

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY 10 OCTOBER 2013 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Todd, R. (Chairman)
Gamble, B. (Vice-Chairman)

Anslow, C.	Kraujalis, J.T.
Alcott, G.	Stretton, Mrs. Z.P.
Davies, D.N.	Sutherland, M.
Dixon, D.I.	

7. Apologies

No apologies were received.

8. 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.

9. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed.

10. Response to Youth Unemployment

18-24 Youth Unemployment Update

Consideration was given to the latest data relating to Youth Unemployment in the District (Item 4.1 – 4.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager reported that overall unemployment in the District had continued to fall on a monthly basis, along with youth unemployment which had seen a greater drop.

Councillor Kraujalis queried if the Council had undertaken any specific work to aid with the reduction.

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager responded that the

Council was involved in a number of initiatives which included working with large scale employers such as Tesco, South Staffordshire College in respect of apprenticeships, and the Department for Work and Pensions to encourage employers to hire more young people.

Councillor Alcott noted that the figures did not take into account the number of people who had signed up to apprenticeships in the District.

J. Whybrow from South Staffordshire College replied that the Employment and Skills Board would shortly be considering quarter one 2013-14 apprenticeships data, so this information could be circulated to the Committee once it had been signed off.

Tesco Partnerships Recruitment (Hednesford and Rugeley)

Members received a presentation on the above from J. Frith, Tesco Partnerships.

J. Frith explained to Members the purpose of the Tesco Partnership, and that her role was to prepare and lead the Partnerships programme when new Tesco stores were planned to open, with the aim of creating new jobs for those who were classed as long term unemployed.

It was then explained that thirteen weeks after the opening of the Hednesford store, 92 out of 96 staff originally hired were still working at the store, and that those staff had since been helping to train the employees at the newly opened Rugeley store.

Members were updated on the recruitment process for the Rugeley store, with 72 people being employed at the end of the process, which included an initial telephone enquiry from 523 potential applicants, interview, literacy and numeracy skills sessions, completion of a paper based rather than electronic application form and finally a face to face interview. Prior to being formally employed, 76 people attended a City and Guilds Employability and Retail Customer Service course, which led to the final 72 receiving a formal qualification.

Members were also advised that as part of the training, staff took part in a charity event to help raise funds for Tesco's chosen charity for 2013, Diabetes UK.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration commented that employers often stated they felt people were underprepared for jobs, particularly in relation their literacy and numeracy skills.

J. Frith responded that this issue varied across different areas; however the Partnership did not take into account results of literacy and numeracy tests as part of the recruitment decision, these results were only used to provide individuals with additional help and support if so required.

Members then thanked J. Frith for the presentation, commenting they were extremely impressed with the work undertaken by the Partnership and the positive impact it had for those who were engaged in the process.

Update from the LSP Employment and Skills Board and Facilitating Local Apprenticeships

Members then received a presentation on the above from J. Whybrow, South Staffordshire College.

J. Whybrow explained that the Employment and Skills Board was created by both the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) and the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) with the purpose of developing and enhancing employment and skills opportunities in the District, and to help achieve this, the Board worked closely with the Skills Funding Agency, National Apprenticeships Service, Job Centre Plus and Chase Chamber of Commerce.

In relation to youth unemployment figures, Members were advised that Cannock's figures were the lowest since July 2008, were lower than the West Midlands region, and on a par with UK average.

Members were then informed about each of the Board's three key priorities and how they would be achieved:

- Priority one – *Reduced youth (18-24 years) unemployment:*
 - Community Buddies
 - Apprenticeship Business Support
 - Chase Schools Young Chamber Programme

- Priority two – *Increased number of businesses that start, survive and grow:*
 - Business Support Event
 - Business Development Programme
 - Start-up Programme

- Priority three – *Improved qualifications and skills in school leavers:*
 - Enabling families to support the development of their children
 - Successful progression of pupils into employment and training
 - More business enterprise experience for students and school leavers.

Expanding on each of the priorities, Members were informed that if specific projects were not working or were not delivering the required outcomes, funding for the projects would be withdrawn immediately and distributed elsewhere, as only limited funds were available to the Board.

Councillor Alcott advised of a Skills Show he attended at the NEC in 2012, and commented that he was impressed by the range and numbers of different skills young people were able to try out, and the fact the stalls were being run by young people.

J. Whybrow replied that Skills Show was an extremely successful event, attracting over 280,000 visitors during its three days, and that as responsibility for advice and guidance on skills had become the responsibility of schools rather

than external providers, Staffordshire County Council had put forward a funding bid to allow schools to attend the show in 2013. Furthermore, the Skills Show Committee had agreed for localised sessions to take place throughout the year, with sessions in Cannock commencing January 2014.

Councillor Dixon queried what would happen to people signed up to projects which were likely to be cancelled following review.

J. Whybrow replied that projects were reviewed every two months to gauge progress, and where projects were recommended to end, people already signed up would be supported through to the project's conclusion.

Councillor Gamble queried how many secondary schools were involved with the project work.

J. Whybrow replied that information on which schools had signed up would be available from the end of October, and at that point, the aim of the Board would be to support those schools, which would hopefully encourage other schools to take part.

Members then thanked J. Whybrow for his presentation, stating they were impressed with the work being undertaken by the Board.

RESOLVED:

That

- (A) the latest overall and youth unemployment figures for the District be noted.
- (B) the presentations from the Tesco Partnership and South Staffordshire College be noted.

11. Performance Report

Consideration was given to the Q1 2013-14 Economic Development and Planning Priority Delivery Plan (PDP) Performance Report (Item 5.1 – 5.3 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

12. Greater Flexibilities for Change of Use

Consideration was given to Council's response to the above consultation from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (Item 6.1 – 6.5 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Planning and Regeneration explained to Members that the consultation formed part of a series of changes being introduced by the Government with the aim of simplifying the planning process.

The Planning Projects Officer then talked Members through the consultation document, highlighting areas of agreement and concern with the proposals.

RESOLVED:

That the Council's response to the consultation document be endorsed.

13. Work Programme Review

Consideration was given to the Committee's 2013-14 work programme (Item 7 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager queried with Members if they wanted a representative of Staffordshire Council to be in attendance when they consider the Cannock Chase Integrated Transport Strategy (CCITS), which was scheduled for discussion at the November meeting of the Committee.

Members responded that the County Council should be very much involved, with the most senior and qualified people being requested to attend the meeting, including the Cabinet lead for such matters, if possible.

Following on from the earlier presentations regarding youth unemployment, Members requested that J. Whybrow from South Staffordshire College be invited back to the Committee in March 2014 to provide a progress update on the project work being undertaken.

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager then provided an update on the Council's relationship with the Amazon distribution centre based in Rugeley, explaining that to date progress had been slow, but increased dialogue was now taking place. Furthermore, the centre was now employing more staff directly rather than via recruitment agencies, and in conjunction with Arriva, bus services were now operating through the District.

RESOLVED:

That

- (A) the work programme update be noted.
- (B) J. Whybrow from South Staffordshire College be invited to attend the March 2014 meeting of the Committee to provide an update on the progress of the Employment and Skills Board project work.

(The meeting closed at 6:00pm)

CHAIRMAN