

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**

**CABINET**

**HELD ON THURSDAY, 21 JUNE, 2012 AT 5.45 P.M.**

**IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK**

**PART 1**

PRESENT: Councillors:

Adamson, G.	Leader of the Council
Toth, J.	Deputy Leader of the Council and Environment Portfolio Leader
Dixon, D.I	Corporate Improvement Portfolio Leader
Holder, M.J.	Crime and Partnerships Portfolio Leader
Mitchell, Mrs. C.	Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader
Alcott, G.	Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader
Allen, F.W.C.	Housing Portfolio Leader
Todd, Mrs. D.M.	Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader

The Leader welcomed Councillors P. Snape, Leader of the Opposition and Crime and Partnerships Shadow Portfolio Leader, and Ms. J.L. Jones, Shadow Housing Portfolio Leader, to the meeting.

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs. M. A. Davis, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader, and Mr. S. Brown, Chief Executive.

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

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

**3. Updates from Portfolio Leaders**

Economic Development and Planning

- Electrification of Walsall – Rugeley Railway Line – The Portfolio Leader advised that local interested parties had met, a letter in support of the case for electrification delivered to the Secretary of State for Transport and an adjournment debate secured in the House of Commons, feedback from which appeared positive. During the course of the debate, Cannock Chase MP, Aidan Burley, and Theresa Villiers, Minister of State at the Department for Transport, had commented on the outstanding work of the Council's Principal Planner, John Morgan, and Cabinet also wished to place on record its thanks to Mr. Morgan for his commitment and dedication to seeking the fulfilment of the upgrade.

## Housing

- Elizabeth Road Redevelopment Scheme – the Portfolio Leader advised that the first 4 rented houses had been completed and allocated. Two households had taken up residence and were delighted with their new homes. The remainder of the 63 rented houses would be completed and allocated throughout the current financial year in accordance with an agreed handover programme.

## Culture and Sport

- ATP at Cardinal Griffin School – The Portfolio Leader reported that the official opening of the ATP would be held on 1 July, 2012.
- Chase Leisure Centre Swimming Pool – The Portfolio Leader advised that the pool was in the process of being filled and checked and was on target for handover on 20 July, 2012.

### **4. Minutes of Cabinet Meeting of 19 April, 2012**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 April, 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed.

### **5. Forward Plan**

Consideration was given to the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period June - August, 2012 (Enclosure 5.1 – 5.4 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period June - August, 2012, be noted.

### **6. Minutes of Policy Development Committees**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the following Policy Development Committees and other Committees be received for information:

- (i) Health and Wellbeing – 26 March, 2012
- (ii) Housing – 20 March, 2012

### **7. Recommendation(s) from Annual Council Meeting – 23 May, 2012**

Consideration was given to consider the following recommendation(s) referred from the Annual Council Meeting of 23 May, 2012, in respect of:

#### Allocation of Land at Stadium Site

“This Council requests that the Cabinet allocate the land at the stadium site for use as public

open space and sport and leisure purposes. The Cabinet is requested to remove the Stadium site from the list of land available for housing development.”

The Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader advised that Cabinet would address the request in the following manner:

- (1) Cabinet would consider the draft Cannock Chase Local Plan Part 1 at its next meeting on 19 July, 2012. The Local Plan (previously called Core Strategy) would be amended to remove the Stadium site as a site for housing. The Local Plan would be subject to public consultation as there had been a number of amendments and revisions to it which included the change of policy on the future use of the Stadium site.
- (2) At the same meeting on 19 July, 2012, Cabinet would also consider a separate report containing outline proposals for the development of the Stadium site for sports and leisure purposes. These proposals would be based on work already completed and agreed with Sport England on the number and type of indoor and outdoor facilities needed by the Cannock Chase District. Potential sources of funding would be identified including the development and submission of grant funding bids. The proposals would also be subject to consultation so that local residents, sports clubs and funding bodies could have their say and play a role in achieving the right mix of facilities on this site.

Overall, the aim of Cabinet was to provide more and better opportunities for residents, particularly children and young people, to enjoy a range of sports and leisure activities on the site. In turn, this should promote better health and lower levels of anti-social behaviour – both of which were key priorities for the Council working in partnership with public and voluntary sector agencies.

RESOLVED:

That

- (A) The land at the stadium site be allocated for use as public open space and sport and leisure purposes.
- (B) The Stadium site be removed from the list of land available for housing development.

## **8. Leisure Concessions to Serving Members of the Armed Forces**

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

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The request from Culture and Sport Policy Development Committee on 17 April, 2012, to provide use of the leisure centres free of charge for serving members of the Armed Forces who are resident in the district be noted.
- (B) Leisure concessions be introduced for serving members of the armed forces who are

resident in the district:

- (i) From 30 June, 2012 for an initial 1 year period as set out in the report, to be reviewed as part of the budget process; and
- (ii) The one off cost of producing Lifestyle Membership cards for all qualifying Armed Forces personnel during this period to be met by the Council.

Reason(s) for the Decision

The cost of current concessions scheme was contained within the existing contract management fee and WLCT agreed to provide free concessions to armed forces personnel during the first year of operation. However, depending upon take up, the Council might need to consider including provision within 2013-14 budgets as set out in the financial implications section of the report.

It was considered that an appropriate start date for the provision of free use of leisure centres for serving armed forces personnel would be Armed Forces Day on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012. Armed Forces day is the annual opportunity for the nation to show its support for the men and women of the Armed Forces community. The day aims to raise awareness of and support for the Armed Forces and highlight the outstanding contribution they make to this country in their service throughout the world.

In recognition of this, the Council would offer free use of its two leisure centres, including meeting the one off cost of producing the Lifestyle Membership card for those serving armed forces personnel living in Cannock Chase District.

**9. Representatives on Outside Bodies**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Chief Executive (Enclosure 9.1 – 9.5 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The appointments to outside bodies be agreed in accordance with the schedule attached to the report be as detailed below:

Cannock Park Golf Club Committee	Culture & Sport Leader (or nominee)
Cannock Chase AONB Joint Management Committee	Environment Leader
Commission for Architectural and the Built Environment (CABE)	Economic Development and Planning Leader (or nominee)
Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP Board	Leader of Council (or nominee)

Heritage Champion appointment to English Heritage	Economic Development and Planning Leader (or nominee)
Housing and Support Partnership Board	Health and Wellbeing Leader (or nominee)
In Staffs	Economic Development and Planning Leader (or nominee)
Joint Staffordshire Parking Board	Environment Leader Chairman of Environment PDC (as named substitute)
Local Government Association (Urban Commission) <i>NB Appointed in own right</i>	Leader of Council (or nominee) + <i>Chief Executive (or nominee)</i>
Local Government Association (Rural Commission) <i>NB Appointed in own right</i>	Deputy Leader of the Council (or nominee) + <i>Head of Regeneration &amp; Planning (or nominee)</i>
Local Government Association General Assembly	Leader of the Council (or nominee)
Local Strategic Partnership (aka the Chase Community Partnership)	Leader of the Council Deputy Leader of the Council Leader of the Opposition (or nominees)
Midlands Association for Design and the Environment	Economic Development and Planning Leader
Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust	Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader (or nominee) For info – 3 yr term commencing 2010
Norton Canes Community Partnership	Economic Development and Planning Leader (or nominee)
Poplars Landfill Site Liaison Committee  <i>NB Appointed at Annual Council</i>	Environment Leader (or nominee) +  ( <i>Chairman of the Environment PDC</i> ( <i>2 Hawks Green Ward Members</i> ( <i>2 Norton Canes Ward Members</i> ( <i>2 Cannock South Ward Members</i>  ( <i>or nominees</i> )

Southern Staffordshire Partnership (AGM) <i>NB Appointed in own right</i>	Leader of Council (or nominee) + <i>Chief Executive (or nominee)</i>
Staffordshire Strategic Partnership <i>NB Appointed in own right</i>	Leader of Council (or nominee) + <i>Chief Executive (or nominee)</i>
Staffordshire Connects (Formerly E-Government Champion)	Corporate Improvement Leader (or nominee)
Staffordshire County Council Pensions Services Joint Scheme (Must be Councillor)	Leader of the Council (or nominee)
Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership	Economic Development and Planning Leader (or Head of Planning & Regeneration as nominee)
Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Planning Forum	Economic Development and Planning Leader
Staffordshire Playing Fields Association  <i>NB Appointed at Annual Council</i>	Culture and Sport Leader (or nominee) <i>1 Other (Cllr. A. Pearson)</i>
Staffordshire and Stoke Waste Management Board	Environment Leader (or nominee)
Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP Board	Leader of the Council (or nominee)
Chase 3 Management Board	Economic Development and Planning Leader (or nominee) Town Centre Regeneration Leader (or nominee) Corporate Director (or nominee)
West Midlands Association of Leisure Chairpersons	Culture and Sport Leader (or nominee)
West Midlands Councils	Leader of the Council (or named substitute)

- (B) The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to make appointments to any additional outside bodies, as necessary, throughout the municipal year that would normally be determined by Cabinet.

Reason(s) for the Decision

Appointments of representatives to outside bodies enable the Council to have greater participation in working with organisations of the Community to inform their decision making processes.

**10. West Midlands Council – Pensions Agreement**

Consideration was given to the Report of Monitoring Officer (Enclosure 10.1 – 10.5 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The new Constitution of the West Midlands Council be endorsed.
- (B) The Monitoring Officer be authorised to sign the Supplemental Admissions Agreement dealing with the past pensions liability of West Midlands Councils.

Reason(s) for the Decision

The endorsement of the Constitution of West Midlands Councils by all member authorities provided a clear, agreed method for dealing with the liabilities of the body in future.

The residual pension liabilities had to be paid and the option of spreading the payments over 25 years was the most financially favourable option.

**11. Update on Partnership Activity**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Policy (Enclosure 11.1 – 11.8 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The update on the Partnership Delivery Plan be noted.
- (B) No further specific areas of interest for future reports were identified at that time.
- (C) Partnership Update reports be received on a quarterly basis in future.

Reason(s) for the Decision

The report provided a comprehensive overview of the wide-range of ongoing work being co-ordinated by the Partnership Team, and further embedded Partnership working in mainstream decision-making processes.

**12. Annual Performance Report, 2011-12**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Policy (Enclosure 12.1 – 12.14 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The 2011/12 annual performance outturn for the Council as detailed at Annexes 1 to 5 of the report be noted and approved.
- (B) In accordance with the Council's Performance Management Framework the annual Outturn report and annexes be provided to Scrutiny Committee on 12 July, 2012, and to Council on 26 September, 2012.

Reason(s) for the Decision

The recommendations were made in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Framework in order that the Council was able to understand its performance during 2011/12, and use this information in its future decision making processes.

**13. Community Forum Consultation**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Policy (Enclosure 13.1 – 13.6 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The results of the consultation of Cannock Community Forum users be noted.
- (B) In accordance with the principles of the Council's Communications Strategy, increased promotion and advertisement of all forums be undertaken in order to widen the opportunity for participation and engagement. Such promotion would include raising awareness of the various ways in which questions can be submitted to the Forums.

Reason(s) for the Decision

Based on the consultation undertaken on 6 March, 2012, the Cannock Community Forum was considered by residents to be achieving its stated constitutional purpose and was valued by people who attend as a way to raise issues, receive information and meet with their local representatives.

43% of the District population were most likely to be receptive to face to face communication channels. In some wards this figure is as high as 89%. In addition the Communications Consultation Survey undertaken in summer 2011 confirmed that despite these likelihoods, only 26% of respondents had ever attended a Community Forum.

Of those who attended the particular Forum, the response rate was 69%. Whilst this was considered to be a good rate for response, the numbers attending the forum was not representative of the local Cannock community. There remained, therefore, a potential wider participatory audience who might welcome being made aware of and/or involved in their local Community Forums.

**14. Removal of BT Payphone Service**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration (Enclosure 14.1 – 14.7 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The action of the Head of Planning and Regeneration, in consultation with the Cabinet Leader for Economic Development and Planning, in publishing a draft decision of the Council and inviting any representations on that decision in order to comply with the statutory consultation timetable be endorsed.
- (B) The Head of Planning and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Leader for Economic Development and Planning, be authorised to issue a final decision following a further consultation on the draft decision, after taking into account the consultation comments and objections, where considered appropriate and following any public or Member representations received.

Reason(s) for the Decision

Authority to delegate the decision on whether to keep the phone service was necessary at the 21 June Cabinet in order to comply with the statutory consultation timetable because BT had set a deadline of 17 July, 2012 for responses. The consultation timeline did not allow the draft and final notifications to be made at separate Cabinet meetings or for all the consultation responses to be received that will affect the final decision made before the Cabinet meeting.

According to BT the phone had been vandalised beyond economic repair and the low usage figures suggested that the phone was not meeting an identified need in the current location. The kiosk had been damaged with an oxyacetylene torch resulting in the need to replace both the back of the kiosk and the internal mounting plates as well as disconnecting and reconnecting the power source. Further research by the Council during the consultation period might alter the initial perception and influence the final decision.

The decision to support the removal of the payphone service might alter in response to public or Member consultation responses. The Ward Members had been notified in writing of the opportunity to make comments. Any decision to object to the removal of the payphone service would need to be supported by evidence, in case BT decided to appeal against the decision, and further research might be required where consultees raised concerns that the payphone service should be kept.

**15. Rail Decentralisation – DfT Consultation March, 2012**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration (Enclosure 15.1 – 15.9 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) Having considered the rail decentralisation proposals outlined in the report, a response based on Annex 1 to the report, be endorsed and sent to the DfT by 28 June 2012.
- (B) The Dept. for Transport be informed that the Council supports in principle the proposal

to devolve powers for local rail services to a local level, subject to the Government guaranteeing adequate funding to allow continued investment and growth in local rail services.

- (C) The Head of Planning and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Leader for Economic Development and Planning, be authorised to agree and submit the Council's formal response in accordance with (A) and (B), above.

Reason(s) for the Decision

The Council in partnership with Centro and Staffordshire County Council have been actively working to secure the retention of the weekday evening and the Saturday incremented service between Birmingham and Rugeley in the current franchise to 2015 and their inclusion on a long term, secure basis in a future franchise beyond 2015.

Devolution of rail service decisions to a local level should be welcomed as being in the interests of the Council's ambitions for the Chase Line, providing this change preserves funding for service investment.

**16. Housing Revenue Account Business Plan**

Consideration was given to the Joint Report of the Head of Housing and Head of Financial Management (Enclosure 16.1 – 16.9 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The changes to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan following the conclusion of the Council's settlement payment borrowing be noted
- (B) The revised HRA Business Plan (attached as Annex 1 to the report) and the associated programme of capital expenditure (attached as Annex 2) be agreed and referred to Council on 4 July 2012 for approval.
- (C) The revised Business Plan assumptions (attached as Annex 3 to the report) be noted including the provision of 15 further Council houses as part of the Capital Expenditure Programme.
- (D) 10 of the additional Council houses are provided as part of the redevelopment scheme for the Reema flats on the Moss Road Estate, Chads Moor with the remaining 5 additional Council houses provided on a further site to be identified through a future report.

Reason(s) for the Decision

The report presented a review of the HRA Business Plan following the conclusion of the Council's settlement payment borrowing.

Changes to four key Business Plan assumptions had generated a potential additional expenditure capacity of £1.830 million over the next five years. Consideration was given to

three options regarding this additional expenditure capacity namely:-

- (a) Further improvements to the Council's housing stock.
- (b) The provision of new Council housing.
- (c) Facilitating the provision of additional social housing by housing associations and private sector disabled facilities grants.

Whilst all three options had advantages it was proposed that in view of the substantial demand for rented accommodation within the District, the provision of additional Council housing should be considered as a priority.

It was therefore proposed that the financial provision to build a further 15 Council houses (at an estimated cost of £1.8 million) be included in the HRA Business Plan. With regard to these additional dwellings, it was further proposed that 10 should be built as part of the redevelopment of the Reema flats on the Moss Road Estate and the remaining 5 dwellings be provided on a further site to be identified through a future report.

The financial impact of the changes to the key Business Plan assumptions and the provision of 15 further Council houses had been incorporated into a revised HRA Business Plan (attached as Annex 1 to the report) and the accompanying programme of capital expenditure (attached as Annex 2). Details of the assumptions used in formulating the plan had also been revised and were attached as Annex 3. The revised Business Plan forms part of the Council's budgetary framework and would therefore require the approval of Council on 4 July 2012.

#### **17. Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes, 2011-12 and 2012-13**

Consideration was given to the Joint Report of the Head of Housing and Head of Financial Management (Enclosure 17.1 – 17.11 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The position with regard to actual expenditure in respect of the 2011-12 HRA Capital Programme be noted and approval be given to incur £200,660 of additional scheme costs met through the virement of existing resources in respect of the following schemes:-
  - (i) Void Properties (Decent Homes) - £122,117
  - (ii) External Envelope Works - £27,543
  - (iii) Second Doors to Bungalows - £51,000
- (B) The reprogramming / slippage of £111,920 of expenditure from the 2011-12 HRA Capital Programme to the 2012-13 HRA Capital Programme, as agreed by the Head of Housing, for the reasons detailed in Annex 4 to the report be noted.
- (C) The £1,017 of expenditure which had been brought forward from the 2012-13 HRA Capital Programme to the 2011-12 HRA Capital Programme, as agreed by the Head of Housing for the reasons detailed in Annex 4 be noted.

- (D) The availability and use of resources in financing the 2011-12 HRA Capital Programme be noted, including the £318,206 of resources carried forward to 2012-13.

Reason(s) for the Decision

In accordance with the Council's agreed Capital Expenditure Control Procedures and Financial Regulations, the report presented the outturn position in respect of the 2011-12 HRA Capital Programme and in the light of this, reviewed the 2012-13 HRA Capital Programme.

**18. Structural Reinstatement of Precast Reinforced Concrete Houses – Moss Road Estate and Rowley Close Area, Pye Green**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing (Enclosure 18.1 – 18.10 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) Scheme approvals and permission to spend for the structural reinstatement of the Council's Precast Reinforced Concrete (PRC) houses on the Moss Road Estate, Chadsmoor and in the Rowley Close area, Pye Green be agreed.
- (B) The Head of Housing following consultation with the Housing Portfolio Leader be authorised to amend the proposed structural reinstatement schemes to address any comments from residents arising from the consultation exercise.
- (C) Tenders for the two schemes be invited in relation to a single construction contract.
- (D) The action of the Head of Housing following consultation with the Housing Portfolio Leader regarding the implementation of design work for the structural reinstatement of the Council's PRC houses in the Rowley Close area be confirmed.
- (E) Following the receipt of tenders a revised financial profile for the structural reinstatement schemes be considered as part of future reviews of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and the three year Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme.

Reason(s) for the Decision

The report sought scheme approval and permission to spend in relation to the structural reinstatement of the Council's Reema and Cornish houses on the Moss Road Estate, Chadsmoor and in the Rowley Close area, Pye Green.

Details of the proposed structural reinstatement schemes which had been formulated by the Council's structural engineers, Michael Dyson Associates, in accordance with the Council's agreed service standard were presented in the report.

Whilst it was envisaged that the structural reinstatement works to the Moss Road Estate Reema houses and the Rowley Close area Cornish houses would be undertaken through separate contracts, Dysons had advised that "competitive tender prices" and a shorter construction

period were likely to result from the two schemes being included in a single contract. It was therefore proposed to proceed in accordance with Dysons recommendations.

In order to invite tenders for a single contract it had been necessary to undertake design work for the Rowley Close Cornish houses "in tandem" with the design work for the Reema houses on the Moss Road Estate. Whilst there was no agreed Capital Programme budget for the Rowley Close design work, the costs had been accommodated within the agreed budget for the Moss Road Estate Reema house scheme. Confirmation of this action which had been undertaken following consultation with the Housing Portfolio Leader was therefore sought.

Undertaking the two schemes through a single contract with a shorter construction period would have implications for the current budgetary profile for the schemes, as it would be necessary to "bring forward" expenditure to earlier years. It was considered that there was sufficient capacity for this within the agreed HRA Business Plan and it was suggested that following the receipt of tenders that a revised financial profile for the scheme be considered as part of future reviews of the HRA Business Plan and the three year HRA Capital Programme.

#### **19. Refurbishment of Communal Entrance Halls at Three Storey Communal Entrance Blocks**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing (Enclosure 19.1 – 19.8 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The proposed design for the comprehensive refurbishment of the existing communal entrance halls to the Council's three storey communal entrance flat blocks (attached as Annex 2 to the report) be agreed.
- (B) The Head of Housing following consultation with the Housing Portfolio Leader be authorised to amend the proposed scheme design to address any comments from residents arising from further consultation.
- (C) Scheme approval and permission to spend is agreed in respect of the proposed communal entrance hall refurbishment scheme.

#### Reason(s) for the Decision

The report considered a proposed design for the refurbishment of the communal entrance areas to the 9 three storey communal entrance flat blocks on the Walsall Road and Moss Road Estates. Subject to the proposed design being agreed the report also sought scheme approval and permission to spend in order that the scheme could be implemented.

Whilst it was originally envisaged that existing communal entrance halls would be demolished and replaced with a new structure, consultation with residents had shown that a majority wished to retain their individual stores which are located within the communal entrance hall area. As a result, the previous proposals had been reappraised and it was proposed to undertake a comprehensive refurbishment scheme to the existing entrance halls. Plans of the proposed design were attached as Annex 2 to the report, and larger plans were available to view. An outline of the proposed work was also presented within the report.

Prior to implementation, the proposed scheme design would be subject to further “round” of resident consultation to ensure it met their requirements. It was agreed that the Head of Housing, following consultation with the Housing Portfolio Leader, be authorised to amend the proposed scheme design to address any further comments from residents.

**20. Provision of Self-Contained Bathing Facilities – Caxton Court and Grace Moore Court Sheltered Housing Schemes**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing (Enclosure 20.1 – 20.8 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The provision of self-contained bathing facilities to the flats and bedsits within the Caxton Court and Grace Moore Court sheltered housing schemes as part of the Council’s bathroom replacement/upgrading programme be agreed
- (B) The revised service standard for bathroom replacement / upgrading which incorporated the provision of self-contained bathing facilities (attached as Annex 1) be agreed.
- (C) Where an existing tenant refused the provision of self-contained bathing facilities, these would be installed when the property became void.

Reason(s) for the Decision

The report considered the provision of self-contained bathing facilities to the flats and bedsits at the Grace Moore Court and Caxton Court sheltered housing schemes. Whilst these properties had their “own” toilet and wash hand basin, bathing facilities were provided in communal bathrooms. The lack of self-contained facilities was not popular with existing residents and resulted in potential applicants refusing the offer of a dwelling.

Proposals to address this deficiency were detailed in the report and would result in a shower being provided in the existing washroom, following the removal of the hot water cylinder and a dividing wall. The work would be undertaken as part of a comprehensive “bathroom” refurbishment and a schedule of the proposed works was also outlined in the report.

Whilst the costs of undertaking the proposed work exceeded the cost of providing a standard replacement bathroom or shower adaptation, the additional cost of £171,500 could be accommodated within the agreed bathroom replacement budgets, which form part of the approved three year HRA Capital Programme.

It was proposed to initially “pilot” the works on a void dwelling within each of the two schemes before extending the implementation of the work to occupied properties.

It was not, however, expected that all households would wish to have the work undertaken and in cases where it was refused, it was proposed that self-contained bathing facilities be provided when the flat or bedsit became void.

The agreed Bathroom Replacement/Upgrading Service Standard had been amended to incorporate the proposed provision of self-contained bathroom facilities at Grace Moore Court

and Caxton Court. A copy was attached as Annex 1 to the report.

## **21. Provision of Double Glazing**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing (Enclosure 21.1 – 21.7 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) Scheme approval and permission to spend for the provision of double glazing, as part of the External Works Programme to the Council's housing stock which remained without this facility be agreed.
- (B) The Council's HRA Capital Scheme Service Standard for the provision of double glazing be amended to reflect the changes to Building Regulations as set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report.

### Reason(s) for the Decision

The report sought scheme approval and permission to spend in relation to the provision of double glazing as part of the External Works Programme for 2013-14 and future years.

Details of the proposed specification which had been formulated in accordance with the Council's agreed service standard were presented in the report. A number of minor alterations had been made to account for recent changes to Building Regulations and it was therefore proposed that the double glazing service standard be amended to reflect these changes.

## **22. Reinvigorating the Right to Buy**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing (Enclosure 22.1 – 22.11 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The changes to the Right to Buy scheme including the increase of the discount cap to £75,000 be noted.
- (B) An article be included in the Autumn edition of "Hometalk" to explain fully the Right to Buy changes and advise tenants of the potential risks of homeownership.
- (C) The Head of Housing on behalf of the Council be authorised to enter into an Agreement with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government regarding the retention of potential "Right to Buy Replacement Receipts" for the provision of affordable housing.
- (D) As the Council needs to return the Agreement with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to the DCLG by 27 June 2012 that call-in procedures in relation to recommendation (C) shall not apply.

- (E) The potential availability of “RTB replacement receipts” be reviewed as part of future reviews of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

#### Reason(s) for the Decision

The report outlined changes made by the Government to the RTB scheme, considered a request from the DCLG for the Council to publicise and promote the RTB changes and assessed the implications of entering into an Agreement with the Secretary of State in order that the Council could retain a proportion of any additional RTB receipts for the provision of affordable housing.

The principle change to the RTB scheme related to an increase in the discount cap, which had increased from £26,000 to £75,000 in the Cannock Chase area. Other changes were outlined in the report.

The DCLG had requested local authorities to assist in publicising and promoting the RTB and had produced a range of promotional literature. This included a model letter (attached as Annex 1 to the report) which the Council could personalise and send to tenants. Cabinet were requested to consider how they wished to publicise the RTB changes and whether they wished to promote the RTB through a customised letter based on the DCLG’s model.

Cabinet considered that the Council’s accepted way of informing tenants about changes in housing policy was through the “Hometalk” magazine. It was noted that, as the layout of May edition had been finalised before the Right to Buy changes became clear, it was only possible to include a small article in that edition. As a result of its restricted size, Cabinet considered that the article did not fully explain the Right to Buy changes, or advise tenants of the potential risks of home ownership. In order to address this deficiency, Cabinet considered that a fuller article should be included in the Autumn edition of “Hometalk”.

The Government had decided that local authorities could retain a proportion of any additional RTB receipts to help provide replacement rented housing. This would, however, require the Council to enter into an Agreement with the Secretary of State by 27 June 2012. Alternatively, any “RTB replacement receipts” could be surrendered to the HCA.

The proposed Agreement contained two principle terms:-

- (a) Local authorities were required to spend the amount of additional RTB capital receipts generated within a period of three years from the commencement of the Agreement. If this was not achieved the receipts would have to be returned to the Secretary of State, together with interest at 4% above the base compounded within each three month period.
- (b) The receipts could be utilised to provide new Council housing, acquire existing properties or provide grants to facilitate provision by housing associations. However, the RTB receipts could not exceed more than 30% of the actual expenditure incurred in providing the replacement housing, but did not necessitate that new dwellings were completed within the two year period.

Details of the formula which would be used to calculate the amount of “RTB replacement receipts” was outlined in the report, although the amount of “RTB replacement receipts” would be largely dependent upon the number of RTB sales. This number was difficult to assess in

view of the current economic climate and difficulties in households obtaining mortgages, although 30 RTB sales per annum had been assumed in the HRA Business Plan.

A minimum of 25 RTB dwelling sales a year were required to provide any "RTB replacement receipts", whilst 30 RTB sales per annum would result in estimated receipts of £411,000 over the next three years. Based on the expenditure contribution cap of 30%, this would facilitate the provision of 12 estimated replacement dwellings. It was therefore evident that unless RTB sales increased significantly, one for one replacement would not be achieved in the Cannock Chase area.

Despite the pessimistic forecast regarding the potential availability of "RTB replacement receipts", it was suggested that the receipts were retained by the Council, rather than surrendering them to the DCLG. Cabinet therefore authorised the Head of Housing to enter into the required Agreement with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. As the Agreement had to be returned to the DCLG by 27 June 2012, it was further proposed that in relation to this recommendation, call-in procedures should not apply.

It was further suggested that the potential availability of "RTB replacement receipts" be reviewed as part of future reviews of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

### **23. Homelessness Funding, 2012-13**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing (Enclosure 23.1 – 23.13 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) Council on 4 July 2012 be recommended to grant supplementary estimates in respect of:
  - (i) £42,000 for Homelessness Prevention Initiatives following the receipt of additional Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2012-13.
  - (ii) £89,211 for the Councils "Preventing Repossessions Fund" following the receipt of additional grant for 2012-13.
  - (iii) £6,676 to deliver Homelessness Prevention work in schools following the receipt of a specific grant for 2012-13.
  
- (B) Subject to Council approval, the £42,000 of Homeless Prevention funding be provided to the following:
  - (i) Contribution to a Domestic Violence Outreach Worker employed by Stafford Women's Aid - £5,000
  - (ii) Cannock Chase Churches Housing Coalition - £5,000
  - (iii) Safe As Houses - £20,000
  - (iv) Contribution to works to 2A Festival Court, West Chadsmoor for use as

- temporary accommodation for homeless households - £3,000
- (v) Development of a Landlords Support Scheme – £8,000, subject to consideration of a separate report elsewhere on your agenda.
  - (vi) Day to day repairs of 3 flats on the Moss Road Estate that will provide temporary shared emergency accommodation for single people - £1,000
- (C) The action taken by the Head of Housing following consultation with the Housing Portfolio Leader regarding the use of the flat at 2A Festival Court, West Chadsmoor as temporary accommodation be confirmed.
- (D) Subject to Council approval to the supplementary estimate of £89,211, that the £126,558.56 within the Council's "Preventing Repossessions" fund is used to:
- (i) Provide small loans to reduce mortgage arrears or rent arrears in the private sector
  - (ii) Provide grants to households to reduce mortgage or rent arrears in the private sector whose financial circumstances would make repayment unrealistic
  - (iii) Make a contribution of £5,000 to the Discretionary Housing Payment fund administered by Housing Benefit
  - (iv) Provide funding of £12,500 to the Citizens Advice Bureau to continue their fast track money advice service
- (E) The revised criteria for loans and grants to households from the Preventing Repossessions Fund as attached at Annex 2 to the report be agreed.
- (F) Subject to Council approval to the supplementary estimate, the £6,676.66 of funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government be used to deliver a programme of homelessness prevention work in local schools as set out in the report.

Reason(s) for the Decision

The Department for Communities and Local Government had an expectation that funding intended for the prevention of homelessness was used for that purpose. If allocations were used for other purposes, it might reduce the amount of resources allocated in future years.

The funds received for the homelessness prevention work in schools were also ringfenced and could only be used for that purpose.

**24. Discharge of Homelessness Duty – Landlord Support Scheme**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing (Enclosure 24.1 – 24.9 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The Council's Homelessness Policy be amended to enable the Council to discharge its

homelessness duty under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 in cases where an applicant had refused an offer of a suitable 12 month private rented sector tenancy subject to any appeal to the Complaints and Appeals Committee.

- (B) Subject to funding being made available from the 2012-13 Homelessness Prevention Grant resources that the proposed Landlord Support Scheme attached as Annex 1 to the report be approved.
- (C) Cabinet review the proposed Landlord Support Scheme after a 12 month operational period.

#### Reason(s) for the Decision

The report considered the principle of the Council discharging its re-housing duty under the homeless legislation through the offer of private rented accommodation and proposed a Landlords Support Scheme to encourage private sector tenancies to be let on a 12 month term.

Whilst numbers of homeless applicants being offered private rented properties was not high, the implications of the Welfare Reform Act on homelessness were unknown. There were significant costs in providing additional affordable housing and as a result it was essential that every opportunity was taken to ensure that best use was made of all available stock within the District.

It was therefore proposed that where a private rented sector offer was refused and the requirements of S193 7AA had been met (this included suitability and right to review) that the Council deemed to have discharged its S193 rehousing duty.

It was further proposed that the Landlord Support Scheme attached as Annex 1 to the report be approved in order to ensure 12 month tenancies were made available by private landlords.

## **25. Proposals for Town Centre Developments**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Corporate Director (Enclosure 25.1 – 25.9 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) Subject to the scheme obtaining planning consent, the allocation of a capped sum of up to £68,000 to establish a Miners Memorial in Rugeley to commemorate miners who lost their lives in the Lea Hall and Brereton Collieries be approved. Should it not proceed, the funding to be ring fenced to deliver a programme of environmental improvements in Rugeley Town Centre.
- (B) A programme of improvements to bus stations in Cannock and Rugeley costing a maximum of £50,000 be approved and the Corporate Director be authorised to implement the detailed programme.
- (C) £50,000 be allocated to the Rugeley Conservation Areas Partnership Scheme for 2012/13 subject to matched funding being provided by English Heritage; and that the Head of Planning and Regeneration, in consultation with the Council's Heritage Champion and the Portfolio Leader for Town Centre Regeneration, be authorised to

manage the operation of the Partnership Scheme including agreeing its Implementation Plan for 2012/13.

- (D) Up to £132,000 be allocated to implement a programme of environmental improvements in Cannock and Hednesford town centres and that the Corporate Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Leader for Town Centre Regeneration, be authorised to agree and implement the detail elements of the scheme following consultation with stakeholders in the town centres.
- (E) The High Street Innovation Fund (Portas) allocation of £100,000 be utilised to introduce a Business Rates Discount Scheme in the District's three town centres for new businesses occupying empty retail units; and that the Corporate Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Leaders for Town Centre Regeneration and Corporate Improvement, be authorised to agree the details of the scheme, its management and implementation.
- (F) Council be recommended to approve a supplementary estimate of £10,000 to pilot the introduction of a Community Toilet Scheme across the District during 2012/13.
- (G) The Corporate Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Leader for Town Centre Regeneration, be authorised to agree the details and implementation of the pilot for the Community Toilets Scheme and that a report on the outcome of the pilot be considered by Cabinet.
- (H) Active engagement with English Heritage, traders associations, businesses, landlords and the public in taking forward the above schemes be supported.
- (I) The Corporate Director be authorised to complete and enter into any legal and other agreements as deemed necessary to implement the schemes authorised in (A) to (G), above.

#### Reason(s) for the Decision

Economic growth and prosperity were key priorities of Cannock Chase Council. Improving town centres and encouraging new business start ups was one element of a wider strategy being pursued by the Council and its partners.

The proposals came forward to Cabinet because there were funds totalling £400,000 for town centre related matters for 2012/13 in relation to the Council's Town Centre Improvement Fund and the Government's High Street Innovation Fund. The Community Toilet Scheme previously considered by the Town Centre Regeneration Policy Development Committee was recommended for pilot across the District.

The meeting closed at 7.35 pm

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LEADER