

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 16th April, 2025
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present:

Councillors:	Beeston	Heesom	Skelding
	Berrisford	Holland	Stubbs
	Bettley-Smith	Hutchison	Sweeney
	Brown	Johnson	J Tagg
	Bryan	D Jones	S Tagg (Leader)
	Burnett-Faulkner	Lawley	J Waring
	Casey-Hulme	Lewis	P Waring
	Dymond	Northcott	Whitmore
	Edginton-Plunkett	Parker	G Williams
	Gorton	Reece	J Williams
	Grocott	Richards	

Apologies: Councillor(s) Adcock, Allport, Barker MBE, Crisp, Fear, Fox-Hewitt, S Jones, Whieldon, Wilkes and Wright

Officers:	Gordon Mole	Chief Executive
	Simon McEneny	Deputy Chief Executive
	Anthony Harold	Service Director - Legal & Governance / Monitoring Officer
	Sarah Wilkes	Service Director - Finance / S151 Officer
	Geoff Durham	Civic & Member Support Officer
	Sam Clark	Service Director - IT & Digital

1. ELECTION OF MAYOR

One nomination was received, for Councillor Bettley-Smith.

This was proposed by Cllr Simon Tagg and seconded by Cllr Sweeney.

Resolved: That Councillor Robert Bettley-Smith be appointed as Mayor for the remainder of the 2024-25 Municipal Year.

The meeting was adjourned whilst the Mayor Elect was invested with the chain of office.

The Mayor took the chair and made the declaration of acceptance of office.

The Mayor made the following appointments:

- **Mayoress:** Mrs Judy Bettley-Smith
- **Chaplain:** Rev. Tim Watson
- **Mace Bearers:** Ms Jenny Otter and Mr Glenn Martin-James

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2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Holland, as a member of the Planning Committee, stated that all members of the Planning Committee should be aware that item six of this agenda related to items that had yet to be determined by this Authority and therefore their interest should be noted.

3. MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 March, 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor thanked those present for electing him to the office of Mayor for the remainder of the current Municipal Year.

The Mayor paid tribute to the late Mayor, Councillor Barry Panter and stated great respect Members held for their late friend and fellow Councillor.

As Deputy Mayor, Councillor Bettley-Smith had hosted a Charity Ball last month, celebrating the life of Barry Panter which had raised over £2,200 towards Mayor Panter's charity fund.

[Watch the announcements here](#)

5. CONTRACT AWARD FOR ASTLEY PLACE, MIDWAY CAR PARK AND THE RYECROFT DEVELOPMENTS

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Simon Tagg introduced a report and moved the recommendations providing an update on the Astley Place, Midway Car Park and Ryecroft developments in the town centre and to agree a contract award for the three projects.

The three projects represented a combined investment of over £85m in committing to create a vibrant, thriving town centre.

The former York Place site was now partially demolished paving the way for the new development. The Midway car park was now ready to be repurposed and redeveloped and the Ryecroft was earmarked for housing and a hotel.

Financing for the developments was structured to ensure cost certainty and minimised financial impact of the Council, building on the Future High Street and Town Deal Funds. A short term financing model coupled with a buy-back agreement was detailed in the agenda report which limited the Council's borrowing to the duration of the building phase.

Councillor Sweeney seconded the recommendations and reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Stubbs stated that the redevelopment would inject new life into the town centre and create much needed economic revitalisation. The projects would provide enhanced urban living and the amenities would create an attractive and convenient living environment. The proposed financial model, involving short term borrowing would significantly reduce interest costs. However, there were still financial risks as the Council would need to secure substantial funding up-front and any delays could strain the Council's financial resources. In addition, the reliance on external grants introduced a level of uncertainty. There would also be disruption in the town centre during the construction phase. Councillor Stubbs stated that it was important to note that the three developments would result in a reduction of the Council's asset base.

Councillor Paul Waring welcomed Capital&Centric's approach to retaining and re-engineering the existing structures which was a good example of sustainable development. The funding model was innovative and was an excellent example of how public sector funding could go hand in hand with private sector funding.

Councillor Gorton raised a question on paragraph 2.16 of the report which stated that Capital&Centric were currently in discussion with Homes England regarding a grant from their BIL programme to subsidise some of the project costs. He asked, how confident was the Council that the funding from the BIL programme would be secured and was there an alternative plan should the decision go against or less than was hoped was received.

Councillor Parker welcomed the fact that Joules Brewery would incorporate a live music venue into the Astley Place development adding a vibrant and cultural element to the project and compliment the already thriving night-life in the town.

Councillor Sweeney stated that the Council was not reliant on the Homes England funding; it would be a bonus if it was received. It was an exciting project and the funding model was good. The Council financed everything and after Capital&Centric have completed building, they pay all of the money back to the Council including any interest and if the market value was higher.

Councillor Richards asked if adequate contingencies been put in place due to the economic climate and cost of materials.

Councillor Holland stated that he would much rather see the Ryecroft and former Civic offices sites redeveloped than sitting on the Council's assets book doing nothing. He had great confidence in Capital&Centric having seen some of their other work.

In summing up, the Leader stated that the development was not reliant on the Homes England bid being successful. Regarding disruption in the town during construction, the Council had a good record of the works going on to date with disruption at a minimum.

A comment had been raised as to whether too many properties were being built and wouldn't be taken up. The Local Plan, currently being inspected included a commitment to build on brownfield sites and there was the requirement from the Government to build houses.

Resolved: (i) That the progress made to date by Capital&Centric on the partially demolished Astley Place development project in Newcastle Town Centre, be noted.

- (ii) That the progress made to date by Capital&Centric on the Midway Car Park development project in Newcastle Town Centre, be noted.
- (iii) That the progress made to date by Capital&Centric on the Ryecroft development project on Newcastle Town Centre, be noted.
- (iv) That expenditure of up to (either £18,213,758 in total or £16,111,895 minus costs already approved) be approved to complete the Astley Place scheme to practical completion in readiness for occupation.
- (v) That expenditure of up to (either £37,518,885 or £35,954,885 minus costs already approved) be approved to complete the Midway scheme to practical completion in readiness for occupation.
- (vi) That expenditure of up to (£34,444,256 or £33,131,668 minus costs already approved) be approved to complete the Ryecroft scheme to practical completion in readiness for occupation
- (vi) That the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth, and Portfolio Holder for One Council, People and Partnerships, be authorised to progress legal agreements, subject to planning approval, to enable the appointment of Capital&Centric under a Development Services Agreements (DSA) for the development of all three schemes through a direct award under the Pagabo Development Management Framework;
- (viii) That the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth, and Portfolio Holder for One Council, People and Partnerships, be authorised to progress the legal agreement for the 'buy back' of the schemes by Capital&Centric upon completion of the developments.
- (ix) That the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth, be authorised to progress the legal agreements with Homes England to accept a grant as a subsidy for the development and become the accountable body for the grant, subject to Homes England approving the grant.

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. CONSTITUTION UPDATE - OUTSIDE BODIES

The Leader introduced a report reviewing the framework for appointments onto outside bodies and updating the constitution accordingly and moved the recommendations.

A Constitution Working Group had recently been convened and a number of issues had been raised.

The Leader made reference to the final recommendation, to undertake an annual review of the constitution to allow the safe and mature running of the Council.

Councillor Sweeney seconded the recommendations.

Councillor Dave Jones stated that the Constitution Working Group did some thorough work on this and the Labour group were pleased to endorse the report.

Councillor Holland moved a grammatical correction to recommendation (i)(a) requesting that 'a 4-year terms of office' be amended to read correctly.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Service Director, Legal & Governance, be authorised to make the following amendments to add the following to section B1:6 of the Council's constitution.
 - (a) 6.2 Appointees to Outside Bodies will serve a 4-year term of office on Outside Bodies.
 - (b) 6.3 Council portfolio holders shall be appointed as of right to designated outside bodies.
 - (c) 6.4 Appointees to Outside Bodies shall provide a bi-annual report in relation to the business carried out/matters dealt with by the relevant Outside Body to full Council as appropriate.
 - (ii) That the undertaking of an annual review of the Constitution including updates to the Scheme of Delegation and legislative changes, be endorsed.

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. URGENT DECISION NOTIFICATION - COMMITTEE SEAT ALLOCATIONS

The Leader introduced a report asking Members to note a decision made by the Council's Chief Executive to re-allocate seats on committees following the resignation of Councillor Moss.

Resolved: That the Urgent Decision notification be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

8. 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.

Questions were raised and responses were provided as follows.

On paragraph 2 – Walleys Quarry Odour Issues

Councillor Dave Jones stated that the Environment Agency (EA) made a better operator than regulator as issues had plummeted since they had been in control of the site. The Leader was asked if he agreed that this vindicated all along that the problems with the site had been down to a rogue operator who had been unable to manage the site properly.

Councillor Holland stated that the EA was a broken regulator, however, since they had been stewarding the site things did appear to be improving. The Leader was asked if he thought that the measures being taken would, in the long term significantly improve things and would it make the quality of life better for nearby residents.

The Leader agreed with both Members and stated that it was key now that capping was completed and restored and that gas management was undertaken safely. This Council would continue doing what it had been – in holding whichever operators of the site to account for any odours. The report stated that future works may create an increase in odours but this had to be seen in the context of the improvement in the long term.

On paragraph 3 – Proposed Creation of Lyme Park Countryside Park

Councillor Northcott stated that this was a wonderful initiative which would help the community's health and wellbeing as well as protecting a significant part of the former golf course. The standard of grass cutting had been better this year than in previous years. The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment, Councillor David Hutchison was asked to thank the grass cutting teams and to comment on how this could be sustained for the rest of the year.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment stated that grass cutting was at a frequency of eight cuts per year starting in March. Two permanent and three seasonal staff had recently been employed. Four ride on mowers were procured last year and a further five had now been ordered to supplement the existing mowing fleet.

Councillor Dave Jones also thanked the Council's grass cutting team. He stated that the creation of a Countryside Park was a fantastic amenity and bringing in more manageable paths would make it even more useable. A significant issue at present was anti-social behaviour caused by dirt bikes going around and asked for a pledge that when the country park was established that it be ensured that all measures be taken to prevent the access of these vehicles.

The Leader agreed with the issue of the dirt bikes and stated that prevention measures should be investigated. The Police were currently targeting the problem, across the Borough.

Councillor Holland stated that it was under the Labour administration that the former golf course closed and failed to reopen as a golf academy and the site had been left since then. The previous Joint Local Plan would have created 1800 homes on the site. The Leader was asked if he agreed that the Labour group should be ashamed of its record or be grateful to the current Administration for the designation of the country park and planting of 850 trees, meaning that two thirds of the site would be protected against development.

The Leader agreed and stated that it was about doing the right thing. The Council needed to provide new housing within the Borough at a sustainable level. The site was not sustainable as a golf course and this proposal was in the best interest of the Borough with 66% of the site protected from housing development.

On paragraph 4 – Expansion of Recycling Materials Collected to include Flexible Plastics and Cartons

Councillor Edgington-Plunkett stated that this was good to read and really good that there were information stickers to guide people and would be welcomed by all residents.

Councillor Bryan stated that expanding the service ahead of the deadline was a great step towards further sustainability and make the recycling service more convenient for residents. The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment was asked if he felt that it would help to increase the Council's recycling rate even further.

Councillor Richards asked what happened to the things now able to be recycled that could not be done before.

The Portfolio Holder stated that increasing what was collected was beneficial in many ways. It would further boost recycling performance which was currently at 53%. It would also reduce carbon emissions and help with net zero objectives. The Council was currently looking at places where the plastic bags and films and wrappers could be sent to.

Councillor Grocott echoed everything that had been said and thanked the Portfolio Holder and the recycling team.

On paragraph 5 – UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) 2025-26

Councillor Jill Waring stated that she was pleased that the Council had secured a further £1.5m through the Fund to support community projects. The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing, Councillor Gill Heesom was asked for an update on the development of Navigation House.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing state that Navigation House would fulfil two roles; it would be a multi-agency assessment centre where rough sleeping or vulnerably housed individuals could be engaged with services – gaining advice, support and help. It would also provide safe, secure accommodation for individuals ready to engage with services and to secure a pathway into secure accommodation.

Work was ongoing to refurbish Navigation House with completion due later this year and invitations have been published to tender for the management and delivery of the supported accommodation to ensure that a provider was in place upon completion of the refurbishment works.

Councillor Gorton welcomed the collaboration with Keele University to encourage the creation of local businesses and the University's expertise would be used to benefit the wider community. The Leader was asked if he could be more specific, whether any projects had been finalised with Keele. If not, when could the Council expect to see projects launched and would the Council commit to publishing a report which would be made available to Members which recorded how the funding was being used.

Councillor Holland stated that it was welcome that the Council had received further investment from the Fund which was designed to replace the Strategic European Union Grant.

The Leader stated that the Cabinet agenda provided details of projects that were upcoming. Working with Keele University was one of the Council's priorities having

worked with them a lot previously on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Town Deal and Future High Street Funds.

The Fund was previously given for three year funding, committed under the previous government but now it was only one year funding.

On paragraph 6 – Devolution and Forced Local Government Reorganisation (FLGR)

Councillor Berrisford believed that the Council's firm stance against forced reorganisation showed a strong commitment to the Borough's history of local governance. The Leader was asked when he expected to hear the Government's response to the Council's Interim Plan.

The Leader stated that the Council was hoping to receive a response from the Government in early May after which, more discussions could be held with partners.

Councillor Gorton drew Members' attention to the statement by the Chairman of the Staffordshire Leaders' Board which read "there is a growing consensus that a more strategic authority would bring extra investment and freedoms to boost our economy further. This is the real prize we are working towards". While there were many benefits of a strategic authority, we don't want the body to be run by a Mayor. Did the Leader believe that this Council should join the growing consensus and support the creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority.

The Leader stated that at the previous meeting, it was resolved that it was in the Council's Interim Plan that a Strategic Authority would be supported but there was no need for an Elected Mayor. There were some benefits from a Strategic Authority, which all Leaders from Stoke and Staffordshire districts agreed last year that it was a programme that could take Authorities through on devolution under the Leaders' Board but the government wish to enforce Elected Mayors.

Councillor Dave Jones stated that at the previous meeting of the Full Council the report identified potential merger options with neighbouring Authorities. The Leader was asked if he had had any conversations with the other Councils and if so, Could he update Members on the outcome of those discussions.

The Leader stated that the options were investigations. The recommendations had been that the two-tier system was best for the Borough and should stay in place. Ideas were put forward and the preferred option went in with the bid. At the last Council meeting it was resolved that this Council wished to see either the two-tier preserved or that it become a Newcastle Unitary Authority.

On paragraph 7 – Borough Heroes Awards 2025

Councillor Skelding extended congratulations to the winners of the awards and thanked everyone involved in the awards including sponsors. In addition he showed his appreciation to everyone nominated for awards.

Councillor Dave Jones extended his groups congratulations to those who won awards and those who were unsuccessful. The Council should be proud that it had residents within its Borough that were so embedded and had such great achievements.

Councillor Parker stated that the Heroes Awards were now in its third year and was a wonderful initiative celebrating the contribution of individuals who had made a

significant impact on the community. Recognising local heroes not only highlighted their dedication but also inspired others to get involved. He was pleased to see Andrew Van Buren receive the Lifetime Achievement Award for promoting the work of Philip Astley.

The Leader echoed all comments and added that it was pleasing to see the happiness in the faces of the recipients of the awards.

The Mayor stated that on Saturday 19th May – World Circus Day, he would have the privilege of visiting the Astley Centre.

Resolved: That the statement of the Leader of the Council be received and noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

9. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEES

Reports for the Licensing and Public Protection Committee, Audit and Standards Committee and the Planning Committee were attached to the agenda.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

10. QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

No written questions had been submitted.

11. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

12. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

13. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

There were no confidential items.

14. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Reports for the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee, the Health Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee and the Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee were attached to the agenda.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

Council - 16/04/25

**Cllr Robert Bettley-Smith
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 8.36 pm