

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**

**CABINET**

**HELD ON THURSDAY, 15 NOVEMBER, 2012 AT 5.45 P.M.**

**IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK**

**PART 1**

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Adamson, G.	Leader of the Council
Toth, J.	Deputy Leader of the Council and Environment Portfolio Leader
Dixon, D.I	Corporate Improvement Portfolio Leader
Alcott, G.	Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader
Davis, Mrs. M.A	Health and wellbeing Portfolio Leader
Allen, F.W.C.	Housing Portfolio Leader
Todd, Mrs. D.M.	Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader

(The Leader advised that Councillor A. Spicer had recently been unwell and admitted to hospital. He explained that she was now back at home and requested that the best wishes of Cabinet be forwarded to her)

**83. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M. Holder, Crime and Partnerships Portfolio Leader and Councillor C. Mitchell, Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader.

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

No other declarations were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members' Interests.

**85. Updates from Portfolio Leaders**

Town Centre Regeneration

The Portfolio Leader advised on the following:

Empty Retail Units -

Despite difficult economic conditions, the Council was making real

progress in attracting new businesses to the area and supporting expansion of existing businesses. In Cannock 8 new businesses had opened in the last 5 months including Card Stop, Costa Coffee and A Little Bit of Blighty. In total across the District there would be 14 new businesses or business expansions by Christmas 2012. The Hednesford town centre regeneration included an investment of £50m and 600 jobs including a new Tesco store that would bring 300 new jobs. There were an additional 6 new business or business expansions that were confirmed to start in 2013 – some of these were directly supported by the Council's Business Rates Discount Scheme. The Council recognised it was still a difficult trading environment for local businesses and that there was still more to do. The Council was spending £132,000 in Cannock and Hednesford town centres on a range of environmental improvements including new bins, upgrade to an underpass and more plants.

The Council was funding free car parking in town centres for the 2 Saturdays before Christmas to bring more shoppers in.

#### Postponement of Business Rates Re-evaluation

That the Government had decided to postpone the next business rates re-evaluation from 2015 to 2017. Legislation to do this was the Growth and Infrastructure Bill. The business rates which local business pay, was based on rental values from 2008 which were pre-recession. These did not reflect current market conditions. The postponement of the re-evaluation to 2017 meant that there was little opportunity to take into account the effect of the recession on the level of business rates being paid by our local businesses.

#### Housing

The Portfolio Leader advised on the following:

1. Additional Affordable Housing – Lion Street, Rugeley

The Bromford Housing Group had announced that they were to develop 10 houses for affordable rent on land at the rear of the Vine Inn, at Lion Street, Rugeley. The 10 houses would comprise 7 two bedroom houses and 3 three bedroom houses. The scheme was being part funded by the Homes and Communities Agency and as a result the houses would be let at affordable rents. This would result in rents of £97 per week being charged for the two bedroom houses and £111 per week being charged for the three bedroom houses. Development was programmed to commence in February 2013 and would be completed by the end of next year. The Council would be able to nominate applicants for all of the properties.

2. “Drop In” Sessions – Housing Benefit “Bedroom Tax”

The Tenancy Services Team held three “drop in” sessions earlier this week to increase the awareness of tenants about the Government’s changes to the Housing Benefit rules in April 2013 which will result in tenants not receiving Housing Benefit for any bedrooms they did not need. The sessions were held at Hednesford and Norton Canes Libraries and the Rugeley Area Office to supplement the advice which is always available from the “Housing Office Bungalow” in Cannock. Tenants were provided with information as to how the changes would directly affect them and were advised of the options regarding transfers to smaller accommodation. Further “drop in” sessions will be held in the New Year.

**86. Minutes of Cabinet Meeting of 20 September, 2012**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 October, 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed.

**87. Forward Plan**

Consideration was given to the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period November, 2012 – January, 2013 (Enclosure 5.1 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period November, 2012 – January, 2013, be noted.

**88. Minutes of Policy Development Committees**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the following Policy Development Committees and other Committees be received for information:

- (i) Economic Development and Planning – 16 August, 2012
- (ii) Health and Wellbeing – 8 October, 2012

**89. Review of the 2012-13 Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Housing and Head of Financial Management (Item 7.1 – 7.15 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The position regarding the estimated availability of Housing Revenue Account Capital resources set out in Appendix 1 to the Report be noted including an additional Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay of £12,000 to meet the additional cost for the replacement of housing service vehicles.
- (B) The position regarding actual and estimated expenditure in respect of the 2012-13 Housing Revenue Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 2 to the Report be noted and approval be given to incur £89,000 of additional scheme costs met through the virement of existing resources in respect of the following schemes:-
- |       |   |   |         |
|-------|---|---|---------|
| (i)   | Void Properties (Decent Homes)          | - | £60,000 |
| (ii)  | Upgrading of Electrical Systems         | - | £10,000 |
| (iii) | Replacement of Housing Service Vehicles | - | £12,000 |
| (iv)  | Lift Refurbishment (Caxton Court)       | - | £7,000  |
- (C) The position regarding uncommitted Housing Revenue Account Capital Resources be noted.

Reason(s) for the Decision

The report presented the quarter two review of the 2012-13 HRA Capital Programme.

Estimated resources for 2012-13 were now forecast to be £10,920,221 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report. This compared to the estimate of £10,871,206 when the programme was reviewed on 21 June 2012. The reasons for this net increase in resources (£49,015) were set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

Actual expenditure at 30 September 2012 totalled £1,963,644 and represented 27.4% of the previously agreed expenditure target.

Estimated expenditure for 2012-13 was now forecast to be £7,262,900. This compared to the estimate of £7,163,900 when the programme was last reviewed on 21 June 2012. The reasons for the net increase of £99,000 were set out in Appendix 4 to the report and included £89,000 of additional expenditure on four schemes for which approval was sought.

Following the financing of the estimated 2012-13 HRA Capital Programme it was now estimated that £3,657,321 of uncommitted resources were anticipated to be available. This compared to the estimate of £3,707,306 when the programme was last reviewed on 21 June 2012, a reduction of £49,985. Unless required during 2012-13 these resources will be carried forward to assist in financing the HRA Capital Programme for 2013-14 and

future years.

#### **90. Update on Partnership Activity**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Policy (Item 8.1 – 8.15 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The update on the Partnership Delivery Plans be noted.
- (B) No specific areas of interest for future reports were identified. It was agreed that this would be better addressed within the next quarterly report, by which time the Local Strategic Partnership Board in December would have taken place.

#### Reason(s) for the Decision

Cabinet at its meeting on 21 June, 2012 had agreed that an Update would be required on a quarterly basis following the LSP Strategic Board meeting cycle.

The report was the first quarterly report to update on key areas of Partnership work following the LSP cycle of meetings in September, 2012. The report included an update on the three priority themes for the Partnership (Improved Health, Increased Economic Opportunity and Community Safety), together with detailed information and case studies on specific initiatives of interest as previously requested.

The LSP had adopted its own governance structure and Terms of Reference, and, therefore, the quarterly update reports were intended to provide a summary of Partnership work for information. Any particular areas of interest to Cabinet could be reported in more detail in future Partnership Update reports, hence the recommendation that Cabinet identify specific areas of interest in respect of Partnership working.

#### **91. Quarter 2 Performance Report**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Policy (Item 9.1 – 9.20 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The performance information and the case studies relating to PDPs as detailed at Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the report be noted.

- (B) The actions and indicators which were rated Red or Amber be noted and the remedial action or rescheduled delivery stated to address performance be confirmed.

Reason(s) for the Decision

Information for performance actions, indicators and case studies during Quarter 2 2012/13 were included for relevant items in Appendices 1 to 4 of the report. The overall rankings for each Portfolio area were detailed in Section 4 of the report, indicating that 84.6% of targets had been achieved during the second Quarter of 2012/13.

**92. Cannock Chase Local Plan Part 1**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Planning and Regeneration (Enclosure 10.1 – 10.91 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The summary of responses made to the Draft Cannock Chase Local Plan Part 1 during public consultation attached as Appendix 1 of the report be noted and the recommended changes to Local Plan Part 1 also set out in Appendix 1 be agreed.
- (B) Subject to (A) above, Cabinet supports the amended Cannock Chase Local Plan Part 1 being reported to Council with a recommendation to Publish.
- (C) The Local Development Scheme attached as Appendix 2 to the Report be agreed.
- (D) Authority be given to the Head of Planning and Regeneration, in consultation with the for Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader, to make further changes considered necessary to the document and supporting documentation prior to reporting to Council.

Reason(s) for the Decision

Local Plan Part 1 forms the central part of the local development plan and brings together and continues the work previously developed as the Cannock Chase Core Strategy and Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan. It sets out the guiding principles and strategic policies for development during the plan period (2006 – 2028). It also provides policy for use in Development Management and for Rugeley Town Centre. Local Plan Part 2 will set out site allocations and provide standards for such matters as open space, car parking and certain developer contributions.

Local Plan Part 1 has been written to reflect national changes including the introduction of the Localism Act 2011, which amongst other things allows for the revocation of Regional Strategies and removal of saved structure plan policies, the recently published National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

**93. Draft General Fund Revenue Budget, 2013-14 to 2016-17 – Medium Term Financial Plan**

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Finance (Item 11.1 – 11.19 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The General Fund revenue outturn for 2011-12 and April – September 2012 be noted as the basis for updating the existing Approved Medium Term Plan and setting this Councils context for preparing forthcoming budgets.
- (B) The information contained within the report on the revised medium term financial plan be noted.
- (C) Further reports be received on the General Fund Revenue Budget and Reserves and Balances when the financial settlement details from the Government are known enabling a budget for consultation to be determined.

Reason(s) for the Decision

The base budget report represents the cost of maintaining existing services and reflects the impact of last years Financial Projection for 2012-13 to 2014-15; the outturn report for 2011-12 and cost pressures arising from the first six months of the current year.

At this stage the Council can fairly accurately determine its Estimated Net Spending for the next three years and at the time determine the level of working balances it needs to maintain based upon a risk analysis of volatile budgets.

The resources or the financing available to meet the Estimated Net Spending for 2013-14 to 2016-17 are uncertain at this stage and are dependant upon the outcome of consultations in relation to the Local Government Finance Bill. This again will impact on the level of working balances to be maintained by the Council.

Resources available will be affected by the final design of the Business Rates

Retention Scheme; potential changes to the timing and magnitude of the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review reductions ; the outcome of the consultation on the Localisation of Council Tax Support and, from 2015-16, the anticipated further reduction in Government Support arising from the 2014 Comprehensive Spending Review.

In the light of potential different scenarios in existence at this time Cabinet are asked to defer the determination of a consultation budget for the period 2013-14 to 2016-17 until the details of the Draft Local Government Financial Settlements for 2013-14 and 2014-15 are known in December.

**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(s) 2, and 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, 15 NOVEMBER, 2012 AT 5.45 P.M.**

**IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK**

**PART 2**

**95. Empty Homes**

Consideration was given to the NFP Report of the Head of Environmental Health (Item 13.1 – 13.17 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The use of £150,000 Decent Homes capital funding to set up a repayable grant scheme for bringing empty dwellings back into use be approved in principle. Final approval of the scheme will be subject to a further report setting out in detail the operation of the scheme.
- (B) Changes to the levels of the Council Tax discount & exemption for empty homes, including the introduction of an “empty homes premium”, in accordance with Appendix 3 of the report be approved.

Reason(s) for the Decision

There will always be a number of empty dwellings in the District at any given time due to natural churn in the market. Where dwellings remain empty for extended periods they can fall into disrepair and become the focus of anti-social behaviour which is detrimental to the local environment.

There is a shortage of affordable housing in the District and bringing privately owned empty dwellings back into use will increase local capacity and choice.

The report outlined the statutory enforcement powers available to the Council, together with a financial incentive in the form of repayable grants and a financial disincentive of additional Council Tax liability and proposed a balanced package of measures to bring empty homes back into use, with financial incentives, disincentives and use of enforcement powers. Through these measures the Council would demonstrate that it intends to tackle the issue of long term empty dwellings but also recognises that owners may benefit from some financial assistance.

---

LEADER

The meeting closed at 6.25 p.m.

