

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD ON MONDAY 6 OCTOBER 2014 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT:
Councillors

Toth, J. (Chairman)
Kraujalis, J.T. (Vice-Chairman)

Anslow, C.	Gamble, B.
Bernard, J.D.	Jones, R. (substitute for Fisher, P.A.)
Burley, Mrs. J.L.	Pearson, A.
Buttery, M.	Snape, P.A.
Cartwright, Mrs. S.M.	Todd, R.
Freeman, Miss M.A.	Witton, P.

7. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.A. Fisher (substituted by Cllr. R. Jones) and Mrs. D. Grice.

8. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restrictions on Voting by Members and Party Whip Declarations

No declarations of interests or party whip declarations were received.

9. Minutes

Minute No. 4

Councillor Pearson asked if information had been sought as requested about the number of people surveyed who felt safe in their local area after dark.

The Policy & Performance Manager replied that the survey referred to was conducted by Staffordshire Police. They surveyed 1450 people across Staffordshire (of which 150 were from Cannock) over 3 different 'waves'.

Councillor J. Bernard asked if information about grass cutting scheme for tenants had been circulated as requested.

The Head of Housing & Waste Management replied that this had been circulated to Members after the meeting via email.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

10. Work Programme 2014-15

An updated version of the Committee's work programme was tabled at the meeting for consideration.

The Corporate Director reported that the two meetings of the Delivering Change Panel scheduled for early January 2015 would not go ahead if the Cabinet proposed a balanced budget for 2015/16. He further reported that following advice received from the Monitoring Officer, the Committee was unable to include 'Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Financial Performance, Recovery Plan and impact upon District' on the work programme as this was a matter which fell within the remit of the Health Scrutiny Committee.

Accordingly, the Chairman recommended that the Health Scrutiny Committee be formally requested consider including this as an item of business on its work programme instead, to ensure that the matter would still be considered.

Councillor Kraujalis then recommended that in place of the CCG item, update on the Bridgtown and new A% Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) be included on the work programme for the 27 November 2014 meeting.

Councillor R. Jones asked if air quality monitoring to be undertaken along Horsefair, in Rugeley.

The Environmental Protection Manager replied that monitoring was generally undertaken when pollutant levels reached a specific threshold and residents' properties were close enough to the highway to be affected. In the case of Horsefair, properties were not considered to be in close enough proximity; however nitrogen oxide monitors could be installed on a pilot basis.

Councillor Anslow asked for clarification on what action could be taken in respect of the Bridgtown/A5 corridor to alleviate the air quality issues.

The Environmental Protection Manager replied that the AQMA action plan detailed what could be done. The Council was restricted in what action it could take as the Highways Agency was responsible for the A5. Pressure had been put on the Agency and M6 Toll Road operator to seek ways to divert traffic elsewhere.

Councillor R. Todd asked if monitoring of the effects of pollutants upon car drivers and passengers was ever undertaken.

The Environmental Protection Manager replied that no such monitoring was done.

Councillor Kraujalis then recommended that a review of how Scrutiny was undertaken also be included on the work programme, as this had been raised by Members in recent years as an ongoing area of concern. In 2013/14 a Task &

Finish had been set up for this purpose but was not able to fulfil its remit.

RESOLVED:

That:

(A) The remaining 2014/15 work programme be agreed as follows:

- 27 November 2014:
 1. Q2 Performance Report 2014/15
 2. Review of Community Forums – input from Scrutiny
 3. Bridgtown AQMA and new A5 AQMA update
 4. Review of how Scrutiny is undertaken
- 5 and 8 January 2014 – Delivering Change Panels (if required).
- 12 February 2015:
 1. Q3 Performance Report 2014/15
 2. Outcome of Review of Community Forums
 3. Effect of open markets on existing retailers
 4. Review of how Scrutiny is undertaken – update

(B) That the Health Scrutiny Committee be requested to consider including 'CCG financial performance, recovery plan and impact upon District' as part of its work programme for the year.

(C) That the Scrutiny Review Task & Finish Group be comprised of the following councillors: Kraujalis (lead Member), Anslow, J. Bernard, Cartwright and R. Todd.

11. Feedback from Cabinet on the Scrutiny Committee Review of Air Quality and Industrial Emissions

The Chairman drew the Committee's attention to the extract of the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 18 September 2014 (Item 5.1 – 5.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Councillor Kraujalis gave his thanks to the Cabinet for giving their full endorsement to the recommendations and suggestion that a liaison group for Norton Aluminium be established.

The Environmental Protection Manager advised that the liaison group had not yet been established as discussions were still ongoing, however the intention was for it to be comprised of residents and district and parish councils representatives.

RESOLVED:

That the feedback from Cabinet be accepted.

12. Staffordshire County Council Library Services Consultation

The Corporate Director gave the Committee a short overview of the consultation (Item 6.1 – 6.32 of the Official Minutes of the Council), advising that any responses agreed would be sent in a letter from the Chairman, as the consultation was due to close on 7 October 2014.

Members discussed the consultation at length and raised several concerns (detailed below) regarding the proposals.

RESOLVED:

That a letter be sent from the Chairman to Staffordshire County Council (SCC) detailing the following concerns raised by the Committee regarding proposed changes to the delivery of library services across the District:

- Use of volunteers to run services in Brereton, Heath Hayes, Hednesford and Norton Canes libraries – unclear as to where volunteers would be sourced from and whether they would have the right skills set to run services effectively. Only one example in document of where volunteers have been used elsewhere (Warwickshire), further examples should have been provided to better illustrate proposals. Also have concerns about proposal to reduce opening hours at Cannock and Rugeley libraries.
- Consideration should have been given to relocating library services into shared building spaces with other existing public/voluntary services so as to reduce running costs and achieve savings without the need to use volunteers and community organisations to run the library services. Furthermore, Stafford library should be moved out of Shire Hall and into Staffordshire Place, in order that Shire Hall can generate revenue for the County Council and remove the need for savings to be made from the library services budget.*
- Libraries were important not just as centres of learning/education, but also as places to support social cohesion amongst different age groups and provide social hubs for the community. Accordingly, the County Council should consider whether it was appropriate to seek short term cost savings from the library services budget.
- Clarification was required on how book stocks would be kept up to date and funded at those libraries classified under the 'library local' category, as if stocks were to be reduced or not maintained, then there was a risk those libraries could face permanent closure.
- Request that feedback about the outcome of the consultation and future for library services in the District and wider County be given to the Committee.

**Members have since been made aware of a proposal by the County Council to relocate Stafford library into units 3 and 4 of Staffordshire Place. The proposal was due to be considered by the County Council's Cabinet on 15 October, 2014.*

13. West Midlands Overview and Scrutiny Network

The Chairman drew the Committee's attention to the terms of reference for the Network (Item 7.1 – 7.3 of the Official Minutes of the Council) and advised that he would attend meetings of the Network (or the Vice-Chairman in his absence).

The Corporate Director advised that the Network was a useful tool for sharing and considering best practice from other councils, and would be helpful in supporting the review of Scrutiny as agreed for the work programme.

14. Quarter 1 Performance Report 2014-15

Consideration was given to the late report of the Chief Executive (Item 9.1 – 9.55 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Chief Executive was unable to attend the meeting, so provided the following written responses to the performance indicators not achieved under the Corporate Improvement portfolio:

'Development of a partnership concordat'

"This was being negotiated directly between the two Chief Executives of Cannock Chase Council (CCDC) and Staffordshire County Council, however, this was now on hold pending the appointment of a new Chief Executive at SCC."

'Development of an action plan to support delivery of the above'

"Plans were still being put in place to ensure that integrated working was pursued between Staffordshire County Council, Cannock Chase Council, Health and Police staff, regardless of the lack of a signed concordat."

Councillor Snape noted that the above indicators were dependent on when the County Council would appoint a new chief executive, so wanted to know when this was likely to happen.

The Corporate Director replied that the recruitment process had not yet commenced, but the County Council's Director of Law & Governance had been appointed to the role on an interim basis.

Performance indicator – 'Office Accommodation – support the move of partners into the CCDC Civic Centre'

"The Police have confirmed that they will not be following up on their proposal to move into the Civic Building. Families First have also informed the Council of their decision not to occupy the building. This decision was being discussed by senior officers of both organisations.

The CCG will be moving into the building in the coming weeks, as will County Registrars. There have also been approaches from other services providers."

The Chairman asked if the target for moving people into the building was based on physical numbers of staff.

The Corporate Director replied that this was not the case, and that it was based on the need to achieve a rental income of circa £200,000 to support the Council's financial position.

Councillor R. Todd queried whether new staff moving in from partner organisations would be using the Civic Centre car park too.

The Corporate Director replied there that pressure on the use of existing car parking spaces was one of the biggest limiting factors to relocating partner staff into the building, however additional provision was being looked into. In terms of the Members' car park, agreement had been reached that officers must not park there prior to and during meetings of full Council.

The Corporate Director replied that this was not the case, and that it was based on the need to achieve a rental income of £200,000 which had been built into the Council's budgets.

'Office Accommodation – development of combined reception service for all organisations operating from CCDC Civic Centre.'

"Meetings were now being held to redesign the Council's reception area to reflect the services being provided from the Civic Centre. It was planned for these changes to now be made without undue delay. Further changes were going to be implemented to improve security in the area, with CCTV cameras due to be installed in the next few days."

Councillor Pearson asked what was going to happen in terms of redeveloping the reception area now that the Police were not going to be moving into the building.

The Policy & Performance Manager replied that due to partnership staff being located on floors four and five, reception staff were already providing more of a combined service. Knowing that the Police were no longer relocating would allow for a longer term plan to be developed about how best to utilise the reception area going forward.

Councillor J. Bernard queried whether panic buttons would be installed in reception alongside the installation of CCTV.

The Policy & Performance Manager replied that panic buttons were already in place, which linked both to internal staff and the Cannock Police station. The aim of using CCTV was to act as an additional deterrent against people be abusive or threatening to staff.

Crime & Partnerships portfolio:

'Percentage of people who feel safe in their local area after dark – target 80%'

Councillor Snape queried why this indicator was shown as having been completed when the percentage rate achieved was only 77%.

The Corporate Director replied the indicator appeared to have been scored incorrectly, so would be checked against the quarter two data.

Culture & Sport portfolio:

'To develop Stile Cop Cemetery (Phase 2)'

Councillor Pearson queried why work on this project was taking so long to complete.

The Head of Commissioning replied that the delays were as stated in the report, however works were due to be completed in a phased process, with the initial works expected to take three to four months.

Housing portfolio:

'Place (Housing) 1 – support the delivery of 120 affordable housing units by March 2015' and 'implement the 2014-15 HRA Capital Programme by providing...'

Councillor Snape queried whether these two indicators should be shown as question marks (in progress) rather than completed, as although work on both had commenced, the target for the year had not yet been achieved.

The Head of Housing & Waste Management replied that he was confident both indicators would be achieved by the end of year, but was happy to amend the status of both in future reports. It was agreed to amend these to question marks.

'Place (Housing) 14 – percentage of homeless decisions determined within 33 days – target 75%'

Councillor J. Bernard queried how quickly the outstanding decisions were determined (i.e. those not made with the 33 days target).

The Head of Housing & Waste Management replied that CCDC completion figures appeared lower than other local authorities, but this was down to how other Councils determined their completion rates.

Members expressed concern that the approach taken by other authorities did not accurately reflect the status of their homeless applications, and so endorsed the approach taken by CCDC.

Financial performance:

'Home security grants'

Councillor J. Bernard queried why there was low expenditure on this budget so far for the year.

The Environmental Protection Manager replied that the grants were generally supplied to residents who had been victims of burglary, which relied on data being provided by the Police.

The Corporate Director advised that the current £60,000 budget was protected for the remainder of the year, but could change for 2015/16 if not fully spent.

Councillor Snape suggested that this matter should be referred through Cllr. Holder as the portfolio leader for Crime & Partnerships.

Councillor Freeman queried if the Police were actively making referrals, as the budget spend to date seemed too low.

The Environmental Protection Manager replied that he would seek clarification from the Police and Council Partnerships team as to what was currently happening.

'Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Year 1 and Year 3'

Councillor R. Jones queried why there was low expenditure showing against each of these budgets.

The Corporate Director replied that in respect of year 1, payments would only be made once work had been completed. For year 3, four different schemes had been proposed; however nothing had yet been confirmed or commenced, hence why no expenditure was shown. The issue was that the owners of the conservation buildings had to meet at least 25% of the total cost of the project and to date, none of the owners had confirmed their willingness to make that contribution.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The performance information relating to the Priority Delivery Plans (PDPs) be noted.
- (B) The actions and indicators rated red or amber, and the associated commentary/remedial action proposed by the Lead Officers be noted.
- (C) The General Fund financial performance against budget for the first quarter be noted.
- (D) That the performance indicators 'Place (Housing) 1 – support the delivery of 120 affordable housing units by March 2015' and 'implement the 2014-15 HRA Capital Programme by providing...' be re-classified from green to amber, in future reports, to reflect that although work on both indicators has commenced, the full year actions have not yet been completed.

15. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 27 November, 2014, 4:00pm.

The meeting closed at 5:40pm

CHAIRMAN