

Cannock Chase Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the

Cabinet

Held on Thursday 1 April 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

Via Remote Access

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.	Community Safety and Partnerships Portfolio Leader
Preece, J.P.T.L.	Corporate Improvement Portfolio Leader
Mitchell, Mrs. C.	Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader
Johnson, T.B.	Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader
Newbury, J.A.A.	Environment and Climate Change Portfolio Leader
Martin, Mrs. C.E.	Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader
Kraujalis, J.T.	Housing Portfolio Leader

Prior to the commencement of the formal business of the meeting, the Leader advised that this was the Deputy Leader's final Cabinet meeting as he was due to retire from the Council in May after 51 years continuous service as a Councillor. A formal tribute would be paid at the forthcoming Council meeting, but thanks were given at today's meeting for his tremendous service to the residents of the District and he was wished all the best for the future and a long and happy retirement.

Members then received a presentation on the 'Cannock Chase Can' project, which covered the following:

- Journey so far
- National, regional, and local data for the percentage of adults (aged 18+) classified as overweight or obese for 2018/19
- National, regional, and local data for the percentage of excess weight reception students (aged 4 to 5) for the period 2017/18 to 2019/20.
- The offer (including a mobile app, engagement projects, 'Food for Life' programme, advertising and promotion and links with other partner projects.
- Next steps.

Members thanked those involved with developing the project and were extremely supportive of the plans, in particular the mobile app.

99. Apologies

None received.

100. 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.

101. Updates from Portfolio Leaders

Culture and Sport

The Portfolio Leader updated on the following matters:

- **Reopening of Culture and Leisure Facilities and Services**

Officers were continuing to work with Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles (IHL) to reopen culture and leisure services and facilities in line with the latest Government guidance, with actions taking place on the following dates:

29 March

- Organised outdoor sport to return to Fives and the new pitches at Rugeley Leisure Centre.
- Golf back at Cannock Chase Golf Course.

12 April

- Gyms would reopen as well as personal training sessions at Rugeley Leisure Centre and Chase Leisure Centre.
- Cannock pool would open with Learn to swim, lane and family swimming, club swimming and Swim Tots would be returning.
- Outdoor fitness sessions would restart.
- Children's parties could be hosted at Rugeley and Chase Leisure Centres.

17 May

- Indoor group exercise and indoor team sports would start again at Rugeley and Chase Leisure Centres.
- Casual team sports could start again at Fives.
- It was also hoped that the Prince of Wales Theatre (reduced capacity) and the Museum of Cannock Chase could reopen on this date. Bookings would still be necessary and social distancing still in place.

- **New Cemetery**

Works continued on the new cemetery at haste and were coming to fruition now and should be complete in the next few weeks.

It was understood that the new crematorium managed by Horizon would open on 19 April, with the new cemetery due to open shortly after. Unfortunately, one of the windows at the cemetery building had been vandalised and someone had apparently tried to set one of the digger machines on fire. It was hoped that not too much time had been lost due to these issues and completion should be in the next four weeks.

Economic Development and Planning

The Portfolio Leader updated on the following matters:

- **Economic Update**

The latest unemployment date was published last week and the position in Cannock Chase remained stable with 3,495 residents claiming out-of-work benefits in February, this being a rate of 5.5% of the District's working age population. The unemployment rate for the District remained below the regional rate of 7.4% and the national rate of 6.5%.

The latest provisional data for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (Furlough) was also published last week and showed there were 6,700 employments furlough in the District to the end of February, a take up rate of 14%. This was in line with regional and national averages. It was hoped that many residents currently furloughed would return to employment soon, but inevitably some would not, and the Council must continue working to create new job opportunities for these residents.

- **Business Support Grants**

The Council continued to prioritise supporting local businesses during the pandemic, with Officers from the Business Rates and Economic Development teams continuing to process and pay Covid support grants. The latest position was:

- Local Restrictions Grant: these had been paid out to businesses mandated to close because of lockdown restrictions, with £6.1m paid out to over 3,000 businesses. From today, this grant would be replaced by a new 'Re-start' grant.
- Additional Restrictions Grants: the Council had paid out over £1.1m to 912 businesses. Furthermore, Cabinet agreed at its last meeting to allocate £302,000 of this grant funding to Staffordshire County Council to support training / apprenticeships initiatives for the District. This meant the Council had now allocated just over £1.455m of this grant allocation, 50% of the total available.
- Following a recent review of the policy for the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), the Council had agreed to extend its funding to the self-employed, and businesses operating from a domestic property. This would make a big difference to many located residents who had contacted the Council asking for the eligibility criteria to be widened.

Further top-up funding from a national pot of £425m would only be provided to local authorities that could demonstrate they had spent their existing allocations by 30 June 2021. It was known that businesses were struggling, and the Council was working as hard as it could to allocate the funding and make payments as quickly as possible.

The revised ARG application form would appear on the Council's website no later than 15 April and payments made from 30 April onwards.

- Officers had also received guidance for the 'Re-start' Grant that was announced by the Chancellor in his Budget on 3 March. This grant would be paid from 1 April and replace the Local Restrictions Grant. Under this new grant, non-essential retail businesses could receive payments of up to

£6,000, and hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym business premises would be eligible for one-off grants of up to £18,000 (the exact grant payable would be dependent on the rateable value of the property concerned).

It was expected the Re-start grants would begin to be paid out at the end of April.

- **McArthurGlen Opening**

Subject to the Government confirming that the next stage of the roadmap for unlocking could proceed, we could finally look forward to the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet opening on 12 April. Having had the pleasure of officially visiting the Outlet yesterday, it looked fantastic with some amazing brands in place. There was no doubt it would be a great success and make a significant contribution to the District's economic recovery, as well as putting Cannock Chase on the map (linked to this update, the Housing Portfolio Leader talked through a series of photos he had taken of the site as part of yesterday's visit).

- **Rugeley Power Station**

It had been confirmed that the demolition of the cooling towers would take place on Sunday 6 June, and some Members would have already noted a road closure application had been made to Staffordshire County Council. Whilst for many people in Rugeley the demolition of the towers would be a sad moment, we could look forward to an exciting future for the site and the delivery of the proposed new through-school and first phases of housing next year. Engie, the owner of the site, was also pushing forward with a plan to make the site 'zero carbon' and this very much fitted with the Council's vision for the District to be net carbon neutral by 2030.

Health and Wellbeing

The Portfolio Leader updated on the following matters:

- **Covid-19 Issues**

In respect of case numbers for the seven-day period to 25 March, Stafford was presently showing the lowest rate in Staffordshire with 37.2 cases per 100,000 population, Staffordshire Moorlands 43.7, South Staffordshire 46.2, Newcastle-under-Lyme 48.7, Cannock Chase 62.5 and Tamworth being the highest at 93.9 per 100,000.

The overall Staffordshire average was 59.1 cases per 100,000, the West Midlands 63.1 and England 55.2.

With regards to testing, there had been a general dip with 47% reduction within communities. It was felt this was due to people having received first and second doses of the vaccine, but it was important to make clear tests should still be done if symptoms were displayed. It was also understood that trials of the Pfizer vaccine in the United States had shown it was safe to use on 12 to 15-year olds, which was good news.

In terms of compliance, visits to industrial premises persisted, with some not having undertaken Covid-19 risk assessments and were being supported to undertake them. Face coverings continued to be an issue, and it needed to be made clear to people that it was not the responsibility of others to pick up and dispose of their discarded masks. Issues persisted with Asda stores across

Staffordshire and a meeting was due to be held with a regional manager regarding the large store in Cannock and others in the County.

- **Licensing**

Officers were continuing to chase up fees not paid during the lockdown for Licensing Act related activities.

Overall demand for licensing services remained high and Animal Activity licences first issued in 2018 were now due for renewal, so relevant establishments were being checked for compliance. Several instances had been reported over the last 12 months of cruel treatment of animals.

Preparations were underway to advise all licensed premises on safe reopening.

- **Food and Safety**

Members may be aware that a pizza restaurant was recently closed by Environmental Health due to poor hygiene standards and remained closed at this time.

Communications had been sent out to all the District's food businesses preparing them for reopening and providing advice and support if necessary.

- **Private Sector Housing**

The Council had been allocated £400,000 to deliver energy efficiency measures in residential accommodation by December 2021. The district councils and County Council were going to work together to deliver this project through the existing Staffordshire Warmer Homes scheme that was already running. The energy efficiency measures were to address local priorities and partners were currently agreeing on these. Suggestions so far included energy efficiency improvements in park homes and in flats above shops that were prone to cold and dampness hazards.

Staffordshire Warmer Homes had successfully completed a project at Woodford End in Chadsmoor where mains gas had been installed to the street and connections made available to residents to enable the switch from electric heating to gas. This heating was much cheaper and would lift many low-income families out of fuel poverty.

- **Cannock Chase Can and Health in All Policies**

Members had just received a brief presentation on Cannock Chase Can, and it was pleasing to note that 'Health in All' Policies could now be progressed as we moved out of lockdown towards the recruitment of a part-time Health Improvement Officer, which we had been able to do by reallocating existing resources. There had never been a more important time for the Council to consider health in everything that it did.

102. Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2021 be approved as a correct record.

103. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan of Decisions for the period April to June 2021 (Item 5.1 of the Official Minutes of the Council) was considered:

Resolved

That the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period April to June 2021 be noted.

104. 3 Year Delivery Plans 2021-24

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 6.1 – 6.21 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Resolved:

That Council, at its meeting to be held on 21 April 2021, be recommended to approve the 3 Year Delivery Plans for 2021-24, as set out in Appendices 1 to 3 of the report.

Reasons for Decision

Adopting a set of 3 Year Delivery Plans provided a medium-term focus on the delivery priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2021-24, and in particular the key areas of recovery. It would also allow for better management of limited resources.

105. Proposed Changes to Scrutiny Committees to Align with the Corporate Plan 2021-24

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 7.1 – 7.5 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Resolved:

That Council, at its meeting to be held on 21 April 2021, be recommended to dissolve the existing four Scrutiny Committees, and with effect from the start of the 2021-22 municipal year, establish three new Scrutiny Committees for:

- Economic Recovery
- Health & Wellbeing, and
- Financially Resilient Council.

Reasons for Decision

Aligning the Scrutiny Committees with the Corporate Plan 2021-24 would allow for effective scrutiny of the delivery of the strategic objectives and holding the Cabinet Portfolio Leaders to account.

106. Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

That the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

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Part 2

107. Request for Flexible Retirement

Consideration was given to the Not for Publication Report of the Head of Housing and Partnerships (Item 9.1 – 9.3).

Resolved:

That the payment of actuarial strain, resulting from the flexible retirement of employee number 204012, be agreed.

Reasons for Decisions

It was considered that internalising the functions of a Cost Manager role to accommodate the flexible retirement would result in an estimated saving of circa £9,000 per annum year on year within the Housing Revenue Account capital programme budget. As a result, and subject to approval for the payment of the resulting actuarial strain, it was proposed that the request be granted.

The meeting closed at 5:08 p.m.

LEADER