

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**HELD ON MONDAY 13 APRIL 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)

Bernard, J.D.	Snape, P.A.
Buttery, M.	Todd, R.
Freeman, Miss M.A.	Witton, P.
Pearson, A.	

Also in attendance – Councillor Mrs C. Mitchell.

**32. Apologies**

Apologies were submitted for Councillor C. Anslow.

**33. 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.

**34. Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed.

**35. Library Services Review – Feedback from Staffordshire County Council**

Members received a presentation from Janene Cox, Commissioner for Tourism & the Cultural County, and Catherine Mann, Libraries and Arts Manager from Staffordshire County Council which covered:

- Why libraries in Staffordshire needed to continue to change;
  - People's habits were changing – library usage was falling, with 55% of libraries attracting only 24% of all visits;
  - A resilient and sustainable library service was needed, which could cope with changing demands and financial constraints;
  - No plan to close libraries, however doing nothing was not an option.

- Reshaping libraries to be more flexible;
  - Think innovatively, act collaboratively, lead and manage creatively;
  - What was the unique library offer?;
  - Have talked to communities and stakeholders to inform the design of our future library service.
  - Consulted on three categories of library.
  
- Consultation:
  - 4,255 respondents to the questionnaires;
  - 3,500 people responded via a range of public events;
  - Feedback received via letters, emails, social media and 9 petitions.
  
- Consultation results:
  - 31% of respondents agreed that the current proposals would safeguard the future of Staffordshire's Library Service. 34% disagreed;
  - 28% of respondents agreed that libraries had been allocated to the correct categories. 34% of respondents disagreed.
  - 53% of all respondents agreed with the 'Library Extra' and 'Library Core' proposals, however only 30% agreed with the 'Library Local' proposal;
  - Approximately 20% of respondents said that they might want to be involved in helping to run a local community library. 63% did not want to help at all.
  
- Realigned model for the Library Service;
  - County Council managed and delivered;
  - County Council managed, community delivered;
  - Community managed and delivered.
  
- Next steps;
  - Selection and evaluation process;
  - Support package;
  - Community capacity building;
  - Opening hours;
  - Mobile & Travelling Library review;
  - Enhanced online library service.
  
- Milestones:
  - May 2015 – start of procurement process;
  - June to August 2015 – development of business case;
  - September 2015 – decision making/contracts in place;
  - October 2015 onwards – community managed libraries established;
  - April 2016 – model implemented;
  - April 2016 onwards – ongoing model development.

Cllr. Witton asked if the proposed changes were being done to achieve public service cuts.

Janene Cox replied that part of the programme was in response to budgetary

pressures being faced by the County Council.

The Chairman queried what savings were going to be made as a result of the changes.

Janene Cox replied that it would be £1.3 million for the review of 'static' libraries.

Cllr. B. Todd commented that it was understood Heath Hayes library would be County Council managed and community delivered, but Hednesford library would be community managed and delivered.

Catherine Mann replied that as yet it was unknown which of the 23 affected libraries would become County Council managed and community delivered, or community managed and delivered as the procurement exercise still needed to take place.

Cllr. Pearson queried whether any communities in the District had come forward yet to manage and/or deliver their local libraries.

Catherine Mann replied that as yet no formal interest had been received as the procurement exercise had not yet commenced.

Cllr. Pearson then asked what would happen if no community interest was received.

Catherine Mann replied that paid staff would still be in place to support affected libraries, but as part of a wider library cluster.

The Chairman noted that County Councillor Lawrence, as the portfolio holder for Library Services, had given the impression that closure of some libraries was still a possible option.

Janene Cox replied that as stated in the presentation, there were no plans in place for any closures.

Cllr. Buttery queried if any libraries would see their opening hours reduced.

Janene Cox replied that a review would be undertaken of current operations and back office support, but where possible current opening hours would be maintained.

Cllr. Witton queried what the likely number of job losses would be.

Janene Cox replied that this was still unknown as the review of staffing levels and support had not yet commenced.

Cllr. Snape queried what the Library Services budget was before the £1.3 million reduction.

Catherine Mann replied that it was £8.7 million at present, but £350,000 of the £1.3 million had already been saved.

The Chairman commented that people were cynical about the motives behind this review, particularly young people, who saw it as a means to cut services.

Catherine Mann replied that halfway through the review they realised that consultation with young people had been particularly low, so focus groups were held to get the views of young people on future service delivery.

Cllr. J. Bernard advised that in his school governor role, he had spoken to pupils about the library service, of which 70% said they did not use it, and the remaining 30% only used it online. Conversely, older people still preferred to read paper books, however it was cheaper and easier to purchase books now than hiring them from the library, but the social aspect of libraries and being able to use the computers was also important. Furthermore, people who worked 'normal' working hours could not use their library due to the nature of the opening times.

Janene Cox replied that they recognised these issues at the start of the review process, so it was important to change what the service offered to keep it accessible and relevant.

Cllr. Pearson commented that computer usage was also important to those on benefits, so problems could arise if access was reduced.

Cllr. Freeman reported that the computers in Cannock library were well used, but there was concern that its opening hours would be significantly reduced.

Catherine Mann replied that the consultation on Cannock's opening hours had already taken place, and only minor changes were proposed.

Cllr. Freeman then queried what was meant by 'managed' libraries.

Catherine Mann replied that the staffing structure for each library would be looked into, along with the physical and additional support provided within a 'cluster' arrangement.

Cllr. Snape queried if the footfall of Cannock and Hednesford libraries had been monitored as part of the review process.

Catherine Mann replied that it had been monitored and raised as part of the consultation process, but was not highlighted as an issue, although it could be looked at again in the future if necessary.

### **36. Quarter 3 Performance Report 2014-15**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance (Item 5.1 – 5.58 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

#### *Corporate Improvement Portfolio:*

'Office Accommodation – move to open plan offices – implement phase 2 of office moves'

The Managing Director updated Members on the office accommodation project as

follows:

- It was still proposed that space on the lower ground floor of the Civic Centre would be converted into office space in order to improve working conditions on floors two and three;
- Original principles of open plan working, better environment and improved welfare for officers were still key to the project;
- Intend to still provide kitchen facilities on each floor;
- Costs for the entire project would have to be met from fixed funds in the Capital Programme;
- Anticipate that work would commence in June or July 2015 and be completed by Christmas 2015.
- Still not looking to move any additional external tenants into the building;
- Start to look in early 2016 for an external operator to take on management of the Ballroom in the Civic Suite;
- The office space of the former Chief Executive was still going to be reconfigured to make better use of it.

Cllr. Freeman commented that morale amongst officers was still low and needed addressing as soon as possible.

The Managing Director agreed that this was the case and did need rectifying, so the aim was to keep the number of moves to a minimum, in particular not moving those officers who had been recently relocated.

*Crime & Partnerships Portfolio:*

'Recorded violence'

Cllr. Pearson queried why no rating had been given for this indicator.

The Managing Director replied that as stated in the accompanying commentary, Staffordshire Police were in the process of changing the way in which their performance was managed, so it would not have been possible give an adequate and consistent report on this indicator.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The performance information and case studies related to the Priority Delivery Plans (as detailed in Appendices 1 to 8 of the report) be noted.
- (B) The actions and indicators rated red or amber, and the associated commentaries/remedial actions proposed by the Lead Officers be noted.
- (C) The General Fund financial performance against budget for the third quarter (as detailed in Appendix 9 of the report) be noted.
- (D) The performance indicator 'Complete the implementation of the replacement Housing Management IT system' be deferred until 2015/16 for completion.

### **37. Community Forums Review – Update**

The Head of Governance advised that the report on the review would now go to Cabinet on 23 April, 2015, for consideration rather than Council, as Cabinet had commissioned the review as part of the 2014/15 Transformation Priority Delivery Plan. Accordingly, Cabinet would be asked to recommend to Council its preferred option for future arrangements of the Forums. Members were then given an overview of the key aspects of the report:

- Review focussed on purpose, structure and frequency and number of Forums;
- The best attended Forums were those where specific themes had been discussed. It was therefore recommended that this approach be used for future Forums instead of single issues being raised, along with using the Forums to promote improvements in the local area and host a public 'question time' style session;
- Concerns had been raised about the 'formality' of the Forums, so more flexible options were proposed in terms of timings, locations, agendas and notes;
- Due to low attendance at the Heath Hayes, Norton Canes and Rawnsley Forum and those held in December each year, different options were proposed change to the number and frequency of Forums held.

Cllr. Pearson commented that the Forums were important for democratic purposes, but weren't 'public friendly' at present.

Cllr. B. Todd agreed that the Heath Hayes etc. Forum was poorly attended, and suggested that the frequency of Forums should be scaled back to once per year and then further reviewed.

Cllr. J. Bernard raised that residents had commented that too many councillors were in attendance at the Forums and tended to ask all the questions, thus meaning there was little point in the public attending.

Cllr. Freeman raised that residents had commented the Forums (and committee meetings in general) were not well advertised, particularly in the local press and 'Chase Matters' magazine.

Cllr. Kraujalis commented that the current format was cumbersome, but the Forums were still important for giving residents a voice local matters, so should be retained, but restructured.

### **38. Review of How Scrutiny is Undertaken – Working Group Update**

Councillor Kraujalis, Lead Member of the Working Group, reported that he was going to make contact with Blaby District Council in Leicestershire and a Worcestershire based council to arrange visits to those authorities as they had been flagged up as good examples of how scrutiny can function. Members then requested that all Committee members be given the option of attending.

**39. Date of Next Meeting**

Monday 29 June, 2015

The meeting closed at 5:00pm

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CHAIRMAN