

## COUNCIL

Wednesday, 12th February, 2025

Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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**Present:** Mayor - Councillor Barry Panter (Chair)

Councillors:	Adcock	Gorton	Skelding
	Allport	Grocott	Sweeney
	Barker MBE	Heesom	J Tagg
	Beeston	Holland	S Tagg (Leader)
	Bettley-Smith	Fox-Hewitt	J Waring
	Brown	Hutchison	P Waring
	Bryan	Johnson	Whieldon
	Casey-Hulme	D Jones	Whitmore
	Crisp	Northcott	Wilkes
	Dymond	Parker	G Williams
	Edginton-Plunkett	Reece	J Williams
	Fear	Richards	Wright

**Apologies:** Councillor(s) Berrisford, Burnett-Faulkner, S Jones, Lawley, Lewis, Moss and Stubbs

Officers:	Joanne Halliday	Service Director - Commercial Delivery
	Gordon Mole	Chief Executive
	Anthony Harold	Service Director - Legal & Governance / Monitoring Officer
	Sarah Wilkes	Service Director - Finance / S151 Officer
	Geoff Durham	Civic & Member Support Officer
	Sam Clark	Service Director - IT & Digital

### 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 22 January, 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

### 3. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor made three announcements regarding the following and asked Members for their support at the events:

- Annual Civic Mass on Sunday 2 March 2025

**Council - 12/02/25**

- Mayor’s Charity Ball on Saturday 29 March, 2025
- A Covid Day of Reflection to be held in March 2025

**4. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET STRATEGIES 2025/26**

The Leader introduced the report and moved the recommendations which set out the recommendations of Cabinet for Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2025/26.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2029/30, Capital Strategy for 2025/35, the Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26, Investment Strategy 2025/26 and the Commercial Strategy for 2025/26 were also recommended for approval.

Following a debate, a named vote was taken in respect of the proposed budget:

ADCOCK	Y	GORTON	Abstain	RICHARDS	Abstain
ALLPORT	Abstain	GROCOTT	Abstain	SKELDING	Y
BARKER	Y	HEESOM	Y	STUBBS	Absent
BEESTON	Y	HOLLAND	Y	SWEENEY	Y
BERRISFORD	Absent	HUTCHISON	Y	J TAGG	Y
BETTLEY-SMITH	Y	JOHNSON	Y	S TAGG	Y
BROWN	Abstain	D JONES	Abstain	J WARING	Y
BRYAN	Y	S JONES	Absent	P WARING	Y
BURNETT-FAULKNER	Absent	LAWLEY	Absent	WHIELDON	Y
CASEY-HULME	Abstain	LEWIS	Absent	WHITMORE	Y
CRISP	Y	MOSS	Absent	WILKES	Y
DYMOND	Abstain	NORTHCOTT	Y	G WILLIAMS	Abstain
EDGINGTON-PLUNKETT	Abstain	PANTER	Y	J WILLIAMS	Abstain
FEAR	Y	PARKER	Y	WRIGHT	Abstain
FOX-HEWITT	Abstain	REECE	Abstain		

In Favour (Y) – 23

Against (N) - 0

Abstain – 14

**Resolved:** That recommendations (a) to (p), as set out in Appendix ‘1’ of the agenda report be approved.

[Watch the debate here](#)

**5. PAY POLICY STATEMENT**

The Leader introduced a report seeking Council's approval of the Pay Policy Statement for 2025/26.

This was an annual requirement of the Localism Act, 2011 setting out the remuneration of chief officers and the lowest paid employees and the changes in roles and titles of senior officers.

**Resolved:** That the content of the Pay Policy Statement for 2025/26, as set out at Appendix A be approved, with a view to this being published on the Council's website by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

[Watch the debate here](#)

**6. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

The Leader introduced a report to note changes in political proportionality following a change in political balance of the Council, as a result of the recent by-election.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That it be noted that, following a by-election in Town Ward, the political balance of the Council had changed following the election of Cllr. Casey-Hulme to Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025.
  - (ii) That it be noted that as a result of this change, the seats allocated to the Conservative Party on the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee be decreased by one seat, with a corresponding increase of one seat for the Labour Party.
  - (iii) That the nomination of Councillor Grocott to the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee, be approved.
  - (iv) That the change to Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee for the Labour Party, be noted.

[Watch the debate here.](#)

**7. MOTIONS OF MEMBERS**

The Motion was withdrawn.

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

Question from Councillor Rupert Adcock to the Leader of the Council:

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“The petition [www.saveourborough.uk](http://www.saveourborough.uk) has reached over 2,100 signatures in a little over a week. Can the Leader update the Council on the Labour’s forced local government reorganisation plans that could mean a takeover of Newcastle Borough by the City of Stoke-on-Trent?”

The Leader advised that, in addition to the online petition, paper petitions had also been circulated across the Borough. Since the last meeting of Full Council, a letter had been received from the Minister, Jim McMullen setting out a criteria and a request for information by 21 March, 2025. The Leader stated that he would continue, with colleagues across the County, to see if there was a united approach to this. In addition, the local MP would be contacted again to ensure that he too was supporting the Borough. The Leader read a response from the Local Government Association regarding the local government reorganisation plans. The Leader was working closely with the Chief Executive and would be bringing a timetable that would be referred back to Members at a Special Meeting of Full Council for a decision.

Councillor Adcock asked a supplementary question:

“Does the Leader agree that, given what we had heard about some Councils tonight – the larger, bigger geographical ones being in financial difficulty, bigger is not always better.”

The Leader agreed and stated that this Council’s role was to keep pointing that out. An extract from an article was read out from the Municipal Journal paper which stated that it was not a devolution paper but a centralising agenda.

Question from Councillor Robert Bettley-Smith to the Leader of the Council:

“Would the Leader share my delight and satisfaction that Walleys Quarry Ltd were not successful in their injunction against the Environment Agency’s Closure Notice and that residents have been saved from further waste being deposited, pending Walleys Quarry Ltd’s appeal against the Closure Notice.”

The Leader agreed and stated that it was pleasing to see that judgement and the Council now awaited the appeal process to the closure notice which, he stated, should happen as soon as possible. The Leader had written to Steve Reed, the Secretary of State for Environment, asking him to bring it forward but no response had yet been received. People wanted to see this resolved, with hopefully the permanent closure and full capping off and restoration of the site.

Councillor Bettley-Smith asked a supplementary question:

“Would the Leader stress the importance of residents and others continuing to report the continuing problems with Walleys Quarry to the Environment Agency and to the Borough as noxious odours and toxic gasses are as bad as ever . It seemed that the site was still being mismanaged and the Leader was asked if the Leader agreed that the cause needed to be investigated by the Environment Agency and a prescription for remedy issued as a matter of urgency”.

The Leader agreed and stated that, along with the closure notice, the Environment Agency had requested for a series of works to be completed by 31 January, 2025 and was sure that they were being looked into.

Question from Councillor Joel Edgington-Plunkett to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth:

“Following the opening of the new car park can the Portfolio Holder update the Council if there has been any technical issues since the opening and what measures were put into place to ensure the car park is disability friendly? “

The Portfolio Holder stated that it was good to see Castle Car Park open and thriving. There had been some minor issues; the ticket issuing machine for a small proportion of drivers had issues with registration numbers and taking the appropriate payment. Some of the issues were down to drivers not understanding the system and some were technical issues. The issues were now being worked through with the supplier and a call button link through to the CCTV centre was now in operation. The Council had invested in temporary on-site security ensuring that drivers had assistance on hand if required. The installation of electric charging points had been completed and working effectively. The final aspect to be launched would be the cycle parking with the access control system nearing completion. There were 22 disabled spaces and 3 electric vehicle disabled spaces and was Building Regulations compliant in terms of spaces and location of those spaces. The Council would continue to monitor demand and could, in the future provide more spaces.

Councillor Edgington-Plunkett asked a supplementary question:

“Could the Portfolio Holder advise of future plans to ensure that there would still be enough disabled parking spaces around the town centre over the next few years and Could the Equality Impact Assessment as part of the Parking Strategy be shared with him at the conclusion of this meeting.”

The Portfolio Holder advised that he did not have the Equality Impact assessment with him but confirmed that there had been no changes to

disabled parking across the Borough – apart from the Midway car park which was now closed.

Question from Councillor Joel Edgington-Plunkett to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage:

“Can the Portfolio Holder provide the Council with a general update on how Jubilee 2 is performing and if the membership numbers and bookings are still strong?”

The Portfolio Holder stated that it continued to perform well and the buoyancy of membership remained good with 4,083 members as at the end of January, compared to 3,699 in January, 2024. Swimming lessons were performing well, with 973 young people enrolled on the programme between October 2024 and January 2025. All customers had now been moved onto direct debit payments as opposed to the recurring payment cycle. The jewel in the crown of the centre was the ‘active life referral programme’ introduced in May, 2024 and had demonstrated some great health outcomes for residents. There had been 470 referrals to date, sixty percent of which were converting into full membership.

Councillor Edgington-Plunkett asked a supplementary question:

“Has there had to be any works done to J2 since the last update to Full Council?”

The Portfolio Holder advised that there had been non currently but there was a plan, with funding hopefully becoming available through Sport England, that would work in line with the net zero target and an update would be given as and when that came to fruition.

[Watch the debate here](#)

**9. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS**

No petitions were received.

**10. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

**11. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION**

There were no confidential items.

**Mayor - Councillor Barry Panter  
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 8.20 pm