

Chair - Councillor J Hood

Present (for all or part of the meeting):-

Councillors:

C A Baron	A D Hobbs
R J Barron	L Nixon
A R G Brown	R M Sutherland
A G Cooper	M J Winnington
A P Edgeller	

Cabinet Member - Councillor J M Pert - Community and Health Portfolio

Cabinet Member - Councillor J K Price - Environment Portfolio

Also present:- Councillors F Beatty (Economic Development and Planning Portfolio), R P Cooke, B M Cross, A T A Godfrey, E G R Jones, R Kenney, M Phillips, A Nixon, A N Pearce, G P K Pardesi and R M Smith (Resources Portfolio).

County Councillor A White	-	Leader of Staffordshire County Council
Dr R Harling	-	Staffordshire County Council Director of Health and Care

Officers in attendance:-

Mr T Clegg	-	Chief Executive
Mr R Simpson	-	Head of Operations
Mrs K Tierney	-	Head of Development
Mrs E Fullagar	-	Chief Accountant
Dr T Redpath	-	Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager
Mrs A Nevin	-	Health and Housing Manager
Mrs H Smith	-	Lead Officer Housing Options
Mr A Yendole	-	Planning Policy Manager
Mr J Dean	-	Democratic Services Officer
Mr A Bailey	-	Scrutiny Officer

CWB41 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 3 March 2020 were submitted and signed.

CWB42 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor C V Trowbridge (Leisure Portfolio).

CWB43 Councillor Session

Councillor G P K Pardesi has submitted the following item under Paragraph 2.7 (c)(i) of the Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules:-

“To seek further clarification on behalf of residents to Paragraph 3.2 (Stafford Town centre) of the Public Space Protection Orders report (Cabinet - June 11th 2020).”

Following Councillor G P K Pardesi’s introduction to the Councillor Session item, Councillor J M Pert - Community and Health Portfolio responded by making the following points:-

- The related Cabinet Decision of 11 June 2020 had not been Called-in
- An extensive consultation exercise had been undertaken with 386 contacts made that engaged with local people
- The consultation was not an affront to civil liberties and not concerned with cost saving
- The responses received amounted to 99 pages of analysis
- 133 responses favoured motor vehicles
- There had been significant investment from Staffordshire County Council
- It was important that cycle ways were safe for the public to use
- Would be happy to further discuss this matter with Councillor G P K Pardesi outside of the meeting

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the Councillor Session Item be noted.

CWB44 Presentation – Managing Local Covid-19 Outbreaks

Members received a presentation by the Leader of Staffordshire County Council and the Director of Health and Care surrounding the epidemiology of the Covid-19 pandemic as it applied to each Borough, which aimed to raise awareness and provide reassurance to elected Members together with an explanation of the limitations of what could be done, given the information available.

During the presentation, reference was made to the following:-

- Covid-19 Staffordshire Local Outbreak Control Plan - Week Commencing 7 September 2020
- Context

- Surveillance and Identification of Outbreaks
- Response and Management of Outbreaks
- Governance and Communications
- National Contain Framework
- Local Alert Levels - For Use Within the Community
- Current Situation
- Local Epidemiology and Significant Incidents
- Questions

The Committee discussed the following aspects of the presentation with the Leader of Staffordshire County Council and the Director of Health and Care:-

- Concern over compliance and trends
- How information was disseminated to Ward Members
- The need for out-of-hours reporting
- Communications between neighbouring authorities
- The need for the compulsory wearing of face masks
- Managing the social distancing of young adults
- The expectations that death rates from Cov-19 would again increase
- How social distancing could be policed
- The penalties for not wearing a face mask and the need to not over use exemptions

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee:-

- (i) County Councillor A White and Dr R Harling be thanked for their informative presentation;
- (ii) the presentation be noted.

CWB45 **Members' Item**

Councillor L Nixon had submitted the following item under Paragraph 2.8 of the Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules:-

“Public Health and Prevention data supports the fact that Stafford & Surrounds remains to have the highest number and rate of suicides in the county. As a community what should we be doing about it? What can Stafford Borough and County Council do to prevent such trauma?”

Councillor J M Pert - Community and Health Portfolio responded by reading the following statement:-

“Public Health and Prevention data supports the fact that Stafford & Surrounds remains to have the highest number and rate of suicides in the county. As a community what should we be doing about it? What can Stafford Borough and County Council do to prevent such trauma?”

Staffordshire County Council

Suicide is a major public health issue. Each death from suicide is an individual tragedy and a loss to society. In Staffordshire suicides make up around 1% of all deaths and in 2019 there were 100 deaths recorded as suicides across the county. Staffordshire's suicide rate has remained consistent with that of the West Midlands and England and comparatively, the rate across the Stafford & Surrounds district is currently higher than elsewhere in the county. However, it is important to recognise that due to the relatively small number of people that do take their own lives, the statistical difference is slight, and regardless of rates being high or low, suicide prevention needs to be a priority for every local authority area.

In order to take a preventative approach towards suicide and self harm across the Stafford & Surrounds District, it is vital that we work together in partnership across the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors. Staffordshire County Council Public Health Team has developed a Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent Suicide Prevention Action plan and in order to take a local approach, Stafford Borough Council will continue to work with us in the ongoing development of local plans and interventions, including the following:

- Accessing any possibly training for staff in order to raise awareness, knowledge, skills and confidence to manage their own mental wellbeing as well as that of the communities they serve
- Identifying any known 'high risk' locations across the Borough, and work with partners to make them as safe as possible, ideally at the design and building stage of any new developments
- Supporting any local or national mental health and suicide prevention related campaigns such as World Suicide Prevention Day on 10th Sept
- Participating in the Suicide Prevention Real Time Surveillance Task and Finish Group, for the purpose of bringing a district perspective to those discussions
- Inclusion of mental health and wellbeing considerations for 'upstreaming' of suicide prevention, for both council employees and Stafford Borough residents in all policy making, through various processes

Stafford Borough Council Response

One of the Boroughs priorities, through the Community Wellbeing Partnership, is mental health and as part of our preventative agenda we commission ReSolv who go into schools to do sessions around mental health and wellbeing. We also provide information, advice and signposting for mental health and wellbeing on our schools website, which includes self-harm.

In terms of adults, if we have any cases referred to us that involve adults threatening to self-harm or take their own lives, these are referred to the vulnerabilities HUB and then onto mental health.

In terms of training for staff the Borough are already looking to deliver mental health awareness training, which will include reference to suicide. Due to lockdown we are looking at alternative delivery mechanisms for this and are likely to think about e-learning for staff and maybe remote interactive training for managers.

Elected Members have received an awareness session from The Samaritans, who in Stafford play an invaluable role working with some people who may feel suicidal.”

The Committee discussed then following aspects of the Members’ Item:-

- Pleased that there were positive actions proposed
- Mental health was very high on both the Borough and County Council’s Agendas
- Railway safety was essential in the prevention of suicide
- Action had been taken to prevent suicides at Waterfront Car Park
- There was a need for all agencies to work together to in order prevent suicide hotspots
- The concern of the effects of further lockdown restrictions on mental health

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the Members’ Item be noted.

CWB46 **Members Item**

Councillor A D Hobbs had submitted the following item under Paragraph 2.8 of the Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules:-

“During this time of Coronavirus where physical and mental health needs to be resilient, is it the best time to be limiting accessibility to Cannock Chase?

Cannock Chase belongs to the people, we need free access to it for our physical and mental health.

If you're on a low income, or indeed, have lost your employment, you could park for free and walk and play with your children for hours in this designated area of outstanding natural beauty. Charges for parking and areas being cut off for vehicles, which is being introduced extensively affects the poorest and most disadvantaged in our society.

It is an amazing place for adults and children to visit as they have done for generations.

It has been abused in some areas during the lockdown period, and some restrictions are required, but the parking restrictions that are being imposed are undoubtedly going to have an adverse affect on people's physical and mental health, especially during this time of coronavirus. It will certainly impact the elderly and disabled who like to park and enjoy it from their cars.

In my opinion the parking restrictions that are being implemented are like cracking a nut with a sledgehammer.

I have heard that a consultation were approximately 200-300 people were consulted has been carried out, given that Staffordshire is heading towards a million in population, this doesn't seem very far reaching.

Cannock Chase does need to be managed and looked after, of course, maybe by volunteers, as is done in other areas, but it shouldn't be inaccessible to the people of Staffordshire, It's far too important a resource for that.”

Following Councillor A D Hobbs' introduction to the Members item, Councillor F Beatty - Economic Development and Planning Portfolio responded by making the following points:-

- The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee and the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation Partnership are separate organisations
- The Parking Document referred to in the Members' Item was produced by the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation Partnership
- Cannock Chase was awarded Area of Outstanding Natural beauty status in 1958
- It has also been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Area of Conservation, the highest level of protection
- The area was available for all, but there was a huge level of demand
- There was intense pressure on the ecosystem due to the density of visitors
- Potential damage would reduce the quality of the visitor experience
- Many of the present pull-ins were in a poor condition
- Committees managed the land alongside the land owners
- Referred to visitor surveys and evidence base
- 8,000 people visited the consultation site and 130 had given feedback on proposals from the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation Partnership
- A 10 year plan had been produced
- There was improved signage in order to raise awareness of the potential damage to the area

- Based on future housing development there is anticipated to be £7.8m new investment in the area over the coming years
- Proposals would mean a 9% increase in paid car parks in the area
- There were future plans to take Members on a tour of Cannock Chase

The Committee discussed the following aspects of the Members' Item:-

- Concern that local people did not know what was happening in the area
- Local residents were concerned over the increase of paid car parks
- It was important to protect the ecology of Cannock Chase and reduce anti-social behaviour in the area
- Money raised by car parking charges was being ploughed back into Cannock Chase
- The damage caused by excess visitors to Cannock Chase was not sustainable

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the Members' Item be noted.

CWB47 Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee

Considered the report of Councillor A P Edgeller on matters considered by the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee at their previous meetings held on 8 June, 6 July and 10 August 2020.

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the report be noted.

CWB48 Stafford Borough Council's Housing Allocations Policy

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Development that presented Stafford Borough Council's new Housing Allocation Policy to Members.

The Health and Housing Manager and the Lead Officer Housing Options presented to the Committee an overview of Stafford Borough Housing Allocations Policy which covered the following areas:-

- Legal Requirements
- Process and Procedure in Stafford
- Aims of the Allocation policy
- Nomination Ready
- Priority Banding
- Band A - Very Urgent Need to Move

- Band B - Urgent Need to Move
- Band C - Housing Need to Move
- Band D - No Housing Need

Following the presentation, the Committee congratulated the Housing Options Team on the exceptional work undertaken.

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the Policy be noted.

CWB49 **COVID19 Pandemic Recovery Planning**

The Committee considered a report by the Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager concerning the Council's approach to local Community Recovery and Reform, from the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Borough Council had worked in partnership with stakeholders and communities to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and is now planning the longer term recovery of the Borough.

As set out in the report to Resources Scrutiny on 20 August 2020, an overarching analysis was being undertaken to assess the impact of the pandemic on the Borough to inform the future priorities and plans. This piece of work would be supported by four inter-related work streams – Economic, Community, Financial and Organisational Recovery.

In July 2020 the Council's Community Safety and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-2023 (which was developed by stakeholders within the Community Wellbeing Partnership) was adopted. This strategy would be reviewed by the partnership to identify whether it needs to be amended in light of the pandemic.

Following the introduction, the Committee discussed the following aspects of the report:-

- Congratulations to all staff at the Council by the way it had dealt with the challenges faced by COVID-19
- The need move towards economic recovery
- Gratitude to the voluntary sector
- The need to recognise volunteers in the Community Awards

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the report, as set out, be noted and that recovery and reform be integrated into the work programme of Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

CWB50 Community Portfolio – Final Accounts 2019/2020

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Finance in relation to the Final Accounts position for the Community, Environment and Leisure Portfolios for the financial year ended 31 March 2020.

The Committee were informed that the 2019/2020 final accounts for the Portfolios revenue budget showed that the net spending in that year was £7.657 million compared with a budget of £7.827 million, a variation of (£0.170 million). The 2019/2020 final accounts for the Portfolios capital budget showed that net spending in that year was £2.833 million compared with a budget of £4.755 million, a variation of (£1.922 million).

The Committee discussed the level of expenditure for the Private Sector Housing (Standards) with the Chief Accountant.

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the Final Accounts position for the year ended 31 March 2020 be noted.

CWB51 Performance Reporting 2019-20

The Committee considered the performance and financial management details for those areas within the remit of the Committee for the quarter 1 period up to 30 June 2020. During quarter 1, members of staff from across the authority provided a huge amount of support for the Community HUB in response to Covid-19 and the committee noted the good work that had been undertaken to support our most vulnerable residents.

The Committee discussed the following aspects of the report:-

- LI16 - % of homeless cases closed through prevention
- LI17 - % of homeless cases closed through relief
- LI18 - No of Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs) completed
- LI9 - KGS of residual household waste collected per household
- 2.7.2 - Ensure sufficient, well managed provision of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation
- Additional Crematorium Income

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee, the performance and financial management data relating to areas of activity within this Committee's remit be noted.

CWB52 Work Programme – Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Considered the report of the Head of Law and Administration, which presented the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for forthcoming meetings up to March 2021.

RESOLVED:- that in exercise of the powers delegated to the Committee,
the Work Programme be noted.

CHAIR