

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ACCESS TO SKILLS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 5 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.
Hewitt, S.M. Thomas, D.

Also present:

Councillor Mrs. P. A. Ansell – Access to Skills & Economic Development
Leader
Mr. P. Amison – Advantage West Midlands

(Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G.R. Martin and R.C. Turville).

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

<u>Member</u>	<u>Interest</u>	<u>Type</u>
Jones, R.	Member on the Board of Rugeley CAB	Personal
Jones, R.	Employee of Sutton Coldfield College	Personal
Jones, R.	Employee of City of Wolverhampton College	Personal
Ansell, Mrs. P.A.	Member on the Board of Cannock Chase College	Personal

19. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 18 October and 27 November 2006 be approved as a correct record.

20. **Advantage West Midlands – RES (Review of the West Midlands Economic Strategy) Review**

The Chairman and Members welcomed Mr. Phillip Amison, Director of Strategy from Advantage West Midlands to give a presentation to Members on the RES Review.

Mr. Amison explained that the policy choice themes were presented as a series of themes such as enterprise, innovation, skills and infrastructure.

He reported that the West Midlands economy was relatively prosperous between 1945 and the early 1970's and by the late 1970's and 1980's there were major job losses and restructuring.

A graph indicated alongside manufacturing decline, employment in sectors such as distribution, financial and business services which had grown rapidly.

Mr. Amison reported that with regard to the regions output gap, GVA/head output was 92 per cent of the UK average with a £10 billion output gap. This was due to low productivity per worker and low employment rates.

With regard to enterprise in the West Midlands, business start ups were low and below the English average and women's entrepreneurship was lower than the average in the West Midlands, although there was a favourable overall attitude towards enterprise and entrepreneurship.

He reported that levels of R&D (Research and Development) investment were limited and skills levels were low in the West Midlands although relatively strong on harder innovation. He also reported that in the West Midlands region spend on R&D is just over 1 per cent compared with the South East which spends 3.07 per cent and the East of England with 4.38 per cent.

The West Midlands was a poorly qualified region in relation to skills in the West Midlands, and there was a significant gap in skills with only a small proportion of the workforce qualified to degree level or above.

A graph illustrated the attainment of NVQ level 2 qualifications and above. The UK in comparison to other Countries at achieving NVQ level 2 and above was approximately 60 per cent and approximately 40 per cent of the UK workforce had low or no qualifications.

He explained that there were low rates of economic activity in comparison to the English average and there was a serious demographic challenge.

Mr. Amison reported that invitations were open to respond to the document on line or in writing and the deadline for submission was 28 February 2007.

Questions were then invited from Members of the Select Committee.

The Chairman referred to the review and asked for clarification as whether or not the report was suggesting a transitional change. Mr. Amison explained that there was a shift towards a service based economy and overall the West Midlands was still more reliant on manufacturing.

Concern was raised due to the funding differences between the West Midlands and the South East. Mr. Amison explained that it was probably due to the mix of business types.

The comments and concerns of the Select Committee were noted.

RESOLVED:

That the view of the Select Committee would be taken into account when the Council's formal response is agreed by Cabinet, and that the Chairman of the Select Committee be consulted prior to comments being forwarded to Advantage West Midlands

21. Work Programme of the Access to Skills and Economic Development Select Committee

Consideration was given to the revised Work Programme (Enclosure 5.1 – 5.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Mr. Bob Phillips reported that the work programme had been updated and one meeting remained prior to the formulation of recommendations on 17 April 2007.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Work Programme of the Access to Skills and Economic Development Select Committee be agreed.

CHAIRMAN