



Please ask for: Wendy Rowe
Email: wendyrowe@cannockchasedc.gov.uk

24 June 2026

Dear Councillor,

Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
6:00pm, Tuesday 7 July 2026
Esperance Room, Civic Centre, Cannock

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

Yours sincerely,

T. Clegg
Chief Executive

To: Councillors:

Lyons, O. (Chair)
Thompson S. (Vice-Chair)
Cecil, D. Johnson, T.
Cecil, M. Millington, G.
Deakin, S. Muckley, A.
Freeman, M. Prestwood, J.
Haden, P.

Agenda

Part 1

1. Apologies

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

- (i) To declare any interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct and any possible contraventions under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- (ii) To receive any Party Whip declarations.

3. Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2026 (enclosed).

4. Introduction to the Role of the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

Presentation from the Head of Economic Development and Planning.

5. Annual Scrutiny Business Report 2025-26

Report of the Head of Law & Governance (Item 5.1 - 5.4).

6. Quarter 4 / End of Year Performance 2025-26

To receive the quarter 4 / end of year 2025/26 performance information for the Economic Prosperity Priority Delivery Plan (Item 6.1 – 6.6).

The documents included are as considered by Cabinet on 11 June 2026.

7. Outcome of Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy and Partnership Review

Briefing Note of the Head of Economic Development and Planning (Item 7.1 – 7.6 plus attachments)

8. Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2026-27

Report of the Head of Economic Development and Planning (Item 8.1 – 8.14)

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
Held on Thursday 12 March 2026 at 6:00pm
in the Esperance Room, Civic Centre, Cannock**

Part 1

Present:

Councillors:

Todd, D. (Chair)
Mawle, D. (Vice-Chair)
Craddock, R. Hill, J.O.
Haden, P. Thompson, S.
Hill, J.

The Chair advised that the meeting was being recorded in accordance with Section 40 of the Council's Constitution, specifically the Protocol for Recording, Filming and Social Media at Meetings.

The Chair then advised that the order of the agenda had been amended and Item 9 (Outcome of Ombudsman Complaints to Development Management Decision) would be taken first followed by Item 8 (Update on Planning Obligations Working Group and Exacom system).

29. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Bullock and O. Lyons.

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

No declarations of interests in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members Interests were made and no party whip declarations were received.

31. Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2025 and 15 January 2026 be approved.

32. Outcome of Ombudsman Complaint to Development Management Decision

Consideration was given to the Briefing Note of the Head of Economic Development and Planning (Item 9.1-9.5) presented by the Development and Policy Manager.

The Development and Policy Manager led members through the Briefing Note that outlined the outcome of a complaint made to the Ombudsman by a resident and the required action to address the complaint.

A member asked whether the outcome of the Ombudsman's complaint had any effect on the original planning application. The Development and Policy Manager confirmed that as the planning decision had been issued a condition could not be added retrospectively.

Another member asked whether there would be any long-term damage to the bat population because of the lighting levels not being controlled. The Development and Policy Manager advised that there were other properties in the area that had lights and these could not be controlled. However, this application could have been controlled by a condition to mitigate the potential adverse impacts of development on bats and wildlife. An Ecologist had now been employed, and their input should avoid planning officers overlooking recommendations made on any future applications.

The Development and Policy Manager explained that the Council had been found at fault on one point raised by the complainant. The complainant had been issued an apology, and the Council had reviewed its practices and procedures to prevent similar faults. The Ecologist who had been appointed would be consulted on any future relevant applications.

Resolved:

That the Briefing Note and the actions carried out in response to the decision of the Ombudsman be noted.

33. Update on the Planning Obligations Working Group and Exacom System

Consideration was given to the Briefing Note of the Head of Economic Development and Planning (Item 8.1-8.5) presented by the Development and Policy Manager.

The Development and Policy Manager led members through the report which outlined the progress on the Planning Obligations Working Group and the proposed purchase of Exacom for the Planning Service.

Members noted that the Working Group had not been established and that Leadership Team had not supported a funding request to resource the review of the processes which would provide transparency on the process and increase the pace that funding was allocated. Members also noted that there was a substantial amount of money available which could be allocated to various projects. It was explained that S106/CIL funding from development schemes could be used against specific projects identified within the Agreement, however, this did not provide all the funding and other funding contributions were required to deliver the schemes. The S106 funding would be held until the project was fully funded with other contributions before it was released and this would explain why there were large sums of money remaining to be spent.

The Development and Policy Manager explained the position regarding the Exacom system and the benefits it would offer. Although an outline business case had been prepared the demands on the IT and Finance teams would have been too much. Therefore, the proposed purchase of Exacom was not taken forward as it was not considered to be a priority.

A member asked what the effect of not purchasing the system would have on the staff who managed the process. The officer explained that the system would ensure the process was not so labour intensive. However, the team were excellent at their job and continued to use a manual system to ensure that deadlines were met and no obligations had been lost.

A member questioned whether the prospect of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) placed a reluctance on officers/members to support the purchase of the system. The Officer advised that when the new Authority was formed following LGR it may decide to standardise systems across all authorities.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning reiterated that although the Exacom system had not been purchased the team were still doing a good job. The system would be beneficial to them, but they continued to do their job effectively using the manual

system. Purchasing Exacom would remain as a service priority; however, it was acknowledged that there was limited corporate capacity within the Legal, IT, Finance and Planning teams. Leadership Team had considered the request but as there were a wider set of priorities to consider, and the Council was operating in a constrained environment and preparing for LGR it had not been supported.

Resolved:

That the Briefing Note be noted.

34. Quarter 3 2025/26 Performance Update – Economic Prosperity PDP

Consideration was given to the Q3 performance update for the Economic Prosperity PDP (Item 4.1 – 4.6).

The Head of Economic Development and Planning led members through the report referring to the progress of the various projects and summarising the successes and slippages. Overall, good progress had been made on the key priorities, but some were behind schedule. He advised that there would be update on the Town Centre Regeneration Scheme later in the meeting and members had already been updated on the S106 Planning Obligations Working Group. Although the Local Plan was slightly behind schedule it was still progressing and was due to be considered at Cabinet on 16 March and full Council on 23 March. He confirmed that all the KPI performances were on target.

35. Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy and Partnership Scrutiny Review

The Head of Economic Development and Planning updated members on the position with the review. He explained that the Group had recently had a change of membership and Councillor O. Lyons had been appointed as the new Chair. At the last meeting on 26 February members had received a presentation from the Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership representatives who had outlined the work of the LVEP and provided some useful data. A copy of the presentation would be made available to members.

It was explained that the review had been on-going for some time and would not now conclude until next year. Contact would be made with the Chair to see whether a meeting could be arranged in the next few weeks to enable the Group to formulate some recommendations to submit to the next Scrutiny Committee.

36. Town Centre Regeneration Scheme Update

The Economic Development and Regeneration Manager provided members with an update in respect of the Town Centre Regeneration Scheme. The Forum had now been demolished, and the site was close to being cleared. She explained that the view of St Lukes Church could now be seen from Market Hall Street. Planning permission for the demolition of the Cabot buildings along Church Street was granted in February and this would be delivered in two phases - a soft strip of the buildings would be done first followed by demolition. This would commence after the Forum demolition works were completed and the properties were vacant.

The Development Framework document was being prepared which would outline the potential for development on the cleared sites. The document would not be prescriptive; it would give an idea of the scale of development that was achievable within the set parameters. There would be consideration to the surrounding area and heritage buildings, so developers were aware of the context. The document would be presented to members

in the coming months.

A member asked how the Development Framework was decided given the original plans for a cultural hub had changed. The Economic Development and Regeneration Manager explained that the original plans had changed from the concept plan that had supported the LUF bid. Officers were working on getting plans to a more detailed stage and then submitting this to Cabinet. She confirmed officers worked with Development Management Consultants to develop a viable scheme which would include a variety of uses including commercial, residential, mixed use and cultural provision. Architects would prepare the drawings based on the size of the available plots and would take into consideration the surrounding area. She confirmed that the original concept was not being delivered as the scheme had moved on from this and Cabinet had received various reports to agree the changes.

She advised that the cleared sites for future development opportunities included the MSCP site, the Forum and the Church Street buildings. Consideration would be given to what was achievable on these sites that was consistent with the Cabinet permission.

A member referred to the Call-in meeting held in January where the Leader of the Council had indicated that the development plans would be available within a couple of weeks. The Development and Regeneration Manager explained that this was the same piece of work, but it was taking longer than anticipated.

Reference was made to the Investment Prospectus that was launched at the UKReiIF development event in May last year where significant interest had been generated in the redevelopment of Cannock town centre. The prospectus set out potential uses for the cleared sites and gave an indication of what kind of development would fit within the footprint. The officer explained that residential schemes required a certain number of units to make them viable for developers.

A member commented that it was pleasing to be able to see a view of St Lukes Church from Market Hall Street now some of the buildings had been demolished. The Officer explained that there was a similar situation in Stafford town centre. It was considered important that new developments respond to existing town centre sight lines.

Another member asked what the plans would be if there was no interest from developers. The Officer explained that the process was flexible and if one idea did not work, another one can. There were lots of uses allowed within a town centre, so it was essential to not be prescriptive and to allow flexibility. The Development Framework document would welcome uses into the town centre that enabled vibrancy and encouraged people to visit and stay longer.

A member commented that he was pleased that the Council's aspiration was to provide a vibrant development within the town centre, but he had concern, along with residents within the town centre Ward, over the lack of consultation. The Officer explained that once the Development Framework document had been taken to Cabinet there would then be a period of engagement with the public. At this stage the plans would be concept plans only; however, once planning applications were submitted there would be lots of consultation and an opportunity for comments then.

A member asked what land was included within the footprint for development. The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that the Development Framework would outline the various pieces of land within the town centre that could be developed. Several meetings had been held with national developers and operators who had a genuine interest in investing in Cannock. It was important to move forward and create an opportunity to deliver a regeneration scheme. It was confirmed that Officers would be attending this year's UKReiIF event due to be held in May.

37. UK Shared Prosperity Fund

The Economic Development and Regeneration Manager provided members with an update in respect of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund advising that this was the last year of funding and it would close at the end of March. She outlined some examples of programmes that had been supported by the funding, referring to the AKG programme which offered tailored support to help build confidence, gain new skills and support residents to move into education or employment. She also referred to the CAB who provided benefits advice support to assist residents in obtaining the maximum benefits. Another programme that had been supported was the Grants 4 Growth scheme which was designed to help local businesses expand and thrive.

A more detailed update would be submitted to a future Scrutiny Committee meeting outlining the impact the funding had made and what had been achieved with the money available.

A member suggested that some of the businesses who had been supported may wish to attend the meeting when the detailed update was provided. Officers confirmed that this could be arranged.

The meeting closed at 7:05pm.

Chair

Annual Scrutiny Business Report 2025/26

Committee: Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee / Council

Date of Meeting: 7 July 2026 / 8 July 2026

Report of: Head of Law and Governance

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To report the business conducted by the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee during 2025/26.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Council note the report and the work of Scrutiny during 2025/26.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.2 To make Council aware of the scrutiny activity that has been undertaken over the last municipal year.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 Scrutiny is an important function in every council operating executive arrangements. It is important that members understand the role of scrutiny and that Council is kept informed of the work undertaken by Scrutiny Committees.
- 3.2 This report provides a summary of the work undertaken by the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee during the previous municipal year. Full details of committee agendas and reports can be found on the Council's website.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 Good scrutiny can enhance decision making across all Council priorities. In particular it supports Priority 4: Responsible Council – 'to be a responsible Council and ensure we deliver good value for money'.

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 The Council operates Executive arrangements through the election of a Leader and Cabinet. Every local authority operating Executive arrangements is required to establish at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee to act as a check and balance to the Executive.
- 5.2 Scrutiny Committees are cross party committees each reflecting the overall political balance of the Council. They are not decision-making bodies but allow elected members who do not sit on the Cabinet to scrutinise and influence Executive decision making. This can take the form of scrutinising decisions that Cabinet are planning to take (policy review and development), those it plans to implement (through use of call-in procedures) and those that have already been implemented (through performance review).

- 5.3 National guidance advises that scrutiny work should be based upon four principles. It should:
- Provide constructive “critical friend” challenge
 - Reflect the voices and concerns of the public
 - Be led independently by members who take responsibility for their role, and
 - Drive improvement in services and strategic decision making
- 5.4 The Council has established three scrutiny committees, each with its own terms of reference and areas of oversight. The three areas are Responsible Council, Economic Prosperity, and Health, Wellbeing and The Community. Details of each committee’s remit, and the procedure rules for the scrutiny function, are set out in the Council’s Constitution.

Performance Review

- 5.5 Each committee regularly monitors Council performance, within its area of scrutiny, through the review of quarterly performance information. Information reported includes progress against delivery plans and key performance indicators and enables members to identify whether the Council is achieving its corporate plan objectives. Effective monitoring helps the Council to identify good and poor performance and to take action where needed to put things right.
- 5.6 Senior officers attend committee meetings to answer any questions, or respond to requests for clarification, and committees have the power to call senior officers and Cabinet members to account.
- 5.7 In addition to playing an important role in reviewing performance, each committee sets its own scrutiny work programme for the year. The following additional scrutiny work was carried out by the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee during 2025/26.

Economic Prosperity

- 5.8 The Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee’s agreed work programme items for 2025/26 were:
- Completion of the Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership review (carried over from 2024/25).
 - Presentation on car parking in the District.
 - Skills requirements in the District.
 - Town centre regeneration updates
 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund updates
 - Local Plan updates
- 5.9 Three meetings of the Staffordshire Local Visitor Economic Partnership (LVEP) review working group were held between August 2025 and March 2026 with the following remit:
- To consider how effective the partnership with the LVEP team was.
 - To consider whether it was value for money.
 - To look at how the output was assessed.

The Committee also received updates during the year on the work of the group. The final report of the working group will be considered at the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee meeting scheduled for 7 July 2026.

- 5.10 The presentation on car parking was given at the 16 September 2025 meeting and covered: the number of currently available car parking spaces in the District; whether those car parks were chargeable; number of spaces lost in recent years; ticket sales / income for 2024/25; current performance; pay & display options; pay & display data; parking charges increases & latest car park; parking fee trials; capital investment; and local electric vehicle infrastructure (LEVI) funding.
- 5.11 Representatives from South Staffordshire College's Cannock campus attended the 9 December 2025 meeting to deliver a presentation that covered: skills requirements in the District, strategic overview of the college's Cannock campus; curriculum and course offer; learner numbers and educational impact; meeting local skills needs; investment & facilities; and challenges & future plans.
- 5.12 Also at the 9 December 2025 meeting, the Committee received an update regarding staffing and performance of the Building Control Service that covered: current staffing/vacancy levels in the service; changes to service delivery following requirements introduced through the Building Safety Act 2022 and the impact of those changes; number of applications received and key performance indicators reported on quarterly; IT system investment; and the Building Safety Levy.
- 5.13 The Committee received updates at each meeting regarding progress with the Cannock town centre regeneration scheme, delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Cannock Chase Local Plan 2018-2040.
- 5.14 A call-in meeting of the Committee was held on 15 January 2026 to consider two call-in requests submitted in relation the 'Cannock Town Centre Regeneration Programme Update and Next Steps' report as considered by the Cabinet on 4 December 2026. Following a debate, a majority of Committee members determined that the call-in requests be rejected and that the Cabinet's decisions be implemented.
- 5.15 At the 12 March 2026 meeting of the Committee, an update was received on the proposed Planning Obligations Working Group and proposed purchase of the Exacom system for use by the Planning service. A report was also received on the outcome of a complaint submitted by a resident to the Local Government Ombudsman about the Development Management service and the action taken to address the complaint.

Future Work Programme

- 5.16 Each committee sets its initial annual work programme at the first business meeting of the new municipal year, taking into account any outstanding matters from the previous year and any new priorities for the upcoming year. The work programme is reviewed as a standing item at every meeting.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

None.

6.2 Legal

As set out in the report.

6.3 Human Resources

None.

6.4 Risk Management

None.

6.5 Equalities and Diversity

None.

6.6 Health

None.

6.7 Climate Change

None.

7 Appendices

None.

8 Previous Consideration

None.

9 Background Papers

None.

Contact Officer: Ian Curran

Report Track: Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee: 07/07/26
Council: 08/07/26

Priority Delivery Plan for 2025/26

Priority 1 - Economic Prosperity

Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 4

				N/A	Total Number of Projects
Action completed	Work on target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	Not Applicable	
10	1	3	1	2	17

Summary of Successes as at Quarter 4

- Cannock Town Centre Regeneration; significant milestone achieved with the completion of main demolition works to the former Multi-storey car park and Forum Shopping Centre with pre-demolition works commencing for the Cabot units. The demolition works form part of the Council's ambitions to create a significant regeneration opportunity for the town centre.
- Cannock Chase Local Plan 2018-2040 was formally adopted 23rd March 2026 which represents a significant achievement for the Council.

Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 4

- Cannock Town Centre Regeneration; pause in presenting the Development Framework and delivery options to Cabinet due to the Council decision in January not to release capital funding to deliver the regeneration programme agreed by Cabinet in December 2025.
- S106 review; review deferred due to capacity issues.

Priority 1 - Economic Prosperity

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
Delivery of major economic growth regeneration projects	Cannock Town Centre Regeneration - Phase One						
	Complete demolition works including former Multi-storey car park			X		Main demolition works completed in Q3 as scheduled	★
	Commence construction works for Northern gateway		X			Cabinet resolved on 4 December 2025 to revise the scope of the Northern Gateway element of the scheme which will be subject to a new programme of works. The PDP will be updated with revised actions in 26/27.	N/A
	Cannock Town Centre Regeneration - Phase Two						
	Submit planning application for phase two of the demolition works	X				The Phase 2 planning application in respect of the Forum Shopping Centre was submitted in June 2025	★
	Commence demolition works for phase two (Forum and Cabot units)			X		Forum demolition works commenced on site November 2025 and Cabot pre-demolition works in March 2026	✓
	Agree preferred development delivery option for cleared development sites			X		Due to be reported to Cabinet in Q4. Delayed due to the proposed change of site boundary as reported to Cabinet on 4 December 2025	▲

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	Investment and growth projects						
	Promote Cannock town centre development prospectus at UKREiF 2025	X				Investment Prospectus produced and launched at UKREiF development event in Leeds, May 2025 with significant interest generated in the regeneration of Cannock town centre	★
	Agree programme of projects for UKSPF for 2025/26	X				The programme was agreed with the Leader in advance of submitting to Government May 2025. Full details are being reported to Cabinet in July 2025.	★
	Refresh Economic Growth Strategy				X	This was due to commence during Q4 but due to the changes within the Town Centre Regeneration programme this has moved to Q1 2026/27	▲
	Develop pipeline of future projects				X	This is aligned with the refresh of the Economic Growth Strategy. This was due to commence during Q4 but due to the changes within the Town Centre Regeneration programme this has more to Q1 2026/27	▲
Local Plan	Local Plan Examination and adoption			X		Cannock Chase Local Plan 2018-2040 was formally adopted 23 rd March 2026.	★

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	Review Statement of Community Involvement in Line with New Regulations - scope out extent of changes required				X	Based on the new Local Plan regulations published by Government, it has been determined that Statement of Community Involvement will be replaced in new plan-making system.	★
	Community Infrastructure Levy - Prepare specification for CIL Viability Assessment				X	Immediate Local Plan review will formally commence June 2026. This workstream will not be progressed at this time.	N/A
	Design SPD - secure budget, prepare specification and appoint consultant. (Local Plan Examination requiring new SPD Spring 2026)				X	Draft Design SPD prepared utilising internal resources rather than consultants. Report will go to Cabinet in April to seek approval to undertake a consultation on draft Design SPD April to June 2026.	★
	Local Validation Checklist - consider need for new update and consultation.				X	Officers have reviewed the need for an update to the checklist and have determined that an update should be carried out later in 2026. This will form part of the Priority Delivery Plan for 2026/27.	★
	New Local Plan - Green Belt Assessment - consultant team procurement			X		Consultant appointed and inception meeting held October 25. Report nearing completion.	★

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
Planning Obligations - Review of Policy and Allocations	- Charging schedules for Section 106 and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) monitoring fees - Introduce Monitoring Fees	X				Fees were introduced from 1 April 2025.	★
	- Planning obligations Working Group - Project Identification, prioritisation and monitoring		X			It has been agreed with the S151 officer to defer this action as the finance team do not have the capacity to support this workstream currently due to competing priorities. With LGR and other competing priorities, it is proposed to deprioritise this action and remove from the PDP for 26/27.	✖

KPIs for Priority 1 - Economic Prosperity

Symbol	Description	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	End of Year
★	Performance exceeds target	5	5	7	7	5
✓	Performance on target					
▲	Performance < 5% below target		2			2
✗	Performance > 5% below target	2				
N/A	Reported Annually / Not Applicable					
	TOTAL	7	7	7	7	7

Indicator	Year End 24/25	Target 25/26	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 25/26	Rating Symbol	Comments
Planning									
Major Planning Applications determined within time	100%	60%	100%	100%	75%	100%	93.75%	★	
Non-major Planning Applications determined within time	97.4%	70%	100%	96.5%	98%	100%	98.63%	★	
Major Planning Applications overturned at appeals as percentage of no. applications determined	0%	< 10%	0%	0%	6.7%	0%	1.68%	★	
Non-major Planning Applications overturned at appeals as percentage of no. applications determined	0%	< 10%	7%	0.32%	0.35%	0.22%	1.97%	★	
Building Control									
Applications registered and acknowledged within 3 days of valid receipt	92%	95%	86%	90%	100%	99%	94%	▲	
Full plans applications with initial full assessment within 15 days of valid receipt	77%	80%	65%	76%	85%	85%	76%	▲	
Customers satisfied or very satisfied with the service	95%	90%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	★	

Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy and Partnership Review - Recommendations to Committee

Committee:	Economic Prosperity Scrutiny
Date of Meeting:	7 July 2026
Report of:	Head of Economic Development & Planning
Portfolio:	Regeneration & Corporate Strategy

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Scrutiny Committee on the outcome of the Task and Finish review and to make recommendations to Cabinet to support future activity in this workstream.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That members note the report.
- 2.2 That the recommendations proposed by the Task & Finish Group are noted and if agreed by the Committee presented to Cabinet for consideration.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) has been established as the strategic body to lead and coordinate destination management and promotion across Staffordshire.
- 3.2 The Task and Finish Group has reviewed the Council's engagement with the LVEP, the effectiveness of current arrangements, and the opportunities to strengthen the district's visitor economy offer in the context of limited resources and capacity.
- 3.3 Key issues identified include:
 - a. Absence of a dedicated tourism function or strategy within the Council
 - b. The need to better leverage strategic partnerships including the LVEP
 - c. Opportunities to strengthen engagement with key private sector partners

- d. Challenges in translating visitor activity into increased footfall and spend in town centres
- e. The importance of evidencing and shaping future provision through the Local Plan

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 Development of the visitor economy supports delivery of the Economic Prosperity priority within the Council's Corporate Plan 2026 – 2028.

5 Report Detail

Scope of the Review

- 5.1 A working group of members chaired by former Councillor Steve Thornley and subsequently Councillor Olivia Lyons was established to carry out a review of the Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).
- 5.2 The scope of the Task and Finish review was agreed to assess the following:
 - a. The role and effectiveness of the Staffordshire LVEP in supporting the visitor economy
 - b. The Council's current level of engagement and value derived from the LVEP
 - c. Opportunities to strengthen the district's tourism offer, including town centres and key assets
 - d. The potential need for a local Tourism or Visitor Economy Strategy

Information Gathering

- 5.3 As part of the information gathering phase, Members:
 - a. Received presentations from LVEP representatives
 - b. Reviewed data and intelligence relating to the scale and growth of the visitor economy
 - c. Considered the role of key stakeholders including Forestry England, McArthurGlen Designer Outlet, and local businesses
 - d. Explored local issues such as town centre footfall, events provision, and accommodation supply
- 5.4 Officers provided background information on current activity, including engagement with the LVEP, local regeneration activity, and relevant planning policy considerations.

- 5.5 The Task and Finish Group met on a number of occasions between 2025 and 2026 to consider the evidence and develop recommendations. Notes of these meetings are appended to this report.

Findings of the Review

- 5.6 The Task and Finish Group identified a number of key findings:

Strategic Engagement and LVEP

- The LVEP provides an important strategic framework for promoting Staffordshire as a visitor destination.
- The Council currently has limited capacity to actively engage and maximise benefits from the partnership.
- The annual financial contribution from the Council was noted as a consideration in determining future involvement.

Local Capacity and Resourcing

- There is no dedicated Tourism Strategy for the Council.
- This limits the ability to coordinate activity, promote the district, or fully engage with regional initiatives

Visitor Economy Offer

- Cannock Chase benefits from strong assets including the Cannock Chase National Landscape and the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet.
- However, there is limited linkage between these assets and town centres, resulting in low levels of linked trips and spend.

Town Centres and Events

- Members identified a lack of coordinated events and activity in Cannock town centre compared to other areas.
- Delivering events is constrained by limited resources and organisational capacity.

Private Sector Engagement

- Stronger engagement with key private sector partners (e.g. McArthurGlen, tourism operators) is needed.
- Opportunities exist to better align promotion, sponsorship and joint initiatives.

Planning and Future Growth

- The Local Plan plays a key role in supporting visitor economy development, including accommodation and attractions.
- Evidence gathering will be required to inform future policy development.

Recommendations

5.16 On the basis of the findings set out above the Task and Finish group propose the following recommendations be referred to Cabinet:

a) **LVEP Engagement**

That the Council reviews its level of engagement with the Staffordshire LVEP, including the benefits of formal membership, to ensure the district maximises opportunities arising from the partnership.

b) **Tourism / Visitor Economy Strategy**

That consideration is given to the development of a Tourism or Visitor Economy Strategy for Cannock Chase to provide a clear framework for future activity, aligned with available resources.

c) **Private Sector Collaboration**

That stronger engagement is established with key private sector partners, including McArthurGlen, Forestry England and others, to support joint promotion, sponsorship opportunities and improved visitor offer.

d) **Town Centre Connectivity**

That opportunities are explored to better link key visitor destinations with town centres, including improved signage, digital promotion, and visitor information.

e) **Events**

That the Council works with Town and Parish Councils, businesses and community groups to explore opportunities to support and expand events and activities within town centres.

f) **Evidence and Local Plan**

That the Council continues to gather evidence on the visitor economy to inform future Local Plan policies, including opportunities for visitor accommodation and supporting infrastructure.

g) **Data and Performance Monitoring**

That ongoing engagement with the LVEP and partners is used to monitor visitor economy performance and inform future decision making.

Implications

6.1 Financial

The Council will need to consider the financial implications of proposing additional activities to support the tourism/visitor economy.

The Council has previously contributed funding to the LVEP, although it should be noted that budget provision does not currently exist and any proposal to reinstate the funding will need to be considered against the Council's overall financial position and consideration of the potential benefits that it could offer.

6.2 Legal

None

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Risk Management

None

6.5 Equalities and Diversity

None

6.6 Health

None

6.7 Climate Change

None

5 Appendices

Notes of the Task and Finish Group's meetings

6 Background Papers

Contact Officer: Dean Piper / Michelle Smith

Telephone Number: 01785 619 335

Ward Interest: All

Report Track: Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee – 7 July 2026

Key Decision: N/A

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE
SCRUTINY REVIEW WORKING GROUP - STAFFORDSHIRE LOCAL VISITOR
ECONOMY AND PARTNERSHIP

TUESDAY 7 JANUARY 2025 AT 5.00 P.M.

REMOTE MEETING VIA MS TEAMS

Present:

Councillor L. Bishop
Councillor J.O. Hill
Councillor N. Lyons
Councillor O. Lyons (joined later)
Councillor F. Prestwood
Councillor S. Thornley
Councillor D. Todd

Officers: M. Smith (Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager)
W. Rowe (Senior Committee Officer)
K. Hill (Staffordshire County Council - Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership)

1. Appointment of Chair

Councillor S. Thornley was appointed Chair of the Working Group.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from D. Piper (Head of Economic Development and Planning) and Charlotte Cain (Visitor Economy Partnership Development Manager, Staffordshire County Council).

3. Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy and Partnership - Scrutiny Review

It was noted that the title of the review would be the Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy and Partnership Review to enable members to review both the Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy and also the Partnership.

The Chair then welcomed Kim Hill, Economy Business Support Officer, Staffordshire County Council to the meeting. She was attending on behalf of Charlotte Cain, Visitor Economy Partnership Development Manager, who had sent her apologies. She provided a presentation to the Group which gave an overview of the Local Visitor Economy Partnership for Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent, which was one of 45 in the Country, accredited by Visit England. The Governance Structure of the LVEP was outlined as follows:

- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Leadership Board
- Staffordshire Place Board
- Local Visitor Economy Partnership
- LVEP Board

- Local Authority Stakeholder Group
- STAR Operators Advisory Panel
- Task and Finish groups where appropriate to deliver elements of the Growth Plan

The partnership was a collaboration between local authorities, tourism organisations, business associations, and key stakeholders dedicated to promoting and enhancing the visitor economy. The newly formed LVEP Board was made up of key representatives across the County. A countywide development plan was being developed, and actions from this would be seen in 2026. There was currently no representative from the Cannock Chase area on the Board; however, there had been extensive talks with McArthur Glen who were keen to be represented on the Board once their staffing changes had been resolved. They had committed to leading one of the STAR Groups and would then appoint to the Board next year. She further confirmed that talks were ongoing with Cannock Chase National Landscape on specific work strands.

The 4 key priority leads for the growth plan were then outlined, along with the priorities that the leads and their groups to be working on between January to April 2025, as follows:

Business Tourism Priority - Craig Simmonds

- Assemble Business Tourism Sub Committee
- Develop a shared “Meet” brand
- Review conference bureau and strategy
- Bring forward a development plan to support future LVEP needs

Education and Inclusion Priority - Fran Hitchen

- Assemble Education and Inclusion Sub Committee
- Create unified package offer of training available in Staffordshire from Entry level to HE
- Roll out Accessible UK business support alongside Visit Staffordshire
- Create a programme plan for future activity

Marketing and Business Support Priority - Laura Gerrard

- Create Steering Group to support
- New destination campaign with focus on new brand - Visit Staffs and Visit S-O-T
- Create cross country promotion and links between attractions/operators and the new brand/website - united effort to promote the brand

Sustainability Priority - Richard Drakeley

- Update Sustainability action plan
- Golden thread that connects the priorities

Another aspect that the LVEP was looking at was STEAM data. This was currently in the research and planning stage but after April 2025 it would be put into action. The STEAM data was collected for each District and Borough and Staffordshire County as a whole. She showed members information that was specific for the Cannock Chase area. It was noted that the number of day visitors and visits to serviced accommodation had increased from 2022 to 2023. However, the number of visitors to non-serviced accommodation had slightly decreased and the reasons for this would be explored. There had also been an increase in the economic impact and in the direct employment of all the visitor economy sectors. This was very positive and in line with the County as a whole.

The data would be assessed in detail to establish the bigger increases. At the end of the month the data for 2024 would be sought. Information would be obtained from businesses, attractions, parks etc., and this would provide comparisons and trends for 3 full years. More detail could be provided at another meeting if members considered this would be useful.

The County was also looking at the accommodation acceleration plan as there was an accommodation stock shortage in the County. This was in the research stages, but consideration would be given to whether there were enough bed spaces available and whether a diverse range of accommodation was being offered. Officers working on this would be consulting with the Planning teams from all Councils. The outcome of the research would provide the information to shape plans and move them forwards.

She explained that the aim was to bring everyone together to enable resources to be streamlined and costs to be shared which would help identify the needs of each District and Borough. She added that the Cannock Chase District area was similar to Stafford whereby an action plan would be developed to outline the immediate and long-term impact to the visitor economy.

She confirmed that a Tourism Conference was being held this Thursday 9 January, with an expected 150 attendees. Representatives from Visit England, the National Tourism Alliance and from local businesses had been invited to talk about tourism. There would be workshops and funding opportunities on how to make businesses more accessible.

She asked members to think about what they considered to be the most important aspects of the visitor economy for Cannock Chase. They should think about what the biggest selling points were and whether anything had been neglected or required attention. She asked that members provide her with feedback on this.

Following this, the Chair thanked Kim Hill for her informative presentation and commented that there was a broad spectrum of issues to consider. The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager advised that it was important to note that the Council did not have any resource for visitor economy work, over and above the partnership with the County Council. The Council relied heavily on the LVEP team and there would be very little activity on visitor economy without their support. Members may therefore wish to consider how effective the Partnership with the team was as part of the scope of the review. As the services provided had to be paid for members may also wish to consider whether it was value for money. The Group agreed with this suggestion, and this would form part of the scope of the review.

A member referred to the potential closure of the Prince of Wales Theatre and the Museum of Cannock Chase, which were both subject to a separate consultation. She questioned what would attract people to the area and encourage them to re-visit if these facilities closed. Kim Hill commented that the STEAM data that was available did not cover 2024 and therefore the effects of any recent events would be included in the next set of data collected.

The Chair asked that a copy of the published STEAM data information be provided to Members. Kim Hill advised that she could provide this to the clerk who could forward it to members on the review group.

At this point, Councillor O. Lyons joined the meeting. The Chair asked whether she had anything to add to the discussion. She commented that she was aware there was no in-house resource for this type of work and was therefore very supportive of the partnership

arrangements with the County Council. She considered that the main attractions in the Cannock Chase District were the Chase, the McArthur Glen Designer Outlet and potentially the Hednesford Raceway in terms of attracting external visitors. She added that, with regards to the contribution payable, she was aware it had recently decreased. She considered it would be useful to consider how to assess success, how the outputs were monitored at present and how this may change moving forwards. The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager confirmed that the contribution had recently gone down, and a report would shortly be submitted to Cabinet to outline what the contribution provided, how it was reviewed and what it delivered.

She confirmed that the issue surrounding the Prince of Wales Theatre, and the Museum of Cannock Chase were subject to a separate consultation process. It was more appropriate for the Group to consider what the offer was for the district rather than concentrating on the Theatre and Museum. Members should consider all the attractions in the area, some of which had been mentioned in the meeting today, and to consider how these were being promoted. She added that officers also worked with Forestry England in terms of issues connected to Cannock Chase. Additionally, the new development at Rugeley Power Station would generate some visitor economy work.

Following the comments made by Councillor Lyons the Chair suggested that the scope of the review could also include "how the Council assess the output". Members agreed with this suggestion. He also asked that the Cabinet report referred to above be submitted to the Group when it was available.

The Chair sought suggestions for the reasons for the Scrutiny review. The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager suggested that one reason could be the value of the visitor economy and the potential increase in value to the district. The Group noted that tourism brought a lot of money into a district when it was done properly. Another reason for the review would be to tie it in with the wider regeneration of the town centre. Regeneration attracted visitors into the town centre but what made them want to stay in the area overnight. After some discussion it was agreed that the reasons for the review would be to determine the value of the visitor economy, tied in with the town centre regeneration, and to determine the effectiveness of the partnership in generating tourism and developing future opportunities.

A member asked how extra visitors to the area affected the health and wellbeing of people in the communities; was there a positive or negative impact. Kim Hill commented that, from a job perspective, tourism was a positive as it created more jobs and provided a higher quality of life as it increased places to visit/eat. However, a negative impact could be that an increase in people meant an increase in transport. For example, residents were affected by big events in the area and therefore the team engaged with the community and worked with the transport and planning teams to mitigate any concerns or negative impact.

The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager added that, as part of the planning process for the development of the McArthur Glen designer outlet or the Cannock Chase Live concert events, the Council had developed relationships with both McArthur Glen and the Forestry Commission to mitigate any concerns. As part of the review the Group could consider whether there were sufficient links in place regarding any possible detriment to the area.

In terms of the membership of the Group it was noted that outside representatives/project leaders could be invited to future meetings to assist with the review. However, it was

confirmed that the membership of the Group would be the members in attendance at the meeting today as outlined on the agenda.

The Chair commented that a lot of information had been received today and members would need to spend some time considering and developing the review plan/key tasks. This would be discussed further at the next meeting. The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager confirmed that the review would consist of 3-4 meetings, looking to conclude early summer with some recommendations to the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee for consideration. The Group should advise the Chair and/or the Clerk if there was anyone they wished to invite to the next meeting or if there was any further information they wished the LVEP team to provide.

It was noted that the outcome of the next STEAM data would be available at the beginning of May. Therefore, the Group may wish to receive and respond to this information as part of the review. This STEAM data currently available would form part of the source of evidence. Members were asked to advise the LVEP team if there was anything else they required.

The Group then discussed the timescale of the review. It was noted that, as the review would not conclude until the summertime, it would therefore progress beyond this municipal year. It was considered that the timescale was too tight to enable the review to conclude this municipal year. Members noted that the membership of the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee may change when the membership of Committees was agreed at the Annual Council meeting in May. Therefore, the membership of the Group may differ if a member currently on the review was not on the Committee next year.

Finally, the date of the next meeting was confirmed for Wednesday 29 January 2025 at 6pm (rather than 4.30pm as scheduled) via MS Teams.

Members noted that Kim Hill had been asked to attend the meeting at very short notice and they thanked her for her attendance and for providing an informative presentation.

AGREED:-

(A) That the **review title** would be Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy and Partnership Review.

(B) That the **scope of the review** would be:

- to consider how effective the Partnership with the LVEP team was;
- to consider whether it was value for money;
- to look at how the output was assessed.

(C) That the **reasons for the review** would be:

- to determine the value of the visitor economy linked in with the town centre regeneration;
- to determine the effectiveness of the partnership in generating tourism and developing future opportunities.

(D) That the **membership of the review** would be Councillors:

- L. Bishop, J.O. Hill, N. Lyons, O. Lyons, F. Prestwood, S. Thornley (Chair) and D. Todd

(Note: outside representatives/Board Leaders could be invited if required).

- (E) That Members give consideration to the **review plan/key tasks** and this be discussed further at the next meeting.
- (F) That the STEAM data form part of the **source of evidence** and this information be provided to Members on the Group.
- (G) That, in terms of the **timescale of the review**, it was considered that the review may need to progress beyond the municipal year due to the timescale being too tight.
- (H) That a copy of the Cabinet report regarding the contribution to the LVEP be submitted to the Group when it was available.
- (I) That the next meeting be held on Wednesday 29 January 2025 at 6pm (rather than 4.30pm as scheduled) via MS Teams.
- (J) That Members advise the Chair and/or the Clerk of anyone they wished to invite to the next meeting, or if there was any further information they wished the LVEP team to provide.

The meeting ended at 6.00pm.

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

NOTES OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW WORKING GROUP - STAFFORDSHIRE LOCAL VISITOR ECONOMY AND PARTNERSHIP

WEDNESDAY 29 JANUARY 2025 AT 6.10 P.M.

REMOTE MEETING VIA MS TEAMS

Present:

Councillor L. Bishop
Councillor J.O. Hill
Councillor N. Lyons
Councillor S. Thornley (Chair)
Councillor D. Todd

Officers: D. Piper (Head of Economic Development and Planning)
M. Smith (Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager)
W. Rowe (Senior Committee Officer)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors F. Prestwood and O. Lyons, Charlotte Cain and Kim Hill (representatives from Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership, Staffordshire County Council).

2. Notes

The notes of the previous meeting held on 7 January 2025 were agreed.

3. Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy and Partnership

Review plan/key tasks/next steps

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and asked them to consider the next steps of the review. The Head of Economic Development and Planning commented that, at the previous meeting, members had received a comprehensive presentation from the LVEP representative, and the Group had agreed several actions. He outlined these agreed actions as a reminder for members. The Chair added that there was a broad spectrum of issues to consider, and several organisations were involved; the Group would therefore need to determine their focus and decide if they wished to talk to any outside organisations/groups as part of the review. It was noted that the STEAM data currently available had been emailed to the Group and the outcome of the next STEAM data would be available later this year. This data could be used to check and challenge any issues in the district.

The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager asked the Group to consider which part of the visitor offer they were interested in looking at. The Chair commented that the outdoor tourism offer in the district was strong, given that Cannock Chase was designated as an AONB. He referred to hotel capacity in the district and asked whether this was an issue for the Group to consider. The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that there were several hotels in the district, but these generally catered for

workmen/contractors rather than tourists. This may be an area to consider but this would depend on the data that was available.

The Group discussed tourism as an income stream and noted the importance of providing better transport links to the Cannock Chase AONB so that everyone, including those economically challenged could enjoy it. A member advised that, in a recent meeting, it was reported that Cannock Chase DC had been designated as a rural council and he questioned whether there would be an opportunity to access any funding because of this designation. The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager clarified that Cannock Chase DC had not been classed as a significantly rural Council when the UKSPF funding had been allocated last year. The Head of Economic Development and Planning added that he considered Cannock Chase DC to be an urban Council rather than rural. The Chair therefore agreed to seek clarification on this to establish whether the “rural” designation for Cannock Chase was correct.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that, in terms of tourism and the visitor economy, Cannock Chase occupied a unique position in that there were built up areas that sat alongside the AONB and a major shopping centre (McArthurGlen Designer Outlet). A member commented that the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet was a big attraction for the district, and it would be beneficial to try to keep visitors in the district for longer when they visited the outlet. She suggested that visitors could be signposted to other places of interest in the district (such as the Chase) and leaflets could be placed in the shops or in the Guest Services centre. The Chair agreed that it would be useful to market what Cannock Chase district had to offer via the McArthurGlen outlet. The Head of Economic Development and Planning commented that McArthurGlen had been incredibly successful, and the company had made a huge return on their investment. They had plans to expand further and planning applications had been submitted to progress Phase 2, which would bring in some big names.

The Officer added that the visitors to the outlet travelled predominately in cars and conversations had been held with the management of the outlet who had indicated a willingness to invest in the train station, to improve signage to the outlet and other places of interest in the district. However, the immediate priority for McArthurGlen was to progress their planning applications to deliver Phase 2 and there could then be a discussion with them in terms of community initiatives.

The Officer referred to other big events in the district, such as the Forest Live concerts that were held on the Chase. These music events attracted huge visitor numbers, and it would be useful to capitalise on these events to encourage visitors to stay for longer. Forestry England did provide overnight stays/accommodation (such as lodges/cabins) in other areas, and he suggested it may therefore be beneficial for the Group to talk to them about this as part of the review.

Therefore, in terms of talking to outside organisations/groups, it was considered that it may be beneficial to have discussions with McArthur Glen and Forestry England.

The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager advised that she attended the regular LVEP group meetings. She agreed to look back at the notes of the recent LVEP meetings to ascertain if anything had been discussed that was specific to Cannock Chase.

A member commented that he had held discussions with local business owners and there was a desire for more events to be held in the town centres, as these attracted visitors.

Events such as galas and outdoor farmers markets were popular and the Friday Street market in Cannock was a big draw with the car parks sometimes being full. A member added that visitors to Cannock may also visit Lichfield to see the Cathedral and Stafford to see the Castle. Therefore, Cannock was well placed, in the middle of these two towns, and a decent accommodation offer may encourage visitors to stay over in Cannock.

The Chair acknowledged that there was a lack of any night-time economy in the district and he considered that this needed to be strengthened in all 3 major towns - Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley. Any ideas to increase the night-time economy would be welcomed.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning confirmed that the LVEP would promote any events held in the area, rather than provide the events, but only if they were profitable. He was hopeful that the LUF regeneration scheme in Cannock town centre and the improvements being made would encourage more visitors to the town and for more events to take place, in addition to the Street markets. He confirmed that the Beecroft Road car park was being refurbished as part of the LUF scheme.

Following the discussions the Chair asked all members to email him with a list of priorities/ideas/suggestions. The Officer suggested that members may wish to consider the following questions to assist them in formulating their ideas:

- to determine the important priorities for Cannock Chase to help support the visitor economy
- to consider what needed to be developed and whether anything was missing
- to consider what the LVEP was providing/not providing

The Chair would then pass all these ideas onto the officers for them to review. The officer commented that the input from members in this respect would enable a framework/spreadsheet of important issues to be developed and to compare this with the LVEP. It was agreed that members should email the Chair with their ideas by Monday 17 February.

The need for a further meeting of the Review Group would be determined once the information from members had been reviewed. If a further meeting was considered necessary, this could hopefully be arranged prior to the next meeting of the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee that was scheduled for 19 March.

AGREED ACTIONS: -

- (a) The Chair agreed to seek clarification to establish whether the “rural” designation for Cannock Chase was correct.
- (b) In terms of outside organisations/groups, it was considered that it may be beneficial to have discussions with McArthur Glen and Forestry England.
- (c) The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager agreed to look back at the notes of the recent LVEP meetings to ascertain if anything had been discussed that was specific to Cannock Chase.
- (d) All members of the Group would email the Chair with a list of priorities/ideas/suggestions by Monday 17 February 2025.

- (e) The need for a further meeting would be determined once the information submitted by members had been reviewed.

The meeting ended at 7pm.

Cannock Chase Council

Notes of the Scrutiny Review Working Group - Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy and Partnership

Wednesday 5 August 2025 at 5.30 p.m.

Held via MS Teams

Present:

Councillor S. Thornley (Chair)
Councillor O. Lyons
Councillor D. Todd (arrived at 5.40pm)

Officers: D. Piper (Head of Economic Development and Planning)
M. Smith (Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager)
W. Rowe (Senior Committee Officer)

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor L. Bishop (received via email following the meeting).

2. Notes

The notes of the previous meeting held on 29 January 2025 were agreed.

3. Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy and Partnership

The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting and referred to the agreed actions from the previous meeting. Unfortunately, he had not been able to seek clarification to establish whether the rural designation for Cannock Chase was correct. He confirmed that he had received no emails from members of the Group in respect of their priorities, ideas, and suggestions. He had met separately with the Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager and discussed the work of the LVEP and suggested that further discussions with the LVEP would be needed at some point.

He believed there should be a focus on Cannock and to develop events for the town centre. Both Rugeley and Hednesford held annual fayres/festivals but there was nothing similar in Cannock. An annual event in town centres enabled the community to come together and this would ultimately increase footfall. He considered that the annual Christmas event held in Cannock was getting better but there was still room for improvement. He suggested that the Town and Parish Councils could be asked to support the Council in delivering and promoting events.

Councillor Lyons referred to the Rugeley Charter Fair which was organised by Rugeley Town Council and advised that over the years it had been a challenge to deliver the event as a lot of the arrangements that were outsourced had now come in-house. The overall organisation of the event was difficult; from affording the security for the event to recruiting enough volunteers to make it work. She confirmed that the Rugeley Christmas event was arranged by the Traders.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that events were just one aspect to consider when looking to attract visitors to the area. The Town Centre Partnership had been established to promote the Cannock town centre, but this was not working as well as had been hoped. There was a twice weekly street market in the town but there was no programme of events. Whilst he was supportive of the suggestion there was no dedicated team or resources at the Council to support the delivery of events.

(Councillor D. Todd joined the meeting at this point).

The Chair suggested that an Events Team could be established involving interested Councillors who would only seek support and guidance from Officers when necessary. The dedicated team could draw up plans/events to help promote the town centres. Whilst Councillor Lyons supported the suggestion in principle, she had concern around the commitment of members and having a team sufficiently prepared to take forward the ideas. The lack of officer capacity was also noted. Councillor Todd agreed with the idea in theory but questioned how it would work practically. She added that working alongside the Town and Parish Councils to develop and promote town centre events was a good idea but noted that there was no Town Council in Cannock. If the Group was keen to develop this idea the Officer advised that a plan would need to be prepared as there was no strategy or policy in place to promote events and there were no resources.

The Chair suggested that the Parish and Town Councils could be invited to a conference at the Civic Centre to enable a discussion to take place around working with them to develop community events for the town centres. He considered there was a lack of community spirit, particularly in Cannock, and he was keen to give people something to look forward to and to develop a community belonging.

The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager advised that whilst it would be ideal to hold more events and develop a sense of community spirit there was an ongoing issue around resource and capacity. Working with the Town and Parish Council's was a good suggestion but there would be a question in respect of who would be responsible for any events in Cannock with there being no Town Council. If this suggestion were to be progressed there would need to be a caveat to outline that the District Council would not be able to do the work for them.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning commented that the Group had held a lengthy discussion around promoting events for the town centres, but this was not the only focus of the review. The review was established to look at the visitor economy and tourism as a whole and the Group would need more data and information before they could determine their findings and formulate some recommendations for the Scrutiny Committee to consider. He referred to the LVEP who did a lot of work to promote the area. The Group had previously had a presentation from the LVEP outlining the work they did. However, members should consider whether they were happy with the work they were doing to promote Cannock Chase and look at the relevant data. In addition, the Group may wish to consider talking to the industries within the area, such as McArthur Glen and Forestry England. Both contributed to the visitor economy with large numbers travelling to either shop at the Designer Village, visit the Cannock Chase ANOB or attend the Forest Live concerts.

The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager clarified that the Group may also wish to consider the effectiveness of the LVEP and look at the data available on the number of visitors to the area now compared to 5 years ago. This would enable the impact of the work of the LVEP to be assessed. The Group noted that the Council made a financial

contribution to the LVEP and there should be a full set of data available to outline the size of the tourism market in Cannock Chase. Representatives from industries across Staffordshire sat on the LVEP Board and officers attended monthly Working Group meetings.

In terms of McArthur Glen the Group noted that whilst it was a positive for the district as a whole it did not attract an increase in visitors to the town centre. The Head of Economic Development and Planning commented that most of the visitors to the Designer Village came from outside the area. There was currently no offer in the town centre for visitors to make a linked trip. It was hoped that the regeneration works taking place in the town would improve this position and give visitors a reason to visit in the future. He added that it was important for the Group to get the relevant data from the LVEP and suggested they be invited to another meeting. The data would show the size and scale of the tourism economy and outline how it has grown and recovered after the pandemic. The Group may wish to ascertain the long-term plans of Forestry England in relation to expanding the annual Forest Live concerts.

The Chair commented that both McArthur Glen and the Forest Live concerts did not increase the spend or visitor numbers in the town centres as when visitors go to the Designer Village, attend the concerts or visit the Chase, they don't visit the town centres. Councillor Todd considered that the street markets had helped to increase footfall in the towns and were popular with locals. It was therefore important to ensure the towns were clean and the street furniture was of a good standard. Councillor Lyons considered that the market in Rugeley had not been too successful despite various providers delivering them, and they did not increase footfall or attract visitors from outside the area. In terms of the Forest Live concerts, she had noted that the Birches Valley visitor centre had significantly improved since the concerts had been held. They had made a positive impact and significantly increased footfall and visitors from outside of the district. She considered would be useful to understand the data in this respect.

Following a lengthy discussion the Head of Economic Development and Planning suggested that the Group may wish to consider the following actions:

- seek the relevant data from the LVEP to establish the size of the visitor economy in Cannock Chase and how it relates to wider Staffordshire.
- consider whether the LVEP offered value for money - look at the branding / website / tourism awards.
- what product did Cannock Chase offer - what places are there for visitors to go to? Determine what was missing or needs to be developed.
- consider whether a Tourism/Visitor Economy strategy should be developed to shape the work.
- consider whether to seek data from Forestry England in relation to their events - look at the wider economic impact of the events which were a fantastic asset/resource for the area.
- McArthur Glen - more retail units to be delivered in Phase 2 - consider how this could help the town and the wider district.

The Group was supportive of the proposals suggested by the Officer and asked that a further meeting of the Group be arranged for mid-September. Representatives from the LVEP would be invited to attend this meeting to provide the Group with the relevant data for the district. The Chair suggested that members of the Review Group would also meet

separately before the September meeting so they could develop some questions ready to ask the LVEP representatives with a view to developing a way forward once members had received the data. The Group could determine a set of priorities and talk these through with the LVEP.

The Officer confirmed that the review should be ready to prepare their findings and report their recommendations to the Scrutiny Committee before Christmas. Should any recommendations relate to budgets/resources this would allow enough time to feed into the budget setting process. The Chair asked how much money the Council contributed to the LVEP each year and it was confirmed that this was £8,000 (with an option to contribute more for any extras). It was not considered that it was worth spending any more at this time.

AGREED ACTIONS:

- (A) That Officers seek the relevant data from the LVEP to establish the size of the visitor economy in Cannock Chase and how it relates to wider Staffordshire and consider whether it was VFM.
- (B) That a further meeting of the Review Group be held mid-September and representatives from the LVEP be invited to attend to discuss the data.
- (C) That members of the Review Group meet separately before the September meeting to develop some questions to ask the LVEP and determine a set of priorities.
- (D) That data be sought from Forestry England in respect of the Forest Live concerts and to ascertain whether there were any plans to expand/increase these events.
- (E) To consider how McArthur Glen and the development of Phase 2 could help the town centre and wider district.
- (F) To consider whether a Tourism/Visitor Economy strategy should be developed to shape the work.

The meeting ended at 6.30pm.

Cannock Chase Council

Notes of the Scrutiny Review Working Group - Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy and Partnership

Thursday 26 February 2026 at 4.00 p.m.

Held via MS Teams

Present:

Councillor D. Todd (in Chair)

Officers: D. Piper (Head of Economic Development and Planning)
M. Smith (Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager)
W. Rowe (Senior Committee Officer)

Also present:

Charlotte Cain (LVEP representative)
Andrea Sammons (LVEP representative)

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J. Hill. Councillor D. Todd took the Chair as Councillor Lyons had advised that she would be joining the meeting later. Councillor Todd explained that she would have to leave the meeting at 4.30pm and offered her apologies.

2. Notes

Councillor Todd advised that she had contacted Councillors Lyons and Hill about setting up a Teams meeting with them to discuss a way forward with the review. However, this meeting had not yet been held.

The notes of the previous meeting held on 5 August 2025 were then noted.

3. Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy and Partnership Review

Local Visitor Economy Partnership presentation

As only one member was in attendance at the meeting it was agreed that the presentation should be recorded and a transcript along with the presentation slides be emailed to members of the Group following the meeting.

Charlotte Cain and Andrea Sammons, the representatives from the LVEP then provided a presentation outlining the work of the LVEP, their strategic priorities, the vision and aims, accommodation supply and the Destination Management Plan evidence review.

It was noted that the visitor economy in Cannock Chase had increased and this was a positive indicator along with the significant investment being undertaken in the town centre. There was potential to link the offer in Cannock Chase to other products in the region/County with an offering that appealed to both the younger and older generations in order to increase visitor numbers.

Charlotte Cain asked whether Cannock Council wanted to commit to being part of the LVEP going forwards. This would require an £8,000 contribution.

Councillor Todd thanked the representatives for their presentation and commented on the positive news contained within the information provided. The Head of Economic Development and Planning explained that officers would be in touch with the LVEP with a decision on whether the Council would be joining the LVEP.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning explained that a discussion with members of the Review Group would be required to finalise the review and determine whether there were any recommendations to refer to the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Todd left the meeting at 4.30pm. As Councillor Lyons had not yet joined and there were no other members present the meeting ended.

Cannock Chase Council

Notes of the Scrutiny Review Working Group - Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy and Partnership

Tuesday 31 March 2026 at 5.00 p.m.

Held via MS Teams

Present:

Councillor O. Lyons (Chair)
J.O. Hill
D. Todd

Officers: D. Piper (Head of Economic Development and Planning)
M. Smith (Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager)
W. Rowe (Senior Committee Officer)

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Notes

The notes of the previous meeting held on 26 February 2026 were noted.

The Chair asked the following questions arising from the presentation given at the last meeting by the LVEP representatives:

The Chair sought confirmation as to whether anything had changed in respect of McArthur Glen being asked to sit on the Board. The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that McArthur Glen were not on the LVEP Board. However, he suggested that it would be beneficial to approach them to get them more engaged and involved in either the Working Groups or on the Board. The Chair considered that it would be useful for the district to have local representation on the LVEP Board.

The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager added that McArthur Glen had been shortlisted for one of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Tourism Awards. Although they had not won, they did receive a Highly Commended Award. It was disappointing to note that there had only been 2 nominees for awards from the Cannock Chase area.

The Chair then referred to the College courses that fed into the Visitor Economy industry which were up by 50% in the West Midlands and asked whether this was reflected locally. The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager advised that the College had produced a report detailing the demand for courses and the level of detail would be outlined in there.

The Chair mentioned the need for visitor accommodation which was lacking within the district and asked how this could be enhanced/increased. The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that this would be included within the Local Plan which had just been adopted. A new Local Plan would soon commence, and this would provide

an opportunity to collate evidence to support policies. He confirmed that the Council did not have a Tourism Strategy as there were no resources or capacity to support this. He referred to Forestry England who had at one time been considering providing log cabins within the Chase. This was a model operated throughout the country. However, as there had been no discussions for several months, he was unsure of the position in this regard.

The Chair referred to the comments in the LVEP presentation about Cannock's nighttime economy being a priority and asked for further information on this given the current position with the town centre. The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager confirmed that the Council had not been asked for input in this regard other than being advised that the LVEP were working on a strategy. She added that the focus for the town centre would be the evening offer, which was more family based, rather than the nighttime economy. The Head of Economic Development and Planning commented that there were several significant attractions within Staffordshire which were worth promoting. These would be packaged together to promote Staffordshire as the nation's playground, highlighting the active and adventure attractions available so visitors would spend more time in Staffordshire. He added that the LVEP may have fallen in line with the County Council who had been doing some work on the nighttime economy which was being driven by the new Leader of Staffordshire County Council.

With regards to the new visitor mascot, "Staffy" who was being used to promote the visitor economy within the County, the Chair asked whether the district could feed into this. The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager advised that the County Council was leading on this, but the District Council would have to agree the various locations the mascot could be placed. The mascot was being used to generate sponsorship from businesses. However, officers at a district level had been advised to help, support and promote the mascot but would not be pushing sponsorship.

The presentation had highlighted that there had been an increase in the local visitor economy and visitor numbers had increased. The Chair asked whether this could be a "good news" story for the district. The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager commented that it may be better to link this "good news" story to a successful event when one was held in Cannock Chase. She was mindful of not attracting criticism by having no event to back up the increase in visitor numbers to the district.

The Chair asked how the district's strategy could be fine-tuned with the plan of the LVEP. The Head of Economic Development and Planning commented that this would be a key challenge as there were limited resources within the small Economic Development Team. Officers would aim to attend meetings and contribute to the LVEP campaigns but there was no dedicated Tourism Officer and no Tourism Strategy in place. The Team would continue to work with the LVEP and with local tourism attractions and providers within the capacity and resources available. He added that the Council could not commit to being part of the LVEP at present as the £8,000 contribution required had not been supported as part of the budget proposals.

Councillor Hill referred to Rugeley canal and asked whether it played a part in increasing tourism. The Chair advised that the canal had recently had a face lift and there was a floating market planned for this Easter weekend. Reference was made the Crown Wharf in Walsall which had been developed alongside cafes, restaurants and shops. He considered that the master plan for Rugeley could look at how the canal area in Rugeley could be similarly developed in the future. The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager advised that the master plan for Rugeley was due to be considered by Cabinet. This aimed

to encourage development and raise the profile of the area which could link into attracting tourism.

3. Staffordshire Local Visitor Economy and Partnership Review

Following this Members then discussed formulating some potential recommendations for submission to the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on 7 July.

Reference was made to the £8,000 contribution required for being part of the LVEP which would ensure maximum output. A member asked how the Council fed into the objectives of the partnership without this contribution. The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that the strategy presented to the LVEP Board listed all the assets in the area. However, due to limited resources some of the information had not been checked and some information in respect of Cannock Chase was missing. He added that the LVEP had been established as a vehicle to engage with tourism in the local area. If the Council wanted to enhance their offer this would require input, but this would be difficult due to lack of resources/capacity. The district had several tourism attractions but with limited staff and capacity it was difficult to promote these and increase visitor numbers.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning advised that it would be important to make the most of the LVEP and to review the existing offer and determine what the £8,000 contribution would provide. Additionally, consideration could be given to improving engagement with the private sector within the district to strengthen the offer. These included attractions such as McArthur Glen, National Landscapes, Forestry England and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (through the land at the old Rugeley power station site).

The Chair considered that as the LVEP grew it would be important for the Council to be a part of this, particularly with LGR fast approaching. This would ensure the district could make the most of what the LVEP offered and make it work better for the Council.

Councillor Hill commented that when local businesses hold successful events these should be celebrated and supported by the Council. However, he had been made aware that an event that had recently been held in the district had been told that it could not operate again due to a minor mistake. In addition, he referred to the recent planning application for log cabins in Rugeley, which would have increased visitor numbers and tourism. However, the planning permission had been refused. He also referred to Hednesford Raceway who were proposing changes to their lease to hold more events, but he had concern that there may be neighbour objections.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning would speak to Councillor Hill regarding the recent event he referred to and confirmed that the planning permission for the log cabins had been refused as there were historical issues at the site. In respect of Hednesford Raceway he would find out the position regarding the lease. It would always be difficult getting a suitable balance of events held there given that people lived close by and whilst they accepted a certain number of events, they may not want any more.

The Chair suggested that strengthening engagement with local businesses and consulting more may address some of the concerns raised by Councillor Hill. The Head of Economic Development and Planning agreed that it would be beneficial to increase engagement with the private sector and ensure there was better coordination between departments and more in house discussions. Additionally, it was important to ensure that evidence was provided within the Local Plan to ensure the appropriate policies were put in place.

Members supported the suggestion to engage with the private sector more as attractions such as McArthur Glen increased visitor numbers in the district. Reference was also made to Cannock train station being well used now as many people visited McArthur Glen having travelled by train. The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager advised that the notice boards on the walkways to and from the train station would be updated soon with QR codes linking to attractions in the district.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning suggested that one of the recommendations of the Group could be for him to liaise with representatives from McArthur Glen to ascertain whether they would be keen to invest/sponsor screens and signage at the station to promote tourism and attractions in the area. This would be subject to agreement from Network Rail. The Chair commented that earlier in the meeting it had been noted that McArthur Glen were not part of the LVEP Board. However, it had been suggested that it would be beneficial to get them more engaged and involved in either the Working Groups or on the Board. The suggestion around sponsoring screens and signage at the train station could therefore be included within these discussions.

AGREED:

That the Head of Economic Development and Planning and the Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager would formulate some recommendations based on the discussion at the meeting today. These would be circulated to the Group along with the notes of the meeting. Members would have the opportunity to amend the recommendations as necessary. Once the recommendations had been agreed by members a report outlining the recommendations would be prepared. This would then be submitted to the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on 7 July along with the any supporting documents, notes of the review group meetings and the presentation slides from the LVEP.

The meeting ended at 5.55pm.

Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2026-27

Committee: Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 7 July 2026

Report of: Head of Economic Development and Planning

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To set out the draft work programme for the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee for 2026-27.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee review the draft work programme for 2026-27 and advise on what they wish to include for the forthcoming year (see Appendix 4).

Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.2 The scrutiny committee is responsible for ensuring effective accountability for the delivery against the Council's priorities and strategic objectives as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2026-28.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 The Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutinising the element of the Corporate Plan that relates to the priority for Economic Prosperity. An extract from the Corporate Plan for 2026-28 setting out details of the priority and strategic objectives is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The services or functions of the Council falling with the remit of the Committee are set out at Appendix 2.
- 3.3 The Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee is encouraged to identify corporate issues and/or ones that are a priority for local people and communities. If a matter is a recurring issue for the people you, as Councillors, represent, the likelihood is that it is something that the Committee should consider.

The more relevant the issue is to local communities then the greater the likelihood of engaging those communities in the scrutiny process and of producing outcomes that will be visible to those communities you represent. Guidance on selecting reviews is included in Appendices 3A and 3B.

- 3.4 Members are invited to comment on the draft Work Programme attached at Appendix 4. Members are also encouraged to propose issues that could be included for consideration in the work programme. The work programme may be revised during the year as necessary.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

4.1 This report supports the Council's Corporate Priorities as follows:

- (i) It provides for effective scrutiny of the Council's priority for "Economic Prosperity".

5 Report Detail

Background

5.1 The Council's current Corporate Plan for 2026-28 was approved by Council on 22 April 2026. The Plan sets out 4 priorities, and this Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutinising Priority 1 – Economic Prosperity.

5.2 The Economic Prosperity Priority has 5 objectives:

- (i) More investment in the district's economy.
- (ii) More new businesses and skilled jobs.
- (iii) Sustainable progress towards the regeneration of Cannock town centre
- (iv) More visitors and an increase in their spend in the district.
- (v) More housing that is well designed and built in the right place.

An extract from the Corporate Plan setting out details of the priority, the strategic objectives and actions is attached at Appendix 1.

5.3 The Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee also has responsibility for scrutinising the services of the Council as set out in Appendix 2.

Developing the Work Programme

5.4 To support Members in their Scrutiny role and in particular in developing a work programme a Scrutiny Toolkit has been produced; a copy of this has been circulated separately to Members. An extract from the toolkit relating to developing a work programme is attached at Appendix 3A and an extract from the LGA's guidance is attached at Appendix 3B.

5.5 In developing the work programme Members are encouraged to consider the following questions:

- Is the matter a concern to local people (you may wish to reflect on topics raised with you when canvassing)?
- Is the issue an identified priority for the Council or partners?
- Does the issue relate to an area of service with a trend in weak performance?
- What difference could scrutiny make?
- What would happen if you did not look at this issue?

5.6 The work programme can be revised during the year to reflect emerging priorities, but it is important to plan ahead and allow time for reports to be prepared and invitations to be sent to relevant parties.

- 5.7 Whilst it is for the Committee to determine what they want to include in the Work Programme, a draft work programme is attached at Appendix 4 to this report which includes some standing items (e.g., performance progress reports) and suggestions as to potential reviews.

Undertaking the Scrutiny Reviews

- 5.8 Once Members have identified the matters they wish to scrutinise, consideration should be given to scoping the subject in more detail including the timing and method of scrutiny to be used. Support in this process will be given by the Lead Officer for the Scrutiny Committee. A template to assist with scoping the review is also attached at Appendix 5.
- 5.9 Members may wish to:
- Allocate the work to a small working group of Members to investigate the issue over a period of 2-3 months (this may involve visits to see how services are working in practice).
 - Invite expert witnesses to give their views.
 - Seeking the views of service users and/or the general public.
- 5.10 Members should also consider what they can do to support the review e.g.:
- Undertaking research e.g., via the internet.
 - Seeking the views of ward members or specific interest groups.

Reporting on Scrutiny Reviews

- 5.11 In addition to reporting to the Committee on the outcome of any reviews, the Committee may wish to make recommendations to Cabinet or another Committee.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

Any costs to be incurred in undertaking any review will need to be contained within existing budgets.

6.2 Legal

None.

6.3 Human Resources

None.

6.4 Risk Management

None.

6.5 Equalities and Diversity

The Council has a responsibility to undertake adequate Equality Impact Assessments to ensure services do not have a negative impact on any one section of the community and the scrutiny committees have a role in ensuring that this responsibility is fulfilled, particularly in regard to health impact.

Scrutiny as a function must also comply with the relevant legislation. When considering work programme items, especially when undertaking reviews of policy, the scrutiny committees must always consider whether their recommendations may impact differently on various individuals/sections of the community.

6.6 Health

None.

6.7 Climate Change

None.

7 Appendices

Appendix 1: Extract from the Corporate Plan – Priority 1 Economic Prosperity

Appendix 2: Overview of services falling with the Committee's remit

Appendix 3A: Extract from the Council's Scrutiny Toolkit

Appendix 3B: Extract from the LGA Guidance on Scrutiny Work Programming

Appendix 4: Draft Work Programme 2026/27

Appendix 5: Template for Scoping a Scrutiny Review

Cannock Chase Council - Corporate Plan 2026-28**PRIORITY 1 - ECONOMIC PROSPERITY****`To create a District that thrives`**

We want to encourage growth and new businesses. We will attract investment and businesses and skilled jobs for local people. We will continue the regeneration of Cannock town centre and attract visitors to the district.

What we want to achieve:

- **More investment in the district's economy.**
- **More new businesses and skilled jobs**
- **Substantial progress towards the regeneration of Cannock town centre.**
- **More visitors and an increase in their spend in the district.**
- **More housing that is well designed and built in the right place.**

How we will deliver this:**Major Projects:**

Over the next 2 years we will:

- Continue the regeneration of Cannock Town Centre creating high quality, mixed use development.
- Complete a new masterplan for Rugeley Town Centre and identify opportunities to attract new investment.
- Work in partnership with South Staffordshire College to strengthen the skills offer of the District
- Commence a new Local Plan for the District identifying sites for homes, including affordable housing, with good infrastructure, land for employment, protection of our green spaces and policies that reduce the impact of climate change.
- Seek to ensure that the next phase of the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet supports our local economy and provides opportunities for our residents.

Operational Service Delivery:

- Ensure that Cannock Chase provides sufficient employment opportunities for residents by attracting investment and supporting local businesses to grow
- Deliver good planning services that provide fast decision making for major and non-major planning applications.
- Promote Cannock Chase as a visitor destination.

**Services / Function Falling Within the
Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee's Remit**

Service Area	Sub Area
Economic Development & Planning	Economic Development & Regeneration
Dean Piper - Head of Economic Development & Planning	• Economic Prosperity Strategy • Town Centre Regeneration • Development of McArthurGlen Designer Outlet • Re-development of former Rugeley Power Station site • Promoting the development of key investment sites • Working with partners to increase skills of local people and reduce unemployment amongst 18-24 age groups • Engaging with local businesses; encouraging expanding businesses to employ local people; support new businesses to start and grow • Business support grants to local companies • Work with the West Midlands Combined Authority
	Development and Policy
	• Development of the Local Plan • Conservation Area policy guidance and management plan • Administration of Community Infrastructure Levy • Neighbourhood Plans • Monitoring implementation of planning policy • Transport related issues • Development Management and Support • Planning Enforcement
Operations	Commercial Services
Joss Presland - Head of Operations	• Council owned car parks • Car parking strategy • Market operations
Regulatory Services	Building Control
Gabrielle Whitehouse - Head of Regulatory Services	• Checking of plans and inspection of work on site • Dangerous structures • Control of demolition

Extract from the Council's Scrutiny Toolkit

Developing the Work Programme

Members have a key role to play in developing the work programme for the Scrutiny Committees and it is important that manageable programmes are developed. The Scrutiny Committees will need to filter potential items of work; to be selective and to prioritise.

Given the limited resources available, in particular the constraints on member and officer time, it is unrealistic to select more than a few items for intensive review. Realistically, a single committee cannot undertake more than two in-depth reviews per year.

In developing the work programme Members are encouraged to consider the following questions:

Public interest – the concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen. Things to think about include:

- o Any issues raised with you when canvassing.
- o Have any surveys or research undertaken by the Council identified any concerns.
- o Is the issue an identified priority for the Council or partners?

Ability to change - priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically influence. Think about what difference Scrutiny could make and what would happen if you did not look at this issue.

Performance: priority should be given to areas in which the Council and Partners are not performing well. You should consider, the scale of the underperformance, whether it is a one off or whether there is an ongoing issue. Has the service been flagged up in an external inspection report for poor performance?

Extent: priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or a large part of the District

Replication: work programme must take account of what else is happening to avoid duplication or wasted effort

Work programmes should be determined at the start of each municipal year and reviewed and revised regularly. Any reviews not started or completed by the year end can be referred for consideration as part of the following year's work programme. The best advice is to start small, learn what works well and what does not and then be more ambitious. It is far easier to add items to the workload than to remove them.

Different items may require different approaches. For example, the Scrutiny Committees can examine the Forward Plan, but may only choose to examine one or two items in any depth. Similarly, if the Scrutiny Committee is asked their views by the Cabinet on key policies and plans, such consultation does not have to involve in-depth investigation.

Similarly with reviews, a more selective approach should be taken, examining more problematic areas in greater depth and others with a lighter touch may prove to be more beneficial.

Members will also need to think about how to manage the workload, whether issues are considered by the whole committee, whether a task and finish group is set up or whether 'paired members' or individual 'lead' members are used.

Stage 1: Agree the Issue

The first step is for scrutiny members to be sure that the subject to be reviewed is significant. Undertaking in-depth reviews is resource-intensive – of member and officer resources. Investing such a high level of resources should only be undertaken for **high priority issues**.

The following are criteria which, alongside the PAPER issues from page 9, could be used to 'check' a topic against, to ensure that it would make a worthwhile review:

- Issue identified by members as key issue (through members' surgeries and other constituency activities).
- Performance issues within a service (e.g., significant under or overachievement of targets).
- Service considered to be important by the community (through market research, citizens' panels and so on).
- High level of user/general public dissatisfaction with service.
- Public interest issue highlighted in local media.
- High level of budgetary commitment to policy/service area.
- Persistent financial issues e.g., significant under or overspends.
- Council corporate priority area.
- Central government priority area
- Issue raised in Inspection Reports
- Issue referred by the Cabinet or the Audit & Governance Committee
- New government guidance or legislation.

Stage 2: Determine the nature of member involvement

The committee will need to decide how members will drive the review. There are three possible approaches to member involvement:

- The whole committee investigates the issue.
- A task and finish working group is established to drive the investigation.
- Individual or paired members drive the review.

For the majority of reviews, the first two are likely to predominate, although individual or paired members may be used to review particular aspects of the subject area. Whichever approach is adopted, all activities should be conducted in the same spirit with the same willingness to experiment, challenge and explore different ways of doing things. Members are encouraged to take an active role in reviews, e.g., undertaking their own research on the internet, through visits, etc.

Vital to the whole review activity is that members take full control of which policy problems and solutions are explored and how that exploration takes place. Members need to take responsibility for, and ownership of, the outputs and outcomes of reviews.

Stage 3: Scoping Exercise

Any resource-intensive review requires careful project planning and the better the planning *beforehand* the more successful the review will be in the longer term. There are 4 key issues to consider when scoping the review:

- What are the core questions the review is seeking to answer? (**no more than 3**)
- What is the purpose of the Review? (**in one sentence**)
- What will **not** be included?
- What is the timescale?

Careful project management involves drawing up a project plan for the review. Time spent planning is time well spent, and if a review scope is robust, it makes it less likely that there will be pressure to modify it once work is under way.

Such a plan should cover:

- A fixed period for the activity.
- The creation by members of a 'term of reference' for the review.
- Calling of independent and expert witnesses.
- Hearing of evidence from stakeholders, communities, and citizens, led by members.
- Member visits, information, and data collection: qualitative and quantitative.
- A series of events at which members sift, discuss, and assess evidence gathered.
- Checking of member responses to evidence and data with stakeholders, communities, citizens, and experts.
- Final report to Council and/or Cabinet Decision by Council and/or Cabinet reported to the committee.
- Review and up-date of the implementation or development of the policy – with targets and criteria for assessment.

Extract from the LGA Guidance on Scrutiny Work Programming

Work programming

The role of scrutiny is to achieve positive outcomes for local people by undertaking a thorough, targeted examination of the council's service provision and procedures. However, it is not possible to examine every service in detail, so it is important for the scrutiny committee to prioritise and plan its workload. Some councils do this at the beginning of each year, and some do it on an ongoing basis.

Planned scrutiny

Work programming is the process for determining which topics scrutiny will look at over the coming year, either at committee meetings or in task and finish groups. This involves evaluating several factors to decide which topics are to be investigated and when. The process will typically involve long-listing and then shortlisting topics before making a final decision.

Responsive scrutiny

The priorities for scrutiny need to be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. This makes sure scrutiny can be flexible and responsive to high priority issues or policy changes that occur throughout the year.



The scrutiny topic selection process

Each council has its own method for selecting topics for scrutiny; in some councils there may be a very structured selection process, while in others it may be more informal. Whatever level of detail is involved, the general process should include the following activities.

Identify issues

You can identify potential issues by:

- consulting with a range of stakeholders, both internal and external to the council – this would include all elected members and senior officers, as well as relevant outside bodies
- looking at corporate priorities, business plans and the forward plan of the council (and the council's neighbouring councils)
- considering events and decisions in the council's calendar that could require an input from scrutiny, such as setting budgets.
- reviewing council performance information and identifying any follow-up work required to previous scrutiny work.
- conducting work to engage with local people, for example, through surgeries, local media, opinion surveys and online forums.

Prioritise topics

Identify and prioritise potential scrutiny topics, considering the resources they would require and the level of impact they could achieve.

Plan scrutiny work

Decide which scrutiny topics to review and include them in the work programme for consideration and updating at each scrutiny meeting.

Review and evaluate

Review progress and evaluate outcomes to demonstrate the value added by scrutiny.



Criteria for prioritising scrutiny topics

The following criteria provide a useful guide for identifying which topics are suitable for scrutiny to review, and prioritising them.

Topics are suitable for scrutiny when:

- scrutiny could have an impact and add value.
- the topic is of high local importance and reflects the concerns of local people.
- the resources are available that would be required to conduct the review, in terms of manpower and budget.
- it avoids work duplication elsewhere.
- the issue is one that the committee can realistically influence.
- the issue is related to an area where the council, or one of its partners, is not performing well.
- the issue is relevant to all or large parts of the local area.
- the review would be in the council's interests.

Topics are not suitable for scrutiny when:

- the issue is already being addressed elsewhere and change is imminent.
- the topic would be better addressed elsewhere (and will be referred there).
- scrutiny involvement would have limited or no impact upon outcomes.
- the topic may be 'sub judice' or prejudicial to the council's interest.
- the topic is too broad to make a review realistic.
- they do not relate to executive matters, for example, planning or licensing decisions.
- new legislation or guidance relating to the topic is expected within the next year.
- the topic area is currently subject to inspection or has recently undergone substantial change.

Defining scrutiny topics

For every item on the work programme / new referral, answers to the following questions should be made clear:

- What is the issue / activity / project under consideration?
- What is scrutiny being asked to do?
- What are the reasons for / expected benefits of involving scrutiny in the matter?
- Is there a specific deadline for the piece of work?



Challenge 1 – Prioritising topics

Consider the issues that are important to the people you represent in your ward.

List the five issues you think are the most important, then put them in order of priority; make a note of your reasoning.

Think about how you would translate these into strategic issues which might be appropriate for scrutiny. Here is an example:

The issue

Several residents have been complaining that the trees in the local area are not being pruned regularly enough, becoming a hazard, and presenting a potential danger to the public. Complaints include difficulty in walking on the pavement, damage to tall vehicles, trip hazards from tree roots and gardens being overshadowed by trees.

Strategic considerations

The council needs to consider how it allocates its environmental services' resources so that it can be efficient while also meeting the needs of residents.

It can look at:

- how services are procured, commissioned, and contracted.
- which are the most hazardous streets and where the biggest improvements can be made.
- prioritising and planning a programme of work for tree pruning.

Having done so, consider how you would translate this into the scope for a scrutiny committee review.

**Proposed Work Programme for 2026-27 for the
Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee**

Meeting Date	Item
7 July 2026	• Scrutiny Annual Business Report for 2025-26 • End of Year Performance Report for 2025-26 for the Economic Prosperity PDP • Determine Review Programme for 2026-27
22 September 2026	• Economic Prosperity PDP – Qtr 1 Progress Report April to June 2026 • Scrutiny Review (to be determined)
15 December 2026	• Economic Prosperity PDP – Qtr 2 Progress Report July to September 2026 • Scrutiny Review (to be determined)
23 March 2027	• Economic Prosperity PDP – Qtr 3 Progress Report October to December 2026 • Outcome of Scrutiny Review(s)

Suggested Items for Reviews:

- Cannock Town Centre Regeneration
- Rugeley Town Centre Masterplan
- McArthurGlen Designer Outlet
- Car Parking Strategy



Scrutiny Review Template

Review Title
Scope of the Review / Terms of Reference
Reason for Scrutiny
Membership of the Review Group
Key Tasks / Review Plan
Sources of Evidence
Timescale