

CABINET REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Since the last report to full Council, Cabinet has met once on 18 July 2012. This report enumerates activities from both the formal meeting and other activities being undertaken by portfolio holders.

1 Town Centre Partnership

Cabinet endorsed the formation of the Town Centre Partnership and approved, on the advice of officers, £30,000 to appoint a Town Centre Manager working under the auspices of the partnership. The Partnership has been set up as a Community Interest Company allowing any interested business or individual to be a member.

The Cabinet is happy to announce that Jonathan Mitchell, a prominent Town Centre trader has agreed to serve as the Partnership's chair and a strategic board has been established bringing together key town centre stakeholders and partners as directors.

The Cabinet also endorsed the second 'Portas Pilot' bid which, sadly, was not successful, but discussions over becoming a 'Portas Partner Town' are ongoing.

2. High-Speed 2

Cabinet considered various options available to the Council regarding its stance on High Speed Rail and determined that, at this juncture, it was prudent to remain cautious to the scheme but take a softer opposition. With the Government having made its commitment to Phase 1 it was felt that the likelihood of the Government giving the go ahead for Phase 2 had increased and it was therefore important for Newcastle Borough Council to be in the best possible position to elicit the potential economic benefits. The Cabinet stressed that any support would only be forthcoming as long as the benefits could be proved and the environmental issues could be mitigated.

3. Home Security Support for Older Vulnerable People

Cabinet approved the redirection of £10,000 from existing budget to assist in providing home security equipment for 200 additional older people in the Borough through the existing handyman scheme.

4. Cemeteries Memorial Safety Programme

The Cabinet agreed to amend the Council's policy toward Memorial Safety Testing to bring it into line with the national standard from the previously advised 35kg/m² to 25kg/m².

5. Pan Staffordshire Representation

Following the Council's resolution to support efforts by the Cabinet to secure the best outcome for Newcastle on the LEP and other pan Staffordshire Boards, a letter was issued to Leaders in Staffordshire Moorlands and Stafford Borough requesting a meeting to discuss the matter. This letter was issued straight after the Council meeting and to date no response has been received from either Council. Should this situation change, a supplementary note will be circulated.

6. **Issues and Option Local Plan Consultation**

The Cabinet has attended all nine public meetings held by the Borough Council as part of the extensive ongoing consultation. The Cabinet would like to thank Helen Beech and her team in Planning Policy for the work they have undertaken in prepping the public meetings. 100s of people have attended meetings and made their comments. The consultation is ongoing until 1 November and the Cabinet would urge all members to make sure their local residents use their opportunity during the first stage of the consultation.

The Core Spatial Strategy, agreed in 2009 by the Council, requires the Borough Council to build 5700 houses between 2006 and 2026. This figure is now enforced by the Government's Planning Inspectorate and the Council is required to make provisions to meet this target.

7. **Locality Cabinets**

The Cabinet is keen to reconnect with communities and will be holding a series of locality Cabinet meetings across the Borough. These will consist of holding already scheduled cabinet meetings in other places but adding an open session prior to the meeting allowing members of the public to come and speak directly to portfolio holders. The first such meeting is taking place on 19 September at the Victoria Hall, Kidsgrove and work the second will be held in Madeley. Details of each meeting will be sent to all members.