

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL – 30TH JANUARY 2019

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 twice since the last Full Council of 21st November 2018 (5th December 2018 and 16th January 2019). Decisions are detailed under items 2 & 3 of this report.

2. **5th December 2018**

2.1 **Newcastle-under-Lyme - A Growing Borough – Growth Deal 2018-2022**

Both the Borough Council and County Council Cabinets have now signed off the new joint Growth Deal which aims to build on the already strong commitment of the two Councils to working together in order to deliver on a number of specific initiatives for the Borough over the next four years.

The document outlines the shared priorities that can be achieved by close partnership working within the existing structure of two-tier local government within the Borough, including in the areas of economic growth, accelerated housing development, improved jobs and skills, and development of the Borough's distinctive identity.

Five key joint priorities have been agreed between the two Councils. These are focused on our Town Centres, Keele University, Knutton, Kidsgrove and enhanced two-tier working and complements the newly adopted Council Plan 2018-2022.

2.2 **Newcastle-under-Lyme Town Centre CCTV Review Report Update**

Cabinet received a report following a comprehensive review of the existing CCTV arrangements in Newcastle town centre. It was agreed to approach partners to support plans to significantly upgrade the CCTV system in Newcastle town centre which includes replacing obsolete equipment and improved monitoring.

Having an effective CCTV system plays an important part in helping to reduce crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour, which will benefit local businesses, shoppers and our residents.

The Portfolio Holder is currently having conversations with a range of partners including Newcastle Business Improvement District (BID), the Police and neighbouring authorities.

Cabinet recognised the need for other towns and villages within the Borough to be included when a monitoring solution has been agreed.

2.3 **Contract Options for the Council's Revenues and Benefits System**

Cabinet reviewed the options for the continued support and maintenance contract for the Council's Revenues and Benefits Software with Northgate Public Sector for a further period of three years. The Council has used Northgate since 2010. The Revenues and Benefits package was procured via an open tender, on an initial five plus two year term.

The existing system has proved to be very flexible; facilitating the addition of self service options, hybrid mail for billing and timely compliance with legislative changes.

The costs of the Revenues and Benefits software maintenance is met from ICT's existing revenue budgets.

Cabinet agreed that the contract should be continued and then after the three year period an open tendering process should be undertaken.

3. **16th January 2019**

3.1 **Revenue and Capital Budgets**

Work is progressing well on the 2019/2020 budget. Cabinet Members agreed draft proposals that were referred to the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee for their views.

The Council will discuss the final recommendations on the budget at its meeting on 20th February 2019.

3.2 **Maer Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

Following a consultation on a draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, Cabinet agreed to adopt the SPD for Maer Conservation Area. A number of key areas are covered in the plan:

- Retaining the landscape character of the village and high density of mature trees, woodlands and hedgerows.
- Ensuring the right balance is struck between the nature and heritage conservation for the mere and parkland features.
- Maintaining the historic sandstone walls along the roads within the village
- Protecting architectural features on buildings and preventing incremental residential alterations to houses.
- Modern farm vehicles through the village.

4. **Kidsgrove Sports Centre Update**

Work with the Community Interest Organisation (CIO) on refurbishment of the Kidsgrove Sports Centre is gathering pace. Since the last Council meeting professional specialist

support has been chosen to carry out the detailed design work for the refurbishment, and the important project management necessary.

Staffordshire County Council has provided an updated condition survey and shared expertise regarding property development with the CIO. Agreement has been reached for the commissioning of the gas supply survey.

Dialogue with Sport England is continuing regarding the CIO's application for funding. This has progressed thanks to the financial commitment agreed by the Borough & County Council's. A decision is expected shortly.

5. **Member/Officer Planning Enforcement Protocol**

As part of the review of the Council's Planning Enforcement function Officers have been tasked with preparing a protocol that sets out what information and support members can expect in this often time consuming and complicated part of the Council's business.

Many members have in the past raised issues relating to lack of timely notification and input into the carrying out of the Enforcement function within their wards.

The new protocol will seek to address those concerns and will be launched at a Members Information Event in the near future.

6. **A Town Centre For All**

The Council's new £1 after 3pm flat rate charge on its car parks in Newcastle town centre has been in place since 1st December 2018. Newcastle-under-Lyme BID reports that in the run up to Christmas visits to the town centre increased by 17%, included in this was the free parking provided for the Christmas light switch on and late night shopping events. The effect on the Borough Council's income during that period was a reduction of £10,000.

The Council with partners, such as Newcastle BID and Staffordshire County Council, is looking at a number of ways to help to reinvigorate the town centre. Car parking policy is one of the many levers we are considering to help us do that.

The data provided by the BID for the run up to Christmas is encouraging and shows the decision the Council made to introduce the changes to car parking fees and also tying them in to coincide with town centre events is the right way to go but should not be viewed in isolation.

Portfolio Holders are developing a series of initiatives for the town centre including a 10-year parking strategy, plans to revitalise the historic market, a bid to the Government's new Future High Street Fund and the plans for the Ryecroft development & Council owned vacant property.

7. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan can be found at:

<https://moderngov.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/mgListPlanItems.aspx?PlanId=93&RP=118>

Councillor Simon Tagg
Leader of the Council