

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEES CHAIR'S REPORTS**

### **Economy, Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee**

There has been one meeting of the Economy Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee since the last full council meeting.

- This was held on Thursday, the 17<sup>th</sup> of March and reviewed the following topics-
- BID performance of the town centre.
- An update on the future proofing of the Streetscene department.
- An update on the future High Street fund and to Town deal bids for Kidsgrove and Newcastle.

The next scheduled meeting will be 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2022.

Cllr Gary White  
Chair

### **Health, Wellbeing and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee met on 7 March 2022 and the following matters were considered:

- Delivery of Newcastle Housing Advice Service – the Committee considered a report on the service since it had returned in-house from April 2021. The benefits included access to one Joint Housing register and housing advice being available at the first point of contact with the council.
- How services have managed with winter pressures – the Committee considered a report on how front line services had managed over winter including the additional pressures caused by the Omicron variant of Covid. Members heard that in the first week of January there was a 30% absence among the Recycling and Waste workforce alongside a 50% increased tonnage of recycling collected and a 30% increase in food waste. The service managed to continue with minimal disruption due to the usual suspension of garden waste collections and support from streetscene and agency staff.
- Space Programme – at its previous meeting on 29 November the Committee had received a presentation from Ben Adams, Police, Crime and Fire Commissioner for Staffordshire, who outlined the key points of his Police and Crime Plan, and Fire & Rescue Plan 2021 – 24; and the Committee was invited to ask questions. One project mentioned by Mr Adams was the Space Programme held over the summer holidays to provide activities for young people. Members considered the Evaluation report and agreed a couple of questions to refer back to Mr Adams relating to provision for people with

Special Educational Needs and whether there were any learnings or initiatives that hadn't worked well.

- Walley's Quarry Health Impacts – the Committee has been keeping a watching brief on health impacts arising from odours. Members made the following points:
  - Concern about the unknown long term physical impacts on health
  - The ongoing detrimental impact on mental health
  - Concern over whether hazardous waste is being dumped at Walley's Quarry as raised by the local MP in parliament
  - Whether the Posi-shell capping was effective or was it disintegrating?
  - Impact on the watercourse
  - Residents experiencing 'reporting fatigue' and giving up reporting odours on the official channels.

Members were also concerned about traffic issues at the site from HGVs queuing on the highway and difficulties of reporting obstructions via 101 due to long call wait times and asked whether there could be police presence at the site.

Members asked whether the Director of Public Health is aware of any studies looking at the long term impact of odours on health.

Members also noted that supporting the permit variation could be seen as supporting the operation whereas the view of the Council is that the Quarry operation should be shut down and the permit withdrawn immediately.

- Meeting with the Clinical Commissioning Group – the Committee received notes from the regular meeting between the Chair & Vice Chair, officers and Tracey Shewan of the CCG. The meeting had discussed the current situation with Covid; pressures at Royal Stoke Hospital and the 111 online system.
- Reports from recent meetings of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel
- The Digests outlining the work of recent meetings of the County Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- The Work Programme was discussed and the Committee proposed items for the next meeting on 23 June relating to dementia, safeguarding and emergency planning – impact of climate change/flooding plus the usual item on health impacts from Walley's Quarry.

Cllr Ian Wilkes  
Chair