

CABINET

Tuesday, 5th December, 2023
Time of Commencement: 2.00 pm

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Present:	Councillor Simon Tagg (Chair)		
Councillors:	Sweeney Heesom	Fear Skelding	Hutchison
Officers:	Martin Hamilton Geoff Durham Simon McEneny Sarah Wilkes Anthony Harold Nesta Barker Georgina Evans-Stadward Craig Jordan	Chief Executive Civic & Member Support Officer Deputy Chief Executive Service Director - Finance / S151 Officer Service Director - Legal & Governance / Monitoring Officer Service Director - Regulatory Services Service Director - Strategy, People and Performance Service Director - Planning	

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 7 November, 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

3. **WALLEYS QUARRY - ODOUR ISSUES**

The Leader, Councillor Simon Tagg introduced a report on Walleys Quarry odour issues. This was the monthly report giving an update on issues at Walley's Quarry.

The Chief Executive presented the report stating that there had been an increase in the number of complaints received in November, double the level seen in October.

The Monitoring station data had shown that the percentage of time that the Hydrogen Sulphide had been above the World Health Organisation's Annoyance Threshold was just over 14% at MMF9 between 20 and 26 November. This was most likely due to the cold weather conditions.

In response, the Council increased the deployment of officers out into the community to try and witness the odours in order to take action. In addition the complaint data was being shared with Walleys Quarry and a meeting was scheduled for Friday 8 December where previous spikes and the data from November would be discussed.

The Environment Agency (EA) had advised that they had also increased the level of odour assessment tours.

The Chief Executive made reference to the ongoing work by the EA in terms of their regulation of the site and publication of some Compliance Assessment Report (CAR) forms which detailed works which they were requiring Walleys Quarry to do. There were two areas in particular; the clay capping of the flanks, to be completed by 12 December and a request for Walleys' to update their Odour Management Plan to reflect the development at the site since the production of the Plan.

The Leader stated that it was good that increased monitoring was taking place by the Council as a result of the rise in complaints. It was key to keep a very close watch on the situation in order to do the Council's part and also to hold the EA to account.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth, Councillor Sweeney made reference to paragraph 3.8 of the report, stating that it was scandalous that the EA did not attend the meeting held at Castle House on 20 November.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning, Councillor Fear stated that the figures were disappointing. Referring to the table at paragraph 3.4, MMF9, Councillor Fear stated that, for one minute in every seven the Hydrogen Sulphide level had been in excess.

The Leader stated that the Council's role through the Abatement Notice was to meet and discuss the issues with the operator and was pleased that officers would be doing that. At Full Council in October, Members had asked the Leader to write to the new Secretary of State regarding issues with the EA. The Leader stated that, in addition, he would also write to the Prime Minister about the failings of the EA and ask again for a public inquiry.

The Leader asked the Chief Executive about the SCG to see if the Group could be ramped up again. The Leader stated that the EA would be coming to speak with Councillors in the new year regarding the calibration issues.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the SCG did continue to meet on a monthly cycle with himself and the Council's Service Director for Regulatory Services in attendance. The Group were continuing to apply pressure to agencies. There were also sub-groups in existence.

The Leader proposed two additional recommendations; asking Cabinet to support the Leader writing to the Prime Minister regarding the issues at Walleys Quarry and the EA's performance and failures and calling for a public inquiry and; asking the Chief Executive to explore holding a political SCG in the new year.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the contents of the update report be noted.
 - (ii) That Cabinet support the Leader writing to the Prime Minister regarding the issues of Walleys Quarry (copying in the relevant people) about the EA's performance and failures and calling for the public inquiry.
 - (iii) That the Chief Executive explore the holding of a political SCG meeting early in the new year.

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4. **REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET 2024/25 - FIRST DRAFT SAVINGS PLANS**

The Leader introduced a report regarding the refreshed Medium Term Financial Strategy including the first draft savings proposals.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth stated that savings and funding strategies had been identified to address a £2.686m budget gap for 2024/25, outlined at paragraph 2.4 of the report.

There would be a council tax increase, significantly below the rate of inflation, of 1.99% for a band D property amounting to an increase of ten pence or less per week.

Identified savings enabled a continued contribution of £250,000 to the Borough Growth Fund to continue to enable investment in the Council's priorities.

The Leader stated that a robust budget setting process began in the summer, an Efficiency Board had met and the MTFS had previously been to the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee. The first draft savings had now been brought to Cabinet en-route to setting the budget which would be a balanced budget, in February.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning thanked the Finance team for an excellent report and their hard work with a process that was producing deliverable targets.

The Leader stated that the next step for this would be to go to the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee next week.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the first draft savings proposals as set out in Appendix A and Appendix B to the report, be noted.
 - (ii) That the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) funding gap (Appendix C), be noted.
 - (iii) That the refreshed Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) (Appendix D) be referred to the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee for their views.
 - (iv) That the first draft savings proposals be referred to the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee for their views (Appendix A and Appendix B).
 - (v) That the Mid-Year Capital Estimates for 2023/24 be approved.

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5. **COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

The Leader introduced a report providing a summary of progress made during the first year of the Council's 2022-2026 Council Plan. The report would go to Full Council for debate in January.

The report showed that Newcastle was a well run Council that was delivering on its set priorities; regenerating the town centre through the Town Deal and Future High Street Fund government funding; supporting a healthy, active and safe community; creating a safe and attractive town centre and the One Council transformation.

During this year there had also been a Peer Review report which showed a good picture of management within the Council. There had been constant focus on

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Walleys Quarry through this period and the Abatement Notice victory. The Council's 850 Anniversary Celebrations had taken place throughout the year and the Council had done exceptionally well in the Britain in Bloom competition.

The Portfolio Holders highlighted some of the areas that had performed well under their Portfolios.

Page 4 of the Annual Report summarised the achievements that had been made across the board. Pages 13 to 21 showed the Council's performance under the four Priorities with 80% of targets being met.

The Leader proposed an amendment to the first recommendation to thank the staff and members that had been involved in achieving the success of the Council during this period.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Council's Annual Report for 2022-2023 be received and that thanks be passed to the staff and members involved during this period, for their work on behalf of the residents.
 - (ii) That the publication date of the Annual Report going forward, which will be September each year, be noted.
 - (iii) That the 2022-2023 Annual Report be referred to Full Council's January 2024 meeting.

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6. TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY 2023-2028 REPORT

The Leader introduced a report seeking Cabinet's approval of the 2023-2028 Technology Strategy.

The Strategy would bring ICT and Digital Strategies together to take the Council forward and provide better services and delivery to residents. The Council understood that there would still be people who wanted the personal approach, either over the telephone or in person at Castle House.

The Strategy would be taken to the next Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee next week for its views.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Technology Strategy be approved.
 - (ii) That the Technology Strategy be reviewed on its individual merits and any future allocation of resources be supported.
 - (iii) That an action plan be received for consideration at a future meeting of the Cabinet.
 - (iv) That the Strategy be considered by the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee and feedback be provided to the Portfolio Holder for One Council, People and Partnerships

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7. CHATTERLEY VALLEY WEST LUCIDEON PROJECT

The Leader introduced a report updating Cabinet on progress with the Chatterley Valley West project and sought approval of Cabinet for a full business case review.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth stated that the project had the potential to create up to 1700 jobs. Lucideon were currently based in Penkhill but wanted to move into Newcastle.

A bespoke office and manufacturing business would be built and once completed, the buildings would be sold to the Council who would then rent it out to Lucideon. The rent received would cover the interest on the loan and create an income stream.

A full financial appraisal of Lucideon was included at page 80 of the report, along with other information.

The Leader stated that the site had a long history with the west side awaiting development for many years and as a result of receiving the Town Deal money and the investment from the County Council this development had been able to move forward.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning stated that the development would create good quality jobs. The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage stated that the development brought great potential to Kidsgrove and the surrounding areas.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the progress made to date on the development of The Chatterley Valley Industrial Park be noted.
 - (ii) That a further report be received detailing both the full business case and the evaluation of the full business case, once completed, to enable a decision to be taken regarding future investment in this project.

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8. **CHATTERLEY VALLEY WEST PLOT C INDUSTRIAL UNIT INVESTMENT**

The Leader introduced a report updating Cabinet on Plot C of the Chatterley Valley West project and sought approval for a full business case review of the potential investment into small industrial units.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth stated that this development was for three separate units that would be sub-divided into smaller units which, upon completion the Council would purchase them and rent them out, generating income for the Council. The smaller units across the Borough were in great demand and the proposed units would be slightly bigger to enable businesses to expand.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the progress made to date on the development of the Chatterley Valley Industrial Park be noted
 - (ii) That a further report be received detailing both the full business case and the evaluation of the full business case, once completed, to enable a decision to be taken regarding future investment in this project.

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9. **FORWARD PLAN**

The Leader went through the Cabinet Forward Plan.

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Resolved: That the Forward Plan be received and noted.

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10. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Business.

11. **DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION**

There were no confidential items.

**Councillor Simon Tagg
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 2.55 pm