

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S
REPORT TO CABINET

13 JANUARY 2026

Report Title: Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) – Evaluation of 2025 Activities

Submitted by: Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery

Portfolios: One Council, People and Partnerships; Community Safety and Wellbeing; Sustainable Environment

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
To review and evaluate the activities delivered in the initial year of the Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) initiative, and to look ahead to the next phase of delivery			
<u>Recommendation</u>			
<p>That Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receives the report and notes the activities delivered in 2025 as part of the initial year of the Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) initiative 2. Formally adopts the Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy 2025 – 2028 now that consultation has concluded 3. Considers the additional resource requirements of increasing community engagement activity and target setting and monitoring as set out in the motion which was approved at Full Council on 19th November 2025 4. Refers this report to the Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee for consideration 			

1. Background

- 1.1 In October 2024, the Council launched its Civic Pride campaign which aims to boost pride across the borough and strengthen its reputation as a place which is clean, safe and friendly. The campaign began with a week of action in Newcastle town centre, and was followed over the remainder of 2024 and 2025 by a varied programme of events in all of the wards of the Borough.
- 1.2 The Clayton and Westlands event on 11th June 2025 also hosted the launch of the new £22,000 Civic Pride Investment Fund (based on a notional

allocation of £500 per single member ward) to support community priorities via a simple application process.

- 1.3** Civic Pride aims to create a strong sense of belonging to, and pride in, our fantastic borough. It's a response to feedback from residents and captures a lot of the work that already goes on by the council and its partners – under a unified #PrideInNUL badge – and is also a call to arms for people of all ages to get involved.
- 1.4** One of the council's priorities is to create healthy, active and safe communities. As part of this area of work, the Council is committed to working closely with partners, and local groups, to make a positive difference in every part of the borough. Civic Pride is a great legacy from the Borough's 850th anniversary celebrations and aims to build on the fantastic community spirit and pride shown by residents in 2023.
- 1.5** To pull all of this together, the Council drafted the Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy 2025 – 2028 which will provide a framework to guide our continuing work in this area. Consultation on the draft concluded in November 2025.
- 1.6** At Full Council on 19th November 2025, a motion was proposed and carried to:
 1. Acknowledge the successful first year of the Civic Pride campaign, recognising the contributions of Council staff, councillors, partner organisations, community groups, businesses, and residents.
 2. Reaffirm its commitment to the core goals of Civic Pride: creating a cleaner, safer, and more welcoming borough, and fostering a stronger community cohesion across the borough.
 3. Recognise the positive outcomes and momentum generated so far, while acknowledging that further work is needed to embed Civic Pride in all aspects of Council activity.
 4. Request that Cabinet and the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee receive a report on the rollout of Civic Pride to help shape future plans, including:
 - a) Targets and benchmarks for cleanliness, safety, amenity, community engagement and cohesion.
 - b) A communications and engagement plan to increase involvement from residents, schools, businesses, and community organisations.
 - c) An updated neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood rollout plan to ensure comprehensive coverage.
 - d) A review of the impact of the Civic Pride Investment Fund and proposals for future funding rounds.
 - e) Explore new opportunities for youth involvement, digital engagement, volunteering and sponsorship.
 5. Note the incorporation of the Civic Pride values as a core element in the Council's wider community, neighbourhood and place-shaping strategies included in its submission to government regarding Local Government Reorganisation.
 6. Welcome the launch of the 'Winter of Action' in Town Centres campaign and notes its alignment with existing Civic Pride efforts by the Council and its partners.

2. Issues

2.1 At the heart of how we work at Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council is listening to our communities and finding ways to give residents power over their own lives and the neighbourhoods they live in. This is central to the Civic Pride approach in Newcastle-Under-Lyme. The community is active across our Borough with residents, partner organisations, schools, the college and the university, businesses and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors making a difference every day.

2.2 To recognise, celebrate and co-ordinate this, we prepared the Borough Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy 2025 - 2028, which will set out the areas we will focus on as we make progress, respond to feedback, and continue to listen to our communities. The Strategy is a dynamic document, which will evolve as we move forward. Our priorities mirror those in the County Council's Communities Strategy and focus on the Great Places Where We Live, our Connected Communities and The Way the Council Listens, Talks and Acts.

2.3 This strategy is the first step of our journey to support residents to achieve the lifestyles and local neighbourhoods that they want to see. Consultation on the draft was carried out during the latter part of 2025 via an online survey, through face to face dialogue with partners and community groups during the 15 dedicated events in the Borough's neighbourhoods and wards, and with members at the Council's 3 Scrutiny Committees. There was a positive response to the principles of the strategy and therefore it is now proposed to formally adopt it.

2.4 The Civic Pride Investment Fund has awarded grants to 11 community projects over the 3 application rounds in July, September and December 2025, with a total fund awarded of £8040. Successful applications demonstrated how they would meet the aims of Civic Pride by contributing to making the Borough cleaner, safer and/or friendlier/more welcoming. In terms of impact, the Fund has reached 9 different neighbourhoods or wards across the Borough, ensuring that the Civic Pride message and principles have been promoted inclusively. For future rounds of funding, areas which have not yet benefitted from the Fund could be the subject of some targeted engagement with groups who may have eligible projects, including the Kidsgrove area and the rural communities.

2.5 The core element of the Civic Pride initiative to date has been the 15 events held across the neighbourhoods and wards of the Borough. These events have been supported by our key partners Aspire Housing, Staffordshire Police and Staffordshire County Council and have involved a variety of community groups and volunteers who are active in their neighbourhoods. As well as carrying out practical activities such as litter picking, the events provide valuable intelligence by listening to what our communities have told us, and hearing from people who live in, work in, study in and enjoy Newcastle. People have talked about what they do to help themselves and each other in the Borough, and what the Council could do differently. This will help to inform the programme and content of events for 2026.

2.6 Although the events have been generally successful and well-supported, it is fair to say that there is still some way to go for the Civic Pride initiative to become fully embedded in, and owned by, the communities of the Borough. The Council and its partners can and will continue to organise events in the neighbourhoods and wards, but ideally the events should be shaped and led by community representatives in response to local priorities. The Council has a limited officer resource available to engage with communities to any greater extent than is currently undertaken, therefore consideration needs to be given as to how a communications and engagement plan to increase involvement from residents, schools, businesses and community organisations and exploring new opportunities for youth involvement, digital engagement, volunteering and sponsorship would be resourced.

2.7 Integral to the Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy is the Delivery Plan, which sets out the practical actions we will take together with our community under the themes of Great Places Where We Live, Connected Communities and the Way the Council Listens, Talks and Acts. This translates our high level objectives into real actions our residents expect, and will show what difference we have collectively made in the future. We will review progress against the Delivery Plan every year, and conduct a reflection in 2028, taking soundings from our partners and residents to check that the direction is still relevant and delivering the right outcomes as we prepare for any changes Local Government Reorganisation may bring.

2.8 The Delivery Plan also includes service-specific actions for each of the Council's Service Directors to facilitate corporate ownership of the strategy and the principles of Civic Pride. The following is a brief update on progress with the Delivery Plan:

Delivery Plan 2025-2028

Pillar	Action	Lead Partner	Timescale
Great Places Where We Live (#Pride in NuL – safer, cleaner, welcoming)			
Strengthen our work with partners and residents to help people feel safer and more included within their communities	Deliver the Community Safety Action Plan	NuLBC/Staffs Police	Ongoing – regular progress reports to Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee
	Hold regular Civic Pride events across the Borough	NuLBC/SCC/Staffs Police/Aspire	Ongoing - 2025 programme completed and 2026 programme drafted
Help residents to get more involved in tackling climate change, take care of our environment and	Deliver Newcastle in Bloom local competitions	NuLBC	Ongoing – 2025 competitions completed and awards ceremony held

make Newcastle more sustainable	Support community volunteering in green spaces	NuLBC	Ongoing – included in Civic Pride and Newcastle in Bloom programmes
Help people to have better access to thriving local town centres and neighbourhoods by working with Staffordshire County Council on a Local Transport Plan	Deliver Town Deal, FHSF and UKSPF projects Local Plan Digital Infrastructure Local Transport Plan	NuLBC and Town Deal Boards NuLBC NuLBC SCC	Ongoing – construction phase in progress on key sites Examination in progress Final specification and tendering in progress Consultation in progress
Engage with our Town and Parish Councils, community groups and other external partners to understand and work with our communities better	Deliver Placemaking Programme Action Plan Promote Civic Pride in Newcastle-under-Lyme	NuL BID/NuLBC Newcastle Partnership Board/elected members/Town and Parish Councils/Support Staffordshire	Ongoing Ongoing - at neighbourhood events, on digital screen and via website/social media
Connected Communities			
Continue to work with and support our thriving Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector	Host Newcastle Partnership Board meetings Facilitate Newcastle Partnership Board workshop to identify priorities and update workplan	NuLBC NuLBC/Newcastle Partnership Board	Quarterly meetings ongoing Updated draft workplan considered at December 2025 Board meeting
Make it easier for residents to find information, opportunities and connections that help them do their bit and be independent	Continue to develop the Information, Advice and Guidance pages on the website	NuLBC	Ongoing – service updates regularly uploaded
Connect people of all ages to the right help, at the right time, in the right place	Support Staffordshire County Council Supportive	SCC	Ongoing - IAG/Box of Trix being developed, champions being

	Communities programme		recruited and microgrants available
Support people to become digitally informed, included and connected across the Borough	Support Staffordshire County Council Supportive Communities Programme	SCC	Ongoing – IAG/Box of Trix being developed and champions being recruited
The Way the Council Listens, Talks and Acts			
Try our best to engage with residents earlier, more accessibly, more creatively, more consistently and more locally	Programme of “Ask the Leader” digital broadcasts Programme of face to face engagement events as part of Civic Pride days across the Borough Online engagement survey Civic Pride Online Community Panel	NuLBC NuLBC SCC/NuLBC NuLBC	Launch date to be agreed 2025 programme completed and 2026 programme drafted Tool being developed for launch in 2026 Launch date to be agreed
Adapt our approach to help residents get more involved and support officers to understand how they can help	Regular feature in Team Talk and CastleNews Volunteering Scheme	NuLBC NuLBC	Ongoing Ongoing – opportunities available for staff and community
Support all our councillors to access the local information they need	Members Area on Connexus	NuLBC	Ongoing – updates regularly uploaded

Service-specific initiatives:

Service	Policy/Strategy	Action/Project	Communications
Sustainable Environment	Grassland/Tree Management – delivery into 3rd year	Lyme Park Countryside Park – phase 1 delivery in progress ; greenspace trail	Waste minimisation campaign – food waste and anti-litter campaigns in progress

Planning	Planning policy and planning application decisions (healthy and vibrant town centres/protect built heritage and open spaces) – engagement with applicants ongoing to reflect views of members and community	Work with property and land owners to add value to development proposals; use building control powers to ensure safety/accessibility and facilitate aesthetic improvements	Engaged with communities on Local Plan proposals via roadshows and online consultation – examination in progress with consultation on Main Modifications
Commercial Delivery	Strategy for future cremated remains burial (Bradwell Crematorium extension) – costed proposal being prepared	Digital hubs in Community Centres – final specification and tendering in progress for internet service; Knutton Village Hall – further consideration required before decision can be taken	Town Deal newsletters – regularly issued; bereavement services customer information (memorial safety/tribute removal) - regularly issued
Regulatory	Partnership approach to supporting vulnerable people – ongoing at weekly Vulnerability Hub	Navigation House Hub – contract awarded and work in progress	Energy efficiency/Staffordshire Warmer Homes campaigns – ongoing and referrals continuing
Legal and Governance	Governance support for town and parish councils – a Town and Parish Council Forum is to be established in 2026 to share best practice in governance	Civic and mayoral events – mayoral events published: support for town centre enforcement – feasibility of injunctions and closure orders being investigated	Promotion of local democracy to young people – a Youth Democracy Day is to be held and then a Youth Advisory Panel is to be established in 2026: promotion of social value procurement – Social Value in Procurement paper drafted
Strategy, People and Performance	Council Plan to deliver community priorities and facilitate co-production of services	Better Health programme	Social Media campaign to enable improved interaction
Information Technology	Technology Strategy to deliver services to residents digitally – strategy approved and launched	CRM/Customer Portal to improve resident access and communication – CRM implementation in progress and customer portal to be	Promote digital connectivity to reduce digital divide – Town Deal fibre network project in progress and free internet for community centres being procured

		launched in March 2026	
Finance	Capital Strategy to support community benefit and priorities – first draft prepared for Cabinet approval	Setting budget to keep Council Tax low and support community priorities – 1.99% proposed for 2026/27 budget setting. Budget allows continued investment in Civic Pride fund	Budget consultation for residents to have their say – results to be reported to Cabinet in February 2026
Neighbourhood Delivery	Mobile Multi Functional operating model – successfully embedded and environmental enforcement/community safety work being delivered	PSPO enforcement – ongoing in partnership with police /Great British Spring Clean – completed in 2025 and planned for March 2026/Safe Space – ongoing to improve safety for women and girls during NTE/Winter of Action – joint plan prepared with police in response to letter from Home Secretary	Publicity on enforcement successes – ongoing in partnership with police

2.9 There has been some good initial progress made with the Delivery Plan in the first year of the initiative, laying the foundations for this work to continue and develop over the life of the strategy up to 2028. The Delivery Plan will continue to be regularly reviewed and updated, and appropriate new actions added in response to community feedback and priorities.

2.10 The motion which was passed at Full Council on 19th November 2025 (see section 1.6 of this report) recognises the good work which has been done so far on the Civic Pride initiative and reaffirms the Council's commitment to continue to develop it. It also acknowledges that further work is required to fully embed the principles of Civic Pride in all aspects of Council activity and in its wider strategies. There is recognition that a great deal of additional communication and engagement is needed to increase involvement from residents, schools, businesses and community organisations, and that new opportunities for youth involvement, digital engagement, volunteering and sponsorship need to be explored. There is also a desire to see targets and benchmarks set for cleanliness, safety, amenity, community engagement and cohesion. Some targets and benchmarks already exist either within the Council's Performance Framework (cleanliness, ASB reports) or within partner monitoring arrangements, but further work will be required to understand what

is to be measured, why and how. The motion sets out an ambition for a significant additional workload which is currently unresourced and cannot currently be absorbed within existing agreed priority work programmes, across the service areas and partner organisations which would need to be involved. Further cross-departmental and partnership work will be required to quantify this resource and to consider the financial implications of resourcing it, before it can be rolled out.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1** That Cabinet receives the report and notes the activities delivered in 2025 as part of the initial year of the Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) initiative.
- 3.2** Formally adopts the Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy 2025 – 2028 now that consultation has concluded.
- 3.3** Considers the additional resource requirements of increasing community engagement activity and target setting and monitoring as set out in the motion which was approved at Full Council on 19th November 2025.
- 3.4** Refers this report to the Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

4. Reasons

- 4.1** To boost civic pride across the Borough and strengthen its reputation as a place which is clean, safe and friendly.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1** No other options were considered.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 6.1** The Council has a duty to work with partners to deliver particular functions and can engage with the communities of the Borough to assist in shaping service delivery.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1** It is intended that this strategy will have a positive impact on equality by providing opportunities for all Borough communities to engage in service design and delivery.

8. Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1** There are staff resource implications in progressing the actions in the Delivery Plan and in undertaking additional community engagement activity and target setting and monitoring. Consideration must be given as to how this is to be resourced before such actions are agreed for progression.

- 8.2 Each service area will need to adapt and flex workplans to enable delivery of the current agreed actions in the Delivery Plan, and be mindful of how this fits with other pre-identified priorities.
- 8.3 Some actions also have financial implications which, wherever possible, will be absorbed within existing approved budget provision. Where this is not possible, further reports will be brought forward to explore funding options.
- 8.4 A continuation of the Civic Pride Investment Fund of £22,000 has been included in the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2026/27, subject to final approval of the budget at Full Council in February 2026.

9. Major Risks & Mitigation

- 9.1 There is a risk of limited community and partner engagement with the Civic Pride campaign. Efforts will be made to promote the campaign and develop community ownership of local issues, subject to staff resource constraints, including continuing to make funds available for local projects via the new Civic Pride Fund.
- 9.2 There is a risk of limited staff capacity impacting on the Council's ability to drive the strategy and deliver the actions in the Delivery Plan. Efforts will be made to balance competing priorities and support communities and members to take forward local actions. Consideration will need to be given to resourcing work related to the strategy.
- 9.3 There is a risk that Local Government Reorganisation could have a significant impact on the sustainability of the Civic Pride campaign in Newcastle. Options to mitigate this risk will be considered when more detail is known about the model of any future Council arrangements which cover the Borough.

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG



11. One Council

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council

We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.

Providing Information, Advice and Guidance to communities on service efficiencies and commercial opportunities are a key element of the strategy.

One Digital Council

We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.

Access to digital services and considering digital exclusion issues are key elements of the strategy.

One Sustainable Council

We will deliver on our commitments to a net zero future and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle

Supporting communities to be involved in managing green spaces and contributing to the Council becoming carbon neutral by 2030 are a key element of the strategy.

12. Key Decision Information

12.1 This is not a key decision.

13. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

13.1 Cabinet - 8th July 2025

14. List of Appendices

14.1 Appendix 1 - Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy 2025 - 28

15. Background Papers

15.1 Staffordshire County Council Communities Strategy 2024 - 29