

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
PERFORMANCE AND PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 8 OCTOBER, 2008 AT 4.00PM
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK
PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Mawle, D.L. (Chairman)
Yates, Ms. W. (Vice-Chairman)

Ansell, Mrs. P.A.	Jones, R.
Beddows, J.	Morgan, C.W.J.
Bernard, J.D.	Thomas, D.

Staffordshire County Council Co-opted Member – Dixon, D.I.

13. Minutes

Arising from consideration of the minutes of the meeting held on 27 August, 2008 the Executive and Policy Manager advised that with regard to Minute 8(A) it was anticipated that a report outlining the amount of recycling credits generated and the figures and costs of collecting the brown bins during the period April 2007 to August 2008 would be submitted to the Sub Committee on 19 November 2008.

With regard to Minute 9 she confirmed that the percentage of the working age population qualified to at least Level 4 or higher was 19.3%. She stated that Members had received a briefing note on 12 September, 2008 responding to the issues raised under Minute 9 (A) – (F). Members noted that Richard Worth, District Strategic Improvement Manager, would be attending the Sub Committee on 19 November 2008 to provide Members with a presentation on the action plan to increase educational attainment standards within the District.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 August, 2008 be approved as a correct record.

14. Comprehensive Area Assessment Presentation

Members received a presentation from the Executive and Policy Manager outlining the Comprehensive Area Assessment. It was explained that the current Comprehensive Performance Assessment was to be replaced by the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

This would involve many public inspectorates working together to provide an assessment of the local area as a whole and also assessments of individual organisations within the area.

Following the presentation Members asked whether any resources were available to undertake this work. The Executive and Policy Manager advised that although a budget was available no additional resources had been allocated from the Government.

15. Strategic Housing Service Improvement Plan 2008-09

Consideration was given to the Report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Enclosure 5.1 – 5.20 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Planning and Regeneration advised that the report provided Members with an update on the Strategic Housing Service Improvement Plan that was implemented following an inspection by the Audit Commission in January 2007. The Audit Commission had made eight recommendations for improvements and these were outlined at Annex 1 of the report.

Members were advised that the Inspection Improvement Plan had been developed to ensure the delivery of the eight recommendations and the internal Strategic Housing Group monitor the progress on plan and adapt the actions if appropriate. The Plan is also monitored by Directors and the Portfolio Leader.

Members discussed the need to provide more affordable housing and to improve housing conditions within the private sector in the District. It was explained that funding had been provided by the Council and a number of schemes had been established in order to assist Registered Social Landlords and to improve private sector housing.

The Committee noted the need to raise public awareness of the ability to access energy efficiency funding through various grants that were available in order to assist in improving the living standards within homes. A number of companies offered financial assistance to the public to install cavity wall insulation or loft insulation. However, Members had concern regarding waiting times for energy efficiency grants following the initial request. The Head of Planning and Regeneration indicated that he would request further information from the company that manages the energy efficiency advice centre, Hestia.

The Chairman suggested that an update on the progress being made in respect of the eight recommendations contained within the Strategic Housing Service Improvement Plan should be provided to Members on a quarterly basis. The format of this would be agreed with the Chairman.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the information and progress identified in the Strategic Housing Service Improvement Plan 2008-09 be noted.
- (B) That an update on the progress being made in respect of the Strategic Housing Service Improvement Plan be provided to the Sub Committee on a quarterly basis.

16. 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 Paragraphs 2 and 3, Part 1, Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

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PART 2

17. Leisure Services Reviews – Leisure Facilities Budget Issues

Consideration was given to the Not for Publication Report of the Director of Governance (Enclosure 7.1 – 7.12 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Director of Governance explained that at the last meeting of the Sub Committee Members had requested an explanation of the reasons for the overspending at the Leisure facilities. The report provided Members with the background and approved monitoring arrangements in relation to the budget position at all Leisure facilities and in particular Chase Leisure Centre. He stated that sound management of the budget and budgetary control procedures had been developed enabling income and expenditure to be controlled within an agreed policy framework for the current year. Service Managers would remain responsible and should be held accountable for service delivery and financial management of the services within the agreed budgets. The budget would be monitored through a rigid performance management regime.

Members considered that the report did not contain detailed information outlining how the overspending had occurred. It was accepted that the appropriate budgetary control procedures had now been developed but there was no justification for the overspending in the previous years.

The Director of Governance explained that the review had not explored the reasons for the overspending but it had highlighted that the Chase Leisure Centre had been allocated insufficient budgets in previous years. The review had concentrated on addressing this to ensure that the service delivered to budget in future years.

Members questioned whether the opening hours of the Chase Leisure Centre had been considered as part of the review. The Deputy Chief Accountant stated that the review had looked at the operation of the Chase Leisure Centre and the budget that would be required. He commented that operating times and activities would be reviewed by the site managers and Head of Leisure and Major Projects as appropriate.

The Director of Governance indicated that budget management at the Chase Leisure Centre had been unacceptable over previous years. However, Members had been given an assurance that appropriate arrangements were now in place to address this issue.

Members then discussed the reasons for the continued overspending on staffing budgets that had occurred over previous years.

The Committee was advised that a review of the opening hours, staffing levels and income charges at Rugeley Leisure Centre would be undertaken after the venue had been open for twelve months.

The Chairman suggested that relevant officers should attend a future meeting to explain the outcome of the Leisure facilities budget for the current year and to outline the budget for the next financial year.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (B) That the Head of Financial Management and the Head of Leisure and Major Projects attend a meeting of the Sub Committee at the end of the financial year to explain the outcome of the Leisure facilities budget for the current year and to outline the budget for the next financial year.

CHAIRMAN