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| **CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL** | | | | | |
| **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE** | | | | | |
| **promoting prosperity SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** | | | | | |
| **WEDNESDAY 3 JULY, 2019 AT 4.00 P.M.** | | | | | |
| **IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK** | | | | | |
| **PART 1** | | | | | |
| PRESENT: Councillors | Davis, Mrs. M.A. (Chairman)  Sutherland, M. (Vice-Chairman) | | | |  |
| Boucker, A.S.  Hewitt, P.M.  Layton, Mrs. A.  Newbury, J.A.A.  Startin, P.D. | Stretton, Mrs. P.Z.  Sutton, Mrs. H.M.  Todd, Mrs. D.M.  Wilkinson, Ms C.L.  Witton, P.T. |

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| **1.** | **Apologies**  An apology for absence was received from Councillor P.A. Fisher. |
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| **2.** | **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. |
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| **3.** | **Minutes**  Arising from consideration of the Minutes a Member sought further information regarding the proposal to operate a shuttle bus from the McArthurGlen Designer outlet village to the town centre. The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that discussions were taking place between McArthurGlen and Staffordshire County Council in relation to providing a bus service to and from the town centre and the designer outlet. Further updates would be provided at future meetings.  A Member asked for an update on the food market that was proposed to operate in the town centre between June and September. The Chairman confirmed that the company who were proposing to operate this had pulled out.  A Member referred to the Cannock Town Centre Partnership (CTCP) who had indicated that events would be advertised on Arriva buses and asked if this was this was still the case. He considered that the promotion of town centre events was important to their success. It was confirmed that Arriva had indicated they would advertise events on their buses and it was understood this was still the case. The Chairman commented that the next big event in the town centre was the Garden party at St Luke’s Church in September and that the CTCP would be promoting this in due course.  RESOLVED:  That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March, 2019 be approved as a correct record. |
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| **4.** | **End of Year Promoting Prosperity Priority Delivery Plan Performance Update** |
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|  | Consideration was given to the end of year performance information for the Promoting Prosperity Priority Delivery Plan (PDP) (Item 4.1 – 4.12 of the Official Minutes of the Council). |
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|  | Members were advised to refer to the document that had been circulated at the meeting as the one included on the agenda had not printed correctly. They were also asked to note that on Item No. 4.2 – Increase housing choice, the first two paragraphs (Sustaining Safe and Secure Communities and Promoting attractive and healthy environments) related to the Community Wellbeing PDP and not the Promoting Prosperity PDP. |
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|  | A Member made reference to the new Employment Support Pilot that had been launched in the Cannock North area. He asked for information on the number of residents who had signed up to courses. The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that this project was being delivered by Walsall College and was progressing well. He did not have the figures in relation to the up take of courses at hand but would provide this to Members at a future meeting. He confirmed that the project was targeted to support those on low pay in the Cannock North area with the aim of improving their skills and employment prospects. |
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|  | Another Member asked if any help had been provided with travel costs as part of the pilot and whether there were any sanctions imposed. The Head of Economic Prosperity confirmed that it was a voluntary pilot which provided additional support to specific groups in addition to the work of the job centre. He did not have any information on whether there had been any help with travel costs. |
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|  | With regard to the performance indicators a Member asked for information on the number of local construction jobs created as a result of the development of the McArthurGlen Designer outlet village. The Head of Economic Prosperity confirmed that it had been difficult to get the information from McArthurGlen in relation to the number of local people working on the construction site. Discussions were on-going in relation to this. |
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|  | A Member raised concern in relation to the town centre vacancy rates as he considered the figures for Cannock were high. He commented that the street markets in Cannock were aimed at increasing footfall; however he considered that the street traders were taking the business off the shop owners. The vacancy rates were higher in Cannock than in Hednesford and Rugeley where there were no street markets. The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that there were greater challenges facing Cannock town centre than Rugeley and Hednesford town centres. He confirmed that the key indicator aimed to keep vacancy rates below the national rate of 12% and all three town centres were below this average. The Member considered that individuals who were using drugs within and surrounding the town centre and the lack of police presence was having an effect on the number of people coming to the town. The Head of Housing and Partnerships commented that community safety fell under the remit of the Community Scrutiny Committee. The issue of drug use/activity and anti social behaviour within the town centre was being managed. She made reference to the next meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee to which a representative of Staffordshire Police had been invited to attend to discuss issues of this nature. |
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|  | A Member asked for confirmation of 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 Housing and Partnerships confirmed she would provide this information to the Member concerned. |
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|  | RESOLVED:   1. That the end of year performance information for the Promoting Prosperity PDP be noted. 2. That the Head of Economic Prosperity provide the Committee with information on the number of residents who had signed up to courses following the introduction of the new Employment Support Pilot in the Cannock North area. 3. That the Head of Housing and Partnerships provide Councillor Witton with the number of Council houses being built in the District in comparison to the number of registered housing providers building in the District. |
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| **5.** | **Promoting Prosperity Annual Report 2018-19** |
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|  | Consideration was given to the Joint Report of the Head of Housing and Partnerships and Head of Economic Prosperity (Item 5.1 – 5.6 of the Official Minutes of the Council) which summarised the work undertaken by the Promoting Prosperity Scrutiny Committee during 2018-19. |
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|  | A Member asked for an update on the outcome of the Working Group to review the Policy for the Commercial Use of the highway, in particular, the recommendations agreed by Cabinet on 13 December as outlined in paragraph 5.6 of the report. |
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|  | The Head of Economic Prosperity confirmed that officers were currently reviewing the fee structure and looking at the feasibility of expanding the application of the Policy to cover the whole District. Discussions had been held with Staffordshire County Council regarding whether the enforcement of highways obstructions covered by the Policy could be delegated to the District Council; however it looked unlikely this would be delegated. He confirmed that this was in the Community Wellbeing PDP for 2019/20 and he understood that it fell within the remit of the Community Scrutiny Committee. He would seek to confirm this. The outcome of the recommendations would be reported to Cabinet later this year. |
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|  | A Member raised concern that this matter now came under the Community Wellbeing PDP. The Promoting Prosperity Scrutiny Committee had undertaken a review of this Policy last year and the Member considered it was a town centre issue and was a little confused as to why it had been moved to another PDP. |
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|  | The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that the “A Boards” Policy was administered by the Licensing team and it therefore came under the remit of the Community Wellbeing PDP. He confirmed that it would still be scrutinised and the outcome of the findings would be reported to Cabinet in due course. |
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|  | Members expressed concern that the Policy had been moved from the Promoting Prosperity PDP and asked to be provided with an explanation as to why it had been moved when the Committee undertook a review of the Policy last year. |
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|  | With regard to the Working Group set up to review the Vulnerable Persons Decorating and Grass Cutting Scheme the Head of Housing and Partnerships confirmed that the changes put forward by the Working Group and agreed by Cabinet had been implemented on 1 April 2019. It was anticipated that more homes would be able to be decorated under the new scheme. |
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|  | With regard to the changes proposed by the Working Group as part of the review of the Cannock Street Market the Head of Economic Prosperity commented that the Tuesday street market had taken place on 3 occasions. This had got off to a slow start as on the first occasion there had been torrential rain. Members considered that it was important for this market to be advertised/promoted so that the public were aware that it was taking place. |
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|  | RESOLVED:   1. That the Promoting Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2018/19 be noted and submitted to Council for information. 2. That the Head of Economic Prosperity provide Members with an explanation as to why the Policy for the Commercial Use of the Highway had been moved to the Community Wellbeing PDP when the Committee undertook a review of the Policy last year. |
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| **6.** | **2019-20 Promoting Prosperity PDP** |
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|  | Consideration was given to the 2019-20 Promoting Prosperity PDP (Item 6.1 – 6.6 of the Official Minutes of the Council). The Head of Economic Prosperity and Head of Housing and Partnerships went through the information outlining the important issues in relation to the performance indicators. |
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|  | The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that it was proposed that an event would be organised to mark the demolition of the towers at Rugeley Power Station. He would advise Members of the details in due course. |
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|  | The Head of Housing and Partnerships outlined the proposals for the Hawks Green Depot site. She confirmed that the services operating from the site had been reviewed and some would be moving to alternative sites. It was planned to build 44 new homes on the remainder of the site - 50% would be for private sale and 50% would be for social housing. There was a completion date of 2022. |
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|  | RESOLVED:  That the 2019-20 Promoting Prosperity PDP be noted. |
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| **7.** | **Promoting Prosperity Committee Work Programme 2019-20** |
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|  | Consideration was given to the services and issues falling under the remit of the Promoting Prosperity Committee (Item 7.1 – 7.3 of the Official Minutes of the Council). |
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|  | The Chairman advised it was proposed that two Scrutiny reviews be undertaken this year; one to review a Housing service and the other to review an Economic Prosperity Service. She sought Members views on any topic they wished to review. Members considered that any Scrutiny review that was undertaken needed to add value and a number of possible topics were discussed. |
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|  | A Member suggested undertaking an Assets Review**.** The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that there was a small team of staff who dealt with reactive work. A Corporate Asset Manager was due to commence in September. An asset register of buildings had been developed but it was still necessary to ascertain what land was owned by the Council. It was noted that although this review was required it would be a big piece of work and there was no capacity to undertake it at this time. It was agreed that this would not be reviewed this year and that it could be a possible review topic for next year once the new Manager had settled in. |
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|  | The Head of Housing and Partnerships advised that she had omitted from the list of issues and services the development of a policy to provide compensation for Housing Tenants should their home/property be damaged as a result of Council employees undertaking work in their homes. She suggested that the Committee may wish to undertake a review which would help set this scheme up and develop the policy. |
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|  | A Member suggested a review of the Housing Applications Process be undertaken. This would look at the time taken for housing applications to be processed. |
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|  | Another proposal was to review how the Council engaged with local businesses. The Head of Economic Prosperity advised that this could be looked at along with how the Council supported businesses and encouraged inward investment to help create the right jobs. |
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|  | Another suggested topic was to look at Cannock town centre and why the occupancy rates were low. The review could consider whether ASB, drug activity and the street market was having an effect on the occupancy rates. |
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|  | Following a discussion it was agreed that the two Scrutiny reviews for 2019-20 would be:   1. Economic Prosperity - A review of Cannock town centre regeneration and   occupancy rates   1. Housing – Housing Allocations Process |
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|  | The Chairman suggested that two Working Groups be established to undertake the reviews with half of the Committee sitting on the one review and the other half sitting on the other review.  It was agreed that the membership of the review to look at Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates would be made up of Councillors A.S. Boucker, P.M. Hewitt, P.T. Witton, Ms. C.L. Wilkinson, Mrs. H.M. Sutton, P.D. Startin and Mrs. D.M. Todd.  The membership of the review of the Housing Allocations Process would be made up of Councillors Mrs. P.Z. Stretton, J.A.A. Newbury, Mrs. M.A. Davis, Mrs. A. Layton and M. Sutherland.  As Councillor P.A. Fisher was not in attendance at the meeting he would be invited to sit on the review of the Housing Allocations Process. |
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|  | RESOLVED:   1. That the two reviews undertaken during 2019/20 would be as follows:- 2. Economic Prosperity – Cannock Town Centre Regeneration and Occupancy Rates (Councillors A.S. Boucker, P.M. Hewitt, P.T. Witton, Ms. C.L. Wilkinson, Mrs. H.M. Sutton, P.D. Startin and Mrs. D.M. Todd) 3. Housing - Review of the Housing Allocations Process (Councillors Mrs. P.Z. Stretton, J.A.A. Newbury, Mrs. M.A. Davis, Mrs. A. Layton and M. Sutherland). 4. That Councillor P.A. Fisher be invited to sit on the review of the Housing Allocations Process. |
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|  | CHAIRMAN |