

**Cannock Chase Council**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Council**

**Held in the Ballroom, Civic Centre, Cannock**

**On Wednesday 14 July 2021 at 6:00 p.m.**

**Part 1**

**Present:**

**Councillors:**

Smith, C.D. (Chairman)  
Buttery, M.S. (Vice-Chairman)

Adamson, G.	Kraujalis, J.T.
Allen, F.W.C.	Kruskonjic, P.
Arduino, L.	Layton, A.
Cartwright, Mrs.S.M.	Lyons, N.
Crabtree, S.K.	Lyons, Mrs. O. (Leader)
Davis, Mrs. M.A.	McCall, M.
Dunnett, Ms. A.J.	McMahon, J.B.
Fisher, P.A.	Muckley, A.M.
Fitzgerald, Mrs. A.A.	Newbury, J.A.A.
Frew, C.L.	Preece, J.P.T.L.
Haden, Mrs. P.K.	Startin, P.D.
Hewitt, P.M.	Sutherland, M.
Hoare, M.W.A.	Sutton, Mrs. H.M.
Hughes, R.J.	Thompson, Mrs. S.L.
Johnson, J.P.	Wilkinson, Ms. C.L.
Johnson, T.B.	Wilson, Mrs. L.J.
Jones, B.	Witton, P.T.
Jones, P.G.C.	Woodhead, P.E.
Jones, Mrs. V.	

**19. Apologies**

Apologies were submitted for Councillors Boucker and Molineux.

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

No other Declarations of Interests were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members' Interests.

## 21. Minutes

Councillor Muckley advised of the following amendments to the Annual Council Meeting Minutes:

- Minute No. 6 – Election of Chairman of the Council – amend to read:  
'Councillor P.E. Woodhead nominated Councillor A.M. Muckley to be Chairman of the Council for the 2021-22 municipal year...'
- Minute No. 7 – Election of Vice-Chairman of the Council – amend to read:  
'Councillor A.M. Muckley nominated Councillor P.E. Woodhead to be Vice-Chairman of the Council for the 2021-22 municipal year...'

### **Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the Extraordinary and Annual Meetings held on 19 May 2021 be approved, subject to the above amendments being made to the Annual Meeting Minutes.

## 22. Questions Received from the Public under Council Procedure Rule 4B(c)

### (i) The following question was submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4B(c) was asked by member of the public, Chris Martin:

“Could you please tell me if you have any plans for the Council owned housing stock?”

### **The Leader of the Council provided the following response:**

“Thank you to Mrs Martin for both submitting the question and allowing me an opportunity to answer. I think there are two points I want to touch on in doing so.

The first point worth noting centres around the timing of your question.

You will appreciate this is the second Council meeting since the change of Administration. As previously mentioned, we want to take stock. We have a duty to fully understand each service area, develop an appreciation of the challenges we face and a chance to investigate to opportunity. Our priority with this approach is ensuring we first and foremost take time to listen – our role is to listen and then engage – with fellow Councillors, the Leadership Team, Council employees and, most importantly, our residents. We won't be rushed – the change of Administration must not distract from the vital work being undertaken as the Council begins the journey towards post Covid recovery. All decisions must be well informed, not rushed. Particularly when determining the Council's future direction, priorities, and plans.

Turning to my second point, and directly to answer your question regarding housing stock. It's a rather broad question asking our future plans.

Firstly, from a financial plan perspective, the existing regime is self-financing. Effectively, this not only ensures the Council to maintain our housing stock over and above the decent homes standard, it enables us to build and increase dwellings to meet the demand for social housing and, primarily, meet the needs of our residents.

Secondly, from an environmental perspective, tackling climate change is a priority. To do this, new build is Passivhaus standard – something we moved as a motion back in 2019. It meets Future Homes Standards, meaning new homes will produce up to 80% less carbon emissions. We will also prioritise our Climate Change agenda in respect of Council stock through refurbishments and retrofits, a housing stock survey is also underway, and the costed housing related climate change programme includes already scheduled work to ensure all Council dwellings have Energy Performance

Certificates. We will be implementing measures outlined in the Government's Social Housing White Paper and engage tenants in line with the Charter to Residents of Social Housing. As this proposes focus on safety, transparency, and accountability, it works to ensure quality social housing and empower residents which, I believe, is crucial.

Thirdly, looking ahead and at the forefront of our plans for both Council owned stock and other social housing, is the need to strengthen relations with partners, providing not only funding but knowledge and expertise. Strengthening partnership working in all aspects is certainly a priority of this Administration. What do I mean by that – connecting further still with Registered Providers of social housing, engaging with the Local Enterprise Partnerships and West Midlands Combined Authority. To this effect, meetings have already been diarised with Registered Providers over coming months. Only last week, Councillor Fitzgerald (the Housing, Heritage & Leisure Portfolio Leader) attended the Housing & Land Delivery Board, and I can confirm that both further Member and Officer meetings have already been arranged. In terms of ensuring local, affordable housing, only last week this Administration personally invited and welcomed the Housing Minister to Cannock Chase. A first for us. We had the pleasure of welcoming Robert Jenrick (the Minister) to see our First Homes pilot at Walkmill Place, which is only the second to launch in the country. A first for us and huge opportunity for our District and our residents.

Having outlined our financial, environmental, and future plans, I can ensure Mrs Martin that we are committed to providing the best service we can, as a Council, as an Administration, both to Council tenants and wider residents. In terms of how we go about that, that will become clear once we have finished taking the time to engage with both residents and partners.

**Chris Martin then asked the following supplementary question:**

“Having listened to your answer, I don't think it was an actual answer to the question. I take it then you can't assure now while your party are in control of Cannock Chase that you won't sell off any Council stock?”

**The Leader of the Council provided the following response to the supplementary question:**

“Everything this Administration will do will be to support Council tenants. I have outlined that the existing regime is self-financing, and I am proud of that fact.”

**23. Deputations Received from the Public under Council Procedure Rule 4B(c)**

- (i) The following deputation was presented under Council Procedure Rule 4B(c) by members of the public, Shara Allanson and Rachel Birch:

“Against the proposed plans against the planned development of houses and maisonettes on the Muldoon Close estate, Chads Moor, Cannock.”

A question was asked by a Member in response to the deputation.

Members then thanked Shara Allanson and Rachel Birch for the deputation, noting it had been presented in a professional and confident manner.

## **24. Chairman's Announcements and Correspondence**

### **(i) Honorary Aldermen / Alderwomen**

The Chairman advised that usual practice would be to present Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen with certificates of their honorary titles at the first meeting following their award. However, due to Covid restrictions still being in place, this presentation would be postponed until the September Council meeting. It was only right that the newly appointed Aldermen and Alderwomen were given the presentation they deserved, in the Chamber followed by a small reception. Each of the Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen had been written to informing them of this and asked that they save the date in their diaries.

### **(ii) Welcome to Joint Chief Executive and Retirement of Interim Managing Director**

The Chairman advised that Mr T. Clegg joined the Authority on 1 June as Joint Chief Executive of Cannock Chase and Stafford Borough Councils. On behalf of all Members, Mr Clegg was welcomed to the Council and would be made to feel very welcome. For those Members who had not yet had the opportunity to meet Mr Clegg, they were reminded to contact his office to book an appointment.

Mr Clegg's arrival at the Council meant that very shortly, the current Interim Managing Director, Mr B. Kean, would be retiring from the Authority after 18 years, 10 of which were as a shared Head of Service with Stafford Borough Council.

Mr Kean had been a great asset to the authority in dealing with its finances. It was not an easy job to lead an authority through recessions and pandemics, but Mr Kean had always managed to steady the ship and for that Members would always be grateful for having him at the Council.

Mr Kean's departure on 31 July would be a great loss to the Authority, but he was more than deserving of his retirement, especially after postponing it twice for the benefit of the Council. On behalf of all Members, the Chairman wished Mr Kean a happy and healthy retirement.

Several Members then spoke to give thanks to Mr Kean for his service to the Council and wish him well in his retirement.

### **(iii) Councillors Olivia Lyons and Robert Hughes**

The Chairman advised that on Sunday 27 June Councillor O. Lyons and Councillor Hughes got married at St. Augustine's Church in Rugeley.

On behalf of all Members, the Chairman congratulated them on their marriage and wished them a lifetime of happiness as they embarked on the next chapter of life.

### **(iv) Demolition of Rugeley Power Station Cooling Towers**

The Chairman advised he had been fortunate to attend the demolition of the cooling towers, noting that whilst this was the closing of one chapter for Rugeley, it represented the opening of a new chapter for the town and wider District, and he looked forward to seeing great things happen as a result.

### **(v) Opening of Beacon Centre for the Blind Charity Shop**

The Chairman advised that he had attended the opening of the new shop in Cannock town centre, with their trade having rocketed since relocating from their previous unit

in the town. He noted it had done them the world of good and it was nice to see a local charity flourishing

## **25. Leader's Announcements and Correspondence**

### **(i) Covid-19 update**

The Leader advised that vaccine uptake locally was positive, but Covid-19 cases were rising again across the District, as they were across the Country. Ahead of the further easing of restrictions on 19 July, Members continued support was sought in promoting local vaccination clinics and raising awareness of local pop-up testing sites.

### **(ii) Rugeley Power Station**

The Leader advised that clearance of the site continued to progress, and as mentioned by the Chairman earlier, the cooling towers were demolished on 6 June. As had been said before, the redevelopment presented an incredibly exciting opportunity, but, as a lifelong Rugeley resident, the day itself had been filled with mixed emotions.

### **(iii) England Football Team**

The Leader paid tribute to the England football team for its performance at the Euro 2020 tournament, noting she was proud of the team and pleased that the District had not experienced the same disturbances following the competition as witnessed in other areas. The racial abuse expressed by a small minority following the tournament was completely condemned by the Leader, and it was made clear that such behaviour had no place at all within our local communities.

### **(iv) Visit from Secretary of State**

The Leader advised that the Deputy Leader (Councillor B. Jones) and the Housing, Heritage & Leisure Portfolio Leader had welcomed the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to the District last week. The visit had followed a letter from Cabinet requesting the opportunity to show and discuss the District with the Minister, and it was a delight he had accepted the invite.

### **(v) Levelling Up Fund Bid and Partnership Working**

The Leader thanked Officers for their work on producing the Levelling Up Fund bid in a very short space of time. The bid had visibly developed during each stage of the process, with letters of support being received from the Cannock Chase MP, Staffordshire County Council, and the Local Enterprise Partnerships.

The Leader then noted that the working relationship with the County Council had been strengthened, with positive results being achieved recently in respect of the Economic Growth Board and the Dry Mixed Recycling contract.

### **(vi) Retirement of Interim Managing Director**

Following on from the Chairman's earlier announcement, the Leader advised that 30 July marked the last working day for the Interim Managing Director, Mr Kean.

The Leader was sure that all Members would join her in thanking Mr Kean for his outstanding contribution to the Council over the past 18 years.

Mr Kean joined the Council in 2003 as Head of Accountancy, and since then, had taken up the roles of S151 Officer, Head of IT, and Deputy Managing Director, before moving into his current position as Interim Managing Director.

Prior to joining the Council, Mr Kean's previous employer provided a sterling reference, confirming that he was "extremely reliable, honest, and committed. A pro-active self-starter who generates ideas to take services forward". The Leader noted he had certainly lived up to this and would be missed greatly.

Throughout his career, Mr Kean had demonstrated completed commitment in pursuing the Council's best interests, being integral in pursuing shared services, and had, without doubt, been instrumental during the pandemic in support proposals to aid recovery and plan for the future of the District.

On behalf of everyone present, the Leader thanked Mr Kean for everything he had done for this Council, and on a very personal level, thanked him for the invaluable support provided over the past two months.

## **26. Changes to Membership of Committees etc. 2021/22**

The Leader of the Labour Group, Councillor Adamson, notified of a change in substitute membership of the Planning Control Committee for approval by Council.

### **Resolved:**

That the appointment of Councillor Kraujalis as the Labour Group's substitute member on the Planning Control Committee, in place of Councillor Preece, be approved.

## **27. Questions Received under Council Procedure Rule 8**

### **(i) The following question was submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8 was asked by Councillor J.P.T.L. Preece, Housing, Heritage & Leisure Shadow Portfolio Leader:**

"As part of the 106 agreements from the Norton Hall Meadow estate development a sum of money is due to be paid by developers to this council for "Formal Sport and Recreational Facilities in Norton Canes and/or Heath Hayes Park".

Norton Canes has provided nearly 25% of all the housing in the district over the current local plan period, and as such this has created an unprecedented level of pressure in the community on infrastructure, including increased demand for indoor sport and leisure facilities within the village.

The previous Leader of the Council, Councillor Adamson, had given Councillors Newbury, Stretton and myself assurances that as the decision to spend this money would be made by the Cabinet, he would ensure that this money would be only spent on projects in Norton Canes in recognition of the position that Norton Canes faces with respect to increased population.

Can the Leader of the Council give similar assurances that when the money is paid to the council by developers the money will be for facilities, such as an indoor sports and youth centre, within Norton Canes?"

### **The Leader of the Council provided the following response:**

"Thank you, Councillor Preece, for submitting this question in respect of Norton Hall Meadow.

As the question outlines, there has been significant development in Norton Canes and the development referred to includes 450 houses and 6,300 square metres of employment space.

Having previously sat on Cabinet under the previous Administration Councillor Preece, you will recall the planning application was considered in 2011 and, as part of the

process, a S106 agreement was reached. This restricts the purposes for which developer contributions can be used and the geographical area they can be spent.

Council requested the developer commit to 14% affordable housing, the implementation of a Travel Plan up to £564,000 including a new bus service and then a commitment of £10,710 to monitor that travel plan. Should it fail, remedial mitigation measures in the form of a £75,000 contribution to the County Council for sustainable travel in Norton Canes were included. The agreement also included £150,000 highway improvements, a contribution towards education provision, funding toward the maintenance of open space, and £650,000 towards off-site indoor / outdoor provision. The S106 agreement was reached with the aim of alleviating the potential infrastructure issues you outline Councillor Preece today, and it was reached in consultation with Sport England.

As Chair of Norton Canes Parish Council, Councillor Preece, you will be aware that funding has already been identified in agreement with the Parish Council towards additional facilities. £120,000 had been allocated for the refurbishment of the Cema play area, which Councillor Fitzgerald, as the Portfolio Lead, visited last week to launch a consultation on the design of the new play area.

Norton Canes Neighbourhood Plan, which Norton Canes Parish Council is heavily involved with, are considering the use of S106 within Norton Canes and are looking to identify a site for an indoor sports and leisure facility.

I've said it before and I'll say it again, residents must be at the heart of all this Council does. Decisions must be well informed and based upon strategic need and evidence. Our aim is to stop the perceived bias we have seen in the past.

The previous Cabinet, which Councillor Preece was a member of, voted on 13 June 2019 to adopt a Sport Facilities Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy. A strategy that was developed on evidence.

Future decisions will be taken based upon fact, having considered the evidence-based strategy, and proposals will be determined following assessment of existing sports facilities, current and future demand, and any surpluses, shortfalls or issues that exist in the area. This will help achieve fairness and ensure equity across all areas of Cannock Chase. Our approach must be data driven. Residents deserve fairness, and the right facilities where they are needed most.

Under the previously adopted Playing Pitch Strategy, the need for a 3G pitch in the Southeast of the District was identified, as were issues with drainage and changing facilities in nearby Heath Hayes park. A wider review is needed to address these issues.

In excess of £325,000 was received on 13 January 2020 with a ten-year time limit. In line with completion, the remaining £325,000 is likely to become due imminently. It would be irresponsible to commit that funding without any knowledge of exactly what that spend would be; somewhat like signing a binding contract without bothering to read it. This is public money that cannot be played with.

More so, any proposed schemes would need to be subject to full Cabinet and Council approval. We are democratically elected Councillors. I don't have the ability to bind Cabinet, and as a whole, it would be irresponsible to agree to the allocation of public money without due scrutiny of proposals. I will not make informal promises without scrutiny, agreement and assurance that such decisions work to ensure equal treatment of all residents.

We are not yet at a stage of considering the merit of individual proposals but, when we are, I can assure Councillor Preece that future allocation of this funding will be made with consideration to proposals within the Norton Canes Neighbourhood Plan, and in light of the already identified issues surrounding nearby Heath Hayes park.

All applications, allocations and proposed schemes will be considered individually, and decision based upon evidence, the conditions of the S106 agreement, and Council rules and procedures.”

**28. Recommendations Referred from Cabinet, Committees etc.**

None referred.

**29. Motions Received under Council Procedure Rule 8**

None received.

**30. Comments and Questions on Part 1 and Part 2 Minutes of Cabinet, Committees, Sub-Committees and Panels under Rule 9**

None received.

The meeting closed at 7:07 p.m.

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CHAIRMAN