

Date of meeting Tuesday, 8th July, 2025
Time 2.00 pm
Venue Astley Room - Castle
Contact Geoff Durham 742222



**NEWCASTLE
UNDER LYME**

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Castle House
Barracks Road
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire
ST5 1BL

Cabinet

AGENDA

OPEN AGENDA

- 1 APOLOGIES**
- 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
To receive declarations of interest from Members on items included in the agenda.
- 3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS** **(Pages 5 - 10)**
To consider the Minutes of the previous meeting.
- 4 WALLEYS QUARRY ODOUR ISSUES** **(To Follow)**
- 5 CIVIC PRIDE (EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITIES) STRATEGY 2025/28** **(Pages 11 - 34)**
- 6 NEWCASTLE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP - COMMUNITY SAFETY ACTION PLAN 2025/26** **(Pages 35 - 50)**
- 7 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION** **(Pages 51 - 76)**
- 8 PET CREMATION OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE** **(Pages 77 - 82)**
- 9 FORWARD PLAN** **(Pages 83 - 88)**
- 10 URGENT BUSINESS**
To consider any business which is urgent within the meaning of Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 11 DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION**
To resolve that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following reports, because it is likely that there will be disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972.

ATTENDANCE AT CABINET MEETINGS**Councillor attendance at Cabinet meetings:**

- (1) The Chair or spokesperson of the Council's scrutiny committees and the mover of any motion referred to Cabinet shall be entitled to attend any formal public meeting of Cabinet to speak.
- (2) Other persons including non-executive members of the Council may speak at such meetings with the permission of the Chair of the Cabinet.

Public attendance at Cabinet meetings:

- (1) If a member of the public wishes to ask a question(s) at a meeting of Cabinet, they should serve two clear days' notice in writing of any such question(s) to the appropriate committee officer.
- (2) The Council Leader as Chair of Cabinet is given the discretion to waive the above deadline and assess the permissibility of the question(s). The Chair's decision will be final.
- (3) The maximum limit is three public questions at any one Cabinet meeting.
- (4) A maximum limit of three minutes is provided for each person to ask an initial question or make an initial statement to the Cabinet.
- (5) Any questions deemed to be repetitious or vexatious will be disallowed at the discretion of the Chair.

Members: Councillors S Tagg (Leader) (Chair), Sweeney (Vice-Chair), Heesom, Fear, Skelding and Hutchison

Members of the Council: If you identify any personal training/development requirements from any of the items included in this agenda or through issues raised during the meeting, please bring them to the attention of the Democratic Services Officer at the close of the meeting.

Meeting Quorums: Where the total membership of a committee is 12 Members or less, the quorum will be 3 members.... Where the total membership is more than 12 Members, the quorum will be one quarter of the total membership.

SUBSTITUTE MEMBER SCHEME (Section B5 – Rule 2 of Constitution)

The Constitution provides for the appointment of Substitute members to attend Committees. The named Substitutes for this meeting are listed below:

Substitute Members:

If you are unable to attend this meeting and wish to appoint a Substitute to attend on your place you need to identify a Substitute member from the list above who is able to attend on your behalf

Officers will be in attendance prior to the meeting for informal discussions on agenda items.

NOTE: IF THE FIRE ALARM SOUNDS, PLEASE LEAVE THE BUILDING IMMEDIATELY THROUGH THE FIRE EXIT DOORS.

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CABINET

Tuesday, 3rd June, 2025
Time of Commencement: 2.00 pm

[View the agenda here](#)

[Watch the meeting here](#)

Present:	Councillor Simon Tagg (Chair)		
Councillors:	Sweeney	Fear	Hutchison
	Heesom	Skelding	
Officers:	Gordon Mole	Chief Executive	
	Simon McEneny	Deputy Chief Executive	
	Anthony Harold	Service Director - Legal & Governance /	
		Monitoring Officer	
	Sarah Wilkes	Service Director - Finance / S151 Officer	
	Craig Jordan	Service Director - Planning	
	Roger Tait	Service Director - Neighbourhood	
		Delivery	
	Geoff Durham	Civic & Member Support Officer	
	Paul Dutton	Senior Media Officer	

1. **APOLOGIES**

All members were present.

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 6th May 2025 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. **WALLEYS QUARRY - ODOUR ISSUES**

The Leader introduced the update report on Walleys Quarry Odours, emphasizing the need for the issue to be resolved for the long term.

The Chief Executive reported that mitigating measures to keep the risks of serious pollution down were in the hands of the Environment Agency (EA) which was instructing contractors on site. There were low levels of complaints and gas emissions were down to zero which was now becoming a long-term trend. The company was under liquidation and the Council had been in contact with the liquidators about outstanding debts.

The Leader expressed being pleased with the figures and noted that the ongoing mitigation works seemed to provide much better results than those previously undertaken by the operator.

The Deputy Leader commented passing the area four to five times a week and not having noticed any odours for a month or two. This suggested progress was being made towards making the surroundings a good place again.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning endorsed the Deputy Leader's statement having also visited the site recently and hoping what was once a menace to the public would become a public amenity.

Resolved: That the contents of the update report be noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

5. KIDSGROVE TOWN DEAL UPDATE

The Leader introduced the report on the Kidsgrove Town Deal projects, quoting the refurbishment and re-opening of the Sports Centre, ground works on the Chatterley site towards enabling 1700 jobs to be created, the pump track in Newchapel, Cliffe Park Hall, 3G pitches at Kings School's and improvements to the Canal Pathway.

The shared service and refurbishment of the station were still under discussion. Money reallocated from the cancelled HS2 project had been expected from the government to go towards the station but seemed not to be an option anymore and the Town Deal funds were not to cover remediation works in the car park if these turned out to be required. A survey was to be carried out to find out for which money was also an issue and a decision was to be made about asking Network Rail for an alternative plan.

The shared service hub's new approach would involve a regeneration of the town centre around the station of which a community learning hub on the Kings Academy site, new small-scale enterprise units on the Meadows, canal pathway and access as well as highway improvements. The changes had been agreed by the Town Deal Board.

The Deputy Leader welcomed the completion of the Chatterley Valley project as far as the Town Deal investment element went. The developer was due to commence the build out of units later in the year. The works by the Canal and River Trust were also substantially complete.

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage expressed his disappointment in the Government for withholding part of the fundings that were to go towards the station. Kidsgrove had otherwise hugely benefitted from the Town Deal's moneys, the first scheme delivered being the Sports Centre which showed a healthy membership and a vast array of classes, promoting better health and social interactions. The pump track was also a success, curbing antisocial behaviours and helping children to get out into the fresh air. Kidsgrove CCTV project was also to be commended, giving a sense of civic pride, comfort and safety for people walking around their hometown.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning praised how much good the Town Deal had done and the investment in creating jobs for the future i.e. prosperity. The doubts brought by the Government not honouring the fundings that had been agreed was

problematic and it was suggested the local MP should step up to use his influence to liaise with the appropriate Government department and Network Rail.

The Leader confirmed having written to the MP who did not provide any response in relation to why the money was no longer available, bringing uncertainty into the Town Deal Board. The MP also abstained to support the proposal brought to the Board to take action and press ahead.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the progress made with the Kidsgrove Town Deal projects be noted.
 - (ii) That the Project Adjustment Form submission to MHCLG for the new Enterprise Units, the community learning facility on Kings Academy, Canal pathway improvements and the highway / public realm improvements to The Meadows, Station Road, Market Street, The Avenue, Heathcote Street along with the public toilets upgrade and Kings Street, be approved subject to Town Deal Board approval.
 - (iii) That the risks that currently sat against the Railway Station scheme be noted.
 - (iv) That further updates be received as necessary.

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. FINANCIAL & PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT - 4TH QUARTER 2024/25

The Deputy Leader introduced the Financial Performance report.

The Leader welcomed the figures and commented on the Efficiency Board process that ensured money was efficiently spent.

The Deputy Leader added that £16.83 Million had been saved in the budget since the change in administration in 2017.

The Leader introduced the Corporate Performance report and invited members to comment on indicators not meeting targets under their respective portfolios.

Priority 1 – One Council Delivering for Local People

Food business inspections completed on time:

the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment commented that while most inspections had been completed on time the Council fell below for quarter 2 which had affected the yearly figure.

Stage 1 complaints processed within 20 working days:

the Leader commented that while the Council slightly fell short earlier in the year the target was met for Quarter 4 with responses sent out within the timeframe.

Percentage of Council Tax collected: the Deputy Leader commented that the moneys had been chased resulting in 97.4% being eventually collected meaning the target was missed by 0.1% only.

Total number of digital online transactions:

the Leader commented that more and more advice and guidance being available online along with referrals to other authorities meant people were finding the information they needed with no need to engage with the Council. Phone and in person resolutions of queries were also still available.

Priority 2 – A Successful and Sustainable Growing Borough

The Leader commented that all indicators were in the green.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning praised the planning team for rising to the challenge despite a heavy load on the department.

Priority 3 – Healthy, Active and Safe Communities

Total % of materials collected for recycling and composting verified via WDF:

the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment commented that the garden waste tonnages were down for December, resulting in performance dipping under 50%. Dry recycling tonnage was slightly up on the previous year and from April the Council has added flexible plastic and film along with cartons to the material collected from householders. Work was ongoing with targeted communications to improve recycling rates.

The targets were largely met for other food and residual waste, percentage of successful collections as well as street and environment cleanliness.

The Leader commented that garden waste was not collected over a short period of time during the winter, which was to be taken into account when looking at the indicator for recycling and composting. All other figures showed really good results and the Council had launched a Civic Pride initiative to encourage people not to drop their litter in the first place.

The Leader commended the work of the multifunction team.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing went through the indicators in relation to antisocial behaviours and vulnerability.

The Leader emphasized the fact that while there would always be issues for the police and the Council to deal with the figures showed the borough had a safe town centre and the cases of homelessness were limited.

People accessing the museum collections:

the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage commented that the door counting system was in the process of being replaced, which explained the absence of data for quarter 4.

J2 membership and customer satisfaction:

the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage expressed his satisfaction on the healthy membership growth and high conversion rate from the active life program, adding that the swimming lessons were also very successful.

The Leader shared his enthusiasm over the figures and the museum being a real asset for the borough.

Priority 4 – Town Centres for All

Car parking usage Number of tickets purchased:

the Deputy Leader commented that the score reflected a period of transition with old car parks being shut and new ones opening. The numbers were being monitored as new use patterns and permit sales established.

Town Centre Footfall:

the Leader commented that missing information for quarter 1 meant the yearly trend was incomplete however the data for quarters 2, 3 and 4 was satisfying. The Classic Car Show was a good example of successful initiatives bringing footfall to the town centre.

Market stalls occupancy:

the Deputy Leader commented that the general market figures could be improved however the town centre was overall a nice welcoming environment.

Resolved: That the contents of the report and its appendices be noted and that the Council's service and financial performance for this period continue to be monitored and challenged.

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. FORWARD PLAN

The Leader presented the Forward Plan.

Resolved: That the Forward Plan be received and noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

8. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

9. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

There were no confidential items.

**Councillor Simon Tagg
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 2.47 pm

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NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET

8 JULY 2025

Report Title: Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy 2025 - 28

Submitted by: Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery

Portfolios: One Council, People and Partnerships; Community Safety and Wellbeing; Sustainable Environment

Ward(s) affected: ALL

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
To approve the draft Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy 2025 – 28 for consultation and adoption			
<u>Recommendation</u> That Cabinet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approves the draft Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy 2025 – 28 for consultation and adoption • Refers the draft strategy to the Scrutiny Committees (Health, Wellbeing and Environment, Economy and Place, and Finance, Assets and Performance) for consideration and comment 			
<u>Reasons</u> To boost civic pride across the Borough and strengthen its reputation as a place which is clean, safe and friendly			

1. Background

- 1.1 In October 2024, the Council launched its Civic Pride campaign which aims to boost pride across the borough and strengthen its reputation as a place which is clean, safe and friendly, with a week of action in Newcastle town centre, followed over the next few months by a varied programme in Kidsgrove, Loggerheads, Chesterton and Holditch, Crackley and Red Street, Audley, Bradwell and Porthill, Knutton and Cross Heath and Clayton and Westlands.
- 1.2 The Clayton and Westlands event on 11th June also hosted the launch of the new £22,000 Civic Pride Investment Fund where elected members were allocated £500 each to support community priorities in their respective wards

via a simple application process. Further events are planned for the remainder of 2025 in the other neighbourhoods in the Borough.

- 1.3 Civic Pride aims to create a strong sense of belonging to, and pride in, our fantastic borough. It's a response to feedback from residents and captures a lot of the work that already goes on by the council and its partners – under a unified #PrideInNUL badge – and is also a call to arms for people of all ages to get involved.
- 1.4 One of the council's priorities is to create healthy, active and safe communities. As part of this area of work, the Council is committed to working closely with partners, and local groups, to make a positive difference in every part of the borough. Civic Pride is a great legacy from the Borough's 850th anniversary celebrations and aims to build on the fantastic community spirit and pride shown by residents in 2023.
- 1.5 The Council is now seeking to consult our communities and partners on the draft Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy which will provide a framework to guide our continuing work in this area.

2. Issues

- 2.1 At the heart of how we work at Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council is listening to our communities and finding ways to give residents power over their own lives and the neighbourhoods they live in. This is central to our Civic Pride approach in Newcastle-Under-Lyme. Our community is active across our Borough with residents, partner organisations, schools, the college and the university, businesses and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors making a difference every day.
- 2.2 In 2024, Staffordshire County Council adopted the Communities Strategy, reaffirming how important the energy of the community is in setting the direction of how the County Council works and moving into implementation to take work forward. The vision was shaped by engagement and feedback, including stories from residents, partners, businesses and others about what happens in their local communities, including Newcastle, and has been adapted to help shape our strategy for the Borough. Building on and linking with this work, we are now launching a Borough Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy, which will set out the areas we will focus on as we make progress, respond to feedback, and continue to listen to our communities. The Strategy will be a dynamic document, evolving as we move forward. Our priorities will mirror those in the County Council's Communities Strategy and will focus on the Great Places Where We Live, our Connected Communities and The Way the Council Listens, Talks and Acts.
- 2.3 This strategy is the first step of our journey to support residents to achieve the lifestyles and local neighbourhoods that they want to see.
- 2.4 In every part of the Borough Council, our councillors, staff, volunteers and services interact with residents and partner organisations every day. It's important to do this in the right way. We know that when we work together with residents and communities, outcomes for everyone are improved. This is why

working with our communities is central to our Council Plan 2022-2026. This strategy is the next step forward for this collaborative work.

- 2.5 The strategy has been developed by listening to what our communities have told us, and hearing from people who live in, work in, study in and enjoy Newcastle. People have talked about what they do to help themselves and each other in the Borough, and what the Council could do differently. This has informed the first iteration of our Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy 2025 – 2028.
- 2.6 A huge amount of work takes place across the Borough Council to improve how we work with communities, from finding better and more convenient ways to provide Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) to residents, to developing new forms of engagement that put residents at the centre. This is the first time we have brought all of this together into a strategy to make sure that this work helps us make progress with our collective vision over the next 3 years.
- 2.7 Integral to this strategy is our Delivery Plan, which sets out the practical actions we will take together with our community under the themes of Great Places Where We Live, Connected Communities and the Way the Council Listens, Talks and Acts. This translates our high level objectives into real actions our residents expect, and will show what difference we have collectively made in the future. We will review progress against the Delivery Plan every year, and conduct a reflection in 2028, taking soundings from our partners and residents to check that the direction is still relevant and delivering the right outcomes as we prepare for any changes Local Government Reorganisation may bring.
- 2.8 This strategy is intended to guide how Newcastle Borough Council works with its communities, how its communities can be involved in decision-making and local service delivery, and to support our workforce and partners. It is to provide clarity and guidance for:
 - Residents
 - Our staff and volunteers
 - Partner organisations (through Newcastle Partnership Board)
 - Town and Parish Councils
 - Organised voluntary, community and social enterprise groups
 - Children and young people
 - Students
 - Businesses
 The draft strategy is attached to this report at Appendix 1.
- 2.9 It is proposed to consult with this group of stakeholders to sense check the draft strategy before formally adopting it later this year (2025) subject to the feedback we receive. The consultation will run online for 6 - 8 weeks from July to September 2025.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That Cabinet approves the draft Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy 2025 – 28 for consultation and adoption.
- 3.2 Refers the draft strategy to the Scrutiny Committees (Health, Wellbeing and Environment, Economy and Place, and Finance, Assets and Performance) for consideration and comment.

4. Reasons

- 4.1 To boost civic pride across the Borough and strengthen its reputation as a place which is clean, safe and friendly.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 No other options were considered.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 6.1 The Council has a duty to work with partners to deliver particular functions and can engage with the communities of the Borough to assist in shaping service delivery.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1 It is intended that this strategy will have a positive impact on equality by providing opportunities for all Borough communities to engage in service design and delivery.

8. Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1 There are significant staff resource implications in consulting on the draft strategy and progressing the actions in the Delivery Plan.
- 8.2 Each service area will need to adapt and flex workplans to enable delivery of the actions, and be mindful of how this fits with other pre-identified priorities.
- 8.3 Some actions also have financial implications which, wherever possible, will be absorbed within existing approved budget provision. Where this is not possible, further reports will be brought forward to explore funding options.
- 8.4 A Civic Pride Investment Fund of £22,000 has been approved in the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2025/26 which will invite applications up to a maximum of £500 from each ward member to support community projects which contribute to civic pride. The application form is available on the Civic Pride web page.

9. Major Risks & Mitigation

- 9.1 There is a risk of limited community and partner engagement with the Civic Pride campaign. Efforts will be made to promote the campaign and develop community ownership of local issues, including making funds available for local projects via the new Civic Pride Fund.
- 9.2 There is a risk of limited staff capacity impacting on the Council's ability to drive the strategy and deliver the actions in the Delivery Plan. Efforts will be made to balance competing priorities and support communities and members to take forward local actions.
- 9.3 There is a risk that Local Government Reorganisation could have a significant impact on the sustainability of the Civic Pride campaign in Newcastle. Options

to mitigate this risk will be considered when more detail is known about the model of any future Council which covers the Borough.

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)



11. One Council

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council ☒

Providing Information, Advice and Guidance to communities on service efficiencies and commercial opportunities are a key element of the strategy.

One Digital Council ☒

Access to digital services and considering digital exclusion issues are a key element of the strategy.

One Green Council ☒

Supporting communities to be involved in managing green spaces and contributing to the Council becoming carbon neutral by 2030 are a key element of the strategy.

12. Key Decision Information

12.1 This is not a key decision.

13. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

13.1 None

14. List of Appendices

14.1 Draft Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy 2025 - 28

15. **Background Papers**

15.1 Staffordshire County Council Communities Strategy 2024 - 29

Civic Pride Strategy (Empowering Our Communities) 2025 – 2028



NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Foreword

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Mr Simon Tagg – Leader of Newcastle Borough Council



At the heart of how we work at Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council is listening to our communities and finding ways to give residents power over their own lives and the neighbourhoods they live in. This is central to our Civic Pride approach in Newcastle-Under-Lyme.

Our community is active across our Borough with residents, partner organisations, schools, the college and the university, businesses and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors making a difference every day

In 2024, Staffordshire County Council adopted the Communities Strategy ([add link here](#)), reaffirming how important the energy of the community is in setting the direction of how the County Council works and moving into implementation to take work forward. The vision was shaped by engagement and feedback, including stories from residents, partners, businesses and others about what happens in their local communities, including Newcastle, and has been adapted to help shape our strategy for the Borough.

Building on and linking with this work, we are now launching a Borough Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy, which will set out the areas we will focus on as we make progress, respond to feedback, and continue to listen to our communities. The Strategy will be a dynamic document, evolving as we move forward.

Our priorities will mirror those in the County Council's Communities Strategy and will focus on the Great Places Where We Live, our Connected Communities and The Way the Council Listens, Talks and Acts.

This strategy is the first step of our journey to support residents to achieve the lifestyles and local neighbourhoods that they want to see.

Thank you for being involved, and for being at the heart of everything we do.



Introduction

In every part of the Borough Council, our councillors, staff, volunteers and services interact with residents and partner organisations every day. It's important to do this in the right way. We know that when we work together with residents and communities, outcomes for everyone are improved. This is why working with our communities is central to our [Council Plan](#) (2022-2026). This strategy is the next step forward for this collaborative work.

The strategy has been developed by listening to what our communities have told us, and hearing from people who live in, work in, study in and enjoy Newcastle. People have talked about what they do to help themselves and each other in the Borough, and what the Council could do differently. This has informed the first iteration of our Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy 2025 – 2028.

A huge amount of work takes place across the Borough Council to improve how we work with communities, from finding better and more convenient ways to provide Information, Advice and Guidance to residents, to developing new forms of engagement that put residents at the centre. This is the first time we have brought all of this together into a strategy to make sure that this work helps us make progress with our collective vision over the next 3 years.

Integral to this strategy is our Delivery Plan, which sets out the practical actions we will take together with our community. This translates our high level objectives into real actions our residents expect, and will show what difference we have collectively made in the future. We will review progress against the Delivery Plan every year, and conduct a reflection in 2028, taking soundings from our partners and residents to check that the direction is still relevant and delivering the right outcomes as we prepare for any changes Local Government Reorganisation may bring.



Who is this strategy for?

This strategy is intended to guide how Newcastle Borough Council works with its communities, how its communities can be involved in decision-making and local service delivery, and to support our workforce and partners. It is to provide clarity and guidance for:



Our Vision

Communities are at the heart of everything we do. We will work better with residents and partners to help people get more involved and make a local difference.

Great Places Where We Live (#Pride in NuL – safe, clean, friendly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen our work with partners to help people feel safer and more included within their neighbourhoods • Help residents get more involved in tackling climate change, take care of our environment and make Newcastle more sustainable • Help people to have better access to our town and neighbourhood centres by working with Staffordshire County Council on a Local Transport Plan • Engage with the County Council and our Town and Parish Councils, community groups and other external partners to understand and work with our communities better
Connected Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with and support our thriving Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector • Make it easier for residents to find information, opportunities and connections that help them do their bit and be independent • Connect people of all ages to the right help, at the right time, in the right place • Support people to become digitally included, informed and connected across the Borough
The Way the Council Listens, Talks and Acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try our best to engage with residents earlier, more accessibly, more creatively, more consistently and more locally • Adapt our approach to help residents get more involved, and support officers to understand how they can help • Support all our councillors to access the local information they need



Engagement Process

Staffordshire County Council engaged with Staffordshire's communities and partners, including Newcastle, from November 2023 to February 2024 using a multi-method approach which involved:

An online residents survey

A paper residents survey

A dedicated partner survey

Face to face conversations with targeted groups of people

A social media campaign

In addition, the Borough Council continually engages with communities in Newcastle via elected members and the Customer Hub, with our partners in the Newcastle Partnership, through the Public Consultations pages on our website, and through our day to day interactions with the community we serve.



Feedback Themes

This engagement was crucial in helping us start to understand what matters to our residents and partners, what they already do in our local area, and what we could do differently to help them do more. We learned:

Community: Residents see their community as where they live. People consider their town or village as their community. Identity is based in local place. Fewer residents identify with other communities, such as groups or clubs they are members of, workplaces, or places of education, however younger people place a greater emphasis on online communities.

Most Proud: Residents have pride in their communities. People are most proud of the friendliness/neighbourliness. The sense that people look out for each other, neighbourliness, friendliness, and community spirit are sources of pride.

Matters Most: Safety and neighbourliness. Safety/low crime matters greatly. Feelings of safety associated with low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, along with neighbourliness or community spirit, are the things that matter to people in their communities, along with a clean and well-maintained green environment, and the availability of community groups, activities and events.

Improve: Infrastructure and transport. Residents think that better infrastructure would improve their community. Residents identify infrastructure and maintenance (roads and pavements) along with the need for better public transport as the things that could improve their communities. Transport was an important priority, particularly regarding accessing local amenities, and seeing this as necessary for a thriving local area.

Involvement: Residents support each other through mostly informal neighbourliness. Residents want to be more involved in local decision making. Residents feel that broadly, people in their community do help them out from time to time, mainly via neighbours helping them with small tasks. This has clear links to the idea of small actions making a bigger difference.

Done Differently: Residents would like to help out further. Residents want the Council to communicate more. They are already engaged where they are able, but they would also like to help out further given the right opportunities of additional support. Better information, advice or communication about opportunities that are available are something that would encourage people more. Residents would also like to see the council setting an example, getting more involved and listening to communities.



Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy for Newcastle-under-Lyme

We have analysed the feedback and learning from the County Council engagement and considered this alongside our experiences from other community work across the Borough Council.

We have also shared learning with partners via Newcastle Partnership Board and our pilot Civic Pride events, and learned from what they could tell us, which has helped test our thinking.

This has helped us to validate and agree the three overarching and ambitious aims set out in the County Council Communities Strategy for our work with communities in Newcastle. These will help us achieve our collective vision and set our focus for the next 3 years of the journey.





Great Places Where We Live

(#Pride in NuL – safe, clean, friendly)

Strengthen our work with partners and residents to help people feel safer and more included within their communities differentiate the objectives somehow.

People told us that feeling safe within their community and connections to other people were the things that mattered to them the most.

We have recognised this within our strategy and will continue to work with partners such as the Office of the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner, our Local Policing Team, the County Council and Newcastle Partnership to support these aims.

Help residents to get more involved in tackling climate change, take care of our environment and make Newcastle more sustainable.

People told us that they would like to take a more active role in maintaining their local environment. The Borough Council Sustainable Environment Strategy sets out our vision to become carbon neutral as a Council by 20230, and as a wider Borough by 2050. The County Council Climate Action Fund supports community activity in this area and gives a great starting point. Our teams will work with partners and community groups to identify and provide more opportunities for people to get involved.

Help people to have better access to thriving local town centres and neighbourhoods, by working with Staffordshire County Council on developing a Local Transport Plan.

People told us how important it was to access their local area through well maintained roads and pavements, using a range of inclusive, sustainable and safe transport modes. We will support the County Council in writing the Local Transport Plan which will support the Government's target to de-carbonise the transport network by 2050 and play a key role in helping our communities to thrive.

Engage with our Town and Parish Councils, community groups and other external partners to understand and work with our communities better.

We also know that lots of other organisations understand our communities. It is important that we continue to work together, sharing whatever knowledge and resources we can, to help us work even better.





Connected Communities

Continue to work with and support our thriving Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector.

A vital part of our work with communities is with organisations in the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector. It remains important that we help the sector to thrive and be sustainable, so this is a key priority within the Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy.

Make it easier for residents to find information, opportunities and connections that help them do their bit and be independent.

People told us that they can find it hard to get information about activities in their community or about how they could get more involved. We know there is a lot of information available, but it can be hard to know which information is correct and up to date. We can build further on great work we have already done such as our Information, Advice and Guidance pages on our website, Citizen Access/MyAccount and our links with communications teams in partner organisations. If we can make the system simpler, we think this could help residents be and stay independent.

Connect People of all ages to the right help, at the right time, in the right place.

A lot of work has already taken place across the Borough Council and with our partners. Whenever people need help we try to link them to support which is nearer to home, and which helps them get on with their lives. This is why encouraging our communities to help themselves and each other is already an important part of our Council Plan.

Support people to become digitally included, informed and connected across the Borough.

We already support people to stay involved with the council through digital channels, from social media and emails, all the way through to digital ways of getting residents views on things. Digital can help us to do more of this, but we know that not everybody wants to engage with us in this way and we don't want to leave anyone behind. However, if we can support more people who would like to, then we can have better conversations together, and they can stay better informed.





The Way the Council Listens, Talks and Acts

Try our best to engage with residents earlier, more accessibly, more creatively, more consistently and more locally.

People would clearly appreciate better communication and information from the Council. They are also clear on how important their very local area is to them. Across the council we are already engaging with residents in new creative ways. However, we want to make our engagement better every time.

Adapt our approach to help residents get more involved, and support officers to understand how they can help.

Working with communities is already a key part of our Council Plan and we have a long history of fantastic work with residents and partners which was highlighted in our Corporate Peer Challenge report. However, there is more work to do. This strategy will focus on making sure everyone in Newcastle Borough Council understands how their role, and every decision we make, impacts on the Borough's communities – and how we might be able to link up work and make things simpler and better.

Support all our councillors to access the local information they need.

Councillors across the Borough are vital to the success of this strategy. Not just Borough councillors, but county, town and parish councillors too. As local champions who understand the patch but who also understand the strategic work going on, they are the people who can join it all up. We need to ensure they have everything they need to do their essential job.



Other Key Work and How this Strategy Relates

The Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy is closely related to other major pieces of work across the Borough and County Councils. Many other organisations and agencies are also working with communities differently too, and we will develop our next steps in partnership with them

**Newcastle Borough
Council – Council
Plan 2022-2026**

**Staffordshire
County Council
Communities
Strategy 2022-2026**

**Newcastle
Partnership –
Workplan and
Community Safety
Partnership Action
Plan**

**Newcastle Borough
Council Sustainable
Environment
Strategy**

**Newcastle Borough
Council Technology
Strategy**

**Newcastle Borough
Council - One
Green Council, One
Digital Council, One
Commercial Council**



Measuring Our Impact/What Will Be Different

We have been working differently with communities for a number of years but this strategy now gives us our long term vision for where we want to get to and marks the start of the next phase. An integral part of this strategy is the Delivery Plan which sets out what we will do to deliver each of the objectives and has clear milestones and implementation dates for each one. We will review this regularly, but most importantly we will not stop listening and talking to residents and partners about this work. The strategy will guide, co-ordinate and set the terms for everything we do with our residents and partners. It is essential that we continue to review this to make sure residents still feel we are going in the right direction.

We will monitor milestones under each of the objectives of the strategy. These will be reviewed annually but will be especially important at the review in 2028 when we will ask partners for views on progress and reflect on feedback provided by our communities in relation to the following themes:

- **Do residents feel safer in their communities, and feel the highways and transport in their area are improving**
- **Do residents feel better informed about where to find opportunities to get involved, and are more of them doing so**
- **Are residents and partners telling us they feel more engaged and that the Borough Council is more visible to them**
- **Are VCSE partners telling us that our systems are evolving and becoming easier for communities to get involved, with capacity being built.**
- **Is our information, advice and guidance being used regularly and increasing over time**

Long term	Mid-point review	Annually	All the time
This is a 3 year plan, so that we have a vision for the long term	After 1.5 years or sooner we will review progress and update the Delivery Plan	We will review our progress every year to make sure we are delivering what we aim to	We will try to maintain a more consistent dialogue with residents about our work with communities in the future



Delivery Plan 2025-2028

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Great Places Where We Live (#Pride in NuL – safer, cleaner, welcoming)

Pillar	Action	Lead Partner	Timescale
Strengthen our work with partners and residents to help people feel safer and more included within their communities	Deliver the Community Safety Action Plan Hold regular Civic Pride events across the Borough	NuLBC/Staffs Police NuLBC/SCC/Staffs Police/Aspire	Ongoing Ongoing annual programme
Help residents to get more involved in tackling climate change, take care of our environment and make Newcastle more sustainable	Deliver Newcastle in Bloom local competitions Support community volunteering in green spaces	NuLBC NuLBC	Annually in June Ongoing
Help people to have better access to thriving local town centres and neighbourhoods by working with Staffordshire County Council on a Local Transport Plan	Deliver Town Deal, FHSF and UKSPF projects Local Plan Digital Infrastructure Local Transport Plan	NuLBC and Town Deal Boards NuLBC NuLBC SCC	2025 – 2028 2025 Ongoing Ongoing
Engage with our Town and Parish Councils, community groups and other external partners to understand and work with our communities better	Deliver Placemaking Programme Action Plan Promote Civic Pride in Newcastle-under-Lyme	NuL BID/NuLBC Newcastle Partnership Board/ elected members/Town and Parish Councils/Support Staffordshire	Ongoing Ongoing



Delivery Plan 2025-2028

Connected Communities

Pillar	Action	Lead Partner	Timescale
Continue to work with and support our thriving Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector	Host Newcastle Partnership Board meetings Facilitate Newcastle Partnership Board workshop to identify priorities and update workplan	NuLBC NuLBC/Newcastle Partnership Board	Bi-monthly meeting June – October 2025
Make it easier for residents to find information, opportunities and connections that help them do their bit and be independent	Continue to develop the Information, Advice and Guidance pages on the website	NuLBC	Ongoing
Connect people of all ages to the right help, at the right time, in the right place	Support Staffordshire County Council Supportive Communities programme	SCC	Launched in April 2025
Support people to become digitally informed, included and connected across the Borough	Support Staffordshire County Council Supportive Communities Programme	SCC	Launched in April 2025



Delivery Plan 2025-2028

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The Way the Council Listens, Talks and Acts

Pillar	Action	Lead Partner	Timescale
Try our best to engage with residents earlier, more accessibly, more creatively, more consistently and more locally	Programme of "Ask the Leader" digital broadcasts Programme of face to face engagement events as part of Civic Pride days across the Borough Online engagement survey Civic Pride Online Community Panel	NuLBC NuLBC SCC/NuLBC NuLBC	Launch in July 2025 Launched in January 2025 Launched in January 2025 Launch in July 2025
Adapt our approach to help residents get more involved and support officers to understand how they can help	Regular feature in Team Talk and CastleNews Volunteering Scheme	NuLBC NuLBC	Ongoing Ongoing
Support all our councillors to access the local information they need	Members Area on Connexus	NuLBC	Ongoing



Additionally, each Service of the Council will progress the following initiatives:

Service	Policy/Strategy	Action/Project	Communications
Sustainable Environment	Grassland/Tree Management	Lyme Park Countryside Park; greenspace trail	Waste minimisation campaign
Planning	Planning policy and planning application decisions (healthy and vibrant town centres/protect built heritage and open spaces)	Work with property and land owners to add value to development proposals; use building control powers to ensure safety/accessibility and facilitate aesthetic improvements	Engage with communities on Local Plan proposals via road shows and online consultation
Commercial Delivery	Strategy for future cremated remains burial (Bradwell Crematorium extension)	Digital hubs in Community Centres; Knutton Village Hall	Town Deal newsletters; bereavement services customer information (memorial safety/tribute removal)
Regulatory	Partnership approach to supporting vulnerable people	Navigation House Hub	Energy efficiency/Staffordshire Warmer Homes campaigns
Legal and Governance	Governance support for town and parish councils	Civic and mayoral events/support for town centre enforcement	Promotion of local democracy to young people/promotion of social value procurement



Service	Policy/Strategy	Action/Project	Communications
Strategy, People and Performance	Council Plan to deliver community priorities and facilitate co-production of services	Better Health programme	Social Media campaign to enable improved interaction
Information Technology	Technology Strategy to deliver services to residents digitally	CRM/Customer Portal to improve resident access and communication	Promote digital connectivity to reduce digital divide
Finance	Capital Strategy to support community benefit and priorities	Setting budget to keep Council Tax low and support community priorities	Budget consultation for residents to have their say
Neighbourhood Delivery	Mobile Multi Functional operating model	PSPO enforcement/Great British Spring Clean/Safe Space	Publicity on enforcement successes

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAMS' REPORT TO CABINET

8 July 2025

Report Title: Newcastle Community Safety Partnership – Community Safety Action Plan 2025/26

Submitted by: Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery

Portfolios: Community Safety and Wellbeing

Ward(s) affected: ALL

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
To provide the Committee with an overview of successful work that has been delivered by the Community Safety Partnership in 2024/25, and planned actions for 2025/26 in the Local Police and Crime Plan and the Community Safety Action Plan, in response to the Strategic Assessment priorities for 2025/2026.	
<u>Recommendation</u> That Cabinet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receives the report and notes the successful outcomes achieved in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as the work in progress to continue to tackle the strategic priorities. • Receives and endorses the updated Local Crime and Police Plan in line with the Strategic Assessment priorities for 2025/26. • Refers the report to the Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee for consideration. 	
<u>Reasons</u> To deliver the Council's statutory obligations in relation to Community Safety and to contribute to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour in Newcastle-under-Lyme.	

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council, Staffordshire Police, and other agencies work collaboratively under the umbrella of the Community Safety Partnership to identify and address community safety issues across the Borough.

- 1.2 Like many other areas across the UK, Newcastle-under-Lyme experiences issues relating to crime and anti-social behaviour which can have a negative impact on community perceptions of the Borough. To address this, a number of initiatives are in progress which are being jointly planned and delivered by the Council, the Police and other Community Safety Partnership agencies. These plans form part of the Local Police and Crime Plan (see appendix 1)
- 1.3 This report focuses on the performance of the Community Safety Partnership in dealing with the strategic priorities as outlined in the Community Safety Strategic Assessment which is prepared on behalf of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and which has recently been refreshed for 2025/26.

2. **Strategic Priorities for 2024/2025**

- 2.1 The Community Safety Strategic Assessment is commissioned on behalf of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to provide Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) a data led assessment on the issues within the Borough. The CSP then formulate an action plan which outlines their response as to how they will tackle the priorities identified.

The priorities for 2024/2025

- Anti-social behaviour
- Community Cohesion and Tackling Extremism
- Domestic Abuse
- Drugs and County Lines
- Fraud
- Serious Violence and Violence Against Women and Girls
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons

3. **Community Safety Partnership performance for 2024/2025**

- 3.1 The following information provided by Staffordshire Police as of April 2025, illustrates data for Newcastle-under-Lyme showing a trend of reducing incidences across all types of offences compared to 2023/24, with the exception of drug related offences where an increase has occurred due to a stepping up of police activity in stop searches and intelligence gathering.

	Previous 12 months April 23 – March 24	Current 12 months April 24 – March 25	% change
ASB	1846	1802	-2%
DA	3026	2666	-12%
Drugs	168	245	+46%
Fraud	94	70	-26%
SVAWG	2129	1912	-10%

The below chart shows the comparative data for Staffordshire Police across the whole of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent for 2023/2024 - 2024/2025.

	April 23 - March 24	April 24 - March 25	% Change
ASB	16,393	15,032	-8%
DA	26,928	25,375	-6%
Drugs	1,925	2,441	27%
Fraud	859	737	-14%
SVAWG	20,713	19,814	-4%

This shows that Newcastle is following a similar trend across these crime types but that in most areas crime and anti-social behaviour is reducing.

Priority : Anti-Social Behaviour

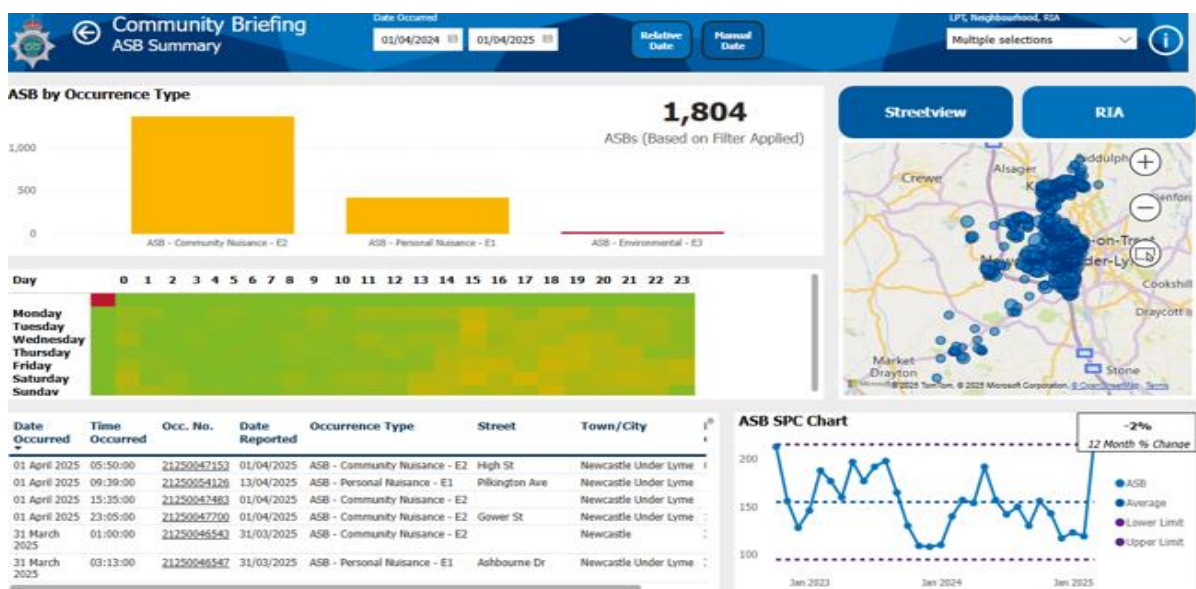


Figure 1– Staffordshire Police ASB performance figures 2024/2025

- There has been an increase of 2% in relation to reported cases of anti-social behaviour.
- Hotspot areas are Newcastle town centre, Kidsgrove, Chesterton and Bradwell.

Priority: Drug Related Offences

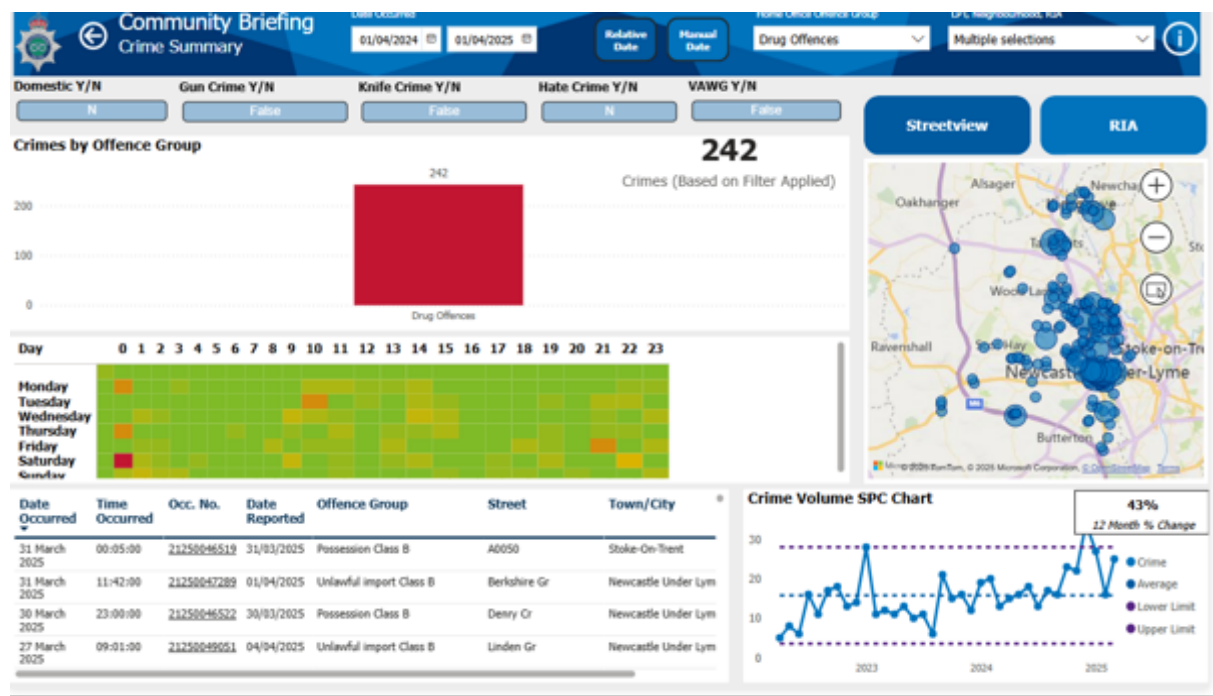


Figure 2 – Staffordshire Police drug performance figures 2024/2025

- During 2024/2025 there has been an increase of 43% in relation to drug related offences across the Borough. The increase can be attributed to the following initiatives:

The introduction of the proactive Policing Team which focused on drug supply and stop searches.

There has been a force-wide drive to increase the number of stop searches across Staffordshire which has seen an increase in possession of drug offences.

Neighbourhood teams are now adopting a problem solving approach which is tackling drug supply.

Newcastle has a high rate of intelligence reports.

Priority: Violence

Figure 3: Staffordshire Police performance data for Violence 2024/2025.

There has been a 10% decrease in violence offences during 2024/2025.

The Community Safety partnership (CSP) has continued a number of projects to tackle violence including;

Operation Sceptre – Knife crime awareness

Knife wands issued to all licenced premises as part of the night time economy.

Introduction of knife bins where people can safely deposit unwanted knives

Street medics to act as triage services for the nighttime economy

Serious Violence Duty funding received from Violence Reduction Alliance which was used by the CSP to extend diversionary activities in Kidsgrove and Chesterton.

SCYVS have rolled out the virtual display education on knife crime and gangs.

Priority: Domestic Abuse

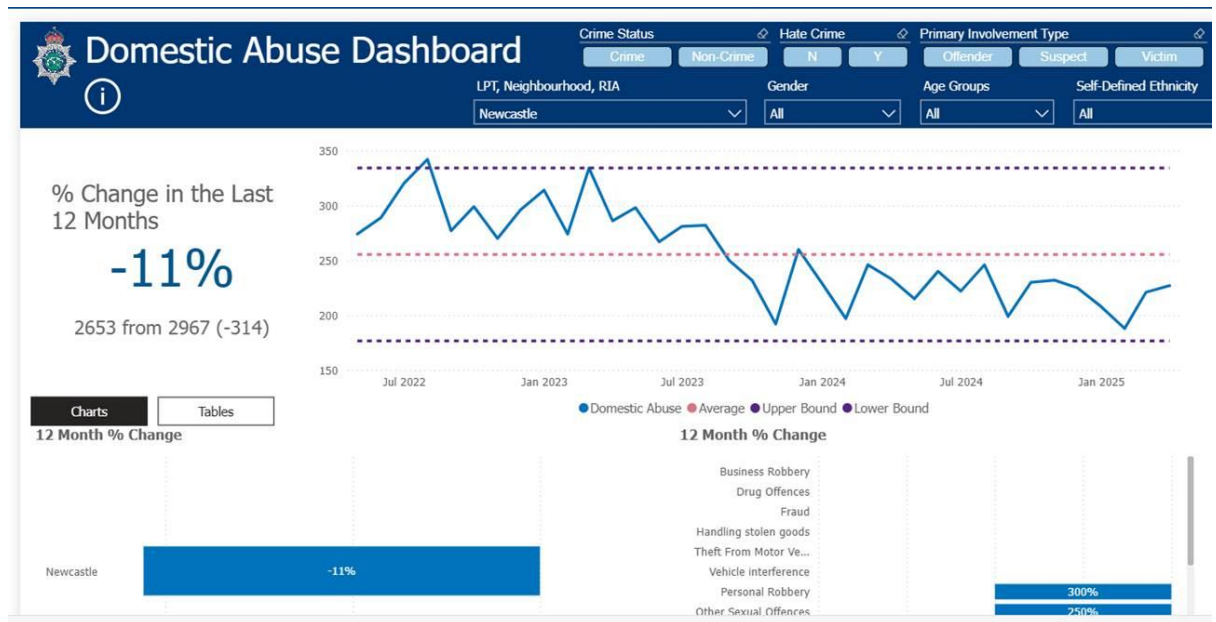


Figure 4: Staffordshire Police performance data for Domestic abuse 2024/2025

The Community Safety Partnership host weekly case conferences referred to as MARAC to discuss the most high risk victims in domestic abuse. This forum look to implement actions around victims to improve their safety.

Total number of cases heard on MARAC over the past three years

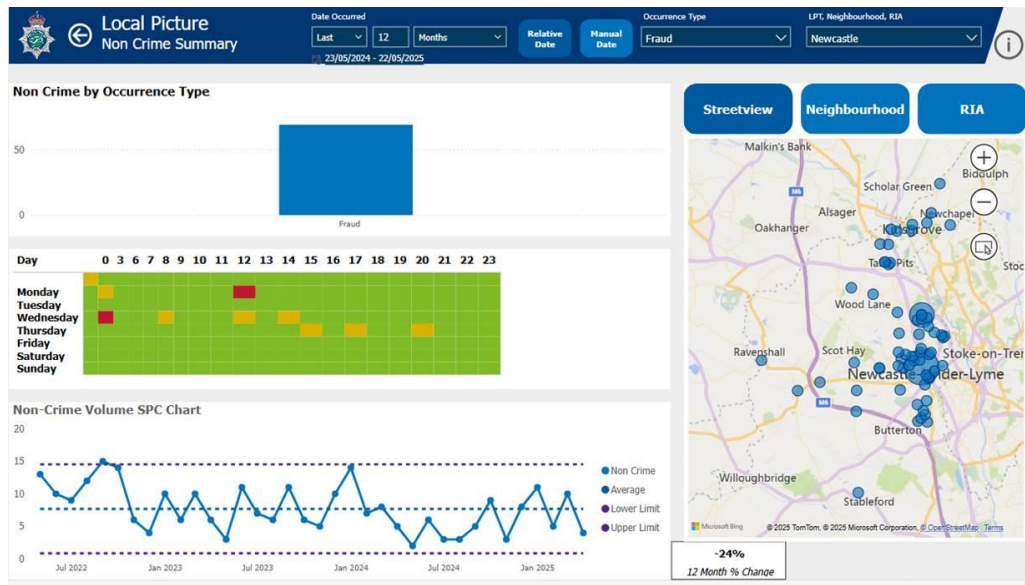
2023 – 240

2024 - 256

2025 (to date May 2025) – 85

Any cases that do not meet the threshold for MARAC but result in repeat calls to the Police can be heard at the Problem Solving meeting which is held every 2 weeks.

Priority: Fraud



There have been 69 incidents of fraud in the last 12 months. This is down by 21% on the previous 12 months.

Priority: Vulnerability

The CSP co-ordinate the Vulnerability Hub which is a case conference to discuss the most vulnerable residents in the Borough. The aim is to reduce their vulnerability and risk.

Total number of referrals to the Vulnerability Hub 2023/2024 – 190.

Total number of referrals to the Vulnerability Hub 2024/2025 - 205

The Council also funds the role of the Safe Recovery Officer through the Community Safety Fund. The role of this officer is provide face to face support with vulnerable individuals who chose not to engage with statutory services or do not meet the threshold for those services.

Staffordshire Police monitor all incidents reported into them in their daily briefings where all crime is reviewed. There is further scrutiny via the in force threat and grip meetings where crime is reviewed and allocated to appropriate officers/teams and any named offenders are considered.

Staffordshire Police also review performance on a weekly basis and any problem profiles for the neighbourhood policing team are referred onto the partnership problem solving meeting for intervention.

4. **Community Safety Priorities for 2025/ 2026**

4.1 The Newcastle-under-Lyme Strategic Assessment was commissioned by the Office of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and undertaken by the centre for Public Innovation to generate the Community Safety Priorities for 2025-2026.

The priorities are:

- Continue to Reduce Violence Against the Person
- Continue to Reduce Theft Offences
- Continue to Reduce Stalking and Harassment
- Continue to Reduce Violence without Injury
- Continue to Reduce Violence with injury
- Continue to Reduce Anti-social behaviour

Additional CSP priorities for Newcastle as identified by local stakeholders include:

- Reduce Business Crime
- Reduce Shoplifting
- Reduce Domestic Abuse
- Reduce Drugs (and County Lines)

The Community Safety Partnership Action Plan and the Local Crime and Police Plan establishes how we will address and tackle these priorities during 2025-2026.

A copy of the Local Crime and Police Plan (which will be shared online) will set out the Community Safety Partnership commitment in delivering on the strategic priorities. This can be found at appendix 1.

4.2 The Newcastle Partnership Board, which meets on a bi-monthly basis, provides the governance structure for community safety in the Borough, and reports to the County-wide Safer and Stronger Communities Strategy Group, hosted by Staffordshire County Council.

4.3 The Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner provide the Community Safety Partnership with an annual Community Safety Fund (formerly LDF) to support the commissioning of projects to help to target their priorities.

This year the Community Safety Partnership have been awarded the sum of £82,333 and the following projects are currently being commissioned (in agreement with the commissioners office) :

- Street Medics
- Taxi Marshals

- Diversionary Youth Activities
- Joint Operations Group funding
- Safe Recovery Officer
- Reactive fund

5 Recommendation

- 5.1** That Cabinet receives the report and notes the successful outcomes achieved in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as the work in progress to continue to tackle the strategic priorities.
- 5.2** Receives and endorses the updated Local Crime and Police Plan in line with the Strategic Assessment priorities for 2025/26
- 5.3** Refers the report to the Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee for consideration

6 Reasons

- 6.1** To deliver the Council's statutory obligations in relation to Community Safety and to contribute to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

7 Options Considered

- 7.1** The Community Safety Partnership structure enables a range of options to be considered to address specific issues, and appropriate interventions to be agreed between partners.

8 Legal and Statutory Implications

- 8.1** The Council, the Police and other agencies in the Community Safety Partnership have a range of powers and duties available to enable appropriate interventions and enforcement action.
- 8.2** The Council has a statutory duty to deliver the Community Safety function as part of its role in the Newcastle Partnership.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

- 9.1** An Equality Impact Assessment has been updated in relation to enforcement activities undertaken by the Council.

10 Financial and Resource Implications

- 10.1** There are no additional financial or resource implications directly relating to this report. The staffing resource required to deliver the activities referred to in this report are situated with the Neighbourhood Delivery Service and Regulatory Services.

11 Major Risks & Mitigation

11.1 Without the Community Safety Partnership, there would be limited resource and capacity to deal with crime and ASB.

11.2 There would therefore be a risk of an increase in crime and ASB across the Borough, and in the town centre in particular.

11.3 Lack of funding could result in no delivery of some community safety projects that assist with reducing vulnerability and early intervention projects for low level ASB. The Community Safety Partnership pools resources and enables targeted funding bids to be made for identified priority projects.

12 UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

12.1 The proposal contributes towards the following UNSDGs:



12.2 This project contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals above as follows:

- Good health and wellbeing – the projects will help to support the well-being of residents who have suffered from anti-social behaviour and crime
- Peace, justice and strong institutions – it will help to bring those who cause ASB to justice by assisting the Police and preventing locations in the Borough from experiencing Crime and ASB.

13 Key Decision Information

13.1 Not applicable.

14 Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

14.1 None.

15 List of Appendices

15.1 Appendix 1 – Local Crime and Police Plan 2024-2027 (updated May 2025)

16 Background Papers

16.1 None



STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER
Police | Fire and Rescue | Crime



NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME LOCAL POLICE AND CRIME PLAN 2024 - 2027

INTRODUCTION

The Newcastle Partnership formed as a result of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which placed a statutory duty on the statutory partners; Police, Borough Council, County Council, Health, Probation Trust and Fire Authority, to work together in order to develop and implement a community safety strategy designed to reduce crime and disorder within their area. The Partnership actively engages with a variety of other partners from the private, voluntary and community sectors in order to achieve a truly collaborative, community-based multi-agency approach.

The Partnership will work collaboratively in order to address the following community safety priorities as per the Community Safety Strategic Assessment 2025. These are:

- Serious Violence
- Theft/ Business Crime and Shoplifting
- Stalking and Harassment
- Anti-social Behaviour
- Domestic Abuse
- Drugs and County Lines

As a Partnership we are working to encourage and empower more resilient, supported and confident communities; contribute to a safer, healthier and more sustainable Borough and in turn create increased opportunities for our residents, visitors and businesses. We also work collaboratively in order to deliver the Serious Violence Duty.

The Partnership is required to have three-year Community Safety Plan, which is refreshed annually. This Plan sets out the priorities for the period 2024 – 2027, based on the most recent assessment of community safety issues. Each year, the Partnership prepares a Strategic Assessment to assist in revising the plan and the community safety priorities for the Borough. The assessment includes; an analysis of the types and levels of crime, including identifying communities at greatest risk; changes in crime since the last assessment and additional challenges; views from partners and the community on matters that need to be prioritised and recommendations.

What we know?

Newcastle has a population of around 123,000 people. Levels of overall deprivation here are broadly in line with the rest of Staffordshire but there are pockets of considerable deprivation – with some areas ranking in the top 10% nationally. Average earnings are lower than national average and there is a higher younger population than elsewhere in the County. The Borough has a mix of rural fringe communities and urban and suburban areas. Partnership working in Newcastle-under-Lyme is effective and we are proud of it. It is essential in improving outcomes and opportunities for our communities and ensuring that our collective resources are used efficiently and effectively. We continue to challenge the way in which the public sector has operated previously to initiate change. We recognise that in many cases we can deliver solutions by bringing together the skills and experience from existing partner organisations without always needing additional money or resources. We are aware of the challenges we face – not least financially – but we aim to remain focused on the work we want to do and will continue to seek to deliver, but also be mindful of how our work is impacting on the Borough as a whole linked to the delivery of complimentary strategies.

Against a backdrop of significant welfare reform and the challenges of financial exclusion, it is inevitable that some of our more vulnerable residents, particularly those in our more deprived communities, may be at an increased risk of experiencing socio-economic hardship and unhealthy lifestyles.

Our Priorities

While Newcastle has seen some improvements in key quality of life indicators in recent years, there are still a number of areas where families and communities face multiple issues such as unemployment, low income, low qualifications, poor housing, social isolation and ill-health. With this in mind, the Strategic Assessment has identified the following priorities;

Anti-social Behaviour (ASB)

We are committed as a Partnership, to reducing ASB and it continues to be a priority to improve the quality of life for local people and reduce fear of crime within our communities. We are also keen to promote understanding, tolerance and respect and to encourage residents to resolve issues themselves wherever possible.

We will continue to utilise the tools and powers we have available as part of joint response to tackling ASB. We will look to develop with partners a better understanding where Hate is a factor in ASB and look to see where Hate-related ASB is a particular concern linking this in with Prevent strategy.

We will continue to share information and work collaboratively to ensure that individuals receive multi-agency support where appropriate in order to reduce re-offending.

Serious Violence

We are working in partnership to deal with matters of serious violence. We understand the impact that this has on communities. We will continue to work together to focus on early intervention and prevention, including commissioning diversionary activity but where problems escalate into more serious and wide spread issues, the Partnership will provide a timely and proactive response using the most appropriate enforcement powers.

We will remain engaged with the development and delivery of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Serious Violence Reduction Strategy. We will continue to look at enforcement and preventative measures for the night time economy and work with licensing authorities to identify and tackle heavy drinking in areas with high levels of alcohol- related disorder and public place violence.

Drugs and County Lines

We understand that the impact of the coronavirus pandemic in regards to physical health, mental health and well-being, employment and education – in addition to the current Cost of Living Crisis and recession will mean that we are likely to see a sharp increase in numbers and people and families considered to be vulnerable. This will also impact on the number of individuals who are likely to be at an increased risk of criminal exploitation. We are aware of trends and ‘hotspot’ locations which require partnership attention in order to tackle and disrupt this activity.

We will continue to develop and enhance our part and community awareness and sharing of concerns linked to County lines, looking to tackle signs of exploitation of young people and vulnerable adults through cuckooing.

We will also continue to work in partnership to focus on education in secondary schools and methods of reporting in regards to criminal exploitation.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse affects all communities and is not unique to any one part of Staffordshire or Stoke-on-Trent. Domestic Abuse presents a significant risk to victims, but also has a wider impact where children are present – with many children

who experience DA coming into contact with Social Care services. Within the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) there is a clear legal definition of DA and the recognition of children who witness or experience such abuse as victims of DA in their own right.

The Act further adds statutory duties around the provision of support within DA-related Safe Accommodation and a requirement for responsible authorities to form DA Local Partnership Boards, which include oversight over support delivered within Safe Accommodation: CSPs should ensure that they engage with these accordingly.

We will engage with partners to develop and improve understanding of Stalking and Harassment offences, and continue to improve awareness and understanding of the Stalking Protection Act (2019) and how the Police can apply for Stalking Protection Orders (SPOs) to address offending and protect victims.

Stalking and Harassment

Stalking and harassment is when someone repeatedly behaves in a way that makes you feel scared, distressed or threatened. Repeated anti social behaviour can also be classified as harassment. Both stalking and harassment are offences under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

We will continue to work with partners on raising awareness on both domestic abuse and stalking and harassment. We will continue to try and identify both as early as possible to get the support in place and reducing risk in cases such as utilising forums such as MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference)

Business Crime and Theft

We will work in partnership to reduce business crime in and around Newcastle Borough. We understand the impact that this has on businesses and the perception on the Borough. We will work closely with Newcastle BID to build relationships with the business community and will continue to work with Partnerships Against Business Crime to tackle and drive down theft offences. We will utilise powers within the ASB, Crime and Policing Act to ensure that repeat offenders are issued Criminal Behaviour Order's as a means to address their behaviour. We will also look to engage with businesses to increase the reporting of offences so that these can be investigated accordingly.

Delivering our vision and achieving our outcomes.

When we come together as partners to support people experiencing problems in the places where they live, work, shop and socialise, that's when real partnership work happens. As a Partnership we are working to encourage and empower more resilient, supported and confident communities.

Using our shared vision and strategic framework we will work with partners and our community to challenge ourselves and transform the way that we commission in

order to deliver efficient, effective and quality services whilst reducing duplication and adding value.

Whilst the priorities we have identified in this plan are predominantly crime and disorder related, the Partnership is focused on achieving its overarching outcomes by working together on more holistic priorities, which encompass themes such as health and wellbeing and economic growth. We believe this interactive approach will increase opportunities for those experiencing the most entrenched vulnerabilities and those most at risk of becoming perpetrators, or indeed victims of crime.

The 'Newcastle Partnership workplan' provides more detail about the tasks and projects that the Partnership will deliver during 2025 -2026.

We are committed and will contribute to the challenges above, through active involvement and participation in the appropriate County wide forums. We will continue to effectively engage and cascade key information back to our local partners for interpretation and delivery in our communities.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE SUCCESS

We will monitor the delivery of the 'Newcastle Partnership workplan' through regular reporting to our Partnership Board and Operational Groups. We will continue to actively monitor performance through qualitative and quantitative information obtained from our partners and commissioned service providers to ensure that we are making a contribution to a reduction in crime and disorder.

We will monitor customer satisfaction and fear of crime by the use of service user questionnaires and the 'Feeling the Difference' surveys.

Local Councillors

Local Councillors are elected by the community to decide how the Council and partners should carry out various activities. They represent the public interest as well as individuals living within the ward in which they have been elected to serve a term of office. Local Councillors are keen to establish the views of residents, address issues of concern and to assist in developing ideas for improvements. They have regular contact with the general public through council meetings, telephone calls or surgeries. Surgeries provide an opportunity for any ward resident to go and talk their Councillor face to face and these take place on a regular basis. To get in touch with your Local Councillor please visit the Council's website www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk or contact the Council on 01782 717717.

Voluntary and Community Support

If you are a voluntary organisation, charity or social enterprise based in Newcastle-under-Lyme, advice and support is available from Support Staffordshire, who offer assistance in starting up a new community group, grant funding, organisational development and can also assist with project management and volunteering opportunities. To get in touch contact;

Support Staffordshire - 0300 777 1207 - info@supportstaffordshire.org.uk - www.supportstaffordshire.org.uk

For further information about the Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Police and Crime Plan 2024 – 2027 or any of the information in this document please contact michelle.hopper@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk or visit our website at www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL
PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S
REPORT TO CABINET

8 July 2025

Report Title: Local Government Reorganisation

Submitted by: Leader of the Council

Portfolios: One Council, People and Partnerships

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>To update Cabinet on feedback relating to Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's submission of an interim plan to Government and for agreement of next steps.</p>	
<p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>That Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notes the receipt of Government feedback in relation to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent submissions of Interim Plans for Local Government Reorganisation. Notes that the Council will now further engage with Government and Staffordshire Leaders through a meeting separate to the Staffordshire Leaders Board. Delegates to the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder, Finance, Town Centres & Growth, to engage the necessary support for the work on the local government reorganisation, noting that the borough is not yet in receipt of funding from Government to partially offset any costs accrued and that the Council continues to seek a fair allocation of this funding. Approve £200k to be transferred from the Business Rates Reserve to the Budget Support and Borrowing Fund in order to fund the work needed to submit the Council's final Local Government Reorganisation Plan. Calls for Newcastle-Under-Lyme's Members of Parliament to support the Borough's resolutions as set out in the report to full Council of 19th March 2025, and that they engage with Government Ministers in stating the case for the Borough. 	
<p><u>Reasons</u></p> <p>This report outlines the steps carried out in submitting Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's final plans to UK Government, planned future actions and consideration of recent discussions with Government and other local authorities in Staffordshire in respect of local government reorganisation.</p>	

1. Background

- 1.1 Following the release of its English Devolution White Paper on 16th December 2024, Government has expressed its intention to seek devolution settlements in every part of the United Kingdom, with the creation of new governance arrangements at revised population sizes.
- 1.2 The first formal stage of the Local Government Reorganisation process set out by the Government was for areas to submit Interim Plans by 21st March 2025.
- 1.3 For the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent region, four such plans were submitted:
 - A submission from Staffordshire County Council advocating a single unitary council for the county (with a second existing unitary council in Stoke-on-Trent);
 - A submission from Stoke-on-Trent City Council advocating a North Staffordshire unitary authority to incorporate Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire Moorlands and the city of Stoke-on-Trent;
 - A South and Central Staffordshire proposal put forward by the six central and south Staffordshire authorities to create a new unitary on this geography; and
 - An interim plan with options for Newcastle-under-Lyme, submitted following endorsement by full Council.
- 1.4 Following a delay to the assessment process, where initial feedback was due in early May, a letter from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to all Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent local authorities was issued on 3rd June. This set out key collective feedback from Government in relation to the proposals received in March.
- 1.5 Prior to submission, the Minister and civil servants advised that the submissions formed a 'temperature check' for regions' thinking around new structures, rather than a decision gateway. This has subsequently been confirmed at a webinar for local authority officers held on 3rd April, where civil servants have reiterated that they do not intend to rule options in or out at this stage. Similarly, options not previously considered within interim plans may be included in later submissions.
- 1.6 A meeting with civil servants was held on 27th June 2025, where Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent authorities requested specific information as set out in section 2, below.
- 1.7 For context, an overview of submissions across England shows that a small number of regions submitted a single plan for their area, some submitted no detail on the number or shape of unitary authorities, with most areas having multiple submissions and options.

2. Feedback

- 2.1 On 21st March 2025, following the resolution of full Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council submitted its interim plan to UK Government, setting out its strong preference for retaining the status quo, but considering options for new unitary models were these to be imposed, including:
 - 2.1.1 Supporting the investigation of a new unitary council on the footprint of the existing borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme (preferred unitary option);

- 2.1.2 Supporting the investigation of a unitary council covering the existing geographies of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire Moorlands;
- 2.1.3 Supporting the investigation of a unitary council covering Newcastle-under-Lyme and Shropshire;
- 2.1.4 Supporting the investigation of a unitary council covering the geography of West Staffordshire;
- 2.1.5 Not currently favouring a single unitary authority for Staffordshire;
- 2.1.6 Not supporting a North Staffordshire unitary authority including Stoke-on-Trent.
- 2.2 The submission also noted that the Council was wholly supportive of the creation of a new Strategic Authority at an appropriate geography. The Council's preference for this to not be led by a Mayor was recorded.
- 2.3 As noted above, the feedback from Government on interim plans was collective, incorporating points for consideration across all four submissions. The letter particularly notes the following local features:
 - 2.3.1 Any submission(s) need to cover arrangements for the whole of the invited area, that is Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. This sets out that the Government is seeking a single submission (which could include multiple delivery options) based on the whole geographic region of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent – i.e. the Government is asking that submissions set proposals within the whole geography, not just the area affected directly.
 - 2.3.2 In relation to population size for new unitary councils, the letter notes that as set out in the Statutory Invitation guidance and in the English Devolution White Paper, Government outlined a population size of 500,000 or more but this was guidance not a hard target. Rather, it notes that all proposals, whether they are at the guided level, above it, or below it should set out the rationale for the proposed approach clearly.
 - 2.3.3 The Government has welcomed the intention across all options submitted to align local government reorganisation closely with ongoing devolution programmes. It asks that the November final submissions show where this aligns with local geography and opportunity.
 - 2.3.4 The letter recognises that Stoke-on-Trent City Council is currently in receipt of extra-ordinary financial support, and asks that all proposals additionally demonstrate how reorganisation will contribute to putting local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing and what area-specific arrangements may be necessary to make new structures viable. The Government also asks how efficiency savings have been considered alongside a sense of place and local identity.
 - 2.3.5 In respect of options put forward within Newcastle's Interim Plan, as resolved by full Council, the letter notes that as Shropshire was not part of the invitation area, if the final proposal(s) include Shropshire, it must still set out a clear option and geography that covers the whole of the invitation area of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

- 2.3.6** Finally, the letter notes that, following a delay due to elections and issuing of feedback letters, the timetable for Local Government Reorganisation remains as stated in the letter from the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution in February 2025, noting that following submission of final plans on 28 November 2025, it will be for the Government to decide on taking a proposal forward and to consult as required by statute, noting that this will be on the most ambitious timelines. Under this current timetable, there could be elections to 'shadow' unitary councils in May 2027, ahead of 'go live' of new councils on 1 April 2028.
- 2.3.7** The issue of allocating the Government's announced development support funding for proposals remains unresolved at the time of writing, with Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council raising concerns that proposals for allocations would exclude the Borough from accessing these funds. MHCLG has advised that it will be asking all authorities to reconsider options ahead of a deadline of 11th July 2025.
- 2.3.8** Other areas for which clarification were sought through the initial meeting included local governance arrangements, the impact of wider changes to institutional structures (e.g. Integrated Care services being taken across wider, cross-county boundaries) and any likely impacts of Fairer Funding settlements. These require further guidance and exploration, and will be reported to a future meeting of Cabinet.

3. Development of November Submission

- 3.1** The next stages of development of submissions will rely on a number of factors, which will be informed by discussions with civil servants in coming weeks. These will include:
- 3.1.1** Following the initial joint feedback meeting with MHCLG and all Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent local authorities, additional meetings to be held with MHCLG to discuss in detail the work needed for a final submission.
- 3.1.2** Development and modelling of data analysis to set out projected service delivery principles for new unitary structures, including reviewing existing assets, staffing provision, service delivery mechanisms and forecast demand;
- 3.1.3** The implementation of programme management arrangements and workstreams to cover legal, financial, cultural, people and resource implications of reorganisation;
- 3.1.4** The design in principle of shadow unitary authority governance arrangements;
- 3.1.5** Community engagement on arrangements to affirm our residents and businesses' view of local government reorganisation and the options being proposed, ahead of the called-for public referendum requested by full Council.
- 3.1.6** Final confirmation of election arrangements for Newcastle in 2026.

4. Recommendation

4.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Notes the receipt of Government feedback in relation to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent submissions of Interim Plans for Local Government Reorganisation.
- Notes that the Council will now further engage with Government and Staffordshire Leaders through a meeting separate to the Staffordshire Leaders Board.
- Delegates to the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder, Finance, Town Centres & Growth, and to engage the necessary support for the work on the local government reorganisation, noting that the Borough is not yet in receipt of funding from Government to partially offset any costs accrued and that the Council continues to seek a fair allocation of this funding.
- Approve £200k to be transferred from the Business Rates Reserve to the Budget Support and Borrowing Fund in order to fund the work needed to submit the Council's final Local Government Reorganisation Plan.
- Calls for Newcastle-Under-Lyme's Members of Parliament to support the Borough's resolutions as set out in the report to full Council of 19th March 2025, and that they engage with Government Ministers in stating the case for the Borough.

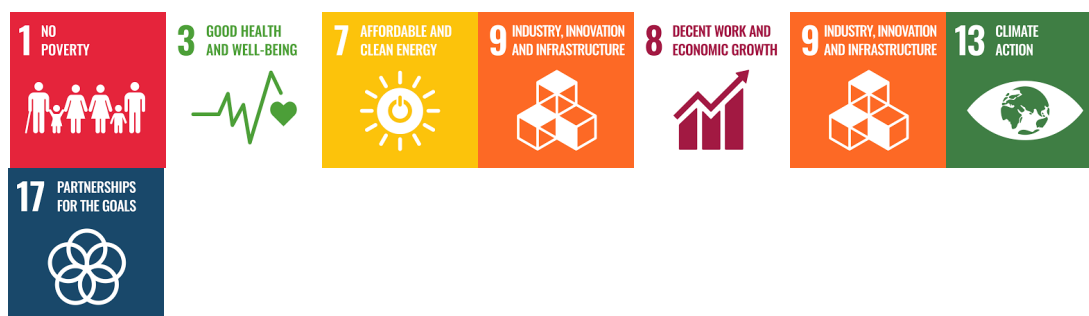
5. Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.1** Full Council considered the financial implications of reorganisation at its meeting of 19th March 2025. It was noted that the costs to authorities of both work to develop plans and to carry out reorganisation were unknown, but are likely to be substantial, and called on the Government to fully fund these costs.
- 5.2** It is anticipated that development of plans could cost circa £150,000 to reach submission later this year, therefore it is requested that £200,000 be transferred from the Business Rates Reserve to the Budget and Borrowing Support Fund to fund this work. The full costs of reorganisation remain unknown at this time.
- 5.3** On 3rd June 2025, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government confirmed allocations for all 21 areas working on local government reorganisation proposals. For Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, this equated to £367,336, based on a baseline sum of £135,000, plus an additional 20p per person based on the latest ONS population estimates.
- 5.4** The letter further asked that up to three Councils in each area be identified to receive funding on behalf of all Councils making submissions for immediate payments in either June or July, with a final deadline of 13th June for a July payment. The allocation is designed to cover some elements of costs accrued by Councils, such as the use of consultants.
- 5.5** At the time of writing, Ministers are yet to make a decision on whether Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council will receive any funding following discussions with MHCLG, following notification to MHCLG that money would not be allocated to Newcastle's proposals by the accountable body councils in Stoke and Staffordshire.
- 5.6** Full Council has also called for funding of a public referendum ahead of any changes to council structures.

6. Major Risks & Mitigation

- 6.1** Much remains unknown of detail at this stage so mitigation measures cannot yet be fully considered. Potential risks at this stage include staff recruitment and retention, a reduction in service delivery under a larger local authority, a potential 'democratic deficit' as elected members may be reduced in number and further from residents and a need to focus on reorganisation rather than get on with the day job of service provision.
- 6.2** *Financial sustainability* – Over recent years, the Council has delivered a balanced budget based on efficiencies across its services and investment in the borough whilst seeking to maintain optimum delivery for residents. It is unknown at what stage in a reorganisation process would restrict spending or borrowing, or whether areas in a much worse financial position would be prioritised over Newcastle.
- 6.3** *Effectiveness of change* – There is a lack of proven success where local government reorganisation has taken place elsewhere in the country to date, and at this stage limited detail on the business case/benefits of the approach being described in the White Paper.

7. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)



8. One Council

- 8.1** Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council ☒

The reorganisation of local government would change the commercial asset holding of councils, for example leisure centres and museums, and decisions would be made on these at a unitary level. The exact nature of changes is unknown at this stage.

One Digital Council ☒

It is probable that newer, larger councils would need to align digital systems, the cost for which is not known.

One Green Council ☒

Newcastle Borough Council has declared a climate emergency and has developed its sustainability programme to meet a 2030 net zero target for its scopes 1 and 2 emissions. Other local authorities are at different stages of implementing net zero approaches.

- 9.1 This is a key decision as Local Government Reorganisation may affect residents in all wards.

10. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 10.1 Cabinet – 4th June 2024 – Staffordshire Leaders Board Joint Committee
- 10.2 Cabinet – 6th January 2025 – English Devolution White Paper
- 10.3 Council – 22nd January 2025 - Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation: White Paper
- 10.4 Council – 19th March 2025 – Local Government Reorganisation
- 10.5 Cabinet – 6th May 2025 – Local Government Reorganisation Update

11. **List of Appendices**

- 11.1 Appendix 1 – Letter from MHCLG to Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent on Interim Plans
- 11.2 Appendix 2 – Letter from MHCLG on funding allocations and further guidance.

12. **Background Papers**

- 12.1 [English Devolution White Paper](#), December 2024, HMSO.

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Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

3 June 2025

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

INTERIM PLAN FEEDBACK: STAFFORDSHIRE AND STOKE-ON-TRENT

To the Chief Executives of:

Cannock Chase District Council

East Staffordshire Borough Council

Lichfield District Council

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

South Staffordshire District Council

Stafford Borough Council

Staffordshire County Council

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

Tamworth Borough Council

Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Overview:

Thank you for submitting your interim plans. The amount of work from all councils is clear to see across the range of options being considered. For the final proposal(s), each council can submit a single proposal for which there must be a clear single option and geography and as set out in the guidance we expect this to be for the area as a whole; that is, the whole of the area to which the 5 February invitation was issued, not partial coverage.

Our aim for the feedback on interim plans is to support areas to develop their final proposal(s). This stage is not a decision-making point, and our feedback does not seek to approve or reject any option being considered.

The feedback provided relates to the following interim plans submitted by Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent councils:

- Interim Plan for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent submitted by Cannock Chase District Council, East Staffordshire Borough Council, Lichfield District Council, South Staffordshire District Council, Stafford Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Tamworth Borough Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council. This includes the following supplementary responses:
 - Interim Plan for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent submitted by Staffordshire County Council.

- Interim Plan: Supplementary Response by Stoke-on-Trent City Council submitted by Stoke-on-Trent City Council.
- Local Government Reorganisation in Southern and Mid Staffordshire Interim Plan submitted by Cannock Chase District Council, East Staffordshire Borough Council, Lichfield District Council, South Staffordshire District Council, Stafford Borough Council, and Tamworth Borough Council.
- Interim Plan for Newcastle-Under-Lyme submitted by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.

We have provided feedback on behalf of central government. It takes the form of:

1. A summary of the main feedback points,
2. Our response to the specific barriers and challenges raised in your plans,
3. An annex with more detailed feedback against each of the interim plan asks.

We reference the guidance criteria included in the invitation letter throughout, a copy can be found at [Letter: Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent – GOV.UK](#). Our central message is to build on your initial work and ensure that the final proposal(s) address the criteria and are supported by data and evidence. We recommend that your final proposal(s) should use the same assumptions and data sets or be clear where and why there is a difference.

We welcome the work that has been undertaken across interim plans to develop local government reorganisation plans for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. This feedback does not seek to approve or discount any option or proposal, but provides some feedback designed to assist in the development of your final proposal(s). We will assess your final proposal(s) against the guidance criteria provided in the invitation letter and have tailored this feedback to identify where additional information may be helpful in enabling that assessment. Please note that this feedback is not exhaustive and should not preclude the inclusion of additional materials or evidence in the final proposal(s). In addition, your named area lead, Osian Morgan, will be able to provide support and help address any further questions or queries.

Summary of Feedback:

We have summarised the key elements of the feedback below, with further detail provided in the annex.

1. In some of the options you are considering populations that would be above or below 500,000. As set out in the Statutory Invitation guidance and in the English Devolution White Paper, we outlined a population size of 500,000 or more. This is a guiding principle, not a hard target – we understand that there should be flexibility, especially given our ambition to build out devolution and take account of housing growth, alongside local government reorganisation. **All proposals, whether they are at the guided level, above it, or below it should set out the rationale for the proposed approach clearly.**

2. The criteria ask that consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including public safety (see criterion 3). **For any options where there is disaggregation, further detail will be helpful on how the different options might impact on these services and how risks can be mitigated.**
3. The criteria ask that a proposal should seek to achieve for the whole area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government (see criterion 1). Numerous interim plans submitted only included options covering part of the area invited to submit proposals for local government reorganisation (i.e the geography of Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent). **For the final proposal(s), each council can submit a single proposal for which there must be a clear single option and geography and as set out in the guidance we expect this to be for the area as a whole; that is, the whole of the area to which the 5 February invitation was issued, not partial coverage.**
4. We note that one option under consideration in the interim plan submitted by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council includes the geography of Shropshire Council which sits outside of the invitation area. As noted in the invitation, it is open to you to explore options with neighbouring councils in addition to those included in the invitation. Only those councils named on the invitation can submit a proposal, but affected neighbouring councils can jointly submit with a named council. **If your final proposal(s) include a neighbouring council(s) from outside the invitation area you should clearly outline the implications of the proposal for that neighbouring council(s) and its wider area. As above, any proposal, regardless of whether a neighbouring council(s) is included, should set out a clear option and geography that covers the whole of the area to which the 5 February invitation was issued, not partial coverage.**
5. We welcome the intention across options to align local government reorganisation closely with ongoing devolution programmes. **Across all LGR proposal(s), looking towards a future Strategic Authority, it would be helpful to outline how each option would interact with a Strategic Authority and best benefit the local community, including meeting the criteria for sensible geography in the White Paper and devolution statutory tests.**
6. Numerous interim plans referenced concerns about the financial challenges being faced by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, and the viability therefore of any new unitary authority which includes within it the city of Stoke-on-Trent. **We would welcome further detail on what these challenges are and how they would be addressed under any prospective option for local government reorganisation. We note that Stoke-on-Trent City Council is in receipt of**

exceptional financial support, therefore proposals should additionally demonstrate how reorganisation will contribute to putting local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing and what area-specific arrangements may be necessary to make new structures viable. Additionally, given the financial pressures identified it would be helpful to understand how efficiency savings have been considered alongside a sense of place and local identity.

7. We welcome steps taken to come together to prepare proposals as per criterion 4:

- a) Effective collaboration between all councils will be crucial; we would encourage you to continue to build strong relationships and agree ways of working, including around effective data sharing. This will support the development of a robust shared evidence base to underpin final proposal(s).**
- b) It would be helpful if your final proposal(s) use the same assumptions and data sets or be clear where and why there is a difference.**
- c) It would be helpful if your final proposal(s) set out how the data and evidence supports all the outcomes you have included, and how well they meet the assessment criteria in the invitation letter.**
- d) You may wish to consider an options appraisal that will help demonstrate why your proposed approach in the round best meets the assessment criteria in the invitation letter compared to any alternatives.**

Responses to specific barriers and challenges raised

Please see below our response to the specific barriers and challenges that were raised in your interim plans.

1. Engagement with MHCLG

You asked for a named official to provide support and advice as you continue with your proposals(s) for local government reorganisation. Osian Morgan has been appointed as your MHCLG point person and is ready to engage with the whole area on issues you wish to discuss further.

You also asked for opportunities to engage with MHCLG Ministers on your proposals. We are committed to supporting all invited councils equally while they develop their proposal(s). Your MHCLG point person will support your engagement with government as a whole.

2. Funding support

You raised the need for sufficient funding support to ensure the development and submission of a credible proposal(s) in November. £7.6 million will be made available

in the form of local government reorganisation proposal development contributions, to be split across the 21 areas. Further information will be provided on this funding shortly.

3. Public and partner consultation

You asked for assurance from government that appropriate public and partner consultation would be supported during the development of proposals. Expectations on engagement and consultation are in the invitation letter. We note the interim plans set out a range of engagement with stakeholders. It is for you to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way with residents; the voluntary sector; local community groups and parish councils; public sector providers such as health, policing and fire; and businesses to inform your proposal.

4. Timeline for LGR

You outlined existing improvement and transformation projects currently being undertaken across the area, and asked government to confirm the previously quoted April 2028 vesting day. We have set out the timelines for each area in our invitation letters to areas and in the webinar held on 3 April 2025. Following submission on 28 November 2025, it will be for the Government to decide on taking a proposal forward and to consult as required by statute. We anticipate that, on the most ambitious timelines, there could be elections to 'shadow' unitary councils in May 2027, ahead of 'go live' of new councils on 1 April 2028. Your MHCLG point person will engage further with you on the decision-making progress and timings post submission of your final proposal(s).

5. Access to other government departments

You asked us to facilitate streamlined and joined-up access to other government departments. We welcome the desire to maximise the opportunities provided through local government reorganisation, and your named MHCLG point person, Osian Morgan, will be able to support you to engage with other government departments.

6. Stable tax base

You outlined your concern that government funding reforms that significantly affect tax bases would undermine the business case you are developing. You asked that any reductions are disapplied during the periods of transition and for early engagement on the amount of government grant funding that each council would receive on day one.

Government recently consulted on funding reforms and confirmed that some transitional protections will be in place to support areas to their new allocations. Further details on funding reform proposals and transition measures will be consulted on after the Spending Review in June. We will not be able to provide further clarification on future allocations in the meantime, but are open to discussing assumptions further if we can assist in financial planning.

7. Clarity over the application of criteria set

You expressed a desire for further clarity on how government would apply the criteria it has set, in particular on population thresholds and functional economic area. We will assess your final proposal(s) against the criteria in the invitation letter. Decisions on the most appropriate option for each area will be judgements in the round, having regard to the guidance and the available evidence. We would welcome an options appraisal against the criteria set out in the letter, so you can provide an evidence-based rationale for the preferred model against alternatives.

In relation to population thresholds, as set out above and in the Statutory Invitation guidance and in the English Devolution White Paper, we outlined a population size of 500,000 or more. This is a guiding principle, not a hard target – we understand that there should be flexibility, especially given our ambition to build out devolution and take account of housing growth, alongside local government reorganisation. All proposals, whether they are at the guided level, above it, or below it, should set out the rationale for the proposed approach clearly.

ANNEX: Detailed feedback on criteria for interim plan

Ask – Interim Plan Criteria	Feedback
<p>Identify the likely options for the size and boundaries of new councils that will offer the best structures for delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services across the area, along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities.</p> <p>Relevant criteria:</p> <p>1c) Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement.</p> <p>2a-f) Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.</p> <p>3a-c) Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.</p>	<p>We welcome the initial thinking on the options for local government reorganisation in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.</p> <p>In your final proposal(s) you may wish to consider an options appraisal against the criteria set out in the letter to provide a rationale for the preferred model against alternatives.</p> <p>Some of the interim plans submitted only included proposals covering part of the area invited to submit proposals for local government reorganisation. For your final proposal(s), each council can submit a single proposal for which there must be a clear single option and geography and, as set out in the guidance, we expect this to be for the area as a whole; that is, the whole of the area to which the 5 February invitation was issued, not partial coverage.</p> <p>Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs, including future housing growth plans. All proposals should set out the rationale for the proposed approach.</p> <p>Given the financial pressures identified it would be helpful to understand how efficiency savings have been considered alongside a sense of place and local identity.</p> <p>We recognise that the options outlined in the interim plans are subject to further development. In your final proposal(s) it would be helpful to include a high-level financial assessment which covers transition costs, and overall forecast operating costs of the new unitary councils.</p> <p>We will assess your final proposal(s) against the criteria set out in the invitation letter. Referencing criterion 1c, it would be helpful to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high-level breakdowns for where any efficiency savings will be made, with clarity of assumptions on how estimates have been reached and the data sources used, including differences in assumptions between proposals

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information on the counterfactual against which efficiency savings are estimated, with values provided for current levels of spending • a clear statement of what assumptions have been made, and if the impacts of inflation are taken into account • a summary covering sources of uncertainty or risks with modelling, as well as predicted magnitude and impact of any unquantifiable costs or benefits • where possible, quantified impacts on service provision, as well as wider impacts <p>We recognise that financial assessments are subject to further work. Referencing criteria 1 and 2, the bullets below indicate where further information would be helpful across all options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data and evidence to set out how your final proposal would enable financially viable councils, including identifying which option best delivers value for money for council taxpayers • further detail on potential finances of new unitaries, for example, funding, operational budgets, potential budget surpluses/shortfalls, total borrowing (General Fund), and debt servicing costs (interest and MRP); and what options may be available for rationalisation of potentially surplus operational assets • clarity on the underlying assumptions for any modelling e.g. assumptions of future funding, demographic growth and pressures, interest costs, Council Tax, savings earmarked in existing councils' MTFs • financial sustainability both through the period to the creation of new unitary councils as well as afterwards • As criterion 2e states, and recognising that Stoke-on-Trent City Council has received Exceptional Financial Support, proposals should additionally demonstrate how reorganisation will contribute to putting local government in the area as a whole on a more sustainable footing, and any assumptions around what arrangements may be necessary to make new structures viable <p>We welcome the information provided in the plans on the potential impact and opportunities for service delivery from reorganisation although we note the</p>
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	<p>level of detail provided varies significantly across different plans. For proposals that would involve disaggregation of services, we would welcome further details on how services can be maintained, such as social care, children's services, SEND, homelessness, and for wider public services including public safety.</p> <p>Under criterion 3c you may wish to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how each option would deliver high-quality and sustainable public services or efficiency saving opportunities • what would the different options mean for local services provision, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do different options have a different impact on SEND services and distribution of funding and sufficiency planning to ensure children can access appropriate support, and how will services be maintained? • what is the impact on adult and children's care services? Is there a differential impact on the number of care users and infrastructure to support them among the different options? • what partnership options have you considered for joint working across the new unitaries for the delivery of social care services? • do different options have variable impacts as you transition to the new unitaries, and how will risks to safeguarding be managed? • do different options have variable impacts on schools, support and funding allocation, and sufficiency of places, and how will impacts on schools be managed? • what impact will there be on highway services across the area under the different approaches suggested? • what are the implications for public health, including consideration of socio-demographic challenges and health inequalities within any new boundaries and their implications for current and future health service needs. What are the implications for how residents access services and
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	<p>service delivery for populations most at risk?</p> <p>We welcome the desire to maximise the opportunity for public service reform, and it would be helpful for you to provide more details on your plans so we can explore how best to support your efforts.</p>
<p>Include indicative costs and arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities.</p> <p>Relevant criterion:</p> <p>2d) Proposals should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.</p>	<p>We welcome the commitment across plans to provide further detail on costs in final proposals. As per criterion 2, your final proposal(s) should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • within this it would be helpful to provide more detailed analysis on expected transition and/or disaggregation costs and potential efficiencies of proposal(s). This could include clarity on methodology, assumptions, data used, what year these may apply and why these are appropriate • detail on the potential service transformation opportunities and invest-to-save projects from unitarisation across a range of services - e.g. consolidation of waste collection and disposal services, and whether different options provide different opportunities for back-office efficiency savings? • where it has not been possible to monetise or quantify impacts, you may wish to provide an estimated magnitude and likelihood of impact • summarise any sources of risks, uncertainty and key dependencies related to the modelling and analysis • detail on the estimated financial sustainability of proposed reorganisation and how debt could be managed locally <p>We note that a high-level estimate for transition costs has been provided within some interim plans. It would be helpful if detail on the councils' financial positions and further modelling is set out in detail in your final proposal(s).</p> <p>The interim plans ask for clarity from government on how transitional costs will be funded. As per the invitation letter, considering the efficiencies that are</p>

	<p>possible through reorganisation, we expect that areas will be able to meet transition costs over time from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.</p> <p>We welcome the joint work you have done to date and recommend that all options and proposals should use the same assumptions and data sets or be clear where and why there is a difference (linked to criterion 1c).</p> <p>Lastly, we note the reference to the strategic alliance between Staffordshire Moorlands District Council in Staffordshire and High Peak Borough Council in Derbyshire. In the final proposals you should provide further information on how the transition to new local government structures through local government reorganisation would be managed for these two areas, given the additional complexities associated with the joint structures created through this alliance.</p>
<p>Include early views as to the councillor numbers that will ensure both effective democratic representation for all parts of the area, and also effective governance and decision-making arrangements which will balance the unique needs of your cities, towns, rural and coastal areas, in line with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance.</p> <p>Relevant criterion:</p> <p>6) New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.</p>	<p>We welcome the early views you have provided for councillor numbers, which we will be sharing with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). We do however note that these are high-level estimates, and we welcome the commitment made to undertake further work on this in advance of November, ensuring that this work is based on best practice and examples of similarly sized unitary authorities. There are no set limits on the number of councillors although the LGBCE guidance indicates that a compelling case would be needed for a council size of more than 100 members.</p> <p>New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.</p> <p>Additional details on how the community will be engaged, specifically how the governance, participation and local voice will be addressed to strengthen local engagement and democratic decision-making would be helpful.</p> <p>In your final proposal(s) we would welcome detail on your plans for neighbourhood-based governance, the impact on parish councils, and the role of formal neighbourhood partnerships and neighbourhood Area Committees.</p>

<p>Include early views on how new structures will support devolution ambitions.</p> <p>Relevant criteria: 5) - New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.</p> <p>5a) Proposals will need to consider and set out for areas where there is already a Combined Authority (CA) or a Combined County Authority (CCA) established or a decision has been taken by Government to work with the area to establish one, how that institution and its governance arrangements will need to change to continue to function effectively; and set out clearly (where applicable) whether this proposal is supported by the CA/CCA /Mayor.</p>	<p>We welcome that each interim plan includes early views on how new local government structures would support devolution ambitions. We note that numerous plans reference your preferred option of a Strategic Authority based on the existing geography of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.</p> <p>Across all LGR proposal(s), looking towards a future Strategic Authority, it would be helpful to outline how each option would interact with a Strategic Authority and best benefit the local community, including meeting the criteria for sensible geography in the White Paper and devolution statutory tests.</p> <p>We cannot pre-judge the result or timelines of any future devolution discussions, but we will work with you to progress your ambitions where possible in due course.</p>
<p>Include a summary of local engagement that has been undertaken and any views expressed, along with your further plans for wide local engagement to help shape your developing proposals.</p> <p>Relevant criteria: 6a-b) New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.</p>	<p>We note that you have highlighted the high-level engagement you have been able to undertake with partners to date, and welcome the recognition that significant further engagement will be required in advance of November.</p> <p>Expectations on engagement and consultation are in the invitation letter. We are happy to engage further on the consultation requirements in statute.</p> <p>It is for you to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way with residents, voluntary sector, local community groups and councils, public sector providers such as health, policing and fire, and local business to inform your final proposal(s).</p>

	<p>You may wish to engage in particular with those who may be affected by disaggregation of services of services.</p> <p>It would be helpful to see detail that demonstrates how local ideas and views have been incorporated into your final proposal(s), including those relating to neighbouring authorities where relevant.</p>
<p>Set out indicative costs of preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team as well as any arrangements proposed to coordinate potential capacity funding across the area.</p> <p>Relevant criterion:</p> <p>2d) Proposals should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.</p>	<p>We welcome the indicative costs as set out in some plans. We would welcome further detail in your final proposal(s) over the level of costs and the extent to which the costs are for delivery of the unitary structures or for transformation activity that delivers additional benefits.</p> <p>£7.6 million will be made available in the form of local government reorganisation proposal development contributions, to be split across the 21 areas. Further information will be provided on this funding shortly.</p>
<p>Set out any voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved in discussions as this work moves forward and to help balance the decisions needed now to maintain service delivery and ensure value for money for council taxpayers, with those key decisions that</p>	<p>We welcome the ways of working together you have outlined in the interim plan, predominantly through the Staffordshire Leaders Board and the supporting Staffordshire Chief Executive Group.</p> <p>We note that the Supplementary Plan submitted by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Outline Case for a North Staffordshire Unitary Council in a Devolved System have been authored exclusively by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, and therefore has a 'city perspective', as noted in the interim plan. We welcome the desire noted to collaborate further with</p>

<p>will affect the future success of any new councils in the area.</p> <p>Relevant criteria:</p> <p>4a-c) Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.</p>	<p>other neighbouring councils in advance of future proposals.</p> <p>Effective collaboration between all councils will be crucial; areas will need to build strong relationships and agree ways of working, including around effective data sharing. This will enable you to develop a robust shared evidence base to underpin final proposals (see criterion 1c).</p> <p>We note that one option under consideration by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council includes the geography of Shropshire Council which sits outside of the invitation area. If your final proposal(s) include a neighbouring council(s) from outside of the invitation area then significant engagement between council(s) in the invitation area with any council(s) outside the invitation area that are directly impacted would be helpful during the development of proposal(s), including through effective data-sharing. Only those councils named on the invitation can submit a proposal, but affected neighbouring councils can jointly submit with a named council.</p> <p>We recommend that your final proposal(s) should use the same assumptions and data sets or be clear where and why there is a difference.</p>
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Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Chief Executives of councils in
Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

Beatrice Andrews and Ruth Miller
*Co-Deputy Directors, Local Government
Reorganisation*

**Ministry of Housing, Communities
and Local Government**

2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/mhclg

3 June 2025

Dear Chief Executives,

The Minister of State for Local Government and Devolution is today providing an update to Parliament on Local Government Reorganisation. This will include the allocation of £7.6 million for proposal development contributions and the publication of a summary of all feedback on interim plans. After the Written Ministerial Statement has been made, the Local Government Reorganisation page on gov.uk will be updated. This letter provides some additional practical information on the allocations.

Each of the 21 areas will receive a flat rate of £135,000, plus an additional 20p per person based on the latest ONS population estimates. The allocation for your area is £367,336. Your area must agree on up to three councils to receive an equal share of the funding and notify your area lead Osian Morgan (Osian.Morgan@communities.gov.uk) accordingly. If you would like a payment in June, we would be grateful if you could let us know by 6 June. For a July payment, please let us know by 13 June. If your area is unable to reach an agreement on up to three councils to receive an equal portion of the fund, we are ready to provide support.

In the Statutory Guidance, the Government has outlined its expectation for all local leaders to work collaboratively and proactively by sharing information to develop robust and sustainable unitary proposals that benefit the entire area. Ideally, areas should submit their final proposals as a single submission, underpinned by a shared evidence base, which includes all options being put forward by councils. Consequently, the Government expects proposal development contributions to support this effort to build a shared evidence base, including sharing non-public data. This could be supported by a Memorandum of Understanding and a data-sharing agreement. The LGA has published helpful data-sharing principles and a checklist that you could utilise. Shortly, CIPFA and F3 Consulting will also release a template to support the presentation of financial information for proposals. This template, or any future templates are not mandatory, but we expect all areas to agree on the consistent presentation of evidence for their area, recognising it may still be used to support a range of alternative proposals.

Feedback and support

We know you have been seeking further clarity on developing your full proposals. We have provided you with feedback on your interim plans and today the Government is publishing a summary of that feedback. This includes a reiteration of the Government's position that a population size of 500,000 or more is a guiding principle, not a strict target. Government understands the need for flexibility, especially given the ambition to build out devolution and take account of housing growth alongside Local Government Reorganisation. All proposals, whether they are at the guided level, above it, or below it, should set out the rationale for the proposed approach clearly. The approach Government has taken from the outset encourages and allows for councils to determine the right fit for their area. What works in one area may not apply in the same way in another, and so it is right that the process allows for flexibility.

The Government welcomes the steps areas are taking to consider how to maintain strong community voice. Local Government Reorganisation should facilitate better and sustained community engagement and needs a clear and accountable system of local area-working and governance. Neighbourhood Area Committees, led by frontline ward councillors, offer a model of place-based engagement and leadership which maximises the structural efficiencies brought about by Local Government Reorganisation and strengthens localism and community participation across all areas. Neighbourhood Area Committees help councils fulfil their commitments to working in partnership with communities at the neighbourhood level. They can also include other service providers, such as town or parish councillors, when applicable, along with co-opted members from local community organisations.

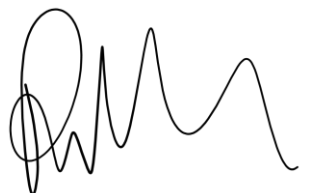
Areas considering new town or parish councils should think carefully about how they might be funded, to avoid putting further pressure on local authority finances and/or new burdens on the taxpayer. The Government recognises the value that town and parish councils offer to their local communities, but they are independent institutions and are not a substitute for meaningful community engagement and neighbourhood working by a local authority. The Government wants to see every local authority hardwiring local community engagement into their own structures, preferably through neighbourhood Area Committees.

We are committed to collaborating with colleagues across Government, the LGA, and its sector support group, to ensure you have the information, tools, and expertise needed to develop the right solutions for their areas. The Government's goal is to set up new councils for success. Accordingly, if there is further support that you consider should be provided, please do get in touch.

The Government also recognises that developing proposals could distract councils from their essential day-to-day activities. However, residents and businesses depend on councils to deliver crucial services and to continue the efforts needed to establish successful new unitary councils. This is particularly important for advancing local plans to allocate land for new homes. As mentioned in the invitation letters, the Government expects local planning councils to work towards adopting an up-to-date local plan as soon as possible. Local Government Reorganisation should not hinder this vital work, nor should the introduction of the new legal framework for local plan-making later this year or our strategic planning reforms. Significant financial support has already been provided to eligible councils to aid in plan-making, and we encourage councils to utilise additional support available through the Local Government Association's Planning Advisory Service.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the programme and for the collaborative approach you have taken. We would be grateful if you could share this letter with your Leaders and Police and Crime Commissioner. The Minister will be writing to MPs in your area and to sector bodies. We will also host a webinar later this month, in part as an introduction to new Leaders, as well as providing the opportunity for any questions. You can expect more details to follow shortly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'BEA', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RM', with a large loop at the start and several peaks and valleys.

BEATRICE ANDREWS

RUTH MILLER

DEPUTY DIRECTORS, LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

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NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET

8th July 2025

Report Title: Pet Cremation Outline Business Case

Submitted by: Service Director – Commercial Services

Portfolios: Finance, Town Centres and Growth; Sustainable Environment

Ward(s) affected: All

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>This report sets out proposals for establishing a pet crematorium in order to provide a local service for pet owners. Following a review of provision in the Borough, as part of the broader bereavement offer which the Council has developed, it has been established that there is a gap in this market due to a current lack of options both within and surrounding our Borough. This provision will also create a further income stream for the Council as set out in the Commercial Strategy to relieve pressure upon the Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p>			
<p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>That Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approves the business case for option three (one cremator with chamber) to expand Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's commercial portfolio to include the provision of pet cremations at Bradwell Crematorium. • Notes the expanded and award-winning service already offered by the Council and continues the personalised approach. • Approves that the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment progresses with all necessary planning and regulatory applications. • Receives a further report on the final business proposals to ensure the procurement of the service meets all regulatory requirements and service expectations. • Authorises the virement of funding within the capital programme. 			
<p><u>Reasons</u></p> <p>Research by Statistica.com and Savills shows that there is a growing market for pet cremation provision both nationally and locally given that there are only a small number of providers offering a dignified animal disposal service. Existing providers are all based outside the Borough, thus leaving a gap in the provision available to our communities.</p> <p>The detail of the business case is included in the confidential report.</p>			

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council operates a range of Bereavement services across the Borough both for burials and cremations at Bradwell. Services can be given at the main Chapel in Bradwell and at Keele Cemetery. The Council works with a range of Funeral Directors to seek to enable families and friends to have the service they wish. This includes choice over service lengths, use of multimedia tributes, attended or non-attended committal, ashes can be taken away by the family or there is a choice of burial options from the monthly gardens, dedicated plots or woodland tree option. More recently the Council has extended the memorial options from the benches and plaques to an sculptural memorial tree whereby a 'leaf' is dedicated to the deceased.
- 1.2 The Council receives compliments from families for the ability to appropriately mourn and celebrate their loved one. It is therefore appropriate that the Council considers supporting residents who have lost their much-loved pet.
- 1.3 The proposal is to install a local facility to cremate pets for both our residents and those in the surrounding areas. It is strongly believed that this will become a net income generator for the council, providing additional funds for the authority to support wider service delivery for our residents, as set out in the Corporate Plan.
- 1.4 In the UK, the pet care market is worth £7.9bn (Statistica.com research) and increasing annually; the pet-funeral industry alone is now worth in excess of £100 million (2018 Savills report) a year and is growing quickly as animal lovers go to ever greater lengths to celebrate the life of their beloved pets. The industry, despite its size, is not dominated by any particular operator.
- 1.5 Analysis in to pet ownership both nationally and locally has been undertaken by the Research Officer within the Strategy, Policy & Performance team utilising a series of data sources (YouGov, Cats Protection League and Kantar (on behalf of Pet Food UK)). It is projected that there are currently around 26 million cats & dogs in the UK, comprising of 13.5 million dogs and 12.5 million cats. Additionally, there are estimated to be 9 million small animals nationally (such as rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters and snakes).
- 1.6 Research by ClaimScore Pet Insurance estimated that approximately 1.5 million pet dogs and cats die each year in the UK, it is thought that at least half of animal owners hold funerals for their deceased pets.
- 1.7 Perfect Choice (funeral plans) conducted a poll in the UK which set out to discover whether the UK truly is a nation of animal lovers. They surveyed 1,608 British adults over the age of 18 that had had a pet pass away within the last year to find out whether they had held a funeral for their pet and what they had spent on them. 51% of respondents said yes, they had held some sort of funeral or memorial for their pet; this is the target market for the proposed service here in Newcastle.
- 1.8 The pets most likely to have a funeral held for them were dogs; with cats second and third being rabbits.
- 1.9 The research by Perfect Choice revealed that to many people the loss of a pet can be just as distressing as losing a family member and many were prepared to buy a cremation and memorialisation service in order to ensure that their pets were honoured in a dignified manner. As the pet funeral market grows this income stream is becoming more important year on year for both pet owners and service providers alike.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 The following issues are linked with undertaking this proposed course of action:

Issue	Mitigation
The cremation of pets is not an established service area that the Council has prior knowledge and skills of.	The project team has researched this area in depth and spoken to several other councils who have been very helpful in sharing their learning and data. The core skills, such as empathy to deal with grieving residents and crematory operation, are interchangeable with our core bereavement services.
Lack of resident awareness of cremation options other than via vets.	The marketing of the service to distinguish our proposed offer is considered key and a healthy budget has been factored in to the set up costs. Learning from other councils identified that visible signage at popular dog walking locations proved highly effective – this is planned for the parks owned by the Council
The activity by its very nature will increase the Council's carbon emissions	The proposal is to operate the cremators on Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) which is a renewable and biodegradable diesel alternative made from vegetable oils, which will keep our carbon footprint to a minimum. The project team have had early engagement with our Sustainability Officer and will be actively exploring sustainability measures including photovoltaic solar panels and heat pump technology to offset.
Stoke on Trent City Council has received cabinet approval for a Pet Cemetery	SOTCC's proposal is to allow owners to bury cremated remains in a designated area, it is not proposing to perform cremations at this stage.

- 2.2 Taking into account the likely competition in this sector it is important that the Council is able to promptly develop the service and that officers are authorised to commence the relevant applications to ensure that the service could be operated from the Bradwell site, this includes engaging with an experienced architect firm to seek planning permission.
- 2.3 In order to establish the actual costs of establishing the service officers will also be required to commence market engagement and relevant procurement to ensure that the physical aspects of the service can be delivered and if any elements of the business case need to be adjusted.

3. **Recommendation**

3.1 That Cabinet:

- 3.1.1 Approves the business case for option three (one cremator with chamber) to expand Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's commercial portfolio to include the provision of pet cremations at Bradwell Crematorium.
- 3.1.2 Notes the expanded and award-winning service already offered by the Council and continues the personalised approach.
- 3.1.3 Approves that the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment progresses with all necessary planning and regulatory applications.
- 3.1.4 Receives a further report on the final business proposals to ensure the procurement of the service meets all regulatory requirements and service expectations.
- 3.1.5 Authorises the virement of funding within the capital programme.

4. **Reasons**

- 4.1 It is recommended that Option 3 be approved as outlined in the confidential report to ensure the best financial benefits.

5. **Options Considered**

5.1 **Option One – 2 pet cremators**

Two units offer the greatest level of scalability & business scalability for this opportunity however also comes with the highest set-up costs.

5.2 **Option Two – 1 pet cremator, with option to retro fit a second cremator**

One unit installed in a container large enough to accommodate a secondary unit as/when demand dictates.

5.3 **Option Three – 1 pet cremator with secondary chamber**

One unit with the secondary chamber affords similar flexibility to Option One but without the full cost of an additional unit. The unit is able to operate independently of the main unit however it is more efficient when they are used in conjunction both in terms of turnaround time and fuel usage

5.4 **Option Four – To do nothing**

Given the level of ambition set out in the Council's agreed Commercial Strategy and the future challenges set out in the MTFS, not pursuing this business opportunity does not feel like a course of action that we can recommend, especially when evaluated against the projected return on investment.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 Whilst the cremation of animals is not under the same level of regulation as the cremation of human remains, there is the requirement to register with DEFRA. The registration cost has been factored into the projected investment costs and support in completion has been sought from the cremator manufacturer.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 The corporate EIA template has been completed, and it is believed that this business case does not affect one or more groups less or more favourably than another.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 The financial implications are all listed in the confidential report.

9. **Major Risks & Mitigation**

Risk	Mitigation
Slow take up of service upon launch	A marketing budget has been factored into the costs and the business case forecast is expected to be deliverable.
Build costs exceeding modelled budget	The purchase and installation costs are based on market engagement but until procurement takes place the final costs will not be known.

Failure to secure licences	The Council will need to secure licenses from DEFRA APHA and Waste Transfer Licence, whilst there are no major concerns about these processes there is a minor risk that these would not be approved.
Public concern re: contamination of human remains	A key USP of this proposal is the guaranteed return of pet ashes in a dedicated pet cremator – allaying this fear will be central to the marketing strategy.

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)



11. One Council

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council ☒

This report outlines the proposal to develop a new service in line with the objectives of the One Commercial Council.

One Digital Council ☒

The Council will seek to offer digital bookings and payments.

One Green Council ☒

The Council is seeking to operate the cremators on Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) which is a renewable and biodegradable diesel alternative made from vegetable oils, which will keep our carbon footprint to a minimum.

12. Key Decision Information

12.1 This is a key decision as it requires the investment of resources for new service delivery.

13. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

13.1 N/A

14. List of Appendices

14.1 N/A

15. Background Papers

15.1 None

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Cabinet Forward Plan: Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council

Notice of Key Decisions to be taken under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings & Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 between 1 July 2025 and 31 October 2025

This plan gives notice of decisions that [Cabinet](#) is expecting to take over the next few months. It also gives, except in cases of urgency, at least 28 days notice of all “Key Decisions” that will be taken “Key Decisions” are decisions about “executive” functions that will:-

- A) result in the Council incurring expenditure or making savings of an amount which is significant having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or the function to which the decision relates. (NB: The financial threshold above which expenditure or savings become significant has been set by the Council at £100,000 Revenue and £250,000 Capital Expenditure); and/or
- B) be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.

We have to take some Cabinet decisions in private because they deal with confidential or “exempt” information. That is information described in one or more of the following categories set out in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under the authority
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals an authority proposes;

- a. to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - b. to make an order or direction under any enactment
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of a crime

If we intend to take a decision in private, we will tell you why in the plan below. If you disagree with our reasons, you can tell us why using the contact details below. We will respond to you directly and will publish our response in the meeting agenda. If we have published the meeting agenda before we can respond, we will respond verbally at the meeting and record the response in the minutes.

You can find more information about Cabinet, Cabinet Members and their portfolios, agendas, reports and minutes [here](#).

More information on Cabinet procedures, executive functions, Key Decisions, urgent decisions and access to information is available in our [Constitution](#).

For all enquiries, please contact Democratic Services, Castle House, Barracks Road, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 1BL.
Telephone – 01782 742222 / Email – DemocraticServices@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk

Report Title	Description	Portfolio	Intended Decision Taker and Date	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Wards Affected	Reason for Determining in Private Session (if Applicable)	Key Decision
Walleys Quarry Odour Update	To consider a report on odour issues at Walleys Quarry	Cabinet Portfolio Holder - One Council, People and Partnerships	Cabinet 8 July 2025	Health, Wellbeing and Environment	All Wards	N/A	No
Community Safety Partnership Workplan 2025-26	To consider a report on the Community Safety Partnership Workplan 2025-26	Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Community Safety and Wellbeing	Cabinet 8 July 2025	Health, Wellbeing and Environment	All Wards	N/A	No

Report Title	Description	Portfolio	Intended Decision Taker and Date	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Wards Affected	Reason for Determining in Private Session (if Applicable)	
Civic Pride Strategy - Empowering Our Communities	To consider a report on Civic Pride Strategy - Empowering Our Communities	Cabinet Portfolio Holder - One Council, People and Partnerships	Cabinet 8 July 2025	Health, Wellbeing and Environment	All Wards	N/A	No
Pet Cremation Outline Business Case	To consider a report on the Pet Cremation Outline Business Case	Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Sustainable Environment	Cabinet 8 July 2025	Economy and Place	Bradwell	1 Information relating to any individual.	No
Local Government Reorganisation	To consider a report on Local Government Reorganisation	Cabinet Portfolio Holder - One Council, People and Partnerships	Cabinet 8 July 2025	Finance, Assets and Performance,Audit and Standards	All Wards	N/A	No
Walleys Quarry Odour update	To consider a report on the Walleys Quarry odour update	Cabinet Portfolio Holder - One Council, People and Partnerships	Cabinet 2 September 2025	Health, Wellbeing and Environment	All Wards	N/A	No
Quarter 1 Finance and Performance Report 2025-26	To consider a report on the Quarter 1 Finance and Performance, 2025-26	Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Finance, Town Centres and Growth, Cabinet Portfolio Holder - One Council, People and Partnerships	Cabinet 2 September 2025	Audit and Standards,Finance, Assets and Performance	All Wards	N/A	No

Report Title	Description	Portfolio	Intended Decision Taker and Date	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Wards Affected	Reason for Determining in Private Session (if Applicable)	
Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026/27	To consider a report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026/27	Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Finance, Town Centres and Growth	Cabinet 2 September 2025	Finance, Assets and Performance,Audit and Standards	All Wards	N/A	Yes
Kidsgrove Town Board award for the Shared Service Hub Development and Town Centre Regeneration	To consider a report on the Kidsgrove Town Board award for the Shared Service Hub Development and updates on town centre regeneration schemes.	Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Finance, Town Centres and Growth, Cabinet Portfolio Holder - One Council, People and Partnerships	Cabinet 2 September 2025	Economy and Place	Kidsgrove & Ravenscliffe	3 Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	Yes
Walleys Quarry Odour Update	To consider a report on the Walleys Quarry Odour Update	Cabinet Portfolio Holder - One Council, People and Partnerships	Cabinet 14 October 2025	Health, Wellbeing and Environment	All Wards	N/A	No
Town Centre Car Park Brown Field Update	To consider a report on a Town Centre Car Park Brown Field Update	Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Community Safety and Wellbeing	Cabinet 14 October 2025	Finance, Assets and Performance,Economy and Place	Town	N/A	Yes
Newcastle Bus Station Upgrade Works	To consider a report on the Newcastle Bus Station Upgrade Works	Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Finance, Town Centres and Growth	Cabinet 14 October 2025	Finance, Assets and Performance,Economy and Place	Town	N/A	Yes

Report Title	Description	Portfolio	Intended Decision Taker and Date	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Wards Affected	Reason for Determining in Private Session (if Applicable)	
Kidsgrove Train Station Update	To consider an update report on Kidsgrove Train Station	Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Finance, Town Centres and Growth	Cabinet 14 October 2025	Finance, Assets and Performance,Economy and Place	Kidsgrove & Ravenscliffe	N/A	Yes

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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