

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HEDNESFORD COMMUNITY FORUM
THURSDAY 10 MARCH, 2011 AT 7.00 P.M.

AT THE MUSEUM OF CANNOCK CHASE, VALLEY ROAD, HEDNESFORD

PRESENT: Councillors

Adamson, G. (Chairman)
Cartwright, Mrs. S.M. (Chairman)

Ball, G.D.	Grice, Mrs. D.
Burnett, G.	Yates, Ms. W.
Burnett, J.	

Other Councillors present:

County Councillor J. Bernard, Hednesford & Rawnsley Division
Councillor Mrs. A.F. Bernard
Councillor M. Sutherland
Councillor D. Todd

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

Also present: Members of the Public – approximately 40
Councillor A. Pearson, Hednesford Town Council
Mr. W. Mortiboys, Staffordshire County Council
Inspector Pat Shannaghan, Staffordshire Police
Inspector Chris Ellerton Staffordshire Police, Chase Division
Mr. W. Southall, Crew Manager, Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service
Press

36. Apologies

No apologies were received.

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

<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>	<u>Type</u>
Grice, Mrs. D.	Member lives in Brindley Crescent, Hednesford	Personal

38. Notes

The Notes of the meeting held on 30 November, 2010 were agreed as a correct record.

39. Questions for Staffordshire Police

The Chairman welcomed Inspector Shanaghan to the meeting.

Inspector Shanaghan reported that he had taken up a new post with the South Staffs Force and would not be attending Hednesford Community Forum meetings in the future. He informed the Forum that Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliffe was now in charge of the Cannock Division and Inspector Chris Ellerton would be attending future meetings of the Forum. Inspector Ellerton informed the Forum that he had been based in Rugeley for the past 4 years and would now be committed to Cannock Chase.

Inspector Shanaghan then informed the Forum that speed checks had been undertaken on Thornhill/Station Road, Cannock due to the speed of traffic.

A Hednesford Town Councillor referred to the recent cuts in the Police Force and asked how this would impact on the local area. Inspector Shanaghan advised that there was a commitment to front line services and the Chief Constable would not be making cuts.

A Local Ward Member informed the Forum that during September, 2010 there were 172 recorded crimes in Hednesford, and more recently there were 9 recorded crimes within a 48 hour period. Inspector Shanaghan advised that there had been a reduction in crime across the District over the past 12 months. He stated that there had been a slight increase in burglary in Hednesford however 3 people in question had been charged with one in prison, one on remand and the other on bail. He also reported on a local police operation which looked at crime patterns and areas that required targeting and it was hoped that this information would assist with pro-active policing.

In response to a question from a local Ward Member, Inspector Shanaghan informed the Forum that the Police were currently in discussion with a developer regarding the establishment of a local base in Hednesford.

40. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

The Chairman welcomed Wes Southall, Crew Manager to the meeting.

Mr. Southall informed the Forum that he had previously been based at Rugeley and was now stationed at Cannock Fire Station as Risk Reduction Officer. He explained that the Fire Station was now fully operational, 24 hours and would be open to the general public early April, 2011.

A Hednesford Town Councillor praised the good work in respect of the fire service fitting smoke alarms to properties and asked if there would be any reduction to this service. Mr. Southall advised that there would be no reduction to the service.

Mr. Tony McGovern, Corporate Director, Cannock Chase Council asked about the community facilities located within the fire station. Mr. Southall advised that the

gymnasium was not open to the general public but was open to certain groups, although if groups were interested they should contact 01785 898513 for more information.

41. Hednesford Town Centre Regeneration

The Chairman welcomed Mr. G. Watson, Economic Development Manager, Cannock Chase Council to the meeting.

Mr. Watson reported that with regard to Phase 2, the Section 106 agreement had been completed on 14 February, 2011 and planning permission was now in place for both Phases. He advised that Tesco were now in the time period in which they would need to confirm that they were happy with the planning permission.

He informed the Forum that a progress meeting had been held with the developers and the first development would provide for a replacement bingo hall. Phase 1 would include a new drill hall and also improvements to the car park accessed off Rugeley Road. He also advised that a detailed programme was being put together with the developer.

A member of the public referred to the Aquarius Ballroom and asked if a replacement would be built when it closed. Mr. Watson advised the approved plans included a replacement community facility.

A member of the public asked who made decisions with regard to the hire of the Council's ballroom. Mr. Watson explained that similar questions had been asked previously at a Forum and advised that the Council had entered into discussions with the current tenant of the Aquarius Ballroom.

Mr. T. McGovern informed the Forum that activities could transfer from the Aquarius although sole use of the Council's ballroom could not be given due to other groups who had an interest in using it as a community facility such as the Blood Authority and various community, public sector and voluntary groups. He advised that the Council's Cabinet Members would accept long-term block bookings from the Aquarius users/Manager although the terms and conditions would be different due to implications on how the ballroom was currently used and whether or not it required caretaking in the evening. The Council at present would not undergo a full competitive tender for the letting of the Council's ballroom due to the current position of the Aquarius.

A member of the public asked if people using the Council's ballroom would incur parking charges. Mr. McGovern advised that the Council's town centre car parks were all chargeable and only Hednesford where the Town Council had previously entered into an agreement with the Council had different terms.

A member of the public then enquired how many groups and what the frequency of use was for the ballroom. Mr. McGovern provided detailed information to the Forum on bookings the Council had received for the ballroom for the next 2 weeks. He then informed the Forum that there was space for further bookings which should be able to accommodate current users of the Aquarius.

He also informed the Forum that those groups, who currently make bookings through the Aquarius, would be encouraged to continue to do this.

Members of the public raised concern that regular users and groups would need to use the Council's facility during the evenings. Mr. McGovern advised that arrangements would need to be put in place so that caretakers would be available for setting the alarm and closing the building at the end of the night which would incur additional costs. He indicated however that detailed dialogue had not yet started.

In response to a question by a member of the public, Mr. T. McGovern advised the Forum that there were a number of reasons why the caretaker was required to lock up which included insurance and security and responsibility to the key holder. He indicated that if a key was given to one group, this could lead to other groups also requesting the same.

Local resident and user of the Aquarius provided information to the Forum on the dance club she runs and stated that at the Forum 12 months ago users were told that they would be accommodated when the Aquarius closed. She asked where groups would go if the Council's facility could not be used. She stated that people needed to be advised of the position.

Mr. McGovern responded that guarantees could not be given as the facility was used by different sections of the community, and advised that there were issues which needed to be addressed and detailed discussions would need to take place with the current Manager in order that groups could be accommodated at the Council's facility without dislodging other bookings.

A member of the public asked what the cost was to hire the Council's facility. Mr. McGovern indicated that if long-term bookings were taken from the Aquarius discounts could be offered, although discussions would need to be had. He also advised that there would be no subsidy from the Council in light of the Council's current budgetary position.

A member of the public asked how long it would be before the site was developed. Mr. Watson responded and referred to the detailed phasing which required notice being given with reference to the Aquarius Ballroom and Hednesford Town Council. The programme assumed that demolition/reclamation would be undertaken in mid 2011. There would then be a junction improvement on Market Street, and a new roundabout which would be constructed.

A local County Councillor referred to the new fire Station and asked if any of the regular bookings from the Council could be transferred in order that the Aquarius could use the Council's facility. Mr. McGovern indicated that it may be a possibility although he was of the view that many existing groups would not accept it as they preferred the location and facilities at the Civic Centre for their activities.

A local Ward Member asked about the start of Phase 1. Mr. Watson explained that Phase 1 work would start at the park end and as the development proceeded buildings along Market Street would be replaced, with the proposed discount food store being built later. He indicated that if work commenced over the next month to six weeks it was anticipated that the development would be complete by 2013. He reported on the problems with the junction of Market Street and Victoria Street and informed the Forum that the County Council Highways department had looked in detail and had agreed the new junction design.

A member of the public asked where the new replacement facility would be located. Mr. Watson advised of the location and indicated that it would become the responsibility of the Council. He also stated that the letting of the new facility would have to go through a full competitive tender process.

42. Brindley Crescent, Hednesford

The Chairman welcomed M. W. Mortiboys, Staffordshire County Council.

Councillor Mrs. D. Grice, local Ward Member reported that a number of problems existed within the cul-de-sac of Brindley Crescent. She informed the Forum that ambulances had problems identifying which part of the Crescent they should go to, large vehicles could not turn and fire engines would not be able to get down the Crescent in an emergency. She asked if it would be possible to open up the Crescent but was informed that it would be too expensive.

Mr. Mortiboys informed the Forum that he had viewed the area and agreed that there was a problem with parked vehicles in turning heads, however the Crescent was filled around 15 years ago with a full consultation taking place. He advised that both signage and re-naming of the Crescent could be considered as the road was totally removed and it could not be converted back.

He advised the Forum that the County Council budget was £8.9 million this year and would be less than half the year after and given that there were no issues around congestion or air quality, opening up the Crescent would only re-introduce old issues.

Councillor Grice referred to the problems with the fence around part of the Crescent and stated that the Crescent should be opened up. She also advised that local residents were never consulted with the closing of the Crescent.

Mr. Mortiboys advised the Forum that the Crescent would not be opened up, however he was happy to meet with the Member to discuss issues and try and find ways of solving them.

43. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

The Chairman reported that the next Forum was scheduled for Tuesday 14 June, 2011 and questions from members of the public should be submitted on the forms supplied.

44. Dates of Future Meetings

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

- Tuesday 14 June, 2011

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 8.50 p.m.