

Minutes of the County Council Meeting held on 13 March 2014

Present:

Attendance		
Ben Adams	Terry Finn	Ian Parry
George Adamson	John Francis	Sheree Peaple
Margaret Astle	Bob Fraser	Kath Perry
Charlotte Atkins	Michael Greatorex	Trish Rowlands
Philip Atkins	Sandra Hambleton	David Smith
Ann Beech	Gill Heath	Alison Spicer
Len Bloomer	Ian Hollinshead	Mark Sutton
Frank Chapman	Derrick Huckfield	Stephen Sweeney
Ron Clarke	Kevin Jackson	Simon Tagg
Maureen Compton	Keith James	John Taylor
Chris Cooke	Brian Jenkins	Martyn Tittley
Tim Corbett	Philip Jones	Diane Todd
Mike Davies	Mike Lawrence	Alan White
Peter Davies	Ian Lawson	Conor Wileman
Derek Davis, OBE	David Loades	David Williams
William Day	Robert Marshall	Susan Woodward
Mark Deaville	Shelagh McKiernan	Caroline Wood
Alan Dudson	Christine Mitchell	Mike Worthington
Janet Eagland	Geoff Morrison	
Brian Edwards	Mark Olszewski	

Apologies for absence: Carol Dean, Geoff Martin, Jeff Sheriff and Mark Winnington

PART ONE

33. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 February 2014

Mr Adamson requested the following amendments to Paragraph 28 of the minutes:

- The inclusion of reference to his motion being submitted on 1 February 2014 which was prior to the date upon which Mr Winnington had written to the Secretary of State to request release of the report.
- That all members of the Labour Group had left the Chamber in protest during consideration of the amendment to his motion.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the inclusion of the above-mentioned amendments requested by Mr Adamson, the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 13 February 2014 be confirmed.

34. Chairman's Correspondence

Long Service Award – Brian Edwards

The Chairman presented a Long Service Award to Mr Brian Edwards who had completed 24 years' service (i.e. six full terms of office) as a Member of the County Council. Mr Edwards was first elected to the County Council in May 1989 and had represented the Kinver County Electoral Division since that date.

35. 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. In introducing his Statement, Mr Atkins informed Members that, later that day, he along with the Leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Chief Executives of the County Council and the City Council, would be signing the City Deal which included plans to supply locally-produced, sustainable energy to major employers. It was anticipated that that the Deal would see more than £113m invested in the local economy and give rise to 20,000 new jobs over the next 10 years.

Infrastructure+

(Paragraph 1.1 of the Statement)

Mr Greatorex welcomed the recent announcement by Central Government of additional funding to local authorities to help tackle repairs to roads arising as a result of the damage caused by the recent adverse weather conditions.

Mr Jenkins sought an assurance that any "windfall" arising from the contract with Amey would be reinvested on repairing Staffordshire's roads. He also enquired about the implications of the contract on staff. In response, Mr Tagg indicated that the highways maintenance teams were carrying out repairs to approximately 300 potholes per week and he encourage local members to report any highway defects so that remedial action could be taken. He also indicated that staff had been consulted and had been involved in shaping the contract with Amey.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Atkins indicated that the County Council spent approximately £25m per annum on highway maintenance and, over the last four years, had invested an additional £50m on Staffordshire's roads. He confirmed that savings arising from the contract with Amey would be reinvested in County Council services

Centralisation of County Archive Service and William Salt Library Collections

(Paragraph 1.3 of the Statement)

Several Members spoke in support of the proposal to extend Staffordshire Record Office to enable the two record offices at Stafford and Lichfield as well as the William Salt Library collection to be brought together onto one site. In response, Mr Atkins indicated that the proposals would lead to an improvement in the quality of service offered and would ensure that the County's historic records were correctly conserved.

Approval of Revised Statement of Community Involvement when dealing with Planning Applications and Producing our Minerals and Waste Local Plans
(Paragraph 1.4 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Mr Worthington, Mr Atkins indicated that Staffordshire supplied around 60% of the West Midland region's sand and gravel requirements and that the Statement of Community Involvement would ensure that, for any future applications for mineral extraction, appropriate consultation took place with the communities which would be affected.

Supporting People Review
(Paragraph 2.1 of the Statement)

Several members paid tribute to the Chairman and Members of the Corporate Review Committee for the robust manner in which they had dealt with the recent call-in of the Cabinet's decision on the "Supporting People Review". They also thanked Mr White for the assurances he had given and the concessions he had made.

In response, Mr White thanked Members for their constructive comments during consideration of the call-in.

Mid-Staffordshire NHS Trust
(Paragraph 3.5 of the Statement)

Mr Adamson welcomed the proposals to transfer Cannock Hospital to the Royal Wolverhampton Hospitals NHS Trust as this would safeguard the future of the hospital. He also sought an assurance from the Leader of the Council that the County Council would engage fully with the Trust.

Mrs Rowlands referred to the issues which still needed to be addressed in relation to the future of a number of services provided at Stafford Hospital including accident and emergency, critical care, paediatrics, and maternity and hoped that these matters would be resolved quickly.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Atkins assured Members that the County Council was working hard to ensure that the health economy in Staffordshire was fit for purpose.

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

36. Notices of Motion

Mr White moved, and Ms Atkins seconded, the following motion:

"That this Council:

- (a) acknowledges the public opinion of the petition around the proposals to modernise day opportunities for people with learning disabilities and notes the decision made at Cabinet on the 15 January to develop tailored and flexible personal care to support people with learning disabilities to live fulfilled and

independent lives through smaller specialist centres and community based support; and

- (b) calls on the Cabinet to ensure, during the transition period for the modernisation of day opportunities for people with learning disabilities, that regular six monthly reports are submitted to the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee for members to monitor outcomes for this vulnerable client group including all those who presently use Staffordshire County Council run day centres.”

Mr White indicated that protecting and supporting vulnerable people was the County Council’s top priority and that, for far too long the Council had tried to fit people into the services available rather than tailoring services to an individual’s needs. He also expressed his thanks to Members for the valuable contribution they had made during consideration of the call-in of the Cabinet’s decision in respect of the proposals to modernise day opportunities for people with learning disabilities.

Ms Akins indicated that there was a need for the County Council to closely monitor the impact of the proposals and that there was still a number of issues which needed to be resolved including transport (particularly in rural areas), ensuring that service provision was sustainable, monitoring the quality of services, and ensuring the availability of respite care.

Following a debate and a vote, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

RESOLVED – That this Council:

- (a) acknowledges the public opinion of the petition around the proposals to modernise day opportunities for people with learning disabilities and notes the decision made at Cabinet on the 15 January to develop tailored and flexible personal care to support people with learning disabilities to live fulfilled and independent lives through smaller specialist centres and community based support; and
- (b) calls on the Cabinet to ensure, during the transition period for the modernisation of day opportunities for people with learning disabilities, that regular six monthly reports are submitted to the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee for members to monitor outcomes for this vulnerable client group including all those who presently use Staffordshire County Council run day centres.

37. Consideration of the Petition in Respect of Youth Services

Members were informed that the County Council’s Petitions Policy stated that a petition that included more than 5,000 signatures automatically prompted a debate at the next available Full Council meeting.

A paper petition totalling 15,691 valid signatures was received on 3 March 2014. The County Council was also in receipt of two e-petitions in respect of the same issue with a total number of signatures of 627. (The overall number of valid signatures was therefore 16,318).

The petition was on the following grounds:

We the undersigned petition Staffordshire County Council to reconsider and reverse its proposal to remove its Staffordshire Youth Service from the delivery of youth provision and of the closing of youth centres in Staffordshire.

The County Council proposes to save £4.5 million by ceasing to directly deliver youth services. This would have a devastating effect on young people, parents, carers, communities in which young people live, study, volunteer and work in, public and voluntary organisations who work in partnership with the Staffordshire Youth Service.

Staffordshire Youth Workers are skilled, professional and experienced people who care about young people and make a difference to people's lives. What the County Council are proposing will destroy a much needed service.

Jenni Crosby, as spokesperson for the petitioners, outlined the possible implications of the proposed changes in youth provision; the need for proper scrutiny of the proposals and for any issues which were identified to be addressed. Danny, a service user, then spoke about the role of youth workers and centres and outlined the positive impact the Youth Service had had on his life.

In responding to the petition, Mr Sutton explained that 75% of young people did not use youth services provided by the County Council and that the current provision was no longer affordable and did not provide value for money. He explained that, under the new proposals, resources would be allocated on a district by district basis according to local need rather than one flat rate for all districts. Furthermore, the aim of the proposals was for the County Council to move away from directly supported youth clubs and to better support the voluntary/community sector to provide the right activities, support and advice for young people.

Members noted that, given the timing of the petition, no final decision had yet been taken on Youth Services. That decision would be taken at Cabinet on 19 March 2014. The debate on the petition provided an opportunity to inform that decision, alongside the impact assessment and wider consultation exercise that would be considered by Cabinet.

Mr Deaville moved and Mr Greatorex seconded the following motion:

“That Council instructs the Cabinet to fully take account of the engagement process, all the replies to the consultation, the petitions and any views or recommendations of the Safer and Stronger Select Committee on March 17 before taking a decision on Achieving Excellence for Young People at their meeting on March 19.”

During the debate a range of issues were raised including:

- Concern that there was an assumption that the voluntary sector would “mop-up” the youth provision no longer directly provided by the County Council when there was no evidence to show that this would be the case.
- The expertise of youth workers and how this may be lost if the proposals were implemented.

- Difficulty in recruiting/retaining volunteers.
- Support for the Youth Parliament and Youth Action Council.
- Potential impact of the proposals on partner organisations such as the Police
- The excellent youth services already provided by the voluntary sector and by churches/religious groups.
- The adequacy of the funding to be provided to support young people in the future.

In responding to the debate, Mr Adams indicated that the County Council listened to the views of young people and, by way of example, explained that the Young Persons Travel Card had been introduced as a direct result of representations made by members of the Youth Action Council. He also confirmed that the County Council would continue to support the Youth Parliament and Youth Action Council and would also retain targeted youth support. Mr Marshall also referred to the excellent training for volunteers provided by SCVYS.

Following a vote, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

RESOLVED – (a) That the petition in respect of the Youth Service be received.

(b) That Cabinet be instructed to fully take account of the engagement process, all the replies to the consultation, the petitions and any views or recommendations of the Safer and Stronger Select Committee on March 17 before taking a decision on Achieving Excellence for Young People at their meeting on March 19.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting until 2:45 pm

Present at 2:45 pm

Ben Adams	Michael Greatorex	Ian Parry
George Adamson	Sandra Hambleton	Sheree Peaple
Margaret Astle	Gill Heath	Trish Rowlands
Charlotte Atkins	Ian Hollinshead	David Smith
Ann Beech	Derrick Huckfield	Mark Sutton
Len Bloomer	Kevin Jackson	Stephen Sweeney
Frank Chapman	Keith James	Simon Tagg
Ron Clarke	Brian Jenkins	John Taylor
Maureen Compton	Philip Jones	Martyn Tittley
Mike Davies	Mike Lawrence	Diane Todd
Peter Davies	Ian Lawson (Chairman)	Alan White
Derek Davis, OBE	David Loades	Conor Wileman
Mark Deaville	Robert Marshall	David Williams
Janet Eagland	Shelagh McKiernan	Susan Woodward
Terry Finn	Christine Mitchell	Caroline Wood
John Francis	Geoff Morrison	Mike Worthington
Bob Fraser	Mark Olszewski	

38. Annual Report on the Staffordshire Local Community Fund 2013

Members welcomed the report; expressed their thanks to those members of staff involved in administering the fund; gave examples of how the fund had been used to support their local communities; and also highlighted how such monies were often able to pump-prime grants from other funding streams.

RESOLVED – That the annual report on the Staffordshire Local Community Fund 2013 be received.

39. Recommendations to Council

Treasury Management, Annual Investment and Minimum Revenue Provision Strategies 2014/15

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 15 January 2014, approved the proposed strategies for the 2014/15 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.

RESOLVED – That, in accordance with the regulations:

(a) The Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) 2014/15 be adopted.

(b) That the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy 2014/15 be adopted.

Members' Allowances 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 2014, including recommendations on the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2014/15, 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 the period of office for Ray Betteridge and Jane Landick, members of the Independent Remuneration Panel, be extended for a further period of 12 months to 31 March 2015.

(c) That a letter of thanks be sent to Ian Starkie and Gerald Griffin following their retirement from the Panel on 31 March 2014, in recognition of their nine years' service as members of the Panel, of which Ian Starkie served for two years as Chairman.

40. Report of the Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel

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

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

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

42. Questions

Ms S. Woodward asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

At the beginning of the year, only 2.5% of the Staffordshire Local Crisis Support Scheme funds had been spent i.e. approximately £35,000 from an allocation of £1.4 million. Can the Cabinet Member tell me what the current position is?

Reply

The Staffordshire Local Crisis Support Scheme fund is a two year time limited fund of £1,475,587.00 per year running from 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2015. This fund is used in two distinct ways:

- Direct Crisis Support
- Crisis Prevention

The Direct Crisis Support helps people with food, services and/or goods who experience an unusual emergency, disaster, unforeseen circumstance or a pressing need, or if someone is vulnerable but wants to remain living independently in their community. Food and fuel are provided within 12 hours of approval of application and white goods are provided within 3 days. To date we have spent £52,637 on direct crisis support and this has supported over 500 people.

Supplementary Question

Given that, by my calculation, there is still only around 3.5% of this fund that has been spent and considering that there is still nearly funding of £1m remaining, will you consider giving the unspent funding as a donation to the food banks that are in operation across the county?

Reply

We are not just working on providing direct assistance. So far, we have allocated £498,700 on crisis prevention schemes. We are trying to spend as much as we can

on preventing people from getting into crisis situations rather than sorting out the crisis once it has happened.

Ms M. Compton asked the following question of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Transformation whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

In the original plans for Staffordshire Place 1 and 2, it was decided that the ground floor would be used for shops, cafes or restaurants. After two years, why are these spaces still empty?

Reply

Staffordshire Place achieved Practical Completion on 12th September 2011. Marketing of the retail units had commenced in April of that year by GVA Grimley who were appointed as the County Council's agents. By Practical Completion, Head of Terms for a lease had been agreed with two tenants but the leases had not yet been signed. A third unit was also subject to serious interest and was likely to progress to Heads of terms.

Shortly after the County Council's occupation of Staffordshire Place, a series of cladding failures occurred which called for a thorough review and rectification of the design and installation faults. The Developer (Stoford) and Contractor (Volker Fitzpatrick) then undertook the complete strip down and reinstatement of the façade. In addition they progressed the rectification of a large number of other defects which affected the retail units. Due to the extent of the repair works the retail units were unlettable and as such the leases were not completed. At the time the work was undertaken a general loss of retail confidence was felt throughout the UK which combined to drive the would-be tenants to withdraw from the potential leases.

The rectification works were finally completed on 18th December 2013 which has now enabled the remarketing of the units.

GVA Grimley have been re-commissioned and marketing will commence.

Compensation for the loss of rental income has been included within the settlement agreement which was made with the Developer and Contractor.

Supplementary Question

How can marketing begin again when just last week rain water was getting inside Staffordshire Place and the damp course is being rectified?

Reply

It is frustrating that we haven't been able to get retailers into the ground floor space at Staffordshire Place but it will happen. The remedial work will be completed shortly and, as I indicated, marketing of the retail units is proceeding.

Mr P. Davies asked the following question of the Leader of the Council whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

As a result of the changes that have taken place recently at East Staffordshire Borough Council, does the Leader of Staffordshire County Council envisage any positive improvements in relations with the new administration at East Staffordshire, and if so, how?

Reply

I look forward to working with Julian Mott, the new Leader of ESBC, and have written inviting him to attend the Staffordshire Partnership Board meetings and Staffordshire Hundred events, which the previous Leader of ESBC, Richard Grosvenor, regularly attended. Until then I have to wait and see what changes will come about.

Supplementary Question

I, like the Leader, would like to see relations between East Staffordshire Borough Council and the County Council improve. They have been somewhat strained over the years and I look forward that with the change in administration those relations will improve.

Reply

We will work with anybody, whatever their political party and I look forward to working with the Borough Council and achieving fruitful things together.

Mr G. Adamson asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Is the Cabinet Member satisfied with the reply from the Secretary of State for Transport to his letter dated 3rd February 2014 concerning HS2 Phase One Major Projects Authority Assessment?

Reply

As Mr Adamson will be aware, we debated this matter at Full Council. I am satisfied that the Secretary of State for Transport took the time to respond to my letter and give me the key arguments for the decision he took. A copy of this response has been circulated to members and I would urge them to read it, however my concern is to focus on the matter at hand – pushing for the mitigation and compensation which residents in Staffordshire deserve. Fighting yesterday's battles hardly seems fitting when there are issues to be addressed here and now.

Supplementary Question

You appear to have given up the fight already despite the fact that the route of HS2 has not yet been confirmed. There is an awful lot to fight for and the report you appear to have given up on is vitally important; residents in Staffordshire should have the chance to see it. Do you now wish you had been more assertive in seeking release of the document?

Reply

The Secretary of State, in his reply, explains why he has not released the document. He exercised his right of veto on the advice of the Cabinet. We should be concentrating on fighting the battle on behalf of our communities, concentrating on securing compensation and mitigation for our residents.

Ms M. Compton asked the following question of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Transformation whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Could we please have a definitive answer as to whether this Council intends to sell the Shire Hall?

Reply

I would reiterate my response from a previous full Council meeting that the County Council has not made any decision at this time to sell Shire Hall. We are simply considering it in the wider context of Stafford's development. Therefore discussion at this stage is premature.

Supplementary Question

Can you confirm that you are not going to sell the Shire Hall please? I'm not sure how the Shire Hall will fit into the context of Stafford's development either?

Reply

There are a number of interesting and historic buildings in the centre of Stafford which are empty at the moment. It does leave an interesting opportunity for the town centre, to make it more vibrant, build on its economy, and attract more visitors for example. We don't make enough of our town centre and its historical importance. We don't just want to sell the Shire Hall – we want it to remain the dignified building we currently enjoy. We want to be part of designing and developing its future. It is an asset that is currently underutilised and we could do something more with it along with the rest of the buildings in central Stafford.

Chairman