

CABINET

Tuesday, 4th February, 2025
Time of Commencement: 2.00 pm

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Present:	Councillor Simon Tagg (Chair)		
Councillors:	Sweeney Heesom	Fear Skelding	Hutchison
Officers:	Gordon Mole Simon McEneny Anthony Harold Sarah Wilkes Andrew Bird Geoff Durham Paul Dutton Sam Clark Joanne Halliday	Chief Executive Deputy Chief Executive Service Director - Legal & Governance / Monitoring Officer Service Director - Finance / S151 Officer Service Director - Sustainable Environment Civic & Member Support Officer Senior Media Officer Service Director - IT & Digital Service Director - Commercial Delivery	

1. **APOLOGIES**

All members were present.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The Leader provided a verbal update on the urgent business item 10 of the minutes of the previous meeting pertaining to the Devolution Local Government Reorganization white paper.

A number of recommendations had been put forward and agreed by Cabinet before being referred to Full Council who backed them up by 25 to 15 votes. Actions had come out including a petition that was now approaching almost 2,000 signatories in less than a week.

The Leader had also written to the Local Government Minister to press the case for the existing devolution proposals issued by the Staffordshire Leaders Board in September 2024 as a way of delivering devolution without the unnecessary cost and disruption of local government reorganization.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2025 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

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4. WALLEYS QUARRY ODOUR ISSUES

The Leader introduced the report on Walleys Quarry, advising members that the operator's request to re-open the landfill during the appeal process had been turned down meaning this would remain closed until the hearing which was a victory for local people. The Leader had also contacted the Secretary of States and asked that the appeal be heard sooner rather than later.

The Chief Executive presented the report including latest figures regarding odour complaints which had increased further in January. Members were informed that the Council would have a seat at the appeal hearing and confirmation was provided that the site would remain closed until then further to a judgement from the Royal Court of Justice issued on 30th January.

The Leader commented on the figures and the upcoming capping of the site which would hopefully help reduce the number of odour incidents.

Cllr Fear expressed his despondency at the rise of complaints along with his hope that things were indeed heading in the right direction.

The Deputy Leader while sharing his feeling added that the timetable suggested that a lot of things would be happening in February and the situation with the operator would likely have evolved by the end of the month.

Cllr Skelding seconded Cllr Fear's comments and said being pleased that the request to re-open had been overturned. There seemed to be a correlation between the number of incidents recorded and the weather conditions and it was important for residents to keep logging in complaints.

The Leader concluded that the outcomes of the appeal would be the next step. The Council would have their say and aid the Environment Agency in making the right decision. The Secretary of States would have a role to play in bringing this forward sooner.

Resolved: That the update report be received and noted.

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5. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS AND STRATEGIES 2025/26

The Deputy Leader introduced the report on the Capital Strategy for 2025-35 as well as the Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy and Commercial Strategy for 2025-26.

The Leader thanked the Deputy Leader and the Finance team for their work in preparing the report and strategies.

The budget and strategies would be submitted to Full Council the following Wednesday including a 1.99% Council Tax increase towards services and programmes such as the Civic Pride which would be enabled through the Civic

Growth Fund, and the Borough Fund. The budget also included a 4% reduction in funding following changes in government.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Revenue and Capital Budgets as detailed in this report and in the report to Cabinet dated 9 January 2025, be recommended to Full Council for approval.
 - (ii) That the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2029/30 (Appendix 2) be recommended to Full Council for approval.
 - (iii) That the strategy for ensuring a balanced revenue outturn position for 2024/25, be approved.
 - (iv) That the calculation of the Council Tax base and a proposed Council Tax increase for 2025/26 of 1.99% per Band D equivalent property be recommended to Full Council for approval.
 - (v) That the risk assessment at Appendix 3 and the Section 151 Officer's recommendation on the level of reserves and contingencies provisionally required to be maintained in 2025/26 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
 - (vi) That the Civic Growth Fund priorities for 2025/26 be approved.
 - (vii) That the Capital Strategy (Appendix 5) for 2025/35 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
 - (viii) That the Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix 6) for 2025/26 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
 - (ix) That the Investment Strategy (Appendix 7) for 2025/26 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
 - (x) That the Commercial Strategy (Appendix 8) for 2025/26 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
 - (xi) That the updated Asset Management Strategy (Appendix 9) for 2023/28 be recommended to Full Council for approval.
 - (xii) That the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Appendix 10) for 2025/26 be recommended to Full Council for approval.

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6. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT - THIRD QUARTER 2024/25

The Deputy Leader presented the Financial Performance report.

The Leader invited portfolio holders to comment on performance indicators.

Priority 1 – One Council delivering for Local People

Cllr Hutchison reported that food business inspections had been overall completed on time except for June due to staff unavailability which had affected the yearly figure.

The Leader commented that the percentage of complaints processed in good time was slightly below target for quarter 3 and data was awaited for quarter 4. Staff turnover as for itself was meeting the target and was currently going through scrutiny. Finally the total number of online transactions was below target but this wasn't necessary a bad thing as more information being now available on the website and / or through relevant services meant that people did not need to engage through the process of transactions as often as before.

Priority 2 – A Successful and Sustainable Growing Borough

Cllr Fear thanked the planning section for the hard work put in and reported that in relation to the percentage of complainants informed within the required timescales of actions to be taken about alleged breaches of planning control things were going in the right direction despite having been impacted by work absences and capacity.

Priority 3: Healthy, Active and Safe Communities

Cllr Hutchison reported that the garden waste tonnages were down in December which explained the recycling and composting figures. Work was being done with targeted communications to improve recycling rates.

The Leader asked about street cleanliness and street scene.

Cllr Hutchison responded that a lot of leaves had been blown around in November and December due to the stormy weather which explained the slightly negative trend although the target was still largely met.

Cllr Skelding reported that the number of visitors for the museum collections had also been impacted by the severe weather conditions however it should be noted that these still attracted more than 60,000 people over the course of the year which was an overwhelming achievement. Shows were being put on and the museum was gaining recognition as demonstrated by the Enjoy Staffordshire Tourism Award.

About the Jubilee 2 Customer Satisfaction Net Promotor Score, the national average was 28 which was only just above that of Newcastle. The indicator was currently under review in the view of replacing it with a simpler and more accurate model. The membership growth was well above target.

Cllr Heesom reported on community safety and wellbeing.

Homeless presentation had dropped down for quarter 3 and the Council was working with partners to tackle antisocial behaviour. Crimes were reducing especially in the town centre. Disability grants had reduced to a manageable level and the Vulnerability Hub continued to work with a high number of cases, the current concern being the cold weather.

Priority 4: Town Centres for All

The Leader commented on the healthy figure for footfall and the regeneration projects bringing more people into the town.

The Deputy Leader shared the Leader's enthusiasm.

Resolved: That the contents of the report and appendices be noted and that the Council's service and financial performance for this period continue to be monitored and challenged.

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7. TREE RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment introduced the report on the Tree Risk Management Strategy aimed at ensuring that the Council's increasing and maturing tree stock was managed to an acceptable standard to members of the public, property and buildings.

The Leader endorsed the risk management strategy commenting this wasn't something new but needed to be updated on a regular basis to make sure the right processes were in place to ensure the safety around the trees, particularly relevant in the recent context of extreme weather events.

The Deputy Leader mentioned receiving complaints about there being too many trees in Clayton, which was a sign that things were actually going well.

The Leader added that the County Council had mirroring policies in relation to their own trees stock and the rest of the population just wanted for the trees to be well looked after.

Resolved: (i) That the Tree Risk Management Strategy be endorsed.

(ii) That the Tree Risk Management Strategy be adopted as policy.

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8. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2025/28

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning introduced the report on the Local Development Scheme 2025-28 following up on the Deputy Prime Minister request for local planning authorities to produce and publish an updated scheme by 6th March 2025. A timetable was to be agreed for the preparation of a new Local Plan in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Leader commented that the previous joint local plan with Stoke-on-Trent hadn't worked and the Borough Local Plan currently going through the inspection process would ensure government requirements were being met.

Resolved: That the update to the Council's Local Development Scheme ("LDS") for the period 2025-28, be approved.

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9. FORWARD PLAN

The Leader presented the latest edition of the Cabinet Forward Plan.

Resolved: That the Forward Plan be received and noted.

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10. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

11. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

There were no confidential items discussed.

**Councillor Simon Tagg
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 2.45 pm