

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 3 DECEMBER 2013 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT:
Councillors

Spicer, Mrs. A. (Chairman)
Ball, G.D. (Vice-Chairman)

Allt, Mrs. A.	Jones, R.
Anslow, C.	Todd, Mrs. D.M.
Grice, Mrs. D.	Whitehouse, Mrs. L.

Observer: Councillor P.A. Snape

Invitees: D. Wisehall – Hednesford Traders' Association
Mrs S. Dunning – Cannock Traders' Association

19. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs. S.M. Cartwright.

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

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

21. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 08 October 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed.

22. Update on Rugeley Public Realm

Mr S. Knott, Community Infrastructure Liaison Manager, Staffordshire County Council, was in attendance for this item.

Mr Knott advised Members of the following key aspects of the scheme:

- Six weeks of construction work had been scheduled to take place late 2013,

which would then recommence in January 2014, with a planned completion date of end of April 2014.

- As well as works being undertaken by Staffordshire County Council, installations works from Western Power Distribution and BT also had to be factored into the project timeframe.
- The project brief was to improve connectivity from Rugeley Town Centre to the train station, with the aim that the scheme would act as a spur for regenerating the wider Rugeley area.
- Although the main section of the route was now single rather than dual lane traffic, there had been no significant adverse impact on traffic flow.

Councillor Ball raised concerns that the consultation regarding the project had been poor. Mr Knott responded that he accepted the criticism about the consultation process, advising that of those consulted, 60% were in favour of the scheme, and 40% against.

Councillor R. Jones queried if traffic flow along the route had been observed at different times of day? Mr Knott replied that traffic modelling and monitoring had been undertaken over the course of a 7 day period, 24 hours a day to inform the design of the scheme.

Mr Knott then informed Members that traders in the area had been warned that disruption would be inevitable whilst the works were being carried out. He also reported that, as a result of the traders comments, an increased number of parking bays would be provided.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration advised Members that the funding for this scheme was coming from the County Council, which would help to enhance the area, and separate money was being provided via a Section 106 agreement with Tesco to improve the links between their new store and Rugeley Town Centre. Preliminary designs for these improvements were underway.

Mr Knott confirmed that he would be attending the Rugeley & Brereton Community Forum on 9 December to provide a similar update and respond to questions from members of the public.

Councillor R. Jones queried if there were also Section 106 funds from McDonalds as well? The Head of Planning and Regeneration replied that there was, but it had been pooled with other 106 monies in order to fund canalside/walkways improvements.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

23. Town Centre Traders Association Issues

Mr D. Wisehall, Hednesford Traders Association, and Mrs S. Dunning, Cannock Traders Association, were in attendance for this item. Apologies had been received from Mrs A Cooney on behalf of Rugeley Traders Association.

Cannock Traders Issues

No provision of parking in Cannock Town Centre for traders. Having to park in pub car parks, which had resulted in some traders having to pay.

Pleased with environmental improvements that had been happening in the town. Concerned that traders in the area were not backing/supporting each other.

Some market traders claimed they had not been informed about a meeting which took place at the Council regarding the new Street Market in the town centre. Also not happy that stalls and stock had been placed around the perimeter of the war memorial.

Council Response

The first Street Market was held on 29 November, which suffered some teething problems, particularly the issue of stock being placed by the war memorial. Traders and the company running the Market have been spoken to, so the issue should be resolved. The Market was being operated on a trial basis, so could be stopped at any time.

The Council met with representatives of the indoor markets traders about the Street Market. They were generally supportive of the proposal to bring a new activity into the town, providing it was linked with the indoor market.

Hednesford Traders Issues

4 hour parking restriction on Aldi Car Park. Once the scheme has bedded in, it would be useful to review who was using the car park to the rear of the Co-Op.

Have also discussed provision of parking permits for traders to exempt them from the restrictions.

Council Response

4 hour limit was advisory on the car park behind the Co-Op. In contrast a formal Parking Order for Rugeley Road car park would be effective from 09 December 2013 or as soon as possible thereafter. Sensible to review to determine if other parking restrictions need to be implemented.

Hednesford had a good supply of car parking; however it was mostly concentrated at one end of the town. Would prefer to avoid issuing permits if possible because a quarter of the spaces in the Rugeley Road car park were by people parking vehicles for most of the day. The Parking Order is intended to give priority to shoppers. Issuing permits would be counter to this

objective.

A number of shops had opened in Hednesford since the last meeting, including 3 vintage shops and other hairdressers. Concerned however about 3 empty units at the end of Market Street. Could the agents target specific types of retailers?

There had been considerable interest in the uptake of the empty units, with the shops now also being advertised online. Informed by estate agents that they were confident of being able to secure tenants. Potential retail opportunities would be passed on to agents.

24. Update from Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Holder

The Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader (Councillors Mrs. D.M. Todd) provided Members with the following updates for each of the town centre areas:

Cannock

- Improvements and repairs to Beecroft Road Subway had now been completed.
- Christmas lights switch on took place on 15 November and was well supported by the public.
- Weekly Street Market started operating on 29 November on a trial basis, and will initially run for a six months period.
- The Mill Street underpass was to be deep cleaned 3 Sundays in a row in the lead up to Christmas.

Hednesford

- Marketing of the remaining units on Phases 1 and 2 was continuing. The most recent letting granted was to the Card Factory, with a Pure Gym due to open before the end of the year.
- Cabinet approved a Parking Order which has restricted the use of the Council's section of the Rugeley Road car park to a maximum 4 hours stay between 8:00am to 3:00pm Monday to Saturday. A similar restriction was due to come into force on the Aldi section of the car park at the same time, with enforcement of the Parking Order commencing from 09 December.

Rugeley

- Cabinet agreed to drop car parking charges on all District Council owned car parks for the two Saturdays leading up to Christmas. The arrangement also applied to car parks in Cannock.

District Wide

- Since the last meeting two further applications for support through the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme had been approved. The total number of approvals was now 16.
- Cabinet approved plans to introduce a temporary 10p nominal charge for people using the Avon Road car park in Cannock and the Forge Road car

park in Rugeley from 3:00pm onwards weekdays, with the trial starting in January 2014 and lasting for six months.

Councillor Anslow then commented he felt that Councillor Mrs. D. Todd had been doing a good job in respect of the town centres, and the right things were being done to develop them.

25. Performance Reporting

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised Members that following comments received at the August 2013 meeting to agree the principal shopping streets in Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley, the performance monitoring information had been updated to reflect the changes, as shown below:

Town Centre	Total Units	Vacant Units	Vacancy Rate (%)
June 2013			
Cannock	126	11	8.73
Hednesford	92	11	11.96
Rugeley	125	11	8.8
Combined	343	33	9.62
October 2013			
Cannock	126	9	7.14
Hednesford	93	11	11.83
Rugeley	125	11	8.8
Combined	344	31	9.01

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager then informed Members that in the period June to October 2013 there had been a marginal decline in the overall vacancy rate across the three towns as a result of their being 2 less vacant units in Cannock.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration observed that although the town centres still needed to improve, a vacancy rate of 9-10% was good compared to national evidence which indicated average vacancies running at c.14%.

RESOLVED:

That the performance update be noted.

26 Provisional Work Programme

The Head of Planning and Regeneration advised Members that car parking had been included as an additional item for the March 2014 meeting as the review of '10p after 3pm' should be ready to report back on by that time.

27. Exclusion of Public

RESOLVED:

That the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

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PART 2

28. Discussion on Town Centre Issues

The Head of Planning and Regeneration informed Members that the issues previously discussed fell into three different categories, which were:

1. Future of Town Centres
2. Investment in Redevelopment Schemes
3. Car Parking Issues

Members were then advised of the key issues for consideration under each category, and were informed that if they were in agreement, officers would need to investigate the key issues in these areas in more detail. Members were also advised that this would result in an additional meeting of the Committee needing to take place early 2014. Following a debate of the type of issues which would need to be discussed under the three categories, it was agreed that an additional Part 2 meeting be convened.

RESOLVED:

That the three identified categories be agreed, and an additional meeting of the Committee be held in early 2014 to consider the issues in more detail.

The meeting finished at 5.50 p.m.

CHAIRMAN