

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD VIA REMOTE ACCESS
AT 6:00 P.M., WEDNESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER, 2020
PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors:

Dudson, A. (Chairman)	
Witton, P.T. (Vice-Chairman)	
Adamson, G. (Leader)	Jones, Mrs. V.
Alcott, G.	Kraujalis, J.T.
Allen, F.W.C.	Layton, A.
Bennett, C. (Telephone)	Lyons, Miss O.
Boucker, A.S.	Martin, Mrs. C.E.
Buttery, M.S.	Mitchell, Mrs. C.
Cartwright, Mrs. S.M.	Molineux, G.N.
Crabtree, S.K.	Muckley, A.M.
Davis, Mrs. M.A.	Newbury, J.A.A.
Dunnett, Ms. A.J.	Pearson, A.R. (Telephone)
Fisher, P.A.	Preece, J.P.T.L.
Fitzgerald, Mrs. A.A.	Smith, C.D.
Freeman, Miss M.A.	Startin, P.D.
Hewitt, P.M.	Stretton, Mrs. P.Z., M.B.E.
Hughes, R.J.	Thompson, Mrs. S.L.
Johnson, J.P.	Todd, Mrs. D.M.
Johnson, T.B.	Wilkinson, Ms. C.L.
Jones, B.	Woodhead, P.E.

42. Apologies

Apologies were submitted for Councillors M. Sutherland and Mrs. H.M. Sutton.

Councillors C. Bennett and Ms. C.L. Wilkinson were not present at the start of the meeting due to issues with signing into the meeting.

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

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

44. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2020, be approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendment being made:

- Page 31, third line down, should read 'all but one', rather than 'Only one...'.

45. Questions Received from the Public under Council Procedure Rule 4B(c)

- (i) The following question was submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4B(c) by member of the public, Jacquie Prestwood:

"Is there a progress report on the new cemetery?"

Councillor Mrs. C. Mitchell, Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader, provided the following response:

"I welcome Jacquie Prestwood's question and I am pleased to confirm, that work started on the new cemetery in June and is progressing well. Work has continued through lockdown and the pandemic and is due for completion during the last quarter on 2020-21 (by March 2021)."

Jacquie Prestwood asked the following supplementary question:

"Are there updates on the crematorium, such as planned dates for completion works?"

The Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader provided the following response to the supplementary question:

"The crematorium was being developed by a company called Horizon, with the work being done at the same time as the Council, although it was approximately one month behind schedule. The anticipated finish date was late spring / early summer, and whilst Covid had put big pressure on sourcing building supplies, the project was hopefully not too far behind, but both schemes could finish at the same time."

- (ii) The following question was submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4B(c) by member of the public, Jacquie Prestwood:

"Cannock Stadium, are there any updates on future plans for the park?"

Councillor Mrs. C. Mitchell, Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader, provided the following response:

"Again, I welcome Ms Prestwood's question on another exciting development that this Cabinet has been instrumental in taking forward.

We have already developed the site as a community sport and recreation hub with new toddler and junior play facilities, a new Multi-use Games area, 14 community allotments and building, a BMX track completed by the contractor who constructed the BMX facility for the 2012 Olympics, nearly 200 metres of lit footpaths for walking, cycling and running and 10 items of green gym equipment.

On 18 March this year Cabinet approved an additional £124,570 to be included in the

Capital programme, making a total investment of up to £400,570 to be allocated toward Phase 2 improvements.

Permission to spend was also approved to deliver:

Improvement	Estimated Amount £
Skate Park Facility	175,000
Additional Footpaths	51,000
Eco Mulch to BMX banks	70,000
Eco Trail, Flower beds and Landscaping	25,000
Barbecue/social picnic areas	15,000
Temporary Toilet Provision	15,000
Contingency 10%	35,100
Sub Total	386,100
Professional Fees 4%	15,444
Total	401,544

Although work has not started on any of the key improvements above, officers have been working together with the Friends Group and our partner IHL on developing new Notice and Information Boards for the site, a new footpath and a new storage container for the allotments.

Despite the pandemic it is hoped that some works will be undertaken in the new year.”

Jacque Prestwood asked the following supplementary question:

“Were any events planned for the future at the stadium?”

The Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader provided the following response to the supplementary question:

“The Council was working with the Friends of Cannock Stadium and an event had been held on Halloween that was well supported and attended. As for the future, a Christmas event was planned, but it remained to be seen how this could be held with Covid restrictions in place. People were advised to keep an eye on the group’s Facebook page for updates.”

(iii) The following question was submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4B(c) by member of the public, Les Bullock:

“In view of the current level of job losses due to the Coronavirus pandemic, what are Cannock Chase District Council doing to try and offset these losses wherever possible?”

Councillor T.B. Johnson, Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader, provided the following response:

“Before the pandemic, the District had enjoyed a period of economic growth and the

District's unemployment rate in March 2020 stood at just 2.6% - it is now 5.6% and we have seen almost 2,000 additional people claiming benefits in just eight months.

The Council has focused its efforts since the start of the pandemic on supporting local businesses through the lockdown and helping them to get back up and running as restrictions were eased.

To support this priority, the Council has been responsible for distributing Government business support funding to small businesses and businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. Over £22m of grant funding has been paid with almost 1500 businesses receiving a grant.

Linked to the introduction of the Local COVID alert system and second national lockdown, the Council has been allocated additional funding from the Government to distribute to local businesses directly affected by the restrictions and mandatory closures and is currently processing grants to eligible local businesses.

The Council has also been allocated £2 million by Government via the Additional Restrictions Grant which is a discretionary fund and Officers are currently developing a policy and criteria to administer this fund.

The Council will continue to support businesses during the winter and I would encourage local businesses to contact Officers to find out whether they are eligible for grant support.

Major investment schemes such as the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet West Midlands are critical for our economic recovery and the Council is working closely with McArthurGlen and Walsall College to ensure local residents can access the new jobs that are being recruited to at the moment – in total phase 1 of the scheme will create 800 new jobs. The Designer Outlet will also benefit the visitor economy with 3.5 million people expected to visit the Outlet per annum, which will create opportunities for tourism and hospitality businesses – which is particularly crucial given the difficulties this sector has faced during the pandemic.

There are also a number of other opportunities in the pipeline which will benefit the District. These include the creation of new job opportunities and investment in key employment areas such as Kingswood Lakeside in Cannock and the regeneration of Rugeley Power Station and the Commonwealth Games 2022 – Mountain Biking event on Cannock Chase.

I will be bringing forward a detailed report to Cabinet in December outlining some of key employment and skills opportunities available to the District to support economic recovery.”

Councillor C. Bennett joined the meeting during the presentation of this question.

Les Bullock asked the following supplementary question:

‘With regard to the Designer Outlet, will it bring the level of quality retail jobs that were originally envisaged when discussions first started with McArthurGlen, as part of the Council’s long term strategy?’

The Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader provided the following response to the supplementary question:

‘Yes, it was hoped so. There will be an estimated 3.5 million visitors each year to the Designer Outlet and it was hoped that they could also be integrated into the

Council's hospitality and tourism sectors. The Designer Outlet will provide both entry level and more senior retail jobs, with a clear career path for people to develop and gain advancement. Training is being provided by Walsall Retail Academy.'

- (iv) The following question was submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4B(c) by member of the public, Les Bullock:

"Will the 'Green Agenda' help to create new job opportunities in the area, with hopefully, a resultant 'upskilling' into more high tech jobs for our community"

Councillor T.B. Johnson, Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader, deferred to Councillor J. Newbury, Environment and Climate Change Portfolio Leader, who provided the following response:

"Yes I do believe that the 'Green Agenda' will create opportunities for the District and the Council is keen to ensure that the District plays its role in a wider West Midlands response to the 'Green Industrial Revolution'. The Council's Economic Prosperity Strategy published in January 2020 is firmly focused on developing 'clean growth' sector and whilst we have been blown somewhat off course this year with COVID-19, we want to make sure that clean and green growth is part of our recovery.

In terms of the skills Agenda, our immediate focus is to work with our partners to get unemployed people back into work as soon as possible and we will need to have a pragmatic approach to supporting new jobs. Longer term, our ambition is to develop higher skilled and higher paid jobs and work with partners such as South Staffordshire College and Walsall College to upskill and reskill local people to ensure they can get access to local employment opportunities.

We have a very productive partnership with South Staffordshire College and the re-establishment of the Cannock Campus has seen the creation of a new £1.5 million Engineering Skills Academy and the College is currently progressing plans for a Digital Skills Academy, with funding secured from the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP. The Engineering Skills Academy will support a new generation of engineers within the District, creating new Apprenticeship and learning opportunities, and engineering plays a key role in the development of the 'clean growth' sector.

The development of a Digital Skills Academy for Cannock Chase will also make an important contribution to the 'Green Agenda'. All of us have had to utilise technology more than ever as a result of COVID-19 and do more of our business on-line. The Digital Skills Academy will provide a more comprehensive digital offer locally for business and learners, including apprentices, adult learners and industry standard specialist courses.

Key projects such as the regeneration of Rugeley Power Station will also position the District as a location for clean growth. The site owner has ambitions to re-develop the site as a sustainable community with a focus on zero and low carbon development and taking advantage of renewable energy technologies - making a direct contribution to the development of our Green Agenda."

Les Bullock asked the following supplementary question:

'Will the new jobs be retained for local people, and will training also extend to high schools in the District to prepare them for moving into further education and training?'

The Environment and Climate Change Portfolio Leader provided the following response to the supplementary question:

‘Clearly there is a need to provide training for pupils at all levels, not just in post-16 education, and the Council hoped to encourage and support local schools in doing this.’

- (v) The following question was submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4B(c) by member of the public, Natascha Chiles:

“Given the Council has awarded a change to the operator of the outdoor market in Cannock, what measures specifically related to traders’ current locations, rent protection, and competition, are the council taking to safeguard the businesses and livelihoods of existing traders to ensure these small businesses are protected in order that they may continue to serve the community of Cannock in the future?”

Councillor G. Alcott, Deputy Leader of the Council and Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader, provided the following response:

“As you may be aware the Cannock Street Market contract has recently been re-tendered with Bescot Promotions Limited being successful and appointed as the new market operator.

As with the previous street market contract this new contract will also run for 3 years with the option to extend for up to a further 2 years.

From correspondence received, I understand that a number of traders have concerns regarding our need to procure a new street market provider, especially as this changeover could impact on their livelihoods. I appreciate they were happy with the existing market, which was run by Sketts, however the Council is bound by strict procurement rules and hence that is why we needed to retender the contract.

The tender process followed the requirements of the public procurement regulations and was overseen and approved by the Staffordshire County Council procurement team. The evaluation process took into consideration both the quality and cost of submitted bids and the assessment criteria applied equally to all operators submitting a tender. The award of the contract reflects the outcome of that prescribed tender evaluation process.

Overall, the quality questions were set to assess the potential operator’s proposals and competence to deliver a street market in Cannock. Rent protection was not part of the quality assessment because this is outside the Council’s remit and is a matter between the market provider and each individual trader.

However, over 20% of the quality assessment was based on a question relating to the provision of support to existing and new traders, which included providing business support, advice, dealing with trader issues, poor quality products and hygiene issues.

In addition, Bescot have expressed their desire to support existing traders and where possible honouring existing pitches. Information for any trader interested in running a stall on the street market is available on both the Bescot Promotions and Council websites and includes an option to request an email package of information.

In addition, on Monday 23 November, Bescot set up a marquee in Cannock Town Centre and invited all interested traders to meet with them and sign up to the

relaunched Bescot street market.

Thus, within the rules of the procurement process, the Council has done everything it can to protect the interests of the existing traders and allow the Cannock Street Market to continue to thrive.”

Natascha Chiles asked the following supplementary question:

“As there was no consultation with local businesses on this re-tendered process, will the Council commit in future to not delegate such decision to so few Officers when it affects so many, and to consult all businesses and traders?”

The Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader provided the following response to the supplementary question:

“I cannot guarantee this will take place as there is a procedure set down for the contracts of the street market. Regarding consultation with traders, I see no reason why we couldn't do so, but this would be for the Council to decide at that time.”

46. Chairman's Announcements and Correspondence

(i) Fundraising Donations

The Chairman advised that to date, he had received £540 in donations from Members toward his fundraising and thanked those Members for their contributions.

Any Members who wished to donate but had not yet done so were asked to contact the Democratic & Resilience Services Manager.

All monies raised would be distributed at the end of the year to the Chairman's chosen charity, Liberty Staffordshire.

(ii) Receipt of a Petition

The Chairman advised that the Council had received from Councillor P.M. Hewitt a petition signed by local residents regarding the height of the advertising sign at the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet.

The petition would be referred to the Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader, Councillor T.B. Johnson, for review.

47. Leader's Announcements and Correspondence

(i) Carbon Literacy Training

The Leader reminded Members that they should contact the Managing Director's PA to book themselves in for the 'carbon literacy' training. Several places were still available for the first cohort scheduled in December.

(ii) Covid-19 Update

The Leader advised that due to the impact of Covid-19. Staffordshire had been at 'Major Incident' status since 29 October. During this period, and especially since the second national 'lockdown' commenced on 5 November, the Council had prioritised the following:

- Track and Trace (with Staffordshire County Council and Public Health England).
- Supporting Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) people, of which there were 4,267 in the District (with Staffordshire County Council, voluntary sector groups and food banks).
- Payments to businesses forced to close and other discretionary payments to support a wider range of businesses.
- Support and advise to businesses to remain open and Covid-19 compliant.
- Maintaining all Council services to the public with the exception of leisure and culture services as they had to be closed from 5 November, and some impact on indoor and outdoor markets due to the ban on non-essential retail.
- Working with all partner agencies as part of the Staffordshire Local Resilience Forum across a wide range of issues.

The Leader was then pleased to report that the Covid-19 seven-day case rates were reducing as a result of compliance with the lockdown. The case rate for the District for the seven days to 20 November was 247.1 per 100,000 population, this being the lowest case rate in Staffordshire. The same case rate indicator was 353 per 100,000 for the seven days to 16 November, therefore a material reduction could be seen. The testing rate remained higher than the West Midlands average at 497.1 per 100,000 population. There were three high risk locations in the District, of which two were nursing homes. Whilst this was positive news overall, the District rate remained above the England average, so there was further progress to make.

The Leader was not in a position to advise what Covid Alert Level tier the District would exit the national lockdown into on 2 December as there was a national announcement being made on 26 November.

Finally, the Leader hoped all Members would join him in thanking staff at the Council and across the public and voluntary sectors for the huge efforts and commitment being made to contain the virus until such time as a licenced vaccine was freely available.

(iii) Free Car Parking on Saturdays in December

The Leader advised that as Members may recall during his Leader's speech to Council on 12 February 2020, he announced that for 2020, the Administration would suspend car parking charges in all Council car parks for the two Saturdays before Christmas (12 and 19 December 2020).

Given the second national lockdown, which was due to be lifted on 2 December, the Leader announced that this offer of free car parking in all of the Council owned car parks would be extended to include Saturday 5 December also.

Offering free car parking on all of the Saturdays leading up to Christmas would hopefully encourage residents to return safely to the District's town centres and high streets and support the local businesses who had suffered financially throughout this dreadful pandemic.

(iv) **Food Justice Champion**

The Leader advised that over 8 million people in the UK were food insecure, and Cannock Chase as a district was no different. He wanted the Council to work with partner organisations, both voluntary and statutory in a more coordinated way, not just during the pandemic, with a view to setting up a food partnership. Food justice is about taking action on the causes of hunger, which is availability and affordability of good nutritious food. Local Councils and local communities played a key role during the pandemic.

The Leader, therefore, intended to give the Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing the lead for delivering food justice in the District as the Council's Food Justice Champion. The relevant Scrutiny Committee would also be asked to investigate the extent of food poverty in the District and see what can be done to tackle through the development of a Food Action Plan to address the causes of food poverty in the District.

48. Changes to Membership of Committees etc. 2020/21

The Leader of the Council, Councillor G. Adamson, notified Council of changes to membership of the Constitution Working Group from the Labour Group for approval by Council (Item 7.1 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That the changes to the Labour Group's membership of the Constitution Working Group, as detailed in Item 7.1 of the agenda, be approved.

49. Questions Received under Council Procedure Rule 8

No Questions under Council Procedure Rule 8 were received.

50. Recommendations Referred from Cabinet, Committees etc.

Consideration was given to the following recommendation to Council, made by Cabinet at its meeting held on 12 November 2020, in respect of:

2019/20 Infrastructure Funding Statement (draft Minute No. 46)

"That Council be recommended to adopt the annual infrastructure funding statement for the financial year 2019/20, as attached at Appendix 1 to the 12 November 2020 Cabinet report, and that it be approved for publication on the Council's website."

(Councillor Andrea Layton sought clarification with regard to an apparent omission in the document: [page 7 – Regulation 59F] referred to unparished areas but excluded Cannock North. Councillor wondered if this was intentional. The Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader confirmed that it was an oversight and the matter would be rectified.)

RESOLVED:

That (subject to the above amendment):

The annual infrastructure funding statement 2019/20, as attached as Appendix 1 to the 12 November 2020 Cabinet report, be adopted, and published on the Council's website.

51. Motions Received under Council Procedure Rule 6

- (i) Consideration was given to the following Motion, submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 6, by Councillor Mrs. C. Mitchell, Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader:

“Council will be aware that we retained all six Green Flag awards in Cannock Chase again this year with a special award for Castle Ring. It is becoming increasingly obvious how important our green spaces, parks and leisure facilities are for our health and wellbeing, mental and physical.

Due to Covid our leisure facilities have come under increased financial pressure due to closures and with cancellations of memberships and lack of public confidence. It is also reported that one in four community clubs state that they will close, with more than half of those most at risk located in deprived areas.

Health conditions such as diabetes and obesity, which we have major problems with in Cannock Chase, can be managed and prevented through physical activity, but lockdown highlighted that not everyone has access to a garden, online classes or parks and open spaces.

As facilities reopen we must work as Councillors and play a key role in articulating sport and physical activity’s contribution to national and local priorities, such as reducing obesity, mitigating climate change, high street regeneration and reducing pressures on adult social care service.

I know that the Managing Director has written to the Member of Parliament for Cannock Chase already. I move further that he write to the Secretary of State to express the urgency for an emergency funding package for this Council, so that our parks, open spaces and leisure facilities can continue to be kept to the standard that our residents want and deserve.”

Councillor A.M. Muckley moved the following amendment, which was seconded:

“At the end of the Motion, insert the following wording:

This Council further resolves to ask the Cabinet at their next meeting to review the boardwalks and bridges in Rawnsley Woods, Anglesey Nature Reserve and the Rugeley Boardwalk along with the other nine identified sites to see whether allowance can be made in the current budget for their repair / replacement and to report back to full Council.”

The amendment was not accepted by Councillor Mrs. C.M. Mitchell for inclusion in the Motion.

Councillor Ms. C.L. Wilkinson joined the meeting during the debate on the amendment.

The meeting was adjourned for a break at 7:15pm and resumed at 7:20pm

Due to the amendment not being accepted by Councillor Mrs. C.M. Mitchell, a vote was taken, and the amendment approved.

Councillor C. Bennett lost connection prior to the vote on the amendment, but rejoined the meeting following the vote.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The Managing Director write to the Secretary of State to express the urgency for an emergency funding package for this Council, so that our parks, open spaces and leisure facilities could continue to be kept to the standards that our residents wanted and deserved.
- (B) This Council further resolves to ask the Cabinet at their next meeting to review the boardwalks and bridges in Rawnsley Woods, Anglesey Nature Reserve and the Rugeley Boardwalk along with the other nine identified sites to see whether allowance can be made in the current budget for their repair / replacement and to report back to full Council.

(ii) Consideration was given to the following Motion, submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 6, by Councillor A.M. Muckley, Member for Rawnsley Ward:

“A recently convened appeal panel requested that this motion is brought before Council in light of some concerns that arose as part of the appeal.

Consequently, this Council notes that a clear and fair complaints process is needed, particularly with regards to Stage Three complaints.

Therefore this Council:

- Resolves to ensure a best practice complaints procedure.
- Proposes that a cross-party working group is formed to fully discuss best practice for Stage Three complaints.
- That the findings of the working group be reported back to full Council.”

RESOLVED:

That:

- The Council resolves to ensure a best practice complaints procedure.
- A cross-party working group be formed to fully discuss best practice for Stage Three complaints.
- The findings of the working group be reported back to full Council.”

(iii) Consideration was given to the following Motion, submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 6, by Councillor Miss O. Lyons, Leader of the Opposition:

“The devastating consequences of Climate Change need no explanation; we are surrounded by evidence of the unwelcome changes to our environment. In July 2019, this Council committed to become net carbon neutral by 2030. Indeed, councillors receive an update on that commitment only last week.

Climate Change is complex and to reach carbon neutrality, we must develop a multifaceted approach. The problem is complicated, contributory factors are entwined into modern life and, sadly, there is no silver bullet. Yet one thing is simple, we must act now.

We live in Cannock Chase and have an entire forest on our doorstep. We are lucky because every tree helps but we must not use this to lessen our own level of

responsibility. We could go further in and around our towns and strive to make a larger impact.

Planting trees is one of the cheapest, most cost-effective means of reducing carbon.

- Trees purify the air and a single tree can absorb almost 1 tonne of carbon during its lifetime;
- A single tree can provide enough oxygen for two people per year;
- Trees support our environment, protect wildlife and help restore vital habitats;
- They help our own wellbeing and mental health by allowing us to take a moment to enjoy the great outdoors.

Science supports the amazing benefits of ‘afforestation’, or simply put ‘planting more trees’. Nationally, there is a range of tree planting schemes and the Forestry Commission’s report ‘Government supported new planting of trees in England’ released in June 2020 confirms that 1,956 hectares, or 3,281,000 trees were planted in 2019/2020 as a result.

Elsewhere, local authorities are embarking upon more localised initiatives and utilising schemes such as the Government’s ‘Woodland Carbon Fund’ which provides capital funding for Council’s to create new green, wooded areas.

It should be recognised that this Council have in the past planted trees alongside the Countryside Volunteers and Staffordshire Wildlife and have a remove one, replace one policy. Cannock Chase District Council’s own Urban Forestry Strategy identifies and promotes community involvement in both tree management and tree planting. I have received requests from community groups who wish to help locally by planting trees themselves. We should be enabling tree planting projects as they bring together communities, encourage residents to spend time outdoors and, longer term, help us to fight Climate Change.

I was therefore disappointed to find a stumbling block – this Council does not have a ‘land bank’ or indeed any areas that have been surveyed, prepared and protected for tree planting. Given the increasing development in the area, I feel strongly that land should be protected for this purpose.

I understand the financial pressures this Council faces and I know that it is not always as simple as planting trees. There will be costs, such as planting materials, ground preparation, fencing and ongoing maintenance, but we cannot ignore the cost to our planet by postponing this action.

I propose that this Council begins to look at identifying a ‘land bank’ for the purpose of planting trees, assessing the potential cost to the Council and further explore the various funding opportunities and incentives on offer.”

Councillor J.A.A. Newbury moved the following amendment, which was seconded:

“Delete final paragraph of the motion and replace with:

I propose that as part of the emerging Local Plan, this Council commits to identifying suitable sites which can be transformed into a woodland habitat with species appropriate to Cannock Chase’s landscape.

Furthermore, officers of the Council should, in due course, produce a report on potential options for sites and explore the various funding opportunities on offer,

including lobbying our Member of Parliament for a share of central government funding for tree planting.”

The amendment was accepted by Councillor Miss O. Lyons.

RESOLVED:

That

- (A) As part of the emerging Local Plan, the Council commits to identifying suitable sites which could be transformed into a woodland habitat with species appropriate to Cannock Chase’s landscape.
- (B) Furthermore, officers of the Council should, in due course, produce a report on potential options for sites and explore the various funding opportunities on offer, including lobbying our Member of Parliament for a share of central government funding for tree planting.

- (iv)** Consideration was given to the following Motion, submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 6, by Councillor B. Jones, Community Safety and Partnerships Shadow Portfolio Leader:

“This motion proposes that council directs the Managing Director of CCDC, Mr Tony McGovern to write to the Minister for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Kwasi Kwartang MP, requesting a change in legislation relating to the sale and use of fireworks.

This motion has been prepared based on the research undertaken by the RSPCA and contained within its report titled ‘Bang out of Order’. For those wishing to read the report in detail, please follow the below link:

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/documents/1494939/0/Bang+out+of+order+-+fireworks+frighten+animals+%28PDF+706KB%29.pdf/ebcfb65c-40f4-58a0-88d2-0896845a3127?t=1571669349793>

We are all aware that the use of fireworks has substantially increased in recent years. What was once a yearly occurrence shortly before and on bonfire night has now become a year-round event. As well as the lead up to bonfire night, fireworks are now routinely used during the New Year, Diwali, Chinese New Year, Birthdays, Weddings and other celebrations. Whilst many people enjoy fireworks, sadly this has led to an increase in anti-social behaviour and considerable distress being caused to domestic pets, horses, farm animals and other wildlife.

Fireworks can be a source of fear and distress for many animals, particularly the sudden, loud noises. For example, it is estimated that 45 percent of dogs show signs of fear when they hear fireworks and a New Zealand survey recorded 79 percent of horses as either anxious or very anxious around fireworks over the period of Bonfire Night. Animals affected not only suffer psychological distress but can also cause themselves injuries, sometimes very serious ones as they attempt to run or hide from the noise.

The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic has also affected many people causing increased isolation and mental health issues. The constant impact of fireworks being discharged has the potential to have a detrimental effect on many people’s wellbeing. Many councillors share the concerns of many pet owners, farmers and other people who are adversely affected by the constant use of fireworks and hope

that members across the chamber do too.

There is already a range of legislation regulating the sale, display and safety of fireworks. The Fireworks Act 2003 and the Fireworks Regulations 2004 (as amended) are the main pieces concerned with regulating fireworks usage in England, Scotland and Wales.

The 2003 Act was introduced with the aim of reducing the noise, nuisance and injuries caused by the misuse of fireworks. Section 2 of the Act conferred powers on the Secretary of State to make regulations to ensure there is no, or minimal, risk that fireworks will cause death, injury, alarm, distress or anxiety to people, or death, injury or distress to animals, and destruction of or damage to property. The main relevant provisions of the 2004 Regulations provide:

1. A prohibition of the possession of fireworks in a public place by anyone under the age of 18 years (Regulation 4).
2. A curfew on the use of fireworks between 11pm and 7am (though this starts later November 5th) (12 midnight), New Year's Eve, Chinese New Year and Diwali (1 am)) (Regulation 7).
3. A ban on the possession of category 4 fireworks (i.e. those whose noise level exceeds 120 dB) by the public (Regulation 5).
4. A prohibition of the supply of excessively loud category 3 fireworks (i.e. over 120 dB) (Regulation 8).
5. A ban on the sale of fireworks to private individuals outside of certain dates 15th October-10th November, 26th-31st December, three days before Diwali and Chinese New Year, unless from certain licensed shops (Regulation 9).
6. An exception to these prohibitions is for professionals who use fireworks in their work (for example putting on professional displays, special effects in theatre, film or television, etc) (Regulation 6).

Schedule 1 of the Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2015 also sets out a categorisation system for fireworks in the UK. Category F1, F2 and F3 fireworks must not exceed a maximum noise level of 120 dB. The report by the RSPCA as highlighted above gives further details on noise levels and the type of firework in each category.

This is an issue that resonates with people and thousands of RSPCA supporters and the wider public have significant concerns about fireworks. For example, in 2016 over 104,000 people signed an e-petition calling for tighter regulation of fireworks and in 2017 a further e-petition was supported by over 113,000 people. In 2018, in less than four weeks 330,000 people signed a petition on the matter. It is clear there is very strong public feeling on this situation.

As stated, it is clear from the available information that fireworks can impact negatively on animals as well as people. The RSPCA believes the law is failing as it does not prevent or reduce the risk of fireworks causing distress or anxiety to people or death, injury or distress to animals. They believe that updating the law would improve the situation for animals and people. Many councillors agree with this view and support all the recommendations highlighted in the RSPCA report. These are as follows:

1. **Limit the public sale and use of fireworks to on or close to specific dates**

and times. The RSPCA supports the current restrictions on the sale of fireworks to the public on or close to agreed traditional dates, i.e. November 5th, New Year's Eve, Chinese New Year and Diwali. These dates are already recognised as being exceptional in the Regulations and we believe that the existing prohibition on sales at all other times could and should be extended to include use as well. We believe this could be enforced by a licensing system for private displays outside of these dates (see point 4 below).

2. **Tighter restrictions on the sale of fireworks in the run up to November 5th.** We feel that tighter restrictions should be placed on the sale of fireworks in the run up to November 5th. At present they can be sold from 15th October through to 10th November, whereas the restrictions for the sale of fireworks for the other traditional dates are much tighter. Based on the experience of New Zealand we believe the sales permission should be limited to 29th October through to 5th November.
3. **Reduce the maximum noise level of fireworks available to the public and ensure they are labelled accurately.** We would like to see the maximum permitted noise level of fireworks for public sale (i.e. those that fall within categories F1, F2 or F3) reduced from 120 dB to 90 dB and the introduction of a labelling system identifying the noise level of fireworks (e.g. 'loud' or 'low noise') to allow consumers to make an informed decision. Setting the limit at 90 dB would be consistent with the approach in other countries and encourage manufacturers to design and produce quieter fireworks.
4. **Licensing of all public fireworks displays.** We would like to see all public fireworks displays licensed by the relevant licensing authority, with information about the proposed display provided in the local area several weeks in advance (allowing mitigating measures to be put in place) and a process for local residents to appeal against the granting of the licence. This process should also apply to people seeking to hold private displays at special events (such as weddings). The licensing process should require due consideration of the potential negative impact on animals and, where possible, mitigation measures to reduce this impact.
5. **Raising awareness.** In addition to changes in the law, we believe there is a real need to raise awareness amongst pet owners about fireworks phobia and that it can be treated (in dogs at least) in the long term, rather than being something that they and their pets have to suffer every year. The importance of needing to prepare themselves and their pets in advance in order to be most effective, rather than just before the fireworks season occurs also needs to be emphasised and could have a significant benefit to dogs and their owners. In addition, there is a need to raise awareness about the impact of fireworks on animals to the wider public to encourage them to be more considerate of pets, horses and livestock as well as local wildlife.
6. **Further research is needed to properly understand the impact of fireworks noise on animals.** We have reached our position based on the limited research we have identified but acknowledge that there is a need to have a better understanding of the impact of fireworks noise (including the contribution of factors such as loudness and audio spectrum frequencies produced) on animal welfare, so that future developments can be more effectively informed.

In conclusion, this District Council already has a very robust anti-social behaviour policy. By working in conjunction with Staffordshire Police and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service this authority will continue to act against those individuals who use fireworks illegally or inconsiderately. This motion is intended to compliment that strategy and tighten the law still further, I commend it to all members of this council.”

Councillor C. Bennett lost and regained connection to the meeting during the debate on the motion.

RESOLVED:

That the Managing Director write to the Minister for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Kwasi Kwartang MP, requesting a change in legislation relating to the sale and use of fireworks.

- (v) Consideration was given to the following Motion, submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 6, by Councillor A.S. Boucker, Member for Western Springs Ward:

“The Coronavirus pandemic has made a lot of necessary changes in our lifestyle, work and politics. Cannock Chase Council officers and staff have risen to this challenge remarkably in every way, and Councillors too have played their part by continuing to host and participate in meetings and committees via video. Also, by broadcasting those parts appropriate to the public.

The public of Cannock Chase have a right to attend meetings, and to see their councillors representing them. We must accept that with Cannock Chase being such a wide area, it is sometimes not possible for people to attend meetings, and as such, they miss a basic right to see their local representatives.

Having been forced to broadcast our meetings due to current restrictions we have had a chance to see that more people are engaging with us and watching us online than do in the chamber. We can only expect this number to grow as more people become aware that we are broadcasting. The Conservative Group believe that this engagement should be encouraged after lockdown when we re-enter the chamber.

The Conservative Group propose:

- 1) That Cannock Chase District Council resolve to continue broadcasting meetings for as long as lockdown is in place.
- 2) That a review be undertaken, to both the cost and feasibility of placing several cameras within the council chamber to broadcast meetings of council online.
- 3) That consideration is given to allowing access to all councillors (or elected groups that require them) to allow them to broadcast on their own social media, or websites.”

Councillor Mrs C.M. Martin moved the following amendment, which was seconded:

“That 1) be deleted, and 2) and 3) replaced with:

The matter be referred to Cabinet for a feasibility study to be undertaken to look at the cost of broadcasting Council meetings.”

Councillor A.S. Boucker accepted the amendment.

RESOLVED:

That the matter be referred to the Cabinet for a feasibility study to be undertaken to look at the cost of broadcasting Council meetings.

- (vi) Consideration was given to the following Motion, submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 6, by Councillor A.S. Boucker, Member for Western Springs Ward:

“The outbreak of Covid-19 has impacted and changed many aspects of our life; the way we work, the way we conduct business, and, particularly at the moment, the way we enjoy our social and private life. I am sure that we would all agree that the staff of this Council, both those employed directly and indirectly, have risen remarkably to the task and challenges at hand and have managed to maintain the great standards of service that our officers deliver.

While we would like to be able to go further than this, the Conservative Group feel that a gesture of appreciation should be made to all directly employed Council staff. Therefore, the Conservative Group put forward that a letter be written to all staff directly employed by the Council explaining our gratitude for their efforts during these incredible times. The cost of this letter should be covered by a donation from all councillors, meaning that there is no direct cost to this Council or the Taxpayer.

While we appreciate that this is a small gesture, it is at times like these that small gestures of appreciation and gratitude go the furthest.”

Councillor G. Adamson moved the following amendment, which was seconded:

“At the end of the Motion, insert the following wording:

The Council resolves to write to our MP demanding that she opposes the public sector pay freeze. The Council recognises and appreciates the work done by public sector staff throughout the country to keep our residents safe during the pandemic and feels strongly that they deserve better than to have a real terms cut in their wages as a reward.”

The amendment was not accepted by Councillor A.S. Boucker for inclusion in the Motion.

Due to the amendment not being accepted by Councillor A.S. Boucker, a vote was taken, and the amendment approved.

Additionally, it was noted that the letter should be sent from the Council; and it should also be sent to non-directly employed staff, such as those working for Biffa and IHL who supported delivery of the Council’s services.

It was also confirmed that the donation to cover the costs would be on a voluntary basis.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) A letter be written to all staff directly employed by the Council, as well as those employed by Biffa and IHL, explaining Members’ gratitude for their efforts during these incredible times. The cost of the letter should be covered by Councillors, on a voluntary basis, meaning that there was no direct cost to the Council or the

Taxpayer.

- (B) The Council resolves to write to our MP demanding that she opposes the public sector pay freeze. The Council recognises and appreciates the work done by public sector staff throughout the country to keep our residents safe during the pandemic and feels strongly that they deserve better than to have a real term cut in their wages as a reward.

(vii) Consideration was given to the following Motion, submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 6, by Councillor J.A.A. Newbury, Environment and Climate Change Portfolio Leader:

“This Council notes that:

- The current process of obtaining a Gender Recognition Certificate is onerous, intrusive and can be distressing for those having to undergo it.
- Transgender people have been calling for the right to self-identify their own gender for many years.
- Many countries already allow for self-identification, including Ireland, Malta, Portugal, Belgium, Norway and Argentina.
- The Minister for Women and Equalities pledged to look into this issue and held a National LGBT Survey in 2018 which received more than 100,000 responses.
- Despite the survey demonstrating widespread support for self-identification, the Minister indicated in September 2020 that this reform would not be pursued.
- The Government is instead proposing to lower the £140 fee to apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate and move the process online.

This Council believes that:

- Transgender people have a right to self-declare their own gender and have this officially recognised by government at all levels.
- Transgender people have waited long enough for reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 and are tired of their status being debated in the public sphere.
- Local government should do what it can to support the right of transgender people to have their gender recorded as they see fit.

This Council resolves to:

- Ask the Managing Director to write to the Minister for Women and Equalities to affirm the Council’s support for self-identification and request that the Government Equalities Office reconsider its stance on this.
- Conduct a review into the information it collects on the gender of residents, tenants and staff and present a report to Cabinet on the practical implications of allowing self-identification.”

Councillor S.K. Crabtree moved the following amendment, which was seconded:

Gender recognition is an issue that affects the whole transgender community. I believe that the Motion should go further and include all of those for whom gender

recognition had been a struggle; mainly non-binary and intersex individuals and the wording of the Motion be amended to include these groups.

Councillor Crabtree said that Would also challenge why gender information is collected at all when accessing Council services and would amend the Motion to seek to remove the collection of gender data unless a compelling case can be made for doing so.

Councillor Newbury advised that the Gender Recognition Act did not currently include non-binary or intersex individuals. Did Councillor Crabtree wish the letter to the Minister to also ask her to also take account of other (non-binary) gender identities.

The amendment was accepted by Councillor J.A.A. Newbury

Councillor Miss O. Lyons moved the following further amendment, which was seconded:

With regard to the second part of the Motion, that it be amended to:

“The review be undertaken and prioritised by Councillors within the relevant Scrutiny Committee rather than adding an additional task to the workload of Officers.”

The amendment was not accepted by Councillor J.A.A. Newbury for inclusion in the motion.

Due to the amendment not being accepted by Councillor J.A.A Newbury, a vote was taken, and the amendment was lost.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The Managing Director write to the Minister for Women and Equalities to affirm the Council’s support for self-identification, including non-binary individuals, and request that the Government Equalities Office reconsider its stance on this.
- (B) A review be conducted into the information collected by the Council on the gender of residents, tenants and staff and a report presented to Cabinet on the practical implications of allowing self-identification.

52. Comments and Questions on Part 1 Minutes of Cabinet, Committees, Sub-Committees and Panels under Rule 9

No comments or questions on Part 1 Minutes had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.

53. Annual Treasury Management Report 2019/20

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Finance (Item 12.1 – 12.13 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The Annual Treasury Management report for 2019/20 be noted.
- (B) The actual 2019/20 prudential and treasury indicators, as set out in Appendix 1

of the report, be approved.

54. Review of Licensing Policy

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 13.1 – 13.45 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The revised Licensing Policy, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved and adopted.
- (B) The Head of Economic Prosperity be authorised to make any amendments to the Policy required due to changes in legislation or government guidance and minor variations to the Policy in the interests of operational efficiency.

55. Comments and Questions on Part 2 Minutes of Cabinet, Committees, Sub-Committees and Panels under Rule 9

No comments or questions on Part 2 Minutes had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.

The meeting closed at 9:32 p.m., and the Chairman took the opportunity to wish Councillors and their families a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

CHAIRMAN