

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**BETTER JOBS AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**TUESDAY 8 MARCH, 2016 AT 4.00 P.M.**  
**IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK**

**PART 1**

PRESENT:  
Councillors

Cooper, Miss J. (Chairman)

Cartwright, Mrs. S.M.	Hoare, M.
Freeman, Miss M.A.	Preece, J.T.
Gamble, 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)  
Sheila Dunning (Cannock Traders Association)  
Linda Whitehouse (The Traders of Hednesford Association)  
Ian Hodgson (Rugeley Traders Association)  
Paul Brewer (Bilfinger GVA)

**11. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. A. Allt, G. Burnett, M. Buttery and T.B. Johnson.

**12. 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.

**13. Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 December, 2015 be approved as a correct record.

**14. Town Centre Trader Issues**

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager welcomed Sheila Dunning (Cannock Traders Association), Linda Whitehouse (The Traders of Hednesford Association) and Ian Hodgson (Rugeley Traders Association) to the meeting to highlight any issues that were relevant for their respective town centres.

### **Cannock Traders Association**

Sheila Dunning raised two issues in relation to Cannock Town Centre. The first related to the development of the Mill Green Designer Outlet Village and she asked how and where the proposed £150k investment into the town centre would be spent and whether the Traders Association would receive any of the funding. The second issue was in relation to youths loitering in the town centre shopping centre, in particular around Market Hall Street. Customers had complained about their presence and the Shopping Centre Manager had raised it but there had been little action by the Police.

In response to the issues raised the Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that discussions were ongoing between the Council and the developer of the Mill Green Designer Outlet Village. The S106 Agreement would contain a large number of elements and it was anticipated that there would be specific initiatives to support the position and appeal of the town centre. Details of the s106 Agreement were currently under negotiation and there was potential to support the work of the town centre Traders Association and to consider how best to connect the Designer Village to the town centre.

Sheila Dunning asked whether the Developers were considering providing a free shuttle bus between the Mill Green Designer Outlet Village and the town centre. The Officer explained that establishing a connection between the two sites was part of the discussions for the S106 Agreement. It was unlikely that a shuttle bus would be free as a sustainable solution was required. Therefore improving the existing bus routes and rail station would be the most likely outcome along with providing better facilities for users along the corridor between the Designer Village and the town centre.

A Member asked for clarification regarding which parts of the town centre was lacking in terms of policing and whether the Shopping Centre Manager had approached the Police regarding the issues raised. Sheila Dunning explained that as the shopping centre was owned privately it was covered by its own security team. Therefore she assumed the problems were occurring elsewhere in the town centre. She would speak with the Cannock Shopping Centre Manager and ask her to contact the Police direct regarding the problems being experienced.

### **Traders of Hednesford Association**

Linda Whitehouse outlined the issues relating to Hednesford town centre. The first issue was in relation to anti social behaviour including drugs related incidents, proxy buying and bullying (children not feeling safe). She had raised these issues with the relevant officers/Police.

She considered that it was important to address the issue of how to increase the footfall in the town centres in order to help the independent traders. This was an issue affecting all three town centres. The Association was looking at getting a street market (farmers/craft market) back in to the town which would hopefully assist.

She made reference to the 13-17 year olds who had nowhere to go and considered that investment was needed to improve the provision for them.

Another issue she raised related to HGV's who were entering the town centre and causing problems by mounting the pavements particularly at the junction of Eskrett Street and Market Street. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager confirmed that the County Council was looking at a scheme to address the parking issues in Anglesey Street.

She commented on the condition of the paving in the town centre and asked who was responsible. The Officer confirmed that the County Council was responsible for paving and this was a common theme in all three town centres. Following discussions between Officers and representatives of the County Council it had been agreed that a "walk-about" with representatives from key agencies would be set up to identify any issues (such as the condition of the paving/potholes/resurfacing etc.) within the town centres so that the County Council could address them.

A Member asked whether a Cannock Chase Member could be involved in the "walk-about". The Head of Economic Development confirmed that this might be possible and advised that at the Rugeley Town Council meeting the previous week Town Councillors had also expressed an interest in taking part in the "walk-about". For practical reasons it was suggested that it might be sensible to have a single representative from each Council.

### **Rugeley Traders Association**

Ian Hodgson highlighted the issues affecting Rugeley Town Centre. He explained that youths were loitering outside Barclays Bank in the evening due to the bank providing free internet access. The youths were not causing any harm but they did look intimidating. Additionally, Barclays Bank was closing on a Wednesday and this was having a damaging effect on footfall. Rugeley Town Council would be discussing this with the Bank.

He also commented on the poor condition of the paving and drains which had been discussed at a Rugeley Town Council meeting. It had been agreed that this would be addressed as part of the "walk-about".

He then raised the issue of the continuing problems with the Horsefair works explaining that the new paving provided as part of the scheme was poor, traffic was backing up for 30 minutes in the evening towards Breretonl and motorists were still parking in the central reservation. He considered that the scheme had not worked and a number of issues required revisiting.

He spoke about the out of town retail shops such as Tesco's and Screwfix who were providing free parking and considered that some form of free parking within the town centre would be useful, even for just 30 minutes. He sought confirmation on how much it cost to administer parking charges and how much was taken in revenue. He also asked whether there were any plans to provide electric vehicle charging points.

He asked that the Traders Association be kept informed about any proposals in relation to the redevelopment of the bus station/market hall site. He also mentioned HGV's/vans entering the town centre pedestrian area causing damage to the paving. He considered that clarification was required as to what type of vehicle was allowed to enter this area.

He then went on to raise the issue of Amazon employees whose shift times did not tie in with the train/bus times and as a result a number of employees were waiting at the stations for some considerable time, some had been sleeping under the canal bridge and this was not enhancing the look of the town centre.

In response to the issues raised the Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that policing issues affected all three town centres. The Committee could note the issues raised and express concern via the Chairman of the Committee to a representative of Staffordshire Police.

With regard to the free wi-fi provided by Barclays Bank he commented that the responsibility of turning the router off in the evening was with the Bank itself.

With regard to the Horsefair works he commented that the Committee had previously raised concerns with the County Council in terms of the needs and benefits of the scheme, the time taken for it to be completed and the impact on trade and footfall. He would raise these issues with the County Council as part of the concerns raised in respect of resurfacing etc.

He noted the comments in relation to parking and advised that free parking being available within walking distance of the town centres was an issue not just in Rugeley but in Cannock as well. The income generated from parking had slightly declined as shoppers were using the alternative free parking that was available.

He was not aware of any proposal in the town centre regarding electric vehicle charging points and commented that the opportunity to provide this was remote given the Council's current financial position.

He confirmed that there were no current proposals to redevelop either the bus station or the market hall site. Although this site had been identified as a key redevelopment opportunity through the Rugeley Area Action Plan any development would be reliant upon the Flood Alleviation Scheme being in place. He would ensure that the Traders Association would be involved in any future proposals for this site.

He advised that he would discuss the issues raised regarding HGV's/vans

entering the pedestrian area of the town centre with the County Council to ascertain whether CCTV cameras could be used to identify the vehicles causing the damage.

In response to the concerns raised regarding Amazon employees he commented that there was no permanent bus service available (only a seasonal one) and this was not ideal. Amazon considered that the problem lay with the Agency providing the employees. However he would raise it with Amazon to ascertain if a solution could be reached.

A Member advised that the Barclays Bank wi-fi may remain on overnight as they may update their system at night. He also commented that providing an area for youths to get together with free wi-fi access may assist in tackling ASB problems. He advised that the service station for the M6 toll had electric charging facilities.

The Head of Economic Development advised that there were a number of common themes affecting the town centres and these would be collated. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager had responded to a number of the concerns raised. The “walk-about” involving relevant agencies including the Police, Community Safety Team, District and Parish Councils would be arranged as soon as possible.

He informed Members of an initiative taking place in Rugeley in partnership with the County Council called the “Town Deal”. Partners involved in the initiative were encouraged to identify common issues affecting town centres and work in partnership to address them. A launch event was planned for May and the Committee would be informed of the date when it was known. He hoped that this may address some issues productively.

The three representatives from the Traders Associations were thanked for their attendance.

AGREED:

- (A) That the concerns expressed regarding the policing issues within all three town centres be noted and the Chairman of the Committee express these concerns to a representative of Staffordshire Police.
- (B) The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager refer the issues raised regarding the Horsefair works to the County Council as part of the concerns raised regarding resurfacing etc.
- (C) The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager refer the issues raised regarding HGV's/vans entering the pedestrian area of the Rugeley town centre with the County Council to ascertain whether CCTV cameras could be used to identify the vehicles causing the damage.
- (D) The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager raise the concerns with Amazon regarding there being no permanent bus service

for Amazon employees to ascertain if a solution could be reached.

(E) That the “walk-about” involving relevant agencies including the Police, Community Safety Team, District and Parish Councils would be arranged as soon as possible.

(F) That the Committee be advised of the launch date for the Rugeley “Town Deal” initiative when the details had been confirmed.

## **15. Quarter 3 Performance Report**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Governance (Item 6.1 – 6.4 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Economic Development advised that some of the commentary within the Priority Delivery Plan had been updated since the agenda had been circulated. An updated version would therefore be sent to Members. He then led the Committee through the actions within the PDP and updated them on the progress.

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager referred to the initiative to “seek to maximise local employment within those businesses creating 50+ jobs with the aim that 50% of new employees will be residents of the district”. Members noted that M&S food store was opening next week and they had not followed through with their commitment to this initiative. The Officer confirmed he would express the Council’s disappointment and establish why M&S had not committed to do this.

The Head of Economic Development advised that issues had arisen with regard to the redevelopment of the former Aelfgar School and it was unlikely that the County Council would be supporting the Extra Care scheme at this site. He further advised that the reference to Cannock street market should have read 19 November, 2015.

(At this point in the proceedings Councillor Miss S. Whitehouse left the meeting).

AGREED:

(A) That the Committee note the performance information relating to Better Jobs and Skills Priority Delivery Plan in Quarter 3 as detailed at Appendix 1 of the report.

(B) That the Committee notes the actions and indicators which are rated Yellow, Orange or Red and the associated commentary/remedial action proposed by the Lead Officer.

(C) That the revised Quarter 3 Priority Delivery Plan for Better Health Outcomes be circulated to Members.

## **16. Unemployment and Youth Unemployment Data**

Consideration was given to the latest data (Item 6.1 – 6.3 of the agenda). The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager led the Committee through the data explaining that there continued to be a downward trend in overall unemployment and youth unemployment in the CCDC area. It was noted that the trend had continued in January which was not usually the case. At the previous meeting it had been agreed that regional data should be presented in the future so that a comparison could be made between Cannock Chase District and the Staffordshire districts and this had been provided at Item 6.3.

## **17. Work Programme**

Consideration was given to the updated Work Programme at Item 7.1 of the agenda. Arising from a request at the previous meeting to include an item on how schools prepared young people for employment, Harriet Allen from Cannock Chase High School had agreed to attend the next meeting. In addition the Principal from South Staffordshire College had indicated that he wanted a representative to attend the meeting for this item but this was still subject to confirmation.

Members should advise Officers of any additional items they wished to include on the Work Programme.

## **18. Exclusion of the Public**

RESOLVED:

That the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

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**19. Cannock Town Centre: Future Positioning**

Paul Brewer from Bilfinger GVA (Birmingham Office) was in attendance to provide the Committee with a presentation outlining the future of Cannock Town Centre.

He explained the background to the report and outlined the issues and opportunities that existed within the town centre. Members noted that there were a number of potential development opportunities within the town centre. It was noted that the report set out the short, medium and long term actions which could help to support the town centre.

Following the presentation Members were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Regular updates would be provided to Members to keep them informed of the progress being made, particularly with reference to the Cannock Town Centre Area Action Plan.

The meeting closed at 18:10pm.

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CHAIRMAN