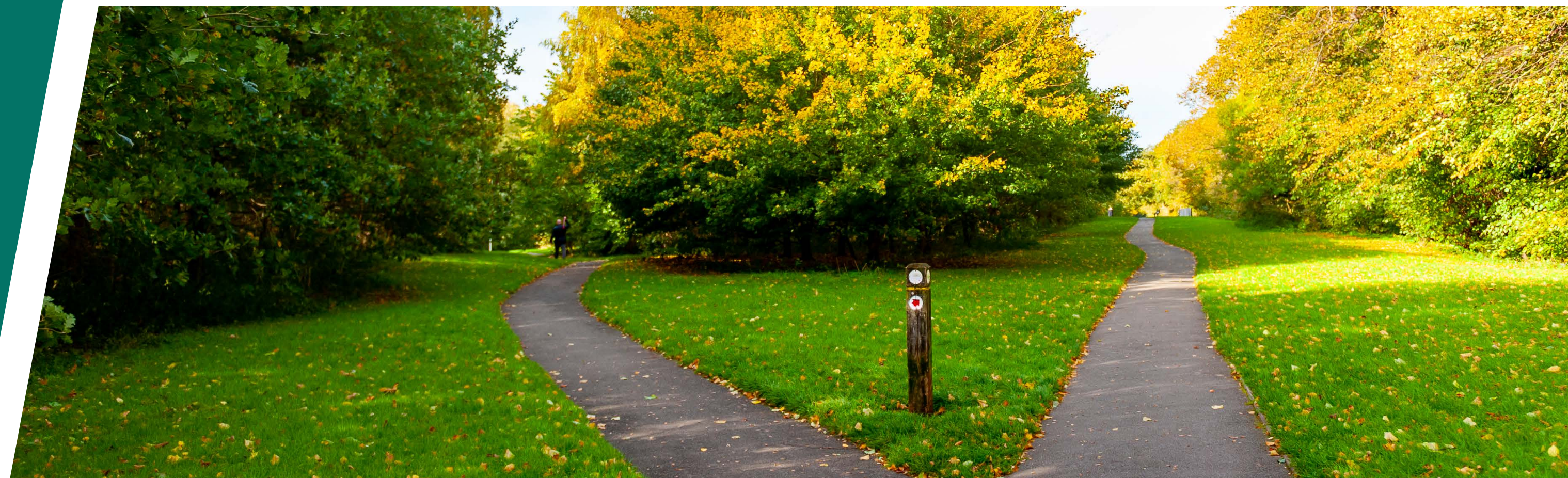


Annual Report 2024-2025



NEWCASTLE·UNDER·LYME
BOROUGH COUNCIL



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Introduction

Welcome to the Council's Annual Report for 2024-25, which outlines the progress we've made against the priorities for the Borough during the penultimate year of our 2022-2026 Council Plan. Alongside a review of our performance, the Annual Report also highlights some of the common issues facing our residents and how we have engaged with local communities to help shape local solutions and service improvements. It also looks at the financial challenges faced by the Council and across the local government sector as a whole, and our plans to continue providing value for money services.

2024-25 marked the transition to delivery stage for the Council's £85m town centre regeneration schemes with the construction of the new Castle Car Park, which opened in early 2025 and will unlock further development on The Ryecroft, Midway and Astley Place – all of which now have planning permission in place, partnership agreements signed and some early preparatory work already underway. Similarly, we've gone from strength to strength with our work supporting business growth, employment and skills through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and our success in delivering £4.8m in projects has resulted in the government granting Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council a further £1.5m to support 24 new projects for the next 12 months, including a new support Hub at Navigation House to help vulnerable people stay off the streets.

The Council continues to actively support our communities and last year launched our new 'Civic Pride' initiative which works with local people to make areas cleaner, safer and friendlier. There has been a round of action days across the Borough

and this year we've launched a new Civic Pride Investment Fund to provide further financial support to improve the quality of life in local areas. We continue to champion residents' concerns over the future of Walleys Quarry following the closure of the site earlier this year and are working closely with the Environment Agency who now have control over the site.

We enjoy strong and creative partnerships across the public, voluntary and statutory sectors, and work together to improve outcomes for our residents in terms of health, employment, and community safety. We are also fiercely proud of our loyal and ancient Borough and although we welcome the opportunities that devolution could bring to the Staffordshire area through increased funding and autonomy, we have expressed our concerns to central government over the forced reorganisation of local government which could see much larger councils operating at a greater distance from the voices of the communities they serve. We will be lobbying at every opportunity to retain the Borough Council and to continue to 'deliver good local services, a prosperous Borough, safe and welcoming places for all' – in line with our Vision. This Annual Report demonstrates how we are achieving that. We hope you find it interesting and informative!



Cllr Simon Tagg

Leader of the Council



Gordon Mole

Chief Executive

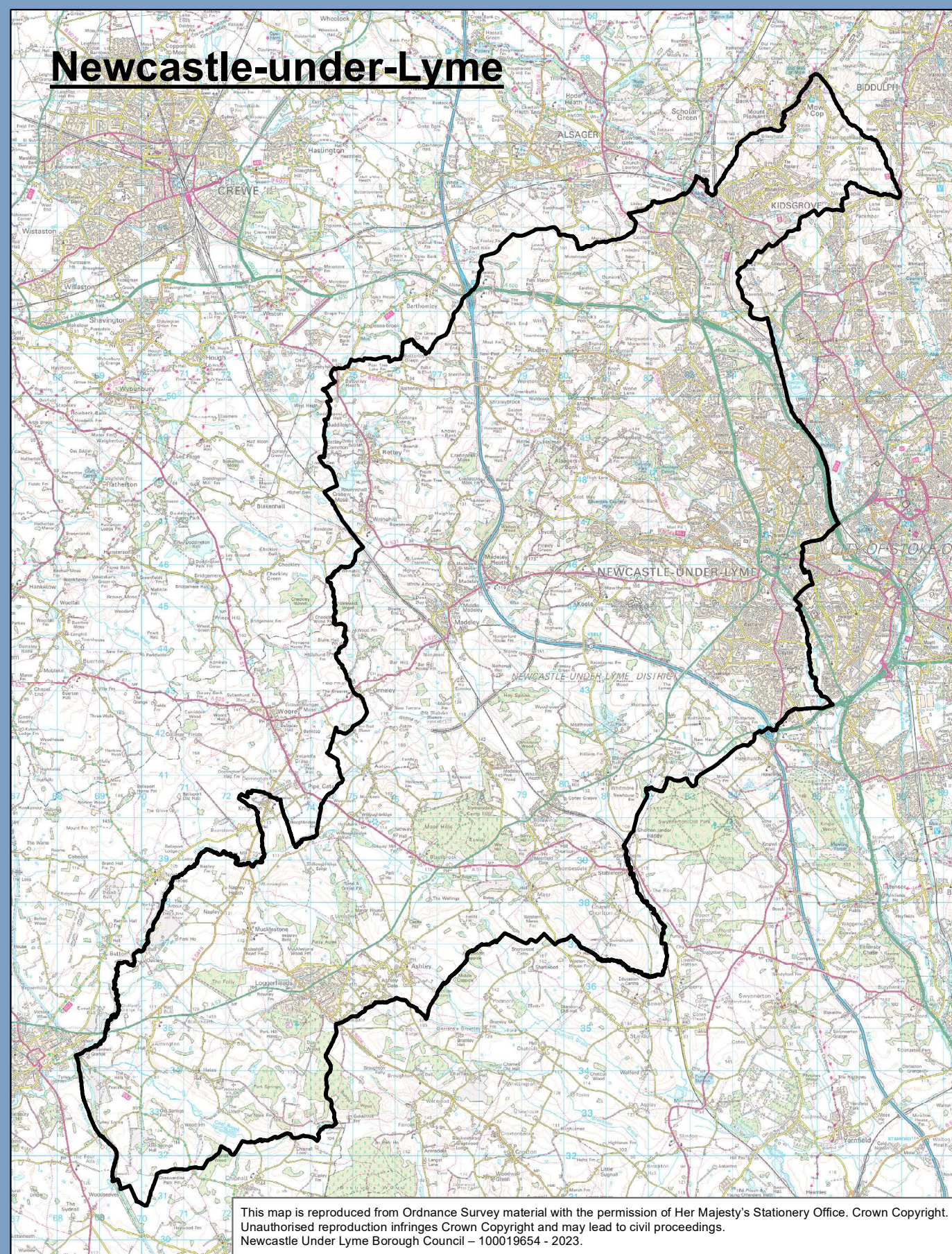


Executive Summary – Progress on a Page

- We completed the new £12 million Castle Car Park as part of the wider £85m town centre regeneration programme
- We set a balanced budget for 2025-26 against a backdrop of challenges facing the sector
- We hosted the Borough's first Business Festival, with a series of workshops and guest speakers during the week-long event
- We launched the Civic Pride initiative with a series of local action days across the Borough
- We have allocated £17m of Town Deal monies in Newcastle, resulting in Keele in Town, a new circular bus service and ground works for new housing at Chesterton and Knutton to name just a few of the projects included
- We brought 23 empty homes back into use and supported 188 adaptations under disabled facility grants
- The Council continued to expend considerable time and resources in monitoring the Walleys Quarry odour problem in order to secure a successful resolution to this issue through our limited enforcement powers, including potential legal action
- We met 65% of our targets in 2024-2025
- We maintained high standards of street cleanliness across the Borough and deployed our Neighbourhood Delivery Team to carry out efficient enforcement action to support this effort
- We adopted our new Sustainable Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan to direct our emissions reduction targets and were successful with our bid to the government's decarbonisation fund for £3.2m of investment
- We successfully completed Phase 1 of the Shared Prosperity Fund, delivering 33 projects focused on community development, people and skills, and support for local businesses. This phase created over 120 new jobs and up skilled more than 300 employees
- We expanded our sector leading food waste collection service to incorporate flats and are compliant with the new national 'simpler recycling' regulations
- We submitted our draft Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate following extensive stakeholder consultation
- We began renovation work to transform Navigation House into a Homeless Hub, complete with Managed Accommodation aimed at tackling and reducing homelessness in the town centre
- We built new changing rooms at the Wammy, which are operated by Newcastle Town FC, as part of our Playing Pitch Strategy
- We continued our work in addressing anti-social behaviour with a new car cruising PSPO and improved CCTV
- We received over 590 referrals on to our new Active Life programme with 75% of users saying that their health had improved
- Our work on tourism, bereavement services, street cleanliness and people management has been recognised and celebrated through a raft of nominations and awards



Section 1: Understanding our Communities



Our historic Borough is a place of marked contrasts. We are the home of a world class University at Keele, a leading light known internationally for its research and sustainability record, which stands side by side with former mining communities including some which register amongst the most deprived areas in the country. Our Borough is also a mixture of urban centres, affected by some of the same social issues facing our neighbouring city, Stoke-on-Trent, but also outstanding rural landscapes containing many smaller settlements with their own challenges. Our plans and priorities aim to address the needs of all our communities.

The Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme covers an area of 211 square kilometres and has a population density higher than that of Staffordshire at 607 residents per square kilometre. The population of the Borough, based on the 2024 Mid-year Estimate, is 127,700 with 51% female and 49% male. The 58,500 households are spread across a mix of urban and rural areas, with two town centres – Newcastle-under-Lyme and Kidsgrove - and a number of rural and urban villages across the Borough.

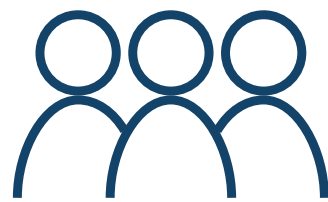
We recognise the importance of place data in decision making and service design and produce an annual 'State of the Borough' Digest, which includes key facts and figures on the make-up of the Borough and the common issues being faced by our residents. We have highlighted below two of the known challenges and how we are addressing them, often in conjunction with our local partners.



Newcastle-under-Lyme Facts and Figures

28%

OF THE POPULATION
ARE AGED
60 AND OVER



90%

OF RESIDENTS
IDENTIFY AS
'WHITE BRITISH'

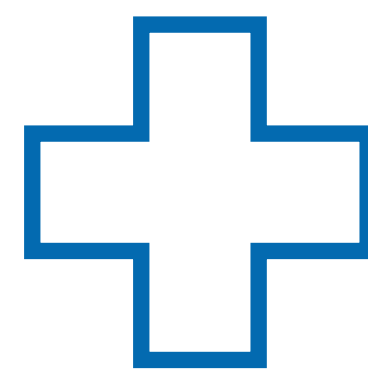
47%

OF RESIDENTS HAVE
**RQF LEVEL 4
OR ABOVE**



**MEDIAN
HOUSE PRICE**
£195,200

LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH
FOR MALES IS
79.0 YEARS
AND FEMALES IS
83.0 YEARS



AVERAGE WEEKLY SALARY OF
£675 FOR FULL-TIME
WORKERS

76.5%

OF RESIDENTS AGED
16 - 64
WERE ECONOMICALLY
ACTIVE



17%
OF HOUSEHOLDS
IN THE BOROUGH
**LIVE IN
FUEL POVERTY**

Skills, Qualifications and Employment

Residents in the Borough tended to have similar qualifications to the national average and higher than the regional average. According to the ONS Annual Population Survey 2024, an estimated 47% of residents in the Borough have RQF level 4 or above. This is very similar to the national rate of 48% and higher than the West Midlands' 43%. Latest data also shows that an average of 77% of residents aged 16-64 were economically active, just below the region (78%) and the country (79%). However, employees who live in the borough tend to earn less with an average weekly salary of £675 for full-time workers, compared to £690 across the West Midlands region and £730 for Great Britain.



Spotlight on: Encouraging Skills and Employment

Shaping the Future – Newcastle's first Business Festival

In March 2025, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council hosted its first ever business festival in conjunction with partners from across the area. The 5-day event had a different theme each day and featured a mix of local and national speakers as inspirational role models who shared their personal journeys.

Day 1 – Entrepreneurs: Featuring Chris Daniels from CyberKiln as the local role model and Keith Brymer Jones as the keynote speaker. The audience was given an oversight into their career journeys and the opportunity to ask questions. Drop in events were hosted around the town centre later in the day, alongside a business market by the Guildhall.

Day 2 – Innovation: A business expo was hosted at the Denise Coates Centre at Keele University giving local companies the opportunity to showcase their talent. Speakers focused on the theme of Industrial Strategies and the impact of AI.

Day 3 - Business Networking: A second business market was hosted around the Guildhall and local speakers provided inspiration at a series of talks around the town centre.

Day 4 - Women in Business: Several female speakers from local companies were able to tell their personal stories of how and why they started their own businesses and who and what were the key influencers for this growth. The sessions proved to be hugely popular with a sell-out audience and many delegates wanting more.

Day 5 concluded the Festival with an open doors day where a number of local businesses opened their doors, welcoming visitors to find out more about the services on offer.

The whole experience provided an opportunity to celebrate doing business in Newcastle, showcase the range of support that is available to help businesses grow and to give local entrepreneurs the opportunity to meet like-minded people.





Crime

In 2024, the recorded crime rate per 1,000 population in Newcastle-under-Lyme was the fourth lowest across the Staffordshire boroughs, following an 8% fall since 2023. The rate of almost all types of crime is now lower than the average across Staffordshire. Addressing instances of anti-social behaviour and of nuisance remain a key priority for the community safety partnership, alongside supporting the night-time economy through safe space provision and the innovative street medics approach, which reduces pressure on the local NHS.

Spotlight on: Safer Communities

The Council is a strategic partner in the Newcastle Community Safety Partnership. We work together with partners to address community safety issues in line with the Local Crime and Police Plan which looks to deliver the strategic community safety priorities.

The following initiatives were completed in 2024-2025:

- Introduction of the car cruising Public Space Protection Order
- Safe Space – Ran by volunteers on Friday evenings from 9pm-2am
- Knife Amnesty – our teams work with partner agencies to raise awareness around knife crime and conduct weapon sweeps across our parks and open spaces
- Spiking awareness training – delivered to a number of licensed premises within Newcastle-under-Lyme
- Street Medics – the medics were commissioned from the PFCC Community Safety Fund to allow us to set up a triage service to support the nighttime economy
- Dizzy Heights youth provision – running at Chesterton Vision and Clough Hall, this provision, again funded from the PFCC Community Safety Fund, provided diversionary activities in these areas.



Section 2: Listening to our Communities

Consultation and engagement with our communities continues to play an important role in informing decision-making across the Council, helping to ensure that we deliver services that meet the needs of local people.

Throughout 2024-25 we have conducted annual satisfaction surveys and ad hoc consultations to enable evidence-based decisions and the shaping of future service delivery. We are careful to ensure that our consultations capture the views of a range of residents to really understand what matters.

Safer Communities - In Summer 2024 we carried out a consultation to decide if residents supported the introduction of a Public Spaces Protection Order to deal with car cruising, and results showed that they were. Since the PSPO was introduced, we have seen a decrease in the number of car cruising reports across the Borough. Staffordshire Police have welcomed the order, which provides them with additional powers to deal with the matter.

Brampton Museum - We carried out a satisfaction survey for visitors to Brampton Museum, enabling the team to see how happy visitors were with their visit. We

provided robust evidence that showed that, with a large response, a significant majority of visitors were very satisfied.

Waste and Recycling - We carried out surveys for Recycling and Waste where we evaluated how many local businesses of various sizes were aware of forthcoming changes to legal requirements around recycling trade waste. This has helped our teams know which changes most needed to be publicised amongst the business community.

Strong Financial Discipline - As we do every Autumn, we carried out an annual Budget Consultation. This enables residents to tell us what their priorities are for the future, as we ask which services they value the most, where we should target income generation, and what we could do to improve their lives. The results were reported to Cabinet, allowing members to make informed decisions in allocating resources. The results of this consultation told us that, as in previous years, residents' top priority was continued town centre regeneration in line with our priority of town centres for all.



Section 3: The Financial Context

The Council is committed to the delivery of high-quality services. Integral to this is the need to effectively target financial resources in line with our stated aims and objectives whilst also working against the background of an adverse economic situation nationally. For more detailed information you can read the published Statement of Accounts.

Revenue

The Council actively manages all of its resources to ensure it delivers the services that local people need, and to prepare for future challenges. The priority actions under 'One Council Delivering for Local People' include workforce development, community engagement, partnership working, financial discipline, high quality value for money services and delivering the transformational One Council Programme, which made recurrent savings of £1.173m.

During the year, the Council has had to use resources (both financial and staff time) in dealing with an environmental crisis due to Hydrogen Sulphide (H²S) escaping from a local landfill site. The scale of work undertaken by the Council on this issue has soaked up a huge amount of corporate resource but has resulted in a greatly improved situation for local residents and securing an Abatement Notice against the site operator – a rare achievement on an Environment Agency regulated site. Since the abatement notice was issued the operators have continually breached the acceptable levels of Hydrogen Sulphide (H²S) being emitted, which has resulted in the Environmental Agency ceasing the operator's licence. As a result of this the operators, Walleys Quarry Limited, have now gone into administration.

Capital

A Capital Programme totalling £16.680m was approved for 2024-25, excluding £1.000m contingency. Of this total, £10.135m relates to the total cost of new schemes for 2024-25 together with £6.545m for schemes funded by external sources (Town Deals Fund, Future High Streets Fund and Disabled Facilities Grants). In addition, £42.174m was brought forward from the 2023-24 Capital Programme (including £25.641m from the Town Deals Fund and the Future High Streets Fund), the Council's contribution towards the construction of a new multi storey car park (£8.100m) and fleet replacement (£4.751m) resulting in a total Capital Programme of £59.855m for 2024-25 (including a £1.000m contingency).

A mid-year review of the Capital Programme for 2024-25 was undertaken as part of the Efficiency Board and budget setting process to identify any projects that may need to be re-profiled from 2024-25 into future years. The revised Capital Programme for 2024-25 totalling £51.295m was approved by Cabinet on 3 December 2024. Actual expenditure has totalled £26.236m, £25.059m below that planned. This relates to expenditure that has been rolled forward into 2025-26 (£23.553m) including projects planned under the Town Deals funds that will be progressed during 2025-26 (£18.354m) and the Council's contribution towards the development of Astley Place (£1.146m). There are also a number of projects whereby costs have been value engineered or whereby a decision has been made not to progress with the project until a future period (£1.506m).



Financial Recovery

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out the Council’s financial position over the next five years. This is aligned to the Council Plan 2022-2026 and is the key vehicle for ensuring efficiency in service delivery and targeting resources to priority areas. The updated MTFS was reported to Cabinet on 9 January and 4 February 2025 and reflects the impact of the Local Government Finance Settlement. The MTFS provides for a gap in 2025-26 of £1.890m and a revised gap to reflect the continued review of the capital programme, over the five-year period of the MTFS of £5.042m.

A number of savings and funding strategies have been identified as being both feasible and sustainable, via a vigorous Financial Efficiency Board process. The Financial Efficiency Board is made up of the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Town Centres, the Cabinet Portfolio Holders, the Corporate Leadership Team, and Finance Officers. During the summer months service directorates are asked to provide saving plans for the coming financial year and future years. These saving proposals are then challenged and discussed at various meetings held with the members of the Financial Efficiency Board. Once the savings proposals have been reviewed and challenged, the approved savings are put forward as part of the MTFS update and form part of the budget setting process. Savings proposals put forward can be revisited at any time.

The Council has a Civic Growth Fund which was established in 2020 for the purpose of enabling investment in corporate priorities. The Civic Growth Fund is required to be used to invest in initiatives that are forecast to generate on-going revenue savings through reducing the costs of service delivery or through the

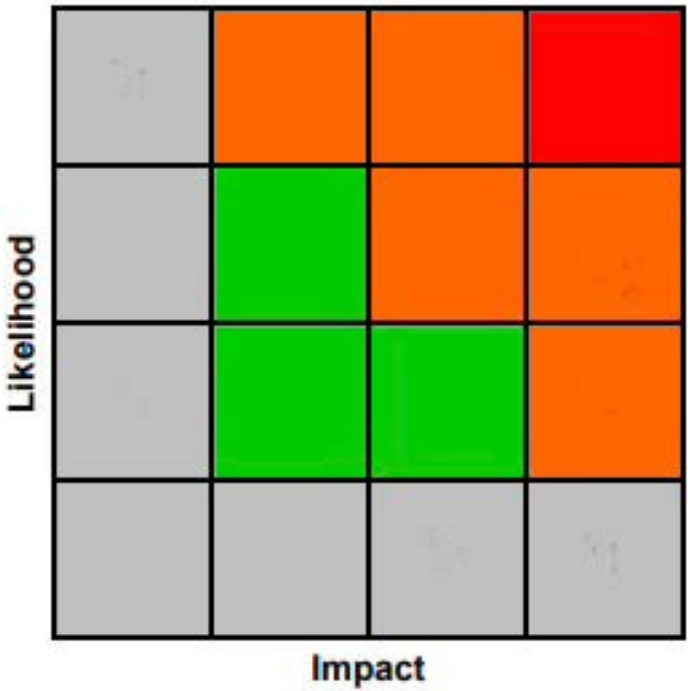
generation of additional income.

The savings and funding strategies identified will enable continued investment of £0.250m in the Council’s priorities as per the Council Plan 2022-2026 via the Civic Growth Fund. The Civic Growth Fund will continue to be used to provide pump priming investment in initiatives, including Digital Delivery, that are forecast to generate on-going revenue savings through reducing the costs of service delivery or through the generation of additional income.

The Council intends to consider ways it can facilitate and participate in the commercial and industrial development of the Borough and thereby gain access to income streams to contribute to a sustainable revenue budget. The basis for this is set out in the Commercial Strategy and the Investment Strategy.

Managing Key Risks

The Council continues to develop and maintain a systematic framework and process for managing corporate, strategic, operational, project and partnership risks and reviews this framework annually. This includes assessing risks for impact and likelihood, identifying, and allocating responsibility for their mitigation, and receiving assurances about ongoing management of these risks. The Council’s Risk Management Strategy sets out the roles and responsibilities of officers and councillors, including escalation and clear reporting lines. The Council’s ‘risk appetite’ has been agreed and mitigating actions are required for all risks that exceed this threshold.



Section 4: Our Vision and Priorities for the Borough

Good local services, a successful, sustainable borough, and safe and welcoming places for all

Outcomes	Priorities	Approach
In Newcastle		
 Residents have easy access to good quality services	 One Council Delivering for Local People	 Our Employees will be supported and empowered to succeed
 Businesses flourish and residents have access to good, well paid, jobs	 A Successful and Sustainable Growing Borough	 we will work closely with valued partners to deliver skills, jobs and growth
 Everyone has the opportunity to be active, healthy and fulfilled	 Healthy, Active, and Safe Communities	 We will support our communities to improve lives and life chances
 Town Centres are vibrant places to live, work and visit	 Town Centres for All	 We will develop opportunities which will help our town centres thrive and grow

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council will be Net Zero by 2030



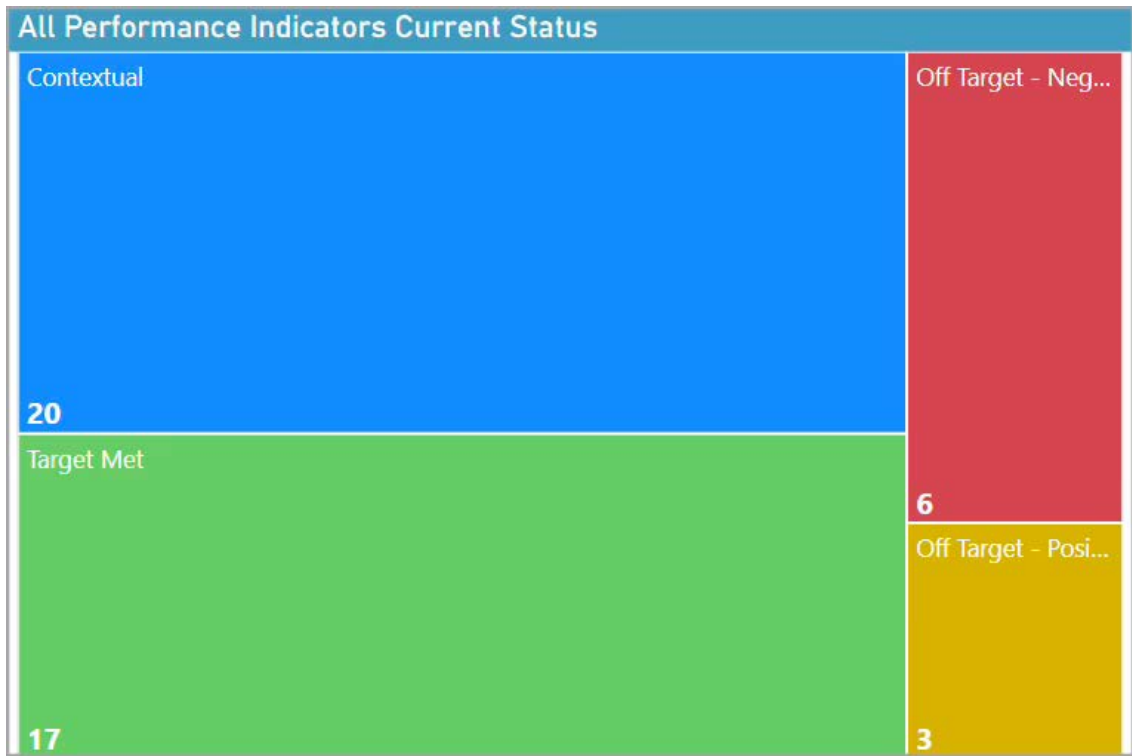
Section 5: Our Achievements

Overview of performance in 2024-25

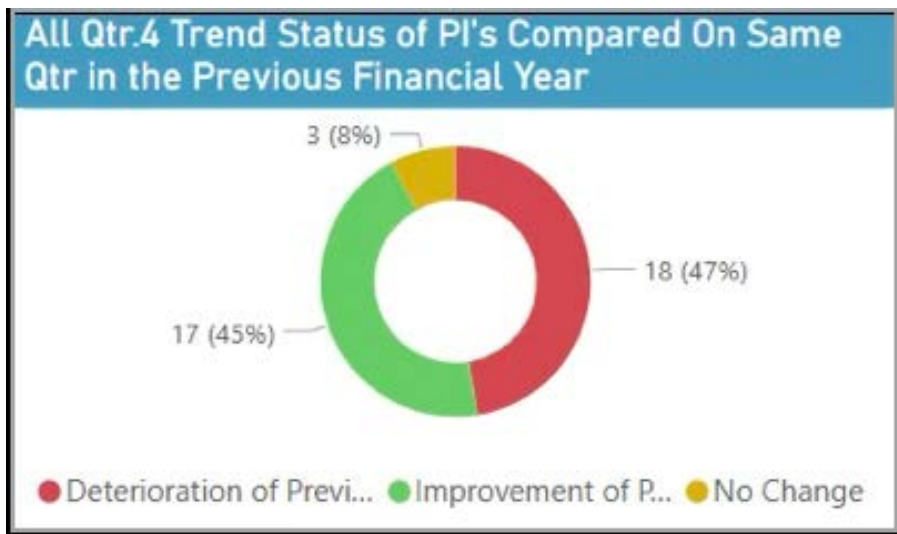
Throughout the financial year 2024-25 the Council monitored 46 key performance indicators, which were aligned with the priorities and objectives set out in our Council Plan. Following our annual Value for Money study at the end of each year, several targets were increased to drive stronger performance and deliver greater value to residents. The ongoing use of business intelligence tools has further enabled year-on-year comparisons, providing deeper insights into both seasonal and annual trends.

The 46 indicators were categorised into two key groups:

- Contextual Measures – These indicators do not have set targets and are instead compared to previous years to assess performance. This year saw 20 contextual measures monitored which was an increase of 3 from the previous year.



- Targeted Measures – These indicators are benchmarked against specific targets and reviewed both in comparison to previous years and against target values. There were 26 measures recorded this financial year that had defined targets.

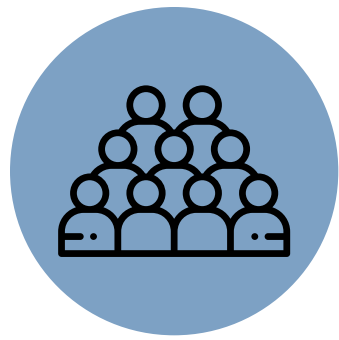


65% of measures successfully met their targets in 2024-25 with nine measures falling short. Among these off-target measures, 33% still showed improvement compared to the previous financial year (2023-24). Across all indicators, 53% showed either improvement or stability in 2024-25, reflecting overall progress in key areas.

Beyond performance measures, the Council continued to advance its 26 key projects and priority actions throughout 2024-25, with three already completed in the previous financial year. 20 projects progressed as expected and are on track for timely completion. The project to deliver an economic and cultural legacy from the celebration of the Borough's 850th anniversary in 2023 was completed last year. However, two projects have faced continued challenges:

- Resolution of Walleys Quarry - the council continues to champion community concerns despite the landfill operator entering voluntary liquidation in February 2025. The level of odour complaints has now decreased dramatically
- Kidsgrove Town Deal – a review of the Railway Station project is underway with a view to revise and reduce the works due to be undertaken to move the project forward.





Priority One: One Council Delivery for Local People

Deliver services to a high standard every day

- The Brampton Museum won Bronze in the Small Visitor Attraction of the Year category at the Staffordshire Tourism Awards and Bronze for Accessible and Inclusive Tourism
- Achieved Platinum standard for our Address Gazetteer accuracy
- 2024 finalists in the APSE Best Service Team of the Year for Cemeteries and Crematorium
- Continued to process Housing Benefits new claims/change events in very quick times (four days)
- Upheld high food safety standards through our inspection programme, with only 0.4% of food premises receiving a zero or one-star national food hygiene rating.

Ensure our services are efficient and accessible

- Enabled increased customer access and flexibility to book J2 leisure sessions with over 11,000 downloads of our App
- Replaced the legacy Mitel Phone system with new Teams Telephony and AnywhereNow contact centre system, allowing us to decommission the aging Mitel servers and downsize our server estate
- Continuous enhancements to our website's information, advice, and guidance pages have empowered residents to access the right support quickly and efficiently,

leading to fewer completed forms. By seamlessly directing enquiries to the appropriate authority, these improvements are ensuring requests are resolved accurately the first time. Additionally, phone enquiries dropped by 1,158 in 2024-25, reflecting the effectiveness of digital solutions in providing streamlined support for the public.

Ensure strong financial discipline across the Council

- Brought in capital receipts of circa £1m
- Set a balanced budget for 2025-26
- Undertook a review of all single person discounts and generated an additional income of approx. £350,000 across precepting partners
- We are currently still a debt-free authority and continue to operate a financially well-managed Council
- Maintained our commitment to financial responsibility, successfully collecting 97.4% of National Non-Domestic Rates last year.

Further increasing recycling rates across the borough with a particular focus on food waste

- We bettered our target for residual waste per household in 2024-25, lowering it to 400kg, and the Council performs better than the national average
- We continue to make positive strides in improving recycling rates, with over 48%



of household waste now being reused, recycled, or composted. We have also launched collections for flexible plastics and cartons, in collaboration with Stafford Borough Council and Veolia, who manage the processing of dry recycling collected from our residents

- The expansion of the food waste collection service to flats is progressing ahead of the mandatory target set for April 2026. In preparation, we have launched a communications campaign in collaboration with Staffordshire County Council to boost participation in food waste recycling and reduce the volume of residual waste.

Secure a step change in street cleanliness and the quality of the public domain

- We continued the use of land audit surveys throughou 2024-25 to monitor and measure street cleanliness within the Borough and identify grot spot areas. Graffiti, Detritus and Fly-posting all received 100% survey scores. Litter whilst performing lower at 98%, still met its set target. The insights from these surveys will guide targeted street cleansing efforts and clearly demonstrate the continued progress made over the past year
- In 2024-25 the Council launched its new Civic Pride initiative to make the borough cleaner, safer and friendlier
- Removed graffiti from subways to improve their appearance
- Reviewed almost all park and green space signage with new maps, webpages, and physical signs.

Continue to keep Council Tax low for the Borough's residents

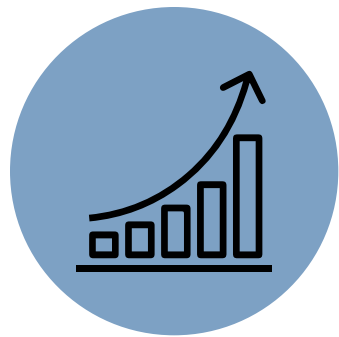
- We effectively managed the Council's commercial property portfolio and achieved a 92.5% occupancy rate, bringing in revenue in excess of £1m

- Exceeded our target for room hire income generation by 139% at the Brampton
- Successfully delivered a highways grass cutting contract on behalf of Staffordshire County Council Highways, and have been awarded an extended contract term
- The Council has launched a new Commercial Programme, following our successful One Council principles, which has already identified over 50 commercial opportunities covering both income generation and cost avoidance.

Develop professional talent across the Council and provide opportunities for staff to grow their careers

- We continue to work towards Silver Thrive accreditation, a process which encourages us to constantly improve our health and well-being offering. One of the most popular schemes has been the onsite health scales, allowing staff to monitor a range of health factors and whether these improve over time
- Built on our relationship with local colleges to support six T-level students for the first year of two-year placements within the council
- Our annual values survey demonstrated improvements in employee engagement and satisfaction
- Continued to ensure we have adequately trained staff for emergency response roles as part of the council's responsibilities as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act
- Used more of the apprenticeship levy to enable employees to progress with their professional development
- The average number of sick days taken by employees has continued to decline over the past year





Priority 2: A Successful and Sustainable Growing Borough

A strong and sustainable economy where everyone benefits

- Successfully completed Phase 1 of the Shared Prosperity Fund (January 2023 – March 2025), delivering 33 impactful projects focused on community development, people and skills, and support for local businesses. This phase created over 120 new jobs, upskilled more than 300 employees, and saw the planting of over 20,000 trees. Under the community theme, over 65 volunteering opportunities were created across the third sector, resulting in 85 activity attendances. In March, the Borough Council hosted its inaugural five-day Business Festival, celebrating UKSPF-backed success. With daily attendance averaging more than 100 delegates, the event spotlighted themes such as innovation, entrepreneurship, business networking, and Women in Business—highlighting strong collaboration among local partners
- Around £17 million of the Newcastle Town Deal allocation is now contractually committed, with all projects having reached key delivery milestones—and some now completed. Recent developments include the opening of Keele in Town and the launch of a new circular bus route serving Keele, Knutton, Chesterton, Cross Heath, Silverdale, and key business parks. The phased rollout of Real-Time Passenger Information at key bus stops continues. Groundworks have begun for new housing developments in Knutton and Chesterton. A delivery partner has been appointed and mobilised for the rollout of a new fibre network across the Town Deal area. Electric vehicle chargers have been installed at Castle Car Park, and further planning has advanced for the proposed conversion of the Midway Multi-Storey Car Park into residential accommodation.



Support the sustainable development of our towns and villages

- A key milestone has been reached with the successful submission of the Borough Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate in December 2024. This marks a significant step forward in shaping the future of the area. The Plan is now set to undergo formal examination, with Hearing sessions taking place in May and June 2025. Subsequent stages will be guided by the appointed Inspector's direction and the progress made throughout the examination process
- We made significant strides in supporting development across the Borough by ensuring timely decision-making on planning applications. Over a 24-month rolling period up to the end of March 2025, we achieved a 91.5% on-time processing rate for major applications and an impressive 95.9% for non-major applications; both reflecting an improvement on the previous year's performance. These results evidence our continued commitment to efficient service delivery and sustainable growth.

Protecting our communities by improving how we use our enforcement powers

- Investigated 130 complaints relating to food safety and 326 infectious disease notifications
- Removed 47 severe hazards to health and 117 high risk hazards to health from private rented sector accommodation
- Carried out 428 checks on DBS certificates to ensure the continuing suitability of our taxi drivers
- Reviewed 311 noise complaints and 186 pollution related complaints

- 72% of complainants were informed within the required timescales regarding alleged breaches of planning control, which is a notable improvement on the previous year
- Walleys Quarry has seen a marked improvement, with the site now closed to incoming waste and odour complaints dropping dramatically—from 1,620 in January 2025 to just 41 by the end of March 2025. In February 2025, Walleys Quarry Limited entered voluntary liquidation and the site is now under the Environment Agency's control.

Ensuring that the Council's operations are carbon neutral by 2030 and the Borough by 2050

- Adopted the Sustainable Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan
- Calculated our Carbon Footprint and supported work that contributed to a 14% reduction in emissions, mostly due to HVO use
- Delivered Phase 6 of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy
- Commenced Carbon Literacy Training for all staff with the aim to have between 150-200 members of staff trained by the end of 2025

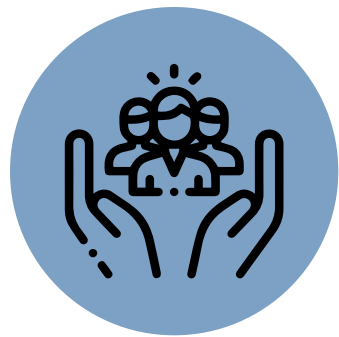


- Facilitated over 80 Sustainable Environment engagements from case study presentations, stalls, events, activities with schools, residents, and businesses
- Successfully adopted a Grassland Management Strategy
- Successfully supported a £3.2m funding bid from the Salix Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme
- Developed a Business Sustainability Guide



Ensure that there are good homes for everyone and that every citizen has a safe and secure place to live

- Brought 23 empty homes back into use
- Housed 485 households via the housing register
- Enabled land remediation at Knutton and Chesterton for Aspire Housing to build much needed new homes on brownfield land
- Supported 143 Disabled Facilities Grant applicants, equating to 188 adaptations, allocating a total spend of £1.5m
- We have partnered with Aspire to secure funding which will enable us to support individuals affected by hoarding
- The number of verified rough sleepers remained relatively steady throughout the year with seven recorded cases at the end of March. Renovation work is now underway on a Shared Prosperity Fund-backed project to transform Navigation House into a Homeless Hub, complete with Managed Accommodation aimed at tackling and reducing homelessness in the town centre. In addition, the team has successfully secured further funding through the Rough Sleeper Initiative to sustain and enhance our ongoing support for rough sleepers.



Priority 3: Healthy, Active and Safe Communities

Reduce anti-social behaviour and crime in our communities

- Safe Space - the project continues to run with volunteers on Friday evenings from 9pm-2am. This space is used to provide a hub for those who are on a night out
- Collaboration with the Local Policing Team continues to be effective, leading to a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB). Efforts remain focused on Newcastle Town Centre, with the installation of additional CCTV cameras and the enforcement of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to enhance safety and security. These measures contribute to maintaining a safer community while deterring unwanted behaviours
- Introduced two new youth diversionary activities in Clough Hall and Chesterton, working with local provider Dizzy Heights
- By the end of the year, there were 30 open Anti-Social Behaviour cases. New cases reported varied throughout the year, however January to March 2025 saw 26 fewer complaints compared to the same quarter in 2024. Additionally, it must be noted that every quarter recorded fewer new cases than its corresponding quarter from the previous year, indicating a positive downward trend in ASB incidents.

Ensure that our most vulnerable residents are supported through the impact of the rising cost of living.

- Throughout the year, 205 referrals were made regarding vulnerability by participating organisations at the Daily Hub. This proactive approach has been instrumental in helping vulnerable individuals access the right support and resources within the Borough

- Collaboration with the Newcastle Partnership remains strong in efforts to support vulnerable residents. The Prevent and Protect agendas are embedded in daily operations, enhancing community safety and confidence. Additionally, the Better Health Programme continues to positively influence the physical health of local communities, while the Partnership Board fosters meaningful collaboration among various organisations, ensuring a united approach to key community goals.

Support the development of community solutions to local problems

- We have built new football changing rooms at the Wammy, which are to be operated by Newcastle Town Football Club. Development of changing rooms at the Wammy has been in a long-term improvement plan for the area; and is a priority for the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy. The changing rooms have been funded from a mix of Council monies, Newcastle Town Deal and Football Foundation funding
- We have collaborated with key partners to establish effective community organisations. The Civic Pride programme is actively progressing, with successful events held in Kidsgrove, Chesterton, Holditch, Crackley, and Red Street. This initiative is supported through a strong partnership with Staffordshire County Council, Aspire Housing, and Staffordshire Police, ensuring meaningful community engagement and positive local impact
- Jubilee2 experienced a steady increase in membership throughout the year, enhancing fitness support and expanding exercise opportunities for residents across the Borough. By the year's end, membership had reached 4,119, reflecting its growing impact on community health and well-being.





Priority 4: Town Centre for All

Increasing the number of people living, working and using Newcastle town Centre

- Newcastle-under-Lyme Business Improvement District (BID), in collaboration with Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, celebrated a tremendous double win at the prestigious Heart of England in Bloom Awards 2024
- Held a varied series of exhibitions at the Brampton, each attracting over 10,000 visitors
- Capital & Centric has commenced preparatory work for the redevelopment of the Midway
- Market occupancy saw a significant boost in 2024-25, with average stall occupancy reaching 76%—surpassing the set target and marking a 4% increase from the previous year. This positive trend was reflected across all markets, including the general market, which recorded a 30% improvement compared to the year prior.

Continuing to work with key partners to deliver the redevelopment of opportunities across the borough

- Completed delivery of the £11.4 million Future High Street Fund which has enabled construction of Castle Car Park and opened up new development opportunities at Ryecroft for residential delivery by McCarthy Stone, Capital & Centric and Aspire. This has also



funded the partial demolition of York Place to enable its re-imagining as Astley Place, a commercial and residential hub in the town centre

- Disposing of land in Knutton to Aspire Housing and Staffordshire County Council to facilitate the regeneration of Knutton village
- Through Newcastle Town Deal, we supported the creation of Keele in Town which opened its doors in January 2025. This is a new community hub from Keele University which will deliver training to local people and host courses from Newcastle College Group, alongside hosting cultural events and being available as a meeting venue and acting as a hub for students living in the town

Developing a Town Centre Strategy for Kidsgrove

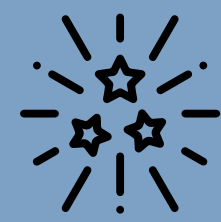
- Work started on refurbishment of the Trent & Mersey canal towpath in Kidsgrove, including improved access from Kidsgrove station and opening up the footpath along the Macclesfield canal
- Completed the refurbishment of ground floor and first floor areas at Kidsgrove Town Hall now occupied by Aspire Housing.

Further enhance the historic market and public realm and boost our signature specialist market programme

- Delivered a programme of event markets throughout the year – Castle Artisan Market, Greyhound Gap, Vegan Market, Record Fair, Makers Market, and the new Advent Market
- Completed planned improvement to the public realm in Newcastle town centre



Section 6: Value for Money Services – Are we delivering?



Top of the Class!

For the Council to know how it is performing we don't just look at our targets and trends but also at how we compare to other councils; both in terms of cost and performance. In this way we can demonstrate that our services to our customers and communities represent value for money.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council performs amongst the top 25% of councils in the country for the following services:

- High percentage of minor and 'other' planning applications processed on time
- Low cost of collecting Council Tax
- Quick processing of Benefit change events and new claims combined
- Low numbers of households in temporary accommodation

In addition, we perform amongst the top 50% of councils in the country for:

- Low numbers of complaints
- Low waste collection costs
- Processing of 'major' planning applications on time
- Low fly-tipping incidents
- Low cost of development control
- Low residual household waste
- High recycling rates
- Fly tipping enforcement activity



Nevertheless, there are some areas where we would like to improve the Council's relative performance and we're already making good progress through spatial planning, harnessing technology, targeting hot spot areas and working in partnership on joined-up problem solving in order to design and deliver the best services we can for our customers and communities:

One Council Programme

The original One Council programme concluded in 2024 after releasing over £1m from our annual spend. We have used the programme's guiding principles and project structures to focus on three new areas in 2024-25:

- One sustainable council – meeting our 2030 and 2050 net zero targets
- One commercial council – identifying and implementing income generation projects
- One digital council – harnessing innovative technologies to streamline processes and improve customer experience

Local Plan

A new Local Plan which provides the blueprint for future development across the Borough through to 2040 has been making significant progress in 2024 with widespread consultation and engagement events taking place. Our draft Plan was submitted to the government's Planning Inspectorate in late 2024 and is being examined this summer in a series of hearings. We expect the outcome this autumn, followed by formal adoption once approved.

Environmental Enforcement

Our Neighbourhood Delivery team officers are taking a proactive approach to improving the environment by targeting a number of grot spot areas, educating

residents on waste matters and if necessary, taking enforcement.

The team are leading a project to address concerns around trade waste and ensuring compliance across the Borough. The project will initially start in Newcastle town centre. Fixed Penalty Notices continue to be utilised for environmental offences and successful prosecutions are being promoted via the corporate pages. The team are continuing to expand their knowledge and have undertaken dog handling training to assist in their role in handling stray dogs.

Civic pride

Working with our communities is central to our council plan priorities for 2022 to 2026 and the Civic Pride initiative has been the next step forward for this collaborative work. Following the introduction of Civic Pride events in Newcastle town centre last Autumn, we have planned Civic Pride days of action in every part of the Borough in 2025, engaging with residents, in partnership with the County Council, Staffordshire Police, Aspire Housing and the third and business sectors in order to make the Borough a cleaner, safer, and friendlier place for all.

We have engaged with groups from pre-school to pensioner, sporting clubs and community associations across the borough and this year we have launched a £22,000 Civic Pride Investment Fund, which will enable local organisations to apply for money to help with activities, events or tools for litter picks and planting.



Active Lifestyles



We know that activity is a key factor in a healthy lifestyle, and we are aware that activity levels across the Borough are lower than in some council areas. We are committed to supporting healthy and active communities through a range of strategies, such as the provision of first-class sporting facilities. At J2, our council-owned leisure centre, we have launched our new 'Active Life' referral programme, following the award of grant funding. The programme covers six referral paths tailored to support residents suffering from long term health conditions. In

2024-25 over 590 referrals have been made across the programme and the health outcomes speak for themselves but in the words of one user "my confidence level has improved greatly, my balance has improved, and it has given me the courage to do so many more things. Thanks to the team I can now continue with my life":

- 64% of participants have seen a reduction in their BMI
- 78% of participants have seen a reduction in their body fat percentage
- 80% of customers have seen an improvement in their mental well-being
- 75% of customers believe their overall health has improved

Due to the success of the Active Life Programme, additional funding has been secured to continue the scheme into 2025-26.



During the last 12 months there has been a growth in the number of tennis bookings at both Westlands Sports Ground and Wolstanton Tennis Courts following their recent refurbishments. Westlands Sports Ground saw the number of bookings increase to 6386 – an increase of 1738 bookings and at Wolstanton, bookings went to 1809 – an increase of 483 bookings.

The two courts at Clough Hall Park in Kidsgrove opened in July 2024 following the refurbishment of the courts with 350 bookings up to the end of March 2025.

The Council was also successful in obtaining funding through the Staffordshire Police and Fire Commissioner to run the 'Space' summer memberships at Jubilee2. There were 435 universal memberships and 30 targeted memberships for 8 to 16-year-olds, which were used over the school summer holidays. Priced at just £10, all 435 of the universal memberships were sold out before the start of the summer holidays! During the 'Space' period we had 257 male and 208 females take up the membership offer, resulting in 1,953 attendances.

Finally, the Council is also playing a key role in a new Better Health Partnership for the Borough, which seeks to work across system boundaries to improve activity levels and overall health outcomes across Newcastle-under-Lyme.



Section 7: External Assessments and Awards – don't just take our word for it!

A year after the Council took the national crown for Britain in Bloom, we're proud to have worked with Newcastle-under-Lyme Business Improvement District (BID) in 2024 on the town's submission to the awards which saw the BID celebrate a tremendous double win at the prestigious Heart of England in Bloom Awards.

Our award-winning Brampton Museum colleagues were honoured again last year after picking up four awards at the annual Visit Staffordshire tourism awards. The team were thrilled to have scooped the following:

- Bronze – Small Visitor Attraction of the Year
- Bronze - Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Award
- Highly Commended – Team of the Year
- Highly Commended – Ethical, Responsible & Sustainable Tourism Award

Congratulations also go to our Bereavement Services and Streetscene Teams who were shortlisted in the APSE 2024 Awards. Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council made the shortlist for Best Service Team in the following categories:

- Parks, Grounds and Horticultural Service
- Cemetery and Crematorium Service



Last but not least on the list of awards was our People Team who were shortlisted in the PPMA Excellence in People Management Awards in the 'Best Organisation Development Programme' Category.

Huge Congratulations to all the winners and to all colleagues contributing to the Council's success!

Flying the Green Flag for our Parks and Open Spaces!

Green Flag Awards are an important benchmark and an internationally recognised accreditation for the provision of high-quality parks and green spaces. Each year locations are judged against a number of criteria including biodiversity, landscape, heritage, community safety, asset management and grounds maintenance quality, community involvement and managing resources.

Judging is undertaken by either an announced visit or a mystery shop. An announced visit involves officers 'walking and talking' with the judges explaining and illustrating aspects of the comprehensive management plans.

We're pleased to have gained six Green Flag awards for: The Brampton, Queens Gardens, Wolstanton Park, Lyme Valley Park, Bradwell Crematorium and Keele Cemetery.





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