

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**  
**WEDNESDAY, 29 AUGUST, 2012 AT 4.00 P.M.**  
**IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK**  
**PART 1**

PRESENT:  
Councillors

Spicer, Mrs. A. (Chairman)

Allt, Mrs. A.	Todd, Mrs. D.
Freeman, Miss M.	Whitehouse, Mrs. L.
Jones, R.	

**1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Anslow, G. D. Ball (Vice-Chairman) and Mrs. D. Grice.

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

No declarations of interests were made.

**3. Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March, 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed.

**4. The Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio**

The Head of Planning & Regeneration reported that the work of the Committee was part of the Economic Resilience Priority Delivery Plan the aims of which were to -

- Increase the employability of the District's workforce
- Facilitate economic growth through job creation
- Deliver community regeneration and development (through creative, tourism and leisure industries and use of natural resources)

It was explained that a series of actions on how the Council could achieve the service aims was listed in the Priority Delivery Plan. The town centre regeneration actions contributed to the aim to 'facilitate economic growth through job creation'. The Committee was advised that good progress was being made with respect to the development of both Hednesford and Rugeley town centres.

Members were interested in actions to reduce unemployment amongst young people and the Planning & Economic Development Services Manager advised that to increase the employability of the district's workforce, the Council was working closely with South Staffordshire College and the Stoke and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. A number of initiatives were being carried out including encouraging apprenticeships to be taken up.

The Head of Planning & Regeneration gave an overview of the Priority Delivery Plan Outturn Report for 2011-12.

AGREED:

- (A) That the parts of the Economic Resilience Priority Delivery Plan relevant to the Committee be noted.
- (B) That the Priority Delivery Plan Outturn Report for 2011-12 be noted.

## 5. The Government Response to the Portas Review

The Committee received a presentation from the Planning & Economic Development Services Manager. He explained that the Government's response had been made known the week following the meeting of the Committee held on 21 March, 2012 when the Portas Review had been discussed.

He highlighted the 28 main recommendations and the Government's response as follows:-

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Response</u>
(1) Put in place a Town Team; a visionary strategic and strong operational management team for high streets (28)Run a number of High Street Pilots to test the concept	Two bidding rounds have been held (to each secure £100k) to create 27 pilot 'Town Teams' for further evaluation; 12 in May, 2012 and 15 in July 2012
(2) Empower successful Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to take on more responsibilities and powers and become 'Super-BIDs'.	£500k has been set aside to create a BIDs fund to help town centres access set-up loans.
(3) Legislate to allow landlords to become high street investors by contributing to the BID	Commitment to explore how a property owner BID could be delivered and how cross boundary and tourism BIDs could be delivered.
(4) Establish a new 'National Market Day' where budding shopkeepers can try their hand at operating a low-cost retail business.	The markets sector launched a National Markets Day on 23 June as the start of a 'Love Your Market' fortnight concluding on 8 July. The Government encouraged Councils to support the initiative.
(5) Make it easier for people to become market traders by removing unnecessary regulations to that anyone can trade on the high street unless there is a valid reason why not.	A consultation on draft regulations to make it easier for street traders to operate legitimate businesses on the streets.

The Head of Planning & Regeneration advised that the Council had supported the National Market Day initiative. Partners and volunteer groups had taken space in markets to increase awareness of their

services and the Council had tried to encourage people to set up a market stall by offering them at a reduced rate of £10 per day. No one had come forward to take up the offer, perhaps due to it being only for a limited two week period. However, Officers were going to liaise with established traders to explore ways of encouraging people to set up new businesses over a longer period of time including work with South Staffs. College for them to provide general business advice.

(6) Government should consider whether business rates can better support small businesses and independent retailers. The Government has urged local authorities to use the new powers contained in the Localism Act 2011 to provide business rate discounts to small businesses and independent retailers.

(7) Local authorities should use their new discretionary powers to give business rate concessions to new local businesses The Local Government Finance Bill proposed further changes to allow local authorities to retain a higher proportion of business rates than at present.

(8) Make business rates work for businesses by reviewing the use of the Retail Price Index (RPI) with a view to changing the calculation to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The Government are committed to migrating from RPI to CPI once their fiscal consolidation plans have been implemented.

(9) Local areas should implement free controlled parking schemes that work for their town centres and we should have a new parking league table. The Government have encouraged local authorities to look closely at their parking provisions and charges to ensure they deliver the best outcomes locally.

A Member raised concern with regard to a car park ticket machine in Rugeley that did not appear to be working properly. The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager advised that he would relay the concerns on to the appropriate Officer.

(10) Town Teams should focus on making high streets accessible, attractive and safe. Government supports the recommendation and encourages Town Teams to develop approaches to minimise anti social behaviour.

(11) Government should include high street deregulation as part of their ongoing work on freeing up red tape. The Red Tape Challenge is intended to put in place a streamlined, deregulated process to reduce burdens on local authorities by making it easier to revoke out of date, archaic or unnecessary byelaws that hinder the effective operation of traders, businesses or markets.

(12) Address the restrictive aspects of the 'Use Class' system to make it easier to change the uses of key properties on the high street The Government encourages local planning authorities to use Local Development Orders to deregulate particular uses in a defined area to encourage business start-ups. They are also advised to consider the use of Article 4 directions to help control certain uses and are consulting on a further review of elements of the Use Classes Order

(13) Put betting shops into a separate 'use class' of their own.

The Committee was advised that betting shops had been put into a separate 'use class' and would need

to apply for planning permission.

(14) Make explicit the presumption in favour of town centre development in the wording of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The National Planning Policy Framework published on 27 March, 2012 contains strong policies to promote town centres.

(15) Introduce Secretary of State 'exceptional sign off' for all new out-of-town developments and require all large new developments to have an 'affordable shops' quota.

This proposal was not supported by Government which prefers local determination and sparing use of the call-in power. They also take the view that an 'affordable shops' quota could increase the adverse impact of that development on town centres.

(16) Large retailers should support and mentor local businesses and independent retailers.

The Department for Communities & Local Government is providing up to £306k match funding for the Enterprise Business Connectors scheme, run by Business in the Community, to help small businesses in disadvantaged communities survive and to thrive by encouraging partnerships with local large firms.

(17) Retailers should report on their support of local high streets in their annual report.

Whilst the Government have welcomed this recommendation, they have not stated if they intend to encourage companies to comply voluntarily or will consider legislation.

(18) Encourage a contract of care between landlords and their commercial tenants by promoting the leasing code and supporting the use of lease structures other than upward only rent reviews, especially for small businesses.

The Government have written to all local authorities to encourage the formal take up of the code and its terms, offering information and support to those signing up. They are also approaching key industry players on a similar basis.

(19) Explore further disincentives to prevent landlords from leaving units vacant.

(20) Banks who own empty property on the high street should either administer these assets well or be required to sell them.

(21) Local authorities should make more proactive use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers to encourage the redevelopment of key high street retail space.

The Government has recognised the importance of these recommendations and launched the £10m High Street Innovation Fund to one hundred local authorities to help address the issues of riots and empty shops, including £100k allocated to Cannock Chase Council.

The Council's Cabinet had approved the principle of launching a local business rates discount scheme to encourage bringing empty 'high street' premises back into use.

An industry-led cross sector taskforce is also being established to consider the issues which prevent commercial property being reused.

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| (22) Empower local authorities to step in when landlords are negligent with new 'Empty Shop Management Orders'. | The Government are not convinced that 'Empty Shop Management Orders' are required, but will review this in the future. |
| (23) Introduce a public register of high street landlords.  | Local authorities are to be encouraged to compile such registers with Town Teams.                                      |

The Committee considered that this would be particularly helpful when trying to locate landlords for properties that were causing concern. The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager explained that it was often the public's misconception that local authorities owned the majority of shops in town centres.

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| (24) Run a high profile campaign to get people involved in Neighbourhood Plans. | The Government has allocated £1m to support the development of High Street Neighbourhood Plans. |
| (25) Promote the inclusion of the High Street in Neighbourhood Plans.           |   |

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| (26) Developers should make a financial contribution to ensure that the local community has a strong voice in the planning system. | The Government agrees with this and points out that through the Localism Act 2011, developers now have a duty to consult communities before submitting planning applications in certain circumstances. |
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| (27) Support imaginative community use of empty properties through:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Right to Buy</li> <li>• Meanwhile Use</li> <li>• Community Right to Try</li> </ul> | The Government has indicated its support for this proposal and points to enabling elements of the Big Society programme as potential delivery vehicles. |
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The Planning & Economic Development Service Manager informed the Committee that a £1m Future High Street X-Fund will be awarded in Spring 2013 to those locations which deliver the most creative and effective schemes to revitalise their high streets.

AGREED:

That the Government's response to the Portas Review be noted.

## 6. Provisional Work Programme

Consideration was given to the Committee's Draft Work Programme for 2012-13 (Enclosure 6).

AGREED:

(A) That the Work Programme be noted.

(B) That the Chairs of the Town Centres Traders Associations be invited to attend the next meeting.

## 7. 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**

**8. Progress on Town Centre Regeneration**

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager gave an update on behalf of the Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader.

It was reported that a development statement for the Beecroft Road site in Cannock town centre was being finalised as part of the first stage in testing the market to identify development potential and a development partner.

With regard to Hednesford town centre, it was reported that Victoria Street had re-opened to traffic at the end of May, 2012 and the bus lay-bys were now being used by local bus operators. A temporary public car park had been created adjacent to the new traffic island with space for 50 vehicles. Aldi was now confirmed as the anchor store for the Phase 1 Rugeley Road 'Chase Gateway' scheme. The construction of Phase 2 was almost running to programme despite some delays due to adverse weather conditions in June and early July. The recruitment process for the new Tesco store was well advanced and the open recruitment phase was to start in the next few days. A number of retailers have now been confirmed and negotiations are proceeding with other potential tenants for the new shop units.

In relation to Rugeley Town Centre, demolition work has begun to clear the site for the new Tesco store and construction is expected to start early in 2013 with an anticipated opening of late summer 2013. Tesco had confirmed that the Rugeley store will be a Tesco Partnerships Store and that some of the new jobs would be available to long term unemployed people using the recruitment model adopted for the Hednesford.

The meeting finished at 5.20pm.

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CHAIRMAN