

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2019 AT 4:00 P.M.

IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors:

Adamson, G.	Leader of the Council
Alcott, G.	Deputy Leader of the Council and Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader
Pearson, A.R.	Corporate Improvement Portfolio Leader
Bennett, C.	Crime and Partnerships Portfolio Leader
Mitchell, Mrs. C.	Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader
Johnson, T.B.	Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader
Preece, J.P.T.L.	Environment Portfolio Leader
Martin, Mrs. C.E.	Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader
Kraujalis, J.T.	Housing Portfolio Leader
Woodhead, P.E.	<i>Invitee (non-voting Observer)</i>

61. Apologies

None.

62. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

No other Declarations of Interest were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members' Interests.

63. Updates from Portfolio Leaders

Leader of the Council

West Midlands Railway Industrial Action

The Leader advised that industrial action had been announced by the RMT union. As a result, no rail services would be operating on the Chase Line each Saturday until the end of the year, and nor would any rail replacement bus services be provided. This was extremely disappointing for passengers given the continual problems experienced since May 2019. This and other matters would be discussed at the reconvened meeting of the Chase Line stakeholders group on 22 November, where it was hoped a resolution could be agreed.

Crime and Partnerships

Policing Numbers for Staffordshire

The Portfolio Leader advised that discussions were taking place between members of the Police, Fire & Crime Panel and the Staffordshire Commissioner regarding the number of police officers allocated to Staffordshire Police, as there was a conflict between the numbers quoted by the Commissioner, and those published by the Home Office. The total difference was 90 officers, which was a significant number in terms of policing resource for the County. Clarity would be provided to Members once the actual position was known.

Environment

Rugeley Town Centre Bus Station S106 Works

The Portfolio Leader reported that Officers had been contacted by Staffordshire County Council advising that S106 funds were available from when Tesco opened its new store in Rugeley. This funding was ring-fenced for improvements to passenger transport facilities in and around Rugeley town centre.

The County Council was proposing to install 'Real Time Passenger Information' (RTPI) boards in the bus station, affixed to the wall of the Market Hall (subject to permission from the landlord) and also similar information boards on 'Totem' poles in the town centre itself.

Such systems were in operation in numerous towns and cities, and provided live information about the time and service number of the next bus due to depart from each stand. This information was extremely helpful to the bus passengers. The County Council approved and licensed all bus routes, as such, they would manage the system.

All buses operated in the District by Arriva were already equipped with the technology to link into the system. The same system was already operational in and around Cannock and Stafford, where Arriva was the main bus operator.

Cannock Chase District Council owned the bus station and shelters, hence the reason for the request.

The scheme would be funded from S106 money from the Tesco development. Subject to approval, the works were scheduled to be completed before the end of March 2020.

Housing

100 Years of Social Housing

The Portfolio Leader advised that 2019 marked the centenary of councils being able to build social housing on a large scale. Alongside this, the Portfolio Leader, with the Leader of the Green Group, was due to undertake a visit on 14 November to a 'Passivhaus' housing scheme to understand more about how such schemes operated and could work in this District.

Town Centre Regeneration

Cannock Town Centre Partnership Events

The Portfolio Leader advised that the Cannock Town Centre Partnership had arranged two events to take place in the Cannock town centre in the run up to Christmas. The first would be a Christmas lights switch on and fireworks display on 30 November, and the second would be a lantern parade on 21 December.

Furthermore, St. Luke's Church would be hosting its annual Christmas tree festival in late November to raise money for charity.

Green Group Leader

LGA Climate Emergency Training

The Leader of the Green Group advised that he would be attending a two-day free training course later in November on the 'Climate Emergency', and would feedback any useful learning or information gained from the course.

64. Minutes of Cabinet Meeting of 17 October, 2019

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October, 2019, be approved as a correct record and signed.

65. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan of Decisions for the period November 2019 to January 2020 (Item 5.1 – 5.3 of the Official Minutes of the Council) was considered.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period November 2019 to January 2020 be noted.

66. Financial Plan 2019-20 to 2022-23

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Finance (Item 6.1 – 6.19 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

(A) It be noted that no specific details existed in relation to the levels of funding the Council would receive from the Government with effect from 2021-22. The proposed new funding regime had been delayed by a year with the effect that the 2020-21 Budget effectively represented a rollover of the 2019-20 settlement, as adjusted for inflation. The Financing element of the Financial Plan therefore represented this authority's interpretation of how new funding regimes, yet to be finalised, would impact on existing forecasts, as compared to actual indicative funding levels provided by the Government.

(B) Subject to decision (A), above:-

(i) The Financial Plan 2019-20 to 2022-23, and the various scenarios that existed in relation to individual funding streams be noted;

- (ii) The forecast outturn for 2019-20 be approved;
 - (iii) The draft Capital Programme 2019-20 to 2022-23 be noted;
 - (iv) The General Fund working balance be set at a minimum of £1.0 million;
 - (v) The principles set out in the Council's Financial Plan and Budget Strategy be adopted in finalising the preparation of the 2020-21 budget.
- (C) It be noted that a submission was made to the Secretary of State for Local Government for an extension of the Business Rates Pilot to 2020-21. The Council and all members of the pilot continued to lobby for an extension with only Devolution pilots currently approved to roll forward to 2020-21. In the event that the request was not successful, the Council was seeking that pooling arrangements, with a similar membership, remained in place to avoid a levy on growth being applied in 2020-21.
- (D) The Financial Plan be updated as further details of the Government's proposed changes to its funding became available during the budget process.

Reasons for Decisions

The report set out the Council's forecast financial position for the next three years, incorporating anticipated spending pressures and savings already identified. Financial resources available to the Council over the three-year period were also set out. The Financial Plan reflected the Government's current funding regime as adjusted for proposals currently being considered in the design of the new regime.

A new Financial Regime for Local Government was intended to be introduced with effect from 1 April 2020, but following the Government's One Year Spending Review, and the need to provide certainty of funding levels for 2020-21, this had now been delayed until 2021-22. Although this provided a degree of certainty for 2020-21, the ongoing funding for this Council remained unclear.

Potential scenarios in changes in funding had been developed to enable a Budget Strategy to be put in place. The Strategy was based upon an interpretation of the 'issues' being evaluated as part of the design stage of the new regime. An interpretation of potential changes – adopting a middle ground stance – was likely to result in:

- A deterioration of Business Rates following the reset of £0.7 million in 2021/22;
- A compensating increase in Business Rates from growth related to Mill Green in autumn 2020, but likely to be time limited for five years only;
- Legacy payment in relation to New Homes Bonus not being applicable to the 2020-21 allocation.

Due to the material amounts involved in the extreme scenarios for Business Rates and New Homes Bonus as set out in report paragraph 5.5.3, a best case scenario would provide a surplus of £0.222 million in 2022-23, whereas the worst case a deficit of £1,544 million. It was essential that a prudent approach was adopted until further details became available.

The revised Financial Plan therefore provided a framework for the preparation of detailed budgets. Its principles and those detailed in the approved Budget Strategy, subject to approval, would be used to prepare both the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme for consideration by Cabinet in January 2020.

The Secretary of State for Local Government announced that all pilots, other than for Devolution areas, would cease on 31 March 2020. In the event that lobbying by the Staffordshire-wide Business Rates Pilot was unsuccessful, the Council would be seeking to ensure a pooling arrangement, similar to pre-pilot, was put in place for 2020-21.

67. Quarter 2 Performance Report 2019/20

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 7.1 – 7.28 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The performance information related to the Priority Delivery Plans, as detailed in Appendices 1 to 4 of the report be noted.
- (B) The actions that had been flagged with an Amber Triangle at quarter 2, which required amendment to the timescale or scope be noted.

Reasons for Decisions

Information for performance actions and indicators for quarter 2 2019/20 was included for relevant items in Appendices 1 to 4 of the report. The overall position for each Priority Deliver Plan was detailed in report section 5, indicating that 100% of the quarter 2 actions had been achieved or were in progress with minor slippage. The cumulative position for April to September indicated that in total, 82% of all actions had been achieved or were in progress with minor slippage.

68. District Needs Analysis and Ward Profiles 2019/20

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 8.1 – 8.31 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The report and Appendices that formed the evidence base be noted.
- (B) Internal and External publication of the District Needs Analysis (including the District Profile) and Ward Profiles be approved.

Reasons for Decisions

The report and Appendices included a range of statistical and perceptions data available to the Council in order to assist with, and inform the priority setting and decision making processes. The information provided in the Appendices was intended to highlight and illustrate the key areas of significance in the District. It should be noted however that due to the frequently changing nature of statistical information, the documents were not intended to serve as a definitive position statement for the District.

The style of the District Needs Analysis 2019-20 had been revised in response to user feedback to be more concise and visual in order to enhance accessibility. Due to the wider use of 'infographics' in this year's report, the District Profile that was previously a standalone document had been included at the start of the District Needs Analysis document.

69. Strategic Risk Register

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 9.1 – 9.19 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That the Strategic Risk Register be approved, and the progress made in the identification and management of the strategic risks be noted.

Reason for Decision

All strategic risks and associated actions plans had been reviewed, and the Council risk profile was summarised as follows:

Risk Colour	Number of Risks at 1 April 2019	Number of Risks at 30 September 2019
Red	1	1
Amber	4	4
Green	0	0
TOTAL	5	5

70. Permission to Spend – Cannock Town Centre

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 10.1 – 10.5 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The progress made by the Cannock Town Centre Partnership since its formation in November 2018 be noted.
- (B) Permission to spend a maximum of £34,500 from Section 106 monies deposited from the Mill Green project held by the Council be granted in order to extend the role of the Cannock Town Centre Partnership Officer post for a further 12 months.

Reasons for Decisions

The Cannock Town Centre Partnership (CTCP) was formed in November 2018, and whilst it was too early to fully evaluate how successful the it had been to date, there was evidence that it was moving in the right direction. The CTCP Board decided to establish the Partnership as a Community Interest Company (CIC) led by a board of 12 members, and a new Chair and Vice-Chair were in place. The CTCP was working to establish itself and was focusing on organising events in the town centre to increase footfall and the visitor experience.

The CTCP was supported by the Town Centre Partnership Officer (TCPO) role, which was hosted by the Council and funded from Section 106 monies received from the Mill Green development. The current funding of the TCPO role was due to expire on 31 May 2020, and there was no resource to continue funding this role from Council core budgets beyond this date. Currently the Partnership had not developed a financial strategy to sustain the role at the present time, given the period it has taken to properly establish itself.

There was sufficient remaining budget within the existing Mill Green Section 106 account, under the town centre improvements category, to fund the post for this extended period. The available balance from the Mill Green Section 106 was currently £50,604, and after deduction of the proposed extension, would leave a remaining balance of £16,104.

It was proposed that by extending the role for a further 12 months, this would be sufficiently long enough to give the Partnership the opportunity to further establish itself and identify opportunities to become self-sustaining.

The TCPO had built relations with the town since the formation of the Partnership Board in November 2018, and the desire to make improvements, via events etc. had grown, and more businesses were becoming involved with ideas and suggestions.

71. Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-23 – Update

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing and Partnerships (Item 11.1 – 11.26 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That the proposed Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2023, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved, and the updated actions contained within it be agreed.

Reasons for Decisions

The updated Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2023 provided an update on rough sleeping context, and included additional actions to prevent and reduce occurrences of rough sleeping in the District.

The Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy ensured that the Council would meet the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government requirement to have an up-to-date Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy available online by winter 2019.

72. 27 Florence Street, Hednesford

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing and Partnerships (Item 12.1 – 12.3 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) An open market disposal of the freehold interest in 27 Florence Street, Hednesford, be authorised, on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Head of Economic Prosperity.

- (B) Authority be delegated to the Head of Economic Prosperity to instruct agents to market the above property for sale and to take all other actions required to implement the decision.

Reasons for Decisions

Disposal of the freehold interest in the property would avoid the need for the Council to spend money upgrading it as it could be sold in its existing condition. The Council would receive a capital receipt that would be determined by market demand.

It was therefore recommended that 27 Florence Street, Hednesford, be declared surplus to Council requirements and offered for sale on the open market.

The meeting closed at 4:30 p.m.

LEADER