



Cannock Chase Council

Council Meeting

Wednesday 12 February 2025 at 6:00pm

Meeting to be held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock

Part 1

Copies of the relevant budget reports for agenda items 4 and 5, as considered by Cabinet, can be viewed on the [12 February 2025 Council](#) meeting page on the Council's website.

Notice is hereby given of the above-mentioned meeting of the Council which you are summoned to attend for the purpose of transacting the business set out below:

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

To declare any interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

Members should refer to the guidance included as part of this agenda.

3. Minutes

To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2025, Minute Numbers 52 – 61; Page Numbers 57 – 65.

4. Housing Revenue Account Budgets and Capital Programmes 2024/25 to 2027/28: Cabinet Resolutions

Council is requested to consider recommendations referred from the Cabinet meeting held on 30 January 2025, in respect of:

(i) Housing Revenue Account Budgets 2024/25-2027/28 (Minute No. 87)

“That Council, at its meeting to be held on 12 February 2025, be recommended to:

- (i) Determine a minimum level of working balances of £3.048 million for 31 March 2026 and indicative working balances of £3.349 million and £3.673 million for 31 March 2027 and 2028, respectively.

- (ii) Approve the Housing Revenue Account Budgets for 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28 (and note the forecast outturn for 2024-25), as summarised in appendix 1 of the 30 January 2025 Cabinet report.”

(ii) Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes 2024/25-2027/28 (Minute No. 88)

“That Council, at its meeting to be held on 12 February 2025, be recommended to approve the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme for the period 2024-25 to 2027-28, as set out in appendix 2 of the 30 January 2025 Cabinet report.”

5. Budgets 2024 to 2028: Cabinet Resolutions

Council is requested to consider recommendations referred from the Cabinet meeting held on 30 January 2025, in respect of:

(i) General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2024-2028 (Minute No. 85)

“That the following be recommended to the full Council meeting to be held on 12 February 2025:

- (A) The Budget Requirement for the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2025-26 be set at £15.809 million.
- (B) The indicative General Fund Revenue Budgets be set at £15.708 million for 2026-27 and £16.286 million for 2027-28.
- (C) The General Fund working balance be set at a minimum of £1.0 million.
- (D) The detailed capital programme as set out in appendices 2 and 3 of the 30 January 2025 Cabinet report be approved, along with the Community Infrastructure Levy allocations in appendix 4 of the same report.
- (E) The Council Tax for 2025-26 be increased by 2.99% to £251.30.
- (F) The Council’s Tax Base be set at 29,999.07 (as determined by the Deputy Chief Executive-Resources).
- (G) Note that the inflation parameter for fees and charges for 2025-26 was generally set at 3%.
- (H) The increase in stray dog budget be approved (£16.5k per annum).
- (I) The detailed portfolio budgets as set out in appendix 1 of the 30 January 2025 Cabinet report be approved, which reflects the closure of the Prince of Wales Theatre and the Museum of Cannock Chase from the end of April 2025.”

In accordance with paragraph 2.3 of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules, consideration will also be given to any valid alternative proposals presented by Political Groups and individual Council Members as a referral back to Cabinet.

Any alternative balanced budget proposals submitted to the Chief Executive by the deadline of 4:00pm, Tuesday 4 February 2025 will be circulated to all Members by 4:00pm, Wednesday 5 February 2025.

The Council Tax Resolution will be submitted to the 26 February 2025 Council meeting following the final agreement of the budget and receipt of all relevant Precepts.



**T. Clegg
Chief Executive**

4 February 2025

Guidance on Declaring Personal, Pecuniary, and Disclosable Pecuniary Interests at Meetings

Definition of what is a Personal, Pecuniary and Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

A Personal Interest is one where your well-being or financial position, or those of a member of your family or any person with whom you have a close association would be affected to a greater extent than the majority of Council Taxpayers, ratepayers, or inhabitants of the electoral ward(s) affected by the decision. You automatically have a personal interest if you have given notice in the Register of Members' Interests, e.g., if you are appointed to an outside body by the Council.

A Pecuniary Interest is a personal interest where the matter:

- a) affects your financial position or that of a member of your family or any person with whom you have a close association or a body in which you have registered in the Register of Members Interests or
- b) relates to the determining of any consent, licence, permission, or registration in relation to you or any person with whom you have a close association or a body in which you have registered in the Register of Members Interests

and, in either case, where a member of the public knowing the facts would reasonably regard the interest as so significant it is likely to affect your judgement of the public interest

A Disclosable Pecuniary Interest is an interest of yourself or your partner (which means spouse or civil partner, a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners) in respect of employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried out for profit or gain; sponsorship; contracts; land; licences; corporate tenancies; or securities, as defined with the Localism Act, 2011.

Please make it clear whether it is a Personal, Pecuniary or Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

It would be helpful if, prior to the commencement of the meeting, Members informed the Monitoring Officer of any declarations of interest, of which you are aware. This will help in the recording of the declarations in the Minutes of the meeting.

Declaring Interests at Full Council

The Code of Conduct requires that personal interests where you have a personal interest in any business of the Council, and where you are aware or ought reasonably to be aware of the existence of the personal interest, and you attend a meeting of the Council at which the business is considered, you must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent.

Some items will be mentioned in the papers for full Council but are not actually being considered by Full Council. In such circumstances the Monitoring Officer's advice to Members is that there is no need to declare an interest unless the particular matter is mentioned or discussed. As a general rule, Members only need to declare an interest at full Council in the following circumstances:

- Where a matter is before the Council for a decision and/or
- Where the matter in which the Member has an interest is specifically mentioned or discussed at the Council meeting.

Cannock Chase Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council

Held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock

On Wednesday 22 January 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Part 1

Present

Councillors:

Thornley, S. (Chair)

Prestwood, F. (Vice-Chair)

Aston, J. Hughes, G.

Bishop, L. Johnson, J.

Boulton, C. Johnson, T. (Leader)

Bullock, L. Jones, V.

Cartwright, S. Lyons, N.

Craddock, R. Mawle, D.

Dunnett, M. Muckley, A.

Elson, J. Preece, J.

Fisher, P. Prestwood, J.

Freeman, M. Samuels, G.

Gaye, D. Sutherland, M.

Haden, P. Thornley, S.J.

Hill, J. Todd, D.

Hill, J.O. Williams, D.

Prior to the start of the formal business of the meeting, the Chair advised that as referenced at the previous meeting, Chase Arts for Public Spaces (CHAPS) and Rugeley Rifle Club had been endowed with the Kings Award for Voluntary Service.

Representatives from both organisations had been invited to attend to join the Chair in his room prior to the Council meeting for a celebratory afternoon tea to congratulate them on achieving this prestigious award. It was the highest award that could be given to local voluntary groups and was equivalent to an MBE and awarded for life.

The Chair then read out short statements outlining the history of both organisations, their work, and why they had each won the award.

The Chair then invited Mike Mellor from CHAPS and Lee Featherstone from Rugeley Rifle Club to speak about their work and receiving the award.

All Members then joined the Chair in congratulating both organisations.

52. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bancroft, A. Fitzgerald, O. Lyons, J. Newbury, H. Page, and L. Wilson.

53. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

No other Declarations of Interests were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members' Interests.

54. Minutes

The Leader moved that under his announcements, the reference to Councillor O. Lyons being given his very best wishes on her forthcoming birth, be amended to read "on the forthcoming birth of her child."

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2024 be approved as a correct record, subject to the above amendment from the Leader.

55. Questions Received from the Public Under Council Procedure Rule 4B(c)

(i) The following question was asked by member of the public, Andy Moseley:

"Clarification on the Inclusion of Venue Subsidies within the 15% Council Budget:

There has been two separate meetings where differing versions of how subsidies for both venues are allocated. We seek formal clarification as to whether the subsidies allocated to both venues fall within, or are supplementary to, the 15% of the council's budget allocated to Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles (IHL)?"

The Leader of the Council, Councillor T. Johnson, provided the following response:

"The 15% of the Council's budget allocation for culture, heritage and leisure services is the fee for IHL's service and this in turn is the level of subsidy the Council provides for the service (the fee and the subsidy are one and the same)."

Andy Moseley then asked the following supplementary question:

"On that basis then, is there any reason why, within the contract with IHL we have not forced them to use their £1 million slush fund as their contingency fund?"

The Leader of the Council, Councillor T. Johnson, provided the following response to the supplementary question:

"I will have to get back to you on that question because I can't discuss the financial matters of a third party at this particular time."

(ii) The following question was asked by member of the public, Coleen Worrall, who was in attendance in place of Jamie Norgrove:

"Management of IHL contract:

Given IHL's responsibility for managing c£2M of taxpayer funds, could the council outline the specific oversight mechanisms and accountability frameworks in place to ensure the effective and transparent management of these funds?"

The Leader of the Council, Councillor T. Johnson, provided the following response:

“The Council has an officer with designated responsibility for working with IHL and managing delivery of the contract. Overall performance in delivering the contract is formally reported annually to the Council but throughout the year regular meetings are held with IHL management. Meetings are also held with the Head of Wellbeing and the relevant Cabinet members as appropriate.”

Added to that, there are also reports which go to the appropriate scrutiny committee, which is obviously made of up Members of this Council.”

Coleen Worrall, then asked the following supplementary question:

“In terms of the evaluations of financial information and performance, what is planned moving forward to ensure they are compliant and what has happened so far in terms of ensuring compliance?”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor T. Johnson, provided the following response to the supplementary question:

“I can say with hand on heart that certainly within the last year or so, we have managed the contract with significantly greater robustness than it might have been in the past, so if you could take the nuances of that answer, I’d be more than grateful.”

(iii) The following question was asked by member of the public, Ben Farbrother:

“Rationale for Classifying Roof Repairs as Revenue Expenditure:

We have been consistently informed by council representatives that Levelling Up Fund (LUF) funding cannot be allocated to address major works required at the Prince of Wales Theatre, as identified in the stock survey report, on the grounds that such works are classified as revenue expenditure. We believe that the nature of the activities involved, which includes significant structural improvements to ensure the extended the life of the building and its functional capacity, is aligned with the characteristics of capital expenditure.

Councillors have publicly provided repeated reassurances that the Prince of Wales Theatre has not been removed from scope for the remaining LUF money. Given that central government has granted an extension to when LUF money has to be spent, will the council commit to revisiting their assertion and re-assess how items of work, or packages of work, identified in the stock condition survey can be re-submitted as legitimate capital spend eligible for LUF money, and if not, why not?”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor T. Johnson, provided the following response:

“The LUF funds can only be used for capital works and not revenue. Furthermore, the capital works need to relate to a wider improvement/refurbishment plan and not just planned maintenance.

Using the roof as an example, repairing and maintaining this would be classed as revenue expenditure, as would a straight like for like replacement of the roof; and we could not use LUF monies for this.

However, if the roof were to be replaced and upgraded e.g. with the addition of solar panels or a new design, this could be classed as capital expenditure and LUF monies could be used to fund the work.”

(iv) The following question was asked by member of the public, Spencer Houghton:

“Ownership and Repatriation of Artefacts held by the Museum of Cannock Chase (MoCC):

When will the council provide detailed clarification regarding the ownership structure of the artefacts in the collection? Specifically, we request information regarding the proportion of the collection owned by the council versus private collectors. Furthermore, what formal plans or processes are in place for the repatriation of any artefacts, should this be deemed appropriate or necessary?”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor T. Johnson, provided the following response:

“Should the Council decide to close the Museum, a detailed plan for decommissioning it will be prepared, having due regard to national guidance.

Provision has been included in the budget for such work and the digitalisation of the collection.

We do not have current details of the ownership of the artefacts, but this will form part of the transition / handover from IHL.”

Spencer Houghton then asked the following supplementary question:

“In respect of decommissioning, could we see as quickly as possible once the decision has been made what these decommissioning plans are, and in particular, the budget required because of the extent of that operation for when it is needed?”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor T. Johnson, provided the following response to the supplementary question:

“As you have asked for that in the future, yes.”

(v) The following question was asked by member of the public, Ben Farbrother:

“Clawback Provisions in Grant Agreements and the Management of Unutilised Funds (Museum):

It has been brought to our attention that numerous grants of which the council are in receipt of are subject to clawback provisions, which stipulate the return of funds should they not be expended in accordance with their designated purpose. Can you state how many funds have been receipted this financial year and how much is left unspent? If such funds remain unutilised, could the council outline the planned course of action regarding the restitution of any unspent balances, and the procedural steps that will be followed to ensure compliance?”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor T. Johnson, provided the following response:

“The grants referred to are ones that were made to IHL and not awarded to the Council. We are however working with IHL and funding partners to identify all of the grants and any requirements for returning the monies.

Can't state at this present moment how many funds have been receipted but we can obtain that information.”

Ben Farbrother then asked the following supplementary question:

“You say that you will be following up. How will the Council ensure that there is transparency and in the handling of unspent balances with the wider public?”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor T. Johnson, provided the following response to the supplementary question:

“We will work with partners and wider public. We have a statutory responsibility to be transparent within our finances, far more than most organisations, and we will of course abide by our statutory responsibilities and discharge our statutory duties with regards to that, but yes, you will be informed on the answer.”

(vi) The following question was asked by member of the public, Peter Sidgwick:

“Communications Protocols Post-Closure of Cultural Buildings:

In the event that the closure of these cultural buildings proceed, what formal communication channels and protocols will be established to ensure ongoing dialogue and transparency with stakeholders throughout this process? It is imperative that a clear and structured channel for communication is set up to facilitate engagement.”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor T. Johnson, provided the following response:

“If the Council agrees to the closure of the Museum and the Theatre, we will ensure that stakeholders are involved in planning for the decommissioning of the museum and theatre, and this will include the development of a communication plan.

We have as part of the consultation process reached out to the groups that use the venues and will be working with them to identify alternative suitable venues for their activities/events.”

Peter Sidgwick then asked the following supplementary question:

“What timelines and reporting structures will be in place to ensure stakeholders are kept informed of key developments and any potential changes to the closure plans?”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor T. Johnson, provided the following response to the supplementary question:

“We will set up those structures to enable that to take place, but I don’t have that detail in front of me at this moment, but please be rest assured we will do that.”

56. The Chair’s Announcements and Correspondence

(i) Holocaust Memorial Service

The Chair advised that a Holocaust memorial service would be taking place at St. Luke’s Church, Cannock at 10am on Monday 27 November (Holocaust Memorial Day) and all were encouraged to attend.

(ii) Presentation of Petitions

The Chair advised he had been given notice of two petitions to be presented this evening.

Councillor Mawle was called forward to present a petition regarding the Prince of Wales Theatre. Councillor Mawle summarised the request of the petition and indicated the number and description of the signatories received.

Councillor Muckley was then called forward to present a petition regarding the Museum of Cannock Chase. Councillor Muckley the request of the petition and indicated the number and description of the signatories received.

The Chair then advised both petitions would be forwarded to the relevant Cabinet members for due consideration.

(Councillor Bullock left and returned to the meeting during this item.)

57. Leader's Announcements and Correspondence

(i) Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

The Leader advised that 2025 would be a challenging and potentially exciting year for local government and Cannock Chase Council. The Government published its vision for the future of local government in the English Devolution White Paper on 16 December 2024.

The Leader reminded Members that some months ago, he briefed the Council on the proposal of the Staffordshire Leaders Board to create a Combined Authority for Staffordshire, at the invitation of the Government. The White Paper went significantly further in setting out a bold vision for the future of local government.

The White Paper described a future without district councils, county councils and the existing small unitary councils. These were to be replaced by large strategic councils headed up by a mayor, where possible.

Strategic councils would oversee issues such as transport, economic development and local plan making. Elected mayors would also take over the responsibilities of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. Strategic authorities would serve a population of some 1.5 million which was bigger than the Staffordshire population of 1.1 million.

Although there would initially be non-mayoral Foundation Strategic Authorities, it was the Government's strong preference that in time all strategic authorities would have elected mayors.

The day-to-day services currently provided by county and district authorities such as social services, refuse collection, revenues and benefits all the functions that residents relied on would be provided by new larger unitary councils serving a population of at least 500,000.

It was the Government's view that bigger unitary councils led to better outcomes and saved significant money, which could then be reinvested into public services. The White Paper also spoke of fewer, more accountable, local politicians whose focus was on delivering for residents.

It was hoped to achieve all this collaboratively and in partnership. However, in areas where leaders failed to make progress, the Minister would legislate to create a strategic authority. At this stage, it was for upper-tier authorities to submit their proposals, i.e., Staffordshire County Council and the City of Stoke-on-Trent. Neither Council submitted an expression of interest by the deadline of 10 January, so the County Council elections scheduled for May this year would go ahead as planned.

A letter was awaited from the Minister for Local Government, Jim McMahon MP, before the end of this month, which it was hoped would give more detail regarding the future of district councils.

The Leader advised he had already met with the leaders of the Conservative and Green Groups to ensure that their members and the Council's communities were up to date with the information available. Liaison would continue with the leaders and councillors. Whatever the outcome, the aim was to secure the best deal possible for the people of Cannock Chase.

Throughout the reorganisation process the Council would be proactive in identifying opportunities to influence the outcome to produce better designed services that joined up the work currently provided by different councils. For example, some of the District's most vulnerable residents benefitted from social care provided by Staffordshire County Council and housing provided by this Council. Whilst this worked well, it could be even better coordinated within one authority if it was designed to be so from the beginning.

Change was challenging for all, and these proposals promised the biggest change in local government since the current structure was introduced fifty years ago and this Council came into being.

Just as the Council did fifty years ago, it must take this opportunity to shape the future for the benefit of the people of Cannock Chase.

58. Constitution Update: Procurement Act 2023

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Law & Governance (Item 7.1 - 7.27).

Councillor Muckley referred to the following sentence in report paragraph 5.2: "Adds a specific requirement for officers to consider the impact of a procurement on climate change as part of considering commissioning of the procurement", noting that this was not referenced in the climate change implications section of the report, but should be so as it was a positive statement to make.

The Head of Law & Governance advised that whilst the report could not be amended, the comments raised by Councillor Muckley could be recorded in the meeting minutes.

Resolved:

That the Procurement Regulations in the Constitution be updated as set out in report Appendix 1, with effect from 24 February 2025.

59. Review of Polling Districts, Places and Stations

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Law & Governance (Item 8.1 - 8.21).

Councillor Samuels declared a personal and pecuniary interest in this item as Chair of the Hednesford Town Council Pye Green Community Centre Committee, which was being proposed to use a polling station.

Councillor Cartwright declared a personal and pecuniary interest in this item as a member of the Hednesford Town Council Pye Green Community Centre Committee, which was being proposed to use a polling station.

Councillors Samuels and Cartwright therefore left the meeting and did not take part in the debate or the vote on this item.

Councillor Bullock proposed that a portable polling station be located on The Green in the centre of the Rumer Hill estate as it meant electors living in polling districts HA5 and HA6 would have less of a distance to travel to visit a polling station than what was being proposed in the report.

The Leader recommended that Councillor Bullock raise his proposal directly with the (Acting) Returning Officer as clarity could then also be provided on the cost implications of doing so.

Resolved:

That:

- (A) The review process be noted, and the proposals detailed in report Appendix 1 be approved.
- (B) The review investigations continue, with a view to implementing any further possible changes to polling place and polling stations in advance of the next scheduled elections on 1 May 2025.
- (C) Delegated authority be granted to the Deputy Chief Executive-Resources in his capacity as (Acting) Returning Officer to approve changes to polling places and polling stations, as may be required, in between formal reviews.

(Councillors Cartwright and Samuels returned to the meeting at the end of this item.)

(Councillor Bullock left the meeting at the end of this item.)

60. Review of the Members' Allowances Scheme

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Law & Governance (Item 9.1 - 9.18).

The Leader thanked the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel for undertaking their latest review of the Members' Allowances Scheme, noting the recommendations they had made as set out in report paragraph 5.2.

The Leader then moved that the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel not be accepted and that all allowance be frozen at their current rates for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2029.

Councillor Muckley referred to the Panel's report, accepting the point they had raised about the basic allowance being on a par with comparator authorities, but considered that because of the differentials in Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) payable, could the Constitution Working Group or relevant Scrutiny Committee be asked to look at the rates of SRAs payable by this Council, with a view to them being reduced.

(Councillor Bullock returned to the meeting at this point.)

The Head of Law & Governance clarified that an independent panel had to be set up to review the Scheme and that as part of the review process, councillors were invited to complete a survey on their views of the amounts and types of allowances that should be paid. The matter could be referred back to the Panel, but this meeting was the last chance for Council to consider establishing a new scheme before the budget setting process and have a new scheme ready for 1 April 2025.

Councillor Muckley then moved the following Amendment to the Leader's motion, which was duly seconded:

“Having regard to the level of Special Responsibility Allowances paid by neighbouring Staffordshire authority, the SRAs paid by this Council should be reduced to the following amounts:

- i) Chair of the Council - reduce to £2,885 per annum.
- ii) Vice-Chair of the Council - reduce to £721 per annum.
- iii) Leader of the Council - reduce to £13,000 per annum.
- iv) Leader of the Opposition - reduce to £3,630 per annum
- v) Members of the Cabinet - reduce to £6,500 per annum.

(Councillor F. Prestwood left and returned to the meeting during the debate on the Amendment.)

A vote was taken on the proposed Amendment, which was not carried.

A vote was then taken on the Leader’s Motion, and it was:

Resolved:

That all members’ allowances rates be frozen at their current levels for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2029.

Councillors Bishop, Craddock, Elson, Mawle and Muckley requested that their names be recorded as having abstained on the vote on the Leader’s Motion.

61. Comments and Questions on Part 1 and Part 2 Minutes of Cabinet, Committees, Sub-Committees and Panels under Rule 9.

None received.

Meeting closed 7:47pm

Chair