

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**CABINET**

**HELD ON THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2015 AT 4:00 P.M.**

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

**PART 1**

PRESENT: Councillors:

Adamson, G.	Leader of the Council
Alcott, G.	Deputy Leader of the Council and Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader
Lovell, A.	Corporate Improvement Portfolio Leader
Bennett, C.	Crime and Partnerships Portfolio Leader
Mitchell, Mrs. C.	Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader
Dudson, A.	Environment Portfolio Leader
Todd, Mrs. D.M.	Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader

**37. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor F.W.C. Allen, Housing Portfolio Leader and Councillor Mrs. M.A. Davis, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader.

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

<u>Member</u>	<u>Interest</u>	<u>Type</u>
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No other Declarations of Interest were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members' Interests.

**39. Updates from Portfolio Leaders**

**Culture and Sport**

Hednesford Park

The Portfolio Leader report that work was currently underway on the play areas, War Memorial and Pavilion.

Cannock Stadium site

The Portfolio Leader reported that tenders were on schedule to be issued for the

Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) by the end of September 2015.

### **Corporate Improvement**

#### Council's new website

The Portfolio Leader reported that the Council's new website was now up and running.

### **Environment**

#### Waste Collection Contract

The Portfolio Leader advised that the procurement of the Waste Collection Contract was ongoing. Should the contract be awarded in-house two new refuse lorries would be purchased.

### **Crime and Partnerships**

#### Transformation of Police service

The Portfolio Leader referred to the new initiative by Staffordshire Police which would change the way crime was tackled in the District. He advised that Inspector Paul Cooke would be willing to attend a meeting to discuss this new initiative to transform the Police service.

### **Leader**

#### Stile Cop Cemetery – consecration

The Leader made reference to the consecration of Stile Cop Cemetery and he thanked the Bishop of Wolverhampton for attending. The Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader wished to place on record her thanks to the staff at the Cemetery for their hard work.

## **40. Minutes of Cabinet Meeting of 27 August, 2015**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 August, 2015, be approved as a correct record and signed.

## **41. Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan of Decisions for the period September to November, 2015 (Item 5.1 of the Official Minutes of the Council) was considered.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period September to November, 2015, be noted.

## **42. Recommendations of Scrutiny Committees**

None received.

## **43. Quarter 1 Performance Review of Wigan and Leisure Culture Trust 2015-16**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Commissioning (Item 7.1 – 7.64 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader asked that the

Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader speak with Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust to suggest the Museum be publicised better and this may help with attendance figures.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust (WLCT) performance in delivering the Culture and Leisure Services for the period 1 April 2015 to 30 June 2015, be noted.

Reasons for Decision

This performance review was an integral part of the Council's contract monitoring arrangements with WLCT, enabling the Council to review the Trust's performance and commitments set out in the contract and method statements.

Appendix 1 attached to the report provided a detailed breakdown of WLCT's performance against performance targets for the first quarter of this financial year, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015.

During the quarter there were a number of key highlights:-

- Of a total of 62 performance measures and targets, WLCT met or exceeded performance in 52 (84%) of its targets and not met target in 10 (16%), albeit that 1 (2%) are within the 5% tolerance threshold. The other 9 (14%) were considered red;
- The Council's culture and leisure facilities and services were being used more this quarter than they were during the same period last year; (238,254 visits compared to 230,844 visits) (+3%);
- The combined swimming lesson usage increased by 16% (3,009 visits) when compared to the same quarter last year;
- Club usage exceeded target at both centres representing a combined increase of 61% (3,312 visits) when compared to the same quarter in 2014-15;
- A 7.7% increase in the number of rounds played on the golf course when compared to the same quarter last year. (8,041 rounds/7,461 rounds);
- Chase Leisure Centre and the Community Wellbeing Sports Team attained "Excellent" status as part of the Quest Combo assessment; the first WLCT site to obtain this award. This showed an improvement from the last assessment which was Good;
- The number of health referrals taking part in the Structured Exercise Programme (SEP) increased significantly compared to the previous year with 1,220 visits recorded during the first quarter of the year;
- The theatre experienced a strong start to this financial year with total visits and attendances exceeding target by 1,177 visits (+9%). Occupancy levels remained consistently high at 86.1%;
- Over 7,800 personal visits were made to the Museum during the first quarter of this year;
- Successful delivery of the Festival of Sport event which attracted 16 local primary schools and over 400 children. This event was held annually as

part of the Council's Olympic legacy commitment;

- Attendances at all activities delivered by the Sports Team remained strong with all targets being exceeded for the first quarter of this year. £14k of funding was secured from the Staffordshire Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver additional spaces on the Chase it day camps and Great days out during the summer;
- The Arts Team was successfully awarded £44k from Public Health for further work on the Chase Fit walking scheme which now also included dementia walks and to commence the Grow Up Great project;
- The successful launch of the "Well Active" website for people with physical and learning disabilities across the District and Staffordshire;
- There were no default notices issued and the contract was delivered within budget.

However, the aim of the report was also to present a balanced picture of achievements and performance against the targets set, including where performance needed to be improved.

- There were 10 (16%) targets that had not been met and where improvement was required. 9 (15%) were rated Red. 3 related to Chase Leisure Centre and usage levels in respect of the dry side activities, health and fitness and education visits. There were two red indicators reported for Rugeley Leisure Centre which related to health and fitness visits and swimming lesson usage. 1 red indicator related to the level of junior visits at Cannock Park Golf Course with the remaining 3 related to the total number of junior visits, visits in person and school visits to the Museum of Cannock Chase. The only amber indicator reported concerns the number of junior visits at Chase Leisure Centre which was only 8 visits down when compared to the same quarter last year.

Results against these measures will continue to be monitored over the coming months and in particular the number of memberships, concessionary cardholders and health and fitness usage at both leisure centres, together with the number of visitors to the Museum and the total number of junior visits to all our facilities and services.

Key issues this year included the following:

- WLCT need to ensure that the culture and leisure facilities and services continue to:-
  - be in line with the Council's Priorities and objectives,
  - be evidence driven and aligned to the needs of the community,
  - contribute to meeting the health needs of the District,
  - influence decision makers and fund holders (LSP, Health and Well Being Boards, CCG's, Arts Council, Heritage Lottery Fund etc), and
  - demonstrate where and how culture and leisure services can make an impact on a range of outcomes (e.g. Preventative – role of physical activity in health prevention + tackling childhood obesity).
- Greater use needed to be made of geographic data and information in

order to target and promote culture and leisure facilities to under represented groups (young people, people with disabilities, over 60's etc).

Performance achieved to date continued to be good, particularly in respect of attendances to the Council's culture and leisure facilities when compared to the same period last year.

**44. The Government's Devolution Agenda – Proposals for a West Midlands Combined Authority**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Managing Director (Item 8.1 – 8.68 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Environment Portfolio Leader made reference to the opposition to the proposed Transport and Haulage facility in Essington. He asked whether Officers would make contact with the company to ascertain whether suitable facilities were available for them in the District. The Head of Economic Development advised that he would look into this.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) Cabinet accept the invitation to become a non-constituent member of the proposed West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).
- (B) Council, at its meeting to be held on 12 October 2015, be recommended to accept the invitation to become a non-constituent member of the proposed West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).
- (C) The Governance Review and Scheme be approved, and further information be received on governance arrangements and devolution 'deal' for the WMCA and any proposals for devolution in Staffordshire.
- (D) In light of decision (B) above, Council, at its meeting to be held on 12 October 2015, be recommended to allocate £10,000 from existing budgets for this Council's contribution to the WMCA set up costs in the 2015/16 financial year.

Reasons for Decisions

Combined Authorities are the primary mechanism identified by central government for the devolution of further powers and funding to local areas. They were introduced in the *Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009*, (sections 103-113) and Economic Prosperity Boards. The power to set them up extends to England only. Local authorities must trigger a review process in advance of setting a combined authority up, but the power actually to create a combined authority lies with the Secretary of State, via statutory instrument. The membership and functions of the combined authority are to be specified in the Order setting it up. Local authorities are included in the Combined Authority by consent.

The seven Metropolitan Councils of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton have made a commitment in principle to develop a proposal to establish a West Midlands Combined Authority by 1 April 2016. A Statement of Intent was published on 5 July 2015 setting out how a proposed West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) would work across the

three existing Local Enterprise Partnerships of Greater Birmingham & Solihull, Black Country and Coventry & Warwickshire to deliver conditions for business to flourish, creating more skilled and better paid jobs, bringing more investment into the area, improving health outcomes and reforming public services. It sets out key objectives to increase competitiveness and productivity and be a driver for growth nationally.

Cannock Chase Council has been invited to join the proposed West Midlands Combined Authority along with all other District and Borough Councils in the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership and the Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (including Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council in Leicestershire). This report set out the key issues for Members to consider in considering this invitation including any financial implications. Discussions about devolution involving the ten local authorities in Staffordshire have also taken place and the report updates on the status of this.

#### **45. Housing Services 2014-15 Annual Report**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Acting Head of Housing (Item 9.1 – 9.30 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The draft 2014-15 Housing Services Annual Report (attached to the report as Appendix 1) be agreed for circulation to all the Council's tenants.
- (B) If required, the Acting Head of Housing, following consultation with the Housing Portfolio Leader, be authorised to make amendments to the draft 2014-15 Housing Services Annual Report prior to circulation.

#### Reasons for Decisions

The Council was required to publish the 2014-15 Annual Housing Report by 1 October 2015.

A draft Annual Report was attached to the covering report as Appendix 1.

The Annual Report must be circulated to all tenants and this will be achieved as part of the Autumn edition of Hometalk.

#### **46. Proposed Reduction in Rents in Social Housing in England**

Consideration was given to the Joint Report of the Head of Finance and the Acting Head of Housing (Item 10.1 – 10.19 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Finance advised that there was an error in recommendation 2.1(a) and the reference to 2014/15 should read 2019/20.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The contents of the report be noted in relation to:
  - (i) the financial impact of the proposed reduction in social housing rent resulting in:
    - a reduction in Housing Revenue Account (HRA) resources of

- £6.1 million over the next four years;
      - an ongoing reduction in rent from 2019/20 onwards of £2.5 million per annum;
      - the removal of £75.8 million of resources from the Council's 30 year HRA Business Plan.
    - (ii) the resultant potential shortfall on the approved Capital Programme to 2017-18 of £1.8 million;
  - and,
  - (iii) the current action taken in respect to lobbying against the Government's Rent Reduction proposals with the following:
    - o Cannock Chase Member of Parliament, Ms. Amanda Milling;
    - o Housing and Planning Minister, Brandon Lewis;
    - o Shadow Housing and Planning Minister, John Healey;
    - o District Council's Network (DCN);
    - o Local Government Association (LGA).
- (B) The Managing Director be authorised to continue to challenge the Government's proposals through lobbying and judicial review as set out in paragraphs 5.50 to 5.54 of the report.
- (C) In light of the potential loss of HCA Affordable Housing Grant and the impact on the new build programme, that the Council proceeds with the procurement exercise for the Redevelopment of Garage Sites and Other Council Owned Land to receipt of tender stage, but that no contract award be made until a review of the HRA Business Plan and associated Capital Programme has been completed.
- (D) The current medium term HRA Business Plan be reviewed to identify compensating measures to enable the scheme to proceed, including the rescheduling of debt and other measures that mitigate the immediate impact on service provision.
- (E) Any further progress on the uncommitted element of the Council's new build programme be deferred, in particular with regard to the proposed use of the £1.94 million of resources to fund an additional 16 Council dwellings, pending a comprehensive review of the HRA Business Plan.
- (F) A review of the Council's 30 year Business Plan be authorised, to:
- (i) undertake a full assessment of the implications of the Government's Rent Reduction proposals;
  - (ii) determine options available to mitigate the impact of the Government's Rent Reduction proposals;
- and,
- (iii) receive a further report on the implications of the Government's Rent Reduction proposals.
- (G) Where the preparatory work as set out in paragraph 5.54 of the report established grounds for a judicial review, a further report be received to

consider the implications of undertaking a challenge against the Government's proposal to reduce social rents by 1% a year for 4 years commencing April 2016.

### Reasons for Decisions

Local authorities' Housing Revenue Accounts now operate under the Government's Self Financing Regime. The regime was introduced in April 2012 to give local authorities the resources, incentives and flexibility they need to manage their own housing stock for the long-term and to drive up quality and efficiency.

The Self Financing regime involved the Council effectively purchasing from the Government its Housing Stock based upon a valuation model. The model was based upon the national social rent policy which essentially involved increasing rents by RPI + 0.5% per annum.

The assumptions in relation to Rent income were seen as key are key to effective business planning for local authorities. In May 2014 the Government committed to a 10 year rent policy of CPI + 1% and stated:

*"Ten years of rent certainty should put them in a strong position to plan strategically and utilise the freedoms they now have following our reforms – including the ability to keep full rental income – and invest in homes and service"*

In accordance with the HRA self financing regime, (whereby authorities can use the whole of their rental income to support housing investment – rental income can be invested directly or can be used to finance additional borrowing), the Council in February 2015 approved the allocation of £2.340 million to provide new housing and the freezing of rent levels at a cost of £1.5 million that fully utilised the available balances of the HRA over the medium term.

The Chancellor in his Summer Budget back tracked on the May 2014 policy by determining that rents in social housing in England will reduce by 1% a year for 4 years.

Cannock Chase Council had assumed a 2% increase in rent per annum and the literal interpretation of the proposal is a 3% per annum reduction in rent income for four years for Cannock Chase and equates to £600,000 per annum with the ongoing reduction after 4 years of in excess of £2.5 million. The impact on the 30-year HRA Business Plan was a reduction in resources of £75.8 million

The Council has entered into commitments to build new houses, in support of Government Policy, and implemented a rent freeze in 2015-16 that now puts in jeopardy its medium term financial viability.

It was proposed that the Council challenges the proposals to reduce rent by 1% per annum for the next 4 years on the grounds that it was:

- Not in accordance with the Government Social Rent Policy for 2015-16 to 2024-25;
- Was contrary to the Self Financing Regime ;
- Has not been subject to consultation.

It was proposed that the Council requests that

- (a) an exemption from the rent reduction requirement to avoid the serious

financial difficulties that it will be faced if clause 19 is complied with;

- (b) a compensating grant be received from the Government, similar to the Council Tax Freeze grant, to offset the impact of the change in policy

OR

- (c) a repayment of the settlement sum based on the overstatement in the Council's housing stock valuation of £10.174 million.

The amendment of rent increases from RPI + 0.5% per annum to a 1% reduction for four years reduces Cannock Chases valuation from £85.028 million to £74.854 million, an overstatement of £10.174 million or 12%.

The Government in response to the Self Financing consultation stated that Clause 169 would allow "a further adjustment to the debt allocated to local authorities if a future policy change has a significant material effect on their costs or income" and that the measure "is designed to protect both councils and the Exchequer."

#### **47. 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).



**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**CABINET**

**HELD ON THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER, 2015 AT 4:00 P.M.**

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

**PART 2**

**48. Cannock Town Centre – Future Positioning**

Consideration was given to the Not for Publication Report of the Head of Economic Development (Item 12.1 – 12.8, plus Appendix, of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Portfolio Leader advised that in October 2013 Cabinet decided not to pursue commercial redevelopment of the Beecroft Road car park site at that time. At the same time Cabinet recognised the need to identify future investment options for Cannock town centre and agreed to get specialist advice to review development and improvement opportunities for the town centre.

Consultants GVA (supported by The Retail Group) were commissioned by the Council, Staffordshire County Council and The West Bromwich Bank (the owners of Cannock Shopping Centre), to look at the future for Cannock town centre. The Report suggests a number of actions to position the town centre to respond to the challenges it faces, to better serve its catchment and to secure its future success.

The report suggests that the future for Cannock town centre should be based on strengthening its role as a daily and weekly needs centre. The centre needs to expand its range of goods and services – not just retail, but leisure, food and drink, health, beauty, financial and student services - to better meet the needs of the catchment and attract them into the centre on a more frequent basis and to spend more time there.

It means planning for smaller mixed use redevelopment opportunities producing a more varied town centre. It also means managing the town centre to support existing as well as new businesses by, for example, improving its environment and public realm, the markets offer, supporting events and festivals, and continuing to encourage occupation of vacant space through the Discretionary Town Centre Business Rates Scheme.

In summary the key recommendations are that:

- the Council shares the findings of the Report with stakeholders and potential investors and consult on the production of a Plan and Prospectus for the development of the town centre based on the vision and actions in the Report;
- an Area Action Plan for Cannock town centre is produced as part of the Cannock Chase Local Plan (Part 2);
- the opportunity provided by the Beecroft Road Car Park site is assessed as part of the local plan process;

- further feasibility work is undertaken on the investment opportunity sites identified in the Report including the commissioning of specialist advice; and that Staffordshire County Council be asked to contribute to this work.

#### RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The contents of the report, 'The Future of Cannock Town Centre', undertaken by GVA (the Report) be noted.
- (B) The vision and actions in the Report be endorsed, including positioning Cannock town centre as a strong daily and weekly needs centre which better meets the needs of its catchment population in terms of range and quality in a compact and 'useable' town centre.
- (C) The Head of Economic Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Leader for Town Centre Regeneration, share the findings of the Report with stakeholders and potential investors and consult on the production of a Plan and Prospectus, for the development of the town centre based on the vision and actions in the Report, subject to any unfunded actions being brought back to Cabinet for consideration.
- (D) The Council commits to producing an Area Action Plan for Cannock town centre as part of the Cannock Chase Local Plan (Part 2) to establish formal planning policy support for the growth and changes required in the town centre up to 2028, subject to any funding requirement to support implementation being brought back to Cabinet for consideration.
- (E) The Head of Economic Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Leader for Town Centre Regeneration, be authorised to undertake further feasibility work on the investment opportunity sites identified in the Report including the commissioning of specialist advice; and that Staffordshire County Council be asked to contribute to this work, subject to any unfunded actions being brought back to Cabinet for consideration.
- (F) The opportunity provided by the Beecroft Road Car Park site be assessed as part of the Area Action Plan for Cannock town centre in decision (D) above.
- (G) Non-planning policy initiatives and interventions to support Cannock town centre, including those identified in the Report, be considered as part of the Plan and Prospectus identified in decision (C) above.

#### Reasons for Decisions

In October 2013 Cabinet decided not to pursue commercial redevelopment of the Beecroft Road car park site at that time. In making this decision Cabinet recognised the need to identify future investment options for Cannock town centre and resolved to procure specialist advice to review development and improvement opportunities for the town centre. The Report (at Appendix 2 to the covering report) from the consultants GVA (supported by The Retail Group) responded to a commission by the Council, Staffordshire County Council and The West Bromwich Bank (the owners of Cannock Shopping Centre), to look at the future for Cannock town centre. The Report suggested a number of actions to position the town centre to respond to the challenges it faces currently, to

better serve its catchment and to secure its future success.

The meeting closed at 4.50 p.m.

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LEADER