

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 16th December, 2020

Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

Present: Mayor - Councillor John Cooper (Chair)

Councillors:	Simon White	Simon Tagg	Allison Gardner
	Ian Wilkes	Silvia Burgess	Barry Panter
	Gillian Williams	Mike Stubbs	Ruth Wright
	John Williams	Amelia Rout	Gary White
	Andrew Fear	John Tagg	Jill Waring
	Tony Kearon	Paul Northcott	Andrew Fox-Hewitt
	Paul Waring	Bert Proctor	Brian Johnson
	Mark Holland	Sylvia Dymond	Sue Moffat
	Julie Cooper	Trevor Johnson	Jennifer Cooper
	Marion Reddish	Andrew Parker	Gillian Burnett
	Kyle Robinson	Sarah Pickup	Helena Maxfield
	Elizabeth Shenton	Mark Olszewski	Graham Hutton
	Gill Heesom	Dave Jones	
	Stephen Sweeney	David Grocott	

Officers:	David Adams	Executive Director Operational Services
	Geoff Durham	Mayor's Secretary / Member Support Officer
	Jan Willis	Interim Executive Director - Resources and Support Services and Section 151 Officer
	Martin Hamilton	Chief Executive
	Simon McEneny	Executive Director - Commercial Development & Economic Growth
	Daniel Dickinson	Head of Legal & Governance /Monitoring Officer
	David Elkington	Head of Customer and Digital Services

Note: In line with Government directions for the CV-19 pandemic, this meeting was conducted using a hybrid method through video conferencing and attendance in person, whilst observing social distancing - 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 Walklate.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September, 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor asked for ten Members to sign a nomination to award the Freedom of the Borough to the Royal Stoke University Hospital.

The Mayor's Charity Fund had, as yet, not raised any money due to the current pandemic and the restrictions that were in place. The Mayor was hopeful to make progress when the restrictions were eased.

5. DESIGNATION OF A SECTION 151 OFFICER

Consideration was given to a report seeking to designate an officer as the Borough Council's Section 151 Officer.

The Leader moved the recommendation and advised that Sarah Wilkes had joined the Authority in 2007 as Principal Accountant and became Head of Finance in 2019. Council was now asked to appoint Sarah Wilkes as the Council's Section 151 Officer.

Councillor Sweeney seconded the recommendation saying that it was nice to see an existing member of staff being promoted internally.

Resolved: That, in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, Council designates Sarah Wilkes as the Council's Section 151 Officer.

6. NOTIFICATION OF A CHANGE TO THE CONSTITUTION - UPDATED JOB TITLE

Consideration was given to a report advising Members of an update to a job title in the Constitution.

The Leader moved the recommendation advising Council that the post, referred to in some parts of the Constitution, no longer existed and that the new job title had been applied and was shown in the appendix attached to the report.

Councillor Sweeney seconded the recommendation.

Resolved: That, references in the Constitution to 'The Head of Business Improvement, Central Services and Partnerships' be changed to 'Head of Legal and Governance'.

7. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT DECISION TAKEN - ADOPTION OF A STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Consideration was given to a report regarding an urgent decision, taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with Group Leaders regarding the adoption of a Statement of Licensing Policy.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency, Councillor Sweeney moved the recommendation advising Council that the previous Policy had expired on 25 November, 2020. The adoption of the new Policy had been due to go to the 18 November Council which had been cancelled due to Covid 19 restrictions. Therefore the Chief Executive took an urgent decision.

The Leader seconded the recommendation.

Resolved: That the urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Group Leaders, on 18 November, 2020 be noted.

8. ADOPTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE ALLIANCE (IHRA) DEFINITION OF ANTI-SEMITISM.

Consideration was given to a report asking Council to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of Anti-Semitism.

The Leader moved the recommendation stating that this was an important document which had been taken to Cabinet in October.

The Government had asked all Local Authorities to sign up to the document and Newcastle would adopt the IHRA as set out in the agenda. Over a year ago, Councillor Johnson had brought a Motion to Council relating to this and this would finish the process.

Councillor Stubbs seconded the recommendation stating that he found all types of discrimination abhorrent and although we now lived in an age of enlightenment there were still some individuals who were discriminatory. Councillor Stubbs stated that he had great pleasure in seconding the recommendation and was delighted that Newcastle was joining the 250 plus, local authorities who had adopted this definition.

Resolved: That Council adopts the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of Anti-Semitism.

9. STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader, Councillor Simon Tagg submitted a report which provided an update to Members on the activities and decisions of the Cabinet, together with the Forward Plan.

The Statement was taken a paragraph at a time to allow for questions to be asked.

Paragraph 2:

Councillor Julie Cooper asked the Leader for an update of the number of cases of Covid-19 in the Borough.

The Leader advised that the number of cases had fallen dramatically in the Borough over the past couple of weeks, which was now at around 190 cases. The numbers had also fallen in all Staffordshire districts. The City, however still had a high number of cases. Testing was being rolled out across the area at Kidsgrove Town Hall, Bradwell Lodge and the Ryecroft site.

Councillor Fox-Hewitt referred to the extra leave awarded to all officers and expressed thanks to the Trade Unions and those in the Joint Consultative Committee for recognising all staff in the Council for continuing to deliver a first class service throughout the current pandemic.

The Leader echoed Councillor Fox-Hewitt's comments and thanks to staff, whether working from home or on the front line for the work that they had done.

Councillor Gardner asked about the roll out of the Covid vaccine in Newcastle and how residents could have access to these. Also, were there to be any priorities - especially the vulnerable and elderly.

The Leader advised that he had sent an email out to all Members with details which he had received from the County Outbreak Board and said that he would send it out again, along with any other information that was received.

Councillor Parker stated that pubs and restaurants were suffering as a result of the pandemic and asked what help the Council and its partners were giving.

The Leader agreed that the hospitality sector was suffering and especially at the current time which was an important period for them. The Council had given grants to businesses and some were continuing to be given out. The Leader, along with other Leaders across the County had written to the Prime Minister asking him to consider hospitality and what needs to be done to help those businesses. The Leaders would be writing again in the next couple of days to suggest a test and dine philosophy which could be rolled out to enable some businesses to reopen.

There was a summit of Council Leaders and MP's who were lobbying the Government to give funding to help hospitality during the period that they were closed.

Paragraph 3.1:

Councillor Paul Waring asked the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency to update the Council with the figure given by the Government to support the Council during Covid-19.

Councillor Sweeney advised that the Council had received £3,278,173 and it was estimated that the Council should receive £4,599,671

The Government had been campaigned and had listened. Councillor Sweeney thanked the Government for listening.

Paragraph 3.2:

Councillor Gill Heesom asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing what was being done to deter rough sitters in the town centre.

Councillor Maxfield stated that the Council did have active engagement with the rough sleepers. A navigator goes out and engages with individuals, sorting accommodation for them.

The Leader made reference to the rough sitters stating that there was a programme with the police and council staff to move these people on.

Councillor John Williams asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing if the Market Superintendent could issue telephone numbers to market traders and shop owners to enable them to contact someone about rough sitters who were drawing in drinkers etc into the town centre.

Councillor Maxfield stated that there was an ongoing dialogue with the police and the rough sleeper team were doing all that they could. Councillor Maxfield stated that she would have a word with the Market Supervisor to see if there was anything else that could be done.

Paragraph 3.3:

Councillor Elizabeth Shenton asked what timelines were involved in the repair works to Jubilee 2 and also who would be liable for the cost of repairs.

The Leader stated that there were timelines and that the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage would do an update for Members on this.

The Leader confirmed that the contractor would be picking up the bill for the cost of the repairs.

Paragraph 3.4:

Councillor Jill Waring welcomed the Kidsgrove Town Deal stating that some funds had already been received for parks. The Deal would make a huge difference to Kidsgrove including a new cycle path which was being worked on as well as the Sports Centre and Clough Hall Park.

The Leader stated that £750,000 of advanced monies had been received for Kidsgrove and this was already making a difference. A really good bid had been put in and it would provide more money to get the Sports Centre open. The Leader was hopeful that the £25M would be awarded to Kidsgrove in January, 2021.

Councillor Paul Waring said that people were keeping their fingers crossed that the bid would be successful as it would be a big step for the transformation of Kidsgrove.

Councillor Burnett stated that the Kidsgrove Sports Centre Community Group welcomed the Town Deal and awaited the results which were due in January, 2021.

Paragraph 3.5:

Councillor Brian Johnson welcomed the Knutton Masterplan stating that this would be a significant improvement. Councillor Johnson made reference to the old school which the Masterplan indicated was being put into residential use. It was an iconic building in Knutton. Also, the building currently occupied by the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) was set to be demolished for housing. Councillor Johnson asked the Leader if he agreed that it was essential to maintain the current old school which is attached to the building occupied by the PRU and whether the Leader agreed that the building should remain a significant part of Knutton and the Borough, given its age and historical significance to the Church.

The Leader stated that Councillor Northcott would reply to this question.

Councillor John Williams asked the Leader to ensure that residents living in parts of the Cross Heath Ward be included in any consultations as some of the areas mentioned in the Masterplan were within the Cross Heath Ward.

The Leader agreed that consultation was important and that Councillor Williams' comment was a valid point.

Councillor Northcott stated that when the Masterplan goes out for consultation, it would take a different form due to Covid – through local knowledge online and posters and he stated that the consultation was open to all residents of the Borough to comment upon.

In terms of the school, the Masterplan needed to have free rein in terms of possibilities and the communities' wishes needed to be known which would be listened to closely. If people wanted things to be retained that would have to be balanced against the bigger picture of the Masterplan and the viability of schemes coming into place.

Paragraph 3.6:

Councillor Panter asked the Leader what would happen if the Council did not provide more space in the Bradwell Crematorium grounds.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling, Councillor Trevor Johnson stated that the area was so popular that the crematorium was fast running out of memorial ground and therefore 2 hectares of adjacent land would become an extension of the remembrance garden. In addition, the car park needed to be expanded.

Councillor Jones asked the Portfolio Holder if there had been any consideration for internment of ashes at Keele Cemetery which was large and had a lot of Borough owned land surrounding it for future expansion. Would the use of Keele have an impact upon the requirement to expand Bradwell?

Councillor Trevor Johnson stated that ashes were interred at Keele if it was desired but people seemed to want their loved ones' memorial close to where they were cremated.

Paragraph 3.7:

Councillor Hutton welcomed the excellent indicators for finance and performance, especially during this time of the pandemic and congratulated everyone involved.

Councillor Gardner agreed with Councillor Hutton and was intrigued by the 92% occupancy for the market and asked the Leader to expand upon the statistics. Were the events organised by the BID and therefore the businesses funded by them and also, on how many days were they at 92% occupancy?

The Leader thanked Councillor Hutton for his comments. Responding to Councillor Gardner, The Leader explained that the 93% referred to the farmers market and the antique market. The Record Fair was 87%. The figures showed a great improvement in the market which was brought back in house as the market company did not want to take it on. Last Sunday there was an artisan market which was well attended, even with the wet weather

Councillor Jenny Cooper stated that it was good news that the markets had been so successful and it vindicated the decision of the Council to bring it back in-house and was attributable to the hard work of the Council's new Market Manager. Councillor Cooper asked the Portfolio Holder to outline other initiatives that were happening before Christmas.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency stated that since the Council had decided to nationalise the market it had gone from strength to strength. Stalls sell out very quickly and the market was really worth a visit.

Tomorrow there would be a 'love local' market between 5pm and 9pm as the stalls now had lighting installed on them. Twenty local traders would be attending this and showing their wares. Free parking was available on Wednesday nights to support late night opening and there was also free car parking on Saturday and Sunday on all Borough owned car parks. The artisan market would be there again this coming Sunday. The Market was a big success of this Authority.

The Leader added that a safe market had been created with hand sanitisation, barriers and social distancing.

Paragraph 3.8:

Councillor Fear asked the Leader what role the Council had in delivering compliance with the Directive that the Government has issued for the North Staffordshire Local Air Quality Plan.

The Leader stated that a Government Directive was put onto the Borough along with the City of Stoke on Trent but Newcastle was not a Highway Authority and therefore these belonged with the County Council along with the City Council.

The Leader stated that he was disturbed to hear that a Scrutiny meeting in the City had been talking about a chargeable Clean Air Zone which covered Stoke and Newcastle which would mean charging motorists coming into the area and potentially the town centre. The Leader was unclear as to what was going on as the proposals referred to under paragraph 3.8 had been worked on by the three Authorities and all three Cabinets had been involved. There were many issues around this and that is why the local MP had been asked to lobby the Government to review this in the light of the Covid changes. Also the potential bus gate needed to be looked at. Councillor Jones stated that credit needed to be given to the successive Secretaries of State in pushing local authorities to deal with the issue of traffic pollution. Councillor Jones asked the Leader if he agreed that it was excellent to see Government acting on this but could the Leader work with Councillor Jones to apply pressure to the Secretary of State to work on the air quality surrounding Walley's Quarry and get the Government to apply the same level of pressure to act that it has over traffic pollution to the odourous pollution emanating from the area.

The Leader stated he had received an email today about the Council agreeing for this submission, with the caveat that the Council wanted the Government to look at this again. The tip was a major issue and there was a different governance structure around that with the Environment Agency. A scrutiny process was up and running which would report back in the new year. There was also the Liaison Committee that scrutinised the EA and other partners around the table. The EA need to do a proper survey of the odour emanating from the quarry. Hopefully the scrutiny from the Council would help to apply the pressure. The local MP had been heavily involved in this and had raised the issue in Parliament.

Paragraph 3.9:

Councillor Panter asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, Councillor Northcott to expand upon the reasons for going it alone with a Borough Local Plan and what the advantages would be, especially for the rural areas.

Councillor Northcott stated that, during the seven years that this had been in development there had been numerous changes. There had been a new NPPF and Government Papers changing various parameters. Seven years is a long time to develop a Local Plan and this year had brought two events which have had a significant impact – Covid-19 and Brexit. Covid would bring about a number of Socio-economic changes over at least, the next couple of years. Brexit changes had given the chance to see if the plan adequately meets the needs of residents, businesses and developers over the next fifteen years. Not all of the information would need to be reset as a lot of the information would still be valid. However it did not take into account the development of Neighbourhood Development Plans. It was clear now that Stoke on Trent and Newcastle had different economic aspirations and operated in different spheres.

Newcastle now had a five year Housing Land Supply but it needed to be ensured that it was fair and equitable to the Borough.

A stand-alone local plan would be for Newcastle only. The best scenarios needed to be looked at. There would be risks in the short term but the Council would not need to rush it, but bring up to date the housing figures and economic information. The target date was likely to be 2023 before the effects of the Government White Paper came into play.

Councillor Hutton wished that his views be noted that the current Joint Local Plan was ludicrous and naïve – tying ourselves to Stoke and, that seven years had been wasted. A Local Plan should have been out years ago. Councillor Hutton asked that this Administration put things right and disassociates from Stoke. Councillor Hutton wanted a Newcastle Plan for Newcastle residents.

Councillor Proctor stated that the Council has spent month after month going nowhere. It needs to be shaken up and a plan developed which was relevant to Newcastle.

Councillor Stubbs asked the Portfolio what communications had been had with Stoke City Council as this week, on two different scrutiny committees, one was examining the Joint Local Plan and and the Minutes of a Cabinet meeting had said that the Council was very much looking at a Borough wide plan. Could the Portfolio Holder make it very clear, in writing to the Leader and Chief Executive at Stoke that this was happening.

The Leader stated that he had met with the Leader and Chief Executive at Stoke on a couple of occasions to outline the Council's thinking as we moved forward.

Councillor John Williams asked if the Council had the resources for the Borough to go it alone with its own local plan.

Councillor Jones was positive about the concept of a Borough only local plan but urged that, the Local Plan had been worked on for years and wouldn't now want to see a rushed Local Plan being produced. He urged that the Portfolio Holder to use

the opportunity, not to rebadge the existing Local Plan but to open it up again and develop a plan that fits the needs of the residents of the Borough.

Paragraph 3.10:

Councillor Holland asked the Leader who the Council would be working with to deliver the goals in the Sustainable Environment Strategy.

The Leader stated that it was a key strategy being taken forward and it fitted in with the Local Plan. The Council would be working with Keele University and the LEP. Staffordshire County Council would be one of the key partners and the District and Borough County Deal would be refreshed. Also the views of the public would be listened to.

Paragraph 3.12:

Councillor Wilkes thanked the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling for championing a residential funeral service which would help a lot of families and asked when the service would be up and running.

Councillor Trevor Johnson advised that the Council needed to engage with a partner and it was expected to be up and running by Spring 2021.

Councillor Jones asked the Portfolio Holder to outline the process, whether it would be a selected partner or a full open bid.

Councillor Trevor Johnson advised that it would be done by open tender and the service would be for residents of Newcastle under Lyme on the first option then there would be cremation which would be open to all.

Councillor Jones asked the Leader, in response of Newcastle Market being nationalised, was there anything else in the pipeline to be nationalised.

The Leader stated that everything was reviewed going forward and if it was best to be provided by the Council, it would but there were some areas that were best provided in the private sector.

Resolved: That the Statement of the Leader of the Council be received and noted.

10. **REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

Written reports were submitted for the Committees that had met since the last Council meeting.

Councillor Holland gave a verbal update for the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee which had met earlier this week to discuss the Medium Term Financial Strategy with a first draft of potential savings for the Council and a quarterly review.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

11. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEES

Written reports were submitted for the Committees that had met since the last Council meeting.

Councillor Fear gave a verbal update for the Planning Committee stating that the Committee had continued to meet on its regular cycle via hybrid and had maintained good attendance. At the last meeting the performance figures for the Planning department were excellent and Councillor Fear thanked officers for their efficiency.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

12. MOTIONS OF MEMBERS

A Motion was received on the Adopting of the UN Sustainable Development Global Goals proposed by Councillor Mike Stubbs and seconded by Councillor Simon Tagg.

Councillor Stubbs stated that, after a difficult year, Sustainable Goals could contribute positively. The document contained 143 targets that were relevant to Newcastle.

Ambitious and measurable goals are set out on how the world should look by 2030. These include targets for both global and national development.

The Council was encouraged to formalise its commitment to the goals and to clearly set out how serious it was to set out and achieve these targets. By working alongside Civil Society and other partners the Council would be able to utilise the rich experience of the Borough's diverse residents to help strengthen communities.

The Council would be re-enforced as an Authority committed to social Justice.

The Council had passed several motions over the past year with good intention but little assurance of completion and delivery. Councillor Stubbs stated that he firmly believed that every report brought to Council from 2021 onwards should highlight how each report dovetails with the UN Sustainable Goals and how each report would include the symbol(s) of the goals that it looks to achieve. Only then would the SDG's be embedded firmly in the minds of Officers and Members. A guide was available which was a joint UK and Local Government Association publication that introduces the SDG's to the Council and provides a guide as to how they might be incorporated into the Council's daily business.

Councillor Simon Tagg seconded the motion and stated that the British Government was involved in the development of the SDG's and also the LGA document appended to the report.

Reference was made to the 17 policies at the bottom of page 5 which would be integrated into everything that the Council does and all of the Policies being brought forward. The Council was already adopting a sustainable approach and a way of measuring that. It would be well appreciated by the Borough.

Councillor Jones reminded Council of a personal interest as an employee of Keele University and stated that the UN Goals have a strong local connection namely with the University that has the reputation for sustainability. Also, with the recent appointment of John Statham as the Professor of Sustainable Livestock Systems. John is a European recognised specialist in dairy cattle. He was involved in the

drafting up of the Sustainable Development Goals so the Borough had the author of some of the goals, particularly surrounding the agricultural economy and he would be pleased to see some of his concepts playing out within the Borough, which has a large number of dairy farms.

This a real opportunity and the Council should strive to exemplify the expertise that we have within our academic community.

Resolved: That the Motion be carried.

13. QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Councillor Fox Hewitt asked the Leader how many new build homes had been earmarked for the land adjacent to Bradwell Crematorium.

The Leader advised that plans had been published as part of the Asset Management Plan and the next stage would be a consultation process. The outcome of the consultation would be awaited before details were decided upon. The Leader was aware of a petition which had been started and this would be included with the consultation.

Councillor Fox Hewitt stated that residents of Bradwell claimed that the land was gifted to the people of Bradwell for community use and asked the Leader to commit that the Council would not breach any such conditions should this be the case.

The Leader stated that this would be looked into and be part of the report that goes to the Cabinet in due course.

Councillor Fear asked the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency for an update on the external Auditors professional opinion on the Council's 2019/2020 Statement of Accounts.

Councillor Sweeney stated that they were completed ahead of the deadline for 2021 and an unqualified opinion was given on the Statement of Accounts which meant that the accounts gave a true and fair view of the position of the of the Authority as at 31 March, 2020. They had been properly prepared and in accordance with the required Acts. The officers who had worked on these should be commended.

14. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions handed in at the meeting.

15. URGENT BUSINESS

Head of Customer and Digital Services

The Leader paid thanks to David Elkington who was leaving the Authority this week especially for his work during the pandemic in adapting the Council to do online and hybrid meetings. The Leader wished David all the best and a round of applause was given.

Councillor David Grocott

Councillor Stubbs passed his condolences to Councillor Grocott whose father had recently passed away.

Chair

Meeting concluded at 8.50 pm