

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
RUGELEY AND BRERETON COMMUNITY FORUM
MONDAY, 9 DECEMBER, 2013 AT 7.00PM
COUNCIL CHAMBER, RUGELEY TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES,
TAYLOR'S LANE, RUGELEY

PRESENT: Cannock Chase Councillors:

Grocott, M.R. (Chairman)

Allt, Mrs. A.	Dudson, A.*
Bottomer, B.H.	Jones, R.
Davies, D.N.	Lovell, A.

Other District Councillor(s):

Spicer, Mrs. A.	Toth, J.
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Cannock Chase Council Officers:

Mrs. J. Aupers	Head of Governance
S. Partridge	Democratic Services Manager

Representatives from the following organisations:

Staffordshire Police	(PC Nick Smith)
Staffordshire County Council	(S. Knott, Community Infrastructure Liaison Manager)
Staffordshire County Council	(SCC Cllr. A. Dudson*)
Rugeley Town Council	
Brereton and Ravenhill Parish Council	
Rugeley Traders Association	
The Landor Society	(Mrs. M. Kettle)

Approximately 8 local residents

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from CCDC Councillors C. Bennett; P.A. Fisher; J.P. Johnson; and G.N. Molineux. Apologies were also submitted on behalf of SCC Councillor G. Martin and a number of Town / Parish Councillors.

2. Declarations of Interest

To avoid any confusion, Councillor A. Lovell declared himself as a District Councillor as well as a local resident submitting a question (Item 10 on the agenda).

3. Notes

The notes of the meeting held on 10 September, 2013 were accepted as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising (Not Otherwise Covered on the Agenda)

None.

6. Questions for Staffordshire Police

No questions had been submitted in advance, but P.C. Smith invited questions from the floor.

A Member enquired as to the legal position in respect of cyclists using roads in areas where cycle paths had been provided for their use. P.C. Smith advised that cyclists could not be forced to use cycle paths and they were legally entitled to use the roads.

Rugeley Town Council Members thanked the Police for their assistance with the Lantern Parade and Christmas Lights switch on events.

PC Smith advised that the Staffordshire Police and Crime Commissioner (Matthew Ellis) would be attending a drop-in event in Rugeley Town Centre on Tuesday, 10 December, 2013. He would be accompanied at the event by the Chief Constable and the Chief Inspector, and all residents and other interested parties were welcome to attend and ask questions on policing matters and the Commissioner's plans for future policing in the County.

A Member enquired if there had been a notable recent increase in offences involving the growing and / or sale of cannabis in the Rugeley area, as he was aware of such an increase in the Cannock area, and wondered if it was being repeated across the district. P.C. Smith advised that he was not aware of any noticeable increase.

7. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services

No questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting for the Fire and Rescue Services, consequently no representative had been sent to the meeting.

No other matters were raised for referral back to the Fire and Rescue

Service.

8. Staffordshire County Council Highways

No questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting for the County Highways Department, however, a number of items were addressed in items raised elsewhere on the agenda, including "Forward Agenda for Future Forums". (These matters have been referred back to the County and will not be included on a future agenda.)

9. Questions submitted by Mrs. R. Robinson

Mrs. Robinson advised that she had submitted the questions on behalf of others in her capacity as a Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator).

Answers to the questions had all been given in advance of the meeting, and the Chairman read these out, as below. (Other related matters raised as a result are also included in highlight.)

1. **"Who owns the patch of ground where the Bow Street Play School was? This was burnt down in 2004 (nearly 10 years ago!) and the site is a mess and an eyesore in the centre of the town. Surely it could be utilised as a car park at least. It is a disgrace to Rugeley as it is at present."**

The Council's Property Services section has advised that:

- *The future of the Bow Street site will be reviewed as part of the Council's ongoing review of its land and property assets, though no decisions have been made at the present time.*
- *With regard to the use of the site as an interim car park, this is not something that has been considered as it would require planning permission for a change of use.*

Mr. G. Grant, local resident and Rugeley Town Councillor, advised that he had been one of the Trustees of the nursery, though he was aware that two of the others had died and at least one had moved away. Mr. Grant offered to provide any assistance that he could, and asked that his contact details be passed on to Property Services.

2. **"Has Mr. Elwell (presume it is still his debris) done anything about the objectionable pile of material visible from the bypass. If not, it is time something was done - or at least started."**

The Council's Environmental Health section has written to Mrs. Robinson advising that:

- *Enquires with the Environment Agency have found that the operator has an Environmental Permit for the activities on the*

site. They have also confirmed that they have no current issues.

- *An Environmental Health Officer has also visited the site and found that it was secure and only contained an accumulation of inert materials which are acceptable under the current conditions of the permit. There was no evidence of fly tipping during the visit.*
- *Contact details for the Environment Agency, including the relevant permit reference, were also included in the letter.*

Mrs. Robinson advised that she had written to Environmental Health to thank them for their assistance.

3. “Surely the churchyard wall of St. Augustine’s, where the post box was, could be tidied up and levelled out?”

This question had also been raised previously, at which time the following information was fed back:

- *“The wall is part of the closed churchyard and as such the Council’s liability. The post box was removed following a Road Traffic Accident (RTA). Repairs haven’t been completed as we have been trying to source a post box to fit back in the wall. The Post Office were happy for us to do this providing it was sealed so it couldn’t be used. They did actually deliver a box but it was far too big for the hole. The problem is that as the wall is a listed structure and as such matching stone needs to be sourced and it is such a small job it is difficult to get a stonemason. The intention was to tag it onto a larger job next time one presented itself.”*

By way of update, the Property Services and Planning sections had advised that:

- *Mr Garner, resident of Wolseley Road, has offered to liaise with Church officials and a local stonemason with a view to arranging for an engraved marker stone to be installed to replace the damaged post box. The Council’s Planning section has offered to assist in developing any proposal towards submission of a Listed Building Consent application.*

Residents remained unhappy with the responses provided and the lack of progress. The Ven. Simon Baker, Archdeacon of Lichfield, who was present to provide an update re. the Old Chancel, advised that closed churchyards required a Faculty for works to be undertaken, and he could assist the Council with this. RTC Cllr. N. Stanley asked what had happened to the old post box when it was removed, as, while it was recognised that it belonged to Royal Mail, it was considered that it had heritage value to the people of Rugeley. Mrs. Kettle, Landor Society,

advised that two other Victorian post boxes remained in situ in the town.

10. Questions Submitted by Cllr. Tony Williams, Rugeley Town Council

Cllr. Williams raised the following questions:

1: “When will we see the money from the Tesco section 106 agreements used in Rugeley for the purposes it was intended.

I refer to the £359,000.00 minuted in the Examination into the Soundness of the Cannock Chase Local Plan - Local Plan (Part 1) MATTER 8.2: SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT August 2013, page 6 minute 8.2.44. which states "A £359,000 contribution for footpath/cycleway improvements between the store and the town centre and along the Trent & Mersey canal corridor to Towers Business Park via Love Lane, has been provided. The development includes provision of cycle stands adjacent to the main store entrance and 8 cycle stands, changing facilities and lockers for employees. Accessibility of the store by foot and cycle will be significantly improved through establishing a clear pedestrian linkage down Leathermill Lane and Forge Road and beyond to Market Street and Albion Street in order to ensure the site is integrated with the town's existing retail provision." and is also mentioned in the minutes of the town centre regeneration PDC of 28th August 2013, minute number 5 in the paragraph titled "Rugeley"

The Planning Department advised that:

“The Tesco £359,000 covers several items:

- *Enhancement of the route between Tesco and Rugeley town centre – CCDC has prepared initial sketches of how the route should be enhanced along its length. SCC are now working these into a detailed design as part of their ongoing public realm work in Rugeley to allow materials, costs etc to be agreed and implementation to follow.*
- *Enhancement of the cycle link between Tesco and the towers Business Park / A51 – CCDC has prepared initial sketches and discussions have taken place with both the Canal and River Trust and SCC, preparatory to detailed design work and implementation.*
- *Enhancement of the canal access and tow path – CCDC proposals have been discussed with the Canal and river Trust, SCC and Inland Waterways, preparatory to detailed design work and implementation.*

All parties are aware of the need to move things forward and work is ongoing.”

In response to questions about timescales, Steve Knott, advised that

resurfacing works on Forge Lane were due to commence on Sunday, 23 February, 2014. The S.106 scheme would need to be agreed by then in order that both projects could run consecutively and with continuity of design, materials etc. He estimated this would require a start on site by end January / beginning February, with a potential completion date of end of May, 2014.

He also confirmed that the Horsefair Public Realm works were due to commence on 6 January, 2014.

2 “When will the entrance stonework to the Birches Estate, Rugeley off the roundabout on the A460 be repaired.

I understand the feature was damaged as a result of a road traffic accident sometime ago, and that the drivers insurance has agreed responsibility yet neither CCDC or SCC have made any attempt at repair and the site has become an eyesore that residents are complaining about?”

In addition to the following update, as per the agenda, the Property Services section also provided a late further update (see below):

- *The District Council continues to try and establish who owns / is responsible for the feature. Whilst the matter remains unresolved, the Council had previously removed some of the damaged stonework that was causing a nuisance, and effected repairs to the hedge, following the road traffic accident.*

Councillor Williams said he was not satisfied with the answer, and the Democratic Services Manager advised that he would follow up the matter with the Head of Planning and Regeneration.

Further update (mid-February):

- *When the accident happened Property Services made the area safe. At that time the Council was unsure who was responsible for wall. It has now been confirmed that the land on which the wall stands has been transferred to the Council. The Police were contacted for details of the driver of the vehicle, and an insurance claim is being pursued.*
- *Contractors were appointed at the beginning of January to rebuild the wall. They have had difficulty sourcing stone that is fit for purposes but the search is ongoing. The contractor is aware of the urgency of the job, and is confident that the right quality of stone will be sourced in the next 4-6 weeks.*

11. Question Submitted by Mr. A. Lovell, The Corner House, Millington Street, Rugeley

Mr. Lovell (also a District Councillor – Declared) raised the following

question for Rugeley Town Council:

“Can a member of Rugeley Town Council explain why it has organised a costly leaflet campaign against the miners memorial even though health and safety assessments and planning permission has been passed. Can the town council also confirm that the cost of this consultation will not come from public money.”

The Chairman read out the following response from Rugeley Town Council, and advised that such questions should be raised at meetings of the Town Council:

“The funds for the survey were taken from the Council’s administration budget where monies are ring-fenced for such projects that may arise through the financial year; there is no additional cost to the rate payer.”

12. The Old Chancel, St. Augustine’s Church, Rugeley

The Ven. Simon Baker, Archdeacon of Lichfield, provided an update. He advised that it was unfortunate when St. Augustine’s was built in 1822 that nobody had thought to remove the remains of the old church or its status. The plan was, therefore, initially to remove its status as a Chapel of Ease, and reclassify it as a monument. The consultation process in this regard was in hand. SCC Cllr. Martin had contributed £2,500 of Community Fund monies, which the Archdeacon had matched to in order that a trust could be established (required £5,000).

In response to questions from the floor, the Archdeacon confirmed that although there appeared to be plant growth at the top of the tower, the structure was stable and safe. He also acknowledged that the Diocese would welcome being able to hand over responsibility in due course, as any monies expended on the building had a detrimental impact on its capacity to spend on other buildings, such as St. Augustine’s itself and the church hall.

13. Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust

Deborah Neal, Head of Communications, Mid-Staffs NHS Foundation Trust, had provided the following update, which the Chairman read out:

‘The Trust 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 questions on the day-to-day business of the hospitals, we would be very pleased to email you answers/updates from the Directors.

The TSA has been granted an extension of a maximum of 40 working days before submitting its final report to Monitor, who will then have a maximum of 20 working days to consider the report and lay it before Parliament. At that time the report will become a public document. The Secretary of State then has a maximum of 30 working days to announce his decision. Because these are all 'maximum' numbers of days permitted, we do not know when each stage will be reached.

If you have any questions around the TSA process and future of services, these would need to be addressed to the TSA.'

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

14. Question Submitted by CCDC Councillor Brian Bottomer

“As it is time for all Town and Parish Councils to set their precept rate for 2014-15, are the Town Councillors considering correcting their grave error resulting in a rate increase of over 20% for the financial year 2013-14, by reducing the Rugeley Town rate by at least 14% for 2014-15? If not, why not?”

The Chairman read out the following response from Rugeley Town Council, and advised that such questions should be raised at meetings of the Town Council:

“The Town Council have not finalised a budget for 2014-15 and, therefore, cannot make comment on a reduction; however the Council advised that an increase is not being considered. The Council will make the budget information available for electors once produced.”

15. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

No items were submitted for the forward agenda, however, **the following matters were raised for SCC Highways:**

Box Junction: Junction of Queensway and Hednesford Road – Work appears to be only half completed. Steve Knott said he would investigate the matter and get back to the questioner (RTC Cllr. Williams).

Western Springs Road – Cars turning (illegally) across the road to access petrol station. Cllr. Jones asked if it would be possible to address this issue as an extension of the Horsefair Public Realm works, as this was an ongoing safety issue. Steve Knott said he would investigate the matter and get back to Cllr. Jones.

Miners Memorial – Safety Assessment. In response to a question concerning a newspaper report that the County was undertaking a safety assessment in respect of locating a memorial on the roundabout, Steve Knott advised that he did not know when the assessment would be completed and if it was intended to make the findings public.

16. Any Other Business

None.

17. Next Meeting

Monday, 10 March, 2014. Venue: Rugeley Council Chamber.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.

CHAIRMAN