

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

HELD IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

AT 4.00 P.M., WEDNESDAY, 9 AUGUST, 2006

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Bennett, K.L. (Chairman)
Easton, R. (Vice-Chairman)

Alcott, G.	Jones, Mrs. A.E.
Allen, F.W.C.	Jones, R.
Ansell, Mrs. P.A.	Kraujalis, J.T.
Ball, G.D.	Martin, G.R.
Beddows, J.	Mawle, D.L.
Bennett, Mrs. D.J.	Mitchell, C.
Bernard, Mrs. A.F.	Molineux, G.N.
Burnett, J.	Morgan, C.W.J.
Butler, R.D.	Pearce, Mrs. L.J.
Carr, I.R.	Stanley, N.K.
Collis, C.	Stretton, Mrs. P.Z.
Davies, D.N.	Thomas, D.
Davis, Mrs. M.A.	Todd, Mrs. D.M.
Dixon, D.I.	Toth, J.
Faulkner, B.J.Freeman, M.P.	Turville, R.C. Whitehouse, Mrs. G.M.
Grice, Mrs. D.	Williams, A.
Grocott, M.R.	Williams, B.
Hewitt, S.M.	

(Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. G. Meaden and M. J. Holder).

16. 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>
Beddows, J.	Member of Norton Canes Community Partnership	Personal
Beddows, J.	Member of Norton Canes Community Association	Personal
Beddows, J.	Member of Norton Canes Health Centre Steering Group	Personal
Bennett, K.L.	Member of Heath Hayes & Wimblebury Parish Council	Personal

Bernard, Mrs. A.F.	Member of Heath Hayes & Wimblebury Parish Council	Personal
Bernard, Mrs. A.F.	Member of Norton Canes Community Partnership	Personal
Collis, C.	Member of Hednesford Town Council	Personal
Dixon, D.I.	Council Tenant	Personal
Dixon, D.I.	Member of Staffordshire County Council	Personal
Freeman, M.P.	Eligible for Concessionary Fares	Personal
Mawle, D.L.	Member of Hednesford Town Council	Personal
Morgan, C.W.J.	Council Tenant	Personal
Todd, Mrs. D.M.	Member of Heath Hayes and Wimblebury Parish Council	Personal
Toth, J.	Member of Staffordshire County Council	Personal
Toth, J.	Council's CCTV/Social Alarms Section - Family Connection	Personal
Toth, J.	Member of Heath Hayes & Wimblebury Parish Council	Personal
Turville, R.C.	Member of Hednesford Town Council	Personal

17. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2006 be approved as a correct record.

18. Chairman's Announcements and Correspondence

British Armed Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan

The Chairman reported that he wished the Council to pay tribute to those British Armed Forces who were killed whilst on service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He reported that since the start of the campaign in March 2003, a total of 115 British Armed Forces personnel had died whilst serving in Afghanistan.

He expressed his condolences to the families of the service men and women and their respective regiments.

A one minute's silence was held as a mark of respect.

Petition

Councillor F.W.C. Allen presented a petition in respect of the closure of the Cannock Sports Stadium. Having received the petition the Chairman agreed that it be referred to the appropriate Portfolio Leader to deal with in the usual way.

Collection for Chairman's Charity

The Chairman advised that the Charity Collection Box would be circulating at the meeting for Members to make a small donation to support his charities.

He reported that a total of £31.00 was donated at the last Council Meeting and thanked Members for their support.

Civic Sunday

The Chairman reported that his Civic Sunday was held on 23 July 2006 at St John's Church, Heath Hayes. He explained that the day was enjoyable and thanked all those involved in making it a special and memorable occasion. A total of £250 was raised from the collection, which would be put to the Chairman's Charities.

Trustees of Cannock Public Recreation and Pleasure Ground Charity

The Chairman reminded Members that at the conclusion of the Council Meeting, there would be a meeting of the Council as Trustee of the Cannock Public Recreation and Pleasure Ground Charity.

19. Questions in accordance with Rule 8

- (i) The following question was submitted by Councillor F.W.C. Allen in accordance with Rule 8.

"Would the Portfolio for Housing, care to comment on the following: -

In 1988 the then controlling Labour Group had managed to put aside some one and three quarter million pounds which was earmarked primarily to regenerate the Elizabeth Road area of Cannock North Ward. Unfortunately, that same year the Council received a visit from a deputation of Government environmental officers whose prime objective was to inform us that if we did not immediately implement a programme to make Cannock Chase District a smokeless zone we would be issued with a Section 8 Notice. The consequences of which would have been very serious for the Council indeed.

As a result of this, the aforementioned money was used on a five year phased scheme and of course the Elizabeth Road area regeneration suffered as a consequence. I am aware that the above area has been discussed along with others in a recent Cabinet meeting and so the problem will be fresh on the minds of Members.

I would like to ask therefore what plans if any are in the pipeline for the said area with regard to improvement, as it is in a very bad state indeed?

Needless to say, any improvement or development would be welcomed with open arms, not only by residents of Elizabeth Road, but by everyone in the surrounding area and would serve to lift the whole estate to a more acceptable level environment wise."

The Social Inclusion and Housing Leader provided the following response: -

"The Council's 45 Wates dwellings in the Elizabeth Road area of the Cannock North Ward are Pre-Reinforced Concrete or PRC construction and require structural reinstatement works during the next 6-10 years. These works are estimated to cost in excess of £31,500 per dwelling or over £1.4 million for the scheme.

As Councillor Allen is aware, the Council do not have the financial resources to undertake the required structural reinstatement works.

However, as well as needing structural reinstatement, the Elizabeth Road area suffers from a number of environmental and social problems and many of the residents wish to leave the area.

These factors were taken into account by the Cabinet when a long-term strategy for the Council's stock of PRC dwellings, including the houses in the Elizabeth Road area, was determined on 1 December 2005.

Cabinet agreed to adopt a strategy of site clearance and redevelopment by a housing association for the Elizabeth Road area but recognised that its implementation would need to be planned and developed over a long timescale, with extensive consultation with residents.

It will also be necessary to secure external funding from the Housing Corporation to facilitate the redevelopment scheme and at the present time the Housing Corporation are directing the majority of its funding within the Cannock Chase area to the redevelopment scheme for the Bevan Lee Estate.

As a result, the earliest date for the commencement of any redevelopment scheme is summer 2008.

It is however, proposed to commence the planning of a proposed redevelopment scheme in the last autumn of this year, after the Council have determined its future strategy for the remainder of its housing stock. This will be followed by the commencement of detailed consultation with residents in the spring of next year.

I would assure Councillor Allen that the planning for, and consultation with residents in respect of a proposed redevelopment scheme will, as was the case for the Bevan Lee scheme, be undertaken in partnership with the ward members for Cannock North."

- (ii) The following question was submitted by Councillor G. Ball in accordance with Rule 8.

"I would like to ask the appropriate Portfolio Leader: -

What is the up to date situation regarding the Aquarius? Is it to remain open or is to be closed? My view is that there is plenty of life in the Aquarius and if someone could be found to take over the day-to-day running, it could remain open rather than closed and the building stand idle and fall into disrepair."

The Leader of the Council provided the following response: -

"Firstly I would like to thank Councillor Ball for asking this question and giving me the opportunity to remind the Council and the general public of how the current situation with regard to the Aquarius came about.

As part of the budget measures in 2001-02 the Council, then under a Labour administration which included Councillor Ball and other members who are still present here today, made a number of major cuts in the services and facilities available to the public of Cannock Chase. These included ceasing to provide a number of community centres, the theatre in Rugeley and the Aquarius Ballroom in Hednesford. The Labour administration of the Council then sought expressions of interest from interested parties to take over the operation of those facilities and was rescued by the assistance of a number of the Parish and Town Councils which took over the running of the community centres and the Rugeley Rose Theatre.

In addition, in July 2001 B&K Leisure were granted a lease of the Aquarius which was renewed in 2004. But unfortunately they have chosen not to take up the offer of a further lease from July this year and as a consequence the premises have now closed pending identification of a new operator.

The current Liberal Democrat and Conservative shared administration of the Council is keen to find an alternative tenant for the premises. Indeed I have had very forceful representations made to me on this subject by my colleague, Councillor Ron Turville.

The Aquarius Ballroom is available for lease for the period pending implementation of a major redevelopment scheme for land fronting Victoria Street. To this end the Council are in discussion with an interested party. In the interim appropriate measures have been taken to protect the security of the building.

This shared administration is also committed to ensure that the long needed redevelopment of Hednesford Town Centre includes the provision of an alternative community facility to replace the Aquarius Ballroom. Finally, I should like to add that I have had a number of representations from Members, including Councillor Glenda Whitehouse, that the new facility should incorporate the floating wooden dance floor from the existing ballroom. I am told that it is of a

standard equal to many of the top ballrooms in this Country.

I look forward to a redeveloped and regenerated Hednesford town centre which includes a top quality community facility to replace the Aquarius. But I can assure Councillor Ball that this administration will do everything possible to maintain the availability of the Ballroom in the meantime."

20. Reports of Cabinet, Committees and Other Bodies

RESOLVED:

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

- (A) Planning Control Committee – 31 May, 2006 and 21 June, 2006
- (B) Licensing and Public Protection Committee – 9 June, 2006
- (C) Cabinet – 15 June, 2006

(It was noted that the recommendations contained within Minute 3 relating to "Corporate and Performance Plan" and Minute 6 "New Rugeley Swimming Pool – Establishment of Steering Group" were approved by Council on 28 June, 2006).

- (D) Scrutiny Committee – 17 May, 2006 and 27 June, 2006
- (E) Social Inclusion and Housing Select Committee – 5 June, 2006
- (F) Culture and Sport Select Committee – 7 June, 2006
- (G) Access to Skills and Economic Development Select Committee – 12 June, 2006
- (H) Environment Select Committee – 19 June, 2006

21. Age Discrimination Legislation

Consideration was given to the Report of the Chief Executive (Enclosure 7.1 – 7.10 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the adoption of a default retirement age for all permanent employees in line with the national retirement age which is currently 65, be approved.
- (B) That requests to work beyond the default retirement age be considered on an individual basis on their merits and that a formal policy be determined following consultation with the Trade Unions and subject to a further report to Council.

22. Changes to Pension Scheme and Redundancy Provisions

Consideration was given to the Report of the Chief Executive (Enclosure 8.1 – 8.8 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the revocation of the existing local policy in respect of Regulation 15 of the Local Government Pension Scheme, which permits an employee to cease contributions to the pension scheme once 40 years membership has been attained, be noted.
- (B) That the payment of contributions for those employees that are no longer entitled to cessation of contributions having attained 40 years of membership of the pension scheme (Regulation 15 of LGPS regulation), be waived back.
- (C) That the changes to the Local Government pension scheme, which specifically affects Council members, be noted.
- (D) That the proposed changes in respect of early termination of employment and the timetable for the end of the consultation period and publishing of the final version of the legislation, be noted.

23. Rent Restructuring Strategy

Consideration was given to the Report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Enclosure 9.1 – 9.13 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Councillor J. Toth moved the following amendment to the recommendations contained within the report which was seconded by Councillor B. Williams: -

“That the Council support the recommendations contained within the report subject to the deletion of paragraph 2.3 of the report”.

Following a vote, the amendment was carried.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the revised rent restructuring strategy, formulated in accordance with the following principles, be agreed: -
 - (a) No rent will change by more than RPI plus 0.5% plus £2.00 per week.
 - (b) All rent changes will be implemented via 6 equal steps between October 2006 and October 2011 except where: -
 - (i) The total change in rent is between £0.10 - £1.00 over the restructuring period, in which case the total change will be implemented in October 2006.

(ii) The total change in rent is between £1.01 and £2.00 over the restructuring period, in which case the total change will be implemented in two equal portions in October 2006 and 2007.

(B) That the 2006-07 rent restructuring plan, as detailed in paragraph 4.1 of the report be implemented with effect from 2 October 2006.

24. Appointment of Representatives to Hopkins & Sneyd Almshouse Charity

Consideration was given to the Report of the Chief Executive (Enclosure 10.1 – 10.4 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

(A) That Councillor Mrs. G.M. Whitehouse be appointed to Hopkins and Sneyd Almshouse Charity until the Annual Meeting 2007.

25. 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 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9 and 12, Part I, Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 and paragraph 3, Part I, Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

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PART 2

26. Minutes of Cabinet, Committees, Select Committees and Panels

RESOLVED:

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

- (a) Licensing and Public Protection Committee – 9 June, 2006
- (b) Cabinet – 15 June, 2006
- (c) Culture and Sport Select Committee – 7 June, 2006

27. Recommendation from the Cabinet held on 20 July, 2006

Consideration was given to the recommendation of the Cabinet held on 20 July 2006 in relation to "Policy Option WG1 – Cannock Sports Stadium".

RESOLVED:

That a supplementary estimate of £56,320 for 2006-07, be approved.

CHAIRMAN