

## **STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL – 28<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022**

**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**

Cabinet met on 19<sup>th</sup> July and 6<sup>th</sup> September; detailed below is a selection of decisions and other actions of the Leader and Cabinet since the last Leader's Statement.

#### **2. Death of HM Queen Elizabeth II**

We have all been saddened by the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and have witnessed an outpouring of both grief and gratitude for her devotion to service and the role she carried out for so long; this has been evident in the Borough with thousands of local people signing a Book of Condolence in Castle House and laying floral tributes in the Queen's Gardens. A Commemoration Service took place at St Gile's Church and an event to mark the National Moment of Reflection was held in Queen's Gardens. Flags on Council buildings were lowered as appropriate.

His Majesty Charles III was proclaimed King in a ceremony at the ancient Market Cross in Newcastle Town Centre.

I would like to thank officers for their work implementing Operation London Bridge which dealt with local protocols relating to the death of a monarch.

To commemorate the long service of Her Late Majesty the Queen, prior to the Council meeting, the Mayor will officially rename the Garden Meeting room in Castle House to the Queen Elizabeth II (QEII) Room. This had originally been planned to celebrate the recent Platinum Jubilee but is now clearly more poignant.

3. **Walleys Quarry Update**

Cabinet received its latest update relating to the on-going problems at Walleys Quarry landfill. Readings from the monitoring equipment and the number of complaints reported during July to August were at their lowest level since reporting began. However, more recently odours have again been detected by both local residents and businesses and the number of complaints has begun to increase. It remains to be seen if the reductions experienced over the summer months are due to work undertaken on site to increase capping and improved gas management or was due to the spell of hot weather.

The court process relating to the appeal by Walleys Quarry against the Council's Statutory Nuisance Abatement Notice is on-going. A pre-trial review took place on 20 September with the final hearing scheduled for 24 October, this is expected to take up to four weeks.

4. **Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023/24 to 2027/28**

Cabinet received an update on the MTFS and the approach being taken regarding savings and income generation proposals ahead of setting the 2023/24 budget in February 2023.

Cabinet noted the on-going impact of rising inflation not only in terms of fuel and utilities, supplies and services but also inflationary costs relating to regeneration projects.

It was also noted that the cost of living reserve built into the budget will help to off-set the financial pressures in the current financial year.

The Deputy Leader has written to the new Chancellor highlighting the challenges facing local government because of the rising costs and its effect on delivering services to residents.

5. **Alternative Fuels – Recycling and Waste and Streetscene HGV's**

The Council has taken a major step towards reducing the level of carbon emissions across all of its services by moving away from 'dirty' diesel to fuelling its HGV vehicle fleet with Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO). This could lead to a further annual 33% reduction in carbon emissions.

A key strand of the Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy is to tackle fuel usage, one of the main contributors to the Council's current carbon emissions, which it has committed to reduce to net zero by 2030.

6. **Financial & Performance Review Report – First Quarter (April-June) 2022-23**

Cabinet reviewed the performance data for Quarter one and noted that performance across the Council remains strong, with 80% of targets being met or within tolerance.

The report indicates that across a number of service areas performance is returning to pre-pandemic levels. For example, at the Brampton Museum, in person visits are back in line with past performance. Likewise at Jubilee 2, memberships are continuing to grow and are roughly in line with projections following a month's closure to allow for the refurbishment of the gym.

Following the adoption of the new Council Plan, performance indicators have been refreshed and the new set of indicators will begin to be reported from the third Quarter of this financial year.

7. **Borough Local Plan**

Cabinet will receive a report at its October meeting mapping out the next stage of the Local Plan process. This will include setting a housing growth figure for the borough and embarking on a Call for Sites public consultation in early 2023.

At its July meeting, Cabinet reviewed a summary of the Issues and Strategic Options consultation which took place over a 14-week period from November 2021 to January 2022, this has helped to inform and shape the next phase of the Local Plan.

8. **Heart of England in Bloom success**

The borough has won the Heart of England in Bloom's small city category and a special award for the upgraded Grosvenor Gardens as well as being granted the borough's 20<sup>th</sup> gold accolade. The borough's participation in the competition brings our communities together and helps make the borough a pleasant place to live, work, shop and visit and we are extremely proud of this year's achievements which builds on 30 years of success in the competition.

Thanks go to all staff and many community groups involved.

9. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan can be found at:-

<https://modern.gov.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/mgListPlanItems.aspx?PlanId=135&RP=118>

**Councillor Simon Tagg**  
**Leader of the Council**