

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL – 29TH JANUARY 2020

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, 4th December and 15th January. A selection of decisions are detailed under items 2 and 3 of this report.

2. **4th December 2019**

2.1 **Town Deals**

Cabinet agreed to establish Town Deal Boards for Newcastle and Kidsgrove. This follows the announcement last autumn by the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government, Robert Jenrick, of a list of more than 100 towns that are set to benefit from the Government's £3.6 billion Town Deal Fund.

By the time of the Full Council meeting both Boards will have met for the first time with the remit of:

- Supporting the ambitions of local towns in their aspirations for their area.
- Driving economic regeneration and delivering long term economic and productivity growth.
- Bringing communities together and giving places new energy and life.

2.2 **Procurement of Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure and Operator to Support Uptake of Electrified Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles**

Following a successful joint bid with neighbouring authorities, the Council has attracted £780,000 of funding for the installation of an electric vehicle charging infrastructure. This will provide a kick-start to the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure on Council owned car parks in line with the recently adopted Car Parking Strategy and supports policies and initiatives to secure cleaner air, encourage the uptake of low and zero emissions vehicles and reductions in transport related CO2.

3. **15th January 2020**

3.1 **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

Cabinet endorsed an update to the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This reaffirms how the Council intends to work with partners to prevent homelessness and support those who may become homeless.

As well as an Action Plan to deliver the key priorities of the Strategy additional measures proposed include:

- Homeless families accessing empty properties that have been brought back into use.
- Development of referral arrangements by working with those who commission and deliver drug, alcohol and mental health services to ensure joined up support.
- Develop a local Make It Count Scheme where passers-by are encouraged to make donations instead of giving money to beggars.
- Develop further closer links with voluntary and community agencies such as foodbanks to ensure consistency in tackling homelessness across the Borough.
- Work with other statutory partners to identify gaps in services.

3.2 **Update on Kidsgrove Sports Centre**

The re-opening of Kidsgrove Sports Centre has taken a further step forward with the Kidsgrove Sports Centre Community Group (CIO) and the Council agreeing to work with a major construction company to fully price the refurbishment.

The plans received endorsement by the All-Party Cabinet Panel and will involve procuring the services of Wilmot Dixon via the SCAPE national construction framework.

The CIO will work closely with the Council and the Scape Group to finalise the cost of the refurbishment before reporting back to the Cabinet Panel ahead of a final decision on funding by Full Council in the near future.

3.3 **Commissioning of Debt, Benefit and Advice Service in the Borough 2020-2022**

Cabinet agreed to re-tender for provision of Debt and Benefit Advice when the current contract expires.

The service is currently operated by Citizens Advice Bureau Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire (CASNS) and provides:- on-line access to self-help and advice, contact by telephone and face-to-face with provision of specialist support, help to deal with issues relating to Social Security, Benefits and Tax Credits, debts, employment rights, relationship and family issues and Housing Advice.

3.4 **Our Borough Heroes 2020**

Cabinet supported the establishment of an "Our Borough Heroes" event to celebrate inspirational individuals in the Borough who make an exceptional contribution to the community.

The event will be arranged in partnership with the Sentinel and will be funded via sponsorship of individual categories by partners and businesses in the Borough.

Awards will be open to all age groups and people who live and work in the Borough, to provide recognition of their efforts, to celebrate those involved and to raise aspirations in others.

Categories will span caring, community, education, sport, business and youth.

4. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan can be found at:

<https://moderngov.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=118&RD=0>

Councillor Simon Tagg
Leader of the Council