

Cannock Chase Council
Minutes of the Meeting of the
Economic Recovery Scrutiny Committee
Held on Wednesday 1 December 2021 at 6:00pm
in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock

Part 1

Present: Councillors:

Thompson, Mrs. S.L. (Chairman)

Kraujalis, J.T. (Vice-Chairman)

Dunnett, Ms. A.J. Lyons, N.

Frew, C.L. Sutton, Mrs. H.M.

Haden, Mrs. P.K. Wilkinson, Ms. C.L.

Johnson, T.B. Witton, P.T.

13. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P.D. Startin.

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

No declarations of interests in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members Interests were made.

15. Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2021 be approved as a correct record.

16. Quarter 2 PDP and Recovery Performance Information

Consideration was given to the Quarter 2 PDP and Recovery Performance Information for Supporting Economic Recovery (Item 4.1 – 4.17 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Economic Prosperity led Members through the information outlining some of the projects/actions achieved in Quarter 2. In particular, he confirmed that notification had been received that the Council had been successful in securing £20m for Cannock Town Centre via the Levelling Up Fund. The public were encouraged to view the online consultation and visuals and offer their ideas and views. Further details would be released in due course.

A Member commented on the difficulty she had experienced navigating the website to complete an application form for ARG funding on behalf of a resident. However, once the

application had been submitted it had been dealt with quickly. The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that he would look at simplifying the process and if any businesses had issues in applying for ARG funding they should contact the Economic Development Team.

The Strategic Housing Manager then referred to the progress with all three key housing projects in Quarter 2 confirming that the Hawks Green site was on target for completion by March 2022. With regards to the Aelfgar development scheme she advised that the land sale had been completed and outline planning permission had been sought. She confirmed that the procurement exercise and selection of a contractor may slip into Quarter 4 due to the complex nature of the scheme. Finally, she confirmed that work was almost complete in relation to submitting the planning application for the Chadsmoor development; however, it may also slip into Quarter 4.

A Member referred to the Chadsmoor development and considered that this should be dealt with in a sensitive manner given that residents had expressed concern over developing the site. The Officer confirmed that residents would be consulted during the planning process.

In response to a question, the Officer confirmed that the Aelfgar development was more complex as it was a Passivhaus scheme and developers and contractors were not as knowledgeable. It was possible that the Chadsmoor development may also be a Passivhaus scheme.

The Head of Economic Prosperity then referred to the Direction of Travel Indicators. He advised that both unemployment rate and youth unemployment were down in Quarter 2. This was good progress and showed that as covid restrictions were eased jobs had been created.

Members asked whether there was any information available on the types of jobs being created and whether the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet had helped in creating jobs, particularly for local people.

The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that he did not have any data on types of jobs available, however, he could circulate this to Members following the meeting. He confirmed that McArthurGlen worked with the Walsall Skills Academy to assist local people in gaining the necessary skills to apply for vacancies. He added that 70% of McArthurGlen employees lived within a 20-minute timeframe and the outlet had created 600-700 jobs since opening.

He then referred to town centre vacancy rates which, although high in Cannock, had fallen in all 3 town centres during Quarter 2. He commented that there was an oversupply of retail units in Cannock and not enough demand. This was one of the reasons why the Council had been successful in obtaining funding through the Levelling Up Fund.

Members noted that the smaller village centres did not appear to have difficulty with empty retail units. The Officer commented that data in respect of District centres was not measured. However, District centres such as Heath Hayes had smaller retail units which were occupied by independent businesses or coffee shops, whereas in Cannock Town Centre many of the units were too large for these independent businesses. It was therefore important to think differently about town centres and their usage in the future.

Resolved:

- (A) That the Quarter 2 PDP and Recovery Performance information be noted.
- (B) That the Head of Economic Prosperity circulate data on the types of jobs available to Members.

17. Briefing Note – Local Plan Consultation Scrutiny Review

Councillor T. Johnson, Chairman of the Local Plan Consultation Working Group, was invited to outline the Briefing Note. He explained that the Group had met on two occasions, 7 September and 11 November and had considered what could be done to increase and improve consultation methods in the future. The Group had formulated several recommendations and he outlined these for the benefit of Members.

Resolved:

Members noted the following recommendations of the Working Group and agreed that these be submitted to Cabinet for consideration: -

- (a) consideration be given to having a stand at public events such as the local farmers markets that take place throughout the District.
- (b) consultation be directed to areas in the District where higher levels of development were taking place.
- (c) make better use of social media by setting up a dedicated Facebook page for the Local Plan consultation; this could then be shared/promoted by all political groups.
- (d) Councillors should be encouraged to liaise and engage with residents to seek their views, particularly in areas where significant development was taking place.
- (e) Improve the communication between Officers and Ward Members in order to share knowledge of any development activities in a particular area.
- (f) To look at using virtual consultation methods similar to those used for the Levelling Up Fund – build this into the next stage of the consultation process.
- (g) That the non-technical document be circulated to Members of the Group for them to review and feedback any comments to officers.
- (h) To look at how the Council publish the information in respect of the Local Plan – do something different to capture the interest of the public when consultation was launched.
- (i) The need for better engagement with Parish Councils – suggest Officer attendance at Parish Council meetings to outline the consultation process and advise how the public can get involved.
- (j) The need for the provision for gypsy/traveller families in the Local Plan – although this was a key theme in the Local Plan it was considered this could be highlighted better in the consultation process.

18. Economic Recovery Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021-22 – update

The Head of Economic Prosperity explained that the Committee had agreed two reviews during 2021/22. The Local Plan Consultation Review had been completed and the first meeting of the Affordable Housing Delivery Scrutiny Review was scheduled to meet on 24 January, 2022.

He confirmed that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for 30 March, 2022. The Committee would receive the Quarter 3 performance update report, an update on the Affordable Housing Delivery Scrutiny Review and an update on the Car Parking Pilot which had been extended until the end of January.

The meeting closed at 6.45pm.

CHAIRMAN