

Please ask for: Matt Berry

Extension No: 4589

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10 March, 2020

Dear Councillor,

CABINET

4:00 PM ON WEDNESDAY, 18 MARCH, 2020

ESPERANCE ROOM, CIVIC CENTRE, CANNOCK

You are invited to attend this meeting for consideration of the matters itemised in the following Agenda.

Yours sincerely,



T. McGovern,
Managing Director

To: 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>

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AGENDA

PART 1

1. Apologies

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

To declare any personal, pecuniary or disclosable pecuniary interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct and any possible contraventions under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

3. Updates from Portfolio Leaders

To receive and consider oral updates (if any), from the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader, and Portfolio Leaders.

4. Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February, 2020 (enclosed).

5. West Midlands Ambulance Service – Changes to Community First Responders Service

Item from the Leader of the Council.

6. Forward Plan

Forward Plan of Decisions to be taken by the Cabinet: March to May 2020 (Item 6.1 – 6.2).

7. Priority Delivery Plans 2020/21

Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 7.1 – 7.20).

8. Communications Strategy 2020-23

Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 8.1 – 8.29).

9. Cannock Chase Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Allocations Protocol Update 2020

Report of the Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 9.1 – 9.9).

10. Housing Investment Fund Programme

Report of the Head of Housing and Partnerships (Item 10.1 – 10.6).

11. Revenues and Benefits Collection Report – Quarter 3

Report of the Head of Finance (Item 11.1 – 11.6 + Not for Publication Appendices 1, 2 and 3 (Item 11.7 – 11.23)).

Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of the Report are confidential due to the inclusion of information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual, and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council).

12 Exclusion of the Public

The Leader to move:

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).

A G E N D A

PART 2

13. Application for Permission to Spend: Artificial Grass Pitch and Associated Car Parking, Rugeley Leisure Centre

Not for Publication Report of the Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles (Item 13.1 – 13.7).

The Report is confidential due to the inclusion of information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council).

No Representations have been received in respect of this matter.

14. Estimated Capital and Revenue Costs for Phase 2 Development of the Community Sport and Recreation Hub-Stadium Site

Not for Publication Report of the Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles (Item 14.1 – 14.12).

The Report is confidential due to the inclusion of information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council).

No Representations have been received in respect of this matter.

15. Cannock Town Centre

Not for Publication Report of the Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 15.1 – 15.50).

The Report is confidential due to the inclusion of information relating to the financial or business affairs of any person (including the Council).

No Representations have been received in respect of this matter.

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CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET

HELD ON THURSDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2020 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
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
Kraujalis, J.T.	Housing Portfolio Leader
Woodhead, P.E.	<i>Invitee (non-voting Observer)</i>

103. Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillors C. Bennett, Crime & Partnerships Portfolio Leader; and Mrs. C.E. Martin, Health & Wellbeing Portfolio Leader.

104. 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.

105. Updates from Portfolio Leaders

Culture and Sport

'Quest' Quality Scheme for Sport and Leisure

The Portfolio Leader advised that the Council was due to find out later in the day the final ranking positions for Cannock and Rugeley Leisure Centres in the 'Quest' Quality Scheme for Sport and Leisure, having already been placed in the top 5 leisure centres in the country.

Housing

Building for 'Zero Carbon'

The Portfolio Leader advised that a discussion had recently taken place between

himself, the Green Group Leader and the Head of Housing & Partnerships as to how the Council could achieve 'zero carbon', or as close to as practically possible, in all future house building projects. A number of schemes had been looked at, and it was agreed that 'Passivhaus' standards should be adopted. These standards would get as close to 'zero carbon' as possible, whilst also helping to reduce heating bills for Council tenants. Costs when compared to conventional build methods were no more than 10%. Additional / on-costs were likely to be more than 4 to 8% than achieved at present, but this should reduce with later schemes as more was learnt about the standards. A consultant would be needed at additional cost, but some or all of this cost could be covered by unused funding that for a Development Officer post.

Town Centre Regeneration

Relocation of Rugeley Area Office

The Portfolio Leader advised that the Rugeley Area Office had now relocated to its new home inside Rugeley Indoor Market. The office would be open every Tuesday to Thursday to deal with council tax and housing benefits matters. A free telephone service was also provided for Council tenants to report any housing repair issues. It was hoped that the new location would prove successful, and help to increase visitor numbers to the market hall.

106. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January, 2020, be approved as a correct record and signed.

107. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan of Decisions for the period February to April 2020 (Item 5.1 – 5.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council) was considered.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period February-April 2020 be noted.

108. Quarter 3 Performance Report 2019/20

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 6.1 – 6.31 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The performance information related to the Priority Delivery Plans, as detailed in Appendices 1-4 of the report, be noted.
- (B) The actions that had been flagged with an Amber Triangle at quarter 3 that required amendment to the timescale or scope, be noted.

Reasons for Decisions

Information for performance actions and indicators for quarter 3 2019/20 was included for relevant items in report Appendices 1 to 4. The overall position for each Priority Delivery Plan was detailed in report section 5, indicating that 70% of the quarter 3 actions had been achieved, or were in progress with minor

slippage. The cumulative position for April to December 2019 indicated that in total, 75% of all actions had been achieved, or were in progress with minor slippage.

109. Social Media Policy for Employees and Members

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 7.1 – 7.23 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The Social Media Policy for Employees and Members, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
- (B) Council, at its meeting to be held on 22 April 2020, be recommended to adopt the Policy.

Reasons for Decisions

An updated policy was needed as social media use had become widespread and increasingly sophisticated since the original guidance was produced over seven years ago, particularly as Members' use of social media was not covered at the time. Therefore, the policy sought to help Members understand how best to use social media, but also how they could avoid some of the pitfalls associated with its use, which might cause damage to the Council's reputation.

110. Proposed Improvements to Play Area and Public Open Space, Green Lane, Rugeley

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles (Item 8.1 – 8.4 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That approval to proceed with the improvements proposed for the Green Lane play area, as set out in the report, be granted, subject to the detail being agreed between the Parks & Open Spaces Manager and Rugeley Town Council, in consultation with the Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader.

Reason for Decision

The play area at Green Lane, Rugeley, was in need of upgrading, and following consultation with local residents and young people, Rugeley Town Council identified £40,000 to undertake improvements to the play site. The Clerk for the Town Council confirmed that at the Town Council meeting held on 8 January 2010, the funding to undertake the improvements was approved.

111. Improvements to Council-Owned Car Parks – Permission to Spend

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles (Item 9.1 – 9.6 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) Permission to spend be approved for the installation of 18 new, and 2

upgraded pay and display machines to enable coin, chip and contactless payments, at all twelve of its pay and display car parks, at a sum of £89,950, to be met from the Capital Programme.

- (B) The option to progress procurement of a 'pay-by-phone' method for car parking, from within existing budgets, be approved.
- (C) Authority be delegated to the Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles, in consultation with the Environment Portfolio Leader, to take such actions as may be necessary to progress the above decisions, within existing budgets. If either of the options was not deliverable within existing budgets, then they would be the subject of a further report to Cabinet for consideration.

Reasons for Decisions

For some time now the Council had been called upon to modernise its pay and display machines in order to accept modern payment methods, such as contactless, card and smart devices.

Deferment of the resurfacing programme provided the opportunity to use some of the remaining approved capital funding to: (a) replace the current and pay and display car park ticketing machines (coin only) with new contactless ticketing machines (coin, debit and credit card), and (b) progress procurement of a 'pay-by-phone' option for car parking.

112. Permission to Spend – Environmental Improvements in Cannock Town Centre

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 10.1 – 10.7 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) Permission to spend £94,000 from an earmarked reserve for environmental improvements in Cannock Town Centre be approved.
- (B) Authority be delegated to the Head of Economic Prosperity to implement the proposed works, including procurement of contractors, in consultation with the Town Centre Regeneration and Economic Development & Planning Portfolio Leaders.

Reason for Decisions

There was an agreed, one-off environmental improvements budget of £94,000 to spend in Cannock Town Centre, and a need for Officers to obtain Cabinet authority to grant permission to spend on the various different areas of proposed environmental improvements as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

113. 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).

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET

HELD ON THURSDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2020 AT 4:00 P.M.

IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 2

114. Disposal of Land at Wharf Road, Rugeley

Consideration was given to the Not for Publication Report of the Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 12.1 – 12.5 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) Disposal of the Council's freehold interest in land at Wharf Road, Rugeley, direct to Jessup Brothers Limited (or another company within the Jessup Brothers Group) be authorised, as part of a Joint Venture Agreement with Staffordshire County Council.
- (B) Authority be delegated to the Head of Economic Prosperity to agree terms and conditions and all other actions required to implement decision (A), above.

Reasons for Decisions

Cabinet was asked to agree terms for disposal of land at Wharf Road, Rugeley. This was due to the need to address a new Section 106 request for Education funding of £223,000. Furthermore, the Council's Principal Estates Surveyor had confirmed the revised offer still represented best value for the Council's interest.

The meeting closed at 4:30 p.m.

LEADER

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FORWARD PLAN OF DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE CABINET: MARCH TO MAY 2020

For Cannock Chase Council, a key decision is as an Executive decision that is likely to:

- Result in the Council incurring expenditure or making savings at or above a threshold of 0.5% of the gross turnover of the Council.
- Affect communities living or working in two or more Council Wards.

Further information about key decisions and the Forward Plan can be found in Sections 10 and 28 of the Council’s Constitution.

Representations in respect of any of matters detailed below should be sent in writing to the contact officer indicated alongside each item c/o Democratic Services, Cannock Chase Council, Civic Centre, PO Box 28, Beecroft Road, Cannock, Staffordshire, WS11 1BG or via email at membersservices@cannockchasedc.gov.uk

Copies of non-confidential items will be published on the Council’s website 5 clear working days prior to the relevant meeting date.

Item	Contact Officer / Cabinet Member	Date of Cabinet	Key Decision	Confidential Item	Reasons for Confidentiality	Representation Received
March 2020:						
Priority Delivery Plans 2020/21	Head of Governance and Corporate Services / Corporate Improvement Portfolio Leader	26/03/20	No	No		
Communications Strategy 2020-23	Head of Governance and Corporate Services / Corporate Improvement Portfolio Leader	26/03/20	No	No		
Cannock Chase Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Allocations Protocol Update 2020	Head of Economic Prosperity / Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader	26/03/20	Yes	No		
Housing Investment Fund Programme	Head of Housing and Partnerships / Housing Portfolio Leader	26/03/20	Yes	No		

Item	Contact Officer / Cabinet Member	Date of Cabinet	Key Decision	Confidential Item	Reasons for Confidentiality	Representation Received
Revenues and Benefits Collection Report Quarter 3	Head of Finance / Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader	26/03/20	No	Yes (Appendices only)	Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council)	
Application for Permission to Spend: Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) and Associated Car Parking, Rugeley Leisure Centre	Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles / Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader	26/03/20	Yes	Yes	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council)	
April 2020:						

Report of:	Head of Governance and Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	Adrian Marklew
Telephone No:	01543 464 598
Portfolio Leader:	Leader of the Council
Key Decision:	No
Report Track:	Cabinet: 18/03/20

CABINET
18 MARCH 2020
PRIORITY DELIVERY PLANS 2020-21

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To obtain Members' approval of the Priority Delivery Plans (PDPs) for the financial year 2020-21, that detail the actions and indicators relating to the Council's mission and priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan 2018-2023.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to recommend to Council that the Priority Delivery Plans for 2020-21 be approved.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Corporate Plan 2018-23, approved by Cabinet in April 2018, sets out the revised aims, priorities and strategic objectives of Cannock Chase District Council.
- 3.2 The supporting Priority Delivery Plans (PDPs) are the annual documents that set out how the Council will achieve progress against its strategic objectives; these plans establish the actions, performance measures and timetables for delivery that are the basis of the Council's quarterly and annual performance reporting framework.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 This report supports the Council's Corporate Priorities as follows:
- (i) The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's mission, priorities and strategic objectives for the period 2018-23, and is therefore a central element of the corporate priority planning process. The PDPs form the annual

mechanism for reporting and monitoring progress in regard to these priorities.

5 Report Detail

Corporate Plan

- 5.1 In April 2018, Cabinet approved the Corporate Plan 2018-23, establishing the strategic priorities and performance management framework for the five year period. Priority Delivery Plans (PDPs) are developed and published annually during this period, providing the basis for the Council’s performance management framework through reports to Leadership Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees.
- 5.2 Since the publication of the Corporate Plan, an Economic Prosperity Strategy has been approved. This strategy has a series of five themes/objectives. It is proposed to now use these in place of the original objectives that sit under the Promoting Prosperity priority. This has been reflected in the Promoting Prosperity PDP. A table showing the changes is set out below:

Revised – Economic Prosperity Strategy Theme	Original – Corporate Plan Objective
Destination Cannock Chase	Establishing McArthurGlen Designer Outlet as a major visitor attraction and maximise the benefits it will bring to the District
A more productive economy Enterprising Cannock Chase	Create a positive environment in which businesses in the District can thrive
Boosting Resident skills	Increase skill levels of residents and the amount of higher skilled jobs in the District Increase access to employment opportunities
Town Centres driving change	Create strong and diverse town centres to attract additional customers and visitors Commencement of the regeneration of Rugeley power Station
Increase housing choice (no change)	Increase housing choice

The objective relating to building new houses remains unaffected by this change.

- 5.3 Following the approval of the Council motion declaring a Climate Change Emergency, a new objective has been added under the Community Wellbeing priority. The objective is:

“To aim to become net carbon neutral by 2030”.

This new objective, together with supporting actions, has been included in the Environment Partnerships and Community Safety PDP for 2020/21.

Priority Delivery Plans

- 5.4 Priority Delivery Plans have been developed for the 2020-21 financial year. The plans have been set out under the following headings, to align with the priorities of the Corporate Plan and with the Council's Scrutiny Committees' structure:
- Promoting Prosperity;
 - Community Wellbeing - Environment, Partnerships and Community Safety;
 - Community Wellbeing - Health, Culture and Sport; and
 - Corporate;
- 5.5 Although our Corporate Plan doesn't have a corporate priority heading, we continue to have a Corporate Priority Delivery Plan for reporting to our Corporate Scrutiny Committee. It reflects the other key work and projects being undertaken by the Council.
- 5.6 The key projects, milestones and performance indicators identified in the PDPs will form the basis of the performance management reports received by Members on a quarterly basis.
- 5.7 The PDP documents, which are reviewed and updated annually and may be subject to minor amendments during the financial year, form Appendices 1 to 4 to this report.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

The Corporate Plan sets out the mission, priorities and strategic objectives of Cannock Chase District Council for the five years 2018-23.

The supporting Priority Delivery Plans (PDPs) relate to the current year and set out how the Council will achieve progress against its strategic objectives in 2020-21 in accordance with the existing revenue and capital budgets already approved by Council.

6.2 Legal

None.

6.3 Human Resources

None.

6.4 Section 17 (Crime Prevention)

None.

6.5 Human Rights Act

None.

6.6 Data Protection

None.

6.7 Risk Management

None.

6.8 Equality & Diversity

None.

6.9 Best Value

None.

7 Appendices to the Report

Appendix 1: Promoting Prosperity PDP 2020-21
(including changes from Economic Prosperity Strategy)

Appendix 2: Community Wellbeing – Health, Culture & Sport PDP 2020-21

Appendix 3: Community Wellbeing – Environment, Partnerships and
Community Safety PDP 2020-21

Appendix 4: Corporate PDP 2020-21

Previous Consideration

None

Background Papers

None

Promoting Prosperity Priority Delivery Plan 2020/21

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Frequency of Reporting (Q or A)	Last year's outturn	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>Destination Cannock Chase</i>							
Visitor economy numbers i.e. Daytrips, overnight stays	A	1,685,000 Day 344,000 Overnight 2018 figures	Aim to increase year on year				
Visitors to McArthurGlenn designer outlet West Midlands	Capture From 2021/22						
<i>A more productive economy</i>							
Employment levels	A	80% Cannock 73.8% W. Mids (Oct 18 to Sept 19)	Aim to keep above WM rate				
Unemployment levels	Cannock	2.5% (Jan 2020)	Aim to keep below WM rate				
	W. Mids	3.8% (Jan 2020)					
<i>Boosting Resident skills</i>							
Increase in qualifications at NVQ Level 3	A	NVQ 3-51.1% (Jan 2018 to Dec 2018)	Aim to increase year on year				
Increase in qualifications at NVQ Level 4	A	NVQ 4- 26.6% (Jan 2018 to Dec 2018)	Aim to increase year on year				

Performance Indicator	Frequency of Reporting (Q or A)	Last year's outturn	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>Enterprising Cannock Chase</i>							
Number of Growth Hub enquiries from Cannock Chase businesses	A	SSLEP	60				
		GBSLEP	60				
<i>Town Centres Driving Change</i>							
Town Centre Vacancy Rates	Q	Cannock	Aim to keep below national rate of 12%				
		Hednesford					
		Rugeley					
<i>Increase Housing Choice</i>							
Total number of net new dwellings completed	A						
Number of additional units delivered (Council Housing)	A						
Number of additional units (Affordable Housing) – total for Council and Registered Providers	Q						

Projects – Promoting Prosperity

Approach	Key Project	Milestone	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>Destination Cannock Chase</i>						
Develop the visitor economy and maximise the benefit of the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet West Midlands	Promote the opening of the Designer Outlet	Develop a marketing plan to coincide with opening of designer outlet		X		
	Marketing/ branding campaign	Commission consultants to develop coherent brand for the District for future marketing activities		X		
<i>A more productive economy</i>						
Improve our local transport infrastructure to accommodate inward investment and ensure infrastructure supports our clean growth aspirations	Improvements to Cannock Railway Station	Production of strategic outline business case (SOBC) (c/fwd from 2019-20 PDP)	X			
		Identify potential funding sources (will form part of SOBC)	X			
		Subject to Cabinet approval; proceed to stage 2 of the Business case process (OBC)		X		
		Work with rail partners to scope potential short term improvements to the Station	X			
Ensure that there is adequate supply of land for housing and employment	Production of the new Local Plan and associated Supplementary Planning Documents	Preferred options consultation		X		
		Proposed submission consultation				X
		Submission of plan to the Secretary of State	2021/22			
		Examination in public	2021/22			
		Adoption	2022/23			
Identify key growth opportunities to inform our investment proposition and identify opportunities to create a clean growth economy	Commission a Growth Opportunities Study	Commission consultants			X	
		Future milestones to be identified on appointment of consultants in Q3	2021/22			

Approach	Key Project	Milestone	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>Boosting Resident skills</i>						
Engage with LEPs, the business community, West Midlands Combined Authority and national bodies to improve the skills base of our residents	Connecting Communities (formerly Employment Support Pilot) in Cannock North area. This tackles unemployment and low pay in local communities.	Project extension request approved	X			
		Continued project delivery including starts, jobs and progressions throughout 2020				X
	Access to local jobs for local people	Hold a jobs fair for the designer outlet		X		
<i>Enterprising Cannock Chase</i>						
Create a positive and entrepreneurial environment in which businesses can grow and thrive	Identify opportunities for managed workspace / business hubs across the District	Commission a demand assessment / feasibility study				X
<i>Town Centres Driving Change</i>						
Cannock Town Centre regeneration	Identify opportunities to bring forward sites in the Town Centre Development Prospectus	Re-development of Multi Storey Car Park site - commence the procurement process to secure a development partner		X		
		Complete procurement process and report outcome to Cabinet				X
	Environmental improvements	Commence roll out of agreed environmental improvements	X			
		Complete agreed environmental improvements excluding Prince of Wales		X		
		Complete Prince of Wales improvements				X

Approach	Key Project	Milestone	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>Town Centres Driving Change (cont.)</i>						
Regeneration of Rugeley Power Station	Work with the land owner and Lichfield District Council to progress the regeneration of the site	Site owner to complete demolition programme				X
		Receive 'reserved matters' planning applications for phase 1 of development				X
<i>Increased Housing Choice</i>						
The Council will invest £12.9m to provide additional affordable homes across the district	Hawks Green Depot	Start on site	X			
	Aelfgar	Exchange of Contracts with Staffordshire County Council for purchase of site	X			
		Assessment of available zero carbon housing standards and appointment of a consultant		X		
		Development Partner to be procured under a recognised framework, where possible			X	
		Scheme developed and a further report received for scheme approval and permission to spend				X
	Chadsmoor	Site investigations and development activities to support an outline planning application		X		
		Assessment, drafting and submission for outline planning approval			X	

ITEM NO. 7.

Community Well Being – Health, Culture and Sport – Priority Delivery Plan 2020/21

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Frequency of Reporting (Q or A)	Last year's outturn	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>Opportunities for healthy and active lifestyles</i>							
Total number of people using all of our facilities	Q						

Projects – Community Well Being – Health, Culture and Sport

Approach	Key Project	Milestone	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>Opportunities for Healthy and Active Lifestyles</i>						
To provide a range of culture and leisure facilities that are accessible for everyone (all ages and abilities)	Develop the ATP at Rugeley Leisure centre to full size.	Submit Funding Application to Football Foundation (Subject to Successful Planning Application)	X			
		Commence Procurement for ATP Contractor	X			
		Football Foundation Funding Panel Decision		X		
		Appoint ATP Contractor and start on site (Subject to Successful Funding bid)		X		
		Complete Works			X	
		ATP Facility Opening				X
	Park Development - The Cema Norton Canes (Pennycress Green)	Consult and review design of play area (subject to successful appointment in March 2020)	X			
		Start on site		X		
		Complete Works			X	
	Park Development - Fortescue Lane	Tenders returned and evaluated	X			
		Appoint Contractor and start on site		X		
		Complete Works			X	
	Park Development - Green Lane	Issue Licence to alter and monitor works undertaken by Rugeley Town Council	X	X		
		Hand-over of completed project			X	
	Stadium Phase 2	Milestones for this project will be determined once Cabinet have determined what is to be included in Phase 2 of the scheme				

Approach	Key Project	Milestone	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>Opportunities for Healthy and Active Lifestyles (cont.)</i>						
Work with our leisure partners to facilitate initiatives and projects to encourage people to participate in healthy activities	Commonwealth Games – particular consideration of legacy options and issues	Attend meetings of: (a) Communications (b) Transport (c) Forestry Commission (d) Steering Group				
	Physical Activity Review / Wellbeing Strategy	Work with Sport England to collate insight information and develop Strategy			X	
		Produce Strategy and Action Plan				
With partners we will encourage and support residents in taking responsibility for their food choices and dietary behaviours	Cannock Chase Can	Recruit into a Health Improvement Officer role	X			
		With partners, develop an agreed action plan, to take forward Cannock Chase Can, from which future actions and milestones will be determined		X		
	Health in All Policies	Develop an agreed corporate action plan to introduce a HiAP approach, from which future actions and milestones will be determined		X		

ITEM NO. 7.

Environment, Partnerships and Community Safety Priority Delivery Plan 2020/21

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Frequency of Reporting (Q or A)	Last year's outturn	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>Sustaining Safe and Secure Communities</i>							
Number of good news stories / case studies (including social media platforms)	A						
Number of Community Protection Notice Warnings (CPNWs) issued	Q						
Number of Community Protection Notices (CPNs) issued	Q						
Number of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued	Q						
Number of ASB complaints dealt with via the Community Safety Hub	Q						
Number of CCTV case reviews provided to Staffordshire Police	Q						
<i>Support Vulnerable People</i>							
Increased number of referrals to the Community Safety Hub	Q						
Increased number of safeguarding concerns cards referred to the Community Safety Hub – hard copy	Q						
Number of Community Safety Hub referrals escalated to the First Response Team (children safeguarding) including emails received via safeguarding email	Q						

Performance Indicator	Frequency of Reporting (Q or A)	Last year's outturn	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>Support Vulnerable People (cont.)</i>							
Number of Community Safety Hub referrals escalated to the Vulnerable Adults Team (adult safeguarding) including emails received via safeguarding email	Q						
% of Assessments completed for households presenting where the household is homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days	Q						
Number of Discretionary Housing Payments awards	Q						
<i>Promoting Attractive and Healthy Environments</i>							
Retain 6 Green Flags	A						
Number of fly tipping incidents	Q						

Projects – Environment, Partnerships and Community Safety

Approach	Key Project	Milestone	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>Sustaining Safe and Secure Communities</i>						
We will work with partners to ensure our licensing compliance and enforcement strategies for persons, premises and vehicles are risk based and make best use of local intelligence	Review of compliance and enforcement policies in key areas of taxi and private hire licensing and sale of alcohol	Review responses to consultation on taxi policy	X			
		Produce revised Policy for adoption by Council		X		
		With Stafford BC, update, and consult on, Statement of Licensing Policy under Licensing Act 2003		X		
		Produce revised Policy for adoption by Council			X	
<i>Support vulnerable people</i>						
We will work with colleagues, partners and residents to raise awareness of safeguarding vulnerable adults and children (See Something Say Something)	Prevent Project	Funding for delivery of phase 2 (Primary Schools)	X			
		Identify schools to deliver phase 2	X			
		Deliver Phase 2		X		
	County Lines Initiative	Research good practice across Staffordshire and West Midlands	X			
		Secure funding to raise awareness regarding early intervention and prevention		X		
		Develop initiative plan			X	
		Deliver County Lines initiative				X
	SPACE 2020	Secure funding for targeted and universal offer	X			
		Commission providers for diversionary activities		X		
		Deliver project		X		

Approach	Key Project	Milestone	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>Promoting Attractive and Healthy Environments</i>						
To provide clean, well maintained and well managed streets, town centres and parks & open spaces	New Cemetery for the District	Finalise Contractor appointment for civil works and Reception Building (subject to successful tenders being received)	X			
		Permission to spend Report to Cabinet	X			
		Start on Site – Civils	X			
		Start on Site – Reception Building		X		
		Completion of Works (Civils and Reception Building)			X	
		Opening				X
	Waste Strategy	Monitor outcomes from Waste Strategy consultations	X			
		Develop plans and options re:waste Contracts	X	X	X	
		Report to Cabinet Waste Contract options			X	
Car Park improvement	New and improved ticket machines	Prepare Specification and Tender Documents	X			
		Procure, evaluate and contract award		X		
		Install machines			X	X

Approach	Key Project	Milestone	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>To aim to become Net Carbon Neutral by 2030</i>						
Undertake analysis and public engagement to prepare a costed 10 year climate change emergency action plan	Carbon Literacy training	Complete Carbon Literacy training for all Elected Member and Senior Managers	X			
	Commission baseline study and technical assessment		X			
	Complete baseline study and technical assessment of options			X		
	Commission Citizen's Assembly and other engagement work to consider options and feed into action plan			X		
	10 year costed action plan for the District	Climate Change Emergency action plan - Report to Cabinet			X	
	10 year plan to reduce the carbon footprint of the District Council	Carbon reduction action plan for the District Council			X	

ITEM NO. 7.

Corporate Priority Delivery Plan 2020/21

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Frequency of Reporting (Q or A)	Last year's outturn	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>Delivering Council services that are customer centred and accessible - giving choice to our customers in how they access our services</i>							
Customer contact data – response to telephone calls	Q						
Use of Online Forms	Q						
<i>E-payments transactions – Payments made via the Council's website</i>							
• Number of transactions	Q						
• Value of transactions	Q						
<i>Payments made via the Council's automated telephone payment system</i>							
• Number of transactions	Q						
• Value of transactions	Q						
<i>Payments made by Direct Debit (Council Tax)</i>							
• Number of transactions	Q						
• Value of transactions	Q						

Projects - Corporate

Approach	Key Project	Milestone	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
<i>Delivering Council services that are customer centred and accessible - giving choice to our customers in how they access our services</i>							
Increasing the ways in which customers can access services	Implementation of Customer Access Strategy	Milestones will be determined once the strategy has been approved					
	Procurement of new CRM system	The timetable for this project is dependent on the outcome of the digital review.					
<i>Making the best use of limited resources – managing our people, money and assets</i>							
Development of an Asset Management Strategy	Develop a new Asset and Energy Management Strategy	Present strategy to Cabinet for adoption			X		
		Adoption by Cabinet – timetable subject to consideration alongside the outcomes from the Asset Management Strategy and the Climate Change Working Group				X	
	Produce asset management plans for key Council assets	Production of asset management plans	2021-22 onwards				
Maintenance and compliance issues – civic buildings	Passive Fire Protection and Fire Door Repairs	Completion of on site contract works	X				
	Toilets Refurbishment	Works to start on site		X			
		Completion of on site works				X	
Maintenance and compliance issues – other Council assets	Multi-storey car-park mothballing and security issues	Ongoing until outcome of procurement process for re-development scheme is known					
	Rugeley Boardwalk	Produce feasibility study looking into potential for a replacement scheme		X			
	Elmore Park toilets	Prepare Specification evaluate Quotes		X			
		Commence Feasibility Study			X		
		Complete Feasibility Study				X	
		Report to Cabinet				X	

Approach	Key Project	Milestone	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>Making the best use of limited resources – managing our people, money and assets (continued)</i>						
Managing our people	Implementation of Workforce Development Strategy	Consult stakeholders on proposed Workforce Development Strategy (following Leadership Team agreement)	X			
		Implementation of Strategy		X	X	
		Review progress of the Strategy				X
	Communicate and launch Employee Health & Wellbeing Strategy	Develop Workplace Health & Wellbeing Strategy and consult stakeholders (following Leadership Team agreement)	X	X		
		Commence implementation of the Strategy			X	
		Continue implementation and review the strategy as appropriate				X
Review of all services to identify opportunities to better align resources to priorities and to identify growth and savings options	Service Reviews	Complete work on service reviews	X			
		Leadership Team to finalise service review options		X		
		Service review options to Cabinet			X	
	Environmental Services Business Case	Business Case to Cabinet	X			
		Action Plan developed		X		
		Implementation			X	X
Replacement and upgrade of IT systems	Planning system – interim solution.	Documents moved to new system	X			
		Staff using the replacement system			X	
	Exchange 365	Mailboxes migrated to new system.	X			
	Office 365	New software installed and hardware rolled out.				X
	Finance system	New software installed and hardware rolled out.				X
		Contract awarded	X			
		System goes live	2021/22			

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Report of:	Head of Governance and Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	Adrian Marklew
Telephone No:	01543 464 598
Portfolio Leader:	Corporate Improvement
Key Decision:	No
Report Track:	Cabinet: 18/03/20

CABINET
18 MARCH 2020
COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2020-2023

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To introduce and gain approval for a new Communications Strategy which will guide the Council's corporate communications work and activities over the next three years.
- 1.2 This report also brings to Members' attention an emerging issue concerning the future of Chase Matters magazine for residents and the financing of its production.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Members approve the Council's new Communications Strategy for 2020-2023.
- 2.2 That Members decide on the future of Chase Matters magazine by agreeing to one of the following options:
- To cease its publication;
 - To financially contribute to its production costs, thereby retaining the magazine;
 - To continue Chase Matters as a digital only option;
 - To merge Chase Matters with Home Talk magazine.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations

Key Issues

- 3.1 Good communication is fundamental to the work of local authorities including Cannock Chase Council. The Local Government Association sums it up well:

“Our customers should know what is available, why we have taken the decisions we have and how they can access our services. They must be able to trust not just what we tell them but that we will engage with them and place them at the core of our thinking. Trust builds and maintains our reputation; brings customers, partners, stakeholders and staff on the journey we have mapped out and enables us to achieve our aims and objectives, be they at a broad place-based level or pertaining to specific behaviour influencing campaigns.”

- 3.2 Having a proper plan or strategy helps understand that good communication is critical and shows how it can be delivered, by whom and by when.
- 3.3 While this strategy is the responsibility of the Policy and Communications Team at the Council, everyone has a role to play in delivering effective communication for the Council, be they an employee or a Member of Cannock Chase Council.

Chase Matters magazine

- 3.4 The magazine has been produced as a printed publication since 2016 with two copies produced each year. It has 36 pages of which 17 are editorial and 19 are advertising. For the first year the Council paid a contribution of £3,000 towards printing and distribution costs. For 2017 and onwards Cabinet agreed that the magazine should become cost neutral with the advertising paying for all of the printing and distribution costs.
- 3.5 However, the current supplier CIS Press has advised that it is now proving very difficult to sustain this publication on a cost neutral basis following increases in paper, ink, fuel and rising distribution costs. We are struggling to find an alternative supplier to produce on a cost neutral basis. CIS Press has advised that to continue with this publication they would need the Council to make a contribution of £2,500 plus VAT per edition (£5,000 per year).
- 3.6 The options available are as follows:
- 3.6.1 **Cease publication** – this would mean that the only regular communication provided directly to all households in the District is the council tax demand. Other communication including via the Council’s website, social media and through local newspapers and radio requires residents to proactively engage with these sites (with the Council having no control over what is reported by the news media). A magazine distributed to all households is also inclusive, regardless of households having access to the internet or not. Furthermore, on request, copies can be made as large print, as a braille version or in other languages.

- 3.6.2 **Financially contribute towards its publication** – this would safeguard the magazine for the foreseeable future. To continue with two editions would cost £5,000 per annum which would require a supplementary estimate. One edition, which potentially could go with the council tax demand, would cost £2,500 (once again, a supplementary estimate), although publication at that time of year might be seen as `propagandist` alongside a demand for money.
- 3.6.3 **Continue Chase Matters as a digital only option** – the magazine is already available as a download from the Council's website and we have built up a small database of 300 email addresses from residents keen to receive a digital version. However, we currently print 46,000 copies of the magazine which includes a supply to supermarkets (paid for by the Council). To build up a subscription list of email addresses in the thousands would require a major and continuous marketing effort; a large database would have to be created, maintained and comply with data protection regulations; and residents who don't have access to the internet would not see the magazine thereby arguably increasing the digital divide. We would also lose the supermarket presence.
- 3.6.4 **Merge Chase Matters with Home Talk magazine** – Home Talk is produced twice a year by Housing Services for our tenants at a cost of £2,000 per edition, paid for from tenants' rents. It has 12 pages (all editorial). In one edition a housing annual report is included which the Council has a statutory responsibility to publish. It is hand delivered (by paid staff) to over 5,000 households – this is cheaper than using the Royal Mail. It serves a different purpose to Chase Matters, carrying information specific to tenants, where as Chase Matters carries broad information about the District. Home Talk is also published online. Combining Home Talk within Chase Matters could be done but the extra costs to make a 48 page publication would add £1,500 plus VAT to the print costs and £400 plus VAT to distribution costs per each edition (beyond the £2,500 plus VAT contribution cost outlined). The publication might also be unattractive for advertisers.

Reason for Recommendation

- 3.7 A new communications strategy is needed to help direct the Council's communications activities, particularly at a corporate level. This will help ensure that available resources are used effectively and efficiently, especially to ensure that the Council's corporate priorities are communicated at all available opportunities.
- 3.8 A decision on Chase Matters is required to enable future planning, and therefore this strategy, to be properly finalised; either with a residents' magazine included in our future work, not included, or continued but with a modified approach to its delivery.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 This communications strategy supports the Council's priorities of Promoting Prosperity and Improving Community Wellbeing. Much of our communications work is directly related to communicating the strategic objectives set out in the plan.

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 A number of tools and channels are used to communicate the Council's work and activities overall. These include the Council's website, social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube), Chase Matters and Home Talk magazines; working with our local and regional newspapers, websites, magazines, radio and TV stations; an intranet site for employees, our campaigns, literature including posters and leaflets, video and photography; corporate publications including the corporate plan, the annual report and the council tax leaflet; and a range of internal communications aimed at employees and Members.
- 5.2 With major projects in the District, for example the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet West Midlands in Cannock, the re-development of Rugeley Power Station, the District to host the mountain biking event at the Commonwealth Games, and District Investment and Housing Investment Funds set up by the Council; good communication is vital in order to promote and realise the full benefits of these opportunities for the District over the next few years.
- 5.3 Day-to-day, effective communication is also vital to ensure that residents understand the services we provide and how to access these, as well as to understand how our work sits alongside that of our partner organisations.
- 5.4 In writing this strategy we consulted Council employees about the effectiveness of our internal communications. We asked for their views on the various channels we use to communicate with them, including our intranet, employee briefings, Core Brief e-magazine, Managing Director's online Question Time sessions, and the regular Communications Emails sent to all employees. This has helped to refine the content we now include in Core Brief - where there is a desire to read more about employee and team achievements; identify improvements to how information is provided on the intranet, and to allow employees to submit questions in advance when the Managing Director has his Question Time session in addition to submitting this as the sessions take place. During this strategy period we will also be surveying the views of residents on our external communications.
- 5.5 We have also researched how neighbouring district councils compare in their corporate social media activity, one of the key aspects of our communications work which, with the growth in digital, will only increase in the next few years:

Number of followers and follows on Twitter and Facebook (as at 20 February 2020):

	Twitter followers	Facebook follows
Cannock Chase Council	8,793	5,214
Stafford Borough Council	8,823	267
Lichfield District Council	8,763	2,572
Tamworth Borough Council	6,768	3,141

East Staffordshire Borough Council	4,851	2,444
South Staffordshire Council	8,909	5,225
Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council	8,527	4,817

This shows that Cannock Chase Council compares well against the other districts.

- 5.6 The strategy also includes a Communications Action Plan for 2020-2023 which describes the key communications` actions to be delivered over the next three years. The action plan is not exhaustive and does not include ongoing communications activities such as day-to-day media relations, specific campaigns, the full range of design collateral produced, social media posts made each working day and PR issues handled as they emerge (which sometimes can take substantial time to deal with).

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

Actions listed in the Communications Action Plan 2020-2023 at the end of the strategy require either no funding or are funded from the departmental operating budget; or are subject to requests to the Members' and corporate training budgets (i.e. media relations training and social media training). Note: Chase Matters has been excluded from the action plan for now pending Cabinet's decision.

However, if Chase Matters is to continue as two editions per year the financial commitment required from the Council's budget would be a supplementary estimate of £5,000 per annum.

6.2 Legal

There is a Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity, issued under section 4 Local Government Act 1986. The Code applies to "any communication in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or a section of the public" and therefore covers both Chase Matters and Home Talk. The Council should ensure that it complies with the terms of the Code, including paragraph 28 of the Code that states that Councils should not issue newsletters more frequently than quarterly.

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Section 17 (Crime Prevention)

None

6.5 Human Rights Act

None

6.6 Data Protection

None

6.7 Risk Management

Communications activity has inherent risk, particularly through social media use which is instant and can be easily shared. To mitigate, the strategy outlines what is expected of employees and Members when communicating the Council's work.

6.8 Equality & Diversity

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed to accompany this strategy. When producing our various publications we can, on request, make these available as large print, in Braille or in other languages. A significant concern is the potential exclusion of anyone from our communications, particularly as we channel shift more of our `communications` online. One of the benefits of publications such as a Chase Matters is that it doesn't rely on access to the internet to read it, as it is printed.

6.9 Best Value

None

7 Appendices to the Report

Appendix 1: Communications Strategy 2020-2023

Appendix 2: Communications Strategy Action Plan 2020-2023

Previous Consideration

None

Background Papers

Equality Impact Assessment

Cannock Chase Council
Communications Strategy 2020-2023

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Communications Strategy explains why communications is important to the Council, the communication principles we will follow and our approach to the various tactics that are used in modern communications practice to get our messages out and to explain our work to the various audiences the Council deals with.
- 1.2 The strategy is the responsibility of the Policy and Communications Team at Cannock Chase Council. It sets the framework for the delivery of the Council's communications functions at the corporate level and links into the Corporate Plan 2018-23.
- 1.3 The Corporate Plan is ambitious and has two strategic priorities: Promoting Prosperity and Improving Community Wellbeing. It describes the key role the Council plays in delivering a number of high profile projects which aim to bring huge benefit to our District and showcase Cannock Chase as a great place to live in, invest in and visit.
- 1.4 Our communications will help promote and bring to life the Council's work whether described in the Corporate Plan as a specific project or delivered as one of our regular and valued services. Our employees, Members and stakeholders will be provided with timely and consistent communication as these projects develop and come to fruition; while information about our services - particularly when there are service developments or changes - will be supported with appropriate messaging where required.
- 1.5 Nuanced, sensitive communication and responsive public relations is especially important to inform the Council's stakeholders, whether it concerns a change in policy, where some may disagree, or a high profile project.
- 1.6 Communications and public relations - terms we use in our overall communications work - are often confused. They have different meanings. "Communications is about the imparting or exchanging of information or news". Whereas "Public Relations is the professional maintenance of a favourable public image by a company, other organisation or an individual". Poor representation of one of these can damage the other, and vice versa, so in this strategy we will interchange between the two as the PR and communications industry does.
- 1.7 In the Feeling the Difference public opinion survey carried out by the Staffordshire Observatory in Cannock Chase between March 2017 and September 2018, 94% of respondents were satisfied with the local area. However, there were 71% of respondents satisfied with the overall service provided by Cannock Chase Council, compared to 87% for GP services, 96% for the Fire and Rescue Service and 96% for the `local pharmacy`. This is not untypical nationwide but demonstrates that we can always do more to keep people well informed and engaged about the day-to-day operational work we do and the major projects we undertake.

1.8 A Peer Review of Cannock Chase Council carried out by the LGA in September 2016 commented favourably on our communications work. On the review team's return visit in July 2019 a comment made in their report was that we, as a Council, should actually shout more about the good work we carry out for our residents and businesses. This strategy is designed to promote our work proactively, in the manner the LGA intended.

2. Why communication matters

2.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) and the national communications body for marketing and communications in the public sector, LGcommunications, advocate a strategy of building trust among our customers. LGA says:

“Our customers should know what is available, why we have taken the decisions we have and how they can access our services. They must be able to trust not just what we tell them but that we will engage with them and place them at the core of our thinking. Trust builds and maintains our reputation; brings customers, partners, stakeholders and staff on the journey we have mapped out and enables us to achieve our aims and objectives, be they at a broad place-based level or pertaining to specific behaviour influencing campaigns.”

2.2 Firmly in mind is keeping our residents and businesses informed, listening to their concerns and involving them when making decisions. Being informed, listened to and having the opportunity to be involved when the Council makes decisions can have a significant impact on people's satisfaction with the Council and the services it provides.

2.3 Informed stakeholders can help the Council in the delivery of its projects and gain overall support.

2.4 Furthermore, it is equally important that people know we are a well-run organisation that provides value for money to our council tax payers and the customers that use our services.

2.5 What follows therefore is a strategy and approach we will use that will enable us to be an organisation that can develop and sustain a District that: delivers quality services at the right time, seeks opportunities for economic growth and is one which seeks to look after its most vulnerable residents. It is a strategy and approach where good communication and well managed public relations is at the heart of everything we do.

2.6 Communications is a two-way process - it is about giving people the opportunity to express their views and opinions as well as providing information. As such it has a close relationship with consultation and engagement, which is referred to in section 11.

- 2.7 Research by polling company Ipsos MORI has consistently found that the more residents and businesses feel informed, the more they tend to be satisfied with public services and their local authority. The research also shows that overall satisfaction with local authorities is further heightened when an informed public feel they can influence local decision making.
- 2.8 This is why we give communications at Cannock Chase Council such a high profile and why all of our communications and public relations work needs to be informed and guided by this strategic approach.

3. Aims of the strategy

3.1 We have two principal aims in creating this strategy:

- i) *“To use a range of communication techniques, with an increasing emphasis on social media and digital communication, to ensure our customers, employees, Members, partners and communities are informed and can become aware about the services, facilities and projects we deliver and have the opportunity to give their views about the work we do.”*
- ii) *“To encourage channel shift but also to recognise, and aim to reach where we can, those residents who are less able to access social media and digital communication, by continuing to use more traditional forms of communication.”*

3.2 In order to achieve this we need to have proactive, timely and well organised communication activities that gain local, regional and, occasionally, national recognition. We also need to be clear and concise in how we communicate.

3.3 Most importantly, we need to learn from what has worked well, by actively seeking feedback from residents, businesses, partners and our employees in order to shape and refresh the ways in which we communicate.

3.4 We must not stand still in our approach to communications. There is always more we can do and will do.

4. Our communications principles

4.1 These are guided by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations definition:

“Public Relations is about reputation - the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. Public Relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour.”

4.2 We also like this definition from the International Public Relations Association:

“Public relations is a decision-making management practice tasked with building relationships and interests between organisations and their publics based on the delivery of information through trusted and ethical communication methods.”

4.3 In order to achieve the aims of the strategy, we are committed to ensuring all internal and external communication is guided by these principles and is:

- Open and honest - presenting a clear picture of what's happening, when and why, and dealing with people's concerns
- Clear and consistent - all communication should be easy to understand, use jargon-free language and simple terms of explanation
- Relevant and timely - communicate what people need to know when they need to know it, with an increasing emphasis on digital communication through our website and social media channels (which can also be more cost effective)
- Targeted - we will use various communication channels to meet the diverse needs of our communities
- Accessible and two-way - using a range of communication channels and feedback mechanisms to maximise reach and encourage dialogue with all sectors of our community

5. What we will do as a team - and what we expect of others

5.1 As a team we will:

- Provide a responsive media relations service working effectively with the local, regional, national and trade media to promote our work, protect our reputation and provide information about our services and activities
- Advise officers and Members on media issues as they affect our work
- Ensure our branding is used consistently across our publications, advertising, signs, information boards and digital communication
- Promote the use of jargon free English in all our communication
- Ensure the Council website and our social media channels are kept up to date, which includes working with internal web editors and training them as required to ensure useful content is provided and standards are upheld, and the sites are accessible to our customers; and continue to develop new website features working with IT
- Assist and promote channel shift to our website and encourage customers to access information online
- Support officers, Members and partners to promote the District as a good place for people to live, work, visit and invest in
- Deliver timely information to stakeholders through the media, social media, our website and publications
- Be alert to emerging issues on a national, regional and local level

5.2 What we expect from others:

Everyone has responsibility for communications

Our employees must be at the heart of this strategy. They are all potential ambassadors to promote the work and ambitions of the Council, with many living in the District and having family and friends who live or work here. Everything therefore we proactively publicise externally needs our colleagues to be aware of.

Our Members are the eyes and ears of the community. Better informed councillors will help us connect more with those we serve and ensure misinformation is addressed.

Partners - more timely and transparent communication with our partners will promote greater trust and support for what we want to achieve.

Leadership Team

- To communicate effectively, in a timely manner, using appropriate means and communications channels
- To adhere to the principles of the Communications Strategy when delivering the Corporate Plan and the Council's priorities
- To take note of and contribute to the internal communications produced, ask questions if required and help shape how we communicate to one another inside the Council
- To communicate decisions and the thinking that supports them, clearly and in a timely manner, so essential information can be delivered to employees and stakeholders

Managers

- To advise the Policy and Communications Team on the key issues that require communications support, or concerns work and activities requiring promotion
- To consider any communications implications or potential media stories within service areas and to liaise with the Policy and Communications Team as appropriate. N.B. Any person managing a project or key initiative must ensure a communications plan is in place.
- Ensure branding and promotional materials adhere to our brand guidelines, are appropriate and understandable to our target audiences
- To be aware of overall web content; working with web editors representing individual services

6. How we will communicate the priorities and objectives of the Council

6.1 As mentioned, the Council's work is guided by the Corporate Plan which has two main priorities: Promoting Prosperity and Improving Community Wellbeing. `Communications` has a key role to play in achieving the ambitions in our Corporate Plan which are expressed through a range of strategic objectives as shown below:

Promoting Prosperity

6.2 *This priority has six strategic objectives:*

- *Destination Cannock Chase*
- *A more productive economy*
- *Boosting resident skills*
- *Enterprising Cannock Chase*

- *Town centres driving change*
- *Increase housing choice*

6.3 Our communication and messaging will be around:

- Welcoming the opening and establishment of the designer outlet to Cannock as a major catalyst for new job opportunities, business rates income for the Council, retail choice, and as a destination to attract visitors to the area – many of whom will undertake secondary spending in other local shops, accommodation outlets, local attractions and facilities
- Town centres being the lifeblood of our community and needing a boost in uncertain times for the retail and hospitality industries, particularly in Cannock where a development prospectus has been published for major regeneration
- A more skilled workforce and how this can lead to new investment into the District, higher paid jobs and a growing local economy that can help many sectors of industry and service businesses
- Housing to provide places for people to live and address current needs, particularly for affordable homes – at the same time helping to provide income sources for the Council

Improving Community Wellbeing

6.4 *This priority has five strategic objectives:*

- *Opportunities for healthy and active lifestyles*
- *Sustaining safe and secure communities*
- *Supporting vulnerable people*
- *Promoting attractive and healthy environments*
- *Aiming for the District to be net carbon neutral by 2030*

6.5 Our communications and messaging will be around:

- Promoting the District as the host of the mountain biking event at the Commonwealth Games for Birmingham in 2022 and the opportunity this gives to encourage the physically inactive to get into cycling and walking, as well as developing opportunities to cycle in the District
- Having healthier communities will reduce the burden on the NHS and social care spending
- Stronger communities will allow earlier intervention to address issues such as anti-social behaviour
- Working closely with partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors in key areas of health and prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour
- Promoting the actions to achieve net carbon neutrality by 2030

- Supporting consultation and engagement opportunities on the climate emergency through a Citizens' Assembly.
- 6.6 Individual communication plans will be required for projects and major pieces of work which will help identify the appropriate audience and channel to ensure we deliver our key messages and encourage engagement with stakeholders.
- 6.7 Overall we will relate our communications back to the Corporate Plan and its strategic objectives, wherever we can. This can be on the Council's website, our social media channels and when we write press releases. A six-monthly Communications Grid will capture the key Corporate Plan projects, as well as other key communications work.

7. The Council's current communications activities

- 7.1 We currently use a wide range of communications channels and tools including:
- Media relations - newspapers, magazines, radio, TV and online
 - The Council's website www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk
 - The Council's social media channels - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube sites
 - The Council's intranet site
 - Marketing and campaigns on specific issues, or to promote individual Council services
 - Printed literature including posters and leaflets
 - Video and photography
 - Corporate publications including the corporate plan, annual report and the council tax leaflet
 - Public meetings as required
 - Presenting at external events and exhibitions
 - Entering awards competitions
 - Internal communications techniques including a quarterly Core Brief for employees, Employee Briefings, an online Question Time with the Managing Director, Notice Boards, and Communications Emails
- 7.2 With the pace of communications technology and changes in demographics, it is important that we continually monitor and seek to refresh the ways in which we communicate as an organisation and the channels we use, not least to ensure that our communications strategy is up to date and meets the needs of the community.
- 7.3 At present, people communicate with us face-to-face, by phone, email, post, social media, website feedback forms, third parties (councillors and partners, forums, consultations, and questions at meetings).

8. Overall strategic approach

8.1 *We will communicate the right messages*

In line with our communications principles our communications will be relevant and inform people of what they need to know and most importantly when they need to know.

8.2 *We will communicate to the right people (i.e. target audiences)*

It is essential to identify the relevant audiences we communicate with in order to deliver the most relevant messages through the most appropriate channels.

Our main audiences include:

INTERNAL

- Cabinet Members
- Elected Members
- Employees at all levels and locations
- Trades unions
- Partners

EXTERNAL

- Customers and residents
- Business community and potential investors
- Visitors
- Suppliers
- MP
- Community and voluntary organisations
- Central government and government agencies
- Media - online and offline, local, regional, national and trade

8.3 *We will communicate through the appropriate channel - recognising diversity*

Recognising diversity when communicating with our residents is vital. We take diversity in to account by having a flexible approach and being aware of the needs of our different audiences.

We believe the most successful way to communicate with our diverse communities is by ensuring we use a variety of mediums to meet varying needs. The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.

Accordingly, through delivery of this strategy and a targeted approach, we will aim to ensure that individuals receive communication which meets their specific needs in a non-discriminatory manner. For example, on request we can make printed publications available as large print.

8.4 *We will develop our use of digital communication tools*

The use of the internet to access information is all pervasive. Even a decade ago, according to the Office of National Statistics, approximately 60% of the UK adult population had accessed the internet every day or almost every day (a staggering 30.1 million adults) in 2010.

What has particularly grown in recent years is the use of mobile phones and especially smart phones to access the internet, social media channels and apps to do a huge variety of tasks, from ordering food from a takeaway to monitoring fitness levels.

It has made a great deal of communication instantaneous and with it a growing demand for responses in real time. Sometimes we can respond in this way but mostly we will need to carefully explain when we will be in the best position to respond.

Such growth in the use of digital is not exclusively among young people, with many older people also embracing new technology to the full.

We will therefore look to innovate and explore new channels as they emerge, to give our various audiences the opportunity to be communicated with in the way that suits them best. One way to do this, which more councils are adopting, is to develop a Digital Newsroom approach to communicate directly with residents as stories are posted, linking this closely to social media output. This is something we will explore as part of this strategy.

It should also be remembered that digital communication, whether through social media channels or enquiries through our website, can provide rich information on our audiences, their queries and how to reach them. It can also be highly effective in reaching audiences quickly and cost effectively.

We use some of this information to plan our campaigns and to advertise via our Facebook site. But there is scope to use more of the information we gather within our communications work.

9. Our approach to media relations

- 9.1 Despite the decline in local newspaper readership, the established media continues to be important in reporting the Council's work and especially in an era of fake news where trust is an issue. The Local Democracy Reporter Scheme, supported by the BBC and the local media, is enabling more Council meetings to be covered.
- 9.2 Our local newspapers are primarily the Express and Star, The Chronicle Week, The Staffordshire Newsletter and the Birmingham Mail.
- 9.3 Locally, radio is served by the community station Cannock Chase Radio, by BBC WM, BBC Radio Stoke and Signal Radio (for Rugeley), and by Free Radio.

- 9.4 Our regional TV news stations are BBC Midlands Today and ITV Central News.
- 9.5 Traditional media has an important role to play in helping us communicate to the hard to reach. For example, The Chronicle Week is free and delivered to households across the District.
- 9.6 We will react and respond to media enquiries, requests for interviews and comments in a timely manner.
- 9.7 We will also be proactive and identify stories that support the priorities within the Corporate Plan, continuing to produce press releases for the media and inviting them to our photocalls and events as these are proven techniques to deliver media coverage. Press releases continue to be appreciated by the media, and where we can we will make connections between stories and the Corporate Plan`s specific priority areas. We will continue to welcome reporters to Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings and provide them with agenda and minutes as appropriate so they can freely go about their reporting.
- 9.8 All press releases will be copied to Members, the Leadership Team and posted on the intranet for employees to see as they are issued. For external viewing they will be posted on the Council`s website and shared on our social media channels.
- 9.9 Where required we will rebut incorrect facts published in the media and we will handle any complaints the Council may wish to make to the media.
- 9.10 As a story befits, we will also conduct press briefings and conferences to communicate with the media face-to-face.
- 9.11 Any media enquiry received by the Council must be directed to the Policy and Communications Team to deal with, who will then involve the appropriate senior officer or Member to provide a comment or to arrange an interview.
- 9.12 We will create updated media protocols within this strategy period which will explain how we manage media enquiries and how we will field Members of the Cabinet and appropriate officers for broadcast interviews or interview comment. We will be providing media training to key Cabinet Members and key officers within this strategy period.
- 9.13 Monitoring of media coverage will continue by using monitoring providers who supply, electronically, a digest of coverage each day. We will share this coverage in a limited way with those officers involved in a particular story, as agreed by our licence undertaking and copyright arrangements.

10. Our approach to social media and digital communication

- 10.1 As communication across digital outlets grows, we will devote more of our time to communicating through our digital channels, on social media and via our website.

10.2 At the time of writing (20 February 2020) we have:

- 8,793 followers to our Twitter site @CannockChaseDC
- 5,214 follows to our Facebook page @cannockchasedc
- 31,887 views to our YouTube site
- 479 followers on our recently set up Instagram account

These figures compare well to neighbouring districts, with only South Staffordshire Council bettering both our Twitter and Facebook figures.

10.3 In the coming years we will develop our presence on Instagram and YouTube with the growing consumer taste for pictures and video content. Instagram, in particular, is becoming increasingly favoured as a channel by young people.

10.4 We will continue to monitor our social media sites during office hours and have made this known on both sites.

10.5 On an adhoc basis we will carry out social listening to understand what is being said about the Council across social media communities and on individual sites. This will help shape our responses and can also inform policy decisions.

10.6 We will interact with posters on social media where it is justified such as correcting misinformation. This includes responding to direct messages on Twitter and Facebook and signposting to other services as appropriate. We will not routinely respond to every post we see about the Council and its work on the basis that we do not have the capacity i.e. a dedicated social media officer (or team) and sometimes engaging on social media, particularly with detractors keen on creating a long conversation, can be time consuming and potentially fruitless.

11. Our approach to consultation and engagement

11.1 Whereas communications can often be a one-way process delivered by the communicator, consultation is very much an evolving dialogue where the exchange of views is encouraged.

11.2 Consultation is: *“A dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups based upon a genuine exchange of views with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action.” (LGA).*

11.3 Engagement can take many forms, and partners can include organised groups, agencies, institutions, or individuals. Collaborators may be engaged in research, promotion or policy making. It is based on the democratic idea that everyone who is affected by an issue that impacts their community should have a say in the decision making around it. “It, moreover, holds the promise that public participation can influence decisions that affect the provision of services, future visions and sustainability”.

- 11.4 The Council consults for a number of reasons including:
- To meet statutory requirements
 - To anticipate public relations reactions
 - To stimulate greater civic awareness
 - To supplement representative democracy with participative elements
 - To educate the public about difficult decisions and to ensure elected Members are accountable
 - To oblige officials etc. to listen
 - To provide opportunities for citizens to express ideas and views and influence decisions and actions that the council provides
- 11.5 Consultation provides the ability to express concerns, views and suggestions for improvement, community sustainability and strong local networks, and to create a greater understanding of local needs and issues.
- 11.6 The Council is committed to consultation as a means by which to supplement its understanding of the local context, to determine priorities and assess the impact of its service delivery.
- 11.7 We will continue to provide support and guidance to services at the Council which need to consult with residents and businesses.
- 11.8 A separate Consultation and Engagement Strategy is to be produced during 2020/21.

12. Our approach to employee communications

- 12.1 Our employees not only deliver on behalf of the Council every working day but, as mentioned, are also ambassadors for Cannock Chase Council. As such they are a key part of the Council's communications.
- 12.2 We use a number of tools and channels to communicate to our employees. These include:
- *The intranet*

The intranet is the go to site to obtain employee work contact details and to understand who works in which particular service, for the latest news from the Council, to obtain information on a wide variety of policies that affect employees' work, for staff news and announcements, and to post private for sale or want messages. Our priority is to keep information on the site as up to date as possible, with the help of our employees.

- *Employee Briefings*

These are held twice a year. The purpose is for the Managing Director and the Leadership Team to update employees on the delivery of the Council's priorities, its recent achievements, to look forward, to cover election results and to report on the Council's budget, within a face-to-face setting using presentations and providing an opportunity for questions. All employees are invited, with a choice of sessions to attend. Questions will in future be able to be submitted in advance as well as asked at the briefings.

- *Online Question Time from the Managing Director*

This involves the Managing Director, supported by HR and the Policy and Communications Team, delivering an interactive session where employees can post questions in real time for the Managing Director to answer. For employees not comfortable about asking questions in an Employee Briefing this is an opportunity to raise questions in another way. Anonymity can be used if desired.

- *Core Brief*

Core Brief is a regular electronic newsletter sent to all employees via a link. It is also posted on the intranet. Printed copies are made available for employees without access to a computer. It is designed to update employees on new policies and announcements, Council activities and achievements, and employee leavers and starters. It relies heavily on contributions from services. As it is quarterly and published at fixed times it has a magazine feel to it and is not therefore used for urgent announcements. Care is taken to avoid duplicating information provided through Employee Briefings, the Online Question Time and the Communications Emails sent out (see below).

- *Notice Boards*

The Notice Boards are located on Civic Centre floors and within Housing Services. The boards display information by subject that is relevant to employees. The boards carry employee vacancies, events posters, campaign material, notices from the trades unions and employee welfare initiatives.

- *Communications Emails*

These are emails sent to all employees. They range from notices about employee fundraising initiatives to updates from the Managing Director. We try to ensure employees are not bombarded by messages hence they can only be issued by the Policy and Communications Team.

- 12.3 As the need arises we might hold employee focus groups during the course of this strategy period to gain greater understanding from our employees about particular areas or issues that may be of concern or could be developed, or improved. Such groups would need to be properly facilitated and be representative of our employees.
- 12.4 The table below has been produced to schedule employee communications throughout the year and ensure they are delivered in a timely manner.

Employee communications month-by-month

<i>Month</i>	<i>Employee Briefings</i>	<i>MD's Question Time</i>	<i>Core Brief</i>
January	✓		
February			
March			✓
April		✓	
May			
June	✓		✓
July			
August			
September			✓
October		✓	
November			
December			✓

13. Our approach to Member communications

- 13.1 The Members Portal is used to keep Members informed about Council business. From here Members can access agendas, minutes and other Council and committee papers.
- 13.2 Members receive a copy of all press releases issued by the Council, as mentioned, and are able to follow Council news and developments via the Council website and its social media channels.
- 13.3 Members also receive a copy of the Core Brief electronic newsletter.
- 13.4 As a future development, Members will receive an annual Members' Briefing (similar to the Employee Briefings).

14. Our approach to corporate communications

- 14.1 Corporate communications includes managing the Council's brand and identity and how it is used (through the issue of brand guidelines), its corporate publications, stakeholder engagement at a corporate level, the design and publishing of corporate publications both printed and web based; and corporate campaigns that are public facing, are internal, or are about corporate issues.
- 14.2 Corporate publications include the annual report, the corporate plan, the council tax leaflet, and Home Talk magazine produced for our residential housing tenants by Housing Services. Chase Matters magazine for all residents has been produced twice a year since 2016.
- 14.3 A key corporate audience for the Council is the business sector within the District. The Council has been proactive in developing relations with many of our local businesses over a number of years. As a new initiative it is proposed to introduce a regular newsletter aimed at businesses. This will be produced in conjunction with the Economic Development Service.
- 14.4 Our corporate campaigns are a mixture of Council initiatives such as a year-long safeguarding campaign (during 2019) and encouraging residents to recycle more; alongside the Council helping to promote campaigns initiated by Government agencies and local partners such as on flood prevention, severe weather and a variety of public health issues as appropriate to our District.
- 14.5 Corporate communications also includes our multi-media graphic design service where we produce artwork for print and digital use and can advise on outsourcing design work to ensure high standards are maintained and consistent branding is used. We liaise with external print companies and advise on specialist print and visual production, such as signage, exhibition displays etc.
- 14.6 We also commission and take photography, and maintain a corporate photographic library, as well as subscribing to external libraries where we can use free and sometimes paid for images to illustrate our designs and publications.

15. Our approach to emergency communications

- 15.1 The Policy and Communications Team has a key role to play in the event of an emergency and is ready to provide a communications service which includes being available to assist outside normal office hours on a voluntary basis and subject to the availability of team members.
- 15.2 In emergencies the team would be responsible for handling media relations requests, drafting statements, advising senior colleagues, providing Council website updates, undertaking social media activity, supporting on internal communications and liaising with the communications teams of our partners.

15.3 An Emergency Communications Plan, revised in 2019, guides how we will respond in an emergency situation.

16. Our approach to evaluation

16.1 Media - as a communications service we regularly evaluate our work, notably producing detailed media analysis including sentiment in media reports i.e. positive, neutral or negative. We will continue to provide such information as required. We can also assess the amount of media coverage achieved, use of key messages in media coverage and can arrange media satisfaction surveys.

16.2 Social media - we can make available analysis of the Council's performance across our social media channels including followers, follows, the popularity of individual posts and reach achieved.

16.3 Intranet and website - performance data on our intranet site, including the most popular pages visited, is used to develop the site and site content. For our website this includes visits to pages, time spent on pages, and sign ups where these have been established, as well as feedback from the public when they contact the Council via our website.

16.4 Campaigns - for each campaign we run we incorporate measurements to determine the success of the activities undertaken, such as reach achieved through paid advertising, media coverage secured, social media analysis, increase in income or attendance (as appropriate), the number of enquiries or calls received and overall behaviour change (e.g. take up of a service) as appropriate.

16.5 Internal communications - evaluation of our internal communications activities can look at engagement at employee briefings and the results from employee surveys.

16.6 In summary, evaluation in communications can measure any one of the following as required:

Media	Reputation
Amount of coverage	Internal communications and external communications surveys
Sentiment of coverage: positive/neutral/negative	Contact centre surveys
Media reach as % of target audience	Stakeholders contacted
Prominence of media stories	Stakeholder feedback/advocacy
Media satisfaction survey	Survey evidence (awareness, attitude)
Key messages included	Media evaluation

Social media analytics (reach, follows, shares etc) Social media sentiment	Website feedback Partner feedback
Internal Communications	Campaigns
Engagement at Employee Briefings and focus groups Staff survey Action Plan implementation Engagement with Action Plan	Visits to webpages Feedback from public (e.g. surveys, social media, via contact centre) Calls to action (clickthroughs, sign-ups) Behaviour change (e.g. service take up) Recognition (e.g. through awards) Number of enquiries/calls Increase in income or attendance

17. Communications Strategy Action Plan 2020-2023

- 17.1 An Action Plan 2020-2023 sits alongside the Communications Strategy. The Action Plan captures a number of actions that have been identified in this strategy for the Policy and Communications Team to lead on/deliver over the course of the next three years.
- 17.2 In addition, the team will produce a six-monthly Communications Grid which will show key communications work, projects, initiatives and known PR issues and how these are being managed through communications activities, and planned campaigns.

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Appendix 2

Communications Action Plan 2020-2023

Action(s)	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
Section 9 – Media Strategy		
Create a set of media protocols setting out how we deal with the media and handle media relations at the Council	Communications Officer	Q1 2020/21
Arrange formal media training for key Cabinet members and Leadership Team with a media training company	Communications Officer	Q1 2020/21
Section 10 – Social Media and Digital Communication		
To explore (and potentially implement) a Digital Newsroom approach to reporting Council news to residents and other stakeholders	Policy and Communications Manager / Communications Officer / Information Manager	Explore in 2020/21 and potentially implement in 2021/22
Arrange training for Communications Team to shoot video on mobile phones and develop photography techniques to broaden our content	Policy and Communications Manager	Q2 2020/21
New social media policy and procedures to be approved and rolled out to employees and Members	Policy and Communications Manager	Q4 2019/20 and Q1 2020/21
Members offered training to get best use of social media in their roles	Policy and Communications Manager	Q1 2020/21
Section 11 – Consultation and Engagement		
New Consultation and Engagement Strategy produced	Consultation and Engagement Officer	Q1 2020/21
To survey residents about the Council’s external communications (to inform the next Communications Strategy)	Consultation and Engagement Officer	Q2 2021/22

Action(s)	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
Section 12 – Employee Communications		
<p>Employee Briefings –</p> <p>Held twice yearly: in January (budget and PDPs for year ahead) and June (context from May election results, half-year progress)</p>	<p>Communications Officer</p>	<p>Each January and June</p> <p>(N.B. months may need to change if there are exceptional items to raise with employees)</p>
<p>Online Question Time from the Managing Director -</p> <p>Held twice a year with employees invited to submit questions in advance as well as putting forward questions as the Question Time takes place</p>	<p>Communications Officer / Information Manager</p>	<p>Each April and October</p>
<p>Core Brief -</p> <p>Refreshed with an increasing emphasis on sharing staff news and focussing on teams and their work and achievements. Consider a re-brand of Core Brief and content it should include.</p>	<p>Communications Officer / Multi-media Graphic Designer / Policy and Communications Manager</p>	<p>Published each March, June, September and December</p> <p>Q2 2020/21 to develop any re-brand - implemented from September 2020 edition</p>
<p>Communications Emails –</p> <p>Issued by the Policy and Communications Team as and when required</p>	<p>Communications Officer</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Action(s)	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
<p>Noticeboards -</p> <p>To create a policy on what information can and cannot be displayed, and to review the appearance of the existing boards</p> <p>To provide a noticeboard for the Depot</p> <p>To be monitored on a regular basis to prevent out of date content being put on display</p>	<p>Communications Officer</p> <p>Communications Officer / Information Assistant</p> <p>Information Assistant</p>	<p>Q2 2020/21</p> <p>Q1 2020/21</p> <p>Each month</p>
<p>To survey employees about internal communications every two years</p>	<p>Policy and Communications Manager</p>	<p>During 2020 and 2022</p>
<p>Section 13 – Member Communications</p>		
<p>Members have a dedicated Members Portal through which they receive Council information</p> <p>Specifically from the Communications team, Members receive a copy of all press releases issued and a copy of Core Brief</p> <p>To introduce an annual Members Briefing (a presentation similar to the Employee Briefings)</p>	<p>Communications Officer</p> <p>Communications Officer / Policy and Communications Manager</p>	<p>As issued (for press releases) and each March, June, September and December for Core Brief</p> <p>Each July</p>

Action(s)	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
Section 14 – Corporate Communications		
Produce a Communications Grid capturing communications activity for key projects and activities, known PR issues and planned campaigns	Policy and Communications Manager	Q1 2020/21
Complete brand audits with services to determine how the brand is used and applied	Marketing and Campaigns Officer	Q4 2019/20
Update the Council's brand guidelines and issue a summary to all staff and make available the full version on the Intranet	Marketing and Campaigns Officer	Q1 2020/21
Produce a new Style Guide and a Jargon Free English Guide to help staff with their written communication	Marketing and Campaigns Officer	Q1 2020/21
Annual Report - To re-design the format and its content To produce and publish the report	Policy and Performance Officer / Multi-media Graphic Designer Policy and Performance Officer	Q1 2020/21 Q2 2020/21 and Q2 2021/22
To introduce a regular newsletter for businesses in conjunction with the Economic Development Service	Policy and Communications Manager / Economic Development Services	From Q2 2020/21
Section 15 – Emergency Communications		
Review the Emergency Communications Plan	Policy and Communications Manager	Q3 2020/21, Q3 2021/22
Section 16 – Evaluation		
Communications team to include evaluation of campaigns, key media and social media activity in team discussions, and with services as required	All team members	Ongoing

(In the timescale: Q1 is April to June, Q2 is July to September, Q3 is October to December and Q4 is January to March)

Report of:	Head of Economic Prosperity
Contact Officer:	Amy Jackson
Telephone No:	01543 464577
Portfolio Leader:	Economic Development and Planning
Key Decision:	Yes
Report Track:	Cabinet: 18/03/20 Council: 22/04/20

CABINET**18 MARCH 2020****CANNOCK CHASE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)
ALLOCATIONS PROTOCOL UPDATE****1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To consider and approve amendments to the Protocol for the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds, following the issues that have come to light during the first allocations process in 2019 and recent legislative changes.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 The amended Cannock Chase Community Infrastructure Levy Allocations Protocol as shown in Appendix 1 be approved and adopted for use by the Council.
- 2.2 That authority be delegated to the Head of Economic Prosperity in consultation with the Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader to make minor changes to the Protocol necessitated by changes to CIL related legislation

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Council approved the CIL Charging Schedule and CIL Infrastructure List (formerly Regulation 123 list, see Cabinet 17/10/2019 minute no. 6.1-6.15) of infrastructure projects eligible to receive funding at its meeting on 15/04/2015. At its meeting on 23 July 2015 Cabinet approved a Protocol for the allocation of CIL.
- 3.2 CIL is intended to provide a funding stream for infrastructure needed to support the housing and commercial growth policies and proposals in the adopted Local Plan. It partly replaces funding previously obtained via Section 106 Planning Obligations.

- 3.3 Considering the amount of CIL receipts retained, the Council decided to carry out its first CIL allocations process in 2019. During this process it became apparent that slight amendments were needed to the protocol to clarify the Council's position on allocation of CIL funds to projects that have already been funded/delivered.
- 3.4 In September 2019, the Government made changes to the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) (the CIL Regulations) regarding Regulation 123 and the use of multiple planning obligations and CIL (pooling restriction) to enable more flexible infrastructure delivery. The update to the Protocol reflects these changes.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 This report supports the Council's Corporate Priorities as follows:
- Promoting Prosperity: CIL supports investment in infrastructure which in turn encourages investment in housing, town centres and employment opportunities.
 - Community Wellbeing: CIL supports investment in infrastructure which can help encourage healthier living opportunities and safe, more attractive environments in the District. Updating the Allocations Protocol ensures that the Council is optimising the funding available from CIL in order to provide infrastructure that will fulfil the needs of the District.

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 The Council approved the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule and Regulation 123 list of infrastructure projects eligible to receive at its meeting on 15/04/15.
- 5.2 CIL is intended to provide a funding stream for infrastructure needed to support the policies and proposals in the adopted Local Plan. It will partly replace funding previously obtained via Planning Obligations (Section 106 agreements and Unilateral Undertaking). CIL and Section 106 agreements can now be used to fund the same piece of infrastructure, following amendments made to the CIL Regulations in September 2019.
- 5.3 The total amount of CIL receipts retained and available for expenditure at the end of the 2018/19 financial year were £1,386,522. A further £477,612 of CIL receipts were received from 1st April to 30th September 2019. The gross amount of CIL receipts to date is £1,814,337. However, it should be noted this figure is before taking into account neighbourhood funds, administrative expenses and SAC mitigation payments. Given the overall amount of funds retained it was deemed appropriate for the Council to carry out its first CIL allocations process, which commenced June 2019. These figures were reported to Cabinet 19/12/19.
- 5.4 The allocations process started by inviting bids for funds from stakeholders who had projects on the Regulation 123 list. These bids were then assessed by the

CIL Joint Member/Officer Working Group against key criteria. Details on this process and recommendations made were approved by Council 30/01/20.

- 5.5 During the first allocations process bids were received for projects that had already been delivered, meaning funding was sought to reimburse monies already spent. Although national guidance allows for funds to be reimbursed for projects delivered using CIL receipts, this is down to each charging authorities' discretion. The Cannock Chase Council CIL Joint Member/Officer Group made the decision not to accept bids for retrospective projects on the 18th October 2019 at the final assessment of CIL bids.
- 5.6 In our current protocol guidance, which is sent to potential bidders when they are invited to bid for CIL funds, we request bids relating to a three year rolling period, state that approval of any scheme will be at the risk of the bidder and that financing will not be provided in advance of funds being received. However, we acknowledged that the protocol did not explicitly state that retrospective projects would not be eligible the CIL funding, although it was implied.
- 5.7 The following sentences have been added to the allocations protocol – 'Bids for projects that have already been funded and/or delivered will be considered ineligible – stakeholders are encouraged to discuss the potential allocation of CIL funds for their project with the CIL Joint Member/Officer Group before implementing the project'.

'Bids for funds that exceed the amount of CIL funds retained by the Council will be considered ineligible.'
- 5.8 Regulation 123 of the CIL Regulations previously required the Council, as a charging authority, to provide a list which sets out items of infrastructure, related to proposed developments in the district as set out in the Local Plan which were intended to be funded either entirely or partially by CIL.
- 5.9 As of 1st September 2019, Regulation 123 was removed lifting the restriction on pooling contributions and giving the Council more flexibility. The Council is now required to produce an annual infrastructure funding statements are due to include information previously included in the Regulation 123 list and the first of which is due to be published 31st December 2020. In the meantime, the Council has renamed the 'Regulation 123 list' the 'CIL Infrastructure list' so that we have not referring to regulations that no longer exist. For this reason, the protocol has been updated to reflect this change.
- 5.10 The amended Community Infrastructure Levy Allocations Protocol is attached as Appendix 1. This document details the protocol for potential bidders; the changes made have been highlighted.
- 5.11 As CIL related legislation is subject to regular updates, it is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Head of Economic Prosperity in consultation with the Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader to make minor amendments, when required, to the Protocol to reflect national legislative requirements.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

The financial implications are set out in the report.

6.2 Legal

The legal implications are set out in the report.

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Section 17 (Crime Prevention)

None

6.5 Human Rights Act

None

6.6 Data Protection

None

6.7 Risk Management

Having a well documented and open procedure of identifying priorities for funding and delivery of projects as proposed minimises the risk of failure to maximise the beneficial use of CIL funding for the community as a whole.

6.8 Equality & Diversity

None

6.9 Best Value

None

7 Appendices to the Report

Appendix 1: Updated Cannock Chase CIL Allocations Protocol 2020

Previous Consideration

Updated Community Infrastructure Levy Infrastructure List (Former Regulation 123 List)	Council	06/11/2019
Cannock Chase Community Infrastructure Levy Funding Decisions Protocol	Cabinet	23/07/2015

Cannock Chase Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule	Council	15/04/2015
Cannock Chase Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Financial Year Report	Cabinet	19/12/2019
General Funds Budget and Capital Programme 2019-20 to 2022-23	Cabinet	30/01/2020

Background Papers

Planning Act 2008

Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014 & 2019

Cannock Chase Local Plan June 2014

ITEM NO. 9.

Cannock Chase CIL Allocations Protocol 2020

Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance document sets out the Council's approach to the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds for the 2020/21 process. The Council's Funding Decisions Protocol for the allocation of CIL funds was agreed July 2015 (Cabinet Report 23.07.15) and updates to this was approved [DATE] (CABINET REPORT). Key points from these reports are detailed in this guidance, with some further elaboration as to aid administration of the process.
- 1.2 Cannock Chase Council is responsible for making the final decision on the allocation of funding raised through CIL. This will be done through a bidding process that aligns and concludes with the Council's annual capital spending programme. The aim of the Funding Decisions Protocol is to ensure that decision making and the process leading to it is transparent. Through it the Council will identify and agree priorities for the allocation of CIL funds.

Key principles

- 2.1 The following key principles set out the overarching framework for the allocations process:
 - CIL funds will be allocated based on prioritising the schemes included in the CIL Infrastructure list (formerly known as Regulation123 list) to reflect the strategic objectives of the Council and its partners.
 - The allocation will attempt to maximise the impact of the CIL resources after taking into account the outcomes of the schemes; the business case and match funding.
 - The process will involve initially a three year window with bids thereafter relating to the rolling new year of the rolling programme e.g. the 2020-21 process will relate to 2021-22 to 2023-24 (should sufficient funds be available for that 3 year period).
 - In the latter case bids will not be accepted for 2021-22 and 2022-23 unless it can be demonstrated that unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of the bidder have materialised.
 - The process in future years will not commence until sufficient resources are considered to be available within the three year period to enable the objectives to be achieved.
 - To aid the process the CIL Infrastructure list will be reviewed annually alongside the infrastructure funding statement or as and when required. This will identify the potential schemes falling due in the 3-5 year period and the current shortfall requiring potential CIL allocations.
 - Approval of any scheme will be at the risk of the bidder. The Council will not incur/reimburse any CIL related scheme expenditure until sufficient resources have been received.

- Bids for projects that have already been funded and/or delivered will be considered ineligible – stakeholders are encouraged to discuss the potential allocation of CIL funds for their project with the CIL Joint Member/Officer Group before implementing the project’.
- Bids for funds that exceed the amount of CIL funds retained by the Council will be considered ineligible.

2.2 The process is tailored to the medium term three year rolling programme allocation process of the Council whereby a capital programme is approved for the next financial year and two subsequent years and reflects the resources available over that period.

2.3 The determination of resources will need to reflect the level of resources available over that three year period and when resources will be able to finance the project. Financing will not be provided in advance of CIL funds being received.

Process and Timetable

3.1 The allocations of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to infrastructure projects consists of two distinct stages:

- Determination of resources available
- Bidding and allocation process

3.2 In terms of the determination of resources available, this is done at the end of each financial year as part of the annual update to the infrastructure funding statement i.e. identifying the level of CIL receipts and expenditure.

3.3 In terms of the budding and allocation process, in order to synchronise with the timing for the Councils annual budget setting process in February, all the consultation and decision making processes are to be completed by the end of the calendar year. The table below sets out the processes and timescales.

Date	Action
By 30 th June	Invite bids from stakeholder for inclusion in the three year CIL Infrastructure Capital Programme
By 30 th August	Deadline for bids for projects
September	Initial assessment of submissions by officers and relevant Cabinet Member
By 30 th September	Consultation to share and review aspirations/priorities with bidding parties
By 31 st October	Prepare draft programme of projects
By 30 th November	Feedback to stakeholders
By 31 st December	Prepare recommendations
February	Report to Cabinet/Council

3.4 Eligible bidders for the projects will be those organisations that have project currently included on the CIL Infrastructure list.

- 3.5 Submissions are to be made via a standard application form. Please note the deadline for submissions is **5pm on [DATE]**. All the information requested on this form should be provided in order for the Council to make informed decision.
- 3.6 Once received, an initial assessment based upon the submitted information will be undertaken by officers and the relevant Cabinet Member. During this assessment the panel will raise any queries or items that require further clarification. These will then be discussed at the consultation with bidding parties.
- 3.7 Further consultation will then be undertaken with the bidding parties in September. This will provide bidding parties with an opportunity to be given an overview of the bidding process to date and those parties will be able to offer any further clarification on their projects at this stage, as necessary.
- 3.8 Following this consultation, the Council will prepare a final draft of project allocations to take forward for Council approval. The bidding parties will be informed of the outcomes at this stage (anticipated to be by the end of November).
- 3.9 The final draft project allocations will be reported to Council as an appendix to the Council's annual budget setting process, with approval by the end of the financial year.

Criteria for determining the allocation of CIL funds

- 4.1 The levy must be spent on the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure needed to support the development of the area (there is more freedom regarding the use of the 15%-25% neighbourhood portion which can also be applied to *'anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area'*).
- 4.2 Bids should provide all the information requested on the application form. This enables the bid to be considered against key criteria.
- 4.3 Potential bidders must ensure that the project is on the **CIL Infrastructure list** and in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- 4.4 Priority will be given to Capital schemes, although revenue funding via maintenance of associated assets will also be eligible.
- 4.5 The connection to relevant Local Plan (Part 1) policies will be considered together with an overall assessment of the economic, social and environmental benefits of the project. This information is to be provided in Part One of the Expression of Interest Application Form. Please note this criteria will be prioritised in the decision making process given that the primary function of CIL is to help deliver infrastructure to support the sustainable development of the District. Those bids that demonstrate strong links to a number of Local Plan (Part 1) policies and that can strongly demonstrate a range of economic, social and environmental benefits will be considered more favourably.
- 4.6 The amount of CIL requested and its relationship to other sources of funding will be considered. The bid should clearly identify the amount of funding being sought

and also any other sources of funding, including potential leverage of match funding and use of Section 106 funds. This information is to be provided in Part Two of the Expression of Interest Application Form. Those bids that are able to leverage match funding will be considered more favourably. Those bids that can demonstrate all other sources of funding have been explored will be considered more favourably.

- 4.7 Evidence of deliverability and arrangements for ongoing maintenance/management will be considered. This information is to be provided in Part Three of the Expression of Interest Application Form. Those bids that have no apparent constraints, or clearly demonstrate that all identified constraints can be readily overcome will be considered more favourably. Those bids that have no apparent risks or clearly demonstrate that all identified risks can be readily overcome will be considered more favourably. Those bids with fewer project partners or those that demonstrate that clear roles and commitments of project partners will be considered more favourably.
- 4.8 Part of the process may include 'banking' funds against individual projects over one or more years until sufficient resources have been accumulated to secure delivery in later years.
- 4.9 The allocation of CIL funds is entirely at the discretion of the Council and there is no right of appeal.

Transfer of funds and monitoring

- 5.1 When CIL funding is allocated to infrastructure providers, the CIL funding can only be used to deliver the agreed infrastructure type or project. To ensure the appropriate and timely delivery of projects, conditions will be attached to the allocation of CIL.
- 5.2 A project plan identifying the profiling of expenditure for the project should be returned by the successful applicant. The applicant should then claim the pro rata CIL allocation (as a proportion of overall funding) based upon completion stages of the project with supporting information attached. Payment will be in arrears. As the Charging Authority, the Council will retain the right to disallow any expenditure incurred that is not in accordance with the agreed allocation.
- 5.3 Successful infrastructure providers will be required to enter into a grant agreement which will confirm the detail of those conditions. The grant agreement will include a commitment to complete quarterly monitoring returns to the Council. In the event that the project is not proceeding in accordance with the agreed project plan, and a revised project plan cannot be agreed, the Council reserves to withdraw the funding allocation.

Report of:	Head of Housing and Partnerships
Contact Officer:	Janet Baldasera
Telephone No:	01543 464317
Portfolio Leader:	Housing
Key Decision:	Yes
Report Track:	Cabinet: 18/03/20

CABINET
18 MARCH 2020
HOUSING INVESTMENT FUND PROGRAMME

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To note the progress of the Housing Investment Fund Programme.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the three site phased Housing Improvement Programme that will deliver a minimum of 100 social housing units (subject to planning consents).
- 2.2 That Cabinet delegate to the Head of Housing the authority to explore and consider additional and alternative sites as circumstances dictate.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 On 25 January 2018 Cabinet approved a budget of £12m, together with approval of a transfer of a further £0.929 million of resources from the General Fund Capital programme by Cabinet on 7 February 2019, for the establishment of a Housing Investment Fund to support the delivery of new Council housing in the District over a five year period and which now forms part of the agreed HRA Capital Programme for the period 2018-19 to 2022-23.
- 3.2 The Housing Investment Fund key project target outcome is that the fund will deliver as a minimum an additional 100 social housing units in the District over and above that which would ordinarily be delivered by the planning / S106 system. All units would be directly managed as part of the HRA.
- 3.3 Due to economies of scale in terms of procurement and partnerships, sites that are able to deliver 20+ social housing units have been prioritised in the early stages of the HIF programme. However, to deliver the HIF programme has necessitated consideration of the purchasing of some sites which has resulted in the recommendation to Cabinet to purchase the Aelfgar School site. Where

larger sites are unavailable or found to be not value for money, then smaller sites will be taken forward in later phases of the programme.

3.4 A programme of priority development sites has been formulated which it is anticipated will provide approximately 160 new homes of which it is expect about 60 will be for market sale and 100 for Council housing. The HIF Programme has identified and progressed three priority sites.

- Hawks Green, Old Hednesford Road, Cannock
- Aelfgar Site, Rugeley
- Site in Chadsmoor

Reasons for Recommendations

3.5 There are no decisions required to progress the three priority schemes but Cabinet are to approve that the three site programme.

3.6 The programme will be subject to amendment for a variety of reasons and therefore Cabinet is asked to delegate to the Head of Housing the authority to explore and consider additional and alternative sites as circumstances dictate.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

4.1 This report supports the Council's Corporate Priorities as follows:

- (i) Promoting Prosperity – Increase housing choice through the Housing Investment Fund.
- (ii) Carbon Neutrality by 2030 is a corporate objective in the Corporate Plan 2018-2023.

5 Report Detail

5.1 On 25 January 2018 Cabinet approved a budget of £12m, together with approval of a transfer of a further £0.929 million of resources from the General Fund Capital programme by Cabinet on 7 February 2019, for the establishment of a Housing Investment Fund to support the delivery of new Council housing in the District over a five year period and which now forms part of the agreed HRA Capital Programme for the period 2018-19 to 2022-23.

5.2 The Housing Investment Fund project has been working to achieve the following objectives:

- a) To deliver additional Council owned homes for rent that are over and above the 20% delivered by the planning system.
- b) To develop priority sites that contain 50% affordable housing units.
- c) To meet the highest priority local needs for social housing;
- d) To attract external funding to augment the HIF resources and improve viability of individual sites;
- e) To deliver mixed schemes and mixed tenures;

5.3 The Housing Investment Fund key project target outcome is that the fund will deliver as a minimum an additional 100 social housing units in the District over and above that which would ordinarily be delivered by the planning / S106 system. All units would be directly managed as part of the HRA.

5.4 Bids have been, and will continue to be, developed and submitted to various bodies to attract external funding to compliment the HIF. This could include:

- Homes England Affordable Housing Fund
- West Midlands Combined Authority Land Remediation Fund
- Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership
- Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Local Enterprise Partnership

5.5 Due to economies of scale in terms of procurement and partnerships, sites that are able to deliver 20+ social housing units have been prioritised in the early stages of the HIF programme. However, to deliver the HIF programme has necessitated consideration of the purchasing of some sites and the recommendation to Cabinet to purchase the Aelfgar School site. Where larger sites are unavailable or not value for money, then smaller sites will be taken forward in later phases of the programme.

5.6 Following a review of site availability and development appraisals a programme of priority development sites has been formulated which it is anticipated will provide approximately 160 new homes of which it is expect about 60 will be for market sale and 100 for Council housing. The HIF Programme has identified and progressed three priority sites which are discussed in some detail below.

5.7 Hawks Green, Old Hednesford Road, Cannock

The Hawks Green Depot Site was identified as the first priority site for and Cabinet in June 19 agreed scheme approval and permission to spend. The Scheme will provide a total of 44 homes of which 22 will be for market sale and 22 Council homes. The Council homes will provide 6 one-bedroom houses, 8 one-bedroom flats, 8 two- bedroom and 2 three-bedroom houses. The number of one-bedroom houses has been increased from four to six to meet planning criteria. A local lettings plan will be submitted to Cabinet in particular to determine the criteria for the one-bedroom houses.

The developer, Jessup Brothers Limited were procured through the Dudley Framework to undertake both the Housing Development and the Depot Rationalisation works.

The depot rationalisation works which were required to release part of the site for the housing development are now on site.

Planning consent was granted on 5 February 2020. It is anticipated that the housing development works will start on site in April 2020 with a long-stop completion date of June 2022.

5.8 Aelfgar Site, Rugeley

The former Aelfgar School, consisting of 3.42 acres is in the ownership of Staffordshire County Council and together with the Council owned Former Squash Courts form a housing development site of some 4.29 hectares at

Taylors Lane Rugeley. The combined site is in the Local Plan as Policy RTC4. Staffordshire County Council have undertaken land remediation and placed the Aelfgar School site on the market. Cabinet on 30 January 2020 approved the purchase of the freehold interest in the site of the former Aelfgar School - Taylors Lane, Rugeley for a housing development subject to planning consent being granted.

It is anticipated that this site will provide approximately 60 homes of which 30 will be for market sale and 30 for new Council homes. In addition, Cabinet agreed in principle that the specification of the new Council housing will be based on a standard to achieve carbon neutrality or maximise carbon reduction as far as is practically possible. The developer will be encouraged to provide similar homes for market sale.

5.9 Site in Chadsmoor

A further site has been identified in the Chadsmoor Area which may provide approximately 60 homes of which 12 would be for market sale and 48 for Council housing. The site is undergoing some initial development appraisal work. As the site is in the Greenspace Network it is anticipated that an outline planning application will be submitted prior to procurement of a developer to determine the sites development feasibility.

5.10 Future and additional sites

Any opportunity to link other sites to the priority sites is explored and where possible will be pursued. An additional site is being investigated which may be tendered and developed with the Aelfgar site.

5.11 Key Milestones.

Key milestones are for information only and will be subject to amendment during the development process and formalised in development agreements and building contracts.

Site	Milestone	Target Date
Hawks Green	Housing Development Start on Site	April 2020
	Completion	31 March 2022
Aelfgar Site	Exchange of Contracts	Spring 2020
	Start on Site	Spring 2021
	Target Completion	Spring 2023
Site in Chadsmoor	Outline Planning	Winter 2020
	Start on Site	Winter 2021
	Target Completion	Winter 2023

6 Implications**6.1 Financial**

There are no financial implications arising from the report as set out above, all sites identified above are contained within the HRA capital programme for 2019-20 to 2022-23 as agreed at cabinet on 30 January 2020.

6.2 Legal

None.

6.3 Human Resources

None.

6.4 Section 17 (Crime Prevention)

All schemes will be 'secure by design' where appropriate.

6.5 Human Rights Act

None.

6.6 Data Protection

None.

6.7 Risk Management

There are a number of risks associated with development, particularly in relation to uncertain ground conditions. The Council's development partners will have extensive experience in developing on sites with land remediation issues.

The Council will also engage independent "Quantity Surveying" services to ensure value for money and adherence to the agreed schemes.

6.8 Equality & Diversity

None.

6.9 Best Value

None.

7 Appendices to the Report

None.

Previous Consideration

NFP Housing Investment Fund – Aelfgar Site	Cabinet	30 January 2020
Redevelopment of Hawks Green Depot	Cabinet	13 June 2019
Hawks Green Depot Rationalisation	Cabinet	13 June 2019

Background Papers

None

Report of:	Head of Finance
Contact Officer:	Rob Wolfe
Telephone No:	01543 464 397
Portfolio Leader:	Health and Wellbeing
Key Decision:	No
Report Track:	Cabinet: 18/03/20

CABINET
18 MARCH 2020
REVENUES AND BENEFITS COLLECTION REPORT – QUARTER 3

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the performance of the Revenues and Benefits Service as regards:
- collections of Council Tax during the first nine months of the financial year.
 - collections of Business Rates during the first nine months of the financial year.
 - the recovery of overpaid Housing Benefit during the first nine months of the financial year.
- 1.2 To seek approval to the write off of the arrears listed in the **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDICES**.

2 Reason(s) for Appendices being ‘Not for Publication’

- 2.1 In accordance with the provisions of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the Appendix is considered ‘not for publication’ under the following categories of exemption:
- Exempt Paragraph 2 – Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
 - Exempt Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council).

3 Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 That the information regarding collections be noted.
- 3.2 That the arrears listed in the **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDICES** be written off.

4 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 Efficient collection of the Council's revenues is of major importance to the funding of Council services and those provided by our preceptors.
- 4.2 Council Tax due for the current year amounts to £52.4M of which some **82.1%** was collected by the end of December.
- 4.3 Business Rates due for the current year amounts to £33.6M of which some **79.7%** was collected by the end of December.
- 4.4 Whilst our collection rates are good, regrettably not all of the monies owed to the Council can be collected and this report contains a recommendation to write off bad debts which cannot be recovered.

5 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 5.1 Not Applicable

6 Report Detail**Council Tax**

- 6.1 Council Tax is collected on behalf of the District Council, Parish Councils and our Major Preceptors (Staffordshire County Council and Commissioner for Police, Crime, Fire and Rescue). The effect of the Collection fund arrangements means that Cannock Chase Council retains around 12.4% of the council tax collected.
- 6.2 Council Tax due for the current year amounts to £52.4M and we would anticipate collecting in the region of 97.5% within the year, as was the case in the last financial year. Action continues to collect the remainder, after the end of the financial year, with around 99% being recovered.
- 6.3 In accordance with the Council's approved policies, all reasonable and lawful attempts are made to recover all amounts due. In the first instance this involves the issue of bills, reminders and final notices, followed by Summonses in the Magistrates Court where the warning notices are not effective. At all stages of this process, debtors are encouraged to engage in voluntary arrangements to repay their arrears, to prevent the need for formal action.

Where necessary and when Liability Orders are granted by Magistrates, the Council uses its powers to make deductions from earnings and benefits of debtors, where it can, and instructs Enforcement Agents where such deductions are not possible or appropriate.

In the most severe cases and for debts exceeding £5,000, the Council will consider personal bankruptcy action against individuals.

6.4 The recovery powers available to the Council are considerable but not completely infallible. There are occasions when bills are not paid and the debts cannot be recovered.

6.4.1 Statutory safeguards such as Debt Relief Orders, Individual's Voluntary Arrangements exist to protect debtors suffering hardship, to attempt to the expensive, stressful and sometimes ineffective process of personal bankruptcy. Where a debt is included in such an instrument, or when a debtor is bankrupt, our ordinary recovery powers cannot be used.

6.4.2 For any of our powers to be effective we need to know the whereabouts of a debtor and this is not always the case. Where debtors abscond we will use all reasonable endeavours to trace them and are often successful in doing so. Unfortunately, on occasions this is not so and we must submit a debt for write off.

Our trace procedures include;

- Checking our internal Council systems, and following any information which may help us to trace the debtor.
- Using the Locating Council Tax Absconders (LoCTA), a Local Authority data sharing system, to check for forwarding addresses at other Local Authorities,
- Use of Transunion credit reference agency data.
- Trace and collect facilities offered by our Enforcement Agencies
- Visits to the last known address by the Council's Property Inspector and use of external tracing agents.

Unfortunately, legislation does not currently permit access to DWP or HMRC records to trace Council Tax debtors or their employers, though a Cabinet Office project is currently reviewing this.

Data protection legislation allows us to receive information as to a debtor's whereabouts but we cannot disclose information to other creditors. Reciprocal arrangements with utility companies and similar are not therefore workable.

6.5 Irrecoverable council tax debts in the sum of £28,343.01 are listed in the confidential appendix to this report.

Business Rates

6.6 Business rates income now forms a part of the Council's core funding, with around 29% of receipts being retained by this Council. The remainder is collected on behalf of Central Government and our major preceptors.

6.7 Business Rates due for the current year amounts to £33.6M of which some **79.7%** was collected by the end of the December. Again we would anticipate the collection rate to match last year's performance of 98.9%.

6.8 The recovery powers available to us are again contained in the Council's approved policies and are used in full. Those powers and our procedures are similar to the council tax powers described above, with the exception that

deductions from individuals' benefits and earnings are not permissible, even if the debtor is an individual.

- 6.9 Where rates are owed by an individual, similar safe guards exist for the debtors and trace facilities are used by the Council for absconding debtors, as described above.
- 6.10 Additionally, in the case of business rates, as has been reported to Cabinet previously, our collection efforts are sometimes frustrated by weaknesses in legislation. Rates are due from the occupiers rather than the owners of property and where the occupier is a company, we can only recover from that company. Some proprietors will strip a company of its assets, or dissolve the company before we have had an opportunity to implement our recovery procedures. A new company is then formed in a similar style, to trade from the same premises. Central Government has previously undertaken to review the loopholes that exist in rating and company legislation, though no changes have yet been received. Your officers continue to actively monitor these issues.
- 6.11 The confidential appendix to this report lists business rate debts of £24,467.15 which cannot be recovered for the reasons stated and for which approval to write off, is requested.

Housing Benefit Overpayments

- 6.12 The Council manages the Housing Benefit scheme on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions, who fund the cost of benefits paid to claimants.
- 6.13 Recovery of overpaid Housing Benefit continues to progress well, with some £748,495.61 being collected into the Council's General Fund in the first three quarters of the year.
- 6.14 11 irrecoverable Benefit Overpayment debt in the sum of £27,605.93 is included in the **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX** to this report.

7 Implications

7.1 Financial

Under the Business Rates Retention Scheme, business rates write offs will no longer be offset against the National Non-Domestic Rating Pool. Write offs will now form part of the costs of collection of business rates. The Business Rates write offs in this report are 15 cases totalling £24,467.15. This represents 0.07% of the outstanding collectable debit as at 1 April 2019.

Council Tax write offs are losses to the Collection Fund and, as such, form part of the cost of collection incurred by this Council. The Council Tax write-offs on this report are 6 cases totalling £28,343.01. This represents 0.05% of the outstanding collectable debit as at the 1 April 2019.

The cost of collecting the debts has been considered as part of the decision to put them forward for write off. If further information does come forward about

the whereabouts of any of the individual debtors the Council will pursue recovery action.

Cabinet are asked to write off the debts as they are considered to be irrecoverable for the reasons given in the appendices. The debts remain legally due to the Council and should the circumstances causing the write off in any particular case, subsequently change, recovery action may be recommenced.

7.2 Legal

Cabinet are asked to write off the debts as they are considered to be irrecoverable for the reasons given in the appendices. The debts remain legally due to the Council and should the circumstances causing the write off in any particular case, subsequently change, recovery action may be recommenced

7.3 Human Resources

None.

7.4 Section 17 (Crime Prevention)

None.

7.5 Human Rights Act

None.

7.6 Data Protection

The appendices to this report contain personal information and are therefore not published.

7.7 Risk Management

The risk issues contained in this report are not strategic and therefore should not be included in the Strategic Risk Register.

7.8 Equality & Diversity

None.

7.9 Best Value

None.

8 Appendices to the Report

Appendix 1: Council Tax write-offs over £1,000.

Appendix 2: Non-Domestic Rates write offs over £1,000

Appendix 3: Housing Benefit Overpayments write offs over £1,000

Previous Consideration

None

Background Papers

None