

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL
18th SEPTEMBER 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 Meeting**

Cabinet met on 4th September 2019; a summary of the Decisions taken is detailed below along with other items of interest.

2. **Newcastle Town Centre CCTV Review Report Update**

Cabinet agreed a significant upgrade of the out-dated CCTV system in Newcastle Town Centre; this will include new state of the art cameras and live monitoring arrangements.

Newcastle Business Improvement District (BID) will support CCTV in the town centre with a major capital investment to enable the project to proceed.

There is an opportunity for other areas of the borough to be included in the upgraded CCTV system if, like the BID, partners in those areas can provide funding.

3. **Economic Development Strategy - Growing our People and Places**

The Council's Economic Development Strategy has been refreshed to reflect the priorities in the new Council Plan and the Growth Deal with the County Council; this includes proposals for delivery of infrastructure projects, support for local small businesses and help for people to upskill and improves their job prospects.

A detailed action plan for delivery is included within the Strategy.

4. **Digital Strategy and Outline Business Case**

To support the Council's drive to provide local services that work for local people, a wide-ranging Digital Strategy has been agreed by Cabinet.

This will take into account the fundamental changes in the way residents interact with the Council and their expectation of the level of customer service provided.

The digital agenda will provide a step change for the Council, revolutionising the way it works providing efficiencies and empowering Council staff.

It is recognised that not all residents will wish to access the Council's services online and there is no intention to 'turn off' traditional methods of communication.

The aim of the Digital Strategy is to be improve services to residents irrespective of how, or when, they contact the Council.

5. **Holiday Pay Entitlement**

Cabinet were pleased to approve the proposed additional holiday pay entitlement following issues with the calculation of holiday pay for those employees who work regular and voluntary overtime dating back to August 2017.

Constructive discussions took place with the unions to reach a satisfactory agreement which is a testament to the improved employer/trade union relations under this administration.

6. **Financial and Performance Management Report to End of Quarter One (April-June) 2019-20**

Cabinet reviewed the performance data for Quarter One and noted that 80% either met their target or were within acceptable levels.

This first quarter saw the introduction of a number of new indicators to reflect the ambitions for our borough as set out in the Council Plan.

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

7. **Climate Change**

Following the motion to Full Council on 3rd April 2019 that declared a climate emergency, a detailed report on the next steps for action will be submitted to the Economy Environment & Place Scrutiny Committee on 25th September 2019.

Discussions have also taken place with the Vice Chancellor of Keele University relating to the involvement of the University in assisting the Council in taking this agenda forward and they have agreed to participate in the development of a Carbon Neutral Borough Action Plan.

8. **Future High Streets Fund and a new Town Deal**

Newcastle Town Centre has been named as one of the locations which could unlock millions of pounds of investment from the Government's Future High Streets Fund (FHSF)

The FHSF bid submitted by the Council will focus on the redevelopment of the Ryecroft site.

The recent announcement made by the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government, Robert Jenrick, gives the Council around £150,000 to develop a business case for the site. If successful, the Council could secure £5-10million to support redevelopment.

In further good news, both Newcastle and Kildersleepe have been included in a list of more than 100 towns which are set to benefit from the Government's new £3.6 billion Town Deal Fund.

It is anticipated that the new 'Town Deals' will improve broadband connectivity, provide vital social and cultural infrastructure and boost growth – with communities having a say on how the money is spent.

9. **Britain in Bloom**

In the 29th year of Newcastle in Bloom, the Council was awarded the coveted Gold Award in this year's Heart of England in Bloom competition. This is the 18th consecutive year the Gold Award has been secured.

The Borough was also awarded the discretionary Environmental Award for work to boost biodiversity, wildlife and habitat creation at Silverdale Country Park.

This is a great achievement and shows that the Council has maintained exceptionally high standards in this prestigious competition over such a long period of time.

These results are testament to the efforts by all sections of the community who once again worked together to showcase the borough at its best, with important support from all our sponsors which makes the entry to the competition cost neutral to the Council.

The judges commented that they 'were very impressed with the very high standard of the whole campaign' saying that 'The effort, innovation and dedication shown by the whole Newcastle team, and the communities that work with you, makes a real and tangible difference to the town.'

10. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan (1/9/2019 to 31/12/2019) can be found at:

<https://moderngov.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/mgListPlanItems.aspx?PlanId=97&RP=118>

Simon Tagg
Leader of the Council