

Cannock Chase Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council

Held via Remote Access

On Wednesday 10 February 2021 at 6:10 p.m.

Part 1

PRESENT: Councillors:

Dudson, A. (Chairman)
Witton, P.T. (Vice-Chairman)

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

Condolences and Minute's Silence

Prior to starting the formal business of the meeting, the Chairman advised that he would be asking Members to join him in a minute's silence.

On Friday 22 January the Council's Repairs Co-ordinator, Jan Walmsley, sadly passed away. Jan joined the Council in 2012 and was highly regarded within the Repairs section. Jan had a fantastic rapport both with Council operatives and tenants and was never afraid to take on big challenges. She would be sadly missed by all those who worked alongside her. The Council's thoughts were with Jan's family and friends at this very difficult time.

Furthermore, on 2 February the country sadly lost a hero when we learned of the passing of Captain Sir Tom Moore, a British Army veteran who touched the hearts of the nation last year, raising almost £33 million for the NHS charities by walking 100 lengths of his garden.

Captain Tom lifted spirits and gave inspiration for the population when they needed it most, and he would be greatly missed. The Council's thoughts were with Captain Tom's family.

And finally, on behalf of the Council, respects were paid to local residents who had lost their lives to Coronavirus and condolences given to their families and loved ones at this sad and difficult time.

All Members then joined the Chairman in a minute's silence to show their respects.

67. Apologies

Apologies were submitted for Councillor Miss M.A. Freeman, and Councillor Mrs. S.M. Cartwright, who would be late joining the meeting.

68. 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.

69. Minutes

Councillor A.M. Muckley raised that in respect of the amendments she had moved under Minute No. 64(i) at the meeting held on 20 January 2021, the word 'National' had not been included before the word 'Justice' in resolution (B).

RESOLVED:

That subject to the above correction being made, the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2021 be approved as a correct record.

70. Chairman's Announcements and Correspondence

The Chairman advised that because of the close association between the Corporate Plan and the General Fund Budget, item 6 of the agenda ('Corporate Plan 2021-24') would be included with item 9 ('Budgets 2020/21 to 2023/24: Cabinet Resolutions').

71. Leader's Announcements and Correspondence

Covid-19 Update

The Leader advised that the latest case rate for Covid-19 in Cannock Chase District was 229.3 per 100,000 population, which was a welcome reduction and below the West Midlands rate but was above that of Staffordshire as a whole. The decrease in the infection rate in the West Midlands was the slowest in the whole of England and was a concern, both to residents and Public Health England.

On the positive side, testing uptake in Cannock Chase was at 82%, whilst the Staffordshire average was 67%, with 66% of the tests being carried out at the Chase leisure centre in Cannock.

The rollout of vaccinations was going well, with approximately 20% of residents in the District having had their first dose, compared to a Staffordshire average of 21.7%. So far, most residents over 75 years old had had their first dose and around three quarters of those aged 70 to 74.

This was a tremendous achievement and tributes were paid to NHS colleagues and all volunteers who were helping with the vaccination programme. The whole process was going incredibly well thanks to their dedication and hard work.

Elections

The Leader advised that the Government had announced that elections planned for 6 May 2021 would proceed. At a meeting of the District Council's Network (DCN) this week attended by the Leader, this matter was discussed at length, with two senior civil servants present. The Leader reported that Leaders of all parties were unhappy with the decision, as were many Returning Officers. Concerns were raised about how safe the elections would be, including the counts, the effect of the pandemic on turnout and also about ensuring a level playing field for all parties involved.

The DCN was promised further details soon. However, it was confirmed that only two assentors would be needed to sign nominations forms for District elections and that schools and vaccination centres should not be used as polling stations. The Council's elections staff would work tirelessly to ensure that the elections were carried out as well as they possibly could be.

72. Housing Revenue Account Budgets and Capital Programmes 2020/21 to 2023/24: Cabinet Resolutions

The Leader of the Council, Councillor G. Adamson, introduced and moved the Housing Revenue Account Budgets and Capital Programmes 2020/21 to 2023/24, which were duly seconded.

Consideration was then given to the recommendations referred from Cabinet held on 28 January 2021, in respect of:

- (i) Housing Revenue Account Budgets 2020/21 to 2023/24.
- (ii) Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes 2020/21 to 2023/24.

Resolved:

That, in respect of:

(A) Housing Revenue Account Budgets 2020/21 to 2023/24

- (i) A minimum level of working balances of £1.866 million for 2021/22, and indicative working balances of £1.908 million and £1.970 million for 2022/23 and 2023/24, respectively, be determined.
- (ii) The Housing Revenue Account Budgets for 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24, as summarised in Appendix 1 of the 28 January 2021 Cabinet report be approved, and the estimated outturn for 2020/21, as summarised in the same Appendix be noted.

(B) Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes 2020/21 to 2023/24

The Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme for the period 2020/21 to

2023/24, as set out in Appendix 2 of the 28 January 2021 Cabinet report, be approved.

73. 2021/22 to 2023/24 Budget Process Procedural Rules

Consideration was given to the Joint Report of the Head of Finance and the Council Solicitor (Item 8.1 – 8.7 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Resolved:

That:

- (A) The timetable for the setting of the budget for 2021-22 be noted.
- (B) The overall level of Council Tax would be set at Council's meeting on 24 February 2021, following determination of Cannock Chase's Council Tax requirement, in accordance with the procedural requirements as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

74. Corporate Plan 2021-24 and Budgets 2020/21 to 2023/24: Cabinet Resolutions

The Chairman advised that if the Conservative Group's Alternative Budget proposals were referred back to Cabinet, then the Corporate Plan 2021-2024 would also be referred back because of the Budget and Corporate Plan being inextricably linked.

The Leader of the Council introduced and moved the Corporate Plan 2021-24 (Item 6.1 – 6.37 of the Official Minutes of the Council) and the Budget for 2020/21 to 2023/24, which was duly seconded, with the following additional recommendation included:

“That the IT monthly allowance for newly elected Members is replaced, dependent on their requirements, by the provision of an iPad, tablet or laptop, and suitable training, with effect from the 2021 local elections with existing Members having the choice to opt into this scheme or continue to receive the IT allowance if they so wish.”

Consideration was then given to Alternative Budget proposals submitted by the Conservative Group.

Conservative Group Alternative Budget Proposals

The Leader of the Conservative Group, Councillor Miss O. Lyons, introduced the Group's Alternative Budget proposals for 2020/21 to 2023/24, copies of which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

The Leader of the Conservative Group then moved the Alternative Budget proposals as a referral back to Cabinet, which was seconded.

Members then debated the Conservative Group's Alternative Budget proposals, which were moved to a vote and carried.

Resolved:

That the Conservative Group's Alternative Budget proposals, and the Corporate Plan 2021-24, be referred back to Cabinet for consideration.

The meeting closed at 8:57 p.m.

CHAIRMAN