

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

TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER, 2013 AT 7.00 P.M.

AT CIVIC CENTRE, CANNOCK

PRESENT: District Councillors:

Alcott, G. (Chairman)
Allen, F.W.C. (Vice-Chairman)

Davis, Mrs. M.A. Sutton, Mrs. H.M.
Freeman, Miss. M. Toth, J.
Mitchell, C.

District Councillors also present:

Ball, G.D.

Cannock Chase Council Officers:

Mr. S. Brown, Chief Executive
Mr. B. Phillips, Head of Planning & Regeneration
Mrs. W. Rowe, Senior Committee Officer

Also Present

Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliffe, LPT Commander for Cannock Chase District
Inspector P. Cooke, Deputy Commander for Cannock Chase District
Ms. M.A. Raftery, Staffordshire County Council Highways
Local Residents (approximately 36).

14. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from District Councillors C. Anslow, J.T. Kraujalis and P. Snape, County Councillors G. Adamson and Mrs. A. Spicer, N. Pedersen (Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services) and Ms. V. Singleton (Neighbourhood Watch).

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

There were no interests declared.

16. Notes

The notes of the meeting held on 11 June, 2013, were agreed.

17. Questions for Staffordshire Police

The Chairman welcomed Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliffe to the meeting who was in attendance to answer questions relating to local policing matters that had been submitted in advance. Chief Inspector Ratcliffe introduced Inspector Paul Cooke, Deputy Commander for Cannock Chase District.

The following question had been submitted by Mr. G. Taylor, local resident:

‘What action is being taken by Cannock Police with regard to the amount of adults riding cycles on footpaths in a dangerous manner in this area.’

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe asked whether there was a particular location where this was happening. Mr. Taylor explained that it was happening all over the district (including the town centre) - cyclists were riding on the footpath and expecting pedestrians to stand by whilst they passed.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe explained that it was especially dangerous in town centres where there were pedestrian areas. The Policing Team would investigate this matter and could issue warning notices to advise offenders of the dangers of riding cycles on footpaths. Enforcement action could be taken in the case of repeat offenders. The Chief Inspector would report back at the next Forum meeting with an update.

Councillor Allen made reference to Old Fallow Avenue where residents had taken to parking in the entrance to what was a very narrow road. He was concerned that access was being restricted, particularly in the event that Fire and Rescue Services needed to gain access. He asked whether the Police could speak with the offenders.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe confirmed that the Local Policing Team in conjunction with the Council’s Parking Enforcement Officers could tackle this issue. He assured the Forum that should Fire and Rescue Services require access they would get through the road despite there being parked cars.

Councillor Toth raised concern regarding the speeding of vehicles throughout the District, particular reference was made to Cannock Road, Chadsmoor, Brownhills Road, Norton Canes, Hednesford Road, Heath Hayes and in Wimblebury. He asked for more surveillance and a campaign to address this issue.

The Chief Inspector advised that the Cannock Chase District Local Policing Team had three main priorities:

- Addressing what matters to the local community;
- Addressing crime and disorder;
- Providing a quality service

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe explained that speeding came under the priority of

what matters to the local community. He would take on board the comments made and deal with the issue. He confirmed that the speed safety camera van had been deployed at various locations in the District to target speeding motorists. Additionally, the hand held speed device had been used by trained staff. The speeding of vehicles was unacceptable particularly in built up areas where there were schools, shops etc. He had noted the locations mentioned by Councillor Toth and would ensure resources were used to tackle the problem.

A local resident sought clarification regarding the recent injunction brought by the Council to ban car cruising.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe provided the Forum with the background to this injunction which was applied for in order to tackle the serious issues of speeding, excessive noise and dangerous driving. Due to the number of complaints received over the last 12 months regarding the large amounts of vehicles gathering at The Orbital, Eastern Way and Longford Island the Council and the Police applied for a High Court injunction to ban "street racers".

The injunction defined car cruising as a congregation of drivers, of two or more vehicles on a public highway involved in activity including car racing, shouting or swearing, playing loud music and dropping litter. The injunction covered the Linkway and Orbital retail parks.

He confirmed anyone breaching the injunction (which would run indefinitely) would be taken to court and could face a fine or up to two years in prison.

The Forum was advised that the BBC had recently been filming in the area for a programme called "Street Patrol UK". The programme showed how the Police and the District Council had addressed the problem of car cruising in the Cannock Chase District.

A member of the public raised concern regarding the excessive amount of parking in Ward Street, Hednesford which was causing difficulties for residents gaining access to their drives. The Chief Inspector commented that it was a matter of common sense and motorists should be more considerate when parking their vehicles. He would arrange for a leaflet drop in conjunction with the District Council's Parking Enforcement Officers with the aim of reducing the problem. However, if it persisted enforcement action could be taken.

18. Questions for Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

Neil Pederson had submitted his apologies and no questions had been submitted.

19. Questions from Matt Williams, on behalf of Allport Road residents regarding the development of Beecroft Road car park

- ***Why does the Council continue to blight the properties in Allport Road with a development proposal that even its own market testing does not support?***

- ***With the positive news that two established hospital trusts are interested in taking over and increasing patient and staff numbers at Cannock Hospital, why does the Council wish to develop the nearest public car park?***
- ***Over recent weeks the Council has been keen to play down their proposal relating to the compulsory purchase of Allport Road properties. However, the plan that has been utilised as part of the public consultation clearly shows a “target” over a number of properties. Can the Council now confirm the extent of their intended proposal and either compulsory purchase those properties highlighted or deliver an official statement that will confine their proposal to the rubbish bin and put the residents minds at rest?***
- ***Has the Council met its “duty to co-operate” given the first residents heard of any proposed redevelopment of Allport Road was an article in the Express and Star?***

The Chairman asked Mr. Williams if he wished to add anything to the questions outlined on the agenda. Mr. Williams commented that residents had been living under a cloud of uncertainty on learning of the Council’s proposals in the Express and Star. He commented that the proposal had been market tested and even though the consultants had said it was not viable the Council had suggested a leisure/retail development be considered. A petition had therefore been submitted objecting to any proposals to develop the Beecroft Road car park. Residents were relieved that the Council were not now going to develop on the land but had come along tonight as they wanted closure over the proposals.

Bob Phillips, Head of Planning and Regeneration provided the Forum with the background to the issue advising that the Council, through various administrations, had for many years given priority to the improvement of the town centre for shoppers and visitors. Therefore money had been spent on improving the appearance of the town centre and the new Town Centre Business Rates Discount Scheme had assisted in improving the take up of vacant properties in the town centre. The issue of improving the town centre by new investment was a long standing policy of the Council and in 2004 a scheme was considered for the redevelopment of Market Hall Street/Church Street/Beecroft Road site.

In order to progress the policy to improve the town centre a development statement was considered in 2011 which had resulted in the need to test the market (post recession).

With regard to Mr. Williams’s comments that residents had learnt of the proposals via the Express and Star, Mr. Phillips explained that a development statement had been prepared and agreed in 2012 and letters had been sent to residents in November 2012 so as to keep them in the picture.

The results of the market testing had been considered by Cabinet in June 2013 and letters had again been forwarded to residents to advise them of Cabinet’s

decision. Cabinet had agreed to explore the options available to develop the Beecroft Road car park site and enhance the retail and leisure offer for Cannock town centre. However, it was agreed that extensive consultation with residents and visitors be undertaken first. Consultation ended in August 2013 and the details of the results were due to be considered by Cabinet in October. The Council's Leader, Councillor George Adamson had prepared a statement which was published on 11 September, 2013. This statement concluded that following the consultation period, and bearing in mind the difficult economic conditions and lack of retail interest, the Leader would be recommending to Cabinet in October that the Council would not pursue this development further at this stage.

The Head of Regeneration referred to the issue raised by Mr. Williams regarding the potential increase in patient and staff numbers at Cannock hospital due to the interest of the two hospital trusts which may increase usage of the Beecroft Road car park. He considered that there was time to consider whether visitors to Beecroft Road car park would increase should the trusts take over the hospital.

With regard to the Council having met its "duty to co-operate" the Head of Planning and Regeneration commented that the Council had undertaken consultation with residents regarding the proposals. It became apparent that issues regarding the development proposals were being selectively reported in the press and therefore the Council had made press releases available to residents.

A member of the public commented that residents were looking for closure over the proposals and was concerned that the Leader had stated that the Council would not be pursuing the development "at this stage".

The Head of Planning and Regeneration confirmed that the improvement of the town centre was a priority for the Council, the proposed scheme at Beecroft Road car park was not going ahead at the current time; however, a whole range of options for other development schemes would be considered if the economic market improved. It would not be appropriate to fetter the decision of future administrations.

Councillor Toth commented that the Council is committed to consulting with the public and taking into account the views of residents. The results of the consultation regarding the proposed development of Beecroft Road car park were clear and the Leader would be making a recommendation to Cabinet to not pursue the scheme. However, he added that it can never be said that something is forever and any scheme can be put to the Council at anytime by a developer. He made reference to comments he had received from concerned residents which suggested that 46 houses in Allport Road were to be demolished. He explained that there was never any plan to demolish 46 houses in the proposed development scheme. It would not be viable to have to compensate for the loss of the houses and the for the loss of the car park revenue.

Councillor Toth confirmed that the Council had listened to the views of the public with regard to this proposal.

20. Questions submitted Mr. G. Fraser

“In relation to street lighting and the lighting of public buildings, (i.e. exterior of buildings) with technology available in solar lighting and electronic timing devices, what, if anything, are Staffordshire County Council’s plans in relation to the above?”

Mark Keeling, Community Infrastructure Liaison Manager, Staffordshire County Council Highways, provided the following response:

“In April 2012, Staffordshire County Council approved changes to the way its street lights would be operated following a complete review of operations. The changes will mean that the majority of new street lights will be fitted with equipment which will reduce (dim) light output levels from late evening to early morning.

Dimming equipment; will be fitted to new equipment either as a consequence of a new highway related development e.g. new residential estate, or when the existing street lights have reached the end of their serviceable life and are replaced by the renewal mechanism contained within the County’s street lighting PFI (Private Finance Initiative) contract. This then ensures that dimming technology is introduced only when the street lighting system accords with current design standards, which is particularly relevant for residential streets.

Dimming equipment (Retrofit programme); will be installed into existing street lights which are fitted with high wattage lamps on what we term to be ‘Traffic Routes’. Higher wattage lamps are generally used on roads where traffic volumes are much higher e.g. A roads, and which require a higher level of illumination to cater for peak traffic periods which will then dim down during outside peak periods and will result in the lighting being at a more appropriate level in line with the reduced vehicle flow rates.

Part Night Switching; under the remit of the localism agenda Parish Councils can request the introduction of part night switched street lights provided the local community support the initiative. There are no restrictions as to how part night street lights can be implemented; it can be a whole street, every other street light or individual street lights. However the County Council would check all requests to ensure that highway safety standards are maintained.

LED lighting; is being phased in and will be installed on estate roads either as a consequence of a new highway related development e.g. new residential estate, or when the existing street lights have reached the end of their serviceable life and are replaced by the renewal mechanism contained within the County’s street lighting PFI (Private Finance Initiative) contract.

I am unable to comment regarding illumination of public buildings which is not within my remit. “

Mr. Fraser indicated that he was happy with the response that had been provided.

21. **Questions from Mr. G. Taylor**

“Cardinal Way – Unadopted section of road which comprises of ‘turning head’, who pays for the maintenance of the road, grass cutting etc.?”

Mark Keeling, Community Infrastructure Liaison Manager, Staffordshire County Council Highways, provided the following response:

"Any unadopted sections of Highway would not be included within cyclic maintenance programs. However on previous occasions we have used our Neighbourhood Highway Team to tidy up the various areas in question following requests from the public".

Mr. Taylor sought clarification over who owned the land from Cardinal Way into the turning head. Mary Ann Raftery, Staffordshire County Council Highways commented that it was not adopted highway and she was not aware of who the owner was.

Mr. Taylor commented that the land was maintained and the grass was cut by Cannock Council and asked who paid for the maintenance if it was not adopted. The Chairman said that he would endeavour to provide Mr. Taylor with a reply to this additional question.

“Cardinal Way – I am still awaiting a communication from Mark Keeling which was put forward by the Chairman of the Forum (at the last Forum meeting), Councillor Gordon Alcott.”

Mark Keeling, Community Infrastructure Liaison Manager, Staffordshire County Council Highways, provided the following response:

"I confirm I have made contact with Mr Taylor by telephone Wednesday 4th Sept. I also note a response was sent to the forum which was read out at the June Meeting. There is very little I can add to this statement. Mr Taylor has asked me "what is happening now in regards to Cardinal Way"? I have replied stating no further works are planned by the County Council in regards to this site, any further questions in terms of Planning Conditions or future planning issues should be directed to Cannock Chase District Council" Mr Taylor has also asked me to look at the current lines which are present on Cardinal Way, I have agreed to check what is on street is correct as per the Traffic Order. I have also advised that if double yellow lines are present then no associated signage is required or allowed by regulation. If a request is received from the forum or a member of the public to change the restrictions then I will refer the matter for the next Joint Parking Committee for consideration".

“Tesco Express, A34, Cannock – Have the Council received any S106 money from the supermarket chain?”

Mazer Aqbal, Planning Development Manager provided the following response:

"I can advise that S106 monies were secured as part of the development, which were: - £3,000 for County Highways to secure a Traffic Regulation Order

and £2,949 for landscaping and planting”.

Question from Mrs. M. Heaton

“Pedestrians with mobility problems of various types have difficulty using two pedestrian crossings in the time allocated. These crossings are those on Park Road and the A34 by the (Cannock) Hospital.

As these crossings are used by many patients visiting the Hospital, is it possible to have the crossings updated to Puffin crossings (Pedestrian User Friendly Intelligent Crossings)? Such crossings automatically vary the length of the pedestrian period, giving pedestrians the time they need to cross”.

Mark Keeling, Community Infrastructure Liaison Manager, Staffordshire County Council Highways, has provided the following response:

“Cllr Spicer has raised this matter with myself and I have received the following response from our signals team.

The timings on the crossings in question are within National standard and Guidelines.

The green man is set at 6 seconds which is when you start to cross, there is then an additional safety period of 9 seconds giving 15 seconds to cross in total. The timing easily covers the majority of pedestrians using the crossings, on the rare occasion a person is still on the crossing then drivers would give way until the road ahead is clear.

In terms of altering the timing it is possible to increase the time however we would strongly recommend we do not go against the National standard for this width of road. The function of increasing the time is to allow for a wider road or to facilitate large numbers of pedestrians at one time perhaps 20/30 people + which I believe is not the case.

We also have to consider the delays and frustration of drivers who would not understand the increased crossing time.

At some point in the future these types of crossings will be upgraded however I am unable to advise when this may take place”.

Mrs. Heaton stated that she had contacted Councillor Mrs. Spicer regarding this matter who had agreed that further time should be allowed for pedestrians to cross. She would be requesting that puffin crossings be provided at these two locations.

Ms. Raftery from Staffordshire County Council Highways advised that the crossings had been upgraded in 2009 and the time allowed for pedestrians to cross was the national standard for this width of road. It was a balance between capacity and safety. Any vehicles pulling up at the crossing should wait for pedestrians to cross before setting off. She confirmed that Councillor Mrs. Spicer had raised the matter with her colleague, Mark Keeling, and she

had been advised that the crossing was set at the national standard in accordance with a crossing in that location.

Mrs. Heaton considered that if the hospital increased patient and staff numbers the crossings would be used more frequently and she was concerned that an accident would occur. She considered that the crossings should be upgraded to puffin crossings.

Councillor Toth confirmed that Councillor Mrs. Spicer did not consider it was unreasonable to increase the crossing time and find the money to upgrade the crossings.

The Chairman suggested that this matter may be an issue that could be referred to the District Council's Joint Parking Committee for consideration. Enquiries would be made with the relevant officers at the County Council.

22. Mid Staffs NHS Foundation Trust - Update

The Chairman advised that Deborah Neal, Head of Communications, Mid-Staffs NHS Foundation Trust, has provided the following update:

"As the Trust Special Administrators' (TSAs) consultation is currently underway, the Directors of Mid Staffs have concluded that it would not be appropriate to attend the Community Forums at this time. However if there are any questions on the day to day business of the hospitals, I would be very pleased to provide answers/updates from the Directors."

In relation to the TSAs consultation process, there are still a number of public meetings to be held, which are taking place on the following dates:

- Thursday 12 September, 7pm-9pm, Chase Leisure Centre, Cannock;
- Wednesday 18 September, 7pm-9pm, Lea Hall Social Club, Rugeley;
- Thursday 19 September, 2pm-4pm, Chase Leisure Centre, Cannock.

Councillor Mrs. M. Davis encouraged residents to respond to the TSA's draft recommendations on the future of services at Cannock and Stafford hospitals. She advised that Cabinet were due to discuss the Council's response at Cabinet on 19 September, 2013.

23. Update on the position of the negotiations in respect of the Asda s.106 monies for the Artificial Turf Pitch

Stephen Brown, Chief Executive advised that there had been no further contact from ASDA since the last meeting so there is no significant change to the update provided at the previous meeting. He further commented that the Council had written to ASDA to advise that if the Council did not hear from them it would be assumed that they were happy for the Council to spend the s106 monies.

24. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

The Chairman explained that a form was available for any issues to be

discussed at future meetings of the Forum. Appropriate representatives would be invited to attend and debate the issues and answer any questions.

25. Date of Future Meetings

The Forum noted that meeting of the Cannock Community Forum had been arranged as follows:

- Tuesday 10 December, 2013
- Tuesday 4 March, 2014

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 7:50pm.

CHAIRMAN