

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 15th February, 2023
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present: Mayor - Councillor Gillian Burnett (Chair)

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

Apologies: Councillor(s) Beeston and S Jones

Officers:	David Adams	Executive Director - Sustainable Environment
	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

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Mayor accepted a declaration of interests on behalf of the Officers present in respect of Item 6 (pay policy statement) and a dispensation to remain was granted lest Members required any advice during the debate on that item.

2. **MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 23rd November be agreed as a correct record.

3. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor made two announcements:

- Tickets were now available for the Mayor’s Charity Event to be held on 31st March 2023. It would be a Roaring Twenties Casino Night and also include the Newcastle Borough Heroes Awards for a cost of £55 each. The funds collected will be going to the Veterans and Home Start.
- A further Scrutiny Training session had been arranged for the 2nd March 2023, commencing at 6pm for Members who had not been able to attend the previous session.

[Watch the debate here](#)

4. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGETS & STRATEGIES 2023/24

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Simon Tagg, introduced the report and moved the recommendations which set out the recommendations of Cabinet for Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2023/24.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 to 2027/28, the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy, Capital Strategy for 2023/33, Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 and Investment Strategy 2023/24 were also recommended for approval.

An amendment to the budget was tabled and debated before a named vote was taken.

ADCOCK	N	GROCOTT	Y	STUBBS	Y
ALLPORT	Y	HEESOM	N	SWEENEY	N
BARKER	N	HOLLAND	N	J TAGG	N
BEESTON	ABSENT	HUTCHISON	N	S TAGG	N
BETTLEY-SMITH	N	JOHNSON	N	TALBOT	Y
BROCKIE	Y	D JONES	Y	J WARING	N
BROWN	Y	S JONES	ABSENT	P WARING	N
BRYAN	N	LAWLEY	Y	WHIELDON	N
BURNETT	N	MOFFATT	Y	G WHITE	N
CRISP	N	NORTHCOTT	N	S WHITE	N
DYMOND	Y	PANTER	N	WILKES	N
EDGINGTON-PLUNKETT	Y	PARKER	N	G WILLIAMS	Y
FEAR	N	REECE	Y	J WILLIAMS	Y
FOX-HEWITT	Y	RICHARDS	Y	WRIGHT	Y

GORTON	Y	SKELDING	N		
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In Favour (Y) – 18

Against (N) – 24

Abstain – 0

The amendment failed.

Following a debate on the substantive motion, a named vote was taken in respect of the proposed budget:

ADCOCK	Y	GROCOTT	N	STUBBS	N
ALLPORT	N	HEESOM	Y	SWEENEY	Y
BARKER	Y	HOLLAND	Y	J TAGG	Y
BEESTON	ABSENT	HUTCHISON	Y	S TAGG	Y
BETTLEY-SMITH	Y	JOHNSON	Y	TALBOT	N
BROCKIE	N	D JONES	N	J WARING	Y
BROWN	N	S JONES	ABSENT	P WARING	Y
BRYAN	Y	LAWLEY	N	WHIELDON	Y
BURNETT	Y	MOFFATT	N	G WHITE	Y
CRISP	Y	NORTHCOTT	Y	S WHITE	Y
DYMOND	N	PANTER	Y	WILKES	Y
EDGINGTON-PLUNKETT	N	PARKER	Y	G WILLIAMS	N
FEAR	Y	REECE	N	J WILLIAMS	N
FOX-HEWITT	N	RICHARDS	N	WRIGHT	N
GORTON	N	SKELDING	Y		

In Favour (Y) – 24

Against (N) – 18

Abstain – 0

Resolved: That recommendations (a) to (o), as set out in Appendix ‘1’ of the agenda report be approved.

[Watch the debate here](#)

5. PAY POLICY STATEMENT

The Leader introduced a report seeking Council's approval of the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24.

This was an annual requirement of the Localism Act, 2011 setting out the remuneration of chief officers and the lowest paid employees and the changes in roles and titles of senior officers.

The Statement had changed slightly from last year to reflect the development of the Council's leadership structure.

Resolved: That the Pay Policy Statement, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved.

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader presented the statement that had been circulated and provided an update on the activities and decisions made by himself and the Cabinet to allow questions and comments.

The Walleys Quarry's report referred to would be shared with the Economic Development Scrutiny Committee as well as the Health and Partnership Scrutiny Committee. About Newcastle-under-Lyme 850 Celebrations, Staffordshire County Council and the Synectics Solutions would be respectively sponsoring the Community Champions Awards and the Young Heroes Awards.

Questions were raised by members as follows.

On Paragraph 2 – Walleys Quarry:

- Cllr Brown expressed her disagreement with the use of the word 'consistent' in a recent press release issued by the company to refer to records of improvement in light of the spikes of odour still felt by residents. As there is now only £100,000 reserve in case further legal action is required against £1 million previously set aside Cllr Brown asked officers to confirm there was enough to take any necessary action to hold Walleys Quarry accountable and take them to Court in the event of a breach of the abatement notice.
- Cllr Whieldon wished the leader to confirm that the enhanced communication taking place with the company was working efficiently to reassure the population that everything was being done to solve the problem.

The Leader confirmed that the company would be held to account and that an officer report was awaited at the end of the standstill period in March.

On paragraph 3 – the 850 celebrations:

- Cllr Gorton asked that the relaunch of Newcastle Civic Society that was disbanded in 2020 be considered as part of the borough important legacy,

and for a meeting to be organised on that topic. Cllr Gorton also wished that Josiah Wedgwood be incorporated in history talks scheduled as part of the celebrations for his work as MP and notably leading the opposition to the bill designed to absorb Newcastle into Stoke.

- Cllr G. Williams expressed her concern over the County Council plans to build 100 houses on Wallfields Avenue which forms part of the borough Green Heritage Network and wished the leader to use his influence to make sure all sites on the list are protected.
- Cllr J. Williams asked the Leader to comment on the alteration of the borough's crest in the celebrations' logo.

The Leader welcomed the idea of supporting the relaunch of the Civic Society as well as including Josiah Wedgwood in the celebrations, to be passed on to the Museum staff and discussed with heritage champion Simon White.

About the planning application the Leader shared his opinion that the planning committee should fight the appeal and reminded the Council of the cross party heritage panel that met 18 months ago allowing members to share their view.

Finally the Leader confirmed that the logo created for the celebrations was indeed just for the latter and that the borough's crest would remain in use for all other Council business.

Cllr Jones shared his initial scepticism followed by genuine enthusiasm over a 850 years' celebration and wished to draw the Council's attention to the work of veterinary surgeon Thomas Mayer as well as the Harper & Keele veterinary school – declaring a late interest, being an employee of the latter.

The Leader welcomed the comment and any other suggestion in relation with the celebrations.

On paragraph 4 – Urban Trees Planting Programme:

- Cllr Stubbs wished to know if the programme would cover the replacement of trees damaged by antisocial behaviours.
- Cllr Adcock shared his satisfaction and optimism over the programme which he qualified as a very positive step.
- Cllr Hutchison asked the Leader to confirm the new programme would make a positive difference for the Sandy Lane site compared to the previous one.

The Leader responded to Cllr Stubbs that the tree management plan would need to be consulted as trees are not always replaced, weather conditions being one of the factors to be considered. The Leader thanked Cllrs Adcock and Hutchison for their comments and confirmed that fundings had been put aside for the Sandy Lane site.

On paragraph 5 – Future High Street Fund Update:

- Cllr Brockie wished the Leader to confirm that what was undertaken for Ryecroft and York Place was under continuous review and would remain affordable and responsive to residents and businesses' needs.

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- Cllr J. Williams asked if the Council would have a say on ownership issues.
- Cllr Gorton commented on the inclusion of a multi storey car park and a hotel as part of the regeneration of the town centre and wished the leader to confirm that a report accompanied by business cases and comprehensive data would be submitted to the Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee so that the latter can assess the actual contribution these would bring to the town centre.

The Leader confirmed that the projects were indeed all subject to review by the Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee.

On paragraph 6 - Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy:

- Cllr Crisp referred to an Ordnance Survey research showing that 24% of households don't have access to off street parking, making the charging of electric vehicles difficult; Cllr Crisp wished to know if there was any plans to address the issue.
- Cllr Adcock asked if the Leader agreed that the Midway car park would be untenable as it would not be able to meet the increasing demand for electrical vehicles charging points.

The Leader responded that the two points raised would indeed be addressed as part of the strategy and that government support should be sought as well.

On paragraph 7 - Staffordshire Wide Climate Change Communication Plan:

- Cllr Panter wished to know what measures were taken to ensure that small businesses were engaged in the outlined efforts to promote sustainability and reduce carbon emissions.

The Leader responded that a Net Zero Carbon reduction plan would soon be made a requirement by the government and the Staffordshire Business Environment Network was there to help businesses achieve that. A database of useful contacts was also made available for businesses and the Council tax builder would include tips on how to reduce carbons emissions and increase energy efficiency.

On paragraph 8 – Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner – Safer Streets Round:

- Cllr Parker wished to know if the Council was planning to involve the Street Pastor Scheme and St John's Ambulance to triage people and ease the pressure on Accidents & Emergencies.

The Leader handed over the response to the Portfolio Holder who confirmed the Council would be looking into involving other organisations and took the opportunity to invite members to volunteer for Safer Spaces for women.

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There were no comments or questions on paragraph 9 – the Forward Plan.

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

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. **REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

The report for the Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee had been circulated with the supplementary agenda.

Verbal updates were given for the Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee and Finance Asset and Performance Scrutiny Committee detailing the items discussed at previous meetings.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

8. **REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEES**

Reports for the Audit and Standards Committee and Licensing and Public Protection Committee were attached to the agenda as supplementary items.

A verbal update was provided for the Planning Committee.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

[Watch the meeting here](#)

9. **QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Two questions were received.

Question from Cllr Reece to the Leader of the Council:

“Several Wolstanton residents have raised concerns about the lack of any maintenance programme for trees that line roads and streets in the ward. Many trees are excessively tall or have branches that overhang drives and gardens. Residents are anxious about the potential dangers of falling heavy branches, or even the trees, particularly with the increase in storm and wind surges that have become part of our weather pattern. In view of these concerns is the Leader of the Council content with the current maintenance arrangements? If he shares the concern expressed by residents, will he take up this matter with the County Council with a view to getting a more effective maintenance programme in place?”

The Leader responded that a system is required for tree issues to be reported to the County Council to be taken into account in the tree management work programme and County Councillors may be in the best position to help. Residents are also welcome to outsource tree works themselves subject to these being authorised by the County Council.

Question from Cllr Parker to the Finance, Town Centre and Growth Portfolio Holder, also Deputy Leader of the Council:

“I read with interest the recent article in the Sentinel relating to the closure of Kirkham Jewellers and the redevelopment of York Place. Would the Deputy Leader like to give the Council’s side of the story to set the record straight?”

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The Deputy Leader responded that the article indeed gave a misrepresentation of what happened and that alternative options had been given to the jewellery shop which they decide not to take. Discussions had taken place and a six month notice extended to ten months had been given for the company to relocate.

Cllr Parker asked as a supplementary question how the Council was getting on with the relocation of other businesses.

The Deputy Leader gave examples of local businesses having moved and where they can now be found and others that unfortunately had to close.

[Watch the debate here](#)

10. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

11. URGENT BUSINESS

Members were informed that Dave Adams, Executive Director for Sustainable Environment was retiring after 35 years' service.

The Leader and Councillor John Williams paid tribute to Dave who then responded with thanks.

[Watch the tributes here](#)

12. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

There were no confidential items.

**Mayor - Councillor Gillian Burnett
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 9.31 pm