

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD ON THURSDAY, 14 FEBRUARY, 2013 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT:
Councillors

Kraujalis, J. T. (Chairman)
Bernard, J. D. (Vice-Chairman)

Bernard, Mrs. A. F.	Grocott, M.
Cartwright, Mrs. S.	Morgan, C.W.J.
Freeman, Miss M.	Pearson, A.
Grice, Mrs. D.	

(It was explained that Councillor B. Gamble was attending as a substitute Member for Councillor A. Lovell. However as the 24 hour written notice prior to the start of the meeting had not been given in accordance with the Substitution Scheme it was agreed that he would not vote on any item.)

25. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. N. Davies, A. Lovell, Mrs. A. Spicer, Mrs. P. Z. Stretton and M. Sutherland.

26. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restrictions on Voting by Members and Party Whip Declarations

<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>	<u>Type</u>
Pearson, A.	Member of Staffordshire Wildlife Trust	Personal
Grice, D. Mrs.	Has attended Shop Watch meetings	Personal

No party whip declarations were made.

27. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November, 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to it being noted that Councillor Mrs. D. Grice was present at the meeting and should not have been listed in the apologies.

28. District/Ward Profile and Related Statistics

The Committee viewed a DVD produced by the Policy and Performance team entitled 'Cannock Chase in Profile'. The film provided statistical information on three of the Council's four priorities, People, Place and Prosperity (the fourth being corporate transformation which is not a community based priority).

People: Active and Healthy Lifestyles

It was explained that Cannock Chase continued to face a number of health inequalities which had a significant impact on the lifestyles and overall prosperity of its residents. The 2011 Census indicated that the area had an estimated population of 97,500 and the number of those aged 85 and over was continuing to increase. It was considered that this would have a significant impact on the provision and use of health and care services across the area. Age UK advised that they provided a wide range of services to older people, including providing practical support and advice.

The issue of obesity in the area remained significant amongst both children and adults and at 29.1% was above the England average of 24.2%.

Figures for November 2011 showed that whilst levels of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Incapacity Benefit claims had fallen, claimant levels remained above the County, Regional and National averages.

Place: Improved Living Environment

It was reported that the proportion of household waste being recycled stood at 51% in 2010/11 compared to the national average of 41.5% and was continuing to increase.

The Committee was advised that the average house price in Cannock Chase at March 2012 was £135,742 which was the lowest average in Staffordshire and that the provision of affordable housing continued to be a high priority.

The Cannock Chase District Profile 2012 produced by Staffordshire County Council suggested that the district was becoming a safer place to live, work and visit, with incidents of crime and anti social behaviour reducing. It was reported that the Police and Community Safety Partnership continued to work together to address issues. An 'Its Never Ok' campaign had been carried out with respect to violence and to make the area a safer place for all. The number of anti social behaviour and drug offence incidents had reduced and was lower than the county average.

Prosperity: Economic Resilience

Cannock Chase had seen widespread changes to the local economy and business environment in recent years, with substantial investment in the transformation of former industrial sites, development of local infrastructure and the diversity of employment in sectors such as high technology, distribution,

services and retail. The economic environment for the district was influenced by many factors, including education and skills; sector trends and development, employment and worklessness; and the local impact of wider national and international economic developments.

The percentage of Cannock Chase pupils attaining 5 or more A* - C grades at GCSE (including English and Maths) in 2011 was 51.2% increasing from 47.3% in 2010. Statistics indicated lower attainment levels amongst children who were in receipt of free school meals compared to those who were not. School performance was an important factor contributing to pupils' attainment; however, research suggested that factors such as household income, family background and parental support and involvement were key issues.

With regard to unemployment it was explained that those claiming key out of work benefits in Cannock Chase had reduced but remained above the County average. The number of Job Seeker Allowance claimants aged 18-24 remained at a high level, but was reducing.

The Policy & Performance Manager advised that the District Needs Analysis would be further updated in the autumn.

Concern was raised as to the accuracy of the figures, particularly relating to youth unemployment. It was explained that there was no measure for those that did not claim JSA. Members considered that further information was needed relating to those with special educational needs. A Member advised that RAISEonline was a useful tool for teachers to analyse performance attainment and progress of pupils in order that additional help could be given where needed, with early intervention being a key issue.

Members enquired if breakfast clubs had made a difference in pupils attainment levels as it was considered that those coming from 'food poverty families' could find it difficult to concentrate. It was explained that there was no way of tracking this as when governments changed, new systems were introduced.

It was considered important that people had equal access to opportunities and had the right skills and qualifications to gain the type of work they chose to do. The Committee was advised that the Council had been instrumental in getting employers to appoint locally rather than from outside the area.

29. Community Safety Strategic Assessment

The Committee received a presentation from the Local Strategic Partnership Manager.

It was explained that the Staffordshire Observatory produced eight assessments for the Staffordshire Districts in August each year the aim of which was to provide Strategic Partnerships with a review of their community safety priorities as part of a 3 year process.

The 2011/12 priorities had been:

- Outcome 1 - increased assurance in the community,
- Outcome 2 - improved living environments;
- Outcome 3 reduce offending

The Committee was advised that the assessment had confirmed that this remained relevant for 2012/13.

Cannock Chase was getting safer and recorded crime was down with 705 fewer crimes being carried out in 2011/12 than the previous year. Violent crime, violence with injury and acquisitive crime had all reduced. Reported domestic violence had also gone down as had ASB (a 48% reduction over 5 years). However crime rates were above average for similar sized County Strategic Partnerships. The Committee was informed that one in ten residents perceived that crime had increased.

It was explained that the three outcomes listed above had been measured through the 'Feeling the Difference' survey. Two of the aims had been met; however people who felt fearful of being a victim of crime in the last 12 months had increased to 15% and was continuing to be a challenge.

With regard to Outcome 2- improved living environments – it was reported that a target of a 5% reduction in violent offences over 12 months had been set with town centres being focused upon, particularly with regard to violence and alcohol related violence. The target had been met with violent offences reducing by 22% in 2011/12 (416 fewer crimes than the previous year).

From a recent survey of 11 -15 year olds, 8 out of 10 had stated that alcohol was relatively easy to acquire with a small minority stating they had brought it themselves and the majority that it had been provided by their parents.

A third of violent crimes were domestic related and it was explained that reports of domestic violence had decreased in 2011-12.

In relation to Outcome 3 – reduce offending – two targets had been set, one to reduce the number of first time entrants into the Criminal Justice system and the other to reduce re-offending rates. This had been achieved with 8 prolific offenders being supported on an educational course at college, with 2 going on to gain employment. A Divert Scheme with ASDA had been introduced for first-time young shoplifters diverting them from the Criminal Justice system and giving them the opportunity to undertake reparation work instead. A Member enquired how many had taken up the Scheme and then reoffended elsewhere. The Local Strategic Partnership Manager undertook to obtain information from the Police in relation to the number of offenders that had taken part.

30. Quarter 3 Performance Report

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Policy (Enclosure 6.1 – 6.5 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

It was explained that the purpose of the report was to update Members on the Council's progress during quarter 3 of 2012-13 in respect of the Priority Outcomes as set out in the Corporate Plan 2011-14 and the supporting Priority Delivery Plans for 2012-13.

The Head of Environmental Health advised that the action plan to include work being delivered by the Council and its partners around the Alcohol Strategy would be completed shortly.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the performance information and the case studies relating to PDPs as detailed at Annexes 1, 2 3 and 4 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.

31. Progress Report on Shared Services

The Head of Financial Services gave an overview of the Report outlining the main issues for consideration.

RESOLVED:

That the outcome of the progress update be noted.

32. Youth Unemployment in Cannock Chase

RESOLVED:

- (A) That an update on Youth Unemployment in Cannock Chase be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee to allow the Chairman of the Economic Development & Planning Policy Development Committee, Councillor A. Lovell, to be present.
- (B) That the Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader be invited to attend.

33. Role of Scrutiny

Scrutiny Training Event

Members commented that they had found the Scrutiny Training Event to be useful and informative.

It was considered that a visit by 3-4 Members of Scrutiny Committee to another authority in Staffordshire to ascertain how their Scrutiny Committee operated could be beneficial and their findings would be reported back.

Proposal to Establish Scrutiny Working Groups

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director (Enclosure 9.1 – 9.5 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) As part of the Work Programme 2012-13 and 2013-14 the following Scrutiny Working Groups be established:
- Air Quality and Industrial Emissions Working Group – Chairman – Councillor J. T. Kraujalis
 - Perceptions of Crime Working Group – Chairman – Councillor J. D. Bernard
 - Anti Social Behaviour Working Group – Chairman – Councillor M. Freeman
 - Scrutiny Task and Finish Working Group – Chairman – Councillor A. Pearson
- (B) The Working Groups need not be politically balanced.
- (C) Detailed Terms of Reference for each of the established Working Groups be received at an additional meeting of Scrutiny Committee to be held in April 2013.
- (D) Each Working Group, at the conclusion of their Scrutiny Review, prepare a detailed report on their findings, conclusions and recommendations to be considered by Scrutiny Committee within timescales to be determined.

34. Date of Next Meeting

RESOLVED:

That an additional meeting be held at a date to be arranged.

The meeting closed at 6.15 pm

CHAIRMAN