

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL'S CIVIC COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 17 MARCH, 2009 AT 4.00PM
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK
PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Ansell, Mrs. P.A. (Chairman)

Alcott, G.

Stretton, Mrs. P.Z.

Bernard, Mrs. A.F.

(An apology for absence was received from Councillor N.K. Stanley)

8. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October, 2009 be approved as a correct record.

9. Chairman's Charity Ball – 7 March 2009

Mr. M. Worsnop, Leisure Operations Manager, informed the Committee that the financial figures with regard to the Chairman's Ball had not been finalised, but it was considered to have been within budget and a success. It was reported that a meeting had taken place in January 2009 with the Chairman and Officers to discuss issues relating to the Chairman's Ball, particularly given the limited number of tickets that had been sold, and a number of actions were agreed in an attempt to increase the number of tickets sold. Approximately 1,100 businesses had been written to detailing a range of options in which they could contribute to the Ball. Due to the current economic climate a number of companies had reduced the number of tables they required. It was also reported that Mr. F. Pritchard had advised the Council that he would be unable to provide the amount of 'sponsorship funding' he had provided in the past. The 'sponsorship funding' provided in previous years had amounted to approximately £5,000.

Members were advised that in view of the financial position it had initially been discussed with the Chairman to move the Chairman's Ball from the Leisure Centre to the Ballroom at the Civic Centre and that the catering was to have been provided by Jenkinsons who had been booked in accordance with the Council's financial regulations.

The Council's Leisure Service considered that it was of utmost importance that the Chairman's Ball should break even and not lead to a cost for the Council Tax Payer, whilst at the same time safeguarding the quality of the event. Concerns were raised over the poor sales which raised issues over the event proceeding. Mr. Pritchard had suggested that the event could be held at the Ramada Hotel with the catering being provided in house, thus increasing the amount of 'sponsorship' and, with the reduction in costs, enabled the tickets to be reduced. The 'sponsorship funding' had, in real terms, risen from approximately £2,500 to approximately £4,500, with the hire of the Ramada being included in this figure. Various discussions took place to address the concerns over the event's viability, which resulted in a meeting being held with the Chairman, Leader of the Council and Senior Officers during which it was agreed to move the Ball to the Ramada Hotel, so as to ensure that as much money as possible was raised for the Chairman's chosen charities, rather than cancel the event. It was reported that three weeks prior to the event only eight tickets had been sold and following negotiations with the caterers, Jenkinsons, the Council would not incur a cancellation fee.

Councillor Mrs. P. Z. Stretton asked if Mr. Pritchard had made any adverse comments on the Civic Centre Ballroom and was informed that he had made it completely clear that it did not make a difference on where the Ball was held. Members expressed concern regarding the possible public's perception that Mr. Pritchard could be making a profit from the Ball. Officers confirmed that the decision to change the venue of the Ball was based upon the need to address the commercial viability of the event, given the poor ticket sales at that time.

Councillor Mrs. P.Z. Stretton explained that, as in previous years, tickets had always been sold at the last minute for the Chairman's Ball and she had been unable to invite some guests this year and that other people had not been able to attend.

Councillor Mrs. A. F. Bernard reported that approximately 5 weeks before the Ball she had been unable to purchase tickets and that an emergency meeting of the Committee should have been held to consider the alternative arrangements.

Officers advised that tickets had been on sale for a number of weeks and were readily available to be purchased. Mrs. G. Turner, Principal Administrator, reported that several weeks prior to the event she had telephoned Members and organisations in order to clarify numbers, the majority of whom did not confirm their attendance and on this basis it was decided to downsize the venue rather than cancel the Ball.

Councillor G. Alcott also expressed concern that an additional meeting of the Committee had not been called in order for Members to discuss the alternative arrangements for the Ball and that this should have been a matter for them to consider, not Officers. He considered all Members of the Committee should have been told about the changes otherwise there was no need for the Committee.

Officers explained that a meeting had been held with the Chairman, the Leader of the Council and Senior Officers, at which the decision to change the venue was made and it was not a unilateral decision made by Officers. The Chairman confirmed the comments made by the Officers.

Councillor G. Alcott expressed concern with regard to the 'sponsorship funding' (and those in kind) received from Mr. Pritchard and whether this should be noted in a

declaration of interests register held by the Council. It was requested that the legal implications of this issue be investigated and reported back to the Committee. The Committee also requested that in future rather than receiving verbal updates, a written report should be provided for them to consider.

There was extensive questioning of officers concerning the arrangements for the Ball to such an extent that an officer indicated his discomfort at the style of questioning by certain Members.

Members asked if lessons had been learned and that in future matters should come to them for decisions to be made as they could have provided help and had not been given the opportunity.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. G. Turner, Mrs. C. Panter-Hood, the Leisure Services staff and those that had attended for making the Ball a resounding success.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the legal implications of sponsorship funding be investigated and reported back to the Committee.
- (B) That, in future, written reports be presented to the Committee in place of verbal updates.

CHAIRMAN