

CABINET

Tuesday, 16th July, 2024
Time of Commencement: 2.00 pm

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Present: Councillor Simon Tagg (Chair)

Councillors: Sweeney Fear Hutchison
Heesom Skelding

Officers: Gordon Mole Chief Executive
Geoff Durham Civic & Member Support Officer
Simon McEneny Deputy Chief Executive
Sarah Wilkes Service Director - Finance /
S151 Officer
Andrew Bird Service Director - Sustainable
Environment
Anthony Harold Service Director - Legal &
Governance / Monitoring Officer
Paul Dutton Senior Media Officer

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 4 June, 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

4. WALLEYS QUARRY - ODOUR ISSUES

The Leader introduced an update report on Walleys Quarry looking at the complaints, monitoring information, actions of the Environment Agency (EA) and the Borough Council.

The Chief Executive, Gordon Mole advised that the report provided an update over the last three months.

Odour complaints had peaked in February with a downward trend through March and April but there had been an upturn in May followed by a reduction in June. It should be noted that the number of complaints exceeded those received in June, 2022 and 2023.

There had been 11 odour events (10 or more complaints in one day) in June. To date, this month there had been 102 complaints and again, that was higher than in previous years for this period.

The air quality data continued to correlate well with the air quality data of the World Health Organisation as shown on page 15 of the report. The table showed that the level of hydrogen sulphide was higher at MMF9, sited at Gallingale, compared to the other MMF's.

In respect of legal action, the Leader of the Council had written to the Secretary of State on 4 July, 2024 requesting permission in relation to legal proceedings. Following the General Election, a new Secretary of State had been appointed and the Leader wrote a further letter on 9 July urging quick approval of the Council's outstanding request to bring legal action against the operator.

Leading experts had been instructed to prepare the evidence which had been requested by King's Counsel in the event that permission was received to proceed.

Regular meetings on these matters would continue between officers and Counsel to collate the evidence. An Inquiry would be held on Tuesday 23 July at Castle House with a further meeting scheduled for 14 August.

The Environment Agency (EA) had provided an update on the long awaited data adjustment on 8 July advising that their report must be reviewed and cleared by the Chief Scientific Advisor. The EA understood that the new Ministers would want to review the report before publication.

The Leader referred to the corrective data from the EA stating that it was eagerly awaited by residents. The complaints received from residents over the last couple of weeks showed that the problem had not gone away. The suspension period, requiring the operator to carry out certain works to resolve the issue, had not worked so the EA needed to be called upon again to take action.

Councillor Fear stated that the complaint figures indicated that the problem was getting worse thus showing that Walleys Quarry was not operating as it should and therefore the EA needed to show improvement. It was hoped that the new Government would allow a public inquiry, which had previously been turned down.

Summing up, the Leader referred to the letter sent to the new Secretary of State asking for a speedy resolution regarding this Council taking legal action. In addition the Inquiry due to take place next week would provide recommendations to take to Full Council.

The Leader agreed with the comment made about a public inquiry stating that it should be raised again. The recommendations were amended in respect of this.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the contents of the update report be noted.
 - (ii) That this Council call again for Central Government to announce a public inquiry into the handling of the Walleys Quarry issue by the Environment Agency over a long period.

[Watch the debate here](#)

5. KIDSGROVE SHARED SERVICE HUB

The Leader introduced a report updating Cabinet on the progress made with the development of the Kidsgrove Shared Service Hub, made possible by the Town Deal Fund.

There had been works undertaken at the railway station, Kidsgrove Sports Centre had reopened, enhancement of the parks and the pump track was now working and well used; the Hub was the next step.

The Leader was pleased that Kidsgrove Town Council had played a major part in this.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Finance, Town Centres and Growth be authorised to apply for the relevant Coal Authority permit to enable ground investigations to proceed and to obtain such necessary insurances as are needed for the development to proceed.
 - (ii) That the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Finance, Town Centres and Growth be authorised to proceed with ground investigations and remediation at the preferred site.

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. **BRAMPTON MUSEUM. APPLICATION TO THE NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND**

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Heritage and Culture introduced a report updating Cabinet on The museum's national lottery heritage funding bid for 2025-27 and to seek approval to accept the funding, should the bid be successful.

The bid that had been put forward was for £98,000. The museum had put the previous funding to good use with, amongst other things the many events put on for the Borough's 850th Anniversary and delivering a 60% increase (90,000 visitors) in footfall for the museum. They increased income by 229% compared to 2019/20 and had won several awards throughout the year and were now in line for national recognition for the 'Small Visitors Attraction'.

Some of the funding would be used for a 'Friend of the museum' scheme which would be a match-funding scheme to bring growth to the funding.

The Leader referred to the museum's status within the Borough and being central to its heritage. The funding would help the museum to grow further and benefit the Council's net zero plans.

- Resolved:** That the museum's application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund be approved and the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage be authorised to accept and utilise any funding allocated in line with the bid.

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. KEELE SUSTAINABLE SOLAR ENERGY BUSINESS CASE

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth introduced a report outlining the business case for a proposed sustainable solar energy scheme at Keele.

The Council was committed to being carbon neutral by 2030 to support the wider communities in being carbon neutral by 2050. By supplying green energy it would service local businesses and help them to meet their environmental obligations. The Council only contributed a small amount of overall volume of carbon emissions across the area but could set an example to show what could be achieved.

The Portfolio Holder amended the recommendations as set out in the report.

The Leader stated that this was still in the early stages with a lot more work required and it was hoped that a report could be brought back to Cabinet later in the year.

More details, relating to the business case would be discussed in closed session at the end of the meeting.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That progress on the business case be welcomed.
 - (ii) That Cabinet receive a further report, in due course about the range of options available to progress the project.

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8. DELIVERY OF ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING THROUGH THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE (LEVI) FUNDING

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth introduced a report which outlined the joint work undertaken by this Council and the County Council to deliver an electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure through the Governments' Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding in the Borough.

Potential sites for EV charging were outlined at paragraph 2.1 of the report. The new Castle Car Park would have 22 charging points within it.

This was welcomed by the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment and the Leader. The Leader pointed out that the take up of electric vehicles was increasing and therefore more charging points were needed.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Council work with the County Council to deliver Electric Vehicle charging points utilising LEVI funding and County Council procurement of the EV Charge Point Operator (CPO).
 - (ii) That the proposed sites for the EV charging points be noted and that these are taken forward for the LEVI soft market testing and if appropriate final installation.
 - (iii) That the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth

be authorised to agree any necessary agreements to facilitate the delivery of the EV chargers and EV charger locations.

[Watch the debate here](#)

9. URBAN TREE PLANTING STRATEGY PHASE 6

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment introduced a report seeking Cabinet approval to progress Phase 6 of tree planting under the Urban Tree Planting Strategy and to expand the strategy to include planting in selected sites in rural villages.

Reference was made to the table at paragraph 2.3 of the report which listed the sites selected for Phase 6.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning was thanked for including the Urban Tree Planting Strategy in the emerging local plan.

The Leader supported this and suggested that 'Urban' should now be dropped from the title and that it be referred to as the 'Borough Tree Planting Strategy' as rural sites would be integrated.

The Leader referred to areas where tree planting had taken place which would deter traveller incursion and was pleased that the emerging local plan would protect the carbon capture areas.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning welcomed this and welcomed the integration of rural areas into the strategy.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That Phase 6 of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy be approved for consultation and implementation in winter 2024/25 (subject to consultation responses), and authorise the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery to seek and accept quotations for the work in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment.
 - (ii) That the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery be authorised to bid for and accept external grant funding and secure community donations (if offered) to contribute to the cost of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy and other related projects.
 - (iii) That the expansion of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy to include rural tree planting schemes, be approved.
 - (iv) That ward members in the rural areas of the Borough be invited to propose potential sites for tree planting on Borough Council land in their wards.
 - (v) That up to two rural sites be included in this phase of planting, subject to consultation with the relevant

community and agreement with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment.

- (vi) That designation of appropriate tree planting sites as Carbon Capture Areas in the emerging Local Plan, be authorised.

[Watch the debate here](#)

10. LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment introduced a report informing on the creation of a Local Nature Reserve Strategy (LNRS), as required under the Environment Act, 2021, for Staffordshire and covering this Borough.

Newcastle Borough Council was leading the way in the County with its Tree Planting and Bio-diversity Plan, the Grassland Management Plan and the recently published Sustainable Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan.

The Leader referred to paragraph 1.5, pointing out that one key partner under 'landowners' was the farming community in their production of foodstuffs.

With the LNRS, the Council would be increasing nature and would look to other landowners to also play their part.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That member endorsement of the LNRS work, and the forthcoming public engagement consultation, be sought.
 - (ii) That a Council and members commitment to supporting the development of the LNRS by engaging appropriate resources, be supported.

[Watch the debate here](#)

11. PRODUCTIVITY PLAN 2024-25

The Leader introduced a report seeking Cabinet approval for a Productivity Plan as required by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

The document pulled together all of the work undertaken by this Council over the last few years, particularly on the back of the peer review.

The Leader made a request to the new Government – to not take this too far with rigid inspections but to just do a light touch exercise, particularly as the peer review had already been undertaken.

- Resolved:** That the Productivity Plan for publication on the Council's website and for submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by July 19th 2024, be approved.

[Watch the debate here](#)

12. PROCUREMENT OF CONTACT CENTRE TELEPHONY

The Leader introduced a report seeking the approval of Cabinet for the procurement of a contract for contact centre and corporate telephony.

Using the latest technology would ensure that the service was future proofed with the better use of interactive voice responses on phone calls and better use of chat and voice boxes on the Council's website. The integration into Microsoft Teams was also assisting Members to pick up on customer Service enquiries.

Resolved: That the procurement and award of a 5-year contract for contact centre and corporate communication solution, delegating authority to enter into a contract to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder – One Council, People & Partnerships, be approved.

[Watch the debate here](#)

13. **AWARD OF SHORT FORM SERVICES CONTRACTS TO A CONSORTIUM OF ARCHITECTURAL SERVICE PROVIDERS**

14. **FORWARD PLAN**

The Leader went through the Cabinet Forward Plan.

Resolved: That the Forward Plan be received and noted.

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15. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Business.

16. **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.

17. **KEELE SUSTAINABLE SOLAR ENERGY BUSINESS CASE**

Consideration was given to documents relating to The Keele Sustainable Solar Energy Business Case.

Resolved: That the confidential documents be received and noted.

**Councillor Simon Tagg
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 2.49 pm