

Please ask for: Wendy Rowe **Your Ref:**
Extension No: 4584 **My Ref:**
E-Mail: wendyrowe@cannockchasedc.gov.uk

10 March, 2020

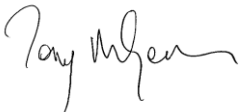
**PLEASE NOTE START TIME
OF MEETING – 5.00PM**

Dear Councillor,

**PROMOTING PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
5.00 PM WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH, 2020
ESPERANCE ROOM, CIVIC CENTRE, CANNOCK**

You are invited to attend this meeting for consideration of the matters itemised in the following Agenda.

Yours sincerely,



**T. McGovern,
Managing Director**

To: Councillors:

Davis, Mrs. M.A. (Chairman)
Sutherland, M. (Vice-Chairman)

Boucker, A.S.	Startin, P.D.
Fisher, P.A.	Stretton, Mrs. P.Z.
Fitzgerald, Ms. A.A.	Todd, Mrs. D.M.
Hewitt, P.M.	Wilkinson, Ms. C.L.
Layton, Mrs. A.	Witton, P.T.
Newbury, J.A.A.	

AGENDA

PART 1

1. Apologies

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

(i) To declare any personal, pecuniary or disclosable pecuniary interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct and any possible contraventions under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(ii) To receive any Party Whip declarations.

3. Minutes

To receive the Minutes of the Promoting Prosperity Scrutiny Committee held on 13 November, 2019 (*Enclosed*).

4. Quarter 3 2019/20 Promoting Prosperity Priority Delivery Plan Update

To receive the latest performance information (Item 4.1 – 4.10)

5. Briefing Note - Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates Working Group

To consider the Briefing Note of the Head of Economic Prosperity outlining the recommendations of the review (Item 5.1 – 5.3)

6. Rent Arrears Recovery Procedure Working Group – Update from Chairman, Councillor Mrs. M. Davis

To receive a verbal update from Councillor Mrs. M. Davis (Chairman of the Working Group) on the outcome of the review

7. Update on the outcome of the Review of the Vulnerable Persons Decorating and Grass Cutting Scheme undertaken during 2018-19

To receive a verbal update from the Head of Housing and Partnerships

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
PROMOTING PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER, 2019 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Davis, Mrs. M.A. (Chairman)
Councillors Sutherland, M. (Vice-Chairman)

Fisher, P.A.	Todd, Mrs. D.M.
Layton, Mrs. A.	Wilkinson, Ms C.L.
Newbury, J.A.A.	Witton, P.T.

8. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A.S. Boucker, Ms. A.A. Fitzgerald, P.M. Hewitt and P.D. Startin along with Councillor Mrs. P.Z. Stretton who was undertaking Civic duties in Datteln.

9. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restrictions on Voting by Members and Party Whip Declarations

No declarations of interests or party whip declarations were received.

10. Minutes

The Chairman advised that Council on 4 September, 2019 had approved some changes to the Conservative Group's membership of the Scrutiny Committees. This meant that Councillor Ms. A.A. Fitzgerald had replaced Councillor Mrs. H. Sutton on this Scrutiny Committee.

With regard to Minute 7 the Committee noted that it had been necessary to change the review topic of one of the Working Groups that had been agreed at the meeting. The Working Group would now be reviewing the Rent Arrears Recovery Procedure instead of the Housing Allocations Process.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

11. End of Year Promoting Prosperity Priority Delivery Plan Performance Update

Consideration was given to the Quarter 2 performance information for the Promoting Prosperity Priority Delivery Plan (PDP) (Item 4.1 – 4.10 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Economic Prosperity and the Head of Housing and Property Services led Members through the information explaining that overall progress had been good this Quarter.

Reference was made to the vacancy rates in Cannock town centre which had risen slightly above the national rate of 12%. The Head of Economic Prosperity confirmed that high streets across the country were having a difficult time and a number of businesses had closed in Cannock in recent months. The Working Group to review Cannock town centre occupancy rates, which had been set up by the Scrutiny Committee, would be considering the reasons for the higher vacancy rates and looking at ways to assist.

The Committee noted that there were a number of factors involved in the higher vacancy rates. Retailers were facing challenging times in town centres and this was not just confined to Cannock; it was a national trend. The increase in online shopping was having an effect on town centre businesses and town centres would need to function in a different way in the future. The importance of incorporating living accommodation in any town centre improvements was noted.

With regard to employment levels the Committee noted that the slight increase since last October was not due to job losses but the changes to the way claimants were measured following the introduction of Universal Credit.

The Head of Economic Prosperity explained that producing the business case for the Cannock railway station upgrade was behind schedule due to the length of time it had taken West Midlands Railways to successfully procure a suitable consultant to develop the outline business case. A consultant had now been appointed and the Council would be working with partners to develop the business case. He confirmed that the outline business case should be completed by the end of Quarter 4 and any major upgrade to the station would not be completed before the opening of the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet next September. However, there were a number of short term cosmetic improvements to the station that could be considered before next September (these would not form part of the business case). These included improving signage and involving Community Groups to clear litter.

The Head of Economic Prosperity confirmed that the consultants would be considering a number of options when developing the business case. This would include how to make the station more accessible, how to improve the platform and develop an attractive route from the station to the Designer Outlet. The business case would look at the detail and how to fund these improvements.

The Committee noted that work on the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet was progressing well and it was on track to be completed in August 2020 and open in the September. 40 to 45% of the units had already been let to high quality retailers and it was anticipated 75 to 80% of the units would be let by the time it was open.

Members were advised that the Duke of Kent had attended the Engineering Skills Academy launch event on 24 October and they noted that the take up of courses was promising.

The Committee noted that the Economic Prosperity Strategy had been drafted and would be submitted to Cabinet in December for formal adoption. Engagement with stakeholders and Members would then commence in order to deliver the priority actions.

Officers were working through the planning application with Lichfield District Council in relation to the Rugeley Power Station site. The demolition programme was on track to be completed by the end of 2020 with the start of a 10 year build programme commencing in 2021.

The Head of Housing and Partnerships confirmed that the Council had invested £12.9m to provide additional affordable homes across the district. Negotiations were ongoing to purchase a piece of land owned by Staffordshire County Council. The Hawks Green Depot site was progressing well, 51% of the site was being released for housing and 44 new homes would be provided.

The Chairman raised concern regarding traffic in that area and sought confirmation about where the exit would be located once the new homes had been built. Officers advised that discussions with the highway authority would take place through the planning process and the County Council would be seeking to mitigate the impact of the development on the highway.

12. Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates Working Group and Rent Arrears Recovery Procedure Working Group – update from Chairs

Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates Working Group - update

In the absence of Councillor P. Hewitt, Chairman of the Working Group, the Head of Economic Prosperity provided the Committee with a verbal update on the work undertaken so far by the Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates Working Group.

He explained that the Working Group had met on 15 October and had received a presentation from Debbie Harris, the Economic Development Manager. The Working Group had indicated support for 4 areas; these included:-

- Car Parking – to consider improving the ways to pay for parking to encourage people to stay longer (i.e. pay by card, contactless and pay-by-phone), to consider whether the car parks were situated in the right place and whether the plans within the Town Centre prospectus would affect the number of

parking spaces available, and also to consider the fee structure.

- ASB/Drug Activity – the Group discussed whether this fell under their remit or that of the Community Scrutiny Committee – the Group could note the current position and issues but not explore this in detail.
- High Rents – to invite estate agents and landlords to the Working Group to understand the high rents and compare rents in other towns
- Town Centre Partnership – to invite representatives to the Working Group to understand the role of the partnership and their plans to increase footfall

The Head of Economic Prosperity confirmed that the Working Group would therefore concentrate on 3 of the issues given that the ASB/Drug Activity issue fell under the remit of the Community Scrutiny Committee. The next meeting would be held in either December or January when car parking would be discussed. Mike Edmonds, Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles and Joss Presland, Waste and Engineering Services Manager would be invited to attend.

A Member made reference to a question he had asked at a previous meeting regarding the number of Council houses being built in the District in comparison to the number of registered housing providers building in the District. The Head of Economic Prosperity commented that this was not discussed at the Working Group meeting but confirmed that no new dwellings had been developed in the town centre.

The Head of Housing and Partnerships referred the Councillor to the information contained in the PDP on page 4.3. This indicated that 19 new dwellings had been provided by the Council and 32 new dwellings had been provided by registered housing providers. The Head of Economic Prosperity added that there were aspirations in the Cannock Town Centre Prospectus to ensure living accommodation was provided in the town centre.

A Member sought confirmation about the plans for the shops (whose leases were up next year) and the garages at St Michaels Drive in Rugeley. The Head of Economic Prosperity confirmed that the shop leases fell under the remit of the Property Services team. He would provide information to the Member concerned outside of the meeting. With regard to the garages the Head of Housing and Partnerships advised that this site had been considered for houses 2 years ago but the proposed scheme was not cost effective. The site remains on the list of site for future potential development; however the larger sites would be considered first.

Rent Arrears Recovery Procedure Working Group - update

Councillor Mrs. M. Davis, Chair of the Working Group then referred to the Rent Arrears Recovery Procedure Review. The Group had met on one occasion and it had proved to be a positive meeting. The Head of Housing and Partnerships explained that Members had considered the information provided to them by officers that outlined the lengthy process involved in recovering rent arrears.

The Group supported the following actions:-

- Amending and streamlining the letters currently sent out, keeping them simple and referencing any help available to tenants
- Communicating with tenants via email/text messages and increasing home visits
- Consider the introduction of an In-house Debt Advisor along with the resources involved
- Investigate alternatives to the Home Contents Insurance Scheme
- Supporting the work done to promote the Discretionary Housing Payment – ensuring the allocation is spent each year

Members noted that the Working Group was due to meet again next Thursday 21 November, 2019.





RESOLVED:





That the Head of Economic Prosperity liaise with Property Services and provide further information to Councillor P.A. Fisher regarding the shops at St Michaels Drive, Rugeley.

The meeting closed at 5.00 pm.

CHAIRMAN

Promoting Prosperity PDP 2019-20

Delivery of actions for Q3				
				Total Number of Actions
Action completed	Work in progress but slightly behind schedule. Action will be completed in next Quarter.	Action > 3 months / 1 Quarter behind schedule and action is required to address slippage	Action / project cannot be completed / delivered. Option to close to be agreed by Leadership Team / Cabinet.	
5 (45.5 %)	5 (45.5 %)	1 (9%)	0	11

Cumulative progress in delivering actions - April to December 2019				
				Total Number of Actions
Action completed	Work in progress but slightly behind schedule. Action will be completed in next Quarter.	Action > 3 months / 1 Quarter behind schedule and action is required to address slippage	Action / project cannot be completed / delivered. Option to close to be agreed by Leadership Team / Cabinet.	
18 (64%)	5 (18%)	4 (14%)	1 (4%)	28

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Frequency of reporting (Q or A)	Last year's outturn	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Establishing McArthurGlen Designer Outlet as a major visitor attraction and maximise the benefits it will bring to the District							
a) Local people working on construction site (those inducted)	Q	N/A	a) 150-200	156	229	275	
b) Retail jobs for local people			b) 700-800	Measurement to commence Summer 2020			
Passenger numbers using the station due to the development of McArthurGlen	A	N/A		Measurement to commence Summer 2020			
Increase the skill levels of residents and the amount of higher skilled jobs in the District							
Increase in qualifications at NVQ Level 3/4	A	NVQ3 – 51.1% average	Aim to increase levels year on year				
	A	NVQ4 – 26.6% average for quarter	Aim to increase levels year on year				
Create strong and diverse town centres to attract additional customers and visitors							
Town Centre Vacancy Rates	Q	Cannock 10.9% average for quarter	Aim to keep below national rate of 12%	12.7% (measure Jul 2019)	14.1% (measure Oct 19)	16.4% (measure Jan 20)	
	Q	Rugeley 4.8% average for quarter		1.6% (measure Jul 2019)	1.6% (measure Oct 19)	2.4% (measure Jan 20)	
	Q	Hednesford 4.6% average for quarter		6.5% (measure Jul 2019)	7.5% (measure Oct 19)	6.5% (measure Jan 20)	

Performance Indicator	Frequency of reporting (Q or A)	Last year's outturn	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Increase access to employment opportunities							
Employment Levels	A	Employment rate 75.7%	Aim to keep above West Midlands rate 73.8%				
Increase access to employment opportunities (continued)							
Unemployment Levels (out of work benefits / universal credits now included)	Q		Aim to keep below West Midlands rate				
	Cannock	1.4%		2%	2.1%	2.3% (Nov 19)	
	West Midlands	2.9%		3.4%	3.55%	3.8% (Nov 19)	
Create a positive environment in which businesses in the District can thrive							
Number of Growth Hub enquiries from Cannock Chase businesses	A	GBSLEP (hub) - 68	60				
	A	SSLEP (hub & landline) - 64	60				
Commencement of the regeneration of Rugeley Power Station							
Increase in supply of employment land				Measurement to commence 2022			
Increase housing choice							
Total number of net new dwellings completed	A	234 net dwellings completed	Average of 241 dwellings pa				
Number of additional units delivered (Council Housing)	A	19	9	9			
Number of additional units (Affordable Housing) – total for Council and Registered Providers	Q	51	140 total (Council and RP)	22	11	62	

Projects






Approach	Key Project	Milestone(s)	Action Required	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Establishing McArthurGlen Designer Outlet as a major visitor attraction and maximise the benefits it will bring to the District							
Implement all associated McArthurGlen S106 planning obligations	Employ Town Centre Officer and Support Town Centre Initiatives	Evaluation of Partnership and Town Centre initiatives				✓	
	Improvements to Cannock Railway Station	Work with partners to develop outline business case	There have been delays in West Midlands Railways being able to successfully procure a suitable consultant for the Outline Business Case. An appointment has now been made and work on the OBC should commence in September 2019. Cabinet have approved a revised target for completing the OBC from Q2 to Q4	▲			X
		Identify potential funding sources and submit bids for funding	Due to the slippage outlined above, Cabinet have approved a revised target for completing this action from Q3 to 2020/21	▲			
		Delivery / phasing plan agreed.	Due to the slippage outlined above, Cabinet have approved a revised target for completing this action from Q4 to 2020/21	▲			

Approach	Key Project	Milestone(s)	Action Required	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Increase the skill levels of residents and the amount of higher skilled jobs in the District							
Work proactively with partners to increase skill levels and access to higher skilled jobs in the District	Work with partners to establish retail skills academy	Commence delivery of Retail Academy courses		✓			
	Work with partners to establish and promote an Engineering Skills Academy	Funding confirmed – maximising bidding opportunities			✓		
		Launch event	Original launch event was cancelled at short notice and has been re-arranged for 24 th October		●	✓	
		Entrants / recruits commencing training				✓	
Create strong and diverse town centres to attract additional customers and visitors							
Provide a strategic view on the future requirements of the District in relation to the changes in retail, leisure and residential requirements of the Town Centres and how the benefits of the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet can be captured	Produce strategic plans for Cannock and Rugeley Town Centres	Cannock Town Centre Investment Prospectus adopted by Cabinet			✓		
		Rugeley AAP review as part of the whole Local Plan review		September 2021			
	Cannock Town Centre Future High Streets Fund	Expression of interest submitted		✓			
		Develop full business case for funding (subject to our Expression of interest being shortlisted)	Unsuccessful round 1 bid. Round 2 is in 2020. Another bid will now be made in round 2. Cabinet approved the rescheduling of this action to 2020/21	✗			

Approach	Key Project	Milestone(s)	Action Required	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Create strong and diverse town centres to attract additional customers and visitors (cont.)							
We will ensure our town centres are safe and welcoming for all visitors	We will review our Policy for commercial use of the Highway, in line with the recommendations of Cabinet	Review the current fee structure		✓			
		Investigate whether the enforcement of highways obstructions covered by the policy could be delegated from the County Council to the District Council		✓			
		Examine the feasibility of expanding the application of the Policy to cover the whole District			✓		
Increase access to employment opportunities							
Engage with LEPs, the business community, West Midlands Combined Authority and national bodies to secure investment in the District	Connecting Communities (formerly Employment Support Pilot) in Cannock North area. This tackles unemployment and low pay in local communities.	Project evaluation		2020/21			
	In conjunction with partners embed local delivery of skills hub for unemployed and employed skill needs.	CCDC businesses benefit from advice and grants available from the LEPs					X

Approach	Key Project	Milestone(s)	Action Required	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Create a positive environment in which businesses in the District can thrive							
Develop a new Economic Prosperity strategy. This will also consider the benefits that can be gained from the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet.	Produce a local Economic Prosperity Strategy	Draft strategic framework and send out for consultation with key stakeholders and local businesses		✓			
		Sign off by Cabinet. Formal adoption of strategy	Strategy was completed during December 2019; however it was decided to present this to Cabinet in January 2020 to coincide with Budget report.			●	
		Commence delivery / priority actions					X
Ensure there is an adequate supply of land for housing and employment	Production of the new Local Plan and associated Supplementary Planning Documents.	Preferred Options consultation October 2019	The Local Development Scheme (LDS) has been reviewed and this has resulted in the revision of some of the target dates previously indicated.	Changed from October 2019 to July/August 2020			
		Proposed Submission consultation July 2020		Changed from July 2020 to February 2021			
		Submission of plan to the Secretary of State December 2020		Changed from December 2020 to September 2021			
		Examination in Public March 2021		Changed from March 2021 to December 2021			
		Adoption September 2021		Changed from September 2021 to July 2022			

Approach	Key Project	Milestone(s)	Action Required	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Commencement of the regeneration of Rugeley power Station							
The Council will work with private and public bodies to maximise the regeneration of the 139 hectare Rugeley Power Station site	Work with the land owner and Lichfield DC to progress the regeneration of the site in line with the strategic uses set out in the approved Supplementary Planning Document	Receive planning application		✓			
		Completion of demolition work		2021			
		Land remediation		2021			

Approach	Key Project	Milestone(s)	Action Required	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Increase housing choice							
The Council will invest £12.9m to provide additional affordable homes across the district	Determination of sites: Property Services Team doing a trawl for sites and engaging with Land Agents	Cabinet report to approve sites identified and funding package	Lengthy negotiations with Staffordshire CC have resulted in the acceptance of an offer for land at the Aelfgar site in Rugeley. Subject to Cabinet approval in January the proportion of land in Staff CC's ownership will be purchased. A piece of Council owned land in Chadsmoor, Cannock will also now proceed as a site for housing.				
		Soft Market Testing / Formal tender process through Homes England DPP3 panel	Procurement process for both sites to be determined and timescales.				
		Tender award	As above				
		Cabinet report for scheme(s) approval	As above				X
	Complete garage site and other Council Owned Land Development Schemes	Completion of existing Council House Development on Garage Sites					

Approach	Key Project	Milestone(s)	Action Required	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Increase housing choice (cont.)								
Rationalisation of Hawks Green Depot site for potential housing	Implementation of Stock Rationalisation Plan - operating existing Services and Parks and Open Spaces from within a rationalised space	Architects Report received – recommendations to be determined		✓				
		Site Clearance of Services in preparation for land remediation	Taking place during Q4			●		
		Surrender 51% of the Site for housing development	Taking place during Q4			●		
	Hawks Green Depot Review for potential housing development	Receive outcome of funding bid to WMCA and SSLEP – <i>Grant offer of £900k received from WMCA (SSLEP bid unsuccessful)</i>			✓			
		Cabinet report to approve funding package	In June 2019 Cabinet approved the housing scheme, permission to spend and the use of Dudley MBC Construction Framework to appoint a contractor.		✓			
		Soft Market Testing / Formal tender process through Homes England DPP3 panel	No longer applicable.					
		Tender award	Contractor appointed via the Dudley MBC Framework on 12/12/19.				✓	
		Cabinet report for Hawks Green scheme approval	Scheme approved by Cabinet				✓	

Briefing Note of:	Head of Economic Prosperity
Contact Officer:	Debbie Harris
Telephone No:	Ext 4490

PROMOTING PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**18 MARCH, 2020****BRIEFING NOTE OF WORKING GROUP TO REVIEW CANNOCK TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION AND OCCUPANCY RATES REVIEW****1 Purpose of Briefing note**

- 1.1 The purpose of this briefing note is to provide Members with details of the work carried out by the Working Group and outline recommendations of the Working Group.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Committee on 3RD July 2019 Members agreed to review Cannock town centre and specifically to understand more about why occupancy rates were low.
- 2.2 A separate smaller group of Members was established forming a Working Group to carry out the review.

3 Detail

- 3.1 A Working Group of seven Members chaired by Cllr Phil Hewitt was established to carry out the review and to then bring its findings back to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.3 The Working Group met on three formal occasions. Agendas, papers and minutes are included as appendices to this Briefing Note.
- 3.4 Representatives from Environmental Services were invited to attend the meeting of the Working Group on 9 January 2020. The representatives discussed with the Working Group car parking issues in Cannock Town Centre that covered:
- Payment Options for Car Parking
 - Car Parking Charges and Rationale
- 3.5 Representatives from local agents and property owners were invited to attend the meeting of the Working Group on 25 February 2020 to give an overview as to why vacancy rates were so high in Cannock Town Centre.

- 3.6 The Working Group also invited a representative from the Cannock Town Centre Partnership (CTCP) to attend the meeting of the Working Group on 25 February 2020 and to discuss the actions being taken by the Partnership to increase footfall in Cannock Town Centre.
- 3.7 A Decision was taken by the Working Group to not focus on Anti- Social Behaviour and Drug activity as Officers advised that this was within the remit of the Community Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.8 The Working Group agreed that that the Promoting Prosperity Scrutiny Committee should be asked to consider the following in regard to **car parking issues**:
- (A) To endorse and support the Cabinet report outlining the proposal to improve car parks, specifically to install new ticket machines that provide alternative payment methods, and that this should be applied to all Pay and Display Car parks across the District.
 - (B) The facility to 'pay by phone' also be supported and rolled out as soon as practicable.
- 3.9 The Working Group also agreed that the Promoting Prosperity Scrutiny Committee should be asked to consider the following in regard to improving the vibrancy of the town centre, specifically with a view to increasing occupancy rates and footfall:
- (A) The Working Group supported the Cabinet report outlining the proposals for spending approximately £100,000 on environmental improvements in Cannock Town Centre.
 - (B) The need to address the quality of "mothballing" in terms of the multi storey car park. It was noted that it was necessary to ensure the site be made safe and secure but also old signs should be removed and replaced with signs that gave a positive idea of any future proposals and a decent barrier should be provided.
 - (C) In view of the perceived negative impact of the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet (MGDO) on Cannock Town Centre; the Working Group considered it was important to ensure that there was enough information available in the public arena outlining the reality with the MGDO. Better marketing of the Designer Outlet should be provided and this should show the positives of what it will bring to the town centre; including the plans for providing a bus link to and from the Outlet to encourage visits into the town centre.
 - (D) That consideration be given to the location of the Friday street market and the positioning of the stalls as part of the re-tendering process to appoint a street market operator. In particular consideration be given to more stalls being positioned in Market Square and to the better placement of stalls in Market Hall Street as it was considered they were too close to the shop fronts.
 - (E) That consideration be given to the feasibility and costing of providing free parking on the days the Town Centre Partnership had events arranged in

Cannock Town Centre.

(F) The need to be flexible regarding the types of units within any redevelopment scheme so that retail, leisure and residential units were all provided if possible.

4 Implications (if applicable)

4.1 Not applicable

5 Appendices

Appendix 1	Agenda – Scrutiny Working Group (Review of Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates) 15.10.19
Appendix 2	Minutes - Scrutiny Working Group (Review of Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates) 15.10.19
Appendix 4	Agenda - Scrutiny Working Group (Review of Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates) 9.1.2020
Appendix 5	Minutes - Scrutiny Working Group (Review of Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates) 9.1.2020
Appendix 6	Agenda - Scrutiny Working Group (Review of Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates) 25.2.2020
Appendix 7	Minutes- Scrutiny Working Group (Review of Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates) 25.2.2020

Background Papers

None

Agenda - Scrutiny Working Group (Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates)



Time: 4:00pm

Date: Tuesday 15 October, 2019

Venue: Esperance Room

1. Appointment of Chairman

2. Apologies

3. Declarations of Interest from Members

To declare any personal, pecuniary or disclosable pecuniary interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct and any possible contraventions under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

4. Review of Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates

The Group will receive a presentation from the Economic Development Manager - Enclosed

Councillors:

Boucker, A.S.

Fitzgerald, Ms. A.A.

Hewitt, P.M.

Startin, P.D.

Todd, Mrs. D.M.

Wilkinson, Ms. C.L.

Witton, P.T.

Officers:

D. Piper Head of Economic Prosperity

D. Harris Economic Development Manager

W. Rowe Senior Committee Officer

Date Despatched: 8 October, 2019

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

NOTES OF THE

**SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP -
CANNOCK TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION
AND OCCUPANCY RATE REVIEW**

TUESDAY 15 OCTOBER, 2019 AT 4.00 P.M.

HELD IN THE ESPERANCE ROOM, CIVIC CENTRE,

BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

Present:

Councillor P.M. Hewitt (Chairman)
Councillor Ms. A.A. Fitzgerald
Councillor P.D. Startin
Councillor Mrs. D.M. Todd
Councillor Ms. C.L. Wilkinson
Councillor P.T. Witton

Officers: D. Piper, Head of Economic Prosperity
D. Harris, Economic Development Manager
W. Rowe, Senior Committee Officer

1. Appointment of Chairman

It was agreed that Councillor P. Hewitt would be Chairman of the Working Group.

2. Declarations of Interests from Members

Nothing declared.

3. Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates Review

Debbie Harris, Economic Development Manager provided Members with a presentation on Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates. She explained that Members may wish to consider whether ASB, drug activity and the street market was having an effect on the occupancy rates.

A recent survey by the GBSLEP reported that 62% of retailers were dissatisfied with the town. Retailers believe empty shops, antisocial behaviour, drugs, drinking, shoplifting and lack of shops/variety were the main weaknesses of the town centre.

Members noted the current position in Cannock regarding vacant units which demonstrated a 100% increase since 2016.

The Group noted that high streets were struggling nationally and the key issues included:-

- Rents that are too high
- Business rates
- Drugs & ASB
- Parking charges
- The overall offer
- Rise of on-line shopping

Members noted the changing consumer behaviour which included an increase in internet shopping, challenging economic conditions and changes in the way retailers operate and engage with their customers.

The Group were shown a table comparing rents in Cannock with those in Stafford. This confirmed that Cannock, from the evidence provided, appeared to be costly in comparison to Stafford. However, the ability to influence these rental levels was minimal giving they were privately owned.

Compared to Stafford, Cannock rates are higher on comparable units. Given that Stafford has a higher footfall and a better offer in terms of shops and food/drink – this shows a rateable value that is high. As the amounts payable are determined by Central Government through the Valuation Office the ability to influence is minimal. Lobbying Government nationally could be the way forward.

With regards to drug use and ASB it was noted that begging had increased by 350% (9 incidents in the last 12 months), drug related incidents had increased by 21% (23 incidents in the last 12 months) and there had been no change in drinking related incidents (14 incidents in the last 12 months).

The Group were shown a table outlining car parking charges on the two main car parks within Stafford and Cannock. This showed that the rates in Cannock were much higher than in Stafford the longer the stay. It was also noted that Cannock had no facility to pay other than cash – Lichfield and Stafford have multiple payment options including Contactless and “pay-by-phone”.

The Group noted that:-

- Successful highstreets and town centres are those that are reinventing themselves as a destination offering an experience as well as a place to shop.
- Popular town centres are now those that offer modern car parking infrastructure, restaurants and entertainment.
- The Government is aware of the need to repurpose the towns and highstreets in the UK – for example their announcement of the “Future high street fund” and “Towns Fund” shows their commitment to this.
- Cannock's retail offer to the consumer is weak. There is no anchor shop, other retail outlets are being lost at an increasing rate, limited food/drink, and no “place-to-be” shops, which not only act as an anchor store, but encourage visitors to spend more time in the town centre.

- Council has an agreed plan - the vision for Cannock Town Centre is to become a culture and leisure hub, creating 21st century experiences.
- McArthurGlen Outlet – could have a positive impact on the Town Centre and developing a complementary offer could encourage new investment

The Officer advised that the Development Prospectus was launched on 1 October 2019 and this outlined that the McArthurGlen Outlet would act as a catalyst for growth and consideration would be given to what makes Cannock a great investment opportunity. The vision within the prospectus was to create Cannock as a culture and leisure hub with a new cinema complex, hotel and successful independent restaurants. 9 investment sites within the town centre had been identified.

Further to this outlining research, the Officer suggested that, to get a deeper understanding of the occupancy rates and possible issues surrounding this, the Group may wish to look at the following potential areas:

- External factors such as ASB and drug activity – (Community Scrutiny Committee).
- Town Centre Partnership activities – what are they doing to increase footfall?
- Cannock Development Prospectus – Potential market interest after launch.
- Cannock Shopping Centre – Invitation to examine their perception and experience of footfall within the shopping centre – look at trends.
- Engagement with landlords, agents and intermediaries to ascertain their views on issues faced in Cannock Town Centre and why vacancy rates are high.
- Street market, invite property colleagues to discuss the effects on overall footfall and occupancy rates.

Following the presentation the Group had a lengthy discussion on which areas to focus on and they gave consideration to where they could have some effect. It was agreed that they would concentrate on 4 of the suggested areas. They considered that car parking was a massive issue and that the ability to pay by card, contactless and “pay-by-phone” would make a difference. In addition, incentives such as a free parking day on market days, or parking free after 3pm/4pm were discussed. However, the Group noted that similar incentives (i.e. charging 10p to park after 3pm) had been trialled a while ago with little effect.

The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that Officers would need to have a discussion with colleagues (Steve Schofield, Senior Technical Officer, Joss Presland, Waste and Engineering Services Manager and Mike Edmonds, Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles) regarding car parking to ascertain what options were available, the costs involved in updating the parking meters and to determine the benefits.

A Member held the view that the street market could be affecting the shop owners’ trade as they sold similar goods but had less rent/overheads to pay. The Group noted that there was a market charter in Cannock which meant that it was necessary for a market to be held in the town centre. Another Member advised

that Street Markets had been reviewed last year and it was seen as a positive initiative with another day being added to the offer on a trial basis. Although this trial had received mixed results due to various factors, one being the weather, the market operator was planning to trial the extra day again in the Spring next year. As a review of the Street Market had already been undertaken the Group agreed they would not consider it as part of this review.

Members decided not to look at business rates as they could not influence the business rates that were charged. Additionally, they considered it was a little too early to get involved in the Cannock Development Prospectus and they were satisfied that a team of officers were currently working on this.

Members then discussed ASB and drug activity within the town centre and whether this was affecting trade. The Group noted that another Scrutiny Committee was reviewing ASB and drug activity within the town and the affect this was having on crime. If the Group wished to look at this issue consideration should be given to any duplication but there may be an option to share findings. The Economic Development Manager advised that she would scope this out, liaise with Kerry Wright, Partnerships and Communications Manager, who was leading on the other Scrutiny Committee review, with a view to inputting any findings into their review. The Economic Development Manager agreed to share any information she obtained via email to the Group before the next meeting.

Another issue Members considered to be important was the high rents. It was suggested that a discussion with landlords and estate agents would be beneficial to understand why the rents were so high. The Group asked what percentage of the units within the town centre were owned by the Council. The Economic Development Manager confirmed that the Council owned approximately 10 units and 4 of these were vacant. Members considered that it may be useful to compare the Council owned rents to those that were privately owned. The Group agreed that they should engage with landlords and the estate agents who marketed the units within the town centre (including CCDC owned units). It should be made clear that the Group had no power to alter rents and any information they shared would be voluntary to try to understand why the rents were so high. The Head of Economic Prosperity added that it may be difficult to engage with landlords regarding rental prices; however it would be easier to get the agents involved.

Members also considered that it would be beneficial to liaise with the Town Centre Partnership to ascertain what events they had planned to promote the town centre and increase footfall and to seek their input into the number of vacant units.

It was suggested that Fred Pritchard and Mike Mellor, who rented out a number of town centre units, along with Rhiannon Holland (Principal Property Services Officer) should be contacted to seek further information regarding rental prices. Members noted that, as Fred Pritchard was also the Chairman of the Town Centre Partnership, a discussion could be held with him regarding the work of the Partnership along with the rental challenges.

The Chairman then summarised the discussions. The Working Group supported

the following:-

(A) That two further Working Group meetings be held on dates to be agreed in consultation with the Chairman. The next meeting would focus on the following two issues:-

- (i) Car parking - relevant officers be invited to attend the meeting to discuss the issues identified above.
- (ii) ASB and drug activity within the town centre - liaison with the relevant officer undertaking the other Scrutiny Committee review to understand the scope of that review and the potential to provide input in terms of the effect on town centre trade.

(B) That the second meeting would focus on the following two issues:-

- (i) High rents – liaise/invite estate agents and possibly landlords to ascertain and understand why the rents were so high
- (ii) Town Centre Partnership – liaise/invite representatives identified above to advise on the work the Partnership was doing to promote the town centre in addition to discussing the rental challenges.

The meeting finished at 5.05 pm.

Please ask for: Mrs. W. Rowe
Extension No: 4584
E-mail: wendyrowe@cannockchasedc.gov.uk



Agenda - Scrutiny Working Group (Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates)

Time: 4:00pm

Date: Thursday 9 January, 2020

Venue: Esperance Room

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interest from Members

To declare any personal, pecuniary or disclosable pecuniary interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct and any possible contraventions under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

3. Notes of previous meeting

To agree the notes of the previous meeting held on 15 October, 2019 (enclosed).

4. Review of Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates

Car Parking Issues

Mike Edmonds, Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles and Joss Presland, Waste and Engineering Services Manager, will be in attendance to discuss the car parking issues raised at the previous meeting.

Councillors:

Boucker, A.S.

Fitzgerald, Ms. A.A.

Hewitt, P.M. (Chairman)

Startin, P.D.

Todd, Mrs. D.M.

Wilkinson, Ms. C.L.

Witton, P.T.



Officers:

D. Piper	Head of Economic Prosperity
D. Harris	Economic Development Manager
W. Rowe	Senior Committee Officer

Date Despatched: 2 January, 2020

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

NOTES OF THE

**SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP -
CANNOCK TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION
AND OCCUPANCY RATES REVIEW**

THURSDAY 9 JANUARY 2020 AT 4.00 P.M.

HELD IN THE ESPERANCE ROOM, CIVIC CENTRE, CANNOCK

Present:

Councillors:

P.M. Hewitt (Chairman)
A.S. Boucker Ms. C.L. Wilkinson
Mrs. A.A. Fitzgerald P.T. Witton
P.D. Startin

Officers:

D. Piper (Head of Economic Prosperity)
M. Edmonds (Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles)
Mrs. D. Harris (Economic Development Manager)
J. Presland (Waste and Engineering Services Manager)
M. Berry (Democratic Services Team Leader)

4. Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted for Councillor Mrs. D.M. Todd.

5. Declarations of Interests from Members

Nothing declared.

6. Notes of Previous Meeting

The Notes of the previous meeting held on 15 October 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

7. Review of Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates – Car Parking Issues

The Head of Environment & Healthy Lifestyles and the Waste & Engineering Services Manager gave a presentation in respect of car parking issues in Cannock town centre that covered:

Payment Options for Car Parking

- Looking at provision of new Pay & Display (P&D) ticket machines that would accept

- payment by contactless and debit / credit card, as well as existing coin payments;
- Report to be submitted to Cabinet before the end of the 2019/20 financial year;
- If approved, procurement and implementation of new machines would take place during 2020/21;
- Currently 20 P&D machines were in place across the District, of which 7 were located in Cannock town centre;
- Estimated capital costs to replace each machine were in the region of £4,500;
- There would be additional revenue costs in respect of transaction fees for non-cash payments;
- It was estimated that initial take up of the new payment methods would be 8-10% of all transactions;
- Payment by Phone (PbP) – the Council was currently a named partner in a county-wide procurement exercise arrangement led by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, procurement for which would be undertaken during 2020/21;
- PbP was already being successfully operated in Stafford borough and Lichfield district.

Car Parking Charges and Rationale

- Total P&D Income and Expenditure 2018/19:
 - Income from P&D was £712,000, budgeted income was £741,000;
 - Income from Penalty Charges was £52,000;
 - Cost of operation (enforcement / cash collection / tribunals etc.) was £113,000;
 - Cost of running (all) (rates / electricity / repair and maintenance) – actual cost was £395,000 compared to budget provision of £383,000;
 - Income from P&D car parks in Cannock was £546,000.
- Total Income District / Cannock town centre:
 - 86% of sales were on the '2 hour' tariff;
 - Long stay (all day) tariffs available at some car parks – priced at £4 and £5;
 - Long stay tariffs were priced high on some car parks.
- Usage Hours (Beecroft Road):
 - 91% (180,387) '2 hour' tickets;
 - 7% (14,077) '3 hour' tickets;
 - 2% (4,112) '4 hour' tickets;
 - 60-70% before 1pm (December 2019 figure).
- Rationale Behind Charges:
 - Previously tried to operate '10p after 3pm', but didn't result in an increase in car park usage – this approach was used to help measure the usage of the car parks after 3pm;
 - Reduce workers using shoppers car parks (Beecroft Road and Backcrofts);
 - Encourage use of long-stay car parks;
 - Drop in parking challenges since the '2 hour' tariff was introduced;
 - Don't charge for parking on Sundays, Bank Holidays or in the evenings (town centres were not overly busy on Sundays).
- Comparison with Others:
 - Medium term (3 to 6 hours) was more expensive than rates charged by

- Stafford BC (Stafford town centre was struggling in its northern / central parts (i.e. those areas not within area of the Riverside development);
- On-par with charges set by Lichfield DC – there was however an argument that Lichfield had a better tourist appeal for visitors.
- Cost of Free Days:
 - 2 free parking days provided over Christmas period were at a cost of £3,000 per day;
 - If free days were to be offered on ‘Market days’, this would be at a cost of £1,900 to £2,400 per day.

In respect of the initial take up of new payment methods, Members noted surprise that the predicted level was not higher than 8-10%. Officers replied that this figure was for the first 6 to 12 months of operation, but it was hoped that as usage increased, the Council may be able to negotiate down the level of transaction fees payable.

The Chairman queried what the financial implications of these proposals would be for the Council. Officers replied that the costs were still being worked upon for inclusion in the Cabinet report. The costs of purchasing the machines should be capital rather than revenue costs, but this was still being explored.

The Chairman then noted the level of income received from Penalty Charges could reduce as a result of the new payment methods.

A Member queried if the closure of the Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) had affected income levels. The Head of Economic Prosperity replied that the MSCP had not been well used when it was still open, but since its closure, traders had commented that there had been fewer people using the town centre. It was considered though that this wasn't the case as other car parking was still readily available. More generally, the standard of MSCPs had improved in the years since the one in Cannock town centre was built.

The Chairman noted that a number of suggestions raised by Members were already being taken forward by Officers; therefore was happy to recommend that the proposals as outlined be supported. The Chairman then further recommended that the alternative payment methods be applied to all car parks across the District and the facility for ‘Pay by Phone’ also be included. The Waste & Engineering Services Manager replied that the existing machines already had the facility to accept payment by phone, and the machines installed at the P&D car park to the rear of the Civic Centre were ready to accept contactless payment, a system module just needed to be applied to make this happen.

The Head of Economic Prosperity queried if provision of ‘short-stay’ parking bays had been considered. The Waste & Engineering Services Manager replied that it was considered the current set up worked better as the ‘2 hour’ tariff was popular. Separately to this, Staffordshire County Council had in the past tried to introduce ‘on-street’ parking charges, but had so far been unsuccessful. Where this Council was concerned, the main issue was medium to long term parking charges.

In respect of the ‘payment by phone’ facility, the Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles advised that introduction of this was entirely dependent on the procurement timescales being followed by Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

The Chairman noted that there didn't seem to be much challenge coming from the public in respect of the existing car parking charges. The Head of Economic Prosperity replied that there was a perception that places where free parking was offered were seen to be failing; therefore this needed to be taken into account when such considerations were made.

Following the conclusion of the discussion, it was resolved that:

- (A) The proposal to install new ticket machines that provide alternative payment methods be supported, and applied all Pay and Display Car Parks across the District.
- (B) The facility to 'pay by phone' also be supported and rolled out as soon as able to do so.

8. Future Meetings

In respect of the issue of 'ASB and drug activity within the town centre' (as referred to on page 5 of the Notes of the previous meeting), the Chairman advised that he would speak with Councillor P.E. Woodhead, in his capacity as Chairman of the Community Scrutiny Committee, to see whether or not this issue could be included on that Committee's work programme.

In respect of 'high rents' and the 'Town Centre Partnership', the Economic Development Manager advised that local estate agents and representatives from the Partnership would be invited to attend the next meeting of the Working Group, along with Officers from the Council's Corporate Assets team (in respect of properties within the town centre under the Council's ownership). The Chairman clarified that he wanted in the next meeting to look at how commercial landlords operated and how the Council worked as a landlord in its own right. A Member asked that provision of residential properties within the town centre offer also be considered as part of that discussion.

The Chairman asked that an update also be provided on how work in respect of the 'Cannock Town Centre Development Prospectus' was progressing, accepting that some of the information would be of a confidential nature.

A Member then queried whether any consideration had been given to providing short term lets / 'pop-up' shops in Council owned units in the town centre. The Economic Development Manager replied that this had previously been raised with the Corporate Assets team for consideration.

The Chairman then noted that any final recommendations produced by the Working Group had to be within the scope of the redevelopment work for Cannock town centre.

The meeting finished at 4:50 p.m.

Please ask for: Mrs. W. Rowe
Extension No: 4584
E-mail: wendyrowe@cannockchasedc.gov.uk



Agenda - Scrutiny Working Group (Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates)

Time: 11:30am * *PLEASE NOTE TIME OF MEETING* *

Date: Tuesday 25 February, 2020

Venue: Datteln Room

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interest from Members

To declare any personal, pecuniary or disclosable pecuniary interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct and any possible contraventions under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

3. Notes of previous meeting

To agree the notes of the previous meeting held on 9 January, 2020 (enclosed).

4. Review of Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates - Discussion

Local Estate Agents and representatives from the Town Centre Partnership will be in attendance.

5. Briefing note on Council owned retail property and pop up shops

Members will receive information on short term lets/pop up shops (raised at previous meeting)

6. Cannock Town Centre Development Prospectus

Members will receive an update on how the work in respect of the Cannock Town Centre Development Prospectus was progressing

7. Any recommendations of the Working Group

To determine which recommendations Members wish to refer to the Promoting Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on 18 March, 2020.

Councillors:

Boucker, A.S.

Fitzgerald, Ms. A.A.

Hewitt, P.M. (Chairman)

Startin, P.D.

Todd, Mrs. D.M.

Wilkinson, Ms. C.L.

Witton, P.T.

Officers:

D. Piper Head of Economic Prosperity

D. Harris Economic Development Manager

A. Haynes Town Centre Partnership Officer

W. Rowe Senior Committee Officer

Date Despatched: 18 February, 2020

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

NOTES OF THE

**SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP -
CANNOCK TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION
AND OCCUPANCY RATE REVIEW**

TUESDAY 25 FEBRUARY, 2020 AT 11.30 A.M.

HELD IN THE DATTELN ROOM, CIVIC CENTRE,

BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

Present:

Councillor P.M. Hewitt (Chairman)
Councillor Ms. A.A. Fitzgerald
Councillor Mrs. D.M. Todd

Officers: D. Piper, Head of Economic Prosperity
D. Harris, Economic Development Manager
W. Rowe, Senior Committee Officer

Also present: Graham Wiggin – Fred Pritchard Properties
Rob Waring – Cannock Town Centre Partnership
Angela Haynes – Town Centre Partnership Officer
Paul Brewer – Avison Young
Christopher Davies – Avison Young
Luke Neal – White Rose Properties

9. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A.S. Boucker and P. Startin.

10. Declarations of Interests from Members

Nothing declared.

11. Notes of previous meeting

The notes of the previous meeting held on 9 January, 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

12. Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates Review - Discussion

The Chairman welcomed the representatives from Local Estate Agents and the Town Centre Partnership to the meeting explaining that Members were hoping to

obtain a better understanding of the challenges they were facing. He would ask a series of questions and sought the thoughts and ideas of the representatives.

Question – Why do you think units in Cannock struggle to let?

The representatives from Avison Young, who were the lettings agent for the Cannock Shopping Centre, explained that retailers were going through a difficult period. The market had decreased and a number of the national retailers had left the town centre. Retailers had a perceived threat that the opening of the McArthur Glen Designer Outlet (MGDO) would have a negative impact on their businesses. They were attempting to persuade retailers and potential retailers that the pricing levels at the outlet would be at a higher level and this would enable continued trade in the town centre. Some of the national stores had moved from the town centre to the retail parks and high business rates were also a problem in letting properties.

Graham Wiggin, the representative from Fred Pritchard Properties, explained that the occupancy levels for the Pritchard units were almost 98%. Their units were smaller, were available with short term leases and they offered a mix of residential and commercial units. He considered that smaller units were easier to let.

Luke Neal from White Rose Properties added that there was demand from the smaller independent retailers but landlords had to reduce rents in an attempt to let the units. It was difficult to convince prospective tenants to commit to renting a unit.

Paul Brewer, Avison Young, agreed that the smaller units were easier to let and considered that it was better to let a unit at a lower rent rather than waiting for the best covenant.

The Chairman asked if the representatives had considered letting any of the retail units as office/work space. Graham Wiggin explained that the Newall Shopping Centre already offered a mix of units. This included cafes, hair dressers, surveyors, residential apartments, restaurants, a beauty spa and office space. The units also came with car parking space.

Paul Brewer added that there were a few empty units in the Cannock Shopping Centre but he would ideally wish to retain these as retail units if possible.

Luke Neal advised that he had received interest in the empty units from a mix of uses including bars, restaurants and a dance studio; however nothing had been confirmed. Christopher Davies, Avison Young added that having a residential offer within the town centre was important as this would bring in the cafes and restaurants.

Paul Brewer commented that if the Council was able to appoint a developer to undertake a cinema/restaurant scheme on the multi storey site this could change the town centre completely and enhance the night time economy. The Economic Development Manager confirmed that Council Officers were working on the procurement process for a development partner and aiming to commence this

process for later in 2020.

Question - How long does it take to let a unit in Cannock and would anything make a difference to lettings?

Representatives indicated that this would depend on the demand but agreed that the smaller units let quicker than the larger ones. Christopher Davies explained that the national retailers had vacated the larger town centre units and, although the rent and the lease term could be negotiated, the size of the unit could not. These units were too big for the small independent retailers and there was no appetite for the national retailers to let them either. It was noted that the units with a rateable value of under £12,000 were the ones easier to let as these attracted small business rate relief. Paul Brewer made reference to the larger unit on the top floor of the Cannock Shopping Centre that had remained unlet for a number of years. Due to its layout being long it could not be broken down into smaller units. It was also very expensive to convert these types of units to enable them to be let to different types of businesses.

Rob Waring, who had been successfully trading in the town centre for 12 years and was also the Treasurer of the Town Centre Partnership made reference to the Bicester Designer Village and how he considered the town centre there had benefitted from its opening over the last 5-10 years. He considered that the MGDO was a positive and was hopeful that it would increase the footfall in the town centre.

Paul Brewer commented that, from a lettings point of view, there was a perception that the MGDO would have a negative impact on trade in the town centre. However, he considered that there would be a dip in trade in the town centre for the first six months once the Outlet opened. The price point of the goods sold in the Outlet compared to those sold in the town centre would see local shoppers returning to the town. MGDO would attract shoppers from a much wider catchment area. He considered it was important that visitors to MGDO also visited the town centre. Money was available as part of the S106 agreement to make environmental enhancements and provide a bus service to and from the town centre. Graham Wiggin agreed with these comments but added that the town centre offered nothing at present to attract visitors. The Economic Development Manager commented that there was some money available (approx. £100k) to make environmental improvements in the town centre and to make it more welcoming in the short term until a re-development scheme could be secured.

The Chairman made reference to the poor state of the multi storey car park which was very visible when entering the town centre and the need to address the quality of "mothballing". The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that the multi storey car park would form part of any future re-development scheme for the town centre. However, the progression of a re-development scheme took time and the £100k was a start point in making small improvements in the town centre until a developer was appointed. When asked if the car park could be demolished he advised that the Council had limited capacity and resources. The appointed developer would undertake demolition as part of the re-development scheme.

Question - Is there a high turnover of units in Cannock?

Paul Brewer could not provide any figures but commented that the perception was that Cannock was trading as well as similar size towns that faced similar challenges. Christopher Davies added that they had to offer good deals on rent and lease terms in order to attract new occupiers.

The Chairman then asked the representatives from the Town Centre Partnership to advise on the work they were doing to promote the town centre and to outline any events they had planned.

The representatives from the Partnership explained that they wanted to make the town centre more vibrant and had lots of events planned for the coming months. They had been working with other organisations including St Luke's Church, the Rotary Club and the Public Houses to make plans for the forthcoming VE celebrations. There were proposals to have an army tank in the town and for a "fly over" as well as there being flags and bunting on display. In addition there were also plans for food festivals, a summer fete and a Halloween and Christmas event. There were approximately 6 events planned for this year and they were receiving good support from the Council in making the arrangements for these events. The importance of providing free parking on the days these events were taking place was highlighted. The Chairman explained that this could be considered but would need to be costed.

The Group then discussed the Friday street market. Luke Neal commented that he received complaints that the shop owners were not happy about the placement of stalls in Market Hall Street as they were too close to the shop fronts. Angela Haynes commented that there could be a better layout of stalls and moving part of the street market to Market Square could be considered but the practical implications of this would need to be investigated by Officers. It was also considered that the goods being sold on the street market should not compete with existing retailers who were paying rent. The Head of Economic Prosperity indicated that the layout and positioning of the street market would be taken into account during the re-tendering process for the street market operator later this year.

The Chairman then asked the representatives for their thoughts on "pop-up shops". There was a general view that there was not a huge demand in the town centre for these.

The Chairman offered the representatives the opportunity to ask any questions. Luke Neal considered that communication was important with regard to providing information on the future plans for the town centre and any re-development scheme that was secured. Christopher Davies agreed and added that there would be a period of uncertainty until the proposals for any re-development scheme was made public. He considered that it would be useful if the occupiers of the units within the MGDO were revealed as soon as possible. He also added that it would be helpful if prospective businesses could be provided with information on any help/assistance that was available to them to start their business. The Economic Development Manager confirmed that this information was available and well

advertised.

The Chairman thanked the representatives for attending the meeting and for their valuable input.

The Chairman explained that any recommendations the Working Group wished to refer to the Promoting Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on 18 March would only be for the interim period before any re-development scheme was secured.

The Working Group agreed the following:-

- (A) The Working Group supported the Cabinet report outlining the proposals for spending approximately £100,000 on environmental improvements in Cannock Town Centre.
- (B) The need to address the quality of “mothballing” in terms of the multi storey car park. It was noted that it was necessary to ensure the site be made safe and secure but also old signs should be removed and replaced with signs that gave a positive idea of any future proposals and a decent barrier should be provided. Some of this was being addressed by the £100,000 for the environmental improvements as outlined above.
- (C) In view of the perceived negative impact of the MGDO the Working Group considered it was important to ensure that there was enough information available in the public arena outlining the reality with the MGDO. Better marketing of the Designer Outlet should be provided and this should show the positives of what it will bring to the town centre; including the plans for providing a bus link to and from the Outlet to encourage visits into the town centre.
- (D) That consideration be given to the location of the Friday street market and the positioning of the stalls as part of the re-tendering process to appoint a street market operator. In particular consideration be given to more stalls being positioned in Market Square and to the better placement of stalls in Market Hall Street as it was considered they were too close to the shop fronts.
- (E) That consideration be given to the feasibility and costing of providing free parking on the days the Town Centre Partnership had events arranged in Cannock Town Centre.
- (F) The need to be flexible regarding the types of units within any re-development scheme so that retail, leisure and residential units were all provided if possible.
- (G) The Working Group endorsed the Cabinet report outlining the recommendations in respect of car parking improvements.
- (H) That a report outlining the above recommendations and proposals be prepared and agreed with the Chairman of the Working Group prior to it

being submitted to the Promoting Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on 18 March, 2020. The report would be presented by Councillor P. Startin at the Scrutiny Committee meeting as the Chairman of the Working Group was not able to attend.

13. Briefing Note on Council owned retail property and pop up shops

The Group discussed the Briefing Note and it was agreed that there was no appetite for progressing this any further.

A Member asked whether Officers could liaise with Local Authorities where Designer Outlets were located. Reference was made to Bicester, Cheshire Oaks, Swindon and Ashford. It was considered that it would be helpful to ascertain the impact on the town centres once the Designer Outlets had opened and to see whether any arrangements had been put in place to ensure the town centres remained vibrant. The Officers confirmed that they were proposing to liaise with Local Authorities regarding tourism but would expand the discussions in this respect.

14. Cannock Town Centre Development Prospectus

The Economic Development Manager provided the Group with an update on the progress of the Cannock Town Centre Development Prospectus. She advised that 58 people had attended the launch on 1 October, 2019. Officers had met with at least 4 developers and the procurement process to secure a developer would commence in the coming months. She could not confirm whether any developers would submit any proposals but the signs were positive.

15. Recommendations of the Working Group

These were outlined in 12 (A) to (H) above.

The meeting finished at 1.00 pm.