

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET

HELD ON THURSDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 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
Allen, F.W.C.	Housing Portfolio Leader
Todd, Mrs. D.M.	Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader

The Leader welcomed Miss Nirmal Samrai, Head of Housing and Waste Management, to her first Cabinet meeting.

49. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs. M.A. Davis, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader, and A. Dudson, Environment Portfolio Leader.

50. 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>
-	-	-

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

51. Updates from Portfolio Leaders

Crime and Partnerships

Taxi Operators' Feasibility Study – Improvement of Fleets to Increase Wheelchair Accessibility

The Portfolio Leader advised that the Joint Taxi Operators Forum that he chaired had received a report prepared by the taxi operators exploring the feasibility of

improvements to the fleet to increase levels of wheelchair accessibility. Unfortunately, the study had concluded that the associated costs were prohibitive. Nonetheless, the Portfolio Leader wished to record his thanks to the Operators for the work they had undertaken.

Staffordshire Police Transformation Project

The Portfolio Leader reported that he had been invited to attend a local briefing session on the Staffordshire Police Transformation Project, as requested by the Community Safety Scrutiny Committee. The briefing would be in the form of an update on progress with the transformation of the service, followed by a question and answer session.

Housing

Moss Road Estate Redevelopment Scheme

The Portfolio Leader advised that the Council's first new build houses had been completed and handed over to the Council on Monday, 9 November, 2015. The properties, two 2-bedroom houses had been advertised via the Council's choice based lettings website, Cannock Chase Homes, and new tenants had accepted and signed up for the properties, and were in the process of moving in.

A rolling programme of handovers was in progress until completion in March, 2018. In total there would be eight 4-bedroom houses; twenty seven 3-bedroom houses, including two wheelchair adapted; and thirty 2-bedroom houses.

In addition to the Council's properties, market sale and equity share houses were also under construction. The show home was open and the first sales had been completed.

52. Minutes of Cabinet Meeting of 24 September, 2015

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September, 2015, be approved as a correct record and signed.

53. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan of Decisions for the period November, 2015 to January, 2016 (Item 5.1 of the Official Minutes of the Council) was considered.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period November, 2015 to January, 2016, be noted.

54. Recommendations of Scrutiny Committees

None.

55. Review of Council Tax and Business Rates Recovery

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Finance (Item 7.1 – 7.5 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Reasons for Decision

The report was by way of an update on progress achieved since the introduction of a Billing, Collection and Recovery Policy and a Bankruptcy, Insolvency and Charging Order Policy, both of which were approved by Cabinet on 20 November 2014.

The policies formalised procedures to tackle the Council Tax and Business Rate arrears, which despite good collection rates, had increased over a number of years. In particular, the policies sought to provide a means to address the actions of individuals and companies who regularly defaulted on their bills, ran up large debts and took specific actions to avoid their debts being recovered.

56. 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

57. Waste Collection Service and Treatment of Organic Waste

Consideration was given to the Not for Publication Report of the Deputy Managing Director (Item 9.1 – 9.16 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) Option 2 be approved as the preferred option for the collection / disposal of Organic Waste, with Green Waste being collected separately (all year round) and Food Waste being collected in the residual bin (on an alternate weekly basis).
- (B) In accordance with (A) above:
 - (i) Jack Moody Ltd is the preferred contractor for the disposal and treatment of organic garden waste; and
 - (ii) Biffa Municipal Ltd is the preferred contractor for the waste collection service.
- (C) In order to provide a smooth transition of service delivery, Green Waste should be collected separately with effect from February 2016.
- (D) Council at its meeting on 18 November be requested to approve a Supplementary Estimate of £50,000, to be funded from Working Balances, to enable the necessary Communication and Education campaigns to be undertaken for the proposed change in service in the run up to the new contracts commencing in April 2016.

Reasons for Decision

In light of the severe budget pressures facing the Council from 2016-17 and the potential to achieve economies of scale from bringing all the collection streams under one contract, Cabinet at its meeting on the 18 December 2014 resolved

- (a) That the Council's Waste Collection Service is subject to an OJEU compliant procurement exercise to secure a single contract for the delivery of all waste collection services, with effect from 1 April 2016.
- (b) That an "in-house bid" is submitted for the proposed single contract.

Subsequent to Cabinet's decision the Council became aware of a review of Green Waste Recycling Credits by the Waste Disposal Authority (Staffordshire County Council) .The cost of disposing of Organic Waste and the associated

recycling credits , represent a key aspect of the overall service hence it was necessary to include this in the procurement process. The Council currently collects garden and food waste together; however, this has to be recycled through “in vessel” composting which is some 40% more expensive than “wind row” composting, which could be used if garden waste was collected alone. A number of Councils have recently taken food waste out of their garden and food waste to save money on disposal.

The overall approach to the procurement process was to combine the anticipated net Disposal costs with Waste Collection Service costs and to base the evaluation of the overall service upon a financial ceiling of the adjusted budget cost. The financial ceiling, representing the cost of the current service, and the forecast net cost of treating organic waste. In addition, bidders were asked to price for three options:-

- (i) Green Waste and Food mixed together;
- (ii) Green Waste only (all year round) and
- (iii) Green Waste seasonal collection.

The procurement process consisted of two separate tenders – Waste Collection Service and Treatment of Organic Waste (i.e. Disposal of Waste) – with Treatment of Organic Waste being undertaken first. Bidders were informed that the actual service option would, however, not be determined until the overall contract cost could be established following the outcome of the waste collection contract. As a result, it was determined that food waste should be excluded from the organic green waste collection. As this represented a change in service delivery which would require effective communication and policing, it was proposed that a communications budget be set aside in the current year, and the change in system be introduced from 1 February, 2016, in advance of the new contract becoming operational.

58. Debt Recovery

Consideration was given to the Not for Publication Report of the Head of Finance (Item 10.1 – 10.20 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The amounts detailed in Appendices 1, 2, and 3 of the report be written off for the reasons stated.
- (B) That the actions of the Head of Finance in writing off irrecoverable debts below £1,000 be noted.

Reasons for Decisions

The Council, as a billing authority, has a statutory duty to collect Council Tax and Business Rates. Recovery procedures which had previously been approved by Council had been followed, including issue of bills, reminder notices, final notices, court action and collection by external bailiff companies before any debts were considered for write off.

Although the agreed recovery procedures were strictly adhered to, ultimately there were debts which could not be collected for various reasons:

- (i) Unable to locate.
- (ii) Deceased persons, no assets.
- (iii) Ill health and limited means.
- (iv) Bankrupt, insolvent or hardship.
- (v) Not cost effective.

All debts under £1,000 considered for write off are submitted to the Head of Financial Management for approval, in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

All debts over £1,000 considered for write off are submitted to Cabinet for approval, in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

Council Tax

Appendix 1 listed Council Tax arrears over £1,000 not collected for the reasons stated. There were 18 cases with arrears totalling £28,102.27.

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

Non-Domestic Rates

Appendix 2 listed Non-Domestic arrears over £1,000 not collected for the reasons stated.

Some of the Business Rates debts are being recommended for write-off on the grounds of insolvency of the companies that previously occupied properties. It is not uncommon, in these circumstances for the properties concerned to be re-occupied, fairly quickly, by new companies often with similar names to the insolvent organisation. It often, therefore, appears that the company has continued to trade, though this is not the case as the new occupier is an entirely separate legal entity to the previous occupant and cannot be held liable for rates due from the insolvent company. Debts are only submitted for write-off when it is assured that they cannot be recovered.

Housing Benefit Overpayments

Appendix 3 listed Housing Benefit Overpayments arrears over £1,000 not collected for the reasons stated. There were 4 cases with arrears totalling £20,307.19.

The meeting closed at 4.25 p.m.

LEADER