

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**  
**THURSDAY 2 OCTOBER 2014 AT 4.00 P.M.**  
**IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK**

**PART 1**

PRESENT: Councillors

Todd, R. (Chairman)  
Kraujalis, J.T. (Vice-Chairman)

Alcott, G.	Dixon, D.I.
Buttery, M.	Gamble, B.
Dean, A.	Holder, M.J.

**9. Apologies**

No apologies for absence were received.

**10. 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.

**11. Minutes**

Arising from consideration of the minutes the Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that there had been a discussion at the last meeting on the performance measures in the Priority Delivery Plan. The Chairman of the Committee and the Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader had set the new targets for the performance measures and these had been circulated to the Committee for consideration. These targets had now been approved.

In addition, he referred to the target regarding youth unemployment and circulated the most recent figures to the Committee. The Committee noted that Cannock Chase District Council had moved up a position.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 August 2014 be approved as a correct record.

## **12. Response to Youth Unemployment**

### **18-24 Youth Unemployment Update**

Consideration was given to the latest unemployment and youth unemployment data for the District (Item 4.1 – 4.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that there had been a significant decline in August 2014 in Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants. He commented that this was a positive step, but was concerned that part of the decline could be attributed to claimants moving to other forms of benefit, or simply choosing to stop claiming. He made reference to the error on Item No. 4.2 relating to the August 2014 percentage rate for local youth unemployment which should have read 3.2% and not 3.6% as stated. A note to this effect had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the latest overall and youth unemployment figures for the District be noted.

### **Update from Job Centre Plus**

Tina Evans from Job Centre Plus (JCP) explained that there had been changes to Job Centres over recent months and Advisors were now called “work coaches”. They worked with claimants to give them the skills they needed in order to make decisions themselves; to take responsibility about being on benefits and the need to do something in order to receive it.

There would be more frequent intervention with JSA claimants so they had more support. Job seekers would be offered support to do things like preparing a CV, setting up an email address and registering for the government’s new jobs website. This change would mean people start their JSA claim ready to look for work.

JCP staff would be working with individuals to assess their needs and draw up a “claimant commitment” which looks at any issues/barriers to starting work and a “work plan” which details any activities followed to look for work/improve their prospects of employment.

Job seekers who need it will also have more regular meetings with their “work coach” – weekly rather than fortnightly – to ensure they are doing everything they can to look for work and to quickly identify any gaps in their search for work.

She explained that any job seekers who were called to meetings which were not mandatory would have their travel costs reimbursed. It had been found that more frequent intervention was very successful and contributed to those coming off benefits. Additionally, claimants were considering Apprenticeships and part time work as well as full time work.

She made reference to Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and the link with JSA. She explained that when an individual switches from JSA to ESA the “work coach” stays involved to talk about work possibilities being mindful of the

person's health condition. A JSA claimant had to have two periods of sickness before switching to ESA. However, more discussion was taking place to inform claimants that they could remain on JSA with health conditions rather than switching to ESA.

Job Centres were working with employers so that job seekers could be offered work experience placements or voluntary work. This had led to more people moving into work quite quickly after being offered a work experience placement.

A Councillor had concern that the JSA figures were being manipulated by moving claimants to ESA. He questioned the assessment process for claiming ESA and stated that it should take 13 weeks to be assessed but some people were waiting a lot longer. Tina Evans explained that in the Central England Group there were 29,000 JSA claimants – 10% of these switch to ESA. Therefore there were not a high percentage of claimants switching to ESA. She acknowledged there were delays in the assessment process and there were steps in place to move the backlog of claimants. It was unacceptable to wait 6/9 months to be assessed.

A Councillor made reference to job applicants who did not receive a reply from an organisation to say they had been unsuccessful. He considered it was demoralising for the individuals not to receive a reply. Tina Evans commented that Job Centres were working with employers to advise them that feedback was important and were encouraging employers to inform job applicants accordingly. However, employers could not be made to do this. She further advised that the jobs and skills of individuals was assessed to ensure they were applying for the most appropriate jobs and had the necessary skills. It was made clear that one CV did not fit all jobs and Job Centres worked with individuals to ensure the CV was appropriate for the job they were applying for.

Another Councillor acknowledged that unemployment was measured by JSA claimants, however; he commented that there may be other people who may be unemployed who do not claim JSA, such as young people who relied on their parents. He asked whether any information was available on NEET's (Not in Employment, Education or Training). The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that information on NEET data could be secured (from a third party). However, the reason unemployment was now measured by JSA claimants was that it provided an up to date figure which the local authority could access once released. He acknowledged that it only provided a partial picture but considered it was the most reliable. He also commented that when an individual switched from JSA to ESA but then failed the ESA assessment and did not reapply for JSA they contributed to "hidden unemployment". It was very difficult to obtain information on this.

Tina Evans advised that the Job Centre could pick up some people who were lost in the system through the Troubled Families programme. Prevention work was undertaken to prevent people getting into the benefits system. They also worked with "Talent Match" to tackle hidden unemployment.

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager commented that an update on Talent Match had been circulated to Members. Kent Parson, Chief Officer for Chase Council for Voluntary Service would be invited to the meeting

in March along with a representative from Talent Match.

A Councillor asked whether any follow up was made on individuals who were claiming benefits but then gained employment. Tina Evans advised that once an individual gained employment the JSA claim was closed and no follow up was made. A follow up was only made where an individual was vulnerable (i.e. mental health or alcohol issues).

A Councillor considered that work related ESA claimants should be included in the figure for JSA claimants to get a more accurate idea of the number of people unemployed. Tina Evans stated that ESA and JSA claimants are not treated the same; although they were offered the same support they did not get sanctions.

Bob Phillips, LEP Consultant commented that although there were failings with JSA it did provide monthly statistics for comparison across the West Midlands. He sought confirmation of the top three reasons preventing 18-24's getting into employment.

Tina Evans advised that the key issues preventing 18-24's gaining employment were as follows:

- Lack of skills/work experience
- Level of education (literacy/numeracy issues)
- Types of work available to individuals because of lack of skills
- Individuals not keen on working for a low wage

She commented that support could be provided to assist on the skills issue; however, it was more difficult to tackle the low wage aspect as it was hard to change the perception of individuals regarding money. Additionally, a number of young people came from households/families with no work ethic. It was difficult to change this, however, work was being done with these families to try and help.

The Head of Service (LEP) added that if the target to reduce youth unemployment was to be achieved work would need to be done with schools and to look at vocational training and workless families.

The Chairman thanked Tina Evans for attending the Committee and providing the information.

### **Update from the LSP Employment and Skills Board**

James Whybrow from South Staffordshire College advised that the LSP Enterprise and Skills Board (ESB) was just one of a number of groups or organisations looking at the skills/employment agenda. He suggested that the role of these groups could be reviewed to reduce duplication.

He made reference to the European Social Fund and advised that projects using this funding source would be developed during the early part of next year to support youth unemployment.

The LSP ESB tried to connect all the groups together and work with Colleges to

tackle unemployment. He suggested that further information on the projects being delivered through the ESB could be considered at the March 2015 Committee meeting so that Members could gain a better idea of what was happening in the area.

The Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader advised that the Council was working closely with the Local Enterprise Partnerships to draw up a bid for funding from the European Social Fund.

A local Councillor made reference to the figures regarding youth unemployment in the West Midlands which had been previously circulated. He considered that although the table showed that Cannock Chase had overtaken Shropshire, both had 3.2 as a percentage so questioned whether they were placed alphabetically. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that he will investigate this before the next meeting and will analyse the data to two decimal points rather than one to establish if the Cannock Chase position can be justified.

Reference was made to incentives to encourage employers to take on apprentices. James Whybrow confirmed that the Government offered a wage incentive to employers who take on apprentices. The money the LSP Employment and Skills Board had set aside for a similar project could now be spent elsewhere.

The LEP Consultant commented there had been limited success in tackling worklessness. However, the European funding, which was available next year, would help.

The Chairman thanked James Whybrow for attending and providing the information to the Committee.

### **13. Community Infrastructure Levy Update**

The Planning Projects Officer provided Members with the background to the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy and then provided the Committee with a presentation. He outlined the proposed changes, as follows:-

- Draft charging schedule and regulation 123 list of projects were the subject of a 6 week consultation which finished on 19 September, 2014
- Only change proposed since the Preliminary Draft consultation in January is to exempt specialist retirement housing from the proposed charge
- Otherwise still proposing £40 per square metre for market housing
- (affordable housing is exempt under the CIL Regulations)
- £60 per square metre proposed for food supermarkets/superstores and out of town retail park developments

He outlined the key points:-

- We have to convince the inspector at the examination that the proposed rates would not make development unviable
- Also have to show that there is a funding gap for relevant infrastructure that CIL will partially fill having taken account of other funding sources

including S106 agreements

- The number and scope of S106 agreements will reduce once CIL is in place
- Pooling of funds from 5 or more S106's will not be permissible from April 2015 onwards or from when the charges are introduced whichever is the sooner
- We estimate that at today's prices potential receipts from CIL from residential development from 2015 to 2028 will be around £3,7 million
- Receipts from retail development are more difficult to estimate but if the major scheme at Mill Green goes ahead this could generate a further £1.5 million

The key messages:

- 17 representations received and no-one has requested to be heard in front of an inspector
- We may be able to avoid the need for a hearing and have the examination dealt with by written representations
- One respondent questions the viability evidence – we need further advice from our consultant Adams Integra on this
- Most of the other responses concern requests for projects to be included on the R123 List – we need to check with the Inspectorate whether we can add projects to the Draft list, if the Council wishes to do this, without carrying out a further round of consultation or not

Following the presentation Members discussed the affect the introduction CIL would have on S106 contributions. Reference was made to the recent planning applications whereby developers were saying that a scheme was unviable with the S106 contribution that had been agreed and were asking for it to be reduced. The Planning Projects Officer explained that the Government had introduced a process for developers to claim that a S106 obligation was making a scheme unviable. A viability test had to be undertaken to confirm a scheme was unviable with the agreed contribution. The outcome of the viability test could not be ignored.

The Planning Projects Officer then referred Member to the summary of responses to the consultation on the draft CIL charging schedule and Regulation 123 List which he had previously circulated. He outlined each response and sought the Committee's views on how to respond to the 17 representations that had been received.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the presentation be noted.
- (B) That the responses suggested by the Planning Projects Officer to the 17 representations that had been received be approved and Officers proceed to the next stage.

#### **14. Work Programme**

Consideration was given to the work programme for the Committee for 2014-15 (Item 6.1 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's work programme for 2014-15 be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.15 pm.

---

CHAIRMAN