

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOWN CENTRES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 4 JULY, 2017 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Martin, Mrs. C. (Chairman)
Councillors Stretton, Mrs. P.Z. (Vice-Chairman)

Buttery, M.S.	Hardman, W.T.A.
Cooper, Miss J.	Lea, C.I. (substitute)
Foley, D.	Snape, P.A.
Freeman, Miss M.A.	Sutherland, M.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chairman referred to the sad news that Councillor G. Burnett had passed away suddenly last week. Members held a 1 minutes silence as a mark of respect.

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was submitted for Councillor Miss J. Christian.

Notification had been received that Councillor C.I. Lea would be in attendance as substitute for Councillor Miss J. Christian.

2. 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.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Better Jobs and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 12 April, 2017 be received for information.

4. End of Year Report 2016/17 Better Jobs and Skills Priority Delivery Plan Performance Update

Members considered and noted the 2016/17 end of year performance information for the Better Jobs and Skills Priority Delivery Plan (PDP) (Item 4.1 – 4.9 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Economic Development made reference to the electrification of the Chase Line. He advised that the proposal to employ a consultant to investigate the required improvements to Cannock station to complement the development of the Mill Green Designer Outlet Village had been put on hold as Officers had become aware of a piece of work undertaken by the WMCA. This work had been led by West Midlands Rail Network and had investigated station improvements along various routes including the Chase Line. It had found that many travellers hurry through the stations to access the rail network but it was considered that stations could become more valuable as community assets. Officers would use the information gathered by this piece of work as a basis for the more detailed work that would be undertaken in relation to the requirements for Cannock Station.

The Committee noted that there was a meeting scheduled for Friday 7 July regarding the electrification of the Chase Line. A Member advised that although the electrification of the line would not lengthen the platforms at stations the new trains/carriages would be able to hold significantly more passengers.

A Member commented that the Council had placed a lot of pressure on the railway operators to implement the electrification of the Chase Line and would continue to apply further pressure to achieve more improvements.

The Head of Economic Development also referred to the Rugeley Flood Alleviation Scheme. Concern had been expressed at the previous meeting regarding the red clay being deposited on the highway. The Chairman commented that she had spoken to the Environment Agency about this issue and had been advised that roads were being swept on a regular basis. However the roads leading to the site were being swept not the ones exiting it. She also considered that the wheel washing facilities at the site were not adequate. The Head of Economic Development would take this up with the Environment Agency to ensure the correct roads were being swept. He also confirmed that Planning Officers would be inspecting the area to ensure that there were no breaches of the planning conditions.

The Head of Economic Development then made reference to the Mill Green Designer Outlet Village and the measures required to enhance connectivity with Cannock Town Centre. He commented that the Designer Village was a huge opportunity for the District who would benefit from an increased number of visitors; however, it would be a challenge to ensure the right offer was provided within the town centre in order to attract visitors. Discussions would continue with the town centre traders regarding this issue. A Member made reference to the cinema/leisure proposal for High Green and asked if this was progressing. The Head of Economic Development advised that Officers had been in discussion with Cannock Assets regarding this proposal but there had been no further communication since Christmas. He confirmed that the Council was still aspiring to get a leisure/cinema use into the town centre.

5. Better Jobs and Skills Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2016/17

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Economic Development (Item 5.1 – 5.4 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Economic Development advised that the report summarised the work undertaken by the Committee in the previous municipal year. He confirmed that although there had been an energetic debate which had been focussed on transport and skills no reviews were undertaken by the Committee and therefore no recommendations were made to Cabinet or Council.

RESOLVED:

That the report summarising the work undertaken by the Better Jobs and Skills Scrutiny Committee during the municipal year 2016-17 be approved and submitted to Council on 30 August, 2017 for information.

6. Economic Development and Town Centres Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2017/18

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Economic Development (Item 6.1 – 6.32 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Economic Development led the Committee through the report advising that when considering the Work Programme Members should have regard to the remit of the Committee, the Priority Delivery Plan and whether there was a need to establish small working groups to investigate the issues identified. He added that there had been a decision taken to reduce the number of Scrutiny Committee meetings so Members should not be looking to schedule any additional meetings. He referred Members to the Scrutiny toolkit at Appendix 1 and the draft work programme at Appendix 2.

A Member made reference to the draft work programme and suggested that the Committee should consider undertaking a review on transport, including bus and rail travel. She considered that this review would also link to education and skills as the recent closure of Cannock Chase Technical College would have implications for students who would now have to travel to other areas to access their courses.

The Chairman agreed that the Committee should undertake a review of transport and added that decent transport would attract investors into the District. She suggested that following the outcome of the review the Committee would have the opportunity to make a recommendation to Cabinet asking the County Council to reintroduce subsidies to the bus companies.

Members put forward a number of other topics that could be reviewed and these were discussed and consideration was given to whether there was time to undertake two reviews within the timescale. Following a lengthy debate Members agreed that the one in depth review on transport should be undertaken this year.

Members discussed the scope of the review and the following issues were noted:-

- bus services were being reduced across the District without any consideration for passengers; many areas were poorly served by public transport;
- there was a lack of competition with bus companies;
- evidence should be gathered as to the problems being experienced and Arriva should be invited to a meeting to discuss;
- the review should look at whether the current local transport in the District was fit for purpose;
- the review should look at bus and rail travel provision and consider both the commercial and passenger point of view;
- the review could also look at community transport and Parish Council's could be involved;
- consideration should be given to how transport restricted residents access to employment, education and leisure opportunities;
- the need to be stronger when determining the use of s106 monies for transport.

The Head of Economic Development advised that he would work with the Chairman and prepare further information for consideration at the next meeting. He commented that Members could telephone or email him outside of the scheduled meetings to discuss the review. The next scheduled meeting of the Committee was on 23 November, 2017 and Arriva would be invited to attend. The meeting date could be altered depending on Arriva's availability.

Reference was made to Staffordshire County Council who had recently started to consult on bus services across the County. Members asked that this document be sent to all Members of the Committee for information and a link to the document be put on the Council's website.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the Committee undertake an in depth review of transport, including bus and rail travel and community transport to determine whether the current local transport was fit for purpose.
- (B) That the Staffordshire County Council document outlining the consultation on bus services across the County be forwarded to all Members of the Committee and a link to the document be put on the Council's website.

The meeting closed at 5.10pm.

CHAIRMAN