

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL – 21ST NOVEMBER 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 has met 3 times since the last Full Council of 5th September 2018 (19th September; 17th October and 7th November). Decisions are detailed under Items 2, 3 and 4 of this report.

2. **19th September 2018**

2.1 **Council Plan**

Cabinet agreed a new Council Plan to cover the period 2018-2022 with 4 new priorities. Local Services for Local People, Growing Our People and Places, A Healthy, Active and Safe Borough, A Town Centre for All. The Plan sets out how we will make the Borough an even better place to live for our residents.

This Leader's Statement contains details of how we have made a start on delivering the new Council Plan.

2.2 **Future Recycling Strategy**

Following an All Party Task and Finish Group, Scrutiny Committee input and a Call-In Cabinet has now agreed the Future Recycling Strategy for the Council. This includes a new kerbside recycling service to start within 18-24 months and an affordable garden waste collection service to start in February 2019. Further ongoing scrutiny of the implementation of the strategy will take place.

2.3 **University Growth Corridor**

The Council is working with Keele University, Staffordshire County Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) on ambitious plans that will bring potential long-term economic benefits for the University and Borough. The Keele University Growth Corridor will enable the creation of high quality jobs and skills, both at the University and its Science and Innovation Park, and also responds to the Borough's housing needs by utilising the former Keele Golf Course.

2.4 **Business Rate Pilot Pooling Arrangements**

The Council is again participating in a bid to Central Government for the formation of a Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Business Rates Pool Pilot. This would allow the retention of up to 75% of business rates. The Cabinet has ensured that lessons have been learned from the failed bid for a business rates pilot in 2017. The consortium of Local Authorities hopes to hear if the bid has been successful by the end of the year.

3. **17th October 2018**

3.1 **Car Parking Strategy – Review of Town Centre Car Parks**

A transformation is planned in the way the Borough Council operates its car parks in Newcastle town centre.

Cabinet has agreed a number of initial changes aimed at supporting the town centre economy and encouraging visitors to the town centre as well as protecting the Council's income from the car parking.

There will also be a flat rate charge of £1 for all town centre car parks after 3pm by 1 December and free parking after 3pm for late night shopping nights in Newcastle in the run-up to Christmas.

The Portfolio Holder will be working with the Business Improvement District (BID), the relevant Scrutiny Committee and the wider town centre businesses to formulate a 10-year car parking strategy.

4. **7th November 2018**

4.1 **Ryecroft Future Redevelopment Options**

Following a review of the scheme agreed by the previous administration that is no longer viable, the Council is to explore alternative proposals for the future redevelopment of the Ryecroft site which includes the old Civic Offices.

Agreement has been reached with Staffordshire County Council and the site developer to seek expert advice on options for an accommodation-led development.

In the meantime authorisation has been given to promote the use of the accessible parts of the Ryecroft site to enable short term events.

4.2 **Borough Market Management**

Cabinet have decided that the Borough's Historic Market will remain under Council management. The Portfolio Holder will work with partners such as the BID with the aim of delivering a stronger, more attractive and sustainable market for the future.

4.3 **One Public Estate – Knutton Masterplanning Project**

The Council and Staffordshire County Council have agreed to make a joint bid to the Government's One Public Estate programme to fund regeneration projects in Knutton.

The aim is to support collaborative public sector land and property projects, especially those which unlock land for new homes.

Both Councils own parcels of land in the village which could form a wider regeneration scheme, potentially involving sites owned by other strategic partners.

4.4 **Kidsgrove Sports Centre Update**

Cabinet has agreed to make a capital contribution of £300,000 to support the provision of a community run sports and leisure facility at Kidsgrove Sports Centre. Following the County Council's decision in relation to the Sports Centre building we have now agreed to asset transfer it over to the Kidsgrove Community Centre Group (CIO), with the demolition costs being used to help refurbish the dry side facilities of the Centre.

There are still challenges ahead as the Community Group work to reopen the Centre, but the Council will be assisting them in every way possible to enable them to achieve their goal.

5. **RHS Britain in Bloom National Finals 2018**

A huge congratulations to all those involved in this year's Britain in Bloom Competition.

The Borough achieved its best ever results in our 27 year involvement in the campaign by being awarded a gold in the Champion of Champions category, the pinnacle of the competition in the UK, at the Award Ceremony in Belfast.

The Borough was also awarded a Discretionary award for Wild About Gardens (for the second year running), in recognition of the work done to promote wildlife and improve habitats in our parks, green spaces, woodlands and urban environments across the Borough.

Amanda Stevenson, court manager at the Lisbon Place retirement complex was given a special community champion award for going above and beyond to make a community gardening project a success.

Amanda has been the driving force behind residents' participation in Britain in Bloom over the past two years which has not only helped to transform the environment, but also their quality of life through social activities and community involvement.

6. **Guildhall**

Following previous discussions at Full Council, a public consultation and subsequent agreement from the Group Leaders, the Council is set to enter into an agreement with up to 10 community & voluntary groups for them to take a short term lease of the Guildhall for up to 12 months, enabling them to provide their service from a town centre location.

This is of benefit to the Council as the building will be in use and kept in good repair. During this interim lease period I will be exploring options for the long term use of this historic building to ensure it is preserved for future generations, which will involve The Friends of Guildhall, community & voluntary groups and the relevant Scrutiny Committee. A final decision on long term arrangements for The Guildhall will come to Cabinet in due course.

7. **Portfolio Holder Changes**

I would like to make Council aware of some minor changes in the responsibilities of some of the Cabinet members. They are:-

Mark Holland – (Leisure, Culture and Heritage) will be responsible for tourism.

Jill Waring – (Community Safety and Well-being) - housing strategy (including housing advice and homelessness) and private sector housing (including enforcement).

Stephen Sweeney – (Finance and Efficiency) – taxi ranks, bus stations and markets.

8. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan can be found at:

<https://moderngov.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/mgListPlanItems.aspx?PlanId=89&RP=118>

Councillor Simon Tagg
Leader of the Council