

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 9 OCTOBER, 2013 AT 4.00 P.M.**  
**IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK**

**PART 1**

PRESENT:  
Councillors

Dixon, D.I. (Chairman)  
Todd, R. (Vice-Chairman)

|                    |                |
|--------------------|----------------|
| Bernard, J.D.      | Morgan, C.W.J. |
| Davies, D.N.       | Pearson, A.    |
| Freeman, Miss M.A. | Rowley, J.     |
| Grocott, M.R.      | Snape, P.A.    |
| Kraujalis, J.T.    |                |

**8. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. D. Grice, Ms. J.L. Jones, Mrs. A. Spicer and Mrs. P.Z. Stretton.

**9. 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

**10. Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2013 be approved as a correct record subject to Councillor R. Todd being listed as having submitted his apologies for the meeting.

Members made reference to Minute No. 6 regarding the work of the Working Groups and noted that this matter was due to be discussed later on in the agenda.

**11. Quarter 1 Performance Report 2013-14**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Policy (Item 4.1 – 4.45 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Policy and Performance Manager explained that the report provided an overview and summary of the Council's progress against its performance

indicators as set out in the 2013/14 Priority Delivery Plans (PDPs) during Quarter One for 2013/14.

Councillor Grocott referred to the table on Enclosure 4.4 commenting that a number of the figures relating to Housing and Environment did not add up. The Corporate Director advised that this would be rectified for future reports.

The Head of Housing and Waste Management advised that he was in attendance at the meeting to provide an explanation in respect of the three Housing performance indicators that had been classed as “Red” this Quarter.

These “Red” indicators related to the following:

**% of repairs appointments made and kept – Target 98%**

The Head of Housing and Waste Management advised that this indicator was below target due to there being an increased level of sickness absence and to the information regarding completed jobs not being captured correctly. Further work was being undertaken to address this.

In response to a question from Councillor Snape the Head of Housing and Waste Management confirmed that repairs appointments were offered in specific time slots, (i.e. either morning (am), afternoon (pm), all day or at a time to avoid the school run).

**% of dwellings that are vacant – Target 1%**

The Head of Housing and Waste Management advised that more transfers were being undertaken which was creating the increase in void properties. He explained that Cabinet had considered a report on 19 September, 2013 regarding the “social sector size criteria” and agreed that the void target should be increased to 2% until the end of the financial year. He explained that this issue would come forward to the Committee for consideration as part of the Quarter 2 performance report.

Councillor Kraujalis commented that having worked for a Housing Association whose void target was 2% he was surprised that the Council’s target was 1%.

The Head of Housing and Waste Management explained that the Council had always been one of the top performing Council’s with regard to the number of vacant properties. It was only a temporary measure for the target to be increased to 2%.

Councillor Grocott had concern that the increase to 2% from 1% was too big a jump and commented that the tenants who were wishing to downsize because of the “social sector size criteria” were being transferred to smaller homes but there were still a large number of people waiting to be homed. He had sympathy for those who had been on the Council’s housing waiting list for a long period of time. He made particular reference to a lady within his ward that was having difficulty

moving.

The Officer advised that a change in the allocations policy in February made it easier for all tenants (not only those affected by the social sector size criteria) to transfer to smaller accommodation and therefore more vacancies were arising. He advised that a revision to 2% was being requested because this was considered achievable whereas 1% was not. Whilst he was uncertain whether a 1.5% target would be possible, he would nevertheless aim to exceed the 2% target. He further commented that the majority of tenants requested a transfer to the most popular estates; if they were to widen their area of choice they would stand a better chance of a move. He asked that Councillor Grocott provide him details of the lady he was referring to and he would investigate her case.

### **% of homeless decisions determined within 33 days – Target 75%**

The Head of Housing and Waste Management explained that the target not been achieved due to a shortage of staff. However, following the appointment of an additional temporary employee the target had been achieved in June. He further explained that due to a bereavement in the Homelessness Team he was expecting a dip in performance later in the year.

Councillor Kraujalis was concerned that 33 days was a long time to wait for a homeless decision. In response, the Officer advised that a homelessness investigation was a two way process between the applicant and Council Officers. Written proof of information was often required and many applicants were in a stressful situation and found it difficult to provide the necessary information. It could take a number of requests before an applicant realised what was required. Although the legislation did allow Officers to make a decision based on the information available the decisions often went against an applicant and the process would have to start again. He did not consider this to be in the best interest of the applicant and also considered that it could be seen as manipulating things in order to meet targets.

He confirmed that a number of decisions were made within the 33 days target. If an applicant was found not to be homeless they had an opportunity to go through the appeals mechanism.

Councillor Grocott referred back to the discussion regarding the request to amend the void target to 2% until the end of the financial year. He asked whether the Housing Policy Development Committee had been consulted.

The Corporate Director advised that the process for amending a performance indicator involved the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee and the Policy Development Committee was not involved. The request to amend the indicator to 2% was considered and agreed by Cabinet and would be considered by the Scrutiny Committee at next meeting under the Quarter 2 performance report. The Scrutiny Committee could either agree or disagree

with the amendment. He confirmed performance targets were not amended on a regular basis and there must be robust reasons for Cabinet to be convinced that a target should be amended. Under the Constitution this amendment must then be considered by the Scrutiny Committee.

Members expressed concern that this process would delay the implementation of the proposed increase in the target indicator. Advice was sought as to whether the target of 2% had already been implemented. The Head of Housing and Waste Management confirmed that although Cabinet had agreed to increase the target to 2% this was subject to the Scrutiny Committee endorsing it.

In order to avoid any delay Members asked whether it was possible to make a decision to amend the performance target to 2% at the meeting today. The Corporate Director advised that as Members had fully debated the issue and considered all the reasons it would be possible for the Committee to make a decision at the meeting.

Councillor Grocott moved that the following motion which was seconded:

“That the performance target in relation to vacant dwellings be amended from 1% to 2% until the end of the financial year”.

Following a vote the motion was carried.

The Corporate Director then outlined the other target indicator that had been classed as “Red”:

- **% of full plans applications that are assessed within 15 working days of receipt (70%)**

He advised that this measure related to Building Control and the reason that it had not achieved the target was because of two issues:

- The applications do not always contain all the relevant information to make an assessment and have to be sent back to the applicant;
- The Building Control service was undergoing a period of change. The service competed with private sector providers and there had been a drop in income. The service had to reduce expenditure as targets were not being achieved.

Members considered that even if the application was not complete and did not contain the relevant information it had still been assessed and should be rejected. The Corporate Director agreed to clarify this and advise Members accordingly.

The Corporate Director made reference to the target indicator in the People Priority delivery plan for 201/14 to increase participation in culture and leisure services and facilities annually by 33% which was currently classed as “Amber”. He explained that Wigan Culture and Leisure Trust had indicated they were confident of achieving this target by the year end. The opening of

the Chase Leisure Centre Pool, the ATP at Rugeley and the proposed introduction of the on line booking system for the Prince of Wales Theatre will contribute to the increase in participation levels.

Members had concern whether the target of 33% would be sustainable each year. It was considered that targets that are set should be realistic and achievable.

The Corporate Director agreed that the target of 33% was not sustainable each year but had been suggested by WLCT for the 2013/14 year. The target of 33% did not apply for the 10 years of the contract and it was anticipated that the target would be set at a lower level in other years.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the performance information and the case studies relating to the PDPs as detailed in Appendices 1-8 be noted.
- (B) That the actions and indicators which are rated Red or Amber, and the associated commentary /remedial action by the Lead Officer be noted.
- (C) That the performance target in relation to vacant dwellings be amended from 1% to 2% until the end of the financial year.

## **12. Scrutiny Working Groups – Terms of Reference of Progress Reports**

Councillor Bernard raised concern that a number of Members appointed to the Working Groups were no longer members of the Scrutiny Committee due to the recent change of membership in the political groups.

Members agreed to sit on the Working Groups as outlined below:

Councillor P. Snape – Perception of Crime Working Group  
Councillor P. Snape – Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group  
Councillors J. Bernard and J. Rowley – Scrutiny Task and Finish Working Group

### **Perception of Crime Working Group**

With regard to the Perception of Crime Working Group he commented that the Police Commissioner was also undertaking some work on this issue. He had an appointment next week with the Police Commissioner to discuss this matter so as work was not duplicated.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group**

Councillor Mrs. Freeman advised that she had completed her review of Anti-Social Behaviour. A document was circulated to all Members of the Committee which outlined the purpose of the review and the Terms of Reference along with the overall aims and objectives of the review. She confirmed that she would be in a position to submit the concluding report to

the January meeting.

### **Air Quality and Industrial Emissions Working Group**

Councillor Kraujalis advised that he was working with colleagues on the Group in order to formulate the recommendations. He would be in a position to submit this at the next meeting. He sought clarification on the process of how to report the recommendations to the Scrutiny Committee.

The Corporate Director advised that the Executive and Civic Support Manager was the main point of contact for Members. She would assist in clarifying the process of reporting the recommendations of the Working Groups to the Scrutiny Committee.

### **Scrutiny Task and Finish Working Group**

Councillor Pearson sought clarification as to who was the relevant Officer to contact in order to progress the review.

The Executive and Civic Support Manager advised that Councillor Pearson should contact her to progress the review. She could provide links to similar reports undertaken by other Local Authorities to assist Members in their reviews. Members wishing to put forward recommendations at the next meeting on 10 December, 2013 should contact her mid/late November as completed reports would need to be ready 10 working days before the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the amendments to the membership of the Working Groups as indicated above be noted.
- (B) That the progress with the Working Groups for 2013/14 be noted.

### **13. Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 10 December, 2013

The meeting closed at 5:05pm

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CHAIRMAN