

CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CANNOCK COMMUNITY FORUM
TUESDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 2009 AT 7.00 P.M.
AT CIVIC CENTRE, CANNOCK

PRESENT: Councillors:

Freeman, M. P. (Chairman)
Bennett, Mrs. D. J. (Vice-Chairman)

Alcott, G. Mitchell, C.
Allen, F.C. Thomas, D.
Davis, Mrs. M. A.

Cannock Chase Council Officers:

Mr. S. Brown, Chief Executive
Mr. S. Partridge, Democratic Services Manager
Mr. M. Challoner, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Mr. N. Hackney, Community Partnerships Manager
Mr. T. Walsh, Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Mrs. R. Gudgin, Street Wardens Manager

Also Present

Mr. W. Mortiboys, Staffordshire County Council
Inspector P. Shannaghan, Staffordshire Police (Chase Division)
Mrs. V. Singleton, Staffordshire Police Neighbourhood Watch
Representatives from the Press
Local Residents (approximately 30)

(Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M.R. Green, J.T. Kraujalis, C.W.J. Morgan and Mrs. H.M. Sutton)

8. Notes

The notes of the meeting held on 17 June, 2009 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:-

Minute 5, paragraph 11 should read:

“A Member explained that he, as a trustee, had considered the matter of gates in 2006 and the matter had been raised as people were parking on the car park and leaving their car there all day. No mention of vandalism issues had been discussed. The Main gates were replaced in consultation with the Friends of Cannock Park but felt that this was a matter for the Council and not CISWO. CISWO had been involved in issues relating to boundaries because there were many plans showing this Trust Land some of which were ambiguous. It was reported that technically some of the area

that is now the Golf Course was not part of the Park, it had originally been bought by Cannock Chase Council to be used as a cemetery, but had been used as a pitch and putt course and then turned into a golf course to earn money."

9. Questions for Staffordshire Police

Mrs. Hargreaves, a local resident, asked if the Police intended doing anything about the man who was sleeping rough outside Cannock library. She expressed concern that the man had some unsavoury sanitary habits, and might upset children passing on their way to school.

Inspector Shannaghan advised that the Police were aware of the individual and had applied for a CRASBO (Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Order), which would set prohibitions including banning the individual from entering defined areas in the community, entering certain buildings, shopping areas etc.

10. Update – Bus Service 31

Wayne Mortiboys, Staffordshire County Council read out a statement from Adrian Hunt, Staffordshire County Council in respect of Bus Service 31:-

"A meeting took place between Arriva and Councillors Davies and Dixon (I was also present) on 18 May 2009 to again put forward the request for at least some journeys on Service 32/33 (formerly 31) to operate via the full length of Cannock Road, Blackfords. Arriva could not accede to this request.

I would reiterate that the County Council has secured the provision of a return shopping service calling at all stops via the full length of Cannock Road between Hednesford and Cannock on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays operated by Cannock Cabs services T3 and T5. Journeys leave Hednesford at 0937 (Tuesday and Friday) and 1052 (Tuesday and Thursday) so will be passing through Central Corner about four minutes later. Return times from Cannock Bus Station are 1205 (Tuesday and Thursday) and 1230 (Tuesday and Friday). As you will have gathered both services operate on Tuesdays hence the better service on that day. Both services operate via Cannock Hospital to and from the bus station."

Councillor Mrs. M. Davis requested that the County publicise the information in order that local residents could better appreciate that Arriva were at fault, not the District or County Councils.

Councillor G. Alcott advised that the Council's "Dial-a-Ride" alternative to the English National Concessionary Travel bus pass, had been extended to include the over 70's.

A local resident enquired why the bus service appeared to operate on a Sunday.

Mr. Mortiboys advised that the Sunday service was funded by the County, but operated on a commercial basis on weekdays.

11. Closure of Cannock Park Gates

Nick Hackney, Community Partnerships Manager, gave a presentation on the findings of the survey that had been undertaken in respect of Cannock Park.

It was agreed that copies of the presentation would be made available, on request.

Mr. Rainsbury, a local resident, asked some detailed questions in respect of funding of works in the park, which related to a written response in respect of a Freedom of Information request.

The Chairman advised Mr. Rainsbury that, as a full written response had been provided to his enquiries (see item 13., below), and the author was not present at the Forum, he did not consider it appropriate to prolong the discussion unnecessarily.

12. Condition of Old Fallow Road and Hamelin Street

Wayne Mortiboys, Staffordshire County Council answered a question from Mr. Cooper, a local resident, in respect of the state of repair and the inspection regime for the above roads.

As they formed part of a bus route, they were subject to a monthly driven inspection, plus an annual walked inspection; the last walked inspection having been undertaken in September, 2008. Both roads were considered to be in a reasonable state of repair, though it was accepted that they had a patchwork appearance due to reinstatements following various utility works. Hamelin Street had been reported as a Category 4 fault along its entire length.

Mr. Cooper expressed concern about the apparent disparity in prioritising maintenance works. For example, he considered that too much work was being done to Stafford Road when the money could be better spent elsewhere.

Mr. Mortiboys explained that this was because Stafford Road carried many times the volume of traffic, including HGV's, and it was necessary to undertake regular repair and maintenance to keep the road in good repair and minimise potential problems.

13. Freedom of Information Request

The Chairman advised that a full written response had been sent to Mr. Rainsbury in the period since the agenda was prepared. Therefore, he moved the meeting on to the next item.

14. Questions in Respect of Senior Officers' Salaries and Expenses and Members' Expenses

Mr. Stephen Brown, Chief Executive, responded to a number of questions from Mrs. Heath, a local resident, in respect of Senior Officers' salaries and expenses and Members' expenses. (A written copy of the response was subsequently provided to Mrs. Heath, for information.) The response was as follows:

14.1 *"Would you please tell me and the public how, accordingly to one item in the newspaper cutting (dated 4 October, 2008), in December 2006, Chief Executive, Stephen Brown, was given a pay rise of £10,000 overnight? Who gives this authority to Councillors and where is the money coming from to pay all these fantastic wage increases?"*

The salary increase for the Chief Executive post was agreed by Cannock Chase Council Members on 13 December, 2006. It followed recommendations made by an independent Consultant (Tribal) employed to advise Members on remuneration packages for the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and proposed Directors' posts. The context was that Members agreed significant changes to the management structure of the Council including the deletion of three Chief Officer posts. The net financial effect of all the changes was that savings of £20,000 were delivered on an annual basis from the 2007/08 financial year. Therefore, these changes did not require any additional funding and in fact produced savings out of the Council's management arrangements.

Full Council (made up of all 41 Elected Councillors) has authority to agree changes to the Council's management structure, the financial implications and all matters in respect of the remuneration of the Chief Executive.

- 14.2 *"Another item in the article stated that Senior Officers at Cannock Chase Council (13 in all) "have seen their pay soar again with a total wage bill coming in at £780,000." Councillor Neil Stanley defended the wage increase of Senior Officers arguing the authority has to keep pace with pay levels to attract the best Officers. Please tell me the total expenses these senior staff claim as, according to press items, the public are obliged to know."*

The 13 Chief Officers claimed a total of £22,240 expenses in the 12 month period starting 1 April, 2008 to 31 March, 2009. £18,090 of the £22,240 relates to travel related expenses.

It should be noted that the following savings have been delivered from management and administration to release funds for Council priorities and services:

2009/10	£121,000
2010/11	£319,000
2011/12	£324,000

This was decided at the Council meeting on 4 March, 2009.

- 14.3 *"Mercury News of 8 August, 2002 reported that Councillors picked up a quarter of a million pounds in allowances (in 2001-02). Please tell me the sum for 2008-09?"*

In accordance with the Local Authority (Members' Allowances) (Amendment) Regulations 1995 the authority publishes each year details of the total amount of basic allowance and special responsibility allowance paid to Members of Cannock Chase Council. The total amount paid for the year ending 31 March 2009 was £388,319.

- 14.4 *"How many Councillors are there for the Cannock Chase District? What is the size of the population of the District?"*

41 Councillors; population of 94,400.

- 14.5 *"Where are the rules for the number of Councillors to be appointed and who makes these rules?"*

The current number of Councillors (41) was determined by the Local Government Commission for England in a report to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions in October, 2000, following a periodic electoral review of Cannock Chase. The report recommended that Cannock Chase District Council should be served by 41 Councillors (reduced from 42), representing 15 wards, with changes being made to the boundaries of 12 of the existing wards in order to ensure better electoral equality (the number of electors represented by each Councillor).

15. Date of Next Meeting

The Chairman advised that the next meeting would be held on 23 November, 2009 in the Council Chamber.

CHAIRMAN

