

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ACCESS TO EDUCATION, SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MONDAY 4 JANUARY, 2010 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Mawle, D.L. (Chairman)
Burnett, G. (Vice-Chairman)

Burnett, J. Williams, Mrs. P.
Holder, M.J.

(An apology for absence was received from Councillor M.R. Green).

9. Minutes

Arising from Minute 5, page 6, it was reported that both the Chairman of the Committee and the Scrutiny Committee Chairman, Councillor Mrs. P. Williams had met with the Head of Blake Valley Technology College. Both Members had viewed the educational improvement plan for the school and explained to the Committee that it was an in-depth document which provided extensive information on the schools plans. It was reported that the school was also in the process of trying to recruit additional Maths teachers although there appeared to be a shortage in this particular discipline.

Members of the Committee discussed school educational improvements plans and were of the opinion that it was important that schools delivered on the plans.

Mr. B. Phillips, Head of Planning and Regeneration reported that 3 local conferences had been organised through Staffordshire County Council with local partners with the emphasis on schools. A discussion had taken place with regard to developing a broader action plan which was currently at the draft stage.

Members of the Committee raised concern that certain areas within the District such as Rugeley were viewed as having low aspirations in terms of education. The Head of Planning and Regeneration indicated that the work of the Industrial Communities Alliance (formerly the Coalfields Communities Alliance) had identified a strong connection between lower levels of aspiration/ambition and the legacy of traditional industries such as coalmining.

Arising from Minute 7, page 7 the Head of Planning and Regeneration reported that those small businesses that were having difficulties in respect of rate relief would be offered information and advice.

With regard to maximising local recruitment via the Future Jobs Fund (FJF) it was reported

that under employment law it would be discriminative to employ only those people that resided within the District, although the Council were working with Jobcentre Plus to raise local awareness of FJF which included a decision to host a number of open days. The first open day had taken place early in December and the next was scheduled for this week. It was hoped that around 33 vacancies would be filled between January and the end of March.

With regard to the 'Golden Hello' scheme which offers employers a package worth £2,000 to employ a person who has been unemployed for at least six months, it was reported whilst some job candidates had been eligible for such support, none had been successful in being recruited by the Council.

AGREED:

- (A) That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 September, 2009 be approved as a correct record.
- (B) That the draft action plan currently being developed through Staffordshire County Council be received at a future meeting of the Committee.
- (C) That the Council's Policy and Performance Manager should examine available data relating to the numbers of pupils who are excluded by schools and the incidence of benefit dependency within their catchment areas

10. 2009/10 Quarter 2 Performance and Finance Report

Consideration was given to the Report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Enclosure 4.1 – 4.6 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Members referred to Annex 1, page 1 which showed one red performance indicator in respect of co-ordinating additional research work through the LSP. Members were keen to know why the research work could not be progressed. The Head of Planning and Regeneration stated that the research had to be carried out within a strict time period due to the research student's other commitments. Despite the best endeavours of the student it had proved impossible for his work to arrive at any meaningful conclusions due to robust data not being available and the individuals from the key agencies involved had been unable to identify the specific impacts of the various initiatives which had been employed to reduce benefit dependency during the study period.

A Member referred to Page 11 of the Action Progress Report and queried the way in which the target had been set; he stated that the actions should be with the Education Authority and not with the schools. The Head of Planning and Regeneration stated that this particular action had been considered by the Scrutiny Committee although there had been difficulties engaging with the Education Authority. He stated that it would be considered as progress that the Committee was currently in dialogue with the three schools.

A Member referred to Page 7 of the Actions Progress Report in respect of convening and leading meetings and developing an Enterprise Centre. The Member sought clarification on whether the target was to hold meetings, or develop the Enterprise Centre. The Head of Planning and Regeneration advised that a 3 year plan was in place to deliver the Enterprise Centre and meetings were currently taking place with partners.

Members referred to Page 7 of the Action Progress Report and were keen to know if the launch of the Destination Cannock Chase web pages were complete. Mr. G. Watson, Economic Development Manager advised that the site had received a significant number of hits however the general Economic Development pages on the Council's website still required updating which had not previously been done due to other priorities.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration referred to Page 9 and advised that in the context of the Hednesford Town Centre Regeneration proposals the two phases had been misreported in the report. He stated that the Phase I proposals for the Rugeley Road area had required an amended planning application which had now been determined whilst protracted negotiations on Phase II (Victoria Street) site had meant that a planning application was unlikely before the end of the financial year.

AGREED:

- (A) That the performance outturn for Quarter 2 as detailed in Annex 1, be noted.
- (B) That the exception reports, as detailed in Annex 2, which describes the actions taken and actions proposed to be taken by Lead Officers for any action or performance indicator classified as red or amber, be noted.
- (C) That the financial outturn for Quarter 2 as detailed at Annex 3, be noted.
- (D) That an additional meeting of the Committee be convened in order that an invite be extended to the Education Authority (possible Richard Worth) to attend a meeting in respect of educational attainment within local schools.
- (E) That an update report be received at the next meeting of the Committee in respect of the proposed development of an Enterprise Centre within the District.

11. Update on the Impact of the Recession

Consideration was given to the Briefing Note of the Head of Planning and Regeneration (Enclosure 5.1 – 5.11 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Information was provided to Members of the Committee in respect of the Response to the Recession – LSP/Partner Activities (Updated November 2009).

The Head of Planning and Regeneration updated the Committee in respect of the Recovery Task Group who were in the process of formulating and progressing their own action plan to deal with the immediate effects of the recession.

It was agreed that Members would receive a list of the recession led actions taken to date at the next meeting.

AGREED:

- (A) That the updated statistics and underlying trends report, be noted.

- (B) That a list of recession led actions taken to date be received at the next Committee.
- (C) That a list of all the Councils Partners and Organisations along with their abbreviations explained in full be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

12. Educational Achievement regarding the Committee's report to Compare Achievement between Key Stage 2 and 4

Mr. R. Lamond, Policy and Performance Manager gave a presentation and provided information to Members on Educational Achievement in Cannock Chase.

Members discussed the information and were keen to see what the results would be at Key Stage 3 and 5 levels and also how many level 6 and 7s were included in the results. Furthermore, it was stated that level 6 information should be provided by Key Stage 3.

AGREED:

The Policy and Performance Manager would provide further information at the next meeting of the Committee in respect of Educational Achievement.

CHAIRMAN