

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HEATH HAYES, NORTON CANES AND RAWNSLEY COMMUNITY FORUM
MONDAY 30 JUNE, 2014 AT 7.00 P.M.
AT PROSPECT VILLAGE HALL, WILLIAMSON AVENUE, RAWNSLEY

PRESENT: Councillors

Bernard, J.D. (Chairman)
Buttery, M.S. (Vice-Chairman)

Bernard, Mrs. A.F. Spicer, Mrs. A.
Dean, A. Stretton, Mrs. P.Z.
Hardman, B. Todd, Mrs. D.

Other Councillors Present: Bottomer, B.H.
Todd, B.

Officers: T. McGovern, Corporate Director
 J. Hunt, Senior Committee Officer
 M. Walker, Environmental Protection Manager

Also present: Members of the Public – approximately 15
 PCSO Dale
 J. Beddows, Norton Canes Parish Council
 L. Bullock, Heath Hayes & Wimblebury Parish
 Council

1. Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Councillor J.D. Bernard was appointed Chairman and Councillor M.S. Buttery was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Heath Hayes, Norton Canes and Rawnsley Community Forum for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M.J. Holder and J. Preece.

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

There were no interests declared.

4. Notes

The Notes of the meeting held on 24 March, 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

5. Questions for Staffordshire Police

PCSO Liz Dale was in attendance.

Stray Dogs

A local resident raised concern that her call had never been dealt with which was made to the Police in June concerning a stray dog. The resident reported that the dog was vicious and posed a risk to other dog walkers and members of the public. She reported that she then made a call to the Council who advised that the Council no longer had a dog warden service, however if the dog was caught and contained then the Council's contractor could collect the stray dog.

The Council's Environmental Protection Manager reported that the Council now used a contractor to pick up stray dogs. He explained the procedure and advised the public that the best course of action was to contain a stray dog, the Council's contractor would then pick the dog up which would be taken to a kennel. Should the owner wish to have their dog released, a fee would be incurred and collection would need to be made within 7 days.

Speeding Traffic

Members of the public expressed concern with regard to speeding vehicles coming from the Green Pipe at Littleworth Road into Sevens Road which then meets with Cannock Wood Road. They were concerned as speed restrictions were not being adhered to which could lead to accidents. The public were keen to know if any speed reducing measures could be considered.

It was reported that speed reducing measures would need to be considered by Staffordshire County Council Highways and that this matter would be reported back to them. PCSO Dale reported that the Police could conduct some speed checks in the area and also advised that Speedwatch were trying to set up a group in Cannock Wood. Community Speedwatch was also present.

6. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services

It was reported that there were no questions received.

7. Questions received for Staffordshire County Council (Highways)

The following questions were submitted by Mr. Gibbs, Local Resident.

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(1) When will John street Wimblebury be properly resurfaced?

John Street Wimblebury – Surfacing – the Highways Department acknowledges the current condition of John Street in Wimblebury. They cannot provide dates of reconstruction at this time until further budgetary information is available in order to form future programmes. In the meantime their maintenance teams will monitor and make the necessary repairs to identified defects.

(2) It has been said that to cover Staffs between Kinver and Stoke there is only one Highways Inspector. Is this true?

There are approximately 15 Highway Inspector's across the County divided up within given areas; these include the re-active inspectors who will deal with enquiries from the public and urgent defects.

(3) Is there any inspection of highway repair or surfacing, and if so are their reports available for public scrutiny?

All recorded defects are recorded on a system (IHMS) and a list of all defects in the area was provided at the previous forum (2 December 2013). However, printing lists is of little value as issues change hourly as defects are repaired and reported. A list of recently repaired defects are available on the website

www.staffordshire.gov.uk/transport/staffshighways/abouthighways/Potholes2.aspx

(4) Why when Forum Minutes clearly identify a need for a response is none made?

Staffordshire County Council always provides a response for public forums when required. At this particular forum no questions were submitted in advance therefore, no officers were required to attend. The demand on officer's time for evening meetings is extensive and the Council does not have the resources to attend them all. Staffordshire County Council covers as many of the Cannock Chase forums as possible where required.

When unable to do so, and a question has been submitted in advance a written response may be provided for inclusion in the agenda and/or read out by the Chair of the forum. Staffordshire County Council Officers are available for the public to speak to during office hours five days a week. If members of the public wish to raise any questions or speak to Highways officers directly then this can be done by calling 0300 111 8000 or via email - highways@staffordshire.gov.uk

The following question was raised at the last Community Forum

A question was put forward regarding the amount of expenditure for each of the district/boroughs within the County regarding spending on the highway for the last financial year 2013/2014

It would be difficult to give specifics based on the extensive amount of maintenance activities that are undertaken across the 3,500 miles of road in Staffordshire. Over a £million was spent in surfacing alone within the Cannock Chase District areas last year. However, there are many other maintenance activities that are undertaken such as drainage, signals, streetlights, winter maintenance, signs, lines etc. Information on expenditure is published on the Staffordshire website

In response to a question raised by a member of the public, the Chairman reported that there were 14 more Highway Inspectors with 1 Inspector covering between Stafford and Stoke.

8. Question raised at the last Community Forum

Confirmation had been sought as to how the system for recording complaints was handled by the Council's Contact Centre. This followed a complaint being made in respect of fly tipping, which resulted in no report number being issued and as a consequence, the matter had taken 3 weeks to resolve.

The following response was provided by the Council's Environmental Protection Manager:-

Reports of fly tipping are received in the Council's Contact Centre where they are initially logged and then referred to Environmental Services (Waste and Engineering Services) for removal. Removal is carried out as soon as practicable, generally within three working days. However, in the case of larger deposits of waste the need to engage a private Waste Disposal Contractor may extend this period. Delays in the removal of waste may also arise when the waste is dumped on private land.

Where evidence of the fly tipper or producer of the waste is available, the Environmental Health (Environmental Protection Team) will be involved in relation to any enforcement action.

The member of the public who initially raised concern asked why he was never given a reference number from the Council's Contact Centre and why it had taken over 3 weeks to resolve.

The Council's Environmental Protection Manager reported that the item in question which required removal was large and this contributed towards the delay. He explained that if the item was causing an obstruction onto the highway it would have been removed quicker. He also advised that where a complaint was submitted to the Contact Centre, a reference number was usually provided to the customer. He could not provide

details on this particular complaint which was submitted, however he would check with the Council's Contact Centre to see if a reference number had been generated.

9. Question received by Member of the Public

The following question has been submitted by Mr. G. Burnett, local resident.

Are the current Council Community Forums format the most effective means of communicating with the residents of the district on matters that concern them.

“What do they cost the Council to host and are they an effective use of Police and Council officer's time, and other resources, in answering questions that appear often to be raised only by Councillors for their own benefit when they have access to information from Council Officers through their normal duties

Could the expense and resource spent on Community Forums be used more effectively elsewhere for better value to the local community

Can the Council prove forums are effective given that only Councillors and other official are recorded as attending in the minutes .How can the all-important levels of local resident participation and attendance be monitored effectively as there is no apparent means of recording these beyond a vague head count

Has this Council done any work in assessing the Forums effectiveness and considering other any means of engaging with a wider audience of residents on the issues discussed at Forums

The election of Forum Chair and Vice Chair is restricted to only Councillors from the local wards and voting is restricted to themselves How can this process be justified as a democratic one when the Forums claim to represent the local residents and yet they allow no permanent representation on them?

Can we be assured that these forums are an effective means of influencing Council policy by residents and not simply a box tick exercise to fulfil a criteria set simply to impress external auditors or verifiers of the Councils own processes”.

The following response has been provided by the Council's Democratic Services Manager:-

The Council would like to thank Mr. Burnett for raising concerns about the effectiveness of its four Community Forums as a means of

communicating and engaging with local residents. The Council itself has identified the need to review the Community Forums, and has included it in the Transformation Priority Delivery Plan for 2014-15, and will be undertaking a consultation / review exercise later in the year. The issues raised will be included as part of this consultation.

The forums, which were initially set up a number of years ago, meet on a quarterly basis in each of the four main population areas within the district, i.e. Cannock; Heath Hayes, Norton Canes and Rawnsley; Hednesford; and Rugeley and Brereton, and form part of the Council's annual Calendar of Meetings. They are intended as a means of discussion on any matters of local concern, i.e. relating to the relevant Wards therein, which may be raised by members of the public or the relevant Ward Members; they are also intended as a means of consultation on, for example, planning or budgetary matters.

In order to ensure that appropriate Officers can be in attendance, if required, i.e. as opposed to having a number of representatives present 'just in case', we ask that questions be submitted in advance. This is particularly the case if questions are of a technical nature or relate to an area that is not the Council's responsibility, such as highways or Police matters; or any other potential invitees, such as the Fire and Rescue Service or local Health Trust.

The Police; relevant County Councillors; and local Parish / Town Councillors, plus representatives from local Health Authority / Trust; local Voluntary Organisations; local Residents' Associations; and local business organisations, where known, are all invited to attend, as is the local MP, and members all are given advance notice of the meetings and asked to publicise them on notice boards etc to encourage public attendance. However, it is recognised that public attendance / participation is limited. This could be for a number of reasons, including those referred to.

Finally, the Council would like to give an assurance that the forums are not simply a tick box exercise; however, as previously mentioned it shares the concerns about their ongoing effectiveness and plans to undertake a consultation / review exercise later in the year.

If members of the public would like to participate in the proposed review, any ideas or suggestions on how they could be improved should be emailed to membersservices@cannockchasedc.gov.uk using the title 'Review of Community Forums'. Any ideas or suggestions made will be considered as part of the proposed review.

Members of the public discussed the lack of advertising of the Heath Hayes, Norton Canes and Rawnsley Community Forum and asked that the Forum also be advertised at Prospect Village Hall in the future. There was some confusion in respect of ownership of the notice board which would need to be pursued further.

10. Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust

Mandi Dunbar, Personal Assistant to Jeff Crawshaw, Deputy Chief Executive, Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust has provided the following update:-

“Our Directors have concluded that, as the Trust continues to be going through the Trust Special Administration (TSA) process, it would not be appropriate for them to attend the Community Forums at this time. The Directors would like to assure local people that services at both Cannock Chase and Stafford Hospitals continue as usual and would encourage people to continue to use them as appropriate.

If there are any specific questions on the day-to-day business of the hospitals, we would be very pleased to email you answers/updates from the Directors.

If you have any questions around the TSA process and future of services, these would need to be addressed to the TSA. Please let me know if you'd like me to put you in touch with them.

The TSA can be contacted at: www.tsa-msft.org.uk/contact-us or for confidential matters at: TSApublic@MidStaffs.nhs.uk”

The Council's Corporate Director reported that The University Hospital of North Staffordshire would take over running the services of Stafford Hospital, and the Royal Wolverhampton Trust would take over the running of Cannock Chase Hospital which was planned from November.

It was reported that Cannock Chase Clinical Commissioning Group would be putting forward a range of proposals for the Minor Injuries Unit at Cannock Chase Hospital which was due to be published sometime this summer.

Members of the public and representatives requested that a letter be forwarded to Mid Staffs NHS Foundation Trust with a request that representatives attend future Community Forums.

The Forum discussed the Minor Injuries Unit at Cannock Chase Hospital and concern was expressed with the proposal for GPs to take over the service and change the hours it operated. It was also reported that x-ray machines were located in the hospital but not being used on patients who could be left to travel to Stafford if they had a suspected fracture.

The Corporate Director advised that these issues could be raised as part of the planned consultation by Cannock Chase Clinical Commissioning Group on changes to the MIU service. The Forum was keen to see public participation when the consultation process commenced and hoped a public meeting would take place in Cannock. The Corporate Director

agreed to pass this request onto the CCG.

11. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

The Chairman reported that the next Forum was scheduled for Monday 8 September, 2014 and questions from members of the public should be submitted on the forms supplied.

12. Dates of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Heath Hayes, Norton Canes and Rawnsley Community Forum would be held on :-

- Monday 8 September, 2014 – venue TBC

CHAIRMAN

(The meeting concluded at 7.40 p.m.)