

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CANNOCK COMMUNITY FORUM
TUESDAY 6 MARCH 2012 AT 7.00 P.M.
AT CIVIC CENTRE, CANNOCK

PRESENT: Councillors:

Alcott, G. (Chairman)
Allen, F.W.C. (Vice-Chairman)

Davis, Mrs. M.A.	Snape, P.A.
Green, M.R.	Sutton, Mrs. H.M.
Mitchell, C.	Toth, J.

Cannock Chase District Councillors:

Councillor G. Adamson
Councillor M. Sutherland
Councillor Mrs. S. Cartwright

Cannock Chase Council Officers:

Mr. S. Brown, Chief Executive
Mrs. W. Rowe, Senior Committee Officer
Mr. R. Lamond, Policy and Performance Manager
Mr. J. Summerfield, Communications Officer
Ms. V. Henderson, Consultation and Engagement Officer
Mr. C. Garner, Tree Preservation Officer

Also Present

Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliffe, LPT Commander for Cannock Chase District
Ms. Lyn Hill-Tout, Chief Executive of Mid Staffs NHS Foundation Trust
Dr. Johnny McMahon, (South Staffordshire PCT)
Ms. V. Singleton, Staffordshire Police, Neighbourhood Watch
Local Residents (approximately 20)

The Chairman advised that he had agreed to the order of the agenda being amended and item 9 – update on the reorganisation of the PCT and the GP Commissioning Consortium would be considered following item 5 – Questions for Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services.

33. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from County Councillor P. Corfield.

34. Notes

The notes of the meeting held on 22 November 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

35. Questions for Staffordshire Police

The Chair of Governors of Longford Primary School asked Chief Inspector Ratcliffe whether PCSO's could patrol the area at better times. Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised that work was being undertaken at the moment regarding the visibility and accessibility of Officers in the Community. It was important to identify key times and locations when the public would benefit the most from the police presence. The matter raised would be included in this piece of work.

Councillor Toth raised the issue of the police privatisation plan which was being put forward by Surrey and West Midlands police. He had concern regarding the proposal which could see police officers on the beat being replaced with security staff and sought reassurance from Chief Inspector Ratcliffe regarding the position in relation to Cannock and Staffordshire Police.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe referred to the recent media articles reporting that Surrey and West Midlands Police were looking at options for private security companies providing a range of police services currently carried out by the police. An assurance had been given that any work would be overseen by a sworn Police Officer as only police officers have the power of arrest. He assured the Forum that Staffordshire Police would continue to deliver the type of services the public want and expect.

Councillor Snape referred to the privatisation of custody detention in Staffordshire. Chief Inspector Ratcliffe confirmed that Security Officers were employed and worked under the overview of the Custody Sergeant. This enabled Police Officers to do front line policing and not be too involved in back office duties. The Police had to consider these types of initiatives in order to maximise every opportunity to ensure police officers are where they should be – on the street. He reassured the Forum that there had been no reduction to front line staff in Staffordshire in the last twelve months.

Councillor Adamson considered that more uniformed Officers on the street were needed but appreciated the impact of the huge cuts in Police budgets. He commented that back office duties were already being undertaken by civilians but he did not expect Staffordshire Police to employ security firms to patrol the streets as this could put the public at risk.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe confirmed that this would be a decision for the Chief Constable. He referred to the elections for the first Police and Crime Commissioners which would take place in November. He advised that the newly appointed Commissioners would also have an input into this decision. He explained that other forces operate different systems of policing and referred to the increasing amount of volunteers assisting the police service, such as Neighbourhood Watch, Crime Prevention Panel Members and Residents Champions. In addition, he made reference to the Special Constables who were unpaid volunteers with some Police powers. He advised that there were 30 Special Constables in Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley.

The Chief Inspector confirmed that the views expressed at the Forum would be reported back to the Chief Constable to ensure he was aware of the level of feeling in the Community about this proposal.

Councillor Sutherland referred to the problems that had been experienced a couple of years ago around St. Luke's Church with drunken folk during the day. Action had been taken and the situation had improved with little or no problems during the summer of 2011. However, he advised that he had seen a few familiar faces in the area last week and wanted reassurance that action would be

taken to prevent a reoccurrence of the problems.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised the Forum that he had given a commitment on how he wanted the town centre to be policed when he was first appointed and he thanked the Member for noticing the improvements. He confirmed that there had been a recent meeting with the Partnership Manager to discuss the location around St Luke's Church. An action plan had been produced through the Community Safety Partnership which involved a number of organisations working together to resolve any problems.

Councillor Toth reiterated his concerns regarding the use of security firms to undertake police duties and commented that the new Police and Crime Commissioners would have the power to go down this route once they were elected.

The Chief Inspector explained that this was a very emotive subject and he assured the Forum that the level of feeling being expressed in the meeting would be reported back to the Chief Constable. He hoped that the hard work that had been undertaken to reduce crime and anti social behaviour and to ensure the community felt safe would not be overshadowed by this proposal.

Councillor Alcott asked the Chief Inspector to outline the number of fixed penalty notices that had been issued to motorists who had been using their mobile phones whilst driving. He referred to a scheme that the County Council had been involved in with other agencies which had determined that motorists using a mobile phone had a 50% slower reaction time.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe confirmed that road safety continued to be a top 10 priority for the force and the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership worked extremely hard to reduce accidents and deaths. He advised that since April 2011 266 motorists had been stopped in the Cannock Chase District area for using a mobile phone whilst driving. 213 of these had been in Cannock, 39 in Rugeley and 14 in Hednesford. Of these 266, 260 had been offered the opportunity to attend an educational programme on driving and standards. Once a motorist had attended the programme it would be unlikely that they would be offered a second opportunity should they reoffend.

In response to a question he advised that large companies who employed drivers had been offered assistance to enable them to develop educational programmes for their drivers on driving standards.

The Chief Inspector confirmed that every fatal collision where the motorist had been using a mobile phone had resulted in the motorist going to prison for a length of time. The message to get across to the public was to switch off your phone or use a hands free device whilst driving. Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter had good campaigns to encourage motorists not to use their phone for any purpose whilst driving.

He informed the Forum that anyone wishing to follow Cannock Police on Twitter could do so on @CannockPolice.

36. Questions for Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

No items had been submitted.

37. Update on the reorganisation of the PCT and the GP Commissioning Consortium

The item had been requested by Councillor G. Alcott. Dr. J. McMahon advised the Forum that he had been a GP at The Colliery Practice in Huntington since 2010. He had been actively involved in Commissioning and was due to take up the role of Chairman in April.

He advised the Forum of the Government's plans which propose significant changes for PCT's. The radical proposals pass the responsibility for NHS budgets and commissioning of local services from PCT's to GP's and Commissioning Groups from April 2013. The plans will make GP's responsible for what services are bought and from where, including which hospitals.

He advised that he had joined the Commissioning Consortium in October 2010. Practices had been consulted and anyone interested in being involved in commissioning was interviewed so as to ensure they understood what commissioning was all about. Arising from this a new Board had been established which would be active from April 2012. However, the Board did not have the resources or knowledge to deliver what was expected on their own so they established a close relationship with Stafford. 129,000 patients from Cannock, Cheslyn Hay, Great Wyrley, Hednesford, Rugeley and Norton Canes come under their care.

He confirmed that there was a huge challenge ahead in order to do what was best for the community and a meeting had been arranged with Councillor Adamson next week to discuss the proposals.

Councillor Snape commented that GP's were well paid and he was concerned that locums were being used to work out of hours. He considered that GP's should be providing the out of hours service. Dr. McMahon advised that in the late 1990's a number of GP's were not able to cope with the amount of hours they were expected to work and it became apparent something had to change. An out of hours service was therefore developed and this is provided when surgeries are closed. The out of hours service provides the best service for the patients and ensures that GP's remain fresh and safe.

Councillor Toth was of the opinion that there was not much support for the proposed changes. He commented that excellent doctors did not necessarily make excellent business people. Dr. McMahon advised that GP's would be provided with support from people who have been involved in commissioning all their working lives. He had been involved in setting up a Commissioning Group in Wellingborough which had done well and was well recognised. Commissioning Groups had to engage with others and get the right support in order to do well.

Councillor Adamson considered that there were a lot of people opposed to the proposals. He considered it would be difficult for GP's to be the voice of patients and to also be in control of the money. He hoped that the Bill would be defeated and the proposals would not go through. He had concern regarding the Cannock Chase Commissioning Group's view of Stafford hospital which had been expressed in a leaked letter recently.

Dr. McMahon commented that, irrespective of his view on the proposals, Commissioning Groups had to be ready should the proposals be passed. He sympathised with the concern expressed regarding the leaked letter but considered that Stafford hospital had been given significant amounts of money to enable them to deliver the service and this could not continue. GP's were committed to supporting changes to ensure the population had the right patient care. It was a complicated and difficult discussion and the letter had been sent to protect patients.

Councillor Mrs. Davis commented that many doctors in the area were not keen on the proposals. She considered it was essential that patients and doctors were involved in the discussions regarding the proposals so they understood what was being put forward. She made reference to practice community groups which had been established under the PCT. She considered them to be useful but they appeared to have been disbanded.

Dr. McMahon confirmed that consultation would take place and the Board would be engaging with

doctors and visiting all practices to ascertain their views on the proposals. With regard to patient participation groups he confirmed they were proposed under the new regime but it was difficult to say if they would be effective. He said he would look into the disbanded practice community groups referred to by Councillor Mrs. Davis.

The Chairman thanked Dr. McMahon for attending the Forum.

38. Update on the position of the negotiations in respect of the Asda s.106 monies for the Astro turf project

Item requested by Mr. Haywood. Stephen Brown, Chief Executive advised that very little had happened since the last meeting and there had been no contact from Asda Solicitors for a long time. The Council continued to seek resolution of the dispute with Asda relating to the s.106 for the Asda store on Avon Road. However, no resolution of the dispute had yet been reached and the matter remained in the hands of the respective solicitors. He confirmed that he would advise the Forum once more information was available.

Councillor Adamson commented that Asda had agreed to meet with the Council to discuss the maintenance of the park opposite the Asda store.

39. Question from Mr. Haywood – “On Friday 10 February 2012 I was in Cannock Park when I saw that the ancient hedgerow behind the 15th tee had been cut to the ground destroying the wildlife corridor. Was this work carried out by qualified personnel under the supervision and direction of the department which covers tree preservation orders? If not, will anyone be considered for disciplinary action as a member of the public would be?”

Chris Garner, Tree Preservation Officer explained that a length of 7m of hedging was coppiced (cut close to ground level) so as to allow a ditch adjacent to the hedgerow to be cleared out to prevent local flooding. This was normal maintenance and did not require any approval. In fact, records show it was last coppiced in 2004. The purpose of coppicing a hedgerow was to encourage new shoots to regenerate. This particular species (Hazel) does this quite readily. This allows the structural diversity of the hedge to support a greater number of wildlife species and allows light into the base of the hedgerow to improve ground flora.

With regard to the issue of Tree Preservation Orders, he advised that as the Hazel is a shrub on the edge of woodland it would not be protected specifically by the TPO. Although Hazel is listed in the Woodland Order, it would only require consent for work if and when the shrubs became trees i.e. 6m in height. Even then, if work was necessary for drainage purposes, the work would be exempt under the Land Drainage Act 1991. He also confirmed that hedgerow regulations did not apply as the hedge was not being removed.

Mr. Haywood expressed his concern over the work undertaken to the hedgerow. He considered that there was no reason to coppice the hedgerow and remove the undergrowth as the ditch could have been accessed in a different way. He felt that there was an ulterior motive for the work that had been undertaken and asked for confirmation as to whether there were plans to extend the Golf course. He commented that notices should be displayed when work was being carried out to a tree which had a Tree Preservation Order placed upon it.

Mr. Garner confirmed that the works were undertaken as part of the ongoing maintenance of the Golf Course and Park. He was not aware of any plans to extend the Golf course although this matter did not come under the remit of his job. He further advised that any Tree Preservation Order trees were exempt as the work was being carried out under the Land Drainage Act and that hedges

cannot be subject to a Tree Preservation Order.

Councillor Mitchell, the Portfolio Leader for Culture and Sport confirmed that this matter came under her responsibility. She had attended a meeting last Friday with Friends of Cannock Park where this matter had been discussed at length with Officers. Friends of Cannock Park expressed concern that the hedge had been chopped down. However, they had been advised that it had been coppiced to allow access to a ditch. Due to the concern expressed by Friends of Cannock Park it was suggested that, in future, any scheduled maintenance works should be publicised. She also commented that as the hedge protected an area of land which produced blue bells, it had therefore been agreed for a temporary barrier to be erected to protect this area of land. She and the Chief Executive confirmed that they were not aware of any plans to extend the Golf course.

A member of Friends of Cannock Park expressed her concern regarding the removal of the hedgerow which she explained had implications for the environment. She had been advised by the Wildlife Officer that no survey had been done prior to it being coppiced and this could have had an effect on any wildlife living there.

In response to a question from Councillor Toth, Mr. Garner advised that the works had been undertaken in order to maintain the ditch and confirmed that the hedgerow would regenerate quickly as it was a traditional woodland species.

A member of Friends of Cannock Park commented that there were strict rules governing this type of work and any maintenance work due to be carried out should be readily available. He considered that any work carried out should be done sympathetically and asked whether there were any plans for the entire hedgerow to be removed.

The Tree Preservation Officer explained that the issue of scheduled maintenance was discussed at length at the meeting on Friday and Officers were working on a solution to keep Friends of Cannock Park informed about any planned maintenance.

Councillor Mitchell stated that she would advise Tom Walsh, the Parks and Open Spaces Manager of Friends of Cannock Park's concerns in relation to whether the entire hedgerow was to be removed. She asked the gentleman to let her have his contact details after the meeting so as a response could be provided to him.

40. Update on A & E Services at Stafford Hospital

The item had been requested by Miss M. Freeman.

Lyn Hill-Tout, Chief Executive of Mid Staffs NHS Foundation Trust explained that the Board had made the difficult decision to temporarily close A & E Services at Stafford Hospital between 10.00pm and 8.00am seven days a week on 1 December 2011 for an initial three month period. She reiterated that the closure had been done for safety reasons and not for financial reasons.

She informed the Forum that a set of agreed criteria had been established which had to be achieved prior to reopening the Department. She then outlined the progress as follows:-

The 6th Consultant had now been recruited and therefore the criteria in this respect had been achieved. It had also been agreed that there was a need to ensure a Consultant was present at the hospital between 8am-10pm (Mon-Fri) and 10am-8pm (at weekends). She confirmed that this had now been achieved.

It had been agreed that a training post be re-introduced into the Department. Discussions were taking place with the deanery regarding this issue; however, it was unlikely that an appointment would be made before October but she confirmed that this would not prevent the Department from reopening.

She explained that it had been agreed that five middle grade doctors were required (as a minimum). There had been a long term problem recruiting doctors but she confirmed that five doctors would be in post on 25 March, 2012.

She commented that further criteria had been set for all middle grade doctors to be suitably qualified. Four doctors had completed and passed the course and one doctor had received the advanced training. Therefore, good progress had been made in this regard and it was likely that the criteria would be achieved mid March. It was important to ensure that when doctors were at the hospital during the night they were competent to treat all types of presenting patients.

It had been further agreed that 80% of nurses should have undertaken a training programme in a range of advanced skills. She confirmed that a full training programme was underway and nurses had been arriving at 7am to receive their training prior to their shift starting at 8am. Good progress had therefore been made.

With regard to nursing staff she informed the Forum that an open day had been held as it was important to recruit the right calibre of people and interviews were being held on 7 March.

She then explained that training had been undertaken on customer care during the closure period to ensure patients were treated with respect, care and dignity. It had been agreed that a minimum of 70% of staff should receive the customer care training. She confirmed that these criteria would be met.

She made reference to the national target that no patient should be waiting more than four hours for treatment in an A & E Department. She confirmed that this target had not yet been achieved. However, there were issues outside of the Department, such as access to beds, which had an impact on this target. Therefore, doctors were seeing patients by 11.00am so that patients could be discharged to free up beds. The hospital was mindful of not discharging patients inappropriately and a close eye was kept on re-admissions.

She confirmed that a lot of good work had been done in order to meet the required criteria and the Board was committed to reopening the A & E Department. A recommendation would be taken to the Trust Board at the end of March and there would be a six week lead in period to ensure the reopening could be done in a planned way.

She paid tribute to the West Midlands Ambulance Service and all other local hospitals for helping Stafford Hospital during the temporary closure of the Department. She advised that the numbers of patients expected to transfer to local hospitals had been broadly as planned.

She explained that there were a number of issues for the hospital to consider including the fact that if consultants left or were off sick for a prolonged period the hospital would be in the same position as it was before. Therefore, consideration was being given to forming a clinical network with North Staffs Hospital as this would have a number of advantages. Recruitment would be easier as staff would then work at both sites.

She further advised the Forum that the PCT would need to consult on the Emergency and Urgent Care Specification and there was hospital support for changing the specification. Patients were

confused regarding the out of hours service and an Emergency and Urgent Care Centre would reduce confusion and ensure a better out of hours service was provided. Additionally, Mid Staffs would take on the management of the minor injuries unit at Cannock (still remaining at Cannock). It was considered that a better service could be provided if it was under the same umbrella and it would remove confusion and duplication.

She spoke about the number of patients who arrived at the A & E Department that were neither an accident nor an emergency; they required GP care. It was essential to educate the public in this respect and to design the service in a better way. However, parents should not be deterred from taking a sick child to A & E.

Maureen Freeman thanked Lyn Hill-Tout for taking the time to attend the Forum and for providing a detailed update on the position with regard to the A & E Department. With regard to the leaked letter she was concerned about the proposals for the maternity unit at Stafford which the letter suggested should be led by midwives. In addition she asked whether there were any plans to extend the minor injuries unit at Cannock Hospital, i.e. open it for more hours and to deal with more injuries.

Lyn Hill-Tout explained that at present approximately 2000 babies were delivered at Stafford hospital each year. If the unit was to move to a midwifery led unit it could only deliver 300-400 babies per year. The remaining 1600 expectant mums would require Consultant care and would therefore have to go elsewhere to have their babies. It would be expensive to maintain a midwife led unit as it would fall below the critical mass. She also made reference to the Battalion of 1000 soldiers and their families who were moving to Stafford who would all require hospital care, particularly maternity care, she questioned whether there was capacity elsewhere to take on board the number of women who required obstetric led care.

She confirmed that there were no plans to extend the minor injuries unit at Cannock hospital. It was considered it could be managed in a more integrated way when it came under Mid Staffs; however, it would never become an A & E Department but consideration would be given to what could be dealt with there.

Councillor Toth considered there were still some risk factors for the Hospital to consider before reopening the Department and he asked whether a date for reopening was known. Lyn Hill-Tout confirmed that if all the criteria were to be met it was proposed to reopen the Department early May, this would allow for the six week lead in period.

Councillor Adamson thanked Lyn Hill-Tout for the detailed report and was pleased to hear of the good work that was being done. He hoped that the Department would be reopened early May and that there was no further slippage. He commented that a mild winter had assisted the Hospital in coping with the closure. He had concern regarding the Commissioning Groups attitude towards Stafford hospital which had been revealed in the leaked letter. He made reference to Walsall Manor hospital who were willing to take patients from Cannock but he was of the opinion that local people were loyal to Cannock and Stafford hospitals and would prefer to be treated there. He considered it was vital that the A & E Department was permanently reopened in May.

Lyn Hill-Tout explained that the leaked letter had added anxiety to staff and the public and considered that it had had a negative effect. She understood that GP's were frustrated with the Hospital and wanted to work with them to provide high quality local care. The hospital needed to give confidence to GP's by its willingness to change. The agreed current plan for the next three years was to keep both Cannock and Stafford sites open although services on both would change.

She confirmed that other local hospitals such as Walsall Manor were interested in picking up work as

they were looking at taking on more patients. However, she considered that the public wanted to go to local hospital and get good treatment.

She explained that the Department of Health had provided financial assistance to enable the Hospital to pay the salaries and bills for this year. £40m had been agreed for the next three years in order to deliver the Clinical plan which had been agreed with the PCT.

Councillor Snape asked whether figures were available for how long ambulances were kept waiting when they arrived at A & E. Additionally, he asked whether the six consultants had been appointed from within the hospital or externally.

Lyn Hill-Tout confirmed that figures on how long ambulances were waiting were kept and monitored by the PCT. She confirmed that the Hospital had recruited experienced consultants – three were new to the Department, one was from overseas and one was a locum who had become a permanent employee.

The Chairman thanked Lyn Hill-Tout for attending the Forum and providing the update.

41. Community Forum Consultation

Rob Lamond, Policy and Performance Manager informed the Forum that last year the Council consulted with the public to get their views on how well the Council communicated with people and how communications could be improved. A quarter of the people consulted had attended a Community Forum and found them useful.

The Council were now seeking the views of those that attend the Forum meetings to establish how they work and how they could be improved. A printed survey was available to take away after the meeting and this was also available online. All surveys must be completed and returned by the end of March and the results would be made available at the next meeting.

The Chairman then undertook a straw poll of the remaining attendees to establish the following:

Question	Result
How many of you are attending the Forum for the first time tonight?	3
Who attends regularly?	25
How many of you feel that the Forum is a useful community meeting?	25
How many have used the Forum as a way of raising local issues with their Councillors/other public services?	9

Following this he opened the floor to any questions. A member of the public considered that it would have been better for this item to have been considered towards the beginning of the meeting as a few people had already left. The Chairman stated that he had only agreed to the item being included on the agenda last week.

Another member of the public asked whether consideration could be given to using a PA system at Forum meetings. Councillor Toth commented that the acoustics within the Chamber made it difficult to hear what was being said. The Chairman advised that a hearing induction loop was available in the Chamber and anyone wishing to use this system should speak to the Clerk prior to the meeting.

42. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

The Chairman explained that a form was available for any issues to be discussed at future meetings of the Forum. Appropriate representatives would be invited to attend and debate the issues and answer any questions.

43. Date of Future Meetings

The Forum noted that the next meetings of the Cannock Community Forum had been provisionally arranged as follows and were subject to Council approval:

12 June 2012, 18 September, 2012, 27 November, 2012 and 19 March, 2013.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.25pm.

CHAIRMAN