

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK
AT 4:00 P.M., WEDNESDAY, 30 AUGUST, 2017
PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors:

Dudson, A. (Chairman)
Witton, P.T. (Vice-Chairman)

Adamson, G.	Lea, C.I.
Alcott, G.	Kraujalis, J.T.
Allen, F.W.C.	Martin, Mrs. C.E.
Allt, Mrs. A.	Mitchell, Mrs. C.
Bennett, C.	Molineux, G.N.
Buttery, M.S.	Peake, Mrs. C.L.
Cartwright, Mrs. S.M.	Pearson, A.R.
Cooper, Miss J.	Preece, J.P.T.L.
Davis, Mrs. M.A.	Smith, C.D.
Foley, D.	Snape, D.J.
Freeman, Miss M.A.	Snape, P.A.
Grocott, M.R.	Sutherland, M.
Hardman, W.T.A.	Sutton, Mrs. H.M.
Hoare, M.W.A.	Todd, Mrs. D.M.
Johnson, T.B.	Woodhead, P.E.

27. Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillors J.L. Bowater; A. Dean; Miss M.J. Dudson; Mrs. D. Grice; J.P. Johnson; Mrs. P.Z. Stretton M.B.E. and Miss S. Whitehouse.

28. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Nature</u>
D. Foley	Agenda Item 9(i) – Motion(s) Received Under Rule 6.	Pecuniary – current local government employee

No other Declarations of Interests were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members' Interests.

29. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 July, 2017, be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to inclusion of the following amendment:

Minute No. 19(ii) – Questions in Accordance with Rule 8

At the beginning of the Housing Portfolio Leader's response to the Question, insert the following wording:

"I understand that Councillor Woodhead has not actually raised this issue directly with Council Officers, I find this rather strange. Rather than trying to gain personal publicity from a national tragedy, I would have expected the Member to try to obtain an immediate response rather than wait for the Council meeting.

I have seen on Councillor Woodhead's Facebook page that he has been trying to put some blame on the newly elected Labour MP for Kensington for the dreadful tragedy at Grenfell. This is the lowest of the low. We should not be playing politics with a national tragedy where numerous innocent people lost their lives."

N.B. Following the meeting it was also noted that Councillor Mrs. P.Z. Stretton's name had been erroneously excluded from the list of named attendees on the Minutes and was therefore inserted into the appropriate section.

30. The Chairman's Announcements and Correspondence

(i) Terror Attack in Barcelona and Cambris

The Chairman asked Members to observe a minute's silence to pay respects to the victims and give their thoughts to the grieving families and friends of the terror attacks which occurred on 17 and 18 August in Barcelona and Cambris, respectively, which claimed the lives of 14 people and injured over 100 more.

(ii) Chairman's Fundraising

The Chairman advised that a collection box was circulating for Members to donate to his fundraising. At the meeting held on 5 July, 2017, a total of £47.00 was collected, and he thanked all Members for their donations.

(iii) Civic Service

The Chairman advised that all Members should by now have received invitations to his Civic Service and Reception on Sunday 17 September at St. Michael's Church, Brereton, and reminded Members to return their reply forms to the Managing Director's PA by no later than Wednesday 6 September if they had not already done so.

31. Amendment to Form and Composition of the Shadow Cabinet

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor P.A. Snape, notified the Council of changes made to the form and composition of the Shadow Cabinet (Item 5.1 of the Official Minutes of the Council):

Councillor P.A. Snape	Leader of the Opposition and Corporate Improvement Shadow Portfolio Leader
Councillor M. Sutherland	Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Economic Development and Planning Shadow Portfolio Leader
Councillor D.J. Snape	Crime and Partnerships Shadow Portfolio Leader
Councillor J.P. Johnson	Culture and Sport Shadow Portfolio Leader
Councillor M.W.A. Hoare	Environment Shadow Portfolio Leader
Councillor C.D. Smith	Health and Wellbeing Shadow Portfolio Leader
Councillor C.I. Lea	Housing Shadow Portfolio Leader
Councillor Mrs. H.M. Sutton	Town Centre Regeneration Shadow Portfolio Leader

32. Changes to Membership of Committees

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor P.A. Snape, notified Council of changes to membership of Committees etc. from the Conservative Group for approval by Council (Item 6.1 to 6.3 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That the changes to Conservative Group membership of Committees etc. as detailed in the schedule at Item 6.1 to 6.3 of the agenda be approved.

33. Questions in Accordance with Rule 8

None received.

34. Recommendations Referred from Cabinet, Committees etc.

None received.

35. Motions Received under Rule 6

(Councillor D. Foley left the meeting at the start of this item having declared a pecuniary interest in the following Motion.)

(Following clarification from the Monitoring Officer, Councillors M.R. Grocott and P.E. Woodhead declared a pecuniary interest prior to the debate on the following Motion as their respective spouses were both school workers, and so left the meeting accordingly.)

- (i) Consideration was given to the following Motion submitted under Council Procedure Rule 6 by Councillor T.B. Johnson, Cannock East Ward, which was seconded and debated:

“Cannock Chase Council notes that:

- National Joint Council (NJC) pay has fallen by 21% in real terms since 2010.
- NJC workers endured a pay freeze from 2010 to 2012.
- Local terms and conditions of many NJC employees have also been cut impacting on overall earnings.
- NJC pay is the lowest in the public sector.
- Job evaluated pay structures are being squeezed and distorted by bottom-loaded NJC pay settlements needed to reflect the increased National Living Wage and Foundation Living Wage.
- There are growing equal and fair pay risks resulting from this situation.

This Council therefore supports the NJC pay claim for 2018 submitted by UNISON, GMB and Unite on behalf of council and school workers and calls for an immediate end of public sector pay restraint. NJC pay cannot be allowed to fall further behind other parts of the public sector. This Council also welcomes the joint review of the NJC pay spine to remedy the turbulence caused by bottom loaded pay settlements.

This Council also notes the drastic ongoing cuts in local government funding and calls on the Government to provide funding for a decent pay rise for NJC employees and the pay spine review.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- Call immediately for the LGA to make urgent representations to Government to fund the NJC pay claim and pay spine review and notify the Council of their action in this regard.
- Write to the Prime Minister and Chancellor supporting the NJC pay claim and seek additional funding to provide a decent pay rise and fund the pay spine review.
- Meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and the pay spine review.”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15(5), a named vote was requested and supported by the required number of Members:

For

Adamson, G.
Alcott, G.
Allen, F.W.C.
Allt, Mrs. A.
Bennett, C.
Buttery, M.S.
Cartwright, Mrs. S.M.
Cooper, Miss J.

Against

Hoare, M.W.A.
Lea, C.I.
Snape, D.J.
Snape, P.A.
Sutherland, M.
Sutton, Mrs. H.M.

Abstain

For

Against

Abstain

Davis, Mrs. M.A.

Dudson, A.

Freeman, Miss M.A.

Hardman, W.T.A.

Johnson, T.B.

Kraujalis, J.T.

Martin, Mrs. C.E.

Mitchell, Mrs. C.

Molineux, G.N.

Peake, Mrs. C.L.

Pearson, A.R.

Preece, J.P.T.L.

Smith, C.D.

Todd, Mrs. D.M.

Witton, P.T.

23

6

0

In addition, Councillors J.L. Bowater; A. Dean; Miss M.J. Dudson; Mrs. D. Grice; J.P. Johnson; Mrs. P.Z. Stretton and Miss S. Whitehouse were absent from the meeting and Councillors D. Foley, M.R. Grocott and P.E. Woodhead were not present in the Council Chamber for this Motion having declared a pecuniary interest in it.

RESOLVED:

That:

(A) "Cannock Chase Council noted that:

- National Joint Council (NJC) pay had fallen by 21% in real terms since 2010.
- NJC workers endured a pay freeze from 2010 to 2012.
- Local terms and conditions of many NJC employees had also been cut impacting on overall earnings.
- NJC pay was the lowest in the public sector.
- Job evaluated pay structures were being squeezed and distorted by bottom-loaded NJC pay settlements needed to reflect the increased National Living Wage and Foundation Living Wage.
- There were growing equal and fair pay risks resulting from this situation.

(B) The Council therefore supported the NJC pay claim for 2018 submitted by UNISON, GMB and Unite on behalf of council and school workers and

called for an immediate end of public sector pay restraint. NJC pay could not be allowed to fall further behind other parts of the public sector. This Council also welcomed the joint review of the NJC pay spine to remedy the turbulence caused by bottom loaded pay settlements.

(C) This Council also noted the drastic ongoing cuts in local government funding and called on the Government to provide funding for a decent pay rise for NJC workers and the pay spine review.

(D) This Council therefore resolved to:

- Call immediately for the LGA to make urgent representations to Government to fund the NJC pay claim and pay spine review and notify the Council of their action in this regard.
- Write to the Prime Minister and Chancellor supporting the NJC pay claim and seek additional funding to provide a decent pay rise and fund the pay spine review.
- Meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and the pay spine review.”

(Councillors D. Foley, M.R. Grocott and P.E. Woodhead returned to the meeting at the conclusion of this Motion.)

(ii) Consideration was given to the following Motion submitted under Council Procedure Rule 6 by Councillor P.T. Witton, Cannock South Ward, which was seconded and debated:

“This Council is opposed to the Tories abolition of free Support for Mortgage interest benefit in its current form, replacing it with a loan secured on people’s homes.

The changes became law on 27 July, and future recipients of new mortgage interest loans will have to pay them back with interest.

Any homeowner who loses their job, falls ill or sees their income drop from this summer will only be able to take out a loan.

The rollout date of April 2018 means they will be the first group to be affected if they need to make a claim. The time-lag is because recipients will only be able to apply 39 weeks after they start receiving the benefits that makes them eligible – down from 13 weeks under Labour.

Around 124,000 people currently receive the benefit who have lost a job or stopped work through disability or illness. And the Money Advice Trust claim it could mean many more people will struggle to keep their homes in the future.

This latest austerity cut to the most vulnerable people in society is another example of the Tories intent to dismantle the ‘welfare state’, and I propose that all members condemn it!”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15(5), a named vote was requested and supported by the required number of Members:

For

Adamson, G.
Alcott, G.
Allen, F.W.C.
Bennett, C.
Cartwright, Mrs. S.M.
Cooper, Miss J.
Davis, Mrs. M.A.
Dudson, A.
Foley, D.
Freeman, Miss M.A.
Grocott, M.R.
Hardman, W.T.A.
Johnson, T.B.
Kraujalis, J.T.
Lea, C.I.
Martin, Mrs. C.E.
Mitchell, Mrs. C.
Molineux, G.N.
Pearson, A.R.
Preece, J.P.T.L.
Sutherland, M.
Todd, Mrs. D.M.
Witton, P.T.
Woodhead, P.E.

24

Against

Buttery, M.S.
Snape, D.J.

2

Abstain

Allt, Mrs. A.
Hoare, M.W.A.
Peake, Mrs. C.L.
Smith, C.D.
Snape, P.A.
Sutton, Mrs. H.M.

6

In addition, Councillors J.L. Bowater; A. Dean; Miss M.J. Dudson; Mrs. D. Grice; J.P. Johnson; Mrs. P.Z. Stretton and Miss S. Whitehouse were absent from the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) "This Council was opposed to the Tories abolition of free Support for Mortgage interest benefit in its current form, replacing it with a loan secured

on people's homes.

- (B) The changes became law on 27 July, and future recipients of new mortgage interest loans would have to pay them back with interest.
- (C) Any homeowner who lost their job, fell ill or saw their income drop from this summer would only be able to take out a loan.
- (D) The rollout date of April 2018 meant they would be the first group to be affected if they needed to make a claim. The time-lag was because recipients would only be able to apply 39 weeks after they started receiving the benefits that made them eligible – down from 13 weeks under Labour.
- (E) Around 124,000 people currently received the benefit who had lost a job or stopped work through disability or illness. And the Money Advice Trust claimed it could mean many more people would struggle to keep their homes in the future.
- (F) This latest austerity cut to the most vulnerable people in society was another example of the Tories intent to dismantle the 'welfare state' and Members condemn it!"

36. Comments and Questions on Part 1 Minutes of Cabinet, Committees, Sub-Committees and Panels under Rule 9

The Chairman invited in turn, those Members who had submitted Comments and/or Questions in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9 to read out their Comments and/or Questions:

Question from Councillor P.A. Snape, Leader of the Opposition:

Draft Minutes of 20 July 2017 Cabinet, Minute No. 23 (Final Accounts 2016/17)

"Working balances at 31 March 2017 for the General Fund were £2.434 million compared to the £2.451 million reported to Council in February 2017. However after taking into account a budget adjustment with 2017/18 a small but healthy increase also exists. The report presented to Cabinet set out the capital outturn of £3.207 million compared to a budget of £4.901 million, a reduction of £1.703 million.

Balancing budgets whilst maintaining the quality of services is never easy and praise is rightly given where it is deserved. Our Head of Finance and his team have done us all a wonderful job.

In October 2016, Cannock Chase District Council held its public consultation on spending and services for 2017/18. A lengthy and expensive procedure, particularly when the public and other interested bodies are then ignored. Is the Leader of the Council now planning to hold another consultation prior to writing his budget for 2018/19?

If the Leader is not planning to hold such a consultation this year, then is he willing to work with Members of this Council, from all political groups in cross party discussions, to ensure that the budget decided in March 2018 reflects the views and needs of all our residents and traders?

The Leader of the Council, Councillor G. Adamson, provided the following response:

“Cabinet at its meeting of 20 July 2017 received reports in relation to the outturn for 2016/17 for the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund.

Both reports showed that the Council, as the Leader of the Opposition acknowledges, continues to manage its budgets very well. The outturn for Working Balances for the General Fund as corrected by Councillor Snape shows that there will be an additional transfer to Working Balances of £196,000. The Council continues to seek efficiency savings wherever possible and manage its capital programme to ensure Value for Money. However it should be noted that the capital outturn variance is primarily as a result of timing delays in bringing projects to fruition.

I note that Councillor Snape praises the Officers when things go right and blames the Labour administration if anything goes wrong. He cannot have it both ways. My administration runs this Council in an efficient, cost effective way that protects front line services for our residents, in sharp contrast to a number of our neighbouring authorities which are blue, not red.

In relation to Budget Consultation, Councillor Snape will recognise that the extensive exercise undertaken in 2016/17 was directly as a result of the premature closure of Rugeley Power Station and the failure of his Government to provide Transitional Funding, this being in addition to reductions in direct Government Support through Revenue Support Grant and New Homes Bonus.

My Administration therefore instigated a Financial Recovery Plan and an extensive public consultation exercise.

The process involved full engagement with all its partners/organisations in receipt of funding/concerned with service provision to make them aware of the Council's predicament and determine options and timescales for consideration by Cabinet.

These options were then subject to public consultation and the outcome of the consultation responses, together with details of stakeholder engagement, were then used to inform the final budget discussions with Cabinet Members and Officers. I can recall members of the Conservative Group complaining about the extent and cost of the consultation we carried out.

I do not want to go over the outcome of this process again, but needless to say, out of the ten options with the lowest level of public agreement there were only two which the Council decided to implement in full. Both of these related to increase in charges, something that the public will never tend to agree with.

This Council clearly does listen to the public and stakeholders but does at the same time show community leadership and make difficult decisions when they are required, something that was clearly recognised by the Peer Review.

I find it very surprising that Councillor Snape states that the public and other interested bodies have been ignored, particularly when the Alternative Budget, as submitted by the Conservative Group, only made four changes to the options put forward by my Administration.

Two of the options related to increase in charges for Car Parks and Football Pitches whereas the other two were as follows:

- Deletion of increase trading days at Cannock Indoor Market – the increase was supported by 80.5% of respondents with only 14.7% disagreeing.
- Deletion of increase revenue from bus stations – the increase was supported by 60.7% with only 25.5% disagreeing with the proposal.

The term ‘the pot calling the kettle black’ comes to mind in relation to ignoring the views of residents.

Dealing now with the question in relation to 2018/19.

This Council, unlike a number of other authorities, attempts to set a balanced budget over the medium term. The objective of the 2017/18 process was to set an ongoing balanced budget from 2019/20 by delivering savings of £1.6 million per annum.

The Council, subject to a residual deficit of £0.181 million does have a balanced budget as such and I sincerely hope that we do not need to implement a Financial Recovery Plan again.

In stating this, I think we all know that the opening of the Mill Green Retail Outlet Development is key to our financial sustainability and is something that we need to ensure progresses smoothly.

In addition all local authorities face a great deal of uncertainty with Local Government Finance being effectively excluded from the Government’s agenda as Brexit proceeds. 100% Business Rates Retention is now on hold whereas the implementation timetable of the Fair Funding Review is still unknown. It is believed that some form of clarity on these issues may come from the Autumn Statement.

Subject to no more surprises arising from the above I believe that the 2018/19 Budget process will follow that of a normal year and hopefully will be fine tuning of our Budget Strategy. Nevertheless, all Members of this Council can engage in this process.

An updated Medium Financial Plan will be considered by Cabinet and full Council following the Autumn Statement and a Draft Budget for consultation issued in December 2017.

The Draft Budget will then be considered by Shadow Cabinet and the Customers & Corporate Scrutiny Committee before a Final Budget is again recommended to Council.

The Leader of the Opposition can however rest assured that if and when, and I say if, we have to make any changes to front line services we will engage fully with all stakeholders and make an informed decision that is in the best interests of our residents.

My administration is committed to our Budget Strategy whereby any reduction in service provision represents the last resort to the Council but clearly we are in the hands of the Government in determining what they see the future for Local Government is.”

The Leader of the Opposition then asked the following supplementary question:

“The Staffordshire Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) is currently consulting on the future joint governance of the Police and the Fire and Rescue Services in Staffordshire. Of the four options presented in the consultation and Business Case, the PCC’s preferred option is the ‘Governance Model’. Does the Leader of the Council agree that the ‘Governance Model’ should not be supported, and that option 1 ‘no change to Current Governance’ was the right option and should be the option supported by this Council?”

The Leader of the Council provided the following response to the supplementary question:

“The Fire and Rescue Service does a lot of good work and was a success, the same could not be said of the Police Service at present. The PCC needs to get Staffordshire Police working properly first before trying to take on the governance of other bodies. The Council’s formal response to the consultation is that option 1 should be taken forward.”

37. Scrutiny Committees’ Annual Reports 2016/17

The 2016/17 Annual Reports of the following Scrutiny Committees were received for information (Item 11.1 to 11.21 of the Official Minutes of the Council):

- Better Jobs & Skills Scrutiny Committee;
- Community Safety Scrutiny Committee;
- Customers & Corporate Scrutiny Committee;
- Environment Scrutiny Committee;
- Health Scrutiny Committee;
- Housing Scrutiny Committee.

38. Constitution Amendments

Consideration was given to the Report of the Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer (item 12.1 to 12.6 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That the proposed amendments to the Constitution as detailed in Appendix 1 to the Report be approved.

The meeting closed at 5:10 p.m.

CHAIRMAN