



PLEASE NOTE THAT PRAYERS WILL BE HELD AT 6.50PM BEFORE THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL.

THE MAYOR REQUESTS THAT ANY MEMBER WISHING TO PARTICIPATE IN PRAYERS BE IN ATTENDANCE BY NO LATER THAN 6.45PM.

Dear Sir/Madam,

You are summoned to attend the meeting of the Borough Council of Newcastle-under-Lyme to be held in the **Queen Elizabeth II & Astley Rooms - Castle House, Barracks Road, Newcastle, Staffs. ST5 1BL** on **Wednesday, 24th September, 2025** at **7.00 pm**.

B U S I N E S S

1 APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations of interest from Members on items contained within this agenda.

3 MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

(Pages 5 - 14)

To consider the Minutes of the previous meeting(s)

4 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

5 APPOINTMENT OF SECTION 151 OFFICER

(Pages 15 - 18)

6 ANNUAL REPORT

(Pages 19 - 48)

7 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

(Pages 49 - 60)

8 URGENT DECISION NOTIFICATION - COMMITTEE PROPORTIONALITY

(Pages 61 - 66)

9 STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

(To Follow)

To receive a statement by the Leader of the Council on the activities and decisions of Cabinet and items included on the Forward Plan.

10 REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Pages 67 - 68)

- a) Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee
- b) Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee
- c) Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee

11 REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEES

(Pages 69 - 70)

- a) Planning Committee
- b) Licensing and Public Protection Committee

12 MOTIONS OF MEMBERS (Pages 71 - 74)

A Motion is attached concerning inappropriate accommodation for Asylum Seekers in Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough.

13 QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS (To Follow)

14 RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

To receive from Members any petitions which they wish to present to the Council.

15 URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any communications which pursuant to Section B4, Rule 9 of the constitution are, in the opinion of the Mayor, of an urgent nature and to pass thereon such resolutions as may be deemed necessary.

16 DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

To resolve that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following report(s) as it is likely that there will be disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs contained within Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Yours faithfully



Chief Executive

NOTICE FOR COUNCILLORS

1. Fire/Bomb Alerts

In the event of the fire alarm sounding, leave the building immediately, following the fire exit signs.

Fire exits are to be found at the side of the room leading into Queens Gardens.

On exiting the building Members, Officers and the Public must assemble at the statue of Queen Victoria. DO NOT re-enter the building until advised to by the Controlling Officer.

2. Mobile Phones

Please switch off all mobile phones before entering the Council Chamber.

3. Notice of Motion

A Notice of Motion other than those listed in Procedure Rule 14 must reach the Chief Executive ten clear days before the relevant Meeting of the Council. Further information on Notices of Motion can be found in Section B5, Rule 4 of the Constitution of the Council.

Officers will be in attendance prior to the meeting for informal discussions on agenda items.

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Agenda Item 3

Council - 23/07/25

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 23rd July, 2025
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

[View the agenda here](#)

[Watch the meeting here](#)

Present:

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

Apologies: Councillor(s) Allport, Casey-Hulme, Dymond, S Jones, Lawley, Northcott, Parker, J Waring and P Waring

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
	Craig Jordan	Service Director - Planning
	Roger Tait	Service Director - Neighbourhood Delivery
	Geoff Durham	Civic & Member Support Officer

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 14 May, 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made the following announcements:

The Mayor wished the former Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Sir Ian Dudson all the best for his retirement and looked forward to welcoming his successor, Professor Elizabeth Barnes to Newcastle in due course.

There would be two further Mayoral walks in August – on 10th and 24th as part of the Mayor's walking around the boundary of the Borough.

The Mayor would be attending an event on 26th September at Burland Hall. The event would be raising money for Papyrus which was one of the Mayor's chosen charities.

4. PROJECT APPROVAL FOR THE DECARBONISATION OF THE J2 LEISURE CENTRE FOLLOWING GRANTING OF PHASE 4 PSDS FUNDING

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment, Councillor David Hutchison introduced a report setting out the success of being awarded a grant as part of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero PSDA Phase 4 funding for the decarbonisation of the Council's J2 leisure centre.

As part of the revised Sustainable Environment Strategy, external funding was pursued to help with decarbonisation and energy efficiency of the building. Members were asked to accept the grant of £2,790,173 towards the project which, in total would cost £3,207, 266. A contribution of £417,093 would be made by the Council, which was included in the Borough Council's Capital Programme for the Sustainable Environment Strategy associated delivery plan. The Portfolio Holder moved the recommendation.

The Leader, in seconding the recommendation, stated that funding for J2 had been 'missed out on' in the past, with funding going to Kidsgrove Sports Centre instead. He was therefore pleased that funding had been received to bring in measures to save energy and cut carbon emissions at J2.

Councillor Stubbs stated that this was fantastic news and congratulated the finance team in acquiring the funding.

Councillor Holland stated that the money was welcome as it would go towards reducing bills and the future liability on the tax payer.

The Leader, referring to previous funding for Kidsgrove Sports Centre stated that the funding for J2 was a 'win' for the Borough's leisure facilities.

Resolved: That the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero granting of funding available to enable Salix Finance to provide the Council with a grant of up to £2,790,173 to assist in carrying out a low carbon energy reduction heating project at its Jubilee 2 Leisure Centre, be accepted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

5. 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.

Questions were raised and responses were provided as follows.

On paragraph 2 – Walleys Quarry Odour Issues

Councillor Adcock stated that he would like to see more information from the Environment Agency (EA) that was available to residents, regarding the long term future for the site such as the future restoration and funding settlement. Councillor Adcock asked the Leader if he agreed that the EA should hold a public meeting as soon as possible where residents could have their questions answered.

The Leader agreed, stating that interaction with the public by the EA was important. In a recent meeting with the EA and other partners, the Leader had asked if they would be willing to convene the liaison committee and they had said that it would be considered. A stakeholders meeting was really important, especially with what could happen in the autumn and when the BUND money had run out.

Councillor Whieldon stated that residents were pleased that odours had diminished but were anxious about any possible future recurrence and were therefore seeking assurance that the EA would continue to do the job properly.

The Leader stated that it was important for the monitoring equipment to come back to Silverdale Pumping Station, if required. The EA had stated that they were discontinuing the dedicated Walleys Quarry reporting system in favour of a standard national one.

Council staff were dealing with any odour complaints and any received were being investigated.

On paragraph 3 – Fields In Trust

Councillor Holland asked the Leader if he welcomed the news that Village Green status had been given to three green spaces in the Westlands ward and if he agreed that the extra protection would compliment the protection given by the Fields in Trust status and stop development of the sites.

The Leader welcomed the decision by Staffordshire County Council's Rights of Way Committee for this and stated that it was down to the dedication of residents making the application. Repton Drive, Winchester Drive and Clayton Field would now be put on the list of Village Green and would also be put into the Fields in Trust applications.

Councillor Whieldon asked if there was potential for increasing the number of parks and open spaces from the 88 mentioned in the report.

The Leader stated that there were more Village Green status applications in the pipeline and more sites were being sought to put into the Fields in Trust.

On paragraph 4 – Devolution and Forced Local Government Reorganisation Update

Councillor Fear recalled that, at the last meeting, it was noted that Staffordshire Moorlands District Council did not seem to be cognizant on this Council's position on the compulsory reorganisation and a letter was sent to them in that respect. The Leader was asked if any reply had been received back and if he agreed that Staffordshire Moorlands had surrendered to the process despite their residents being hostile towards it.

The Leader stated that no response had been received from them. They had agreed their proposal at a meeting last week which was a merger with Stoke, taking in part of Stone and Uttoxeter who were against it. One of Newcastle's proposals was to talk with Staffordshire Moorlands regarding a North Staffordshire Unitary authority, excluding Stoke.

The Leader stated that Karen Bradbury MP was against the reorganisation so he did not feel that Staffordshire Moorlands had surrendered to the process.

Councillor Turnock stated that the Council had set aside £200,000 to pay for the forced local government reorganisation. A previous Cabinet report had referred to money coming from central government to work up proposals and the Leader was asked if any money had been received.

The Leader stated that £366,000 had been allotted to the ten Councils in Staffordshire. In the early stages, there would have been none coming to Newcastle but an appeal had been made to the Ministry to ensure that a fair share was received. Funding allocations would be announced next month.

The Leader stated that discussions had been held with Shropshire and there were upcoming discussions with Telford and Leaders of other Districts within the County.

On paragraph 5 – Kidsgrove Town Deal Update

Councillor Stubbs referred to the £1.9m, allocated to support a new package of initiatives. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth was asked if the £1.9m was an additional sum that had been received or if it was a reallocation within the current budget and if so, which projects had it been taken from.

The Leader advised that the £1.9m had come from the money for the shared hub development which was included with the Town Deal Fund.

Councillor Skelding welcomed the amount received but was disappointed that it was vastly reduced from what had been previously promised.

Councillor Burnett-Faulkner was delighted to welcome the further investment in Kidsgrove via the Town Deal money. £1.9m on enterprise units, a learning centre, towpath improvements and improvements to the public realm would benefit everyone. The Leader was asked to give an update on progress relating to the station refurbishment.

The Leader stated that a refurbishment of the station could now move forward. The Town Deal Board had met earlier in the week and officers had been asked to go back to the Government and ask for a plan to be agreed – a full refurbishment of the station but not the car park. The designs for the scheme looked good and would be a credit to Kidsgrove. Any money left would be allocated to other schemes within Kidsgrove.

Councillor Whieldon stated that Harecastle Tunnel and the canal were becoming tourist spots so a refurbished station would compliment it.

On paragraph 6 – Financial and Performance Review Report – 4th Quarter 2024/25

Councillor Crisp asked the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Heritage and Culture what plans were in place to promote the new Brampton Museum Supporters Group and

inspire more people to become involved. Would it include the use of social media, community events or collaborations with local schools and businesses?

The Leader advised that the Museum had been brought up on this part of the agenda because it was performing well and was a credit to the Borough and could be one of the assets lost under the forced local government reorganisation.

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Heritage and Culture, Councillor Skelding stated that the supporters group, launched last Friday was in part, a continuation of the Friends of the Museum group. Social media was being used to promote the supporters group. School events had always proved useful for promoting the site.

Councillor Bryan asked the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth for an update on the Council's financial revenue budget outturn figure at the end of the last financial year.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth stated that there was a surplus of £20,000 in the revenue budget.

Councillor Skelding, referring to the third paragraph of item 6 stated that J2 was doing well with current membership at 4,19. The wellbeing centre referral programme was engaged with 470 referrals of which 60% were converting to full membership. Twelve schools had confirmed their involvement with swimming lessons and three more were being awaited for confirmation.

Councillor Whieldon stated that her residents were pleased with the street cleanliness levels and wished to pass on congratulations to the Streetscene team through the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment.

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Hutchison was proud of his team and, after updating Members on the performance of the Streetscene team, thanked Councillor Whieldon for her comments.

On paragraph 7 – Civic Pride Update

Councillor Gorton was pleased to hear that the draft Civic Pride Strategy would be referred to the Council's Scrutiny Committees and suggested that the Strategy could have a specific pillar of work, working with schools and the college and university.

The Leader stated that this was a good point and Councillor Gorton could put that forward at a Scrutiny Committee in due course.

Councillor Adcock welcomed the Strategy. At a recent visit to a school within his ward, he was encouraged to see the children being encouraged to take pride in and learn about where they lived.

The Leader stated that the benefits of civic pride could be seen in the community and there were more awards to come. An event was planned in the Guildhall and in Kidsgrove, regarding the consultation, where people would be encouraged to give feedback on the strategy.

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

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Reports for the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee, the Health Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee and the Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee were attached to the agenda.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEES

Reports for the Planning Committee and the Audit and Standards Committee were attached to the agenda.

Members were advised that the Licensing and Public Protection Committee had not met since the last meeting of the Full Council.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

8. MOTIONS OF MEMBERS

A Motion, concerning Walleys Quarry, had been submitted by the Labour Group and an amendment to the Motion was submitted by the Conservative Group.

The Monitoring Officer advised Members that the proposer and seconder of the Motion wished to withdraw it - with the consent of the Mayor.

Councillor Holland, under Procedure Rule 4.3 of the Constitution, proposed to move the suspension of Procedure Rule 4.6 in order that the text of the Conservative Group's amended Motion may be debated.

The meeting was suspended briefly whilst the Mayor took advice from the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer.

The Mayor accepted the withdrawal of the Labour Group's Motion and advised that adjournment of the meeting was necessary in order to discuss Councillor Holland's Point of Order.

Meeting adjourned at 8.10pm

Meeting resumed at 8.40pm

The Mayor advised that following discussion, the Point of Order to discuss the Motion would be allowed.

The Leader was asked to propose the 'Motion Without Notice'.

The Leader moved the Motion which, following the issuing of the Closure Notice for Walleys Quarry, gave a number of resolutions which included calling upon the Environment Agency (EA), MP and relevant authorities to ensure that the site was

remediated, made safe and fully restored. The Motion also asked for a Public Inquiry to be held, looking into the failings of the EA as regulator of the site.

Councillor Holland seconded the Motion stating that the Motion was clear. The national framework for protecting the residents of Newcastle had failed in this instance and therefore the national bodies should be held accountable.

Following a debate, which raised issues such as what happens next, the Leader in summing up stated that the Motion was clear and set out the parameters for moving forward.

A vote was taken and the Motion was carried.

[Watch the debate here](#)

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

Question from Councillor Mark Holland to the Leader of the Council:

“There has been considerable coverage in the media about so-called "DOGE savings" since the local elections in May. Could the Leader of the Council outline how the Conservative Administration at Newcastle Borough Council, working with Council Officers, has delivered millions of pounds in efficiency savings since 2018?”

The Leader advised that from this Council’s point of view, the efficiencies that were attached to the DOGE agenda were nothing new as efficiency board meetings had taken place in the Council since 2018 and, through that funding strategy almost £17m had been saved. This had allowed for the financial position to be balanced each year and services had improved in the process. The Efficiency Board process had begun for this year which would feed through to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees before going to Full Council for the budget in February, 2026. This Council would come forward with a measure of savings to save almost £2m. Decisions would be made such as not closing the toilets in town and to support the Museum and flower displays across the Borough, all of which could be challenged, DOGE’d and removed.

Councillor Holland did not ask a supplementary question

Question from Councillor Richard Gorton to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage:

“A decade after his death, Ian 'Lemmy' Kilmister remains a giant of rock music. Lemmy may have been born in Burslem, but the greater part of his childhood was spent in Madeley. In view of Lemmy's international status as a musician, song writer and leader of the band Motorhead, does the Portfolio Holder agree that it is time Lemmy's association with the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme was formally recognised and celebrated?”

The Portfolio Holder stated that Lemmy spent a lot of time in Madeley before the age of ten, then moving to Anglesey. The Council did have discussions on the unveiling of the recent statue in Burslem – if it could be located in the new Astley Place area, alongside the new music venue where there could be a motorhead themed restaurant. However, Burslem was selected as it was his birthplace. A national Blue Plaque had also been considered at his childhood home in Madeley but unfortunately he had only been passed for ten years - with the criteria being twenty years. The Museum had been approached to look into ways that Lemmy could be recognised.

Councillor Gorton asked a supplementary question:

“Does the portfolio agree that, at some stage it would be brilliant if an exhibition could be held at the Museum celebrating Lemmy’s life and music.”

The Portfolio Holder agreed, stating that he would be following up with the Museum into possible events.

Question from Councillor Andrew Fox-Hewitt to the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment:

“Following a number of members raising concerns with regards the councils new grass management strategy, Council was informed last year that a review would be undertaken including a public consultation.
Can the Portfolio Holder please inform Council when and how this review and consultation will take place?”

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Grass Management Strategy was adopted and launched in April 2024, beginning with Phase 1. This had been growing long grass on 18 sites, covering 60 hectares. Phase 2 was the consultation and review period of the Strategy. The consultation had been advertised on the website and through the Strategy itself. The first social media post was done in September 2024 on the Council’s website and also on Facebook. Feedback from the consultation including from word of mouth, complaints, compliments, social media, the Council’s website and meetings was collated and analysed during phase 2. Overall, 93% of those who engaged with the Strategy were either in support or speaking about it positively. The feedback was reviewed by Cabinet in November, 2024 with issues being logged including fire safety to protecting football pitches. The Council flexed its approach with the community and had a mixed approach with mowed and unmowed areas. Phase 2 also found increased bio-diversity and resource efficiencies. Phase 3 had not received any negative comments to date.

Councillor Fox-Hewitt asked a supplementary question:

“Could the Portfolio Holder confirm how many respondents to the consultation there were in Phases 2 and 3”

The Portfolio Holder advised that he would source this information and email it to Councillor Fox-Hewitt.

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

“Council will note the fantastic work the Tri Services and Veterans support Centre do for veterans in our borough and the wider County and beyond, whilst operating as a charity in a challenging environment.

Can the Portfolio Holder advise if the Council is going review and waive the discretionary 20% business rate on the Tri Services building.”

The Portfolio Holder stated that he went to the reopening of the refurbished building recently and said that it was a tremendous facility. The Tri Services and Veterans Centre currently received 80% of mandatory relief from business rates due to their charitable status. They could apply for a further discretionary top up but to date had not done so. Applications were assessed using the established scoring matrix and could be granted on a sliding scale from 0 to 20% depending upon reasons given. The application form was on the Council’s website and could be submitted digitally.

Councillor Fox-Hewitt asked a supplementary question:

“Could the Portfolio Holder commit to meeting the Tri-Services Committee and go through the process of how to apply for a top up of the grants on the discretionary rates”

The Portfolio Holder stated that he could, re-stating that the application form was on the Council’s website. Councillor Fox-Hewitt was advised that if he passed Mr Harriman’s phone number to the Portfolio Holder, he would call him.

[Watch the debate here](#)

10. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

No petitions were handed in.

11. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

12. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

There were no confidential items.

**Cllr Robert Bettley-Smith
Chair**

Council - 23/07/25

Meeting concluded at 9.28 pm

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

4th September 2025

Report Title: Appointment of Service Director for Finance and Section 151 Officer

Submitted by: Service Director for Strategy, People and Performance

Portfolios: All

Ward(s) affected: All

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
To seek the Council's formal agreement to the appointment of the Service Director for Finance and Section 151 Officer			
<u>Recommendation</u> That Council:- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Approve the appointment of Craig Turner as the Council's Service Director for Finance and Section 151 Officer 2) That Mr Turner be appointed on a salary of £63,510.68 per annum with an additional £10, 000 per annum Statutory Officer allowance 			
<u>Reasons</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Under Pt VIII of the Local government Act 1972 the Council has a statutory duty to appoint a Section 151 Officer. 2) In line with the constitution; the appointment of the Council's Section 151 Officer is a matter for decision by full Council 			

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Council has carried out an external and internal recruitment campaign to recruit its new Service Director for Finance and Section 151 Officer. There were 4 applicants from both within our sector and others. A panel representative of the Employment Committee conducted a final interview on 16th September 2025
- 1.2 The Interview Panel, chaired by the leader of the panel and acting as a sub-committee of the Employment Committee reached the unanimous decision to recommend to Full Council that Mr Turner be appointed as the new Service Director for Finance and Section 151 Officer.
- 1.3 Full Council is now asked to formally agree to the appointment of Mr Turner as Service Director for Finance and Section 151 Officer.

2. Issues

- 2.1 Current Section 151 Officer, Sarah Wilkes has handed in her resignation and will leave the Authority in October 2025. We have a statutory obligation to employ a Section 151 Officer.

3. Recommendation

That Council:-

- 3.1 Approve the appointment of Mr Turner as the Council's Service Director for Finance and Section 151 Officer such appointment to commence from 15th October 2025
- 3.2 That Mr Turner be appointed on a salary of £63,510.68 per annum with an additional £10, 000 per annum Statutory Officer allowance

4. Reasons

- 4.1 Under Pt VIII of the Local government Act 1972 the Council has a statutory duty to appoint a Section 151 Officer

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 A full and robust selection process was undertaken with Mr Turner emerging as the preferred candidate.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 6.1 Under Pt VIII of the Local government Act 1972 the Council has a statutory duty to appoint a Section 151 Officer

7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1 The selection process undertaken was fair and equitable

8. Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1 No additional costs

9. Major Risks & Mitigation

- 9.1 No risks identified

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)



11. Key Decision Information

11.1 n/a

12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

12.1 n/a

13. List of Appendices

13.1 n/a

14. Background Papers

14.1 n/a

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NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet's Report to Council

24 September 2025

Report Title: Annual Report 2024-2025

Submitted by: Cabinet

Portfolios: One Council, People & Partnerships

Ward(s) affected: All

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>To provide Council with the opportunity to consider the Council's Annual Report for 2024-2025, which provides a high-level summary of the progress made during the penultimate year of the Council's 2022-2026 Council Plan. The Annual Report also provides contextual information on the financial challenges and operating environment, which have informed the Council's priorities.</p>	
<p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>That Council:</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">1. Receives and consider the Council's Annual Report for 2024-2025</p>	
<p><u>Reasons</u></p> <p>The publication of an Annual Report is accepted good practice and a key element in the Council's governance and assurance framework providing transparency to stakeholders on progress made, the handling of key risks, the financial outlook of the authority and evidence-based strategy development.</p>	

1. Background

- 1.1** As part of the Council's focus on performance management this Annual Report provides an opportunity to review the progress and achievements made against the Council's stated objectives and to use this intelligence to understand what still needs to be done and what new challenges lie ahead. The Annual Report does this by including the following sections:
- Understanding our Communities - presenting a place profile for the Borough to inform decision-making
 - Listening to our Communities – detailing the consultation and engagement programme for the previous year and how this feedback has been used to inform service improvements
 - The Financial Context - outlining the financial challenges facing the authority over the course of its Medium Term Financial Strategy and how we manage risks
 - Our Vision for the Borough – as set out in the 2022-2026 Council Plan
 - Our Achievements - looking at performance against our own targets and trend data
 - Value for Money Services - analysing our performance and costs against national and regional comparisons

- External Assessments - providing objectivity and assurance through the reporting of external assessments of the Council's work and any awards received in recognition of our achievements on behalf of our communities

1.2 In summary, the Annual Report provides assurance as to the progress made during the third year of the 2022-2026 Council Plan with 65% of all targets met in 2024-2025 and sound progress on our priority projects. The Report acknowledges the funding gap outlined within the 5-year Medium Term Financial Strategy and the plans to address this.

1.3 The Annual Report will be published on the Council's website as an important stakeholder document written for councillors, partners and employees and will remain a central element in the Council's annual performance management framework.

2. Recommendation

That Council:

1. Receives and consider the Council's new Annual Report for 2024-2025.

3. Reasons

3.1 The publication of an Annual Report is accepted good practice and a key element in the Council's governance and assurance framework providing transparency to stakeholders on progress made, the handling of key risks, the financial outlook of the authority and evidence-based strategy development.

4. Options Considered

4.1 At this time, it is felt there is no other option necessary for consideration, however the presentation of information is continually reviewed.

5. Legal and Statutory Implications

5.1 The Council has a Best Value duty to provide value for money services.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no differential equality issues arising directly from this report

7. Financial and Resource Implications

7.1 None from this report.

8. Major Risks & Mitigation

8.1 No new major risks have been identified through the process of developing the Annual Report.

9. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)



10. One Council

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council ☒

We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.

One Digital Council ☒

We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.

One Sustainable Council ☒

We will deliver on our commitments to a net zero future and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle.

10.1 The annual report sets out progress against One Council delivery.

11. Key Decision Information

11.1 This is not a key decision.

12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

12.1 Not relevant

13. List of Appendices

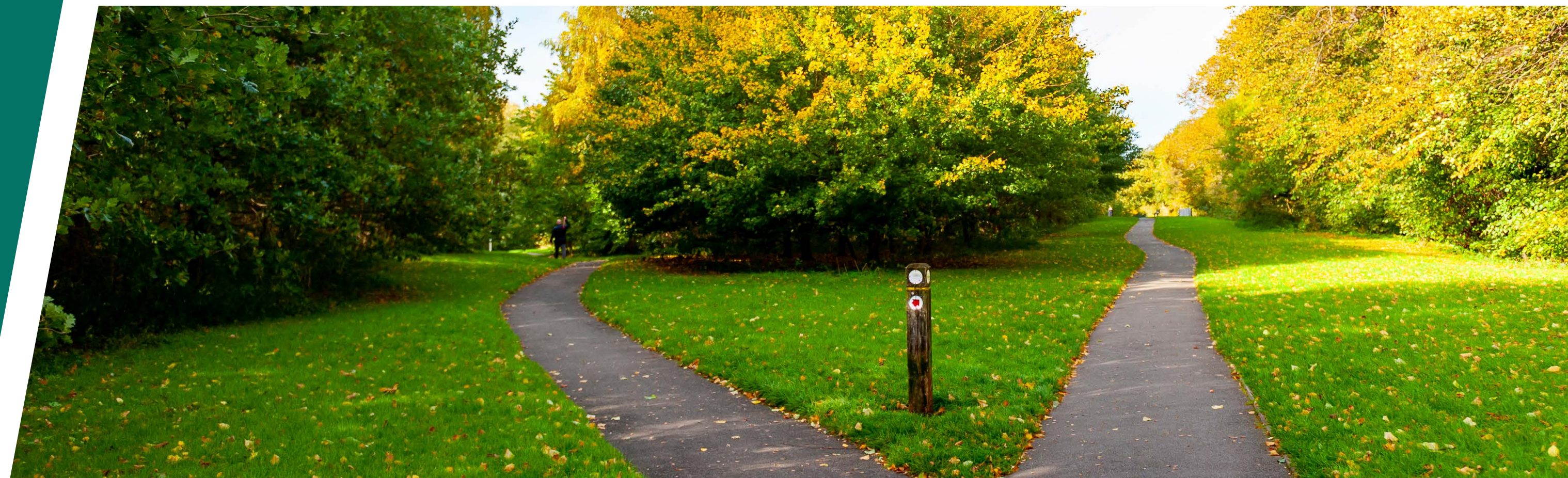
13.1 Appendix 1 - Annual Report 2024-2025

14. Background Papers

14.1 Working papers held by Strategic Hub Team.

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Annual Report 2024-2025



NEWCASTLE·UNDER·LYME
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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		The findings from third party judgements on the Council and its services	



Introduction

Welcome to the Council's Annual Report for 2024-25, which outlines the progress we've made against the priorities for the Borough during the penultimate year of our 2022-2026 [Council Plan](#). Alongside a review of our performance, the Annual Report also highlights some of the common issues facing our residents and how we have engaged with local communities to help shape local solutions and service improvements. It also looks at the financial challenges faced by the Council and across the local government sector as a whole, and our plans to continue providing value for money services.

2024-25 marked the transition to delivery stage for the Council's £85m town centre regeneration schemes with the construction of the new Castle Car Park, which opened in early 2025 and will unlock further development on The Ryecroft, Midway and Astley Place – all of which now have planning permission in place, partnership agreements signed and some early preparatory work already underway. Similarly, we've gone from strength to strength with our work supporting business growth, employment and skills through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and our success in delivering £4.8m in projects has resulted in the government granting Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council a further £1.5m to support 24 new projects for the next 12 months, including a new support Hub at Navigation House to help vulnerable people stay off the streets.

The Council continues to actively support our communities and last year launched our new 'Civic Pride' initiative which works with local people to make areas cleaner, safer and friendlier. There has been a round of action days across the Borough

and this year we've launched a new Civic Pride Investment Fund to provide further financial support to improve the quality of life in local areas. We continue to champion residents' concerns over the future of Walleys Quarry following the closure of the site earlier this year and are working closely with the Environment Agency who now have control over the site.

We enjoy strong and creative partnerships across the public, voluntary and statutory sectors, and work together to improve outcomes for our residents in terms of health, employment, and community safety. We are also fiercely proud of our loyal and ancient Borough and although we welcome the opportunities that devolution could bring to the Staffordshire area through increased funding and autonomy, we have expressed our concerns to central government over the forced reorganisation of local government which could see much larger councils operating at a greater distance from the voices of the communities they serve. We will be lobbying at every opportunity to retain the Borough Council and to continue to 'deliver good local services, a prosperous Borough, safe and welcoming places for all' – in line with our Vision. This Annual Report demonstrates how we are achieving that. We hope you find it interesting and informative!



Cllr Simon Tagg

Leader of the Council



Gordon Mole

Chief Executive

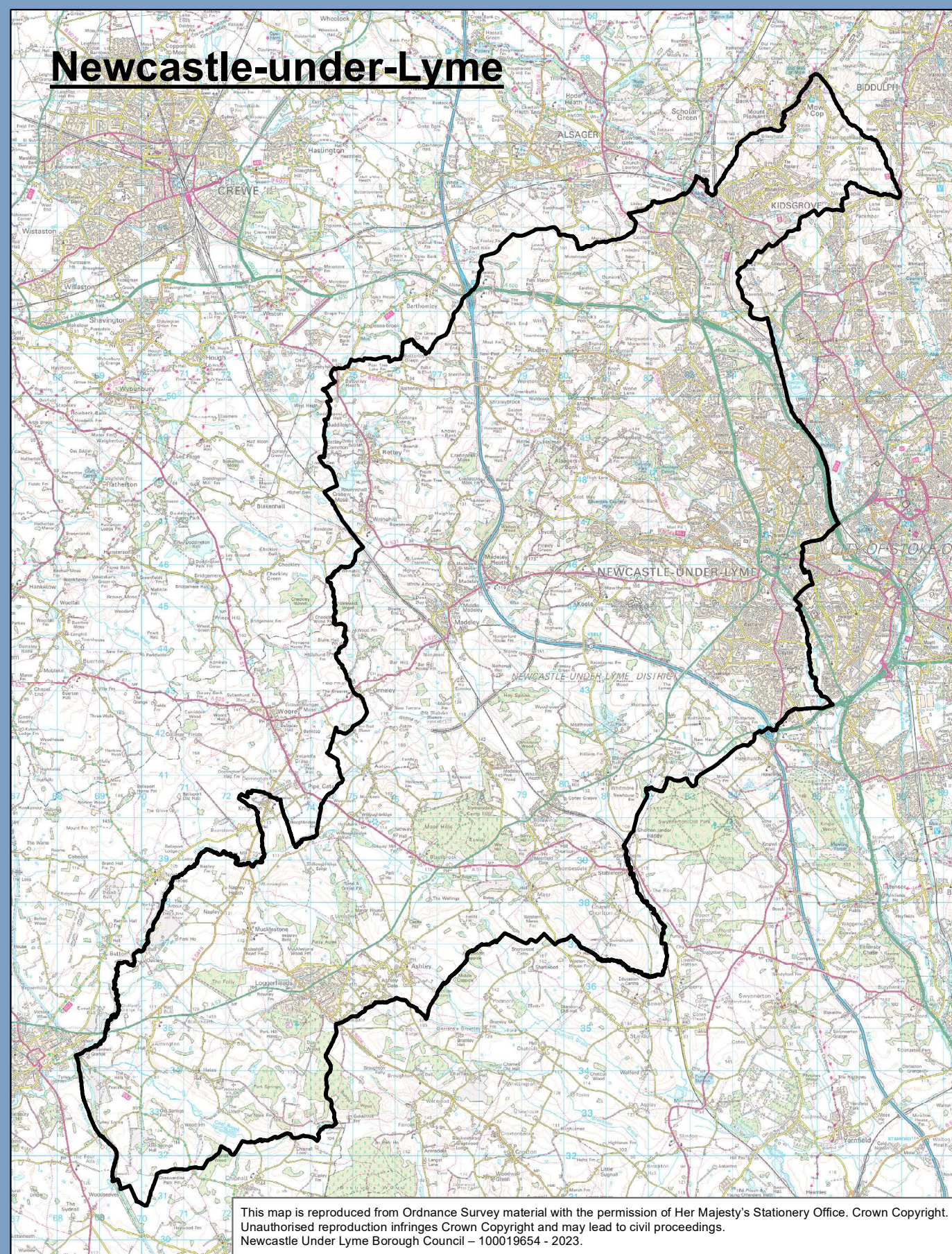


Executive Summary – Progress on a Page

- We completed the new £12 million Castle Car Park as part of the wider £85m town centre regeneration programme
- We set a balanced budget for 2025-26 against a backdrop of challenges facing the sector
- We hosted the Borough's first Business Festival, with a series of workshops and guest speakers during the week-long event
- We launched the Civic Pride initiative with a series of local action days across the Borough
- We have allocated £17m of Town Deal monies in Newcastle, resulting in Keele in Town, a new circular bus service and ground works for new housing at Chesterton and Knutton to name just a few of the projects included
- We brought 23 empty homes back into use and supported 188 adaptations under disabled facility grants
- The Council continued to expend considerable time and resources in monitoring the Walleys Quarry odour problem in order to secure a successful resolution to this issue through our limited enforcement powers, including potential legal action
- We met 65% of our targets in 2024-2025
- We maintained high standards of street cleanliness across the Borough and deployed our Neighbourhood Delivery Team to carry out efficient enforcement action to support this effort
- We adopted our new Sustainable Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan to direct our emissions reduction targets and were successful with our bid to the government's decarbonisation fund for £3.2m of investment
- We successfully completed Phase 1 of the Shared Prosperity Fund, delivering 33 projects focused on community development, people and skills, and support for local businesses. This phase created over 120 new jobs and up skilled more than 300 employees
- We expanded our sector leading food waste collection service to incorporate flats and are compliant with the new national 'simpler recycling' regulations
- We submitted our draft Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate following extensive stakeholder consultation
- We began renovation work to transform Navigation House into a Homeless Hub, complete with Managed Accommodation aimed at tackling and reducing homelessness in the town centre
- We built new changing rooms at the Wammy, which are operated by Newcastle Town FC, as part of our Playing Pitch Strategy
- We continued our work in addressing anti-social behaviour with a new car cruising PSPO and improved CCTV
- We received over 590 referrals on to our new Active Life programme with 75% of users saying that their health had improved
- Our work on tourism, bereavement services, street cleanliness and people management has been recognised and celebrated through a raft of nominations and awards



Section 1: Understanding our Communities



Our historic Borough is a place of marked contrasts. We are the home of a world class University at Keele, a leading light known internationally for its research and sustainability record, which stands side by side with former mining communities including some which register amongst the most deprived areas in the country. Our Borough is also a mixture of urban centres, affected by some of the same social issues facing our neighbouring city, Stoke-on-Trent, but also outstanding rural landscapes containing many smaller settlements with their own challenges. Our plans and priorities aim to address the needs of all our communities.

The Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme covers an area of 211 square kilometres and has a population density higher than that of Staffordshire at 607 residents per square kilometre. The population of the Borough, based on the 2024 Mid-year Estimate, is 127,700 with 51% female and 49% male. The 58,500 households are spread across a mix of urban and rural areas, with two town centres – Newcastle-under-Lyme and Kidsgrove - and a number of rural and urban villages across the Borough.

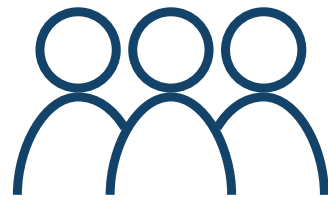
We recognise the importance of place data in decision making and service design and produce an annual 'State of the Borough' Digest, which includes key facts and figures on the make-up of the Borough and the common issues being faced by our residents. We have highlighted below two of the known challenges and how we are addressing them, often in conjunction with our local partners.



Newcastle-under-Lyme Facts and Figures

28%

OF THE POPULATION
ARE AGED
60 AND OVER



90%

OF RESIDENTS
IDENTIFY AS
'WHITE BRITISH'

47%

OF RESIDENTS HAVE
RQF LEVEL 4
OR ABOVE



MEDIAN
HOUSE PRICE
£195,200



AVERAGE WEEKLY SALARY OF
£675 FOR FULL-TIME
WORKERS

LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH
FOR MALES IS
79.0 YEARS
AND FEMALES IS
83.0 YEARS



76.5%

OF RESIDENTS AGED
16 - 64
WERE ECONOMICALLY
ACTIVE



17%

OF HOUSEHOLDS
IN THE BOROUGH
LIVE IN
FUEL POVERTY

Skills, Qualifications and Employment

Residents in the Borough tended to have similar qualifications to the national average and higher than the regional average. According to the ONS Annual Population Survey 2024, an estimated 47% of residents in the Borough have RQF level 4 or above. This is very similar to the national rate of 48% and higher than the West Midlands' 43%. Latest data also shows that an average of 77% of residents aged 16-64 were economically active, just below the region (78%) and the country (79%). However, employees who live in the borough tend to earn less with an average weekly salary of £675 for full-time workers, compared to £690 across the West Midlands region and £730 for Great Britain.



Spotlight on: Encouraging Skills and Employment

Shaping the Future – Newcastle’s first Business Festival

In March 2025, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council hosted its first ever business festival in conjunction with partners from across the area. The 5-day event had a different theme each day and featured a mix of local and national speakers as inspirational role models who shared their personal journeys.

Day 1 – Entrepreneurs: Featuring Chris Daniels from CyberKiln as the local role model and Keith Brymer Jones as the keynote speaker. The audience was given an oversight into their career journeys and the opportunity to ask questions. Drop in events were hosted around the town centre later in the day, alongside a business market by the Guildhall.

Day 2 – Innovation: A business expo was hosted at the Denise Coates Centre at Keele University giving local companies the opportunity to showcase their talent. Speakers focused on the theme of Industrial Strategies and the impact of AI.

Day 3 - Business Networking: A second business market was hosted around the Guildhall and local speakers provided inspiration at a series of talks around the town centre.

Day 4 - Women in Business: Several female speakers from local companies were able to tell their personal stories of how and why they started their own businesses and who and what were the key influencers for this growth. The sessions proved to be hugely popular with a sell-out audience and many delegates wanting more.

Day 5 concluded the Festival with an open doors day where a number of local businesses opened their doors, welcoming visitors to find out more about the services on offer.

The whole experience provided an opportunity to celebrate doing business in Newcastle, showcase the range of support that is available to help businesses grow and to give local entrepreneurs the opportunity to meet like-minded people.





Crime

In 2024, the recorded crime rate per 1,000 population in Newcastle-under-Lyme was the fourth lowest across the Staffordshire boroughs, following an 8% fall since 2023. The rate of almost all types of crime is now lower than the average across Staffordshire. Addressing instances of anti-social behaviour and of nuisance remain a key priority for the community safety partnership, alongside supporting the night-time economy through safe space provision and the innovative street medics approach, which reduces pressure on the local NHS.

Spotlight on: Safer Communities

The Council is a strategic partner in the Newcastle Community Safety Partnership. We work together with partners to address community safety issues in line with the Local Crime and Police Plan which looks to deliver the strategic community safety priorities.

The following initiatives were completed in 2024-2025:

- Introduction of the car cruising Public Space Protection Order
- Safe Space – Ran by volunteers on Friday evenings from 9pm-2am
- Knife Amnesty – our teams work with partner agencies to raise awareness around knife crime and conduct weapon sweeps across our parks and open spaces
- Spiking awareness training – delivered to a number of licensed premises within Newcastle-under-Lyme
- Street Medics – the medics were commissioned from the PFCC Community Safety Fund to allow us to set up a triage service to support the nighttime economy
- Dizzy Heights youth provision – running at Chesterton Vision and Clough Hall, this provision, again funded from the PFCC Community Safety Fund, provided diversionary activities in these areas.

Section 2: Listening to our Communities

Consultation and engagement with our communities continues to play an important role in informing decision-making across the Council, helping to ensure that we deliver services that meet the needs of local people.

Throughout 2024-25 we have conducted annual satisfaction surveys and ad hoc consultations to enable evidence-based decisions and the shaping of future service delivery. We are careful to ensure that our consultations capture the views of a range of residents to really understand what matters.

Safer Communities - In Summer 2024 we carried out a consultation to decide if residents supported the introduction of a Public Spaces Protection Order to deal with car cruising, and results showed that they were. Since the PSPO was introduced, we have seen a decrease in the number of car cruising reports across the Borough. Staffordshire Police have welcomed the order, which provides them with additional powers to deal with the matter.

Brampton Museum - We carried out a satisfaction survey for visitors to Brampton Museum, enabling the team to see how happy visitors were with their visit. We

provided robust evidence that showed that, with a large response, a significant majority of visitors were very satisfied.

Waste and Recycling - We carried out surveys for Recycling and Waste where we evaluated how many local businesses of various sizes were aware of forthcoming changes to legal requirements around recycling trade waste. This has helped our teams know which changes most needed to be publicised amongst the business community.

Strong Financial Discipline - As we do every Autumn, we carried out an annual Budget Consultation. This enables residents to tell us what their priorities are for the future, as we ask which services they value the most, where we should target income generation, and what we could do to improve their lives. The results were reported to Cabinet, allowing members to make informed decisions in allocating resources. The results of this consultation told us that, as in previous years, residents' top priority was continued town centre regeneration in line with our priority of town centres for all.



Section 3: The Financial Context

The Council is committed to the delivery of high-quality services. Integral to this is the need to effectively target financial resources in line with our stated aims and objectives whilst also working against the background of an adverse economic situation nationally. For more detailed information you can read the published Statement of Accounts.

Revenue

The Council actively manages all of its resources to ensure it delivers the services that local people need, and to prepare for future challenges. The priority actions under 'One Council Delivering for Local People' include workforce development, community engagement, partnership working, financial discipline, high quality value for money services and delivering the transformational One Council Programme, which made recurrent savings of £1.173m.

During the year, the Council has had to use resources (both financial and staff time) in dealing with an environmental crisis due to Hydrogen Sulphide (H²S) escaping from a local landfill site. The scale of work undertaken by the Council on this issue has soaked up a huge amount of corporate resource but has resulted in a greatly improved situation for local residents and securing an Abatement Notice against the site operator – a rare achievement on an Environment Agency regulated site. Since the abatement notice was issued the operators have continually breached the acceptable levels of Hydrogen Sulphide (H²S) being emitted, which has resulted in the Environmental Agency ceasing the operator's licence. As a result of this the operators, Walleys Quarry Limited, have now gone into administration.

Capital

A Capital Programme totalling £16.680m was approved for 2024-25, excluding £1.000m contingency. Of this total, £10.135m relates to the total cost of new schemes for 2024-25 together with £6.545m for schemes funded by external sources (Town Deals Fund, Future High Streets Fund and Disabled Facilities Grants). In addition, £42.174m was brought forward from the 2023-24 Capital Programme (including £25.641m from the Town Deals Fund and the Future High Streets Fund), the Council's contribution towards the construction of a new multi storey car park (£8.100m) and fleet replacement (£4.751m) resulting in a total Capital Programme of £59.855m for 2024-25 (including a £1.000m contingency).

A mid-year review of the Capital Programme for 2024-25 was undertaken as part of the Efficiency Board and budget setting process to identify any projects that may need to be re-profiled from 2024-25 into future years. The revised Capital Programme for 2024-25 totalling £51.295m was approved by Cabinet on 3 December 2024. Actual expenditure has totalled £26.236m, £25.059m below that planned. This relates to expenditure that has been rolled forward into 2025-26 (£23.553m) including projects planned under the Town Deals funds that will be progressed during 2025-26 (£18.354m) and the Council's contribution towards the development of Astley Place (£1.146m). There are also a number of projects whereby costs have been value engineered or whereby a decision has been made not to progress with the project until a future period (£1.506m).



Financial Recovery

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out the Council’s financial position over the next five years. This is aligned to the Council Plan 2022-2026 and is the key vehicle for ensuring efficiency in service delivery and targeting resources to priority areas. The updated MTFS was reported to Cabinet on 9 January and 4 February 2025 and reflects the impact of the Local Government Finance Settlement. The MTFS provides for a gap in 2025-26 of £1.890m and a revised gap to reflect the continued review of the capital programme, over the five-year period of the MTFS of £5.042m.

A number of savings and funding strategies have been identified as being both feasible and sustainable, via a vigorous Financial Efficiency Board process. The Financial Efficiency Board is made up of the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Town Centres, the Cabinet Portfolio Holders, the Corporate Leadership Team, and Finance Officers. During the summer months service directorates are asked to provide saving plans for the coming financial year and future years. These saving proposals are then challenged and discussed at various meetings held with the members of the Financial Efficiency Board. Once the savings proposals have been reviewed and challenged, the approved savings are put forward as part of the MTFS update and form part of the budget setting process. Savings proposals put forward can be revisited at any time.

The Council has a Civic Growth Fund which was established in 2020 for the purpose of enabling investment in corporate priorities. The Civic Growth Fund is required to be used to invest in initiatives that are forecast to generate on-going revenue savings through reducing the costs of service delivery or through the

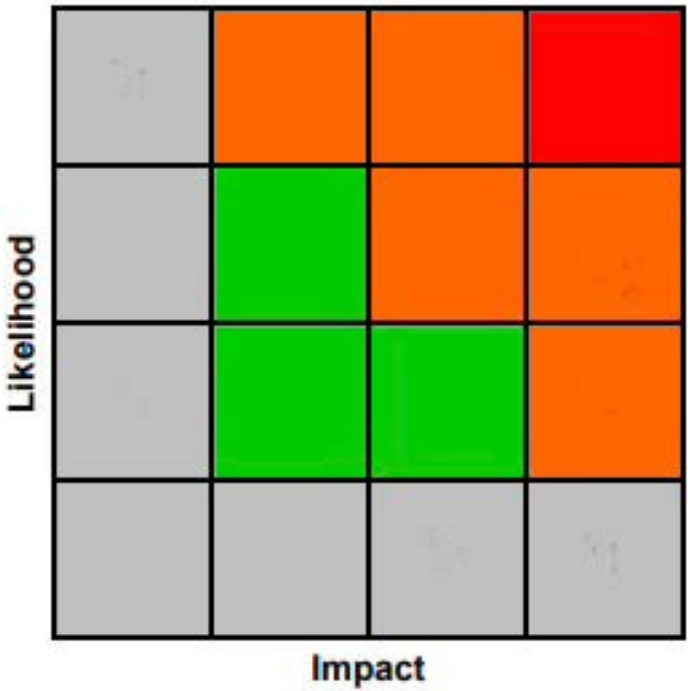
generation of additional income.

The savings and funding strategies identified will enable continued investment of £0.250m in the Council’s priorities as per the Council Plan 2022-2026 via the Civic Growth Fund. The Civic Growth Fund will continue to be used to provide pump priming investment in initiatives, including Digital Delivery, that are forecast to generate on-going revenue savings through reducing the costs of service delivery or through the generation of additional income.

The Council intends to consider ways it can facilitate and participate in the commercial and industrial development of the Borough and thereby gain access to income streams to contribute to a sustainable revenue budget. The basis for this is set out in the Commercial Strategy and the Investment Strategy.

Managing Key Risks

The Council continues to develop and maintain a systematic framework and process for managing corporate, strategic, operational, project and partnership risks and reviews this framework annually. This includes assessing risks for impact and likelihood, identifying, and allocating responsibility for their mitigation, and receiving assurances about ongoing management of these risks. The Council’s Risk Management Strategy sets out the roles and responsibilities of officers and councillors, including escalation and clear reporting lines. The Council’s ‘risk appetite’ has been agreed and mitigating actions are required for all risks that exceed this threshold.



Section 4: Our Vision and Priorities for the Borough

Good local services, a successful, sustainable borough, and safe and welcoming places for all

Outcomes	Priorities	Approach
In Newcastle		
 Residents have easy access to good quality services	 One Council Delivering for Local People	 Our Employees will be supported and empowered to succeed
 Businesses flourish and residents have access to good, well paid, jobs	 A Successful and Sustainable Growing Borough	 we will work closely with valued partners to deliver skills, jobs and growth
 Everyone has the opportunity to be active, healthy and fulfilled	 Healthy, Active, and Safe Communities	 We will support our communities to improve lives and life chances
 Town Centres are vibrant places to live, work and visit	 Town Centres for All	 We will develop opportunities which will help our town centres thrive and grow

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council will be Net Zero by 2030

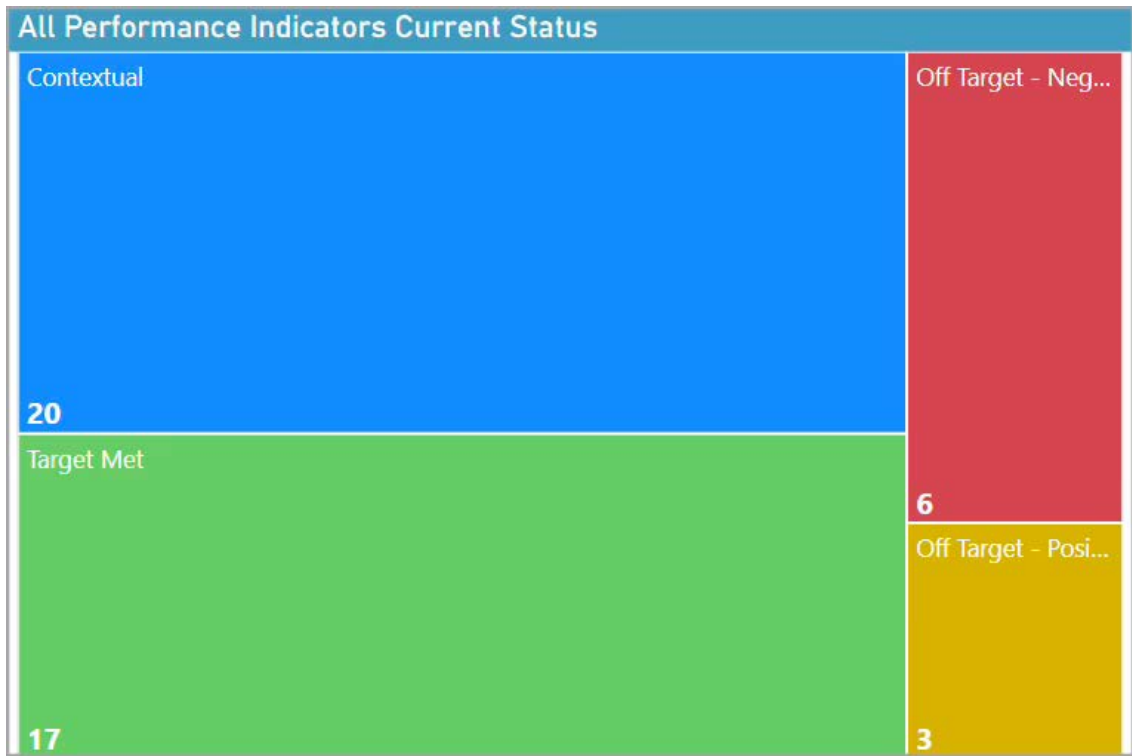
Section 5: Our Achievements

Overview of performance in 2024-25

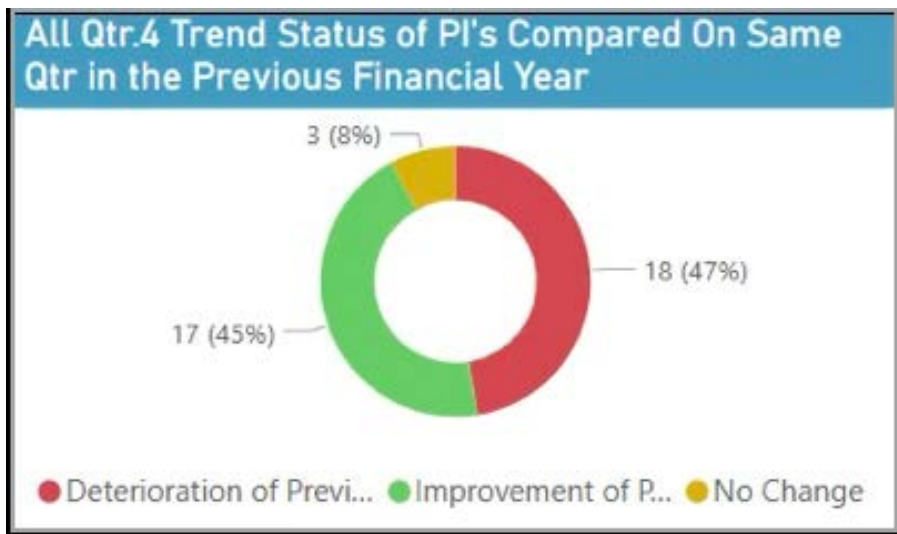
Throughout the financial year 2024-25 the Council monitored 46 key performance indicators, which were aligned with the priorities and objectives set out in our Council Plan. Following our annual Value for Money study at the end of each year, several targets were increased to drive stronger performance and deliver greater value to residents. The ongoing use of business intelligence tools has further enabled year-on-year comparisons, providing deeper insights into both seasonal and annual trends.

The 46 indicators were categorised into two key groups:

- Contextual Measures – These indicators do not have set targets and are instead compared to previous years to assess performance. This year saw 20 contextual measures monitored which was an increase of 3 from the previous year.



- Targeted Measures – These indicators are benchmarked against specific targets and reviewed both in comparison to previous years and against target values. There were 26 measures recorded this financial year that had defined targets.



65% of measures successfully met their targets in 2024-25 with nine measures falling short. Among these off-target measures, 33% still showed improvement compared to the previous financial year (2023-24). Across all indicators, 53% showed either improvement or stability in 2024-25, reflecting overall progress in key areas.

Beyond performance measures, the Council continued to advance its 26 key projects and priority actions throughout 2024-25, with three already completed in the previous financial year. 20 projects progressed as expected and are on track for timely completion. The project to deliver an economic and cultural legacy from the celebration of the Borough's 850th anniversary in 2023 was completed last year. However, two projects have faced continued challenges:

- Resolution of Walleys Quarry - the council continues to champion community concerns despite the landfill operator entering voluntary liquidation in February 2025. The level of odour complaints has now decreased dramatically
- Kidsgrove Town Deal – a review of the Railway Station project is underway with a view to revise and reduce the works due to be undertaken to move the project forward.



Priority One: One Council Delivery for Local People

Deliver services to a high standard every day

- The Brampton Museum won Bronze in the Small Visitor Attraction of the Year category at the Staffordshire Tourism Awards and Bronze for Accessible and Inclusive Tourism
- Achieved Platinum standard for our Address Gazetteer accuracy
- 2024 finalists in the APSE Best Service Team of the Year for Cemeteries and Crematorium
- Continued to process Housing Benefits new claims/change events in very quick times (four days)
- Upheld high food safety standards through our inspection programme, with only 0.4% of food premises receiving a zero or one-star national food hygiene rating.

Ensure our services are efficient and accessible

- Enabled increased customer access and flexibility to book J2 leisure sessions with over 11,000 downloads of our App
- Replaced the legacy Mitel Phone system with new Teams Telephony and AnywhereNow contact centre system, allowing us to decommission the aging Mitel servers and downsize our server estate
- Continuous enhancements to our website's information, advice, and guidance pages have empowered residents to access the right support quickly and efficiently,

leading to fewer completed forms. By seamlessly directing enquiries to the appropriate authority, these improvements are ensuring requests are resolved accurately the first time. Additionally, phone enquiries dropped by 1,158 in 2024-25, reflecting the effectiveness of digital solutions in providing streamlined support for the public.

Ensure strong financial discipline across the Council

- Brought in capital receipts of circa £1m
- Set a balanced budget for 2025-26
- Undertook a review of all single person discounts and generated an additional income of approx. £350,000 across precepting partners
- We are currently still a debt-free authority and continue to operate a financially well-managed Council
- Maintained our commitment to financial responsibility, successfully collecting 97.4% of National Non-Domestic Rates last year.

Further increasing recycling rates across the borough with a particular focus on food waste

- We bettered our target for residual waste per household in 2024-25, lowering it to 400kg, and the Council performs better than the national average
- We continue to make positive strides in improving recycling rates, with over 48%

of household waste now being reused, recycled, or composted. We have also launched collections for flexible plastics and cartons, in collaboration with Stafford Borough Council and Veolia, who manage the processing of dry recycling collected from our residents

- The expansion of the food waste collection service to flats is progressing ahead of the mandatory target set for April 2026. In preparation, we have launched a communications campaign in collaboration with Staffordshire County Council to boost participation in food waste recycling and reduce the volume of residual waste.

Secure a step change in street cleanliness and the quality of the public domain

- We continued the use of land audit surveys throughou 2024-25 to monitor and measure street cleanliness within the Borough and identify grot spot areas. Graffiti, Detritus and Fly-posting all received 100% survey scores. Litter whilst performing lower at 98%, still met its set target. The insights from these surveys will guide targeted street cleansing efforts and clearly demonstrate the continued progress made over the past year
- In 2024-25 the Council launched its new Civic Pride initiative to make the borough cleaner, safer and friendlier
- Removed graffiti from subways to improve their appearance
- Reviewed almost all park and green space signage with new maps, webpages, and physical signs.

Continue to keep Council Tax low for the Borough's residents

- We effectively managed the Council's commercial property portfolio and achieved a 92.5% occupancy rate, bringing in revenue in excess of £1m

- Exceeded our target for room hire income generation by 139% at the Brampton
- Successfully delivered a highways grass cutting contract on behalf of Staffordshire County Council Highways, and have been awarded an extended contract term
- The Council has launched a new Commercial Programme, following our successful One Council principles, which has already identified over 50 commercial opportunities covering both income generation and cost avoidance.

Develop professional talent across the Council and provide opportunities for staff to grow their careers

- We continue to work towards Silver Thrive accreditation, a process which encourages us to constantly improve our health and well-being offering. One of the most popular schemes has been the onsite health scales, allowing staff to monitor a range of health factors and whether these improve over time
- Built on our relationship with local colleges to support six T-level students for the first year of two-year placements within the council
- Our annual values survey demonstrated improvements in employee engagement and satisfaction
- Continued to ensure we have adequately trained staff for emergency response roles as part of the council's responsibilities as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act
- Used more of the apprenticeship levy to enable employees to progress with their professional development
- The average number of sick days taken by employees has continued to decline over the past year



Priority 2: A Successful and Sustainable Growing Borough

A strong and sustainable economy where everyone benefits

- Successfully completed Phase 1 of the Shared Prosperity Fund (January 2023 – March 2025), delivering 33 impactful projects focused on community development, people and skills, and support for local businesses. This phase created over 120 new jobs, upskilled more than 300 employees, and saw the planting of over 20,000 trees. Under the community theme, over 65 volunteering opportunities were created across the third sector, resulting in 85 activity attendances. In March, the Borough Council hosted its inaugural five-day Business Festival, celebrating UKSPF-backed success. With daily attendance averaging more than 100 delegates, the event spotlighted themes such as innovation, entrepreneurship, business networking, and Women in Business—highlighting strong collaboration among local partners
- Around £17 million of the Newcastle Town Deal allocation is now contractually committed, with all projects having reached key delivery milestones—and some now completed. Recent developments include the opening of Keele in Town and the launch of a new circular bus route serving Keele, Knutton, Chesterton, Cross Heath, Silverdale, and key business parks. The phased rollout of Real-Time Passenger Information at key bus stops continues. Groundworks have begun for new housing developments in Knutton and Chesterton. A delivery partner has been appointed and mobilised for the rollout of a new fibre network across the Town Deal area. Electric vehicle chargers have been installed at Castle Car Park, and further planning has advanced for the proposed conversion of the Midway Multi-Storey Car Park into residential accommodation.



Support the sustainable development of our towns and villages

- A key milestone has been reached with the successful submission of the Borough Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate in December 2024. This marks a significant step forward in shaping the future of the area. The Plan is now set to undergo formal examination, with Hearing sessions taking place in May and June 2025. Subsequent stages will be guided by the appointed Inspector's direction and the progress made throughout the examination process
- We made significant strides in supporting development across the Borough by ensuring timely decision-making on planning applications. Over a 24-month rolling period up to the end of March 2025, we achieved a 91.5% on-time processing rate for major applications and an impressive 95.9% for non-major applications; both reflecting an improvement on the previous year's performance. These results evidence our continued commitment to efficient service delivery and sustainable growth.

Protecting our communities by improving how we use our enforcement powers

- Investigated 130 complaints relating to food safety and 326 infectious disease notifications
- Removed 47 severe hazards to health and 117 high risk hazards to health from private rented sector accommodation
- Carried out 428 checks on DBS certificates to ensure the continuing suitability of our taxi drivers
- Reviewed 311 noise complaints and 186 pollution related complaints

- 72% of complainants were informed within the required timescales regarding alleged breaches of planning control, which is a notable improvement on the previous year
- Walleys Quarry has seen a marked improvement, with the site now closed to incoming waste and odour complaints dropping dramatically—from 1,620 in January 2025 to just 41 by the end of March 2025. In February 2025, Walleys Quarry Limited entered voluntary liquidation and the site is now under the Environment Agency's control.

Ensuring that the Council's operations are carbon neutral by 2030 and the Borough by 2050

- Adopted the Sustainable Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan
- Calculated our Carbon Footprint and supported work that contributed to a 14% reduction in emissions, mostly due to HVO use
- Delivered Phase 6 of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy
- Commenced Carbon Literacy Training for all staff with the aim to have between 150-200 members of staff trained by the end of 2025

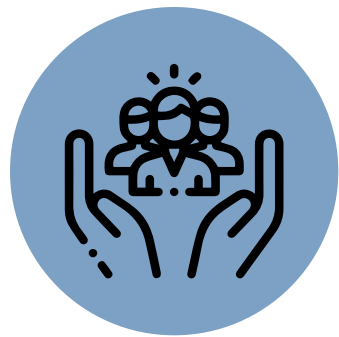


- Facilitated over 80 Sustainable Environment engagements from case study presentations, stalls, events, activities with schools, residents, and businesses
- Successfully adopted a Grassland Management Strategy
- Successfully supported a £3.2m funding bid from the Salix Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme
- Developed a Business Sustainability Guide



Ensure that there are good homes for everyone and that every citizen has a safe and secure place to live

- Brought 23 empty homes back into use
- Housed 485 households via the housing register
- Enabled land remediation at Knutton and Chesterton for Aspire Housing to build much needed new homes on brownfield land
- Supported 143 Disabled Facilities Grant applicants, equating to 188 adaptations, allocating a total spend of £1.5m
- We have partnered with Aspire to secure funding which will enable us to support individuals affected by hoarding
- The number of verified rough sleepers remained relatively steady throughout the year with seven recorded cases at the end of March. Renovation work is now underway on a Shared Prosperity Fund-backed project to transform Navigation House into a Homeless Hub, complete with Managed Accommodation aimed at tackling and reducing homelessness in the town centre. In addition, the team has successfully secured further funding through the Rough Sleeper Initiative to sustain and enhance our ongoing support for rough sleepers.



Priority 3: Healthy, Active and Safe Communities

Reduce anti-social behaviour and crime in our communities

- Safe Space - the project continues to run with volunteers on Friday evenings from 9pm-2am. This space is used to provide a hub for those who are on a night out
- Collaboration with the Local Policing Team continues to be effective, leading to a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB). Efforts remain focused on Newcastle Town Centre, with the installation of additional CCTV cameras and the enforcement of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to enhance safety and security. These measures contribute to maintaining a safer community while deterring unwanted behaviours
- Introduced two new youth diversionary activities in Clough Hall and Chesterton, working with local provider Dizzy Heights
- By the end of the year, there were 30 open Anti-Social Behaviour cases. New cases reported varied throughout the year, however January to March 2025 saw 26 fewer complaints compared to the same quarter in 2024. Additionally, it must be noted that every quarter recorded fewer new cases than its corresponding quarter from the previous year, indicating a positive downward trend in ASB incidents.

Ensure that our most vulnerable residents are supported through the impact of the rising cost of living.

- Throughout the year, 205 referrals were made regarding vulnerability by participating organisations at the Daily Hub. This proactive approach has been instrumental in helping vulnerable individuals access the right support and resources within the Borough

- Collaboration with the Newcastle Partnership remains strong in efforts to support vulnerable residents. The Prevent and Protect agendas are embedded in daily operations, enhancing community safety and confidence. Additionally, the Better Health Programme continues to positively influence the physical health of local communities, while the Partnership Board fosters meaningful collaboration among various organisations, ensuring a united approach to key community goals.

Support the development of community solutions to local problems

- We have built new football changing rooms at the Wammy, which are to be operated by Newcastle Town Football Club. Development of changing rooms at the Wammy has been in a long-term improvement plan for the area; and is a priority for the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy. The changing rooms have been funded from a mix of Council monies, Newcastle Town Deal and Football Foundation funding
- We have collaborated with key partners to establish effective community organisations. The Civic Pride programme is actively progressing, with successful events held in Kidsgrove, Chesterton, Holditch, Crackley, and Red Street. This initiative is supported through a strong partnership with Staffordshire County Council, Aspire Housing, and Staffordshire Police, ensuring meaningful community engagement and positive local impact
- Jubilee2 experienced a steady increase in membership throughout the year, enhancing fitness support and expanding exercise opportunities for residents across the Borough. By the year's end, membership had reached 4,119, reflecting its growing impact on community health and well-being.



Priority 4: Town Centre for All

Increasing the number of people living, working and using Newcastle town Centre

- Newcastle-under-Lyme Business Improvement District (BID), in collaboration with Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, celebrated a tremendous double win at the prestigious Heart of England in Bloom Awards 2024
- Held a varied series of exhibitions at the Brampton, each attracting over 10,000 visitors
- Capital & Centric has commenced preparatory work for the redevelopment of the Midway
- Market occupancy saw a significant boost in 2024-25, with average stall occupancy reaching 76%—surpassing the set target and marking a 4% increase from the previous year. This positive trend was reflected across all markets, including the general market, which recorded a 30% improvement compared to the year prior.

Continuing to work with key partners to deliver the redevelopment of opportunities across the borough

- Completed delivery of the £11.4 million Future High Street Fund which has enabled construction of Castle Car Park and opened up new development opportunities at Ryecroft for residential delivery by McCarthy Stone, Capital & Centric and Aspire. This has also



funded the partial demolition of York Place to enable its re-imagining as Astley Place, a commercial and residential hub in the town centre

- Disposing of land in Knutton to Aspire Housing and Staffordshire County Council to facilitate the regeneration of Knutton village
- Through Newcastle Town Deal, we supported the creation of Keele in Town which opened its doors in January 2025. This is a new community hub from Keele University which will deliver training to local people and host courses from Newcastle College Group, alongside hosting cultural events and being available as a meeting venue and acting as a hub for students living in the town

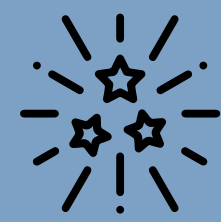
Developing a Town Centre Strategy for Kidsgrove

- Work started on refurbishment of the Trent & Mersey canal towpath in Kidsgrove, including improved access from Kidsgrove station and opening up the footpath along the Macclesfield canal
- Completed the refurbishment of ground floor and first floor areas at Kidsgrove Town Hall now occupied by Aspire Housing.

Further enhance the historic market and public realm and boost our signature specialist market programme

- Delivered a programme of event markets throughout the year – Castle Artisan Market, Greyhound Gap, Vegan Market, Record Fair, Makers Market, and the new Advent Market
- Completed planned improvement to the public realm in Newcastle town centre

Section 6: Value for Money Services – Are we delivering?



Top of the Class!

For the Council to know how it is performing we don't just look at our targets and trends but also at how we compare to other councils; both in terms of cost and performance. In this way we can demonstrate that our services to our customers and communities represent value for money.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council performs amongst the top 25% of councils in the country for the following services:

- High percentage of minor and 'other' planning applications processed on time
- Low cost of collecting Council Tax
- Quick processing of Benefit change events and new claims combined
- Low numbers of households in temporary accommodation

In addition, we perform amongst the top 50% of councils in the country for:

- Low numbers of complaints
- Low waste collection costs
- Processing of 'major' planning applications on time
- Low fly-tipping incidents
- Low cost of development control
- Low residual household waste
- High recycling rates
- Fly tipping enforcement activity



Nevertheless, there are some areas where we would like to improve the Council's relative performance and we're already making good progress through spatial planning, harnessing technology, targeting hot spot areas and working in partnership on joined-up problem solving in order to design and deliver the best services we can for our customers and communities:

One Council Programme

The original One Council programme concluded in 2024 after releasing over £1m from our annual spend. We have used the programme's guiding principles and project structures to focus on three new areas in 2024-25:

- One sustainable council – meeting our 2030 and 2050 net zero targets
- One commercial council – identifying and implementing income generation projects
- One digital council – harnessing innovative technologies to streamline processes and improve customer experience

Local Plan

A new Local Plan which provides the blueprint for future development across the Borough through to 2040 has been making significant progress in 2024 with widespread consultation and engagement events taking place. Our draft Plan was submitted to the government's Planning Inspectorate in late 2024 and is being examined this summer in a series of hearings. We expect the outcome this autumn, followed by formal adoption once approved.

Environmental Enforcement

Our Neighbourhood Delivery team officers are taking a proactive approach to improving the environment by targeting a number of grot spot areas, educating

residents on waste matters and if necessary, taking enforcement.

The team are leading a project to address concerns around trade waste and ensuring compliance across the Borough. The project will initially start in Newcastle town centre. Fixed Penalty Notices continue to be utilised for environmental offences and successful prosecutions are being promoted via the corporate pages. The team are continuing to expand their knowledge and have undertaken dog handling training to assist in their role in handling stray dogs.

Civic pride

Working with our communities is central to our council plan priorities for 2022 to 2026 and the Civic Pride initiative has been the next step forward for this collaborative work. Following the introduction of Civic Pride events in Newcastle town centre last Autumn, we have planned Civic Pride days of action in every part of the Borough in 2025, engaging with residents, in partnership with the County Council, Staffordshire Police, Aspire Housing and the third and business sectors in order to make the Borough a cleaner, safer, and friendlier place for all.

We have engaged with groups from pre-school to pensioner, sporting clubs and community associations across the borough and this year we have launched a £22,000 Civic Pride Investment Fund, which will enable local organisations to apply for money to help with activities, events or tools for litter picks and planting.



Active Lifestyles



We know that activity is a key factor in a healthy lifestyle, and we are aware that activity levels across the Borough are lower than in some council areas. We are committed to supporting healthy and active communities through a range of strategies, such as the provision of first-class sporting facilities. At J2, our council-owned leisure centre, we have launched our new 'Active Life' referral programme, following the award of grant funding. The programme covers six referral paths tailored to support residents suffering from long term health conditions. In

2024-25 over 590 referrals have been made across the programme and the health outcomes speak for themselves but in the words of one user "my confidence level has improved greatly, my balance has improved, and it has given me the courage to do so many more things. Thanks to the team I can now continue with my life":

- 64% of participants have seen a reduction in their BMI
- 78% of participants have seen a reduction in their body fat percentage
- 80% of customers have seen an improvement in their mental well-being
- 75% of customers believe their overall health has improved

Due to the success of the Active Life Programme, additional funding has been secured to continue the scheme into 2025-26.



During the last 12 months there has been a growth in the number of tennis bookings at both Westlands Sports Ground and Wolstanton Tennis Courts following their recent refurbishments. Westlands Sports Ground saw the number of bookings increase to 6386 – an increase of 1738 bookings and at Wolstanton, bookings went to 1809 – an increase of 483 bookings.

The two courts at Clough Hall Park in Kidsgrove opened in July 2024 following the refurbishment of the courts with 350 bookings up to the end of March 2025.

The Council was also successful in obtaining funding through the Staffordshire Police and Fire Commissioner to run the 'Space' summer memberships at Jubilee2. There were 435 universal memberships and 30 targeted memberships for 8 to 16-year-olds, which were used over the school summer holidays. Priced at just £10, all 435 of the universal memberships were sold out before the start of the summer holidays! During the 'Space' period we had 257 male and 208 females take up the membership offer, resulting in 1,953 attendances.

Finally, the Council is also playing a key role in a new Better Health Partnership for the Borough, which seeks to work across system boundaries to improve activity levels and overall health outcomes across Newcastle-under-Lyme.



Section 7: External Assessments and Awards – don't just take our word for it!

A year after the Council took the national crown for Britain in Bloom, we're proud to have worked with Newcastle-under-Lyme Business Improvement District (BID) in 2024 on the town's submission to the awards which saw the BID celebrate a tremendous double win at the prestigious Heart of England in Bloom Awards.

Our award-winning Brampton Museum colleagues were honoured again last year after picking up four awards at the annual Visit Staffordshire tourism awards. The team were thrilled to have scooped the following:

- Bronze – Small Visitor Attraction of the Year
- Bronze - Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Award
- Highly Commended – Team of the Year
- Highly Commended – Ethical, Responsible & Sustainable Tourism Award

Congratulations also go to our Bereavement Services and Streetscene Teams who were shortlisted in the APSE 2024 Awards. Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council made the shortlist for Best Service Team in the following categories:

- Parks, Grounds and Horticultural Service
- Cemetery and Crematorium Service



Last but not least on the list of awards was our People Team who were shortlisted in the PPMA Excellence in People Management Awards in the 'Best Organisation Development Programme' Category.

Huge Congratulations to all the winners and to all colleagues contributing to the Council's success!

Flying the Green Flag for our Parks and Open Spaces!

Green Flag Awards are an important benchmark and an internationally recognised accreditation for the provision of high-quality parks and green spaces. Each year locations are judged against a number of criteria including biodiversity, landscape, heritage, community safety, asset management and grounds maintenance quality, community involvement and managing resources.

Judging is undertaken by either an announced visit or a mystery shop. An announced visit involves officers 'walking and talking' with the judges explaining and illustrating aspects of the comprehensive management plans.

We're pleased to have gained six Green Flag awards for: The Brampton, Queens Gardens, Wolstanton Park, Lyme Valley Park, Bradwell Crematorium and Keele Cemetery.





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BOROUGH COUNCIL

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NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S REPORT TO

Council
24 September 2025

Report Title: Treasury Management Annual Report 2024/25

Submitted by: Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer)

Portfolios: Finance, Town Centres and Growth

Ward(s) affected: All Indirectly

Purpose of the Report

To receive the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2024/25 and to review the Treasury Management activity for this period.

Recommendation

That Committee

1. **Receive the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2024/25 and to review the Treasury Management activity for this period.**

Reasons

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management recommends that Members should be informed on Treasury Management activities at least twice a year. Council resolved that the Audit and Standards Committee would monitor and oversee the delivery of the Treasury Management Strategy through the receipt of half yearly and year end Treasury Management Reports. Following submission to the Audit and Standards Committee the Treasury Management Annual Report will be reported to Full Council on 24 September 2025.

1. Background

- 1.1 The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management recommends that Members should be informed on Treasury Management activities at least twice a year. It was resolved that the Audit and Standards Committee would monitor and oversee the delivery of the Treasury Management Strategy through the receipt of half yearly and year end Treasury Management Reports.
- 1.2 This report therefore ensures that this Council is embracing Best Practice in accordance with CIPFA's recommendations in the CIPFA Code of Practice.

1.3 Treasury Management operations are carried out in accordance with policies laid down in the currently approved Treasury Management Policy Statement, backed up by approved Treasury Management Practices and Schedules thereto, and the Annual Treasury Management Strategy Report for 2024/25 approved by Council on 14 February 2024.

1.4 The Council has been provided with Treasury Management Advisory services for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 by Arlingclose Ltd.

2. **Issues**

2.1 The Treasury Management Annual Report for 2024/25 is attached at Appendix 1. The economic background and economic forecast included in the report has been provided by the Council's Treasury Management Advisors, Arlingclose Ltd.

3. **Proposal**

3.1 That the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2024/25 be received and the Treasury Management activity for this period reviewed.

4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

4.1 In line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

5. **Options Considered**

5.1 There are no specific options to consider.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management recommends that Members should be informed on Treasury Management activities at least twice a year. It was resolved that the Audit and Standards Committee would monitor and oversee the delivery of the Treasury Management Strategy through the receipt of half yearly and year end Treasury Management Reports.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 Not applicable.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from the report.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 Treasury Management is a major area of risk for the Council in that large amounts of money are dealt with on a daily basis and there are a number of limits and indicators, which must be complied with.

9.2 The overriding consideration in determining where to place the Council's surplus funds is to safeguard the Council's capital. Within this constraint the aim is to maximise the return on capital.

9.3 Operational procedures, coupled with monitoring arrangements, are in place to minimise the risk of departures from the approved strategy.

10. **UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**

10.1 The Treasury Management Annual Report for 2024/25 supports UNSG and Climate Change objectives through supporting sustainable cities and communities through the correct use of public monies.



11. **One Council**

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council ☒

We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.

One Digital Council ☒

We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.

One Green Council ☒

We will deliver on our commitments to a net zero future and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle.

12. **Key Decision Information**

12.1 Not applicable.

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

13.1 Council 24 February 2010 – Adoption of CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice.

14. **List of Appendices**

14.1 Appendix 1, Treasury Management Annual Report 2024/25.

15. **Background Papers**

- 15.1 CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice,
- 15.2 Council's Treasury Management Policy Statement,
- 15.3 Council's Treasury Management Strategy,
- 15.4 Local Government Act 2003,
- 15.5 Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003.
- 15.6 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's revised Guidance on Local Government and Investments and Statutory Guidance on Minimum Revenue Provision.
- 15.7 Arlingclose Ltd. Treasury Management Outturn Report template.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This Council is required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual Treasury Management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for the financial year 2024/25. This report meets the requirements of both the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code).

The Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25 was approved at a meeting on 14 February 2024. The Council has invested substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of risk remains central to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management was adopted by this Council on 24 February 2010; this was updated in November 2011 and updated further in December 2017 and December 2021.

The primary requirements of the Code are as follows:

1. Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management activities.
2. Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
3. Receipt by the Council of an annual treasury management strategy report (including the annual investment strategy) for the year ahead and an annual review report of the previous year.
4. Delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring treasury management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions.
5. Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of the treasury management strategy to a specific named body which in this Council is the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee.
6. Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of treasury management performance to a specific named body which in this Council is the Audit and Standards Committee, a midyear and year-end review report is received by this Committee.

Treasury Management in this context is defined as:

"The management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."

The purpose of this report is to meet one of the above requirements of the CIPFA Code, namely the annual review report of Treasury Management activities, for the financial year 2024/25.

The regulatory environment places responsibility on members for the review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This report is therefore important in that respect, as it provides details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlights compliance with the Council's policies previously approved by members.

This Council has complied with the requirement under the Code to give prior scrutiny to the annual review report by reporting this to the Audit and Standards Committee prior to it being reported to Council.

2. THIS ANNUAL TREASURY REPORT COVERS

- The Council's treasury position as at 31 March 2025;
- The strategy for 2024/25;
- The economy in 2024/25;
- Investment rates in 2024/25;
- Compliance with treasury limits and Prudential Indicators;
- Investment outturn for 2024/25;
- Involvement of Elected Members;
- Other issues.

3. TREASURY POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2025

The Council's investment position at the beginning and the end of the year was as follows:

	At 31/03/25	Average Return	Average Life (Days)	At 31/03/24	Average Return	Average Life (Days)
Total Debt	£0m	0.00%	0	£0m	0.00%	0
Total Investments	£3.05m	2.7%	1	£17.5m	5.19%	16

It should be noted that the above table is only a snapshot of the total Investments as at 31 March 2025. Large fluctuations in cash inflows and outflows that occur throughout the month can have an impact on the figure reported.

4. THE STRATEGY FOR 2024/25

The strategy agreed by Council on 14 February 2024 was that:

- The Council may be required to borrow during 2024/25;
- All borrowing would be kept absolutely within the Authorised Limit of £100m and would not normally exceed the Operational Boundary of £95m;
- Temporary surpluses which might arise would be invested, either in short term deposits with the Council's various deposit accounts or in money market investments (cash deposits) if the size warranted this and for an appropriate period in order that these sums would be available for use when required;
- The proportions of loans and investments to be at fixed or variable rates were: fixed rate loans to be between 0% and 100% of the total and variable rate to be between 0% and 100% of the total, thus enabling maximum flexibility to take advantage of interest rate trends;
- Long term investments to be permitted as follows: maturing beyond 31/03/25 - £25m, maturing beyond 31/03/26 - £25m, maturing beyond 31/03/27 - £25m;
- The overriding consideration is safeguarding the Council's capital. At all times the risk to the Council will be minimised. Within these constraints, the aim will be to maximise the return on investments; and,
- Forward commitment of funds for investment is permitted in respect of in-house investments, in instances where market conditions warrant it.

5. THE ECONOMY AND INTEREST RATES - narrative supplied by the Council's Treasury Management Advisors – Arlingclose Limited

Both the UK and US elected new governments during the period, whose policy decisions impacted the economic outlook. The Chancellor of the Exchequer delivered her Spring Statement in March 2025, following her Budget in October 2024. Based on the plans announced, the Office for Budget Responsibility downgraded its predictions for UK growth in 2025 to 1% from 2%. However, it upgraded its predictions for the four subsequent years. Inflation predictions for 2025 were pushed up, to 3.2% from 2.6%, before seen as falling back to target in 2027. The market reaction to the Spring Statement was more muted compared to the Budget, with very recent market turbulence being driven more by US trade policy decisions and President Trump.

After revising its interest rate forecast in November following the Budget, the council's treasury management advisor, Arlingclose, maintained its stance that Bank Rate will fall to 3.75% in 2025.

UK annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation continued to stay above the 2% Bank of England (BoE) target in the later part of the period. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported headline consumer prices at 2.8% in February 2025, down from 3.0% in the previous month and below expectations. Core CPI also remained elevated, falling slightly in February to 3.5% from 3.7% in January, just below expectations for 3.6% but higher than the last three months of the calendar year.

The UK economy Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 0.1% between October and December 2024, unrevised from the initial estimate. This was an improvement on the zero growth in the previous quarter, but down from the 0.4% growth between April and June 2024. Of the monthly GDP figures, the economy was estimated to have contracted by 0.1% in January, worse than expectations for a 0.1% gain.

The labour market continued to cool, but the ONS data still require treating with caution. Recent data showed the unemployment rate rose to 4.4% (3mth/year) in the three months to January 2025 while the economic inactivity rate fell again to 21.5%. The ONS reported pay growth over the same three-month period at 5.9% for regular earnings (excluding bonuses) and 5.8% for total earnings.

The BoE's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) held Bank Rate at 4.5% at its March 2025 meeting, having reduced it in February. This follows earlier 0.25% cuts in November and August 2024 from the 5.25% peak. At the March MPC meeting, members voted 8-1 to maintain Bank Rate at 4.5%, with the one dissenter preferring another 25 basis points cut. The meeting minutes implied a slightly more hawkish tilt compared to February when two MPC members wanted a 50bps cut. In the minutes, the Bank also upgraded its Q1 2025 GDP forecast to around 0.25% from the previous estimate of 0.1%.

The February Monetary Policy Report (MPR) showed the BoE expected GDP growth in 2025 to be significantly weaker compared to the November MPR. GDP is forecast to rise by 0.1% in Q1 2025, less than the previous estimate of 0.4%. Four-quarter GDP growth is expected to pick up from the middle of 2025, to over 1.5% by the end of the forecast period. The outlook for CPI inflation showed it remaining above the MPC's 2% target throughout 2025. It is expected to hit around 3.5% by June before peaking at 3.7% in Q3 and then easing towards the end of the year, but staying above the 2% target. The unemployment rate was expected to rise steadily to around 4.75% by the end of the forecast horizon, above the assumed medium-term equilibrium unemployment rate of 4.5%.

Arlingclose, the authority's treasury adviser, maintained its central view that Bank Rate would continue to fall throughout 2025. From the cuts in August and November 2024 and February 2025, which took Bank

Rate to 4.50%, May is considered the likely month for the next reduction, with other cuts following in line with MPR months to take Bank Rate down to around 3.75% by the end of 2025.

The US Federal Reserve paused its cutting cycle in the first three months of 2025, having reduced the Fed Funds Rate by 0.25% to a range of 4.25%-4.50% in December, the third cut in succession. Fed policymakers noted uncertainty around the economic outlook but were anticipating around 0.50% of further cuts in the policy rate in 2025. Economic growth continued to rise at a reasonable pace, expanding at an annualised rate of 2.4% in Q4 2024 while inflation remained elevated over the period. However, growth is now expected to weaken by more than previously expected in 2025, to 1.7% from 2.1%. The uncertainty that President Trump has brought both before and since his inauguration in January is expected to continue.

The European Central Bank (ECB) continued its rate cutting cycle over the period, reducing its three key policy rates by another 0.25% in March, acknowledging that monetary policy is becoming meaningfully less restrictive. Euro zone inflation has decreased steadily in 2025, falling to 2.2% in March, the lowest level since November 2024. Over the current calendar year, inflation is expected to average 2.3%. GDP growth stagnated in the last quarter of the 2024 calendar year, after expanding by 0.4% in the previous quarter. For 2025, economic growth forecasts were revised downwards to 0.9%.

6. FINANCIAL MARKETS IN 2024/25 – narrative supplied by the Council’s Treasury Management Advisors – Arlingclose Limited

Financial market sentiment was reasonably positive over most of the period, but economic, financial and geopolitical issues meant the trend of market volatility remained. In the latter part of the period, volatility increased and bond yields started to fall following a January peak, as the economic uncertainty around likely US trade policy impacted financial markets. Yields in the UK and US started to diverge in the last month of the period, with the former rising around concerns over the fiscal implications on the UK government from weaker growth, business sentiment and higher rates, while the latter started falling on potential recession fears due to the unpredictable nature of policy announcements by the US President and their potential impact.

The 10-year UK benchmark gilt yield started the period at 3.94% and ended at 4.69%, having reached a low of 3.76% in September and a high of 4.90% in January in between. While the 20-year gilt started at 4.40% and ended at 5.22%, hitting a low of 4.27% in September and a high of 5.40% in January. The Sterling Overnight Rate (SONIA) averaged 4.90% over the period.

The period in question ended shortly before US President Donald Trump announced his package of ‘reciprocal tariffs’, the immediate aftermath of which saw stock prices and government bond yields falling and introduced further uncertainty over the economic outlook.

7. COMPLIANCE WITH TREASURY LIMITS

During the financial year the Council operated within the treasury limits and Prudential Indicators set out in the Council’s annual Treasury Strategy Statement. The outturn for the Prudential Indicators is shown in Annex 1.

8. INVESTMENT OUTTURN FOR 2024/25

Internally Managed Investments

The Council manages its investments in-house and during 2024/25 invested with institutions in compliance with the credit worthiness service of the Council's treasury management advisors, Arlingclose Limited.

The Council invested for a range of periods from overnight to up to 50 days during 2024/25, dependent on the Council's cash flows, its interest rate view and the interest rates on offer. 56 of 98 investments made in 2024/25 were for a period of 2 weeks or less. 1 investment was made with the Public Sector Deposit Fund. The remaining 97 investments were deposited in the Debt Management Account Deposit Facility.

In addition, funds were held in the general fund account that the Council has with Lloyds Bank.

Investment Outturn for 2024/25

During 2024/25 an average rate of return of 4.77% was achieved on an average individual investment of £2.149m due to the receipt in advance of Government grants and only modest interest rate cuts. No target was set for 2024/25 as it was assumed that a net interest payable amount would be required to meet the Council's capital programme. Actual interest income from interest activity amounted to £0.810m.

9. INVOLVEMENT OF ELECTED MEMBERS

Elected members have been involved in the treasury management process during 2024/25 including:

- Scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy by the Finance, Assets & Performance Scrutiny Committee prior to being submitted for approval by the Council.
- Scrutiny of treasury management performance by the Audit and Standards Committee through the receipt of a half yearly Treasury Management Report.
- A quarterly budget monitoring and performance report is reported to Cabinet, this contains details of Treasury Management activity undertaken during the quarter.

ANNEX 1: PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

Position/Prudential Indicator		2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Indicator	2024/25 Actual
1	Capital Expenditure	£11.630m	£16.680m	£26.236m
2	Capital Financing Requirement at 31 March *	£10.262m	£35.061m	£19.893m
3	Treasury Position at 31 March:			
	Borrowing	£0	N/A	£0
	Other long-term liabilities	£0	N/A	£0
	Total Debt	£0	N/A	£0
	Investments	(£17.5m)	N/A	(£3.05m)
	Net Borrowing	(£17.5m)	N/A	(£3.05m)
4	Authorised Limit (against maximum position)	£0	£100.0m	£0
5	Operational Boundary (against maximum position)	£0	£95.0m	£0
6	Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	(5.31%)	5.37%	(2.29%)
7	Upper Limits on Variable Interest Rates (against maximum position)			
	Loans	0%	100%	0%
	Investments	0%	100%	0%
8	Actual External Debt	£0	N/A	£0
9	Principal Funds Invested for Periods Longer than 365 days (against maximum position)	£0	£25.0m	£0

GLOSSARY

CFR – Capital Financing Requirement

The Capital Financing Requirement is the total historic outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources.

CIPFA – The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy is the professional body for accountants working in Local Government and other public sector organisations.

CPI – Consumer Price Index

A measure that examines the weighted average of prices of a basket of consumer goods and services. The Consumer Price Index is calculated by taking price changes for each item in the predetermined basket of goods/services and averaging them; the goods are weighted according to their importance. Changes in CPI are used to assess price changes associated with the cost of living.

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

Gross Domestic Product is the market value of all officially recognised final goods and services produced within a country in a given period of time.

BPS – Basis Points

Basis points are a unit of measure used in finance to describe the percentage change in value of a financial instrument. One basis point is equal to 0.01%.

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NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S REPORT TO COUNCIL

24TH September 2025

Report Title: Change to Committee Proportionality

Submitted by: Chief Executive

Portfolios: One Council, People and Partnerships

Ward(s) affected: All

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
To enact a change to the existing proportionality arrangements pursuant to The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 (Regulation 11 Key Decisions) due to changed political membership/composition.			
<u>Recommendation</u> That Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notes the urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive to amend committee proportionality in line with the attached Appendix A to this report. Notes the changes to committee representation as requested by Group Leaders. 			
<u>Reasons</u> It is a legal requirement under The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ("the 1989 Act") imposes political proportionality requirements in respect of the allocation of seats on ordinary committees to the political groups [section 15(5)]. Under Part B1, para 5.2 (j) of the Council's Constitution, the Chief Executive has authority to amend the proportionalities (to comply with the rules of political balance). The Chief Executive shall have the authority to amend appointments to committees in accordance with the wishes of Group Leaders.			

1. Background

- 1.1** Regulation 11 (special urgency) allows for a key decision to be made if it is impracticable for notice of the intention to take a key decision under Regulation 9 to be given 28 clear days in advance of the taking of the decision.
- 1.2** This provision also allows for a Key Decision to be taken where it is impractical for public notice at least five working days before the decision is taken to be given in accordance with Regulation 10.

- 1.3** Under the Council's Constitution, the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Group Leaders and Mayor of the Council may make an urgent decision on such matters.

2. Issues

- 2.1** The Monitoring Officer has been advised that the only Independent member on the council has given notice that she is joining the Conservative Group which impacts on the political proportionality of committees.
- 2.2** As a result of a by-election in May 2025 a member was elected for Reform UK which also needs to be taken into account in the new committee proportionality arrangements. Therefore, Cllr. Lynn Dean will be allocated a place on Planning Committee.
- 2.3** Amendments to committee appointments have also been requested by the Conservative Group. These include:
- 2.3.1** Cllr. Sue Beeston will retain a place on Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.
 - 2.3.2** Cllr. Sue Beeston will replace Cllr. Amy Bryan on Planning Committee.
 - 2.3.3** Cllr. Amy Bryan will join Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee.
 - 2.3.4** Cllr. Sue Beeston will become a substitute member of the Finance, Assets & Performance Scrutiny Committee.
 - 2.3.5** Cllr. Sue Beeston will become a substitute member of the Licensing and Public Protection Sub-Committee.
- 2.4** The Labour Group also have the right to make changes to committee appointments, to be made to the Chief Executive in due course.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1** It is noted that the Chief Executive has taken this urgent decision to amend the proportionality arrangements for committees as per the attached Appendix A.
- 3.2** Council is asked to:
- 3.2.1** Note the urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive to amend committee proportionality in line with the attached Appendix A to this report.
 - 3.2.2** Note the changes to committee representation as requested by Group Leaders.

4. Reasons

- 4.1** It is a legal requirement under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Council Constitution that local authority committees are politically balanced and the allocation of places on committees reflects changes in political allegiance.
- 4.2** This decision is taken in accordance with provisions for Matters of Urgency within the Council's Constitution. The urgency arises on account of the need

for this decision to be taken at a time before a meeting of full Council can be convened.

5. Options Considered

5.1 None, these are necessary changes to comply with legislation and the council constitution.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

6.1 None other than contained herein.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

7.1 There are no direct impacts arising from this report.

8. Financial and Resource Implications

8.1 There are no direct impacts arising from this report.

9. Major Risks & Mitigation

9.1 There are no direct risks as a result of actions recommended within this report. The effective governance of the Council is a standing corporate risk.

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)



11. One Council

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council ☒

We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.

One Digital Council

We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.

One Sustainable Council

We will deliver on our commitments to a net zero future and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle

- 11.1 There are no direct implications arising from these changes. Committees oversee and scrutinise effective decision-making relating to Council policy for commercial, digital and sustainability activity.

12. Key Decision Information

- 12.1** Regulation 11 (special urgency) allows for a key decision to be made if it is impracticable for notice of the intention to take a key decision under Regulation 9 to be given 28 clear days in advance of the taking of the decision.
- 12.2** This provision also allows for a Key Decision to be taken where it is impractical for public notice at least five working days before the decision is taken to be given in accordance with Regulation 10.
- 12.3** Regulation 11 sets out the actions required to be taken in those circumstances which include gaining the consent of the Chairman of the relevant Select Committee or in their absence, of the Mayor. Details of Key Decisions taken under Regulation 11 must be presented to full Council in due course.

13. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

- 13.1** N/a

14. List of Appendices

- 14.1** Appendix A – new proportionality on committees 19.08.2025

15. Background Papers

- 15.1** N/a

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Scrutiny Committee's Chairs' reports

Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee

The Committee met on Thursday 11th September and received updates on the Borough Local Plan; Town Deal and Future High Street Funds and a report on the Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy.

Members asked questions and made pleasant comments on how the updates were received and all recommendations for the reports were agreed.

The Committee will meet again on 15th December

Cllr Andrew Parker

Chair

Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee

The Health, Wellbeing and Environment Committee met on 15th September.

Members received an update on the activities of the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee.

An update was given on the situation at Walleys Quarry and the report noted.

An update was delivered on the Council's Civic Pride Strategy and positive feedback given by the committee.

The final report of the Parks Task & Finish Group was received and the recommendations of the report approved by the committee to go to Cabinet.

A verbal update was received on the Council's Animal Welfare Charter.

Members heard a report on the Community Safety Partnership joint working on crime and anti-social behaviour in the Borough. The future work programme was discussed.

Cllr Rupert Adcock

Chair

Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee

The Committee met on 4 September to scrutinise the Medium Term Financial Strategy and to consider the administration's Civic Pride (Empowering our Communities) Strategy, a report on which has been received by each of the Council's scrutiny committees.

Members reviewed the quarterly performance report for the first quarter and gave comments on the revisions made by cabinet to the performance indicators for the present financial year.

The Committee also received scheduled update reports on the Commercial Strategy, and the Town Deals and Future High Streets Fund programmes. The Committee will meet again on 4 December.

Cllr Mark Holland
Chair

Regulatory Committee's Chairs' reports

Planning Committee

The Planning Committee has met twice since the last full Council meeting:- 12 August and 9 September.

The following items were considered:

12 August:

- Land North of Mucklestone Wood Lane and East of Rock Lane, Loggerheads. 25/00352/REM
- Morston House, The Midway, Newcastle. 25/00438/FUL.
- Hartshorne Potteries Ltd. Rosevale Road, Crackley, Chesterton. 25/00443/FUL.
- 5 Boggs Cottage, Keele 14/00036/207C3.

9 September:

- Land at Moss Lane Madeley. 24/00619/FUL.
- Former site of the Zanzibar, Marsh Parade, Newcastle. 25/00349/FUL
- Land adjacent Fairgreen Road, Baldwins Gate. 24/00833/OUT
- Council Depot, Knutton Lane, Newcastle. 25/00120/DEEM3
- Car Park, Meadows Road, Kidsgrove. 25/00345/DEEM3
- Land North of Mucklestone Wood Lane, Loggerheads. 25/00505/OUT
- 35 Clayton Road, Newcastle. 25/00485/FUL
- Land West of Hazeley Paddocks, Keele. 25/00574/PIP
- Land East of Hazeley Paddocks, Keele. 25/00575/PIP
- Land at Doddlespool, Betley. 17/00186/207C2.

Cllr Paul Northcott
Chair

Licensing and Public Protection Committee

The Licensing and Public Protection Committee met on 19th August 2025.

At the meeting Members, received the following Licensing Report:

- Draft Statement of Licensing Policy 2025/30

The Committee discussed a number of aspects of the reports and agreed to the proposed recommendations that were set out in those reports.

The minutes for the Sub Committee, held on 4th June were received and noted as a correct record.

The following Public Protection reports were also considered:

- Food Safety Service Plan 2025/26 and Review of Performance in 2024/25
- Revocation of the Kidsgrove Air Quality Management Area
- Revocation of the May Bank, Wolstanton & Porthill Air Quality Management Area
- Taxi Licensing Framework consultations 2025
- Taxi & Private Hire Licensing Policy 2026/30

The Committee discussed a number of aspects of the reports and agreed to the proposed recommendations that were set out in those reports.

The Public Protection Sub Committee met on two occasions; 7th May and 11th June.

The minutes for the Sub Committees were received and noted as correct records

Cllr Joan Whieldon
Chair

Conservative Group Motion to Full Council – 24th September 2025

Concerns about inappropriate accommodation for Asylum Seekers in Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough

Council notes:

1. The recent public statement issued by the Leader of the Council, on 21st August 2025, expressing concern over the placement of asylum seekers in unsuitable accommodation within the Borough, including Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and short-term lets, which often lack the necessary support infrastructure.
2. The outcome of legal action undertaken by Epping Forest District Council aimed at preventing the use of a hotel for asylum seeker accommodation, highlighting the growing national concern over inappropriate placements.
3. That the Borough is not currently hosting asylum seekers in hotels but officers are actively monitoring developments and reviewing the legal position regarding all forms of accommodation.
4. The powers available under the General Permitted Development Orders and has used 'Article 4 Directions' in the past to require planning applications for HMOs. Officers are currently reviewing the legal position in light of recent developments and will consider further action where appropriate to ensure that local planning oversight is maintained.
5. The ongoing discussions with Staffordshire County Council and other local councils seeking to develop a united approach to central Government on this issue.
6. The letter sent by the Leader of the Council on 21st August 2025 to the Member of Parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyme, Adam Jogee, urging him to raise the matter with Government Ministers and to advocate for a more collaborative approach between the Home Office, its contractors, and local councils, and that a response has not been received before submission of this motion.

Council believes:

1. Newcastle-under-Lyme has a proud history of welcoming individuals and families from all backgrounds and remains committed to supporting those in genuine need.
2. The current approach to placing asylum seekers in accommodation that does not reflect local pressures or community needs risks undermining social cohesion and the wellbeing of vulnerable individuals.

3. Local authorities must be properly consulted and supported in the implementation of national asylum policy, with decisions made in partnership and with full recognition of local circumstances.

Council resolves to:

1. Endorse the concerns raised by the Leader of the Council and support his call for a more collaborative and locally informed approach to asylum seeker accommodation.
2. Request that the Chief Executive continues to monitor developments and explore legal and policy options to ensure that accommodation used for asylum seekers is appropriate and sustainable.
3. Ask the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive to write to the Home Office and other relevant Government departments to express this Council's position and request a review of current practices, with a view to ensuring better outcomes for both asylum seekers and local communities.
4. Support the Leader's engagement with the MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme and regret that a prompt response was not received.

Proposed: Mark Holland

Seconded: Andrew Fear

12th September 2025

Councillor Simon Tagg, Leader

Our ref: CST/2008a

Your ref:

Date: 20 August 2025



Adam Jogee MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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

By e-mail only: Adam.Jogee.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Adam

Concerns Regarding the Use of Inappropriate Accommodation for Housing Asylum Seekers

I am writing to you following the interim injunction granted to Epping Forest District Council in preventing use of hotel accommodation to house 'asylum seekers'.

Whilst Newcastle Borough does not currently have hotels occupied in this way, it is a matter of significant concern among our residents regarding the housing of asylum seekers in accommodation that is not deemed appropriate or suitable for their needs. This follows recent calls for protest in Knutton and previous concerns in areas including Madeley and Kidsgrove regarding unsuitable accommodation.

As you will be aware, the Council - alongside other local authorities across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent - has already engaged with the Home Office through the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership to be clear that - across the county - there is next to no capacity for further suitable accommodation. We have expressed our reservations clearly and consistently, particularly where properties fall short of the standards required to ensure the dignity, integration and access to necessary facilities for those seeking asylum.

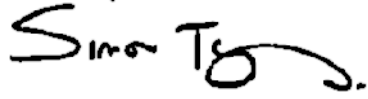
The borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme has long been a welcoming place. We take pride in our history of supporting individuals and families who choose to make their home here, regardless of their background or circumstances. Our concern is not with the principle of offering support to those in need, but with the manner in which it is being implemented - specifically, the use of accommodation that fails to recognise local pressures and risks undermining both community cohesion and the wellbeing of vulnerable individuals.

I therefore urge you to raise this issue with Ministers at the earliest opportunity. It is vital that national policy reflects both the practical realities faced by local authorities and the challenges of the high demand for similar accommodation for local people, students, contract workers and those seeking to visit the borough. We ask that you advocate for a more collaborative approach between the Home Office, its contractors, and local councils - one that ensures appropriate housing is identified and that communities are properly consulted and supported.

I look forward to your support and to working together to uphold the values that define our borough.

A copy of this letter has also been sent to David Williams MP and Leigh Ingham MP.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Tagg', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Simon Tagg

Leader

Simon.tagg@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk

Contacting the Council: Telephone 01782 717717

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