

## **COUNCIL**

Wednesday, 23rd July, 2025  
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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### **Present:**

Councillors:	Adcock	Gorton	Stubbs
	Barker MBE	Grocott	Sweeney
	Beeston	Heesom	J Tagg
	Berrisford	Holland	S Tagg (Leader)
	Bettley-Smith	Fox-Hewitt	Turnock
	Brown	Hutchison	Whieldon
	Bryan	Johnson	Whitmore
	Burnett-Faulkner	D Jones	Wilkes
	Crisp	Lewis	G Williams
	Dean	Reece	J Williams
	Edginton-Plunkett	Richards	Wright
	Fear	Skelding	

Apologies: Councillor(s) Allport, Casey-Hulme, Dymond, S Jones, Lawley, Northcott, Parker, J Waring and P Waring

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
	Craig Jordan	Service Director - Planning
	Roger Tait	Service Director - Neighbourhood Delivery
	Geoff Durham	Civic & Member Support Officer

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

### **2. MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 May, 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

### **3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor made the following announcements:

The Mayor wished the former Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Sir Ian Dudson all the best for his retirement and looked forward to welcoming his successor, Professor Elizabeth Barnes to Newcastle in due course.

There would be two further Mayoral walks in August – on 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> as part of the Mayor's walking around the boundary of the Borough.

The Mayor would be attending an event on 26<sup>th</sup> September at Burland Hall. The event would be raising money for Papyrus which was one of the Mayor's chosen charities.

**4. PROJECT APPROVAL FOR THE DECARBONISATION OF THE J2 LEISURE CENTRE FOLLOWING GRANTING OF PHASE 4 PSDS FUNDING**

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment, Councillor David Hutchison introduced a report setting out the success of being awarded a grant as part of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero PSDA Phase 4 funding for the decarbonisation of the Council's J2 leisure centre.

As part of the revised Sustainable Environment Strategy, external funding was pursued to help with decarbonisation and energy efficiency of the building. Members were asked to accept the grant of £2,790,173 towards the project which, in total would cost £3,207, 266. A contribution of £417,093 would be made by the Council, which was included in the Borough Council's Capital Programme for the Sustainable Environment Strategy associated delivery plan. The Portfolio Holder moved the recommendation.

The Leader, in seconding the recommendation, stated that funding for J2 had been 'missed out on' in the past, with funding going to Kidsgrove Sports Centre instead. He was therefore pleased that funding had been received to bring in measures to save energy and cut carbon emissions at J2.

Councillor Stubbs stated that this was fantastic news and congratulated the finance team in acquiring the funding.

Councillor Holland stated that the money was welcome as it would go towards reducing bills and the future liability on the tax payer.

The Leader, referring to previous funding for Kidsgrove Sports Centre stated that the funding for J2 was a 'win' for the Borough's leisure facilities.

**Resolved:** That the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero granting of funding available to enable Salix Finance to provide the Council with a grant of up to £2,790,173 to assist in carrying out a low carbon energy reduction heating project at its Jubilee 2 Leisure Centre, be accepted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

**5. 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 Adcock stated that he would like to see more information from the Environment Agency (EA) that was available to residents, regarding the long term future for the site such as the future restoration and funding settlement. Councillor Adcock asked the Leader if he agreed that the EA should hold a public meeting as soon as possible where residents could have their questions answered.

The Leader agreed, stating that interaction with the public by the EA was important. In a recent meeting with the EA and other partners, the Leader had asked if they would be willing to convene the liaison committee and they had said that it would be considered. A stakeholders meeting was really important, especially with what could happen in the autumn and when the BUND money had run out.

Councillor Whieldon stated that residents were pleased that odours had diminished but were anxious about any possible future recurrence and were therefore seeking assurance that the EA would continue to do the job properly.

The Leader stated that it was important for the monitoring equipment to come back to Silverdale Pumping Station, if required. The EA had stated that they were discontinuing the dedicated Walleys Quarry reporting system in favour of a standard national one.

Council staff were dealing with any odour complaints and any received were being investigated.

On paragraph 3 – Fields In Trust

Councillor Holland asked the Leader if he welcomed the news that Village Green status had been given to three green spaces in the Westlands ward and if he agreed that the extra protection would compliment the protection given by the Fields in Trust status and stop development of the sites.

The Leader welcomed the decision by Staffordshire County Council's Rights of Way Committee for this and stated that it was down to the dedication of residents making the application. Repton Drive, Winchester Drive and Clayton Field would now be put on the list of Village Green and would also be put into the Fields in Trust applications.

Councillor Whieldon asked if there was potential for increasing the number of parks and open spaces from the 88 mentioned in the report.

The Leader stated that there were more Village Green status applications in the pipeline and more sites were being sought to put into the Fields in Trust.

On paragraph 4 – Devolution and Forced Local Government Reorganisation Update

Councillor Fear recalled that, at the last meeting, it was noted that Staffordshire Moorlands District Council did not seem to be cognizant on this Council's position on the compulsory reorganisation and a letter was sent to them in that respect. The Leader was asked if any reply had been received back and if he agreed that Staffordshire Moorlands had surrendered to the process despite their residents being hostile towards it.

The Leader stated that no response had been received from them. They had agreed their proposal at a meeting last week which was a merger with Stoke, taking in part of Stone and Uttoxeter who were against it. One of Newcastle's proposals was to talk with Staffordshire Moorlands regarding a North Staffordshire Unitary authority, excluding Stoke.

The Leader stated that Karen Bradbury MP was against the reorganisation so he did not feel that Staffordshire Moorlands had surrendered to the process.

Councillor Turnock stated that the Council had set aside £200,000 to pay for the forced local government reorganisation. A previous Cabinet report had referred to money coming from central government to work up proposals and the Leader was asked if any money had been received.

The Leader stated that £366,000 had been allotted to the ten Councils in Staffordshire. In the early stages, there would have been none coming to Newcastle but an appeal had been made to the Ministry to ensure that a fair share was received. Funding allocations would be announced next month.

The Leader stated that discussions had been held with Shropshire and there were upcoming discussions with Telford and Leaders of other Districts within the County.

#### On paragraph 5 – Kidsgrove Town Deal Update

Councillor Stubbs referred to the £1.9m, allocated to support a new package of initiatives. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth was asked if the £1.9m was an additional sum that had been received or if it was a reallocation within the current budget and if so, which projects had it been taken from.

The Leader advised that the £1.9m had come from the money for the shared hub development which was included with the Town Deal Fund.

Councillor Skelding welcomed the amount received but was disappointed that it was vastly reduced from what had been previously promised.

Councillor Burnett-Faulkner was delighted to welcome the further investment in Kidsgrove via the Town Deal money. £1.9m on enterprise units, a learning centre, towpath improvements and improvements to the public realm would benefit everyone. The Leader was asked to give an update on progress relating to the station refurbishment.

The Leader stated that a refurbishment of the station could now move forward. The Town Deal Board had met earlier in the week and officers had been asked to go back to the Government and ask for a plan to be agreed – a full refurbishment of the station but not the car park. The designs for the scheme looked good and would be a credit to Kidsgrove. Any money left would be allocated to other schemes within Kidsgrove.

Councillor Whieldon stated that Harecastle Tunnel and the canal were becoming tourist spots so a refurbished station would compliment it.

#### On paragraph 6 – Financial and Performance Review Report – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2024/25

Councillor Crisp asked the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Heritage and Culture what plans were in place to promote the new Brampton Museum Supporters Group and

inspire more people to become involved. Would it include the use of social media, community events or collaborations with local schools and businesses?

The Leader advised that the Museum had been brought up on this part of the agenda because it was performing well and was a credit to the Borough and could be one of the assets lost under the forced local government reorganisation.

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Heritage and Culture, Councillor Skelding stated that the supporters group, launched last Friday was in part, a continuation of the Friends of the Museum group. Social media was being used to promote the supporters group. School events had always proved useful for promoting the site.

Councillor Bryan asked the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth for an update on the Council's financial revenue budget outturn figure at the end of the last financial year.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth stated that there was a surplus of £20,000 in the revenue budget.

Councillor Skelding, referring to the third paragraph of item 6 stated that J2 was doing well with current membership at 4,19. The wellbeing centre referral programme was engaged with 470 referrals of which 60% were converting to full membership. Twelve schools had confirmed their involvement with swimming lessons and three more were being awaited for confirmation.

Councillor Whieldon stated that her residents were pleased with the street cleanliness levels and wished to pass on congratulations to the Streetscene team through the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment.

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Hutchison was proud of his team and, after updating Members on the performance of the Streetscene team, thanked Councillor Whieldon for her comments.

#### On paragraph 7 – Civic Pride Update

Councillor Gorton was pleased to hear that the draft Civic Pride Strategy would be referred to the Council's Scrutiny Committees and suggested that the Strategy could have a specific pillar of work, working with schools and the college and university.

The Leader stated that this was a good point and Councillor Gorton could put that forward at a Scrutiny Committee in due course.

Councillor Adcock welcomed the Strategy. At a recent visit to a school within his ward, he was encouraged to see the children being encouraged to take pride in and learn about where they lived.

The Leader stated that the benefits of civic pride could be seen in the community and there were more awards to come. An event was planned in the Guildhall and in Kidsgrove, regarding the consultation, where people would be encouraged to give feedback on the strategy.

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

[Watch the debate here](#)

**6. 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](#)

**7. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEES**

Reports for the Planning Committee and the Audit and Standards Committee were attached to the agenda.

Members were advised that the Licensing and Public Protection Committee had not met since the last meeting of the Full Council.

**Resolved:** That the reports be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

**8. MOTIONS OF MEMBERS**

A Motion, concerning Walleys Quarry, had been submitted by the Labour Group and an amendment to the Motion was submitted by the Conservative Group.

The Monitoring Officer advised Members that the proposer and seconder of the Motion wished to withdraw it - with the consent of the Mayor.

Councillor Holland, under Procedure Rule 4.3 of the Constitution, proposed to move the suspension of Procedure Rule 4.6 in order that the text of the Conservative Group's amended Motion may be debated.

*The meeting was suspended briefly whilst the Mayor took advice from the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer.*

The Mayor accepted the withdrawal of the Labour Group's Motion and advised that adjournment of the meeting was necessary in order to discuss Councillor Holland's Point of Order.

*Meeting adjourned at 8.10pm*

*Meeting resumed at 8.40pm*

The Mayor advised that following discussion, the Point of Order to discuss the Motion would be allowed.

The Leader was asked to propose the 'Motion Without Notice'.

The Leader moved the Motion which, following the issuing of the Closure Notice for Walleys Quarry, gave a number of resolutions which included calling upon the Environment Agency (EA), MP and relevant authorities to ensure that the site was

remediated, made safe and fully restored. The Motion also asked for a Public Inquiry to be held, looking into the failings of the EA as regulator of the site.

Councillor Holland seconded the Motion stating that the Motion was clear. The national framework for protecting the residents of Newcastle had failed in this instance and therefore the national bodies should be held accountable.

Following a debate, which raised issues such as what happens next, the Leader in summing up stated that the Motion was clear and set out the parameters for moving forward.

A vote was taken and the Motion was carried.

[Watch the debate here](#)

**9. QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Question from Councillor Mark Holland to the Leader of the Council:

“There has been considerable coverage in the media about so-called "DOGE savings" since the local elections in May. Could the Leader of the Council outline how the Conservative Administration at Newcastle Borough Council, working with Council Officers, has delivered millions of pounds in efficiency savings since 2018?”

The Leader advised that from this Council’s point of view, the efficiencies that were attached to the DOGE agenda were nothing new as efficiency board meetings had taken place in the Council since 2018 and, through that funding strategy almost £17m had been saved. This had allowed for the financial position to be balanced each year and services had improved in the process. The Efficiency Board process had begun for this year which would feed through to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees before going to Full Council for the budget in February, 2026. This Council would come forward with a measure of savings to save almost £2m. Decisions would be made such as not closing the toilets in town and to support the Museum and flower displays across the Borough, all of which could be challenged, DOGE’d and removed.

Councillor Holland did not ask a supplementary question

Question from Councillor Richard Gorton to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage:

“A decade after his death, Ian 'Lemmy' Kilmister remains a giant of rock music. Lemmy may have been born in Burslem, but the greater part of his childhood was spent in Madeley. In view of Lemmy's international status as a musician, song writer and leader of the band Motorhead, does the Portfolio Holder agree that it is time Lemmy's association with the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme was formally recognised and celebrated?”

The Portfolio Holder stated that Lemmy spent a lot of time in Madeley before the age of ten, then moving to Anglesey. The Council did have discussions on the unveiling of the recent statue in Burslem – if it could be located in the new Astley Place area, alongside the new music venue where there could be a motorhead themed restaurant. However, Burslem was selected as it was his birthplace. A national Blue Plaque had also been considered at his childhood home in Madeley but unfortunately he had only been passed for ten years - with the criteria being twenty years. The Museum had been approached to look into ways that Lemmy could be recognised.

Councillor Gorton asked a supplementary question:

“Does the portfolio agree that, at some stage it would be brilliant if an exhibition could be held at the Museum celebrating Lemmy’s life and music.”

The Portfolio Holder agreed, stating that he would be following up with the Museum into possible events.

Question from Councillor Andrew Fox-Hewitt to the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment:

“Following a number of members raising concerns with regards the councils new grass management strategy, Council was informed last year that a review would be undertaken including a public consultation.  
Can the Portfolio Holder please inform Council when and how this review and consultation will take place?”

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Grass Management Strategy was adopted and launched in April 2024, beginning with Phase 1. This had been growing long grass on 18 sites, covering 60 hectares. Phase 2 was the consultation and review period of the Strategy. The consultation had been advertised on the website and through the Strategy itself. The first social media post was done in September 2024 on the Council’s website and also on Facebook. Feedback from the consultation including from word of mouth, complaints, compliments, social media, the Council’s website and meetings was collated and analysed during phase 2. Overall, 93% of those who engaged with the Strategy were either in support or speaking about it positively. The feedback was reviewed by Cabinet in November, 2024 with issues being logged including fire safety to protecting football pitches. The Council flexed its approach with the community and had a mixed approach with mowed and unmowed areas. Phase 2 also found increased bio-diversity and resource efficiencies. Phase 3 had not received any negative comments to date.

Councillor Fox-Hewitt asked a supplementary question:

“Could the Portfolio Holder confirm how many respondents to the consultation there were in Phases 2 and 3”



The Portfolio Holder advised that he would source this information and email it to Councillor Fox-Hewitt.

Question from Councillor Andrew Fox-Hewitt to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth:

“Council will note the fantastic work the Tri Services and Veterans support Centre do for veterans in our borough and the wider County and beyond, whilst operating as a charity in a challenging environment.

Can the Portfolio Holder advise if the Council is going review and waive the discretionary 20% business rate on the Tri Services building.”

The Portfolio Holder stated that he went to the reopening of the refurbished building recently and said that it was a tremendous facility. The Tri Services and Veterans Centre currently received 80% of mandatory relief from business rates due to their charitable status. They could apply for a further discretionary top up but to date had not done so. Applications were assessed using the established scoring matrix and could be granted on a sliding scale from 0 to 20% depending upon reasons given. The application form was on the Council’s website and could be submitted digitally.

Councillor Fox-Hewitt asked a supplementary question:

“Could the Portfolio Holder commit to meeting the Tri-Services Committee and go through the process of how to apply for a top up of the grants on the discretionary rates”

The Portfolio Holder stated that he could, re-stating that the application form was on the Council’s website. Councillor Fox-Hewitt was advised that if he passed Mr Harriman’s phone number to the Portfolio Holder, he would call him.

[Watch the debate here](#)

**10. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS**

No petitions were handed in.

**11. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

**12. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION**

There were no confidential items.

**Cllr Robert Bettley-Smith  
Chair**

***Council - 23/07/25***

Meeting concluded at 9.28 pm