

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MONDAY 21 JULY, 2014 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT:
Councillors

Spicer, Mrs. A. (Chairman)
Witton, P. (Vice-Chairman)

Anslow, C.	Dean, A.
Bottomer, B.	Todd, Mrs. D.M.
Snape, P (observer)	

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. S.M. Cartwright, B. Hardman and R. Jones. Councillor R. Jones had given notification that Councillor P. Fisher would be attending as his substitute. However, Councillor P. Fisher also submitted his apologies.

2. 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.

3. Members' Induction 2014 – Policy Development Committees – Town Centre Regeneration

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager referred Members to the presentation which had been circulated to Members. The presentation was aimed at providing new Members on the Committee an overview of what they are about, how they function and what Members could expect from the meetings.

He highlighted the key issues within the presentation, as follows:

Overview

- 6 Policy Development Committees in total – linked to 6 of the 9 Cabinet Portfolios
- 9 Members on each Policy Development Committee
- Membership includes relevant Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet Portfolio Leaders
- Meet on a quarterly basis (or more often if necessary)

- Each Policy Development Committee is allocated 1 of 6 Priority Delivery Plans aligned to the Cabinet Portfolios
- Each Priority Delivery Plan is linked to one of the Corporate Plan Priority Outcomes:

The Town Centre Regeneration Policy Development Committee relates to the Prosperity element of the Corporate Plan outcome.

Functions of PDCs

- Assist Council and Cabinet in developing budget and policy framework
- Assist Cabinet in policy development as directed by Cabinet
- Review current Council policies having regard to the Performance Management Framework
- Consider how to encourage community participation in policy development
- Question Cabinet members and senior officers about issues relevant to their Priority Delivery Plan
- Invite individuals/organisations to attend Policy Development Committees to help contribute to their work
- Refer performance matters to Scrutiny Committee for further investigation
- Consider matters affecting the area or its residents within the scope and remit of the individual Priority Delivery Plan
- Invite any Member, Officer or representative of an external body to provide written/oral evidence as required
- Make reports and recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.

Policy Development Committees do not act as scrutiny bodies, but may review existing policy to understand how future policy should be developed.

3. Minutes

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager explained that an additional meeting had been held on 27 February to discuss the future of the districts town centres. It had been agreed that this issue would continue to be included on the Work Programme for this year.

He referred Members to Minute 37 of the meeting on 27 March and circulated a list of businesses that had been supported under the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme. This list would be maintained and updated and circulated to Members on a quarterly basis.

With regard to the resolution in relation to Minute 38(B) he commented that a letter had been forwarded to Councillor Mark Winnington (copy included on the agenda) in relation to the concerns raised by Rugeley Traders regarding the effect the road works at Horsefair was having on trade. Arising from this letter Councillor Winnington had attended a Rugeley Traders meeting on 8 July, 2014. This would be discussed later in the meeting.

Arising from the resolution on Minute 38(C) he confirmed that both he and the

Chairman had contacted the Community Infrastructure Liaison Manager, Mark Keeling regarding the concerns over the lack of Highway maintenance in the Districts town centres and a response was awaited.

A member asked about the missing trees in Cannock town centre which had been removed leaving empty circles in the paving. The Chairman agreed to raise this with the relevant officer.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 27 February, 2014 and 12 March, 2014 be approved as a correct record.

4. Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio

Consideration was given to the Economic Resilience Priority Delivery Plan 2014-15 (Item 4.1 – 4.21) and the Economic Resilience Priority Delivery Plan Outturn (Item 4.22 – 4.26). The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager referred Members to Enclosure 4.6 which outlined the position with regards to the Districts town centres during the second half of last year. He also referred members to the “improve town centres through regeneration and management” service aim and outlined the relevant issues.

A member asked whether there was any money remaining in the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme fund. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager explained that he did not have a precise figure but confirmed money was now available to enable the scheme to continue. Recent planning approvals had secured Section 106 monies some of which would be used to support the the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme.

A member made reference to a business that had been supported through the scheme. The business had ceased trading and had been sold to someone else. However, they had kept the same company name. He considered it was unfair as the person taking over the business would not benefit from the scheme. The Officer explained that scheme supported businesses who occupied empty units. As the business had been taken over it had already benefitted from the scheme.

The officer referred Members to the performance targets as outlined at Item 4.22 – 4.26. With regard to the target to achieve a reduction in the number of vacant ground-floor retail units in the District’s principal town centre shopping streets he explained that there had been a reduction in the number of vacant units in Rugeley and Hednesford. However, this was not the case in Cannock. This was due to a number of factors including the closure of Dunelm and the relocation of the Schoolwear shop and the Post Office, the latter to within the WH Smith premises.

AGREED:

That the Economic Resilience Priority Delivery Plan 2014-15 and the Economic Resilience Priority Delivery Plan Outturn be noted.

5. Update from Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Holder

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

Hednesford

- Lettings are currently being agreed for the final unit on Victoria Shopping Park and for two of the small units at the end of Market Street. An announcement concerning the identity of the occupants will be made in due course.
- Prior to Easter Aldi introduced a two hour limit on the use of their section of the Rugeley Road Car Park which it is enforcing through Parking Eye. As a consequence the number of vehicles using the car park has reduced. Aldi have been informed that their decision to reduce the time limit without prior consultation is unacceptable. The Council has also commissioned a car parking survey to assess the use of the car park. The findings will inform future discussions with Aldi on car park management issues.

Rugeley

- The detailed design work to create an enhanced link between the Tesco store and Rugeley Town Centre has been agreed and initial works to replace the kerb stones has been completed as part of a County Council programme to resurface Forge Road. We are awaiting confirmation of a programme of works for the upgrading of the footpath.
- The Rugeley Partnership Scheme has now closed for new applications. Two schemes were completed last year, and two more schemes have just started. A further four schemes are in the process of being approved for implementation later in 2014 – 15. The Council, English Heritage and Staffordshire County Council have invested £340,000 in the Scheme which has been matched by further investment from the property owners. A Press Release providing an up-date on the scheme is due out later this week.

Cannock

- Last week's Cabinet meeting decided to allow the weekly Cannock Street market to continue after a detailed evaluation of the trial which started in November last year. The decision will allow the current operator to continue pending the completion of a competitive tendering exercise. The Cabinet decision also approved the commissioning of a report on potential actions to support the Cannock Indoor Market in consultation with the indoor market traders.
- The Cannock Carnival was held on Saturday 12 July and appears to have been the most successful in recent years. Once again the Council approved the use of a small amount of S106 monies to cover the costs of the children's entertainer and the St John Ambulance personnel.

- The Portfolio Leader has written to all those businesses in Cannock Town Centre who have been supported through the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme to encourage them to get involved in the work of Cannock Traders Association.

District-Wide

- Since the last meeting of the Committee a further five applications for support through the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme have been approved. The total number of businesses supported stands at 24. A further three applications are anticipated during the next couple of weeks.

A member made reference to the Aldi car park in Hednesford and questioned if the parking restrictions were legally enforceable. The Officer confirmed that any parking tickets that were issued were a civil matter between the individuals concerned and Parking Eye (the contractor for Aldi).

Members discussed the Friday street market in Cannock. It was considered that it had improved over recent weeks with more uniformity and the stalls being laid out better. A member asked whether it was possible to know what was to be included in the tender. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that he was not directly involved in the work to support this process. However, should members want to contribute to the tender process he asked that they inform Councillor Todd of their comments. He was pleased to hear the positive comments about the street market and explained that now the market had a degree of permanence the operator would have the confidence to attract additional stalls.

Reference was made to the Indoor market traders and their view that the street market was unfair competition as the stall holders were not subject to paying Business Rates. The Chairman commented that although it was difficult for businesses with the increased competition, a shop had a permanent presence in the town centre 7 days a week whereas the street market traders were only trading 1 day a week on a Friday. The aim of the street market was to attract more people in to the town centre to boost trade.

6. Town Centre Traders Association Issues

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that the Hednesford Traders Association issues were similar to those reported at the last meeting, as follows:-

- concern regarding signage – traders want the word “shops” added to the Market Street sign
- Victoria Street pedestrian crossing
- the potential road safety issues at the T junction.

As the District Council had no direct control over these issues, the County Council would be contacted to ascertain if they could be resolved. The Officer would also

be asking the County Councillors to assist in these matters.

The Traders Association issue in Cannock related to Cabinet's consideration of the Friday street market trail. There was concern raised regarding how the street market would impact on the Christmas Light switch on which was scheduled for Friday 4 December. Members noted that Bob Phillips and Councillor Diane Todd were looking at this issue.

Cannock Traders had also asked for better dialogue regarding the Mill Green Designer village. They had been advised that a meeting with the Traders Association could be arranged if there were enough Traders willing to participate in the meeting.

With regard to the Mill Green Designer village the Officer advised that there was a general view that it was a unique opportunity for Cannock and would attract trade to the town centre.

A Councillor commented that the Mill Green Designer Village would replace the lost Business Rates from the Rugeley Power Station which was scheduled to close within the next few years.

In respect of Rugeley, the Officer explained that the Traders Association had expressed concern regarding the Rugeley Public Realm project and the ongoing road works in Horsefair. The Traders had asked that a letter be circulated to the Committee along with the minutes of the Traders Association held on 8 July, 2014. These were circulated. It was noted that when the letter was drafted it referred to Councillor Winnington had failed to attend earlier meetings. However, Councillor Winnington had attended a Traders Association meeting on 8 July 2014 after the letter had been produced for traders to sign. The letter outlined the traders concerns regarding the road works and the negative effective it was having on their businesses. The Traders were asking whether the Town Centre Regeneration Policy Development Committee could offer them any assistance. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that the scheme was a County Council scheme and had overrun by a number of weeks.

He suggested that the Committee could formally write to Councillor Winnington outlining the concerns being raised as detailed within the Traders Associations letter and invite him to respond to the difficulties the Rugeley traders were facing.

The Chairman had sympathy for the Rugeley traders; she was concerned that the scheme had overrun and was poorly designed. She suggested that a letter be sent to Councillor Winnington outlining the traders concerns and inviting him to attend the next Town Centre Regeneration PDC meeting to respond.

Reference was made to Horsefair being closed on four consecutive Sundays (20th July being the first Sunday). However, it was worrying that although it was closed on 20 July no work had been undertaken.

RESOLVED:

That a letter be sent to Councillor Winnington outlining the Rugeley Traders Associations concerns regarding the ongoing road works in Horsefair and inviting him to attend the next Town Centre Regeneration PDC meeting to respond.

7. Provisional Work Programme

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager referred Members to the Draft Work Programme for 2014-15 (Item No. 7.1 – 7.2).

He advised that each meeting followed a similar format. Representatives from the Traders Associations were invited to attend alternate meetings. In view of the outcome of the discussion on the previous item Councillor Winnington would be invited to attend the next meeting on 8 October when representatives from the Traders Associations should be present.

The Part 2 discussion on “the Future of the District’s town centres” would remain on the agenda. Any specific issues raised could be added to the Work Programme as necessary throughout the year.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be noted and agreed.

8. 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

9. The Future of the District's Town Centres –

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager provided a presentation explaining that the work already undertaken by the PDC included:-

- Updates on Investment/Redevelopment Schemes in all three town centres.
- Discussions focused upon site specific or retailer specific issues.
- Recommendations concerning car parking issues:-
 - St. Joseph's Church car park, Rugeley
 - 10p after 3.00 p.m. at Avon Road, Cannock and Forge Road, Rugeley

The additional meeting on 27 February, 2014 had been arranged so that Members could consider a Briefing Note on the Future of the Town Centres. This Briefing Note had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting. The meeting considered:-

- Portas Review and Government Response
 - Distressed Town Centre Property Taskforce
 - The Grimsey Review
 - Supporting High Streets and Town Centres
- External Advisors were invited to the meeting
- Data on comparative car parking charges in competing centres and ticket sales on CCDC car parks

The key messages from the Committee were:-

- Proactive approach is required which will identify specific locations for future redevelopment;
- Car parking charges to be reviewed to ensure value for money as a means of competing with out of town locations;
- Opportunities to be taken to keep refreshing the offer within the town

centres.

The presentation also outlined a summary of the key messages of the recently published Mary Portas paper “Why our High Streets still matter”, as follows:-

- High streets will thrive if we re-imagine them.
- Central Government progress slower than anticipated.
- Business Rates are not fit for purpose.
Note: House of Commons; Business Innovation and Skills Select Committee also reached this conclusion in February 2014.
- Some local authorities are starting to reconsider their role – from tax collector to community incubator.
- Local Planning Authorities must work with local communities to know and understand what they need.
- Case studies to back up messages

Our town centres will adapt and survive – they already are.

- National chains have been replaced with independents.
- Many retailers are still committed to representation in town centres.
- Convenience formats for the food retailers provide opportunities for town centres.
- Digital High Streets Advisory Board work supports ‘better connected’ town centres_

He Officer then outlined some useful national research from Deloitte:-

- 61% of us express satisfaction with our High Streets, they are convenient.
- Most people view them as safe places to be.
- People want to have more:-
 - Free parking (60%)
 - Better choice of stores (59%)
 - More independent retailers (57%)
 - More specialist retailers, e.g. butchers (50%)
 - More parking capacity (48%)
- But fewer:-
 - Charity shops (31%)
 - Betting shops (52%)

Following the presentation confidential information regarding the 10p ticket trial at the Avon Road and Forge Road car parks was circulated to Members. The Committee considered the information and noted the different results from the two car parks. The reasons for this were discussed.

The Committee spoke about car parking in general and considered that it was a major issue as any changes to car parking charges would have an impact on the income the Council received. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manger commented that a report on the 10p after 3.00pm trial was due to be considered by Cabinet, probably in September. He suggested that relevant officers dealing with car park matters could be invited to the next meeting to discuss car

parking issues in more detail.

RESOLVED:

Those relevant officers with responsibility for car park matters are invited to the next meeting to discuss car parking issues in more detail in part 2 of the agenda.

The meeting closed at 5.40pm.

CHAIRMAN