

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HEDNESFORD COMMUNITY FORUM
MONDAY 5 SEPTEMBER, 2011 AT 7.00 P.M.
AT THE MUSEUM OF CANNOCK CHASE, VALLEY ROAD, HEDNESFORD

PRESENT: Councillors

Grice, Mrs. D. (Vice-Chairman) (In the Chair)

Ball, G.D.	Cartwright, Mrs. S.M.
Burnett, G.	Todd, R.

Other Councillors present:

Bernard, J.D.; Todd, Mrs. D.M.

Officers:

T. McGovern, Corporate Director
B. Phillips, Head of Planning and Regeneration
G. Watson, Economic Development Manager
T. Walsh, Parks and Open Spaces Manager
S. Partridge, Democratic Services Manager

Also present:

Members of the Public – approximately 20
Councillor A. Pearson, Hednesford Town Council
Inspector C. Ellerton, Staffordshire Police, Chase Division
Ms. V. Singleton, Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator
Mrs. J. Bamber, Fusion Credit Union
Mr. M. Watkins, St. Modwen
Mr. C. Price, Prosurv
Mrs. C. Howard, Mid-Staffs NHS Foundation Trust

12. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Adamson (Chairman), and J. Burnett.

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

There were no interests declared.

14. Notes

The Notes of the meeting held on 14 June, 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

15. Matters Arising from Minutes

A Hednesford Town Councillor referred to item 4 on the notes, re a barrier across Brindley Crescent. He requested that the matter be addressed by Staffordshire County Council (Highways), and an Officer report back to the next meeting.

16. The Establishment of a Credit Union across Cannock Chase District

The Chairman welcomed Mrs. Janet Bamber, Treasurer of Fusion Credit Union, who spoke about credit unions in general and Fusion Credit Union, in particular. She explained that credit unions are:

- Community based, not for profit, savings and loans organisations owned and operated by its members.
- Regulated by the Financial Services Authority (FSA).
- Managed by a volunteer Board of Directors, drawn from and elected by members.
- Required to hold compulsory insurance to protect against fraud and theft.

And:

- Any profits generated are retained for the benefit of all its members.
- Savings remain members' own, and may be withdrawn in part or in full, subject to seven days' notice.
- Savings are guaranteed by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

Fusion was looking to ascertain the potential level of demand in the Cannock Chase area.

Members of the public asked various questions for clarification, including how long it would take to set up a credit union in the area if there proved to be sufficient demand. Mrs. Bamber advised that, as the credit union would be an extension of Fusion's Lichfield operation, it would take very little time to complete once the decision was made to go ahead.

17. Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust

The Chairman welcomed Mrs. Carole Howard, elected governor for the Cannock Constituency on the Council of Governors at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust. Mrs. Howard spoke about her own role as an elected Governor, and invited anybody who had an interest in the running of / future plans for Cannock and Stafford hospitals to also consider becoming public members. She confirmed that membership was free, and open to anyone aged 16 years or over. Members received regular newsletters keeping them apprised of news and developments at the hospitals, and enjoyed voting rights at the Annual General Meeting.

Mrs. Howard agreed to leave membership application forms for anyone who might be interested in joining the trust.

18. Questions for Staffordshire Police

The Chairman welcomed Inspector C. Ellerton, Staffordshire Police (Cannock Division) to the meeting and invited questions from the floor.

Kingfisher Drive

A resident advised that a nearby pathway was being used by youths going to / from a local youth club on Thursday nights. Since the youth club started, he had had eggs and a brick thrown at one of his windows. Neighbours had also suffered similarly. Although the matter had been raised with the Police and an increased Police presence promised, he had never actually seen any Police or CSO's in the area at the required time. He also commented that he felt there was a similar lack of Police presence in Hednesford town centre at night.

Inspector Ellerton apologised if the resident felt that the Police had not responded proportionately. There was due to be a residents meeting ("Street meeting") later that week, and he would ensure that the matter was raised. The Police's Engagement Officer was also due to liaise with the youth club, and he had asked CCTV to monitor matters in the town centre, so even if there did not appear to be an overt Police presence, matters were in hand.

Victoria Street

A resident of Victoria Street advised that similar problems were occurring there. Incidents had been reported, but he had only seen CSO's on patrol, not Police officers. The resident considered that there had been a marked increase in anti social behaviour since the year 2000. The resident also expressed concern that calls to the Police appeared to be directed to Stoke-on-Trent and an unnecessary amount of time was being spent explaining locations etc to people who didn't have any local knowledge.

Inspector Ellerton confirmed that he too recognised changes in the area as he had been a beat officer in Hednesford when starting out on his career. He also advised that whilst it was true that non-emergency calls to the Police were directed to Stoke, 999 calls went to the Police HQ in Stafford and the response was from Cannock, which was manned 24 hours a day.

Car Parking – Station Road / McGhie Street

A resident advised of an ongoing danger posed by cars parking near the junction of Station Road and McGhie Street, and he requested that McGhie Street be marked with yellow lines to reduce the hazard, and parking penalties enforced.

The Corporate Director advised that this was a matter for the County Council, but he would forward the matter to the Highways team. He would also raise the resident's concerns with the Parking Enforcement Team.

Car Park at Former Doctor's Surgery, Eskrett Street

A resident enquired why the car park had not been upgraded and brought into use during the course of the redevelopment of Hednesford Town Centre when so many other parking places would be lost, and the surgery itself was prone to vandalism.

Mrs. Howard, Mid-Staffs NHS Foundation Trust, advised that the property and car park belonged to the local PCT, not the Council, and the PCT was, therefore, responsible for its upkeep. She also advised that, contrary to some of the other criticism directed towards the Police, she had enjoyed a swift response on an occasion when she had reported vandalism at the premises.

However, it was agreed that Officers should lodge an enquiry with the PCT in respect of temporarily bringing the car park back into use.

A resident advised that traders throughout the town had been asked to report any incidents of anti-social behaviour / vandalism directly to the Police.

Crime / Prevention

Inspector Ellerton advised that overall crime in the area was reducing, although there had been an increase in burglary. In some cases, this was simply as a result of property or vehicles being left insecure and opportunist theft. He asked everyone to remind friends and relatives to ensure that property and vehicles were always left secure and, where possible, marked with suitable identifiers. To this end, there was a team of officers based at Cannock who were involved in property marking initiatives which were to be rolled out across the district.

Inspector Ellerton also advised of an increase in theft of lead and other metal bearing items, such as copper cables and cast iron drain covers, and asked everyone to be vigilant.

19. Hednesford Town Centre Regeneration – Update

The Chairman welcomed Mr. Watson, Economic Development Manager to the meeting. Mr. Watson advised that, with reference to the notes of the last meeting:

- Temporary toilet facilities had been made available since 13 July, in the Lightworks. The toilets were open to the public between 8.00am and 6.00pm, Monday – Saturday, and the facility would remain available subject to responsible usage.
- Parking issues – Mr. Watson was pleased to report that additional spaces had been made available in the Rugeley Road car park the week after the last Forum meeting, although work was continuing on the Rugeley Road side. With the regard to the Eskrett Street car park mentioned earlier, he had only recently been made aware of the opportunity and would be enquiring with the PCT if it could be brought into temporary use.
- Aquarius Ballroom – the Aquarius had closed at the end of May (temporary alternative facilities were being provided at the Civic Centre Ballroom). The building had been cleared and was awaiting demolition, however, some of the wooden block floor had been salvaged and would be incorporated, in due course, into some part of the new facility.

Update from Representatives of St. Modwen and Prosurv

Mr. Watkins and Mr. Price advised that:

- Almost 100 car parking would be available at the Rugeley Road car park in the next few weeks. They were extremely appreciative of residents' patience in this matter.
- The bingo hall was nearing full completion and was expected to open by mid-October.
- Attempts to secure a budget food store for the other unit on the Rugeley Road phase remained ongoing.
- Phase 2 was planned to open before Christmas, 2012.

Discussions then followed concerning:

- The siting of, and problems associated with, a pedestrian crossing near the junction of Victoria Street and Market Street.
- Safety issues associated with the Cardigan Place entrance to the car park – lack of formal footpath / questions as to the effectiveness of landscaping as a safety feature.
- The proposed colour scheme for the cooling ducts on top of the Tesco store.
- The proposal to direct buses onto Station Road, which some members of the public considered already to struggle to accommodate them, without increasing the volume

of traffic along there.

20. Consultation on Future Improvements to Hednesford Park

The Chairman welcomed Mr. Walsh, Parks and Open Spaces Manager to the meeting. Mr. Walsh advised that there were no particular issues to update the forum on, though he had brought along plans of the approved planning permission and its impact on the park, which included raising levels in some areas, and a new tree avenue.

Members of the public raised concerns about a number of issues in the proposals, including:

- Location of the play area.
- Retention of the bowling green.
- Provision of football pitches.

As none of these issues were affected by the Planning Permission Approval these items were not discussed in any detail.

A representative from the Friends of Hednesford Park advised that the group was drafting a constitution to give it formal status, and would be considering all of the above matters and formulating a position which would be advised to the Council.

21. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

The Chairman reported that the next Forum was scheduled for Wednesday 7 December, 2011 and questions from members of the public should be submitted on the forms supplied.

22. Dates of Future Meetings

The Chairman confirmed the following dates of Hednesford Community Forum meetings:-

- Wednesday 7 December, 2011
- Monday 26 March, 2012

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.