

The Forum received a presentation from Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliffe from Staffordshire Police, Mr. Phil McFarlane from Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Mr. Stephen Brown, Chief Executive from Cannock Chase Council.

Stephen Brown, Chief Executive explained that the vision of the Community Safety Partnership was for Cannock Chase to be a place where people had the opportunity to enhance their quality of life and achieve economic prosperity.

The Chief Executive outlined the structure of the Chase Community Partnership and explained that Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a statutory duty on local authorities and other 'Responsible Authorities' to 'exercise their various functions with due regard to their likely effect and the need to do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area'.

The Chase Community Partnership was made up of responsible authority partners who had a statutory responsibility which included Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire Fires and Rescue Services and South Staffordshire PCT whilst other organisations included Parish Councils', Chase CVS and Cannock CAB.

The Community Safety Delivery Plan's targets were highlighted which included Increased assurance in the community, Improved Living Environments and Reduced Offending

It was reported that Councillor G. Adamson, Leader of the Council, was the Chair of the Strategic Board / Responsible Authority's Group (RAG) and the Chief Executive, Stephen Brown, was the Chair of the Executive Board.

A number of initiatives had been undertaken by the Chase Community Partnership with respect to domestic violence which had proved to be successful with an increase in the number of incidents being reported. Domestic violence had reduced by 35% as a consequence of this.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe (Local Policing Commander) advised that it was important that resources were used in an effective and efficient manner, particularly as allocated budgets were being reduced. By working through the Chase Community Partnership a greater achievement of what could be done had been made. The Forum was advised that the public's perception of crime and anti social behaviour (ASB) levels was greater than which was actually occurring and ways to address this issue were being explored.

The top priorities for 2012/13 were to deliver quality services, reduce crime and disorder, protect the public from harm and provide value for money.

It was reported that Officers, with the support of its partners, had conducted a number of search warrants as part of an operation at four addresses in Mill Street, Cannock after members of the community had raised concerns relating to crime and disorder at the location. A council flat had also been closed and boarded up following neighbours complaints, as it had been proved that heroin had been used at the property.

A number of initiatives had been carried out to try and address ASB issues, including a boxing project for young people, PCSOs had attended youth clubs, and young people had been encouraged to take a pride in their area and to take part in a community clear up.

He explained that all crime had reduced from between 2009/10 and there had been nearly 1,000 crimes less reported.

Chief Inspector Ratcliff then reported on the vulnerability of people being subjected to crime by way of their religion, gender or disability and referred to a man who had a facial disfigurement being called names which he found very distressing. As a way to tackle such crimes the partnership decided that they would approach local schools to educate them on how it feels to be a victim of bullying and in this case Hate Crime as the man was being targeted due to his disability. As a result of this school children thanked the man for attending and this also made a difference to the person who had been bullied.

With regard to community priorities Chief Inspector Ratcliffe reported that issues in the local community would be prioritised. He explained that one issue in Cannock which had been raised was with modified car users causing problems around the Longford Island and the Orbital, although this issue had been taken up by the Joint Operations Group. He explained that the Police had conducted a 'online' survey which had generated almost 250 responses from local residents.

At this point a local resident referred to 'Drink Stop' in Hednesford and the problem with drug dealing, concern was also raised in respect of the heritage trail at night time and the need for both lighting and Police presence.

The Chief Executive advised that Staffordshire County Council, as part of the Chase Community Partnership:

- Supported vulnerable people in the community through Children's and Adult safeguarding processes
- Commissioners of services within the area covering a range of services accessed by residents
- Responsibility of road safety across the county taking account of local issues
- Members of the Joint Operational Group (JOG)
- Statutory service provider across a range of services

Mr. Phil McFarlane then explained that he was Head of Prevent & Protect Western Service Delivery Group which covered Stafford, Cannock and South Staffordshire.

There had been a significant reduction in the number of small fires occurring in Hednesford and a great deal of time had been spent by Fire Officers on fire prevention projects. As a consequence Hednesford North and South did not appear on statistics this year and there was an 83% reduction. He reported that both the Easter and summer campaign projects were a success and had helped by giving young people the opportunity to engage in other activities.

5. Questions for Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust

Ms. Julie Hendry, Director of Quality and Patient Experience reported on the current recruitment drive at Stafford Hospital. She advised the Forum that the Hospital required a number of Senior Doctors and that there was some difficulty recruiting for the Accident and Emergency Department (A&E) together with issues with recruiting middle grade

Doctors. However, she advised that 5 Consultants had now been appointed for A&E and the target had now been met.

She advised the Forum that the Trust Board had made the decision that they had now met the criteria for the re-opening of the A&E department with the final decision being made tomorrow following a meeting between Trust Board members and the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's). There would be an announcement on Wednesday 12 September and if agreement was made the A&E department was scheduled to re-open the beginning of the October.

The Vice-Chairman expressed concern that it had been proposed to close the Nightingale restaurant facilities at Cannock Chase Hospital.

Ms. Hendry reported that the Trust was currently losing money on catering provision and she provided information to the Forum in respect of the savings which were required in order to run the service. She indicated that investment would be made into the introduction of a ward hostess service.

Councillors and members of the public referred to recent press releases which had been issued concerning the future of the hospital. In response to this Ms. Hendry reported that the local MP was planning on setting up a group in which the Chief Executive of Mid Staffs would join concerning the hospital's future.

6. Questions for Staffordshire Police – submitted in advance

Mrs. Howard, local resident reported that the old health clinic site in Hednesford was not being used and as a consequence there was anti-social behaviour being caused by children at weekends alongside other problems. She explained that she has had to contact the Police on many occasions.

Mrs. Howard explained that she had received a response from the Council which suggested that she seek an alternative way of making enquiries into who owned the property and was unhappy with the response she had received.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe reported that establishing who owned the property was important as they were responsible for maintaining the building. He explained that if children were entering the site and were accessing the building this would lead to there being a health and safety issue however he would take this up with the Joint Operations Group. A site visit could then be undertaken and pressure could be placed on the owner to maintain it.

Glenn Watson, Planning & Economic Development Services Manager reported that the old health clinic had been secured last week and other issues had been also been discussed. He explained that it was proposed that the Health Authority would sell the site and a planning application would shortly be lodged with the Council. Should the application be agreed the site would be sold to a housing association.

Councillor B. Todd asked how the cut to budgets made by Police Commissioners would impact on the local area.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe reported that he was responsible for Hednesford and referred to

recent discussions in respect of the Olympics where he had said that policing would not be compromised, and indicated that anti-social behaviour was still reducing in Hednesford.

Local residents then expressed concern with anti-social behaviour in certain areas and in particular Anglesey Park nature reserve. It was explained that youths were causing problems and would congregate on the bridge. The local residents asked if the bridge could be removed.

A Local resident explained that he had emailed the Council about the problems but had received no response and was unhappy with this, and further complaints had been made at a local ward Member's surgery and no response had been received from the Police. Officers from the Council would take this issue up.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised that the Police's internal system would flag up priority issues which were a local concern and those issues could not be removed until they had been resolved. He explained that the issues were discussed at a daily briefing which involved all partners and this particular issue had already been discussed.

Local residents then discussed other issues and Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised all members of the public to continue contacting the Police.

7. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services

The Chairman reported that no questions had been received.

8. Health Facilities – Pye Green Development

The Chairman reported that there was no representation from South Staffordshire PCT in order for this item to be discussed.

9. Questions received from Mrs. Howard, Local Resident

Question 1

Why hasn't the streets been treated with weed killer, Eskrett Street is a disgrace.

The Chairman reported that supplementary information had been received from Staffordshire County Council and read out the following statement:-

"The area has been treated, however continued wet conditions throughout the summer has lead to wash off or delayed treatment. The highway is treated 3 times during the season, the first treatment covers the channel, the second treatment mid summer is at the back of footway and the final treatment will cover the channel again. We are still weed spraying and will continue throughout September and into October".

Question 2

Parking in Eskrett Street in an evening during restricted hours is a problem. When an event is taking place at the Hen House? Traffic wardens? Not around in the evening.

The Chairman reported that a written response had been supplied from the Council and was attached as part of the Agenda. The response was:-

“Eskrett Street does feature on one of the Councils evening beat patterns for Civil Parking Enforcement; we will be asking our Civil Enforcement Contractor to ensure the area is reviewed and any enforcement required is undertaken”.

Question 3

What is the Council doing to promote business in Hednesford i.e., the new shops at the Rugeley Road end of the town.

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager reported that it was hoped that the Rugeley Road end of Market Street would reverse the trend of people going out of Hednesford by bringing people back to the town centre.

He explained that shops were available at the end of Market Street to rent. Although the shops were not Council owned he understood that the developers would enter into negotiations to agree terms to allow the shops to become marketable.

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager also reported that the Council would be launching a business rates discount scheme to help subsidise new businesses with their business rates. He advised that full details were yet to be finalised and referred to the units in Market Street which would be eligible.

10. Update on Credit Union

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager reported that a number of volunteers had now been identified to run local collection points for the Credit Union. He indicated that the first collection point would be run at the Council Office; however other points would be created the more members that joined. He reported that Cannock Chase residents had already joined and it was hoped that there would soon be more. An announcement would soon be made followed by a press release in local newspapers.

11. Speeding Traffic – Keys Park Road, Hednesford

The Chairman reported that a written response had been received from Staffordshire County Council and read out the following statement:-

“It was agreed at the last meeting that a traffic count will take place, the demand for traffic counts is high and the count is still to take place, this will be undertaken as soon as possible.

The issue is what to do once we have the figures, we do have suggestions that may help and these issues are due to be discussed at the next Divisional Highway meeting with local Members Cllr John Bernard and Cllr Phillip Jones in 2 weeks time. I would hope to have the traffic data and further information in time for the next meeting”.

12. Update on Hednesford Town Centre Regeneration

The Planning & Economic Development Services Manager reported that work was progressing and indicated that phase 2 was on target. Units had been let to Pet's Corner, Costa Coffee and Lloyd's Chemist.

He reported that with regard to phase 1 there were 2 units in Market Street under offer and the two of the four units next to Hednesford Park were also currently under offer. He confirmed that Aldi would be the discount food store operator and Tesco would be starting its recruitment process next week through their website.

He reported that the layout for the new community building which replaces the Aquarius had been agreed and floor plans were available for those that wished to view them. He indicated that the Council would be going out shortly to secure expressions of interests for the running of the facility.

With regard to a comment made by a member of the public concerning the inclusion of a public house, the Planning & Economic Development Services Manager indicated that there was no proposal in place as part of the scheme.

13. Update on Hednesford Park

The Chairman of Friends of Hednesford Park reported that the Council and Friends of Hednesford Park worked in conjunction with each other to try and promote activities that were taking place. She commented on the work undertaken by Tom Walsh, Parks and Open Spaces Manager to make events happen.

She explained that their AGM would be held on Thursday 20 September, 2013 commencing at 8.00 p.m. at the Hednesford Ex-Servicemen's Club and people were encouraged to attend.

She referred to a bid for funding through the Heritage Lottery Fund and the need for people to be active in the events organised. She commented that a Halloween event was being organised and volunteers were required to support the event. This was an opportunity for people to get involved as members of the Heritage Lottery Fund had been invited to attend.

14. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

The Chairman reported that the next Forum was scheduled for 3 December, 2012 subject to Council approval and questions from members of the public should be submitted on the forms supplied.

15. Dates of Future Meetings

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

3 December, 2012

4 March, 2013

CHAIRMAN

(The meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.)