

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY, 29 NOVEMBER, 2012 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Lovell, A. (Chairman)

Alcott, G.
Gamble, B.

Jones, Ms. J. L.
Sutherland, M.
Todd, R.

16. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Davies and Mrs. A. Spicer.

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

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

18. Minutes

AGREED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October, 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed.

19. Delivering Infrastructure for New Jobs

Integrated Transport Strategy including Transport Links to Employment Areas

The Committee received a presentation from Nick Dawson, Connectivity Strategy Manager, Staffordshire County Council.

He advised that County Councillor M. Maryon and Clive Thomson, Commissioner for Transport and the Connected Council had sent their apologies for not being able to attend.

It was explained that the Cannock Chase District Integrated Transport Strategy (CCDITS) formed part of the Staffordshire Local Transport Plan (LTP3). The document identified how the LTP would be funded. A consultation exercise had been undertaken in 2011 and the LTP was updated annually taking into consideration the

responses received. The LTP detailed what was to be carried out both in the short term (3 years) and the long term (2026), focusing on the economic prosperity and needs of communities.

The following three Local Transport Packages were recommended to be implemented:

- Pye Green Valley
- Norton Canes
- Rugeley Area Action Plan

A meeting had taken place on 15 October, 2012 with Officers from the District Council to discuss issues that had been identified and it was considered that some progress had been achieved. The majority of the issues were already included in the CCDITS. Some of those identified required partner support in order to be delivered, such as improvements to the Chase Line and a Rail Summit was to be held on 9 January, 2013 at which 50/60 representatives would be present in order to agree a Rail Strategy.

Work was planned around the Churchbridge area and the County Council was working closely with the Highways Agency with respect to this project.

New work streams to improve access to employment included:

- A460 Eastern Way Dualling
- A4601 Tallent Automotive (off peak bus and improved egress arrangements)
- Opportunities to improve bus services in Rugeley (Tesco/ Towers/Power Station)
- A service to Kingswood (a new bus service was to be introduced – Norton Canes/Kingswood/Cannock Bus Station)

Issues had been identified with respect to people gaining access to training, however it was considered that the 'Your Staffordshire Card' had been of assistance to young people.

A Countywide Transport Review was to be undertaken led by the Transport Services Unit and the Commissioner for Transport and Connected County. It was envisaged that it would cost in the region of £31m to connect people to business, education, skills, retail and services. Data was being gathered and meetings held with commercial operators as a way to move forward as efficiently as possible. It was considered that the Review could potentially be implemented in 2013 and Cannock Chase Council's priorities would be taken into account.

Concern was raised that planning applications from businesses were sometimes the subject of an objection on highways grounds. The Connectivity Strategy Manager advised that the provision of jobs was a priority for both Councils and took the view that Officers should continue working closely with each other to overcome any problems.

It was reported that an expensive major transport scheme was planned with regard to Five Ways Island at Heath Hayes and regular meetings were to be held with Officers

and progress reports would be presented to Members.

The Connectivity Strategy Manager advised that Councillor Maryon was willing to attend a future meeting to update the Committee on the CCDITS. He advised that the amount of funding had been cut from £8m to £3m across the county, although additional funding would be received from developers.

Concern was raised by Members that Arriva ceased to provide bus services without giving prior notice to the Council. It was reported that buses did not always run on time, were sometimes dirty and poorly heated and that there were no services at all to some outlying areas. Concern was also raised with regard to the age of the bus fleet running in Cannock Chase as opposed to those in other areas.

A Member reported that some older people in the Church Hill area of Hednesford had complained that they felt isolated, particularly those that did not drive, as they did not have a bus service, so cannot access the new retail developments in the town centre.

The Connectivity Strategy Manager advised that he would relate the concerns back to the County Council. He explained that Arriva only needed to report on services that were subsidised by the County Council. Schemes to reduce unemployment were a priority for the County Council, particularly those relating to youth unemployment.

The Head of Planning & Regeneration advised that he would take the issues up with Arriva and report back to the Committee on any response received.

20. Employment and the Visitor Economy

The Staffordshire Visitor Economy

The Committee received a presentation from Graeme Whitehead, Staffordshire Destination Partnership.

He reported that tourism was the fifth largest industry in the United Kingdom, valued at £86billion and employed over 1.4 million people. Leisure tourism in Staffordshire had increased by 11% from 2008 to 2011 and was valued at £1,001 million. Visitor day trips had increased considerably, although the number of overnight stays and amount spent had reduced.

Campaigns were being run to attract people to the county with an 'Enjoy Staffordshire Guide' being produced. A quarterly 'Out & About' newspaper was distributed (250,000) as a free insert in the Sentinel, Stafford Newsletter and Burton Mail. Members asked whether the Cannock Chronicle could be used for the insert which Graeme Whitehead undertook to investigate. It was reported that the discount 'Enjoy Card' had been launched in 2009 and offers could be viewed through the website www.enjoystaffordshire.com.

A 'Taste of Staffordshire' helped to promote restaurants, retailers and food and drink providers as it was considered that this was an important aspect of attracting visitors to Staffordshire. The Staffordshire & Stoke Conference Bureau managed by Stoke City Council acted as a booking facilitator and promoted members businesses. The Staffordshire Environmental Quality Mark supported a green tourism scheme which

had been designed in consultation with Visit England.

European Regional Development funding of £543k had been attained to be used between October 2012 to March 2015 and this had been matched by public sector partners. This would be used to

- Support marketing
- Develop business tourism
- Provide support and advice
- Support the food and drink sector
- Enhance visitor information.

It was considered that key opportunities were to increase membership across all sectors, improve communication and support for the industry and increase consumer engagement. It was important to maximise resources, reduce duplication, develop appropriately targeted campaigns and develop further revenue and other means of funding. Ways of increasing social networking would be explored further i.e. facebook, twitter and it was intended to become more aspirational in the future.

Graeme Whitehead advised that improving the provision of quality accommodation was important in order to promote Staffordshire to visitors. He reported that Cannock had good hotel facilities and it was hoped that with improved market conditions a 4/5 star hotel with conference facilities could eventually be built on part of Kingswood Lakeside. Day trips to this area and over nights stays had risen higher than any other district from 2008 to 2011.

He reported that the Staffordshire Destination Partnership had a good relationship with Officers of the Council and that from a business point of view Cannock Chase benefited from its proximity to Birmingham Airport and the NEC via the M6 Toll. He informed the Committee that it was important for the local economy to develop tourism in the area and its infrastructure.

The Cannock Chase Visitor Economy

The Committee received a presentation from the Planning & Economic Development Services Manager.

He explained that to realise the potential of the visitor economy across Cannock Chase the Council worked with private, public and voluntary sector partners. A Tourism Network Forum had been developed and a working relationship had been built and supported with, currently, 287 businesses associated with the delivery of visitor services and products. A dedicated website for visitor information had been set up – www.visitcannockchase.co.uk.

Cannock Chase received 4.5% of visitor spend in Staffordshire in 2004, but this had increased to 8% in 2010. The figures for 2011 were currently being compiled. It was reported that 10% of all employment in the district was supported by the visitor economy sector and excellent opportunities were offered for youth employment, particularly for those with less academic qualifications.

It was reported that from those responding to a local employment survey recently

undertaken, it had indicated that:

- 21% of employed were in the 16-24 year old category
- 85% employed were local people
- 67% of businesses offered work experience opportunities.

Visitors helped to create a positive image of Cannock Chase; raise the aspirations of young people; develop self esteem and were a tool for regeneration and employment and skills development.

It was reported that town centre developments were important in order to attract businesses and provide support to the visitor industry.

Concern was raised with respect to the Chase Heritage Trail and that the signage was not always clear. The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager advised that a deficiency existed with respect to the maintenance of signs and owing to the town centre regeneration work in Hednesford, the Trail may need to be reviewed.

RESOLVED:

That the Economic Development & Planning Policy Development Committee recommends that Cabinet reaffirm their support for the activities of the Staffordshire Destination Partnership and its contribution to local employment provision and efforts to strengthen the local economy.

21. 18-24 Unemployment Update

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager advised that he had circulated data with the agenda on the number of those aged 18-24 that were unemployed. He reported that there was a gradual decline in the number of those unemployed and the figures circulated with the agenda pre-dated the opening of the Tesco store at Hednesford where it was known that a number of young people had been taken on. The Committee was advised that a number of young people had also been employed at two new local food establishments (McDonalds in Rugeley and KFC in Cannock).

22. Performance Outturn Updates – Quarter 1 and Quarter 2

The Head of Planning & Regeneration advised that overall a positive picture was indicated in the first two quarters.

He explained that the most recent measure of the employment figures indicated a local rate of 67.1% compared to a regional rate of 67.4% and a national rate of 70.2%. However the data was based on the Annual Population Survey which suffered from low confidence levels at district level. Therefore the reliability of the data could change by 8% either side and should be treated with caution.

23. Work Programme Review

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme. Members requested feedback from the Head of Planning & Regeneration with respect to the response

from Arriva relating to the concerns raised regarding local bus services.

It was requested that the CCDITS should be included on the agenda for the meeting to be held in March 2013 in order that feedback from the Rail Summit could be discussed and that County Councillor M. Maryon be invited to attend.

AGREED:

That the amended Work Programme be agreed.

CHAIRMAN

(The meeting closed at 5.40 p.m.)