

**STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL –
20th NOVEMBER 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 15th October and 5th November, detailed below is a selection of decisions and other actions of the Leader and Cabinet since the last Leader's Statement.

2. **Newcastle Town Centre Regeneration Update**

The regeneration of Newcastle Town Centre on the back of the previous government's Levelling Up agenda is progressing with significant developments across three key sites: Midway, Astley Place (formerly York Place) and Ryecroft.

Cabinet has approved contracts to develop construction drawings, pricing and work programmes for each site, with Ryecroft divided into an Aspire Housing residential portion and a Capital & Centric led residential & Aparthotel. McCarthy & Stone will be submitting plans shortly for a residential development on their part of Ryecroft.

Partial demolition of the old York Place is well underway and expected to be complete by early 2025. Similarly, Midway will close in early 2025 when Castle Car Park opens, allowing development plans to come forward.

The Council will finance these projects, with development partner Capital & Centric purchasing them upon completion, thereby minimizing financial risk and transferring operational risk away from the Council.

Final authorisation to award construction contracts for the three sites will be made by Full Council at a future date.

3. **Contract Award for the Digital Infrastructure Project**

Plans to bring superfast fibre broadband to communities across the Newcastle Town Deal area (urban) were endorsed by Cabinet. This initiative will involve laying up to 50km of fibre

network to provide high-speed internet to homes, businesses and community centres ahead of what can be achieved by mainstream providers.

Investing in the local digital infrastructure will not only boost local growth and support small businesses but will also enhance the access to the internet for residents. It is intended that several community centres will serve as distribution hubs offering opportunities for residents to get online and learn new skills, with support from partners including Keele University

This project, alongside other developments such as the regeneration of Knutton village centre and the expansion of the Newcastle Enterprise Centre, reflects the Council's commitment to urban regeneration.

4. **Borough Local Plan update**

Following the recent eight-week consultation on the new Borough Local Plan, during which there were nine public engagement events across the borough, with comments about the Plan being made via the web portal, email or in written form, there were 1407 individual comments from 427 people and organisations.

The new Local Plan will guide planning decisions about new housing, employment sites, infrastructure, protecting public green space and ensuring sustainable growth that meets the needs of the borough up to 2040. All submissions will be forwarded to the government's Planning Inspector for examination when the Plan is submitted.

Cabinet agreed a report outlining the costs associated with the examination - a crucial step in ensuring that the Local Plan meets all legal requirements. The costs include fees set by Government for the Planning Inspectorate, legal advice and other necessary expenditures to facilitate a thorough and compliant examination. This investment is essential to secure a robust and sustainable framework for future development of the Borough.

5. **Financial & Performance Review Report 2nd Quarter 2024-25**

Cabinet received a report detailing second quarter performance. At the end of September 2024, the Council had 83% of measures on track to meet the 2024-25 target.

All targets around waste and recycling are being met including those around food waste which positions the Council well for future changes to legislation expected in 2025.

Staff sickness absence continues its year-on-year downward trend although winter colds and illnesses will likely see an increase in the coming months which officers will support and manage proactively.

Our town centre remains lively and dynamic with market stall occupancy rates high and car parking tickets over target despite some closures and changes to provision as we move to the next phase of regeneration work.

The Council continues to monitor 'off track' measures and actions and uses this data and stretch targets to ensure continuous improvement to service delivery and resident outcomes.

6. **Civic Pride Campaign**

The Council has launched its Civic Pride campaign which brought together multi-agency partners including Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire County Council, Newcastle Business Improvement District (BID) and Aspire Housing

The initial programme focused on the town centre, highlighted by the inaugural Castle Classics car show which attracted hundreds of car enthusiasts and Remembrance Sunday and featured a range of activities such as daily enforcement patrols, youth engagement, community litter picks, and advice sessions for residents.

Civic Pride is a response to concerns expressed by residents about safety and cleanliness in the borough. It captures a lot of work that already goes on by the Council and its partners and is also a call to arms for everyone – young and old - to play their part.

The positive feedback from residents and the praise from the Local Government Association for our partnership approach underscore the campaign's success. Cabinet is looking to work with local members on the next areas of focus to continue making the wider Borough a cleaner, safer and friendlier place for all.

7. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan can be found at: -

[Browse plans - Cabinet, 2024 – Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council](#)

Councillor Simon Tagg
Leader of the Council