

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK
AT 4.00 P.M. WEDNESDAY, 29 JUNE 2011

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors:

Beddows, J. (Chairman)
Ball, G.D. (Vice-Chairman)

Adamson, G.	Holder, M.J.
Allen, F.W.C.	Jones, Ms. J.L.
Alt, Mrs. A.	Mitchell, Mrs. C.
Bennett, Mrs. D.J.	Molineux, G.N.
Bernard, Mrs. A.F.	Morgan, C.W.J.
Bernard, J.D.	Rowley, J.
Brown, G.C.	Snape, P.A.
Burnett, G.	Spicer, Ms. A.
Burnett, J.	Sutherland, M.
Davies, D.N.	Sutton, Mrs. H.M.
Davis, Mrs. M.A.	Todd, Mrs. D.M.
Dixon, D.I.	Todd, R.
Easton, R.	Toth, J.
Fisher, P.A.	Whitehouse, Mrs. L.
Gilbert, P.	Williams, B.
Grice, Mrs. D.	Williams, Mrs. P.
Grocott, M.R.	

16. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillors A. Williams, M.R. Green, R. Jones, G. Alcott, Mrs S.Cartwright and J.T. Kraujalis.

17. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>	<u>Type</u>
Mitchell, C.	Health Scrutiny Committee – 18 April, 2011 Minute 45 – Member's daughter works for a mental health services provider	Personal

Grice, Mrs. D.	Hednesford Town Councillor	Personal
Morgan, C.W.J.	Blue badge holder	Personal
Toth, J.	Member of Standards Committee and previously had dealings with with the Standards Board for England	Personal
Burnett, G.	Previously had dealings with with the Standards Board for England	Personal

18. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 25 May, 2011 be approved as a correct record.

19. Minutes of the Meeting of the Council as Trustee of Cannock Public Recreation and Pleasure Ground Charity

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Council as Trustee of Cannock Public Recreation and Pleasure Ground Charity held on 6 April, 2011 be approved as a correct record.

20. Chairman's Announcements and Correspondence

(i) Chairman's Charity Box

The Chairman reported that a charity collection box was circulating for Members to make a donation to support his charities. A total of £53.37 had been donated at the meeting on 25 May, 2011.

The Chairman was pleased to report that his chosen charity for this year was the Poppy Appeal and would also be donating small amounts to other local organisations.

(ii) Civic Sunday

The Chairman reported that he would be holding his Civic Sunday on Sunday 24 July 2011. The day would start with a 'Party in the Park' to celebrate 40 years of Town Twinning with Cannock and Datteln, followed by afternoon tea and a Civic Service at St. James Church, Norton Canes.

The Chairman looked forward to sharing the special day with Members and hoped to see everyone there.

21. Questions in Accordance with Rule 8

Councillor C.W.J. Morgan asked the following question of the Environment Portfolio Leader, Councillor J. Toth in accordance with Rule 8:

“I wish to ask the Environment Portfolio Leader why the St John’s Close allotments, located on Laburnum Close, have not been renovated and let to local people for at least 3 years and possibly much longer.

Councillor John Kraujalis e-mailed the Parks and Open Spaces Manager back in November 2009 enquiring about the possibility of getting the site up and running by offering it to people on the waiting list and locally who would put it back into use at little or no cost to the Council. On that occasion he was told that it was about to be sprayed and marked out to provide more plots.

In February, 2011 Councillor Kraujalis noticed that the site was still not being used. As a consequence he contacted the officer responsible for allocations and was told that further works were required and that hopefully people would be allocated the plots at the beginning of April 2011.

To date, we are not aware that anything has been done.

Bearing in mind, that many people have been on the Council’s waiting list 4 years or longer before they are offered the chance of a plot, I have to ask, what is going on?

That is not to mention the cost of the abortive costs back in November 2009 and presumably in April, and the rent we have lost on those plots that have not been let for 3 years or possibly longer.”

The Environment Portfolio Leader, Councillor J. Toth, provided the following response:

“I would like to thank Councillor Clive Morgan for his question submitted under Rule 8 this afternoon. The question refers to allotment provision and upkeep and this is an important part of my new Portfolio for the Environment. Demand for allotments is growing and it’s good that people want to get out in the fresh air and grow various types of fruits, vegetables and other plants. As you will be aware I have not served on the Council for the last 3 years, although I did for the previous 16 years to this, so I have had to gather information from various sources including Members, officers and residents.

There are 3 allotment plots in the St John’s Close Allotment Site situated in Laburnum Close. Two of these plots became vacant in April 2009 after the existing tenants served Notice to Quit to the Council. The third plot was taken back on legal grounds due to a breach of the existing tenancy agreement. The 3 plots were all in poor condition at this time due to the large volume of perennial weeds such as marestail, convolvulus, nettles and overgrown hedges. The loss of income to the Council based on charges applying at the time amounted to £31.45p per annum in not being able to let the plots out immediately. The current loss of income per plot based on 2010/11 charges is £77. Obviously, whilst the sums of money involved are not large, the allotments are a community asset and should always be in use benefiting local people.

The Council, run by the previous administration, apparently did have a plan for improving the quality of the plots at this time and asked Glendale Grounds Maintenance to remedy the above issues. In July 2009 Glendale were also asked to spray out the plots. Councillor John Kraujalis

did offer to help bring the site back into use in an email dated 4 November 2009 but an order had already been raised with Glendale Grounds Maintenance and as the Council's main contractor it was considered that they should complete this work. Cllr Kraujalis was advised of this by return and thanked for his offer of help. The main source of delay related to contractual issues with Glendale Grounds Maintenance which were as a result in part of this work and other work not being completed. A Contract Default Notice was issued in November 2009 to Glendale Grounds Maintenance but they failed to complete this work before the end of their contract.

In hindsight it would have been more pragmatic to accept Cllr Kraujalis offer but it would have meant that the Council was allowing the contractor with the main responsibility to complete this work to get out of their obligations. I would like to thank Councillor John Kraujalis for his offer to undertake the remedial work and I believe we would not be in this situation if this had been undertaken at the time.

The new Grounds Maintenance Contractor started in May 2010 and the three allotment plots at St John's Close were cut down and sprayed and the hedges were reduced in height and spread. After this work was completed, the three plots were offered to four people on the waiting list who expressed a preference for this particular site. One of the four accepted and was assigned a plot but who then unfortunately moved house and surrendered the plot.

At this time, it became apparent that the site had three separate areas of Japanese Knotweed. This is identified in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as a Schedule 2 plant making it an offence to allow the weed to grow. The other legal constraint is that the Environmental Protection Act 1990 makes it an offence to remove the weed and surrounding soil to a landfill site. In order to meet its legal obligations, the Council has had to fence these sections of the site off and treat the Japanese Knotweed chemically.

These plots have been traditionally difficult to let because the access to the site is limited and it does not have a dedicated water supply. However, a plot has been successfully let in June 2011.

The plots have not been in use from April 2009 to June 2011 which is just over two years. One plot is let out as detailed above and the other two remain not used.

In summary Councillor Morgan, plots at St John's Close Allotment Site have not been let out on a regular basis as a result of contractual issues with a previous grounds maintenance contractor, issues with Japanese Knotweed on site and a low success rate in attracting or retaining tenants due to some of the features of the site. These practical problems have hindered all three allotments being brought into use.

However, I have instructed officers to review all inactive allotment plots across the Cannock Chase District and bring forward proposals as to how we can bring these all into active use. This may involve additional costs over and above the annual revenue budget of £250 for general allotment grounds maintenance. However I am keen to explore innovative community schemes which can operate on a no cost basis. I intend to bring proposals as soon as possible to the Cabinet.

In the meantime I have also asked that the two vacant plots at St John's Close Allotment Site are offered to as many people on the waiting list as possible.

I hope this answers your question and I can assure you that I take seriously the provision and

upkeep of allotment sites across our District”.

22. Part 1 Minutes of Cabinet, Committees and Panels

RESOLVED:

That the Part 1 Minutes of the following Cabinet, Committees, Forums and Panels be adopted and any recommendations be approved and decisions implemented following the expiry of any call-in period:-

- (a) Cabinet – 17 March and 6 April, 2011
- (b) Planning Control Committee – 9 March, 30 March, 20 April and 11 May, 2011
- (c) Licensing and Public Protection Committee – 3 March and 14 April, 2011
- (d) Health Scrutiny Committee – 19 October, 2010 and 18 April, 2011
- (e) Standards Committee – 1 February, 2011
- (f) Joint Parking Committee – 19 January, 2011
- (g) Appeals and Complaints Panel – 31 March, 2011
- (h) Cannock Community Forum – 16 March, 2011
- (i) Heath Hayes, Norton Canes and Rawsley Community Forum – 8 March, 2011 (Councillor Mrs. D. Todd referred to Minute 35. and clarified that the proposed Cannock Road crossing did not meet Staffordshire County Council’s criteria, therefore appropriate traffic calming measures were requested for Cannock Road).
- (j) Hednesford Community Forum – 10 March, 2011
- (k) Rugeley and Brereton Community Forum – 16 March, 2011

23. Representatives on Outside Bodies

Consideration was given to the Report of the Chief Executive (Enclosure 8.1 – 8.5 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Prior to consideration of the report, the Leader of the Council reported that he wished to withdraw the name of Councillor Mrs. D. Grice who had been nominated for the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Advisory Partnership.

RESOLVED:

That the following Council representatives be appointed to Outside Bodies as set out on the schedule circulated for the forthcoming municipal year.

<u>Body</u>	<u>Representative</u>
Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Advisory Partnership	Councillor G. Burnett
University of Birmingham	Councillor G.C. Brown

24. 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 2, 3 and 4 Part 1, Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

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PART 2

25. Part 2 Minutes of Cabinet, Committees and Panels

RESOLVED:

That the Part 2 Minutes of the following Cabinet, Committees and Panels be adopted and any recommendations be approved and decisions implemented following the expiry of any call-in period:-

- (a) Cabinet – 17 March, 2011
- (b) Licensing and Public Protection Committee – 3 March and 14 April, 2011
- (c) Appeals and Complaints Panel – 31 March, 2011

CHAIRMAN

(The meeting closed at 5.45 p.m.)