

# What we said we'd achieve in 2013/14

## Priority Outcome: Prosperity – Economic Resilience

### Town Centres

End of Year

How are we doing so far?

**We said we would: Improve town centres through regeneration and management**

By:

<p><b>To maintain a dialogue with the stakeholders in the District's three Town Centres, including the Traders Associations, as a means of supporting specific initiatives in each centre.</b></p> <p>There is a regular dialogue with all three of the District's Traders Associations who are also invited to attend meetings of the Town Centre Regeneration PDC.</p>	
<p><b>Hednesford Town Centre</b></p> <p><b>To secure the completion of both phases of the town centre regeneration programme through the occupation of the discount foodstore on Rugeley Road by Aldi.</b> <b>NB Note that this is subject to a decision of the retailer.</b></p> <p>Achieved. Aldi opened on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013.</p>	
<p><b>Rugeley Town Centre:-</b></p> <p><b>To secure a commitment from Tesco to build a new store at the Leathermill Lane site with an opening date prior to the end of 2013.</b></p> <p>Achieved. Tesco, Rugeley opened on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2013.</p>	

<p><b>Cannock Town Centre:-</b></p> <p><b>To implement the decisions of Cabinet following consideration of the completed market testing work on the Beecroft Road site.</b></p> <p>Achieved.</p> <p>The outcome of the market testing work and subsequent public consultation was considered by Cabinet in September 2013. Cabinet resolved that as a result of difficult market conditions, the lack of national retailer interest and the fact that there was not majority support from the public consultation for the development of Beecroft Road, development should not be pursued further at that time. Cabinet also agreed that a review of development and improvement opportunities in Cannock Town Centre should be undertaken, which would include the procurement of specialist advice in conjunction with the County Council and other stakeholders and partners.</p> <p>In March 2014 the Council jointly commissioned research with the County Council and other stakeholders to inform the future investment needs of Cannock Town Centre.</p>	
<p><b>To adapt the Council's website to provide new pages and links on town centre improvement initiatives.</b></p> <p>Achieved. Initial pages were made available in April 2013</p>	
<p><b>Replace and enhance highway barrier planters on A34 and Cannock bus station</b></p> <p>Achieved.</p>	
<p><b>Provide new hanging baskets in Cannock town centre</b></p> <p>Achieved.</p>	

**To continue to implement town centre improvement initiatives including the Town Centres Improvement Fund, the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme.**

Achieved.

At the end of March 2014 the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme had supported 19 separate businesses in the reoccupation of previously vacant floorspace within the District's three town centres. 10 schemes have been implemented in Cannock Town Centre, 8 in Rugeley Town Centre and 1 in Hednesford Town Centre.

In addition further improvements were carried out via the Town Centres Improvement Fund, most notably involving the refurbishment of Beecroft Subway during Summer 2013.

Reduced parking fees were also introduced on a trial basis at St Joseph's Church Car Park in June 2013, and in January 2014 at Avon Road Car Park in Cannock and Forge Road Car Park in Rugeley. The effectiveness of these trials will be evaluated during the course of 2014-15.



**Replace and enhance highway landscape on A34 Cannock (Beecroft to Church Street Island).**

Achieved.



**Clear and replant all shrub beds in Cannock town centre.**

Achieved.



**Replant small trees in Cannock town centre**

Achieved.



**As Performance Measures:**

**To achieve a reduction in the number of vacant ground-floor retail units in the District's principal town centre shopping streets.**

**Note:-** The principal town centre shopping streets were defined as part of the Work Programme of the Town Centre Regeneration PDC during 2013-14, and therefore comparable data is not available for Q1 and Q2.

Key Performance Measures

Service Aim: Improved Town Centres through regeneration and management

Town Centre	Total Units	Vacant Units	Vacancy Rate (%)
October 2013			
Cannock	126	9	7.14
Rugeley	125	11	8.8
Hednesford	93	11	11.83
Combined	344	31	9.01
March 2014			
Cannock	126	13	10.32
Rugeley	125	8	6.4
Hednesford	93	9	9.68
Combined	344	30	8.72



**Notes:**

1. Cannock's principal streets include Market Hall Street (inclusive of The Forum, Cannock Shopping Centre and outside Market Hall ground floor units); Church Street; Market Place (up to Newhall Street); and the front part of High Green Court.
2. Rugeley's principal streets include Market Street (up to and including Morrisons); Market Square; part of Anson Street; Lower Brook Street; Brook Square (including units up to and including the Market Hall); Brewery Street; Upper Brook Street; and Horsefair (up to St Paul's Road).
3. Hednesford's principal streets are Market Street (only the front two units of The Lightworks are included and Anglesey Lodge is excluded); Rugeley Road (up to Victoria Street); and the new developments off Victoria Street.

# End Of Year Case Study

PROSPERITY; ECONOMIC RESILIENCE PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

QUARTER 1 REPORTING

CASE STUDY: THE TOWN CENTRE BUSINESS RATES DISCOUNT SCHEME

## Background

In April 2012 Cannock Chase Council was identified as one of 100 local authorities who were chosen to receive an allocation of £100,000 from the Government's High Street Innovation Fund. The Fund, which was established in response to the recommendations contained in the Portas Report, was to be used to stimulate investment in locations which had been adversely affected by the recession.

After due consideration by the Cabinet and a period of consultation which involved discussions with local traders associations and the Chamber of Commerce, the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme (TCBRDS) was formally launched in September 2012. The main aim of the TCBDRS is to bring back into use empty retail units within the District's three town centres. A 100% discount on business rates is available for a maximum period of 12 months with a cap at £10,000 per business. This support is on top of any other rates relief the business may be entitled to, such as Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR). The principal requirement of the TCBDRS is that the successful applicant must be either a new business or an expanding one and they are proposing to occupy a currently empty unit in Cannock, Hednesford or Rugeley town centres with the boundaries defined on a series of maps which are available for inspection on the Council's website. Charity shops, betting shops, off licenses and market stalls are specifically excluded from consideration. Applications which include additional financial contributions from a landlord, such as rent free periods, or will secure a use in a prominent ground floor location are given priority.

## Progress to Date

In the period since the TCBDRS was launched, four new businesses and ten business expansions have received approval with only one failing to take up the offer of support from the Council. These range from a café, card shops, cosmetic treatments, a pet shop, clothing shops and an estate agency. Over 20 new jobs have been created and many more protected, footfall is on the increase and there are indications that the new business ventures are trading well. Of the 13 approved and implemented schemes six are located in Cannock, six in Rugeley and one is located in Hednesford Town Centre which has seen a number of new retailers opening up in the town without assistance from the TCBDRS via the completion of the regeneration works. Approximately £60,000 of the £100,000 allocation secured by the Council has been committed to support those schemes above, with a further £40,000 still available to new applicants.

A recent survey of vacant units in the three town centres revealed that in the period between June 2012 and June 2013 the number of empty units had gone down in both Cannock and Rugeley with a direct correlation to the take up of assistance from the TCBDRS. One negative aspect of the scheme is that some businesses who have expressed a desire to expand have had to reconsider their plans because it would adversely affect their eligibility for SBRR.

## Trader Comments

Angi Cooney from Rugeley Traders Association assisted one of the successful applicants said "the knowledge that they would get help from the Council with their business rates helped two of our traders to move to larger premises within the town centre. As a direct result, the move from a market stall to a retail unit has seen their trade increase by 15%".

Jon Banner from Card Stop in Market Hall Street in Cannock, the Schemes first successful applicant, was featured on the BBC's Midlands Today in November 2012. He was also supportive of the Scheme and welcomed "the role of the Council in bringing new jobs to the town and supporting his family business".