

**STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO FULL COUNCIL –
16th APRIL 2025**

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 4th February and 18th March, detailed below is a selection of decisions and other actions of the Leader and Cabinet since the last Leader's Statement.

2. **Walleys Quarry Odour Issues**

The appointed liquidator for Walleys Quarry Ltd. has now declaimed the landfill site and its associated permits, meaning that the liquidator has no further interest in the site. At a public meeting of 20th March 2025, the Environment Agency (EA) confirmed it would now work on site to deal with any issues of serious pollution. The site will transfer to the Crown Estate.

The EA has also published an online series of Frequently Asked Questions, which can be accessed on the EA's Engagement website ([Walleys Quarry Landfill Site | Engage Environment Agency](#)), which sets out the roles and responsibilities for the site.

On 1st April, the EA published the following information:

'As part of the steps we have arranged at Walleys Quarry to remove the risk of serious pollution, our contractors have begun removing surface water accumulated in the void area adjacent to the western flank of the site, where there have also been signs of slippage under the capping.

Our contractors have made a small slit in the capping, which was identified as having been stretched more than we had anticipated. This is to facilitate drainage of the leachate that had built up behind it. The drainage is likely to last several days. The leachate will be disposed of off-site appropriately. These works may lead to a temporary increase in odour around the site.

This week (week commencing 31 March 2025) our contractors will continue work in the void area. You may see additional machinery and materials arriving on site'.

The Council continues to monitor odour, which has been significantly lower with February seeing a significant reduction against the key performance indicators: percentage exceedance of the WHO annoyance level, monthly average for H2S and the maximum level of H2S recorded at each monitoring station.

Residents experiencing gas odour issues are asked to continue to report these to the EA and to the Council.

I chaired a briefing meeting for elected stakeholders (Leaders of Councils and our local MP) on 18th March and have asked that further information is provided on national funding for full site restoration. Officers are engaging with key agencies in looking at wider plans for recovery of the site, with updates being provided through the regular reporting to Cabinet.

3. **Proposed Creation of Lyme Park Countryside Park**

Cabinet approved the creation of a new countryside park at Silverdale and Keele, protecting a significant part of the former Keele Golf Course as a vibrant green space to be known as Lyme Park. It will encompass the woodlands, mature trees and greens, enhanced with well-designed walking and cycling routes, linking to the Lyme Forest, which was planted to celebrate the borough's 850th anniversary.

As well as maintaining a large green space for community's health, well-being and recreation, Lyme Park supports the council's tree planting strategy, contributing to carbon capture, biodiversity preservation and nature recovery. With protection of 66% of the former Golf Course from development, Lyme Park can become like the other fabulous parks and open spaces in the borough, a cherished community asset for generations to come.

4. **Expansion of Recycling Materials Collected To Include Flexible Plastics & Cartons**

Cabinet endorsed an early expansion of the Council's kerbside recycling service, that began in early April. Residents can now recycle flexible plastics, such as bags, films and wrappers, as well as food and drink cartons, including Tetra Pak, two years ahead of the mandatory deadline set by the UK Government.

The council's decision to implement these changes early is not only part of our commitment to recycling and sustainability but also to make the service as easy and as simple as possible for residents to use. By expanding the range of recyclable materials, the council aims to boost recycling performance.

Information stickers will be added to blue bins to guide residents on the new items accepted, and the updated list is available on the council's website and promoted via social media channels.

This proactive approach underscores the Borough Council's leadership in recycling initiative in Staffordshire, having been the first council to provide separate weekly food waste collections since 2010.

5. **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) 2025-26**

The Council has secured £1.5 million via the UKSPF to support a variety of community projects over the next 12 months. This new funding follows the successful delivery of £4.8 million worth of schemes aimed at enhancing community and place, improving people's skills, and supporting local businesses.

Funding will be allocated to local projects, including initiatives to help vulnerable residents, such as those struggling to access services after hospital or prison discharge, and those with mental health issues. Additionally, the funding will support the development of Navigation House, a facility aimed at helping vulnerable people stay off the streets and will provide resources for Keele University students and graduates to assist in developing local businesses and community groups.

The council's commitment to fostering Civic Pride and improving local amenities is evident in our ongoing efforts with partners to regenerate urban spaces, support small businesses, and promote volunteering opportunities. This latest round of funding is expected to bring further positive changes to reinforce a sense of community and improving the quality of life for residents.

6. **Devolution and Forced Local Government Reorganisation (FLGR)**

Following the special Full Council Meeting the Council submitted its Interim Plan on Devolution and council reorganisation to the Government on March 22nd.

The Council has taken a firm stance against forced local government reorganisation, advocating for the preservation of the existing two-tier system or a preferred option of a Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Unitary if FLGR is imposed by the Government and emphasised that any changes to local governance should ultimately be decided by residents through a Borough-wide referendum.

I have invited Jim McMahon OBE, Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, to visit the Borough to witness first-hand how current services are delivered locally.

There is still no compelling evidence that a larger more distant single-authority system would enhance services for residents. The Council firmly opposes Stoke-on-Trent City Council's proposal of for a North Staffordshire Unitary Council. Over 7,500 people have now signed the Save Our Borough petition.

To deliver Devolution, the Council supports the creation of a Strategic Authority to address region-wide issues like transport, infrastructure, skills and jobs which is in line with a submission to Government by Staffordshire Leaders Board in September 2024. A Strategic Authority would not deliver day to day local services to residents.

7. **Borough Heroes Award 2025**

The Borough Heroes Awards, organised by the Borough Council and now in its third year, celebrates the extraordinary contributions of local individuals who have made a significant impact in their communities. The 2025 awards saw four worthy winners:

Rosie Howells, the winner of the Civic Pride award, has dedicated over 40 years to leading Girlguiding groups in Newcastle-under-Lyme, fostering skills, friendships and community support among young girls. Adam Pritchard, our Young Hero winner, has shown remarkable dedication to Scouting since the age of six, balancing his commitments with high-level hockey and serving as a role model for younger Scouts. Poppy Edwards, the Sporting Hero winner, has overcome personal challenges to excel in kickboxing and boxing, winning numerous titles and medals, and inspiring others through coaching. Andrew Van Buren, honoured with the Lifetime Achievement award, has tirelessly promoted the legacy of Philip Astley, the founder of the modern circus, significantly contributing to the cultural heritage and regeneration of Newcastle.

These remarkable individuals exemplify the spirit of community and dedication in our borough, making them true heroes in their own right – Well done to all the winners!

8. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan can be found at: -

[Browse plans - Cabinet, 2025 – Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council](#)

Councillor Simon Tagg
Leader of the Council