

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 12 JULY, 2010 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Kraujalis, J. T. (Chairman)
Dixon, D. I. (Vice-Chairman)

Ansell, Mrs. P.	Jones, R.
Beddows, J.	Mitchell. C.
Bernard, Mrs. A. F.	Rowley, J.
Bernard, J.D.	Thomas, D.
Davis, Mrs. M.A.	

In attendance

M. P. Freeman, Housing Portfolio Leader

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. D. J. Bennett, M. R. Green and B. Williams.

2. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restrictions on Voting by Members

<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>	<u>Type</u>
Mitchell, C.	Daughter works at the Cannock Chase Well Being Centre	Personal

3. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed.

4. Annual Performance Report

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive (Enclosure 4.1 – 4.19 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Members noted that at the Council meeting held on 30 June, 2010 it was resolved that the 2010-11 PDPs would be deferred to a future meeting in view of the budget situation.

The Head of Policy and Performance explained that Annex 1 provided the annual performance information and progress made in relation to the LAA for the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Annexes 1a and 1b contained the performance indicator information for Countywide and District level LAA indicators.

The report provided Members with a performance overview on how the Council had delivered the priority delivery plans drawn up in April 2009. Annexes 2a to 7a set out performance information for the actions and indicators included in each of the Council's six Priority Delivery Plans. Annexes 2c to 7c set out the exception reports in relation to the 'red' and 'amber' actions and indicators within the Priority Delivery Plans. There were no exception reports for Environmental Sustainability.

Concern was raised with respect to the volume of information provided, the level of officer time it must have taken to provide this, the duty to provide it and whether the information could be proved to be correct. The Head of Policy and Performance informed the Committee that the National Indicator Set was the statutory performance framework which measured the progress of public sector services. There are 35 of these indicators within the Staffordshire LAA, although comprehensive performance information for the District was only available for 4 out of the 35 indicators. In addition to the LAA, there were a number of national indicators which the District Council had a statutory duty to report against. Both LAA and District national indicators had therefore been included in the 09/10 PDP's and had been reported against on a quarterly basis. The report therefore currently included the annual outturn for these indicators. It was reported that the National Indicator set was currently under review nationally as it had predominantly been developed within the Comprehensive Area Assessment Framework which had been recently abolished in May 2010. However at the present time, whilst the NI set remained statutory, the District Council had a continued duty to manage and report progress against such indicators.

It was reported that notwithstanding the NI data for both the LSP and the Council, the majority of the report detailed the Council's performance against its own local targets and actions as detailed in the Priority Delivery Plans. In this regard, Members were advised that there was no legal requirement to firstly adopt a Corporate Plan and/or Priority Delivery Plans and hence no subsequent requirement to receive performance reports. However, the Head of Policy and Performance advised that in accordance with the Council's approved performance management framework and indeed the governance structure in respect of the Cabinet and Scrutiny model, it had been agreed (and it was prudent) to provide performance reports to the Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis to enable informed scrutiny of the Executive.

The Committee considered that it could be beneficial to set up a small working party to discuss this issue. The Chairman indicated that, initially, he would liaise with officers to discuss how information on the Council's performance could be provided to the Committee and would report back on the outcome.

Concern was raised on the lack of progress made on the exception reports for the Children Young People and Families. The Director of Culture and Regeneration reported that the Arthur Street Play Area was progressing well, Elmore Park had been completed and that the

Heath Hayes Park had been delayed due to inclement weather, but was now in its final stages. Delays had occurred with the Oxford Green site as the Council needed landlord consent from Staffordshire County Council to enter the site. This matter was now with the Council's Legal Section. The Committee requested sight of the correspondence to the County Council, subject to the Council's Solicitor's agreement that this could be permitted. The Director of Culture and Regeneration reported that the Netball Development Camps and Nutritional programmes had been delivered but after 31 March 2010. There was a shortfall in funding for the Cardinal Griffin ATP and ways to bridge this were being explored.

With respect to the Healthier Communities, Housing and Older People Exception Reports, the Head of Environmental Health explained that the time taken to process Housing/Council Tax benefit new claims and changes had suffered as a result of recruitment problems. Posts had now been filled and performance was improving and was presently at target level and would continue to improve.

The Head of Housing explained that problems had arisen with respect to the Elizabeth Road redevelopment and a report would be presented to Cabinet on 22 July 2010 for them to consider the shortfall in funding.

Adult participation in Sport and Recreation had reduced from 21.2% to 19.2% primarily due to the affects of the recession. A number of activities and programmes had been carried out by staff to address this issue.

Members were concerned that the withdrawal of the free swimming scheme for those under 16 and over 60 would also be to the detriment of this target. The Committee considered that Cabinet should be requested to consider reinstating the free swimming scheme until at least the end of the school holidays from extra funding identified at Council on 30 June 2010.

National Indicator 135 with regard to supporting people to live independently through social services was being addressed by the County Council.

The Director of Culture and Regeneration explained that the exception reports for Access to Education, Skills and Employment were mainly due to the impact of the recession. The Council was working with partners to progress these issues.

With respect to the Safe, Strong and Cohesive Communities Exception Reports, the Head of Environmental Health informed the Committee that to endeavour to make progress on NI16 – Serious Acquisitive Crime – Staffordshire Police were continuing to work closely with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. The Director of Service Improvement explained that intensive work was ongoing with the Probation Service to focus on prolific and priority offenders who committed high levels of acquisitive crime.

NI 32 – Repeat incidents of domestic violence - was being managed by a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) which met at fortnightly intervals to share information relevant to the safety of victims. The Chase MARAC was being evaluated by the Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA). A priority of the CDRP was to investigate if there were hotspots and, if so, the reasons behind this.

It was reported that with regard to the CCTV system being enhanced by a talking project to cover hotspot locations, a problem had arisen with accessing a certain bank's premises, but

this had now been overcome. Officers were asked to confirm that this was a one way speaker only system. Concern was raised regarding the effectiveness of the system and the Committee agreed to consider this issue as part of the Work Programme.

The Community Cohesion Strategy had not been completed due to capacity issues. A Community Safety Officer had now been appointed and this would now be prepared. An ASB Strategy had also not been developed due to the lack of success in recruiting an ASB Co-ordinator and budgetary constraints could have an affect on this post. The Director of Service Improvement reported that significant work had, however, been carried out to address anti social behaviour.

The Partnership Plan had been delayed due to the need to review the CDRP and lack of capacity pending the recruitment of a Community Safety Officer. Staffordshire Police, Chase Division had agreed that their Partnerships Officer would be based in the Civic Centre and would work with the Community Safety Team.

With respect to the Corporate Improvement Exception Reports the Chief Executive reported that –

- Sickness figures - approximately 61% related to long term sickness absence and figures were improving
- Ethics and Values - the Head of Governance having left the authority and not being replaced had impacted on this work being carried out
- Risk Management (in relation to Partnerships) - Some of this work had been undertaken
- Civil Contingencies and Communications Plan – these had been completed
- Data Quality and Development of an Energy Management Policy/Strategy would be progressed, but budget constraints could have an impact.
- Asset Management Strategy and Plan to be prepared - the Directors Management Team had met to discuss these matters and had agreed that due to capacity issues the target date would be revised to December 2010.
- Consultation Strategy - the funding for of a Consultation Officer post had been removed in the 2010/11 budget setting process and options for delivering this work within existing resources was currently being explored.
- Community Engagement Strategy, Equality & Diversity Action Plan and the completion of Equality Impact Assessments – some work on these matters had been carried out.

RESOLVED:

That:-

- (A) The 2009/10 performance outturn for the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership as detailed at Annexes 1 to 8 be noted and approved;
- (B) The financial outturn for 2009/10 Priority Delivery Plans (PDPs) as noted in Annexes 2b, 3b, 4b, 5b, 6b, and 7b be noted;
- (C) The content of exception reports in Annexes 2c, 3c, 4c, 5c, and 7c (there were no exception reports for Environmental Sustainability – hence no 6c) which detail the

actions taken and actions proposed to be taken in respect of any indicator or action classified as Red or Amber be noted;

- (D) It did not wish to further review and/or scrutinise the performance of the Council and/or its Local Strategic Partners in respect of the data provided for the end of year report.
- (E) Having identified that it did not wish to review or scrutinise, it was confirmed that it did not require the attendance of Council Officers and/or Local Strategic Partners at subsequent committee meetings.
- (F) The content of the annual performance report, the quarterly PDP reports and the exception reports having informed the refresh of the 2010-11 PDPs, be noted.
- (G) That Cabinet, as a matter of urgency, considers reinstating the free swimming scheme for those aged 16 and under and for those aged over 60, until at least the end of the school holidays. The cost to be met from the £40,000 extra savings identified at Council on 30 June 2010.

5. Grass Cutting Policy

It was reported that Councillor G. Adamson had raised this matter with the Chairman and requested that he be allowed to address the Committee.

Councillor Adamson informed the Committee that he considered that the Council's current grass cutting policy to be both arbitrary and unfair and, as it was now the grass cutting season the policy needed to be reviewed urgently. The current policy was laid down in the report of the Director of Service Improvement in July 2009 and came into effect this year, to the detriment of hundreds of vulnerable tenants.

The Head of Housing reported that the grass cutting contract had recently gone through the tendering process and the new service would be costing less for the 660 lawns to be cut than the previous contractor had charged. Under the current criteria for Vulnerable Tenants Grass Cutting and Internal Decoration Scheme it was approximately £50,000 under budget. If the number of properties was to be increased it would be better value for money to increase the number by 600 as there would be little difference in cost to, say, cutting a further 300 lawns.

That the vulnerable tenants grass cutting and internal decoration scheme be included in the Committee's 2010/11 Work Programme.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet be requested to increase the number of properties eligible to have their lawns cut by 600 properties with immediate effect, the cost to be met from the £50,000 savings already identified in the grass cutting budget.

6. Teenage Pregnancy Update

Consideration was given to a Report of the District Manager, Staffordshire Young People's Service (Enclosure 6.1 – 6.5 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Mr. Karl Hobson, District Manager, Staffordshire Young People's Service gave a brief overview of the Report. He explained that the Staffordshire Young People's Service (SYPS) had been established since April 2010 and he was responsible for responding to the specific request made by Scrutiny Committee at their meeting held on 7 December 2009 with respect to how data on teenage pregnancies was presented and that it did not reflect unfairly on schools which the mothers no longer attended. Data had now been provided with respect to wards and broken down by age in order that efforts for prevention could be concentrated on target locations. Data on schools could also still be provided.

A Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator had been appointed in September 2009 to support teenage parents and to try and reduce the under 18 conception rate, working closely with partners in the Health Services. A teenage pregnancy support worker had also been appointed and as part of that role, would collect and evaluate information regarding teenage pregnancy specifically to Cannock Chase.

The District Manager had also established a Preventing Adverse Risk Taking Behaviour Group (PARB) which would commence in quarter 2 of 2010-11. Key vulnerable groups of young people at risk of teenage pregnancy were –

- Looked after children/young people and care leavers
- Young people using alcohol and drugs
- Children and young people disengaged from mainstream services (particularly school)
- Young offenders
- Young people engaging in multiple adverse risk taking behaviour
- Existing teenage parents

As part of the targeted prevention activity the PCT would be conducting an audit of sexual health services in target areas in Cannock Chase in order that the information could be used to complete analysis and identify unmet needs. A Sexual Health Awareness campaign was being held in September 2010 with a follow up being carried out in November.

The Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator explained that 50% of teenagers that got pregnant had terminations and others struggled to gain access to them. The Staffordshire Young People's Service and other agencies concentrated on those that did not know how to access support.

The District Manager informed the Committee that he would not be able to provide them with an evaluation of the effectiveness of the various partners' programmes until December 2010 and would attend a future meeting when this was available.

7. Determination of Work Programme 2010-11

Consideration was given to items to be included in the Work Programme

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme for the Scrutiny Committee include the following items:

- (i) Teenage Pregnancy Update
- (ii) Vulnerable Tenants Grass Cutting and Internal Decoration Scheme
- (iii) Effectiveness of the CCTV scheme

- (iv) Update by the Chairman of Scrutiny Committee on how future performance information would be presented to them
- v) Incinerator at the Poplars Site with representatives from Biffa and the County Council being invited to attend
- (vi) Details of the E-petition scheme
- (vii) Update, on how the Council intended to publish its Policy and Procedure

8. Determination of the Membership of the Delivering Change Panel

Consideration was given to determination of the membership of the Delivering Change Panel. It was noted that in accordance with the current political balance the, Panel would be made up as follows:-

- 3 – Labour
- 3 – Conservatives
- 5 – Liberal Democrats

RESOLVED:

That the Membership of the Delivering Change Panel be noted and that the Group Leaders would be contacted accordingly.

9. Scrutiny Review of Prince of Wales Theatre

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Culture and Regeneration (Enclosure 9.1 – 9.8 of the Official Minutes of the Council)

It was reported that Councillor P. Williams, Chairman of the Prince of Wales Working Group had submitted her apologies for not being able to attend today's meeting. The Director of Culture and Regeneration reported that the Working Group had scrutinised in considerable detail the workings of the Prince of Wales Theatre. The Working Group had concluded that, overall the Theatre provided value for money and ascertained that there were no areas where savings could be made.

Concern was raised regarding the budget for Promotions and Marketing being more than the amount raised. The Director of Culture and Regeneration explained that this was not spent on advertising and promoting the Theatre's programme, but was to pay fees to entertainers and acts and income was also raised from lettings, which was shown separately. Concern was also raised that, although the report clarified the position, it did not include a strategy for the future. The Director of Culture and Regeneration advised that Members had taken a decision in March 2010 as part of the Budget to include the Theatre as part of a future outsourcing of all leisure facilities. It was also reported that Members had been invited to put forward suggestions at two Scrutiny Committee meetings as to what should be reviewed and the scope of the review had been determined at the first meeting of the Group. No suggestions had been received from other Members not part of the Scrutiny Review Group.

In accordance with the budget proposals, the whole of leisure services would be market tested.

RESOLVED:

That the outcome of the review of the Prince of Wales Theatre be noted.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 7.15 pm.