

## **STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL – 14 DECEMBER 2011**

**Submitted by:** Councillor Stephen Sweeney

**Portfolio:** All

**Wards affected:** All

### **Purpose of the Report**

To provide an update to Members on the activities and decisions of Cabinet together with the Forward Plan.

### **Recommendation**

**That the statement of the Leader of the Council be received and noted.**

### **Reasons**

To update Council Members on the activities and decisions of the Cabinet and to allow questions and comments on the Statement to the relevant Portfolio Holders.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 Cabinet has met twice since my last report, on 19 October and 30 November 2011. Below is a summary of actions and decisions taken along with a link to the Forward Plan. (For further background to the Cabinets Decisions please refer to the Cabinet agendas of 19 October and 30 November 2011).

## **2. New Vic Theatre**

A partnership agreement with the North Staffs Theatre Trust is being developed in respect of funding for the New Vic Theatre.

This will not impact on the level of grant – which is £97,620 in the current financial year – but it will enable the Council to monitor the impact of the funding in a more efficient and effective way.

Cabinet enthusiastically voiced support for the work of the Theatre which has a national reputation not only for the performances it puts on each year but the huge amount of work it does with the community.

## **3. Corporate Plan**

Members approved the adoption of the Corporate Plan for 2012/13 to 2014/15.

The Plan confirms the Council's priorities are:

- Promoting a cleaner, safer and sustainable borough
- Promoting a borough of opportunity
- Promoting a healthy and active community
- Transforming our Council to achieve excellence

4. **Medium Term Financial Strategy**

The Strategy which covers a 5-year period from 2012/13 was approved. Cabinet was told the shortfall for 2012/13 was £2,141,000. Members stressed that work has already gone on to achieve a large portion of the shortfall identified for next year. This would be achieved through savings on internal operations which will not impact directly on the public.

5. **Site Allocations Policies Development**

It was agreed that preparation work start on this key document which will underpin where future housing, retail, leisure facilities and employment should be located within the Borough.

6. **A New Economic Development Strategy for the Borough**

Cabinet agreed that the draft policy will be used as a basis for consulting with partners, businesses, Locality Action Partnerships and the Newcastle Partnership.

7. **Renew North Staffordshire Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder**

Cabinet noted the achievements of the RENEW Pathfinder Programme between 2003-11 in particular, its works in Newcastle-under-Lyme which had impacted on communities in Knutton, Cross Heath, Chesterton, Kidsgrove, Silverdale and Holditch.

8. **Disposal of Knutton Recreation Centre**

Members confirmed the Cabinet decision of 15<sup>th</sup> June 2011 to dispose of the Knutton Recreation Centre site for redevelopment as soon as possible after Jubilee 2 is complete.

9. **Ryecroft Car Park (Adjacent to former Sainsbury's)**

Cabinet approved the introduction of an off-street parking order on the Ryecroft car park.

10. **Jubilee 2 Update**

Cabinet approved the report which outlined the significant progress towards completion of Jubilee 2, which is on target and budget and is set to be 'handed over' to the Council on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

11. **Keele University Promotional Signage**

The boundary signs located at gateway locations around the Borough will soon illustrate the close connection between the University and the area. The new signs will read "Home of Keele University".

12. **Financial and Performance Management Report**

The Financial and Performance Report to Quarter 2 (September) 2011 was discussed. Most services are performing with the majority of targets being met.

13. **Amendments to the Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy**

The new '3c's' policy reduces the number of stages in the process from three to two and replaces one that had been in place since 2008.

14. **Newcastle-under-Lyme Waste Management Strategy**

It is proposed to extend the current Waste Management Strategy until 2016. It was agreed that the extension would be authorised as it had been clearly demonstrated in the report that it was the best way to create further cost efficiencies and savings.

The service has been recognised several times in national award schemes for its effectiveness and had made savings of more than £500,000 annually while recycling rates had risen to more than 50%.

15. **Allotments Service**

Cabinet agreed that the review should be carried out in order to explore all options available for both cost efficiencies and effective future management and provision of the service.

16. **ICT Contract Re-Negotiation**

Savings and administration efficiencies of almost £10,000 were outlined in the report which included simplified billing procedures and the reduction in the required support of the Council's electronic document and record management system.

17. **United Charities – appointment of Council representative**

Members confirmed the appointment of Councillor David Clarke as Trustee to the United Charities.

18. **Newcastle Town Centre Car Parks**

Usage of the car parks is being scrutinised as part of the wider review of how the Council's assets are used.

19. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 can be found at:

<http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/forwardplan>

**Councillor S. Sweeney**  
**Leader of the Council**