

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

**Held on Thursday 14 October 2021 at 6:00 p.m.**

**In the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock**

**Part 1**

**Present:**

**Councillors:**

Lyons, Mrs. O.	Leader of the Council
Jones, B.	Deputy Leader of the Council and Neighbourhood Safety & Partnerships Portfolio Leader
Sutherland, M.	District Development Portfolio Leader
Johnson, J.P.	Environment & Climate Change Portfolio Leader
Fitzgerald, Mrs. A.A.	Housing, Heritage & Leisure Portfolio Leader

**40. Apologies**

Apologies were received for Councillors P.M. Hewitt, Innovation & High Street Portfolio Leader and Mrs. V. Jones, Community Engagement, Health & Wellbeing Portfolio Leader.

**41. 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.

**42. Updates from Portfolio Leaders**

**(i) Leader of the Council**

The Leader updated in respect of the following:

- **Government Cabinet Reshuffle**

Following the recent Government Cabinet reshuffle, the Leader and the Innovation and High Streets Portfolio Leader wrote to the Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The letter set out this Cabinet's ambitious plan following the change of Council Administration in May and extended an invitation to the Minister to visit the District to discuss the Levelling Up Fund bid and share the Cabinet's narrative.

- **Covid-19 and Vaccination Update**

In the 7 days up to 7 October, Cannock Chase had the highest case rates in Staffordshire, at 611.9 per 100,000 population. This being above the Staffordshire and regional averages and well above the national average. The majority of cases were in 2 age groups, 5 to 10 years old and 11 to 18 years old.

Schools were the highest risk settings, although numbers were falling as effective controls were being put in place.

Vaccinations had now commenced in schools, along with the booster programme.

(ii) **Community Engagement, Health & Wellbeing**

The Leader of the Council updated in respect of the following on behalf of the Portfolio Leader:

- **Consultation on 'Improving Emergency and Urgent Care Services in Staffordshire' by We're Better Together**

This update followed our continued lobbying for the Minor Injuries Unit at Cannock Hospital to reopen.

The consultation began back in 2019 but was paused due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Engagement events to seek public views had now commenced and all Councillors were made aware. One event was held last night and two held last week.

The online survey was live on the 'We're Better Together' website and would remain open until 31 October.

It was crucial that all Members took part, and where possible, residents be encouraged to complete the survey as feedback would be used to inform any proposals for future services.

(iii) **District Development**

The Portfolio Leader updated in respect of the following:

- **Opening of Digital Skills Centre**

On Monday 20 September, the Portfolio Leader, along with the Leader of the Council and the Head of Economic Prosperity, attended the opening of the new Digital Skills Centre at the Cannock campus of South Staffordshire College. This impressive new skills centre was one of 2 set up in Staffordshire, so the Council was delighted that we had this important new education skills facility on our doorstep.

The purpose of the Centre was to provide our local people with access to a range of courses designed to boost digital skills. Courses ranged from basic essential skills to higher level specialist courses, including:

- Learning how to do online banking, maintaining a secure computer, and backing up your phone; and
- Helping individuals into higher paid, skills employment, such as digital marketing, digital design, data, and networking.

- **Staffordshire Means Back to Business**

Cannock Chase was doing well in terms of delivery of the apprenticeships and the nil-cost training programme. It was pleasing to report that specifically within Cannock Chase, take up on apprenticeships was encouraging.

Across all boroughs and districts in Staffordshire the total number of apprentices from approved applications was currently 175 so far. Of that number, Cannock Chase currently accounted for 50 approved applications. Overall, the District had the highest number of approved applications across all of Staffordshire.

(iv) **Environment & Climate Change**

The Portfolio Leader updated in respect of the following:

- **Consultation on New Urban Forest on Bradbury Lane Common Land**

Consultation had started in relation to a new a new urban forest of 4,000 native trees on Bradbury Lane green, Hednesford, adjacent to the 5s Pavilion ATP. It was a fantastic event for which a number of volunteers had signed up to help progress the project.

- **Waste Collection – Rejected Loads**

Since the last Cabinet meeting, it was pleasing to report there had been no further rejected loads, the last one being in mid-August.

(v) **Housing, Heritage & Leisure**

The Portfolio Leader updated in respect of the following:

- **Green Flag Awards**

In a record-breaking year for the Green Flag Award, with the scheme marking its Silver Jubilee, 6 parks and green spaces in Cannock Chase had retained their awards. They were amongst 2,127 parks and green spaces across the country celebrating success this year. The Award was the international quality mark for parks and green spaces.

The Council would be raising the Green Flag Award at Cannock Park, Elmore Park, Hednesford Park, Ravenhill Park, Stile Cop Cemetery and Castle Ring.

After 18 months that had seen our parks and green spaces play a vital role for people through lockdowns as a place to relax, exercise and meet friends and family safely, the news that these sites had achieved the Green Flag Award was testament to the hard work and dedication of the team that made the green space a great space that everyone could enjoy.

Castle Ring had also achieved the much-coveted Green Heritage Site Accreditation, supported by Historic England, for the management of its historic features.

Parks, open spaces, and cemeteries had been opened and maintained since the lockdown began, as the Government quite rightly indicated the importance of parks to people's health and wellbeing.

Thanks were given to all employees that had continued to work throughout the pandemic and to the volunteers who had worked alongside our parks, grounds

maintenance and cemetery staff, as this had clearly contributed to these fantastic Awards being retained by the Council.

#### **(vi) Innovation and High Streets**

The Leader of the Council updated in respect of the following on behalf of the Portfolio Leader:

- **‘Welcome Back Fund’**

The Council received £179,245 from the Government through the ‘Welcome Back’ fund and ‘Re-opening High Streets Safely’ fund.

The aim and purpose of the fund was to support businesses and help our high streets to recover. The fund must be allocated and spent by 31 March 2022, due to this, it would be allocated a first-come, first-served basis. All parish and town councils in the District were contacted and asked to submit ideas, and if the national criteria were met, then funding was allocated.

Examples of allocations included:

- Cannock: ‘Music FeAst’ on 25 September which the Portfolio Leader attended, upcoming ‘walk-in’ street event in October, Christmas lights switch on, and the car parking initiative.
- Rugeley: ‘Support Artisan Markets’, upcoming Christmas film showing, pantomime, light displays and parking pilot.
- Hednesford: ‘Yoga in the Park’, entertainers at events, upcoming climbing wall hire in November, shopper bags and ‘Nutcracker Trail’.
- Heath Hayes: bus shelters, hanging baskets, Christmas event, dog mess bag dispenser, and new notice boards.
- Norton Canes: Christmas Fayre that would coincide with a lantern parade, barrier planters and Christmas lights.
- In addition to those individual, localised initiatives, also District-wide schemes such as signs, artwork, bunters, and literature promoting social distancing in public areas, digital display boards promoting Covid-19 messaging, hand sanitising stations, and public safety announcements.

£179,000 had now been allocated and funding for new ideas had been paused, simply to ensure that all spend met the national criteria, was accounted for, and would be refunded.

#### **(vii) Neighbourhood Safety & Partnerships**

The Portfolio Leader updated in respect of the following:

- **Police, Fire and Crime Panel**

On 12 October, the Portfolio Leader had the pleasure of attending the Police, Fire and Crime Panel confirmation hearing for the appointments of the new Chief Fire Officer for Staffordshire, Mr Rob Barber, and the Chief Constable for Staffordshire, Mr Chris Noble.

Both individuals gave outstanding presentations and answered all questions of the Panel to its great satisfaction. The Portfolio Leader was confident that both appointees would be a great asset to the safety of the people of Staffordshire.

- **Staffordshire Climate Matters Conference**

This morning, together with the Council's Chief Executive, the Portfolio Leader attended the 'climate matters' conference in Stoke-on-Trent, to present what was being done here in Cannock Chase to address the climate emergency. All other boroughs and districts in Staffordshire, as well as Stoke-on-Trent City Council, presented their actions. It was a very informative conference.

**43. Minutes**

**Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2021 be approved.

**44. Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan of Decisions for the period October to December 2021 (Item 5.1 – 5.2) was considered:

**Resolved**

That the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period October to December 2021 be noted.

**45. Destination Staffordshire Partnership**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 6.1 – 6.17).

**Resolved:**

That:

- (A) The Council retain its membership of the Destination Management Partnership until at least 31 March 2024. Ahead of this date, a review of the Destination Management Partnership should take place to evaluate the value for money from the service being provided, with the Head of Economic Prosperity providing a further report to Cabinet.
- (B) The request to increase the Council's membership contribution to Destination Staffordshire for 2022-23 and 2023-24 from £3,000 per annum to £15,000 per annum be agreed.
- (C) The cost of the increased financial contribution be met from the existing budget allocated to the 2020-2030 Economic Prosperity Strategy given that the proposal delivered against the Council's aspiration to develop the District as an attractive visitor destination.
- (D) Authority be delegated to the Head of Economic Prosperity, in consultation with the Head of Law & Administration and the District Development Portfolio Leader to enter into any agreements necessary to monitor performance and to agree a set of performance indicators that could be managed and monitored on a regular basis.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

A direct approach had been made to the Leader of the Council following a review of the Destination Management Partnership by Staffordshire County Council to seek a substantial increase in current subscription fees.

A decision on retaining membership of the Destination Management Partnership was necessary in order to concentrate limited Council resources on delivery and to enable the Council to maximise the potential to develop the District's visitor economy.

#### **46. Statement of Common Ground Between Cannock Chase DC and Solihull MBC**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 7.1 – 7.15).

#### **Resolved:**

That:

- (A) The Statement of Common Ground between Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Cannock Chase District Council, as attached at Appendix A to the report be approved, and the Head of Economic Prosperity be authorised to sign the Statement of Common Ground in consultation with the District Development Portfolio Leader.
- (B) The delegation of future Statements of Common Ground related to Local Plan matters to the Head of Economic Prosperity in consultation with the District Development Portfolio Leader be approved.

### **Reasons for Decisions**

Statements of Common Ground (SoCGs) were used to document areas of agreement as well as areas of disagreement where further discussions were needed. Cannock Chase Council would, in the preparation of the new Local Plan, look to secure similar SoCGs. Alternatively, Cannock Chase Council did not need to enter into a SoCG as the Solihull MBC Local Plan Examination would explore the area of strategic cross-boundary collaboration without one as SoCGs with other local authorities were available. The examiner would note the existence of SoCGs and determine the extent of hearings on such matters, prioritising those areas that were contested.

It would be in Cannock Chase Council's interest to enter into SoCGs as it would set out the District's collaboration with neighbouring authorities that would feed into the Council's own Local Plan evidence base. In turn, this would help focus a Local Plan examination and potentially reduce the number of hearing sessions and consequently reduce the time and cost of the examination in public.

#### **47. Car Park Incentive Scheme Update**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 8.1 – 8.11).

#### **Resolved:**

That:

- (A) The Car Park Incentive Scheme pilot be extended up to Christmas 2021 or beyond (for at least a further 3 months), utilising existing additional ARG

(Additional Restrictions Grant) monies received by the Council. As a result, the following amendments be made to the scheme to aid its effectiveness / take up:

- The value of the transaction that a customer needed to make to qualify for a refund be reduced, i.e., a £2 refund based on a £5 transaction.
- The amount of grant funding made available to participating businesses be reduced from £500 to £250.

(B) As a result of decision (A), above:

- (i) The Car Park Incentive Scheme be included in the current Additional Restrictions Grant Policy, and an element of the Additional Restrictions Grant funding be allocated to fund the costs associated with the scheme.
- (ii) Authority be delegated to the Head of Economic Prosperity in consultation with the Innovation and High Streets Portfolio Leader to implement all actions required to deliver the pilot initiative.

### **Reasons for Decisions**

The car park pilot was originally approved by Cabinet to be implemented for a period of 3 months and was funded by the initial Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) monies awarded to the Council. The trial period ended on 21 September 2021. A review of how effective the pilot was in drawing additional visitors into Cannock and Rugeley town centres was scheduled to take place toward the end of the pilot period. The report captured how the pilot had performed to date.

The Council received a further top-up payment of ARG monies to that it originally received, thus allowing for the potential pilot extension (if proven to be successful) to be considered by Cabinet, without any financial impact being placed upon the Council.

There were several options that needed to be considered before making any final decision of how best to proceed with the pilot initiative. These options were set out in the report for Cabinet's consideration.

The Economic Recovery Scrutiny Committee met on 15 September 2021 and received an interim review report at that time. The Committee considered the findings of the pilot initiative available at that time and Members recommended the following to Cabinet:

- (A) That, the additional information, and data in respect of the costs of administering the scheme and which businesses had done well from the pilot, including whether the businesses had done better on market days, be made available to Cabinet.
- (B) That Cabinet consider extending the Car Park Payback Initiative pilot by 1 month and, based on the outcome of the data, to consider extending the pilot until Christmas.

It was noted that it was not possible to immediately extend the scheme up to Christmas without a decision being taken by Cabinet first, hence the options that were proposed in the report. It was also not recommended to extend the pilot for 1 month, before committing to a longer extension of 3 months (as recommended by the Economic Recovery Scrutiny Committee), due to the administrative work required to do this.

**48. Climate Emergency – Consultation and Community Engagement**

Consideration was given to the Joint Report of the Head of Environment & Healthy Lifestyles and the Head of Governance & Corporate Services (Item 9.1 – 9.8).

**Resolved:**

That Council, at its meeting to be held on 15 December 2021, be recommended to set up stakeholder panels and undertake wider consultation and community engagement on the costed action plan within the approved £30,000 budget.

**Reasons for Decisions**

It had not been possible to set up a Citizens' Assembly as originally envisaged given the budget available. If this was still required, then a budget provision of circa £60,000 was necessary; this would require a supplementary estimate of £30,000 to be added to the current budget.

As an alternative, other options had been identified that could be delivered within the existing £30,000 budget and were set out in section 5 of the report.

The meeting closed at 7.07 p.m.

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LEADER