

Minutes of the Corporate Review Committee Meeting held on 5 February 2021

Present: Colin Greatorex (Chairman)

Attendance

Charlotte Atkins	Bernard Peters
Mike Davies	Natasha Pullen
Helen Fisher	Stephen Sweeney
John Francis	Conor Wileman (Vice-Chairman)
Ian Parry	Susan Woodward
Jeremy Pert	

Also in attendance:

Apologies:

PART ONE

33. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Wileman in the Chair.

Councillor Woodward declared an interest in relation to her position as co-chair of Chasewater Friends an organisation that supports the work at Chasewater.

Councillor Francis declared a non-pecuniary interest as he lives on Cannock Chase, is a member of the Stafford Agricultural Society and friends with Farmer who farms on the Chase.

Councillor Fisher declared an interest as co-Chair of Chasewater Friends

34. Consideration of the Call In of the Cabinet Decision - Protecting Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation for Future Generations

Councillor C Atkins as the Lead Member for the Call In rehearsed with the Committee her reasons for the Call In and the passion expressed within the community in relation to this issue, in particular the correspondence received by many Members. Also that many Members of the public had felt they had not been engaged with and the Member raised the issue of a number of groups who it was felt would be disenfranchised. The cutbacks within the Rangers Service were also highlighted. It was felt that harnessing the enthusiasm of the local residents such be support to preserve the area for future generations

The reasons for the Call in were detailed as

The Cabinet approach appears piecemeal and lacked evidence of a long term plan for the protection and conservation of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation. The plans did not fully address the needs of people living with a range of disabilities.

Despite the County Council's focus on volunteering both before and during the pandemic, the plans did not incorporate a role for volunteers in the protection and conservation of the site.

No evidence had been presented to demonstrate that closing car parks and directing people into larger car parks would change the behaviour which is impacting adversely on the SAC. Nor has the environmental impact of expanding some car parks been assessed.

The lack of an ecological assessment of some areas over the last five to ten years raised concerns about the evidence base for these plans.

Councillor Greateorex in the Chair

Councillor Ian Parry detailed the scrutiny undertaken by the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee who had received detailed reports on two occasions and made recommendation before the decision by Cabinet. As part of their first consideration of these proposals, Member had also received representation from the Safe Cannock Chase group, who had been invited to present their views as the Committee felt it was important.

Following their consideration the Committee were convinced that the Cabinet Members proposals were sound and that they would preserve the most vulnerable areas of Cannock Chase for future generations. However it was recognised the groups of people who access the Chase and the scale of consultation exercise and the level of people who had been able to express their views was considered. Therefore the Cabinet Member was asked to reassess this submit a further report to the Select Committee which they did. This further review and actions taken satisfied the Members of the Committee.

Councillor Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture, addressed the Committee. She referred to the detailed scrutiny process which had been undertaken and her disappointment that some of the issues being raised had not been raised earlier as she felt she had been willing and open in relation to answering any queries. It was highlighted the importance of Cannock Chase and the responsibility both legally and morally to protect it for further generations in the face of increasing demand and reasons for the development of the partnership.

In support of Councillor Wilson officers responding to the Committee on each of the issues raised within the call in. details were given to highlight the joined up approach to the conservation of the Chase, the Community Impact Assessment undertaken, the ongoing engagement which will take place to incorporate community concerns, the importance of the role of volunteers and highlighted the groups the Council is involved in, the reasons for the consideration of numbers and locations of the parking sites and finally that it was not recognised that there had not been a lack of ecological assessment.

A Member highlighted the increase in traffic that they had observed of time and that consultation in their view could only give part of the picture and they recognised within the proposals further consultation would be undertaken. They also detailed the support they were aware of for the proposals.

Another Member stated they were not against the proposals however it was the execution that was of concern and therefore supported the reasons for the call in. They also raised concern in relation to the Ranger service their experience and roles they undertake and their limited resources. They would like to see a review of the Rangers service.

A Member requested reassurance that any funds generated would be re invested and also concerns about car parking displacement. Councillor Wilson responded that funding would be invested into the Parking Plan alongside funding for other area to conserve the Chase.

Councillor Woodward moved the motion, seconded by Councillor C Atkins, that the matter be referred on to Cabinet with the specific issues raised, in particular how would the proposals be implemented and the condonation of the work with volunteers, for Cabinet to consider.

Councillor C Atkins For
Councillor M Davies Against
Councillor H Fisher Against
Councillor C Greatorex Against
Councillor J Francis Against
Councillor I Parry Against
Councillor J Pert Against
Councillor B Peters Against
Councillor N Pullen Against
Councillor S Sweeney Against
Councillor C Wileman Against
Councillor S Woodward For

Against a vote by the Committee this motion was lost.

Councillor Francis moved the motion, seconded by Councillor Parry, that the Committee agree for the decision to be implemented as set out in the original decision notice

Councillor C Atkins Against
Councillor M Davies For
Councillor H Fisher For
Councillor C Greatorex For
Councillor J Francis For
Councillor I Parry For
Councillor J Pert For
Councillor B Peters For
Councillor N Pullen For
Councillor S Sweeney For
Councillor C Wileman For
Councillor S Woodward Abstain

This motion was agreed.

RESOLVED – that the Corporate Review Committee that the Committee agree for the decision to be implemented as set out in the original decision notice

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Chairman