

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET

HELD ON THURSDAY 21 MAY 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
Preece, J.P.T.L.	Corporate Improvement Portfolio Leader
Muckley, A.M.	Crime and Partnerships Portfolio Leader
Mitchell, Mrs. C.	Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader
Johnson, T.B.	Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader
Woodhead, P.E.	Environment Portfolio Leader
Martin, Mrs. C.E.	Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader
Kraujalis, J.T.	Housing Portfolio Leader

Prior to the commencement of the formal business of the meeting, the Leader advised that this was the second 'remote' meeting of the Cabinet held under the 'Remote Meetings Regulations' via 'ZOOM'.

[Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020]

The Leader reminded Councillors and Officers that it was a public meeting and members of the Press and public could be watching or listening in. The Regulations required that the meeting be broadcast live, and the Press and public could observe the meeting via the Council's YouTube page. Therefore, Members were asked to be mindful of the Council's Rules of Conduct and Debate.

The Leader also welcomed Councillors Muckley (Crime and Partnerships) and Woodhead (Environment) to their new positions as Portfolio Leaders on Cabinet.

135. Apologies

None.

136. 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.

137. Updates from Portfolio Leaders

Culture and Sport

Cannock Park Golf Course

The Portfolio Leader advised that Cannock Park Golf Course would re-open on Saturday, 23 May. Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles (IHL) would be implementing strict safety measures in place to protect the players.

The course would be open from 8am until 6pm by advance booking only, there would be no turn up and play permitted. A number of changes had been made to enable the course to open under the current government guidelines.

Economic Development and Planning

Economic Response and Recovery

The Portfolio Leader advised that:

- Since the Covid-19 lockdown had been in place, the number of unemployed in the District had increased by 1,600 to 3,025, this being the highest level since January 2010. In percentage terms, the unemployment rate for March 2.6% for the District, and 4% for the West Midlands Region. As at end of April, the rates had increased to 4.8% and 6%, respectively;
- Construction of the Designer Outlet Village was continuing, as were the demolition works at the former Rugeley Power Station site;
- Over £19 million of the Government's grant funding for businesses affected by the pandemic had been paid out by the Council to date, which represented over 92% of the total monies allocated;
- The District's town centres were still vital to the local economy, so the Council was actively looking into ways they could be reopened safely.
- It was expected that the hospitality sector would not be able to start operating until the beginning of July at the earliest;
- The Council would continue to move to achieve the vision set out in the Economic Prosperity Strategy, a review of which would be required, but it provided a basis for economic recovery;
- The plan for the economic recovery would need to set out short and medium term priorities with the Council working with the local enterprise partnerships, West Midlands Combined Authority, local businesses and other key partners to help shape and support this work.

Environment

Household Waste Recycling Centre / Waste Collections

The Portfolio Leader advised that the HWRC had reopened on 14 May, 2020 and, after initial long queues, the number of people turning up had reduced to manageable numbers. It was hoped that the HWRC reopening would reduce the pressure on household waste collections and reduce incidents of fly-tipping,

which had seen a sharp rise while HWRC facilities across Staffordshire had been closed. During this period, 25 loads had been rejected at the recycling facility and 3,000 bins had been tagged.

Housing

Hawks Green Depot

The Portfolio Leader advised that the contractors were back on site for the redevelopment / housing work at the Depot.

Void Property Repairs

The Portfolio Leader also advised that the Housing Repairs operatives had returned to work where it was practicable to do so, i.e. where they were able to observe social distancing, in void properties.

138. Minutes

In respect of Minute 134 (D), the Culture and Sport Portfolio holder advised that the actual wording of the additional recommendation she had moved was:

“In view of the need for democratic oversight during this unprecedented crisis the Managing Director or his Deputy must liaise on a daily basis with the Leader or his Deputy.”

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the amendment being noted, the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 April, 2020, be approved as a correct record.

139. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan of Decisions for the period May to July 2020 (Item 5.1 – 5.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council) was considered. The Leader advised that, owing to the prevailing uncertainty arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, the Forward Plan should be considered ‘fluid’.

RESOLVED:

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

140. Covid-19: Response of Cannock Chase District Council and Partners

The Managing Director gave a verbal update to the meeting in respect of the ongoing response within the District to Covid-19.

1. Financial Support to local businesses

- As of 21 May, 2020, £19,020,000 had been paid out to 1,677 businesses from the Government grant of £24m; this included £500,000 paid out in grants over the last weekend.
- This represented 92.5% of what the Council expected to pay out to local businesses.
- Associated with this, the Managing Director had received a telephone call from Nadhim Zahawi, M.P., Minister at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, thanking the Council for its efforts on processing grant payments, and asking for an update on how the Council was tracking down the remaining businesses.

2. Supporting Vulnerable People in the District

- The District was working with Staffordshire County Council, the voluntary sector and central Government to support individuals who had been identified as part of the National NHS Shielding Programme for clinically extremely vulnerable.
- As at 10 May, 2020, there were 3,591 people in the District who had received an NHS Shielding letter.
- Of these, 2,000 had not registered for any help; 1,300 were being contacted by the County Council as known services users; and 700 were being contacted by the District Council.
- To date, positive contact had been made with 130 of the 700 individuals.
- In addition to the NHS Shielding programme, Officers had identified and written to a further 4,800 individuals who had a known 'vulnerability', such as 70+ years old, living alone, in receipt of Disabled Facilities Grant etc., and positive telephone contact had been made with 421 of these individuals to date.
- A total of 1,427 actions had taken place to support vulnerable people during this time.
- Officers would continue to implement a detailed programme of telephone contact over coming weeks to contact the remaining vulnerable people.

3. The importance of communications during a major incident

Between 11 March and 16 May 2020:

- Over 60 separate information updates were sent by the Managing Director to elected members and group leaders.
- 28 press releases were issued.
- There were 2015 Facebook posts on the Council's Facebook account
- A new section of the Council's website was created on Covid-19, and 41 new pieces of information were added in addition to the press releases (above).
- The Council's website was seeing 12,000 page views per day during the Covid-19 response, as compared to an average of 3,400 page views per day prior to Covid-19.

4. Mortality Information (ONS)

In the period up to 8 May 2020:

- Tragically, 59 residents of Cannock Chase District had died from Covid-19, as recorded on the death certificate.
- Of these 59 residents, 45 died in a hospital setting; 13 died in a care home setting; and 1 died in other setting.
- Restrictions still applied to funeral services as a direct result of Covid-19; and it was a very difficult time for some families at present.
- Council should have the opportunity to formally recognise this sad loss at its meeting on 24 June, 2020, where a minute's silence was planned.

141. Approach to Recovery Planning from the Impact of Covid-19

Consideration was given to the Report of the Managing Director (Item 5.1 – 5.8 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Leader of the Council moved a set of terms of reference for the proposed Recovery Overview Board, which were seconded.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The proposed framework for planning for the recovery from the consequences of Covid-19 be agreed.
- (B) In light of the consequences of Covid-19, a review of the existing priorities of the Council, as set out in the Priority Delivery Plans, be agreed.
- (C) The terms of reference for the Recovery Overview Board be agreed, with the inclusion of the Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles on the Board's membership.

Reasons for Decisions

Effective planning would be essential to aiding the recovery of the District and the Council over the coming months.

The lockdown had changed the way the Council, residents and businesses were operating, and this needed to be considered in planning for the future. The Council's priorities and plans made before the pandemic would need to be reviewed in light of these changes and the impact that Covid-19 had had on the District.

142. Adoption of the Revised Housing Assistance Policy (Independent Living) 2020

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles (Item 6.1 – 6.37 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The work of the Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee in reviewing and revising the current Discretionary Housing Assistance Policy of March 2017, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, be noted.
- (B) The revised Housing Assistance Policy (Independent Living) 2020, as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report, be approved and adopted.
- (C) Authority be delegated to the relevant Head of Service, in consultation with the Environment Portfolio Leader, to make minor amendments to the policy which do not affect the broad thrust of the Policy's purpose and direction.

Reason for Decisions

The adoption and publication of a policy was a requirement of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 ("the Order"), before assistance could be offered.

143. Development of New Cemetery, Norton Road / Hednesford Road, Norton Canes

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles (Item 7.1 – 7.11 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) Additional capital funds totalling £100,000, required to enable construction to start on the new cemetery and to fully delivery phase 1, be agreed and approved.
- (B) Council be requested to approve the revised capital programme for the scheme, amounting to £1.411 million.
- (C) The additional revenue / capital budget totalling £53,870, required to start-up and operate the facility when opened, be agreed and approved, and it be noted the cemetery would be self-financing within a three-year period.
- (D) Permission to spend in respect of the delivery of the project be granted.
- (E) Authority be delegated to the relevant Head of Service, in consultation with the Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader, to take such actions and enter into such contracts as necessary to progress the above scheme within agreed budgets.

Reason for Decisions

To ensure that sufficient resources were made available to enable construction to start on the new cemetery, to fully delivery phase 1 of the project, and to operate the facility when it was opened, Cabinet was asked to consider the recommendations set out in the report.

The meeting closed at 5:00 p.m.

LEADER