

**Cannock Chase Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of the**  
**Cabinet**

**Held on Thursday 12 November 2020 at 4:00 p.m.**

**Via Remote Access**

**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.	Community Safety and Partnerships Portfolio Leader
Preece, J.P.T.L.	Corporate Improvement Portfolio Leader
Mitchell, Mrs. C.	Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader
Johnson, T.B.	Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader
Newbury, J.A.A.	Environment and Climate Change Portfolio Leader
Martin, Mrs. C.E.	Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader
Kraujalis, J.T.	Housing Portfolio Leader

**38. Apologies**

None received.

**39. 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.

**40. Updates from Portfolio Leaders**

**Culture and Sport**

The Portfolio Leader updated on the following matters:

- **Extension to the Artificial Grass Pitch at Rugeley Leisure Centre**

The Council had been successful in securing a grant from the Football Foundation to construct a new full-sized third generation artificial grass pitch at Rugeley Leisure Centre.

The need for a new full-sized pitch at this site had been identified as a key project during the development of the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy, which was approved by Cabinet in 2019.

Confirmation of the funding could now signal the go ahead for this welcome project and although actual works on site would not start until 2021, they should be completed before the start of the 2021/22 football season.

- **The ‘Cema’, Norton Canes**

Consultation on proposals for the new play equipment and art works at The Cema in Norton Canes was to start soon and run through until 11 January 2021. Residents, children and young people would be asked for their views / suggestions on the scheme to be delivered in 2021/22.

Survey could be completed online from 23 November by visiting the Council’s website or obtained by contacting Norton Canes Parish Council. Respondents would have the chance to win £25 in Argos vouchers. The Corporate Improvement Portfolio Leader further advised that a leaflet was being delivered to all household that included a QR code for people to scan in order to access the online survey.

*(The Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader joined the meeting during this item.)*

### **New Cemetery**

A short presentation was given by the Portfolio Leader on progress with the new cemetery for the District, which covered the following:

- Brief history
- Development
- Constraints
- Works on site
- Current progress / works
- What next.

### **Economic Development and Planning**

The Portfolio Leader updated on the following matters:

- **Economic Picture**

The impact of the second wave of Covid-19 remained a key issue for the District, and unfortunately there was uncertainty as to how this would impact on the local economy. The new lockdown had less restrictions than those applied in March, with a number of key sectors such as manufacturing and construction able to continue operating, however the ongoing lockdown deepened the impact on many businesses in parts of the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, which unfortunately made the challenge to support recovery even more difficult. It was hoped however that this week’s vaccine announcement would come to fruition, and aside from protecting people from Covid-19, the arrival of a vaccine would help restore business confidence and investment.

Last week, the Chancellor announced a series of measures to provide financial support to businesses; the most notable being the decision to extend the Furlough scheme until the end of March 2021, with eligible employees receiving 80% of their usual salary for house not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month.

This provided some certainty and avoided at least in the short-term a further increase in the District’s unemployment rate, which had been a major concern over the last couple of months.

October's unemployment data was published on 10 November, and the position in Cannock Chase remained relatively stable, with current the claimant count standing at 3,570, a reduction of 70 from the September figure and the first reduction since March. An update on the Country's GDP had also been published today, showing a 15.5% growth from July to September. Whilst this was a positive position, it was still below pre-pandemic levels.

As had been said before, it was important that there was a pipeline of employment opportunities available within the District to support unemployed residents. It was hoped to bring a report to Cabinet today on 'Jobs and Skills Opportunities to Support Economic Recovery', but due to events of the last couple of weeks and increased uncertainty, the report was withdrawn and would now be presented to Cabinet on 10 December.

- **Business Support Grants**

Last Thursday, the Chancellor announced a further package of support to businesses affected by the current lockdown restrictions, with the Council responsible for administering and distributing its allocation of funding to local businesses. In summary, the Council was dealing with the distribution of the funding in a phased way.

Phase 1 included cash grants of up to £3,000 per month based on rateable value and were available for businesses mandated to close on 5 November, and those that offered click and collect / takeaway services only as a result on the current lockdown. Possibly 1,000 businesses in the District were covered by this. The grant would cover the 28-day period of the lockdown. There was an urgent need to deal with these businesses and the online application form would be on the Council's website by the end of the week.

Phase 2 would deal with businesses that fell outside of the phase 1 categories, i.e. those that were struggling as a result of the effects of Covid-19, and incorporate two elements:

- (i) Grants of up to £2,100 per 28-day period for hospitality, hotel, bed & breakfast and leisure businesses, based on rateable value.
- (ii) A discretionary fund of around £2m was available to help support businesses from now until March 2022. Some decisions had to be made on how the money would be distributed and which businesses to support over the next 17 months. This would need a longer-term plan to help support economic recovery, and the Economic Development team would be working up a policy and set of criteria to help determine how the funds should be allocated.

## **Environment and Climate Change**

The Portfolio Leader updated on the following matters:

- **Pay By Phone and Car Parking Ticketing Machines**

Following the progress update given at the October Cabinet meeting, both the pay-by-phone option and new car parking ticketing machines enabling payment by debit and credit card would be rolled out from the first week in December. This would include the installation of new machines as well as the replacement of the coin-only machines.

- **Waste and Recycling Calendars**

The 2020/21 new look waste and recycling calendars were being delivered to residents over the next few weeks. They were in landscape format this year, and formed part of an information booklet that included a guide on what could and couldn't go into the waste and recycling bins. This was particularly important given the increased number of contaminated loads experienced this year.

- **Climate Change Baseline Report**

Following the commitment made by the Council in July 2019 to become a net carbon neutral District by 2030, the first piece of work had now been completed. A carbon baseline for the District had been produced in conjunction with other Staffordshire local authorities, and included details on where the District was in terms of emissions, and where those emissions were coming from. Officers were currently going through the report and looking at any implications arising from it. Once completed, a report would be submitted to Cabinet in January 2021.

## **Health and Wellbeing**

The Portfolio Leader updated in respect of the following:

- **Covid-19 Case Numbers**

As at 11 November, Staffordshire now had 792 open Covid-19 incidents. All districts in Staffordshire were experiencing high seven-day case rates, although Cannock Chase was now the lowest in the County, with 324 cases per 100,000 people. Newcastle-under-Lyme was currently the highest with 407 cases per 100,000.

Between 2 and 11 November, Cannock Chase observed 324 cases, the majority of which were in the 25-64 age group. There were currently 103 open incidents in the District. Environmental Health continued to respond to ongoing notifications of affected settings and workplaces across the District.

Discussions were ongoing Countywide as to a suitable strategy to adopt when and if the national lockdown restrictions were lifted after 2 December, and the tier level for the County reassessed.

The testing rate in Cannock Chase compared favourably with other districts in Staffordshire, and the testing facility on the car park at the Civic Centre was being well used. Thanks were given to the operators of the facility following positive feedback received from residents who had used it.

A recent out of hours exercise carried out by the Licensing Unit and Staffordshire Police revealed very high levels of compliance in the licenced trade with the current lockdown restrictions. Thanks were given to those businesses that were making a major contribution to peoples wellbeing and reducing the spread of Covid-19.

## **Town Centre Regeneration**

The Portfolio Leader updated in respect of the following:

- **Cannock Street Market:**

Following re-tendering of the Cannock street market contract, an 'Award Decision Notice' had been issued to Bescot Promotions Ltd. as the

successful tenderer. Officers from Corporate Assets, Environmental Health and PR & Marketing were currently engaging with the directors of Bescot Promotions ready for the relaunch of a full street market on Friday 4 December, post lockdown. Bescot would not be operating an 'essential goods only' street market during the lockdown period, and therefore, the Council had issued individual street trading licences to traders of essential goods that wished to trade during lockdown. Formal advertising and promotion of the new Bescot Cannock street market was expected to commence in the next few days.

- **Rugeley Outdoor Market:**

Stallholders offering essential goods were continuing to trade during the current lockdown period. There were currently four stalls trading, selling fruit and vegetables, garden plants, household goods and a takeaway burger van.

- **Cannock Indoor Market:**

Cannock Indoor Market was due to close to the public on 13 November, but as a result of the current lockdown, the last day of trading was Tuesday 3 November. The Market Hall would not reopen following the lockdown.

- **Prince of Wales Market:**

There was still only the flower seller operating at this Market currently. As a result of the lockdown, the trader was only selling horticultural plants to the public from his town centre kiosk. Sale of cut flowers to the public was currently prohibited, however the trader's wholesale supply of flowers to florists' businesses was continuing from the Market site.

- **Rugeley Indoor Market:**

Due to lockdown restrictions only two stalls were currently trading at the Rugeley Indoor Market, these being the butcher, and the Tea Room (permitted to operate on a takeaway basis). The Council's promotional offer of a six-month rent-free period for new traders had attracted significant interest despite lockdown, and the Markets Officers were currently assessing applications from potential new traders.

- **ShopAppy**

Several businesses in Cannock and Rugeley had now signed up to the scheme and places were still available for others. Sadly however there had been no take-up in Hednesford, so support was sought to help promote the scheme to businesses in the area.

- **'Think Staffordshire First'**

The Council was working with Staffordshire County Council to promote the #ThinkStaffordshireFirst scheme, the aim of which was to promote local businesses and advertise their goods to people.

#### **41. Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October, 2020, be approved as a correct record.

#### **42. Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan of Decisions for the period November 2020 January 2021 (Item 5.1 – 5.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council) was considered.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period November 2020 to January 2021 be noted.

#### **43. Quarters 1 and 2 Performance Report 2020/21**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 6.1 – 6.28).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The performance information related to the Priority Delivery Plans, as detailed in report Appendices 1 to 4, be noted.
- (B) The actions flagged with a yellow circle or an amber triangle at quarter 2, which required amendment to the timescale or scope, but still being delivered in-year, be note.

##### Reasons for Decisions

Information for performance actions and indicators for quarters 1 and 2 2020/21 was included for relevant items in Appendices 1 to 4 of the report.

The overall position for each Priority Delivery Plan was detailed in report section 5, indicating that 90% of the quarter 1 and 2 actions had been completed, or were in progress with minor slippage.

#### **44. Recovery Strategy Action Plans – Progress Report**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 7.1 – 7.48).

RESOLVED:

That that current position on the Recovery Actions Plans and dashboard of performance measures, as set out in the Appendices to the report, be noted.

##### Reasons for Decisions

The Recovery Actions Plans set out the Council's response and recovery to the Covid-19 pandemic. Delivery of these plans was essential for maintaining the delivery of critical services, restoring services and supporting the District with recovery from the impacts of lockdown and the pandemic.

The overall position for each of the work streams was detailed in report section 5, indicating that 94% of the actions had been achieved or were in progress.

#### 45. Financial Plan 2020-21 to 2023-24

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Finance (Item 8.1 – 8.24).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) It be noted that the Council faced a period of financial uncertainty, reflecting the ongoing impact of Covid-19, and fundamental changes to the local government finance regime, be noted.
- (B) Subject to decision (A), above:
  - (i) The Financial Plan 2020-21 to 2023-24, the various scenarios that existed in relation to the impact of Covid-19, and the individual funding streams, be noted.
  - (ii) The forecast financial outturn for 2020-21 of £15.073 million be approved.
  - (iii) The draft Capital Programme 2020-21 to 2023-24 be noted.
  - (iv) The General Fund Working Balance be set at a minimum of £1.0 million.
  - (v) The principles set out in the Council's Financial Plan and Budget Strategy in finalising the preparation of the 2021-22 budget, be adopted.
- (C) In accordance with the Council's Recovery Strategy, the Financial Plan reflected the four key work streams of Economic; Financial; Community and Organisational Recovery.

To that end, the initial focus was on providing an interim financial strategy that:

  - (i) Maintained the financial resilience of the Council in the short-term, whilst ensuring the maintenance of service provision and responding to the impact of Covid-19.
  - (ii) Delivered a balanced Budget for 2021-22, pending development of a sustainable medium-term financial plan that reflected the new local government funding regime.
  - (iii) Laid the foundations to realign resources with priorities and provide a sustainable medium-term budget.
- (D) It be noted that the 'best case scenario' still identified a deficit of £549,000 in 2023-24, and that the Council would over the next 12 months need to identify savings options to potentially implement as part of the 2022-23 budget process or sooner, as the Council's financial position became clearer.
- (E) The Financial Plan would be updated as a result of the Spending Review and if any further detail of the Government's proposed changes to its funding arrangements became available during the budget process.

### Reasons for Decisions

The report set out the Council's forecast financial position for the next three years, incorporating anticipated spending pressures and savings already identified. Financial resources available to the Council over the three year period were also set out. The Financial Plan refreshed the current approved plan and reflected the Government's current funding regime as adjusted for the proposals currently being considered in light of the new regime.

Material variances existed between the best / worst case scenarios and it was essential that a prudent approach be adopted until further details became available. This was particularly relevant in relation to the assumptions made in relation to Covid-19 and the potential for further Government support if the scenario outlined in section 3 of the report materialised in 2021-22. Nevertheless, the Council would need to continue to progress the development of savings options over the next 12 months to address the underlying deficit and potentially implement these as part of the 2022-23 budget process or sooner as the financial position became clearer.

The Financial Plan therefore provided the framework for the preparation of detailed budgets. Its principles, and those detailed in the approved Budget Strategy, subject to approval, would be used to prepare both the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme for consideration by Cabinet in January 2021.

Key elements of the delivery of service budgets would be the maintenance of existing levels of service provision and, the implementation of actions as contained in the Corporate Plan, currently being refreshed, and the Council's Covid-19 Recovery Strategy. Due regard was also being taken to the emerging changes to services of partner organisations within Staffordshire.

#### **46. 2019/20 Infrastructure Funding Statement**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 9.1 – 9.23).

#### **RESOLVED:**

That Council, at its meeting to be held on 25 November 2020, be recommended to adopt the annual Infrastructure Funding Statement for the 2019/20 financial year, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, and that it be approved for publication on the Council's website.

### Reasons for Decision

Central Government had made amendments to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 in order to improve transparency regarding developer contributions paid under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) (Section 106 Agreements).

To support this, Councils were now required to produce and publish an annual infrastructure funding statement. This statement must include details of the developer contributions collected and spent, both historically and for the reported year, and a statement of infrastructure projects that the Council, as charging authority, would be, or may be, wholly or partly funding from CIL.

**47. Technology Desktop Infrastructure Replacement – Permission to Spend**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Technology (Item 10.1 – 10.4).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The purchase of appropriate laptop devices to enable Officers to work from home, the Civic Centre, or any other suitable office, be approved.
- (B) Permission to spend £204,000 from the IT Reserve be granted.

Reasons for Decisions

The current desktop hardware was almost at the end of its life and would probably become increasingly faulty.

The use of video meetings and remote working had increased during 2020, and the Council was now almost entirely dependent on such technologies.

It was important to give Officers the appropriate tools to support their work within the Council.

**48. Covid-19: Task Force and Community Hub Response – March to July, 2020**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing and Partnerships (Item 11.1 – 11.10).

On behalf of the Cabinet, the Leader thanked all those in the District who had volunteered their services during the pandemic.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The work of the Council's Community Vulnerability Hub and the local voluntary sector in responding to the Covid-19 emergency be noted.
- (B) The lessons for the Council learned during the response to the Covid-19 emergency be noted.
- (C) A grant allocation of £8,320 to Support Staffordshire for a period of 12 months be approved, in order to deliver an additional 5 hours per week support to the voluntary sector within the District.

Reasons for Decisions

The initial response to the Covid-19 emergency focussed on the need to address vulnerable residents (including those shielding) accessing food and the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE). The Council addressed this by quickly mobilising the Community Vulnerability Hub (CVH). Appendix 1 to the report provided an overview of the community emergency response network for the District.

Cannock Chase benefited from the early work of local 'mutual aid' organisations, in particular the Chase Coronavirus Support Network (CCSN) and the Heath Hayes and Wimblebury Support Group, as well as from the well established Cannock and Rugeley Foodbanks and the Salvation Army. Regular meetings were held with these organisations and with Support Staffordshire, to discuss

issues and share learning. The presence of these very active organisations was extremely valuable and meant that the Council's food resources were used as a last resort. Support was also provided from Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles (IHL) volunteers who were furloughed during this period.

Two of the biggest emerging issues were around loneliness and grass-roots community groups being at risk of disappearing. Support Staffordshire had been encouraging the establishment of local 'Good Neighbour' schemes had had also been linking in with other known group leads to find out how they could offer to support residents by operating differently in innovative ways.

The District Council did not currently have the capacity to support the development of such groups, therefore it was recommended that Cabinet approve the funding request from Support Staffordshire to deliver on engaging with voluntary groups within the District.

**49. Budget Provision to Subsidise Funding to Optimise the Usage of Existing Solar PV Energy Installations**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing and Partnerships (Item 12.1 – 12.4).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) Approval for funding for the battery storage project be granted.
- (B) The Head of Housing and Partnerships be authorised to agree on the conditions of the project with Beat the Cold and Chase Community Solar.
- (C) The list of properties to be included in the projects would be restricted to Council owned properties, agreed by the Head of Housing and Partnerships, and would be determined on the basis of their suitability for inclusion in the project.

Reasons for Decisions

The project would assist with the development of energy efficient technology to help reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

**50. Exclusion of the Public**

RESOLVED:

That the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

**Cannock Chase Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of the**  
**Cabinet**

**Held on Thursday 12 November 2020 at 4:00 p.m.**

**Via Remote Access**

**Part 2**

**51. Request for Flexible Retirement**

Consideration was given to the Not for Publication Report of the Head of Housing and Partnerships (Item 14.1 – 14.4).

RESOLVED:

That the payment of actuarial strain, resulting from the flexible retirement of employee number 202019 be agreed.

Reasons for Decision

It was considered that the loss of 14.8 hours per week could be absorbed within the service with no significant reduction in core service provision. As a result, and subject to Cabinet approval for the payment of the resultant actuarial strain, it was proposed that the request be granted.

The meeting closed at 5:09 p.m.

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LEADER