

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 20th November, 2024

Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present: Mayor - Councillor Barry Panter (Chair)

Councillors:	Adcock	Grocott	Richards
	Allport	Heesom	Skelding
	Barker MBE	Holland	Stubbs
	Beeston	Fox-Hewitt	Sweeney
	Berrisford	Hutchison	J Tagg
	Bettley-Smith	Johnson	S Tagg (Leader)
	Brown	S Jones	J Waring
	Bryan	D Jones	P Waring
	Burnett-Faulkner	Lawley	Whieldon
	Crisp	Lewis	Whitmore
	Edginton-Plunkett	Moss	G Williams
	Fear	Parker	J Williams
	Gorton	Reece	Wright

Apologies: Councillor(s) Dymond, Northcott and Wilkes

Officers:	Gordon Mole	Chief Executive
	Simon McEneny	Deputy Chief Executive
	Anthony Harold	Service Director - Legal & Governance / Monitoring Officer
	Sarah Wilkes	Service Director - Finance / S151 Officer
	Nesta Barker	Service Director - Regulatory Services
	Sam Clark	Service Director - IT & Digital
	Joanne Halliday	Service Director - Commercial Delivery

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

2. **MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September, 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

3. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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The Mayor advised Members of his Christmas Carol Service at All Saints Church in Madeley on Sunday 8th December at 630pm. All Members were invited to attend.

On Sunday 24 November the town will be commencing its Christmas festivities with a market, entertainment and food, followed by the switching on of the Christmas lights. The Mayor encouraged all Members to attend.

The Mayor stated that, on 1st December it would be his pleasure to attend 100th birthday celebrations of a lady in Clayton. The family had requested the Mayor's attendance and he would be presenting her with a little gift on behalf of the Council.

4. WALLEYS QUARRY - ODOUR ISSUES UPDATE

The Leader introduced a report updating Members on the latest position regarding the odours at Walleys Quarry.

Complaints had risen and monitoring equipment was showing high spikes, particularly on the equipment at Maries way. In October, 290 complaints of foul gas odours were received, more than the same period over the last three years and up until today, 339 complaints had been received this month. The Council was still not seeing any action from the Environment Agency (EA). A public inquiry had been requested but had been knocked back by both the previous and current governments.

Members were asked to approve the allocation of more money to the fighting fund for legal action. The Council had employed King's Counsel and there were experts working on the case to lead to legal action.

There were things happening at the quarry that were outside of the Council's powers – even from an abatement notice point of view; this included the parking up of lorries. The County Council has a team that were looking into this. The police were also taking action.

The Council was doing all that it could; lobbying government, whether that was to hold the EA to account or having put the abatement notice in place. Officers were monitoring the site closely to see if there were any further breaches of the abatement notice.

Councillor Sweeney stated that the situation was getting no better and earlier today it could be smelt in Clayton which was rare. The Council was doing what it said it would do and was being done in different tranches.

Councillor Dave Jones stated that it was critically important that Council secure legal action in response to breaches of the abatement notice. The landfill site had been a plague over the past month with a number of real high-odour days. The odour had landed on Keele Campus, causing several issues including affecting an open day with prospective students turning up on a day when the smell was horrendous. This could have huge ramifications, not just for the university but also for residents of the Borough who rely on the contribution to the economy that the university provided. Lorries had also become a problem. The police had been contacted on a number of occasions when lorries had been parked on Keele Bank and traffic had been forced to cross an unbroken single line on the highway, which was against the law. However, the police had stated that matters were not in themselves criminal. The Leader was asked that, in conversations with the Deputy Police and Crime

Commissioner, to raise that on occasions it had been difficult to understand why the police were not acting when motorists lives were being put at risk.

Councillor Bettley-Smith stated that in the past week the smell had been in the Brampton, town centre, Thistleberry and even Betley. It was outrageous that the Council was having to spend council tax payers money on taking this action because the EA had failed.

Councillor Stubbs made a request to stop heading the committee reports as 'Odour issues'; it was not just a smell/odour, it was an environmental issue. A Silverdale resident had approached Councillor Stubbs and asked that the Council stop calling it a smell/odour as it downplayed the true impact that the site was having on its surroundings.

Councillor Adcock agreed with the previous comment, stating that it was pollution. Hydrogen Sulphide was a toxic gas which was causing harm to residents of the Borough. The current situation was totally predictable, looking at the trends of when it worsened with weather patterns and months of the year. Residents were losing faith – not seeing the point in reporting it. The inquiry that this Council held over the summer showed some damning evidence but a public inquiry still had not yet been secured and again the EA still had not taken the report seriously. The Leader was asked for reassurance that this issue had been discussed for a long time and the Council had been fighting this for a long time when other agencies had not been taking it seriously.

Councillor Whieldon had a couple of concerns; referring to paragraph 9 of the report, where the Chartered Institute of Waste Management (CIWM) stated that Walleys Quarry Limited were not part of its membership and therefore could not pursue the line of investigation. Googling Walleys Quarry, their website stated that they had a welcome visit from the CIWM in March. In addition, Red Industries referred to a primary phone number on the CIWM site.

Councillor Fear agreed with Councillor Dave Jones' comment regarding the impact on the important organisations in the Borough. Residents were assured that this Council was fighting wholeheartedly on this issue. The Borough had now been let down by two national governments and betrayed by the EA. Councillor Fear also referred to the lorries and made a plea to the police to deal with the traffic hazards.

The Leader stated that it was right to point out Keele University, an international establishment suffering the odours – smells and gases. It also affected local schools.

The Leader stated that he would continue reporting issues to the police. He agreed that the odours were more than just a smell but for the report, because of the Council's Statutory Nuisance role – it was an odour issue so that is what they had to be referred to as. The Leader stated that he referred to them as 'gas odour issues' in his opening remarks.

The Leader assured that the public would be kept up to date with as much information as possible going forward.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the action being taken by the Council in respect of legal action against Walleys Quarry Ltd for alleged breaches of an Abatement Notice, which obliges the operator to not create or allow statutory odour nuisance, be noted and endorsed.
 - (ii) That the continued and increasing level of complaints in

- respect of odours at Walleys Quarry, be noted.
- (iii) That the additional funding allocation of £400k (£250k from the General Fund Reserve, £150k from the Budget and Borrowing Support Fund), be approved for costs associated with legal action, and delegate to the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for One Council, People and Performance and Town Centres and Finance, to draw down and remit such funds as are necessary for this action.

[Watch the debate here](#)

5. **GAMBLING POLICY 2024**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth introduced a report seeking to adopt an updated Gambling Licensing Policy.

The draft Policy has been seen by the Licensing and Public Protection Committee last month. The consultation had been completed and it was now here to be approved. The Policy would be published on 3 January, 2025, subject to its approval this evening and then implemented on 31 January, 2025.

No major changes had been made to the policy but a few typographical errors had been corrected and dates changed.

Councillor John Williams referred to page 10 of the Policy – paragraph 15 – protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed by gambling. He stated that he would like the Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee to do a piece of work on this element, such as organisations within the Borough that could be contacted.

Councillor Stubbs asked the Portfolio Holder what principles had been inserted into the document from a Newcastle point of view. The document did mention a local area profile and the Portfolio Holder was asked if an opportunity had been missed to talk about issues in Newcastle and included specific figures.

Councillor Gorton had an understanding that the Local Government Association had recommended that the Council should provide training for front line staff, who could then direct people to websites and agencies to help with problem gambling. He asked if the Council provided such training and if not, should it be doing so.

Councillor Brown referred to page 29 of the agenda, paragraph 1.3 bullet point 9 which stated that national charities had been consulted. An example of one of the charities was requested. Also, Councillor Brown had concerns for the use of the term 'vulnerable adults' as it was difficult to determine which adults would go on to develop a gambling dependency. She asked how the Council could ensure that those people were identified and protected.

Councillor Whieldon stated that she had concerns regarding the television adverts put on by organisations to warn people of the dangers of gambling. There had to be cautious as to how much responsibility the Council took on.

Responding to the Comments, The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth referred to a local area profile where a lot of these things were investigated but online gambling was nothing to do with the Council or the Policy. Councillor Sweeney stated that it could be taken to the Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

The Leader agreed that a Scrutiny review would be ideal and should be raised at the next meeting of Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny.

Regarding the training of officers, the Leader stated that in the Council's licensing function officers offered training to establishments.

Resolved: That the updated Gambling Licensing Policy appended to this Report, be adopted, as recommended by the Licensing and Public Protection Committee.

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. **PROPOSED ANIMAL WELFARE CHARTER**

Councillor Rupert Adcock introduced a report seeking approval to adopt an Animal Welfare Charter for Newcastle-under-Lyme. A Motion had been passed at Full Council on 24 January, 2024 and the conclusions were set out at paragraph 1.1 of the report.

The draft Animal Welfare Charter had been considered by the Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee in September and by Cabinet in October.

Councillor Adcock was aware of neighbouring authorities that had also developed similar motions and stated that, by working together in writing to the Government for an outright ban, many voices would be better than one.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment seconded the motion stating that The Charter would protect the welfare of animals.

Councillor Gorton asked if his suggestion that a version of the Charter be made available for use in Newcastle schools be taken forward and also, would there be a commitment to review the Charter in the future.

Councillor Whieldon stated that the downflow of the Charter into schools would be wonderful. Referring to Councillor Adcock's statement about working with other authorities, she stated that best practice did not happen enough.

Councillor Reece suggested that the Charter be reviewed in one year's time, particularly recommendation two – canvassing other local authorities and then maybe to canvass Government.

Councillor Adcock agreed that it would be appropriate to review the Charter in twelve months and to take it through the Health, Wellbeing and Environment Committee, looking at the progress made on canvassing other authorities and anything within the Charter that members of the Scrutiny Committee wished to comment on.

The Leader stated that animal welfare was important and getting more authorities to sign up to a policy would be really good. Councillor Gorton's suggestion regarding taking the Charter into schools was a good idea. The Council already visited schools

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to talk about recycling and the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment was already in discussion with officers to take this into schools too.

Regarding the use of pesticides, this Charter fitted with other policies and charters of the Council, including the Nature Recovery Declaration.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Animal Welfare Charter be approved and adopted, subject to any further amendments, noting the comments from the Health Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.
 - (ii) That officers be authorised to canvass other local authorities to establish the appetite for collectively writing to the UK Government urging a ban on the giving of live animals as prizes on public and private land.

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Leader introduced a report to note changes in political proportionality following a change in political balance of the Council, resulting in changes to committee membership and to appoint a member to the Charity of Sir John Offley, Madeley.

Wendy Brockie was wished well for the future and thanked for her time as a Councillor.

Councillor Jones stated that Wendy had been a fantastic Councillor and vociferous supporter for Town Ward and all of its interests. Wendy was wished well, including congratulations on the birth of her first grandchild. The Leader wished to be associated with these comments.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the change to political balance of the Council following a vacancy as a result of implementation of Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, be noted
 - (ii) That as a result of this change, it be noted that the seats allocated to the Conservative Party on the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee be increased by one seat, with a corresponding decrease of one seat for the Labour Party.
 - (iii) That the nomination of a member of the Conservative Party to the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee, be approved.
 - (iv) That it be noted that, following a by-election for Madeley in July 2024, the Council is asked to nominate a Trustee to the Charity of Sir John Offley, and endorses the nomination of Cllr. Jill Whitmore to this position

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8. STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader, Councillor Simon Tagg presented the statement that had been circulated about the activities and decisions made by Cabinet to allow questions and comments. Reference was made to the Council's Annual Report and the Leader stated that this Council 'made things happen' and this Statement reflected that.

Questions were raised and responses were provided as follows.

On paragraph 2 – Newcastle Town Centre Regeneration Update

Councillor John Williams raised concerns regarding all the works commencing at the same time and impacting upon businesses and asked the Leader and Portfolio Holder to speak with businesses in the town to ensure that they were on board with safety aspects and traffic controls in the town.

The Leader agreed and stated that officers did a lot of work with businesses in Merrial Street in preparation and it would be the same with the Midway. It needed to be ensured that traffic movements were taken care of.

On paragraph 3 – Contract Award for the Digital Infrastructure Project

Councillor Holland asked the Leader to outline how the distribution hubs at Community Centres would work and what benefits would be seen by the community.

The Leader stated that it was good news for the Town Deal areas. Rural areas would be part of a procurement for gigabit broadband.

ITS Technology, the company that had been awarded the contract for the work had a good track record for delivering. It was hoped that there would be eleven public sector buildings and sixteen community facilities connected to the network. Part of the development included the creation of a local digital community hub which would include digital inclusion skills and training to the public over the next five years and also possibly connecting community centres across the Borough.

Councillor Richards asked the Leader if the Borough Council was working with the County Council and utility companies to ensure that, once rolled out, the roads and footpaths were put back into a good stated of repair.

The Leader stated that the County Council did have a protocol when working with contactors digging up roads. There was a network programme and officer team at the County Council to oversee this. Our officers were working with the provider too.

On paragraph 4 – Borough Local Plan Update

Councillor Lewis asked if the information contained within the report was the raw data of just the responses that had been acknowledged.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning stated that feedback had been collated by theme so that only one response was required to avoid replication. All comments

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were being recorded and put onto the website and all of the comments would be forwarded to the independent inspector.

Councillor Crisp asked the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning if he agreed that the progress made on the local plan made the Borough's green spaces safer and was a vindication of the Council's decision to go ahead with a bespoke plan for Newcastle.

The Portfolio Holder stated that he was 100% behind the local plan. By identifying specific areas for development, green spaces were made safer. However, the Government could still change the rules. The Portfolio Holder stated that he was never in favour of a joint local plan as the City's interests differed from our own.

Councillor Adcock asked what steps were being taken to ensure that the next steps of the process go smoothly.

The Council was working hard to ensure that the consultation responses were put together ready to go to the Inspector. In addition, people had been spoken with to ensure that the plan, when presented to the Inspector, had no legal pitfalls. In October, a sum of money was voted through by Cabinet to ensure that the inspection ran smoothly. It was uncertain how long the Inspector would take. Officers were thanked for securing a substantial grant from the Planning Skills Delivery Fund.

Councillor Moss asked for confirmation that there was at least one group that had come forward to run the proposed village hall in Knutton and what was the current status of the project to build it.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth stated that nothing was set in stone as yet, however, the Council was working fast to recruit members to this and was underway at present.

Councillor Gorton asked if it could be taken that no changes to the plan had been made as a result of the consultation exercise. In addition, when was it anticipated that the Borough's local plan would be submitted to the Inspector.

The Portfolio Holder advised that were a material concern to emerge from the consultation, the plan would come back to Council. Confirmation was given that, according to officers, it was not the case. It was hoped that the plan would be submitted to the Inspector by the end of the calendar year.

Councillor Fox-Hewitt asked if the comments and the Council's response to the themes that were mentioned, whether they be that the Council was happy with the extant plan or amendments in response to those themes were to be made; would they be shared with Scrutiny or Council prior to the plan being submitted to the Planning Inspector.

Responses would be made public but the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning would check with the Service Director – Planning that that was correct and would get back to Councillor Fox-Hewitt.

On paragraph 5 – Quarter 2 Finance and Performance Report 2024/25

Councillor Stubbs referred to the Kidsgrove Fund – Kidsgrove Station, the Shared Services Hub and the Canal Enhancement Scheme had all stalled for at least six months and 84% of the management budget had already been spent. He asked the

Leader or Portfolio Holder if they could ensure that the money would not be sent back due to delays on site.

The Leader stated that the Council needed to ensure that the money did not go back. The scheme was developing and was currently going through a sub-group arrangement where plans were being clarified so it was hoped to get those through the Town Deal Board and through the necessary planning procedures. Members were advised that the canal scheme was progressing.

Councillor Whieldon referred to the recent Castle Classics car show held in the town and asked if there were any plans for the event to be repeated and similar ones held.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth advised that Castle Classics would not only be repeated but would be three times bigger on 15 March, 2025. It would include military vehicles and scooters. The Christmas lights switch on would be taking place on 24th of this month and on 30th, Keele Brass Band would be in town and on 14th December a food festival would be held and on 24th December there would be an antiques forum.

Councillor Bryan asked the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment what plans there were to increase the volume of food waste collections in the Borough.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment stated that all waste and recycling targets were being met. In the last quarter, property and resident participation in food waste collection had increased to 45.4%. This positioned the Council well for the forthcoming Simpler Recycling legislation which was expected in 2025 for business waste and in 2026 for household waste. The Council would be providing recycling services to its current commercial customers, including separate food waste collections from April, 2025. Food waste collection from flats would also be rolled out during the next year.

Councillor Holland welcomed the performance indicators falling under the Sustainable Environment Portfolio which included four 100% in street environmental cleanliness. He also welcomed the 99.96% collection statistic in waste and recycling collections which equated to, out of every 10,000 collections, the Council had missed four.

On paragraph 6 – Civic Pride Campaign

Councillor Paul Waring asked the Portfolio Holder what actions were being taken to address the issues raised by residents regarding safety and cleanliness in the Borough.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment stated that over the last year, the Council had been implementing the same in-cab and back office system that was successfully used in the recycling and waste service into streetscene servers. The software system, supplied by Bartec was the first to be implemented and the location was noted digitally of every litter bin in the Borough that the Council serviced. The use of each bin could be monitored digitally, to assess the emptying frequency and adjusted if required. It also indicated if the correct size bin was being used.

Councillor Lewis stated that, as part of Civic Pride, she would like to see the Council working alongside volunteer groups to maintain areas such as St James' Church yard in Audley. Could wardens be brought in across the Borough.

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The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment had visited the churchyard and met with volunteers. He had mentioned to the Parish Clerk that it would be best if she dealt directly with the Streetscene Manager to ensure that everything was being done properly. The Portfolio Holder would check with the officer to see if that was still functioning.

The Leader stated that there were community wardens in Kidsgrove who were funded by the Town Council and people in Madeley carried out community clean up jobs so, working with Audley Parish Council was key.

Councillor John Williams welcomed this which brought together the Police, County Council, the BID and Borough Council. Reference was made to the paragraph regarding moving out into the communities and stated that the Council needed to be the leaders on this but felt that that was not the case. He mentioned that the grass in Douglas Road, Cross Heath and other areas of the Borough had not been cut for twelve months and he hoped that in the future, the Council would be leading with the different partners out in the communities.

The Leader stated that the issue at Douglas Road had been raised before and agreed that this first year – where grass had been left longer should be reviewed and the Health Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee could take that on and there were plans to set up a scrutiny working group looking at the Borough's parks and open spaces and part of that could be to look at reviews of the grass cutting.

Councillor Burnett-Faulkner asked the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing to advise how the Council was working with partners to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) and how it was being highlighted this week – 'Anti-Social Behaviour Awareness week' and with upcoming events.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Council was taking part in a national initiative to tackle ASB working closely with Staffordshire Police and Aspire Housing to ensure that residents and stakeholders were healthy, happy and able to enjoy living in a safe environment. This week, Staffordshire Police and Aspire Housing were delivering themed events running until 24 November. High visibility patrols would take place in known hotspots in the town centre, Chesterton and Kidsgrove. There had been a mobile police station in Kidsgrove today as part of 'Let's Talk – Anti Social Behaviour Day' and it would be based at the Salvation Army in Chesterton tomorrow.

Councillor Reece on his way to this meeting had met a resident of May Bank who pointed out some broken glass and other debris from a road traffic accident about four weeks ago. Councillor Reece urged the Council to get behind local people.

Councillor Gorton asked the Leader for more information on how the campaign would be taken forward, how would other areas of focus be selected and how would elected members be involved in the planning and implementation of future schemes.

The Leader welcomed the positive comments. The Council did not have the resources to spread Civic Pride across the Borough straight away but can work with partners. A lot of the work that was already being done did fall under Civic Pride – such as tackling fly tipping and graffiti work. The Launch week was currently being evaluated to see where to go next and he would write to local members for their views. Scrutiny could also play a part and there were many ways that Civic Pride could be expanded beyond litter picking – by making it a community effort for example.

Councillor Parker referred to the Remembrance Day parade at the cenotaph Stating that crowds seemed to increase yearly. It was good to see poppies on the Capital and Centric hoardings and scaffolding across the road which also had a Remembrance Banner on it. Councillor Parker was pleased to see progress being made on the three sites in the town centre and asked the Leader if he agreed that the extra people living and working in the town would mean even more people congregating at the cenotaph in future years.

The Leader agreed that it was a growing event. Regarding the hoardings, the developer had been contacted and at the Leader's request worked with the Council to put the poppies on the hoardings.

The new developments would have hundreds of people living and working in the town centre with the new Astley Place development overlooking the cenotaph.

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

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9. **REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEES**

Reports for the Planning Committee, Licensing and Public Protection Committee and the Audit and Standards Committee were attached to the agenda.

Members were advised that none of the Scrutiny Committees had met since the last Full Council meeting.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

10. **QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Question from Councillor Mandy Berrisford to the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning

"The portfolio holder will be aware that a date of 8th September was set, by Court Order, for the removal of the baled waste from land at Doddlespool Hall Farm, in the Betley area of my ward. Last Sunday evening (17 November), at about 17.00, I was contacted by concerned residents about a fire on the land at Doddlespool Hall Farm. They informed me the fire brigade had been called. Can the portfolio holder assure me that the Environment Agency has checked the court order has been complied with and the baled, or indeed other waste, was not the source of the fire? Can the portfolio holder also assure me that the relevant Borough Council Officers have confirmed that, since the fire on Sunday evening, there is no ongoing risk to residents?"

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning stated that it had not been possible to confirm whether the fire concerned baled waste or other types of waste on site. The Portfolio Holder did confirm that the Environment Agency (EA), via a court order had required the removal of waste by 8 September, 2024 but the understanding was that the court order had not been complied with. Any further legal action would have to

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be pursued by the EA. The EA had been approached by the Council for comment but, as of yet, had not received a response.

The Council, in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council and Cheshire East Council and the EA were currently undertaking a joint investigation with the intention of taking enforcement action against breaches of planning permission and the illegal deposition of waste at the site.

Councillor Berrisford asked a supplementary question:

“Adam Jogee MP had spoken strongly and passionately about waste crime and air quality issues in two recent Westminster Hall debates on 5 September and 14 November respectively. He mentioned the land at Doddlespool Hall Farm saying that something must be done very urgently. Will the Portfolio Holder press the EA and the MP to take the necessary action to ensure that the Doddlespool Hall Farm site is compliant with statutory requirements. Will the Portfolio Holder ask the MP to press the Minister to hold an inquiry into the waste crime and related failings of the EA. Finally, given the baled waste remained on the land at Doddlespool Hall Farm for several years, after being reported to the EA as an environmental hazard does the Portfolio Holder have faith in the EA and would he regard the EA as no longer being fit for purpose.”

The Portfolio Holder stated that he would be happy to write to the EA and MP. It was a long standing problem that needed resolving. He welcomed the MP’s words on this and hoped that the MP would be working behind the scenes to pressurise the EA to do their job. The Portfolio Holder did not have confidence in the EA and had not for a long time and considered them to be no longer fit for purpose.

Question from Councillor Paul Waring to the Leader of the Council

“A key part of the Kidsgrove Town Deal funding is £3.65m to deliver an improved, modern Kidsgrove station building, a new transport interchange, and a 200-space car park. There has been concern for some time about the risk to the Kidsgrove Station project because of abnormal ground conditions that has led to a significant funding gap. It was announced by the previous government in February 2024 that Kidsgrove would benefit from Network North funding as part of an uplift in the Local Transport Fund (LTF) as the result of the cancellation of the Birmingham to Crewe section of the HS2 project. There has been uncertainty about if the new government would honour that commitment. Can the Leader provide an update on the funding situation?”

The Leader thanked Councillor Waring for his work on the Kidsgrove Town Deal. Prior to the General Election, the Council was told that the funding shortfall, created by the need for groundworks around the station would be funded by money displaced by the HS2 money scheme following the cancellation of HS2 and there would be an uplift in the local transport fund. Neither the Council or County Council had heard from Central Government regarding this. News was expected in the recent budget from the Government but, to date, nothing had come through. The additional money would need to be in place by early next year so that the project could proceed at pace. A delay from the Government would put the project at major risk. The Leader stated that he had written to David Williams MP on 7 November stating the facts and history of this case but as yet no reply had been received but it was hoped that it was being worked on.

The previous MP, Jonathan Gullis had been good at lobbying the Government, taking the Secretary of State to Kidsgrove. It was not yet known if HS2 was back on as yet. There were moves to try and reinstate a line between Birmingham and Manchester.

Question from Councillor Robert Moss to the Leader of the Council

“In regard to the Knutton war memorial what maintenance does the Council carry out and with what frequency does it occur?”

The Leader stated that the change of land ownership, previously NHS land with the former clinic in Knutton came over to the Council as part of the purchases with the Town Deal. The war memorial was now on Council owned land and it was right that in future the Council would look after it. The Leader congratulated the fire service, firefighters and community who had brought the memorial back to good condition and going forward needed to be kept in that condition. The Leader assured that it would be put onto the rota to be looked after.

There had been a number of enquiries regarding the maintenance of the Wolstanton memorial too and earlier in this meeting had referred to the cenotaph in the town centre. Conversations had taken place with the Chief Executive regarding the using of Civic Pride to work with community groups and using funding streams and council staff to ensure that the memorials were a credit, particularly next year for the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

Councillor Moss asked a supplementary question:

Before asking the question, Councillor Moss stated that himself and a Mr Ian Egan cleaned up the war memorial in Knutton for five hours on the 7th November and the fire service turned up to wash down the slabs at Councillor Moss' request.

“ May I request to be sent the maintenance programme for 2025 and be given assurances that the Knutton monument would be in good order for Remembrance Sunday in 2025”

The Leader asked that the Portfolio Holder contact Councillor Moss after this meeting to confirm those arrangements”.

Question from Councillor Fox-Hewitt to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth

“Can the portfolio holder confirm if an impact assessment or viability report has been undertaken following the decision by Lucideon to withdraw from the Chatterley Valley Business park, and cancel their planned bespoke HQ, citing a substantial increase in costs for the site?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth stated that no impact assessment had been undertaken on Lucideon's decision to withdraw from the Chatterley Valley Business Park. It was not deemed necessary as the Council was actively working on an alternative site with a company who wished details to

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remain confidential at this time. It was also worth mentioning that the Chatterley Valley site was in private ownership and the part that Lucideon were interested in was one of the smaller plots available. The Council was aware that a whole development was now being actively marketed by the developer/owner Howarths who were confident that all plots would be occupied and the units and employment opportunities would be delivered. But, as with all such developments in this arena with the continuing worsening economic situation it was a challenge.

Councillor Fox-Hewitt asked a supplementary question:

“Is the Chatterley Valley West project still going to deliver the 1700 jobs and £72m gross value added per annum as promised as part of the business case for the Town Deal”,

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth had heard that it was. It was a private company that were running it and they would obviously want a return from their investment and he saw no reason why they should not get it. They were actively marketing the entire site, the County Council had put some money into it for the roadworks and this Council had put money into it from the Town Deal Fund to open the site up.

Question from Councillor Andrew Fox-Hewitt to the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing

“Following the news that nine fire stations/teams have withdrawn from the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service 'three person crewing trial', whereby staff assert that the service is violating the management Health and Safety Regulations 1999, can the portfolio holder provide an assurance that the administration still have full confidence in the trial, and an assurance that both fire fighter and public safety here in Newcastle is not at risk as a result of this trial continuing.”

The Portfolio Holder stated that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service had the operational responsibility for crewing arrangements, including for this trial. They would continue to keep partner agencies advised of the findings of the trial ahead of a decision at the end of the year. Initial feedback had been that response times since – some cases had been improved but it was understood that senior fire officers also acknowledged that concerns had been raised that they would seek to address. The Council worked closely with the fire service including, in responses to recent fires at Walleys Quarry and Kidsgrove and had worked in strong partnership with the service and the incident management of the Walleys Quarry odour issues, referenced in the earlier Council report where the fire service had led on charring agency coordination.

Councillor Fox-Hewitt asked if the administration still had full confidence in the trial having articulated support for it in the appearance before Scrutiny Committee so did the administration still support the trial.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the fire and rescue service had the operational responsibility but as they were aware of the issues and looking into them she was

reassured that they would continue to work within their safety guidelines. An update would be given by them to the Scrutiny Committee next year.

Councillor Fox-Hewitt asked a supplementary question:

“Can the Portfolio Holder update Council as to whether the Newcastle and Kidsgrove Fire Stations were still operating under that trail, given that they service and represent the safety of our residents”.

The Portfolio Holder advised that this would be looked into and a response provided to Councillor Fox-Hewitt.

[Watch the debate here](#)

11. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

12. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

13. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

There were no confidential items.

**Mayor - Councillor Barry Panter
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 8.57 pm

The Mayor advised that refreshments, provided by the Leader and Deputy Leader would be available to mark this being the last meeting before Christmas