

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 24th July, 2024
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present: Mayor - Councillor Barry Panter (Chair)

Councillors:

Adcock	Heesom	Skelding
Allport	Holland	Stubbs
Barker MBE	Fox-Hewitt	Sweeney
Berrisford	Hutchison	J Tagg
Bettley-Smith	Johnson	S Tagg (Leader)
Brown	S Jones	J Waring
Bryan	D Jones	P Waring
Burnett-Faulkner	Lawley	Whieldon
Crisp	Lewis	Whitmore
Dymond	Moss	Wilkes
Edginton-Plunkett	Northcott	G Williams
Fear	Parker	J Williams
Gorton	Reece	
Grocott	Richards	

Apologies: Councillor(s) Beeston, Brockie and Wright

Officers:

Geoff Durham	Civic & Member Support Officer
Simon McEneny	Deputy Chief Executive
Sarah Wilkes	Service Director - Finance / S151 Officer
Georgina Evans-Stadward	Service Director - Strategy, People and Performance
Andrew Bird	Service Director - Sustainable Environment
Gordon Mole	Chief Executive
Craig Jordan	Service Director - Planning
Allan Clarke	Planning Policy Manager

Also in attendance: John Tradewell Staffordshire County Council

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

2. MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 May, 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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The Mayor made no formal announcements.

4. NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 2040

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning - Councillor Fear introduced a report seeking approval for the Final Draft Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Local Plan 2040 and to carry out consultation. Should no matters be raised during the consultation, it was recommended that the Plan be submitted to the Secretary of State for formal examination.

Councillor Fear advised that without a Local Plan in place the Borough would be vulnerable to predatory development and also would run the risk of having a plan written by the Government.

The report was to approve the Draft Local Plan to be sent out for an 8 week consultation with a suite of supporting documents and, following the consultation if a material impact arose, the plan would be brought back to Council for further debate. If no impacts arose then the draft plan, along with the verbatim and unredacted comments made upon it, would be sent to an independent planning inspector who would have the final say on the soundness of the plan or make changes to it.

Councillor Fear stated that if the Council did not have a plan in place by June, 2025 the process would have to start all over again.

The draft plan required developers to build up to 30% of affordable homes, to respect local heritage, consider health impacts of development and increase bio-diversity. It defended public green spaces and would create a third country park.

The Leader seconded the motion and welcomed the reaching of this stage of the draft plan for the Borough. Planning Officers were thanked for the work that they had undertaken to pull the plan together.

Councillor Dave Jones introduced an amendment to the report outlining issues that the Labour Group had identified with the recommendations.

Following a debate on the amendment, a named vote was taken.

ADCOCK	N	GORTON	Y	RICHARDS	Y
ALLPORT	Y	GROCOTT	Y	SKELDING	N
BARKER	N	HEESOM	N	STUBBS	Y
BEESTON	ABSENT	HOLLAND	N	SWEENEY	N
BERRISFORD	N	HUTCHISON	N	J TAGG	N
BETTLEY-SMITH	N	JOHNSON	N	S TAGG	N
BROCKIE	ABSENT	D JONES	Y	J WARING	N
BROWN	Y	S JONES	N	P WARING	N
BRYAN	N	LAWLEY	Y	WHIELDON	N
BURNETT-FAULKNER	N	LEWIS	Y	WHITMORE	N
CRISP	N	MOSS	Y	WILKES	N

DYMOND	Y	NORTHCOTT	N	G WILLIAMS	Y
EDGINGTON-PLUNKETT	Y	PANTER	N	J WILLIAMS	Y
FEAR	N	PARKER	N	WRIGHT	ABSENT
FOX-HEWITT	Y	REECE	Y		

In Favour (Y) – 16

Against (N) –25

Abstain – 0

The motion to amend the recommendations fell and a debate then took place on the original motion.

Councillor Holland, at the recent Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee, had asked what was thought to be of concern with the plan and the response was that the new Government would want to see more development and growth than the Council had planned for. Councillor Holland referred to Policies included in the plan which benefited the Borough and its residents.

Councillor Skelding stated that he wanted to see economic growth in the Borough and the draft plan delivered that.

Councillor Stubbs expressed concerns stating that there were several critical issues with the plan at this stage including the lack of consultation and community engagement which, he stated, the UK Planning Inspectorate often cite as a significant reason for refusal at the Regulation 19 stage. Councillor Stubbs added that the proposed plan raised environmental concerns and that the proposed developments would place pressure on existing infrastructure.

Councillor Bettley-Smith referred to a point raised earlier in the meeting regarding the green belt being lost. The plan promoted opportunities for walking , cycling and horse riding. There was also the tree planting schemes taking place across the Borough.

Councillor Adcock referred to gains within the draft plan, including allowing the Council to designate areas that it wanted to protect.

Councillor Edgington-Plunkett queried whether any major risks had been identified during the consultation process to date.

Councillor Dave Jones stated that the draft plan aimed to take land out of the green belt for development.

Councillor Northcott referred to a number of large estates in Loggerheads that had been built in the absence of a local plan and therefore the Council had been unable to resist development of those sites.

*The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 8.22pm
The meeting reconvened at 8.30pm.*

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Councillor Northcott stated that there had been frustration from members at the Planning Committee when deliberating on applications without reference to a local plan. He was pleased that there was now a policy (PSP 6) in the draft plan that referred to the health and wellbeing of residents of the Borough.

In summing up, Councillor Fear first called for a named vote on this item. He stated that the current Chancellor of the Exchequer had announced that there would be mandatory housing targets imposed across the country. The calculations for housing contained within the draft plan had been run with the standard methodology as recommended by the National Planning Framework. No plan did not mean no development – it meant that the Council lost control over development.

Reference was made to paragraph 3.18, which Councillor Fear felt was really sad. It read ‘employees that live in the Borough tend to earn less than across the region or country’ and Councillor Fear was proud that the draft plan was promoting employment opportunities.

The Leader endorsed all of the comments made by his Group. There had not been an up to date Local Plan in the Borough since 2003. The Council withdrew from the Joint Local Plan in 2021 as it was being tied into city size housing growth figures. The two Authorities were also moving in different directions.

The draft plan would allow the Council to protect the green spaces under its ownership, some of which had already been improved with tree and wildflower planting. Brownfield sites were being prioritised for housing development including the Ryecroft and Midway car park sites. Third party landowners would be able to put land into the plan, which would be assessed on its merits.

A named vote was taken:

ADCOCK	Y	GORTON	N	RICHARDS	N
ALLPORT	N	GROCOTT	N	SKELDING	Y
BARKER	Y	HEESOM	Y	STUBBS	N
BEESTON	ABSENT	HOLLAND	Y	SWEENEY	Y
BERRISFORD	Y	HUTCHISON	Y	J TAGG	Y
BETTLEY-SMITH	Y	JOHNSON	Y	S TAGG	Y
BROCKIE	ABSENT	D JONES	N	J WARING	Y
BROWN	N	S JONES	Y	P WARING	Y
BRYAN	Y	LAWLEY	N	WHIELDON	Y
BURNETT-FAULKNER	Y	LEWIS	N	WHITMORE	Y
CRISP	Y	MOSS	N	WILKES	Y
DYMOND	N	NORTHCOTT	Y	G WILLIAMS	N

EDGINGTON-PLUNKETT	N	PANTER	Y	J WILLIAMS	N
FEAR	Y	PARKER	Y	WRIGHT	ABSENT
FOX-HEWITT	N	REECE	N		

In Favour (Y) – 25

Against (N) –16

Abstain – 0

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Final Draft Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Local Plan 2040 (at Regulation 19 stage), the Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment and supporting documentation be approved for public consultation in line with the approved Local Development Scheme;
 - (ii) That the Service Director (Planning), in consultation with the Strategic Planning Portfolio Holder, be authorised to make any necessary minor typographical changes and modifications to the Final Draft Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Local Plan 2040, Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment prior to consultation;
 - (iii) Subject to the outcome of consultation, and if no matters are raised that materially impact upon the Plan strategy, the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Strategic Planning Portfolio Holder, be authorised to submit the Final Draft Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Local Plan 2040 and supporting documents to the Secretary of State for formal examination by the end of 2024;
 - (iv) That the Service Director (Planning) be authorised to write to the appointed Inspector(s) at the start of the examination of the Final Draft Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Local Plan 2040 requesting them, under section 20(7C) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, to recommend any main modifications necessary to ensure the Plan sound and legally compliant.

At 8.52pm the Mayor allowed a few minutes for the public gallery to clear. At this point, Councillors' Bettley-Smith and Wilkes also left the meeting.

[Watch the debate here](#)

5. URGENT DECISION NOTIFICATIONS - COMMITTEE SEAT ALLOCATIONS

The Leader introduced a report notifying Members of decisions taken by the Interim Chief Executive and Chief Executive respectively, under urgency powers, on 28 May and 16 July, 2024.

Following changes to political proportionality there was a need to review committee seat allocations.

Councillor Dave Jones advised of changes to the Labour group membership on the Planning Committee as follows:

Committee Members would be Councillors' Brown, Gorton, G Williams and J Williams. Councillors' Brockie and D Jones would become substitutes and Councillor Lewis would replace Councillor Stubbs as a substitute.

Resolved: That the decisions taken be noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader, Councillor Simon Tagg presented the statement that had been circulated about the activities and decisions made by Cabinet to allow questions and comments. Reference was made to the Council's Annual Report and the Leader stated that this Council 'made things happen' and this Statement reflected that.

Questions were raised and responses were provided as follows.

On paragraph 2 – Walleys Quarry Update

Councillor Adcock welcomed the activity taking place in respect of Walleys Quarry, including a letter being sent out to the new minister and it was hoped that legal action would finally be approved. It was welcomed that Newcastle's new MP, Adam Jodge had already raised the issue in parliament. The Inquiry held on 23rd July at Castle House had been both productive and useful and was a good opportunity to hear from those most affected. The Leader was asked if he agreed that local campaigners, doctors and the Council were, at significant cost, having to pick up the pieces after the failings of other agencies designed to protect them.

The Leader thanked all members of the Committee of Inquiry and stated that the testimonies of residents had been heartfelt. The Leader agreed that the operator and Environment Agency needed to be held to account for their failings. There was enough evidence to show that there had been failings which would be captured in the final report and then see how that could be used, with Government and to look at ways of trying to get a Public Inquiry.

Councillor Fear asked the Leader if he agreed that yesterday's Inquiry was very informative but also very concerning and if it would be possible for a link to the recording to be sent to the relevant secretary of state so that he may be brought up to date with what had been happening.

The Leader stated that this was a good suggestion and was sure that it could be done.

On paragraph 3 – Town Deal and Future High Street Fund Update

Councillor John Williams asked the Leader for clarification regarding the Ryecroft site – whether it would be houses or apartments.

The Leader stated that houses would be delivered by Aspire Housing and that the social element of those was key.

Councillor Stubbs asked the Leader if the newly elected MP's for Newcastle and Stoke on Trent North had been written to, invited to the Town Boards, if not when it would take place.

The Leader stated that Adam Jogee MP was coming to see him on Friday next and would be invited to the Town Board meetings. The Leader was yet to have a meeting with Mr Williams MP and once that took place he would ensure that he too would have his place on the Board.

Councillor Stubbs, referring to the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 27 June where he challenged the Interim Chief Executive with the lack of physical progress achieved with regard to the Kidsgrove Town Deal over the last six months. He had been assured that all activity had been carried out behind the scenes with a resolution being reached and assurances now in place. The latest update was that a progress report had been received. The Leader was asked if he believed that this was ample progress and was there any news of planning permissions, procurement exercises, contractors or any intended works.

Councillor Paul Waring stated that significant progress had been made regarding the shared services hub. It had been granted planning permission and tender documents were in the process of being prepared. The delay had solely been down to an insurance issue in relation to the mining works that had taken place historically. The railway station was progressing and were also at a stage to prepare the tender documents.

There was an open day on 27 July at Kidsgrove Town Hall with various representatives and plans of proposed buildings. A number of changes of the road network were being considered for the centre of Kidsgrove to enable a more efficient passage of traffic.

The Leader welcomed Kidsgrove Town Council being the leading body on the hub and wished them success.

Councillor Lewis asked about progress with the new market stalls. Initially there had been a lot of progress but seemed to have slowed down.

The Leader advised that the Council was awaiting the delivery of planters for the central part. In the long term, there would be pitches marked out for temporary market stalls as and when required. When stalls were not pitched there, it would be a potential entertainment space. There would also be nipper parking spaces for people making quick visits into town.

Councillor Parker asked The Leader if he agreed that it was important for the new Labour Government to honour the previous Government's commitment to provide further funding to enable levelling up to continue.

The Leader agreed, stating that at the election the new Government had announced 100 towns, of which Newcastle was included, that would receive more levelling up funding and the Government was expected to honour that.

Councillor Whieldon was delighted to see the development of the new Keele University hub in the town centre which would draw younger people into the town.

The Leader welcomed the hub which would hopefully be open by the autumn.
On paragraph 4 – Sustainable Environment Update

Councillor Fox-Hewitt referred to the new piloted Grassland Management Strategy and stated that there had been a number of issues where grass was no longer being cut at some locations in Bradwell, notably Bradwell Crematorium field. The Leader was asked if he would consider placing the Strategy in abeyance and cut the grass as it had been previously. Then to undertake resident and member consultations prior to any decision to recommence with the Policy in Bradwell Ward.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment stated that the Grassland Management Strategy, at a recent meeting of the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE), was discussed in a presentation by officers, to over 300 councils and were congratulated on the Plan. The Plan was currently in phase 1 where, after two years there would be a consultation where a review would be conducted to review the social and environmental impacts.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that he had met with Councillor Fox-Hewitt and had since been corresponding by email to some residents who wanted some grass to be cut. This had now been organised whereby a section had been cleared at the top, centre and bottom of the land to facilitate ball games.

Councillor Parker made reference to the Lyme Valley Parkway and asked the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment pass on thanks to the staff for their hard work in maintaining the Council's wonderful green spaces.

The Portfolio Holder stated that there were 6 green spaces in the Borough that were Green Flag award winners for 2024.

Councillor Edgington-Plunkett asked the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment if it was correct that a number of mowers had been purchased at a lower price than what was recommended and also, if several mowers were currently unusable due to damage.

The Portfolio Holder stated that due to the short notice of awarding the urban grass cutting contract, a rapid recruitment process was undertaken to recruit seasonal and permanent staff. In addition, additional plant and equipment was identified to deliver the contract efficiently and to the required standard. Anticipated ride on mowers were not delivered or available for road use until 18 June. Up to that date the contract had been delivered with older, less reliable machinery which resulted in increased unavailability and no supplier was able to provide short term rentals. Higher than average rainfall also impacted the grass cutting programme.

Councillor Reece referred to grass cutting at Porthill Church where grass cuttings had been left on the pavement and road.

Councillor Stubbs had received correspondence from the Kidsgrove and Staffordshire Lads & Dads organisations noting that the latter had approached the Council to request a meeting regarding grass cutting at Birchenwood. The lease required them to cut the pitches but part of the grant which they got from the Football Foundation required that the pitches had to be of a certain quality. Due to grass being cut around the bowl it was felt that there was a genuine risk that Kidsgrove Lads and Dads could potentially lose their grant or have to stop using Birchenwood. Assurance was sought that this would be dealt with in a speedy manner.

The Leader agreed that this needed to be taken up urgently and asked the Portfolio Holder to speak with officers and report back to Councillor Stubbs.

Councillor John Williams invited the Portfolio Holder to meet him in the Cross Heath ward to view grassland that was two foot high in the Douglas Road area and also at Rogers Avenue where workmen had been but left it untidy.

The Leader stated that there needed to be some balance where long grass was good for wildlife but at the same time there needed to be tidy edges and pathways.

Councillor Lewis asked about concerns raised regarding St James' Church in Audley where the war graves required the grass to be cut to access them. The grounds had now been noted as unsafe and unsteady for the Council to do the grass cutting.

The Leader stated that information would be sought on this and passed to Councillor Lewis. In the past, Councillor Wilkes had arranged for sheep to be put into the churchyard to graze and bring the grass down naturally.

The Portfolio Holder stated that he was aware of this and had asked officers to investigate.

Councillor Dave Jones referred to two areas at the bottom of Church Bank in Keele where grass had been cut and the cuttings deposited in the highway and at one point blocked the grids. He asked for assurance that future grass cuttings would be cleared away.

The Leader stated that due to the spring weather it had been a national problem where the grass had grown longer and had created a backlog. The Council had now caught up and the Council's Service Director for Sustainable Environment would ensure that grass cuttings were blown back onto the grass.

On paragraph 5 – Borough Tree Planting Strategy – Phase 6

Councillor Moss stated that a lot of trees were lost near to Acacia Avenue in Knutton due to the extreme weather earlier in the year. He asked if there were any plans to replace the felled trees.

Councillor Gill Williams asked the Leader if trees that were being damaged by the tractor mowers being used in Cross Heath would be replaced.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment stated that if they were highway trees, they would be covered by the County Council. He would be happy to meet with Councillor Moss to establish the ownership of the trees. Any trees owned by the Borough would be replaced where appropriate.

Councillor Stubbs referred to trees planted in Talke and asked the Leader if he would be as frustrated as himself that two thirds of the trees could be lost in a sea of dock leaves that had taken hold on Coalpit Hill. A guarantee was sought that the invasive spread of dock leaf plants would be removed.

The Portfolio Holder was not aware of the overgrown dock leaf plants but he would be speaking with the officers and would look into getting the dock leaves removed and the area restored.

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Councillor Holland asked the Leader for assurance that, with the backing of an adopted Local Plan, the designation of a carbon capture zone and the planting of trees would be an effective protection for green spaces from a government that may wish to see the compulsory sale of assets by local authorities in the future.

The Leader agreed and stated that part of the policy within the local plan was to protect the carbon capture areas in the future. The Council would protect those areas as much as they could.

On paragraph 7 – Staffordshire Leaders Board

Councillor Holland stated that Stoke on Trent City Council was joining the Leaders Board and asked the Leader for assurance that, if Stoke on Trent would be represented, the Leaders Board would work constructively as a partnership of equals to secure greater devolution and more influence/investments for the districts of the County and would emphatically reject and resist any imposition of a directly elected Mayor or similar devolution type.

The Leader confirmed that that would be the case. He welcomed Stoke City Council being involved in the Leaders Board. It was a board of equals though with different powers, from across the authorities and geography of the county. The Leaders Board had discussed devolution of powers and money which would be a partnership of the County, City and Districts to enable authorities to be where they wanted to be with areas such as education skills or transport.

On paragraph 8 – Delivery of Electric Vehicle Charging through the County Council's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Funding

Councillor Crisp asked the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth how many electric charging points there would be in the new Castle Car Park.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that there were 22 spaces.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment advised Members that a further seven charging points had been installed at the Knutton Lane depot.

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The reports for the Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee, Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee and Finance Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee had been circulated with the agenda.

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, Licensing and Public Protection Committee and the Planning Committee were attached to the agenda.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

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

Question from Councillor Jacqueline Brown to the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning

“Having attended a meeting on Wed 17th July at Silverdale WMC organised by Acre Allotments Association, could the borough council explain the reasoning behind the selection of Traveller and Gypsy Site 8 (T&G 8) in the amendment to Draft Borough Local Plan 2024 as submitted to the Special Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee on 11 July as apparently, suitable for a Traveller and Gypsy site for 5 pitches?”

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning stated that he would supply a written answer to Councillor Brown.

Councillor Brown asked a supplementary question:

“On Monday afternoon (22 July) a site specific selection report was downloaded onto the Council website which mentioned some of the reasons why the site was selected but there were issues with transport, accessibility, natural resources, waste, health and wellbeing. In view of that, Councillor Brown and her residents were surprised that the site had been selected so a full answer to the question would be appreciated”.

The Portfolio Holder assured that Councillor Brown would receive such an answer. He stated that the site had been the product of a long and rigorous look at a large number of sites across the Borough. It was pointed out that the Council was required to look at projected future need for the travelling community. It was a projected form of need so it was quite possible that it would not be required. That would mean that the site would not be developed in the immediate future and if problems presented themselves there would be time for a useful resolution.

Question from Councillor Richard Gorton to the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment

“Will the Portfolio Holder confirm when the abandoned waste bins and other miscellaneous discarded items currently littering part of Orchard Street, Wolstanton will be removed? Despite requests from Wolstanton councillors last month and assurances by Street Scene that the bins and rubbish would be removed, as at 11.00 am yesterday (23rd July), no action appears to have been taken”.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the neighbourhood delivery team were aware of the ongoing issues with discarded rubbish and bins being left out at Orchard Street. It was believed that the area in question was privately owned which would mean that the landlords were responsible for removing the waste. However, as a gesture of goodwill the neighbourhood ranger had been periodically visiting the site and clearing away what he could. Also, engagement had begun with residents to raise awareness of their individual responsibilities in relation to presenting their domestic bins and returning them to their properties after collection. If the problem persisted, the neighbourhood delivery team would consider enforcement action if appropriate but it

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was hoped that the majority of residents would want to do their bit in keeping the area clean and tidy.

Councillor Gorton asked a supplementary question:

“Reassured by the Portfolio Holders answer but it was not just the bins. There was also a lot of miscellaneous rubbish up there. Would that be cleared?”.

The Portfolio Holder stated that he would pass the comments on to the officers tomorrow and arrange for the neighbourhood delivery team and neighbourhood ranger to visit. It was a privately owned area so there may be difficulty and may even need to look at the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act and do a community protection order against the landlord.

[Watch the debate here](#)

10. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

No petitions were handed in.

11. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

12. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

There were no confidential items.

**Mayor - Councillor Barry Panter
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 9.55 pm