

**STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL**  
**20<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 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**

Since the last meeting of Full Council on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019, Cabinet met on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and 6<sup>th</sup> November, a summary of the Decisions taken is detailed below.

**2. Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2024/25**

Cabinet endorsed the draft MTFS as a basis for consultation. The report set out the Council's four year spending and funding plans and is a framework for the development of the detailed budget for 2020/21 which will be agreed at the February Full Council meeting.

**3. Commercial Strategy 2019/24**

A new draft Commercial Strategy was approved setting out how the Council can continue to secure the delivery of high quality, value for money services for residents in future by being innovative and entrepreneurial.

This will involve the Council becoming more self-sustainable and a business-orientated organisation that generates service efficiencies and new income streams, using effective procurement processes, prudent investments and strategic asset development.

## Classification: NULBC **UNCLASSIFIED**

Potential investments could include renewable energy and a commercial loan portfolio. There is also a significant opportunity to capitalise on the Council's ability to borrow at historically very low rates and acquire income-producing investments.

Thinking and acting more commercially is key to the Council's approach to protecting valuable frontline services.

The new Strategy, building on the Council's already substantial commercial property portfolio, will be delivered by our new Executive Director – Commercial & Economic Growth, working closely with Members. It provides an overarching plan for future activities, ensuring consistency, and access to the expertise needed to drive forward this agenda within a context of robust risk management.

### 4. **Kidsgrove Sports Centre Update**

Following the Council's commitment to the re-provision of sports facilities, including swimming, in Kidsgrove, an all Party Cabinet Panel has been convened to consider the plans put forward by the Kidsgrove Sports Centre Community Group (CIO) for the refurbishment of the existing Sports Centre.

The Panel has recently visited the Centre site and received a presentation from a representative of the CIO on their proposals. Further work will now be carried out to validate and confirm the full cost estimates and lifecycle costs.

### 5. **Car Parking Strategy**

Cabinet agreed a new ten year town centre Car Parking Strategy, with the purpose of supporting traders and increasing footfall. Measures agreed include:-

- Launching a £1 after 1pm scheme for shoppers starting prior to Christmas.
- Reducing the cost of parking permits for businesses.
- Investing in a modern CCTV system for the Midway car park.
- Modernise payment methods for motorists, including an App.
- Working with the Business Improvement District (BID) to create a 'shoppers' car park on Goose Street.
- Provide electric charging points on all council-owned car parks.

### 6. **Rough Sleepers Initiative**

Cabinet agreed to support the commissioning of a Rough Sleeping Outreach Service with Stoke City Council.

The joint provision will continue the existing work of offering support and assistance to those who find themselves homeless.

A cross authority approach will allow a consistent standard of service across the conurbation and working collectively in a joined up approach meets the aims contained in the Council's Homelessness Strategy.

7. **Armed Forces Covenant – Sport and Leisure Card**

The Council will now provide free and discounted access to facilities at Jubilee2 for serving and retired officers, as well as reservists, as part of its commitment to upholding the key principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.

A leisure pass was one of the recommendations in a recent unanimously supported motion calling for the Council to reaffirm its commitment to the covenant.

8. **Experience Newcastle – Newcastle Town Centre Growth Plan**

Cabinet endorsed a new prospectus entitled Experience Newcastle; this outlined the projects and schemes underway or planned to improve Newcastle town centre:

- **Healthy High Street** – a suite of actions to support economic vibrancy and help to address adverse trading conditions.
- **Diversification** – bringing forward residential and non-retail employment uses into currently under-utilised or redundant premises and by doing so bringing more people into the town centre to live and work.
- **Revitalisation** - an action plan for improvements to the town's historic market, with actions put in place to improve its vitality and sustainability.
- **Improved CCTV** - with support from the town centre BID, upgrading the town centre CCTV.
- **Car Parking Strategy** – setting out how the town centre parking provision can be used to support the town centre economy over the next decade.

9. **Progress on Preventing Unauthorised Encampments**

The Cabinet received a report which detailed the programme of actions taken to deter illegal traveller incursions on borough-owned land.

Deterrent measures including wooden bollards, boulders and reinforced locks have been installed at 14 locations; these, together with the halving of eviction times, have led to a significant reduction in the number of incursions this year.

10. **Aspire Housing and Newcastle Borough Council – Prospectus for Joint Working**

The Cabinet has approved a closer working relationship with Aspire Housing that will focus on: development and regeneration, housing advice and allocations, locality working and training opportunities. This will benefit communities across the borough and will build on

the already long track record of joint working between the organisations dating back over 19 years.

A briefing will be arranged in due course for Members of the Council on the work of Aspire Housing and its associated companies, PM Training and Realise Foundation.

11. **Financial and Performance Review Report – Second Quarter (July–September) 2019-20**

Cabinet reviewed the performance data for Quarter Two and noted that 78% either met their target or were within acceptable levels.

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

12. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan (01/09/19 to 31/12/2019) can be found at:

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