

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**

**NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**

**CANNOCK COMMUNITY FORUM**

**TUESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2014 AT 7.00PM**

**AT THE CIVIC CENTRE, CANNOCK**

PRESENT: District Councillors:

Kraujalis, J.T. (Chairman)  
Alcott, G. (Vice-Chairman)

Allen, F.W.C.	Snape, P.A.
Davis, Mrs. M.A.	Toth, J.
Freeman, Miss M.	Witton, P.

Cannock Chase Council Officers:

Mr. S. Brown, Chief Executive  
Mr. M. Walker, Environmental Protection Manager  
Mrs. W. Rowe, Senior Committee Officer

Also Present

Chief Inspector Stephen Morrey, Cannock Chase Local Policing  
Commander, Staffordshire Police  
Local Residents (approximately 12)  
Councillor G. Adamson  
County Councillor Mrs. A. Spicer  
County Councillor Mrs. D. Todd

**24. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from District Councillors Mrs. H. Sutton, C. Anslow, Mrs. C. Mitchell and County Councillor Mark Deaville.

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

There were no interests declared.

**26. Notes**

AGREED:

That the notes of the meeting held on 16 September, 2014 be agreed as a

correct record.

## **27. Questions for Staffordshire Police**

No questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting. However, Chief Inspector Morrey was in attendance to take questions from the floor.

There being no questions the Chief Inspector advised the Forum that there were 3 new recruits joining his Policing Team, all of which would be fully trained by January, 2015.

## **28. Questions for Cannock Chase Council – submitted in advance**

### **(i) “Why aren’t the pathways for the public around the perimeter of the golf course being maintained?”(submitted by Mrs. Heaton)**

*As outlined on the agenda, Mike Edmonds, Head of Commissioning has spoken directly to Mrs. Heaton in order to clarify which particular pathways on the golf course she was referring to. It has been explained to Mrs. Heaton that not all pathways on the golf course are maintained but now the particular pathways in question have been identified it has been agreed that he will look into this matter and respond directly to her in due course.*

The Chairman asked Mrs. Heaton if she had anything further to add. She advised that she was concerned about the pathway behind the gardens along the Old Penkridge Road (marked with a yellow line on the plan she had circulated). It was blocked by vegetation and the stream below the bridge could not be seen as it was so overgrown. This caused problems for walkers wishing to use these pathways. She advised that costs had been put forward as a reason for not maintaining it but suggested that if it was cut back during the summer months this would not be too costly.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Head of Commissioning had agreed to look into the matter and provide Mrs. Heaton with a response.

Mrs. Christine Salmon, a local resident advised that none of the perimeters of the golf course were being maintained and suggested that the only part which was being maintained was the golf course itself. It was a public park and yet the public could not access it. She also made reference to the amount of litter which was still present and that the electrical substation was almost hidden by the overgrown vegetation.

A number of District Councillors also expressed their concern regarding the overgrown pathways surrounding the golf course and considered that something should be done. A local resident commented that the maintenance of the golf course had been contracted out and although the golf course was being maintained nothing else was. He considered that Council officers should ensure the contractor was doing what they were contracted to do.

The Chief Executive explained that he would advise the Head of Commissioning of the concern raised and ascertain the costs of maintaining the whole of the

perimeter of the golf course. Members would be advised of this in due course.

- (ii) **“Early morning on Tuesday 4 November 2014, spraying to control worm casts took place on the golf course, which is part of the public open space of Cannock park and is used extensively by the public.**

- 1. What is the Trade and Chemical name of the substance used?**
- 2. Why were there no warning signs posted at the entrances?**
- 3. What consideration has been given to the environmental consequences of using chemicals to suppress the activity of worms, which are an important part of the wildlife food chain?” (submitted by Mrs. C. Salmon)**

*As outlined on the agenda, Mike Edmonds, Head of Commissioning has responded to Mrs. Salmon directly in advance of the Forum meeting answering the questions she has raised. An extract of the letter is outlined below:*

*“I write in response to the following questions which you have requested be included on the Agenda for the next Community Forum on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014. However, as they are purely operational matters and relate solely to the recent spraying undertaken on the golf course to manage and control worm casts I have set out below my response in advance of the meeting and in the order raised.*

*As you are aware, this same exercise was carried out last year and at the Friends of Cannock Park Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2013 the Council's Parks and Open Spaces Manager provided an explanation as to the impact the chemicals might have on particular worms. I enclose a copy of these minutes which were agreed as a true and accurate record at the following meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2013, for your information.*

**Reply to Question 1** - *The spraying of the golf course was undertaken by a contractor and the name of the chemical used is Caste Off. This is a systemic benzimidazole fungicide which has a wide application and is used on fruit, vegetables, cereals, ornamental garden plants, forestry as well as for worm cast suppression on turf. It is approved for outdoor amenity grassland use but is also used as fruit dips and seed treatments post harvest and pre-storage, to control rotting.*

**Reply to Question 2** - *Signage was erected at the main entrance to the golf course and staff within the golf shop were also made aware before spraying commenced. However, on investigation it has been established that the signage did not include all of the relevant dates when the spraying was undertaken. In future the signs will advise when spraying is taking place but will not indicate a specific date, so as to avoid this problem again.*

**Reply to Question 3** - *It is acknowledged that earthworms are beneficial to soil formation, aeration, drainage and organic matter breakdown but in the autumn through to the spring months the casts of the 2 to 3 species that feed on grass litter known as thatch cause a really big problem on golf course surfaces encouraging weed growth and making them muddy, bumpy, wet and uneven. If left untreated up to 60 -70 tonnes of casts could be deposited on the golf course*

*surfaces. It is for this reason and following a request from the Council's golf course operator, Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust (WLCT) that the spraying was undertaken so that the problem could be suitably and appropriately managed, with minimal impact on the course and local environment.*

*As explained to you at the Friends meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2013 the chemicals only affect the 2-3 species of earthworms that come to the surface, leaving the worm species deeper under the surface to flourish in greater numbers".*

Mrs. Salmon was invited to add any further comments. She explained that spraying also took place on 3, 4 and 5 October when signs were erected on the park entrances. However, when the spraying took place on 4 November there were no signs erected. She was made aware that the Golf shop had been advised that spraying was taking place but there were no signs erected at the park entrances. She considered that the signs should have been erected to warn the public who could then make an informed decision on whether to enter the park in the circumstances. With regard to the chemical being used she advised that, as from 1 December, 2014, it was banned by the EU for use on fruit and vegetables. Additionally the chemical should not be used near water and she was therefore concerned as there were water courses all over the golf course. She confirmed that she was awaiting a response from the Head of Commissioning regarding this matter.

Another local resident, Mrs. Hargreaves, expressed her concern regarding the spraying that had taken place on 4 November as she had entered the park with her three dogs before she realised that spraying was taking place. She also considered that the erection of signs was very important.

A District Councillor commented that when the County Council spray the bracken over Shoal Hill common notices are displayed and it is publicised on the Council's website. He considered that should there be any further spraying on the golf course in the future this same process should be followed.

The Chief Executive explained that there were strict regulations regarding the use of hazardous chemicals. He would seek assurance regarding the chemical that was used to ensure it was safe for use on amenity land. He agreed that in future the erection of signage was important.

The Chairman asked that the Head of Commissioning provide Members with feedback on the issues raised.

- (iii) ***Last year members of the local ex-servicemen's groups asked that consideration be given to find a system whereby the wreaths and other tributes could be maintained on the memorial for as long as possible and hopefully all year. While I am not part of these groups I wish to make the following comments:-***

***I have noted the small modification to the memorial and have seen the majority of wreaths and tributes survive throughout the year. I would therefore like to thank the officer concerned for his efforts in this matter and hope that he will in due course extend my appreciation to his staff, in***

***particular the town centre cleansing staff who look after this area.***

***(submitted by Mr. A. Haywood, a local resident)***

*As outlined on the agenda, the Council's Corporate Director, Mr. Tony McGovern provided the following statement in response to Mr. Haywood's comments:-*

*"Thank you for the positive feedback about the Council's street cleansing operatives.*

*In agreement with Royal British Legion, the Council's practice over many years has been to collect the wreaths by the middle of January every year following the Remembrance services of the previous November. It is correct that a local branch group did ask whether wreaths and other tributes could be maintained on the Cannock memorial all year round. The Council agreed to explore this request and whilst this was being explored, to leave wreaths on the Cannock memorial for longer during 2014. However, in this process, it became clear that the advice of the Staffordshire Royal British Legion to the Council (who have the legal responsibility for war memorials) is that removal of the wreaths in mid- January every year is the appropriate timing. The Council will therefore follow this policy across all war memorials in the District, as it has done for many years. Should the Royal British Legion at national or County level provide different advice in the future, the Council will consider this very carefully".*

Mr. Haywood was asked if he wished to comment further. He explained that he wished his thanks to the officer concerned be noted and he had not expected a response. Although he did not believe that the officer who had responded had any intention of upsetting him or making him feel inferior he considered the response was somewhat condescending.

The Chief Executive advised that he would report these comments back to the Corporate Director.

- (iv) ***"We walk our dog on a lead and clean up after him on the land behind the old "Moon Under the Water", Huntington Terrace Road and on Hednesford Park.***

***In both situations more and more people have their dogs loose which can lead to aggression together with lack of control where their dogs foul; leading to lack of cleaning up by owners. Can more be done with signing and enforcement of rules to prevent this happening, as it can be particularly dangerous to children?"***

*Mike Walker, Environmental Protection Manager was present at the meeting, in addition he had provided the following response which was included on the agenda:-*

*"At present the Dog Control Order made by the Council in 2009 to control dogs off leads only applies where the dog is off lead within 3 metres of a highway. In considering this Order the Council was obliged to be mindful of the dog owning communities desire to exercise their dogs off lead and determined not to restrict this activity in parks. Hence the Order does not require owners to keep their*

*dog(s) on a lead in Parks and other Open land away from the highway.*

*It is acknowledged that some dogs will be aggressive towards other animals and people. In the latter case when a dog is dangerously out of control in a public place and there is a fear that it will bite a person, or actually does bite a person it would be a matter for the police to investigate. Dog-on-dog attacks may be addressed by new powers introduced in October. Action can be taken against the dog's owner where the lack of control of its aggressive behaviour is detrimental to the quality of life of the local community, is persistent or continuous and is unreasonable. Action may be taken by the Police or the Council who must initially issue appropriate warning to the owner before issuing a Community Protection Order. Failure to comply could lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution. It should be appreciated that in determining the appropriate action each case would be considered on its own merits.*

*In terms of fouling the second of the Council's Dog Control Orders requires dog owners to pick up dog waste left by their dog(s). Sadly, some dog owners continue to ignore this requirement. Enforcement officers routinely conduct covert patrol of parks and other areas of the district in an effort to identify those responsible for dog fouling and littering. In addition high visibility patrols are also carried out where officers engage with dog owners offering advice on responsible dog ownership and providing promotional material such as leaflets and dog poo bags. Furthermore, officers also put up signs in areas where reports of fouling occur and at the public's request. These may be either fixed to lamp standards, sprayed on the pavement or a banner sign fastened to railings outside parks or schools.*

*Unfortunately however there are a limited number of officers and much of this antisocial behaviour occurs when the officers are not in the area. In this respect, if members of the public have specific information regarding a particular problem dog or dog owner and are willing to provide evidence in the form of a statement, enforcement officers will be able to pursue the matter with the owner concerned. This may include the issue of warnings, Fixed Penalty Notices and ultimately prosecution in cases where the evidence is sufficient and other options have been unsuccessful in achieving the desired change in behaviour. "*

The Chairman invited Mr. Grainger to make any further comments. He sought confirmation regarding whether there were any warning signs about dog fouling/offences at the park entrances.

The Environmental Protection Manager advised that there was a banner in Hednesford Park which moved around periodically. Additionally, self adhesive signs were erected on lampposts and the pavements were sometimes sprayed with paint stating "No Dog Fouling" (this was weather dependant). A number of Enforcement Officers patrol the hotspot areas in the District to engage with dog owners and, if they see an individual allow their dog to foul, a Fixed Penalty Notice was issued. However, once the dog walking community are aware that an Enforcement Officer is in the vicinity they will then clean up after their dog has fouled. With regard to incidents that take place outside of normal office hours the Council were reliant upon the public reporting any incidents giving an indication of the time it occurs or the address of the individual concerned so that Officers could catch them doing it. He agreed that more signage could be

erected at hotspot locations if this was considered necessary. He welcomed any information from the public about dog owners who allow their dogs to foul. If these individuals were caught and issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice word would go around. A statement would be asked for which would be used as a fallback position should it be took to prosecution. However, the majority of Fixed Penalty Notices issued were paid and did not go to prosecution. He confirmed that the FPN was £75 and this may deter some dog owners. A second offence would go to prosecution.

The Leader of the Council made reference to the minority of selfish dog owners who either allow their dogs to foul or run free. He considered that signage may help; however, some owners would continue to take no notice. A District Councillor stated that she had raised concern regarding dog fouling and dogs not being on a lead in Cannock Park. This was being monitored in conjunction with the park keepers.

The Environmental Protection Manager confirmed that any complaints should be referred to the Contact Centre (via the Council's main telephone line) or alternatively by email to [environmentalhealth@cannockchasedc.gov.uk](mailto:environmentalhealth@cannockchasedc.gov.uk)

Mr. Grainger commented on the extent of control dog owners had when their dogs were running loose off the lead. Mr. Walker advised that if a dog was dangerously out of control or there was a fear of being bitten this was an offence under the Dangerous Dogs Act and would be dealt with by the Police. He also made reference to Community Protection Notices which were issued by the Police and Environmental Health Officers – these address things like dog on dog attacks. A CPN can be used when the authority is satisfied that the conduct of an individual or organisation is having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality; is persistent/continuing and is unreasonable. Chief Inspector Morrey advised that CPN's were not widely used; the ASB route was more commonly used.

The Chief Inspector advised that he would liaise with the Environmental Protection Manager after the meeting to discuss a co-ordinated response.

- (v) ***“Is there any consideration for the provision of Athletics in the new stadium layout considering the recent success in the Olympic Games and European (Commonwealth?) in Glasgow”***

***(submitted by B. Grainger, a local resident)***

*Mike Edmonds, Head of Commissioning had provided the following response which was included on the agenda:-*

*“The Council has undertaken a rigorous process in order to determine the mix of facilities to be included in the proposed community sport and recreation hub at the former stadium site. This has included consultation with local residents, key stakeholders and National Sporting Governing bodies in order to identify the type of possible facilities to be included on the site. This work has been underpinned by a detailed feasibility study which looked at the majority of sports including athletics before the proposed mix of facilities to be included was determined.*

*The results of which do not include for the re-provision of an athletics track on the site but do cater for a number of individual athletic activities such as running (jogging) and cycling within the new facilities to be provided”.*

Mr. Grainger added that he considered that there was a lack of athletics provision in the District and there were no facilities for interschool sports within the District. A District Councillor agreed with Mr. Grainger but reminded the Forum that it was not the Labour party who decided to close the Athletics track and Stadium. Despite protests it was the opposition who closed it. However, the new facilities to be provided at the former stadium site would be available for young people to use and would be improved over time. He added that, if money became available, there may be an opportunity to provide a track in the future.

Another District Councillor agreed with Councillor Alcott in that the Stadium should not have been knocked down but commented that it was badly run and costing too much money. He welcomed the new proposals.

A District Councillor commented that Athletics clubs had been consulted and a track was not high priority for them. In addition it would be very costly to reinstate an athletics track.

In response to a question the Leader confirmed that there was no space on the site to accommodate an athletics track. The Chairman added that should money become available it could be considered but it should be noted that it was not classed as a high priority from the consultation.

**29. Questions for Staffordshire County Council Highways – submitted in advance**

***“What plans are in place to repair the potholes on roads within the District?”***

***(submitted by Councillor G. Alcott)***

*Mark Keeling, the Community Infrastructure Liaison Manager, Staffordshire County Council provided the following information which was included on the agenda:-*

*“In terms of the general condition of the footways and carriageways in the area, the County Council’s Asset Management Plan develops carriageway and footway lifecycle plans to optimise the use of available funding.*

*For those sites that have not yet been prioritized for renewal through the Asset Management Plan the County Council operates a risk management approach to reactive repairs which include a regular inspection regime.*

*This basically means various potholes are actioned dependant on the category (risk) with each hazard being rated on size, depth, location and status of the route.*

*When there are a number of higher categories’ then temporary repairs may be required in order to “make safe” until such time a permanent repair takes place.*



*In addition to the reactive work we have ongoing programmes of highway maintenance which include re-surfacing and preventive maintenance on both footways and carriageways, it is intended that these programmes of work will be available to view via the website in the near future.*

*If anyone has any specific concerns in regards the highway network then please contact the County Council on 0300 111 8000 or via e-mail: [highways@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:highways@staffordshire.gov.uk). “*

Councillor Alcott explained that over the last few months the process to report repairs/defects in respect of Highways had changed. He was receiving complaints from members of the public and Councillors that issues reported via the free phone number were not being dealt with within the permitted timescale and they had to report the repair/defect more than once.

He had requested that the Community Infrastructure and Liaison Manager attend the Forum but the invitation was declined. He had therefore contacted County Councillor Mark Deaville, the Cabinet Support Member for Highways and Transport and he had agreed to visit the District along with the Head of Highways to look at any specific highways concerns. He asked that anyone with any concerns in relation to highways matters to contact him so he could add it to the list of issues and he would then raise them when the visit takes place.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Alcott for his efforts in this regard and hoped that some of the highways issues would be resolved.

The Leader of the Council raised his concerns regarding the condition of the roads and footpaths and advised that the County had cut back their maintenance budget. He commented that a new contractor “AMEY” had been appointed in October. A new reference number was being issued when a repair/defect was reported and this had led to delays in responding. The County Council seemed unaware that there were problems and he considered the County was too big and too remote.

Concern was raised that a Highways Officer had not attended a recent Forum meeting. The Chairman commented that it would be useful for a Highways officer to attend a future Forum meeting.

The Forum noted that a number of roads and footpaths throughout the District were in need of repair and considered that the lack money was the issue. A District Councillor sought information on how much of the money allocated to the County for highway repairs was spent in the CCDC area compared to other areas in the County. The Chairman advised that the Highways Officer would be invited to attend the next Forum meeting and asked to provide this information.

### **30. Questions for Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services**

No questions have been submitted in advance of the meeting.

### **31. Resident Champions**

It was reported that the Resident Champions volunteers were unable to attend the Forum due to illness. However, they had requested to attend the Forum on 9 March, 2015.

### **32. Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust - Update**

Sultan Mahmud, Integration Programme Director, Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust provided the following update which had been circulated in advance to Forum Members:-

#### *Current and Future Management of Services at Cannock Chase Hospital*

*The separation of Cannock Chase Hospital from the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust (Stafford Hospital) took place very smoothly on the 1st November 2014 – with The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust (RWT), taking full management responsibility for the delivery of inpatient and outpatient services on the site.*

*The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust now manages the inpatient wards and provides all of the Orthopaedic, Rheumatology, Ophthalmology, Dermatology and Elderly Care services at the hospital. The Consultants attending outpatient clinics are largely unchanged with additional sessions being provided by our Gastroenterology Team.*

*Good working relationships with the Cannock Chase Hospital staff have developed well with Induction plans provided to support their introduction into our organisation and we have ensured a senior presence is available on site at Cannock to answer questions and resolve any issues quickly.*

*Initial informal feedback from patients and visitors has been positive.*

#### **Our immediate plans:**

- *Work is underway to build a dedicated Endoscopy Suite – doubling our capacity to undertake these procedures at Cannock. Expected completion date: March 2015*
- *We are looking to bring all of the elements of the Rheumatology service into a single location at the hospital which will allow us to increase the number of ward beds that we can provide, therefore, increasing the number of operations we can undertake. Expected start date for Rheumatology: January 2015*
- *January 2015 will see the reopening of 16 beds on the Orthopaedic Ward, increasing the number of Orthopaedic operations. Surgeons from both New Cross Hospital and Cannock Hospital will undertake elective/planned cases*
- *With the changes proposed for Maternity Services at County Hospital Stafford, we will begin to provide all Midwife and Consultant Obstetric clinics at Cannock Hospital and for Cannock GP's from mid-January 2015.*

- *We are now working closely with GP's in Cannock to process all of their blood samples from the local surgeries, as well as those samples taken at Cannock Hospital*
- *We are working with Cannock Chase District Council to increase access to car parking for patients, visitors and staff*

*The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust is fully committed to ensuring that Cannock Chase Hospital has a robust and viable long term future.*

*It is our aim to further develop the site as a centre of excellence for elective Orthopaedics and Rheumatology and establish it as a significant elective care centre, offering improved access / waiting times and guaranteed admissions for Cannock residents and those in the surrounding areas.*

*Our plans for the physical development of the site and the increase in capacity are well underway and we will be providing regular updates to patients and residents on our progress and timescales”.*

It was noted that Mr. Mahmud had attended the recent Hednesford Forum and he gave an indication that he would attend the other Forums in due course.

A District Councillor advised that she was hopeful that there would be evidence available for the next Forum meeting in March that things were starting to improve at Cannock Hospital. It was confirmed that the bus service being provided by Arriva was up and running.

The Leader of the Council advised that residents living in the WS11, WS12 and WS15 postcodes would transfer to the New Cross hospital unless they opted to go elsewhere. He noted that there had been many problems over the recent months due to Stafford Hospital's poor reputation and the proposed reduction in the opening hours of the Minor Injuries Unit; however, he was pleased that Cannock hospital was to remain open.

### **33. Agenda Items for Next Meeting**

Questions were invited from members of the public and these would be included on the agenda for the next meeting which was as follows:-

- Tuesday 3 March, 2015 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

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CHAIRMAN