

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL – 21ST JULY 2021

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

A selection of items and decisions of Cabinet since the last Leader's Statement are detailed below.

2. One Council Programme

The One Council Programme continues to shape the future of our Council and we are now moving to the implementation stage, which includes proposals around an enhanced, resident focussed "One Front Door" model based around a new website and streamlined customer service offer for our residents and local businesses, which will see more queries successfully resolved at the first point of contact. Staff consultation on this key change is now underway.

3. Back on Track – Coronavirus Pandemic Recovery Update

At the time of writing, the Prime Minister had indicated that Coronavirus restrictions will be lifted on the 19th July. Since the country emerged from lock-down in the spring the Council has focussed on reopening our town centres and market, the phased reopening of J2, and a continued focus on supporting vulnerable people and local businesses whilst maintaining Council services and focussing on the economic and financial recovery.

4. Business Improvement District (BID), Newcastle Town Centre – Re-Ballot

The Council indicated its support for the continuation of Newcastle-under-Lyme Business Improvement District in the successful BID Re-Ballot. The BID has now commenced its new 5-year term under a new Manager and an ambitious set of priorities to support business growth and investment, offering a welcoming, attractive and safe shopping experience and to promote Newcastle, its heritage and its cultural offer. The Council will continue to work with the BID as a key partner in creating a town centre for all.

5. **Town Deals and Future High Street Fund**

The Council was pleased to have confirmation in June of the award of £23.6 million by the Government for Newcastle's Town Deal Investment Plan. This follows the award of £16.9 million for Kidsgrove Town Deal and £11 million for Newcastle's Future High Street Fund.

The Council is now progressing plans to use this once in a lifetime investment in our Borough to regenerate our town centres, reopen sports facilities, improve transport links and make sustainable and digital infrastructure improvements.

6. **Kidsgrove Sports Centre Refurbishment**

Following the confirmation of £2.45m from the Kidsgrove Town Deal, Cabinet has given the go-ahead for the final phase of the refurbishment of the Sports Centre. This will lead to the re-opening of the Centre in the spring of 2022, which will enable swimming, fitness and indoor sports to finally return to Kidsgrove after the Sports Centre was closed by the previous Council administration in 2017.

7. **Borough Local Plan**

Work is progressing on the new Borough Local Plan. Cabinet have agreed a local development scheme and a draft statement of community involvement, which set the framework for progression of the Local Plan. A number of policies relating to future housing and industrial growth will be brought forward as part of an Issues and Preferred Options consultation this September.

8. **Aspire Housing – Prospectus for Joint Working**

Cabinet endorsed a Prospectus for Joint Working with Aspire Housing to provide housing developments within the Borough. This builds on the already close relationship between the two organisations and is designed to deliver a sustained housing offer, which will help to kick-start difficult sites and develop a commercial approach that maximises returns for both parties.

9. **Future Provision for Temporary Accommodation**

Following the review of temporary accommodation needs in the Borough, Cabinet agreed to support the development of options to ensure the availability of temporary accommodation such as supported housing, hostels and B&B's that are cost effective and that meets local need within the Borough. This includes maintaining a select list for emergency access accommodation and officers will be working with partner organisations to ensure supply of appropriate provision.

10. **Urban Tree Planting Strategy and Encouraging Greater Use of Parks and Open Spaces**

Cabinet approved an Urban Tree Planting Strategy which provides the framework for the management of the Council's tree stock and future tree planting proposals with a particular emphasis on carbon off-setting as part of the Council's commitment to achieve net carbon zero. The focus of future tree planting will be on land owned by the Borough Council and local Councillors will be invited to propose small green open spaces in their ward for tree planting.

It is also proposed to work closely with organisations such as Staffordshire County Council and Aspire Housing who own land within the Borough and have their own sustainability commitments and to explore opportunities to take part in urban tree planting as part of the Queen's Green Canopy to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

11. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan can be found at:-

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

Councillor Simon Tagg
Leader of the Council