

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

MONDAY 19 NOVEMBER, 2012 AT 7.00 P.M.

AT THE MUSEUM OF CANNOCK CHASE, VALLEY ROAD, HEDNESFORD

PRESENT: Councillors

Adamson, G. (Chairman)
Pearson, A. (Vice-Chairman)

Ball, G.D. Grice, Mrs. D.

Other Councillors Present: Councillor Mrs. D. Todd
Councillor J. Toth
Councillor Mrs. L. Whitehouse
Councillor C. Mitchell
Councillor P.A. Snape

Officers: T. McGovern, Corporate Director
G. Watson, Planning & Economic Development
Services Manager
J. Hunt, Senior Committee Officer
M. Edmonds, Head of Commissioning

Also present: Members of the Public – approximately 25
Chief Inspector C. Ratcliffe, Staffordshire Police,
Chase Division
Sgt. Edge, Cannock Police
County Councillor J. Bernard (Hednesford
Division)
M. Keeling, Community Infrastructure Liaison
Officer, Staffordshire County Council
Ms. L. Hill-Tout, Chief Executive, Mid Staffs NHS
Foundation Trust

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B. Gamble and R. Todd.

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

There were no interests declared.

3. Notes

Arising from consideration of the Notes Mr. G. Burnett, local resident referred to Minute 5 and commented that the local MP had now set up a group with regard to looking at issues concerning the future of Cannock Chase Hospital.

He also referred to Minute 6 and advised that the new Police and Crime Commissioner had been elected.

The Notes of the meeting held on 10 September, 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Consultation on Stadium Site

The Chairman explained that the meeting had changed from its original date due to the consultation on the stadium site.

Tony McGovern, Corporate Director gave a brief presentation with regard to the former Cannock Stadium site. It was hoped that local people could provide their thoughts and views on what leisure and recreation facilities they would like to see at the former site.

The Consultation period would end on 30 November, 2012 and local people were being consulted using the following:-

- Letter and consultation questionnaire
- Attendance at local meetings and events
- Telephone interviews
- Social media

Following the consultation, results would be presented to the Council's Cabinet for further consideration and the local community would be kept informed through the local press and would have the opportunity to provide further comments on design and planning application proposals.

It was explained that there had been 300 responses received and local people had been asked to provide a postcode in order that the Council could analyse which areas responses had been received from.

A local resident asked about the cost for the project and whether funding would be used through S106 monies received from the Pye Green valley development. The Corporate Director explained that no formal decision had been made although S106 money was available from the Pye Green development which could be allocated for sport and recreation if agreed by the Council. However, the facility would also be available for use by those wards in Hednesford.

In response to a question concerning the survey, the Corporate Director responded and advised the Forum that certain questions were not appropriate to be included in the survey. An example of this was around housing as the Council had already removed the site from part of the Local Plan in the District that deals with housing supply.

The Chairman responded and stated that the stadium site would be a facility for all residents of all wards to use. Other Members of the Council asked residents to provide their views as responses had already been received from sporting groups interested in the proposals. This was an opportunity for local people to have their say in what would happen to the stadium site.

A local resident asked how younger people were being engaged. The Corporate Director explained that pre-existing networks within sporting groups were being consulted and a suggestion to make a presentation to school children was taken on board as part of the consultation.

A Member of the Council Councillor P. Snape explained to the Forum the position with the stadium site prior to the proposals to bring it back into use. He then asked about the timescale in implementing the project. The Corporate Director responded and stated that the timescale was dependent upon what facilities would be available and could take up to 5 years to develop the site. A funding strategy would need to be developed and agreed, and the necessary planning consents obtained before the site could be developed.

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5. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services

It was reported that there were no questions received.

At this point the Chairman reported that given that no questions had been received for Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services, he would ask Mid Staffs NHS Foundation Trust for an update on Trust related matters.

6. Mid Staffs NHS Foundation Trust

The Chairman welcomed Lyn Hill-Tout, Chief Executive to provide an update on Trust related matters.

Lyn Hill-Tout provided information to the Forum in respect of public meetings that would be held to discuss a wide range of issues and would

include the same format as previous meetings. They would be held on:

- 4 December, 2012 in the Ballroom, Cannock Chase Council between 7-9 p.m. with doors open from 6.45 p.m.
- 10 December, 2012 in the Kingston Centre, Stafford between 7-9 p.m. with doors open from 6.45 p.m.

A local resident referred to the expansion of the rheumatology department at Cannock Hospital and welcomed this.

Lyn Hill-Tout referred to the hospital as being the main base for the rheumatology department and also reported that a new CT scanner had been installed. She advised that despite previous concerns, there were no plans to close Cannock Hospital, although it was under utilised. With this in mind the Trust was currently working together with a group to see how the Hospital could be used effectively.

In response to a question regarding the expansion of the department, Lyn Hill-Tout commented that the day unit had been expanded which would allow patients' daytime access for drugs as drug regimes had now changed from the past.

The Chairman asked for an update in respect of the closure of the A&E department at Mid Staffs Hospital.

Lyn Hill-Tout provided the Forum with background information to why the A&E department had closed and explained the decision made by the Trust Board agreeing that the department should open but with concerns that it could be in a vulnerable position if any of the staff recruited were unavailable. Discussions were then held with the CCG's who did not agree that the department should open 24 hours and following discussions would open until 10.00 p.m. only. There was no proposal to re-open 24 hours although other services could be accessed.

In response to a question concerning additional staffing based on the original decision to open 24 hours, Lyn Hill-Tout explained that the hospital may recruit the full 6 consultants needed as locums and agency staff were currently being used. She explained that the hospital may consider reducing staff numbers but currently there was a great need for patient care particularly over the winter period. She referred to plans by the CCG's to change the service provided, however consideration would first need to be given to their staffing model before reducing staff numbers.

She reported that as of 4 December, 2012 certain services at Stafford Hospital could be accessed 24 hours per day depending on the nature of the problem experienced by the patient.

A Member of the Council Councillor J. Toth expressed concern that local residents would be required to travel as far as North Staffs to receive

treatment or visit family members following the decision not to re-open the A&E department 24 hours. He was concerned that the CCG's had made this decision and asked if the community should have had involvement in this decision.

Lyn Hill-Tout explained to the Forum the position of the CCG's. The CCG's were currently in shadow form and would take over all responsibility from the PCT as of 1 April, 2013. Public meetings would be held and there was a need to consult.

She explained that Monitor were independent of central government and authorised and regulated NHS Foundation Trusts. The Monitor process was first in acted with Mid Staffs when problems were being experienced.

A local resident asked about the impact on surrounding hospitals as a consequence of the A&E department being open until 10.00 p.m. only.

Lyn Hill-Tout explained that on average between 12/15 patients who could not access the A&E service at Stafford Hospital would use either North Staffs, Wolverhampton, Burton or Walsall. The ambulance service had received extra funding through the PCT and patients using the ambulance service would be taken to the nearest hospital depending on the seriousness of their condition.

A local resident referred to the proposal to move Social Services and highlighted problems with car parking. Lyn Hill-Tout explained that a meeting had been held on how best the hospital could be utilised and the situation with car parking had been discussed with suggestions being made.

A Member of the Council Councillor P. Snape asked if any figures were available for Stoke in respect of the queuing of ambulances. Lyn Hill-Tout explained that the first two quarters were good but later figures were going down. The figures included patients who were waiting 24 hours or more.

She explained that ambulance turnaround figures were approximately 20 minutes, however in the winter months the turnaround was longer due to the hospital being busier. She commented that it was important to make sure ambulances were back out on the road once patients had been dropped off.

7. Questions for Staffordshire Police – Submitted in advance

Questions for the Police were included below in questions raised by members of the public.

8. Questions received from Sue Lynskey, Local Resident

Q1. Is speeding from Rose Hill Island to Pye Green Road into Brindley

Road being addressed?

The Chairman welcomed Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliffe to the meeting.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe explained that road safety was a priority and a number of methods including social media were used to try and get the message across to people.

He explained that numerous campaigns were undertaken and handheld speed devices were used on roads. Regular operations were being conducted and plans existed for the future, and currently problems on Pye Green Road were being addressed.

A local resident referred to a matter which was of a personal nature and was asked by Chief Inspector Ratcliffe to visit the Police Station where further discussions could be held.

Anglesey Park Nature Reserve

Councillor G. Ball, Ward Member referred to the Minutes from the previous meeting and asked what the position was with regard to the bridge at Bedford Place (Anglesey Park nature reserve).

A local resident advised that the situation was still the same and with the new lighting young people were congregating under it which made it easier for drug related activities to take place.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised that feedback had been received from the young people who blamed boredom as part of the reason. He explained that the problem required a resolution and issues considered as to why they were congregating there. He advised that the issue would not be solved by simply moving the young people on.

It was reported that a resident meeting had taken place with the attendance of 8/9 people and information had been received and passed on by PCSO Evans.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe stated that they would continue to monitor the situation and work more closely with the Council.

Drug Related Activities – Cardigan Place

Local residents referred to drug related activities taking place in certain areas of Hednesford including the garden in Cardigan Place.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised the Forum that drug related matters were a priority to deal with as it caused crime and misery for both victims and those who were addicted. He referred to a recent crackdown where 100 cannabis plants were seized and ammunition from a house in Cannock and the criminality associated with this activity. He commented

that the Police would continue to crackdown on those undertaking in such activities and would involve other agencies if needed.

He explained that he would investigate activities around the garden in Cardigan Place and also raise this issue through the Joint Operations Group, although there was a duty for the land to be maintained by the landlord and referred to legislation which could be used.

Councillor A. Pearson, Ward Member referred to this and explained that a number of years ago Hednesford Town Council offered to clear the land at no cost but this offer was declined.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe then referred to the website www.police.uk where various statistics with regard to crime in the local area was available to view.

He reported that burglary in Hednesford was down from last year from 27 to 23, robbery was the same between April and now and vehicle crime, theft from vehicles was up slightly on last year from 40 to 41 crimes.

9. Questions received from Mrs. B.M. Thompson, Local Resident

Q1. Could anything be done about the inconsiderate parking at the junction of Essex Drive with Stafford Lane (hairdressers and corner shop)

The following response was received:-

“It is confirmed that there is no Traffic Regulation Order in force”.

The Chairman then welcomed Mark Keeling, Staffordshire County Council to the meeting.

Mark Keeling explained to the Forum that there were no restrictions in place and no enforcement; although suggestions could be made to the Joint Parking Committee and restrictions could be considered for the corner of the junction.

Local residents explained that problems were being caused on the estate and traffic was not flowing as it should be particularly around the area where the hairdresser was located. Suggestions were made by residents on how to improve the situation with the use of yellow lines.

Mark Keeling explained that in order for any restriction to be placed, a Traffic Regulation Order would be required and could take some months as consultation with residents and local businesses was required.

Q2. What can be done about people who park all day on the Co-op car park, Hednesford when using the trains to Walsall or Birmingham?

The following response was received:-

“There is no enforcement that currently exists on the car park although this was a matter that was discussed between the Council and the Town Council in the past. In order for enforcement action to be undertaken, a parking order must be in existence on the car park; such as those on pay and display car parks. We are aware a number of the vehicles that use the car park in question are as a result of an overflow from the nearby free railway car park and that a number of Hednesford workers also use the car park for all day parking.

There will be further positive changes to car parking in Hednesford as there are currently in excess of 300 spaces available on car parks around the town and this will soon increase with the opening of the Tesco store and car park”.

Tony McGovern explained that significant changes would take place with the opening of the new Tesco store which would create over 540 new spaces. The Council would monitor the situation to see if the additional car parking would alleviate some of the problems, however the Council were unable to take any action unless there was a system for taking payments in place.

A local resident asked whether Tesco would take enforcement action if they encountered the same problems with parking.

Glenn Watson, Planning & Economic Development Services Manager advised that in his opinion most commuters would probably park closest to the railway station which would not interfere with shoppers accessing the new Tesco store. There would be a lot of free parking available in Hednesford and no problems were envisaged at this time.

He reported that there was no formal management arrangement in place for the car park, however the situation would be monitored. Although it was noted that car parking capacity would increase by over 200% with the opening of the new store.

Q3. There are taxis parked along Anglesey Street whilst waiting to join the taxi rank, this combined with the amount of disabled parking outside the Co-op, makes leaving the car park very difficult.

The following response was received:-

“The situation has already been brought to the Council’s attention and will continue to be monitored by the Licensing department to see if there are any options to address the problems raised. However, there are no parking restrictions at the point where the taxis wait. Should any vehicles be causing an obstruction this can be reported to the Police”.

Tony McGovern explained that discussions were being held with taxi drivers. Although the Council could enforce on the taxi rank, there were

no powers when they were joining the rank.

He explained that the situation would be monitored and although options were available, they would be very costly to implement. Should members of the public experience any problems with abusive drivers, they were advised to contact the Council's Licensing Unit.

10. Question received from Mr. and Mrs. Parkes, Local Residents (Similar question to Item 8)

Can anything be done regarding the parking on the corner of Stafford Lane and Essex Drive. Customers at the hairdressers have total disregard for pedestrians and other motorists i.e., parking on pavements, both sides of the narrow road and on the junction, making it extremely dangerous for exiting Essex Drive.

The Chairman agreed that this item had already been discussed above.

11. Question received from Ann Round, Local Resident

Why has parking in Hednesford been limited to 20 minutes? You can't go shopping in this time it should be at least an hour. People will not go to shop in Hednesford if they can't park. Having visited the hairdressers the other day at 9.30 a.m. I couldn't get on to the main car park because of all the people parking and using the trains. The car park behind B & M has been made drastically smaller. The council should be encouraging people to shop in Hednesford not putting them off.

The following response was received:-

The parking bays referred to in Market Street have been restricted to 20 minutes ever since Market Street was made a one way system in the 1990's. The Council have been enforcing these regulations since 2009, prior to this the Police carried out parking enforcement. The spaces would have been restricted to 20 minute waiting to allow customers who only have to make quick visits to one or two shops or the Banks etc to park for short periods of time. This is of benefit to the shopkeepers as this frees up space outside their particular shop thus encouraging trade. There are other locations around the Town where unrestricted on-street parking is available such as parts of Eskrett Street and Anglesey Street. With regard to the comments about the car parks, there are in excess of 300 spaces available on car parks around the town which will soon increase with the opening of the new Tesco store and car park. At this moment in time there are additional vehicles on the car parks with employees working on the new development site but this will ease at the end of the month. On the issue of Train Commuters parking, these residents of the local area are entitled to park on the public car parks just the same as any other shopper or employee who visits or works in the town.

There was a positive response from traders in the town who are keen on

the Council enforcing the 20 minute wait to free up the space for other users. This feedback has come via the parking officers and the Joint Parking Committee”.

Glenn Watson reported that the island was removed as part of the re-design of Market Street. He explained that following the completion of the scheme it would be subject to a 12 month road safety audit to be carried out by Staffordshire County Council and if any measures were required; they would then be dealt with.

12. Question received from Councillor B. Todd

What is the County Council doing regarding the poor state of the roads? View Street is a prime example.

Mark Keeling reported that View Street would be placed on the programme of works as £200K funding had been secured for resurfacing to be carried out to the carriageway and footpath works although works would not be carried out until at least the financial year after next. He explained that problems with potholes would be picked up following inspections.

13. Speeding Traffic – Keys Park Road, Hednesford

Mark Keeling advised that a traffic survey was undertaken on the industrial side and it was found that traffic speeds were around 40mph. He explained that approximately 3,900 vehicles used the road in a 24 hour period. With regard to the residential side, vehicles were travelling at around 31-36mph with 3,500 vehicles passing in a 24 hour period. He suggested that the speed limit should be raised on the industrial side and lowered on the other side although he would discuss this matter with the Ward Member involved. Any proposals would then need to be consulted on.

Councillor G. Ball, Ward Member wished to have it recorded that he objected to the suggestion to raise the speed limit to 40mph.

14. Update on Hednesford Town Regeneration

Glenn Watson reported that the new Tesco store would open on 26 November, 2012. As a consequence 300 jobs had been created and 94 jobs would go to those who had been unemployed long-term and 34 positions by young people aged 18-24. The store would operate 24 hours per day and details were given.

He indicated that Pets Corner, Lloyds Chemist and Costa Coffee had all taken up retail outlets, and Phones 4 U and a butchers shop were amongst the most recent lettings. It was anticipated that all the retailers would be open by the end of January next year..

He reported that 3 expressions of interests had been received and were being evaluated with regard to the running of the new facility which replaces the Aquarius Ballroom. It was hoped that an announcement would be made shortly after Christmas.

With regard to the Rugeley Road car park, it was reported that there were misquotes made in the local press. Restrictions did apply on car parking at the request of Aldi but it had been agreed that people could use the car park without having to visit the food store. He confirmed that an invitation would be extended to involve the Traders Association in discussions relating to the car park signage to be installed by Aldi.

It was reported that problems had been experienced a few weeks ago when a large number of contractors' vehicles were forced to use the Rugeley Road car park. It was explained that the gates securing the Aldi site had not been opened for the contractors and as a consequence members of the public experienced great difficulty finding spaces in the car park. Glenn Watson explained that this problem had been resolved as quickly as possible and with the conclusion of works the situation would ease over the coming weeks.

Local residents asked what the situation was with regard to Anglesey Lodge and whether there were any restrictions on the use of the building.

Glenn Watson explained that discussions were ongoing between the Pritchard Group and J D Wetherspoon about its conversion into a pub. He advised that legal matters had yet to be resolved between the two parties. The agreement would be subject to a planning application which had not yet been submitted.

He reported that in his experience a company such as Wetherspoons had a preference for retaining the character of older buildings. However, he explained that this would be something that would be considered as part of the planning process.

15. Update on Hednesford Park

Tony McGovern provided background information about the bid submitted for £2.2 million funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. He reported that on 6 September, 2012 a visit was undertaken by representatives from the Heritage Lottery Fund which described the bid as 'strong'. However, they indicated that there had been more bids than funding available and the Council would be notified in January of the decision.

He reported that on 22 November the first stage for the Heritage Lottery Fund in reviewing the applications received in the West Midlands would commence.

In response to a question raised by a local resident, it was reported that if

the funding was not secured the Council was in a position to carry out some works.

16. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

The Chairman reported that the next Forum was scheduled for 4 March, 2013. Questions from members of the public should be submitted on the forms supplied.

17. Dates of Future Meetings

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

4 March, 2013

CHAIRMAN

(The meeting closed at 9.55 p.m.)