

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 10th July, 2013

Present:- Cllr Eddie Boden – in the Chair

Councillors Miss Walklate, Mrs Heames, Mrs Cornes, Mrs Johnson, Studd, Clarke, Cooper, Mrs Beech, Bannister, Hambleton, Howells, Cairns, Boden, Matthews, Olszewski, Mrs Hambleton, Wemyss, Wilkes, Mrs Williams, Williams, Mrs Astle, Fear, Hailstones, Mrs Hailstones, Allport, Eagles, Kearon, Taylor.J, Miss Olszewski, Loades, Holland, Bailey, Miss Cooper, Jones, Miss Reddish, Robinson, Mrs Simpson, Mrs Heesom, Snell, Sweeney, Tagg, Mrs Bates, White, Miss Mancey, Mrs Burgess, Eastwood, Miss Baker, Mrs Peers, Plant, Stringer, Stubbs, Taylor.M, Turner, Becket and Mrs Winfield

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs Heames, Cllr Mrs Burnett, Cllr Wilkes, Cllr Stubbs, Cllr Mrs Shenton and Cllr Welsh.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th May 2013 be agreed as a correct record.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

4. SILVERDALE AND PARKSITE WARD BY-ELECTION - 4 JULY 2013

It was reported that the successful candidate at the by-election held for the Silverdale and Parksite Ward on 4th July 2013 was Amelia Catherine Rout.

5. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor stated that he was investigating the possibility of appointing a town crier for Newcastle under Lyme in partnership with the Civic Society which had offered to fund the appointment.

The Council Leader stated that he fully supported this and thanked the Civic Society for its generous offer.

6. REPORT OF THE LEADER

A report was received informing the Council of decisions made by Cabinet and other actions undertaken by the Cabinet since the last Council meeting.

The leader stated that the 100 in 100 campaign had been a resounding success. Working in partnership with Paul Farrelly MP and Newcastle under Lyme College, 177 young people had been matched up with jobs, employment or training opportunities in the local area. The Leader thanked Kim Graham, the Councils

Principal Regeneration Officer, Newcastle under Lyme College, Paul Farrelly MP and Karen Bradley MP for their help with the project.

A question was raised following discussions at the Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding whether there would be a time limit or cut of date regarding finding a new long term partner for Keele Gold Course. The Leader stated that the process would not carry on longer than 6 months.

Resolved: That the report and its contents be noted.

7. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Verbal and written updates were received from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees on work undertaken since the last meeting of the Council.

Resolved: That the updates be received and the work undertaken noted.

8. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE STATUTORY COMMITTEES

Verbal updates were received from the Chairs of the Statutory Committees on work undertaken since the last meeting of the Council.

The suggestion was made that a digest be created for all Elected Members regarding the recent changes in Planning legislation.

The request was also made that a report be sent to all Elected Members regarding the recent changes to the Licensing Act 2003. It was noted that there was a link to these changes on the website where members would be able to access this information.

Resolved: That the updates be received and the work undertaken noted.

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

The following questions were submitted and discussed:

- 1)** Why has the litter figure for Q4 2012/2013 risen to 15% (Target 9%) from a figure of 6.79% in 2011/12, and why has the detritus figure risen to 15.02% from 9.32% in 2011/12? Submitted by Cllr David Becket

Response from Cllr Ann Beech, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling:

Cllr Beech agreed that she was a little disappointed with the figures but that they were still at distinction level. Cllr Beech stated that improvement was desired and that officers had been asked to provide a report on current working practices which would be distributed to all Members and from which it would be possible to see where improvements could be made. Investments had been made in the service including the purchase of a new road sweeper and litter campaigns had been run. Resident satisfaction with the cleanliness of the streets and open spaces had risen and it was thought that greater resident participation had helped on this, Cllr Beech thanked Simon Long, Community Development Officer for his help with this. Elected Members were encouraged to report any problem areas and it was stated that a review was also being looked at regarding refuse collections.

- 2) Why is the second round of the site allocations consultation running late, and by how many months? Question submitted by Cllr Nigel Jones.

Response from Cllr Terry Turner, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Town Centres:

A revised timetable had been released in February 2012 but unfortunately the 2nd draft option stage was now behind schedule. Cllr Turner stated that this was due to a more rigorous consultative approach being carried out and the diversion of officer time and resources to deal with legislative and structural changes. A revised timetable would be considered by Cabinet in the near future.

- a) Supplementary questions from Cllr Nigel Jones:

Will the lack of a detailed local plan increase the risk that the Council will not have enough control regarding where building takes place in the Borough?

Cllr Terry Turner stated that unfortunately due to cuts from Central Government the Council had to prioritise.

- 3) Will you agree that the council is unable to demonstrate an up-to-date 5 year plus 5% supply of deliverable housing sites? Question submitted by Cllr David Becket. Response from Cllr Terry Turner, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Town Centres:

Cllr Turner stated that a report had been discussed regarding this at the last meeting of the Planning Committee and that this was not a new situation for the Council. The methodology for calculating the percentage had changed in 2009/10 and the Borough was currently experiencing the highest rate of building since 2006/07. Cllr Turner stated that building houses reduced the number of sites available and that a 20% buffer rather than a 5% buffer now had to be allowed for. Each year a 5 year supply had to be shown which was continually reduced by new building.

- a) Supplementary question from Cllr David Becket:

Would you agree that if the previous Site Selection Policy had not been disregarded then the Council would not be in this Positions?

Cllr Turner stated that this was not the case.

- 4) Will you agree that the failure of this council to get its planning act together brings the risk of the government taking over our planning function? Question submitted by Cllr David Becket

Response from Cllr Terry Turner, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Town Centres:

This was not the case, the Council was significantly above the threshold and there was no reason to consider it to be at risk.

- a) Supplementary question from Cllr David Becket:

Did the Portfolio Holder agree that the Council had come close to the threshold in 2006.

Cllr Turner stated that as he was not a Member of the Council at the time he was unable to comment on this.

- 5) In the report considering the future of the Mayor's car, what alternative vehicles were considered and did the council look at a low-emission low-running cost vehicle? Question submitted by Cllr David Becket

Response from Cllr Gareth Snell, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Communications, Policy and Partnerships:

The report in question had been considered by the Revenue Investment and Budget Support Panel and therefore only budgetary considerations had been debated.

- a) Supplementary question from Cllr David Becket:

The annual servicing costs had been detailed as £300, was there confidence in this amount?

Cllr Snell stated that all work would be carried out by the Council's depot and that the figure of £300 would be adhered to.

- 6) A range of KPIs in the most recent (2012/13 Q4) Quarterly Performance Report show that the Council is failing to meet its targets in a diverse number of areas. Can the Leader assure us that the development of the formatting of this report will continue to give councillors the information they need to scrutinise properly the Executive's performance, or is there truth in the rumour that the smiley faces in the Performance Report are being abolished because they are not smiling any more? Question submitted by Cllr Mark Holland.

Response from Cllr Gareth Snell, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Communications, Policy and Partnerships:

The smiley faces had been removed and the changes made to enable greater detail to be provided in the performance reports. A red, amber, green system would be used in the future and where a figure was lower than expected, detail as to the reasons why would now be included.

- a) Supplementary question from Cllr Mark Holland:

Could the Leader reassure him that the scrutiny process was robust in this area?

Cllr Snell stated that greater cross party attendance at meetings would make it more robust.

- 7) What assessment would the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources make of the impact on revenue and collection rates of Cabinet's decision on the report, 'Technical Reforms to Council Tax', made on 16th January 2013, and when does Cabinet next intend to review its policy on council tax discounts and premiums? Question submitted by Cllr Mark Holland.

Response from Cllr Gareth Snell, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Communications, Policy and Partnerships:

Cllr Snell referred Cllr Holland to Appendix A of the report. The Council kept 12% of the amount collected with the majority of funds going to other organisations including

the Fire Service and the County Council. It was hard to make any estimations regarding collection rates after only three months but they appeared to be improving compared to the same time the previous year.

There were no plans at present to review the Council's policy on council tax discounts and premiums but the scheme was looked at annually. Members and Officers were however fully aware of the current issues including the number of property rich/cash poor residents in the Borough.

a) Supplementary question from Cllr Mark Holland:

As authority to make decisions regarding areas such as council tax exemptions had now been delegated to local authorities would this Council be taking any action?

Cllr Snell stated that due to reductions in central funding all partners including the Fire Service and the County Council had to make cuts and that we were currently dealing with the best option possible.

10. REVISED FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

A report was submitted requesting Council to approve the revised Financial Regulations and Procedures be approved.

The Council's Financial Regulations and Procedures needed to be reviewed regularly and revised where necessary so that they reflected the current structure and requirements of the Council.

Resolved: That the revised Financial Regulations and Procedures be approved.

11. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Resolved: (a) That Cllr Terry Turner replace Cllr Gareth Snell on the Staffing Committee.

(b) That Councillor Gareth Snell replace Cllr Kyle Robinson on the Public Protection Committee.

No further changes were requested.

12. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR EDDIE BODEN
Chair