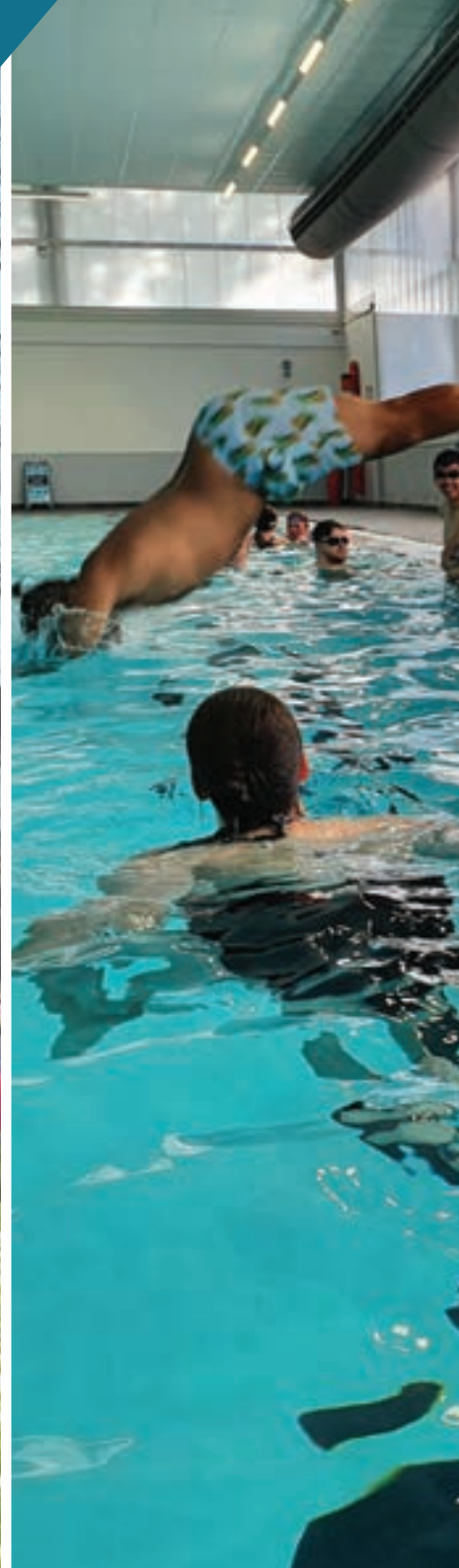


ANNUAL REPORT

2022 - 2023



NEWCASTLE
UNDER LYME
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of our new Annual Report for 2022-23, which outlines the progress we've made in delivering the priorities for the Borough during Year 1 of our 2022-2026 [Council Plan](#). Alongside a review of the Council's performance, the Annual Report also highlights some of the common issues facing the Borough's residents and how we have engaged with local communities to help shape local solutions and service improvements. It also looks at the financial challenges faced by the Council and across the local government sector as a whole, and our plans to continue providing value for money services. There has been considerable progress across our priorities during the first year of the Council Plan, including the varied year-long schedule of events celebrating the 850th anniversary of the Borough's royal charter.

The Council is delivering an ambitious programme to transform the Borough and the Council. We aspire to be a place where people have good, well-paid jobs, live in vibrant communities, and receive quality services. We have secured over £50m through Town Deal and Future High Streets programmes – a level of government funding which is unprecedented for the area, and which is being used to transform our town centres and drive economic growth. This once-in-a-generation opportunity to boost the local economy will enable our communities to thrive and prosper and reset the local landscape for generations to come. We're pleased to be able to share some of that progress here.

As an organisation, we are delivering the One Council transformation programme, driving efficiency through service redesign and digital investment, coupled with staff development and a strengthened focus on performance management. The programme has an ambitious target of financial savings and is set to release over £1m from our annual spend. In March we welcomed a group of Peers from the Local Government Association who reported that "staff and members of the council are clearly focused on delivering positive outcomes for the Borough's communities" after talking to over 100 people over a 3-day visit, including our partners.

The Council continues to actively support its communities – whether that is through facilitating intensive multi agency support for the most needy through our Vulnerability Hub or championing resident concerns at Walleys Quarry. We enjoy strong and creative partnerships with Staffordshire County Council, Aspire Housing, Keele University and our colleagues in the police, as well as wider partnerships across the voluntary and statutory sectors. Our Vision is: to deliver good local services, a prosperous Borough, safe and welcoming places for all. This Annual Report demonstrates how we're achieving that. We hope you find it interesting and informative!



Cllr Simon Tagg
Leader of the Council



Martin Hamilton
Chief Executive

Newcastle-under-Lyme Facts and Figures

28%

OF THE POPULATION
ARE AGED
60 AND
OVER



90%

OF RESIDENTS
IDENTIFY AS
'WHITE BRITISH'

28%

OF ADULTS HAVE
NVQ4+
QUALIFICATIONS



**MEDIAN
HOUSE PRICE**
£170,000



AVERAGE WEEKLY SALARY OF
£567 FOR FULL-TIME
WORKERS

LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH
FOR MALES IS
78.5 YEARS
AND FEMALES IS
82.3 YEARS



81%

OF RESIDENTS AGED
16 - 64
ARE ECONOMICALLY
ACTIVE



18%
OF HOUSEHOLDS
IN THE BOROUGH
LIVE IN
FUEL POVERTY

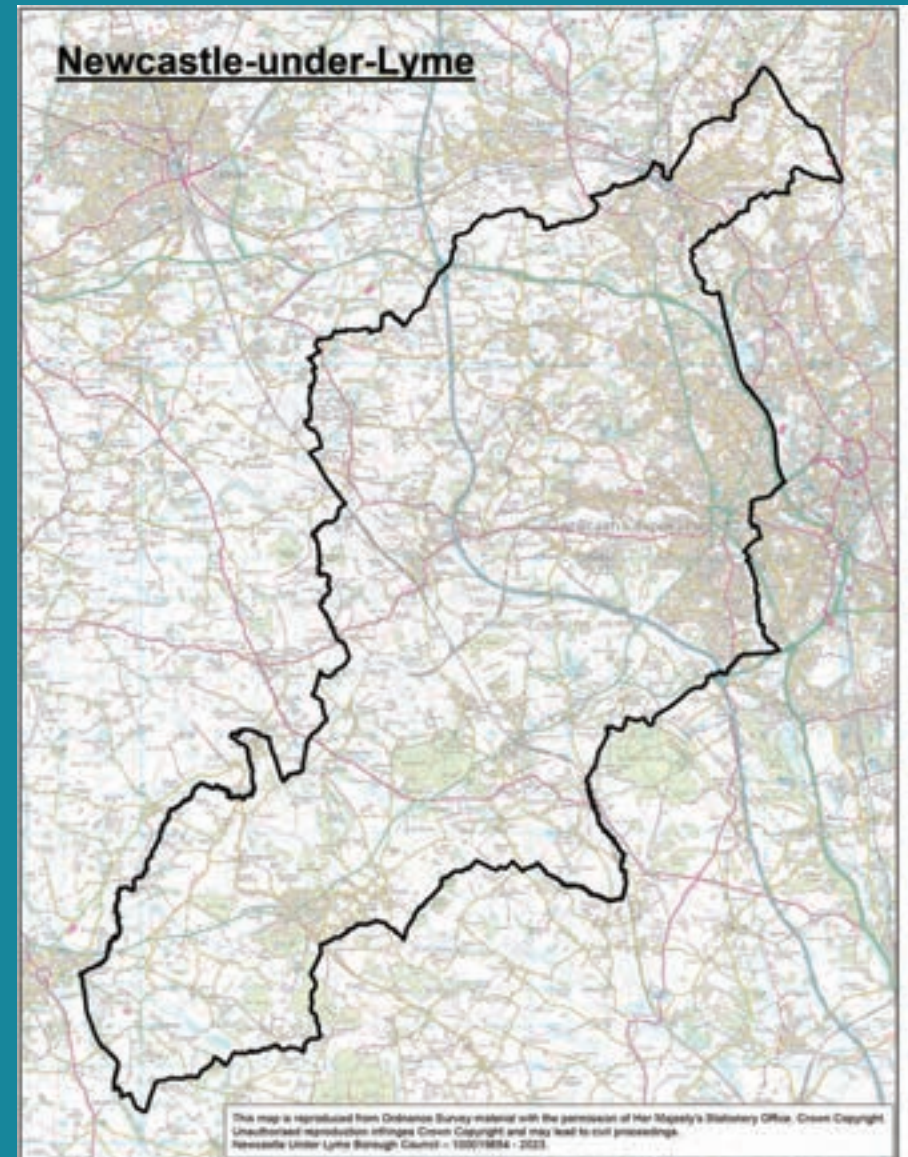
Section 1:

Understanding our Communities

Our historic Borough is a place of marked contrasts. We are the home of a world class University at Keele, a leading light known internationally for its research and sustainability record, which stands side by side with former mining communities including some which register amongst the most deprived areas in the country. Our Borough is also a mixture of urban centres, affected by some of the same social issues facing our neighbouring city, Stoke-on-Trent, but also outstanding rural landscapes containing many smaller settlements with their own challenges. Our plans and priorities aim to address the needs of all our communities.

The Borough covers an area of 211 square kilometres and has a population density higher than that of Staffordshire as a whole at 584 residents per square kilometre. The population based on the 2021 Census is 123,300, split 51% female and 49% male. There are 53,400 households that are spread across a mix of urban and rural areas, with two town centres - Newcastle and Kidsgrove - and a number of rural and urban villages across the Borough.

We recognise the importance of place data in decision making and service design and produce an annual 'State of the Borough' Digest, which includes key facts and figures on the make-up of the Borough and the common issues being faced by our residents. We've highlighted below two of the known challenges and how we're addressing them, often in conjunction with our local partners.



Skills and Qualifications - According to the 2021 Census an estimated 28.0% of residents in the Borough have a NVQ level 4 or above. This is significantly lower than the national rate of 33.8%. The proportion of adult residents with no qualifications is 20.1%, which is higher than the national average.

Spotlight on: Encouraging Skills and Employment

The WorkShop employment, training and skills hub offers users a single point of access to a wide range of partners who work collaboratively to offer information, support and guidance; helping people along their journey into training, education and work. The WorkShop is open 50 weeks of the year and has provided over 600 people with employment and skills advice since opening.

Funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, has enabled us to create a new Enterprise Coach role, looking at self-employment career establishment and needs. The Coach is available to talk to clients face to face and support them through their business plans helping them to start viable businesses. Currently eight individuals have set up as self-employed with a further four people turning to work experience in the employment market.

The UKSPF is also supporting the Advanced and Digital Technologies Innovation Accelerator project to boost growth and productivity of the Newcastle-under-Lyme business base through the development / adoption of new advanced or digital technologies.

Finally, Keele University will be working with a cohort of local businesses to develop proposals for more RD&I projects, with the intention of creating jobs and boosting community cohesion.



Crime – Rates of Anti-Social Behaviour and of nuisance have been a key priority for the community safety partnership. Figures from the local policing team for 2023 indicate that there has been a 25% reduction in Anti-Social Behaviour compared to last year, with burglary, robbery and arson also showing significant reductions.

Spotlight on: Safer Communities

The Council works in partnership on community safety issues and together we have made targeted improvements in line with residents' priorities for action:

- **Safe Space** – Launched in March 2022 and funded through the PFCC the safe space was opened on the Ironmarket to provide help and support to the night time economy. The project is run in partnership with Newcastle BID. The space is open from 9pm-2am on Fridays and is run by volunteers.
- **Security Marshals** – this project was originally implemented in December 2021 and funded as part of the 'Welcome back Fund' post Covid. The scheme saw two marshals patrol the town centre and has now been extended after receiving additional funding from UKSPF and Newcastle BID.
- **Safer Streets Round 4 (SSR4)** – we have been hugely successful in being one of the chosen recipients of SSR4, as part of this project the following initiatives have been completed or are nearing completion:
 - implementation of additional CCTV cameras in and around the town centre
 - a number of trees in the town centre, pruned to add additional CCTV coverage
 - gating installation and improvements across the town centre
 - education package being developed as part of SSR4 with the PSHE Co-ordinators to aid the educational input in educational establishments
 - ASB campaign material has been distributed across Staffordshire.
- **Street medics** – Funded as part of Safer Streets Round 4, the project sees street medics in the town centre from 9pm- 2am on key Friday/Saturday nights throughout the year. The medics act as a triage to reduce the demand on A&E services.



Section 2:

Listening to our Communities

Consultation and engagement with our communities continues to play an important role in informing decision-making across the Council, helping to ensure that we deliver for local people.

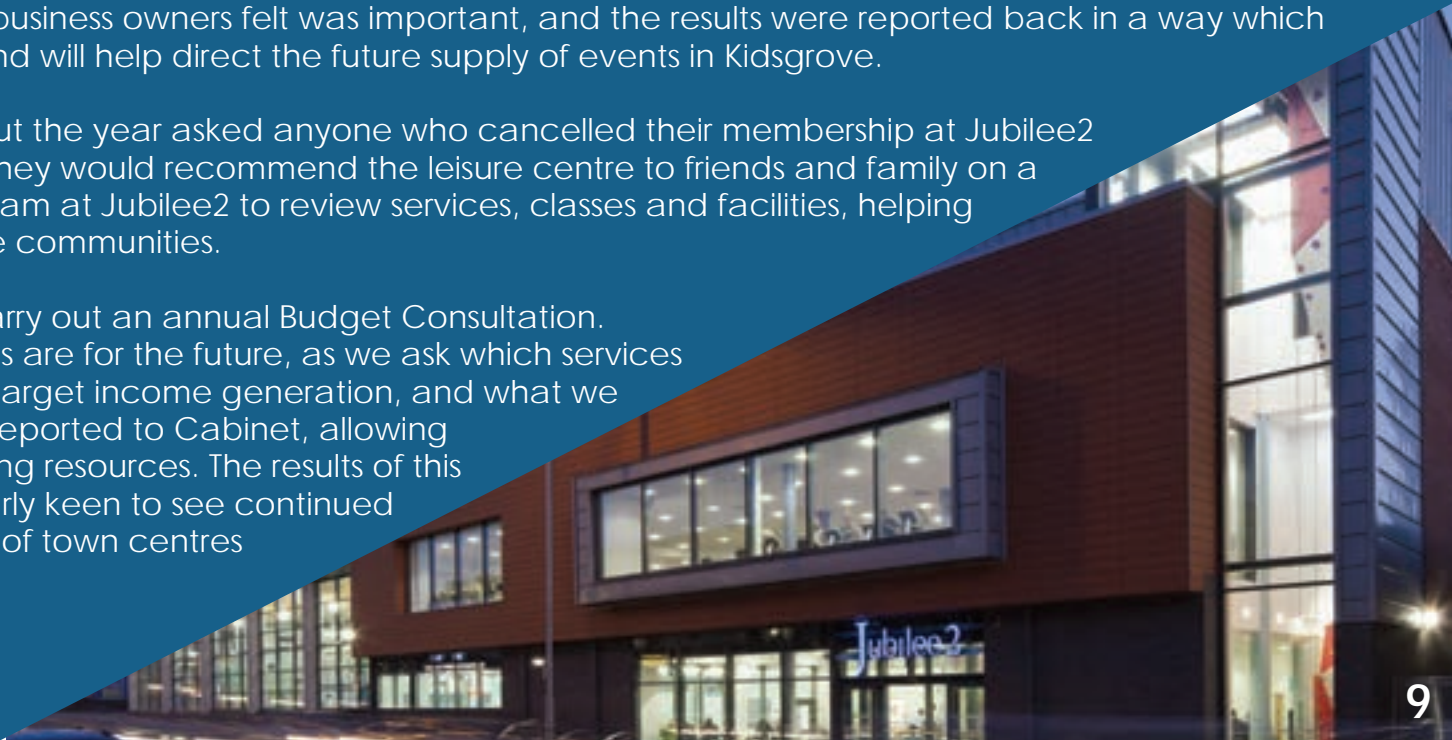
Throughout 2022/23 we have carried out annual satisfaction surveys and ad hoc consultations to enable evidence-based decisions and the shaping of future service delivery. We are careful to ensure that our consultations capture the views of a range of residents to really understand what matters.

Safer Communities - In late 2022 more than 200 respondents gave a clear view that they considered issues such as drinking in public places, drug-taking and vandalism to be problematic and they gave overwhelming backing to the proposed interventions. We have used the feedback to inform decisions and make improvements – notably around Public Space Protection Orders.

Kidsgrove - In early 2023, the Town Centre team launched two satisfaction surveys for residents and businesses of Kidsgrove. The response rate allowed us to see what both residents and business owners felt was important, and the results were reported back in a way which clearly showed the priorities for the local area and will help direct the future supply of events in Kidsgrove.

Healthier Communities - A survey held throughout the year asked anyone who cancelled their membership at Jubilee2 why they decided to do so. They were asked if they would recommend the leisure centre to friends and family on a score out of ten. This analysis has enabled the team at Jubilee2 to review services, classes and facilities, helping to contribute to having healthy, active, and safe communities.

Strong Financial Discipline - Each Autumn we carry out an annual Budget Consultation. This enables residents to tell us what their priorities are for the future, as we ask which services they are keenest to continue, where we should target income generation, and what we could do to improve their lives. The results were reported to Cabinet, allowing members to make informed decisions in allocating resources. The results of this consultation told us that residents were particularly keen to see continued town centre regeneration in line with our priority of town centres for all.



Section 3:

The Financial Context

"Finances are healthy, they are actively managed, putting you in a stable position" (LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, March 2023)

The Council is committed to the delivery of high quality services. Integral to this is the need to effectively target financial resources in line with our stated aims and objectives whilst also working against the background of an adverse economic situation nationally. For more detailed information you can read the published [Statement of Accounts](#).

Revenue - The Council closely manages all of its resources to ensure it delivers the services that local people need, and to prepare for future challenges. The priority actions under 'One Council Delivering for Local People' include workforce development, community engagement, partnership working, financial discipline, high quality value for money services and delivering the transformational One Council Programme,, which to date has made recurrent savings of circa £0.780m.

Residents of the borough have been impacted by the Cost of Living Crisis by increasing energy and food costs. The Council has provided support via the Energy Bills Support Scheme funded by Central Government together with the Council Tax Support Fund. The Council has also been impacted by increasing fuels costs and has incurred additional gas, electric and vehicle fuel costs amounting to £0.542m during 2022-23.

During the year the Council has had to utilise resources (both financial and staff time) in dealing with Walleys Quarry. The scale of work undertaken by the Council on this issue soaked up a huge amount of corporate resource but has resulted in a greatly improved situation for local residents and securing an Abatement Notice against the site operator – a rare achievement on an Environment Agency regulated site.

Capital - A Capital Programme totalling £32.309m was approved for 2022/23. Of this total £30.309m relates to the total cost of new schemes for 2022/23 together with £1.000m for schemes funded by external sources (Disabled Facilities Grants) and £1.000m contingency. In addition £5.548m was brought forward from the 2021/22 Capital Programme (including £4.017m from the Town Deals Fund and the Future High Streets Fund), resulting in a total Capital Programme of £37.857m for 2022/23.

A mid-year review of the capital programme for 2022/23 has subsequently been undertaken as part of the Efficiency Board and budget setting process in order to identify any projects that may need to be re-profiled from 2022/23 into future years. The revised capital programme for 2022/23 totalling £32.977m was approved by Cabinet on 6 December 2022. In addition to the revised 2022/23 Capital Programme additional capital expenditure of £0.342m regarding the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts and One Council expenditure were incurred as well as expenditure that was fully funded by grant (£0.606m).

Planned expenditure financed via capital for 2022/23 therefore totalled £33.925m. Actual expenditure has totalled £7.545m, £26.380m below that planned. This relates to expenditure that has been rolled forward into 2023/24 (£24.013m) including projects planned under the Town Deals and Future High Streets funds that will be progressed during 2023/24, Disabled Facilities Grant that will be utilised in future periods (£0.547m) and unused contingency funding (£0.691m) plus a number of projects where costs have been value engineered or whereby a decision has been made not to progress with the project until a future period (£1.129m).

Financial Recovery

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out the Council’s financial position over the next 5 years. This is aligned to the Council Plan and is the key vehicle in targeting resources to priority areas. The MTFS provides for a gap in 2023/24 of £2.103m and a revised gap to reflect the continued review of the capital programme, over the 5 year period of the MTFS of £5.873m.

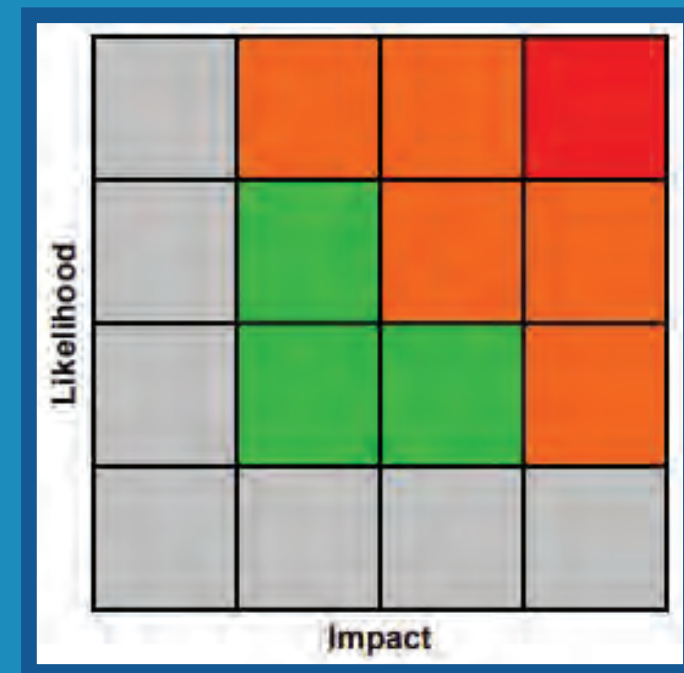
One Council is a “spend to save” programme with an agreed investment of £1.2m. Recurrent benefits of circa £1m will be achieved moving forward. The savings are set to be staggered over the life of the 3 year programme (£0.196m achieved in 2021/22, £0.601m achieved in 2022/23 with a further £0.376m in 2023/24).

The savings and funding strategies identified will enable continued investment of £0.250m in the Council’s priorities as per the Council Plan 2022-2026 via the borough Growth Fund. The borough Growth Fund will continue to be used to provide pump priming investment in initiatives, including Digital Delivery, that are forecast to generate on-going revenue savings through reducing the costs of service delivery or through the generation of additional income.

The Council intends to consider ways it can facilitate and participate in the commercial and industrial development of the borough and thereby gain access to income streams to contribute to a sustainable revenue budget. The basis for this is set out in the Commercial Strategy and the Investment Strategy.

Managing Key Risks

The Council continues to develop and maintain a systematic framework and process for managing corporate, strategic, operational, project and partnership risks and reviews this framework annually. This includes assessing risks for impact and likelihood, identifying and allocating responsibility for their mitigation, and receiving assurances about ongoing management of these risks. The Council’s Risk Management Strategy sets out the roles and responsibilities of officers and councillors, including escalation and clear reporting lines. The Council’s ‘risk appetite’ has been agreed and mitigating actions are required for all risks that exceed this threshold.



Section 4:

Our Vision and Priorities for the Borough

Good local services, a successful, sustainable borough, and safe and welcoming places for all

Outcomes

In Newcastle



Residents have easy access to good quality services



Businesses flourish and residents have access to good, well paid, jobs



Everyone has the opportunity to be active, healthy and fulfilled

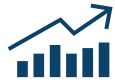


Town Centres are vibrant places to live, work and visit

Priorities



One Council Delivering for Local People



A Successful and Sustainable Growing Borough

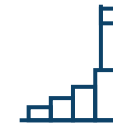


Healthy, Active, and Safe Communities



Town Centres for All

Approach



Our Employees will be supported and empowered to succeed



we will work closely with valued partners to deliver skills, jobs and growth



We will support our communities to improve lives and life chances



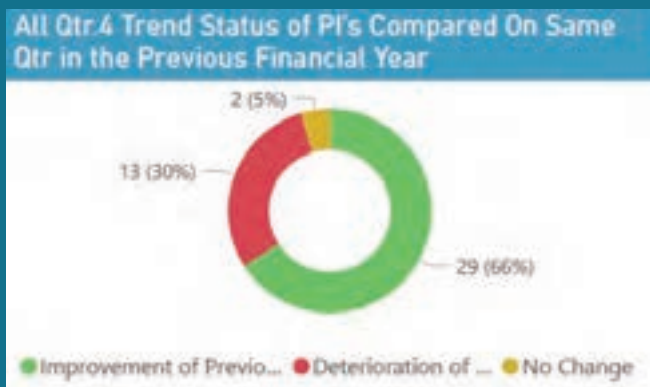
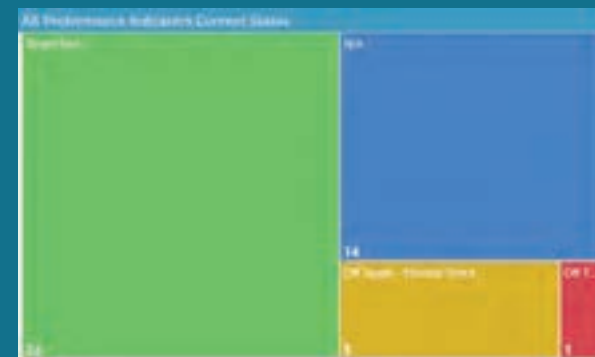
We will develop opportunities which will help our town centres thrive and grow

Section 5:

Our Achievements

Overall analysis of last year

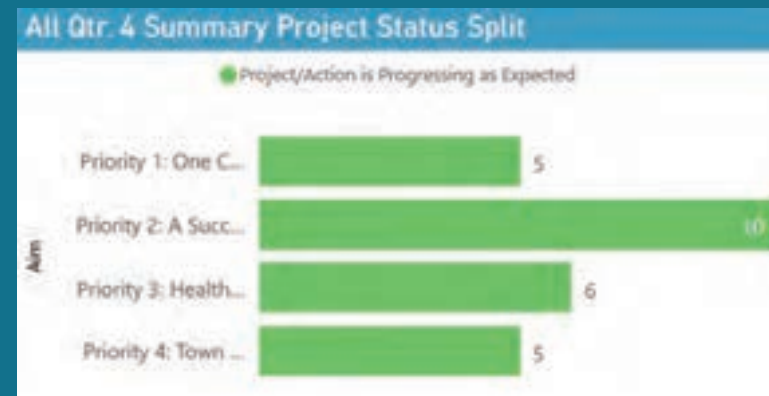
During the financial year 2022/23 the Council measured 44 core performance indicators. These core indicators were aligned with the new Council Plan to ensure that all measures being recorded reflected the Council's priorities and strategic objectives. From Quarter 3 onwards, the use of a business intelligence tool called PowerBI was introduced to improve the reporting format and support the data collection process for the quarterly reports. This created a standardised approach that helped improve monitoring and allowed for greater review of all of the collected data. It also enabled the opportunity to compare performance against historic data to understand trends.



The 44 indicators collected were split into two key categories. In one category there were measures which were classed as contextual, these are measures where a target is deemed inappropriate but performance is compared to previous year's data to help understand overall trends. In the other category there were measures that had set targets. Measures with set targets are reviewed both against the target value and also in comparison to previous year's data to understand overall performance. Of the 44 measures recorded, 14 indicators were classed as contextual and 30 indicators had set targets. 80% of the measures met their set targets in 2022/23, with only six measures being deemed to be off target. Of the six measures which were off target, 83% demonstrated improvement when compared with the previous financial year.

When comparing all measures to the previous financial year of 2021/22 the Council improved upon 29 of the indicators with two maintaining performance from the previous year. This equates to 71% of all measures from 2022/23 showing an improvement or no change since the previous year. 13 measures showed a negative trend when comparing with the previous year.

In addition to the core indicators the Council has 26 projects/priority actions to deliver as part of its 4-year Council Plan. All of these projects were classed as progressing as expected and are anticipated to be delivered on time.



We have developed a new Performance Framework across the Council, in line with our One Council programme, which ensures ownership, alignment and delivery of our Council Plan ambitions through regularly reviewed 3-year Priority Delivery Plans. The following section highlights the achievements made against each strategic objective last year:

Priority One: One Council Delivery for Local People



- **Deliver services to a high standard every day**
 - We completed 100% of category A and B food business inspections on time. This in turn was represented by only 0.4% of food premises in the Borough having a zero or one star national food hygiene rating
 - We performed well in the processing of Housing Benefits new claims/change events, which took 3.91 days
- **Ensure our services are efficient and accessible**
 - The ongoing One Council programme has continued to provide efficiencies and improvements to service delivery within the Council. The number of visits to our website grew dramatically and this was mirrored in digital transactions undertaken by members of the public; just over 60,000 web forms were raised in the year. We also saw a reduced percentage of unmet demand at 12.1%, being 1.7% lower than the previous year
 - We maintained a good accessibility rating for our website (7.6 out of 10) and are ranked at number 40 out of 403 We achieved a 94% response rate to the 2022 annual canvass for the electoral roll and piloted the use of tablets for canvassers
- **Ensure strong financial discipline across the Council**
 - We demonstrated strong financial discipline by collecting 97.6% of Business Rates last year, going past our target by 1.6%. We collected 97.4% of Council Tax in 2022/23, whilst being under target for the year by 0.1%, we matched the previous year's collection rate and we are working hard to improve the measure
 - A booking kiosk was set up at Jubilee2 to enable self-service booking and improve the income generated by allowing for speedier and more efficient bookings by customers
 - We achieved an unmodified audit opinion on the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts and VFM Audit
- **Further increasing recycling rates across the borough with a particular focus on food waste**
 - We collected 24.35% of organics, including food waste. We used targeted communications initiatives to improve the uptake of this service, with food waste collections being introduced as a pilot to a number of flat complexes in the Borough

- We also demonstrated a reduced amount of residual waste per household last year at 398.1kg. . Our performance showed that we had out-performed against our target of 440kg and also we compared well when looking at the national average for residual waste collections per household, which sat at 470.75kg

- **Secure a step change in street cleanliness and the quality of the public domain**

- Our street cleanliness surveys were completed twice in 2022/23 and our targets were met in all four categories. Detritus, Graffiti and Fly-posting all received 100% survey scores, whereas Litter, whilst performing lower at 91% still met the target set. The survey data will be used to help us identify areas to focus our street cleaning efforts
- The Great British Spring Clean campaign took place in March where in excess of 850 hours were recorded from groups and schools who took part in a litter pick making a massive improvement to their community
- The Neighbourhood Delivery Team continued in its development with recruitment to key roles. This team also continued its work on priority neighbourhood issues including fly tipping, household waste duty of care and abandoned vehicles. Working alongside the One Council programme the service looked to provide improved processes to improve the quality of the public realm

- **Continue to keep Council Tax low for the Borough's residents**

- We effectively managed the Council's commercial property portfolio and achieved a 93.6% occupancy rate
- We added £1,018,000 of revenue from our commercial property portfolio
- We secured over £78k in external grants for the Brampton Museum and just under £600k of spend in the local economy

- **Develop professional talent across the Council**

- We put a second cohort of employees through IOSH Managing Safely training as part of our commitment to health and safety
- We delivered a training programme to embed the Customer Hub team into handling all council services at first point of contact including Revenues, Benefits, Overpayments, Subsidy, Rates, NHA, and Leisure
- We facilitated training for 28 emergency response roles as part of the council's responsibilities as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act
- We have nine members of staff undergoing apprenticeships
- We continue to invest in staff development with 14 staff members gaining internal promotions last year
- We saw the successful growth and broadened scope of the accredited employee Thrive group which has also supported the training of a number of Mental Health First Aiders and domestic abuse champions



Priority Two:

A Successful and Sustainable Growing Borough



- **A strong and sustainable economy where everyone benefits**

- A delivery plan was approved by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities which has enabled the project delivery of a number of UK Shared Prosperity Fund projects, these included improving the town centre; supporting culture and heritage; skills development for local people; and supporting the most vulnerable people. The Fund is in excess of £4.6m
- We continued with the delivery of the £16m Kidsgrove Town Deal, seeing the delivery of the multi-million pound refurbishment and reopening of Kidsgrove Sport Centre. Ongoing discussions with the Canal and River Trust for canal improvement works were also undertaken and moved into the final stages of negotiations. Work is well underway on the Chatterley Valley project, which has been given over £3.6m in Town Deal monies. The Town Deal funded part of the work is basically complete, which has opened up the site for wider business development
- We also continued in the delivery of the £23m Newcastle Town Deal. The Astley Centre for Circus was submitted at the end of March 2023 and the development of other remaining projects continued with the delivery partners into the new financial year. Two elements of the Knutton Village masterplan project were also submitted for planning permission within the year



Support the sustainable development of our towns and villages

Spotlight on Sustainability

In 2019, the Council passed a climate emergency motion, declaring, as an organisation that we are currently experiencing a climate emergency. A target was set to meet net zero for the Council's own estate and activities by 2030, and for the wider borough by 2050. The Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy was adopted a year later and is central to helping achieve the aims of caring for and enhancing our natural environment, and adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change.

Early actions undertaken include an urban tree planting strategy with just under 15,000 trees planted in the borough in the first four phases of the plan with an additional 25,000+ whips and feathers being planted this year. As well as improving biodiversity and facilitating future carbon capture, the development of community woodlands has provided assurance around sites which local communities were keen to protect from development.

Cabinet approved the use of Hydro-treated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel to replace white diesel in the majority of our waste and streetscene vehicles. This involves an investment of £70K as HVO costs 40p per litre more than diesel, but will reduce emissions by over 90% for those vehicles using it, greatly contributing to our 2030 net zero goal.

The Council has also introduced staff sustainability induction training for all current and new staff and the Council has achieved a reduction in their carbon emissions by around 50% since 2009, thanks to the work achieved by NuLBC staff.

The emerging Local Plan will be a major tool in securing environmental sustainability, providing the ability to influence the sustainability and decarbonisation of future and current developments across the borough. Development of a fully costed Building and Vehicle Fleet Decarbonisation 'RoadMap' has occurred which will underpin an updated Action and Decarbonisation Plan and provide structure and project management to ensure the journey to net zero is fully costed and implemented. The Updated Sustainable Environment and Decarbonisation Action Plan will approach sustainability in a holistic way focusing on renewable energy, transport, fabrics, heating and cooling, lighting, recycling and waste, biodiversity and behaviour change.



- The First Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) was worked on by the planning team and produced in line with commissioned evidence received and within the timeframe of the adopted Local Development Scheme
- Our open space and green infrastructure strategy received recognition from the Landscape Institute. There were over 200 entries for a range of awards. The strategy produced by RSK won the category 'excellence in landscape planning and assessment'
- We helped to support developments within the Borough by ensuring major and non-major applications were processed within the time agreed. The Council maintained a high performance in dealing with planning applications, which put the Council within the top quartile when measured against other local districts and government targets



- **Protecting our communities by improving how we use our enforcement powers.**

- We continued to monitor the Walleys Quarry odour problem and secured a mediated settlement with the operator Walleys Quarry Ltd (WQL), which resulted in the withdrawal of their challenge against the Abatement Notice. In Q4 of 2022/23 the number of odour complaints (month on month) were significantly below the number reported in previous years (2021 and 2022). February saw the lowest number of complaints reported at 47 complaints, lower than any other month from January 2021 to date. Officers liaised with the operator WQL and the EA, highlighting peak periods of complaint and identifying upward trends in complaint reporting
- We continued to work in partnership with UKHSA and the Environment Agency. Information provided on air quality and weather enabled officers to proactively undertake odour assessments e.g. during periods of predicted low dispersion
- During the year the Council commissioned an expert to review data relating to odour between November 2022 and January 2023. The expert noted there have been improvements to:
 - the scale of hydrogen sulphide and landfill gas releases,
 - a reduction in the frequency of episodes of hydrogen sulphide being present at a noticeable level,
 - the intensity has reduced but on occasions remains at noticeable levels,
 - the peak concentrations are lower than when the Abatement Notice was issued.
- We also carried out 363 checks on DBS certificates to ensure continuing suitability of our taxi drivers, undertook 443 Food hygiene official control interventions and served 47 housing enforcement notices

- **Ensuring there are good homes for everyone and that every citizen has a safe and secure place to live**

- We worked with partners to establish a new Multi-Agency Homelessness Hub in September 2022 as a pre-cursor to agreeing plans to acquire a property which will provide safe, secure emergency accommodation to ensure "no-second night out" and provide an immediate space off the streets while investigations and referrals are done
- We brought 41 empty homes back into use
- 95 customers who made a homeless application owed a prevention duty were recorded as having a successful outcome
- 222 customers who made a homeless application owed a relief duty were recorded as having a successful outcome
- We saw an increased number of successful outcomes with registered providers on the housing waiting list. In total we had 628 allocations in 2022/23 which was 115 more than the previous year
- We saw the number of verified rough sleepers reduce throughout the year, from 49 to 6. The number of rough sleepers overall have reduced due to dedicated work by the rough sleeper team and the support pathways that have been created by the Council.

Priority Three:

Healthy, Active and Safe Communities



- **Reduce anti-social behaviour and crime in our communities**

- We continued to build on our joint work with Staffordshire Police, strengthening partnership working through the new Neighbourhood Delivery Team
- By the end of the year we had 20 open anti-social behaviour cases, which was 10 less than the end of 2021/22. Whilst the number of new cases was slightly greater than 2021/22 year, the overall number of cases that were successfully closed increased by 195
- We had the honour of hosting the former Countess of Wessex (now the Duchess of Edinburgh) who visited the Safe Space in the town centre to learn all about our campaign and our mission to keep people safe. The project was granted a sum of money back in March 2022, which enabled the project to kick into action. Since then we have been able to keep the project running on Friday evenings with our very trustworthy bank of volunteers who have gone above and beyond to keep people safe
- We adopted the Town Centre Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for a hot spot location for crime and anti-social behaviour

- **Ensure that our most vulnerable residents are supported through the impact of the rising cost of living**

- Over the course of the year there were 223 referrals regarding vulnerability by participating organisations at the Daily Hub. The Hub provides vital cross-agency collaboration in helping vulnerable people to find the right support within the Borough
- We continued to work collaboratively with the Newcastle Partnership to ensure that the right actions are taken by the right people at the right time to ensure the most vulnerable residents are supported when necessary

- **Delivering an economic and cultural legacy from the celebration of the borough's 850th anniversary in 2023**

- Over 500,000 people accessed the Museum's collections both online and in person during the financial year. The use of online viewing was included this year which shows the number of views taken from online catalogues the museum is part of – Art UK and Staffordshire Past Track. Also included are the stats from our social media account



Spotlight on 850 celebrations

The borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme celebrated its 850th year in January 2023. The Cabinet agreed the ambitious 850 programme for 2023 with a celebratory launch on 19th January at the Brampton Museum. All the activities happening throughout the year that have been provided by the Council and partner organisations have been promoted, including specific pages of the website. At the end of the financial year we also set up the Borough Hero Awards, which were presented at the Mayor's Ball at the end of March.

By the end of 2023, 75 events will have been delivered. Whilst many of these have been orchestrated by partner organisations, the 850 team have been involved in facilitating and supporting all the events. These have included yarn bombing, lectures, music festivals, major exhibitions, dance, circus, tea parties, historical re-enactments and commemorative statues. As well as celebrating the past, the team are looking to the future, creating an annual 'Local Heroes' award, planting 850 Lime trees and working with local schools and Newcastle College to foster pride in place among younger members of the community. Events have raised awareness of the Borough's offer for residents and visitors. Footfall in the town centre has increased. The events have opened up some key locations to new audiences, i.e. the Brampton Museum and the Belong dementia care village. Local businesses have also been given a variety of opportunities to engage with the celebrations.



Images above: Appetite - Andrew Billington



- **Support the development of community solutions to local problems**
 - We worked with partners to develop effective community bodies and continue to develop the partnership in line with the Community Safety Strategic Assessment
 - Jubilee2 saw a growth in membership of 546 throughout the year, providing greater fitness support and opportunities for members of the public to exercise within the Borough.
 - Kidsgrove Sports Centre re-opened after a multi-million pound refurbishment
 - Planning permission was granted for new sports changing rooms at the Wammy to increase football usage



Priority Four: Town Centres for All



- **Increasing the number of people living, working and using Newcastle town Centre**
 - The town centre showed increasing footfall figures again. There were 2.78 million visits in the town centre throughout the year, this figure was an increase of 510,000 visits from the previous year
 - The town centre footfall increase was mirrored by a growth in the number of car parking tickets that were purchased across the area last year, up by 49,000 on the previous year
 - We completed re-tiling of 5 subway barrels at Grosvenor Roundabout to substantially uplift the appearance of this key entrance to the town centre
 - 88% of visitors to the Brampton Museum said it had made them feel proud of Newcastle and the local area



- **Continuing to work with key partners to deliver the redevelopment of opportunities across the borough**
 - We completed the purchase of York Place and developed plans for its future use. Submitting a planning application for the demolition and redevelopment of York Place to make way for its redevelopment with a well-designed mixed use scheme appropriate for this sensitive conservation area location in the town centre
 - We completed demolition of the Civic Offices. A key milestone achieved for ensuring the entire Ryecroft site is ready for redevelopment for a mixture of uses that will drive footfall and regeneration of this prominent part of the town centre. Morgan Sindall was appointed as contractor for the design and construction of a new multi storey car park at Ryecroft and a planning application for this exciting first stage of re-developing the Ryecroft was submitted in January 2023.



- **Encourage visitors and support local businesses in Kidsgrove**
 - The "Experience Kidsgrove" town centre strategy has been drafted in partnership with Kidsgrove Town Council and Go Kidsgrove. In addition a consultation exercise has been completed to understand business views on potential measures to increase footfall within the town of Kidsgrove and to help support and grow local businesses there
 - A funding agreement has been signed for the redevelopment of Kidsgrove railway station



Section 6:

Value for Money Services - Are we delivering?

In order for the Council to know how it is performing we don't just look at our targets and trends but also at how we compare to other councils; both in terms of cost and performance. In this way we can demonstrate that our services to our customers and communities represent value for money.

Top of the Class!

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council performs amongst the top 25% of Councils in the country for the following services:

- ✓ High percentage of planning applications processed on time
- ✓ Low cost of collecting Council Tax
- ✓ Low numbers of complaints
- ✓ Low numbers of households in temporary accommodation

In addition we perform amongst the top 50% of Councils in the country for:

- ✓ Low waste collection costs
- ✓ Low fly-tipping incidents
- ✓ Low cost of development control
- ✓ Low residual household waste
- ✓ High Recycling rates

Nevertheless, there are some areas where we would like to improve the Council's relative performance and we're already making good progress through harnessing technology and working in partnership to deliver the best service we can for our customers and communities:

One Council Programme – In January 2021 we launched our transformation programme which sought to drive efficiency through service redesign and digital investment, coupled with staff development and a strengthened focus on performance management across the organisation. The transformation programme is now in its third year and has seen huge successes in improving digital access to services, self-serve for residents and businesses, widening the capacity of our customer hub and launching a new website for the Council. The programme had an ambitious target of financial savings and is set to release over £1m from our annual spend.

The Borough Council successfully worked with the Lawn Tennis Association to apply for funding to renovate several park tennis courts in Newcastle-under-Lyme, which were officially reopened after the £116,272 renovation works. Through the Parks Tennis Project, 14 courts were transformed across the local area, providing a significant boost to sporting facilities.

Finally, the Council is playing a key role in a new Better Health Partnership for the Borough, which seeks to work across system boundaries to improve activity levels and overall health outcomes across Newcastle-under-Lyme.



Section 7:

External Assessments and Awards – don't just take our word for it!

"Staff and Members of the council are clearly focused on delivering positive outcomes for the Borough's communities"

This was just one of the many positive findings relayed to the Council after undergoing a voluntary 3-day external review from the Local Government Association through its Corporate Peer Challenge programme in March 2023. Over the course of their time at the Council the six peers (senior leaders and councillors from other local authorities) talked to over 100 staff, councillors and strategic partners to get under the skin of how and what we do to deliver our services.

Corporate Peer Challenge is a voluntary process commissioned by a council to aid their improvement and learning. The structure for the review is built around 5 core components, to ensure consistency across the local government sector. Below is a snapshot of the key findings of the review:

- ✓ Local Priorities – *"The council has a good knowledge of its communities and its needs which has shaped the development of its priorities"*
- ✓ Place Leadership – *"The Leader and Chief Executive are seen as effective within the council and externally" and "the multi-agency Vulnerability Hub is sector leading. This is working well and delivering impressive outcomes with partners"*
- ✓ Governance and Culture – *"There are good relationships between members and officers"*
- ✓ Financial Management – *"Finances are healthy, they are actively managed, putting you in a stable position"*
- ✓ Capacity – *"Staff are committed to and believe in the council priorities" and "The council has fantastic relationships with partners and works together to deliver its strategic ambitions"*

The full Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report can be viewed on the Council's [website](#). Alongside the considerable number of strengths identified, the LGA also highlighted some areas to help the Council build on its improvement activity. The Council welcomed these suggestions and is actively implementing them as part of its agreed [Action Plan](#) following the review.

Progress with our further improvement plans will be reviewed by the LGA in early 2024 as part of their ongoing support offer.

Spring 2023 saw a raft of awards for the Council that recognised the resilience, innovation, and dedication to high quality services that are central to our council priorities.

First up was the iESE Transformation Awards in March 2023 where we scooped Bronze for the One Council Transformation Programme. The judges said: 'The One Council Transformation Programme at Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council continues to achieve success in efficiency, cultural improvement and people focussed value to its services'.

Next up was the Enjoy Staffordshire Tourism & Good Food Awards where the Council picked up another four accolades.



The Resilience and Innovation Gold Award went to Newcastle's Market - "The Stones" - in recognition of the push to launch fledgling businesses, its ability to continually diversify and adapt when conditions change, the hard-work keeping the market open for residents, traders and events during Covid and the support provided to traders. All of this is happening whilst the high streets evolve nationally, digital delivery is introduced, and online shopping impacts. Thank you to all of our super traders and events markets who make this possible.

The Council's Brampton Museum landed a trio of awards and commendations in its first year of entering the Staffordshire Tourism Awards. The Museum won Silver in the 'Best Small Visitor Attraction of the Year Awards' and also the 'Ethical, Sustainable and Responsible Tourism Awards' and a Highly Commended in the 'Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Awards'.



The awards recognise the achievements of the best tourism attractions and businesses operating in our county and reflect their hard work and professionalism in contributing to an industry which generates a huge economic impact for our area. The success of the museum is a great reflection of the impressive improvements which have been undertaken to the museum as part of the National Lottery funded project to add new event spaces, a café and gallery in addition to redisplaying many areas of the site.

2022 also saw the Council winning its 20th consecutive gold award in the Heart of England in Bloom; being declared category winner in the small city category; and receiving a judges' discretionary award for the project to refurbish Grosvenor Sunken Roundabout (the Bearpit). The judging panel gave the Council a perfect score for its community involvement, recognising that our campaign really is inclusive and community-led. Our success has been repeated and extended in the 2023 awards with the Council taking the top award nationally!

Our waste service team were also shortlisted in the Association for Public Service Excellence's annual awards in the category of 'most improved performer' for Refuse Collection last year. This year they have been selected as a finalist in the Awards for the 'Best Service Team: Waste Management and Recycling Service'.

Our Deputy Chief Executive Simon McEneny was nominated for Staffordshire Ambassador of the Year and finally our Leader, Cllr Simon Tagg has been shortlisted for Leader of the Year in the prestigious LGiU councillor awards.

Huge Congratulations to all the winners and to all colleagues contributing to the Council's success!



