

Please ask for: Mrs. W. Rowe

Your Ref:

Extension No: 4584

My Ref: WR

E-Mail: wendyrowe@cannockchasedc.gov.uk

11 July, 2014

Dear Councillor,

**TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MONDAY 21 JULY, 2014
ESPERANCE ROOM, CIVIC CENTRE, CANNOCK**

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

Please note that prior to the meeting a short briefing session has been arranged to provide members with an overview of the Policy Development Committee and the recent areas of work undertaken. This session will be held at 3.30pm in the Esperance Room.

Yours sincerely,



**S.G. Brown
Chief Executive**

To: Councillors

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

Anslow, C. Hardman, B.
Bottomer, B. Jones, R.
Cartwright, Mrs. S.M. Todd, Mrs. D.M.
Dean, A.

A G E N D A

PART 1

1. Apologies

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

To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 27 February, 2014 and 12 March, 2014 (enclosed along with a letter to Councillor Mark Winnington)

4. The Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Holder

To give consideration to the following:

- The Economic Resilience Priority Development Plan 2014-15 (Item 4.1 – 4.21)
- The Economic Resilience Priority Development Plan Outturn (Item 4.22 – 4.26)

5. Update from Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Holder

To receive an update from Councillor Mrs. Diane Todd.

6. Town Centre Traders Association Issues

A discussion on issues raised by the three Traders Associations

7. Provisional Work Programme

To discuss and agree the Committee's Work Programme for 2014-15 (Item 7.1 – 7.2)

8. Exclusion of the Public

The Chairman to move:

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).

PART 2

9. The Future of the District's Town Centres

- **Summary of the Mary Portas Paper “Why our High Streets Still Matter”**

To receive a presentation from the Planning & Economic Development Services Manager

- **Discussion on:**
 - Investment/Redevelopment Schemes
 - Site/Retailer Specific Issues
 - Car Parking Issues

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
THURSDAY 27 FEBRUARY, 2014 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT:
Councillors

Spicer, Mrs. A. (Chairman)
Ball, G.D. (Vice-Chairman)

Allt, Mrs. A. Jones, R.
Cartwright, Mrs. S.M. Todd, Mrs. D.M.

External Advisors also in attendance: Mark Watkins – St. Modwen Developments
 Natal Chapman – Cannock Shopping Centre
 Paul Brewer – GVA
 Graham Hunt – Staffordshire County Council

29. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs. L.M. Whitehouse.

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

No other Declarations of Interests were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members' Interests.

31. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December, 2013 be approved as a correct record.

32. Exclusion of Public

RESOLVED:

That the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
THURSDAY 27 FEBRUARY, 2014 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 2

33. Discussion on Town Centre Issues – The Future of Town Centres

The Head of Planning and Regeneration explained that the meeting had been arranged so that the Committee could debate the challenges facing town centres and to consider options to respond to these challenges. He welcomed the external advisors to the meeting – Graham Hunt, Staffordshire County Council, Natal Chapman, Cannock Shopping Centre Manager, Paul Brewer, GVA and Mark Watkins, St. Modwen Developments. These representatives had been invited to share their retail experience with Members of the Committee in order to assist the discussion.

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager led Members through the Briefing Note (Item 5.1 – 5.25) which outlined detailed issues associated with the District's three town centres in the context of the following issues:

- The Future of Town Centres
- Investment in Redevelopment Schemes
- Car Parking Issues

In summary, the outcome of the various studies undertaken was that town centres cannot survive by relying on their historic functions; they need to change in order to survive. Local Authorities played an important role as they would need to work with partners to identify a future vision for their town centres.

He displayed plans which identified the principal streets in each of the town centres. Also circulated was a list of six questions regarding the future of the District's town centres in order to stimulate the debate together with information outlining comparative short stay car park charges as at January 2014 and car park tickets sales (2010-2014).

The views of Members of the Committee and the external advisors were sought to establish their thoughts and ideas on what the town centres should be like in the future and what elements were considered to be important. The external representatives shared their experiences to give the Committee an idea of what they considered to be important in order to improve the town centres.

The Committee noted that the conclusion of the Portas Review was that shopping

habits and preferences have changed and town centres need to provide something new. There was a general view that town centres would need to provide a broader mix of commercial and other uses and consideration should be given to:-

- Creating a smaller retail core within each town centre
- Establishing modern shopping facilities within the town centres
- The contribution of markets
- More food and drink establishments
- More service based uses
- More residential development

The external representatives and Members of the Committee also gave their views and shared their experiences with regard to:

- the Business Rates Discount Scheme initiative
- car parking provision - whether car parking charges should be reviewed to encourage more visits to the town centres
- enabling town centres to compete more effectively and complement out of town retail developments
- the need for a more pro-active approach to town centre regeneration and designating specific locations for redevelopment.

Consideration was given to the figures regarding ticket sales and usage of the car parks within the town centres. Members discussed whether there was a need to review the charges so as to provide value for money car parking provision which could compete with out of town retail developments. Additionally, the Committee noted the figures relating to footfall in the town centres during each month in comparison to the previous year.

The Committee considered that it was clear that the offer of the town centres needed to be refreshed. The debate with the external representatives was a good starting point for the Committee in assisting them to formulate initiatives and ideas to support the improvement of the District's town centres.

Following a lengthy debate, it was RESOLVED:

- (A) That the Committee note the national level proposals for the future of town centres as outlined in the briefing note.
- (B) That the Committee supported a pro-active approach to town centre regeneration and actively encouraged the process of reinvention by designating specific locations for redevelopment.
- (C) That the Committee had support for a review of car parking charges so as to ensure what is provided is value for money and can compete and complement out of town retail developments.
- (D) That the Committee agreed that the offer available within the town centres needed to be refreshed.

(E) That feedback from the meeting would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee scheduled for 12 March, 2014.

The meeting finished at 5.55 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 12 MARCH, 2014 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT:
Councillors

Spicer, Mrs. A. (Chairman)
Ball, G.D. (Vice-Chairman)

Allt, Mrs. A.	Jones, R.
Anslow, C.	Todd, Mrs. D.M.
Cartwright, Mrs. S.M.	Whitehouse, Mrs. L.M.

34. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs. D. Grice.

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

No other Declarations of Interests were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members' Interests.

36. Minutes

The Head of Planning and Regeneration advised that the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December, 2013 had been included on the agenda (although already approved at the meeting on 27 February, 2014) so that Members could view the comments made by the Traders Associations.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December, 2013 approved at the meeting on 27 February, 2014 be noted.

37. Update from Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Holder

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

Hednesford

- Marketing of the final unit on Victoria Park and the small units at the end of Market Street continued. To date, there has been limited interest in the Market Street units.
- Pure Gym opened last month after an extensive fit-out. The opening was helping to increase footfall along the frontage of the terrace next to Tesco and through to Market Street.
- The Parking Order on the Council's section of the Rugeley Road Car Park has now been in place for three months and has helped to deter vehicles being parked for long periods of time. A similar 4 hr limit is currently being enforced on Aldi's section of the car park. Aldi have indicated that they may need to introduce more extensive restrictions in the future because of the high demand for spaces during the period from lunchtime through to mid afternoon.

Rugeley

- Improvements are currently being carried out along Forge Road as part of a programme of work to create an enhanced link between the Tesco store and Rugeley Town Centre.
- The Council are supporting a privately organised monthly street market the first of which was held at the end of February. The next market, with an emphasis on farmer's produce and crafts, was due to take place on 22 March.
- The second phase of the Rugeley Public Realm improvements was continuing between Globe Island and Wharf Road. The work was due for completion next month.
- The Rugeley Partnership Scheme was now nearing the end of the third and final year. So far two properties have been completed and a feasibility study has been supported on a third property. Improvements are now underway on the third property and a second feasibility study has been commissioned. There was active interest in improvements to a further five properties which would need to be confirmed by the end the month.

Cannock

- The weekly Cannock street market was continuing each Friday and was due to run until the end of May. Its impact would be evaluated and Cabinet would need to consider whether or not it, or something similar, should continue.
- The Crown Post Office has now relocated to WH Smith. Discussions would be held in the near future with the owners of the vacated property to establish their intentions.

- The Council was contributing to a jointly commissioned piece of research which should help to guide future investment decisions in Cannock Town Centre. The need for this work was identified last year when the decision not to proceed with the Beecroft Road proposals was confirmed.

District-Wide

- Since the last meeting of the Committee a further three applications for support through the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme (TCBRDS) have been approved. The total number of approvals now stands at 19, all but one have been implemented.
- The '10p After 3pm' parking trial has now been in operation since 2 January on Avon Road Car Park in Cannock and Forge Road Car Park in Rugeley.
- The Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader concluded by noting the Committee's consideration of the complex issues associated with 'The Future of the District's Town Centres' at its most recent meeting. Accordingly, she recommended that it should be retained on Part 2 of the agenda throughout the next Municipal Year.

A Member sought clarification as to when the Public Realm improvements in Rugeley were due to complete as the Traders Association had been informed the works were two weeks behind schedule. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager confirmed that the works were due to complete during April/May. There had been no notification that there could be a delay with this timescale; however, he would seek clarification as the poor weather may well have led to a slippage in the programme.

A Member asked what type of new businesses had been assisted by the three recent approvals for support via the TCBRDS. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager advised that two were clothing retailers and he would advise the Member of the third.

Arising from the discussions on the TCBRDS Members indicated they would like to see a wider range of retailers within the town centres so as to improve the retail offer. It was confirmed that the Scheme was largely reactive, so the Council would have little control over the type of businesses that would apply for assistance. The aim was for supported businesses to establish themselves and be strong enough to continue trading after the funding support ends.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration confirmed that a list of retailers who had benefited from the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme would be forwarded to Members of the Committee. There was £20,000 remaining and negotiations were underway to secure additional funding. The Planning Control Committee had recently given consent for an out of town retail scheme and this was subject to the developer making a contribution to the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme. Once the money was a reality it would be possible to look at amending the terms of the Scheme to make it more responsive to the specific needs of the District's individual town centres.

RESOLVED:

The Head of Planning and Regeneration circulate a list of retailers who had benefited from the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme to Members of the Committee.

38. Town Centre Traders Association Issues

The Head of Planning and Regeneration advised that the Minutes of the December meeting (attached to the agenda) outlined the Traders issues along with the Council's response.

The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager updated the Committee on the feedback received from the Traders Associations since the meeting in December, 2013. He advised that he had been unable to obtain an update from Rugeley Traders Association as Angi Cooney had been taken ill. With regard to Cannock, the issue of the street market had been raised and there was concern over the quality of the goods being sold. Additionally traders considered that there had not been enough consultation with the retailers in advance of the commencement of the street market trial. With regard to Hednesford Traders Association he commented that a new Chairman had been appointed and a good dialogue had commenced. The issues highlighted were as follows:

- how can S106 monies be utilised in order to assist Hednesford town centre;
- congestion/vehicle movements at the junction of Anglesey Street/Market Street (a meeting had taken place with Staffordshire County Council Highways and the Leader of the Council to discuss relocating the Taxi Rank)
- potential road safety issues at the junction of Victoria Street/Market Street (Councillor Ball raised this issue at Hednesford Forum and the County Council Highways would be investigating)
- Delivery lorries on Aldi car park blocking the entrance (this required further investigation)
- Suggestion that the pedestrian crossing should be replaced with a pelican (controlled) crossing (County Council Highways had been advised)

Reference was made to a rally that was taking place in Rugeley town centre this Saturday at 12 noon to support breast feeding. This had been arranged following a photograph that had appeared on a social media site labelling the mother as a "tramp" for breastfeeding in public.

A Member expressed the concern of the Rugeley Traders who were reporting between 20 - 40% losses in business due to the continuing road works. The traders would be seeking compensation for loss of business. He commented that it was possible that car parking income would be affected by the lack of trade in the town centre and this could have an effect on the Council's budget. He also made reference to the phasing of the lights under the Horsefair railway bridge which were not allowing the free flow of traffic. Additionally, he commented that

the road works at Horsefair looked as if they were behind schedule. He had reported these issues to Mark Keeling and Steve Knott, Staffordshire County Council Highways.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration suggested that a letter be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to Staffordshire County Council Highways expressing the Committee's concern with regards to the issues raised by the Member on behalf of the Rugeley Traders and ask for a response.

Further concern was raised regarding the condition of the flag stones and paving in Rugeley town centre and the increase in trips and falls as a result of this. A Member considered there were similar issues in Hednesford with regards to the condition of the flagstones, paving and missing grids. There was also concern regarding the lack of footfall in the town. Reference was made to Cannock town centre and the issue of missing trees which has resulted in empty circles in the paving.

The Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader advised that these issues had been highlighted during a recent tour of the town centres and had been reported to County Council Highways.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration suggested that the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee may wish to contact the County Council to advise of the concern raised regarding the lack of Highway maintenance in the Districts town centres.

The Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Leader advised that she had received positive feedback regarding the street market in Cannock which had helped make the town busy last Friday. It was considered that, if the offer of stalls was right, the Friday street market could help trade pick up in the town centre. She confirmed that the next street market in Rugeley was due to take place on 22 March and would have an emphasis on farmers produce.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the feedback from the Traders Associations be noted.
- (B) That a letter be sent to Staffordshire County Council Highways expressing the Committee's concern with regards to the issues raised by the Rugeley Traders and ask for a response.
- (C) That the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee contact Staffordshire County Council to advise of the concern raised by Members regarding the lack of Highway maintenance in the Districts town centres.

39. Car Parking

The Head of Planning and Regeneration advised that the issues arising from the meeting held on 27 February in relation to car parking would be discussed in the confidential part of the agenda.

40. Performance Reporting

The Head of Planning and Regeneration led Members through the Quarter 2 performance information (Item 7.1 -7.2).

RESOLVED:

That the performance update be noted.

41. Work Programme

The Head of Planning and Regeneration sought the views of the Committee on the meetings held during the last Municipal Year. He asked whether Members were content with the format of the meetings and whether they wished to retain the issue of “the Future of the District’s town centres” on Part 2 of the agenda.

Members considered that the Part 2 discussion on “the Future of the District’s town centres” was a valuable agenda item and should continue for the next Municipal Year. It was also considered that the involvement of the Traders Association in the meetings was essential. It was suggested that it may be useful to speak with each of the Associations prior to their attendance at the Committee meetings so that their concerns could be raised in advance and hopefully addressed at the meeting.

Members discussed the vacant units within the town centres; particular reference was made to the four units in Market Street, Hednesford and asked whether there was any incentive that could be offered to assist in letting these units. The Planning and Economic Development Services Manager confirmed that agents would use incentives to encourage retailers to take up the empty units.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the issues associated with the “the Future of the District’s town centres” be retained on Part 2 of the agenda throughout the next Municipal Year.
- (B) That the Committee continues to engage positively with the Traders Associations and representatives be invited to attend alternate meetings.
- (C) That the Traders Associations be asked to raise any issues in advance so that, where possible, these can be fully addressed at the meeting.

42. 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).

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 12 MARCH 2014 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 2

43. Discussion on Town Centre Issues

The Head of Planning and Regeneration advised Members that a number of issues arose at the recent discussion on the Future of the District's Town Centres at the meeting held on 27 February, 2014. The Committee's views were being sought on these issues so that an agenda for the future could be established.

Issues around car parking were discussed at the meeting and information was circulated to the Committee which outlined the following:

- the comparative short stay car park charges as at January 2014
- car park ticket sales 2010-14
- St Joseph's car park – comparison of sales after the introduction of a minimum 2 hour stay
- Comparison of ticket sales after the introduction of the "10p rate after 3pm" parking trial at Avon Road, Cannock and Forge Road, Rugeley car parks (one month's information)

Members considered that car parking should be value for money and attractive to shoppers. If the retail offer within the town centres was improved parking would be a secondary concern.

A Member raised concern regarding litter in the hedge by Morrisons car park in Rugeley. The Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Holder advised that it was important to report any litter issues to Environmental Health.

The Committee's views were sought on whether the current charging regime at St Joseph's car park (£1.10 for a 2 hour stay) should continue. There was a mixed view of this 12 month trial. Some Members noted that traders viewed car parking charges as an issue and therefore any reduction was seen as a positive thing. However, the effect of the 12 month trial did not show any particular benefit and some Members questioned whether introducing the reduced rate for a 2 hour stay at an alternative car park closer to the town centre would be more beneficial.

The Committee was content for the Chairman to advise Cabinet of the views of the Committee in this respect.

A Member suggested that parking should be provided free of charge on Rugeley

Charter Fair day.

With regard to the “10p after 3pm” parking trial which had been operating since January, 2014 Members considered that it was too early to ascertain whether the trial had been successful. The Committee was happy for further data to be gathered and this be discussed with the Chairman so that a view on the trial could be offered to Cabinet.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration then referred Members to the information that had been circulated to the Committee outlining a list of 10 questions/issues arising from the meeting on 27 February, 2014 arising from the discussion on the future of the District’s town centres. The views of Members of the Committee was being sought in order to form an agenda for the future.

The first question suggested that markets can add an extra dimension to the town centre offer and Members views were sought on this and also to whether any controls were required. Members considered that a market of a uniformed design would be an added attraction within a town centre. The market stalls should be of similar size and design, be located in the same position each week and offer the right type of goods. Standards should be enforced and once the offer was right it could be applied in all three of the District’s town centres. Concern was raised with regard to the differing size of some of the stalls in the Cannock street market. It was explained the reason for this was that some of the traders were operating with street trading permits and not under the street market legislation.

Another issue discussed at the meeting on 27 February related to the offer of leisure uses within the town centres. Members agreed that leisure uses within the District town centres was a good thing and the letting of units to family restaurants, for example, should be encouraged.

The Committee discussed whether there was any benefit in letting units to independent retailers. Members considered that the letting of units to independent retailers should be viewed as a positive change and welcomed within the town centres.

The Committee agreed that the introduction of free wi-fi within the town centres was essential in order to improve their offer.

In view of the time, the remainder of the questions/issues outlined on the handout would be deferred to a future meeting.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration also advised Members that the Council was contributing to a jointly commissioned piece of research which should help to guide future investment decisions in Cannock Town Centre and identify potential redevelopment sites. The need for this work was identified last year when the decision not to proceed with the Beecroft Road proposals was confirmed. Further information would be provided to the Committee in due course.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the comments made by the Committee in response to the issues raised at the meeting held on 27 February, 2014 regarding “the future of the District’s town centres” as outlined above be noted and the remainder of the questions/issues outlined on the handout be deferred to a future meeting.
- (B) That the Chairman advise Cabinet of the views of the Committee in respect of the St Josephs car park (minimum 2 hour stay) trial.
- (C) That further data be gathered in respect of the “10p after 3pm” parking trial and this be discussed with the Chairman so that a view on the trial could be offered to Cabinet.

The meeting finished at 5.55 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

Please ask for: Cllr Alison Spicer
Telephone No: 01543 279654
E-Mail: alisonspicer@cannockchasedc.gov.uk

Cllr Mark Winnington
Cabinet Member for Economy & Infrastructure
Staffordshire County Council
Cabinet Office
Wedgewood Building
Tipping Street
Stafford
ST16 2DH

29 May 2014

Dear Cllr Winnington

TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
RUGELEY PUBLIC REALM

I am writing to you at the request of the above Committee in response to concerns raised by Members regarding the ongoing works centred on Horse Fair in Rugeley.

The Committee have previously been advised of the proposals and the potential benefits that will be achieved in this part of Rugeley by your officers, but at the Committee's most recent meeting some Members expressed concern that the implementation of the works appears to be having a detrimental effect upon the trading position of many businesses located in the Town Centre. Members have also been informed by Rugeley Traders Association that turnover in the majority of shops in the Town Centre is markedly lower than for the corresponding period in previous years, largely because the resultant congestion on the local road network is encouraging people to shop elsewhere.

I should also add that the Committee were concerned to hear that the works are unlikely to be completed until July at the earliest, which simply compounds the issues outlined above. You will be aware that the original programme indicated that the improvements should have been completed by now.

The Committee would be grateful if you could explain what the County Council are able to do in response to the problems associated with the ongoing works and its effect upon trade in the Town Centre, and why the programme for the completion of the works has slipped so significantly.

Finally, I understand that Rugeley Traders Association have previously invited you to attend one of their regular meetings to respond to their concerns. In view of the issues raised on their behalf by Members of this Committee, and the greatly extended timescale for the completion of the works, I would encourage you to respond positively to their invitation.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Alison Spicer
Chairman, Town Centre Regeneration Policy Development Committee

cc. Rugeley Traders Association

PROSPERITY
Economic Resilience
Priority Delivery Plan
2014/15

Lead Officer:
Corporate Director

Contents

Why is this a priority outcome?

Portfolio Delivery Plans

- Economic Development and Planning : Introduction, Actions and Indicators
- Town Centre Regeneration: Introduction, Actions and Indicators

Why is this a priority outcome?

Cannock Chase has seen widespread changes to the local economy and business environment over the three decades following the decline of coal mining and related industries in the late twentieth century. In subsequent years the District has seen substantial investment in the transformation of former coal use sites, in the local infrastructure and the development of a broad base of new employers in sectors such as high technology, heavy industry, distribution, services and retail.

Education and Skills

The importance of education, training and skills to a robust and successful economy are widely recognised. However, issues with educational attainment, adult skills levels and areas of high levels of unemployment and benefit claimants remain in the District. These problems, combined with the international economic recession that began in 2008 have continued to have profound consequences for the District and its communities. Despite gradual improvement over the past five years, GCSE attainment levels have remained consistently below county, regional and national averages, thus reducing the options for pupils both in terms of continuing in structured education (to “A level” standard and subsequently Degree level) and in terms of employability. The number of NEETs (16-18 year olds not in education employment or training) in Cannock Chase in March 2013 was 213, or 6.2% of the population of 16-18 year olds, and remained one of the highest within Staffordshire. National research published in May 2010 states that “spending time not in education, employment or training can have a lasting impact on wages, with evidence of a 10-15% wage penalty for young people”¹, thus emphasising the long-term potential consequences of disengagement from education and training. Additionally, school leavers with lower-level skills “are less likely to receive work-related training through their employer, are less likely to participate in informal training, and face greater barriers to learning”², thus further perpetuating the socio-economic consequences of low school attainment on individuals’ social mobility.

The long term effects of under attainment in education are seen in the skills levels amongst the adult population. Results from the Annual Population Survey indicate that for the working age population in Cannock Chase, the proportions of A level and Degree levels of qualification are below County, Regional and National comparators. The skills gap increases further up the

¹ *State of the Nation Report: poverty, worklessness and welfare dependency in the UK*: HM Government, May 2010; page 29.

² *Ibid.* page 48.

qualification scale, with 69.3% qualified to Grade C and above at GCSE; 41.8% qualified to A level; and only 16.7% are qualified to degree.

The workforce structure and employment in the District.

The Annual Population Survey conducted by the Office for National Statistics indicates that occupation types in the District include above average employment rates in skilled trades, service and elementary occupations; whilst professional, management and administrative employment (known as Soc 2000 major group 1-3) is under represented in comparison to regional and national averages.

However, the number of 'white collar' jobs within the District is increasing with the construction of a number of office based developments over recent years, most recently for Aggreko and Veolia at Kingswood Lakeside. These investments form part of a general growth in employment (over 5,000 jobs) in the period since 2001. Other major investors during this period include DHL (on behalf of Unilever), 3663 First for Food Service, Ultra Electronics, Whitbread, Gestamp Tallent Automotive, Amazon, Veolia, Briggs Equipment, Rhenus Logistics, Electrium/Siemens, the Alternative Parcels Company (APC) and Sunflex. This has facilitated a 40%+ growth in VAT registered businesses between 1996 and 2009.

Unemployment and Benefit Dependency

At the height of the economic downturn from 2008 onwards the rate of Job Seekers' Allowance in Cannock Chase District saw one of the highest increases in the Country, reaching its peak of 5.5% of working age population in April 2009. Of the working age population in Cannock Chase in November 2013, 9,300 people (14.7%) claimed out of work benefits (i.e JSA, employment support, incapacity benefit, lone parent benefit etc) – compared to 11.6% in 2007. The most prevalent forms of benefit claim in the District are Employment Support Allowance/ Incapacity Benefit and Job Seekers Allowance.

Since these peaks in the rate of unemployment, the District rate has gradually reduced to levels similar to the national average, although the Cannock Chase percentage (2.2%) continues to be higher than that for Staffordshire as a whole. However, alongside these average rates, "hotspots" for JSA Claimant rates continue to exist in the District, with five Wards seeing disproportionate levels in comparison to the County (1.8%), and Great Britain (2.9%) averages in November 2013.

November 2013 data indicates that a total of 400 18–24 year olds within the District are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, which equates to a rate of 4.9% for this age group. This measure of youth unemployment compares to 3.7% in Staffordshire, and 5.1% in Great Britain.

Government and Resources

The Government formed in May 2010 has started to implement its proposals for economic recovery set out in the "Local Growth" White Paper, published in November 2010. The Government's approach is based on giving business a greater say in sub-regional economic growth policy through the formation of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs); and on ensuring that the planning system is reformed to support the drive for housing and business growth. To this end, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Localism Act 2011 have a major influence on the Council's approach outlined in this document. Emerging national policy sees the role of Local Authorities as one of supporting growth through the ability of Councils to ensure the supply of land for housing and business growth, and the significance of the Planning system's place in influencing business confidence and decision making. Alongside Government action to reform Welfare and Employment Law, re-localise business rates, implementing the Work Programme, the investment in transport, and planned reforms to Education and Skills provision, the changing environment of Local Government interventions in the field of Economic prosperity and resilience will bring fundamental changes of approach and implementation.

The achievement of these tasks must be set in the context of a period of financial restraint as the Government attempts to reduce the public expenditure deficit. As a consequence the resources available to achieve the Service Targets set out in this Plan will also be limited. Therefore, the successful achievement of the actions will also be highly dependent on the active and timely involvement of the Council's Local Strategic Partners (LSP) and the Council's LEP partners in both the Greater Birmingham and Solihull and the Stoke and Staffs LEPs. In certain areas, for example the delivery of town centre regeneration schemes, the Council has a much more significant role in leading on implementation. However, in the majority of economic development interventions the Council's role is more one of co-ordinating and influencing the delivery priorities of other partners.

Town Centre Regeneration

In town centre regeneration, the recent experience across the District's three town centres has been mixed. In general the Council is pursuing a policy of trying to implement physical redevelopment schemes in a very difficult market, alongside carrying out more local initiatives to support existing and new local traders and improve the town centre experience for visitors and shoppers.

In Rugeley an active traders association has emerged over recent years, while the investment impetus of much delayed Tesco store was finally achieved in September 2013. With the exception of the Tesco scheme, other regeneration sites in the town centre await improved market conditions. Nevertheless, the vitality of the centre is being supported by the promotions of the traders association and other stakeholders, and by investment into conservation area buildings, bringing vacant properties back into use through a business rate discount scheme, and public art.

Despite the recession, Hednesford's strategy for regeneration investment was completed in 2013. It is a successful example of how determined Council action can work with private sector developers to transform the shopping function of even small centres. The remodelled centre is now anchored by new Tesco and Aldi stores at opposite ends of the town centre. The new developments also include a range of additional shop units for both national and local retailers as well as new leisure facilities. The local traders association will need to continue to work with District and Town Councils to make the most of the benefits of the new investment.

Cannock town centre's ambition for multi-million pound redevelopment schemes at the Avon Plaza and Market Hall Street/Church Street/Beecroft Road sites have been affected by difficult economic conditions. These have seen radical change to the fortunes of local landowners and developers and retrenchment and a more cautious attitude to small towns by national retailers. The council carried out an extensive public consultation into proposals for the Beecroft Road site during summer 2013 which demonstrated that there was limited support for such investment at this time. Consequently, the Council has agreed not to pursue the potential redevelopment of the Beecroft Road site at the present, but will continue to work with key stakeholders to improve the retail offer of the town centre.

While the opportunity for new developments adjust to the new market conditions, the Council is investing in supporting the existing town centre through an environmental improvement programme to spruce up the town centre, and through incentivising the occupation of vacant shops with the business rate discount scheme.

Portfolios

- **Economic Development and Planning**
- **Town Centre Regeneration**

Each of these Portfolios and the contribution they make to the Priority Outcome of Prosperity: Economic Resilience is set out in the following Portfolio Delivery Plan sections.

Economic Development and Planning

Portfolio Delivery Plan

The portfolio responsibilities for Economic Development and Planning include:

- Promotion of the economic well-being of the District including measures to alleviate unemployment and create new employment opportunities
- Liaison with various bodies and agencies to further the economic well-being of the District including the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) Southern Staffordshire Partnership, Staffordshire Destination Management Partnership, Make it Stoke & Staffordshire, & Chase Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- Services and facilities to assist tourism, other regeneration schemes (excluding town centres), derelict land, and other economic initiatives, industrial estate management and relevant externally funded projects.
- Town and country planning and transportation services and facilities including planning policy development at regional, county and local plan levels, street lighting including Christmas lighting, public transportation policies including hackney carriages and private hire vehicles.
- All statutory and non statutory plans and policy documents prepared by the Council relating to the above services including Economic Regeneration Strategies, Tourism Strategies and the Local Plan.

The Council provides those portfolio services above which are relevant to this PDP through the Economic Development and Planning Services sections of the Planning and Regeneration Department.

Economic Development Services

The Economic Development Section is responsible for the delivery of the Council's economic regeneration activities, in particular:-

- Strategic economic regeneration activities primarily through the Council's involvement with the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)
- Business support, information, advice and guidance.
- Liaison with inward investors.
- The co-ordination and delivery of major regeneration projects.
- Efforts to improve the viability and vitality of the District's three town centres.

- Tourism promotion and the visitor economy.
- Liaison with local employers.
- Efforts to reduce local unemployment, particularly amongst 18 – 24 year olds.
- Initiatives to improve skills, including the promotion of apprenticeships.

Planning Services

The Council's statutory responsibilities for land use planning and the control of development is the responsibility of the Planning Services Section.

Planning Policy

- The production of the Cannock Chase Local Plan which will help to shape the way in which the physical, economic, social and environmental characteristics of the District will change between 2006 and 2028.
- Representing the Council's interests in the production of other forms of planning policy documentation by other organisations, for instance those relating to Minerals, and Waste Disposal produced by Staffordshire County Council; other Local Plans produced by neighbour Councils.
- Dealing with emerging Neighbourhood Plans.

Development Management

- Processing and determination of planning applications in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, other Government guidance and local policies.
- Ensuring that subsequent development takes place according to approved plans or within the limits of permitted development, including taking enforcement action in cases of unlawful development.
- Providing advice on development proposals prior to submission of a planning application and promoting sustainable, well designed schemes which will enhance the District wherever possible.

Specific Service Aims for 2014/15:

Economic Development and Planning Services:

- Increase the employability of the District's workforce.
- Facilitate economic growth through job creation.

- Increase the economic, social and environmental prosperity of the District through the delivery of sustainable development.

How will we achieve our service aims and the priority outcome?

Service Area: Planning and Regeneration

Service Aim: Increase the employability of the District's workforce.

How	When				Who	Indicator
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
<p>Work with the LSPs Employment & Skills Board, the LEPs and local stakeholders to support initiatives to reduce the number of local JSA claimants, in particular those aged 18 – 24 via the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with key stakeholders to secure over 500 apprenticeship starts in 2014-15 through the District's employers. • Delivery of local actions via the LEPs 				<p>✓</p>	<p>Head of Planning & regeneration, Planning & Economic Development Services Manager and Economic</p>	<p>Prosperity – Economic Development and Planning 1 & 2</p>

<p>Youth Employment Programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local delivery of Talent Match. • Working with the County Council to improve public transport linkages to employment areas within and beyond the District. 				<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>Development Manager</p>	
<p>Seek to maximise local employment within those businesses creating 50+ jobs within the District with the aim that 50% of new employees will be residents of the District.</p>				<p>✓</p>	<p>Economic Development Manager</p>	<p>Prosperity – Economic Development and Planning 1 & 2</p>

Performance Measures				
Indicator reference code	Definition	Baseline 2013/14	Targets 2014/15	Frequency of Reporting
Prosperity – Economic Development and Planning 1	Reduce youth unemployment (18 – 24 year olds) to the County rate by 2017. (Based upon LSP Benchmark data established in July 2011: CCDC 9.7% (785), Staffs 6.7% (4,755)) SUBJECT TO REVIEW	Latest (Nov 2013) CCDC 4.9% (400), Staffs 3.7% (2,650)	Reduce by 50 pa (to close the gap with the County rate as at benchmark date)	Quarterly
Prosperity – Economic Development and Planning 2	Increase in the Employment Rate of the District’s residents (with the aim of closing the gap with the regional and GB rates by 2017)	Latest (July 2012 – June 2013) CCDC 69.8%, WM Region 69.0%, GB 71.1%.	To maintain the District’s Employment Rate above the rate for the WM Reg.	Quarterly

Service Area: Planning & Regeneration

Service Aim: Facilitate economic growth through job creation.

How	When				Who	Indicator
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
To play an active role in the ‘local’ LEPs with the aim of securing LEP endorsement for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in transport infrastructure projects including the electrification of the Chase 				✓	Head of	

<p>Line, and upgrades to Eastern Way and Churchbridge junction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in key projects to support business growth in the A5/M6 Toll corridor. • Programmes (including EU funded schemes) to support at least 8 local businesses to grow/start-up. • Participate in at least 3 engagement events open to local businesses. 				<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>Planning & Regeneration, Planning & Economic Development Services Manager & Economic Development Manager</p>	<p>Prosperity – Economic Development & Planning 3</p>
<p>To support efforts to increase employment within the local tourism sector by participation within the Greater Birmingham Visitor Economy Strategy.</p>		<p>✓</p>			<p>Planning & Economic Development Services Manager</p>	<p>Prosperity – Economic Development & Planning 4 & 5.</p>

Performance Measures				
Indicator reference code	Definition	Baseline 2013/14	Targets 2014/15	Frequency of Reporting
Prosperity – Economic Development & Planning 3	To secure (through either completion or commencement of construction) at least 20,000sq m of new commercial floorspace within the District from April 2013 to March 2015.	At least 6,980sq m since April 2013 at the end of Q3 of 2013-14.	To secure a further 10,000sq m of new commercial floorspace from April 2014 to March 2015.	Quarterly
Prosperity – Economic Development & Planning 4	To secure at least an annual 5% increase in tourism expenditure within the local economy.	TBC	TBC	Annual
Prosperity – Economic Development & Planning 5	To increase the number of visitor economy bed spaces within the area covered by the Cannock Chase Tourism Network over a 4 year period commencing 2013-14.	1,260 hotel, B & B and self-catering spaces/units in 2011/2.	5% increase (63 bed spaces) over 2 years.	Annual

Service Area: Planning & Regeneration

Service Aim: Increase the economic, social and environmental prosperity of the District through sustainable development.

How	When				Who	Indicator
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
Maintain a 5 year reservoir of 28ha of ready to develop employment land.				✓	Planning Policy Manager	Prosperity – Economic Development and Planning 3
Offer Full Council the opportunity to adopt the Cannock Chase Local Plan – Part 1 following receipt of the Inspector’s Report.		✓			Head of Planning & Regeneration, Planning Policy Manager	Prosperity- Economic Development and Planning 6 & 7
Formally adopt a Community Infrastructure Levy and Charging Schedule.				✓	Planning Projects Officer	N/A
Grant sufficient planning permissions to evidence a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land sufficient to secure a net increase of 225 units per year.		✓		✓	Planning & Economic Development Services Manager, and Development Control Manager	Prosperity- Economic Development and Planning 6 & 7
Provide a responsive Development Management service which meets national targets for				✓	Planning & Economic Development Services	Prosperity – Economic Development

the speed and quality of decision making in dealing with planning applications.					Manager, and Development Control Manager	nt & Planning 6 & 7
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Performance Measures				
Indicator reference code	Definition	Baseline 2013/14	Targets 2014/15	Frequency of Reporting
Prosperity – Economic Development & Planning 6	More than 60% of major planning applications Should be determined within 13 weeks measured over a 2 year period. (National threshold is 30%)	For the year ending June 2013 the CCDC figure was 83%.	To ensure that at least 70% of major planning applications are determined within 13 weeks.	Quarterly
Prosperity – Economic Development & Planning 7	To ensure that over a 2 year period no more than 20% of planning refusals on all decisions on major applications are both refused and lost at appeal. (National threshold for designation is 20%)	Currently 0%.	To ensure that at least 50% of planning appeals on major applications uphold the Council's refusal	Quarterly

Town Centre Regeneration

Portfolio Delivery Plan

The portfolio responsibilities for Town Centre Regeneration include:

- Town centres regeneration schemes and town centres management.
- Liaison with various bodies and agencies involved with the economic wellbeing and management of town centres.

The Council provides those portfolio services above which are relevant to this PDP through the Economic Development, Planning and Property Services sections of the Planning and Regeneration Department, through the Housing and Waste Management Department and the Commissioning Department.

Economic Development, Planning and Property Services:

- Co-ordination and delivery of major regeneration projects.
- Actions to improve the viability and vitality of the District's three town centres
- Liaison with town centre stakeholder groups
- Improvement of the town centre conservation areas
- Implementation of planning policy designed to support town centres
- Estate management of Council occupied and let buildings in the town centres
- Management of town centre markets

Housing and Waste Management:

- Cleaning of town centres, removing litter and rubbish on a daily basis.

Commissioning:

- Parks and Open Spaces
- Creation of new planting schemes in disused flowerbeds.

Service Aim 2014-15:

- Improve town centres through regeneration and management.

How will we achieve our service aims and the priority outcome?

Service Area: Planning and Regeneration

Service Aim: Improve town centres through regeneration and management

How	When				Who	Indicator
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
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.	✓	✓	✓	✓	Planning & Economic Development Services Manager	Prosperity – Economic Development & Planning 1 & 2.
To continue delivery of the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme. To include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance to a further 5 businesses via existing resources. Securing additional resources during 2014-15 to enable the Scheme 				✓ ✓	Planning & Economic Development Services Manager	Prosperity – Economic Development & Planning 1 & 2.

to continue.						
To work with the County Council to commission research to inform future investment needs of Cannock Town Centre.		✓			Head of Planning & Regeneration	Prosperity – Economic Development & Planning 1 & 2
To undertake a detailed analysis of the use of the Rugeley Road car park to inform a review of management arrangements.	✓				Planning & Economic Development Services Manager	Prosperity – Economic Development & Planning 1 & 2.
To work with Staffordshire County Council to secure improved pedestrian connectivity between Rugeley Town Centre and the new Tesco store.				✓	Head of Planning & Regeneration.	Prosperity – Economic Development & Planning 1 & 2.
To undertake a detailed Retail Study of all three town centres within the District to assist the development of appropriate future policy.			✓		Head of Planning & Regeneration and Planning Policy Manager	Prosperity – Economic Development & Planning 1 & 2.
To complete the delivery of outstanding town centre improvements from 2013-14.			✓		Parks & Open Spaces Manager	Prosperity – Economic Development & Planning 1 & 2

Performance Measures				
Indicator reference code	Definition	Baseline 2013/14	Targets 2014/15	Frequency of Reporting
Prosperity – Town Centre Regeneration 1	To achieve a reduction in the number of vacant ground-floor retail units in the District’s principal town centre shopping streets.	33 (9.62%) vacant out of 343 in June 2013, (benchmark date) 31 (9.01%) vacant out of 344 in October 2013. England average 14.0% as at Sept 2013.	To maintain a net reduction in the number of vacant units at March 2015 compared to the benchmark date, June 2013.	Quarterly
Prosperity – Town Centre regeneration 2	To facilitate the reoccupation of vacant town centre floorspace through the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme (TCBRDS). SUBJECT TO REVIEW	At the end of December 2013 a total of 17 schemes had been approved through the TCBRDS.	To secure a further 5 approvals during 2014-15, subject to funding restrictions.	Quarterly

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>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.</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>Hednesford Town Centre</p> <p>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. NB Note that this is subject to a decision of the retailer.</p> <p>Achieved. Aldi opened on 1st August 2013.</p>	
<p>Rugeley Town Centre:-</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Achieved. Tesco, Rugeley opened on 26th September 2013.</p>	

<p>Cannock Town Centre:-</p> <p>To implement the decisions of Cabinet following consideration of the completed market testing work on the Beecroft Road site.</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>To adapt the Council's website to provide new pages and links on town centre improvement initiatives.</p> <p>Achieved. Initial pages were made available in April 2013</p>	
<p>Replace and enhance highway barrier planters on A34 and Cannock bus station</p> <p>Achieved.</p>	
<p>Provide new hanging baskets in Cannock town centre</p> <p>Achieved.</p>	

<p>To continue to implement town centre improvement initiatives including the Town Centres Improvement Fund, the Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme.</p> <p>Achieved.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>In addition further improvements were carried out via the Town Centres Improvement Fund, most notably involving the refurbishment of Beecroft Subway during Summer 2013.</p> <p>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.</p>	
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<p>Replace and enhance highway landscape on A34 Cannock (Beecroft to Church Street Island).</p> <p>Achieved.</p>	
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<p>Clear and replant all shrub beds in Cannock town centre.</p> <p>Achieved.</p>	
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<p>Replant small trees in Cannock town centre</p> <p>Achieved.</p>	
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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".

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
WORK PROGRAMME 2014-15
DRAFT**

Meeting No 1: 21 July 2014

- The Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio
 - Prosperity: Economic Resilience Priority Delivery Plan 2014-15.
 - Performance Outturn 2013-14.
- Update from Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Holder
- Issues Raised by the Traders Associations
- Provisional Work Programme for Discussion
- The Future of the District's Town Centres (Part 2 item)
 - Summary of Mary Portas paper 'Why Our High Streets Still Matter'
 - Investment/Redevelopment Schemes
 - Site/Retailer Specific Issues
 - Car Parking Issues

Meeting No 2: 8 October 2014

- Update from Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Holder
- Issues from Traders Associations (reps to be invited)
- Performance Report (Q1) - provisional
- Work Programme Review
- The Future of the District's Town Centres (Part 2 item)
 - Investment/Redevelopment Schemes
 - Site/Retailer Specific Issues
 - Car Parking Issues

Meeting No 3: 3 December 2014

- Update from Town Centre Regeneration Portfolio Holder
- Issues from Traders Associations
- Performance Reporting (Q2) - provisional
- Work Programme Review
- The Future of the District's Town Centres (Part 2 item)
 - Investment/Redevelopment Schemes
 - Site/Retailer Specific Issues
 - Car Parking Issues

Meeting No 4: 4 March 2015

- Update from Town Centre Regeneration Holder
- Performance Outturn Report (Q3) - provisional

- Issues from Traders Associations (reps to be invited)
- Work Programme Review
- The Future of the District's Town Centres (Part 2 item)
 - Investment/Redevelopment Schemes
 - Site/Retailer Specific Issues
 - Car Parking Issues