

Supporting Our Borough's Town Centres, High Streets and Villages

Our town centres and high streets are at the heart of our community, both urban and rural, but they face challenges. We know that small businesses, both retail and hospitality, are facing difficult economic circumstances. However, we also know that people still want to visit their local town centres and that bricks-and-mortar shops can still be the preferred choice for many over online retail because they form part of a leisure offer.

The Council is supporting businesses and shoppers by delivering once-in-a-lifetime regeneration projects building on the £50 million Town Deal and Future High Street programmes awarded by the last Conservative Government.

- **Newcastle-under-Lyme Town Centre:** Significant investment is transforming key sites in the town centre, creating modern spaces for homes, retail, leisure, and improving connectivity and public realm.¹
- **Kidsgrove:** The Town Deal is driving improvements to transport, leisure facilities, and public spaces, ensuring Kidsgrove remains an accessible destination for residents and visitors.²

Council believes that:

1. Our town centres and high streets across our Borough are vital community hubs where residents access shops, services, culture, hospitality, and public facilities.
2. Vibrant retail and leisure are essential for the economic health, social wellbeing, and identity of our communities.
3. Hospitality and retail businesses play a central role in shaping the life of our town centres and high streets, attracting footfall, creating jobs, and supporting the wider local economy.
4. Government policies, such as the Employer's National Insurance rise and increases in business rates payable, are destroying local businesses.

Council further believes that:

1. Through its once-in-a-lifetime regeneration activity, the Council is doing what it can to support the long-term viability of our town centres, help attract footfall, and create the conditions for independent businesses and local employers to succeed.
2. Hospitality and retail sector businesses are vital and that they benefit from stable costs, predictable trading conditions, and good access for customers.

¹ <https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/news/article/470/borough-transformation-continues-at-pace-as-key-sites-undergo-town-deal-backed-regeneration>

² <https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/news/article/428/kidsgrove-town-deal-delivery-is-on-right-track>

3. The Government should do more to support our town centres, high streets, and villages, such as offering business rates exemptions or discounts for hospitality and retail sector businesses, without impacting income to local authorities.

Council resolves:

1. To continue to act to ensure the long-term viability of our town centres and high streets as part of everything we do, whether that be via regeneration policies, community safety, or civic pride.
2. To continue to work with the police to tackle antisocial behaviour in our town centres by ensuring that necessary PSPOs and other council-implemented actions are kept up to date.
3. To ask the Leader and Chief Executive to write to the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, requesting:
 - That the package of measures providing relief to pubs³ from changes announced at the Budget to the business rates regime be extended to all hospitality and high street businesses.
 - A further review of business rates for retail, hospitality and leisure sector businesses, with a view to permanently reducing taxation in line with the Government's stated ambition of stronger economic growth, and building on HM Treasury's October 2024 ambitions for lower tax and greater support for RHL sector businesses.⁴
4. To engage with the three Members of Parliament that represent the Borough to:
 - Seek their active support for ongoing regeneration projects and, crucially, work to secure additional central government funding for the Borough's further regeneration;
 - Encourage them to advocate for fairer business rates and policies that protect hospitality and retail on our high streets;
 - Work collaboratively to promote Newcastle, Kidsgrove and the wider Borough as thriving destinations for investment and leisure.

Proposed: Simon Tagg

Seconded: Mark Holland

³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c8e57dexly1o>

⁴

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675197b95692dd4c0c8d1dac/Transforming_Business_Rates__2_.pdf