

## Access to Skills, Economic Development and Enterprise Policy Development Committee

### Recommendations to Cabinet – Matters to be considered

Thursday, 7 May, 2009

#### Introduction

The agenda for the Policy Development Committee, addressing the issues of skills and economic development, is one which requires long term action to tackle structural weaknesses in the local economy (for example the over reliance on employment in low value added manufacturing), and to tackle the low qualifications and skills culture which affects many of the Cannock Chase communities. Both of these 'big' issues for the local economy will require sustained action and investment over the long term to address. Many of the levers of action for these issues are in the hands of others. As a result, the Council's role is often one of seeking to exercise influence over partner organisations some of which see their priorities as lying elsewhere within Staffordshire or the West Midlands region.

The need for long term action has set the context for the work of this year's Policy Development Committee as it has sought to build on the work of the previous Select Committees. The recommendations made to Cabinet in 2007 set the two policy themes of Local Jobs for Local People, and, Modern Facilities for a Modern Economy. Both are an attempt to capture in easily understood messages the type of outcomes being sought from the Council's activities. In recognising the need for long term action, the 2007/08 Select Committee retained these themes for its work and the report on actions against the original recommendations was considered by the current Policy Development Committee in May 2008.

It was against this background that the theme adopted by the Committee for its work for 2008/09 was to investigate and consider '**Local Jobs for Local People/Worklessness with an emphasis on the Skills Agenda**'. As the severity of the recession began to emerge over the winter months, the work of the Committee was expanded to consider the local impact of the economic downturn. The table that follows charts the issues considered by the Committee and proposes recommendations to Cabinet for the Committee to consider. Also on this agenda is a Briefing Note on the Impact of the Economic Downturn. Any recommendations which flow from consideration of this Note will need to be incorporated into the table.

Subject	Recommendation	Action / Activities	Comment
<p>Local Jobs for Local People – the Skills agenda. Staffordshire Local Area Agreement - schools and qualifications.</p> <p>Modern Facilities for a Modern Economy – Investment in schools and Further Education</p>	<p>That the Council continues to press Staffs LEA to agree a plan of action to improve performance in Cannock Chase schools.</p> <p>That the Council encourages the County Council to invest in new education facilities through the Building Schools for the Future programme and supports the County Council in securing funds for this or similar programmes.</p> <p>That, to be able to provide a modern ‘fit for purpose’ further education offer, the Council continues to support South Staffordshire College to secure investment in new campus facilities in Cannock and, in conjunction with the LEA, in an Extended Learning Facility in Rugeley.</p>	<p>LEA representative invited to meet with Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee Chairs. Request for Council to share Improvement strategies between schools and Staffs County Council</p> <p>Committee received District schools exam performance data and information on new National Qualifications framework which has now been formally adopted and which includes a broader definition of Level 4 qualifications than degrees only.</p> <p>Merger of Cannock, Tamworth, Lichfield and Rodbaston colleges into Southern Staffordshire College.</p> <p>Proposal for Cannock campus redevelopment submitted to the LSC by new college.</p>	<p>In considering an update on the Staffs LAA, Committee expressed concern with the continuing under performance of student qualifications on leaving school and supported the Council’s Scrutiny Committees in seeking to agree a plan of action with Staffs LEA</p>

<p>Local Jobs for Local People - The Worklessness Agenda.</p>	<p>That the Council notes the formation of the Worklessness Action Group and supports the development of a local programme, under the LAA, to tackle Worklessness in the District.</p> <p>That Council supports LAA partners in piloting actions considered as best practice in tackling worklessness (from the north Staffs JET work), initially within the District's priority neighbourhoods as identified in the LAA and the Locality Working programmes.</p>	<p>The Committee has received a presentation on the worklessness agenda from representatives of Job Centre+ and the LSC.</p> <p>A District Worklessness Action Group (WAG) has been established and is chaired and 'championed' by the District Council.</p> <p>Funding secured to enable continued use of the Jobs Bus within the District.</p> <p>Back to work initiatives targeted on incapacity and lone parent claimants have been run in 'hot spot' neighbourhoods. - WAG to consider learning from the JET work in Q1 2009/10</p>	<p>Committee supported the new emphasis being placed on tackling worklessness by integrating the skills and employment actions of the LSC and Job Centre+.</p> <p>The Council should look to monitor the JET concept being developed in Stoke to see if it's best practice can be piloted in the District's neighbourhoods identified as priorities for worklessness within the LAA.</p>
<p>Action to reduce NEET's – Connexions service</p>	<p>That, the Council continues to support work with partners to reduce those NEET in the District as an important element in reducing the high proportion of 18-24 unemployment.</p>	<p>Committee received a presentation from Connexions on the services provided.</p> <p>Connexions to provide Committee with additional data on 'drop outs' and comparisons with other Staffs LA's</p> <p>Council has directly supported NEETs work through the Choices Day, Change It, and Taste Your Future schemes, and through providing accommodation for the</p>	<p>Committee considered the work undertaken with the Connexions service for those who are NEET (not in employment, education or training) or at risk of being so, the issues raised, reductions achieved and the activities focussed on 'hot spot' wards. The work demonstrated that with partners resources focussed on the issue, numbers of NEETs can be reduced. Committee were concerned that the</p>

		<p>Training and Opportunity Provider (TOPS) event held in April 2009.</p> <p>Apprenticeships website being developed.</p> <p>Adult programme introduced to improve the numbers of unemployed adults entering education/employment.</p>	<p>District may suffer from larger numbers dropping out of employment and training and becoming NEET after the first year.</p>
<p>Local Jobs for Local People – the Skills agenda. District 14-19 Partnership – Vocational Qualifications</p>	<p>That, the Council continues to support the Chase Collegiate and the 14-19 Partnership and encourages the partners to make available the full set of vocational Diplomas to the District's students at the earliest opportunity.</p>	<p>Committee has received a presentation from Chase Collegiate.</p> <p>9 Diploma qualifications to be available from September 2009 with further Diploma lines to be applied for during 2009/10.</p> <p>Progress to be reported back to Committee in 2009/10.</p>	<p>The Committee offered continuing support for the work of the Chase Collegiate programme. This brings together secondary schools and the College to be able to offer a broader curriculum for the 50% or so of the District's students who have a vocational rather than an academic preference. The improved performance of the College and its merger into South Staffs College create the conditions to offer more vocational training courses based around the new Diplomas.</p>
<p>Young Chamber – Raising student aspirations and work readiness.</p>	<p>That the Council supports Enterprise activities in schools both through using its membership of the Southern Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SSCCI) support and participate in future Young Chamber events; and through continual support for the Young Enterprise</p>	<p>The Young Chamber initiative in the District has achieved national recognition and has been run in 5 local schools.</p>	<p>The Chamber of Commerce' Young Chamber initiative has had a successful start in being taken up in 5 schools. It uses the Chamber's business members to help students run business enterprise projects in school and appears to be effective in raising aspirations.</p>

<p>Staffordshire Partnership – Raising student aspirations and work readiness. Improving links between schools and business.</p>	<p>initiatives.</p> <p>That the Council provides a public sector lead on improving the aspirations and work readiness of local students by supporting work experience placements, and by working with partners to achieve an effective and sustainable model of engagement between business and education.</p>	<p>Presentation received by the Committee from the Director of the Staffordshire Partnership.</p> <p>DEEP (District Employer and Education Partnership) established to provide a network for collaborative work on employer engagement.</p>	<p>The Committee considered the work of the Staffordshire Partnership which aims to bring schools and employers together to provide work experience placements and routes into training for students. Committee were concerned about employers views of the lack of work readiness of school leavers and the difficulty in finding employers willing to work with schools to offer work experience placements.</p>
<p>The Council’s own role as a major local employer – Raising aspirations and work readiness.</p>	<p>That, subject to available funding, the Council’s proposed Workforce Development Strategy includes initiatives designed to encourage the training, employment, and upskilling of local people.</p> <p>That the Council signs up to the public sector Skills Pledge.</p>	<p>Committee received a presentation on the issues faced by the Council in terms of skill gaps, the age profile of the workforce and recruitment needs, and on options provided for work experience.</p> <p>The Committee have requested the opportunity to comment on the Council’s Workforce Development Strategy.</p> <p>The Council provides currently a range of work experience options to school and college students.</p>	<p>The Committee considered that the Council as a major local employer should provide a lead in offering local students a range of work experience and training opportunities. This could also benefit the Council’s business by providing a local solution to meeting skill shortages and recruitment difficulties.</p>

<p>Local Jobs for Local People – The Skills agenda. Work Based Learning and improving skills in the workforce.</p>	<p>That the Council works with its partners to improve local business awareness of and access to regional and national training and skills development programmes.</p>	<p>Committee has received a presentation from the Chamber of Commerce on employer's views on 'who does what' in terms of recruiting skills and tackling skill shortages.</p>	<p>Committee were concerned to hear from the Chamber of Commerce that there was resistance from many employers to retraining or upskilling employees. Various reasons were cited (cost, loss of key workers) including confusion over the various training schemes and providers. Unskilled and semi-skilled workers were especially vulnerable in economic downturns and skilled workers were being imported.</p>
<p>Supporting local people to access local jobs</p>	<p>That the Council requests SCC for closer collaborative work to secure effective public transport infrastructure to the key employment sites within the District.</p>	<p>Following a presentation to the Committee, the Chair has held further discussions with SCC to seek assurance on their assistance in improving transport access to employment sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commitments given to improve intelligence sharing between SCC and CCDC e.g. notification of withdrawal of services, section 106 developer obligations, and new investors/employers moving into the area.</li> <li>- The 'Wheels to Work' scheme is operating within the District and will be available over the next 3 years.</li> </ul>	<p>Committee have pressed the County Council to address the need for better public transport access to the District's main employment areas.</p>
<p>Supporting local people to access local jobs – The developers view</p>	<p>(Recommendation to be reviewed following presentation from Gazeley Properties on the Council using its influence to encourage new employers to the District to recruit local people and use local suppliers for main contracts.)</p>	<p>Committee to receive a presentation from Gazeley Properties in May 2009 on Section 106 obligations and the employment of local contractors and a local workforce. End occupier of the unit to be invited to attend future Policy Development Committee.</p>	<p>Committee to hear from Gazeley Props. owners of the large 700,000 sq ft distribution building on Towers Business Park.</p>

Impacts of the Economic Downturn.	Recommendations on further Council actions related to the recession to be considered by Committee on 7 May 2009.	The Council's current actions are listed in the Briefing Note received by Committee in May 2009.  Economic Bulletins produced by Staffordshire County Council now periodically provided to policy committee.	Committee to consider a Briefing Note on potential action to combat the impact of the recession at the meeting on 7 May 2009.
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## Glossary of Acronyms

DEEP – District Employer & Education Partnership  
JET - Jobs, Enterprise & Training  
LAA – Local Area Agreement  
LEA – Local Education Authority  
LSC – Learning & Skills Council  
NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training  
SCC – Staffordshire County Council  
SSCCI – Southern Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry  
TOPS – Training Opportunity Provider's  
WAG – Worklessness Action Group