

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**  
**THURSDAY, 8 JANUARY, 2015 AT 4.00 P.M.**  
**IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK**

**PART 1**

PRESENT:  
Councillors

Cartwright, Mrs. S.M. (in the Chair)

Anslow, C.	Dean, A.
Bottomer, B.	Jones, R.

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman nominations were sought for a Chairman to be appointed for the meeting. Councillor Mrs. S.M. Cartwright was appointed Chairman.

Invitees: Councillor M. Winnington, Cabinet Leader for Economy and Infrastructure, Staffordshire County Council  
Mr. I. Hodgson – representing Rugeley Traders' Association

**18. Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs. D.M. Todd.

**19. 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.

**20. Minutes**

A Councillor referred to Minute 12 and asked for an update on whether s106 monies had been used to improve the disabled access to the canal towpath. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager explained that s106 monies had been allocated towards this and a number of design options were being developed. He understood that some small pieces of land would need to be acquired in order to enable the option which included wheelchair access. He would check and confirm that this was the case.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 October, 2014 be approved as a

correct record.

## **21. Town Centre Traders Association Issues**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Mark Winnington, Cabinet Leader for Economy, Environment and Transport, Staffordshire County Council and Ian Hodgson, Rugeley Traders' Association to the meeting to discuss the impact of the Rugeley Public Realm Works on trade within Rugeley Town Centre.

The LEP Consultant explained that at the last meeting there was an extensive discussion regarding the works carried out along Horse Fair in Rugeley. A letter from the Town Centre Regeneration Policy Development Committee Chairman, Councillor Mrs. A. Spicer, was forwarded to Councillor Winnington dated 5 November, 2014 detailing a number of outstanding issues. He asked Councillor Winnington to respond to the issues today.

Councillor Winnington commented that it would be useful to have an update from Rugeley Traders' Association now that the works had been completed.

Ian Hodgson, Rugeley Traders' Association explained there had been two meetings with Councillor Winnington and Helen Riley, Director for Place and Deputy Chief Executive, Staffordshire County Council where the Traders issues had been raised. He confirmed that Helen Riley had acted swiftly on some of the issues that had been discussed. However, there were still a number of other issues that were outstanding and he summarised these as follows:-

- Crossing points had not been resolved
- Pedestrian crossing was still a problem and there had been a number of rear end collisions under the bridge at Horse Fair (as this was a blind spot); however, the Police had no knowledge of these collision as they were low speed and therefore not reported to the Police
- The power points for the Christmas lights on the Globe Island had been removed by the contractors
- Heavy traffic in Brereton every night and no free flow of traffic
- The verges were too low which had resulted in parking along the central reservation which was damaging the grass, and enabling motorists to perform u-turns across the central reservation
- The project had gone over budget by a significant amount and there was concern how the overspend was to be funded
- Request for a schedule of works regarding the improvements to the paving in the town centre
- Concern that the final scheme was nothing like the initial plan
- The flow of traffic had been ruined and should the M6 be closed the town would be blocked
- Concern regarding the loss of car parking spaces on the Iceland car park due to the new entrances. In addition although the plant had now been removed from the car park the spaces were now being taken by staff parking so there were still too few spaces available
- The need for Staffordshire County Council to provide financial assistance to the traders who had suffered as a result of the works
- Consideration should be given to providing free car parking or parking

incentives (e.g. first 20 min/1 hour free)

A number of Rugeley Councillors supported the concerns raised by the Rugeley Traders' Association representative and commented that the last 18 months had been a very difficult trading period for the Rugeley traders who had been frustrated by the works being undertaken and the effect this had had on their trade. The issue regarding the pedestrian crossing being too close to the bridge and motorists reversing off the central reservation were highlighted as hazards which required attention. Councillor R. Jones also raised concern that he had not received responses to emails which he had sent to the County Council and he also raised concern regarding the consultation that had been undertaken regarding the proposals.

Councillor Winnington thanked the Committee for inviting him to attend the meeting. He explained that the purpose of the Rugeley Public Realm Works had been to make the area more attractive. He confirmed that since the Rugeley bypass had been opened the dual carriageway was no longer necessary and therefore it had been changed as part of the scheme. He confirmed that full consultation had been undertaken. Arising from a meeting in the summer of 2013 with Rugeley Traders' Association a double page spread had been included in the Rugeley Chronicle to publicise the scheme. This had attracted only one reply.

He confirmed that the County Council took responsibility for the scheme taking longer than anticipated due to the contract management being poor. Additionally, the scheme had been extended further due to Rugeley Traders' Association constantly asking for amendments to the scheme.

He advised that the scheme had passed a full safety audit which had recently been undertaken. The key findings of the audit were outlined as follows:-

- Vehicle speed along Horse Fair – the proposed 20 mph limit would cover this
- Concern regarding there being no steps outside the shops and a hand rail was required – hand rail had been ordered
- Concern regarding the cycle symbols being dangerous – these had been removed
- Concern regarding illegal u-turns being performed on the central reservation – plans to install street furniture at a cost of £10,000. (Councillor Winnington requested that the funding for this be discussed at the Economic Governance Board)

He confirmed that very few complaints from the public had been received since the scheme had been completed. A Rugeley Councillor commented that this was due to the public raising their concerns with their District Councillors. Councillor Winnington advised that the County Council were unaware of these concerns.

He further advised that part of the scheme originally included improvements to the footway which connected to Rugeley Town Station. Councillor Winnington believed that this was now delayed by the discussions between District and

County for joint housing development at the top of Wharf Road. The LEP Consultant explained that he believed that the footway to be improved was not that on Wharf Road but the footway from Horsefair to the station on the town centre side of the railway.

Councillor Winnington referred to the proposals to improve the paving in the town centre and confirmed that he was not aware of what had been promised but would speak with officers regarding this.

Councillor Winnington confirmed that he would ensure Councillor Jones received a response to his emails in which he raised various issues.

He stated that as car parking and business rates were a District Council function he could not comment on this. Finally, he added that he hoped that the Horse Fair project would improve the area and people would start to use it. He considered it was an attractive scheme and hoped that trade would improve in the future.

In response to the comments made by Councillor Winnington Ian Hodgson, the representative from Rugeley Traders' Association explained that at the meeting in the summer of 2013 there had been a huge amount of discord. Traders had been advised that the County Council had a budget of £650,000 to spend and if it wasn't spent on the project it would be lost. Included in this budget was an amount to pay for the street furniture. He commented that Traders had asked for an input into the safety audit but were told that this was not possible. He considered that the independent person who carried out the audit was not aware of the problems in the area, the traffic flow, road users etc. They did not have the full facts and therefore the audit was a waste of time and money. He asked that consideration should be given to allowing residents who live in the area to be involved in any future safety audits.

Councillor Winnington responded by advising that the safety audit was carried out under national standards and there was no provision for a group of people/residents to be involved.

The LEP Consultant referred to the safety audit and asked for confirmation as to whether there had been any concern raised in the audit regarding the pedestrian crossing and its proximity to the bridge. Councillor Winnington confirmed that it had not been raised as a problem in the safety audit. The LEP Consultant asked whether this could be reviewed given the concerns that had been raised. Councillor Winnington asked that this be emailed to him along with any further issues. He confirmed that the Public Realm scheme had now been completed and it wasn't useful to keep talking about issues in the past. He agreed that the pedestrian crossing would be looked at again and he would provide an update on this in the future. He also commented that there was a need to look at the installation of street furniture to assist in stopping the u-turns on the central reservation.

The LEP Consultant referred to the Traders' Associations request for financial assistance from the County Council. He confirmed that the County Council's suggestion to reduce business rates was not the correct vehicle to use to

respond to the difficulties businesses had encountered as a result of the work carried out on Horse Fair. The second suggestion regarding the possible reduction or removal of car parking charges was not connected to the works on Horse Fair and therefore could not be used to respond to the traders request for assistance. He asked Councillor Winnington whether consideration could be given to the issue of compensation for the Traders in view of the disturbance and difficulties they had experienced as a result of the scheme. Councillor Winnington asked that this matter be included on a list of issues for him to consider, and that he would respond accordingly. However, he commented that he did not expect that the County Council would be able to pay any compensation to the Traders.

Following the discussion with Councillor Winnington he was thanked for his attendance and left the meeting. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager then explained that representatives from the Hednesford and Cannock Traders Associations had attended the previous meeting and therefore were not in attendance today. He reported their concerns verbally, as follows:-

### **Hednesford Traders Association**

Hednesford Traders Association had made reference to the progress with regard to the Towns Alive initiative. Hednesford Traders Association, The Friends of Hednesford Park, the Town Council and the Heart of Hednesford Initiative had now formed an umbrella group called Hednesford in Partnership Group who were working on a list of schemes that would help the town centre to be in a better position to secure trade and investment in the future.

### **Cannock Traders Association**

Cannock Traders had expressed concern that car parking would be free at the Mill Green Designer Village and considered that this disadvantaged the town centre because parking was not free in the town centre. They had also made a request for the Policy Development Committee to support the removal of car parking charges to coincide with the Cannock Carnival.

The LEP Consultant commented that the aim of the Designer Village was not to compete with the town centre as the brands available at the Village would not be represented in the town centre. Therefore the issue regarding there not being a level playing field for parking was not relevant as the two were not competing for the same business.

The request to support the removal of car parking charges on Cannock Carnival day was a matter for the Committee to consider. The Chairman suggested that the Committee could ask Cabinet to give consideration to this request.

**RESOLVED:**

- (A) That the views of the Committee be forwarded to Councillor Winnington outlining the following:-
  - i) consideration be given to reviewing the outcome of the safety audit

- in respect of the pedestrian crossing and its proximity to the bridge;
- ii) consideration be given the issue of compensation for the Rugeley Traders in view of the disturbance and difficulties they had experienced as a result of the scheme

(B) That Cabinet be asked to consider the request from Cannock Traders' Association to remove car parking charges to coincide with Cannock Carnival.

## **22. Update from Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Holder**

The following update from the Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader for each of the town centre areas was circulated:-

### **Hednesford**

- The final unit on Victoria Shopping Park has been leased by Marie Curie Cancer Care who has now been trading since the end of October last year. Unfortunately, this happened shortly after the collapse of Phones 4 U, which means that their unit is now closed and a new tenant is being sought by the administrators. The two refurbished units in Market Street have also been let; one to a recruitment company and the other to a locksmiths/key cutting business.
- At the end of November St Modwen completed the sale of the Victoria Shopping Park to an investment company (Aviva) who have now taken responsibility for its long term management.

### **Rugeley**

- An enhanced link between the Tesco store and Rugeley Town Centre is now nearing completion. Contractors are currently completing the hard landscaping works and soft landscaping works are about to commence.

### **Cannock**

- The Cannock Christmas Lights Switch On took place on Friday 14 November with the Council agreeing to cover some of the costs with the use of S106 monies. The event appeared to be well supported.
- Following the successful refurbishment of Beecroft Underpass in 2013, a similar programme of improvements is now being proposed to the Mill Street Underpass. A public consultation based on a 'Now and Then' theme closed yesterday. More information on the work to be undertaken and timescales will be announced in due course.

### **District-Wide**

- The Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme has now closed with all of the monies secure through the High Street Innovation Fund being used to support 26 businesses to occupy previously vacant units across

the District's three town centres. It has been replaced by the Town Centre Business Rates Relief Scheme which will operate along similar lines. The scheme is now live with information posted on the Council's website.

### **23. Performance Reports**

Consideration was given to the Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 performance information as outlined at Item 6.1 – 6.5. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager led Members through the four performance indicators for Quarter 1 which had all achieved their target.

He then referred Members to the Quarter 2 performance information and advised that the performance indicator relating to commissioning research to inform future investment needs of Cannock Town Centre had actually achieved its commissioning action – works were underway but it was taking longer than anticipated.

With regard to the indicator to reduce the number of vacant retail units in the town centres he commented that although this had not been achieved in Quarter 2 the situation had improved for Quarter 3 with various initiatives being developed to encourage the take up of the retail units.

He advised that the indicator in relation to the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme had been achieved in Quarter 2. The scheme had now closed; however, it had been replaced by the new Town Centre Business Rates Relief Scheme which would operate along similar lines.

RESOLVED:

That the performance information in relation to Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 be noted.

### **24. Work Programme**

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme as detailed at Item 7.1 be noted.

### **25. Exclusion of 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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**PART 2**

**26. The Future of the District's Town Centres**

The LEP Consultant advised the Committee on the investment opportunities in Rugeley as a result of the Rugeley Area Action Plan. It was noted that the Environment Agency had indicated that a flood alleviation scheme should be undertaken prior to any new redevelopment. This scheme would need to be progressed in order to bring forward investment sites in the area.

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager then briefed Members on the progress with the Aelfgar site also in Rugeley.

With regard to Hednesford town centre Members noted that the redevelopment scheme had now been completed and the impact of the scheme was being absorbed. The opening of the new Wetherspoons public house in April would be significant and could act as a stimulant for other uses in the town centre.

The LEP Consultant confirmed that the report being produced by GVA to highlight the potential investment opportunities in Cannock town centre was ongoing; however, this was taking longer to complete than had been anticipated.

He would keep the Committee advised of any issues with regard to the Forum Shopping Centre in Cannock which had recently been taken over and was under new management.

The meeting closed at 5.55pm.

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CHAIRMAN