

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 21st January, 2026
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

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

Councillors:	Adcock	Grocott	J Tagg
	Allport	Heesom	S Tagg (Leader)
	Beeston	Holland	Turnock
	Berrisford	Fox-Hewitt	J Waring
	Brown	Hutchison	P Waring
	Burnett-Faulkner	Johnson	Whieldon
	Casey-Hulme	D Jones	Whitmore
	Crisp	Northcott	Wilkes
	Dean	Parker	G Williams
	Dymond	Reece	J Williams
	Edgington-Plunkett	Richards	Wright
	Fear	Stubbs	
	Gorton	Sweeney	

Apologies: Councillor(s) Barker MBE, S Jones, Lewis and Skelding

Officers:	Gordon Mole	Chief Executive
	Simon McEneny	Deputy Chief Executive
	Anthony Harold	Service Director - Legal & Governance / Monitoring Officer
	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

Also in attendance:

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

2. FORMER MAYOR AND ALDERMAN ELIZABETH (BETTY) CADDY

A minute's silence was held for former Mayor and Alderman, Elizabeth (Betty) Caddy who had recently passed away.

The Leader of the Council led the tributes stating that Betty had been a long standing and very respected public servant. She had served as Mayor between 1994 and 1995 and had been appointed as an Honorary Alderman in 2015. Betty had served

as a Councillor until 2004 with a strong voice and fierce sense of loyalty. She had also been a dedicated JP too. On behalf of his group, the leader sent condolences to the family and expressed his gratitude for her service over many years.

Councillor Gill Williams stated that Betty had served as a Councillor between 1986 and 2004 and had led a very busy life. She had served as mayor between 1994 and 1995 and had been appointed as an Honorary Alderman in 2015. After her retirement, she had continued with voluntary work in the Chesterton community. Condolences were sent to the family.

Councillor Grocott, who had known Betty for most of his life stated that she always did her best for the Chesterton community even when her health had started to fail.

[Watch the tributes here](#)

3. MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That, subject to the insertion of the comment below, under paragraph 4 – Local Government Reorganisation, the minutes of the meetings held on 19 November, 2025 be agreed as a correct record:

‘Councillor Crisp stated that the people of Audley were constantly worried about houses being built in the green spaces and he had heard rumours that people had commented about the many brownfield sites in Stoke on Trent but Councillor Crisp felt that the opposite would be the truth – with more housing developments appearing in Audley and similar areas.’

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made the following announcements:

The Mayor thanked his Chaplain and the Parochial Church Council of St Margaret's, Betley for donating the collection from the Mayor's Carol Service, to the Mayor's Charity. The Salvation Army who donated the collection from their Carol Service to the Mayor's Charity fund were also thanked.

A list of fund raising events for the remainder of the Mayor's term of office had been circulated with the Christmas Card. Members were also advised of an event in February and mention was made of the Mayor's Ball.

The next Mayoral fund raising event, would be a concert by the Rock Choir which would be held at the Madeley Centre on Saturday 14th February (at 7pm). Tickets, could be obtained direct from the Madeley Centre, costing £15 each. Jamie Stephenson was thanked for dealing with the arrangements and the Madeley Centre, for sponsoring the event.

Tickets were now available for the Mayor's Ball, which will be held in the Chancellor's Building at Keele on Saturday 21st March at 7pm. Tickets cost

£75, for three courses with a cheese board on the side. Audley Brass Band would be playing during the evening and there would be a photobooth provided. A disco, auction and tombola would follow the meal. Further details and tickets could be obtained from Geoff Durham.

A further announcement would be made at February Council, about a fund raising event, to be held on at 7pm on Saturday 14th March, at St Giles.

5. UPDATES TO THE COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

The Leader introduced a report and moved the recommendations informing Council of legislative updates that would impact upon the Council's Constitution including and relating to the Procurement Act 2023.

At the Council meeting held last September there had been an update to the Constitution and the Monitoring Officer had been asked to carry out a review of what legislative changes had occurred. The Council had been asked to endorse the national changes that were detailed in the report – specifically the Finance and Contract Procedure Rules within Section F5. Transitional arrangements were also outlined where the old regulations continued to apply in addition to the new duties and digital requirements coming into force this year. The report set out updates that were required in order to remain compliant with new legislation.

Officers were working alongside the Constitution Working Group on a full review of the Constitution which would be taken to the Annual Council meeting in May.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Holland stated that the technical changes to Part F of the Constitution had been made in order to bring it into line with national legislation.

Resolved:

- (i) That the changes introduced as part of the Procurement Act 2023 and its impacts on the delivery of future procurement exercises delivered throughout the authority, be acknowledged.
- (ii) That the required changes to the Council's current constitution particularly under section(s): F5 Finance and Contract Procedural Rules – Section F5F – Contract Procedure Rules and F5 Finance and Contract Procedural Rules – Section F5H – Glossary; be acknowledged.
- (iii) That the ongoing work for the Constitution Working Group by officers for a full constitution review to be brought to Annual Council, be noted.

[Watch the debate here](#)

6. STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor Parker arrived at 7.45pm

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 welcomed the progress on Walleys Quarry and stated that attention now turned to the future of the site. The Leader was asked if he had received a response from Government or the local MP regarding who would be responsible for paying for the restoration of the site.

The Leader echoed Councillor Adcock's comments regarding the site not causing the problems seen in previous years.

Councillor Fox-Hewitt stated that Adam Jogee MP was on record as supporting a public inquiry and pushing for Government support. He had made the same contributions at this Council's Committee of Inquiry. The MP had stated that there were more immediate priorities in closing the site and developing a full and final remediation plan. He had worked with the relevant Authorities to finally deliver the closure notice.

The Leader took on board Councillor Fox-Hewitt's comments and stated that the case being raised here concerned the letter that had been written in response to the letter that had been received from the Minister who had stated that there was no need for a public inquiry. A further letter had then been written to the MP which had not been responded to and the Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee had then requested that a further letter be written, jointly between the Chair of that Committee and the Leader and as of yet, no response had been received.

Councillor Whieldon stated that residents had benefited from a more stable winter period this year. The Leader was asked what further assurances could he give that the improved performance would be maintained long term. In addition, the lack of communication from the local MP was important to residents. Meetings that the MP had with Ministers was of no significance unless it was communicated to the people.

The Leader echoed Councillor Whieldon's comments and in response to her question, stated that the Council did not own or run the site. The Council's role was any statutory nuisance coming off the site which had now abated. Long term, the Council was working with its partners in order to get a plan in place for full term restoration and capping.

Councillor John Williams asked the Leader if it was right to call for a public inquiry as a criminal investigation was going on. Should that not be concluded before a public inquiry took place?

The Leader stated that a public inquiry should take place at the right time but there should be an announcement that one would be held. The MP had stated, on Radio Stoke, that he did want a public inquiry but that the restoration should take place first. The Leader stated that restoration would take 25 to 30 years to complete.

On paragraph 3 – UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

Councillor Holland stated that he had regretted the winding down of the UKSPF. The Fund was real money which had a real impact as outlined in the report. The winding down of the Fund had coincided with new funding which would not be beneficial to this Borough. The Leader was asked if he agreed that the withdrawal and winding down of this Fund was regrettable.

The Leader agreed with Councillor Holland stating that the Borough had really benefited from that Fund with £4m coming from the previous Government and over £1m during the first year of the new Government. The Town Deal Funding had benefited the two towns within the Borough.

The projects that had benefited from the UKSPF were making a real difference to people in many areas. The Leader referred to the new funding that was being funnelled to Strategic Authorities. The Local Government Reorganisation was denying Staffordshire of being a Strategic Authority which would have allowed devolution. The local MP had been written to but no satisfactory answer had been received.

On paragraph 4 – Local Government Reorganisation Update

Councillor Gorton referred to the paragraph regarding the elections being held in May and stated that someone from his group ought to express disappointment that the Secretary of State, Steve Reid had referred to authorities that may be abolished as 'zombie councils'. This was an insult to officers and elected members serving at those authorities and Councillor Gorton felt that the Secretary of State should apologise. In addition, it was wrong of Ministers to use a clause in the Local Government Act 2000 to allow councils to opt out of elections in May, 2026. The Leader was asked if he agreed that the uncertainty over the local elections in May was another example of how badly the reorganisation of councils had been handled.

The Leader, referring to the comment about 'zombie councils', stated that this Council had plenty of work to do, including the huge regeneration of the town centre and all of the work being undertaken to ensure that services continue for residents. The Leader suggested that Councillor Gordon should write to the Local MP regarding the Secretary of State's comment.

Councillor Crisp stated that the Council's stance on a Newcastle Unitary sends a powerful message to Ministers. The Leader was asked how confident he was that this Council's evidence based submission would go out to consultation as part of the Government's Statutory Consultation on Local Government Reorganisation proposals in Staffordshire.

The Leader stated that this Council had put in a really good bid that had been agreed by Full Council last Autumn. The Leader and Chief Executive had been on a call with other Leaders, Civil Servants and the Minister and it was clear that, as the Council met the criteria, it would be going forward to the consultation.

On paragraph 5 – Draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2026-30

Councillor Edgington-Plunkett asked the Leader what 'affordable housing' meant and also, how many people were currently homeless across the Borough.

The Leader stated that the term 'affordable housing' could have multiple meanings, for example social housing or affordable to first time buyers. However, each

planning application that is submitted for a housing development needed to have the affordable element and a social element also.

The Leader did not have the number of homeless people to hand but this would be provided to Councillor Edgington-Plunkett.

The Portfolio Holder was asked if she had the information. Councillor Heesom did not have the number of homeless but confirmed that there were currently seven rough sleepers in the town.

The Leader made to the Council's temporary accommodation for people who were about to be made homeless.

Councillor Whieldon stated that when she was first elected there were a significant number of rough sleepers. The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing and officers were thanked for their hard work in bringing those numbers down.

On paragraph 6 – Newcastle Town Deal Update

Councillor Beeston asked the Leader for an update, following the presentation in Parliament on the exciting development of the regeneration of the Midway car park by the Council's delivery partner – Capital and Centric.

The Leader stated that it was exciting to have this Council's proposals for regeneration talked about in the House of Commons. The Plans for the former car park were the first in Europe to be converted into apartments.

Councillor John Williams was pleased to see the developments around the town and Knutton and Chesterton. Referring to the previous question on affordable housing, Councillor Williams stated that there were flats in the town centre for single younger people and possibly hospital workers. The former Zanzibar would be social housing and therefore affordable rent. There were two sites being developed in Knutton but it was not clear what those would be. Aspire Housing had been written to but no answer had been received. Councillor Williams stated that it was important for the Borough to have sufficient affordable rented properties and asked how many of the properties on the Knutton developments would be affordable rented properties.

The Leader stated that the proposal was to have a mix of people with young professionals; there would be a social housing element on the Ryecroft site delivered by Aspire Housing and an elderly persons element on the other part of the site through other partners.

At a meeting with the Business Improvement District the Leader had made the point that historically, those sites had back to back terraced houses on them which were cleared in the 1960's.

Councillor Grocott stated that there was a lot of development happening in Chesterton at present. Councillors had been working together trying to get a committee together for the community hall in Knutton but despite many attempts it was proving hard to set up. The Leader, Portfolio Holder and Deputy Chief Executive were asked if they could provide an update on the type of changes that would take place because of that.

The Leader stated that the plans had always had provision for a Knutton community hall – a commitment made during the Town Deal process to replace the former

building. The new building would be managed by people in the community but no-one had come forward but attempts would still be made. Officers were being worked with, along with the Town Deal Board, to try and find a way to have a community centre with enterprise units inside who could then run and manage the building with rooms to be hired by the community.

On paragraph 7 – Kidsgrove Train Station Update

Councillor Paul Waring stated that this had been a difficult and protracted process. Consequently, the finalised plans under the Town Deal were welcome and encouraging. The Leader was asked if he agreed that Kidsgrove had an exciting future ahead.

Councillor Allport agreed with Councillor Waring and thanked him and the Town Deal Board for their hard work. John Honeyset MBE was also thanked for doing the groundwork and feasibility study for the project.

The Leader endorsed both comments and stated that there had been a set back when promised funding had not been available for the bigger station rebuild due to the land conditions on the old car park. However, proposals had been put forward for the £2.7m refurbishment which would help the gateway into Kidsgrove.

The public realm improvements and enterprise units would also enhance and compliment the town, bringing people into the centre of Kidsgrove.

On paragraph 8 – Civic Pride in Our Borough

Councillor Hutchison stated that Civic Pride had 22 days of action in 2025. An event in June in Clayton and Westlands had launched the £22,000 Civic Pride Investment Fund - £500 for each Councillor allowing them by application to support community priorities. Twenty four days of action were planned for 2026.

The Leader thanked Councillor Hutchison for the work covered by his Portfolio and advised that the funding scheme would start again after the elections in May.

Councillor Gorton welcomed the Town and Culture bid which would draw on and highlight a substantial record of achievement. He stated that now was the time to encourage the re-creation of a new Civic Society and he felt that having it in place would strengthen the Council's bid. The Leader was asked to ensure that Members of Parliament for the Borough were briefed on the bid with a view to encouraging them to lobby on behalf of the application.

Councillor Parker had been successful over the past year with buy-in from the police and Aspire Housing and asked which other partners were the Council including to strengthen the submission.

The Leader acknowledged the work of Basford Allotments who had helped the community and outreached to schools as part of the scheme.

The Leader advised that the Town of Culture bid was important as it would bring in £3m which would make a huge difference to the work that could be done in the town in the future. There were also runner-up awards with less amounts of money but it would still help to put on cultural projects throughout the year.

Newcastle had a real strength of culture with the New Victoria Theatre, colleges and the University. There was also the Newcastle-under-Lyme Business Improvement District and events markets.

The Leader advised that letters had already been exchanged with the MP and he was keen to be involved.

Putting the bid in and working with partners would bring in a lot of things that were happening but, as yet unknown to the Council.

Councillor Whieldon stated that the launch of the Civic Pride last year was a precursor to the Council's Town of Culture bid. The Portfolio Holder was asked to include Thistleberry in the list because it was launched in that ward with Aspire Housing, the police and lots of local people carrying out litter picking and there was also a visit to the refurbished Thistleberry allotments.

The Leader thanked Councillor Whieldon for her comments and referring back to Councillor Gorton's question regarding the Civic Society, an attempt was made to resurrect it as part of the Council's 850th anniversary celebrations but were unsuccessful. Another attempt would be made on the back of the Town of Culture bid but it was difficult to get a new generation of people to come forward to protect the civic heritage of the town.

Councillor John Williams stated that Civic Pride was a great project which had been happening for years in Britain in Bloom with residents gardens and allotments and was therefore a major part of Civic Pride.

Councillor Williams stated that at litter picking events it seemed to be officers, people from Aspire Housing and Councillors and they appeared to take place in parks/ Borough owned land. The Leader was asked how could the public be encouraged to be more involved.

The Leader agreed, stating that Newcastle were the national champions in 2023 which would be key to the bid.

Councillor Dave Jones stated that he did work for the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and advised that within their building in London was a plaque with the inscription 'In recognition of the work of Thomas Mayer and son of Newcastle-under-Lyme'. Thomas had his practice at what was now Charter Vets which was one of the oldest running veterinary practices in the UK and which led to the creation of the veterinary charter. Without Thomas and his son there would be no regulated veterinary practice in the UK today. The Leader was asked if he could ensure that the bid contained a strong reflection of Newcastle's role in the creation of the modern veterinary profession.

The Leader stated that Thomas Mayer was one of the famous 'Newcastlians' in the 850th Anniversary celebrations so all of that would be captured in the bid.

Councillor Fear stated that litter picking had taken place in his ward this week and was very heartened. People came down from Clayton Academy as did members of the public. The scheme was gaining traction but could still be pushed harder – especially on social media.

The Leader stated that the report back from Clayton and Northwood was encouraging and heartening to see that there was public involvement and Councillor Fear was correct in saying about promoting it on social media.

On paragraph 9 – Progress of the Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy

Councillor Adcock stated that he was pleased to hear about the scale of tree planning that had taken place over the last 5 years and with more to come. The Lyme Countryside Park proposal would become a valuable community asset and the Leader was asked how the Council would ensure that local groups would become involved in the shaping of its development.

The Leader stated that getting people and groups such as the Parish Councils and other community groups involved with the proposed country park development was key. A consultation would be carried out in the near future to see what people would like to see there. Council officers would also be going out onto the former golf course and speaking to people who were currently using it to see what they wanted to see and any improvements that could be made.

Councillor Whitmore asked how the recycling and waste teams had managed over the past two weeks during the recent bad weather.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment stated that no collections had taken place on 5th and 6th January due to the snow. Residents were advised to put their bins out on their usual day and the refuse would be collected as soon as practically possible.

As at close of business today flats, schools and trade waste collections were up to date as was food waste. Recycling would be up to date tomorrow and it was hoped that, by Saturday, residual waste would be up to date. The teams were thanked for doing voluntary overtime throughout the weekends.

On paragraph 10 – Future Delivery of Financial Wellbeing and Debt Advice Service

Councillor Berrisford stated that extending the debt advice service provided crucial continuity for residents who were under pressure. With fuel poverty rising, the service was more important than ever. The Leader was asked if additional preventative measures were being considered to support struggling households.

The Leader stated that it was really important to advise people on who they can go further than simply debt advice, such as advice on reducing energy bills and any grants available to help with that. The scheme was run by the County Council and millions of pounds had been given over the last few years to households that were suffering fuel poverty.

Councillor Burnett-Faulkner asked the Leader and Portfolio Holder if they agreed that this service was even more vital now, given the Government's failure to tackle the cost of living crisis, rising inflation and unemployment. The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing was asked who would be providing the service for the six month's contract extension.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Citizens Advice Bureau currently had the contract and would continue to run it for the next six months.

Councillor Whieldon congratulated those involved in this initiative which was a key service for helping residents.

Councillor John Williams stated that this was a really good service for residents.

The Leader stated that it was important to ensure that residents received the right advice.

On paragraph 11 – The APSE Award for Best Performance in Streetscene

Councillor Stubbs advised the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment that, due to the period of bad weather did not have their recycling collected for 28 days. No blame was laid on the collectors but there had been five communications from this building advising residents to put bins out then take them back in which had led to recycling materials being on the streets. The Portfolio Holder was asked for assurance that communications on those type of events would be better in future.

The Leader stated that the non-collection for 28 days would need to be investigated. However, he acknowledged that the weather had been bad across the County. The snow had fallen on the day when Talke and Butt Lane's collections would usually have taken place which would have impacted.

Councillor Turnock stated that winning a national award demonstrated the hard work of the Streetscene teams and the use of new technology and external funding was all welcome. The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment was asked what further innovations were being explored to enhance the Council's Streetscene services.

The Portfolio Holder advised that a cold weather review meeting was taking place on Friday and he would investigate the issue raised by Councillor Stubbs.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased that Streetscene had won the APSE award. Newcastle was a top performer in Streetscene in relation to costs, performance and environmental quality standards. In addition to the new technology and external funding, the Council was now introducing mandatory 18 month leadership apprenticeships for level 3 qualifications for new supervisors. Seasonal employment opportunities would be offered to encourage wider Council employment opportunities. New system would also be introduced to manage the playgrounds.

Councillor Berrisford extended her thanks to Streetscene for making a quick decision to add an extra sweeping to the schedule to deal with fallen leaves on the road by Betley Hall Gardens.

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

[Watch the debate here](#)

7. 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](#)

8. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEES

Reports for the Audit and Standards Committee, 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](#)

9. MOTIONS OF MEMBERS

A Motion, concerning supporting our Borough's Town Centre's, High Streets and villages was submitted by the Conservative Group, proposed by Councillor Simon Tagg and seconded by Councillor Holland.

Councillor Tagg introduced the Motion which resolved to do what could be done to ensure the long term viability of town centre's and high streets; work with the police to tackle antisocial behaviour and to engage with the three Members of Parliament seeking their support. In addition, for the Leader and Chief Executive to write to the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves asking that the relief to public houses, as set out in the budget, to be extended to all hospitality and high street businesses and to carry out a further review of business rates for retail, hospitality and leisure sector businesses.

Councillor Holland seconded the Motion stated that the principle of the Motion was for whatever public houses were getting, so too should the whole of the high street. However, at the present time there was still no movement on that concession for pubs.

Following a debate, the Leader in summing up addressed some of the points raised. He agreed that 'shop local' should be tied into Civic Pride. Referring to the monitoring of MP's, a record of their votes was available which would show the support given by them on various matters.

Regarding the number of vape shops, barbers and nail bars being opened in the town. The Leader stated that it was a good point although the businesses were well used by the public. Reference had been made regarding the regeneration of the town and the Leader advised that since 2017, the Council had been working hard to kick-start the regeneration of the Borough's two town centres which was now coming into fruition. The issue of buses bringing people into the town was not a borough or county matter but if investment was made by central government, operators could extend or introduce routes. However, through the Town Deal funding, the Council had instigated the 'K' route that went from Keele University, around the employment sites – into Chesterton and then into the town centre.

The Motion was about standing up for local people, the businesses, town centres, high streets and villages in the Borough.

A vote was taken and the Motion was carried.

[Watch the debate here](#)

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

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

“Residents tell me there is no longer a facility to renew their brown garden waste subscription by phone and they must have an email address/account to do this. Residents say that the staff, although trying to be helpful, have asked such residents whether they can get help from someone to do it online. One resident in this position was a woman in her 80’s who has never had children. Although her neighbours have been helpful in the past, she feels like ‘she does not want everyone to know her business’. With so much in the media concerning elderly and other vulnerable people being victim to scams, I could sympathise with her view. I have heard of other cases where non digital customers get a neighbour/relative to set this up for them and then they give them the cash. Could I ask the portfolio holder:

Is there no facility for residents to pay for this service other than online?

If this is so, are staff advising residents to get members of the public to help them?”

The Portfolio Holder stated that It was quicker and easier for customers to renew their garden waste subscription on line, and this was the Council’s preferred route for such transactions.

This negated the need for customers to provide bank details over the phone and protected their privacy, and reduced the risk to the Council’s staff. However, if a customer genuinely could not complete this by themselves, or with the help of a relative or friend, or by using the self-serve terminals in the reception at Castle House, the Customer Hub team could assist them to set it up.

Upon receipt of the question yesterday, the Portfolio Holder had met with Customer Services Supervisors and asked them to speak with every member of the Customer Hub team to ensure that they were all aware of the correct procedure in dealing with telephone requests, whereby the recording would be stopped whilst personal details were being given.

Councillor Brown was asked for the contact details of the resident in question so that their details could be passed to the Customer Hub team in order for them to be contacted, apologised to and the transaction carried out.

Councillor Brown asked a supplementary question:

“Did the Portfolio Holder have any further reasonable adjustments that could be made for vulnerable residents so that they could set it up from scratch in terms of the subscription.”

The Portfolio Holder stated that if someone was taking out a garden waste subscription from scratch they would follow the same procedure by telephoning the Council advising that they wished to subscribe and the procedure would be gone through as above. It was hoped that next year, automatic renewals would be in place.

Question from Councillor Richard Gorton to the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning:

"The consultation on the main modifications stage of the Borough's Draft Local Plan ended on 17th December 2025. How many responses were received during the main modification stage and have these responses been forwarded to the planning inspector?"

The Portfolio Holder stated that a total of 197 representations were received from 71 respondents during the consultation on the schedule of main modifications. All duly made representations had been forward to the Inspector. The Inspector had confirmed receipt of the responses received and would provide an update to the Council in due course.

Councillor Gorton asked a supplementary question:

"Could Members look forward to receiving and considering the final version of the draft local plan before the elections in May"

The Portfolio Holder stated that unfortunately he could not guarantee that because it was not known when the Inspector would respond to us. It was his understanding that the Inspector would consult other colleagues on legal matters during the process prior to contacting the Council and therefore the timescale was unknown.

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

"The Cabinet sent a letter to Chancellor Rachel Reeves on August 1st 2025 outlining pressures on local authority finance, including business rate deficits, cost-of-living impacts on council income, unexpected cost of local government reorganisation and the rising cost of providing temporary accommodation for individuals and families made homeless.

Has the Portfolio Holder received a response from the Chancellor?"

The Portfolio Holder stated that a letter had been received on 8 January, 2026 from the Chancellor's Secretary.

Councillor Parker asked a supplementary question:

"What was actually in the response from the Chancellor's Secretary"

The Portfolio Holder stated that the letter was split into four paragraphs, the first stating that local authorities would be getting an extra £3.3b over the next three years. Newcastle would not be benefiting from that money and were actually losing £1,051,000 over the three years.

The second paragraph did not contain anything significant

The third paragraph stated that £3b was being provided to help homeless support. Newcastle would receive £200,000 over three years which would keep the service level.

The final paragraph referred to the benefits of Local Government Reorganisation which the Portfolio Holder disputed.

[Watch the debate here](#)

11. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

12. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

13. DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

There were no confidential items.

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

Meeting concluded at 9.30 pm