

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET

HELD ON THURSDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER, 2016 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 Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader
Kraujalis, J.T.	Corporate Improvement Portfolio Leader
Mitchell, Mrs. C.	Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader
Preece, J.P.T.L.	Environment Portfolio Leader
Davis, Mrs. M.A.	Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader
Allen, F.W.C.	Housing Portfolio Leader
Todd, Mrs. D.M.	Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader

42. Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillor C. Bennett, Crime and Partnerships Portfolio Leader.

43. 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.

44. Updates from Portfolio Leaders

Leader

The Leader thanked all Officers and Members who had taken part in the LGA Peer Review last week. Initial feedback from the Review Team was positive overall, with the full report due to be issued by the end of October.

Economic Development and Planning

The Portfolio Leader asked that formal thanks be given from Cabinet to those involved in progressing the Mill Green Designer Outlet Village application through each stage of the process. A lot of hard work and time had been put in

to the scheme, the size of which the Council had never dealt with before.

Housing

The Portfolio Leader reported that one of the residents who had been visited as part of the Hillsprings Court housing scheme grand opening had sadly died two days after the event taking place.

45. Minutes of Cabinet Meeting of 25 August, 2016

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 August, 2016, be approved as a correct record and signed.

46. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan of Decisions for the period September to November, 2016 (Item 5.1 – 5.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council) was considered.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period September to November, 2016 be noted.

47. Recommendations of Scrutiny Committees

None received.

48. Consultation on the Financial Recovery Plan

Consideration was given to the Joint Report of the Managing Director, Head of Finance and Policy & Performance Manager (Item 7.1 – 7.42 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The Financial Recovery Plan (which includes the potential savings options for public consultation) as set out in Appendix 1 to the Report, be approved.
- (B) It be noted that the outcome of the consultation will feed into a Draft Budget for consultation in December 2016, in advance of the formal budget setting for 2017/18 onwards.

Reasons for Decisions

Cabinet at its meeting of the 21 July 2016 received a report that provided a Budget Update outlining the Council's proposed Financial Recovery Plan, including a Budget Strategy and Timetable based upon an updated General Fund Revenue Budget for 2016-17 to 2019-20.

Cabinet had previously at its meeting on 1 February 2016 made its recommendations to Council in relation to the 2016-17 Budget, and set a balanced budget for 2016-17 and 2017-18 having identified a material deficit in 2018-19. The announcement of the premature closure of Rugeley Power Station (RPS) necessitated a revised Budget being approved by Council with working balances being used to offset the £700,000 reduction in business rates income

in 2016-17 with the power station ceasing production on 8 June 2016. The ongoing full year loss of business rates for the Council amounted to over £1 million per annum which represented a loss of 25% of income from retained business rates.

In light of the closure of Rugeley Power Station, the Council requested transitional funding from the Government pending the opening of the proposed Mill Green Retail Outlet Centre. Following a meeting with the Parliamentary Secretary of State and civil servants on 11 July 2016, the Council was informed that transitional funding was no longer available and no mechanism existed to provide such funding to take account of the Council's unusual circumstances.

The lack of any Transitional Funding support from Government meant that the Council had to address an immediate deficit of £0.700 million in the current year, a projected deficit that peaks at £2.15 million in 2018-19 with an ongoing deficit of £1.6 million from 2019-20 onwards (subject to the proposed Mill Green Retail Outlet Centre being opened on time).

Cabinet at its meeting in July 2016 approved the development of a Financial Recovery Plan and timeline to address this deficit position. The development of the Financial Recovery Plan included some early engagement with partners /organisations in receipt of funding /concerned with service provision to make them aware of the Council's predicament and to get early comments on options and timescales for consideration by Cabinet.

The attached Financial Recovery Plan included a range of potential options prepared by officers reflecting the Council's Budget Strategy and its priorities and objectives. The Financial Recovery Plan presented potential financial savings options that included all the services of the Council with the exception of the recently let Refuse and Recycling Waste Contract. The options were presented under the following categories:

- Capitalisation / Use of Reserves;
- Optimisation & Transformation;
- Reductions in Management Costs;
- Shared Services;
- Democratic / Governance options;
- Reductions in Corporate and Support Services ;
- Reduction in funding to external bodies and
- Reductions in Frontline services to the Public and Income Generation proposals.

The total saving options presented for consultation amounted to some £2.1 million per annum in a full year and were in excess of the £1.6m minimum savings requirement. This meant that not all options would be selected and that meaningful public consultation could take place on what the final set of options would be to achieve the minimum £1.6m savings. The consultation period was from 23 September 2016 to 6 November 2016. If there were any Government policy decisions, such as those that may arise from the Autumn Statement in the meantime that increased our savings target, these would need to be considered alongside the outcomes of the public consultation. Statutory consultation would also need to take place with any Council staff and other staff in bodies funded by

the Council who may be at risk of redundancy from all options and any issues raised from that consultation would also need to be considered.

The outcome of the consultation plus any further Government announcements would be taken account of in a Draft Budget for consultation in December in advance of the formal budget setting timeline. Formal decisions would be taken in early 2017.

The Council volunteered for an external Peer Review as part of its approach to the Financial Recovery Plan. This was co-ordinated by the Local Government Association and consisted of a team of peers (Elected Members and Officers) spending three days in the organisation during September 2016. The Peer challenge was commissioned to provide an external check and reassurance that what the Council was doing, and planning to do, looked relevant and realistic – particularly in terms of the strategy for realising savings and achieving a balanced budget over the medium and longer term to enable future financial viability and sustainability.

49. Hednesford Town Centre Regeneration: Proposed Parking Order: Car Park to the Rear of the Co-op

Consideration was given to the Joint Report of the Head of Housing & Waste Management and Head of Economic Development (Item 8.1 – 8.7 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) Approval be given to the principle of introducing a Parking Order to limit the use of the Council owned car park to the rear of the Co-op store in Anglesey Street, Hednesford, as a short stay car park for the benefit of visitors to Hednesford Town Centre (as illustrated on the plan shown in Appendix 1 of the Report).
- (B) The implementation of the Parking Order be subject to the outcome of a formal consultation process which will include users of the car park and key stakeholders such as Hednesford Town Centre and the Traders of Hednesford.
- (C) The Managing Director be authorised to take those actions necessary to support the implementation of the Order, compliance with the associated legal process and arrangements for its enforcement thereafter.
- (D) The implementation of any Parking Order should be conditional upon the introduction of appropriate on-street parking restrictions on nearby sections of Anglesey Street by the Highways Authority, and the continued availability of appropriate long-stay parking provision with the town centre.
- (E) Employees of the Co-operative store be given the opportunity to obtain permits (either free of charge or at a cost); or the Council provides a number of long-stay spaces within the car park to enable parking for longer than the four hours limit.

Reasons for Decisions

The Hednesford Town Centre Regeneration Scheme resulted in a significant increase in visitors to the town centre each day. As a consequence patronage of the car parking facilities within the town centre also increased. Whilst the car parking capacity was more than adequate to meet demand, with approximately 1,000 car parking spaces available within the town centre as a whole, the demand for car parking capacity was uneven, with demand exceeding supply at certain times of the day in some locations.

As a consequence a Parking Order was introduced on the Council's section of the Rugeley Road car park in December 2013, with a four hours limit imposed between 8:00am and 3:00pm Mondays to Saturdays.

However, the steady increase in regular visits to the town centre, combined with continued investment such as the opening of the Hednesford Inn by J.D. Wetherspoon, had resulted in increased use of the car park to the rear of the Co-op store. Surveys also established that a significant number of vehicles in this car park belonged to commuters catching the train at the adjacent railway station. The incidences of 'fly-parking' by commuters were expected to increase as a consequence of the new housing planned in the Hednesford area over the next decade or so. In the absence of parking charges to manage the situation, the only practical solution appeared to be to introduce a second Parking Order in Hednesford Town Centre to ensure that adequate short-stay car parking was available in that location.

50. Cannock Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) Consultation Procedures

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Economic Development (Item 9.1 – 9.55 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The Cannock Town Centre Vision Area Action Plan (AAP) Issues and Options paper be approved for the purposes of consultation.
- (B) The Head of Economic Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Leader, be authorised to agree the details of the consultation process, make minor modifications to the Issues and Option Paper and to prepare a report on the comments received and proposed responses thereafter.
- (C) The Head of Economic Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Leader, be authorised to agree the details of subsequent consultations required to support the production of the AAP.

Reasons for Decisions

In September 2015 Cabinet approved a report entitled "Cannock Town Centre: Future Positioning" which had been prepared by GVA to identify how the Council and its partners should proceed in pursuing future investment opportunities in the town centre. One of the key recommendations was that Part 2 of the Cannock Chase Local Plan should include an Area Action Plan (AAP) for Cannock Town Centre which would create a formal planning context to support growth and change in the town centre up to 2028.

In response to this a competitive process resulted in the appointment of WYG in March 2016 to work with the Council to produce an AAP for Cannock Town Centre. The AAP needed to be treated in a similar way to the Cannock Chase Local Plan Part 2 and formed part of the Local Development Scheme (LDS). The revised LDS was considered and approved by Cabinet in March 2016 (Minute 98 refers).

Work on the AAP had progressed to the point where an Issues and Options Paper was produced by WYG (attached at Appendix 1 to the Report) and the views of stakeholders were required. Before the proposed consultation could proceed, it was necessary for the Council to confirm that it wished to proceed with such a consultation. Such confirmation was required in order to satisfy Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

51. 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 Paragraph 3, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
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HELD ON THURSDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 4:00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 2

52. Debt Recovery

Consideration was given to the Not for Publication Report of the Head of Finance (Item 11.1 – 11.18 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The amounts detailed in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of the Report be written off.
- (B) The actions of the Head of Finance in writing off irrecoverable debts below £1,000 be noted.

Reasons for Decisions

Council Tax

Set out in Appendix 1 to the Report was a list of Council Tax arrears over £1,000 which could not be collected for the reasons stated. Included in this Appendix were 18 cases with arrears totalling £40,071.76.

The amount of Council Tax charged in the financial year was £43,410,568.23 and so the amount of debt recommended to write-off in the Report represented only 0.09% of one year's charges.

All of the amounts written-off would be charged against the provision for bad debts.

Non-Domestic Rates

Set out in Appendix 2 to the Report was a list of Non-Domestic arrears over £1,000 which could not be collected for the reasons stated. Included in this Appendix were 23 cases with arrears totalling £227,454.38.

The amount of Business Rates charged in the financial year was £37,634,836.53 and so the amount of debt recommended for write-off in the Report represented only 0.6% of one year's charges.

Some of the Business Rates debts were being recommended for write-offs on the grounds of insolvency of the companies that previously occupied properties. It was not uncommon in these circumstances for the properties concerned to be re-occupied fairly quickly by new companies often with similar names to the

insolvent organisation. It often therefore appeared that the company had continued to trade, though this was not the case.

Where this situation occurred, the new occupier was an entirely separate legal entity to the previous occupant and could not be held liable for rates due from the insolvent company. Members could be assured that such debts were only submitted for write-off when Officers were sure that they could not be recovered.

Housing Benefits Overpayments

Set out in Appendix 3 to the Report was a list of Housing Benefits Overpayments with arrears over £1,000 which could not be collected for the reasons stated. Included in the Appendix were 10 cases with arrears totalling £52,927.89.

53. Pest Control Service

Consideration was given to the Not for Publication Report of the Head of Environmental Health (Item 12.1 – 12.6 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That a limited pest control service be provided to residents with free rat and mice treatments and charges applied to all other treatments offered.

Reasons for Decision

The current contract awarded in 2014 was scheduled to expire on 31 March, 2017.

The contractor indicated that during the period of the contract the level of losses incurred year-on-year were increasing and in the first 5 months of the current financial year had reached a point that could not be sustained.

The company had an option to withdraw from the contract having given the Council a 3 month notification period.

There was limited scope to negotiate an adjustment of the contract specification or fee that would enable the contractor to continue to provide the service until its scheduled expiry date.

Preparations were being made to re-tender the pest control service with an intended commencement date of 1 April, 2017. However, it would be necessary to re-tender the contract earlier if Notice was received from the company.

An interim arrangement may be required to extend the existing arrangement in the event that the re-tendering process was not completed by the end of the 3 months notification period.

The contractor was being paid quarterly in arrears and should the contract be terminated before 1 January, 2017 the Council would not be obliged to pay the remaining quarterly fee. The outstanding funds would be available to meet the cost of any interim agreement or new contract.

The likelihood of engaging a new contractor to deliver the contract on the current basis at the same or a lower price was negligible. It was considered that an increase in funding to maintain the same level of service or a reduction in the range of free services on offer would be required if funding was not increased.

Additional funding may be secured by either an uplift in the budget for the service or alternatively by increasing the range of treatments in respect of which a charge was made.

The Council was not required by law to provide a pest control service. Its statutory duty extended to the control of rats and mice, which may be discharged by the use of enforcement powers against those responsible for rodents infestations conferred by the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949. However, savings on the cost of a pest control contract would be significantly reduced by the cost of additional enforcement activity.

Under paragraph 3.6 of the Scrutiny and Call-In Procedure Rules (Part 4, Section 31 of the Constitution) this item was requested to be exempt from call-in for reasons of urgency. The request was not unanimously agreed to by all of the Political Groups Leaders and therefore a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee was arranged for 29 September, 2016 to consider this matter in more detail and without the need for the normal call-in process to be followed.

The meeting closed at 4:30 p.m.

LEADER