

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET

HELD ON THURSDAY 17 OCTOBER 2013 AT 4:00 P.M.

IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors:

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

64. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C. Bennett, Environment Portfolio Leader; Mrs. M. Davis, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader; and Mr. S. Brown, Chief Executive.

65. 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.

66. Updates from Portfolio Leaders

Economic Development Planning

Growing Places Funding - The Portfolio Leader advised that two local businesses were in line to secure potential funding from the Growing Places Fund managed by the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP).

Bus Service to Amazon Distribution Centre, Rugeley- The Portfolio Leader advised that, following consultation between recruitment agencies, Amazon and Arriva, agreement had been reached on the provision of two temporary bus services running from Wednesbury and Wolverhampton, through the district to the Amazon site. Amazon had recently announced that they would be taking on up to 1,500 workers in the build up to Christmas, and the bus

services had been arranged to meet the shift patterns at the Rugeley site, affording opportunities to unemployed people who did not have transport.

“Open for Business” Breakfast event – The Portfolio Leader reported that he had recently attended a Business Breakfast organised to highlight the availability of grant available from the Business Development Programme (BDP), administered by Birmingham County Council's Business and Innovation Team and funded through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The BDP was intended to provide financial assistance, by way of a match funding grant, to existing small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) who had been trading for more than six months and had expansion plans ready to implement that would safeguard existing jobs or create new ones. The programme would run until June, 2015 and SME's in Cannock Chase District could still apply. The Portfolio Leader advised that the programme also offered a unique coaching and mentoring scheme 'great200leaders'.

Town Centre Regeneration

Beecroft Road Underpass – The Portfolio Leader advised that there was to be an official opening ceremony for the refurbished underpass at 11.00 am on Friday, 25 October, 2013.

67. Minutes of Cabinet Meeting of 19 September 2013

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed.

68. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan of Decisions for the period October – December, 2013 (Item 5.1 – 5.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council), was considered.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period October – December, 2013, be noted.

69. Recommendations and References for Determination and Minutes of Policy Development and Other Committees

RESOLVED:

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

- (i) Health and Wellbeing – 5 August, 2013
- (ii) Town Centre Regeneration – 28 August, 2013

70. External Curtilage Works and Environmental Improvements

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing and Waste Management (Item 7.1 – 7.12 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That

- (A) Scheme approval and permission to spend in relation to External Curtilage Works and Environmental Improvements to be undertaken in conjunction with the External Works Programme be agreed.
- (B) The action of the Head of Housing and Waste Management, following consultation with the Housing Portfolio Leader, regarding the Mosswood Street pilot car parking scheme be confirmed.
- (C) The single “External and Environmental Works Programme” service standard covering external works, external curtilage works and environmental improvements, as set out in Appendix 3 to the Report, be agreed.
- (D) The Head of Housing and Waste Management, following consultation with the Housing Portfolio Leader and the relevant Ward Members, be authorised to agree the specific environmental improvement works in relation to communal areas within the Council’s housing estates.
- (E) The separate budgets for External Works, External Curtilage Works and Environmental Improvements be combined into a single “External and Environmental Works” budget as part of future reviews of the HRA Business Plan and the three year HRA Capital Programme.

Reasons for the Decisions

The agreed three year HRA Capital Programme included budgetary provision to undertake External Curtilage Works and Environmental Improvements in conjunction with the existing External Works Programme.

In order that these works could commence in 2014-15, it was necessary, in accordance with the Council’s agreed Capital Expenditure Control Procedures to seek scheme approval in order that surveys, work schedules and plans could be formulated during 2013-14.

Details of the proposed works were set out in the report and included the provision of car parking spaces to Council properties which were included within the County Council’s Minor Highway Works Programme.

A pilot car parking scheme to four properties in Mosswood Street would also be undertaken in the current year. This had been agreed by the Head of

Housing and Waste Management following consultation with the Housing Portfolio Leader and confirmation of action was sought.

The works would be undertaken in accordance with a single “External and Environmental Works Programme” service standard as set out in Appendix 3 to the Report, and it was proposed that the Head of Housing and Waste Management, following consultation with the Housing Portfolio Leader and the relevant Ward Members be authorised to agree the specific environmental improvement works to communal areas.

It was further proposed that the three separate budgets for External Works, External Curtilage Works and Environmental Improvements be combined into a single “External and Environmental Works” budget.

71. Beecroft Road Car Park – Public Consultation Findings

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration (Item 8.1 – 8.12 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That

- (A) In respect of development of the Beecroft Road site, taking into account the difficult economic conditions, the lack of national retailer interest and the fact that there was not majority support from the public consultation for the development of Beecroft Road, development should not be pursued further at that stage.
- (B) The Head of Planning and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Leader for Town Centre Regeneration and the Leader of the Council, be authorised to undertake a review of development and improvement opportunities for Cannock town centre, including the procurement of specialist advice; and that in this respect the Council should undertake joint work with Staffordshire County Council and other stakeholders and partners, subject to all District Council costs being contained within existing budgets.

Reasons for the Decisions

Cabinet resolved on 20 June, 2013 to support the option to ‘Do Something’ to seek investment in new retail and leisure development on the Beecroft Road car park site, subject to the outcome of a consultation with stakeholders on the results of the ‘soft market testing’ of the development potential of the Beecroft Road site. The report documented the findings of the subsequent public consultation exercise and concluded that at the present time there was limited support for progressing development of the site.

A total of 962 responses were received to the consultation carried out. In summary, in response to the question - ‘Based on the report into the potential

for development of the Beecroft Road site, the Council wants to know what you think is the best option for the future of the site', 562 respondents (58.4%) said 'Leave the site as a car park and not explore development'; while 299 respondents (31.1%) said 'Explore the options for development of the Beecroft Road Site' and a further 69 respondents (7.2%) preferred to 'Wait for the economic climate to improve before pursuing development proposals'.

In addition to the consultation responses the Council had received a 2,685 signature petition from the Allport Action Alliance, organised by the residents of Allport Road objecting to development proposals for the Beecroft Road site.

In response to the initial findings of the consultation, the Council issued a press statement on 11 September, 2013. In this the Leader of the Council stated that; taking account of economic conditions, the lack of retailer interest, and the lack of public support for development, he intended to recommend to Cabinet not to pursue this development further at this stage. The statement included also a commitment to continue to seek ambitious plans for improving the District's town centres to try to ensure that they don't fall behind other centres outside the District which are pursuing new development schemes.

The report provided Cabinet with some further analysis of the consultation responses including some analysis of the many comments that were received from residents, visitors and traders as part of the consultation. The general conclusion to be drawn from was that there is a strong desire from respondents to see Cannock town centre improved despite the reservations about the Beecroft Road site proposals.

In responding to the consultation and the statement issued by the Council it is recommended that the development proposals for the Beecroft Road site were not pursued at this time; and that the Council undertook a review of development and improvement opportunities for Cannock town centre. The aim of this was to ensure that Cannock strengthens its role as the main strategic town centre for the District. Staffordshire County Council had indicated financial and other support for this improvement and 'master-planning' work.

72. Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED:

That the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

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PART 2

73. Debt Recovery

Consideration was given to the Not for Publication Report of the Head of Finance (Item 10.1 – 10.7 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The amounts detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be written off.
- (B) The actions of the Head of Finance in writing off the irrecoverable debts below £1,000, be noted.

Reasons for the Decisions

Council Tax:

Appendix 1 to the Report contained a list of Council Tax arrears over £1,000 which could not be collected for the reasons stated. Included in this Appendix were 10 cases with arrears totalling £18,321.94, representing 0.04% of the outstanding collectable debit as at 1 April, 2013.

Additionally 36 irrecoverable Council Tax debts, with a value of £11,573.43 had been written off by the Head of Finance.

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

74. Website and Intranet Strategy

Consideration was given to the Not for Publication Report of the Head of Policy (Item 11.1 – 11.8 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That implementation of new website and intranet systems and associated

work to update current information through departmental website champions be noted.

Reasons for the Decision

The organisation needed to ensure that the website continued to deliver a comprehensive information resource for our residents and substantial savings for the organisation. Due to the rapidly rising use of mobile devices accessing the Council's website it was necessary to ensure that it was easily accessible through this medium.

As of July 2013, ICT had identified several new security regulations which the Council's current Intranet did not meet. As it is essential that the Council complied with these regulations either the current intranet required updating, or a new system implemented that addressed these issues. A deadline of the start of 2014 applied.

It would be sensible to use the opportunity to develop the intranet site to provide a more comprehensive internal communications tool as agreed by Leadership Team on 10 September, 2013 from the Internal Communications Plan. ICT security issues dictate that the project must be completed by the start of 2014 in order for the Council to comply with the Public Sector Network security requirements.

75. Development of the Mill Green Site

Consideration was given to the Not for Publication Report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration (Item 12.1 – 12.13 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That recommendations 2.1 - 2.4 of the report be approved.

Reasons for Decisions

The Council had received a proposal to acquire and develop the Mill Green site. The report set out the key issues associated with the potential development.

A consequence of pursuing the proposed disposal of the site was that the offer of loan funding from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull and the Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnerships (the LEP's), to service the site could not be taken up.

The meeting closed at 4.45 pm

LEADER