

## **CABINET**

Tuesday, 17th October, 2023  
Time of Commencement: 2.00 pm

[Watch the meeting here](#)

[View the agenda here](#)

<b>Present:</b>	Councillor Simon Tagg (Chair)		
<b>Councillors:</b>	Sweeney Heesom	Fear Hutchison	Skelding
<b>Officers:</b>	Martin Hamilton Simon McEneny Sarah Wilkes  Andrew Bird  Roger Tait  Anthony Harold  Craig Jordan Angela Hodgkinson	Chief Executive Deputy Chief Executive Service Director - Finance / S151 Officer Service Director - Sustainable Environment Service Director - Neighbourhood Delivery Service Director - Legal / Monitoring Officer Service Director - Planning Executive and Cabinet Support Officer	

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

### **2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**Resolved:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 19 September be agreed as a correct record.

### **3. WALLEYS QUARRY UPDATE REPORT**

The Leader introduced a report on Walleys Quarry odours, stating that this was the first Cabinet meeting since the revelations against the Environment Agency.

The Chief Executive presented the report and confirmed that there was still a downward trend of complaints to the Environment Agency (EA).

The most significant news at the moment was the issue relating to the Air Quality data from the three monitoring stations placed around the area by the EA. The EA had stated that the problems that had been encountered were not specific with Walleys Quarry but were a common problem with the monitoring stations generally. However, the stations needed to be regularly calibrated to ensure that they were recording the presence of various gases in the atmosphere and it had been identified that the calibration had not been done correctly. As a consequence of this, Hydrogen Sulphide had been understated.

## **Cabinet - 17/10/23**

Colleagues from the EA were working with experts in that area and the manufacturers of the machines to see if it was possible to identify the scale of under reporting.

The data that would be published in November would be from a properly calibrated machine.

A significant issue was that agencies had been relying on the data for advice. Improvements at Walleys Quarry had stood under three elements: Progress of the action on site to contain, capture and destroy the gasses; the complaint data and the Hydrogen Sulphide data.

The other significant issue for the community was the health impact from this news. It was known that there were short term implications to exposure but there was also a significant mental health impact.

The Leaders of Newcastle Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council had jointly written to DEFRA and the Secretary of State for the Environment had been contacted asking for a Public Inquiry into the issues with the EA.

The Leader stated that it was disappointing to see that the information that had been considered previously by Cabinet had not been correct and had been under reported. The Leader stated that there had been comments at meetings and on social media that the Council should have known that the data was incorrect through the monitoring that had been done with the Council's hand held devices. The Chief Executive stated that the equipment used by the Council and that used by the EA were completely different and used in different ways. The EA's equipment was fixed and provided a long term view whereas handheld devices would be at different times.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning welcomed the call for a public inquiry and that it asked to look into the overall effectiveness of the EA.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth agreed and stated that he was not completely surprised as the dealings with the EA had been so bad.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the contents of the update report be noted.
  - (ii) That the call for a public inquiry into the regulatory performance of the Environment Agency be endorsed.

[Watch the debate here](#)

## **4. RYECROFT REDEVELOPMENT**

The Leader introduced a report updating Cabinet on the progress made with the Ryecroft development and to take decisions on moving the development forward.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth advised that Ibis had been selected as the hotel supplier. In respect of the residential units, there were three interested parties, outlined at paragraph 2.4 of the report. Work on the multi storey car park would be commencing soon.

The Leader referred to the three types of residential development on the site. Accommodation for over fifties, social housing and accommodation for young professionals. Bringing accommodation to the edge of town and the provision of the replacement car park would increase footfall.

Reference was made to a confidential appendix that would be considered at the end of the meeting.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the interests from developers to secure portions of the site for residential development be noted and that delegated authority be given to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth, and Portfolio Holder for One Council, People and Partnerships to finalise a masterplan for the hotel and residential developments and agree terms with developers to enable these developments to progress.
  - (ii) That the outcome of the procurement for a Hotel brand for the site be considered, and agree to the selection of Accor Hotels, with their Ibis Styles brand, for the development of the next stage of business case development, at a cost of £50,000;
  - (iii) That further update reports on progress of the various elements be received as and when further details have been developed.

[Watch the debate here](#)

## **5. FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND - IMPROVEMENTS TO THE MARKET**

The Leader introduced a report seeking approval for proposed improvements to the market in Newcastle.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth advised that the improvements would be done in two stages. Removing some of the fixed stalls which have attracted anti-social behaviour near to the Guildhall and removing thirteen fixed stalls from the lower part of the High Street. The retained stalls would all have new canopies and temporary stalls would be purchased and made available.

Temporary stall pitches would then be marked out and landscaping improvements would be carried out including the provision of street furniture and an advertising screen in lower High Street.

The Leader stated that the current administration had set out to revive the market and to keep it in-house. The Future High Streets Funding allowed for public realm improvements around the market. The first phase of the work would take place before Christmas. When the stalls are removed from outside the former W H Smiths, new recycle bins would be placed there. There would be a free market on Mondays for traders.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning welcomed the improvements stating that it would improve the heritage site at the bottom end of the town.

Councillor Brockie had concerns about the lawned area stating that it could attract anti-social behaviour (ASB) and would require maintaining. Also, the existing

## **Cabinet - 17/10/23**

canopies had been subject to repeated vandalism plus were showing wear and tear. It was difficult to see how replacing them with that of a similar nature would mitigate the damage. Would it be possible to look at some way of reinforcing the roofs. Also, in removing the temporary stalls between larger events may not be realistic budgeting. Three people would be required to move them and a projection of the manpower would be useful. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth was asked for assurance that the market would be given the priority that it deserved in terms of quality investment.

The Leader stated that the grassed area would be a focal point and is seen in many town centres and outside of universities for example. Regarding the canopies, the main problem with them was age although they had been vandalised on the odd occasion. Materials were being sought that were ASB resistant. Referring to the manpower for removing the temporary stalls, the Leader, this had been included in the budget proposal put forward in February.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth advised that funding for market improvements passed £11 million from the Future High Streets Fund which took into account a number of priority projects in the regeneration of the town centre.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the proposed Phase 1 improvements to the market in Newcastle be approved.
  - (ii) That the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth, be authorised to finalise detailed plans for the proposed Phase 2 improvements to the market in Newcastle and consult with traders and other stakeholders.
  - (iii) That the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth, be authorised to invite and award tenders for the works, up to the value of the available Future High Streets Funding of £396,851
  - (iv) That a free market be offered to traders on Mondays to seek to boost trader numbers on that day.

[Watch the debate here](#)

## **6. KEELE SUSTAINABLE SOLAR ENERGY**

The Leader introduced a report outlining plans for a feasibility study and business case for a solar array at Keele.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth stated that there was a lot of land that would not be used for many years and having a solar farm was part of the Council's sustainable strategy.

The Leader stated that the land would not be used for burials for approximately forty years and this would be a good alternative use for the site. Reference was made to the confidential appendix that would be considered at the end of the meeting.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment welcomed this proposal stating that the solar panels lasted approximately twenty five years which would fit in with the Council's long term plans.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning welcomed the proposal and stated that there would be a hedgerow separating the site from the cemetery to help to alleviate any noise from the windmills.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the production of a detailed feasibility study and business case for the solar array at Keele be approved. Details to be provided through a further report.
  - (ii) That the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres & Growth, be authorised to submit a planning application for the solar array at Keele;
  - (iii) That a further report on the progress and next steps required be received prior to any installation works being undertaken on site or end user agreements are signed.

[Watch the debate here](#)

## 7. **BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN UPDATE**

The Leader introduced a report providing an update following consultation on the First Draft Local Plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning referred Members to paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4 which outlined what the Council had done during the consultation period and listed drop in events around the Borough. Reference was also made to paragraphs 2.10 to 2.12 which looked at consultation themes and the next steps.

The Leader stated that this was the most extensive consultation that the Council had carried out. Some authorities at this stage would be carrying out an online consultation. The Leader referred to the allocation of funds. When it was agreed, there was a joint local plan with Stoke that was not fit for purpose - with data from three years previous and it was felt that money should be spent on a consultation.

Councillor Gorton stated that the Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee report did not include the information contained within paragraph 2.12 of this report so members of that committee were not aware of £300,000 being allocated to fund the work of consultants. The Leader was asked why the Scrutiny Committee had not been made aware of that and also, what the consultants would do for this fee.

The Leader stated that the report that went to Scrutiny looked back on the consultation rather than forward to the next level.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning stated that, to take the next steps it was important that the next drafting was up to date. The consultants would be looking at the evidence base and any issues that had been raised.

## **Cabinet - 17/10/23**

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the update following consultation on the First Draft of the Borough Local Plan be noted
  - (ii) That the Local Development Scheme 2023-2026 (Appendix 1) be published to confirm that the Council intends to prepare a Final Draft (Regulation 19 stage) of the Local Plan by Summer 2024.
  - (iii) That approval be given to allocate £300,000 from the Budget Support Fund to fund the Local Plan programme.

[Watch the debate here](#)

### **8. REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY & ROADMAP TO NET ZERO**

The Leader introduced a report giving an update on the progress made in the Council's achieving of aims contained within the Sustainable Environment Strategy and to consider the Road Map to net zero.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment referred Members to the Strategy that was attached as appendix one to the report. The Strategy was divided into four main sections which were outlined at paragraph 1.2 of the report.

The Road Map to net zero showed the net zero target and it would be realistically met through a wide range of implementation measures and changes to reduce carbon emissions of the Council's operations and estate over the next seven years. The timeline was outlined in paragraph 1.6 of the report.

The road map had identified capital expenditure of £7.4 million up to 2030.

The Leader stated that the report outlined some of the challenges that would have to be taken on over the next seven years and also the offsetting of energy consumption, particularly at J2, the depot and the crematorium.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the progress made in the various facets of the Council's Sustainable Environmental Strategy and other linked initiatives be noted.
  - (ii) That the 50% reduction in the carbon emissions from the Council's Operations and Estate over the last 10 years be noted.
  - (iii) That the findings and recommendations of the Road Map to Net Zero be considered and built into the Action plan for an updated Sustainable Environment strategy moving forward.
  - (iv) That the progress update and 2023/2024 Action Plan be referred to the Health, Wellbeing & Environment Scrutiny Committee for scrutiny and comments.

[Watch the debate here](#)

9. **URBAN TREE PLANTING STRATEGY UPDATE 2023**

The Leader introduced a report updating Cabinet on the progress with the Urban Tree Planting Strategy and seeking approval for Phase 5.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment stated that the Tree Planting Strategy would contribute towards the Sustainable Environment Strategy, the removal of carbon from the atmosphere, the good management of the Council's tree stock and Nature Recovery plans and enable external grant funding.

Attention was drawn to paragraph 2.1 of the report which outlined the list of sites for Phase 5.

The Leader advised that the trees being planted on the end of Earls Drive were also a deterrent for travellers.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment advised that a consultation on Phase 5 would run from now until 20 November, 2023. Planting was planned from January through to March, 2024.

The Leader stated that there were over sixty areas across the Borough that would be protected as carbon capture areas.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing stated that this would be a welcome addition, particularly in her ward.

Councillor Gorton queried the maintenance of the trees. The report gave little detail about looking after them and what action the council would be able to take. Councillor Gorton was pleased that there would be a Strategy for this going forward.

Councillor Gorton also referenced the donations from residents and groups to support continuation of the Strategy and asked what the implications for the next phase would be if donations were not forthcoming.

The Leader stated that the donations related to Wolstanton Marsh where residents wanted to contribute to prevent further incursions of travellers.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment stated that there was a tree maintenance plan but it was felt that it could be developed and improved so officers have asked for it to be put together and it should be going to the next Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That Phase 5 of the tree planting under the Urban Tree Planting Strategy be approved for implementation, subject to consultation responses, and the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery Services is authorised to seek and accept quotations for the work.
  - (ii) That the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery Services be authorised to bid for and accept external grant funding and secure community donations to contribute to the delivery of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy and other related projects.

**Cabinet - 17/10/23**

[Watch the debate here](#)

**10. FORWARD PLAN**

The Leader went through the Cabinet Forward Plan

**Resolved:** That the Forward Plan and Urgent Item be received and noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

**11. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Business.

**12. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION**

**Resolved:-** That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration if the following matter because it is likely that there will be disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs contained within Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972.

**13. CONFIDENTIAL REPORT TO THE KEELE SUSTAINABLE SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT**

Consideration was given to the confidential report in connection with the Keele Sustainable Solar Energy Project

**Resolved:** That the recommendations outlined in the confidential report, be agreed.

**14. RYECROFT REDEVELOPMENT EXEMPT APPENDIX**

Consideration was given to the confidential appendices attached to the Ryecroft Redevelopment report.

**Resolved:** That the confidential appendices be received.

**Councillor Simon Tagg  
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 3.50 pm