

CABINET

Wednesday, 10th June, 2020
Time of Commencement: 2.00 pm

Present:- Councillor Simon Tagg – Chair

Councillors Stephen Sweeney, Mrs Helena Maxfield,
Paul Northcott and Mrs Jill Waring

Officers David Adams, Martin Hamilton, Jan
Willis, Geoff Durham, Simon McEneny,
Daniel Dickinson and David Elkington

Note: In line with Government directions on staying at home during the current stage of the CV-19 pandemic, this meeting was conducted by video conferencing in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Trevor Johnson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 May, 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

4. CORONAVIRUS RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE

A report was submitted to Cabinet to inform upon actions being taken across the Council in response to the Coronavirus pandemic and to recover from its impacts.

The Leader stated that the last few weeks had been fully focussing upon recovery for the Council and the Borough's economy and the continuation of helping vulnerable people to get through the crisis.

The report addressed the Council's current position across five areas of the recovery plan. Members' attention was drawn to paragraph's 2.1 to 2.20 which explained the work being carried out in each of those areas.

Reopening Safe, Successful Retail Areas:

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency, Councillor Stephen Sweeney advised that Friday and Saturday, 5th and 6th June had seen the soft reopening of the

Market with 8 – 10 stalls being occupied. This had been an encouraging start with social distancing measures being observed by everyone.

The Leader advised that in addition to the measures being taken in Newcastle Town Centre, officers had also been to other areas in the Borough to put up advisory notices in respect of social distancing. Letters had also been sent to all retailers providing useful advice and web-links on how to reopen safely on 15th June.

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage, Councillor Jill Waring advised that she had been working with officers in respect of the safe reopening of Kidsgrove Town Centre.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, Councillor Paul Northcott stated that it was important to have town centres and surrounding businesses open and vibrant again. Retailers and shoppers wanted reassurance that every provision was being made to help shops to reopen safely and that Personal Protection Equipment was being used where required. Councillor Northcott acknowledged that a lot of work had been carried out by officers and the Council's partners.

The Leader endorsed Councillor Northcott's comments and made reference to Staffordshire County Council Highways, one of the Council's partners for their work in the recovery process and thanking them for what they were doing.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing, Councillor Helena Maxfield stated that shops being able to reopen safely and securely was a good way of looking forward and thanked the Council's teams and partners who were involved in facilitating this.

The Leader echoed Councillor Maxfield's comments and asked for thanks to be passed to officers working to reopen retail premises.

Supporting Health and Wellbeing:

Councillor Maxfield stated that she could not praise the teams supporting health and wellbeing of Borough residents, highly enough. They had worked with a full complement of staff throughout the crisis helping the homeless and rough sleepers, including sorting temporary accommodation for those in need.

This work would continue for many months after the virus had passed.

Councillor Maxfield thanked the J2 staff who had manned the helplines that had been set up by the Council and advised Members that a reduction in calls indicated that provision of the service had worked and would continue to do so.

Economic Recovery:

Councillor Sweeney advised that the Council had paid out over £20m to approximately 1,700 businesses in the Borough under the Government's grant schemes.

The Leader advised that the Council may have been undersubscribed for the Government's discretionary fund and therefore may receive a second tranche. The Leader thanked the Finance team for their work in the distribution of the funds to local businesses.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraph 2.12 which set out the Council's economic recovery programme including four direct developments: Ryecroft; Kidsgrove Sports Centre; Sidmouth Avenue housing project and Newcastle Mortuary site.

In respect of Kidsgrove Sports Centre, costings were awaited from Wilmot Dixon and the Sports Centre had been discussed in Parliament yesterday when it was raised by Karen Bradley MP.

Staffordshire County Council would be transferring ownership of the building over to this Council in the next few months.

Councillor Northcott stated that it was important to keep an eye on the Council's assets. Lancaster Buildings now had occupancy by the NHS which would help the Council's recovery plan.

The Leader added that it was important for the Council Plan to get 'back on track' and Kidsgrove Sports Centre and the Ryecroft development played a big part in this.

Stepping Up Council Services:

The Leader referred Members to paragraph 2.13 of the report and stated that there had been an extraordinary effort by staff in keeping the Council's services running during the lockdown caused by the pandemic. Plans were now being made to step up services, starting with J2 and the Brampton Museum. The new recycling service was now underway, with residents starting to use it this week. Delivery of this new service had been brought forward as a result of the Coronavirus and the Leader stated that the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling - Councillor Trevor Johnson was full of praise for it.

Councillor Jill Waring stated that the Museum and J2 had been missed and they would reopen in July. Officers from J2 were thanked for their help in manning the Council's helpline throughout the pandemic. Measures were being put into place to ensure the safety of customers at the facilities.

Councillor Northcott thanked all of the Council's Services, in particular Recycling and Waste who had done a great job, maintaining the service which had received many positive reports. The Executive Director of Operational Services and his team were thanked for their hard work.

The Leader made reference to the Planning team who had been processing and making decisions on Planning applications throughout the lockdown period.

Councillor Sweeney added that the Council had coped with the pandemic fantastically and thanked all involved for maintaining the services.

Councillor Maxfield thanked everyone for the 'business as usual' for all services, especially Recycling and Waste.

The Leader stated that the Council continued to be proactive and was looking at services post-lockdown. The Leader added that Councillor Johnson would wish to pay tribute to the Bereavement team who had done a great job in difficult circumstances.

Financial Recovery:

The Leader referred Members to paragraph 2.25 of the report stating that the pandemic had impacted greatly on all Councils finances across the country. The Government had provided £1.3m funding to Newcastle but there were still challenges to be met.

Councillor Sweeney stated that businesses were now starting to open up in the town centre which indicated that Newcastle was now on its way to recovery following the pandemic.

The Leader referred Members to paragraph 2.19 of the report and advised that the Council would continue to lobby the Government for further support to address Covid-19 costs and the loss of income with the impact from Business Rates and Council Tax collection.

The Back on Track – Recovery Plan which gave details of the process was appended to the report.

Resolved: That the report be noted and the work being undertaken to recover from the pandemic be endorsed.

5. LOCAL PLANNING ENFORCEMENT PLAN

A report was submitted to Cabinet seeking the approval of an up to date Local Planning Enforcement Plan for the Council.

Councillor Northcott advised that it had been eleven years since the previous update and there had been a lot of changes during that time such as Community Protection Notices giving new powers to Local Authorities. There would still be work to be done on the Plan to keep it up to date.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraph 1.7 of the report which outlined the key sections of the Plan. The Plan, which was appended to the report, sets out the framework in detail.

Members would have a clear pathway of how the Council responded to enforcement matters and the Plan would send out a message to those who sought to breach Planning Regulations - that the Council would not tolerate such actions.

The Leader endorsed Councillor Northcott adding that some enforcement cases had been ongoing for many years and the Council needed an up to date Enforcement Plan that could continue to be updated regularly.

Councillor Northcott stated that the Enforcement Protocol for Members was up and running and had received a positive reception from Members. In addition, a weekly bulletin which was sent to Members gave them the opportunity to look at enforcement issues within their Ward.

Resolved: That the proposed Local Planning Enforcement Plan be approved for introduction and implementation in the Borough.

6. FORWARD PLAN

Consideration was given to the Forward Plan which listed upcoming key decisions to be made by the Cabinet.

Resolved: That the Forward Plan be received.

7. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Business.

COUNCILLOR SIMON TAGG
Chair

Meeting concluded at 2.35 pm