

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BETTER JOBS AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 8 SEPTEMBER, 2015 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK
PART 1

PRESENT:
Councillors

Cooper, Miss J. (Chairman)
Dudson, Miss M.J. (Vice-Chairman)

Buttery, M.	Lea, C. (substituting for
Cartwright, Mrs. S.M.	Christian, Miss J.A.)
Freeman, Miss M.A.	Molineux, G.N.
Gamble, B.	Preece, J.T.
Johnson, T.B.	Whitehouse, Miss S.

Also in attendance:-

Councillor G. Alcott (Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader – observer)
Councillor Mrs. D.M. Todd (Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader – observer)
Councillor P. Snape (observer)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. A. Allt, C.H. Anslow and Miss J. Christian.

Councillor C. Lea was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Miss J.A. Christian).

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

No further declarations were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members Interests.

3. Scope and Functions of the Environment Scrutiny Committee

Rob Lamond, Policy and Performance Manager, provided Members with a presentation which gave an overview of the scope and functions of the Better Jobs and Skills Scrutiny Committee. The presentation covered the following:-

- Support for the Committee

- Background to Scrutiny
- The Committee's Role and Remit
- Scrutinising Performance
- Work Programme
- The Priority Delivery Plan (PDP)

Members noted that the Lead Officer of the Committee was Michael Tichford, Head of Economic Development. Other Heads of Service and Managers would have an input in the Committee as appropriate.

Following the presentation Members were afforded the opportunity to ask questions. A Member asked whether information on the current position with regards to the Performance Indicators was available. The Officer explained that figures relating to the well established Performance Indicators that were reported on each year would be available. There were a couple of new Indicators and the figures for these would not be available. However, these would be monitored throughout the year to enable a benchmark to be set and then monitored at the end of the year.

The Head of Economic Development added that the Performance Indicator relating to "Increase in the Number of Businesses" was previously monitored by the number of VAT registrations. However, as the VAT registration figures were no longer available it would be challenging to monitor this Performance Indicator. Data would therefore need to be sourced from elsewhere. The Committee noted that using the information the Council held regarding the payment of Business Rates was a good source of data.

4. Work Programme 2015-16

The Head of Economic Development asked Members to give consideration to any items they wished to include in the Work Programme for 2015-16. He referred Members to an item that was raised at the Scrutiny Committee regarding the target to secure at least an annual 5% increase in tourism expenditure within the local economy. Councillor Burnett had expressed concern regarding Travelodge withdrawing from plans to build on the Watling Street site and indicated that the Council could fail to secure its targets for the future. The Scrutiny Committee agreed that this issue be referred to this Committee so that Members could give consideration to including this as part of the Work Programme for 2015/16.

He then led Members through the objectives and actions contained within the Priority Delivery Plan Plan. He highlighted a number of topics within the PDP which the Committee may wish to consider as potential items for the Work Programme. These included :-

Supporting a successful business economy

- transport and access to employment – transport was critical in order for individuals to access employment opportunities
- Reinstating regular forum meetings with Chamber of Commerce

Improving skills and accessibility to local employment opportunities

- This objective had been a major part of the previous Economic Development and Planning Policy Development Committee – Job Centre Plus had attended meetings to give presentations – they offered support to attain skills and then employment
- Apprenticeships – The Council was keen to take on more office based Apprentices – two Apprentice positions were proposed (one in Business Support and one at the Contact Centre) – South Staffs College would be the provider

Supporting attractive and competitive town centres

- The previous Town Centre Regeneration Policy Development Committee had focused on this objective. The development of the Mill Green Designer Outlet Village was critical to ensure the offer of Cannock Town Centre was improved. It was anticipated that the planning application would be considered by the Planning Control Committee in October. Additionally a report on development opportunities within Cannock town centre had been considered by Cabinet
- In addition to the Cannock Street Market (which was currently out to tender) Members noted that holding events, carnivals' etc within the town centre would increase the attractiveness of the town centre
- Business Rates Town Centre Discount Scheme – this had proved to be a successful scheme and was to run until March 2016. In response to a question from a Member the Officer advised that he would check how much money was left in respect of this Scheme

The Head of Economic Development advised the Committee that Cannock Chase Council was part of both the Stoke and Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership. He suggested that Members could consider more regular reporting of LEP work and the impact and effectiveness of the LEP's in Cannock Chase as part of their Work Programme.

He also referred Members to the specific priorities contained in the Local Partnership Plan which were relevant to this Committee.

The Chairman opened up the discussion with regard to this item by suggesting that either 2 or 3 specific items be chosen for the Work Programme this year.

A Member suggested that Reducing Youth Employment (18-24 year olds) could be a potential item for the Work Programme. Another Member agreed that this was an important issue but asked whether unemployment amongst the older generation could also be included.

The Head of Economic Development advised that the funding from the Government tended to focus on tackling Youth Unemployment. However, unemployment amongst the older generation could be included as part of the Work Programme should Members wish.

A Member suggested transport to work was another possible item for the Work Programme as good transport was important to enable individuals to access employment opportunities. He considered that Arriva should be asked to explain why there was no stability in bus routes. The Head of Economic Development commented that Arriva had attended the previous Economic Development and Planning Policy Development Committee and were keen to engage with the Council. The Committee noted that there were proposals for significant changes to bus routes and work was being carried out on establishing which parts of the Community were disadvantaged by the bus schedules.

Following this it was AGREED:

(A) That the following items be included as part of the Work Programme of the Committee for 2015/16:

- Reducing Youth Unemployment and unemployment amongst the older generation;
- Transport to Work

(B) That Officers discuss the Work Programme with the Chairman based on the discussions held at the meeting and further consideration be given to this at the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.55pm.

CHAIRMAN