

Cannock Chase Council
Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council
Held via Remote Access
On Thursday 11 March 2021 at 6:00 p.m.
Part 1

PRESENT: Councillors:

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

Adamson, G. (Leader)	Kraujalis, J.T.
Alcott, G.	Layton, A.
Allen, F.W.C.	Lyons, Miss O.
Bennett, C. (Telephone)	Martin, Mrs. C.E.
Boucker, A.S.	Mitchell, Mrs. C.
Buttery, M.S.	Molineux, G.N.
Cartwright, Mrs.S.M.	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.
Freeman, Miss M.A.	Stretton, Mrs. P.Z., M.B.E.
Hewitt, P.M.	Sutherland, M.
Hughes, R.J.	Sutton, Mrs. H.M.
Johnson, J.P.	Thompson, Mrs. S.L.
Johnson, T.B.	Todd, Mrs. D.M.
Jones, B.	Wilkinson, Ms. C.L.
Jones, Mrs. V.	Woodhead, P.E.

88. Apologies

Apologies were submitted for

89. 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.

90. Chairman's Announcements and Correspondence

None.

91. Leader's Announcements and Correspondence

Covid-19 Update

The Leader reported the latest infection rates for the District were 65.5 per 100,000 population, which was a welcome reduction and the third lowest rate in Staffordshire, as well as being below the rates for Staffordshire and the West Midlands, but above the England rate. The highest rates at present were in the 25 to 34 age group.

In respect of the vaccination programme, approximately 37.9% of residents had received their first dose, compared to 39.6% for Staffordshire. Thanks were again given to the wonderful NHS staff and brilliant volunteers who had made this possible.

Remote Meetings

The Leader reported he had attended a District Councils' Network (DCN) meeting this week at which the issue of remote local authority meetings was raised. As Members were aware, the legal authority to hold remote meetings would expire in early May.

The Secretary of State was asked if this authority would be extended, to which he advised that the matter was out to consultation, but to extend it would require primary legislation and it was unlikely the Leader of the House would find parliamentary time to enable this to be done.

Leaders of all political persuasions voiced their concerns about this as it was generally felt it would be unsafe to hold meetings in the various council chambers.

It was agreed that the DCN and all member councils would write to the Secretary of State to voice their concerns and urge an extension to the authority to hold remote meetings. The Staffordshire Leaders, at their meeting earlier today, had also voiced similar concerns.

Community Renewal Fund and Levelling Up Fund

The Leader reported the Council had been notified that under the Government's 'Community Renewal Fund', Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent were classed as 'priority places', with the rest of Staffordshire being classed as 'other places', and the County Council designated as the lead authority.

In terms of the 'Levelling Up Fund', East Staffordshire, Staffordshire Moorlands and Stoke-on-Trent had been classified as priority one areas, with Cannock Chase put in priority two.

The classifications for both funds were very disappointing, particularly as the Government had made it clear that priority two schemes would have to be exceptional to have any chance of success, whereas the priority one schemes would be favoured. As a result, Cannock Chase was being treated as the poor relation in Staffordshire.

A letter was being sent from the Leader to the District's MP expressing the Council's disappointment at these outcomes and asking for her support in these matters.

92. Interim Management Arrangements and Future Options

Consideration was given to the Report of the Leader of the Council (Item 5.1 – 5.9 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Resolved:

That:

- (A) The following interim arrangements be approved with effect from 11 March 2021:
 - (i) In accordance with section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Deputy Managing Director be designated Head of Paid Service and appointed as Interim Managing Director, and
 - (ii) In accordance with sections 8 and 35 of the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Head of Governance and Corporate Services be appointed as the Local Returning Officer and the local Electoral Registration Officer.
- (B) The Interim Managing Director be authorised to exercise all delegated powers of the role of the Managing Director as set out in the Constitution, including the Proper Officer functions delegated to the Managing Director (but excluding the Proper Officer functions and delegations connected with the role of the Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer).
- (C) The Deputy Section 151 Officer and Chief Accountant undertakes the role of Interim Head of Finance and be appointed as Interim Section 151 Officer.
- (D) The Interim Managing Director, in accordance with the role of Head of Paid Service, be delegated the authority within existing resources to put in place the necessary interim arrangements for the Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles, and at service manager and below, to ensure business continuity and the resilience of the management structure.
- (E) The Council makes a formal approach to Stafford Borough Council in relation to the Stafford Borough Council Chief Executive acting as a Joint Chief Executive for a period of 12 months, with effect from the retirement of the Interim Managing Director, to enable a business case for a Joint Chief Executive and further shared services to be developed between Stafford Borough Council and Cannock Chase District Council.
- (F) Subject to a positive outcome in respect of decision (E), above, a report be submitted to both councils detailing the rationale and terms and conditions for the proposal to share a Chief Executive on an initial 12-month interim basis.
- (G) In the event that sharing a Chief Executive was not possible, the Head of Human Resources be authorised to commence the recruitment process for the Managing Director post, and a budget of £30,000 be set aside for the appointment of a recruitment agency specialising in the recruitment of senior management posts in the public sector. The nature of the recruitment (permanent / interim) and intended timeline to be agreed with the Group Leaders of the Council.
- (H) The Head of Human Resources, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to finalise the necessary arrangements in relation to the above decisions.

The meeting closed at 6:37 p.m.

CHAIRMAN