

Minutes of the County Council Meeting held on 15 March 2013

Present:

Attendance		
John Bernard	Terry Finn	Mike Maryon
Len Bloomer	John Francis	Geoff Morrison
Henry Butter	Bob Fraser	Michael Oates
Frank Chapman	Gill Heath	Ian Parry
Ron Clarke	Mark Heenan	Kath Perry
John Cooper	Derrick Huckfield	John Rowley
Tim Corbett	Christina Jebb	Liz Staples
Pat Corfield	Ivan Jennings	Stephen Sweeney
Peter Davies	Philip Jones	Simon Tagg
Derek Davis, OBE	Mike Lawrence	Steve Tranter
William Day	Ian Lawson	John Wells
Veronica Downes	Frank Lewis, MBE	Alan White
Janet Eagland	Geoff Locke	Mark Winnington
Ray Easton	Robert Marshall	Mike Worthington
Brian Edwards	Geoffrey Martin	

Apologies for absence: Lee Bates, Dylis Cornes, Matthew Ellis, Phil Jones, Kathy Lamb, Mary Maxfield, David Nixon, Jeremy Oates, Neal Podmore, Robert Reade and Rex Roberts, OBE

PART ONE

50. County Councillor Rex Roberts OBE

The Chairman informed Members of Mr Robert's continuing absence from Council meetings due to ill health.

RESOLVED – That in light of Mr Rex Robert's continuing ill health, and for the purposes of section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, his continuing absence from Council meetings be authorised until 2 May 2013.

51. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 15 February 2013

RESOLVED – That, subject to paragraph no. 49 being amended to read as follows, the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 15 February 2013 be confirmed:

“Mrs Bayliss presented a petition from local residents seeking the introduction of traffic calming measure along Mill Lane and Forge Lane, Little Aston.”

52. Chairman's Correspondence

Former County Councillor Donald Mole

Members were informed of the death, on 5 February 2013, of former County Councillor Don Mole who represented the Leek North County Electoral Division.

Mr Mole was a Member of the County Council between 1980 and 1985 and again between 1989 and 2005. He was Chairman of the County Council from May 2001 until May 2003.

Several Members paid tribute to the contribution made by Mr Mole during the time he was a Member of the County Council.

LGIU C'Ilr Awards - Partnership Achievement of the Year

The Chairman informed Members that Philip Atkins, Leader of the County Council, along with Brian Edwards, Leader of South Staffordshire Council, and Roger Lawrence, Leader of Wolverhampton City Council, had been awarded the "Partnership Achievement of the Year" Award at the recent LGIU (Local Government Information Unit) Awards in recognition of their work in relation to the i54 project.

Members extended their congratulations to Mr Atkins and Mr Edwards on their success in winning the award.

Retiring Members

The Chairman reported that the following Members had indicated their intention not to seek re-election at the County Council elections in May 2013 and would thus be retiring from the Authority:

- Lee Bates – Watling South (Tamworth) 2009 - 2013
- Erica Bayliss – Lichfield Rural South (Lichfield) 1985 - 2013
- Henry Butter – Eccleshall (Stafford) 1988 - 2013
- Veronica Downes – Penkridge (South Staffordshire) 2005 - 2013
- Ray Easton – Brereton and Ravenhill (Cannock Chase) 2009 - 2013
- Matthew Ellis – Lichfield Rural East (Lichfield) 2005 - 2013
- Mark Heenan – Stafford Central (Stafford) 2009 - 2013
- Phil Jones – Hednesford and Rawnsley (Cannock Chase) 2009 - 2013
- Kathy Lamb – Burton Tower (East Staffordshire) 2009 - 2013
- Frank Lewis – Lichfield Rural West (Lichfield) 1977 - 2013
- Mike Maryon – Cheadle and Checkley (Staffordshire Moorlands) 2006 - 2013
- Mary Maxfield – Kidsgrove and Talke (Newcastle-under-Lyme) 2009 – 2013
- Neal Podmore – Leek South (Staffordshire Moorlands) 2012 - 2013
- Robert Reade – Wombourne (South Staffordshire) 2009 - 2013
- Rex Roberts – Brewood (South Staffordshire) 1970 - 2013
- John Wells – Watling North (Tamworth) 2009 - 2013

The Chairman, the political group leaders and Mr Parry thanked their fellow Members for the contribution they had made to the work of the Authority during their time in office.

Charity Spring Ball

The Chairman informed Members that he was to host a Charity Spring Ball in the Ingestre Suite at the County Showground, Stafford on Friday, 19 April 2013 at 7:00 pm. The Ball was in aid of a fund to offer support to those young people leaving care who wished to enter higher education and to disabled children who were gifted or talented in sport. Tickets for the Ball were available from the Civic Office

53. Statement of the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council presented a Statement outlining his recent work and an overview of decisions taken by the Cabinet (and Portfolio Holders) since the previous meeting of the Council.

Independent Futures

(Paragraph 1.2 of the Statement)

Several members spoke in support of the Independent Futures initiative which provided for the introduction of an assessment and brokerage service to improve the outcomes for disabled people of all ages within Staffordshire. Mr Worthington indicated that the proposals had received the support of the Safeguarding and Public Protection Select Committee

The Leader responded by indicating that the initiative, along with the Council's Strategy for Disabled People, showed how the Council was working to improve the lives of Staffordshire residents through innovation.

A Volunteering Strategy for Staffordshire

(Paragraph 2.1 of the Statement)

Mr Chapman informed the Council that he had the pleasure of being one of the judges for the Volunteer Staffordshire Awards 2013 which recognised the tireless work of volunteers in supporting the community. The Awards ceremony took place at St George's Park FA Centre in Burton-upon-Trent and Mr Chapman expressed his thanks to Mr Corfield and to the officers involved in organising the event.

Several Members commented on the invaluable contribution made by volunteers in helping to improve life for people across Staffordshire. Mrs Jebb also spoke about the need to improve the support offered by the County Council to volunteers through, for example, the provision of professional advice.

Mr Corfield responded by thanking Members for their comments. He also stressed the important and vital role played by volunteers in society.

2012/13 Quarter 3 Performance and Finance Report

(Paragraph 3.1 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Mr White, the Leader of the Council outlined a number of matters highlighted in the 2012/13 Quarter 3 Performance and Finance Report including:

- The development of the i54 site in South Staffordshire and Redhill Employment site in Stafford.
- The percentage of roads in Staffordshire which were gritted being higher than the national average.
- The development of the new Waste to Resources (W2R) plant at Four Ashes.
- New and innovative ways of working.
- Joint working with the Health Authority.
- Staffordshire having the lowest Council Tax of all Shire Authorities in England.
- The level of savings achieved by the Authority over the past five years.

Cabinet Member Delegated Decisions

(Paragraph 3.2 of the Statement)

Mr Morrison expressed his support for the decision to Close Steeple View Day Centre following a decline in the number of people using the facility. He also extended his thanks to the Cabinet Member for Adults Wellbeing for the consultation that had taken place prior to the Centre's closure and for the support given to the affected service users in finding alternative provision.

Mrs Heath stated that she welcomed the news that three of the Council's farms had recently been let on new business tenancies and she extended her best wishes to the new tenants.

Forward Plan

(Paragraph 3.3 of the Statement)

In response to a question from a Member, the Leader of the Council stated that there was no truth in the rumour that the County Council had plans to increase Council Tax by 8% following the elections in May. He added that any proposal to increase Council Tax above 2% would require a referendum and that, over the past four years there had been a reduction in the level of Council tax in real terms.

Wave 2 City Deals

(Paragraph 3.4 of the Statement)

Mr Francis welcomed the recent announcement that Staffordshire County Council, in partnership with Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership, had been successful in getting through to the next stage of the City Deal process launched by the government. The Leader of the Council thanked Mr Francis for his comments and indicated that the government was impressed with the ambition of the expression of interest for the *Powerhouse central* concept making Staffordshire the key European centre for research and manufacturing of advanced materials, including ceramics, metals and polymers, thriving alongside other businesses and growth sectors in the region.

i54

(Paragraph 3.5 of the Statement)

Mr Edwards welcomed the recent announcement of Jaguar Land Rover's plans to extend their manufacturing facility at i54 creating up to a further 700 jobs in addition to the proposed 750 announced in 2011. He also paid tribute to those Members and Officers from the County Council who had been involved in the negotiations with JLR which culminated in the company's decision to choose the i54 site for their new engine plant.

The Chairman and Mr Adams referred to the other initiatives promoted by the County Council aimed at retaining and attracting employment opportunities in Staffordshire such as the Small Business Loan Scheme and the investment in employment sites such as Redhill. Mr Adams added that it was the Council's aim to create 30,000 new jobs in the County over the next ten years. Mr Marshall referred to increase in house prices in some areas of the County and indicated that this showed that the area was becoming a "magnet" for skilled people.

RESOLVED – That the Statement of the Leader of the Council be received.

54. Questions

The Chairman reported that there were no Questions under Standing Order No 8 on this occasion.

55. Recommendations of the Council

(i) Treasury Management, Annual Investment and Minimum Revenue Provision Strategies 2013/14

Members were informed that the management of the County Council's cash flows and borrowing had a significant impact on the budget. The Cabinet, at their meeting on 16 January 2013, approved the proposed strategies for the 2013/14 financial year. Adoption of the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the adoption of the Minimum Revenue Provision policy were however, matters that were reserved for the Full Council to determine.

Mr P.E. Jones indicated that the Assets and Budget Select Committee had scrutinised this matter and were of the view that the strategies were soundly based.

RESOLVED – That, in accordance with the regulations:

(a) The Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) 2013/14 as described in paragraphs 35 to 85 and as detailed in Appendices 2, 3 and 5 of the report considered by the Cabinet (attached) be adopted.

(b) That the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy 2013/14 as summarised in paragraphs 125 to 127; and as set out in full at Appendix 9 to the report considered by the Cabinet (attached), be adopted.

(ii) Members' Allowance Scheme – Independent Remuneration Panel Report

Members were informed that the County Council was required to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel to provide advice and recommendations to the Council on its Members' Allowances Scheme. Any decisions on the nature and level of allowances were a matter for the full Council, but the Council must have regard to any recommendations submitted by the Independent Remuneration Panel before establishing or amending the Members' Allowances Scheme. The Independent Remuneration Panel's report of March 2013, including recommendations on the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2013/14 had been circulated to all Members and copies had been placed in the group rooms and the Members' library.

RESOLVED – (a) That the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel be approved

(b) That Members' Allowances be frozen for the 2013/14 Municipal Year at the 2008/09 rate (i.e. a basic allowance of £8,933).

(c) That the period of office for Ray Betteridge, Jane Landick, Gerald Griffin and Ian Starkie as members of the Independent Remuneration Panel be extended for a further period of 12 months to 31 March 2014.

(iii) Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Waste Local Plan 2010 – 2026

Members were informed that the County Council had worked jointly with Stoke-on-Trent City Council to prepare the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Waste Local Plan 2010 – 2026. The new policies in the Plan would guide the Councils in determining planning applications for the development of waste management facilities up to 2026. The Plan would replace the policies in the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Waste Local Plan 1998 – 2011 adopted in 2003. The Plan would also meet requirements to ensure compliance with the EU Waste Framework Directive. The Joint Waste Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on 20 January 2012 and was subject to examination by an independent Planning Inspector. Main modifications and minor changes (endorsed by the County Council Planning Committee in August 2012, approved by the City Council Cabinet in August 2012 and the County Council Cabinet in September 2012, and consulted on during October and November 2012) were submitted to the Planning Inspector in January 2013 for consideration alongside the submitted Plan. On 4 February 2013, the Councils received the Planning Inspector's report which concluded that with the main modifications proposed by the Councils, the Joint Waste Local Plan was sound, legally compliant and capable of adoption.

Mr Winnington informed the Council that, on 6 March 2013, a letter was received from solicitors acting for an individual who very actively participated in the examination process throughout. The letter alleged that the Plan was legally flawed as too much reliance had been placed on certain documents and proper consultation had not taken place and therefore it should be withdrawn, otherwise a challenge would be considered under s113 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. However the County Council's QC had advised that the allegations were completely without merit and that the adoption of the Plan should go ahead.

Mr Davis moved and Mr Huckfield seconded the following amendment:

“That consideration of paragraphs five and six of the report be deferred until the next meeting of the County Council to allow more time to consider the possible legal challenge.”

Mr P. Davies indicated that the Planning Committee had also considered the letter alleging that the Plan was flawed but were of the view that there was no reason to defer the adoption of the Plan.

The Monitoring Officer informed the Council that the issues raised in the letter were not new and had been dealt with during the examination into the Plan. He also indicated that it was not considered necessary to defer the adoption of the Plan to allow more time to consider the legal issues that had been raised.

Following a vote, the Chairman declared the amendment lost.

Mr Winnington extended his thanks to the Council's Commissioner for the Sustainable County (Mr I Benson) and his colleagues for their work in producing the Joint Waste Local Plan.

RESOLVED – That the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Waste Local Plan 2010 – 2026 be adopted with the main modifications and minor changes as recommended by the Inspector in accordance with section 23 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and made available in accordance with Regulations 26 and 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012.

56. Proposed Changes to the Constitution - Transfer of Public Health to the County Council and Establishment of the Health and Wellbeing Board

The Council considered a report of the Director of Democracy, Law and Transformation recommending changes to the Council's Constitution in respect of:-

- The transfer of public health to local government under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 (Sections 10 and 11 of the Constitution)
- The establishment of the Health and Wellbeing Board (Section 10 of the Constitution)

Mr Marshall informed Members that the transfer of public health to local government was a bid opportunity for the County Council to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Staffordshire.

RESOLVED – (a) That the proposed amendments to the relevant sections of the Council's Constitution (as set out in the report) be adopted.

(b) That the Constitution, as revised, be approved.

57. Report of the Chairman of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

In presenting the report, Mr Bloomer outlined some of the successes of the Fire and Rescue Authority over the past few years including the construction of ten new Community Fire Stations under PFI1 and the proposal to build a further 11 new stations under PFI2.

RESOLVED – That the Periodic Report of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority be received.

58. Report of the Chairman of the Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel (report to follow)

In presenting the report, Mr Chapman gave a brief overview of the role of the Panel. He also extended his thanks to John Tradewell, Julie Plant and Helen Phillips for the support they had provided to the Panel.

RESOLVED – That the Report of the Chairman of the Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel be received.

59. Petitions

Arriva Bus Service 7/7A

Mrs Eagland presented a petition from residents of Alrewas and the surrounding area seeking improvements to bus service 7/7A operated by Arriva.

Pedestrian Crossing on the A527

Mr Lawson presented a petition from residents of Biddulph and the surrounding area seeking an upgrade to the pedestrian crossing adjacent to the Biddulph Arms Public House on the A527.

Chairman