

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HEDNESFORD COMMUNITY FORUM
MONDAY 25 JUNE, 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. Gamble, B.
Cartwright, Mrs. S.M. Todd, R.

Other Councillors Present: Councillor Mrs. D. Todd
 Councillor P.A. Snape
 Councillor Ms. J.L. Jones

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 6
 Chief Inspector C. Ratcliffe, Staffordshire Police, Chase
 Division
 County Councillor J. Bernard (Hednesford Division)
 Mr. M. Keeling, Staffordshire County Council Highways
 Mr. K. Faulkner, Friends of Hednesford Park

47. Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Councillor G. Adamson was appointed Chairman and Councillor A. Pearson was appointment Vice-Chairman of the Hednesford Community Forum for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

48. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Ms. K. Staples, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services, Ms. V. Singleton, Chase Watch – Staffordshire Police and Councillor Mrs. D. Grice.

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

There were no interests declared.

50. Notes

The Notes of the meeting held on 26 March, 2012 to include a slight amendment to Page 7, Item 43 Update on Hednesford Park, Paragraph 1 to include a second sentence were agreed as a correct record.

51. Questions for Staffordshire Police

The Chairman welcomed Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliff to the meeting to provide responses to questions raised by local residents.

Mr. G. Burnett, local resident reported that he had recently used the Police crime search facility available on the internet and found that there had been 160 crimes within the WS12 postcode which included 54 anti social behaviour crimes, 11 of which were in the centre of Hednesford. He asked why the outcomes of anti-social behaviour crimes were not available, although 34 crimes were currently under investigation.

Chief Inspector Ratcliff reported that crime statistics were available for all members of the public across the country to view by accessing the Police website at www.police.uk. The facility allowed people to search crime statistics such as anti-social behaviour, burglary and theft of vehicles by entering their postcode, town or street. He explained that there were no outcomes for anti-social behaviour as the statistic would be very mixed, however a new link would be introduced which would be based on crime investigations and would contain information on those offenders that had committed crimes where a caution or charge were given. He also explained that work was still being undertaken by the Police in respect of rolling out the Restorative Justice approach.

He advised that anti-social behaviour within Hednesford was slightly down compared to this time last year. He reported that there had been 67 incidents between March and June and Market Street, Hednesford had received a high number of reports of anti-social behaviour. Burglary was down compared to last year in Hednesford by 45%, vehicle crime was down to last year and theft of vehicles was the same. Anti-social behaviour across the District had reduced by 20% compared to last year with 200 less incidents.

Councillor P. Snape asked about the headings that fell under anti-social behaviour. Chief Inspector Ratcliff provided details, however he advised that anti-social behaviour was classed separately to other crimes.

Councillor A. Pearson raised concern about an incident where he had his vehicle stolen and received no visit from a Police Officer to take any details.

Chief Inspector Ratcliff explained that upon a member of the public contacting the Police a number of areas would be assessed such as the vulnerability of the person concerned, the crime and the risk. Upon the assessment it would then be considered if a telephone investigation could take place. However, if there was any forensic evidence at the scene of the crime then the Police would always attend.

He reported that funding of £200K from Staffordshire County Council and a further £200K

from the Police would be used to fund ANPR readers which would be placed around certain points within the County and would help the Police in tracking any vehicles that may be stolen. He also spoke of operations undertaken by the Police such as Operation Amalgam which targeted scrap metal dealers, and it was hoped this would encourage dealers not to buy stolen vehicles.

In response to a question raised by Councillor B. Gamble, Chief Inspector Ratcliff would need to provide details separately with regard to the way crimes were reported since the introduction of the non emergency telephone number.

The Chairman discussed the Olympics and the requirement for Police forces to send additional Officers to Police events, and asked if there would be enough Officers for the local area in light of the current problems with anti-social behaviour.

Chief Inspector Ratcliff reported that he would ensure that Officers were available throughout Staffordshire and as a consequence Officers would not be able to take leave until September, other than under extenuating circumstances.

A local resident reported that cyclists using the wrong side of the road in Hednesford could potentially cause accidents and asked what the Police could do.

Chief Inspector Ratcliff explained that there was a similar problem in Cannock which was dealt with by Officers. He indicated that advisory notices were circulated to perpetrators and then discussed both the dangers and legalities associated with this. He advised the Forum that something similar could be considered for Hednesford. He advised any local residents with concerns to attend one of the local meetings which were held by local Police Officers within Hednesford. Details for those meetings were available at Hednesford Library.

52. Speeding Traffic – Keys Park Road, Hednesford

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

Mr. Keeling reported that the County Council were working in conjunction with Staffordshire Police due to the problems on this stretch of road. He explained that a number of tickets had been issued to drivers and enforcement action would continue, although he advised that there were no 30mph signs along the stretch of road even though it was a 30mph zone.

He stated that the road was fairly wide on the section that occupied the industrial units and advised that a consultation would be carried out with local residents to determine whether or not that section should be made into a 40mph zone. If this was agreed, it would then enable 30mph signs to be put along the other stretch of road which may help alleviate the problems with speeding traffic.

In response to a question raised by Councillor P. Snape regarding the use of surface based speed wires, Mr. Keeling responded and advised that speed limit checks would first need to be undertaken, however it was likely that a survey would be undertaken in the next 3 months.

53. Update on Hednesford Town Centre Regeneration

The Chairman welcomed Glenn Watson, the Council's Economic Development Manager to the meeting to provide an update.

Mr. Watson reported on the Rugeley Road development and advised that negotiations continued with the discount food retailer although it was hoped for a conclusion in the next few weeks. The retail block in Market Street was complete and one of the new tenants had already moved in. This had followed a delay caused by sewage works. Problems had occurred in Market Street as a result of the on street parking not being suspended which was subsequently resolved and the road was now open.

With regard to Phase 2 Mr. Watson reported that Victoria Street re-opened in time for the Jubilee celebrations at the beginning of June which was a great success. He advised that the temporary car park located just off the island was now open and the Contractors would be asked to provide signage to confirm that it was open for public use. The erection of steel work commenced last week and it was hoped for completion by the end of July. He also indicated that Solicitors were now dealing with the letting of retail accommodation.

Mr. Watson indicated that the programme was on schedule and it was hoped that the discount food store would be open by early 2013 and Tesco by Christmas 2012. He also advised that the long-term recruitment campaign was underway with a commitment from Tesco for 80/100 jobs to be taken by local unemployed people.

The Chairman commented that it was encouraging that Tesco were committed to providing jobs for local unemployed people.

Councillor G. Ball asked about the hoarding currently in Market Street/Rugeley Road and the design of the junction on Anglesey Street, Hednesford.

Mr. Watson responded and stated that it was important for the work to be completed and also secure the buildings before the hoarding is taken down as the Council did not want the same problems with vandalism as with the retail park. He did however indicate that he would be meeting with the developer and would discuss this with them.

With regard to the junction on Anglesey Street, Mr. Watson reiterated the discussion that had taken place at the last meeting that this was the responsibility of Staffordshire County Council Highways, but would liaise with developers.

54. Update on Hednesford Park

Mr. Watson reported that all work undertaken over the past 12 months was nearing completion with a small number of items still outstanding.

He indicated that there was an additional separate proposal to secure funding through the Heritage Lottery Fund and a submission would be made by August with a public consultation due to take place on 11 July in Hednesford. Anyone interested was asked to contact Tom Walsh, Parks and Opens Spaces Manager for further information.

With regard to the pathway it was reported that only service vehicles and occasional vehicles could use this, however this had been constructed up to base height and if money was secured through the Heritage Trust Fund the work would be completed.

Mr. Faulkner, Friends of Hednesford Park then discussed future events within Hednesford and reported that the 'It's a knockout' competition would be taking place in August and the cost for local businesses to enter was £60 per team of 6. He also reported that the Hednesford 'Got Talent' competition was won by Kingsmead School and was well received; there were around 300 people in the park on the day. It was hoped that these events and the use of the park by the local community would strengthen a lottery application which had been submitted as the organisation was looking for funding for future events.

Mr. T. McGovern, Corporate Director concurred and reported that events held in the park were important with winning the bid which was for £2million. One of the criterion for the funding was how well utilised the park was in terms of the community events.

55. Questions from Member of the Public

Aquarius Facility

Mr. G. Burnett, local resident referred to the new venue and asked if there were any plans for Hednesford Town Council to use the facility or whether it would be an ideal base for the Police to use as well as being a dance facility.

Mr. Watson reported that the Council had discussed with Staffordshire Police over 2 years ago whether or not they would be keen to take space in a new unit, however there was never any response from the Police on this. He also advised that a number of discussions had taken place in respect of the usage of the replacement facility and it was considered that the facility be replaced on the basis of what the demand previously was. However, It was agreed to have not only a dance facility but to also incorporate other facilities. It was hoped that plans for the facility could be made available for the next meeting.

The Chairman reported that the Police had previously been asked if they would be stationed in Hednesford however due to financial constraints and a 20% budget cut it was unlikely that this would happen.

Councillor A. Pearson, Chairman of Hednesford Town Council responded and stated that the Town Council would not be occupying any space at the Aquarius facility and was keen to remain in the current premises.

Housing Development – Pye Green

Mr. Burnett asked for confirmation that the Council proposed to build an extra 2,000 houses in Pye Green. This consisted of 303 houses in Pye Green and 750 houses planned for the land west of Pye Green, Hednesford.

Mr. Phillips, Head of Planning and Regeneration reported that there was outline planning permission for 330 houses in Pye Green, however the land was owned by Staffordshire County Council.

He reported that there was currently a live planning application for the land west of Pye Green Road and then discussed the 1997 Local Plan which had identified that housing development was needed to meet needs beyond 2001. He stated that the new Local Plan had identified the land as being suitable for development and therefore a figure of 750 houses was identified and the development brief approved houses for the site.

The Council had received a planning application for 700 houses and there was also the option to include a primary school, local centre and allotments. He explained that the process was currently ongoing with discussions being had with the applicants.

At this point Mr. Phillips reminded those Members of the Council on the Planning Control Committee about expressing views before seeing all information in respect of the application.

A local resident referred to the current situation and the lack of health facilities. She expressed concern that with the development of more houses more health facilities would be required.

Following a discussion it was agreed that a representative from the PCT be invited to the next meeting to discuss this issue.

56. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

The Chairman reported that the next Forum was scheduled for 10 September, 2012 subject to Council approval and questions from members of the public should be submitted on the forms supplied.

Dates of Future Meetings

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

10 September, 2012
3 December, 2012
4 March, 2013

CHAIRMAN

(The meeting closed at 8.25 p.m.)