

**NEWCASTLE
UNDER LYME**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Commercial Strategy

2026/27 to 2027/28



Introduction

The Council has a new Council Plan – Building a Better Borough: People, Places Prosperity and Performance.

One of these key priorities is ‘Performance – A Borough with efficient services, strong finances and respect for taxpayers’ money’

This Commercial Strategy is a key document alongside the Assets Management Strategy for setting out the Council’s approach to assets and our management to strong Council finances.

Every pound spent by the Council has first been earned by somebody else. It comes from the residents and businesses of Newcastle-under-Lyme, and we have a responsibility to use it wisely.

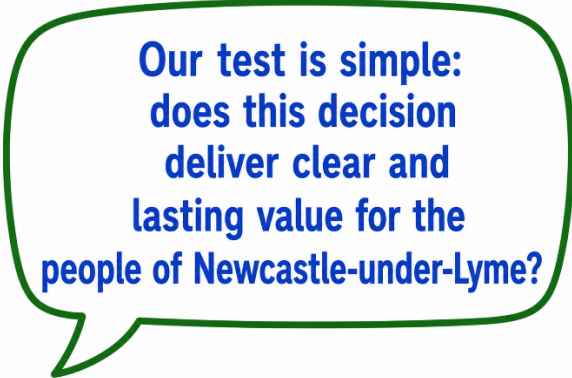
This Strategy is therefore built around a simple principle: **every pound, every contract and every Council asset should work as hard as possible for local people.**

We will challenge unnecessary spending, improve the way we procure goods and services, make better use of our assets and ensure that contracts deliver genuine value. Where the Council can generate sustainable income, reduce costs or unlock economic growth, we will do so — but commercial activity is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

Our approach is about protecting Council Tax payers, strengthening the Council’s financial resilience and ensuring that scarce public resources are focused on the services and improvements that matter most to residents.

We will take a long-term view. We will invest where investment delivers clear benefits, work with partners where this provides better outcomes, and make difficult decisions where costs cannot be justified by the value they provide.

This is not about making the Council more commercial for its own sake. It is about being **responsible stewards of public money**, reducing unnecessary costs, generating sustainable income, supporting jobs and growth, and making sure that the Council delivers more for every pound entrusted to it.



**Our test is simple:
does this decision
deliver clear and
lasting value for the
people of Newcastle-under-Lyme?**

Vision

The Council's overarching Vision is *"To build a better Borough: where local people come first, local places are clean and safe, local businesses can prosper, and council services deliver visible value for our residents."*

Newcastle-under-Lyme belongs first and foremost to the people who live, work, raise families, run businesses and contribute to our communities.

Our role as a Council is simple: **put local people first, get the basics right and make every pound count.**

We want a cleaner, safer and more prosperous Borough, with well-kept streets and parks, reliable services, thriving towns and villages, strong local businesses and opportunities for people to work, learn and succeed.

We will support those who genuinely need help, while promoting independence, personal responsibility and contribution. We believe rights should be matched by responsibilities, and that everyone has a part to play in making their community stronger.

Strong communities cannot be created by the Council alone. We will work alongside families, volunteers, businesses, charities, community groups and parish and town councils, backing local initiative and giving communities the freedom to shape their own future.

We will protect vulnerable people, uphold proper standards and act firmly when the behaviour of a minority harms the wider community.

We will champion enterprise, investment and jobs by reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and creating the conditions for local businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive.

We will also protect and celebrate the identity of our towns, villages and neighbourhoods, ensuring development strengthens the places people are proud to call home.

Above all, we will remember that every pound the Council spends comes from residents and businesses. We will challenge waste, use our assets wisely and focus resources on the services that make a real difference.

Our ambition is a cleaner, safer, stronger and more prosperous Newcastle-under-Lyme — with proud communities and a Council that listens, delivers and makes every pound count

How does our Commercial approach fit within our governing principles:

Commercialisation is about doing things differently to create better outcomes for local people, strengthen our communities and make the best possible use of public resources. It is not about putting profit before people or charging for services for the sake of it. It is about adopting a more entrepreneurial, innovative and commercially minded approach to how the Council operates.

- **Local people first** – commercialisation should ultimately deliver better outcomes for residents. We should understand what people need, what they value and where services can be improved, and use commercial approaches where they can make a tangible difference to everyday life.

- **Community stewardship of assets** – we should enable communities, voluntary organisations, charities, local businesses and other partners to play a greater role in delivering successful places. Commercialisation means being open to different models of delivery and partnership, rather than assuming the Council must always provide services itself. The Council will work with community groups to take a greater role in the use, management and stewardship of Council owned assets.
- **High standards, rights and responsibilities** – commercial approaches should support high-quality, safe and reliable services while encouraging individuals, businesses and organisations to take responsibility. We should set clear expectations, manage performance effectively and ensure that any income-generating activity delivers a clear public benefit.
- **Pride in place** – we should make the most of our towns, villages, neighbourhoods, assets, parks and green spaces. Working together can help us unlock investment, generate income and create new opportunities to improve and maintain the places people are proud to call home.
- **Backing enterprise and aspiration** – the Council should act as an enabler of economic growth, creating the conditions for businesses to invest, people to develop skills and good jobs to be created. We should bring an entrepreneurial mindset to our own organisation, identifying opportunities rather than being constrained by traditional ways of working.
- **Respect for taxpayers' money** – commercialisation is fundamentally about improving value for money. We should make the best use of our assets, identify opportunities to generate sustainable income, reduce avoidable costs and challenge established ways of working. Every pound generated or saved can help protect frontline services or fund improvements for residents.
- **Embracing Technology and Productivity** - Using technology and smarter ways of working to deliver better services and stronger results. Thus supporting efficient use of tax –payers money and enabling support to be provided to those customers that need it.
- **Stewardship for the future** – commercial decisions should be responsible. We should manage public assets strategically, invest where there is a clear community benefit and consider the long-term financial and social benefits of our decisions. Commercialisation should strengthen the Council's financial resilience and leave a stronger organisation and better places for future generations.

In essence, commercialisation means thinking differently: being entrepreneurial, making the most of what we have, working with others, generating sustainable income and securing better value – always with a clear focus on improving outcomes for local people.

Strategy links and outcomes

- To generate income through commercial activity that can be reinvested in local priorities, services and improvements for our residents.
- To build strong working relationships with public, private and third sector partners in order to maximise collaboration and generate efficiencies.
- To support local businesses and Small to Medium Enterprises to be financially sustainable and grow with local contracts.

- To support wider community priorities including investment and securing long term access to valued assets, including delivery of mechanisms such as Fields In Trust.
- To embed a commercial culture within the council and ensure that our staff are equipped with the skills they need to operate in a more commercial environment.
- To support the council in delivering the council plan and growth agenda as a key pillar of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and our goal of financial self-sufficiency before and within the North Staffordshire Authority.
- To optimise the council's use of technology and support our digital agenda in order to enable new, more efficient and flexible ways of working and interacting with customers and residents.
- Thus providing the right level of support and focussing officer time where it is needed.



What 'commercial' means to us

- Commercialisation can mean generating more income, however the Council sees this much more widely with a clear focus on preventing and avoiding costs. The Council has seen the benefits of challenging proposals and programmes to ensure that tax-payers money is well spent or in some cases not spent at all. This principle will continue throughout the decision making process.
- Generation of service efficiencies and new income streams

- We will continually identify and develop opportunities to commercialise existing and new services
- When we need to charge for our services, we will price commercially, ensuring that this covers the full cost of the service unless we have made a conscious and evidenced decision to subsidise taking into account the needs of our communities
- Effective procurement and contract management, challenging a range of issues from specification, value for money and contribution to the local community.
- We will all understand and recognise where we have a role to play in maximising the impact of the Council's assets for the benefit of residents and communities. This is both in terms of our communities as a whole but specifically our local businesses and supporting them to thrive.
- Strategic asset development and prudent investment in income generating assets
- This strategy impacts on all services across the Council. 'Being commercial' is a mindset that must underpin the way we all do our jobs.

This means 'commercialisation' at Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and includes all of the following:

- Insight and Intelligence to make good choices
- Preventing costs in the first place
- Early intervention to prevent a cost escalating
- Redesigning internal processes to be most efficient and effective
- Eliminating unnecessary demand and work to focus on what matters to our residents and businesses
- Reviewing service delivery models (e.g. outsourced, shared service, company) to be most efficient and effective
- Effectively procuring and managing our contracts
- Commissioning the right outputs/outcomes
- Enhanced financial ownership by service managers
- Reviewing existing and potentially new sources of income

Benefits

The successful delivery of the strategy will achieve multiple benefits including:

- Ensuring our resources are stewarded wisely to deliver outcomes for our residents and businesses.
- Developing new income streams to support services and the Council's budget.
- Creating a culture where staff think and act differently to deliver new ways of service delivery to serve our residents and businesses.

- Inspiring staff by embedding a forward thinking, opportunity focused mind-set that can drive wider culture shift.
- Increasing the robustness of the organisation through the creation of a diverse commercial portfolio to ensure long term organisational sustainability.
- Supporting local communities and local businesses, ensuring that local tax-payers money benefits the tax-payers of our Borough.

Culture

Developing a commercial culture is an important part of this strategy. we are looking to develop a commercial culture across all service areas where, thinking in a business-like way and making business-like decisions, along with being creative and innovative is the normal way of working at the Council.

An embedded commercial culture will enable all our services to reach their potential and it will unlock new and innovative ways of delivering services to residents and businesses in Newcastle-under-Lyme. A commercial culture will encourage us to be creative and entrepreneurial, finding ways to add value to the way we serve residents. This will include behaviours such as challenging current approaches to look for improvements, seeking ways to maximise value for customers and the Council from contracts and looking for growth opportunities.

A culture can be defined as ‘the way we do things round here’ and the way we operate across our service areas will be ambitious and bold, working in new ways to steward the resources we have in the most effective way to deliver the priorities highlighted in the Council Plan.

Developing the programme and our priorities

A portfolio of opportunities has then been selected for further development. This approach should ensure that the Council pursues a diverse range of opportunities - different in their potential scale, complexity and nature – to balance the risks of the overall programme.

In selecting the opportunities, consideration has been given to:

- The need to generate a net financial return to support the pressures identified in the MTFS.
- The creation of large-scale commercial projects that have the potential to create long-term income for the Council.
- Development of a commercial culture across service areas, so that thinking and acting in a commercial manner becomes central to the Council’s thinking and decision-making.

The following table shows the highest commercial priorities to investigate within the commercial programme.

Priority Area	Description	Impact
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Light Industrial	Develop and regenerate sites into light industrial units	Increased revenue generation, servicing demand in the local area and supporting economic development
Fees and Charges	Fees and charges should be fair, competitive and proportionate, while protecting Council Tax payers from unnecessary subsidy.	Where appropriate service costs are met by appropriate charges
Commercial Waste	Developing the Commercial Waste income streams, building on the existing assumptions that form part of the Waste Transformation Programme	Increase the number of businesses using the council service and improve the level of income generated
Investment opportunities for delivering our Corporate Priorities	Development of Council owned sites and surplus sites within the Borough. Bring forward Council owned land and buildings for development where there is a clear regeneration or service purpose, generating sustainable income as a consequence rather than as the primary aim. The Council will not acquire investment assets held primarily for yield. Specifically to take forward the ambitions to deliver a Creative Hub	Increased revenue generation, servicing demand in the local area and supporting economic development Supporting local creative businesses to develop and grow
Commercial Council	Contracts Review – focussing on areas of higher spend as the priority. To challenge specifications, supplier performance, contract renewals, indexation, unnecessary usage and value for money. Reviewing options for marketing of contracts to ensure that local companies	To ensure that the services we procure deliver the best outcomes for the Council and our residents Supporting local companies to thrive with additional contracts delivered within our Borough

	are aware and able to tender for services	
Digital transformation	Investing in AI and technology where it improves services or reduces costs	Some services can become available 24 hours. Improvements to internal process including automating repetitive administrative work enables officer time to focus on complex cases and residents who genuinely require human support.

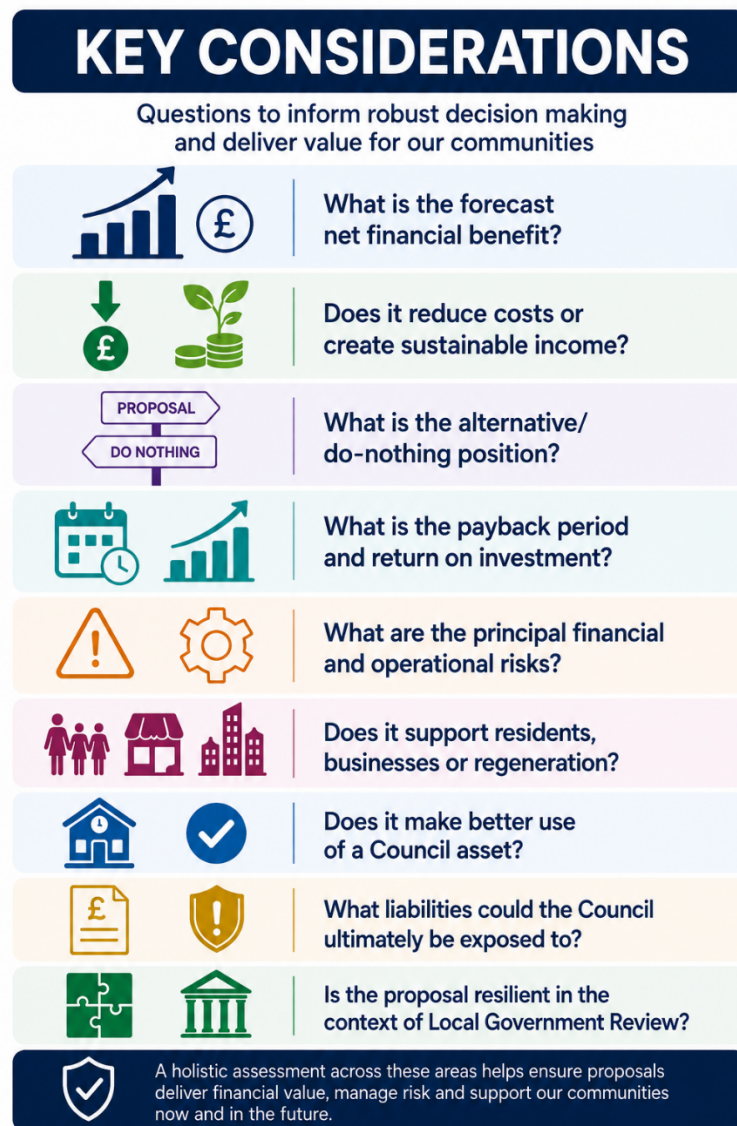
How will we realise our strategic outcomes?

- Act with intelligence and agility
- Embrace transformation and innovation
- Understand that resources are required for growth and change
- Act with integrity and high ethical standards
- Embrace commercialism and maximise income
- Create and nurture commercial and development opportunities
- Use marketing intelligently to drive increased sales for our commercial services
- Act strategically for the long-term benefit of the borough and its residents
- Greater focus on procurement and contract management, both in terms of direct benefit to the Council and Newcastle Borough.
- Create a sustainable commercial programme
- Know the market place and act competitively
- Establish a strong commercial culture and invest in staff and member skills
- Drive our digital agenda forward
- Demand more from service providers and contracts
- Ensure we get value for money for residents
- Listen to our staff and customers
- Actively seek and work with partners commercially
- Engage with specialist commercial advisers and professional partners

- Pursue opportunities to generate efficiencies and financial savings
- Take into account the needs of our communities and where appropriate consider the disposal, repurpose or develop assets that can deliver better financial, economic or community outcomes.
- Establish a range of approaches to support community organisations to use, manage and take ownership of community assets.
- Support sporting clubs to take leases to develop valued sporting opportunities for our residents and where possible use these to enable sporting organisations to access external funding grants.
- Significant asset decisions should take account of financial return, community value and the long-term interests of Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- Stop activities that add no value or benefit to customers
- Challenge where services can be commissioned

What is the governance structure?

- Investment decisions will mainly be taken by Cabinet subject to the financial implications.
- Some variations may be required to the Council's Constitution to enable timely decision making as commercial opportunities present themselves.
- As part of the decision making process, each project or investment will need to address a wide range of criteria. The issues to be considered may vary dependent on the project but the key considerations will be important for all projects.
- As the Local Government Review is considered further the Council will need to take into account any requirements this brings, the Council will continue to ensure our work supports the needs and aspirations of our communities.



How will risks be managed?

- Partner with industry experts and specialists
- Ensure transparency and effective communication
- Rigorous approval processes and project scrutiny
- Following corporate risk management and mitigation procedures
- Effective contract management
- Meticulous due diligence

What are the tools and structures we will use?

- Exercise statutory powers
- Shared service agreements

- Crown Commercial Service, g-cloud and local framework agreements
- Joint venture partnerships
- Arms-length management organisations and/or council owned companies

Resourcing our journey

If local government reorganisation ultimately proceeds, our responsibility is to protect Newcastle-under-Lyme's finances, assets, services, projects and identity and ensure the Borough enters any successor arrangements from the strongest possible position.

This Commercial Strategy should therefore help us avoid unnecessary liabilities, protect valuable assets and leave a strong pipeline of investment and commercial opportunities for Newcastle-under-Lyme.