

**STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL – 19<sup>th</sup> JULY 2018**

**Submitted by:** Councillor Simon Tagg

**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 Leader & Cabinet and to allow questions and comments to be made on the Statement.

1. **Cabinet Meetings**

Cabinet met on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2018 and will meet again on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018. Key decisions are detailed under items 4 and 5 of this report.

2. **Move to Castle House**

The long-awaited move to Castle House is underway and the building will be open to the public to access Borough Council services on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2018.

The Council meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2018 is the first in our new Council Chamber and I would welcome any feedback from Members of the Council on their experience of the new building from their perspective.

3. **Future of the Guildhall**

As a result of the move to Castle House, Customer Service staff will also vacate the Guildhall.

Following the failed attempt by the previous administration to secure the future of this historic building, I am working with Council officers and interested parties from the community, town centre focused organisations and the Friends of the Guildhall Group, to explore opportunities for securing the future of the Guildhall under the umbrella of a Newcastle Borough Council owned and maintained building.

4. **Traveller Incursions**

The Borough has experienced multiple incursions by travellers on various green spaces in recent months. The Council has led on work to evict several unauthorised camps from its land recently.

Members will be aware the Council does everything it can to remove travellers as soon as is legally possible and it works quickly to serve initial notices, which require them to leave a site, and then to secure the earliest court hearing date available, to apply for an eviction order, if the first contact is ignored.

Residents regularly report issues of anti-social behaviour, littering and fly-tipping which the Council also deals with, ultimately ensuring that the sites are left clean and tidy after the travellers finally leave.

Officers have confirmed that legal and clean-up costs associated with these incursions amount to within the region of £500 per encampment.

Councillor Trevor Johnson and I along with Council officers have met with Chief Inspector Pete Owen and Matthew Ellis, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire, to discuss ways to enhance the partnership working which already exist between our two organisations with the aim of speeding up the eviction process.

We agreed a 10 point plan which includes closer working on the ground between Council officers and the police when new encampments occur. This includes joint visits where possible, and also joint working to speed up the eviction process, as well as on community reassurance messages and progress reports.

There will be more police evaluation of encampments to consider use of immediate removal powers which are available to the police if criminal damage or anti-social behaviour is caused.

The Council will continue to work quickly to serve initial notices and secure the earliest court hearing date to apply for eviction orders recognising that a strict legal process has to be followed in order to organise a successful eviction.

Both parties pledged to work with local communities to protect their green spaces. Measures such as the wooden posts that are in the process of being installed at Wolstanton Marsh, or barriers and gates will be considered on a rolling programme. Funding for this will be made available from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Proceeds of Crime fund.

Councillor Johnson will work with Officers and Partners to investigate options for a temporary transit site.

It was also agreed to press local MP Paul Farrelly to respond to calls for changes to traveller laws and to support any legislative changes which may come from Parliament in the future.

5. **Cabinet Meeting of the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

5.1 **Financial and Performance Management Report to End of Quarter Four (January - March) 2017-18**

Cabinet Members reviewed the Financial and Performance Data for the period to March 2018.

5.2 **Keele Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document**

Cabinet agreed to adopt the Supplementary Planning document for the Keele Conservation Area. One key element is to amend the boundary to include the area of former student halls of residence known as The Hawthorns which is currently being developed for housing.

5.3 **Newcastle Economic Development Strategy (EDS): Year One Action Plan**

Following approval of the EDS by Cabinet in March, the Action Plan for Year One (2018-2019) has now been agreed, which identifies a number of key priorities which will be refreshed annually and contains details on how the agreed aims and objectives will be delivered.

5.4 **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy and Procedure**

Cabinet approved an updated ASB Policy that sets out the Council's commitment to reducing anti-social behaviour, improving the quality of life for local people and reducing crime and fear of crime within our communities.

This ensures that the Council has robust mechanisms in place in order to appropriately co-ordinate ASB enforcement and diversionary activity in the Borough, using available resources.

6. **Cabinet Meeting of the 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

To follow.

7. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan covering the period from April to July 2018 can be found at:

<https://moderngov.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/mqListPlans.aspx?RPId=118&RD=0>

**Councillor Simon Tagg**  
**Leader of the Council**