

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Minutes

MONDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2021

PRESENT: Councillor D Shaw (Chair)

Councillors J Aberley, G Bentley, G Heath, I Herdman, K Hoptroff, B A Hughes, B Johnson, J T Jones, K Martin, T Riley, P Roberts, L Swindlehurst, P Taylor, R Ward, P Wood and N Yates.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor C J S Atkins, B Cawley, M Gledhill, S Coleman, T Holmes, M Bowen, M A Deaville, K J Jackson, J Salt, A Hart, P Routledge, S Scalise, I Plant, E Fallows, L Page, J Porter and L A Malyon.

25 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS, IF ANY.

As part of the opening comments for the meeting, the Chair advised members that the Council's Climate Change Action Plan would be presented to the next meeting of the Panel, prior to it being considered by Cabinet for approval.

There were no substitute members for this meeting.

26 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.

DECIDED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on the 23rd November 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

27 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS:

Agenda No.	Member Declaring Interest	Nature of Interest
Agenda Item 8 – Call-in of the Delegated Decision - Discretionary Disabled Facilities Funding for a Project at South Moorlands Leisure Centre.	Cllr P. Routledge	Other – Daughter is a volunteer at the Leisure Centre
	Cllr D. Shaw	Other – The group he represents in Werrington has benefited from a disabled facilities grant.
Agenda Item 6 - Local Policing Team Annual Update	Cllr J. Porter	Other – Member of the Staffordshire Moorlands Safer Neighbourhood

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28 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, IF ANY.

1. Question received from Councillor Yates:

“Having considered The Climate Change Action Plan current version at the recent working group session and in anticipation of the full debate at the next Scrutiny on the final version of The Climate Change Action Plan, could The Portfolio Holder comment now on whether the final version will include additional information to ensure the timely, costed, and resourced delivery of the action plan, to ensure our target of achieving a Carbon Neutral district by 2030 will be achieved?”

Response from Councillor Porter – Portfolio Holder for Climate Change & Biodiversity:

The version of the Climate Change Action Plan presented to the working group in January represented work in progress. As explained at the working group the action plan will be in two parts. Part one is focused on the Council’s own CO2 emissions, part two is focused on the wider CO2 emissions of Staffordshire Moorlands. The intention is to have part one ready in detail for discussion at Scrutiny prior to its adoption and implementation from April 2021. Currently further work is being undertaken on part one to verify the baseline data in the plan, to identify budget and resource implications and to add more target date detail where I can. It should be noted however that the plan is dynamic with further actions, costing and target setting to be included as options are investigated.

The intention with part two of the plan is to continue its development through the working group. The aim is to have this element of the work progressed sufficiently by the summer to undertake community engagement, to then finalise that part of the plan and produce a more publicly accessible version of the whole document (part one and two) which I’ve described as the Carbon Neutrality Charter in time for the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP26 in November 2021.

While I don’t anticipate part two of the plan being completed until the autumn a number of actions which the Council is taking have already been identified and others suggested for development. The Council will continue to progress these actions and for the time being until part two of the plan is finalised we will list these actions and associated targets as an Appendix to part one of the plan.

The Portfolio Holder was thanked for his comprehensive response, however Councillor Yates felt that it had taken too long to produce the action plan, in light of the deadline for the Staffordshire Moorlands to be carbon neutral by 2030. He also requested that any orchard initiatives were discussed with the Climate Change Working Group. Councillor Porter explained that the plans couldn’t be rushed, great progress was being made and that the Panel would have the opportunity to scrutinise part 1 of the action plan at the next meeting. In terms of the orchards, they had recently been announced and he had attended the Parish Assembly and meetings of parish and town councils. He intended to work with Biddulph Town Council to identify the correct sites in the area and gave assurance that the working group would be kept updated.

29 LOCAL POLICING TEAM ANNUAL UPDATE - CHIEF INSPECTOR MARK THORLEY.

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The Panel considered a briefing note which set out details of operational policing in the area for the last 12 months. Chief Inspector Thorley, advised members that the three national lockdowns had led to many changes in the demand generated for the Moorlands Neighbourhood Policing Team. The majority of residents had adhered to the restrictions, and given the impact of the virus on staffing levels, a good quality policing service had been provided.

Last year, there had been a 15% reduction in recorded crime. This year, he was pleased to report further crime reductions which were detailed in the briefing note. Whilst some of the reductions in crime were due to the hard work of his team, some were also a direct consequence of the impact Coronavirus had on our community.

Members congratulated the Policing Team for their continued dedication and hard work during the pandemic. The following questions and queries were raised: -

Mental Health – Staff had access to a welfare support network and should any potential issues be identified these would be referred to supervisors and support was provided.

Implementation of changes to regulations – The Legal Team responded to rapid changes in legislation and provided guidance for officers. Staff also attended daily briefings with supervisors.

Non-molestation orders and domestic violence – The Panel was advised that domestic abuse could have decreased due to the closure of pubs and drugs had become more difficult to obtain. A councillor had concerns about a person being at risk of violence and the cost of a non-molestation order preventing an order being put in place. The processes/actions taken by the Police in these circumstances were explained and costs could be involved should a solicitor be required. A multi-agency meeting was held regularly at which reports of repeat incidents were discussed.

Discussion took place around areas prone to drug dealing, problems associated with mass tourism in the rural areas of the Moorlands and response times of officers travelling from Hanley. Officers hadn't been advised when they would receive their Covid-19 vaccination.

Councillor Bentley described an incident of burglary from a van which involved CCTV footage and requested an update which would be discussed outside of the meeting.

The Chair thanked Chief Inspector Thorley for his attendance at the meeting.

DECIDED: That the update be received.

30

PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER - ALCOHOL EXCLUSION ZONES

David Smith – Principal Officer (Communities and Partnerships), introduced a report which set out measures to improve community safety by restricting on-street drinking in Biddulph, Cheadle and Leek.

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The two main tests which had to be met for the introduction of such an order were highlighted: -

- Behaviour which had caused or may cause a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality, and
- were likely to be of a continued or persistent nature and were therefore unreasonable.

The possibility of recreation grounds being included in the order was mentioned and it was confirmed that this had been considered, areas had been largely selected in consultation with the Police and there had to be a persistent problem for an area to be restricted.

In response to a query around outside bars at festivals, it was explained that there were a number of exemptions to the order, such as licenced pubs.

DECIDED:

The Panel recommended that: -

- 1) Cabinet agreed to carry out the necessary consultation, publication and notification in relation to the draft Order appended to the report.
- 2) Cabinet subsequently approved the draft Order by Delegated Decision unless the responses from the consultation necessitate material changes to the draft Order.

31

CALL-IN OF THE DELEGATED DECISION - PROPOSAL FOR USE OF DISCRETIONARY DISABLED FACILITIES FUNDING FOR A COMMUNITY PROJECT AT THE SOUTH MOORLANDS LEISURE CENTRE, CHEADLE (7:10 P.M)

The Portfolio Holder had considered a report which sought approval for the use of discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding for a community project at the South Moorlands Leisure Centre, Allen Street, Cheadle. The report determined the scope of the eligible works and the commensurate level of funding to be approved.

The decision made was: -That approval was granted for the use of DFG funding to the community project at South Moorlands Leisure Centre on the terms set out in the report.

Following this decision, call-in requests had been received from Councillors: - C. Atkins, L. Swindlehurst, K. Hoptroff, M. Gledhill, N. Yates and B. Cawley.

The call-in request confirmed the following principles of decision making which they believed had not been adhered to:

- taking due regard of all relevant considerations and disregarding irrelevant considerations;
- respect for human rights and equalities;
- a presumption in favour of openness; and

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- clarity of aims and desired outcomes.

Councillors detailed their concerns below: -

- 1) Although we fully support the use of Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants to provide much needed Changing Places Facilities within Staffordshire Moorlands, the lack of consultation, clear aims and openness over the plans for the development of Cheadle town centre raise doubts over whether it is appropriate to allocate such funding to South Moorlands Leisure Centre as its future is now uncertain.
- 2) The cost of providing the Changing Places Facility at over £29,000 needs to be properly scrutinised before such payments are sanctioned to demonstrate that this is 'excellent value for money' as stated.
- 3) If equalities are to be properly respected, all relevant sites within Staffordshire Moorlands should be assessed for the provision of such vital Changing Places Facilities to ensure their maximum use and accessibility. This requires a strategic assessment taking on board all relevant considerations rather than just accepting a single bid.

The Labour Group highly valued Changing Places facilities as they were hugely beneficial for those with profound disabilities, however they didn't want the funding to be spent on short term initiatives due to the redevelopment of Cheadle town centre.

Members gave accounts of substandard works funded by disabled facility grants and residents that had not been able to receive the funding despite their disabilities. Some members were critical of the level of service provided by Millbrook Healthcare and felt that disabled facility grants were not promoted adequately in the area. The point was raised that around only half the budget had been spent which was a concern for some members and that there were 3 other Changing Places facilities in the area.

The Portfolio Holder explained that individual cases of poor quality works and customer service was a separate issue to the call-in of the decision. He confirmed that all applications made under this scheme had been funded and all applications received would be considered.

The redevelopment of the leisure offering in Cheadle was a long-term project and therefore, this grant funding would provide improved disability access to the Leisure Centre now.

The provision would benefit the wider community and visitors to the area. It would also encourage the use of the Leisure Centre and other nearby attractions. Lex Leisure had applied for this funding, with a costed solution and would contribute towards the works. This was a viable scheme and was one of several applied for across the Moorlands. In terms of value for money, the quoted costs were below the market average for facilities of this nature. The applicant would invest a contribution

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of £3,400.00 towards the project, and so the contribution sought from the Council was £25,750.00.

The adapted changing rooms would be used by Paddles Swimming Club and the centre would actively promote the facilities to other clubs and individuals in the area. Other members agreed that the facilities were needed in Cheadle and that the area required investment.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that he had given careful consideration to the report before he had made his decision.

The matter was then put to a named vote as follows:-

In favour of the Call-in:

Councillors: Hoptroff, Swindlehurst, Taylor and Yates (4)

Against the Call-in:

Councillors: Aberley, Bentley, Heath, Herdman, Hughes, Johnson, Jones, Martin, Riley, Roberts, Shaw and Ward (12)

DECIDED:

In accordance with the procedure for consideration of Call-ins at Overview & Scrutiny Panel meetings, the Panel decided **not** to refer back the decision to the relevant Portfolio Holder for reconsideration, the Portfolio Holder be asked to note or take account of concerns as he sees fit without holding up the implementation of the decision.

32 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel considered its Work Programme and agreed the items listed.

DECIDED: That the Work Programme for 2020-21 be agreed.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm

_____Chairman _____Date