

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HEDNESFORD COMMUNITY FORUM

WEDNESDAY 7 DECEMBER, 2011 AT 7.00 P.M.

AT THE MUSEUM OF CANNOCK CHASE, VALLEY ROAD, HEDNESFORD

PRESENT: Councillors

Adamson, G. (Chairman)
Grice, Mrs. D. (Vice-Chairman)

Ball, G.D. Todd, R.
Burnett, G.

Officers: T. McGovern, Corporate Director
 B. Phillips, Head of Planning and Regeneration
 G. Watson, Economic Development Manager
 J. Hunt, Senior Committee Officer

Also present: Members of the Public – approximately 20
 Councillor A. Pearson, Hednesford Town Council
 Inspector C. Ellerton, Staffordshire Police, Chase Division
 Chief Inspector C. Ratcliffe, Staffordshire Police, Chase Division
 Ms. V. Singleton, Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator
 Mr. C. Evans, Staffordshire County Council

23. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs. S.M. Cartwright, J. Burnett and County Councillor J. Bernard (Hednesford Division). An apology was also received from Mr. S. Orme, Chairman, Hednesford Traders Association.

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

There were no interests declared.

25. Notes

The Notes of the meeting held on 5 September, 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

26. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services

It was reported that no questions had been submitted; however a representative would be attending the next meeting to make a presentation to the Forum on risk reduction

activities.

27. Questions for Staffordshire Police

The Chairman welcomed Inspector Chris Ellerton and Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliffe to the meeting.

There is a problem with anti-social behaviour in Hednesford, what can be done about this?

Inspector Ellerton informed the Forum that the Police were aware of drug and anti-social behaviour problems within Hednesford. He reported that PC Graham Aries and a number of Police Community Support Offices (PCSOs) had recently carried out an operation to try and engage with the young people, which also included the help of other agencies such as the Youth Service.

A Member of the public informed the Forum that the Police had recently carried out checks on vehicles on Cannock Chase which had included his own. He reported that there were several officers and asked if similar checks could be carried out around the Hednesford area.

Inspector Ellerton advised that joint operations would take place each year and this helped identify rogue traders.

Members of the public were very concerned about drug dealing in certain parts of Hednesford and reference was made to a complaint being lodged with the Police which had not been acted upon.

Inspector Ellerton advised that it was important to build up intelligence information first and all reports were taken very seriously.

A concerned local resident referred to a recent incident where scrap metal dealers had been onto his land attempting to take away his property. He contacted the Police who advised that no action could be taken as they could not establish where it had had been removed from. He asked Police representatives if these people were allowed to just go onto his property.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised the Forum that the Police had worked with other organisations to try and combat problems with scrap dealers. He reported that a number of arrests had been made in Cannock due to thefts of lead and scrap metal. He also stated that officers would target businesses to check CCTV operation and accounts to check activity and advised that it was always best to contact the Police in the event that someone trespassed on land.

Members of the public then had a discussion and a number of issues/concerns identified by local people within the Hednesford area were raised which included the following:-

- Windows smashed causing around £10,000 worth of damage at the new Hednesford development
- Problem with youths congregating and causing anti-social behaviour
- Worried residents who had received damage to their properties

- Although there was an improvement, things needed to remain the same or be better
- Concern from shopkeepers locking up at night in Hednesford
- Engagement needed with young people about the dangers of drugs to include speaking with parents of those causing problems
- Facilities/activities needed for young people
- Issues of concern with drug dealing in the area
- Residents wanted to work with the Police to help combat the problems
- Reports of crime figures being down

In response to some of the concerns, PC Aries referred to the incident of windows being smashed on the new development in Hednesford and advised that no arrests had been made as no identification from the CCTV footage could be made.

With regard to crime figures, Chief Inspector Ratcliffe reported that overall crime was down and figures for November had improved compared with September. The figures were taken from reported incidents made by the public and it was important to make members of the public aware of what was going on in their area by using the media and social networking websites.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised the Forum that a Police operation had taken place in the area which had involved engaging with young people. He advised that most of the young people had been dispersed out of the town centre and there was a reduction in anti-social behaviour. He also advised that he had received no reports from concerned shopkeepers in the town centre.

Inspector Ellerton advised the Forum that the Police were engaging with families of young people that were causing problems and commented that facilities were needed for young people such as the one in Rugeley.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe commented that anti-social behaviour was one of the top 10 priorities for Staffordshire Police and there was a commitment to protect Police numbers in neighbourhoods, with no reduction in Officers within Cannock Chase District. He then reported on a Police operation which targeted problem young people and advised that 33 young people were now on an anti-social behaviour intervention process. As part of the process parents were informed and were supportive of this, and he advised that work was ongoing.

He informed the Forum that there was now an extra PCSO who had been recruited for Hednesford, and having teamed up with St Johns Ambulance the Police would now be able to use premises in the town centre above Lloyds Bank, however the building was not open to the public due to access issues.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe then informed the Forum that regular meetings were held with the local MP and Members of the Council to discuss issues, and indicated that he would be happy to come back to the next meeting of the Forum with updates.

There is a problem with underage drinking and associated trouble which is on the increase in the Town Centre/Church Hill and spreading to Hednesford Hills. What can be done about this?

PC Graham Aries indicated that premises selling alcohol were now finding it easy to spot when checks were taking place, however a number of premises had been identified as selling to underage children and Trading Standards had been contacted. He explained that work was ongoing.

The Forum discussed parking within Hednesford and the need for a visual notice on the premises that the Police would occupy in Hednesford. PC Aries would look into this and liaise with the Council on parking issues.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised the Forum that there was a significant amount of peer pressure associated with alcohol and how readily available it was for young people to access. He stated that the Police through operations were trying to combat the problems with underage drinking.

He was keen to see if any members of the public would find it beneficial to visit the Police station to see the work which was currently ongoing and discuss concerns. A number of residents appeared keen to do this.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe indicated that he would provide a report at the next Forum.

28. Update on Hednesford Town Centre Regeneration and Park Improvements

Mr. Watson, Economic Development Manager referred to concerns highlighted at the last meeting in respect of parking issues at the former medical centre on Eskrett Street. He advised that the PCT had not yet responded, however the Council would continue to pursue this.

With regard to the safety issues associated with the lack of a footpath linking the car park and Cardigan place, Mr. Watson advised the Forum that this had now been rectified and also indicated that a dropped kerb had been installed at the end of the alleyway next to B&M Stores.

He advised that the retail block had been completed and was awaiting letting and the bingo hall had been occupied since 20 October, 2011. The car park at Rugeley Road was nearing completion and indicated that there would also be further parking spaces available when the scheme was finally completed.

Mr. Watson reported that discussions were continuing with a discount foodstore operator and construction had commenced to the block on Market Street. It was hoped that completion would take place by June, 2012.

With regard to Hednesford park materials were on site ready to create new access points and the car park to the Park had now been closed. He explained that the existing pedestrian access would also be closed.

He hoped that by mid January, 2012 the bingo hall and drill hall would be demolished and work would commence on Phase 2 (ATP) with the retaining wall being built.

He reported that work would commence on the junction of Victoria Street and Market

Street in January, 2012. He explained that there would be lane closures for approximately 3 months, which would not affect the access to the bus station, although part of Victoria Street would have to close from February, 2012. He explained that the section from the new bungalow up to the new drill hall would be closed to enable the construction of the new roundabout. Access to the bungalows would be maintained.

It was reported that by December, 2012 it Phases 1 and 2 should be complete with retail floor space open.

A Hednesford Town Councillor pointed out that the 'No Exit' signage in the car park near Cardigan Place was not very visible. Mr. Watson stated that the Council would be improving the signage and indicated that additional signage was due to be erected on Market Street near Cardigan Place.

A member of the public asked if the new community centre would be operated by the Council. Mr. Watson responded and stated that the Council would not run the facility however the Council were trying to secure interests from organisations who would be interested in running it.

A local Ward Member expressed concern with the arrangements for pedestrian access across Market Street. Mr. Watson advised that Staffordshire County Council had previously considered the design and safety audits had been carried out. He advised that a further safety audit would be carried out after the scheme was operational; however there were ongoing discussions with regard to implementation.

29. What has happened to the time capsule that was in the Aquarius Ballroom and where is it going to be relocated to.

Mr. Watson informed the Forum that the contents of the capsule were currently in safe storage at the Council; however ongoing discussions were taking place as to the location where it should be permanently kept. It was understood that Hednesford Town Council had discussed this matter.

30. Update on the Friends of Hednesford Park

Mr. Faulkner, Friends of Hednesford Park advised the Forum that the group was now established and the Constitution was agreed in September. There were now 11 members, 8 non voting representatives and 35 members.

He reported on recent and upcoming events which had been organised and included:-

- Lantern parade held on 31 October with around 350 people attending walking through areas of Hednesford
- 11 February, 2012 - Army cadets recruitment drive to be held in Hednesford Park with training events taking place on Tuesdays and Thursdays
- March, 2012 – Tree planting in Hednesford Park. Stage 1 due in December and Stage 2 in August all part of a lottery bid
- 7 April, 2012 - Hednesford Town Traders Easter egg hunt
- 2 June, 2012 - Hednesford 'Got Talent' competition
- 7 August, 2012 – 'It's a Knockout' competition in conjunction with the Olympic

- games having had applied for funding
- 7 August, 2012 – Torch carrying parade around Rugeley, Hednesford and Cannock and along the Heritage Trail in support of the Olympics

Mr. Faulkner was seeking more volunteers and hoping more organisations would show an interest in what the group was trying to achieve.

Mr. David Wisehall, Hednesford Traders Association was supportive of the group and advised that the Association would be meeting in January, 2012 to discuss and formulate a number of events in conjunction with the group.

31. Are there any proposals to change the refuse collection due to there being a new Labour Administration?

Mr. Turville, local resident asked if weekly refuse collections would be reinstated and asked if there had been any problems with fortnightly collections.

Mr. T. McGovern advised that there were no plans to change the current refuse collections and reported on guidance issued by the Government to promote weekly refuse collections. He indicated that weekly refuse collections were not a legal requirement and the guidance received was unclear as to whether or not the funding was one off or ongoing.

He reported that the Council was at capacity in terms of the number of refuse vehicles and crew that it had, and if collections were increased investment would need to be made which would mean an increase in costs.

Mr. McGovern reported that the number of complaints received was very low and the refuse collection service was running well.

A number of members of the public expressed satisfaction with current waste collection services.

32. Update on Pye Green Valley – landscaping and any news of the Development?

In response to questions raised by Mr. Turville, Chris Evans, Landscape Architect, Staffordshire County Council reported that he was not aware of any embankment on either side of the road as the road was elevated. He also advised the Forum that he would only be dealing with landscaping of the open space.

He reported that Property Services would be responsible for the sale of the land which had not yet been marketed but hoped this would happen in the New Year.

With regard to landscaping he reported that planting, footpath works and timber chicanes had been completed. He advised that tarmac work and fencing was still required to be undertaken.

He indicated that access to the roundabout was now open and reported that the barrier was now in place and would be until the road was opened when the new homes were built. He reported that it had been agreed that the street lights in the valley should be on during the evenings although not all street lights would be in use.

Mr. Evans reported on incidents of trees being vandalised by young people. He then commented that the management of the open space was ongoing and it would be pleasing to see more groups set up who could help with the work required on the valley.

A member of the public referred to the amount of traffic which travelled along Stafford Road and asked if there was anything in place to tackle this. Mr. Evans commented that a traffic assessment would be undertaken.

Mr. B. Phillips, Head of Planning and Regeneration advised the Forum that there would be a scheme for traffic calming as part of the planning application and if concern was still raised, this could be raised with the County Council.

Members of the public were concerned with the proposals for the number of new houses in Hednesford. The Chairman advised that the land West of Pye Green Road was previously supported and would still need to go before the Planning Committee. He also advised that the Council had funded a project to consider if it would be viable to install a bypass on the Winchester Road.

In response to a question raised by a Member, Mr. Evans advised that it was possible to recover wildlife and some wildlife could still be seen. He also stated that he would endeavour to maintain the open space for the public.

33. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

The Chairman reported that the next Forum was scheduled for Monday 26 March, 2012 and questions from members of the public should be submitted on the forms supplied.

22. Dates of Future Meetings

The Chairman confirmed the following date of the next Hednesford Community Forum meeting:-

- Monday 26 March, 2012

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm.