

**STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL – 24<sup>th</sup> JULY 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 and Cabinet and to allow questions and comments to be made on the Statement.**

1. **Cabinet Meetings**

Cabinet has met three times since the last Full Council of 3<sup>rd</sup> April (24<sup>th</sup> April, 5<sup>th</sup> June and 10<sup>th</sup> July). A summary of the Decisions taken is detailed below.

2. **Newcastle-under-Lyme Town Centre Growth**

The Cabinet has approved a report setting out an extensive programme of regeneration and economic growth for Newcastle Town Centre including invigorating the market, a car parking strategy, improved CCTV, footfall generators and business support for on-line trading, promotion.

Governance and delivery structure were also agreed which includes a town centre taskforce group and a leadership group & stakeholders forum.

In June Cabinet endorsed a report about the future of the Market and an action plan with milestones has been established. Further detailed reports on each of the workstreams will be submitted to Cabinet over the next few months.

3. **Improved union relations**

The Council has now signed a Recognition Agreement with the trade unions; this follows a breakdown in relations between the Council and the unions dating back to 2016. I am pleased to say that relations with the unions have now improved significantly.

The Recognition Agreement has allowed both parties to agree a new Attendance Management Policy and a Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme (MARS). These will help the Council to address longstanding problems with sickness absence and enable organisational change to the benefit of both the Council and the employee, whilst driving service improvement for the benefit of the borough's residents.

Further HR related policies are currently being discussed with the unions and will be submitted to Cabinet in due course.

4. **Air Quality Local Development Plan**

Cabinet has received a number of reports relating to the Air Quality Ministerial Direction which has been served on the Borough and City Councils by Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Department for Transport (DfT) respectively. An Air Quality Local Development Plan has been compiled jointly by both Councils with proposed options for reducing pollution levels ranging from a city centre/A53 traffic management scheme and Council boundary low emission strategy, Etruria Valley Link Road and A500 improvements to workplace levy schemes or a chargeable Clean Air Zone.

Cabinet has put forward a clear view that there should be a highways and transport solution to the air quality problems and not workplace levy schemes or a chargeable Clean Air Zone. Council officers are working closely with the City Council, County Council and Central Government to ensure that a suitable solution is found.

5. **Single Use Plastics**

Following the recent motion to Full Council, Cabinet endorsed a strategy to reduce plastic waste including eliminating single use plastics completely from its premises and facilities by 2023.

The Council is encouraging partners at Castle House to adopt a similar goal and will also work with suppliers to reduce single use plastics, with the ambition of eliminating them from goods and services provided to the Council by 2025.

6. **Financial and Performance Management Report to End of Quarter Four (2018-19)**

Cabinet reviewed the performance data for Quarter Four and noted that a number of key indicators were above target.

Cabinet Members outlined measures that were in place where indicators were below target and actions taken to address those.

7. **Jubilee2 update**

Cabinet agreed an action plan for Jubilee2 (J2). This included three key proposals aimed to tackle the budget deficit, improve income through more effective marketing and dealing with outstanding building defects.

Serious and unresolved defects with the building came to light from 2014 onwards; these have affected the operation of J2 and the user experience.

The current administration has made it a priority to resolve these issues and to ensure that J2 becomes the flagship facility it was always intended to be.

8. **20 Sidmouth Avenue, Newcastle**

Cabinet has agreed plans to redevelop the former Registry Office in Sidmouth Avenue; this includes the demolition of the post 1950s building extensions and the preservation of the 1870s dwelling as a family home or as two apartments. Planning permission will be sought to build three substantial four or five bedroomed detached houses on the site.

This will not only protect the character of the area but also provide extra income for the Council; than would otherwise have been the case if the whole building had been disposed of at auction as was proposed by the previous administration.

9. **Newcastle Housing Advice Service Contract**

The Cabinet has agreed to go out to tender for the provision of the Council's statutory homelessness, housing advice and housing register services from April 2020 when the current contract expires.

The tender will be advertised between August and October and applications will be evaluated through the autumn to enable a contract to be awarded in December.

10. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan (11/7/2019 to 15/1/2020) can be found at:

<https://moderngov.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/mgListPlanItems.aspx?PlanId=96&RP=118>