

CABINET

Tuesday, 13th January, 2026
Time of Commencement: 1.00 pm

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Present: Councillor Simon Tagg (Chair)

Councillors:	Sweeney	Fear	Hutchison
	Heesom	Skelding	

Officers:	Gordon Mole	Chief Executive
	Anthony Harold	Service Director - Legal & Governance / Monitoring Officer
	Andrew Bird	Service Director - Sustainable Environment
	Nesta Barker	Service Director - Regulatory Services
	Georgina Evans-Stadward	Service Director - Strategy, People and Performance
	Geoff Durham	Civic & Member Support Officer
	Craig Turner	Service Director - Finance / S151 Officer
	Simone Harris	Marketing and Communications Officer

Also in attendance: Councillor Fox-Hewitt

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

2. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 2 December, 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

3. **WALLEYS QUARRY UPDATE**

The Leader introduced a report updating Cabinet on the latest position regarding odours in the Borough associated with Walleys Quarry.

The Leader stated that this was the post-Christmas meeting and previous years' reports at this meeting had reported odours and discomfort and many complaints. That was not the case this time.

The Council's Chief Executive advised that this was a slightly more streamlined version of the report but all historic data remained available from the previous reports or on request.

Figure 2 at paragraph 2.1 of the report showed the contrast throughout the past year of odour complaints, with only two being received in December.

The change was recognised at the recent political multi-agency meeting where an update was received from the Environment Agency (EA) on the activity at the site.

Although the site was largely shut down over the Christmas period, leachate was still being removed and EA and Council officers were monitoring the situation. Any complaints received would be investigated and work would continue with the multi-agency partners on defining, designing and delivering the next steps.

Councillor Fear stated that this was heartening and looking to the future it was hoped that it would remain like this. Councillor Fear also hoped that the Government would provide national funding for the recovery and restoration of the site and also that a public inquiry would be held.

Councillor Sweeney agreed with Councillor Fear, the crucial question being who would pay for the recovery and restoration. Referring to paragraph 2.1 and the position this time last year, Councillor Sweeney said that it was amazing.

The Leader stated that it showed what could be done when a site was managed correctly, as the contractor for the EA was doing.

The Council would be playing a key part in the recovery stage, with other agencies although it was not the responsible agency for restoration or capping but did have powers as a regulator for the statutory nuisance.

Resolved: That the contents of the update report be received and noted.

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4. DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS AND STRATEGIES 2026/27

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth introduced the Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets and Strategies 2026/27 and sought approval for the five year Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2026/27.

In addition, consideration was given to the Commercial Strategy for 2026/27 to 2030/31, the Treasury Management Strategy for 2026/27, the Investment Strategy for 2026/27 and the Commercial Strategy for 2026/27 prior to their submission to Full Council for final approval.

Savings and funding strategies had been identified to address a £1.599m budget gap for 2026/27 via the Efficiency Board Process and the first draft of those had been scrutinised by the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee. A below inflation increase in Council Tax of 1.99% for a Band D property was again proposed which equated to 10p or less per week for 95% of households within the Borough.

The Leader stated that the Council had seen a cut in funding allocation of £1.1m from the government over three years but the Council was still able to deliver a balance budget and spend money on the services that really mattered to people.

Councillor Skelding, referring to his Portfolio for Leisure, Heritage and Culture stated that J2 had shown a strong growth in membership over the last few years. The money being brought in through the Salex bid would help to cut energy costs.

Although the main pool had been closed temporarily, there was minimum disruption to members of the Centre as the small pool and gym were open.

Councillor Hutchison, referring to his Portfolio for Sustainable Environment stated that this year had seen a reduction in annual bedding plants in Queens Gardens and those had been replaced with sustainable bedding plants and residents had given positive comments.

Pet cremations would soon be commencing at Bradwell Crematorium which would bring in income.

The Leader referred to the regeneration that was going on in the town centre from funding received from the Government. There would be a presentation in Parliament today by Capital and Centric around this Council's plans for the former Midway car park into apartments as it would be the first 1960's structure in Europe where such a project had been undertaken.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the progress on the completion of the Revenue (Appendix 1) and Capital Budgets (Appendix 4), be noted.
 - (ii) That the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026/27 to 2030/31 (Appendix 2), be noted.
 - (iii) That the strategy for ensuring a balanced revenue outturn position for 2025/26, be noted.
 - (iv) That the calculation of the Council Tax base and the Council Tax increase to be proposed for 2026/27 of 1.99% per Band D equivalent property, be noted.
 - (v) That the risk assessment at Appendix 3 and the Section 151 Officer's recommendation on the level of reserves and contingencies provisionally required to be maintained in 2026/27, be noted.
 - (vi) That the draft Capital Strategy (Appendix 5) for 2026/36 be noted.
 - (vii) That the draft Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix 6) for 2026/27, be noted.
 - (viii) That the draft Investment Strategy (Appendix 7) for 2026/27, be noted.
 - (ix) That the draft Commercial Strategy (Appendix 8) for 2026/27, be noted.
 - (x) That the updated Asset Management Strategy (Appendix 9) for 2023/28, be noted.
 - (xi) That the draft Budget and Council Tax proposals be referred to Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny

Committee for comment before the final proposals are considered at Cabinet on 3 February 2026.

[Watch the debate here](#)

5. SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES 2026/27

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centre's and Growth introduced a report seeking approval for the proposed scale of fees and charges applying from 1 April, 2026.

The proposed fees and charges were set out at Appendix 1 of the report.

Councillor Fox-Hewitt had requested to ask a question. He noted within the report that there were increases in costs for football/rugby pitch hire, bowls, swimming pool hire, the gym in J2 membership and educational sessions at the Museum. At the same time there were no increases in costs for licences in connection with gambling premises or licensed premises.

Given that one of the core objectives of the Council was for a green and healthy Borough, there was an opportunity for the Council to move some of the revenue raising required onto other areas that would enable healthy activities to remain much more accessible and affordable for all ages, thus promoting health and wellbeing.

Councillor Sweeney stated that the Council was unable to amend nationally set charges such as licensing or betting. In relation to sports charges, tennis booking fees had recently been introduced and the Council was seeking to keep at an affordable level. The charges were in line with the Council's policy, reflecting both the level of use and the fact that team games could be split across a larger number of players.

The Leader invited Councillor Fox-Hewitt to meet with the Portfolio Holder and Finance officer if he wished, to discuss the sports fees before the item was taken to the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

Resolved: That the fees and charges proposed to apply from 1 April 2026, as set out in Appendix 1 and 3, be approved.

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. CIVIC PRIDE (EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITIES) - EVALUATION OF 2025 ACTIVITIES

The Leader introduced a report for Cabinet to review and evaluate activities that had been delivered in the initial year of the Civic Pride (Empowering our Communities) initiative and to look ahead to the next phase of delivery.

Events were held in each ward around the Borough to start the initiative and this years' events were outlined on page 149 of the agenda.

The Civic Prize Fund that had been received by the Council was now in its last phase of giving funding to community groups.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment advised that Civic Pride in 2025 had been a great success with Councillors, officers of the Council, partners, community groups, businesses and residents all getting involved. The initiative was committed to creating a cleaner, safer and more welcoming Borough.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing stated that Civic Pride events had been held across the Borough and had been supported by key partners such as the police, Aspire and Staffordshire County Council, plus local groups and schools. There had been a wide range of activities such as bulb planting and litter picking. Councillor Heesom stated that she had been pleasantly surprised by the number of young people who had attended the event in Silverdale where the police were security marking bicycles. Thanks were given to everyone involved in what had been a really good first year.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth stated that people had been asking what 'Civic Pride' meant him and his answer had been 'being proud of where he lived'. Councillor Sweeney stated that his reason for being elected was to make his ward, Clayton the best possible place it could be.

The Leader stated that communities across the Borough were unique but all had a strong sense of belonging. Civic Pride was more than just clean streets and tidy gardens – it was about creating a shared commitment to the local environment, celebrating the heritage in towns and villages and working with everyone.

The Leader stated that at the last Full Council meeting it had been discussed how to get more people involved, getting the message out to everyone to help by joining community clean up days; volunteering for planting projects; reporting issues to the relevant authority or weeding the gutters outside of their properties.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the report and notes the activities delivered in 2025 as part of the initial year of the Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) initiative, be received.
 - (ii) That the Civic Pride (Empowering Our Communities) Strategy 2025 – 2028 be formally adopted now that consultation has concluded
 - (iii) That 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, be considered.
 - (iv) That this report be referred to the Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. BOROUGH TREE PLANTING STRATEGY (PHASE 7) AND UPDATE ON PROTECTION OF GREEN SPACE

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment introduced a report seeking Cabinet approval to progress Phase 7 of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy.

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The first 6 phases had been delivered over the last 5 years with over 24,000 having been planted over 37 sites. Phase 7 was now being planned and community groups had planted more than 9000 trees included in the Britain in Bloom plant a tree scheme. Therefore, in total 34,065 had been planted to date.

The sites that had been chosen for Phase 7 were shown in the table at paragraph 2.3 of the report and the varieties would include Silver Birch, Hazel, Beech and Wild Cherry.

Members would continue to be invited to put forward a list of sites within their areas in Borough Council ownership , for future planting.

In May, 2025, Cabinet approved a schedule of approximately 80 sites to be classified as 'Fields in Trust' which protected them from future development. A further 17 sites had been applied for since with 5 sites currently being finalised for submission.

The Leader stated that the tree planting was securing long term environmental recreational impacts. In addition, there was the environmental benefit and carbon reduction as part of the Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That Phase 7 of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy be approved for immediate implementation, subject to the final consultation responses, and the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery is authorised to seek and accept quotations for the work.
 - (ii) That the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery be authorised to bid for and accept external grant funding and secure community donations to contribute to the delivery of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy and other related projects.
 - (iii) That the new planting sites be designated as Carbon Capture Areas in the Open Space Strategy.
 - (iv) That the progress made with the Field in Trust applications for the selected sites, be noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

8. PROGRESS OF THE COUNCIL'S SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY & DELIVERY PLAN

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment introduced a report which provided an annual review of the Delivery Plan which formed parts of the Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan (SESDP).

The SESDP was governed to be reviewed every six months ensuring that it was a living document.

Paragraph 2 outlined the progress to date and other achievements were outlined at paragraph 2.5.

The Leader welcomed the Strategy update which would now be considered by the Health, Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved: That the progress of the delivery plan associated with the Councils Sustainable Environment Strategy be noted, and that the update be referred to a future meeting of the Health Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

[Watch the debate here](#)

9. **SUPPORT FOR DRAFT STAFFORDSHIRE LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY**

The Leader introduced a report seeking support for the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Staffordshire, prior to a full public consultation being undertaken.

The Strategy, which would cover the whole of Staffordshire, tied in well with what this Council had agreed locally a few years ago for the nature recovery declaration.

Council Officers are engaged with the Local Nature Recovery Team at the County Council to ensure that Newcastle was doing its part. The Leader stated that he would like this Council to continue to monitor and develop its own plans in case the County Council's commitment on nature recovery was not as it was previously.

Councillor Hutchison made reference to paragraph 1.13 which outlined the 9 strategic priorities and stated that he was really excited about implementing them.

The Leader stated that this Council had a strong track record, being the first Authority in Staffordshire to agree a Local Nature Recovery Declaration in 2021.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Council's support for the development of the LNRS for Staffordshire be confirmed and respond to the consultation for the draft LNRS with the comments set out in section 2 of this report; and
 - (ii) That a model of delivery within a specific plan for the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme, be adopted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

10. **RECYCLING & WASTE SERVICES OPERATIONAL STAFF STRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment introduced a report seeking approval for changes to the management structure within the Recycling and Waste Team, creating 4 supervisor posts. This would align them to the same structure as the Streetscene team.

Councillor Sweeney stated that the words 'offering career progression' were to be applauded.

The Leader stated that this would help to improve services through the structure and development of staff. The Leader thanked the staff for their operations throughout the recent bad weather and thanked the public for their understanding.

Resolved: That the use of pEPR funding for the creation of 4 supervisor positions within the Recycling & Waste Service as part of the service expansion to cater for increased housing and to fulfil the requirements of HM Government's Resources and waste Strategy, be approved.

[Watch the debate here](#)

11. FUTURE DELIVERY OF FINANCIAL WELL-BEING AND DEBT ADVICE SERVICE

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing introduced a report seeking authority to re-procure a Financial Well-being and Debt Advice Service ensuring that access to a knowledgeable, experienced and locally delivered service was accessible to residents.

The current service would expire at the end of March and would have to be re-procured. A six month extension to the current contract was also sought to ensure that the service was maintained. The service enabled residents to access debt advice, budgeting advice and IT support.

The Leader stated that this was a very important service as people faced higher bills.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the proposal to re-procure the Financial Well-being and Debt Advice Service, be approved.
 - (ii) That the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Service Director – Regulatory Services, be authorised to award the contract arising from the procurement.
 - (iii) That a six-month extension to the current contract to maintain this service during the procurement period, be approved.

[Watch the debate here](#)

12. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS 2026

The Leader introduced a report updating Cabinet on correspondence from the Minister for Local Government and Homelessness received on 18 December, 2025 and the response which would be sent from this Council.

The correspondence offered councils, who were involved in local government reorganisation, the option to postpone the local government elections in May, 2026. The Leader had stated that he did not think that acceptable and that elections should proceed as planned at Newcastle.

A letter would be sent back by 15 January stating that this Authority wished for the elections to go ahead and saw no reasons why they should not. Parish Council elections would be taking place and therefore money savings would be miniscule. In addition, the future of local government reorganisation was still uncertain date-wise and could be pushed back.

Councillor Fear endorsed the Leader's approach, noting that democracy mattered and this was just another coordinated attack on basic freedoms in this country.

Councillor Sweeney stated that the forced local government reorganisation was a disaster which would not save money or give better services.

The Leader stated that he would be working with the Chief Executive to ensure that this Council's comments were sent back to the Government before the deadline.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the receipt of a letter from the Minister for Local Government & Homelessness in respect of the invitation for Councils to seek postponement of local authority elections in May 2026, be noted;
 - (ii) That it be agreed that elections to Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council will proceed as planned in May 2026;
 - (iii) That it be noted that the Leader and Chief Executive will confirm to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government by 15th January 2026 that there is no change to the planned elections for May 2026.

[Watch the debate here](#)

13. FORWARD PLAN

The Leader presented the Forward Plan.

Resolved: That the Forward Plan be received and noted.

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14. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Business.

15. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

Resolved:- That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration if the following matter because it is likely that there will be disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs contained within Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972.

16. TRADE REFUSE SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES - CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX

Consideration was given to the confidential appendix.

Resolved: That the information contained within the confidential appendix be received and noted.

**Councillor Simon Tagg
Chair**

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Meeting concluded at 1.54 pm