

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BETTER JOBS AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 7 SEPTEMBER, 2016, AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT:

Councillors

Martin, Mrs. C.E. (Chairman)
Sutherland, M. (Vice-Chairman)

Cartwright, Mrs. S.M.	Johnson, T.B.
Cooper, Miss J.	Molineux, G.N.
Freeman, Miss M.A.	Snape, P.A.
Grice, Mrs. D.	Whitehouse, Miss S.
Hoare, M.W.A. (substituting for Councillor G. Burnett)	(substituting for Councillor M.S. Buttery)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Mrs. D.M. Todd (Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader – observer);
- Councillor J.P.T.L. Preece (Environment Portfolio Leader);
- Sheila Dunning, Cannock Traders Association;
- Stephanie Cunningham, Hednesford Traders Association
- Dave Hancock, Rugeley Traders Association
- Carol Fittes and Lesley Yates, Hednesford in Partnership

8. Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillors G. Burnett, M.S. Buttery, Mrs. C.L. Peake and G. Alcott (observer).

Councillors Hoare and Miss Whitehouse were in attendance as substitutes for Councillors Burnett and Buttery respectively.

It was noted that the Head of Economic Development would be joining the meeting for the later items on the agenda following the conclusion of the Cabinet Conference.

9. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restrictions on Voting by Members and Party Whip Declarations

No declarations of interests or party whip declarations were received.

10. Minutes

Minute No 3. – Minutes

A Member queried if a legal challenge to the Mill Green Designer Outlet Village development had been lodged with the High Court in advance of the 9 September deadline. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager replied that so far no indication had been received as to whether a legal challenge had been submitted, but a definite answer would not be known until the middle of week commencing 12 September.

Minute No. 4 – Better Jobs and Skills Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2016-17

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that Cabinet was due to consider the Cannock Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) Issues and Options Paper on 22 September for public consultation. Additionally, the working group set up to oversee production of the Local Plan (Part 2) would also be given the opportunity to feed into the AAP consultation. It was also confirmed that the Street Trading Policy would be included on the agenda for the 12 April, 2017 meeting of the Committee and the Senior Licensing Officer had been invited to attend for that item.

Minute No. 5 – Preparing Young People for Employment

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager noted regret that the new Arriva bus timetables implemented on 3 September had withdrawn a number of local services, including those which had served Kingswood Lakeside. Staffordshire County Council (SCC) was however looking into whether this service could be provided by another operator.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July, 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed.

11. Town Centres Traders Issues

Cannock

Sheila Dunning reported the following issues from the Cannock Traders' Association:

- Clarity needed on what was being proposed for the Christmas period in respect of free car parking in the town centre.
- Sections of block paving around the town centre had either broken or sunk and needed to be fixed.
- The new Chairman of the Traders' Association had suggested re-naming it the 'Cannock Community Group'.
- Assistance was needed to advertise events, publish more positive advertising and keep notice boards up to date.
- Concern about what impact the Mill Green Designer Outlet Village would have on the town centre and whether a free shuttle bus would be provided between the two locations.

Members supported the concerns raised about the poor state of the block paving and raised wider concerns about the town centre being in bad shape in general.

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager provided the following responses to the issues raised:

- Understanding was that principle agreement had been reached for free car parking to be provided for two Saturdays before Christmas as had been the case in previous years, however this was still to be confirmed.
- A number of walkabouts had taken place in Cannock town centre and identified issues of broken block paving amongst others. There was budget provision available in the current year to try and address problems identified and a related report would be submitted to the Council's Leadership Team in the near future for consideration.
- Any name change to the Traders Association should continue to include Cannock for sake of clarity, but it was for the Traders to agree on what they felt was most suitable. The Terms of Reference would need to be redefined to emphasise the relationship between Cannock Town Centre and its surrounding businesses.
- Funding support for advertising would be difficult to provide but from the walkabouts it was clear that noticeboards required more regular updating. Furthermore, there was an opportunity through the Council's website to link to the Traders Associations, which would be an alternative avenue for advertising.
- Unknown as yet what impact Mill Green would have on the town centre, but it was hoped there would be an increase in visitors from people who wouldn't ordinarily visit the area. The S106 agreement for the development included provision for improved bus services, but these would not be operated on a free basis.

Sheila Dunning then queried what additional help the town centre would receive as a result of Mill Green. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager replied that schedule 6 of the S106 agreement set out a number of improvements specifically for the town centre.

Hednesford

Stephanie Cunningham reported the following issues from the Hednesford Traders' Association:

- CCTV coverage within the town centre needed to be improved to address issues, particularly in the area near the library.
- Regular occurrences of vehicles being parked on double yellow lines on Anglesey Street and Eskrett Street which were causing blockages for passing traffic.

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager provided the following responses to the issues raised:

- Budget pressures and technological issues would need to be considered for the CCTV provision. Hednesford Town Council paid an annual sum of money for the cameras, but management of the cameras was the responsibility of the District Council.

- A report was due to be submitted to Cabinet on 22 September to seek approval for the principle of a Parking Order to be introduced on the car park to the rear of the Co-op store. As part of this discussion, it was hoped to address issues of on-street parking too. A related issue was the location of the taxi rank on Anglesey Street, but this would require further investigation by Staffordshire County Council.

A Member commented that the main issue for the car park to the rear of the Co-op was that it was regularly used by people commuting by train to work in Birmingham and Walsall and so were therefore taking up spaces all day because parking was free. The same Member also advised that Hednesford Town Council were due to consider a proposal to move the taxi rank to within the Anglesey Street car park.

Another Member commented that there needed to be equity in charges for usage of car parks across the district to ensure fairness for all residents.

Rugeley

Dave Hancock reported the following issues from the Rugeley Traders' Association:

- As with Cannock, there were issues in Rugeley town centre with uneven and broken block paving which needed to be addressed.
- Issues had occurred with lorries parking and causing obstructions to traffic. A clear parking zone was needed to stop this happening in future.

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager provided the following responses to the issues raised:

- Paving issued would be addressed as with Cannock town centre, however there was only a £100,000 budget available to undertake such improvement works across all three town centres.
- An area of land identified by the Traders Association for lorry drivers to park up overnight was owned by Staffordshire County Council who could be approached about providing the land for such a purpose, but a positive response was unlikely to be forthcoming.

Councillors Preece and Mrs Todd arrived at the meeting during the consideration of this item.

12. Hednesford in Partnership

Carol Fittes and Lesley Yates delivered a presentation to Members on Hednesford in Partnership (HiP) which covered the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current committee structure 	<p>Chair – Carol Fittes</p> <p>Vice-Chair – Paul Woodhead</p> <p>Treasurer – Lesley Yates</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background to formation of Hednesford in Partnership 	<p>HiP was set up to bring together local groups such as; Friends of Hednesford Park, Heart of Hednesford Restoration Project and Hednesford Traders Association.</p> <p>Community sessions and focus groups held to find out what the public wanted to see HiP achieve within two, five and ten years.</p> <p>Decision makers from local groups and organisations meet together to discuss and organise activities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims and objectives 	<p>To facilitate collaboration between local bodies, so as to promote Hednesford as a great place to live, work, do business and visit.</p> <p>To combine the forces of local organisations in order to develop funding bids for community wide and specific local projects, thereby potentially attracting greater investment.</p> <p>To provide a transparent way for local organisations to share with each other information about the activities they are undertaking, their experiences, local intelligence and best practice.</p> <p>To assist with the promotion and co-ordination of community events and initiatives.</p> <p>To encourage individuals to volunteer in support of the work of community organisations and build a bank of volunteers.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision for Hednesford 	<p>Creating long term sustainability for Hednesford, making it a great place to live, work and visit.</p> <p>Arts & Architecture (creating a theme).</p> <p>Events (joint – working together).</p> <p>Marketing & Promotion.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Parters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chase Chamber of Commerce Hednesford Town Football Club Hednesford Traders Staffordshire University Academy Kingsmead School CHAPS (Chase Arts in Public Spaces) Museum of Cannock Chase South Staffordshire College McDonalds Hednesford Town Council Heart of Hednesford Restoration Project

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chase Creative Hub • Community Wellbeing Arts, Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles • Cannock Chase Clinical Commissioning Group • Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty • Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service • St. Peters Church • Friends of Hednesford Park • Cannock Chase Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievements so far 	<p>April 2016, Bridging Communities Initiative - £10,000 received from Staffordshire County Council's Community Arts Fund.</p> <p>Working in partnership to deliver Summer and Christmas events.</p> <p>Launching four specialist markets in 2017.</p> <p>September 2016, submitted a bid for 'Celebrate' lottery funding for a carnival event in Hednesford in August 2017.</p>

A Member queried what the proposed five and ten year plans were. Carol Fittes replied that the longer term plans needed to be realistic about what could be achieved as finances and timescales needed to be accounted for, but projects such as redevelopment of Hednesford railway station and buildings renovations had been discussed. The two year plan included items which could be delivered quickly and help to engage more people and organisations in the Partnership.

Another Member then queried what the theme for the town would be. Lesley Yates replied that this would be developed as the artwork for the railway bridge starts to come together (to be achieved via the Bridging Communities initiative) but it was recognised that an identity for the town needed to be established. Members commented that it was important for the identity to be forward looking, but also recognised the heritage and history of Hednesford.

13. Priority Delivery Plan – Q1 Report

Members noted the latest performance information (Item 6.1 to 6.8 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager apologised to the Committee for the continued absence of the Head of Economic Development and introduced the Q1 outturn report. He then reported that the direction of travel performance indicators for quarter 1 were broadly positive, drawing Members' attention to the following indicators:

Improving skills and accessibility to local employment opportunities

The employment rate for the district was above the regional and national average and Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) claimant numbers sitting below 1%. There

was ongoing concern however about the number of 16-18 year olds classed as being not in education, employment or training (NEETS).

Supporting attractive and competitive town centres

Town Centres vacancy rates had increased compared to the previous quarter, but were still better than the national vacancy rate. Cannock Town Centre had however experienced an upward trend in the number of vacant premises.

Secure improvements to Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley Town railway stations

The S106 agreement for the Mill Green Designer Outlet Village included provision that improvements would be made to Cannock train station, along with connectivity improvements to/from the town centre and Mill Green. Improvements were also required to Hednesford and Rugeley Town stations, however any such improvements would have to be funded locally.

Continue working with partners to facilitate the formulation and implementation of EU funded projects to support business start ups and the growth of existing businesses.

The launch of the Business Growth Programme had been heavily delayed, and further information was awaited as to when the launch would happen. Grant monies from the Skills Funding Agency were only available until March 2018.

To work with Staffordshire County Council to clear the site of the former Aelfgar School site in advance of a re-tendering to secure an Extracare facility within Rugeley Town Centre.

The Extracare review was still underway so no further update was available at this time, however it was expected that the site would still be cleared in due course.

Other issues

A Member raised concern with the announcement from Gestamp Tallent to relocate 800 workers from their current site in Bridgtown to a new site at Four Ashes in South Staffordshire District and the accompanying loss in business rates for the Council. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager replied that the Council had tried to work with Gestamp to secure alternative locations in the district as they had outgrown their current site but no suitable relocation options could be identified. It was expected that the transfer to the new site would take place gradually over three to four years, so the impact upon Gestamp's existing employees and the district would not hit all in one go. The company had however indicated they would be willing to retain a training facility in the area. Assurances would also be sought from the company that transport would be provided for all workers affected by the relocation. In respect of business rates, the buildings currently occupied by Gestamp would still be liable for business rates if retained, and other existing/future proposals for development of new employment floorspace within the district would help to mitigate any loss of business rates income.

Councillor Mrs. Grice left the meeting at this point and did not return.

A Member requested an update on the continued development of the Kingswood Lakeside site. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager replied that two further schemes were currently under discussion and other

existing schemes were nearing completion. If all agreed and proposed schemes were achieved then the site would almost be at 100% capacity.

14. West Midlands Combined Authority Update

Due to the Head of Economic Development not being in attendance, this item was deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

15. Work Programme Update

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager reported that the agenda for the 8 December meeting would be mainly focussed on transport matters. Network Rail had been invited to provide an update on the Chase Line electrification project, Jeff Tucker from SCC had been invited to provide an update on bus services (a representative from Arriva may also be in attendance for this item).

A Member suggested that Staffordshire County Councillor Mark Winnington should also be invited as the current Chairman of West Midlands Rail.

The meeting closed at 5:50pm

CHAIRMAN