

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 25 MARCH 2014 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

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

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| Anslow, C. | Stretton, Mrs. Z.P. |
| Alcott, G. | Sutherland, M. |
| Dixon, D.I. | |

Also in Attendance:

- Staffordshire County Councillor (SCC) Mark Winnington, Cabinet Leader for Economy and Infrastructure;
- Mr Clive Thomson, Staffordshire County Council, Commissioner for Transport & The Connected County.
- Mr Kent Parson, Chief Officer, Support Staffordshire – Cannock Chase

27. Apologies

No apologies were received.

28. 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.

29. Minutes

Minute No. 21

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager advised that this meeting had been rearranged to allow SCC Mark Winnington to attend. As a result, James Whybrow from South Staffordshire College was unable to attend and was available to attend the Committee again on 12 August 2014.

Minute No. 24

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager advised that data on part-time working and its effects on unemployment in the area had been collated and was tabled for Members' reference (attached to these Minutes as Appendix 1).

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 23 January and 05 February 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

30. Local Transportation Issues

SCC Mark Winnington, Cabinet Leader for Economy & Infrastructure and Clive Thomson, Staffordshire County Council Commissioner for Transport & The Connected County were in attendance for this item.

Copies of the proposed Cannock Chase Integrated Transport Strategy (CCITS), which was considered at the last meeting of the Committee, were provided again for Members' reference. (Item 4.1 – 4.14 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

SCC Winnington apologised to the Committee for having been unable to attend the previous meeting, and thanked them for rescheduling this meeting to enable his attendance.

In respect of the CCITS, SCC Winnington reported the following:

- A rail franchising exercise had recently been undertaken in Birmingham, however no decisions had yet been taken on future franchising arrangements;
- Electrification of the Chase rail line was still scheduled to happen by 2017/18, however the ramifications of High Speed 2 (HS2) and its impact upon Cannock Chase would need to be considered as part of any future proposals for the Line;
- The County Council had formally objected to the HS2 project, but should the project be approved, the County Council would seek to maximise the benefits of it for both Cannock and Staffordshire;
- Some bus routes operating in the District were no longer feasible and costly to run, however in respect of schools transport, usage needed to be increased to ensure viability for private operators;

Councillor Mrs Stretton asked how difficult schemes such as Five Ways could be achieved in the context of new funding arrangements for highways schemes..

SCC Winnington suggested that the Five Ways scheme was owned by the Highways Agency rather than the County Council.

The Head of Planning & Regeneration commented that the question in fact related specifically to Five Ways, and not to Churchbridge, which had been rated low priority by the County Council despite it being important to the local area. He also advised that additional transport funding for the District was supplied by the Stoke and Staffordshire LEP (SSLEP) rather than the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP).

Councillor R. Todd queried what had happened to S106 funding which had been paid to support local road improvements as a result of the ATS development at Five Ways about ten years ago?

Clive Thomson reported that the Five Ways scheme had been reviewed but was

scored lower than a number of other schemes in the County; however a funding bid for this scheme was to be submitted to the Government on 31 March via the SSLEP and supported by the GBSLEP, the outcome of which would be known in July 2014.

In respect of the S106 monies, SCC Winnington responded that he would need to clarify where the money had gone and then provide a written response to the Committee.

The Head of Planning & Regeneration queried if pinch point funding was separate from funding provided for the trunk roads?

Clive Thomson replied that the funding wasn't separate, however there may be potential in future to divert funds if necessary.

Councillor R. Todd then raised concerns about the standard of road surfaces and repairs across the District.

SCC Winnington replied that this was a County-wide issue which had resulted in £36m being spent on A and B class roads since 2009, although C class roads had secured less support.

Councillor Mrs Stretton asked how the three rail stations in the District could be improved in readiness for electrification of the Chase Line and its associated benefits.

SCC Winnington replied that the standard of some stations across the County was poor, and whilst Network Rail was upgrading stations, the process was happening too slowly. He also advised that one outcome of the rail franchise exercise could be that local authorities instead receive funding to make rail station improvements in their areas.

Clive Thomson further replied that the County Council and District Councils needed to work together to establish what improvements they wanted to see achieved through the franchising exercise.

The Head of Planning & Regeneration advised that Cannock Chase Council was looking to the County Council to give support for these improvements to be completed in time for electrification in 2017/18, and also to give support for having the Chase Line speed improvements included in the Strategic Economic Plans of the LEAs. He also advised that the line speed upgrade should have originally happened in 2014, but Network Rail backtracked on this date, so pressure needed to be put on them to complete the upgrade in 2015, which would in turn help the Council to try and secure replacement of the rail services lost in 2010.

SCC Winnington replied there was no issue with giving support to the issues raised, and with Network Rail due to undertake a consultation in the near future, that would be a good time to apply pressure on them.

Clive Thomson further replied there was a need to ensure that Network Rail delivers on its 2017 completion date and not divert funds to other projects.

Councillor Alcott commented that at a recent stakeholders meeting which Network Rail did not attend, all parties present agreed that the improvements had to happen sooner rather than later.

Councillor Sutherland queried when the key dates were in order to move these issues forward.

The Head of Planning & Regeneration replied that the original funding for the improvements had been diverted, however other funding could be available via a pot of money intended for projects which would 'increase passenger journey times', so ideally progress would need to be made within the next month.

Councillor Dixon commented there was also a need to make clear the benefits of providing an electrified rail link directly between Cannock and Stafford.

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager raised that a long standing concern of the Committee had been the lack of bus services provision to employment sites in and out of the District, so it was pleasing to see that improving such access had been included in the CCITS, but sought clarification over how this would be achieved and what the Council could do to support it.

Clive Thomson replied as follows:

- The transport review looked at how people travelled (which covered travel costs and method of transport used) and support given to public transport provision;
- The amount which was currently spent of transport provision matched the annual budget for road maintenance across the County;
- There was a need to work with private transport operators to determine what transport could and could not be provided;
- S106 monies provision could be linked to the existing transport budgets to establish how funds could be better spent.

Councillor Alcott queried how the County Council could support the District's ambition to see the dualling of Eastern Way completed and maximise the capacity of the Churchbridge Junction to ensure future economic growth was not unnecessarily constrained.

Clive Thomson replied that following consultation with the County Council's network management team, the Eastern Way scheme was scheduled to commence on 28 April for a period of eight weeks, but the work would be 'off-carriageway' to minimise disruption to traffic flow. In respect of Churchbridge Junction, the network team were unable to provide a start date due to waiting for information from the Highways Agency.

The Head of Planning & Regeneration raised concern about the Churchbridge Junction scheme as the Council had expected the work to start in May 2014.

Clive Thomson replied that the County Council was also concerned by the delay, however discussions were well underway with contractors about how it would impact on the local area.

County Councillor Winnington and Councillor Alcott stated that a letter should be sent from both Councils to the Highways Agency detailing the joint concerns about the scheme.

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager asked when the Strategic Bus Review was due to take place, and could the Council be fully involved with it.

Clive Thomson replied as follows:

- The Council could definitely be involved in the review. Most reviews in Staffordshire had been completed and had primarily looked into school transport provision and underused services;
- Progress had to be made on the review of Stafford before the Cannock review could be commenced;
- The County Council had a good relationship with Arriva Midlands, and they and other bus companies would be involved;
- The Council could be provided with the documents related to Cannock which Arriva had already seen, but weren't interested in at present;
- There had been recognition that not all services were as good as they should be, which would need rectifying.

Councillor Sutherland commented that the main items identified in the CCITS appeared to be 'emergency' projects, but longer term projects such as poor road conditions and provision of alternative transport schemes such as tram systems for the County had not been considered.

Clive Thomson replied that tram projects generally tended to be expensive, whereas the priority for Staffordshire at present was to have clean, punctual and reliable bus services in place.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The Committee receives a formal written response from SCC Winnington clarifying the position regarding the S106 monies which had been secured by the ATS development at Five Ways.
- (B) In liaison with the County Council, pressure be put on Network Rail to secure completion of the line speed improvements to the Chase Line by the end of 2015, noting the importance of completing this project at the earliest possible time in order to try and secure replacement of rail services lost in 2010.
- (C) A joint letter be sent from the District and County Councils to the Highways Agency detailing concerns about the progress of the Churchbridge Junction improvements scheme.
- (D) The Council continues to engage with the County Council to ensure its direct involvement with the Strategic Bus Review of the District.

31. Responses to Youth Unemployment

18-24 Youth Unemployment Update

Consideration was given to the latest data relating to Youth Unemployment in the District (Item 5.1 – 5.2 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager advised that the unemployment data for February 2014 had been recently released, detailing that the number of overall unemployed people in the District had fallen by 7 compared to January 2014, and the number of youth unemployed had increased by 5 compared with January 2014, however it was expected that going forward both figures would show a continuing downward trend.

Talent Match

Kent Parson, Chief Officer of Support Staffordshire – Cannock Chase, was in attendance for this item.

Kent Parson presented a briefing paper on Talent Match Staffordshire which was tabled at the meeting (attached to these minutes as Appendix 2). He also reported that work was being undertaken with the Council's Economic Development Manager to establish how businesses in the District could become involved with the project.

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager asked if the project's key audience were identifiable, as they were generally the people who were furthest away from the jobs market.

Kent Parson replied as follows:

- Involved with a venture called Entrust, which was formed by Staffordshire County Council and Capita. Entrust tracked the education and development of young people up to the age of 20, which helped the project identify the right target audience;
- Regularly liaise with Jobcentre Plus to identify individuals;
- A community buddy scheme used to be in place, however it was disbanded as it did not work effectively;
- The project was designed to help young people talk with other young people about their education and employment needs;
- Aware of individuals who were harder to reach and less likely to be involved, so the aim was to inform them about the support available and how it could be accessed.

Councillor Gamble queried if support was provided for young people who were due to attend job interviews, such as provision of suitable clothing?

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager replied that the Department for Work and Pensions held specific funding pots for such purposes which were distributed through local job centres.

The Head of Planning & Regeneration commented that previously the Council and former Chase Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) had set up a 'Future Jobs Fund' which had been successful in finding different ways to achieve what Talent Match was hoping to do.

Kent Parson replied that the Fund may be reintroduced as part of the total pot of money coming forward for the project, and that Talent Match was not the same as it had different aims and bodies involved, and would also cost less to administer.

Councillor Sutherland queried how much of the £1m of National Lottery funding Cannock would receive?

Kent Parson replied that approximately £200,000 per year would be allocated overall, of which £70,000 would be directed to Cannock Chase District.

Councillor Sutherland then raised he was pleased with what had been presented so far, but was concerned that the project could go off in different directions, so wanted to know how long individuals would be supported to help them into the jobs market.

Kent Parson replied that there were not set time limits in place as different individuals would have different needs, but as there was only a limited pot of money, clear focus would be needed to achieve the project's aims and objectives.

RESOLVED:

That the latest overall and youth unemployment figures for the District and the briefing on Talent Match be noted.

32. Work Programme Review

Consideration was given to the Committee's 2013-14 work programme (Item 6.1 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager raised that the Committee needed to consider the agenda for its next meeting to be held in August 2014, and potential items for the overall 2014-15 work programme.

In respect of the August meeting, it was advised that James Whybrow from South Staffordshire College and Tina Evans from Jobcentre Plus would be able to attend to update on 18-24 youth unemployment work. In respect of the overall work programme, it was suggested that linked with the data circulated on part-time working, the Committee could look into further detail at employment and economic data from the 2011 Census.

Councillor Gamble commented that joint working on transport issues should be followed up as soon as possible, primarily involvement with the bus network strategic review.

Councillor Sutherland stated there was a need to ensure the content of the CCITS was right to meet the needs of the District, also raising concern about gaps in provision and shared working with the County Council. He also commented that the work in respect of 18-24 youth unemployment had been highly commendable to date, but should continue nonetheless.

Councillor Stretton commented there was a need to look at how to secure apprenticeships with large companies, but the County Council and other partners would need to be involved in this.

RESOLVED:

That:

- (A) The 2013-14 work programme be noted.
- (B) James Whybrow from South Staffordshire College and Tina Evans from Jobcentre Plus be invited to attend the August 2014 meeting to provide an update on youth unemployment work.
- (C) The following items be included as part of the 2014/15 work programme:
 - 18-24 youth unemployment – including apprenticeships and skills development;
 - 2011 Census economic and employment data;
 - Transport projects – including the CCITS and bus network strategic review.

The meeting closed at 6:00pm

CHAIRMAN