

HEALTH, WELLBEING & ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 3rd March, 2025
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present:	Councillor Rupert Adcock (Chair)		
Councillors:	Barker MBE Brown Crisp Dymond	Northcott Reece Richards Whieldon	Wilkes Wright
Officers:	Nesta Barker Michelle Hopper Craig Jordan Gillian Taylor	Service Director - Regulatory Services Mobile Multi-Functional Manager Service Director - Planning Housing Manager	
Also in attendance:	Councillor Gill Heesom Councillor David Hutchison	Portfolio Holder - Community Safety and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder - Sustainable Environment	

1. **MINUTE OF SILENCE**

A minute of silence was observed for the passing of the Mayor of Newcastle-under-Lyme Cllr Barry Panter.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Northcott declared an interest in relation to his role as Public Health and Integrated Care Cabinet portfolio holder at the County Council.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Cllr Northcott raised a typo in item 7.

The name of the village was Madeley, not Medley.

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th November 2025 be agreed as a true and accurate record subject to the name of the village referred to in item 7 paragraph 3 be corrected.

[Watch the debate here](#)

4. **NEWCASTLE FIRE STATION UPDATE & PERFORMANCE**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented an update on the mobilisation of Three Person Crews from on-call stations.

Cllr Reece asked about road traffic collisions and if the crew would be sufficient to take people out of a car.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that was the case, adding that fire fighters were not going in a burning environment although there was still a level of risks that needed managing especially due to the road.

The crew could stabilise the vehicle, administer casualty care and manage the glass of the systems in place, close the road and support ambulance calling.

Specific training in relation to road traffic collisions had been implemented and was provided to all on-call firefighters who were also in possession of the right equipment including battery powered lighter gear allowing them to undertake actions such as making cuts to take roofs off to create space.

Cllr Reece enquired about fire alarms activating.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that the vast majority were false alarms. In the event of a real fire incident the full crew was immediately mobilised.

Cllr Reece wondered about the Olive Branch referral systems.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer responded that a dedicated team of technicians along with fire crews would come and provide home fire safety visits.

Cllr Whieldon mentioned her visit to the fire station thoroughly looking at all apparatus and talking to members of staff who provided direct transparent answers to all questions raised and should be commended for it.

The Chair who also attended the visit along with Cllr Lewis seconded Cllr Whieldon who added that other members would benefit from visiting the station.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer acknowledged the kind words which would be passed on to the crew.

The Fire Station Manager provided an overview of the station performance, highlighting the importance of smoke alarms.

Cllr Brown thanked the Fire and Rescue Services for the educational work carried out in terms of fire safety and enquired about the rise of houses in HMOs (houses in multiple occupation) across the country in relation to incidents.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that there was a special interest when it came to HMOs with crossovers between enforcement and regulation activities from a protection point of view and work was being done in collaboration with landlords.

Cllr Brown commended the Fire and Rescue Service response to the social disorder that had followed the Southport killings tragedy.

Cllr Dymond asked about the contact details of Safe & Well Service.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer responded that there was a [dedicated web page](#) which would be shared with members after the meeting.

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Cllr Whieldon wondered if there were any plans in relation to ongoing construction works involving bigger buildings and different style of accommodation.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that the Fire and Rescue Services were involved as consultees for planning and building regulations. They had also invested and found match funding for the fitting of sprinklers.

The Fire Station Manager added this was included in the training provided to firefighters. The protect department had been involved in identifying the potential issues which had then been passed on to the team. All crews had also been asked to visit the premises to familiarise themselves with where systems were located.

Cllr Heesom thanked the team for the comprehensive overview and update on the three-person crew.

Cllr Reece asked if the Home from Hospital programme had reduced the delay in hospital discharges.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that was the case as independently explored through Chester University.

The Chair wished to commend the initiative which was a great example joined up services that were needed to help relieve the pressure the NHS and care services were currently under.

The Chair also commented on the open day event that took place the previous year and seemed to have gone very well and inspired people.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer said that similar events would be organised again in the future and thanked members for their kind comments.

Resolved: That the presentation be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

5. DISTRICT AND BOROUGH HEALTH SCRUTINY ACTIVITY

The Chair introduced the District and Borough Health Scrutiny Activity report received from Staffordshire County Council.

Cllr Brown commented that seeing what other districts and boroughs were up to throughout Staffordshire was useful and wondered if what Stafford Borough Council was doing in relation to Health Inequalities could be considered in Newcastle as well.

The Chair noted the suggestion.

Resolved: That the district and borough scrutiny activity report be noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. WALLEYS QUARRY - ODOUR ISSUES

The Service Director for Regulatory Services presented the report on Walleys Quarry as presented to Cabinet in February. The complaints figures had improved in the meantime and it was noted that the operator's application in relation to the closure

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notice had been turned down meaning they hadn't been able to restart the importation of waste throughout that period.

Since then Walleys Quarry had entered a liquidation phase and the Environment Agency had confirmed their intention to work the liquidators as well as partner organisations to carry out air quality monitoring.

Cllr Whieldon wished to highlight that while odours and smells were commonly reported, these were indications of toxic gases which were a deeper problem regardless of existing health conditions people may have.

The Service Director for Regulatory Services advised that the legislation was addressing odours which is why the term was being used and the causes of those odours had been identified as a number of different gases including hydrogen sulphides which could be assessed and measured against legal standards. In relation to health advice people were encouraged to contact their GP when suffering the effects of the emissions.

Cllr Brown enquired about the table in paragraph 2.26 of the report and asked if the operator had been keeping up to pace with the actions detailed in the Schedule to the Closure Notice as well as if it had an impact on the drop of incidents reported in February.

The Service Director for Regulatory Services responded that the capping and gas infrastructure works for step 1 had principally been completed and the step 2 bench-like horizontal platforms were now visible. Steps 3 and 4 had also been done and progress were made on steps 5 and 6. Overall and while there had been some delays an improvement of the situation could now be recorded.

Cllr Northcott asked if the drop in February could be attributed to the changes in weather conditions and milder temperatures.

The Service Director for Regulatory Services advised that it was difficult to make such a correlation and time would tell.

Cllr Whieldon enquired about drone footage showing considerable amount of water and what could be air or gas bubbling up at the surface.

The Service Director for Regulatory Services responded that those footage were undertaken by the Environment Agency and the Council was focusing on the offsite impacts on residents within the area. An update would be requested from the Environment Agency.

Cllr Whieldon asked if a copy of those footages was provided to the Council.

The Service Director for Regulatory Services said that updates were available on the Environment Agency website and compliance assessments reports were sent to the Council.

The Chair asked about the methane referred to in the closure notice plan and why the Environment Agency had chosen to make measurements of this particular gas instead of the usual hydrogen sulphides.

The Service Director for Regulatory Services responded that methane was a carrier gas containing other gas including hydrogen sulphides and the regulations about capping were using limit values in terms of methane emissions as a standard.

The Chair wondered if resurgences in odours would be expected once the capping works would be completed.

The Service Director for Regulatory Services suggested this was too early to say but time would tell and an update would be provided.

Cllr Wilkes asked of the water quality was being checked.

The Service Director for Regulatory Services responded that it was and the Environment Agency would provide further details.

Cllr Whieldon expressed doubts about the trustworthiness of both the operator and the Environment Agency when it came to taking actions and the subsequent need to keep a close watch on them.

The Service Director for Regulatory Services confirmed that officers were keeping in touch with the Environment to try and provide this reassurance.

Resolved: That the report be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. PARKS SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Cllr Whieldon provided a verbal update on the first meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Task & Finish Working Group, an information gathering exercise. Members had raised questions to which officers would provide responses at the next meeting of the working group scheduled on 24th March.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

8. NEWCASTLE TOWN CENTRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Mobile Multi-Functional Manager presented the update report on the work that had been delivered by the Community Safety Partnership in Newcastle Town Centre in line with the Community Safety Strategic Assessment and Priorities for 2024-25 and the Civic Pride initiative.

Cllr Brown enquired about the Crime & Policing bill currently going through Parliament in relation to increasing enforcement powers to tackle antisocial behaviours as well as the £200 limit on prosecution for shoplifting which had been lifted.

The Mobile Multi-Functional Manager advised that enforcement was always a useful tool. In regard to shoplifting a lot of engagement was being done with business owners who chose not to report offenses. Applications for criminal behaviours orders had been shown to be successful with a knock on effect on shoplifting itself.

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Cllr Reece referred to the reduction in serious violence instances and asked if a definition of the terms could be provided.

The Mobile Multi-Functional Manager responded that serious violence encompassed a number of offenses such as violence against a person, violence with a weapon and domestic violence. The Council was working in partnership with establishments where this type of violence had been reported to ensure that any trends were dealt with.

Cllr Reece wondered if data pertaining to those trends could be shared.

The Mobile Multi-Functional Manager said that the data was collated as part of the Safe at Night initiative and fed back to business owners so that they could take proactive measures.

Cllr Reece asked how many Fixed Penalties Notices had been issued to individuals and how many had failed to comply.

The Mobile Multi-Functional Manager responded there was a good compliance rate to those notices. A small number of breaches currently going through the Court process and assurance was given that escalation for failure to comply to those notices was handled swiftly, whether that be to injunctions or through criminal behaviour orders.

Cllr Reece enquired about Street Medics funding until the end of March and the reduction and demand on A&E services.

The Mobile Multi-Functional Manager advised that data suggested a variation of incidences that had been dealt with by Street Medics, which could be shared with members of the Committee. The triage provided for low level injuries had a huge impact on the need to call on ambulances and it was intended that the project be continued for another twelve months and be rolled out on a more regular basis.

Cllr Whieldon expressed her satisfaction at hearing that criminal orders were attached to shoplifting.

The Mobile Multi-Functional Manager commented that shoplifters were usually regular offenders and criminal orders were a good alternative to prison to be exploited.

Resolved: That the report be received, and the successful outcomes achieved in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as the work in progress to continue to tackle identified priority issues and promote Civic Pride, be noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

9. NAVIGATION HOUSE

The Housing Manager presented the report on the review of operations at Navigation House post planning permission being granted and towards ending rough sleeping in the borough.

Cllr Wilkes welcomed the report and referred to a similar project carried out in Norway with a 90% success rate, also adding that he had personally witnessed the seriousness with which the Council was following up on cases.

The Housing Manager thanked Cllr Wilkes for his feedback.

Cllr Reece asked how things were progressing regarding finding a suitable service provider and if this would be via a tendering framework.

The Housing Manager advised that the specifications were just being finalised so that a tender could go out.

Cllr Reece wondered if the management would be funded through the Shared Prosperity Fund in addition to the Housing Benefits.

The Housing Manager responded that it was designed to be self-funded so that the project doesn't rely on external, finite resources.

Cllr Reece asked if that meant there would be a service charge for residents.

The Housing Manager replied that there would be a supported accommodation module and the care provided would be supported by the housing benefits process.

Cllr Reece asked if data would be collected on the number of alcohol, drugs and antisocial behaviour related incidents.

The Housing Manager confirmed that activities involving the security of residents would be monitored on site.

Cllr Whieldon welcomed the intention to ensure long term funding and enquired about additional resources available through the Prince of Wales.

The Housing Manager commented that this would typically be investigated by the team, bearing in mind that government, finite funding was bringing vulnerability to long term initiatives.

- Resolved:**
1. That the report be received.
 2. That a tour of Navigation House be undertaken once the building works would be completed to view the accommodation and review the operating policy.
 3. That a further site visit be undertaken once the accommodation and operating policy had been ongoing for several months as part of the preparations to submit a planning application to continue after the first 12 months.

[Watch the debate here](#)

10. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair stated that the next meeting would feature update reports on the Parks and Open Spaces Task and Finish Working Group and Walleys Quarry Odours, and suggested that an invitation be extended to Staffordshire Police Commander in relation to antisocial behaviours impacting the environment.

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Cllr Brown asked that the roll out of the breakfast clubs in school be considered for scrutiny.

Resolved: That the work programme be updated.

11. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions received from members of the public.

12. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: That the next meeting be held on the 12th June 2025 at 7pm.

**Councillor Rupert Adcock
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 9.01 pm