

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 4 MARCH, 2015 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.	Hardman, B.
Bottomer, B.	Jones, R.
Dean, A.	Todd, Mrs. D.M.

Invitees: Mr. D. Hancock – representing Rugeley Traders' Association
Mrs. L. Whitehouse – representing Hednesford Traders' Association
Mrs. S. Dunning – representing Cannock Traders' Association

27. Apologies

No apologies for absence were received.

28. 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.

29. Minutes

A Councillor referred to Minute 20 and asked for an update on the improvements to the disabled access to the canal towpath. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that there was nothing to add to the update provided at the last meeting.

The LEP Consultant referred to Minute 21 and asked Councillor Jones to confirm whether he had received a reply from Councillor Winnington to his emails in which he raised various highway issues. Councillor Jones confirmed he had not received a reply but was content to allow the response to the letter sent to Councillor Winnington from the Chairman of the Committee to deal with his concerns.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January, 2015 be approved as a correct record.

30. Update from Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Holder

The Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader provided the following update:-

Hednesford

- As I reported to the last meeting of this Committee, St Modwen completed the sale of the Victoria Shopping Park to an investment company at the end of last year. The new owners, Aviva, have now taken responsibility for its long term management. The Council has made them aware of some issues associated with excessive litter and the need to carry out remedial work to landscaped areas. Discussions are due to take place with Tesco and Aldi relating to similar concerns.

Rugeley

- The work to enhance the link between the Tesco store and Rugeley Town Centre is now nearing completion. A specific issue associated with the access arrangements and the reconfiguring of the Forge Road Car Park has now been resolved.
- A public consultation on a Flood Alleviation Scheme to help protect homes and businesses in Rugeley Town Centre is starting tomorrow afternoon at Rugeley Leisure Centre. The implementation of the scheme is fundamental to securing development interest in a number of locations in the town centre.

Cannock

- I'm pleased to report that the planning application for the Mill Green Designer Outlet Village has now been submitted. The consultation notices have been issued and the proposals are likely to be considered by the Planning Control Committee during the early part of the summer.
- Detailed designs for the refurbishment of the Mill Street Underpass are nearing completion and preparatory work is due to commence in the next few days. The approved design is based upon the creation of an art gallery which will include a large number of tile based images produced by local artists. The installation of the decorative tiles will start immediately after Easter and the refurbished underpass should be completed by late June.

District-Wide

- As I indicated in my previous Briefing, the new Town Centre Business Rates Relief Scheme is now underway with information posted on the Council's website. There have already been two successful applications from businesses, both relating to premises in Cannock town centre. This scheme will be of major importance to the Council's efforts to bring new investment into the District's three town centres. In this context I

understand that the number of vacant premises in the District's three town centres at the end of 2014 was lower than it has been for a number of years at 6.7% which is about half the national average.

- Over the last few weeks both Tesco and Morrisons have announced a number of store closures. I'm pleased to tell you that the plans do not affect any stores in Cannock Chase District.

Following the update, a Councillor sought confirmation as to whether there were plans to upgrade the lighting as part of the Mill Street underpass refurbishment project. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that he was not aware of the details of the scheme or whether there were any plans to upgrade the lighting. However, he would confirm this with the Councillor direct. Illustrations of the proposals were circulated to Members.

A Councillor asked whether the parking tickets issued to motorists for parking in bays that did not exist on the Forge Road car park were to be rescinded. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that there had been some confusion regarding the parking bays on this car park and he understood the tickets issued would be rescinded.

The LEP Consultant explained that it would be a challenge to continue to meet the Performance Indicator to achieve a year on year reduction in vacancy rates in town centre shops. He asked the Committee to consider amending the Performance Indicator to "keeping vacancy rates below 10%". The Committee was in agreement with this suggestion.

A Councillor asked whether amending this Performance Indicator would assist in ensuring there was a good mix of shops provided within the town centres. The LEP Consultant confirmed that the two were not related; however, consideration would be given to ensuring a good selection of shops was provided in town centres.

RESOLVED:

That the update provided by the Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader be noted and the Performance Indicator relating to vacancy rates in town centres be amended as indicated above.

30. Town Centre Traders Association Issues

The Chairman welcomed Sheila Dunning, Cannock Traders Association, David Hancock, Rugeley Traders Association and Linda Whitehouse, Hednesford Traders Association to the meeting.

Hednesford Traders Association

Linda Whitehouse, representing Hednesford Traders Association outlined the concerns/issues affecting Hednesford Traders Association. She advised that Hednesford Traders main concerns centred on highways, in particular road safety. She circulated a number of photographs showing the problems being experienced with large HGV's taking a short cut through Eskrett Street,

sometimes the vehicles were mounting the kerb or reversing back up the road. In addition there was a problem with illegal parking by disabled badge holders. She also highlighted the problem with speeding traffic through the town.

She made reference to Tesco's and considered that the flow of traffic required improvement around the junction of Rugeley Road and Rawsley Road.

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that, as part of the planning application for the second phase of the Hednesford Town Centre Regeneration scheme, discussions took place with the County Council regarding improvements to the traffic lights. However, after further evaluation it was concluded that this was not necessary. Additionally, another proposal to ban right turns from Uxbridge Street to Church Hill was considered unnecessary.

Mrs. Whitehouse also made reference to the road surfaces and pavements in the town centre which were in a bad state of repair and could be a trip hazard. Further concern was raised regarding the pedestrian crossing in Victoria Street which was considered dangerous due to the speed vehicles were travelling. The parking by taxis at the Victoria Street junction was also a problem.

All of the issues raised had been reported to Staffordshire County Council Highways team but the Traders Association was hopeful that the Committee could assist in resolving them.

Finally she advised that motorists were parking on the car park at the rear of the Co-op between 7am-7pm to use Hednesford Station and she asked for consideration to a 4 hour restriction being implemented. Further concern was raised regarding visitors to Tesco's who were not shopping in the town centre following their visit to Tesco.

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that he would continue the discussions with Aldi around the suggestion to place a hand rail on the pedestrian section of the slop to the car park. He referred to the issues raised and confirmed that they had all been raised with the County Council previously but he would raise them again. He suggested that it may be useful for a representative from County Council highways to be invited to attend a meeting in the new municipal year so that the issues, which not only affected Hednesford, but Cannock and Rugeley too, could be discussed more fully. The Committee considered that this would be useful.

With reference to the pedestrian crossing on Victoria Street Members agreed that it was located in the wrong place. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager and the Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader had raised this with the County Council and at Hednesford Forum. The County Council had advised that a safety audit had been carried out and this had not flagged up an issue with the crossing. However, he would continue to make a case with the County about the concerns raised regarding its safety. It could also be discussed further at the meeting when the Highways representative was in attendance.

Cannock Traders Association

Sheila Dunning, representing Cannock Traders Association outlined the following issues:-

- How long is the street market staying as they had heard that it was to go out to tender?
- The Christmas light switch on event was on 13 November and traders had requested that the street market be not held on this day
- The Cannock Carnival was being held on 9 July and the Traders had requested that car parking charges be removed
- Traders had concern regarding the lack of police presence in the town centre

The LEP Consultant advised that Cabinet had resolved that the Friday street market would continue in Cannock town centre. It was to go out to tender to ensure that an attractive, quality street market was being operated.

With regard to the request regarding the Christmas light switch on event he confirmed that this could be included within the tender specification to ensure the event continued to operate successfully. With respect to the Carnival and the request to remove car parking charges on this day he advised that this was due to be considered by Cabinet at the meeting in April.

The concerns raised regarding the lack of Police presence in the town centre were noted. As this could be an issue in all 3 town centres the LEP Consultant suggested that the relevant Police Inspector could be requested to attend a meeting of the Committee to address these concerns.

A Councillor considered that the Friday street market had improved over recent months and asked whether there were any plans to refurbish the indoor market.

The LEP Consultant confirmed that work on an improvement plan had been commissioned and this would form part of the Committee's discussions in the new year.

Reference was made to young people drinking alcohol in the town centre. The Chairman advised that this had been raised at the Cannock Forum. This matter could be discussed further when a representative from the Police attended a future meeting. Further concern was raised regarding the condition of the block paving in the town centre and it was agreed that this could be raised with Staffordshire County Council Highways.

Rugeley Traders Association

David Hancock, representing Rugeley Traders Association raised the following issues:-

- Concern that further disruption will occur when the resurfacing of Horsefair was carried out later in the year
- Condition of the paving in the town centre – Staffordshire County Council had carried out patched repairs; however, the remainder of work had not been done
- Condition of manhole covers in Upper Brook Street – Staffordshire County Council had not carried out the repairs properly
- Concern regarding the speed of traffic in the town centre which was a pedestrian area

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager confirmed that the issues raised related to the County Council highways and would therefore be picked up when the representative from highways attended a future meeting. With regard to the resurfacing of Horsefair, this had been raised at the previous meeting when Councillor Winnington was in attendance and it was also included in the letter from the Chairman sent to Councillor Winnington following the meeting. A response to this letter had not yet been provided. He would therefore chase a response and circulate it to Members once it was received.

Members noted that a number of potholes repairs had to be redone and it was considered that this was a waste of resources and money.

With regard to the attendance of a representative from highways at a future meeting the LEP Consultant suggested that the concerns raised by the Traders Association representatives were maintenance issues rather than strategy. He would liaise with the County Council and, if it was considered that a political presence was necessary, then County Councillor Winnington would be invited to attend along with a relevant Highways Officer. Members agreed that meeting which the highways representatives were invited to attend should commence at 3.00pm.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the issues raised by the three Traders Associations be noted.
- (B) That a representative from Staffordshire County Council highways be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to discuss concerns affecting Cannock, Hednesford, and Rugeley town centres and this meeting commence at 3.00pm
- (C) That a representative from Staffordshire Police be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to discuss the issues and concerns highlighted.

31. Work Programme

The LEP Consultant sought the views of the Committee on the meetings held during the last Municipal Year. He asked whether Members were content with

the format of the meetings and the items that were included on both Part 1 and Part 2 of the agenda. Members agreed that they were happy with the format of the meetings.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme as detailed at Item 6.1 – 6.2 be noted.

32. 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

33. The Future of the District's Town Centres

The LEP Consultant made reference to the progress with the Aelfgar site in Rugeley and to the work by the Environment Agency on a flood alleviation scheme which had to be undertaken prior to any new redevelopment. This scheme would need to be progressed in order to bring forward investment sites in the area.

A Councillor advised that the plans for the flood alleviation scheme would be on show at Rugeley Leisure Centre over the weekend.

With regard to Hednesford town centre the Committee was advised that the redevelopment scheme had now been completed and the impact of the scheme was being absorbed. Members noted that the opening of the new Wetherspoons public house in April would be good for trade and could act as a stimulant for other uses in the town centre.

The LEP Consultant confirmed that the planning application in respect of the Mill Green Designer Village had been submitted. The relationship of the Village to the town centre would be regulated through the planning process. This would form a big part of the Committee's work during the forthcoming year. The reason for the removal of a cinema in the planning application for the Designer Village was explained to the Committee.

The Head of Economic Development commented that the developers of the Mill Green Designer Village had indicated they would be happy to communicate their proposals to traders or any other interested parties.

Members further noted that the report being produced by GVA to highlight the potential investment opportunities in Cannock town centre was nearing an end and would also form a big part of the Committee's work next year.

The meeting closed at 5.35pm.

CHAIRMAN

