

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 18th September, 2019

Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

Present: The Mayor- Councillor Simon White (Chair)

| | | | |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| Councillors: | S. Burgess | T. Johnson | K. Robinson |
| | G. Burnett | D. Jones | A. Rout |
| | Miss J Cooper | T. Kearon | M. Stubbs |
| | Mrs J Cooper | A. Lawley | S. Sweeney |
| | J. Cooper | H. Maxfield | J Tagg |
| | S. Dymond | S. Moffat | S Tagg |
| | A. Fear | P. Northcott | J. Walklate |
| | A. Fox-Hewitt | M. Olszewski | J Waring |
| | A. Gardner | K.Owen | P Waring |
| | G. Heesom | B. Panter | G Williams |
| | M. Holland | A. Parker | J Williams |
| | E. Horsfall | S. Pickup | R. Wright |
| | Hutton | B. Proctor | |
| | B. Johnson | M. Reddish | |

Officers: Geoff Durham - Mayor's Secretary / Member Support Officer
Caroline Elwood - Interim Head of Legal / Monitoring Officer
Martin Hamilton -Chief Executive
Jan Willis - Interim Executive Director - Resources and Support Services
and Section 151 Officer

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors' Shenton, G White and Wilkes.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 July, 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

4. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor advised Members of three upcoming events:

Mock Mayor Making Ceremony on Saturday 21 September

Curry Evening on Monday 21 October

Remembrance Day Parade and Church Service on Sunday 10 November

5. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency introduced the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2018/19, which had been produced in line with legislative requirements.

The Annual Report was appended to the agenda report.

Councillor Stubbs stated that it was a positive report.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2018/19 be received.
 - (ii) That the actual Prudential Indicators contained within the report be approved.

6. PUBLIC SPEAKING AT PLANNING - PROTOCOL

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, Councillor Paul Northcott introduced a report for members to review the existing scheme for Public Speaking at Planning Committee and to discuss proposed amendments.

Councillor Northcott stated that it reflected changes to incorporate modern technology and enabled speakers to do their presentations using plans and information that was available on the website.

Members were referred to Appendix A of the report outlining the protocol.

Councillor Simon Tagg supported the protocol stating that it was a great improvement and would be a useful reference for the speakers.

Members all agreed with the protocol stating that it would give everyone a fair advantage.

Councillor Proctor commented that, as Planning Committee meetings were now recorded, anyone making a presentation should be seated rather than standing to allow the microphones to pick everything up clearly.

The Chair to the Constitution and Member Support Working Group, Councillor Mark Holland stated that the protocol had been circulated to members of the group and that they were happy with its content. A comment was made that it would be useful if officers, wherever possible, could contact any speakers should an application be withdrawn from a meeting which they were planning to attend.

Councillor Kearon observed that the policy proposed that, a request to speak at Planning Committee required three working days notice but to use plans was 48 hours notice. If a Planning Committee takes place on a Tuesday, the period would commence on Sunday which didn't give officers much time to pull the information together.

Councillor Northcott advised that the information allowed to be displayed at meetings would already be in the public domain and would not include any 'new' information.

- Resolved:** That the existing scheme be amended to reflect the proposed changes in the document at Appendix A to the report.

7. STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader, Councillor Simon Tagg submitted a report which provided an update to Members on the activities and decisions of the Cabinet, together with the Forward Plan.

The statement was taken a paragraph at a time to allow for questions to be asked.

Paragraph 2:

Councillor Robinson asked the Leader if any staff operating the CCTV in Stoke on Trent would be affected by the job cuts that had been announced by the Authority.

The Leader stated that, as far as he was aware the redundancies at Stoke were voluntary ones and therefore could not comment as to any affect. However, the Borough was paying the city for the service to continue.

Councillor John Williams commented that Newcastle had been accused of 'selling out' to the City Council.

The Leader advised that local business had taken the CCTV on. The equipment would be owned by the Borough Council and the BID. Stoke on Trent City Council would monitor it for us as they have a sophisticated system.

Councillor John Cooper asked if, when the system was up and running, if Community Centres, for example could be added into the link.

The Leader advised that discussions could be had with other areas about being included in the upgraded system, adding that Madeley had invested in a system which could be linked in.

Councillor Hutton stated that, as Chair of the Local Safer Network Panel he could confirm that the Police were very supportive of the initiative.

The Leader confirmed that the Police do agree with the initiative but as yet were not putting any money into the scheme. The Police were looking to a Staffordshire wide scheme which they could invest in.

Councillor Sweeney stated that the Business Improvement District had put a large sum of money into the scheme and thanked them for their support.

Paragraph 3:

Councillor Gill Burnett commended the Leader and officers for producing the Plan which included Newcastle Town Centre and Kidsgrove. Councillor Burnett added that its success depended upon working with partners and asked the Leader what part Kidsgrove Town Council would play in any discussions.

The Leader stated that he was pleased with the document and referred to the Action Plan. With regard to Kidsgrove Town Council, Go Kidsgrove were coming on board and the Leader would welcome any dialogue from the Town Council.

Councillor John Williams asked what the money would be spent on.

The Leader referred Members to the Strategy.

Councillor Stubbs asked why Kidsgrove Town Council were not approached at the start of the process and why nothing had been brought up at Town Council meetings.

The Leader stated that everyone needed to work together and made reference to the Local Neighbourhood Development Plan which was currently being worked on.

Paragraph 4:

Councillor John Cooper thanked officers for the work that had been done on this on behalf of people suffering from dementia or autism.

Councillor Panter welcomed the assurance that the face to face contact would not be lost.

The Leader agreed that Councillor Cooper and Panter's comments were well made.

Councillor Sweeney stated that it was an excellent Strategy. It costs £8 for face to face contact and 8p for online. Councillor Sweeney added that the online form filling process was straight forward.

Councillor Brian Johnson stated that the Council's website was not as easy to navigate as it could be and asked that, in the interest of transparency, would this be looked at.

The Leader stated that the Council's website had been 'four stars' for years but now needed overhauling and agreed that navigation to the required pages often involved too many 'clicks'.

Councillor Northcott welcomed the Strategy stating that the public were becoming more confident in engaging digitally. More people were doing online shopping and form filling online.

Paragraph 5:

Councillor Fox-Hewitt stated that the Council, as an employer was legally obliged to include the additional holiday pay.

Councillor Sweeney stated that constructive discussions had taken place with the Trade Unions.

Councillor Proctor congratulated the Trade Union Representatives and the Council's Human Resources section who had been involved in the discussions stating that an element of trust was being shown.

The Leader stated that the Council now had a good relationship with the Trade Unions and that more HR agreements were in the pipeline.

Paragraph 8:

Councillor Burnett advised that Kidsgrove residents were happy with the Deal and were looking forward to seeing what benefits it would bring.

Councillor Robinson asked if a bid was required to apply for the fund and, if so, could members see it or be advised how Kidsgrove was chosen.

The Leader advised that no bids had been submitted. The Government had looked at areas requiring regeneration and would work with the Council on a Town Deal.

Councillor Jenny Cooper stated that it was good news that Newcastle Town Centre had progressed to the next stage and enquired as to the next steps.

The Leader thanked Councillor Cooper for her comments adding that the fact that Newcastle was through to the next stage was testament to the hard work of officers.

Councillor Holland stated that guidance was being produced on how the Future High Streets Fund would work.

The next stage would be more difficult and would require more preparation.

Councillor John Williams welcomed any money coming into the town centre and hoped that the community would be involved as to how it could be spent.

Councillor Williams added the Country had suffered with austerity for years and it was well known that former industrial areas would suffer post-Brexit and money would need to be spent wisely to bring prosperity back.

Councillor Paul Waring welcomed the funding and asked that Town Councillors be involved in the production of the Kidsgrove Town Plan.

Councillor Julie Cooper asked if, when the bid was received, could money go to smaller areas within the Borough.

Councillor Olszewski asked the Leader if he had considered working with stakeholders and if so, who.

Councillor Brian Johnson asked if the bids for Newcastle Town Centre and Kidsgrove were two separate entities or if it was one bid, would money be spent equally.

The Leader confirmed that they were two separate bids and the Council would be working with the Government, County Council, Parish and town Council's and local stakeholders to progress the bids.

Paragraph 9:

Councillor John Cooper thanked the staff for their hard work. Councillor Hutton referred Members to the final paragraph under number 9 regarding the judges comments.

Councillor Robinson expressed his thanks to the volunteers who had helped with the Reginald Mitchell Memorial Garden. This was the first year that they could enter Britain in Bloom and had received an invitation to the awards ceremony.

Councillor Holland also expressed thanks to people in the community that had joined in and gave special congratulations to Silverdale Country Park. Councillor Holland added that this was the eighteenth year that Newcastle had won a Gold Award.

Next year marked the thirtieth anniversary of Newcastle's participation of Britain in Bloom.

The Leader echoed everything that had been said by Members adding that the Newcastle in Bloom Awards would take place in November. In addition, the Leader stated that the thirtieth anniversary of the Borough participation in the competition should be celebrated.

The Queens Gardens looked good for every season and were a credit to the Borough. The Leader expressed his thanks to the Executive Director for operations – Dave Adams and his team.

Paragraph 10:

Councillor Maxfield queried the reference to Kidsgrove Sports Centre being discussed at the Cabinet meeting in October.

The Leader confirmed that a report would be taken to October Cabinet. A lot had happened over the summer, with an architect and project manager being appointed.

Councillor Brian Johnson stated that there were 1000 empty homes in the Borough and asked for an update on the homeless and rough sleepers.

The Leader advised that the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing, Councillor Jill Waring would prepare a written response to all Members.

8. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Only the Health, Wellbeing Partnerships Scrutiny Committee had met since the last Council meeting. The Chair, Councillor Ian Wilkes had sent apologies for this meeting and therefore no verbal update was given.

9. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEES

A written report had been submitted for the Audit and Standards Committee.

Verbal updates were given by the Chairs of the Planning Committee and Licensing and Public Protection Committee.

Councillor Fear welcomed the receipt at this meeting of the Public Speaking at Planning Protocol. Members were advised that an outstanding appeal case had been reported at the last Planning Committee meeting, where a decision was awaited from the Inspector. A letter had been sent to the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Planning Committee for an update.

Councillor Olszewski advised that at the last Licensing and Public Protection Committee, the increase to Hackney Carriage Fares had been agreed by Members but the request to alter the start time for Tariff 2 had been rejected.

The new Taxi Licensing policy would be implemented in two stages – 1 November, 2019 would be the first stage followed by 1 January, 2020.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

10. MOTIONS OF MEMBERS

There were no Motions from Members.

11. QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Question 1:

Councillor Olszewski asked the Leader, in his opinion, what adverse impact a no-deal Brexit would have on the citizens of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

The Leader stated that his opinion was not relevant. However, it is the opinion of experts such as the operators of Calais and Dover ports and the Euro Tunnel that there will be no problem with keeping the ports open. This Council is leading the Brexit preparations in the Borough with the Head of Communications, Phil Jones as Lead Officer and Councillor Sweeney as Lead Member.

No problems were anticipated. The Council was working closely with partners such as the Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce in the event of a no-deal. There was a page on the Council's website offering advice.

Councillor Olszewski asked the Leader if he agreed with the Prime Minister, leaving the European Union at the end of October – even if it meant breaking the law.

The Leader stated that it was the Prime Minister's decision to make. There had been a lot of scaremongering about a no-deal Brexit and there were far worse things that could befall the Country such as a Corbyn government.

Question 2:

Councillor Parker asked the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency to confirm if the Audit of the Council's accounts had been completed.

Councillor Sweeney confirmed that this had been done.

Question 3:

Councillor Fear asked The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency how the Council was spending the money provided by the Government to prepare for Brexit on 31 October.

Councillor Sweeney advised that £17,400 had been used to fund Brexit workshops and these had proved very successful.

In addition, a joint social media project was being aimed at EU nationals advising of their position post Brexit.

Funds would continue to be monitored on how to put them to their best use.

Councillor Fear asked Councillor Sweeney to write to the government asking them to declare Brexit Day a Bank Holiday.

Councillor Sweeney agreed to do that.

Question 4:

Councillor Wright asked the Leader if any help could be given to the Cultural Squatters Café for Merrial Street who had been asked to vacate the premises by the landlord.

The Leader stated that he had been made aware of this two days ago and discussions had taken place as to what could be done. Some of the smaller vacant units owned by the Council may be suitable for a transitional period. The situation would be closely monitored so that they were not lost from the town centre.

Councillor Wright asked if there was anything that the Council could do to prevent private landlords giving short notice to vacate premises.

The Leader would raise this with the Council's Housing Team.

Question 5:

Councillor Robinson asked the Leader if Locality Action Partnership's (LAP's) would be sustainable without the administrative support of the Council.

The Leader advised that the LAP's knew that the Council's Locality Action Partnerships Coordinator, Irene Lee was retiring and that she would not be replaced. The Council wanted to support LAP's in a different way. They would be shadowed by a member of the Strategic team. The LAP's would be advised who their support officer would be. LAP's had their own bank account and Constitution. Support Staffordshire could be asked to give advice to LAP's

Councillor Robinson stated that the LAP's had achieved a great deal but felt that without administrative support, some would struggle.

Councillor Robinson praised Irene Lee for the work that she had done with the LAP's.

The Leader joined Councillor Robinson in praising Irene.

Question 6:

Councillor Robinson asked the Leader if any plans to distribute the Town Centre Fund in Kidsgrove would be distributed fairly.

The Leader stated that the publication of the prospectus was awaited and a meeting would be held with a government official shortly, which would hopefully set out the criteria for how the money could be spent.

The Leader would keep Members up to date on the progress.

Councillor Robinson asked that all Councillors be involved and that residents and community groups be given their say on how monies would be spent.

Question 7:

Councillor Northcott asked that thanks be placed on record to the former Head of Planning, Guy Benson who had recently retired.

Members acknowledged the work that he had done over the years and stated that he would be a hard act to follow. He had provided valuable advice in an honest and forthright manner and had been hardworking throughout.

Members wished him all the best for the future.

The Mayor stated that he would personally send a letter to Mr Benson, on behalf of Members, expressing their thanks.

A round of applause was given for Mr Benson.

12. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

Councillor Robinson presented a petition in respect of Clough Hall Park seeking the reinstatement of the Park Warden, improved fencing and CCTV.

Councillor Robinson thanked Staffordshire Police for stepping up their presence and also, Council Officers' Natalie Noone and Robin Wiles for looking at solutions.

The petition was received.

13. STANDING ORDER 7 - URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

Chair

Meeting concluded at 8.32 pm