

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD ON THURSDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2015 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.

Pearson, A.

Bernard, J.D.

Todd, R.

Freeman, Miss M.A.

Witton, P.

Gamble, B.

24. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors M. Buttery, Mrs. S.M. Cartwright, P.A. Fisher and P.A. Snape.

25. 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.

26. Minutes

Minute No. 20 – Air Quality Update

The Environmental Protection Manager circulated to Members an update on the Council's air quality work, which covered:

- ECO Stars Fleet Recognition Scheme:-
 - Assessment of operators' fleets and management practices
 - Recognition of current good practice
 - Support for further efficiency and environmental improvements
- Air Quality Grant:-
 - Funding of £80,000
 - 8 member authorities across Staffordshire
 - Duration of two years
 - Recruitment of a minimum of 40 vehicle fleet operators
- Next steps:-
 - Appointment of the consultants
 - Promotion of scheme
 - Engagement of Fleet Managers

- Air Quality and M6 Toll Road:-
 - Free one-month trial in July 2013
 - 442 companies took up the offer, including 8 companies from the Cannock/Burntwood area and 7 from the Tamworth area
 - 33,000 free trips – 2,000 for local companies
 - Unable to calculate the vehicle pick up from the A5
 - 250-300 trips per day have been retained
- Feedback;
 - Average of 20 minutes per trip saved
 - Fee of £8-9 would provide an incentive
 - Current Toll fee is £11
 - Other incentives – free overnight parking and meal voucher and deals for coaches stopping at Services
- Air Quality data;
- Air Quality in Rugeley;

The Chairman commented that the M6 Toll Road trial scheme had not stopped lorries from still using the A5 and so queried why it had been stated the scheme had no impact?

The Environmental Protection Manager replied that the intention of the free trial was to encourage more businesses to use the Toll Road rather than the A5; however this had unfortunately not been the case.

Councillor R. Todd queried if the Council had met any of its targets under the Clean Air Act 1993?

The Environmental Protection Manager replied that in the time monitoring stations had been in place, air quality had improved, but the Council was still 'above' the relevant targets. Increases in traffic flow balanced against improvements in fuel technologies had to be taken into account as part of this.

Councillor Gamble queried if there had been a significant improvement health over the last 20 years as a result of monitoring being undertaken?

The Environmental Protection Manager replied that it was difficult to assess the public health impact as monitoring was not undertaken for this purpose, however the Council did have opportunities to bid for funding if air quality was deemed to be a major public health issue for the District.

Councillor Gamble then queried why monitoring was undertaken if not for public health reasons?

The Environmental Protection Manager replied that bids for public health funding had to be evidence based, and at present the Council did not have such evidence available, but was looking at what other local authorities were doing on this. Additionally, air quality monitoring was a statutory requirement.

Councillor Pearson queried how the ECO Stars Scheme was going to operate?

The Environmental Protection Manager replied that it would be a mainly paper-based exercise, focussed on working with relevant businesses to review where improvements could be made. Star ratings will be given on basis of assessment outcome.

Councillor Kraujalis queried how relevant businesses would be identified, suggesting that businesses which most used the A5 should be focussed on.

The Environmental Protection Manager replied that it was a countywide scheme, so businesses would be targeted as necessary, but locally it would cover the District, but factors such as A5 usage would be discussed with the scheme consultants.

Councillor Witton queried how often emissions checks were carried out on lorries?

The Environmental Protection Manager replied that he would have to find this out and report back, as these checks were carried out by the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA). Additionally, there was a facility available on the Council's website to report 'smoky vehicles'.

Councillor Kraujalis requested that this be made more visible on the website and better promoted.

Minute No. 19 – Q2 Performance Report 2014-15

In response to the questions from Councillor J. Bernard on potential overspends for the Crime & Partnerships Portfolio and Culture & Sport Portfolios budgets, the Managing Director reported the following:

- Crime & Partnerships budget would not be overspent as there sufficient reserve funding available to meet the spending requirements;
- Culture & Sport budget:-
 - A backdated rateable value increase of £10,000 for Cannock Park Golf Course had been incurred which was unexpected;
 - Lower income from the cemeteries had been received than anticipated, but the situation had improved;
 - Cashflow issue from Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust (WLCT) in respect of boiler replacement was going to be balanced out over the course of the current contract.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

27. Library Services Review – Feedback from Staffordshire County Council

The Managing Director reported he had been advised that no County Council representatives were available to attend this meeting, so suggested that a representative be requested to attend the next scheduled meeting to provide a briefing on the final outcomes of the future of library services in the District.

The Chairman raised disappointment about the lack of attendance again by a County Council representative on this matter.

The Managing Director made reference to the County Council report 'Libraries in a Connected Staffordshire – Part 3', which was to be considered by the County's Cabinet on 18 February, highlighting the following points:

- £350,000 had already been saved from the Library Services budget as part of the County's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS);
- If the proposals contained in the report were approved in full, further savings of £975,000 would be achieved on top of the £350,000 already referred to;
- Additionally, savings of £350,000 from the provision of mobile and travelling library services was under consideration;
- Future service delivery for fixed libraries was proposed on a basis of either 'SCC Managed/Delivered, SCC Managed/Community Delivered or Community Managed/Delivered';
- Cannock library was proposed to be SCC Managed/Delivered;
- Heath Hayes and Norton Canes libraries were proposed to be SCC Managed/Community Delivered;
- Confirmation was needed on what the proposals were regarding Hednesford library, as local interest had been received about running it as a Community Managed/Delivered service.
- Paragraph 76 of the report implied that no fixed based libraries in the County would be subject to closure.

Councillor Gamble commented that where service reductions had been proposed, local residents should receive a council tax rebate on the proportion levied by the County Council.

In respect of Heath Hayes library, Councillor J. Bernard commented that community contract had still not been released, therefore the proposal could not progress as yet.

The Managing Director replied that the report mentioned a procurement exercise would be undertaken; therefore the contract may not be issued until after that exercise had been completed.

Immediately after the meeting, a copy of the County Council's report was circulated to Members for information.

28. Update on Accommodation Proposals for the Civic Centre Ballroom

Consideration was given to the update provided by the Chief Executive (Item 5.1 – 5.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Further to the feedback provided by the former Chief Executive, the Managing Director provided the following update:

- At present there were no options in place for potential tenants of the Ballroom area as Police and Social Care services had declined the option;

- The Council was now no longer looking for new tenants to bring into the Civic Centre office accommodation;
- The most important issue to be resolved was of the 80 or 90 District Council staff who were currently working in cramped conditions;
- Looking at using all available space in the building to resolve this issue as a matter of urgency, but without using the Ballroom area where possible;
- If the above can be achieved, then a procurement exercise will be undertaken by late 2015 to return the Ballroom to its intended use – impression from Members is that this would be their preference;
- Due to the ongoing financial position of the Council, no subsidy would be provided to help run the Ballroom facility;
- The building was now licensed to host weddings and civil partnerships, so the Ballroom could add potential to such events taking place.

Councillor Pearson agreed that the Ballroom should be brought back into use, especially as this would help with the hosting of Civic functions for the Chairman of the Council.

Councillor Freeman also agreed with the Ballroom proposal and commented that morale was low amongst Officers affected by the office conditions, so it was pleasing to hear that action was being taken to rectify the situation.

Councillor Gamble queried what would happen in respect of Chairman's access to the Jack Holsten room and likely car parking issues?

The Managing Director replied his understanding was that weddings/civil ceremonies would mostly take place at weekends and out of hours, and the Registrars had been advised that dates/times when Council meetings were being held were unavailable. Accordingly, Chairman's access and car parking should not be adversely affected.

Councillor J. Bernard queried where waiting areas were to be located, as these were commonplace in standard Registrars offices.

The Managing Director replied that he was unsure of what had been proposed.

Councillor Freeman suggested that the front entrance to the Civic Suite could be used, but security access for the rest of the building would have to be maintained.

29. Community Forums Review – Update

Consideration was given to the Briefing Note of the Head of Governance (Item 6.1 – 6.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Members agreed that rather than undertaking a discussion on the review at this point, they would wait until the final report was made available.

30. Review of How Scrutiny is Undertaken – Working Group Update

Councillor Kraujalis, Lead Member of the Working Group, reported that he wanted to look into how other district councils in the region undertook Scrutiny with the aim of bringing forward ideas about how Scrutiny could be done better and made more useful here. He then advised that contact would be made with the West Midlands Scrutiny Network to determine which authorities in the region had good Scrutiny arrangements in order to arrange a visit to such authorities.

The Committee agreed that such a visit should be undertaken, comprised of the Working Group, or where feasible, members of the Committee itself.

31. Date of Next Meeting

As the next scheduled meeting was not due to take place until July 2015, the Committee agreed that an additional meeting be arranged for 13 April 2015 to consider:

- 2014-15 Q3 Performance Report;
- County Council Library Services Review update;
- Scrutiny Review update;
- Community Forums Review update

The meeting closed at 5:15pm

CHAIRMAN