

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 24th September, 2025

Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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Present: Mayor - Councillor Robert Bettley-Smith (Chair)

Councillors:	Adcock	Gorton	Richards
	Allport	Grocott	Sweeney
	Barker MBE	Heesom	J Tagg
	Beeston	Holland	S Tagg (Leader)
	Berrisford	Hutchison	Turnock
	Brown	Johnson	Whieldon
	Casey-Hulme	S Jones	Whitmore
	Crisp	D Jones	Wilkes
	Dean	Lawley	G Williams
	Dymond	Northcott	J Williams
	Edgington-Plunkett	Parker	
	Fear	Reece	

Apologies: Councillor(s) Bryan, Burnett-Faulkner, Fox-Hewitt, Lewis, Skelding, Stubbs, J Waring, P Waring 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
	Craig Jordan	Service Director - Planning
	Roger Tait	Service Director - Neighbourhood Delivery
	Geoff Durham	Civic & Member Support Officer
	Craig Turner	Finance Manager / Deputy S151 Officer

1. ALDERMAN JOSEPH 'HARRY' MATTHEWS

A minute's silence was held for Alderman Joseph 'Harry' Matthews who had passed away earlier this week.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Simon Tagg led the tributes to Harry who had served as Councillor, Deputy Leader of the Council and Mayor.

Although the Leader had not served alongside Harry on the Council, he had met him many times and had served alongside Harry's son Ian. On behalf of himself and his group, the Leader sent condolences to his family.

Councillor John Williams echoed the Leader's words and stated that Harry's door was always open to give advice and he treaded members from all groups in a friendly and courteous manner.

[Watch the tributes here](#)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 July, 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made three announcements:

The 'Music under the Stars' charity event, this coming Friday had been cancelled and would be replaced by another event in May, 2026.

The Mayoral walk, scheduled for Tuesday 30 September had been moved to Sunday 5 October.

The remaining walks would then follow on Sunday 12 October; Saturday 25 October and Sunday 8 November which requires booking would end at the Brompton Museum with 'cream tea and fizz'.

5. APPOINTMENT OF SECTION 151 OFFICER

Craig Turner left the room during consideration of this item.

The Leader introduced a report seeking Council's formal agreement to the appointment of the Service Director for Finance and Section 151 Officer following the current postholder, Sarah Wilkes leaving the Authority in mid-October. The Leader advised Council of Craig Turner's previous experience.

Sarah was thanked for her work over many years and wished all the best for the future. This would be her last meeting before taking on her new role with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's office.

Following Council's approval of appointment, Mr Turner returned to the room and was congratulated.

Resolved:

- (i) That the appointment of Craig Turner as the Council's Service Director for Finance and Section 151 Officer be approved.
- (ii) That Mr Turner be appointed on a salary of £63,510.68 per annum with an additional £10,000 per annum Statutory Officer allowance.

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. ANNUAL REPORT

The Leader introduced a report on the Council's Annual Report for 2024-25 which provided a summary of work and outcomes achieved during the first year of the Council's 2022-2026 Council Plan. A copy of the Annual report was appended to the report.

The Leader outlined some of the achievements of the past year which included the momentum on the regeneration of the Borough; maintaining a balanced budget and delivering high quality services; the opening of Keele in Town. In Kidsgrove, plans were underway for the town centre and railway station developments.

Councillor Sweeney stated that, in reference to the balanced budget it had been achieved by feasible and sustainable savings through the Efficiency Board process. Savings and Funding strategies had enabled continued investment via the Civic Growth Fund. The One Council Programme had made recurrent savings of £1.173m year after year.

Members discussed and complimented upon the Annual Report.

Resolved: That the Council's Annual Report for 2024-2025 be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth introduced the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2024/25, which had been produced in line with legislative requirements.

As of 31 March, 2025 no external borrowing had been undertaken by the Council.

The Leader stated that national policy governed the way in which the Council managed its money when using it, for example, to raise interest. Factors such as the economy and interest rates would have an impact and the economy needed to grow to benefit authorities both locally and nationally.

Resolved: (i) That the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2024/25 be noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

8. URGENT DECISION NOTIFICATION - COMMITTEE PROPORTIONALITY

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 Councillor Beeston joining the Conservative Group.

Resolved: That the Urgent Decision notification be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

9. 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 asked the Leader if he agreed that it was concerning that there was still no timetable for a public inquiry which was one of the key recommendations coming from the Inquiry held here at Newcastle last year but were still awaiting a response. Did the Leader also agree that it was regrettable that there had been no clear response from the Government.

The Leader agreed, stating that since publication of the agenda, a response had been received from the new Secretary of State but unfortunately she did not wish to consent to a public inquiry. A copy of the letter would be sent to Members.

There had been a significant reduction in complaints regarding odours from the site through the effective works and management of the contractors brought in by the Environment Agency (EA) and the Council continued to press for the permanent capping and restoration of the site and opposed any reopening of the site. The government, EA and local MP would continue to be pressed for a public inquiry.

On paragraph 3 – Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026-27 to 2030-31

Councillor Berrisford welcomed the Council's commitment to prudent financial planning and the focus on maintaining a balanced budget. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth was asked what contingency plans were in place within the MTFS to mitigate potential funding shortfalls, given the uncertainty around future government financial settlements.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the MTFS had been developed with a strong emphasis on resilience and adaptability, recognising the ongoing uncertainty around future government financial settlements. To mitigate financial shortfalls, the Council had embedded a number of contingency measures including maintaining a prudent level of reserves, regularly reviewing service efficiencies and scenario planning to model different funding outcomes. Opportunities were also being explored to diversify income streams via the commercial strategy.

The Council continues to lobby central government for fair and sustainable funding.

On paragraph 4 – Kidsgrove Town Deal Update and Contract Awards

Councillor Holland was pleased with the progress made on the Town Deal. The Leader or Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth were asked how many job opportunities were forecast with the development at Chatterley Valley West.

The Portfolio Holder stated that he went to the site recently and the progress on the development was substantial. In previous discussions of the development, the portfolio holder had mentioned the creation of 1800 jobs. However, information was now being received from the County Council that it could be more than 1800.

On paragraph 5 – Newcastle -under-Lyme Borough Local Plan 2020-40

Councillor John Williams asked, when the Inspector talked about parking within the town centre, did she take into account the sale of car parks by the Council. There was a problem to the East of the town centre, particularly Hassell Street where the under provision of car parking was causing great concerns to residents and local businesses. Would the sale of car parks make the situation worse, especially with the development of the former Zanzibar site and the former Jolly Potters pub.

The Leader stated that the Council was aware of the issues in Hassell Street and some proposals had already been amended relating to Hassell Street car park to enable more spaces for businesses and residents. There had been a long running issue with parking spaces within the town centre. The sites being brought forward, which were in the Cabinet report, were ones that were rarely, if ever used for parking.

Councillor Turnock asked the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning for confirmation that the new local plan guaranteed a five year housing land supply so that further speculative development could be resisted.

The Portfolio Holder stated that, if an authority did not have a five year housing supply, there would be very little protection and at the current time, Newcastle did not have a five year housing land supply, however, this would hopefully change once the local plan had finished its examination period. Newcastle's timely movement with the plan meant that it would be examined under an older system and therefore fewer houses were required. If a land supply can be demonstrated then site outside of the allocated areas could be resisted. However, the government could change the goalposts in the future and that was outside of the Council's control.

Councillor Crisp stated that getting the local plan in place was the best short term protection for green spaces as it enabled sustainable housing developments. However, it was now known that the government wanted to impose an additional two thousand homes on the Borough. The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning was asked to outline how the neighbourhood plan would protect green spaces from the government's stated policy of build, build, build.

Councillor Northcott joined the meeting at 19:55

The Portfolio Holder stated that, if it was adopted it would become part of the Council's Strategic Development Plan which would carry weight along with the local plan and minerals plan. Paragraph 30 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stated that "neighbourhood plans should not provide less development than set out in strategic policies for the area or undermine those strategic policies" – the strategic policies were set out in the local plan. Note 17 of paragraph 30 stated that "neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained within any development plan which covered their area". The neighbourhood plan was therefore a supplement to the local plan but for issues such as defending green spaces, it was the local plan that had to be referred to.

On paragraph 6 – Forced Local Government Reorganisation (FLGR) Update

Councillor Dave Jones asked the Leader if he could provide details of any conversations or agreements that had been discussed with other authorities.

The Leader stated that he had met with the Leaders Board and had individual meetings with a number of leaders and also outside of Staffordshire including

Shropshire, Telford and through the Local Government Association (LGA). Some council's proposals were still awaited, particularly in the south. The Leader had spoken with the leader of Staffordshire County Council regarding their proposals for creation of West and East Staffordshire Authorities, the West being one of the proposals that Newcastle was investigating.

Councillor Adcock asked the Portfolio Holder for Finance Town Centres and Growth what immediate financial implications this process had had on the Council so far, including diversion of time of officer resources that could otherwise be focussed on delivering services.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the FLGR would not save money, nor would it be more democratic or improve services. The Council had £200k in this year's budget to pay for consultants and senior officer's time. A further £400k had been allocated in next year's budget to pay for other costs that would arise. The Portfolio Holder stated that the £600k would be better spend in the Borough for the people of Newcastle.

Councillor John Williams stated that he would like to see the Council look at the opportunities on behalf of its residents. He would like to see the Borough being independent. All opportunities should be looked at. The Leader was asked if he wanted a North Staffordshire Authority or an East and West Authority.

The Leader stated that this Council had made its view known agreeing that the preferred proposal was for a Newcastle Unitary and had put forward other ideas for investigation. There would be a Special Council meeting on 19 November when this Council's final proposals would be brought forward. The proposal would protect the Borough's history, protect the finances of the Borough and protect front line services.

The Leader stated that 8,700 people had signed the petition to 'Save Our Borough'. Newcastle MP's need to listen and stand up for the Borough.

Councillor Wilkes asked, if Newcastle did get taken over, would the local plan still stand.

The Leader stated that once the local plan was in place it would take the Council through to any new authority. However, a new local plan would then have to be prepared.

On paragraph 7 – Finance and Performance Review Report – First Quarter 2025-26

Councillor Beeston commended the Council's commitment to public health and safety, particularly food hygiene. The latest performance report stated that 0.41% of premises in the Borough were rated 0 or 1 out of 5. The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment was asked what percentage of premises were rated 4 or 5 stars.

The Portfolio Holder stated that 980 premises were inspected across the Borough. Of those, 892 premises were rated 5 (very good) and 59 premises were rated 4 (good). Therefore 951 premises, or 97% had a 4 or 5 rating.

Councillor Whieldon stated that it was important to recognise outstanding performance of the Council's recycling and waste team. The percentage of successful collections stood at 99.97%.

The Portfolio Holder was asked to pass on Councillor Whieldon's congratulations to the team for their continued professionalism and dedication. The Portfolio Holder was also asked how current performance compared to previous quarters and if there were any further plans to build upon the Council's recycling services.

Councillor Dave Jones left the meeting at 20:17

The Portfolio Holder stated that he would pass Councillor Whieldon's comments to the team. The 99.97% collection success rate meant that for every 10,000 collections only three were missed. In the previous financial year, the figures finished on 99.95% successful collections. Newcastle was still the only council in the county that separately collected food waste from households and had now started collecting it from flats ahead of the 2026 deadline. In addition, more plastics were now being collected.

Councillor Parker echoed Councillor Whieldon's comments and also wished to thank officers, the Leader and the Cabinet for maintaining the strong performance of council services. Given that the County Council's new Reform Leadership had recently approved £140,000 for political assistant posts to advise their group, did the Leader share Councillor Parker's concerns that this displayed a lack of experience or capability within their new Cabinet to effectively run the County Council.

The Leader stated that he had been astounded to see that the County Council were looking to employ two political assistants, one of which would be for the Conservative group. However, the Conservative group would not be taking up the offer. The decision had been called-in for debate at the County and the Leader, as a County Councillor would be supporting the call-in to reverse that decision.

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

[Watch the debate here](#)

10. **REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

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

Resolved: That the reports be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

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

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

Members were advised that the Audit and Standards Committee had not met since the last meeting of the Full Council.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

[Watch the debate here](#)

12. MOTIONS OF MEMBERS

A Motion, concerning inappropriate accommodation for Asylum Seekers in Newcastle-under-Lyme was submitted by the Conservative Group, proposed by Councillor Holland and seconded by Councillor Fear.

Councillor Holland introduced the Motion which expressed concerns regarding the unsuitability of housing Asylum seekers in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's) or short term lets as they often lacked the necessary support infrastructure.

Since publication of the agenda, in respect of resolution 6, a response had been received from Adam Jogee MP which had been circulated this evening.

Councillor Fear seconded the Motion and reserved the right to speak in the debate.

Following a lengthy debate, the Leader in summing up stated that the Motion addressed growing concerns, both locally and nationally for the placement of Asylum Seekers in appropriate accommodation. It was about standing up for residents and those seeking refuge by demanding that the system worked.

A vote was taken and the Motion was carried.

[Watch the debate here](#)

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

Question from Councillor Jacqueline Brown to the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment:

"In the summer of 2023 I contacted officers as a result of residents' complaints regarding bins left out all week in narrow terraced areas. This anti social behaviour causes obstruction and hazards to anyone using the pavement, particularly wheelchair users and those pushing prams & pushchairs. It also makes the area look very untidy.

Around this time The Sentinel ran an article about the City of Stoke-on-Trent issuing fixed penalty notices to habitual offenders. Officers informed me they were setting up a similar scheme and I was asked to identify hot spots, which I did including Kinsey St, West Street and George Street. Fellow councillors inform me this is a problem in other wards.

However, to my knowledge no fixed penalty notices have yet been issued. Could the portfolio holder give us an update please?"

The Portfolio Holder stated that a procedure had been approved in August 2023. This was a staged approach to enforcement as follows: Education. Letters and fliers were sent to the hotspot areas. There then followed a three staged approach: A warning letter sent to properties where issues had continued; this would be followed up by a community protection warning which outlined what was expected of the householder; finally, a community protection notice would be issued identifying the expectations and requirements that the owner/occupier needed to follow and asked them to comply with the notice. Failure to comply would result in a £100 Fixed Penalty Notice. Since approval of the scheme, the Neighbourhood Delivery team had carried out extensive work in a number of Wards.

Officers visited Kinsey Street, George Street and Church Street in Silverdale delivering letters and knocking on doors giving advice. A small number of bins were abandoned and subsequently uplifted. One resident in Kinsey Street did receive a fine.

Ward members were urged to encourage residents to report such issues so that they could be actioned.

Councillor Brown asked a supplementary question:

“Just to confirm, did you say that one resident was fined on Kinsey Street”

The Portfolio Holder confirmed this.

Question from Councillor Andrew Parker to the Leader of the Council:

“Deakins Yard (formerly the Sky Building) has been in the news again recently, following the Health & Safety Executive’s decision to block the opening of the student flats due to safety concerns. Can the Leader of the Council provide an update on any further developments?”

The Labour MP for Newcastle, in media interviews, stated that he wants answers as to why this student flats development was granted permission. Does the Leader agree with me that he should be looking closer to home to find those answers?”

The Leader stated that Building Control Officers dealing with the Newcastle area raised the alarm in December, 2024 identifying potential risks and alerted the Building Safety Regulator and their evidence prevented occupation of the building. From that point, the Council worked closely with the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and ensured that action was taken by keeping up the pressure. In August this year, the Chief Executive of the Council activated an incident response approach to mitigate the immediate risk. A major focus was rehousing students and ensuring that they were placed in appropriate accommodation.

Council staff engaged directly with developers and stakeholders to resolve the situation. The developers agreed to cooperate with the Building Safety Regulator and the Council had agreed to meet regularly with the regulator to ensure that there would be no long term impact for residents in the wider community.

Adam Jogee MP was given a full briefing by the Building Safety Regulator, (part of the Health and Safety Executive) and officers, before being interviewed on BBC Radio Stoke. The MP had asked why permission had been given for this development. The sale, permission and question regarding due diligence therefore lay with the previous administration of the Council.

Councillor Parker did not ask a supplementary question:

[Watch the debate here](#)

14. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

No petitions were handed in.

15. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

16. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

There were no confidential reports.

**Mayor - Councillor Robert Bettley-Smith
Chair**

Meeting concluded at 9.11 pm