

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET
HELD ON THURSDAY 16 JULY 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

1. Apologies

None.

2. 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.

3. Updates from Portfolio Leaders

Leader of the Council

Government Assistance in Dealing with COVID-19 Response

The Leader advised that the Council had that day received notification of the third tranche of Government funding to help councils facing the financial pressures arising as a result of the pandemic. Cannock Chase Council was to receive £172,295 and the County Council was to receive just over £5 million. With regard to other lost income from sales; fees and charges, indications from Whitehall were that a co-payment scheme would be introduced with councils having to absorb the first 5% of the irrecoverable losses; the Government picking up 75% of the remainder; and local authorities meeting the balance. This would, obviously, impact negatively on the Council's ability to deliver its previously

agreed balanced budget.

Crime and Partnerships

Reopening of Restaurants and Bars

The Portfolio Leader reported that the reopening of restaurants and bars in the local area had gone smoothly without reported incidents.

Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

The Portfolio Leader reported that he had attended a remote meeting of the Panel on Monday, 13 July, 2020. It was reported that there had been 60 new police officers appointed in Staffordshire. During lockdown, generally, there had been no significant rise in domestic abuse incidents across the country though in two Force areas incidents had nearly doubled. In Staffordshire there had been a slight fall with only 100 incidents reported.

Police stations were still being rationalised and consideration given to sharing accommodation with complementary services, such as community fire stations.

Culture and Sport

Re-opening of Leisure Facilities

The Portfolio Leader advised that, following the Government's confirmation week that indoor leisure facilities could re-open from the 25 July, the Council's provider, Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles (IHL) were ready to go.

A phased re-opening of centres would begin on Saturday, 25 July with Chase Leisure Centre opening its gyms and group exercise classes and racket sports; with the pool opening the following week on Saturday, 1 August for lane swimming, family swim sessions and Aqua-aerobics. The Learn to Swim programme would recommence in September.

Rugeley Leisure Centre would re-open in the second phase (1 August) to allow time to test and embed the new secure operating practice. However, because of the problems with the pool at Rugeley, facility members there would be able to use the pool at Chase LC.

Rugeley Swimming Pool

The Portfolio Leader advised that, as Members were aware, there had been problems with the tiling in the swimming pool at Rugeley Leisure Centre since the lockdown. IHL had been working with structural engineers and other pool consultants to identify the cause and appropriate remedial measures. Unfortunately it was not possible to give a timeline yet for the repairs to be undertaken. Tests on the structure of the pool tank needed to be completed, but as soon as anything further was known, residents would be updated.

Playgrounds and Green Gym Equipment

The Portfolio Leader advised that the Council had re-opened all of its play areas and outdoor gym equipment on 11 July. Signage had been installed providing advice and guidance to parents, children and users on how to use the equipment safely.

Green Lane Play Area

The Portfolio Leader advised that, unfortunately, the play area at Green Lane, which was designed, funded and installed by Rugeley Town Council, had been

vandalised within only a short time of opening.

Vulnerable Tenants Grass Cutting

The Portfolio Leader advised that the Council had also re-introduced the grass cutting service for vulnerable council tenants on Monday, 29 June. The scheme was suspended following the Government lockdown in late March in order to protect the most vulnerable Council housing tenants

Economic Development and Planning

Unemployment

The Portfolio Leader advised that unemployment data for June had been published earlier that day by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). There was a slightly improved position compared to May with 3,660 people now out of work and claiming benefits, which was down from 3,930 in May. The unemployment rate stood at 5.8% (down from 6.2% in May) and was below the West Midlands rate of 7.2%.

However, it was likely the true impact of the recession and its effect on unemployment was being masked by the Government's furlough scheme, so a more accurate picture would emerge in the autumn.

Furlough

The Portfolio Leader reported that HMRC had published the latest furlough data up to 30 June. The number of employments furloughed in the District had increased to 16,700 representing an employment take-up rate of 36% from 46,400 eligible employments. On a positive note, the number of employees furloughed in Cannock Chase was no longer the highest in Staffordshire, although the take-up rate of 36%, shared with Tamworth, was the highest in the County. It was hoped that many of local businesses who had furloughed staff would bring them back into gainful employment and protect local workers from unemployment.

Business support

The Portfolio Leader advised that the Council continued to work hard to support local businesses and ensure that they got access to the funding that they needed to safeguard their businesses.

As reported previously, the Council had launched a £1million Local Discretionary Grant scheme and Officers were working hard to process applications and ensure payment to local businesses as soon as possible. Both phases of the fund had now been opened and the latest figures were that over 160 applications for funding had been received. The Revenues and Benefits team and Economic Development team were busy processing the applications and businesses were asked to bear with the Council as the applications were processed as fast as possible.

The Council was also working in partnership to promote other business grant schemes and it was pleasing that there had been a healthy level of interest from Cannock Chase businesses in the GBSLEP Pivot and Prosper Fund. Work had also been undertaken in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council to promote free PPE starter packs to small businesses in the District – to date 1,000 packs had been distributed across the county and nearly 100 of those had gone to businesses in Cannock Chase.

The Leader confirmed that feedback from the GBSLEP indicated that local businesses had shown significant interest in the Pivot and Prosper scheme whereas other areas, such as North Warwickshire, had shown little interest by comparison.

McArthurGlen Designer Outlet

The Portfolio Leader reported that, as Members were aware, a decision had been taken by McArthurGlen to delay the opening of the Designer Outlet until February, 2021. Nonetheless, it was pleasing to note that the associated highway works were almost complete and that practical completion of the Designer Outlet was on track to complete by the autumn. The Council continued to work hard with McArthurGlen and Walsall College to ensure that local people were trained to take advantage of the job opportunities that would be on offer when the Outlet opened and the creation of these new jobs took on even more importance given the prevailing economic climate.

Environment and Climate Change

Contaminated Recycling Waste and Rejected Loads

The Portfolio Leader advised that Cannock Chase residents had been fantastic over recent months in showing their appreciation for bin collection staff since lockdown began. Unfortunately, there was an ongoing significant increase in the levels of contamination with 39 reject loads and the tagging of over 1,500 blue bins per week.

It was appreciated that recycling could be confusing, so, over the next 8 weeks the Council would be working with Biffa to raise awareness with residents by issuing more informative press and social media releases; providing advice on the side of bin lorries and putting a new sticker on all blue household bins across the District reminding residents of what should be put in the bin.

It was considered that with the help of residents the quality of the District's recycled waste could be improved, and the economic and environmental cost of incineration reduced.

Fly-tipping

The Portfolio Leader advised that, sadly, 100 tyres had been dumped near the A5 overnight. A witness had come forward and liaison was being undertaken with the Police in respect of surveillance. Members considered that the increase in fly-tipping was directly related to the disposal charges imposed by the County Council at their tips.

Health and Wellbeing

Local Response to COVID-19

The Portfolio Leader advised that the Staffordshire Local Outbreak Control Plan had been published on the County Council's website, this detailed how the County would respond to any local outbreaks referred by Public Health England from the national test and trace process. Council Environmental Health Officers had been working with County colleagues in developing procedures for work place outbreaks. Council EHO's had responded to some early notifications of local workplace incidents. Though the workplace itself was not implicated, Officers had ensured that the relevant precautions were in place and that employee contacts who had been advised to self isolate were doing so.

The Portfolio Leader had also attended two meetings of the Member Local Outbreak Control Board, both of which had been very informative. Members would be kept updated as and when meetings of the Board took place, which was presently fortnightly. The District had featured in some media articles which suggested that local numbers of cases were higher than expected. Whilst this was true, the numbers of cases were compared with an extremely low expected number, and the County Public Health service was not unduly concerned.

The Portfolio Leader also advised that she had invited Dr. Richard Harling, Director of Health and Care for Staffordshire County Council, and County Councillor Alan White to deliver a briefing to members on 22 July covering the local response to COVID-19. The Portfolio Leader hoped that all Members would take the opportunity to attend.

The Leader confirmed that the measure of 10 cases per 100,000 head of population, had risen at one point to 11.9 cases per 100,000, and people should not fool themselves into thinking that the problem had gone away.

Housing

Garage Sites

The Portfolio Leader advised that demolition works were about to be carried out at two derelict garage sites off Red Lion Lane, Norton Canes and High Meadow, Rawsley. The works were being undertaken to stop vandalism and address health and safety concerns.

Hawks Green Depot Site

The Portfolio Leader advised that clearance works for the housing scheme at the Hawks Green Depot had completed and the site was now being levelled. A handover had taken place with the contractor. Forty four houses were to be built; half of which were to be for social housing. It was noted that on site waste materials were to be stored, sorted and recycled.

Town Centre Regeneration

Re-opening of Town Centres

The Portfolio Leader reported that the easing of lockdown restrictions had taken effect with many town centre businesses re-opening including shops, pubs, restaurants, cafes and hairdressers. Officers from the Economic Development and Environmental Health teams had been busy supporting many of shops, pubs and restaurants to ensure that they re-opened in a safe way and adapted their premises to be COVID-19 secure in line with the Government guidance.

Most business owners seemed to be keen to get things right and were co-operating with our Officers. Only a small number of establishments were not operating with the correct procedures in place and the Portfolio Leader requested that if any Members were aware of any premises that were not managing social distancing, could they get in touch with Officers from the Environmental Health team.

It was hoped that people continued to return to town centres, continued to shop local and spend money in local pubs and restaurants. However, the Portfolio Leader also encouraged them to continue to be responsible and stay safe.

Markets / Street Market

The Portfolio Leader also reported that the markets in Cannock and Rugeley had

now re-opened to the public.

The Street Market operated by Sketts re-opened on Friday, 19 June. The operator had followed all of the guidance and undertaken the appropriate risk assessments and reported that they were pleased with the new stall layout and the relocated stalls had, so far, been trading well. Social distancing measures had been put in place by Sketts, and it appeared, in general, that the public were adhering to social distancing of their own accord.

Cannock Town Centre Environmental Improvements

The Portfolio Leader advised that, as part of the £94,000 environmental improvement scheme, the Council was working with a professional artist to produce pieces of art on 14 roller shutter doors, including 7 opposite St. Luke's Church and 7 on vacant shops by the Beecroft Road subway underpass. The Council was seeking ideas and images from local community groups that reflected the local area that could be incorporated into the final designs. The professional artist would use these ideas to come up with the overall design theme for each shutter.

Furthermore, as part of the scheme, a contractor had been appointed to undertake improvements to street furniture in the town centre including bollards, signage boards, directional signage, benches, railings, canopies to shop frontages and painting the exterior to the subway by Beecroft Road car park. The work would commence within the next 4 weeks and it would brighten up the town centre ahead of the Designer Outlet opening.

Small Business Tour Bus

The Portfolio Leader reported that, after two years of trying, the Town Centre Partnership Officer had managed to arrange for the Small Business Tour Bus to be located in Cannock Town Centre on 11 November between 2 and 4pm. This offered a great incentive for small businesses to ask questions, new start ups to ask for advice etc. Mentors would be available on the date as well.

Small Business Saturday (SBS)

The Portfolio Leader advised Members that SBS was an event promoted all over the Country, promoted on social media and in the press. This would be an excellent platform for the businesses in Cannock and surrounding areas to participate. The SBS team would also be visiting some existing independent traders / businesses during their time in the town and promoting their stories on their platforms. Further information would follow in due course.

The Town Centre Partnership Officer was trying to get local crafters / artisan food stalls to attend on the day to help make the town centre all about small businesses whilst also adhering to social distancing rules.

Shopappy

The Portfolio Leader advised that Shopappy was a platform for businesses to use to promote their businesses using click and collect, special offers, food ordering in bars and restaurants, amongst other things.

GBSLEP had recommended the District for Shopappy to promote. It should be noted that the service was being offered free for 12 months. The TCPO for Cannock, had spoken with Shopappy and they would be promoting the service in Cannock and Rugeley. Shopappy were partners with VISA and a lot of their stories and successes are often in the Times or Guardian. Barclaycard had

even made TV adverts out of some of the successes.

This could be a lifeline for businesses, and anyone that was interested could register for free, using the ‘Register New Account’ button at shopappy.com/vendor.

4. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June, 2020, be approved as a correct record.

5. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan of Decisions for the period July to September 2020 (Item 4.1 – 4.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council) was considered.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period July to September 2020 be noted.

6. Priority Delivery Plans – Outturn for 2019/20 and Revisions for 2020/21

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 5.1 – 5.43 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The performance information relating to the Priority Delivery Plans for 2019/20, as detailed in report appendices 1a to 1d, be noted.
- (B) Council, at its meeting to be held on 5 August 2020, be recommended to approve the revised Priority Delivery Plans for 2020/21, as detailed in report appendices 3a to 3d.
- (C) The Officer capacity issues be noted, and the short to medium term solutions as set out in report paragraph 5.15 be agreed.

Reasons for Decisions

The Priority Delivery Plans (PDPs) were the annual documents that set out how the Council would achieve progress against the strategic objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan for 2018-23. These plans established the actions, performance measures and timetables for delivery that were the basis of the Council’s quarterly and annual performance reporting framework.

7. Strategic Risk Register

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 6.1 – 6.21 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That the Strategic Risk Register, as set out in report appendix 2, be approved, and the progress made in the identification and management of the strategic risks be noted.

Reasons for Decision

All strategic risks and associated action plans had been reviewed, and the Council's risk profile was summarised as below:

Risk Colour	Number of Risks at 30 September 2019	Number of Risks at 31 May 2020
Red	1	4
Amber	4	3
Green	0	1
TOTAL:	5	7

8. Housing Revenue Account – Creation of New Posts

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing and Partnerships (Item 7.1 – 7.4 of the Official Minutes of the Council). Members were advised that a formal job evaluation had subsequently determined that the post of Special Complex Case Officer P/T should be established at Grade G with associated additional costs.

RESOLVED:

That the creation of the following two new posts, funded within budgetary provision for the Housing Revenue Account, be approved:

- Compliance Officer – Salary Grade H; 37 hours per week (£42,780 – including on-costs);
- Special Complex Case Officer – Salary Grade G; 18.5 hours per week (£18,050 – including on-costs).

Reasons for Decisions

The Housing Property Services Team was currently understaffed to deliver compliance across the board. To maintain and further develop the processes it was essential to recruit a new Compliance Officer position so that focus on all areas could be retained.

The new Special Complex Case Officer would ensure that services and teams were able to build resilience by tackling the individuals' demand for services and would achieve this by providing a resident centred housing service and link in with other partners to ensure service delivery was coordinated.

The meeting closed at 5:20 p.m.

LEADER