

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MONDAY 23 MARCH 2015 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. Gamble, B.
Buttery, M. Holder, M.J.
Dean, A Johnson, J.P.
Dixon. D.I.

22. Apologies

No apologies for absence were received.

23. 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.

24. Minutes

RESOLVED:

Minute no. 19 – Local Transport Issues

Cllr. Alcott reported that the request from the Newlife Foundation for improvement public transport provision in and around Hemlock Way had been accepted by Arriva Bus, and it was hoped the service would be well used.

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November, 2014, be approved as a correct record and signed.

25. Tackling Youth Unemployment

18-24 Youth Unemployment Data 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).

An update was tabled at the meeting which included the data for February 2015:

- Overall unemployment rate for Cannock Chase of 1.4% (Jan 2015 – 1.4%);
- Overall unemployment rate for Staffordshire of 1.1% (Jan 2015 – 1.1%);

- Youth unemployment rate for Cannock Chase of 3.2% (Jan 2015 – 2.6%)
- Youth unemployment rate for Staffordshire of 2.1% (Jane 2015 – 2%)

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager advised that it was common for there to be a slight increase in the rate at the start of the year, but it was important to note how much the rate had decreased compared to the same period in 2014 and 2013.

RESOLVED:

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

Talent Match Staffordshire

Members received a presentation from Amanda Newbold and Amy Preece from Talent Match Staffordshire (TMS), which covered:

- £108m invested across 21 areas in England to tackle youth unemployment;
- TMS awarded £1.6m by the Big Lottery fund – used to target a minimum of 586 beneficiaries in Cannock Chase, Lichfield and Newcastle-under-Lyme;
- TMS aims to work with 18-24 year olds who have been unemployed for longer than 12 months, and support them into training, employment or enterprise;
- Achieving this aim will be done through recruiting volunteers aged 18-24 years old to be either:
 - ‘Linking Peer’ mentors to those young people identified as not in education, employment or training (NEET) and provide support to enable those NEETs to identify and work towards their goals; or,
 - Be part of a ‘Youth Action Team’ to help shape the way the project should be delivered and create more opportunities for young people.
- A cross-sector partnership has been formed to develop local solutions to youth unemployment issues;
- During the first year of the project, 50 young people were engaged with, way above the ‘target’ of 11.

The LEP Consultant queried that in respect of working with NEETs, how big a problem was it within the District.

Amanda Newbold replied that they were working with the NEETs they knew about, the main issue was in finding the ‘hidden’ NEETs.

Amy Preece further replied that there were some homeless NEETs they knew about and were working with.

Cllr. Kraujalis asked for clarification on how young people were referred to Talent Match.

Amy Preece replied that it was a mixture of self and agency referrals. The self referrals usually occurred by word of mouth or local knowledge.

Cllr. Buttery queried what else Talent Match did to engage with NEETs.

Amanda Newbold replied that job fairs/events were held in the town centres, liaison

activities with the Job Centre and use of social media.

The LEP Consultant then queried if Talent Match had adequate resource in place to deal with the issues faced.

Amanda Newbold replied that more volunteer resource was always required in order to help deliver the project, but having access to increased staff resource would mean that more challenging needs could be dealt which weren't appropriate for the volunteers to handle.

Cllr. Gamble queried what Talent Match had in place to deal with 'sofa surfers'.

Amy Preece replied that they had good links in place with the Rugeley YMCA, but none of the young people referred were actually living on the streets when engaged with the project.

The Head of Economic Development queried whether it was explicit within the aims of the project that wider employment support would also be provided.

Amanda Newbold replied that arrangements were in place to support this, including policy development/influence, working with the Cannock Chamber of Commerce and Department for Work & Pensions etc.

The Head of Economic Development then queried what other help the Council could provide to support the project.

Amanda Newbold replied that help could be given by passing on details of referrals, providing entry level jobs, mentoring, work experience and also awareness to those already employed.

Job Centre Plus Update

Carol Hemming, Job Centre Plus, provided the following update:

- Number of young people claiming job seekers allowance (JSA) in Cannock Chase had fallen year-on-year, and now accounted for 29% of the total registered claimants;
- All 18-24 year olds were seen on a weekly basis as a minimum;
- An initiative called 'job club' had been set up and was led by Job Centre staff, with the aim of identifying claimants who required extra support to find employment;
- 'Work coaches' were also in place to identify and establish work experience placements;
- All young claimants were requested to register with 'Universal Jobmatch' (online job search service provided by the Job Centre) and submit a CV for inclusion;
- The Careers Service also undertook regular visits to the Job Centre to provide further support and guidance;
- Computers and wi-fi access were now available in all Job Centres to help make it easier for claimants to search and apply for jobs;
- Currently working with 59 different local and national companies to provide employment opportunities;
- Since January 2015, 32 claimants had taken up work experience and 148

since April 2015. Of that 148, 116 claimants had completed their placements, and 65 had found full employment within 13 weeks of completion.

Cllr. B. Todd queried how many young people had been 'lost' once they were no longer classed as unemployed.

Carol Hemming replied that this sort of data wasn't collected. Once a young person had been signed off from unemployment they were no longer monitored.

The LEP Consultant queried what was considered to be the top three things which could get 18 to 24 year olds back into work.

Carol Hemming replied as follows:

1. Work experience
2. Employers giving young people a starting chance
3. Clarity on what skills were needed for particular jobs in order to make those young people a more attractive prospect for employers.

Cllr. Holder queried if the Job Centre had much contact with local school for work experience purposes.

Carol Hemming replied that this was not the case at present, but could be looked into.

Chris Plant further replied that schools were now struggling to source work experience placements compared with previously as there were less opportunities being made available.

Cllr. Kraujalis left the meeting at this point and did not return.

Cannock Chase Employment & Skills Board

Chris Plant, Chase Chamber of Commerce and Vice-Chair of the Cannock Chase Employment & Skills Board provided an update on the recent work of the Board, particularly with a focus on skills development and enhancement for young people.

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager reported that the Board had been involved in a wide spectrum of activities, some of which had been more successful than others, but funding could be accessed in order to do more.

Cllr. Gamble queried whether the skills requirements referred to were as basic as literacy and numeracy skills, as there was a shortage of skills gained by young people for them to include on CVs.

Chris Plant replied that the Board and all partners involved were keen to get both skills and CVs developed for the benefit of those young people.

Cllr. BATTERY commented that work experience and volunteering were both important for development and improving CVs and life skills.

Carol Hemming replied that work experience gave better employability skills which

could only be gained by doing the role.

Chris Plant further replied that employers had been saying that it was employability skills, rather than key skills, which were missing from young people.

Cllr. Holder reported that over the past few years he had learnt that schools weren't good at looking outside of their own walls and engaging with the Council and other bodies to improve skill sets for young people.

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager backed up Cllr. Holder's comments, reporting that schools were difficult to work with, especially those where the head teacher did not have the willingness or right attitude to be engaged.

The Head of Economic Development advised that the Managing Director had recently attended a head teachers' forum to discuss and understand how they could be better engaged.

Amy Preece advised that she had attended a careers debate in January 2015, where it was evident that careers guidance in schools was now not as important as it once was, but suggested this could be reversed by getting business representatives in to schools to help deliver the guidance at an earlier stage than GCSE level.

26. Performance Report 2014-15

Consideration was given to the performance updates for quarters two and three of 2014/15 (Item 5.1 – 5.5 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

Performance indicator – 'increase in the employment rate of the District's residents:
The LEP Consultant commented that whilst it was a positive the indicator had been achieved, its success needed to be balanced against the discussion just held on employability and skills. Additionally, a shift in focus at the Amazon site in Rugeley meant that more employees were now full-time permanent staff rather than being short-term agency appointments.

Performance indicator – 'to secure at least 20,000sq m of new commercial floorspace within the District from April 2013 to March 2015:

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager advised that the internal expansion of the Amazon warehouse had helped towards achieving this indicator; however a number of other large development projects also had a positive affect.

Performance indicator – 'to secure a reduction in youth unemployment (18-24 year olds) with the aim for the rate in Cannock Chase District to be lower than the majority of authorities in the West Midlands Region within 4 years (2018):

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager advised there had been a continual improvement in the unemployment rate year-on-year, resulting in Cannock Chase nearly being in the top 50% of authorities (currently 16th out of 30).

27. Updated Work Programme

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

The LEP Consultant commented that as this was the final meeting for 2014/15, the new Committee would need to discuss whether or not it wished to remain focussed on youth unemployment as its main topic, or widen the scope to look more broadly at skills and employability.

RESOLVED:

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

The meeting closed at 5:25pm.

CHAIRMAN