

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ACCESS TO SKILLS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2007 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Jones, R. (Chairman)
Faulkner, B. (Vice-Chairman)

Dixon, D.I. Holder, M.J.

Also present by invitation:

Councillor Mrs. P. A. Ansell – Access to Skills & Economic Development
Leader
Mr. Roger Bradshaw, Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership
Mr. Kevin Smith, 5Cs Training

(An apology for absence was received from Councillor G.R. Martin).

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

<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>	<u>Type</u>
Jones, R.	Member of Rugeley CAB	Personal
Jones, R.	Employee of Sutton Coldfield College	Personal

23. Local Jobs for Local People: Promoting Good Practice

The Select Committee received a presentation from Mr. Roger Bradshaw, Economic Development and Tourism Officer, Staffordshire County Council, representing the Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership (DMP).

Mr. Bradshaw explained that the Partnership was made up from both the private and public sectors. The private sector included, amongst others, such organisations as Alton Towers, Drayton Manor Park, the Snow Dome and Silvertrees Caravan Park.

Tourism was a major economic force and over the last 20/30 years there had been a steady increase of money spent in Staffordshire. In Cannock Chase there were 3.000 tourism related jobs which equated to 9.4% of the total workforce. Tourism was particularly important in this part of Staffordshire with the highest number of visits in the region, although due to its location the percentage of people staying overnight was small. Investment in excess of £300 million had been made over the last 10 years in the Ramada Hotel, Travel Inn, Cannock Chase Heritage Trail and Forest Enterprise. The Partnership was endeavouring to find ways of getting people to stay for longer visits.

Staffordshire was centrally located with a unique industrial history, a rich cultural heritage and stunning landscapes.

The following three strategies had been influential in establishing the DMP:-

- Southern Staffordshire Visitor Economy Strategy 2003
- North Staffordshire Tourism Strategy 2004
- West Midlands Visitor Economy Strategy 2004

The Staffordshire DMP had been set up in the form of a mini tourist board to rationalise the limited resources, overcome duplication and to have a clear role in agreeing what was needed.

The Partnership delivered tourism in a more effective and efficient way. They were customer focused; led by the needs of the industry with the aim that it will deliver a better visitor experience.

The DMP had been given approval to progress by the Leaders and Chief Executives Group on 1 November 2004. The Partnership was officially launched in April 2006. A delivery structure was agreed in December 2005 and a 3 year delivery programme was agreed in January 2006 aimed at:-

- Marketing and branding
- Information and E Tourism
- Product Development and Infrastructure
- Business Support, Quality, Training and Skills
- Research and Monitoring
- Membership
- External Funding

Dragon a specialist marketing agency was appointed in December 2005 to develop a Staffordshire Brand and prepare with the Partnership a three year communications strategy aimed at rationalising marketing and information etc. E Tourism was also being developed with an integrated Destination Management System for:-

Lichfield – Southern Staffordshire
Stoke-on-Trent – North Staffordshire
Staffordshire Moorlands – Peak District
Staffordshire Tourism Portal Website

Research and monitoring work had been undertaken with 100 businesses providing important information.

Some key issues were being addressed with respect to the image of the tourist industry to overcome the problems associated with recruiting and retaining staff. The Partnership also provided specialist business support and training on customer service skills.

A strategic bid would be submitted to Advantage West Midlands for the following funding:-

- £30K Development Fund to develop brand and training programme (successful)
- £2.1 million for 3 year Strategic Revenue Application for
 - Marketing/Branding
 - Visitor Information
 - Quality, Training and Sector Skills
 - Research and Monitoring

The strategic bid would assist with raising the profile of Staffordshire with media campaigns being undertaken and developing visitor information. How literature was distributed would also be reviewed with possible displays at Service Stations on what Staffordshire had to offer.

Workshops would be run to provide an Ambassador Training Programme which was anticipated would have a pyramid effect, with those receiving training, then training others.

An outline bid for the funding was submitted in February 2007 with a full application to be submitted by the end of March 2007. A costed Business Plan for 2007/08 would be prepared for Board/Local Authority approval.

It was considered that the work being undertaken would help generate more businesses and therefore more employment. One of the criticisms of work in the tourist industry was that it was seasonal, part-time and low paid. However, it was considered that in rural and urban areas a valuable service was being provided, that they were not low value jobs and part-time working often suited people's circumstances and many jobs were at a professional level.

Members were concerned that too many visitors to the Chase could lead to damage occurring, but were informed that by providing high quality centres, better control of the public and cyclists could be achieved thereby providing better protection to conservation areas. Lack of signage particularly from the motorways to Cannock Chase was also perceived to be a problem.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Bradshaw for his informative presentation.

24. Local Training Initiatives and Best Practice

The Select Committee received a presentation from Mr. Kevin Smith, 5'Cs Training.

He gave an overview of the Leitch Review of Skills, Prosperity For All In The Global Economy – which was published on 5 December 2006.

The review sets out a vision for the UK and showed that levels of skills at all levels needed to be raised. Responsibility for achieving this had to be shared between Government, employers and individuals. The UK's skills were fundamentally weak which was holding back productivity and growth. Global competitors were advancing rapidly with China and India creating four million graduates a year compared to 250,000 in the UK. The skills in the UK would be behind competitors even if current skills targets were met. Therefore radical change was necessary and urgent.

The skills framework was as follows:-

National Curriculum	Skills for Life	Key Skills	NVQs
Postgraduate		Level 5	Level 5
Graduate		Level 4	Level 4
A Levels		Level 3	Level 3
GCSE A*-C	Level 2	Level 2	Level 2
GCSE D-G	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1
NC Level 3	Entry 3		
NC Level 2	Entry 2		Entry
NC Level 1	Entry 1		

The skills vision was to commit to the UK becoming a world leader in skills by 2020 with:-

- 95% of working age adults to achieve functional literacy and numeracy up from 85% literacy and 80% numeracy at present.
- More than 90% of workforce adults qualified to at least level 2 up from 70%.
- Intermediate skills balance shifts from level 2 to level 3. Double apprenticeships to 500,000. 300,000 people to achieve level 3 each year against 110,000 at present.
- More than 40% of the adult population qualified to level 4 and above, at present 29%.

The three key players were the Government who had to create a clear system to deliver economically valuable skills, employers to respond to the opportunities offered to meet their needs and individuals to invest in their own skills development.

The Leitch recommendations were:-

- Strengthen the employer voice
- Increase employer engagement and investment in skills
- Increase adult skills across all levels and all ages
- Route all adult vocational skills funding through Train to Gain and Learner Accounts
- Improve higher level skills
- Increase employer investment in level 3, 4 and above
- Build basic platform skills
- Increase people's aspirations and awareness of the value of skills to them and their families
- Create a new integrated employment and skills system to increase sustainable employment; and
- Develop a nationwide network of local employment and skills boards.

Some of the barriers to employers engaging in training were the cost, business priorities and the lack of clarity as there were an increasing number of projects, programmes etc. However, by providing a job that matches people's aspirations, paying the going rate and having confidence in their employees to carry out their work, they would get a loyal and skilled workforce.

More employers needed to offer apprenticeship places, take up the Train to Gain offer and commit to developing their business through developing their workforce. The Train to Gain was a new service designed to help businesses get the training they needed to succeed. It helped businesses improve their productivity and competitiveness by ensuring that employees have the right skills to do the best job.

It was considered that a massive challenge lay ahead as over a third of adults in the UK did not have a basic school leaving qualification, five million people had no qualification at all, one in six did not have the literacy skills expected of an 11 year old and half did not have these levels of functional numeracy. Of the working age population in 2020, 70% would have already completed their compulsory education and half would be over 25 years of age and unlikely to participate in the traditional route from school through to university.

The Staffordshire Providers Association (SPA) was formed in 2003 to promote work based learning within the county. A SPA Manager had been appointed in early 2006 and was now based in Cannock.

The SPA provided a communication network for all member organisations that work under contract with Staffordshire Learning and Skills Councils. They encouraged links with other professional bodies to improve the quality of learning in line with regional and national developments and provided support to providers in meeting the challenges ahead.

The key features of best practice that providers were now working together on to meet the needs of both learners and employers were:-

- Developed Train to Gain Consortium – 15 private training providers and 8 colleges. Best performing in the West Midlands Region, acknowledged at national level as good practice.
- Secured funding (£25K) to help develop and improve learner and employer satisfaction.
- StepUp2 – Programme aimed at addressing the NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) problem, a partnership between 7 training providers across Staffordshire.
- It's My Future Project – Providers working with each other, schools and Be Together to provide alternative curriculum to year 10 and 11 pupils at risk of becoming NEET.
- TORCH – Outreach project between 5Cs Training and Rodbaston College.
- Working with the Local Education Authority to support development of the 14-19 Specialised Diplomas.
- Local E2E development group working with other providers and the Connexions Service.
- Provision management and networking in order to meet the needs of employers and sharing of best practice through the Provider Quality Sub Group.
- For the third year running delivering the “Staffordshire Apprentice of the Year Awards” with local successes in 2005 and 2006.
- Involvement with the Regional Skills Development Agencies and Regional LSC and provider network groups.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Kevin Smith for his informative presentation.

RESOLVED:

That a copy of the presentation be forwarded to Members of the Select Committee.

CHAIRMAN