

**STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL –  
24<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2024**

**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 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023 and 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024, detailed below is a selection of decisions and other actions of the Leader and Cabinet since the last Leader's Statement.

2. **Walleys Quarry update**

Cabinet received an update from officers about a worsening situation at Walleys Quarry landfill following a significant increase of foul odours since November last year. The Council received 203 complaints in December alone, surpassing the total for both 2022 and 2021, with a total of 319 complaints by mid-January.

Cabinet has urged the Environment Agency to use its closure powers to address the persistent issues at the landfill and expressed disappointment at the Prime Minister's lack of response (at time of writing) to a call for a public inquiry into the EA's management of the situation as the primary regulator for the site.

Cabinet also supported increasing a 'Walleys Quarry contingency fund' to £300,000 as part of budget proposals for 2024/25 for legal costs as part of any abatement notice action should the Council's Environmental Health officers deem it necessary.

3. **Technology Strategy 2023-2028**

Cabinet endorsed a new Strategy which sets out the Council's vision for technology and how the Council will continue to utilise it to enable enhanced service delivery to residents and also drive efficiencies across the organisation. The Strategy also sets out the importance of making it easy and inclusive for residents to use online services as a method of interacting with the Council whilst continuing to provide a choice of telephone and in person access for those who do not have access to digital technologies.

#### 4. **Chatterley Valley West**

Cabinet received a report about plans for a high-tech jobs cluster at Chatterley Valley West business park. It is hoped that Lucideon, a leader in materials technology, could become the flagship tenant, anchoring a technology cluster with other similar companies in neighbouring units.

The Chatterley Valley West project, backed by £3.6 million from the Kidsgrove Town Deal and £3.5 million from Staffordshire County Council, has the potential to generate up to 1,700 jobs. The overall Kidsgrove Town Deal, successfully bid for by the Borough Council, includes £16.9 million investment for various initiatives which are fostering local economic growth and providing health and wellbeing for residents such as funding towards the refurbishment of Kidsgrove Sports Centre.

#### 5. **Borough Local Plan Consultation Responses and Next Steps**

Cabinet received a further update on the Borough Local Plan detailing the ongoing review of thousands of comments submitted during the public consultation on potential locations for homes, businesses, community amenities and preserved green spaces. The aim is to achieve sustainable growth, promote investment and secure spaces for leisure, healthcare, education, and transport facilities into the 2040s.

The update report again emphasised the necessity of a Local Plan to prevent a free-for-all scenario for developers.

Cabinet has asked independent consultants to review calculations for the number of homes required during the period of the Plan taking into account the latest national planning guidance.

The Council is following the Government's procedure for implementation of a new Local Plan and Full Council in July will be asked to support the final draft followed by a further public consultation before the Plan is submitted for the Planning Inspector's evaluation before the end of 2024.

#### 6. **Staffordshire County Council Urban Grass Cutting Contract Delivery**

In response to residents' requests for more frequent highway grass verge maintenance, the Council is set to deliver the grass cutting contract on behalf of the County Council from March this year with an enhanced level and quality of cuts. This will also allow coordination with existing mowing work and litter picking in the borough to further enhance the maintenance process. This initiative not only addresses residents' concerns but also reflects the Council's broader commitment to improve overall environmental aesthetics and safety.

#### 7. **Health Inequalities Grant Projects**

Cabinet endorsed a report outlining over £400,000 in initiatives aimed at addressing health inequalities in the Borough. The funds, secured through a successful bid to the County Council, will be allocated to 10 wards where health disparities exist. The focus includes resolving issues related to poor housing conditions, such as damp and mould, infestations, and targeted exercise programs for individuals recovering from illnesses. The financial support, stemming from Covid Outbreak Management Funding, will be distributed across three key areas: a health and care hardship fund for local organisations to address urgent health issues, reinforcement of existing health and wellbeing programs, and targeted interventions to improve housing conditions. The Council aims to act swiftly, with the potential for project extensions based on assessed demand and collaborating with partners to ensure the funds make a meaningful impact in communities.

## 8. **850 Legacy**

At the start of 2024 we can now look back on a wonderful year of 850 celebrations. We brought our communities and partners together with many events across the year to celebrate our Borough's rich history including film shows and concerts enjoyed by 5,600 residents to special exhibitions that attracted over 44,000 visitors. Events such as the Tri-Services Day, Astley's Homecoming, Jazz and Blues weekend, themed markets, and Brampton Medieval Day brought thousands of visitors to our town.

The 850th anniversary propelled our Britain in Bloom entry to be crowned 'best of the best,' earning a national award for the first time. The creation of new events, projects, and sponsorships ensures a lasting legacy for the Borough, exemplified by initiatives like the inaugural 'Borough Heroes Awards,' the planting of the 850 Lyme Forest, subway art and improvements to Queens Gardens and the sponsorship of Aspiration Keele to inspire local students. The collaborative efforts extended beyond official celebrations with local organisations and community groups initiating their own 850-themed events, reflecting the widespread enthusiasm and engagement.

My heartfelt thanks extend to our partners, sponsors, museum and council staff plus volunteers whose dedication and hard work made these celebrations a resounding success.

Looking forward, we are now working to ensure a legacy including: 2024 Borough Heroes awards, the Annual Chris Malkin Memorial History Lecture, a time capsule, promotion of the blue plaque scheme, reformation of a Civic Society, and the installation of a life-size statue of Queen Elizabeth II in Queens Gardens

The last year truly was a great year of celebration, fostering a spirit of community, joy and pride that we eagerly anticipate carrying forward into the future of our loyal and ancient Borough.

## 9. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan can be found at: -

[Forward plan - Cabinet Forward Plan - 1 January to 30 April, 2024 – Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council \(newcastle-staffs.gov.uk\)](https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/forward-plan)

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