

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S  
REPORT TO

Council  
28 June 2023

Report Title: *Newcastle under Lyme High Steward*

Submitted by: *Deputy Chief Executive*

Portfolios: *One Council, People and Partnerships, and Culture, Leisure and Heritage*

Ward(s) affected: *All Wards within the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme*

Purpose of the Report

*To seek Council support to the re-establishment of a High Steward for Newcastle under Lyme as part of the legacy programme of the 850<sup>th</sup> Year Celebrations.*

Recommendation

*That Council:*

- 1. Notes the historical role of the High Steward in Newcastle under Lyme.*
- 2. Authorises the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council to further investigate and pursue the relevant processes to re-establish the role of the High Steward for Newcastle under Lyme.*

Reasons

*Until 1956 the Borough appointed a High Steward, which was a ceremonial role, entailing the appointment of a prominent resident for their lifetime.*

*From Museum records we understand that the Loyal Address for the establishment of a High Steward was issued in 1901, upon the death of Queen Victoria, and the role was in place until 1956. After that time, no-one has held this position.*

*This report explores the potential to re-establish the role as a legacy of the Borough's 850<sup>th</sup> anniversary.*

## 1. Background

- 1.1 *High Steward is an honorary title bestowed by the councils or Charter Trustees of certain towns and cities in England. Originally a judicial office with considerable local powers, by the 17th century the role had evolved into a largely ceremonial one. Examples of the ceremonial role in modern times include processing with the Civic party at ceremonial events. The title is usually awarded for life, and in some cases has become associated with a particular peerage title. As of 2007 twenty-four communities have the right to confer the status of high steward, although the office is in abeyance in a number of these (Newcastle under Lyme is not one of the listed communities). These places include Congleton, Ipswich, Chichester, Tamworth and Southwark.*
- 1.2 *The role of High Steward is mentioned in some of the Newcastle under Lyme Charters. It was resurrected in Newcastle in 1901 for reasons unknown, although likely related to the death of Queen Victoria and the subsequent coronation of Edward VII.*
- 1.3 *Such special occasions / anniversaries appear to have been the time when 'loyal addresses' were made - in effect a petition to revive or create the role. Loyal addresses are statements of loyalty to the crown by persons and corporations of esteem on any royal occasion of note. They are thus published infrequently. In the last 40 years, there have only been three occasions whereby loyal addresses and responses have been gazetted (The Silver Jubilee in 1977; the marriage of Charles and Diana in 1981; and the Diamond Jubilee in 2012).*
- 1.4 *The Council minute books do record the creation of the role in Newcastle, but not the reason for doing so. There is a mention of a report, but that is not with the minutes. The minutes do not record how the High Steward was chosen but we know from press reports that Grand Duke Michael of Russia was elected by council. The Grand Duke was present at the 1902 coronation when he was High Steward, although he appears on the list of Foreign Royalty as he was a Romanov. The last High Steward of Newcastle was Lord Webb-Johnson who died in 1958.*

1.5 *The various Acts of Parliament that established the new Local Government areas in 1974 made all prior positions such as High Steward obsolete, unless the area was listed in one of 24 communities who continue to hold the right to appoint a High Steward.*

## 2. ***Update***

2.1 *To date and through the historical records we have not been able to establish why the post of High Steward lapsed but are certain that many areas do indeed have such a ceremonial role. It is understood that a Loyal Address to the Crown is capable of creating such a role in any area although further work is required to establish whether and how the role could be reprised in Newcastle.*

2.2 *In the event that it is possible to re-establish the role of High Steward, a future meeting of Council would be required to define the parameters of the role and the consider prominent residents who might be considered for the role.*

## 3. ***Proposal***

3.1 *That Council:-*

- 1) *Notes the historical role of the High Steward in Newcastle under Lyme.*
- 2) *Authorises the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council to further investigate and pursue the relevant processes to re-establish the role of the High Steward for Newcastle under Lyme.*

## 4. ***Reasons for Proposed Solution***

4.1 *The re-establishment of the role of High Steward will form part of the legacy programme of the Council's 850<sup>th</sup> Year Celebrations.*

## 5. ***Options Considered***

5.1 *The only other option considered was to not re-establish the role of High Steward. However, this ceremonial role historically present in the Borough has been re-discovered and it is considered that its*

*reinstatement would be a fitting legacy of the Council's 850<sup>th</sup> year celebrations.*

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 *These are set out in the body of the report and any further updates required will feature in future reports as the proposal progresses.*

