

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL – 23rd NOVEMBER 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 5th & 18th October and 8th November; detailed below is a selection of decisions and other actions of the Leader and Cabinet since the last Leader's Statement.

2. Walleys Quarry Odour Issues

Since the last meeting of Full Council, a settlement has been reached in relation to the Abatement Notice for statutory nuisance served by the Council on the operator of Walleys Quarry Landfill. It has taken over a year of intensive work to get to this point, but the settlement means that an Abatement Notice is now in place requiring Walleys Quarry Ltd to abate the odour nuisance off site, and to prevent a re-occurrence of a Statutory Nuisance.

The agreement also affords the community access to information about activities on the site which will be both welcomed and useful. This will include key documents which set out how Walleys Quarry Ltd manage the site in terms of waste acceptance, gas management, capping and odour management are now available on their website. Our officers have begun a programme of regular meetings with the landfill operator to ensure the Council has up to date information about the implementation of these plans and on their impact.

The operator has also agreed to provide advance notification of activities on site which might give rise to odours in the community, and to record meetings of the Liaison Committee and make these available for the residents to review online and refresh the committee's membership.

The Council allocated substantial funds to enable this case to be progressed and, as part of the settlement, Walleys Quarry Ltd have agreed to reimburse the Council £400k

towards the costs incurred in preparing for the appeal and £60k towards future odour monitoring.

The clock has now restarted on the period the operator has to abate the odour nuisance and Cabinet will ensure that this issue continues to be a key priority for the Council on behalf of the local community.

3. **Future High Street Fund and Town Deals update**

Cabinet received updates on the next stage of the multi million pound investment via the Future High Street Fund and Town Deals for both Newcastle and Kidsgrove. Authority was given to appoint the services of Quantity Surveyors to develop the various projects over the next few years. This will include the redevelopment of the Ryecroft site, York Place, Midway and development of new industrial units at Parkhouse Industrial Estate and Chatterley Valley.

The £23m Town Deal Investment Plan for Newcastle will focus on digital connectivity around the town, sustainable transport and regeneration projects in Knutton and Chesterton.

The £16.9m Kidsgrove Town Deal Investment Plan is focussed on improved connectivity to the railway station and canal network, creating a Shared Service Hub as a community focal point for the town centre as well as an expansion of job opportunities at Chatterley Valley.

4. **Kidsgrove Sports Centre Final Account**

Cabinet signed off the final accounts following the completion of the Kidsgrove Sports Centre refurbishment. The Sports Centre and swimming pool reopened in July and is now run by a community interest company and has been extremely well received by local residents.

The overall cost of the project was £7.7m, this comprised of £4.326m capital funding from the Council, £2.848m Town Deal funding, contributions of £355k from Staffordshire County Council, £205k from Sport England and £21k from the community interest company which also financed additional equipment for the centre.

5. **UK Shared Prosperity Fund Contract Award**

Cabinet endorsed the Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan which supports the following priorities – Community and Place, Local Business and People and Skills.

A Grant Funding Agreement will be entered into with the Government for the borough's allocation of £4.8m after which contracts will be awarded to deliver a range of projects including supporting jobs growth and heritage and culture, enhancing green infrastructure, focussing on small business growth, developing job skills and supporting businesses to take advantage of digital opportunities.

6. **Christmas Car Parking 2022**

Free parking is being provided for shoppers visiting Newcastle town centre in the run up to Christmas until 6th January 2023.

The Midway car park will be free from 10am to 1pm every day. After 1pm it will cost just £1 to park until 8am the next day. Sunday parking is free all year round on Council car parks.

This will support the programme of events including the festive market events, the Christmas lights switch-on and late night shopping on Wednesdays.

7. **Additional Space for Cremated Remains Burial at Bradwell and New Cemetery and Crematorium Regulations**

Cabinet approved the extension of the burial area of Bradwell Crematorium to include part of the open space off Chatterley Drive, this will enable the Council to continue to offer the burial of cremated remains on the site for the next 40 years. The remainder of the open space is protected as a carbon capture area to be planted with trees and the existing children's play area will be retained.

8. **Borough Local Plan – Call for Brownfield Sites**

The Council has launched a Call for Sites as part of the Borough Local Plan process. This is aimed at identifying brownfield sites which can be used to build new houses and attract new businesses.

Prioritising the use of brownfield sites was one of the main requests received from the public during the Issues and Strategic Options consultation which took place earlier this year and will allow the best use of available land to ensure we have appropriate development while protecting green space in the borough.

Cabinet, at its meeting on 5th October, agreed a lower housing growth target based on the nationally set Government standard methodology which is 7,000 homes over the 20 year plan period (350 dwellings per annum). This was also a key request from the public during the consultation.

There will be a further public consultation on Preferred Sites in Spring 2023 after which the Borough Local Plan will be finalised and consulted on again before being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination by the end of 2024. The Local Plan will form an essential framework for the borough's housing, employment, retail, leisure and transport requirements for the period up to 2040.

9. **Financial & Performance Review Report – Second Quarter (July-Sept) 2022-23**

Cabinet received a report detailing Quarter 2 performance at its November meeting. For quarter 2 a total of 34 indicators were reported, with 85% of indicators either hitting their target or being within the tolerance level.

Performance across the Council remains strong, with waste & recycling, planning and indicators relating to the town centre all performing well. One area which was highlighted for specific attention is sickness absence, where the target has been missed for a second consecutive quarter. Cabinet has requested action to ensure that cases of repeated or longer term absence are actively managed, and employees are supported to get back into work.

10. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan can be found at:-

<http://svmma/mgListPlanItems.aspx?PlanId=138&RP=118>

Councillor Simon Tagg
Leader of the Council