

ECONOMY & PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 1st September, 2022
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present:	Councillor Gary White (Chair)		
Councillors:	Burnett Edginton-Plunkett Gorton	Grocott Hutchison Moffat	Panter Skelding
Apologies:	Councillor(s) Beeston and Bettley-Smith		
Substitutes:	Councillor Andrew Fox-Hewitt (In place of Councillor Susan Beeston) Councillor Mark Holland (In place of Councillor Robert Bettley-Smith)		
Officers:	Andrew Bird Denise French Martin Hamilton	Head of Sustainable Environment Democratic Services Team Leader Chief Executive	
Also in attendance:	Councillor Trevor Johnson	Portfolio Holder - Environment and Recycling	

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

7. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 August 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

8. UPDATE FROM CABINET

There was nothing to update from cabinet.

9. RECYCLING AND WASTE SERVICES

The Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling introduced the report on the operation and performance of the new recycling service introduced in 2020. The borough was now the second highest performer in Staffordshire in regards to recycling and he thanked staff for their role in transforming the service.

The Head of Sustainable Environment presented the report. The new service had received positive feedback from residents; the streets looked tidier; tonnage volumes of recycling had increased and the overall volume of waste had decreased. The

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number of missed collections had reduced and the quality of recycled materials was high.

The aims for the future were, in the short term, to increase separate food waste collections, enhance provision of services for those residents living in flats and look at options for participation in recycling by commercial and business properties. In the longer term the implications of the Environment Act 2021 were outlined:

- The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) would be set up whose role included holding the government to account on environmental issues.
- Producers would become responsible for the full net costs of their products after they had been used for their primary purpose.
- Introduction of a deposit return scheme for single use drink containers.
- Charges for single use plastics.
- Separation of waste requirements.

It was noted that the council's current recycling and food waste collection service met the requirements in the Act.

Members raised queries and issues as follows:

- Waste collection staff were thanked for their work particularly during the recent hot weather
- What was the budget impact from the new service? The committee was informed that a small saving had been made in 2021-22, this was partly due to high prices being paid for materials which was also a result of the high quality of materials being collected.
- Were there any plans to introduce electric vehicles? Members were advised that costs for electric vehicles were double that of diesel. The council was in discussion with Keele University around their hydrogen production facility as this appeared to be a better option than electric. A report was going to Cabinet on 6 September seeking approval for a trial use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), a renewable diesel alternative, for the Council's HGV fleet operating in the Recycling & Waste and Street Cleansing operations.
- Was the amount of food waste that was collected a disappointing amount (2%)? In response, this was not seen as necessarily disappointing; once people had to separate out food waste it was apparent how much food was wasted which could then lead to greater awareness and less waste. There would also be a proportion of households who composted food waste.
- Was data collected on household participation in food waste collection? Members were told that information was collected on the number of households per street and specific measures would be looked at to identify reasons why certain areas had low take up.
- It was important to enable flat dwellers to recycle even though difficulties were recognised.
- Were there measures to address fly tipping? The committee was informed the legislation was helpful in this regard and more options would be available to local authorities but further detail was awaited.
- The focus on producer responsibility was welcomed. The Head of Sustainable Environment reported that he was part of Defra's Advisory Committee on packaging which included representatives of the supply chain; producers were willing to change their methods.
- Were there particular reasons for missed collections? In response, these could include access difficulties, operatives not seeing the food waste caddy if it was tucked beside another bin or during dark mornings or evenings, agency workers who were unfamiliar with routes. The Team Leader would mark any property where no collection had taken place.

- Was there any impact of the garden waste charges? The committee was advised that levels were around 80-90% of pre charge levels, there had been less garden waste produced overall this year due to the exceptionally hot weather. The quality of garden waste had improved since charges were introduced.
- Some Councillors held a stock of recycling bags for residents which was a good way to encourage and promote recycling.

Resolved: that

- (a) The update be noted;
- (b) Cabinet be recommended, at the appropriate time as guided by the Executive Director for Sustainability, to arrange for an all Member briefing to be given on the key points in the presentation; and
- (c) Thanks be recorded to all staff involved in the waste and recycling service for an excellent service.

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10. **FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND AND TOWN DEALS FOR KIDSGROVE AND NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME**

The Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling introduced the regular update on the Future High Street Fund and Town Deals for Kidsgrove and Newcastle under Lyme.

The Chief Executive presented an update:

(a) Future High Street Fund:

- Ryecroft site – the Civic Offices had been demolished. The scheme comprised 5 elements – multi-storey car park; 100 bed hotel; 90 residential units for the over 55s; new office headquarters for Aspire Housing; and public open space. The car park, residential units and office accommodation would be subject to planning permission. The demolition had seen the reuse of around 90% of the product (excluding any asbestos)
- York Place – Wilmott Dixon had been appointed to support the delivery which would include ground floor retail, leisure and restaurant units with office space above. Planning permission was yet to be sought.

(b) Town Deals:

- Kidsgrove - £16.9m funding had been received for 5 projects – Kidsgrove Sports Centre (now fully open); Chatterley Valley; railway station improvements; canal enhancements; and a shared services hub. There had also been advanced funding which had delivered the pump track and 3G pitches.
- Newcastle under Lyme - £23.6m had been received for 9 projects of which 8 had been approved – Knutton Masterplan works were progressing; Cross Street Chesterton had progressed to a feasibility study for the next stage; walking and cycling routes were being delivered by Staffordshire County Council; key gateway sites – the Zanzibar site was progressing towards seeking planning permission, the Midway car park scheme was waiting the multi-storey car park at Ryecroft; the deadline for the business case for the Performing Arts Centre was December 2022; the digital project was progressing and was being led by Keele University to enhance digital skills; GB broadband and EV charging points – both schemes were being progressed.

Members raised queries and points as follows:

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- There was good feedback on Kidsgrove Sports Centre which had exceeded membership targets.
- The lifts at the Kidsgrove station were welcomed.
- What input did the Borough Council have regarding cycling routes? This scheme would be led by the County Council but the Borough Council would be involved.
- Town Centre schemes at Ryecroft and York Place needed to ensure an effective blend of modern with the existing traditional design. This was accepted, the new buildings and infrastructure would complement and be in character with existing.
- What safeguards were in place with regards to rising inflation? The committee was informed that proposals and costs were being worked on and additional funds may be needed; value engineering would also take place. The Ryecroft site had a robust scheme with a mix of projects which was important from a financial perspective.
- Residents still raised concern about Newcastle town centre with empty units and lack of variety. How much awareness was there of the above projects among the public, could there be improved communications. The Chief Executive responded that more communication could be undertaken now there was certainty of some of the schemes. The environment of the town centre was much improved due to the Town Ranger and the positive impact of strategies to deal with rough sitters and rough sleepers. There was an improved Police presence in the town especially in the early mornings.

Resolved: that:

(a) The update be noted.

(b) That Cabinet be recommended to put in place wider ranging communications to ensure as many people as possible are aware of the improvements that the Newcastle under Lyme Future High Streets Fund and Town Deal will deliver.

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11. WORK PROGRAMME

The committee discussed the work programme. Members referenced the presentation by the BID Manager earlier in the year and mention of the 'safe space' scheme. It was suggested an update would be useful. It was agreed that this could be a wider update and include promotion of the town centre as discussed under the previous item.

Resolved: that the next meeting include an item on the strategic management of the town centre including promotion of the town centre current and future offer.

12. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.

13. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

**Councillor Gary White
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 8.29 pm