To consider the Minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2020
- 4 BACK ON TRACK THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE** (Pages 11 - 18)
- 5 FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND** (Pages 19 - 30)
- 6 FORWARD PLAN** (Pages 31 - 34)
- 7 URGENT BUSINESS**  
To consider any business which is urgent within the meaning of Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 8 DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION**  
To resolve that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following reports, because it is likely that there will be disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972.

#### ATTENDANCE AT CABINET MEETINGS

### **Councillor attendance at Cabinet meetings:**

- (1) The Chair or spokesperson of the Council's scrutiny committees and the mover of any motion referred to Cabinet shall be entitled to attend any formal public meeting of Cabinet to speak.
- (2) Other persons including non-executive members of the Council may speak at such meetings with the permission of the Chair of the Cabinet.

### **Public attendance at Cabinet meetings:**

- (1) If a member of the public wishes to ask a question(s) at a meeting of Cabinet, they should serve two clear days' notice in writing of any such question(s) to the appropriate committee officer. [denise.french@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](mailto:denise.french@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)
- (2) The Council Leader as Chair of Cabinet is given the discretion to waive the above deadline and assess the permissibility if the question(s). The Chair's decision will be final.
- (3) The maximum limit is three public questions at any one Cabinet meeting.
- (4) A maximum limit of three minutes is provided for each person to ask an initial question or make an initial statement to the Cabinet.
- (5) Any questions deemed to be repetitious or vexatious will be disallowed at the discretion of the Chair.

**Members:** Councillors Simon Tagg (Chair), Stephen Sweeney (Vice-Chair), Trevor Johnson, Mrs Helena Maxfield, Paul Northcott and Mrs Jill Waring

### ONLINE COMMITTEE MEETING JOINING INSTRUCTIONS

The meeting of Cabinet will begin at 2pm on Wednesday 8th July

This meeting will be held virtually using Zoom.

#### Watching the Meeting

You can attend the meeting in the following ways:

Web: <https://zoom.us/j/99643040515>

#### Using the Zoom App

Telephone: 0330 088 5830 or 0131 460 1196

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You do not require a password or pre-registration to access this committee meeting. Please note, as an attendee you will only be able to watch the meeting. You will not be able to vote, ask questions or discuss the materials presented to the committee.

#### Questions and Representations

In your email, please include details of the item you would like to speak on and, if you are asking a question, the question itself. If you cannot be identified to ask your question during the meeting, the meeting Chairperson will ask the question for you.

When joining the webinar using the App or Web link, please ensure that you enter your full name as your screen name, so that you can be identified during the meeting and asked to speak at the appropriate time.

If you will be joining the webinar by phone please ensure that you inform our Committee Services team of the number you will be using and make sure that your Caller ID is not blocked – this will allow us to identify you during the meeting and facilitate you speaking to the committee.



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## CABINET

Wednesday, 10th June, 2020  
Time of Commencement: 2.00 pm

<b>Present:-</b>	Councillor Simon Tagg – Chair
Councillors	Stephen Sweeney, Mrs Helena Maxfield, Paul Northcott and Mrs Jill Waring
Officers	David Adams, Martin Hamilton, Jan Willis, Geoff Durham, Simon McEneny, Daniel Dickinson and David Elkington

**Note:** In line with Government directions on staying at home during the current stage of the CV-19 pandemic, this meeting was conducted by video conferencing in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

### 1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Trevor Johnson.

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

There were no declarations of interest stated.

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

**Resolved:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 May, 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

### 4. **CORONAVIRUS RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE**

A report was submitted to Cabinet to inform upon actions being taken across the Council in response to the Coronavirus pandemic and to recover from its impacts.

The Leader stated that the last few weeks had been fully focussing upon recovery for the Council and the Borough's economy and the continuation of helping vulnerable people to get through the crisis.

The report addressed the Council's current position across five areas of the recovery plan. Members' attention was drawn to paragraph's 2.1 to 2.20 which explained the work being carried out in each of those areas.

*Reopening Safe, Successful Retail Areas:*

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency, Councillor Stephen Sweeney advised that Friday and Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> June had seen the soft reopening of the

Market with 8 – 10 stalls being occupied. This had been an encouraging start with social distancing measures being observed by everyone.

The Leader advised that in addition to the measures being taken in Newcastle Town Centre, officers had also been to other areas in the Borough to put up advisory notices in respect of social distancing. Letters had also been sent to all retailers providing useful advice and web-links on how to reopen safely on 15<sup>th</sup> June.

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage, Councillor Jill Waring advised that she had been working with officers in respect of the safe reopening of Kidsgrove Town Centre.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, Councillor Paul Northcott stated that it was important to have town centres and surrounding businesses open and vibrant again. Retailers and shoppers wanted reassurance that every provision was being made to help shops to reopen safely and that Personal Protection Equipment was being used where required. Councillor Northcott acknowledged that a lot of work had been carried out by officers and the Council's partners.

The Leader endorsed Councillor Northcott's comments and made reference to Staffordshire County Council Highways, one of the Council's partners for their work in the recovery process and thanking them for what they were doing.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing, Councillor Helena Maxfield stated that shops being able to reopen safely and securely was a good way of looking forward and thanked the Council's teams and partners who were involved in facilitating this.

The Leader echoed Councillor Maxfield's comments and asked for thanks to be passed to officers working to reopen retail premises.

#### *Supporting Health and Wellbeing:*

Councillor Maxfield stated that she could not praise the teams supporting health and wellbeing of Borough residents, highly enough. They had worked with a full complement of staff throughout the crisis helping the homeless and rough sleepers, including sorting temporary accommodation for those in need.

This work would continue for many months after the virus had passed.

Councillor Maxfield thanked the J2 staff who had manned the helplines that had been set up by the Council and advised Members that a reduction in calls indicated that provision of the service had worked and would continue to do so.

#### *Economic Recovery:*

Councillor Sweeney advised that the Council had paid out over £20m to approximately 1,700 businesses in the Borough under the Government's grant schemes.

The Leader advised that the Council may have been undersubscribed for the Government's discretionary fund and therefore may receive a second tranche. The Leader thanked the Finance team for their work in the distribution of the funds to local businesses.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraph 2.12 which set out the Council's economic recovery programme including four direct developments: Ryecroft; Kidsgrove Sports Centre; Sidmouth Avenue housing project and Newcastle Mortuary site.

In respect of Kidsgrove Sports Centre, costings were awaited from Wilmot Dixon and the Sports Centre had been discussed in Parliament yesterday when it was raised by Karen Bradley MP.

Staffordshire County Council would be transferring ownership of the building over to this Council in the next few months.

Councillor Northcott stated that it was important to keep an eye on the Council's assets. Lancaster Buildings now had occupancy by the NHS which would help the Council's recovery plan.

The Leader added that it was important for the Council Plan to get 'back on track' and Kidsgrove Sports Centre and the Ryecroft development played a big part in this.

*Stepping Up Council Services:*

The Leader referred Members to paragraph 2.13 of the report and stated that there had been an extraordinary effort by staff in keeping the Council's services running during the lockdown caused by the pandemic. Plans were now being made to step up services, starting with J2 and the Brampton Museum. The new recycling service was now underway, with residents starting to use it this week. Delivery of this new service had been brought forward as a result of the Coronavirus and the Leader stated that the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling - Councillor Trevor Johnson was full of praise for it.

Councillor Jill Waring stated that the Museum and J2 had been missed and they would reopen in July. Officers from J2 were thanked for their help in manning the Council's helpline throughout the pandemic. Measures were being put into place to ensure the safety of customers at the facilities.

Councillor Northcott thanked all of the Council's Services, in particular Recycling and Waste who had done a great job, maintaining the service which had received many positive reports. The Executive Director of Operational Services and his team were thanked for their hard work.

The Leader made reference to the Planning team who had been processing and making decisions on Planning applications throughout the lockdown period.

Councillor Sweeney added that the Council had coped with the pandemic fantastically and thanked all involved for maintaining the services.

Councillor Maxfield thanked everyone for the 'business as usual' for all services, especially Recycling and Waste.

The Leader stated that the Council continued to be proactive and was looking at services post-lockdown. The Leader added that Councillor Johnson would wish to pay tribute to the Bereavement team who had done a great job in difficult circumstances.

*Financial Recovery:*

The Leader referred Members to paragraph 2.25 of the report stating that the pandemic had impacted greatly on all Councils finances across the country. The Government had provided £1.3m funding to Newcastle but there were still challenges to be met.

Councillor Sweeney stated that businesses were now starting to open up in the town centre which indicated that Newcastle was now on its way to recovery following the pandemic.

The Leader referred Members to paragraph 2.19 of the report and advised that the Council would continue to lobby the Government for further support to address Covid-19 costs and the loss of income with the impact from Business Rates and Council Tax collection.

The Back on Track – Recovery Plan which gave details of the process was appended to the report.

**Resolved:** That the report be noted and the work being undertaken to recover from the pandemic be endorsed.

5. **LOCAL PLANNING ENFORCEMENT PLAN**

A report was submitted to Cabinet seeking the approval of an up to date Local Planning Enforcement Plan for the Council.

Councillor Northcott advised that it had been eleven years since the previous update and there had been a lot of changes during that time such as Community Protection Notices giving new powers to Local Authorities. There would still be work to be done on the Plan to keep it up to date.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraph 1.7 of the report which outlined the key sections of the Plan. The Plan, which was appended to the report, sets out the framework in detail.

Members would have a clear pathway of how the Council responded to enforcement matters and the Plan would send out a message to those who sought to breach Planning Regulations - that the Council would not tolerate such actions.

The Leader endorsed Councillor Northcott adding that some enforcement cases had been ongoing for many years and the Council needed an up to date Enforcement Plan that could continue to be updated regularly.

Councillor Northcott stated that the Enforcement Protocol for Members was up and running and had received a positive reception from Members. In addition, a weekly bulletin which was sent to Members gave them the opportunity to look at enforcement issues within their Ward.

**Resolved:** That the proposed Local Planning Enforcement Plan be approved for introduction and implementation in the Borough.

6. **FORWARD PLAN**



Consideration was given to the Forward Plan which listed upcoming key decisions to be made by the Cabinet.

**Resolved:** That the Forward Plan be received.

7. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Business.

**COUNCILLOR SIMON TAGG**  
**Chair**

Meeting concluded at 2.35 pm

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## NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

### EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET

Choose an item.

08 July 2020

**Report Title: Back on Track - Coronavirus Pandemic Recovery Plan Update**

**Submitted by: Chief Executive**

**Portfolios: All**

**Ward(s) affected: All**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

To inform the Cabinet of the actions being taken across the Council to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic and to recover from its impacts.

#### **Recommendation**

1. **It is recommended that Cabinet note this report and endorse the work being undertaken to recover from the pandemic.**

#### **Reasons**

To allow Cabinet to publicly consider the actions being undertaken in order to recover from the pandemic.

#### 1. **Background**

1.1 Cabinet has received monthly reports detailing the Council's response to the Coronavirus pandemic and, latterly, progress in delivering its recovery plan. As work progresses nationally to ease the lockdown restrictions, this report provides the current position regarding the recovery effort.

1.2 The recovery plan continues to be closely monitored by the Leader and Cabinet Members who are leading on specific work streams, with the Incident Management Team continuing to manage the day to day recovery effort alongside the ongoing elements of incident response which continue to be required.

#### 2. **The Recovery Plan**

2.1 This report addresses the Council's current position across five areas of the recovery work:

- Reopening Safe, Successful Retail Centres
- Supporting Health & Wellbeing
- Economic Recovery

- Stepping-up Council Services
- Financial Recovery

### **Reopening Safe, Successful Retail Centres**

2.2 Ahead of the re-opening of general retail on 15<sup>th</sup> June, arrangements were put in place to facilitate the safe re-opening of Newcastle and Kidsgrove town centres and the various district centres across the borough.

2.3 To assist in getting Newcastle town centre back on track, the Council has:

- Provided businesses with advice regarding Covid secure arrangements that they would be required to implement;
- Deployed a range of signage to encourage social distancing;
- With the Business Improvement District, provided a visible presence in the town to encourage social distancing and identify any businesses which require additional advice or locations where securing social distancing is problematic;
- Provided market traders with six weeks of trading free of pitch fees;
- Launched a “Shop Local” campaign to encourage support for local businesses.

2.4 From 4<sup>th</sup> July a further range of businesses will be permitted to open, including those in the hospitality sector. As with the first wave of businesses to re-open, officers are providing advice to this second wave of businesses so that they can re-open safely and contribute to the economic recovery of the borough.

### **Supporting Health & Wellbeing**

2.5 The Council continues to operate a helpline and online facility for individuals to reach out for assistance. The helpline is staffed by colleagues from J2 and links into the national and County support arrangements, as well as support arrangements established with the Realise Foundation and Support Staffordshire. Whilst demand for this service has greatly reduced in terms of requests for service, there has been a moderate increase in calls seeking advice on the implications of the easing of lockdown. As we progress towards the pausing of shielding in August, it is anticipated that demand for advice will continue for a further period, and arrangements are being made to continue the help line for the time being.

2.6 Homeless & Rough Sleepers - in March the Government required District and Borough Councils to provide emergency accommodation for any rough sleepers in their area and provided funds to support this. The Council is currently providing emergency accommodation for 17 individuals in a mix of bed and breakfast and range of temporary accommodation, with support tiered according to need.

2.7 Work is continuing to ensure ongoing support for this cohort, in line with Government guidance. It is anticipated that this will be a significant financial pressure for the Council and, whilst the Government has announced funding to support homeless individuals, it is as yet unknown what this Council's share of that funding will be.

### **Economic Recovery**

2.8 The Council has paid out approximately £20m to around 1700 businesses under the Government's grant schemes for small businesses and businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. Applications for this have now more or less stopped, although the scheme remains open for any businesses yet to apply.

2.9 The initial grant programmes were specifically related to the rateable value of the business premises, and as such excluded businesses which operated from shared premises where they paid a rent inclusive of rates (eg a business centre, or shared office space). To support this cohort of businesses, the Government launched an additional scheme, with a degree of local discretion, including on the level of grants paid. This discretionary grant fund was launched at the end of May with the expectation that grants will be paid to businesses in June. The Council has so far paid out approximately £400,000 to 85 businesses under the discretionary scheme.

2.10 The Council's economic recovery programme will involve a mix of immediate direct developments, alongside longer term strategic initiatives. Elsewhere in this agenda, Cabinet will consider the Council's bid under the Future High Streets Fund for the regeneration of Newcastle Town Centre, with a specific focus on the Ryecroft site.

2.11 In addition to this, extensive work with partners is continuing to develop the Town Deal proposals for both Newcastle and Kidsgrove. The Council is also bringing forward key sites for development including Sidmouth Avenue and the Newcastle mortuary site.

### **Stepping-up Council Services**

2.12 Government guidance remains that wherever possible employers should facilitate staff to work from home. Since the commencement of the lockdown, staff who have been able to effectively work from home have done so. This has meant that the majority of services have continued with minimal disruption. However, a number of services have been significantly impacted either due to the risk associated with continuing business as usual, the additional demands placed on the service, or due to Government guidance. The services experiencing the most significant change are:

- **J2** – remains closed to the public. The earliest this facility is likely to re-open will be mid-July. Arrangements are in place to facilitate a phased re-opening once Government guidance permits such centres to re-open. A phased re-opening will be necessary to ensure that ongoing social distancing can be observed whilst the requirement to do so remains.

- **Museum** – this facility is now scheduled for re-opening, but with restrictions in place around numbers permitted in the building; we anticipate reduced opening hours and a more restricted access to the collection than normal.
- **Castle House & Kidsgrove Customer Contact facilities** – closed to the public, with all services being provided online or by phone. Performance of the customer contact service has remained strong in terms of time taken to answer calls.
- **Bereavement** – demand for service has returned to the usual level; however, the numbers able to attend funerals remains limited to ten. This is currently being reviewed in the light of the “1m with mitigation” guidance.
- **Taxi Licensing** – the service is focusing on supporting existing drivers, with no new licence applications currently being processed. Taxi testing has been suspended. Nevertheless, through holding remote licensing hearings and other measures in place, there remains an appropriately licenced adequate taxi and hackney carriage fleet in operation.

2.13 A review of service readiness to return to normal service as part of the recovery plan has identified the following services where challenges are expected to either continue or, in some instances, increase in the coming months.

- **Inspections and enforcement activity** – in a number of areas either the health and safety issues presented by Covid, or the temporary closure of businesses, has meant that officers are working through a significant backlog of casework. This is across a number of Council service areas including housing grants, food premises inspections, planning enforcement, pest control etc.
- **Homeless Support** – having responded successfully to the Government call to provide accommodation to all rough sleepers and others presenting as homeless, there is a requirement to sustain that provision and the associated support on an ongoing basis. Demand during this time has been approximately double the normal level, and this presents pressure both on availability of places and the associated costs.
- **Taxi driver and vehicle licencing & inspections** – As highlighted above, this is a service significantly impacted by the pandemic in terms of service delivery. As a consequence, there is a backlog of both current and new driver/vehicle licence applications. In addition, vehicle inspections continue to be suspended and, as such, a significant demand for inspections can be anticipated placing pressure on the Garage Workshop.
- **Licensing Act Applications** – Government has amended the approach to granting certain licences in an effort to facilitate bars, cafes and restaurants to service food and drink outside. This has included significantly reducing the time to process licence variations (eg consultation period for pavement licences reduced from 28 days to 7 days and presumed approval if not processed within 14 days). It is anticipated that the Council will receive a significant number of such applications to be processed rapidly.
- **Local Outbreak Control measures** – this is a new responsibility for the Council involving, primarily, the Environmental Health service which will have a significant role in managing any local Covid outbreaks associated with businesses or certain high risk premises. The scale of the demand associated with this is as yet unknown, but

potentially significant. The Council has received £50k Government funding via the County Council to support this function.

- **Other Pressures** – in addition to addressing the service pressures above, the Council is responding to the financial impact of the pandemic by refreshing its Medium Term Financial Plan, and accelerating work on the Digital Strategy and Commercialisation. This will be an additional work pressure across the Council alongside the service specific issues. The Council is also currently rolling out the new recycling service.

2.14 The challenges identified fall disproportionately on a number of services. Environmental Services, which covers licencing & environmental health and is leading on the air quality project on behalf of the Borough and Stoke-on-Trent City Council, is likely to be the focus for significant additional demands. This is under constant review by the Incident Management Team and Cabinet, which will direct priorities and resourcing.

## Financial Recovery

2.15 The pandemic continues to have a significant impact on the Council's financial position through a mix of lost income and additional costs. As reported at May's Cabinet meeting, Government funding of £1.3m has been secured, which has reduced the immediate pressure on Council finances. Signals from Government indicate that some further package of support is likely to be forthcoming, although the timing and nature of this is unknown at this time.

2.16 The Council's revenue budget relies on service income from fees and charges of c£850k per month across a wide range of services, with a significant proportion coming from J2 and car parking. The Council has been actively monitoring the impact of the lockdown and the working practices required to ensure safe practice. Across the business, it is estimated that net income of c£276k will be lost during each month that the lockdown prevails. This is slightly lower than reported in May and reflects increased income from recycling credits as well as action taken to minimise associated costs.

2.17 In addition to the loss of income, the Council is experiencing additional costs in some areas, amounting to c£147k per month. Some of these costs are expected to reduce over the coming months as the new waste and recycling service is rolled out. The Council has submitted a £110k claim to HMRC for the costs of furloughing staff unable to work up to the middle of June and payment has been received. This will partially offset some of the additional costs incurred to date.

2.18 In the longer term, any impact on either business rates collection (due to business failure) or Council Tax collection (due to non-payment) may materialise in 2021/22. A 10% reduction in the collection rate would cost the Council £180k per month in lost collection fund revenues.

2.19 The consequences of the Coronavirus on the Council's financial position will depend significantly on the duration of the lockdown and on the scale and timing of further Government financial support. The Council is actively lobbying our local Members of Parliament and through national networks as part of the wider public sector family, to make the case for further Government support to address Covid-19 related costs and loss of

income. Particular emphasis in our lobbying has been the impact on Business Rate and Council Tax collection.

2.20 In response to the Covid-19 crisis, the Secretary of State has announced that for the 2019/20 accounting period the period of publication of authority accounts is to be extended from 30 September to 30 November 2020. This amendment will affect the whole chain of publication requirements in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 not just the final publication date, the intention being that the date for the public inspection of draft accounts will move to the first 10 working days of September. This in turn means that the accounts themselves will not need to be signed off until 31 August.

2.21 The draft accounts will be presented to Audit & Standards Committee for approval at its July meeting. The external audit of the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts is planned to commence in July leading up to the production of the auditor's final audit findings report.

2.22 The full Statement of Accounts will be submitted to Audit & Standards Committee for formal approval at the 29 September meeting, when members will have an opportunity to review the audited accounts.

2.23 As noted in this and previous reports the Covid pandemic has had an impact on the Council's finances. For the financial year ending March 2020, the reduced income and increased costs has resulted in an adverse variance of £207k, with this sum being transferred from the General Fund Reserve. This will reduce the General Fund Reserve from £1.448m to £1.241m, but overall reserves at year end stand at £3,596m, up almost £800k on the budget forecast. Cabinet Members will use the detail of the outturn position as an important baseline for refreshing the Medium Term Financial Plan, and shaping the financial recovery activity as outlined below.

2.24 As part of the recovery plan, Cabinet has agreed a specific work stream focussed on financial recovery. These include:

- Ongoing of furlough of staff where there is no ability or need to redeploy;
- Benchmarking of Council service performance and budgets;
- Review of performance against the Council Plan to date, and confirmation of Council priorities post Covid;
- Refresh of the Medium Term Financial Plan in the light of the above.

### 3. **Proposal**

3.1 Cabinet are recommended to note this report.

### 4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

4.1 This report serves to brief Cabinet on the work being undertaken to address the Coronavirus pandemic, and the financial impact that the pandemic is having on the Council, and the recovery arrangements being put in place.



5. **Options Considered**

5.1 N/A

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 Addressing the impact of Coronavirus locally has involved adjustment to some service provision. When making such changes there are a number of legal and statutory implications to take into account. These are all appropriately factored into decision taking by the Incident Management Team.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 None directly arising from this report.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 The Council's General Fund balance as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 was £1.548m. Careful monitoring of the financial position will be required over coming weeks and months leading to prompt corrective action where necessary to ensure that reserves are not exhausted and the Council remains in a position of being able to deliver a balanced budget position in the current financial year and beyond.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 The Coronavirus pandemic, in the round, represents a significant risk to the Council. This report sets out how that risk is being addressed.

10. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

10.1 N/A

11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 This is not a key decision.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 None

13. **List of Appendices**

None

14. **Background Papers**

14.1 None



## NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

### EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO

Cabinet  
08 July 2020

**Report Title:** Newcastle Town Centre Future High Street Fund Submission

**Submitted by:** Executive Director – Commercial Development and Economic Growth

**Portfolios:** Corporate and Service Improvement, and Partnerships

**Ward(s) affected:** Town

#### Purpose of the Report

To set out the key elements of the Newcastle Town Centre Future High Street Fund submission and seek Cabinet approval for submission of the funding bid to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government.

#### Recommendation

1. That Cabinet notes and approves the key elements of the Future High Street Fund Business Case submission.
2. That the Executive Director Commercial Development and Economic Growth is authorised to work with the Leader of the Council to approve the finalised detail of the Future High Street Fund Business Case bid prior to its submission to Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government.
3. At the point that Covid-19 measures allow, further public and stakeholder engagement is undertaken to build on the initial consultation that was undertaken in March 2020.

#### Reasons

To pursue a healthy future for Newcastle town centre as the heart of economic and community life in the Borough whilst ensuring that funding opportunities are maximised in achieving Council Plan objectives.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 In December 2018 the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced the Future High Street Fund opportunity. This opportunity recognised that High Streets and town centres lie at the heart of communities and local economies, creating jobs, nurturing small businesses and injecting billions of pounds into the economy. The Fund recognised that many High Streets and town centres faced challenges, including the switch to online shopping and the need to consider the function of town centres as more than purely retail centres to include, leisure opportunities, living, access to services and the opportunity for community interaction.
- 1.2 The Council responded by submitting a bid for Newcastle town centre. The stage one bid an 'expression of interest' stage set out some of the challenges faced by Newcastle town centre, including:

- a. A very small residential population within the town centre core;
  - b. Competition from other centres in North Staffordshire, both in-town and out of town and leisure shopping destinations;
  - c. Poor connectivity with the surrounding residential areas;
  - d. The challenge of online shopping;
  - e. Rising vacancy rates in the town centre and decline of the street market which had become the focus of efforts to reenergise it;
  - f. The challenge presented by the empty Ryecroft site where the retail scheme originally envisaged for the site is no longer appropriate.
  - g. The need to create an attractive destination for residents and visitors to the town capitalising on the attractive architecture and welcoming ambience of the town.
- 1.3 The stage one bid focussed on the opportunity of the Ryecroft site. This key strategic site had been assembled to take advantage of previous proposals for a retail and student living scheme that had received planning consent but ultimately in view of shifting retail property market conditions had not progressed to development.
- 1.4 In August 2019, the Council was invited to progress to stage two of the Future High Street Fund bidding process with the submission of a Business Case for Newcastle town centre. The Business Case is to be submitted in line with MHCLG published guidance that sets out the requirements and framework of the information to be submitted, following a five stage business case process.
- 1.5 To support development of the detailed Business Case for a phase two submission the Council received a grant made under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 to bring in additional capacity to develop the bid. In October 2019 Cabinet approved the procurement of consultancy support for this. Following a competitive procurement process, Peter Brett Associates (Now Stantec (UK)) was appointed to support development of the phase two bid and since then officers have been working with Stantec to develop the bid in line with MHCLG guidelines.

## 2. **Issues**

- 2.1 The Future High Street Fund presents a significant opportunity for investment in Newcastle town centre with which to drive an uplift in its status as an economic, community and social hub for residents, visitors and those who work in the town centre.
- 2.2 Following further consultation with MHCLG in support of developing the submission for Newcastle town centre the scope and vision of the stage two bid has been widened and lifted to encompass the core of the town centre including:
- a. The Ryecroft site as a key strategic anchor for the town with a mix of employment and residential uses and a new modern and efficient multi storey car park that caters for the future of more environmentally friendly vehicles complemented by new public space and more direct pedestrian connections to the residential areas at the North of the town centre.
  - b. Creation of a series of linked plazas and public spaces with attractive pedestrian and cycle routes connecting the Ryecroft area with the heart of the town and the revitalised market using the public spaces to encourage people to dwell and enjoy the ambience of the town centre.
  - c. Complementing an improved offer from the street market, to open up space for visiting markets and events and potential creation of a pocket park in the heart of the town.

- d. The potential to open up a development opportunity on the current Midway multi storey car park site that creates an opportunity to both address the poor quality pedestrian environment at Midway and to tie into the developing residential area surrounding the multi storey car park.

2.3 The emerging bid sets out the overall vision for improving the function and connectivity of key elements within the town centre that will be developed in stages as funding opportunities emerge.

2.4 In early 2020, the Council commissioned Catherine Ralph of All The Small Things to undertake public consultation on some of the emerging themes within the stage two Future High Street Fund bid. This was in the form of a bespoke two day consultation in the town centre. Members of the public were invited to talk through and respond to questions with the aim of capturing qualitative data. Whilst the results showed broad support for the emerging themes in the Future High Street Fund proposals the consultation process was unfortunately cut short as lockdown measures were introduced. It will therefore be desirable to undertake further public and stakeholder engagement as the stages of delivery are brought forward.

2.5 The submission deadline for the phase two bid was originally set for the end of June 2020. However, in light of the national response to Covid-19 and the role that Local Authorities have undertaken in that response MHCLG extended the opportunity to submit funding bids to the end of July 2020.

### 3. **Proposal**

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes and approves the key elements of the Future High Street Fund Business Case submission.
- 3.2 That the Executive Director Commercial Development and Economic Growth is authorised to work with the Leader of the Council to approve the finalised detail of the Future High Street Fund Business Case bid prior to its submission to MHCLG.
- 3.3 At the point that Covid-19 measures allow, that further public and stakeholder engagement is undertaken to build on the initial consultation that was undertaken in March 2020.

### 4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

- 4.1 To ensure submission of a Future High Street Fund Business Case submission by the deadline date and maximise the opportunity for investment through the Future High Street Fund.
- 4.2 To use this Government funding opportunity to support delivery of Council Plan objectives.
- 4.3 To uplift the status of Newcastle town centre as the heart of economic, social and community life in the Borough.
- 4.4 To gain support to address the abnormal costs associated with the demolition of the former Civic Offices building at Ryecroft (due to asbestos), without which this site is unlikely to be a viable proposition for development by the private sector on its own.

### 5. **Options Considered**

5.1 The Future High Street Fund opportunity is significant for Newcastle town centre. To attract the investment on offer the Council needs to submit a funding bid to MHCLG. If this is not done then an opportunity to use this external funding opportunity to support delivery of Council Plan objectives will be missed.

5.2 Should the Council chose not to pursue this funding opportunity then it would be in a position of needing to attract substantial funding from other sources to deliver the key elements proposed in the funding bid. This would not be in line with Council Plan objectives or the powers given to Local Authorities to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their areas.

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

6.1 The Local Government Act 2000 gives local authorities the powers to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas.

## 7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 The nature of the project is intended to seek benefits for all people who use the town centre and to support the economic and social health of Newcastle town centre as a destination.

## 8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 The Future High Street Funding bid represents the opportunity to attract in the region of £13 million external funding to Newcastle town centre from the Future High Street Fund. It is anticipated that activities proposed in the bid will generate additional funding from other sources such as the private sector.

8.2 It is anticipated that the Council will use some of its land and assets to support delivery of the Future High Street Fund. This may require re-alignment of existing commitments within the Council's capital programme and investment in line with the Council's previously agreed Commercial Investment Strategy.

## 9. **Major Risks**

9.1 A full programme risk assessment is presented in the detail of the bid.

9.2 Should the bid not be submitted, or be unsuccessful then the risk is that the Council loses an opportunity for significant investment in Newcastle town centre.

## 10. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

10.1 Newcastle town centre is a highly accessible location, encouraging greater use of its land and assets enhances its role as a centre for services, leisure, retail and living and its connection to local residents.

## 11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 Activities within the Future High Street Fund bid are within the Town Ward although the benefits will be enjoyed by residents from a wider area of the Borough.

11.2 Should the bid be successful the Council will be re-shaping land within its ownership for a more productive use however this will require some expenditure in line with the Council's previously approved Commercial Investment Strategy.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 16 October 2019, Cabinet concerning development of the second stage FHSF bid and procurement of consultancy support.

12.2 December 2019, Economy Environment & Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Town Centre Funding Update (information item)

13. **List of Appendices**

13.1 Draft images of projects within the Future High Street Fund bid.

14. **Background Papers**

14.1 None





## Development Site 1

### Retirement Living with Office/Café & Public Open Space

Site Area: approx 8,000 m<sup>2</sup>

#### Office Building

Area: 2,200m<sup>2</sup> / 23,680ft<sup>2</sup> (all floors)

Storeys: 2

Description: entrance / cafe / teaching / informal meeting / offices.

#### Apartment Building

Area: 8,500m<sup>2</sup> / 91,490ft<sup>2</sup> (all floors)

Storeys: 4 / 5

Apartments: 75 - 90

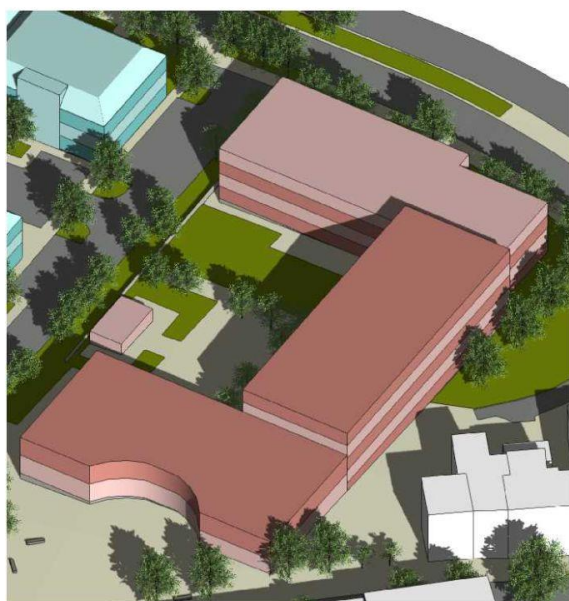
Description: residential with entrance / flexible social space

#### Parking

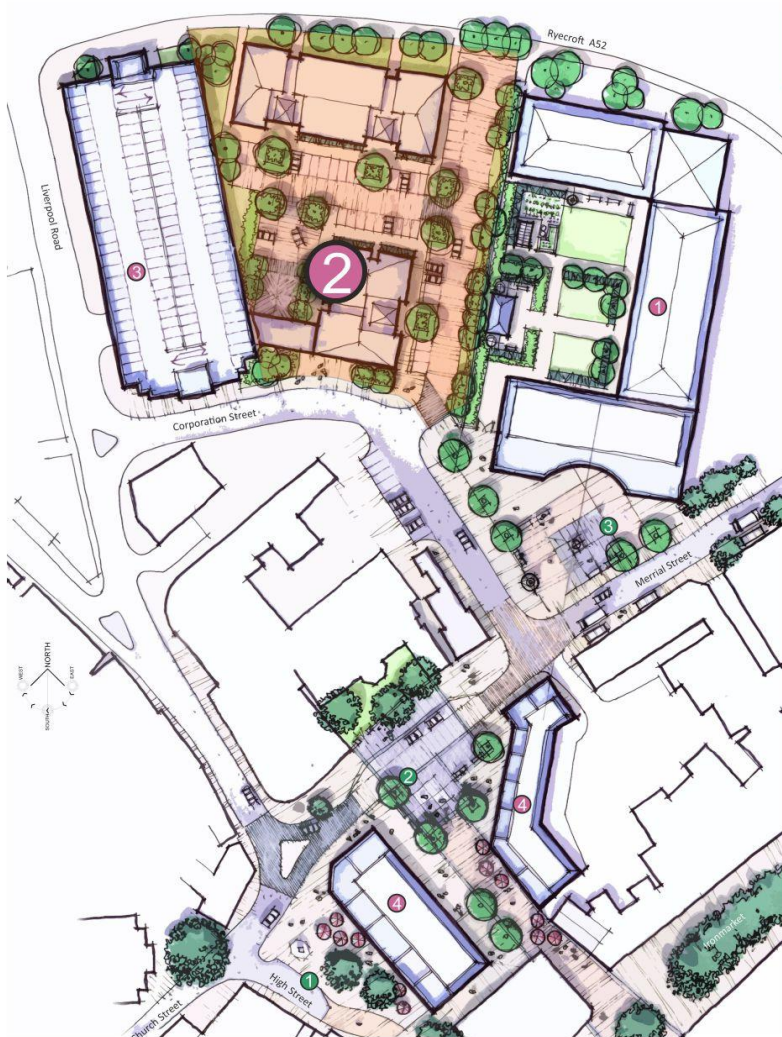
Undercroft for office + apartments

Spaces: 150

Site area: 8,160m<sup>2</sup> / 87,830ft<sup>2</sup>







## Development Site 2

**Residential with option for flexible community business space**  
(medium density development)

Site Area: 5,300m<sup>2</sup>

Gross development all floors 3,100 m<sup>2</sup>

Storeys: 3

Building Footprint: 1,584 m<sup>2</sup>

On street parking for 42 cars

### Option 1

All units @64 m<sup>2</sup> per unit

Ground floor: 12 x 2 bedroom units

Remaining 2 floors: 15 units per floor

**Total: 42 units**

### Option 2

Each floor: 7 x 2 bedroom @64 m<sup>2</sup> per unit + 6 x 3 bedroom @ 96 m<sup>2</sup> per unit

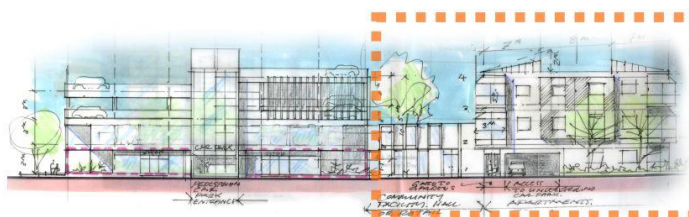
**Total: 39 unit**

### Higher density development scenario

84 no. + Apartments 4no. floors with undercroft parking approx 105 spaces

### Lower density development scenario

25 no. town houses with ground level parking



*Elevation of car park and residential development from Corporation Street*





## Development Site 3

**512m<sup>2</sup> Car park with option for flexible community/business space**

Site Area: approx 4,000 m<sup>2</sup>

Car park 4 Split level decks (4 floors overall)  
with flexible community/business space to ground floor at front (Corporation St. frontage)

Site Area: 3,095 m<sup>2</sup>

Building Footprint: 2,600 m<sup>2</sup>

Approx 400 car park spaces  
(incl. private spaces for business units)



*Elevation of car park and residential development from Corporation Street*



## Development Site 4

Residential with flexible community  
business space/retail at ground level

Site Area: approx 3,450 m<sup>2</sup>

### Block A

GF Retail/flexible  
community/businessspace: 835 m<sup>2</sup>  
3 Floors Residential  
Apartments: 24  
Gross development all floors: 3,165 m<sup>2</sup>  
Storeys: 4  
Building Footprint: 835 m<sup>2</sup>  
Apartment size: approx 55 m<sup>2</sup> - 70 m<sup>2</sup>

### Block B

GF Retail/flexible community/business  
space: 665 m<sup>2</sup>  
3 Floors Residential  
Apartments: up to 33  
Gross development all floors: 2,495 m<sup>2</sup>  
Storeys: 4  
Building Footprint: 665 m<sup>2</sup>  
Apartment size: approx 55 m<sup>2</sup> - 70 m<sup>2</sup>

**Total Units** up to 57 units  
**Gross incl. GF** 5,660 m<sup>2</sup>

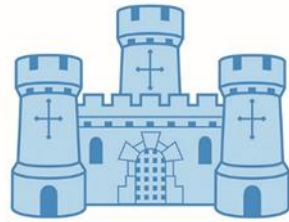








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**NEWCASTLE·UNDER·LYME**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **Cabinet Forward Plan: Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council**

#### **Notice of Key Decisions to be taken under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings & Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012**

This Plan gives 28 days' notice of Key Decisions which we are expecting to take over the next few months. Councils cannot take Key Decisions without first giving 28 days' notice, unless an urgent decision is required. Urgent Key Decisions may be taken under the urgency procedures set out in the Council's Constitution. A decision notice for each Key Decision made is published within 6 days of it having been made.

"Key decisions" are defined as those Executive (Cabinet) decisions which are likely:

- a. to result in the Council incurring expenditure or making savings of £100,000 or more (in the case of Revenue) and £250,000 or more (in the case of Capital); and/or
- b. to be significant in terms of the effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.

This Forward Plan also contains details of other important Cabinet decisions that we are expecting to take even if they do not meet this definition.

Whilst the majority of these decisions taken at meetings held in public, some decisions may be taken in private meetings because they deal with confidential information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. If we intend to take a decision in private, that will be noted below with reasons.

If you object to a decision being taken in private, you can tell us why by emailing [DemocraticServices@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](mailto:DemocraticServices@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk) or contacting the address below. Any representations received at least 8 working days before the meeting will be published with the agenda together with a statement of the Council's response. Any representations received after this time will be reported verbally to the meeting.

The Cabinet is made up of the Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members with the following portfolios:

Leader of the Council (Corporate & Service Improvement, People & Partnerships)	Councillor Simon Tagg
Deputy Leader & Cabinet Portfolio Holder (Finance & Efficiency)	Councillor Stephen Sweeney
Cabinet Portfolio Holder (Community Safety & Well Being)	Councillor Helena Maxfield
Cabinet Portfolio Holder (Environment & Recycling)	Councillor Trevor Johnson
Cabinet Portfolio Holder (Leisure, Culture & Heritage)	Councillor Jill Waring
Cabinet Portfolio Holder (Planning & Growth)	Councillor Paul Northcott

#### Exempt Information Categories under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under the authority
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals an authority proposes;
  - a. to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
  - b. to make an order or direction under any enactment
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of a crime

Copies of the Council's Constitution, agendas and reports relevant to any key decision may be accessed on the Council's website [www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk) or may be viewed during normal office hours. Copies or extracts can be obtained on payment of a fee (unless the publication contains exempt information).

For all enquiries, please contact:-

**The Chief Executive's Directorate, Castle House, Barracks Road  
Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 1BL  
Telephone 01782 742222 Email: [DemocraticServices@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](mailto:DemocraticServices@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)**



<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>Brief Description of Report</b>	<b>Cabinet Portfolio</b>	<b>Intended Decision Date</b>	<b>Relevant Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>Wards Affected</b>	<b>Reason for Determining in Private Session (if applicable)</b>
Future High Streets Fund	To consider the priorities for the Future High Streets Fund bid	Corporate and Service Improvement, People and Partnerships	8 July 2020	Economy, Environment and Place		
Provisional Financial Outturn 2019/20	To report on the provisional financial outturn	Finance & Efficiency	8 July 2020	Finance, Assets and Performance	All Wards	N/A
Knutton Masterplan	To consider a report on the master planning of Knutton village.	Planning and Growth	9 September 2020	Economy, Environment and Place	Knutton and Silverdale	N/A
Crematorium Grounds Extension	Proposal to design an extension to the existing Crematorium Grounds	Environment and Recycling	9 September 2020	Economy, Environment and Place	Bradwell	N/A
Town Centre Plans	To update on Future High-street Fund and Town Deals	Corporate and Service Improvement, People and Partnerships	9 September 2020	Economy, Environment and Place	All Wards	N/A
Open Space	An addendum to the existing	Environment	9 September	Economy, Environment	All Wards	N/A

Strategy Addendum	Open Space Strategy is required to ensure that the strategy remains current through the life of the Joint Local Plan.	and Recycling	2020	and Place		
Affordable Funerals	To consider introducing affordable funerals.	Environment and Recycling	9 September 2020	Economy, Environment and Place	All Wards	N/A
Air Quality OBC	To authorise the submission of an air quality outline business case	Environment and Recycling	9 September 2020	Economy, Environment and Place	All Wards	N/A
Gym Refurbishments	To authorise refurbishments of the J2 gym facility	Leisure, Culture & Heritage	9 September 2020	Economy, Environment and Place	Town	N/A
Q1 Finance and Performance Report	To receive a report in relation to Q1 of 2020	Corporate and Service Improvement, People and Partnerships	9 September 2020	Finance, Assets and Performance	All Wards	N/A
Self-Build Register	To receive a report on the publication of a register of land for Self-Build opportunities	Planning and Growth	9 September 2020	Economy, Environment and Place	All Wards	N/A
Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22	To receive proposals for the 2021/22 MTFS	Finance & Efficiency	9 September 2020	Finance, Assets and Performance	All Wards	N/A
Environmental Sustainability Strategy	To consider action to secure environmental sustainability for the Council	Environment & Recycling	October 2020	Economy, Environment and Place	All Wards	N/A