

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 12 AUGUST 2014 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Todd, R. (Chairman)

Alcott, G.
Dean, A.
Johnson, J.P.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from J.T. Kraujalis (Vice-Chairman), M. Buttery, D.I. Dixon, B. Gamble and M.J. Holder.

2. 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.

3. Minutes

Minute No. 30

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager provided the following updates:

- A formal written response had not yet been received from Staffordshire County Councillor (SCC) Winnington regarding the S106 monies secured through the ATS development at Five Ways, so a reminder had been issued to that effect.
- A joint letter from the District Council, County Council and key partners had been sent to Network Rail and the Office of Rail Regulation regarding the completion of line speed improvements to the Chase Line. A response had been received from Network Rail which implied the project would not be completed before the completion of electrification of the Line. The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Consultant advised that as Network Rail was under Government responsibility, the letter would be used to put pressure on Ministers to secure early completion of the project.
- A joint letter from the District and County Councils had been sent by SCC Cllr Winnington to the Highways Agency detailing the concerns about

progress of the Churchbridge Junction Improvements Scheme. *A copy of the letter was circulated to the Committee for reference.*

- The County Council had been reminded about the need to ensure it engaged with the District Council on the Strategic Bus Review for the area.

Minute No. 32

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager reported that James Whybrow from South Staffordshire College and Tina Evans from Job Centre Plus would be attending the October 2014 meeting of the Committee instead of the August meeting as originally requested.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

4. The Economic Development & Planning Portfolio

Consideration was given to the Economic Resilience Priority Delivery Plan (PDP) 2014-15 (Item 4.9 – 4.27 of the Official Minutes of the Council) and the Economic Resilience PDP 2013-14 Outturn (Item 4.1 – 4.8 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The LEP Consultant reported that in recent years the work of the Committee had focussed on economic prosperity and jobs growth, in particular targeting a reduction in youth unemployment across the District. He also advised that economic development and driving prosperity in the District were not just a Council function, but required input from key partners such as the private sector, skills providers, LEPs, national government, Network Rail and others.

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager drew Members attention to the following performance measures in the 2013-14 PDP outturn as they required review by the Committee:

- *Reduce youth unemployment (18-24 age group) to the County Rate by 2017;*
- *To secure at least an annual 5% increase in tourist expenditure within the local economy;*
- *To increase the number of visitor economy bed spaces within the area covered by the Cannock Chase tourism network over a 4 year period.*

In respect of the youth unemployment measure, the Planning & Economic Development Services Manager stated that the new target needed to be challenging, but not unattainable. In order to effectively review this target, a comparison was produced of unemployment rates for all West Midlands local authorities for November 2013 and June 2014, which placed Cannock Chase in the third quartile of authorities. An aim to move up into the second quartile was proposed.

The LEP Consultant advised that as Cannock's current youth unemployment rate was 3.7%, achieving the Staffordshire average of 2.8% was probably unrealistic over the short term.

Councillor Johnson commented that moving into the second quartile was a big ask, as realistically a further 1% decrease in the youth unemployment rate would be required.

Councillor Dean cautioned that the revised target should not be set so high to be unrealistic and likely to fail.

Councillor Alcott replied that the proposed aim could be achieved as the Council already knew of an increase in jobs coming into the District, particularly at the Amazon Distribution Centre in Rugeley and the potential of apprenticeships being offered to young people at the new Jaguar Land Rover factory.

The Policy & Performance Manager commented that achieving a 1% decrease over a one year period could be difficult, but could be possible over a four year period.

The LEP Consultant suggested that officers review what has been discussed and then consult with the Chairman of the Committee and relevant Portfolio Leader to set the new performance measure and circulate to the Committee for consideration, subject to approval by Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Johnson requested that the unemployment data due to be issued on 13 August be emailed to the Committee once available.

In respect of the performance measures for tourist expenditure and visitor economy bed spaces, the Planning & Economic Development Services Manager advised that going forward, the intention was to use data produced by the Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership as it provided both county and district level information which could be used for the performance measures.

As with the youth unemployment performance measure, the LEP Consultant suggested that officers consult with the Chairman of the Committee and relevant Portfolio Leader to set the new performance measures and circulate to the Committee for consideration, subject to approval by Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

That officers consult with the Chairman of the Committee and Economic Development & Planning Portfolio Leader to set new targets for the following performance measures and circulate to the Committee, subject to those targets being approved by Scrutiny Committee:

- Reduce youth unemployment (18-24 age group) to the County Rate by 2017;
- To secure at least an annual 5% increase in tourist expenditure within the local economy;
- To increase the number of visitor economy bed spaces within the area covered by the Cannock Chase tourism network over a 4 year period.

5. Youth Unemployment

Consideration was given to the latest unemployment and youth unemployment data for the District (Item 5.1 – 5.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager reported that he had queried with Tina Evans from Job Centre Plus the reasons behind the decrease in Job Seeker's Allowance claims, in particular the sharp drop in claims from 18 to 24 year olds. She advised him that in respect of youth claimants, this was due to more full time jobs and apprenticeships being secured by young people, and for overall unemployment, some people found the JSA process too rigorous, so had alternatively signed up to the 'Employment and Support Allowance' (ESA), which instead required claimants to be signed off by a doctor as not 'fit to work'.

This was to be discussed further with Job Centre Plus at the PDC's October meeting.

RESOLVED:

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

6. 2011 Census: Key Employment and Economic Data

The Policy & Performance Manager and Research & Information Officer were in attendance for this item.

The Policy & Performance Manager advised that this item had been placed on the Agenda as Members considered information at the March 2014 meeting on part-time jobs data, and requested that further data be presented which looked at the wider employment and economic data for the District.

The Research & Information Officer then took Members through a presentation entitled 'The Cannock Chase Labour Market', which covered the following:

- Employment levels
69% of people aged 16-64 were in employment in Cannock Chase between April 2013 and March 2014. Employment levels fell by 2.3% in the District between 2013 and 2014 and were lower than the Regional average (69.3%) and the National average (71.7%) in March 2014. There were inherent inaccuracies in the data at District level.
- Unemployment
The District continued to see a downward trend in the JSA claimant rate with a fall of nearly 2% (1.7%) between June 2012 and June 2014. The Cannock Chase claimant rate was below Regional and National comparators. Residents who had never worked or were long-term unemployed, as well as those who experienced a long-term health issue may face additional barriers to labour market participation.
- Youth unemployment
A larger proportion of Cannock Chase residents aged 18-24 claimed JSA than those aged 25-49 and 50-64. However, claimant rates among this

age group had fallen by around 3% in the last twelve months and remained below Regional and National averages.

- Occupation and Earnings
Skilled trade occupations, elementary occupations and administrative and secretarial occupations employed the largest proportion of Cannock Chase residents in 2011. It was significant that decline in skilled trade and administrative employment were projected by 2020. Gross weekly pay for full-time workers in the District was below that of the Staffordshire, West Midlands and Great Britain averages.
- Part-time and full-time working
Cannock Chase saw an increase in part-time working between 2001 and 2011. This could be an indicator of underemployment. However, part-time employment also offered access to the labour market for those unable to take full-time work.
- Workplace population
38,814 people aged 16-74 had a workplace in Cannock Chase in 2011, the majority being full-time employees. People with a workplace in Cannock Chase largely travelled to work by car or van.
- Commuting for work
14,879 people commuted into Cannock Chase to work in 2011, the largest number coming from South Staffordshire, Lichfield, Walsall and Stafford. 23,354 people who lived in Cannock Chase commuted outside the District for work, the majority commuting to Lichfield, Walsall, Stafford and South Staffordshire. Driving a car or van was the most popular method of travel to work among people commuting into and out of Cannock Chase, although travel by bicycle or foot was more popular among residents of the District commuting elsewhere for work.

The Chairman queried if any issues of employment ageism had arisen out of the data received?

The Research & Information Officer replied that employers said this wasn't the case as employers had adopted a positive approach to employment of older people.

Councillor Johnson queried if there were not enough employment opportunities being created in the District, primarily because of the issues of lower average weekly earnings and a higher flow of people commuting out of the District for work.

The Research & Information Officer replied that in comparison to the 2001 Census, a greater number of people were commuting into the District for work in 2011, but the issues referred to were still relevant. The Policy & Performance Manager further replied that the weekly average data was difficult to accurately monitor, as the figures used were primarily based on responses to the Annual Population Survey, from which a median income figure was drawn out.

The LEP Consultant commented that changes to educational attainment and

skills development needed to happen to improve residents' life chances, and that increased employment flow into the District was positive, but it did also mean residents had to compete for those jobs.

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager indicated that there had been a longstanding issue of the employment rate in the District being poor compared to elsewhere, and so queried if a comparison had been carried out of the Census data and Annual Population Survey data as at March 2011 to see if any differences had arisen?

The Research & Information Officer replied that this data could be pulled together and looked into, but added the caveat that the Census data only had a relatively short lifespan compared to the Annual Population Survey.

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager then asked if a short document could be put together comparing five or six key economic indicators from the 2001 and 2011 Census' to try and determine if the economic position of the District had improved?

The Policy & Performance Manager advised that this could be done, but advised that questions asked on each Census could be different, so it may not be possible to do a specific like-for-like comparison.

Members then thanked the Research & Information Officer for the presentation, and requested it be circulated to all of the Committee for information.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

7, Technical Consultation on Planning

Consideration was given to the 'Technical Consultation on Planning' document (Item 7.1 to 7.4) of the Official Minutes of the Council.

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager gave Members an overview of the purpose of the document, drawing particular attention to the sections which covered 'Neighbourhood Planning' and 'Reducing Planning Regulations'.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The proposals contained within the Technical Consultation on Planning be noted.
- (B) The Corporate Director be authorised to submit the Council's formal response to the Consultation to the Department for Communities & Local Government, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, the Chairman of the Planning Control Committee and the Cabinet Portfolio Leader for Economic Development & Planning.

8. Provisional Work Programme

Consideration was given to the provisional work programme for the Committee for 2014-15 (Item 8.1 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

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

The meeting closed at 5:55pm

CHAIRMAN