

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE

CABINET

THURSDAY, 27 AUGUST, 2009 AT 4.30 P.M.

IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Stanley, N.K.	Leader of the Council
Davies, D.N.	Access to Education, Skills, and Employment Portfolio Leader
Freeman, M. P.	Housing Leader
Grocott, M.R.	Culture, Sport and Services for Children & Young People Leader
Jillings, J.	Safe, Stronger and Cohesive Communities Portfolio Leader
Williams, A.	Environmental Sustainability Portfolio Leader
Yates, Ms. W.	Healthier Communities and Older People Portfolio Leader.

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

Member	Nature of Interest	Type
Davies, D.N.	Minute 39 – Debt Recovery - Reference Numbers 101056843 and 101071608: Individual is known to Member.	Personal
Grocott, M.R.	Minute 39 – Debt Recovery - Reference Numbers 101056843 and 101071608: Individual is known to Member.	Personal
Stanley, N.K.	Minute 39 – Debt Recovery - Reference Numbers 101056843 and 101071608: Individual is known to Member.	Personal
Williams, A.	Minute 39 – Debt Recovery - Reference Numbers 101056843 and 101071608: Individual is known to Member.	Personal
Williams, A.	Minute 39 – Debt Recovery - Reference Number 101052899: Member's spouse is employed by company	Personal and Prejudicial

26. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July, 2009 be approved as a correct record.

27. Forward Plan

Consideration was given to the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period August – December, 2009 (Enclosure 4.1 – 4.5 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Members were asked to note an amendment to the decision date in respect of consideration of the implementation date for digital TV for the Council's housing stock. This would now be September, 2009.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan of Decisions for the period August – December, 2009 be approved, subject to amendment to the decision date in respect of consideration of the implementation date for digital TV for the Council's housing stock, which would be considered in September, 2009.

28. Part 1 Minutes of Policy Development Committees

In respect of the Minutes of the Healthier Communities & Older People Policy Development Committee of 22 July, 2009, the Healthier Communities and Older People Portfolio Leader asked Members to make particular note of the recommendation referred to in Minute 7 that Cabinet be requested to consider the need to raise the level of awareness by advertising the Council's central alarm system for vulnerable people.

RESOLVED:

(A) That the Part 1 Minutes of the following Policy Development Committees be received for information:

(i) Housing Policy Development Committee - 30 June, 2009

(ii) Healthier Communities & Older People Policy Development Committee – 22 July, 2009

(B) That with regard to the recommendation referred from the Healthier Communities & Older People Policy Development Committee of 22 July, 2009 (Minute 7, Members' Update refers), the Head of Environmental Services be requested to consider raising the level of awareness by advertising the Council's central alarm system for vulnerable people.

29. Performance and Finance Report

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive for submission to Scrutiny Committee on 7 September, 2009 (Enclosure 6.1 – 6.11 of the Official Minutes of the Council)

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Reason for the Decision

Cabinet noted a report setting out the Quarter 1 performance of 2009/10 of the Council and its partners, which would be considered by Scrutiny Committee on 7 September 2009.

30. Cost Effective Methods of Consulting with the Public

Consideration was given to a recommendation referred from the Scrutiny Committee held on 13 July, 2009. (A copy of the report considered by the Scrutiny Committee was included as Enclosure 7.1 – 7.6 of the Official Minutes of the Council):

“That Cabinet be recommended to approve the utilisation of the Citizens Panel as the most cost effective way of communicating with the public, which would include conducting additional postal and telephone surveys with the Panel and focus groups.”

Cabinet was of the opinion that the Council needed to adopt a strategic approach to community engagement, rather than a piecemeal approach of utilising the Citizens Panel as recommended by the Scrutiny Committee.

It was noted that the development of a Community Engagement Strategy was included as part of the Corporate Improvement Priority Delivery Plan. It was also noted that any financial implications that were likely to arise from the development strategy would be subject to the Council's delivering change process.

RESOLVED:

(A) That it be noted that the Council needed to adopt a strategic approach to community engagement and that following the development of a Community Engagement Strategy as part of the Corporate Improvement Priority Plan, the Strategy be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee for consultation.

(B) That any financial implications that were likely to arise from the development Strategy be subject to the Council's delivering change process.

Reason for the Decision

The Development of a Community Engagement Strategy was included as part of the Corporate Improvement Priority Delivery Plan. There is a duty to involve representatives of local persons under the statutory guidance “Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities”. The guidance covers aspects from the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

The duty to involve aims to allow people greater opportunities to have their say and to embed a culture of engagement and empowerment, meaning that local people are consulted and involved as a matter of course. The new duty came into force on 1 April 2009 and was an addition to existing statutory and non-statutory requirements.

31. Activities for Teenagers Fundamental Service Review – Final Report

Consideration was given to recommendations referred from the Scrutiny committee held on 13 July, 2009, in respect of the Activities for Teenagers Fundamental Service Review. (A copy of the report considered by the Scrutiny Committee was included as Enclosure 8.1 – 8.13 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED

That approval be given to:

- (A) Support the Positive Activities For Young People Project by ensuring that any services involved with providing facilities or activities for young people submit information to enable the County wide website to be developed.
- (B) Make appropriate resources available through the Delivering Change process to enable the Council's PR& Marketing team to work with young people to develop imaginative, accessible and attractive webpage(s) for young people on its own website. This should provide links to the County wide website and other information and advice sites that are of interest to young people.
- (C) Request the Children's Trust Board to: -

Co-ordinate an area based approach to address the key findings in this report, by:-

- (i) engaging with all relevant partners responsible for the delivery of positive activities for teenagers and young people,
- (ii) in the medium term and in conjunction with the Crime and Reduction Partnership, explore with partners, the options available and resources required (human and financial) for identifying the correlation between those activities and reductions in anti-social behaviour or the levels of crime committed by young people,
- (iii) developing activities that are accessible, reliable and relevant to young people by consulting with them when planning and designing new activities or events (consideration should also be given to mobile provision and taking activities into local areas),
- (iv) agreeing with partners a standard approach by which to monitor and evaluate activities so that evidence based judgments (around cost, performance, effectiveness and whether the activities meet the needs and demands of young people) can be made when considering new or repeat activities and projects,
- (v) establishing with partners and Members adequate funding for projects and schemes so as to provide some certainty and reliability around activities and events designed to reduce anti-social behaviour,
- (vi) developing with partners effective and relevant ways of telling young people about activities and events in their area, including:-

- (a) co-ordinating the development of the Positive Activities for Young Peoples web-site,
- (b) exploring the opportunity to use the Schools message pages subject to adequate budgets or funding,
- (c) making more creative use of technology by using Facebook and texting subject to adequate budgets or funding."

Reason for the Decision

Cabinet considered it important to ensure that the recommendations proposed by the Fundamental Review Steering Group be implemented, co-ordinated with partners, monitored and reviewed and that a dialogue with young people be maintained after the review. The Children's Trust Board (CTB) in its role of improving outcomes for children and young people by bringing services together was the ideal vehicle to take the recommendations forward. The Children's Trust Board involves all relevant partners and therefore could address one of the key findings arising out of the review, the need to ensure that a co-ordinated and area based approach was adopted in order to provide activities for teenagers and tackle anti-social behaviour.

32. Update on the Concessionary Travel "Dial-a-Ride" Scheme

Consideration was given to a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Enclosure 9.1 – 9.6 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Environment Sustainability Leader proposed the following amendment to the recommendations:

"2.2 That Cabinet extends the current option of "Dial-a-Ride" as an alternative to the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme bus pass to include those concessionary travel scheme members aged 70 and over."

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the information in respect of the first four months of operation of the "Dial-a-Ride" scheme be noted.
- (B) That the option of "Dial-a-Ride" as an alternative to the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme be extended to include those concessionary travel scheme members aged 70 and over.

Reason for the Decision

The "Dial-a-Ride" scheme was currently operating at less than full capacity. In order to encourage increased levels of usage, thereby reducing average journey costs and increasing value for money, it was agreed to extend the option to include the rest of the group that were previously eligible for alternative travel concessions.

33. Local Lettings Plan – Cornwall House and Cherry Tree House Redevelopment Scheme

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Service Improvement (Enclosure 10.1 – 10.8 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That the local lettings plan for the initial allocation of dwellings in respect of the Cornwall House and Cherry Tree House redevelopment schemes be approved.

Reason for the Decision

Cabinet on 22 January 2009 agreed a Choice Based Lettings Scheme for the future allocation of social housing in the Cannock Chase area and the agreed scheme included provision for Local Lettings Plans in respect of specific areas or schemes. The plans were time limited and have regard to “community stability” issues which may include child density, age and employment considerations. The local lettings plan suggests that nominations were prioritised in accordance with the Priority Bands as set out in the Council’s Choice Based Lettings Guide “Somewhere to Live” and proposes maximum and minimum occupancy levels in order to limit child density and reflect the potential for family growth.

34. Right of First Refusal

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Service Improvement (Enclosure 11.1 – 11.9 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the Council’s current policy, not to acquire dwellings offered under the “Right of First Refusal” be re-affirmed.
- (B) That a further review of the Council’s “Right of First Refusal” policy be undertaken when the situation regarding the eligibility of local authorities to bid for Social Housing Grant from the National Affordable Housing Programme has been clarified.
- (C) That the Council’s current policy of refusing other requests to purchase dwellings for continued occupation be continued.

Reason for the Decision

The report reviewed the Council’s “Right of First Refusal” policy in the light of changes to the Government’s financial regime for new and acquired housing. Whilst the financial disincentives in relation to the acquisition of acquired housing have been removed, the Council was not able at the present time to bid for Social Housing Grant. As a result, any request to the Secretary of State to exclude any dwellings acquired under the “Right of First Refusal” would not demonstrate “value for money” in comparison to the continued funding of housing association development. Local authorities would be able to bid for Social Housing Grant in the future and when the situation has been clarified the Council’s “First Offer of Refusal” policy is reviewed again. A number of other requests to purchase dwellings from owner-occupiers are received and the Council’s existing policy of refusing such requests was reaffirmed.

35. Provision of Adaptations for Disabled Occupants in Council Owned and Privately Owned Housing

Consideration was given to a Report of the Director of Service Improvement (Enclosure 12.1 – 12.12 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

- (A) That a strategy and five year action plan to meet the need to provide or facilitate adaptations to the homes of disabled households in both the public and private sectors is formulated in partnership with Staffordshire County Council (Social Care and Health) and South Staffordshire PCT.
- (B) That Staffordshire County Council and South Staffordshire PCT are formally requested to contribute funding towards the provision of disabled facilities works for Council tenants and Disabled Facilities Grants for private sector households which will be required under the strategy.
- (C) That as an interim measure Council is recommended to approve:-
 - (i) The continuation of a 40% level of funding to supplement the financial assistance received from the Government to provide disabled facilities grants to private sector households.
 - (ii) A £100,000 increase in the 2009-10 Disabled Facilities Works budget (which forms part of the 2009-10 HRA Capital Programme) through an additional revenue contribution to capital outlay met from HRA working balances.

Reason for the Decision

The need for disabled facilities provision had increased substantially during the last year and the trend was expected to continue. As a result a strategy and five year action plan was agreed to be formulated to meet the current and projected need. Council resources would be insufficient to finance the action plan and both Staffordshire County Council and South Staffordshire PCT would be formally requested to contribute to funding. Pending the formulation of the proposed strategy and action plan, interim measures were required as outlined in the report.

36. Cannock Chase Local Development Framework Core Strategy Preferred Options Summary of Consultation Responses

Consideration was given to a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Enclosure 13.1 – 13.8) of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the Cannock Chase Local Development Framework (LDF), Core Strategy Preferred Options - Summary of Consultation Responses be adopted as an appropriate account of the consultation process undertaken for this stage of the LDF Core Strategy.

- (B) That the findings of the report be used to help define policy in the Core Strategy for development in the District to 2026.
- (C) That the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Environment Leader, be authorised to make any minor amendments to the Cannock Chase Local Development Framework (LDF), Core Strategy Preferred Options - Summary of Consultation Responses.

Reason for the Decision

A series of consultations were undertaken between 2006 and 2008 based around issues and options in the preparation of the LDF Core Strategy. These informed the Preferred Options 2009 consultation which set out the preferred strategic approach across the District and sought views and preferences on new locations to meet this approach for housing provision in the District. The summary of the consultation responses was considered as an appropriate account of the consultation process undertaken.

37. Members' Grant Aid Scheme – Approval of Applications

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive (Enclosure 14.1 – 14.11) of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet, having discharged its obligations under the Members' Grant Aid Initiative Scheme, consents to the Chief Executive (or anyone so authorised by him) to pay all such grants as are due to applicants named in the Schedule of Endorsed Applications at Annex 2.

Reason for the Decision

The Council's Grant Aid Scheme **SUPPORTED** applications by Members to actively promote and endorse organisations in delivering various benefits to those that live, work and visit the district.

38. 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).

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PART 2

39. Debt Recovery

Having declared a personal and prejudicial interest, Councillor A. Williams left the meeting prior to consideration of this item.

Consideration was given to the Not for Publication Report of the Head of Financial Management (Enclosure 16.1 – 16.6 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the amounts detailed in Annexes 1 to 5 be written off.
- (B) That Members note the actions of the Head of Financial Management in writing off the irrecoverable debts below £1,000.

Reason for the Decision

There was no reasonable prospect of the Council recovering the monies owing for the reasons detailed in the report and so writing them off was considered the most appropriate course of action.

LEADER