

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 6th July, 2022
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

[View the agenda here](#)

[Watch the meeting here](#)

Present: Mayor - Councillor Gillian Burnett (Chair)

Councillors:	Adcock	Fear	Talbot
	Allport	Fox-Hewitt	S Jones
	Barker	Skelding	Lawley
	Beeston	Gorton	Panter
	Bettley-Smith	Stubbs	Whieldon
	Brockie	Grocott	G White
	Bryan	Heesom	S White
	Brown	Holland	Wilkes
	Crisp	Sweeney	G Williams
	Dymond	S Tagg	J Williams
	Parker	Hutchison	Wright
	Edginton-Plunkett	Johnson	
	Richards	J Tagg	

Apologies: Councillor(s) Reece, D Jones, J Waring, Moffat, Northcott and P Waring

Officers:	Geoff Durham	Mayor's Secretary / Member Support Officer
	Martin Hamilton	Chief Executive
	Simon McEneny	Executive Director - Growth and Development
	Daniel Dickinson	Head of Legal & Governance /Monitoring Officer
	Sarah Wilkes	Head of Finance / S151 Officer

Also in attendance:

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

2. **MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 May, 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

3. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor made three announcements:

- 27 July - Kidsgrove Sports Centre would reopen for business.

Council - 06/07/22

- 7 August – from midday, a Garden Fete would be held at the Old Hall Country House in Madeley in aid of the Mayor's Charity Fund.
- 12 November – A 1940's evening would be held at Kidsgrove Town Hall in aid of the Mayor's Charity Fund.

4. WALLEYS QUARRY UPDATE

The Leader introduced an update on issues associated with odours from Walleys Quarry. This had been one of the biggest issues that the Council had faced over the past two years.

Actions had been taken to try and hold the operator to account, including abatement notices and trying to force the Environment Agency (EA) to take a more rigorous approach.

The Council's Chief Executive, Martin Hamilton gave a presentation outlining the work that the Council was doing to remedy the situation which had been going on for a number of years. In 2021 the Council received over 22,000 complaints and the EA received over 43,000.

The landfill gas, Hydrogen Sulphide (H₂S) could be easily traced and had defined characteristics around the levels at which it became offensive and problematic to health.

Four Air Quality Monitoring stations had been placed around the site which gave weekly reports of H₂S levels. Two thresholds had been identified by the World Health Organisation - the Annoyance threshold and the Long Term Health Impact threshold.

The presentation included a graph which showed the number of complaints received and the levels of H₂S at the four monitoring stations.

The EA had been enforcing the environmental permit for the site and had identified breaches. The site had been identified as level F which was the lowest grading that a landfill site could get.

The Council served an Abatement Notice in August, 2021 requiring abatement of the nuisance within five months. The Notice had a right of appeal, which Walleys Quarry Limited did in September, 2021. A court hearing had been scheduled for four weeks in October, 2022. The option of a mediated resolution remained open.

Temporary clay capping had been completed in Phase 2 and permanent capping was being carried out for Phase 1.

It was queried whether any health bodies were monitoring or recording the number of GP visits, prescriptions or treatment and potential causation to Walleys Quarry operations.

Syndromic monitoring was being carried out to assess any differences in reporting in the area, over time. In addition, changes to prescriptions had been monitored. Staffordshire County Council had got a health symptom tracker on their website. Also, work had been commissioned by health colleagues to work with Keele University to do a longer term study.

Clarification was sought regarding the long term health threshold and whether it was being exceeded as the length of time of the odours continued.

The HAS had been focussed on the long term health threshold and there was a lot of debate as to whether or not the threshold was being met at the particular sites. This was difficult as the health threshold was measured over a long period of time – 2mg over the period of a year.

It was asked if the odour had impacted upon workers at Garners Garden Centre.

Businesses had been engaged with to discuss what the issues were and what the impacts had been.

Assurance was sought that pressure would continue to be put on the EA to resolve the issues.

The Council was working with them through the multi-agency effort co-ordinated by a strategic co-ordination group. The Council had engaged with the EA to try and make progress.

Reports had been made regarding an Enforcement Notice being withdrawn despite a deadline not being met. It was asked whether this was true.

The Enforcement Notice had been issued by the EA and had been withdrawn due to sufficient information being received from the operator.

Regarding the lorries stacking up on Cemetery Road. There had been talk about them being admitted to the site, had there been any progress with that?

The Council was organising dialogue between the County Council, Police, EA and this Council to find a solution.

It was asked whether links could be added to committee report which opened up sites such as the County Council's symptom tracker.

A link was included on the Council's website to the symptom tracker.

All of the monitoring was based on Hydrogen Sulphide. Other gases were included within landfill gas and it was asked if the Council had details of the thresholds for those other gases.

Other components of landfill gas were routinely monitored and there had been nothing to suggest problems with any other gases.

In summary, the Leader thanked the Chief Executive for the presentation. There was still a lot to be done and pressure needed to be kept up on the EA to hold the operator to account.

Resolved: That the update be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

5. **STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

Council - 06/07/22

A report was submitted which provided an update to Members on the activities and decisions of the Cabinet, together with the Forward Plan.

Paragraph 2

The Leader was asked if there was a plan to roll out more EV charging points in Council car parks.

King Street and Goose Street car parks had already had EV charging points installed. The County Council had been asked to put forward a strategy on rolling out EV across the County. The Strategy would be delivered later in the year and this would be followed by the seeking of a partner within the private sector to deliver it.

It was asked when the next tree planting phase would start and where they would be planted.

The next phase was already being considered by officers to decide which areas to bring forward. A list had been presented to Cabinet and to Full Council in February and included many areas across the Borough.

In view of the tree planting, it was queried whether the Council had enough grounds staff to maintain the trees in the future.

The right species would be planted in the right places. More trees would mean less grass cutting and therefore, the grass cutting staff could become more maintenance orientated.

Paragraph 3

It was asked what evaluation processes had been put into place to ensure that residents were not encountering any negative experiences.

There was a One Council Board, run by elected members and there were regular meetings were held with the unions. In addition, items were regularly taken to Cabinet and to the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee.

Reassurance was sought that residents would still be able to phone in and visit the Council as well as accessing the services online.

This was confirmed.

The Once Council Programme could be seen as the next phase of a previous corporate priority of the Administration which had been 'Transforming Council Services to Achieve Excellence'. The Leader was asked to join in congratulating the staff who had been involved in the One Council Programme.

The Leader was asked if the public were being surveyed regarding the One Council Programme.

Customer feedback forms were available online for those using the new website and online services.

Paragraph 4

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth was asked why the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy had been updated.

The new Policy had been devised in conjunction with a scoring matrix, awarding points based on answers given on the application form. This in turn would determine the amount of discretionary relief that could be awarded to ensure that all applications were treated equally.

Paragraph 5

The Deputy Mayor was asked, as Heritage Champion, if he would be working with the relevant Councillors to create the strategy.

Members would be able to interact in the programme as it progresses and through items going to Cabinet and Scrutiny. If any members had any ideas or suggestions, they were advised to email or call the Deputy Mayor.

The Deputy Mayor was asked to consider doing something to commemorate Sergeant Kite who had received the Military Medal three times during World War Two and whose memorial was outside of Castle House. Sergeant Kite had attended Hassell County Primary School as a child.

The Leader was asked if Kidsgrove would be included in the programme.

As the anniversary covered the whole Borough it must be ensured that Kidsgrove be involved in the celebrations and use venues such as the Victoria Hall for example.

Paragraph 6

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing was asked how the new Police model would improve policing in the Borough.

Policing numbers had increased significantly across the County. The number for Newcastle could not be confirmed at present as they were still looking at the structure. However, Newcastle would, in addition to neighbourhood officers, have officers based at Newcastle who were previously classed as response. The officers would be allocated to specific areas, therefore getting to know the area, individuals and problems.

Chief Inspector Owens had been invited to the Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee to give an overview on 5th September, 2022 and Members were invited to go along as spectators if they so wished.

The Head of Sustainable Environment Services and his team were congratulated for their work on recycling which had increased as the amount being sent to landfill had decreased.

In the Borough, recycling was now above fifty percent, residual waste was down by eleven percent and the landfill figure was three percent and falling. In addition, care homes had recently been brought in to the weekly food waste collections increasing the collection to 100 tonnes per week which was all being put to good use.

Paragraph 7

The proposed bus gate and any chargeable Clean Air Zone would not remove any carbon out of the atmosphere but move the problem to other areas. It was therefore vital that the Council received support from its partners to ask if the numbers could be reappraised - in light of rising fuel prices taking cars off the roads and more

Council - 06/07/22

electric vehicles being used. In addition to reappraise the number of journeys, congestion and traffic pollution in the area.

It was understood that the area was now at a natural level of compliance and if the situation was not assessed, traffic would relocate, potentially going past schools.

Considering the amount of concern over the bus gate, the Leader was asked to consider establishing a cross-party sub-committee to scrutinise the final business case.

The Leader agreed with Members and stated that Red Industry lorries used Basford Bank en-route to Walleys Quarry and would be banned from doing so when the bus gate was operating. Those lorries would re-route up Grange Lane, passing several schools. Covid had changed travel patterns and this had possibly expanded the rush hour and could have led to the natural compliance which should be pressed further. Local MP's also needed to be involved.

There would be further scrutiny on the matter as it moved forward. The Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Party would be the correct place to set up a Working Group and asked the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee to take it on board.

The Leader was asked what could be done for local businesses on Basford Bank.

As the area was now reaching compliance there was a need to ensure that it would be kept there – and below. The Council needed to look at behavioural change and possibly giving funding to businesses to switch to electric vehicles. The Government were spending a large amount of money on this, therefore the Council could ask for funding to help to bring in more electric vehicles.

Paragraph 8

There had been an omission of acknowledgement of Kidsgrove Town Council's grant of £70,000 towards the project.

The Leader apologised for the omission but stated that all finances had been discussed in Cabinet meetings.

Clarification was sought from the Mayor regarding the opening date. In the Mayor's announcements the 27th had been mentioned whereas the Sports Centre website stated the 25th.

The main opening day would be Saturday 27th.

Paragraph 9

It was queried what had happened to the beacons that were lit for the Jubilee celebrations and whether they had gone to the Museum for future generations.

Confirmation was given that the beacon used at Apedale was now in the Museum for people to see.

Support was given for the renaming of the Astley Room to Queen Elizabeth II. In addition, congratulations were given to everyone who had put on community events over the weekend of celebrations.

Discussions were underway with the County Council regarding the renaming of the room which could be tied in with the 850th anniversary celebrations next year.

Resolved: That the Statement of the Leader of the Council be received and noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Reports were submitted for the Scrutiny Committees that had met since the last Council meeting.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

7. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEES

Reports were submitted for the Regulatory Committees that had met since the last Council meeting.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

8. QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Councillor Andrew Parker asked the Leader the following:

The Leader would be aware that residents had been complaining about the poor standard of Highway grass verge cutting across the Borough by the County Council's contractor. The frequency and quality of the cuts this year had been abysmal.

Was there anything the Borough Council could do about the situation?

Issues had been identified in the Spring regarding the length of time it was taking to do one division and the poor quality of the cut. It appeared that the contractor was not doing a full week. County Councillors applied pressure for the matter to be resolved to a degree by getting the contractor back to do the cuts much quicker, although the quality was still an issue. The Council had been in negotiation to take back the grass cutting so that the Borough teams could do it.

Councillor Parker asked if the Leader agreed that after the next cut, residents would begin to see an improvement.

The Leader agreed that they would but the quality would still be an issue.

Councillor Joel Edgington-Plunkett asked the Leader the following question:

All wards across the borough had seen vital bus services reduced or removed. Local affordable public transport was vital for the economy, work, medical access and social isolation. Could the borough prosperity fund explore subsidising money for local transport to get the people of the borough moving again?

The borough prosperity fund was called the shared prosperity fund. One of the criteria was supporting decarbonisation and improving the natural environment whole

Council - 06/07/22

growing the local economy. Bids coming forward could be looked at from a transport angle. Through the Town Deal, a new bus service was already planned, going through Keele University, Knutton and Silverdale and into Newcastle. This would be sought to be a green bus service – possibly hydrogen or electric. It was hoped that new services could be replicated out to the north and east of the Borough too.

Councillor Edgington-Plunkett asked if people with bus passes would be included when demand was considered.

The Leader confirmed that the normal discretionary travel situation would be on any new routes which were brought in. When new planning applications were brought in, it needed to be ensured that there were bus services and funding for them to ensure that green travel plans were part of it.

Councillor Mike Stubbs asked the Leader:

On the 15th of June, Lord Giedt was forced to quit as the Prime Minister's Ethics Advisor, the second to do so after Alex Allan quit in November 2020. On Monday, Lord McDonald was forced to write to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards Kathryn Stone over No 10's statements on MP Chris Pincher "to ensure confidence is not eroded in our local democratic process". Does the Leader condone the behaviour of the Prime Minister or does he think that the seven principles of public life are to be ignored like the Prime Minister?

A process was underway regarding the MP in question and nobody could condone that behaviour. The Leader had ensured that this Council's Constitution contained the latest LGA Code of Conduct, relating to Standards and the seven principles. All Members signed up to them and the public could hold the Council to account.

Councillor Stubbs asked:

Staffordshire Police had been told it must improve after being placed in 'special measures' and Staffordshire Fire had also just released figures that their second fire engine had seen its availability go from 95% last year to 70% this year. Would the Leader of the Council apportion the blame for this substandard performance at the door of the Conservative Staffordshire Commissioner Ben Adams, or maybe that of the former Conservative Police and Crime Commissioner Mathew Ellis? Could the Leader guarantee to the residents of Newcastle that the Fire Service would not follow the Police into special measures after the pending HMI report.

The Leader stated that it had been a body blow for the Police coming at a time when changes were taking place with Ben Adams and a new Chief Constable and team. The Leader had confidence that they could deliver for the Police and also the Fire Service which was part of the new joint Commissioner role.

[Watch the debate here](#)

9. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

10. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

11. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

There was no confidential business

**Mayor - Councillor Gillian Burnett
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 8.55 pm