

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, 18 JANUARY, 2011 AT 3.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Jones, R. (Chairman)

Burnett, G.	Sutherland, M.
Davies, D. N.	Thomas, D.
Davis, Mrs. M. A.	Whitehouse, Mrs. L.

By invitation: Councillors G. Adamson, Chairman of Planning Control Committee

(The Vice-Chairman of Planning Control Committee had also been invited to attend, together with Members of Shadow Cabinet)

12. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor D. Dixon.

13. Declarations of Interest of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>	<u>Type</u>
Jones, R.	Employed by Wolverhampton and Sutton Coldfield Colleges	Personal

14. Minutes

The Head of Planning and Regeneration informed the Committee that it had not been possible for the Director of Learner Skills from South Staffordshire College to attend today's meeting. The Director, together with an appropriate Officer from Staffordshire County Council would, however, be invited to attend a future meeting.

It was reported that Minute number 9 third paragraph should have read '30 Future Jobs Fund opportunities had been developed' not '3,000 job opportunities'.

The Economic Development Manager informed the Committee that the percentage of pupils with a Fixed Term Exclusion in Cannock Chase was 3.44% in 2007, 3.16% in 2008 and 2.97% in 2009. Cannock Chase had the highest rate of exclusions in Staffordshire, the County average being 2%. The Committee requested that further information be provided to them on a number excluded, school, age and gender basis. It was also requested that information on the process and policy for exclusions be presented to a future meeting.

AGREED:

- (A) That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September, 2010 be approved as a correct record, subject to Minute 9 page 6 – Economic Development and Planning Priority Delivery Plan being amended to read '30 Future Jobs Fund opportunities'.
- (B) That further information be presented to the Committee on a number excluded, school, age and gender basis for those pupils who had received a Fixed Term Exclusion in Cannock Chase.
- (C) That information on the process and policy for issuing Fixed Term Exclusions be provided to a future meeting.

15. Developing Employability Skills in Cannock Chase

The Committee received a presentation from Deborah Merrick from the Staffordshire Partnership on various initiatives involving local schools and businesses.

It was explained that Staffordshire Partnership was the education and business partnership for Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent.

Through various funding systems, schools in Cannock Chase had been able to access vocational training courses through South Staffordshire College. Courses were offered at Level 1 for students expected to gain GCSE grades D-G, and Level 2 for those expected to gain grades A* - C.

When diplomas had been trialled at two schools, 4 had been achieved at one and none at the other, with transport issues being cited as causing particular problems. Diplomas had therefore been withdrawn due to the lack of uptake and the costs involved.

The Aim Higher programme aimed to widen participation in higher education (HE), especially for those whose families did not have a history of HE. Activities included summer schools to give students a taste of university and independent life and visits to HE providers.

Young Apprenticeships gave 14-16 year old pupils the opportunity to pursue industry specific vocational related learning programmes alongside the national curriculum. Pupils attended courses for two days a week over a two year period and this included undertaking 50 days of work experience.

The Staffordshire Partnership co-ordinated the pre16 element of the European Social Fund (ESF) Active8 project which was designed for young people aged 15-16 who had been identified as being at risk of leaving school not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The Partnership co-ordinated and supported meetings of District Employers in Education Partnership Groups (DEEP). DEEP involved employers working with schools and colleges.

The DEEP group had introduced a pilot scheme to help prepare students for interviews. Employers were asked to supply application forms, job descriptions and copies of advertisements for job vacancies. The Partnership had taken 168 year 10 pupils to RAF Cosford where 25 employers had provided support in carrying out mock interviews. Feedback had then been provided to the pupils on whether they would have been successful or not and

the reasons for this.

Businesses also mentored students, particularly those it was considered could gain improved GCSE grades. It was reported that Cannock Chase High School had, since 2010, received support from Briggs Equipment, Cannock. The School had identified that a number of very able students were choosing universities not in the top 20 due to the higher costs of living at them. Briggs Equipment provided sponsorship of £5000 to give a maximum of 5 students a scholarship of £1,000 for their first year at one of the Russell Group (top 20) universities, plus the opportunity to work-shadow a member of staff at Briggs.

Deborah Merrick informed the Committee that it was unclear, at present, how future initiatives to get young people into work would be funded with the changes being made by the new Coalition Government.

Regarding future issues the following were raised:

- Staffordshire Partnership had had some success in extending the number and range of businesses now engaged with students, but future funding for their work was unclear and this may result in a loss of engagement with employers.
- Despite schools having additional funding for 'enterprise activities', employers are reporting that too many school leavers are still ill prepared for interview and the world of work.
- The complex and short term nature of funding for education to business initiatives and the inconsistent approach of schools makes forging relationships and actions with businesses difficult.
- Staffordshire Partnership is always looking for employers to engage with students and schools through, for example, work experience and mentoring and it would be helpful if the Council as a major employer, or Members through their contacts with businesses, could play the fullest part in this as possible.

AGREED:

That the work of Staffordshire Partnership be noted and that the role of better engagement between local businesses and local schools be supported as a means of improving employability outcomes for school leavers.

16. Core Strategy Transport Issues

- **Highways Infrastructure in the Cannock/Hednesford area**
- **Public Transport**

The Committee received a presentation from Mr. N. Dawson, Group Manager, Transport Planning and Strategy Integrated Transport, Planning & Research, Staffordshire County Council.

It was explained that Officers from the County Council worked together with Officers from Cannock Chase Council on the Core Strategy transport issues to ensure it was assembled on a robust evidence base. Site assessments were undertaken to ensure there was suitable accessibility to them by different modes of transport. Pre-application advice was given to potential developers and submissions were audited upon receipt.

Contained within the Transport Policy were:-

- National – PPG13 integrates land use planning and transport – promotes sustainable choices, improved accessibility to jobs and facilities, and reducing need to travel
- Delivering a Sustainable Transport System (DaSTS – DfT 2008) focus on economic growth, whilst reducing emissions, making best use of existing transport infrastructure, targeted improvements, low carbon transport options, better planning that reduces need to travel

It was explained that DaSTS had not been endorsed by the new Coalition Government, but it was envisaged that priorities would be similar, although there would be reduced public resources.

The Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) had been published in draft which sets out the objectives that were needed to be delivered countywide and locally.

Copies of the recommended local transport packages for Pye Green and Hednesford, Norton Canes and Heath Hayes and Rugeley were circulated at the meeting.

The Committee was informed that from evidence gathered, there was no case to support construction of the Winchester Road Extension (WRE) based upon planned development in Hednesford including land west of Pye Green Road. It was explained that on this basis developers would not be obliged to finance the road and no public funding was available. The estimated cost of the road was in the region of £6m.

Concern was raised by Members that with the proposed development of 750 houses on the land West of Pye Green Road, that the Pye Green Road, which was already a busy road, would become congested. A Member noted that at the Stadium Inquiry, St. Modwens had indicated that they would be willing to contribute funding for the Winchester Road Extension. The Planning Services Manager explained that this had been when the developer had ambitions to build 1,500 dwellings on the site with a further 300 on the stadium site. It was reported that a maximum of 750 houses would be built on the Pye Green site due to its close proximity to the AONB.

Members expressed concern that, in effect, the County Council had changed its mind on the need for the WRE to the detriment of the strategic road infrastructure serving the Cannock urban area.

The Group manager responded that the County Council had supported the case for the WRE at the Local Plan Inquiry in 1995 based on the accident record on Cannock Road. Since traffic calming improvements on this road, the accident record had fallen dramatically.

The Group Manager reported that the WRE would need to be justified on technical grounds and withstand external examination and it was not considered that this would be the case. There was adequate capacity on the Pye Green Road and adaptations would be made to some roads and junctions to allow them to carry more traffic.

The Committee requested that a copy of the technical document relating to these issues be provided to them. The Group Manager explained that he had a summary document listing the key issues but that it was a very technical document and was not easy to understand. He would endeavour to obtain a simpler version of the analysis figures.

Local transport packages included proposals for new cycle routes and it was possible that more people would work from home, both of which would reduce the need to travel by car. Members explained that they had recently received a letter from the County Council indicating that funding was no longer available for the provision of some cycle lanes. The Group Manager indicated that this may be the case in the short term, but they would remain in the overall package.

Members raised a number of detail concerns including:

- the timing of the traffic counts
- that public transport could not be relied on to take the place of road infrastructure because routes are susceptible to closure at short notice. A member cited the lack of buses to Towers Business Park as an example of need being unmet by public transport.
- the unsuitability of some roads for cycle routes, for example, Belt Road
- the County Council's scrutiny of the transport assessment prepared by the developers.

The Committee considered that the relevant County Council Portfolio Leader should be invited to attend a future meeting in order that they could express their views.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration informed the Committee that additional meetings had been scheduled in order that they could further consider issues relating to the Core Strategy and make recommendations to Cabinet who would then recommend to Council. The WRE issue would be brought back to a future meeting.

AGREED:

- (A) That a more easy to understand analysis of the evidence relating to the Winchester Road Extension be provided to the Committee.
- (B) That the relevant Portfolio Leader from the County Council be invited to attend a future meeting.
- (C) That the position with new cycle route provision be clarified.

17. Proposals for a Health Centre for Cannock

The Planning Services Manager updated the Committee on the proposals for a new Health Centre on a site in Mill Street, Cannock.

It was reported that it was planned to amalgamate two doctors practices and provide other facilities. The Health Centre would be smaller than that originally planned when it was envisaged that four practices would be accommodated. Architects had indicated that a planning application would be submitted within the next week or so.

Councillor Muriel Davis informed the Committee that the Health Centre had been debated at Health Scrutiny on 17 January, 2011. The PCT were considering moving the minor injuries unit from Cannock Hospital and services provided at Crown House if it was more cost effective. No facilities would close until the Health Centre was available.

18. Economic Development and Planning Priority Delivery Plan

Consideration was given to the Quarter 1 and 2 Performance Report. The Head of Planning and Regeneration reported that with respect to the Youth Unemployment in quarter 2, the gap in meeting the County target was closing. However the quarter 3 results would show that the situation had deteriorated. Processing of minor and other applications currently exceeded the target. Processing of major applications was slightly below target due to one major application not being met within timescale and it was considered no further action was required.

The target to secure at least 16,800 sq. metres of new commercial floorspace by March 2012 was on target with the completion of the Netto Store in Cannock and the commencement of an office construction at Kingswood Lakeside for Veolia.

Regarding the Choices Day action, the Committee was informed that year 9/10 students from six high schools across the District would be taking part in the sixth Choices Day which was being held at Rugeley Leisure Centre on Thursday, 20 January, 2011 and Members were invited to attend. A series of mini workshops would be run by partners on the day including South Staffordshire College, the Army, Stafford College, Staffordshire Primary Care Trust and the Learning World Academy to give students a taster of various career opportunities.

At the event, students would also get the opportunity to attend an exhibition on careers supported by a variety of organisations including the Police, Connexions, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Royal Air Force.

It was reported that with cuts in funding it was possible that the event would no longer be able to take place in the future.

(The meeting closed at 5.30 p.m.)

CHAIRMAN