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10 March 2023

Dear Councillor,

Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee
6:00pm, Monday 20 March 2023
Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock

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

Yours sincerely,

T. Clegg
Chief Executive

To: **Councillors:**

Frew, C.L. (Chair)
Johnson, T.B. (Vice-Chair)
Arduino, L. Muckley, A.M.
Hoare, M.W.A. Prestwood, J.
Jones, P.G.C. Theodorou, P.C.
Kraujalis, J.T. Wilson, L.J.
McMahon, J.B. Woodhead, P.E.
Molineux, G.N.

Invitees (for agenda item 4):

- Councillor R.J. Hughes (Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader)
- Councillor D. Foley (Call-in Supporter - non-committee member)
- Councillor J.S. Elson (Call-in Supporter - non-committee member)
- D. Piper (Head of Economic Prosperity)
- A. Badman (Corporate Assets Manager)
- Hazel Slade and Rawnsley Community Association
- Hednesford Town Council
- Rugeley Town Council
- M. Walker (Local Resident)

Agenda

Part 1

1. Apologies

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

- (i) 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.
- (ii) To receive any Party Whip declarations.

3. Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 15 December 2022 and 30 January 2023 (enclosed).

4. Call-in Request: Boardwalk and Bridges

The following documents are enclosed for the Committee's consideration:

- Report of the Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 4.1 - 4.17):
 - o Appendix 1 - Not-for-Publication Cabinet report of 16 February 2023 re: Boardwalks and Bridges (Item 4.4 - 4.11).
 - o Appendix 2 - Extract of the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 16 February 2023 (Item 4.12 - 4.13).
 - o Appendix 3 - Call-in Request Form (Item 4.14 - 4.16).
 - o Appendix 4 - Procedure for Debating the Call-in (Item 4.17).

5. Responsible Council Priority Delivery Plan Q3 2022/23 Performance Update

To receive the latest performance information for the Responsible Council Priority Delivery Plan 2022/23 (Item 5.1 - 5.11).

6. Work Programme Update

Verbal update from the Head of Governance and Corporate Services and the Head of Economic Prosperity.

Cannock Chase Council
Minutes of the Meeting of the
Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee
Held on Thursday 15 December 2022 at 6:00pm
In the Esperance Room, Civic Centre, Cannock

Part 1

Present: Councillors

Johnson, T.B. (Vice-Chair)
Frew, C.L. Muckley, A.M.
Jones, P.G.C. Prestwood, J.
Molineux, G.N.

14. Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillors J.B. McMahon (Chair), L. Arduino, M.W.A. Hoare, J.T. Kraujalis, L.J. Wilson, and P.E. Woodhead.

In the absence of the Chair, the meeting was chaired by Councillor T.B. Johnson as the Vice-Chair.

15. Declarations of Interest of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restrictions on Voting by Members and Party Whip Declarations

No declarations of interests or party whip declarations were received.

16. Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2022 be approved.

17. Responsible Council Priority Delivery Plan Q1 and Q2 2022/23 Performance Update

Consideration was given to the latest performance information for the Responsible Council Priority Delivery Plan 2022/23 (Item 4.1 - 4.7) *(presented by the Head of Governance and Corporate Services)*.

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services provided updates on projects where work was less than three months behind schedule (as identified by an amber triangle in the document).

A Member was pleased to note that pre-work had been completed on development of the energy management strategy, and then queried if there had been any progress with the strategy itself. The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that it was still being developed, so work would progress into the final quarter of 2022/23. A report

was currently being prepared on maintenance plans for corporate assets, so the energy management strategy would follow afterwards.

The same Member then noted concern about a lack of available resource to identify 'green' funding opportunities to support asset requirements. The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that although funding was available, the Council needed to have projects ready to go, but resource was stretched to even have plans developed whilst still delivering the day job. It was expected that bids would be looked at to support energy efficiency measures and the asset reviews would help to inform this work.

The same Member noted previous concerns they had raised that climate change did not sit in the new corporate plan as a standalone priority, being worried that such issues would be put on the back burner due to other matters being given greater priority. During their time as a councillor no progress had been made on climate change work. Lots of funding was available for 'green' projects, so they did not want the Council to miss out. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that relevant officers were doing the groundwork to get the asset plans in place, so it was hoped to see the benefits of this work during 2023/24.

The Vice-Chair noted that the position as presented in the report did not read well but understood that funding was unlikely to come forward without shovel ready projects being in place. In response, the Head of Economic Prosperity advised that by way of example, one such project could look at improving the energy efficiency of the leisure centres, including the use of solar panels or heat networks. There was a public sector decarbonisation scheme in place that the Council could apply for funding from. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that energy efficiency surveys for the leisure centres had been commissioned by the Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles, including in the provision of electric vehicle charging points.

A Member queried if there was a timetable in place to look at when relevant bids could be developed. The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that the energy management strategy was scheduled for completion during Q4 2022/23, with a rolling programme to be produced of what bids could be drawn up.

Another Member then queried if an update was available on the bridges as referred to in previous meetings. The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that a report would be presented to Cabinet in January for consideration.

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services then talked through the key performance indicators, drawing particular attention to those not achieving targets and the reasons as to why.

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services then advised of additional work taken on by the Council during the first half of 2022/23 related to:

- Supporting Ukrainian families - this had impacted several services areas across the Council.
- Payment of Energy Rebates - £6.2 million had been paid out to 45,000 households. This had impacted the Council Tax team's ability to undertake recovery work during this period.

- Covid-19 Additional Rate Relief Fund - £1.8 million had been paid out to circa 700 businesses, primarily affecting the work of the Revenues & Benefits team.

The Vice-Chair asked that thanks be placed on record to those teams that had taken on these significant extra duties alongside the day job.

In respect of the delays to turnaround times for land charges searches, a Member queried if the Committee could write to the County Council asking if any changes were being made to help resolve the problems being caused by their staff shortages. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised she would check to see if the situation had improved but was intending anyway to ask the Chief Executive to raise this matter at the next countywide Chief Executives' board meeting.

A Member noted that whilst it was necessary to collect council tax, there needed to be recognition of the significant hardships being faced by many people at the moment. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that other ways of providing help and support were being investigated, with a report due to be considered by Cabinet next month.

In response to a query from a Member as to whether staff were given training on delivering the extra services not expected to do so, the Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that not all additional responsibilities required extra training, the main issue was the volume of work involved.

18. Work Programme Update

Review of Customer Contact Task & Finish Group

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that the draft scoping template enclosed with the agenda (Item 5.1 - 5.2) reflected the discussions held at the first meeting of the task & finish group. The review would have a focus on those individuals considered to be digitally excluded, with presentations from Housing, Revenues & Benefits, and external support organisations.

In response to a query from a Member as to how 'digitally inclusive' the Council's digital services were, the Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised the Council received regular reports on the accessibility of its website, and the committee report templates had been reformatted to meet accessibility requirements. The main issue related to the website's 'e-forms', but this situation should be improved by the new customer portal. The review should also help to identify what tools were needed to help customers use digital services once the new portal was implemented. The forms would also be tested with different sectors to ensure they were user friendly for customers.

A Member requested that an additional key task be added into the review scope to examine how accessible information was provided and how people could get information in accessible formats from the Council. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that by way of example, the Council had used tablets with a language translator installed to help provide support to Ukrainian refugees.

Another Member queried if the Council worked directly with the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) or deaf associations. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised this was not the case as the Council wanted to be mindful

of not making assumptions about what support individuals may need when accessing its services if they had not been made aware in advance.

Linked to this, another Member raised difficulties people experienced when trying to complete housing applications online. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised other Members and the Leader of the Council had also raised similar concerns.

New Hub Facilities Task & Finish Group

The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that so far, the group had met online to discuss the scope of the review, and some Members had recently undertaken a visit to South Staffordshire Council. The visit was a worthwhile exercise with good feedback provided, and an emphasis on the site being used as a community and business hub and multi-functional space.

The draft scoping template as included with the agenda (Item 5.3 - 5.4) set out the initial points discussed with Members, with the crux of the matter being whether to establish a new civic hub in the town centre, or the Council looking to relocate to another premises depending on the outcome of the business case. The template also set out key tasks and timelines for completion of the review. It would be necessary to think about the post-Covid working environment, hybrid working, customer access, Members' meetings and facilities, energy efficient, partners, and ambitions.

A Member noted that their initial view had been for the Council not to spend money for the sake of it, especially being mindful of residents struggling financially compared to the cost of a new building, but the visit had helped to make clear the scheme could be delivered cost neutral and would provide a valuable community space. The layout of the shared members space worked well as it allowed for better interaction between members from different political parties.

Another Member noted the South Staffordshire Council hub was a well thought out building. The design phase happening during the pandemic had enabled them to rethink the plans and design it better for the future. The technology setup in the council chamber had been a particular positive as was the flexible design of the space to meet different needs.

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that in respect of hybrid working, an increasing number of staff had worked again from the civic centre during the trial period, with a further staff survey to follow in the new year to help inform the outcome of the trial.

Another Member noted that the move towards further shared services would also need factoring into any new designs.

The meeting closed at 6:51 p.m.

Chair

Cannock Chase Council
Minutes of the Meeting of the
Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee (Budget Consultation)

Held on Monday 30 January 2023 at 6:00pm

In the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock

Part 1

Present: Councillors

Frew, C.L. (Chair)
Johnson, T.B. (Vice-Chair)

Arduino, L.	Muckley, A.M.
Hoare, M.W.A.	Prestwood, J.
Jones, P.G.C.	Theodorou, P.C.
Lyons, N. (substitute)	Wilson, L.J.
Molineux, G.N.	Woodhead, P.E.

Also in Attendance:

- Councillor O. Lyons (*Leader of the Council*) (arrived at 6:40pm)
- Councillor B. Jones (*Deputy Leader of the Council and Community Safety & Partnerships Portfolio Leader*)
- Councillor M. Sutherland (*District and High Street Development Portfolio Leader*)
- Councillor J.P. Johnson (*Environment and Climate Change Portfolio Leader*)
- Councillor V. Jones (*Health, Wellbeing, and Community Engagement Portfolio Leader*)
- Councillor A.A. Fitzgerald (*Housing, Heritage, and Leisure Portfolio Leader*)
- Councillor R.J. Hughes (*Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader*)

19. Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillors J.T. Kraujalis and J.B. McMahon.

Councillor N. Lyons was in attendance as substitute for Councillor McMahon.

Councillor Hoare advised he would need to leave by 7pm.

20. Declarations of Interest of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restrictions on Voting by Members and Party Whip Declarations

No declarations of interests or party whip declarations were received.

21. General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2023-2026

Consideration was given to the Report of the S151 Officer & Deputy Chief Executive (Item 3.1 - 3.62) *(presented by the Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader)*.

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader introduced the report, raising the following points:

- The proposed 2023-24 budget was set out, along with indicative budgets for 2024-25 and 2025-26. The proposals were set against a backdrop of a challenging economic environment, including inflationary pressures, post-Covid income, supply changes, and increased interest rates. Continued single-year funding settlements from the Government also made future planning difficult.
- Adjustments had been made to the proposed 2023-24 budget to account for inflation, and for 2024-25 / 2025-26 a general rate of inflation had not been applied. Provision for pay awards in each of the three years had also been included.
- Paragraphs 5.4 and 5.5 set out additional spending pressures and loss of income that would affect 2023-24.
- The draft Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023-24 as published in December 2022 set out core funding to the Council, including details of one-off grants and New Homes Bonus payments.
- There was an assumption that Business Rates reset would not happen until at least 2025-26, and the budget assumed that the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Business Rates Pool would remain in place.
- Table 2 set out the revenue budget recommended to Council, detailing that £902,000 of reserves would be used to cover the 2023-24 budget gap and a projected gap of £1,180,000 existed for 2024-25.
- Table 3 summarised changes in the 2023-24 budget assumptions and table 4 set out reasons for movement between 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- The Council Tax base for 2023-24 was set at 33,543,50, however, allowing for proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction scheme for next year, the base figure would be 29,851.05. Full details of the Council Tax base for each parished and unparished area of the District were set out in Appendix 8.
- Council Tax was proposed to increase by 2.99% for 2023-24, which equated to 13p per week for a Band D property.
- Details of the Council's reserves were included at Appendix 6, and Appendix 7 set out the report of the Chief Finance Officer on the robustness of the budget estimates and adequacy of the Council's reserves.

Members of the Committee then raised questions/comments on the budget proposals as follows:

1. Were the proposed garden waste charges due to begin in 2023 given the £500,000 difference in projected income between 2023-24 and 2024-25?

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised that consultation was needed on the proposals, as well as administrative changes to working practices, therefore the charges were likely to start at the beginning of the 2024 calendar year.

2. Were indicative charges set to come up with the proposed income figures for garden waste charges, accounting for the number of people who currently had such waste collected and would not want to pay the charge?

The S151 Officer advised an average was taken across the area, with an annual charge in the mid-£30 suggested. The income levels were a conservative figure based on funds raised by other councils nearby. A circa 45% uptake had been modelled.

3. Given the Committee was currently looking at the issue of digital exclusion, it was concerning that people would be left out if the annual waste calendar was only available online.

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised the calendar would become an opt-in scheme, therefore anybody still wanting a hard copy would need to collect one from the Civic Centre or request one be issued to them.

It was requested that all Members be made aware of this scheme so residents could be advised accordingly.

4. Would charging for car parking at Hednesford train station produce the suggested income levels given that two free car parks were already in close proximity and located nearer to the town centre?

The S151 Officer advised the charges would apply to the station car park and long-stay spaces on the old Co-op car park. The Council would ensure sufficient enforcement was in place to discourage on-street parking in nearby roads.

5. Had the implementation and maintenance costs of pay and display ticket machines been factored into the proposal given issues of vandalism with the ticket machine located on the train station platform?

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised that the use of pay by phone apps should reduce the need people to use the machine and lessen the likelihood of vandalism.

6. Proposed efficiencies in respect of Environmental Protection did not make sense given the services provided by that department.

The S151 Officer advised this proposal related to the deletion of vacant posts.

7. Would the current deal with Hednesford Town Council regarding other car parks in Hednesford remain in place?

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised nothing was in the proposed budget that would remove the deal, but no further commitment beyond that could be given at this time.

8. What were the proposed efficiencies in the Parks and Open Spaces team?

The S151 Officer advised they related to changes in the service structure and deletion of a vacant post.

There would be concern if these changes impacted on the countryside and maintenance of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

9. Were the works in respect of boardwalk and bridges planned to be funded in this year?

The S151 Officer advised that that original capital budget as previously agreed was still in the proposed capital programme.

10. The proposals for tennis courts income did not make sense as an identical income stream of £38,000 had been included for 2023-24 and 2024-25.

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised that the Lawn Tennis Association was providing the infrastructure and capital funding for the tennis courts to be improved, and the level of charges proposed were equal to when the Council last charged for such provision over ten years ago.

The S151 Officer advised the income levels proposed were an estimate at this stage, but the budget position would be reviewed during the course of the year to assess whether an adjustment would be necessary.

The Environment and Climate Change Portfolio Leader advised that for the tennis courts income a figure had to be included in the budget, and that put forward was a best guess at this stage. It was expected the income levels for year two would be higher.

The S151 Officer clarified that the preparation of the budget had been through a robust process, as set out in Appendix 7 of the report as signed off by the S151 Officer.

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader further advised that what to include and not include in the budget was a political decision, but the officers supporting this process were professionals in their role, so the report reflects the budget that Cabinet was able to put forward for consideration.

It was noted the role of the committee was to understand the detail behind the budget proposals and help Members to understand what was being put forward. The issue with the tennis courts charges was the perception that it would only be for those people who could afford it, and therefore negatively impact on the Council's approach to health-in-all policies.

11. What were the proposed efficiencies in Street Cleansing?

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised that town centre streets sweeping had been operating with one machine instead of two for some time now, so this would be made a permanent change.

The S151 Officer further advised the proposals also included the deletion of a vacant post.

12. What was the proposal in respect of the Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles (IHL) concessions review?

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised it was a reduction in percentage discount on the concessionary card scheme from 50% to 40%.

The S151 Officer further advised it also included removal of golf from the concessions scheme.

13. What was proposed in respect of the IHL museum location?

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised this would involve moving the museum of Cannock Chase from its existing site to another IHL facility in the District to remove maintenance and upkeep costs of the current site.

Concerns were about this proposal given the history and heritage of the site and what it meant to people in the District.

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader acknowledged the concerns, but clarified that budget savings had to be found, and so invited other Members and political groups to put forward alternative budget proposals to the February Council meeting if they felt could propose something different.

The Environment and Climate Change Portfolio Leader advised that it was not proposed to get rid of the museum but to relocate it. The Cabinet was not trying to forget about the District's mining heritage but had to address a funding shortfall.

The proposal would involve moving the museum out of Hednesford, and so would there be a significant and well publicised consultation on this?

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader confirmed this would be the case.

When the Council had produced its Financial Recovery Plan in 2016, extensive consultation had taken place on the proposed savings, but this had not happened this time around.

(Councillor Hoare left the meeting at this point and did not return.)

The Leader advised that each savings option proposed would be consulted on and impact assessments prepared.

14. Were any artefacts in the museum that could not be relocated to a new venue?

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader understood this was not the case and car parking would be available at a new location so could help to create a better visitor experience overall.

The Deputy Leader noted that the main focus of the museum was about what was stored and exhibited there, and savings would be achieved through relocation.

15. What were the proposed efficiencies for Environmental Protection?

The S151 Officer advised they related to the deletion of a vacant post, reduction in car allowances, and savings in printing and stationery costs.

16. How much funding was left in the reserves once the £900,000 amount had been removed to support the 2023/24 budget?

The S151 Officer advised the projected level of reserves were set out in report paragraph 5.33.

17. What did the 'private sector housing capitalisation of post' refer to?

The S151 Officer advised this post had previously been paid for out of the General Fund budget, would be funded in future Disabled Facilities Grants funding allocation.

18. What were the proposed efficiencies for Caretaking and Cleaning?
The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised this related to reduced levels of cleaning required in the Civic Centre.
The Head of Governance and Corporate Services further advised there was already an existing vacant post in the team that would be deleted.
19. What were the proposed efficiencies for Policy and Performance?
The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised this was the deletion of a vacant post.
20. How many vacancies were being held across the Council and how many were proposed to be deleted through this process?
The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that some vacant posts had been held pending the decision on further shared services. Some would be deleted as part of the budget process and others reviewed as part of shared services. The roles were spread across several service areas.
21. What were the planned efficiencies in Revenues and Benefits? It was noted a greater level of saving was factored in for 2024/25 compared to 2023/24.
The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised they related to a reorganisation of how the service operated across Cannock Chase and Stafford Borough Councils.
The S151 Officer further advised that 2024/25 included moving the computer system to the cloud, hence the greater saving shown in that year.
22. What were the planned efficiencies in Food and Safety?
The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised this was the deletion of a vacant post.
23. What would the budget position be had the savings from shared services not been realised?
The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised that additional savings of over £500,000 would have to be looked on top of what was already proposed.
24. What were the proposed savings for estates rationalisation?
The S151 Officer advised this related to non-housing properties owned by the Council, looking at what could be sold off, mothballed or used differently.
25. There was concern about the proposed reduction in grant aid support to Citizens Advice, particularly given the service it provides to support people who could not afford legal advice. This proposal would have a massive impact on residents.
The S151 Officer advised that Citizens Advice received a substantial amount of funding from the Council - £122,000 from the General Fund, £15,000 from Housing Options, and £15,000 from the Housing Revenue Account.
Was it possible that for those people who would not get as much support in future the Council could promote other services available and how to access support?
The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader clarified that Citizens Advice was not the sole support offer available to residents.

The Leader noted that whilst the focus here was on Citizens Advice, other organisations such as the Chase Advice Centre were also available to provide support, so it was important to be clear that the reduction in grant funding was not a withdrawal of service.

Given the reduction in funding would affect service provision, had Citizens Advice provided any information on what they would stop doing as a result?

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised that information was not currently available.

The Leader clarified that Cabinet would receive specific reports for areas where changes were proposed and ensure due process was followed.

It was requested that Cabinet review the impact of this specific proposal.

26. What was the legal amount of funding that needed to be retained in reserves to support the budget?

The S151 Officer advised that a minimum working balance of £1million was in place, and as the S151 Officer, had to be satisfied the Council could operate as a going concern - the level of balances was currently above that limit. There was a substantial amount of earmarked reserves in place and significant drawn down on reserves for the next two years.

27. Was the proposed 2.99% Council Tax increase for one year or two years?

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised this was just for 2023/24 as per the draft Local Government Finance Settlement.

The S151 Officer advised this increase would generate additional income of circa £80,000.

Concern was raised with the proposed increase given the cost-of-living crisis.

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader understood the concerns raised as the Council did not want to put unnecessary pressure on residents, but a balanced budget had to be achieved.

The S151 Officer advised that the proposed increase was in line with some neighbouring authorities and it had to be noted that with inflation being at 10% the Council was having to absorb the higher costs in its budgets and contracts that had higher inflationary levels.

28. Why was the Cannock Mortuary being mothballed?

The Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader advised that the building was a County Council facility and they had decided to change the operating model for the Coroners service, therefore the site was no longer required.

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that Cannock Chase Council staff had operated the site during the Covid-19 pandemic, but the Council had received full cost reimbursement for doing so via an 'agency' arrangement.

29. Was an update available in respect of the boardwalk and bridges?

The Leader advised a report on this was due to be considered by Cabinet in February.

30. In respect of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allocations set out in Appendix 4 of the report, it was noted a lot of CIL money was allocated for phase 2 of the stadium site redevelopment. Where had this money come from in terms of housing developments in the area?

The S151 Officer advised this would be checked and reported back accordingly.

The meeting closed at 7:40 p.m.

Chair

Report of:	Head of Economic Prosperity
Contact Officer:	Dean Piper
Contact Number:	01543 464 223
Portfolio Leader:	Innovation and Resources
Report Track:	Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee: 20/03/23

Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee

20 March 2023

Call-In: Boardwalk and Bridges

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide information to the Committee regarding the call-in request received in relation to the Cabinet decisions of 16 February 2023, in respect of the Boardwalk and Bridges report.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Members consider the proposal put forward by Councillor A.M. Muckley, as set out in report paragraph 3.7, below.

3 Call-In Details

- 3.1 Cabinet, at its meeting held on 16 February, considered a report entitled 'Boardwalk and Bridges'. The original Cabinet report is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Cabinet resolved:
- That:
- (A) The costs of replacing the footbridges at Anglesey Nature Reserve and Rawnsley Woods, and the likely costs of replacing the Rugeley Boardwalk, as set out in report paragraph 3.1, be noted.
 - (B) It be noted that additional funding would be required to fund the works described in decision (A) above, as the required funding exceeded the existing approved amount in the Capital Programme of £110,000.
 - (C) All works on Boardwalks and Bridges be deferred, pending a review of market conditions, inflation, and construction costs to be carried out by the end of 2023, with a report brought back to Cabinet for further consideration.

- (D) Authority be delegated to the Head of Economic Prosperity in consultation with the S151 Officer and Innovation & Resources Portfolio Leader to implement all actions necessary to progress the recommendations arising from the report.
- 3.3 The relevant extract from the 16 February 2023 Cabinet minutes is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.4 Decisions (A) to (D) are the subject of this call-in.
- 3.5 The request for the call-in was submitted by Councillor A.M. Muckley, and supported by Councillors D. Foley, J.S. Elson, G.N. Molineux, and P.E. Woodhead. The call-in request is attached at Appendix 3.
- 3.6 The reasons given for the call-in are:
- First, we do not consider that this matter needs to be confidential. We seek officers' advice on why this discussion and decision was deemed to be so.
 - We are extremely concerned about the proposal to pause works, which were agreed initially in February 2021 by the previous administration and confirmed, by the current administration, to take place during the current financial year (2022/23).
 - Investigatory work on the costs and feasibility of replacing the two bridges and one boardwalk mentioned was carried out, which led to the allocation of £110,000 in this year's budget by the current administration.
 - The administration's dither and delay has led to this work not being brought forward in a timely manner, meaning the budget allocated is now substantially insufficient due to the huge levels of inflation the UK has experienced.
 - Previously, councillors have suggested that a more basic specification for these works would reduce costs whilst simultaneously meeting the needs of residents. This was dismissed. A decision we feel must now be reconsidered.
 - We propose, for example, that a concrete culvert covered with soil would be an entirely adequate and long-lasting alternative to the proposed material of recycled plastic for the two bridges.
 - We would be grateful to see the proposal and quotes as £35,000 for a bridge to cover a six-foot gap seems wildly disproportionate when we consider our role as guardians of the public purse.
 - The longer this delay continues, the longer residents will have to put up with poor accessibility in our nature reserves, green spaces and in Rugeley town centre.
 - Lastly, the report fails to mention that there were two bridges in Rawnsley Woods: One was removed a number of years prior to the one mentioned in the report. The village, without either bridge, is bisected.

- 3.7 The Councillors who submitted the call-in request are proposing that:
- “This initiative be referred back to cabinet with a suggestion that quotes for simpler, cheaper, long-lasting specifications be invited as part of this review so that an informed decision on future costs can be made.
 - This review investigates alternative sources of funding, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which could be used to offset some of the cost of these replacements.”
- 3.8 The procedure for debating a call-in request is attached at Appendix 4.

4 Implications

4.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

The report to Cabinet on (insert date) referred to the financial implications arising from Cabinet’s resolutions. Any changes to those resolutions resulting from the outcome of this call-in process will form part of further reports to Cabinet, if applicable.

4.2 Legal

The powers of the Scrutiny Committees are limited by the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended) and the Council’s Constitution. The Committee cannot substitute its own decision for that of the Cabinet as it has no power to make decisions on Executive functions.

If the Committee disagrees with the decision of the Cabinet it can refer the decision back to Cabinet for reconsideration, making sure recommendations as it wishes. The Cabinet must, if the Committee refers the matter back, reconsider the decision, having regard to the Committee’s recommendation, but it is not bound by the recommendation proposed.

5 Appendices to the Report

Appendix 1: Not for Publication Cabinet Report - 16 February 2023 - Boardwalk and Bridges.

Appendix 2: Extract of 16 February 2023 Cabinet Minutes.

Appendix 3: Call-in Proposer and Supporters form.

Appendix 4: Procedure for considering a call-in request.

Cannock Chase Council
Minutes of the Meeting of the
Cabinet

Held on Thursday 16 February 2023 at 5:36 p.m.

In the Esperance Room, Civic Centre, Cannock

Part 1

Present:

Councillors:

Lyons, O.	Leader of the Council (<i>arrived at 5:42pm</i>)
Jones, B.	Deputy Leader of the Council and Community Safety & Partnerships Portfolio Leader
Sutherland, M.	District and High Street Development Portfolio Leader (<i>arrived at 5:54pm</i>)
Johnson, J.P.	Environment and Climate Change Portfolio Leader (<i>arrived at 5:55 pm</i>)
Jones, V.	Health, Wellbeing, and Community Engagement Portfolio Leader
Fitzgerald, A.A.	Housing, Heritage, and Leisure Portfolio Leader
Hughes, R.J.	Innovation and Resources Portfolio Leader

90. Apologies

None.

It was noted the Leader of the Council, District & High Street Development Portfolio Leader, and the Environment & Climate Change Portfolio Leader would be delayed arriving at the meeting.

The Deputy Leader chaired the meeting.

94. 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 16 February 2023 at 5:36 p.m.

In the Esperance Room, Civic Centre, Cannock

Part 2

95. Boardwalk and Bridges

Consideration was given to the Not for Publication Report of the Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 6.1 - 6.7).

(The District & High Street Development Portfolio Leader and Environment & Climate Change Portfolio Leader both arrived at the meeting during the debate on this item.)

Resolved:

That:

- (A) The costs of replacing the footbridges at Anglesey Nature Reserve and Rawnsley Woods, and the likely costs of replacing the Rugeley Boardwalk, as set out in report paragraph 3.1, be noted.
- (B) It be noted that additional funding would be required to fund the works described in decision (A) above, as the required funding exceeded the existing approved amount in the Capital Programme of £110,000.
- (C) All works on Boardwalks and Bridges be deferred, pending a review of market conditions, inflation, and construction costs to be carried out by the end of 2023, with a report brought back to Cabinet for further consideration.
- (D) Authority be delegated to the Head of Economic Prosperity in consultation with the S151 Officer and Innovation & Resources Portfolio Leader to implement all actions necessary to progress the recommendations arising from the report.

Reasons for Decisions

The existing capital budget for replacement of the structures outlined in the report was not sufficient. Recent increases in construction and materials costs had had a major impact on costs, coupled with the replacement structure for Rugeley Boardwalk needing to be far more substantial than the original design.

It was therefore considered financially prudent to defer a decision on these works pending a review of market conditions, inflation, and construction costs to be carried out by the end of 2023.

The meeting closed at 5:58 p.m.

Leader



Request for Call-in of a Decision of the Cabinet (Executive)

Date of Cabinet Meeting: **16/02/2023**

Minute Reference / Number: **95**

Subject: **Boardwalks and Bridges**

Decision to be called-in:

That:

- (A) The costs of replacing the footbridges at Anglesey Nature Reserve and Rawnsley Woods, and the likely costs of replacing the Rugeley Boardwalk, as set out in report paragraph 3.1, be noted.
- (B) It be noted that additional funding would be required to fund the works described in decision (A) above, as the required funding exceeded the existing approved amount in the Capital Programme of £110,000.
- (C) All works on Boardwalks and Bridges be deferred, pending a review of market conditions, inflation, and construction costs to be carried out by the end of 2023, with a report brought back to Cabinet for further consideration.
- (D) Authority be delegated to the Head of Economic Prosperity in consultation with the S151 Officer and Innovation & Resources Portfolio Leader to implement all actions necessary to progress the recommendations arising from the report.

Reasons for Decisions

The existing capital budget for replacement of the structures outlined in the report was not sufficient. Recent increases in construction and materials costs had had a major impact on costs, coupled with the replacement structure for Rugeley Boardwalk needing to be far more substantial than the original design.

It was therefore considered financially prudent to defer a decision on these works pending a review of market conditions, inflation, and construction costs to be carried out by the end of 2023.

Reasons for Call-In (please explain):

- First, we do not consider that this matter needs to be confidential. We seek officers' advice on why this discussion and decision was deemed to be so.

- We are extremely concerned about the proposal to pause works, which were agreed initially in February 2021 by the previous administration and confirmed, by the current administration, to take place during the current financial year (2022/23).
- Investigatory work on the costs and feasibility of replacing the two bridges and one boardwalk mentioned was carried out, which lead to the allocation of £110,000 in this year's budget by the current administration.
- The administration's dither and delay has led to this work not being brought forward in a timely manner, meaning the budget allocated is now substantially insufficient due to the huge levels of inflation the UK has experienced.
- Previously, councillors have suggested that a more basic specification for these works would reduce costs whilst simultaneously meeting the needs of residents. This was dismissed. A decision we feel must now be reconsidered.
 - We propose, for example, that a concrete culvert covered with soil would be an entirely adequate and long-lasting alternative to the proposed material of recycled plastic for the two bridges.
 - We would be grateful to see the proposal and quotes as £35,000 for a bridge to cover a six-foot gap seems wildly disproportionate when we consider our role as guardians of the public purse.
- The longer this delay continues, the longer residents will have to put up with poor accessibility in our nature reserves, green spaces and in Rugeley town centre.
- Lastly, the report fails to mention that there were two bridges in Rawsley Woods: One was removed a number of years prior to the one mentioned in the report. The village, without either bridge, is bisected.

What are you proposing?

- We propose that this initiative be referred back to cabinet with a suggestion that quotes for simpler, cheaper, long-lasting specifications be invited as part of this review so that an informed decision on future costs can be made.
- We also ask that this review investigates alternative sources of funding, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which could be used to offset some of the cost of these replacements.

Please indicate below who should be invited to the Scrutiny Committee meeting?

Councillors	Officers	Representative from organisations / public
D. Foley	D. Piper	Hazel Slade and Rawsley Community Association
J. Elson	A. Badman	Hednesford Town Council
R. Hughes		Rugeley Town Council
		Local resident - M. Walker (Anglesey Nature Reserve bridge)

Request made and supported by:

Councillor	Signature	Date
Andrea Muckley (Proposer)	Confirmed via email	28/02/2023
Paul Woodhead (Supporter)	Confirmed via email	28/02/2023
Darren Foley (Supporter)	Confirmed via email	28/02/2023
Jo Elson (Supporter)	Confirmed via email	28/02/2023
Gerald Molineux (Supporter)	Confirmed via email	28/02/2023

Procedure for Debating Call-in of Cabinet Decisions at Meetings of the Scrutiny Committees

Notes:

Prior to members of the Committee debating the call-in, other Members of the Council present and other invited persons who are not members of the Scrutiny Committee will be requested to sit in the public gallery.

The relevant Cabinet Member may remain in the chamber and answer questions put through the Chairman. The Cabinet Member may speak at any time if invited by the Chairman. The Chairman will invite the Cabinet Member to exercise a right of reply at the end of the debate before the Proposer of the motion exercises their right of reply.

A Scrutiny Committee may exercise their statutory powers to invite such persons and request such information as they consider necessary to facilitate their examination of the matter and they adjourn the meeting if necessary to facilitate this.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee should be present for all of the debate prior to them exercising their vote to ensure that the Committee makes an informed decision based on the evidence presented.

Procedure

1. The Proposer (who must be one of the members of the Scrutiny Committee requesting the call-in) shall read their motion, formally propose the motion and give reasons for the call-in.
2. If none of the members of the Scrutiny Committee who requested the call-in are present, the Chairman shall ask if any other member of the Scrutiny Committee will propose the motion. If no member proposes the motion the call-in will be deemed to have been withdrawn.
3. Once the motion has been seconded, the Chairman shall allow those others of the five members who requested the call-in and who are present to speak before any debate.
4. During the course of the debate members of the Committee may propose minor amendments to the motion with the consent of the Proposer (or the stand-in Proposer).
5. The Committee may:
 - (a) reject the motion, or
 - (b) refer the decision back to Cabinet for reconsideration with a recommendation.
 - (c) refer the matter to full Council with a recommendation for a decision.
6. A formal written decision will be made on the call-in within ten days of the Scrutiny Committee first meeting.

Report of:	Head of Governance & Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	Adrian Marklew
Contact Number:	01543 464598
Portfolio Leader:	Innovation & Resources
Key Decision:	No
Report Track:	Cabinet: 02/03/23

Cabinet
2 March 2023
Quarter 3 Performance Report 2022/23

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise Members on the progress of the Priority Delivery Plans (PDPs) and Council's performance at the end of the third quarter of 2022-23.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To note the progress at the end of the third quarter relating to the delivery of the Council's priorities as detailed at Appendices 1a-1c and the performance information set out at Appendix 2.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations

Key Issues

- 3.1 The Priority Delivery Plans set out the key projects and actions for delivery in 2022/23. These are based on the Corporate Plan 2022-26 and the supporting four-year delivery plans.
- 3.2 Overall, 89% of the projects have been delivered or are on schedule to be completed. Progress in delivering the PDPs is summarised in section 5 of the report and set out in detail in Appendices 1a to 1d.
- 3.3 With regard to the operational performance of the key services of the Council, 68% of targets have been met or exceeded. Further details can be found at 5.7 and in Appendix 2.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.4 The performance information allows Cabinet to monitor progress in delivery of the Council's corporate priorities and operational services.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities





- 4.1 The indicators and actions contribute individually to the Council's priorities and objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-26.

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2022-26 was approved by Council on 27 April 2022, setting out the priorities and strategic objectives. The supporting four-year delivery plans were approved on 16 November 2022.
- 5.2 The Priority Delivery Plans (PDPs) set out in Appendices 1a to 1d to this report are the annual documents that set out how the Council will achieve progress against its strategic objectives; these plans establish the actions and timetable for delivery that are the basis of the Council's performance reporting framework.
- 5.3 In addition to the PDPs, performance is also reported against the delivery of key operational services; Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for these services are set out in Appendix 2.
- 5.4 Where applicable, we will also report on new or additional duties undertaken by the Council during the quarter, as part of this report.

Priority Delivery Plans

- 5.5 A commentary on performance and a rating for each of the projects/actions set out in the PDPs is given in Appendices 1a-1d. A summary of progress, by rating, is given in the table below.

Delivery of Projects as at end of Quarter 3							
Corporate Plan Priority					Total Projects due as at Q3	N/A	Total Number of Projects
	Action completed	Work on Target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule		Work not yet due to be started	
Economic Prosperity	4	10	2	0	16	0	16
Health and Wellbeing	6	14	1	0	21	1	22
Community	3	10	2	0	15	2	17
Responsible Council	4	3	2	0	9	3	12
Total	17	37	7	0	61	6	67

5.6 At the end of quarter 3, of the 61 actions due for delivery:

- 28% of have been completed,
- 61% are on target to be completed,
- 11% have slipped slightly.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

5.7 A dashboard of key performance indicators for the Council's operational services is set out in Appendix 2. In summary:

- 9 indicators show performance above target (47%),
- 4 indicators show performance on target (21%), and
- 6 indicators show performance below target (32%).

The reasons for underperformance and the corrective action to be taken is set out in Appendix 2.

New / Additional Duties

5.8 There were no new or additional duties required of the Council during quarter 3 of 2022/23 though the Council has continued to deliver the new duties reported in quarter 2 i.e.:

- Supporting Ukrainian families
- Payment of Energy Rebates

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

The financial management of the PDPs is standard in accordance with Financial Regulations and any measure to address a performance shortfall as reflected in a PDP report will require compensatory savings to be identified in the current year and be referred to the budget process for additional resources in future years.

6.2 Legal

None

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Risk Management

The Council's Strategic Risk Register sets out the risks the Council faces in delivering its priorities.

6.5 **Equality & Diversity**

Equality and diversity matters are addressed in individual services areas and by undertaking equality impact assessments for projects and programmes of work where this is necessary and appropriate.

6.6 **Climate Change**

There are specific objectives within all of the priority areas which address the challenge of climate change.

7 Appendices to the Report

Appendix 1d: Responsible Council PDP

Appendix 2: Key Performance Indicators

Previous Consideration

None

Background Papers





Corporate Plan 2022-26 - Council 27 April 2022


4-Year Delivery Plans 2022-26 - Cabinet 15 September 2022


Priority Delivery Plan for 2022-23

PRIORITY 4 - RESPONSIBLE COUNCIL “To be a modern, forward thinking and responsible Council”




Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 3


				N/A	Total Number of Projects
Action completed	Work on Target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	Action not yet due	
4	3	2		3	12

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
Improve our customers’ access to services							
Develop a new customer portal to deliver better access to services online	Procurement of new system		X			<p>The procurement of a new customer portal has been completed and the contract awarded.</p> <p>Work has commenced with the supplier on planning for implementation on the new software.</p>	

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
Enhance the use of technology and new ways of working							
Update our digital technology strategy and plan future improvements	Review of digital strategy and development of action plan				X		
	Future improvements to be prioritised once a decision has been made regarding the shared services business case				X		
Develop our workforce to ensure they are suitably skilled							
Develop and deliver a workforce plan	Over-arching framework for workforce plan to be developed. Specific workstreams will be determined once a decision has been made regarding the shared services business case				X		
	Development and trial of hybrid working model		X			The hybrid working trial is in progress. The surveys of managers and employees to gauge progress is slightly behind schedule and will now take place during February 2023.	

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
Be a responsible Council that lives within its means and is accountable for its actions							
Set a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce a draft MTFS for 2023-26 for Cabinet Briefing by end of September that aims to eliminate the use of reserves over the period. Final MTFS to Cabinet in January. 		X			<p>This has now been completed following a significant amount of work by the finance team and budget holders.</p> <p>While it was not possible to eliminate the use of reserves at Cannock, this was a result of a lower funding amount from central government rather than a lack of savings programmes.</p>	★
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of the second stage of the business case for shared services. Further actions will depend on the decision taken by Council in December. 			X		<p>The business case has been completed.</p> <p>Both Councils have agreed to proceed with the wider sharing of services and the creation of a joint management team.</p> <p>Work is underway to plan for the implementation phase.</p>	★
Make the best use of our assets							
Undertake a corporate wide review of our assets and develop a new Asset Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset and Property Strategy to be approved by Cabinet 	X				Asset Strategy was approved by Cabinet on last June	★

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a strategic review of the Council's non-HRA land and property assets 		X	X	X	Terms of reference for Corporate Asset Management Group have been developed and agreed; the first meeting took place in October. The group has agreed an initial work programme and focus for first tranche of asset reviews.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the business case to create a new Civic Hub in Cannock town centre as part of the Levelling Up Fund scheme 		X	X	X	Strategic business case work is progressing. External support has been sourced from a neighbouring authority to help develop strategic case and develop financial modelling. Discussions with Staffordshire County Council are progressing the co-location of services and potential partnering arrangements. Initial RIBA 1 design work has been undertaken and will be refined during Q4.	
Identify opportunities for funding for green initiatives to improve energy efficiency of our buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an Energy Management Strategy 			X	X	Following issue of the AECOM Baseline Study (Costed Action Plan), the Energy Management Strategy will be developed in Q4 in consultation with the Climate Change Working Group and the Asset Management Group	

Projects	Actions and Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="551 217 987 320">Identify `green` funding opportunities to support asset requirements 				X	<p data-bbox="1447 217 1906 427">Salix funding opportunities have been identified. However, they have a short registration window, requiring organisations to have projects ready to go and match-fund.</p> <p data-bbox="1447 451 1906 662">This work is unlikely to commence until the Energy Management Strategy is in place, asset reviews progress, and the long-term future of properties is agreed.</p> <p data-bbox="1447 686 1906 751">It is likely to be 2023-24 before projects are developed.</p>	

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2022/23 - as at end of Quarter 3

KPIs for Priority 4 - Responsible Council “To be a modern, forward thinking and responsible Council”

Indicator	Target	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Symbol	Comments
Local Taxation and Benefits							
Days taken to process new HB/CT Claims	20 days	15.2	14.5	15.9		★	
Days taken to process new HB/CT change of circumstances	9 days	7.5	5.7	5.2		★	
% of Council Tax collected annually	98% by year end	27.8%	54.1%	80.5%		✓	Reversion to the pre-pandemic collection levels is likely to take some time. Arrears have accrued during the past 3 years and the Revenues Team’s ability to deal with them has been impacted by the work done to pay covid relief grants as well as Council Tax Energy Rebate payments.
% National non-domestic rates (NNDR) collected	98% by year end	24.0%	56.6%	81.0%		✓	At this time, collection rates are on a par with the 2019-20 pre-pandemic levels. This in part due to the increased levels of rate relief afforded to many business since the start of the pandemic.
Land Charges Searches							
Turnaround time for land charges searches (excluding personal searches) – average no. of working days	10 working days	14.85	24.15	31.85		✗	Delays in receiving responses from the county council continue to affect turnaround times for local searches

Indicator	Target	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Symbol	Comments
Calls, Complaints and FOI requests							
% of calls answered	94%	88.7%	85.1%	97.7%		★	
Average call wait time	2 min	2.36min	3.08min	1.18min		★	
Complaints received and upheld:							
Total stage 1 complaints	N/A	14	12	10			
<i>Upheld in full</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>			
<i>Upheld in part</i>		<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>			
Total stage 2 complaints	N/A	3	3	4			
<i>Upheld in full</i>		<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>			
<i>Upheld in part</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>			
FOI requests within time i.e., 20 working days	85%	88%	91%	88%		★	
Finance							
Percentage of invoices paid within 30 Days							Following implementation of the new financial management system, this reporting requirement is still being developed and is planned to be available for the Q4 reporting period.