

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HEDNESFORD COMMUNITY FORUM
MONDAY 26 MARCH, 2012 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. Cartwright, Mrs. S.M.
Burnett, J. Todd, R.

Other Councillors Present: Councillor Mrs. D. Todd

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
 Hednesford Town Councillor A. Pearson
 Chief Inspector C. Ratcliffe, Staffordshire Police, Chase
 Division
 Ms. V. Singleton, Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator
 Ms. K. Staples, Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service
 County Councillor J. Bernard (Hednesford Division),
 Staffordshire County Council

35. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor G. Burnett.

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

There were no interests declared.

37. Notes

The Notes of the meeting held on 7 December, 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

**38. Staffordshire Police – Update on Issues from Previous Meeting to include
Questions from Councillor G. Burnett on behalf of Local Residents**

The Chairman welcomed Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliff to the meeting to provide the Forum with an update on issues previously raised.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised that a number of issues were raised at the last meeting detailed below. A detailed update was then given on each area.

- Rogue traders/scrap metal dealers
- Information in respect of crime statistics
- Anti-Social behaviour
- Resources for Hednesford - additional PCSO
- Alcohol/grass fire issues

Rogue Traders/Scrap Metal Dealers

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe updated the Forum and advised that work was continuing across the District in conjunction with other Police forces. In terms of those offending, extra measures were being used which included challenging those suspected of an offence and also the seizure of vehicles off roads. He assured the Forum that those engaging in criminal activity would be dealt with and work would continue.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised the Forum that work was continuing in Hednesford around the Market Street and Kingfisher Drive locations. He indicated that leaflets had been made available in respect of a joint initiative with other partners which would be taking place throughout the Easter period for local people to enjoy activities taking place in Hednesford Park, and it was hoped that this would engage the community and children. He was keen to know the general feelings of the public in respect of the anti social behaviour problems within the community.

There was a general consensus from those members of the public present that there was more Police presence, less calls and complaints from the public and that anti-social behaviour had declined since the Forum was held last year.

Councillor Mrs. D. Grice raised concern in respect of motorists on the Bindley Heath Road. She was concerned that motorists were blocking and driving onto pavements which caused problems for people with mobility issues, those with children and the general public who were trying to use the pavements.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised that the Police were noting the areas where there were similar issues and would work closely with parking enforcement officers to try and alleviate the problems. He indicated that the first step was to warn motorists using printed advisory notices, and should this fail, enforcement activity such as issuing tickets would be used to stop the offenders. He was happy to speak with members of the public at the end of the meeting to establish the streets/roads that were a cause for concern.

Resources for Hednesford - additional PCSO

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe updated the Forum and advised that there was now a new additional PCSO for Hednesford. He reported that a Police presence was now in

Hednesford Town Centre following agreement by St John's Ambulance to use their facility for local policing. He commented that this was not a Police Station but purely for Officers to use as a base and reassured the community that they were present in the Town.

Alcohol/Grass Fires

It was reported that there were 4 stages and work continued around anti-social behaviour. The first stage had commenced with 4 letters being forwarded in respect of engaging in anti-social behaviour to people within the Market Street and Hednesford area.

At this point the Chairman commented on the recent visit to Cannock Police Station that had taken place by a number of members of the public who had attended the last Forum.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe reported that the invite had been extended to those at the last Forum to visit the Police Station where new arrangements and community priorities could be discussed, and to show examples of the work being undertaken within the community. He suggested that another visit could be arranged for those that were interested that may have missed out the first time.

Information in respect of Crime Statistics

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe reported the following statistics in comparison to this time last year:

- Domestic burglary down in Hednesford by 21%
- Theft of motor vehicles down by 45%
- Theft from motor vehicles down by nearly 40%
- Violence down

He indicated that all crime types were reducing across Hednesford and that work would continue.

Speeding – Station Road, Hednesford

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe explained that there had been a multi-agency meeting and monitoring had been undertaken in Station Road, Hednesford which was arranged through Mark Keeling at Staffordshire County Council.

He explained that average speeds on the road were between 30-34mph which was then compared to other locations within Hednesford to see if this figure was representative. The figure was found to be representative and there had been almost 7,000 vehicles monitored in Station Road.

A member of the public queried the speed signage on the Rugeley Road, Hednesford as there did not appear to be 30mph signs prior to the speed cameras on this stretch of the road.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe and the Forum then discussed speed limits and signage and it was reported that signage for roads was dealt with by Staffordshire County Council.

Councillor J. Burnett discussed with the Forum a recent meeting which he and Councillor G. Burnett had attended regarding the issues on Station Road.

39. Question from Hednesford Town Councillor A. Pearson

Town Councillor A. Pearson asked if there were any plans for Staffordshire Police to follow West Midlands Police and privatise aspects of the Police service.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe reported that Surrey and West Midlands Police were looking at options for private security companies who would provide a range of police services currently carried out by the police although this was at a very early stage. He assured the Forum that Staffordshire Police would continue to deliver the type of services the public wanted; however they could not turn down opportunities in the future although there would always be consultation to see what the views of the public were.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe provided an example of a service which was currently run by a private security company for Staffordshire Police, this was the custody section that looked after those that had been detained.

He then referred to the elections for the first Police and Crime Commissioners which would take place in November. He advised that the newly appointed Commissioners would also have an input into any decision regarding the use of private security companies and would work closely with the Chief Constable.

Concern was raised by not only the Chairman but also other Members of the Council and the public that at some point in the future private security companies could take over the policing of local communities and it was possible that crime could increase as a consequence of this. The Forum was not happy that this could happen in the future and insisted that it was fundamental for communities to be policed properly.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe assured the Forum that the Police would continue to serve the community in the best way possible and that the Police were also accountable to people and responsible for people on the streets.

Councillor Mrs. S. Cartwright reported the problems on many estates with drug dealing and stated that incidents would not be reported as people were fearful of retaliation.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe reported that the only way the Police could apprehend offenders was through the public providing information. He explained that the best way for the public to do this was through Crimestoppers and explained that any information given was taken anonymously. He explained that the Police could then build up a case and act on information received which could then be used to obtain a warrant from the Magistrates Court to search potential offenders' homes. He advised that without the information, this could not happen.

He then explained that offenders addicted to drugs and caught in possession needed help in order to try and rehabilitate and stop the offending from occurring again. He advised that help was offered through an Integrated Offender Drug Management Programme and this was generally taken up as a way of help.

In response to a question raised by a member of the Forum, Chief Inspector Ratcliffe provided information on what the difference was between making a 101 and a 999 call. He explained that 101 calls were national non emergency and 999 were for emergency calls only. He provided an example and advised that the operator based at the control room would ask a number of questions which would include what the threat were to the public, based on this information the operator would then make an assessment of who should attend the scene. He explained that 999 calls were responded to straight away and the appropriate service(s) sent to deal with the situation depending on what it was.

A member of the Forum referred to Crimestoppers and asked that more information be put into the public domain as many people were unaware of contact details should there be a need to use it.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised that Crimestoppers was independent of the Police although the Police and other Partners were currently considering ways of making information available to the public. He reported that it had been suggested that certain information be printed onto fridge magnets and should there be a need to contact Crimestoppers the information was readily accessible. In the meantime the contact number for the public to contact should they need it was 0800 555 111.

In response to this Ms. V. Singleton, Chase Watch, Staffordshire Police reported that a variety of contact details including Crimestoppers was publicised through Neighbourhood Watch, via email, newsletter and other forms.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe updated the Forum and reported that Staffordshire Police would be rolling out the Restorative Justice approach over the next 6 months. He explained that this approach to justice focused on the needs of victims who could take an active role in the process whilst offenders were encouraged to take responsibility for their actions.

He explained that this approach gave offenders the opportunity to give something back to the community such as making and paying for a repair to a damaged window which could have been made as a consequence of criminal activity they may have been involved with.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe then talked about the recent campaign for reducing domestic violence which was held in Cannock Town Centre on Valentines Day. He explained that the campaign was successful and involved members of the Right Stuff Boxing Project and the Council.

40. Question from Councillor G. Ball

P.C. Graham Aries updated the Forum and reported that operations on Keys Park Road had been undertaken. The Police would be prosecuting those offending or alternatively they would be offered one chance of attending a speed awareness course.

Mr. T. McGovern, the Council's Corporate Director reported that Staffordshire County Council would be reviewing signage and would be undertaking a speed check using a speed line over a week to determine the speed of motorists on the Keys Park Road. He explained that further information would be reported back to the Forum at the next meeting in respect of the average speeds of vehicles; following this the Highways department would then determine on the information collected what action would need to be taken.

41. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

The Chairman welcomed Ms. K. Staples, Risk Reduction Officer, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service to the meeting.

Ms. Staples provided information to the Forum on an initiative called 'Play it Safe' in conjunction with other partners to offer a wide range of events on Hednesford Park over the Easter period. Events would include an Easter egg hunt, games fun day and a mobile youth bus which would enable young people to find out what was going on in their area.

She then explained that work was ongoing to try and educate children about the dangers of fires and in particular grass fires. She then referred to a leaflet issued by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service which detailed the Crimestoppers contact details and also the emergency services should someone deliberately be starting a grass fire. As part of the initiative around the dangers of fires she reported that Staffordshire Trading Standards had forwarded communication to shops and off licences around the District to remind them about the use and dangers of lighters and matches.

Ms. Staples reported that in the event of a grass fire the Fire Service would send out a Target Response Vehicle (TRV) which operated with a crew of 4 instead of the usual 6 and the vehicle was also used as a risk reduction tool.

She then invited members of the public to provide feedback on the scheme and asked if there were any questions the public could contact her on 01785 898795.

42. Update on Hednesford Town Centre Regeneration

Mr. G. Watson the Council's Economic Development Manager reported on Phase 1 that surplus material was taken off the site last week and was taken to the area that would form the new road. He reported that the site had now been developed for the discount food store and talks were still ongoing. Work was being carried out according to schedule and it was hoped that this phase would be completed by May, 2012.

With regard to Phase 2 the site which would accommodate the final development was in place, and the closure of Victoria Street and the bus station would remain until it was re-opened towards the end of April subject to a number of services such as Transco also being in agreement.

Mr. Watson reported that the new bus lay-bys would soon become operational and the old bus station would then close. With regard to parking it was reported that due to the nature of the programme it was likely that the temporary car park area would be taken out of use for approximately 1 month, however when the new road opened work would commence on the car park. With regard to alternative car parking, the Council was still pursuing the possibility of using the medical centre car park on Eskrett Street through the PCT and it was reported that temporary public conveniences were now available for the public to use in Hednesford Library.

It had been reported at the last meeting that the 'No Exit' signage was not very visible in the car park near Cardigan Place. Following this signage had been put on the road

surface and the Council would consider enforcement action if problems persisted.

Members of the Forum raised concern that motorists were still ignoring signs.

In response to this Mr. Watson would consider what solutions could be used to try and deter motorists; he also indicated that signage had been installed on Market Street stating 'No Access' to Cardigan Place.

Mr. Watson reported that the Council was currently in discussion with Tesco with regard to their recruitment programme. He indicated that there would be approximately 300 job vacancies and employment levels when the development was completed would be around 600.

Councillor G. Ball referred to the design of the junction on Anglesey Street, Hednesford and asked about access points.

Mr. Watson indicated that this was the responsibility of Staffordshire County Council Highways, however he would liaise with the developers in order that plans were checked with the County and he also advised that a safety audit would be completed upon completion.

43. Update on Hednesford Park

Mr. Watson reported that the Council had been successful in securing funding from the Heritage Lottery for undertaking improvements to the park. ***(GLENN – I MISSED SOME OF THE DISCUSSION AS THE CHAIR WAS TALKING TO ME AT THE TIME).***

Mr. Watson discussed the potential changes to Hednesford Park and referred to a letter about the tipping of waste, he also reported that the re-routing of the road would be necessary in order to develop the car park which would mean that the size of the park would change. New fencing would then be erected although it would be slightly higher than the current fencing.

Councillor Mrs. D. Grice referred to the activities proposed by Friends of Hednesford Park and asked if these would still go ahead in light of the up coming changes to the park.

Mr. Faulkner, Friends of Hednesford Park reported that the Easter Egg Hunt which was scheduled for 5 April, 2012 would still go ahead as assurance had been received that parking issues could be resolved.

He also reported that Hednesford 'Got Talent' would take place on 2 June which would involve local school children, and It's a Knockout on 7 August. It was hoped to have craft stalls at this event. He advised that the event was free for schools and voluntary organisations to enter and £60 per team of 6 for any local businesses who wished to enter.

Mr. Faulkner reported that the Friends of Hednesford Park had secured £10K funding from the Lottery Fund to cover future events and commented that there had been a good response from the community to the events being organised.

Members of the Forum referred to the CCTV cameras in Victoria Street and asked if they would be replaced. Mr. Watson explained that 2 CCTV cameras had been taken out of operation and discussions were continuing with Tesco about where the cameras would be reinstated.

44. New Aquarius Facility

Mr. Watson reported that the facility would be a dance venue but would also be flexible for use. He advised that discussions were ongoing with the developers and when the internal layout had been agreed, discussions could then take place with potential operators.

45. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

The Chairman reported that the next Forum was scheduled for 25 June, 2012 subject to Council approval and questions from members of the public should be submitted on the forms supplied.

46. Dates of Future Meetings

The Chairman confirmed the dates of future meetings of the next Hednesford Community Forum which were subject to Council approval:-

10 September, 2012

3 December, 2012

4 March, 2012

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm.