

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET

HELD ON THURSDAY 8 AUGUST 2019 AT 4:00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors:

Adamson, G.	Leader of the Council
Alcott, G.	Deputy Leader of the Council and Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader
Pearson, A.R.	Corporate Improvement Portfolio Leader
Bennett, C.	Crime and Partnerships Portfolio Leader
Mitchell, Mrs. C.	Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader
Johnson, T.B.	Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader
Preece, J.P.T.L.	Environment Portfolio Leader
Martin, Mrs. C.E.	Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader
Woodhead, P.E.	<i>Invitee (non-voting Observer)</i>

25. Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillor J.T. Kraujalis, Housing Portfolio Leader. Apologies were also noted for Mr R. Kean, Deputy Managing Director and Head of Finance.

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

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

27. Updates from Portfolio Leaders

Leader of the Council

Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge Follow-up Visit

The Leader advised that the initial feedback from the LGA Peer Challenge follow-up visit held during mid-July was generally favourable and positive about the Council, in particular noting its handling of the closure of Rugeley Power Station, its future plans, priorities and ambitions and the hard work of its staff. A full report of the visit was expected shortly.

Crime and Partnerships

Funding for New Police Officers

The Portfolio Leader advised that following the recent announcement by the Prime Minister that 20,000 new Police Officers would be recruited; further details were still awaited as to how these posts would be paid for, whether it be with new money or sourced from existing funding streams.

Economic Development and Planning

Building Safer Futures Consultation

The Portfolio Leader advised that following the recommendations made as part the 'Independent Review of Building Regulation and Fire Safety', led by Dame Judith Hackitt in response to the Grenfell Tower fire, the Government launched a consultation on policy proposals to improve the fire and structural safety of high-rise residential buildings. Although no such buildings existed within this District, Officers had submitted a response to the consultation as different sizes of buildings could in future be covered by any new regulatory scheme devised.

28. Minutes of Cabinet Meeting of 11 July, 2019

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July, 2019, be approved as a correct record and signed.

29. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan of Decisions for the period August to October 2019 (Item 5.1 – 5.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council) was considered.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period August to October 2019 be noted.

30. Siting of World War One Commemorative Beacon

Consideration was given to the Report of the Managing Director (Item 6.1 – 6.9 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The allocation of funds required to site the World War One commemorative beacon be approved.
- (B) Permission to spend and proceed with the project be granted.

Reasons for Decisions

Since 2014, the Council had been committed to delivering a four-year commemorative programme to mark the centenary of World War One. To complete this, a World War One commemorative beacon, which was specifically made for the official beacon lighting ceremony in 2018, would be sited on the grounds of St. Luke's Church as a permanent memorial feature.

A small amount of funds to the value of £2,100 were available in a reserve budget, however, further funding was required to complete this final element. Up to £6,000 was required to complete this project, the details of which were broken down in Appendix 2 of the report. In addition, an ongoing maintenance fee payable to St. Luke's Church would have to be agreed to cover the cost of the electricity used. This would be up to £50 per annum.

31. Consultation on Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Finance (Item 7.1 – 7.6 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The need to review the Council's Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme be noted and supported.
- (B) Authority be delegated to the Head of Finance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to instigate a formal consultation process, subject to detailed cost forecasting and the scheme principles explained in the report.

Reasons for Decisions

Over the last six years there had been several significant changes that had been applied to the Housing Benefit Scheme through Welfare Reform legislation that, in the main, had not been applied to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS). This had resulted in complex and costly administration, with councils applying different rules to the assessment of Housing Benefit Claims compared to the assessment of LCTR. This could lead to confusion for customers as well as staff. In particular, the scheme did not work well for Universal Credit (UC) claimants, who no longer claimed other benefits from the Council.

Central government funding for the Council's benefit service would continue to reduce as Housing Benefit caseloads reduced as a result of UC. The rules for LCTR for pensioners continued to be prescribed nationally, and the Council could only consider the scheme insofar as it affected working-age claimants.

32. Final Accounts 2018/19

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Finance (Item 8.1 – 8.31 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The final accounts position for the year ending 31 March 2019 be noted.
- (B) The financing of the capital programme as outlined in the report be approved.

Reasons for Decisions

The overall revenue account position showed net expenditure reducing by £406,000 when compared with the budget agreed by the Council. The overall impact, after taking into account changes in Financing was a reduction in the Transfer from Balances of £48,000. The portfolio outturn for 2018/19 showed a

favourable variance of £128,000, which consisted of a number of minor variations. Investment income in year increased by £89,000. Technical items showed a variance of £181,000, however this primarily related to a reduction in the transfer to the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve as a result of a reduction in the amount retained for 2018/19.

Income from the Business Rates Retention Scheme was £257,000 lower than anticipated, principally as a result of an increase in the provision for appeals and losses. Council Tax collection rates continued to improve, and combined with additional properties, an in-year surplus of £22,000 existed. This, combined with the surplus brought forward provided a distribution to the Council of £154,000.

33. Housing Revenue Account – Final Accounts 2018/19

Consideration was given to the Joint Report of the Head of Finance and the Head of Housing & Partnerships (Item 9.1 – 9.7 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The final accounts position of the Housing Revenue Account for the year ending 31 March 2019 be noted.
- (B) The financing of the capital programme as outlined in the report be approved.

Reasons for Decisions

The overall revenue account position showed net expenditure reducing by £0.042 million when compared with the budget agreed by Council. Income at 31 March 2019 was £19.681 million, which was broadly in line with the revised budget position of £19.714 million reported to Cabinet in February 2019.

Expenditure at 31 March 2019 was £19.847 million, compared to the revised budget position of £19.922 million reported to Cabinet in February 2019. The £0.0750 million decrease in expenditure related primarily to savings in supervision and management, repairs and maintenance, and provision for bad debts partly offset by net additional capital financing costs. The final accounts therefore showed a use of working balances of £0.166 million, compared with a planned use of £0.208 million, a reduction of £0.042 million.

Working balances at 31 March 2019 were now £1.573 million, compared to the £1.531 million reported to Cabinet in February 2019. The report set out the capital outturn of £6.349 million, compared to a budget of £7.682 million, a reduction of £1.333 million. Details of financing for the current year, and resources available, were also included.

The meeting closed at 4:15 p.m.

LEADER