

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CANNOCK COMMUNITY FORUM
TUESDAY 12 JUNE 2012 AT 7.00 P.M.
AT CIVIC CENTRE, CANNOCK

PRESENT: Councillors:

Alcott, G. (Chairman)
Kraujalis, J.T. (Vice-Chairman)

Anslow, C.	Mitchell, C.
Dixon, D.I.	Morgan, C.W.J.
Freeman, Miss M.	Snape, P.A.

Cannock Chase District Councillors:

Councillor G. Adamson
Councillor M. Sutherland
Councillor J. Bernard
Councillor Miss J. Jones

Staffordshire County Councillors:

Councillor P. Corfield

Cannock Chase Council Officers:

Mr. S. Brown, Chief Executive
Mrs. W. Rowe, Senior Committee Officer
Mr. G. Winslow, Strategic Assets Manager

Also Present

Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliffe, LPT Commander for Cannock Chase District
Karen Yeomans (Staffordshire County Council Library Services)
Catherine Mann (Staffordshire County Council Library Services)
Local Residents (approximately 20)

1. Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Councillor G. Alcott was appointed Chairman and Councillor J. T. Kraujalis was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Forum for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors F.W.C. Allen and Mrs. H. Sutton and Victoria

Henderson, Consultation and Engagement Officer.

3. Notes

The notes of the meeting held on 6 March 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Questions for Staffordshire Police

The Chairman welcomed Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliffe to the meeting who was in attendance to take questions relating to local policing matters.

Mrs. M. Heaton, Friends of Cannock Park, made reference to the signs recently erected in Cannock park designating areas in the Park where ball games were not allowed. Youths had been playing football on the former bowling green in the rose garden and on the other bowling green located behind the tennis courts. Footballs had been going into residents gardens and their hedges had been broken by the youths attempting to retrieve the football. She considered that Park Attendants were having their authority undermined as the youths were ignoring the signs and playing football in areas that were not designated for ball games.

Councillor Maureen Freeman also raised concern regarding issues of this nature that had been going on in the park since March. She commented that the public were in fear of sitting in the rose garden due to the youths playing football there. She explained that one youth had been served with an harassment order against her following a recent incident. Youths had told her that the Police had allegedly given permission for them to play on the bowling green. The Park Attendants were not asking the youths to move because of what they had been told by the Police. She sought clarification on the roles of the Police, Council Officers and Park Attendants.

Councillor Mitchell expressed her concern regarding the matter which had been brought to her attention as the Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader. She was of the opinion that the situation was under control but it was clear from the views being expressed at the meeting that the problem still existed. She considered that the agencies should work together to tackle the problem.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised the Forum that he had recently visited the park and was pleased that the condition of the park was good; this was a testament to the hard work of the staff. He commented that the park should be a safe and secure place for residents to enjoy and he was disappointed to hear of the issues that had been taking place in the park over recent months. He agreed that it was important to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Police, Council Officers and Park Attendants. However, it was not just a Police issue as a number of agencies would be involved in tackling the problems. He advised that the issue would come under the direction of the Community Safety Partnership who would develop an action plan to address the concerns being raised.

With regard to the comment that the Police had allegedly given permission for the youths to play football on the bowling greens, he said that Police Officers would not encourage youths to play football on a bowling green. The "No Ball Game" signs that had been erected were only advisory and were not legally enforceable. He considered that the Park Attendants had a difficult job but the Police would offer a supporting role to assist them. He further advised that Cannock park was a top priority area for anti social behaviour.

He informed the Forum that last year anti social behaviour incidents across the District had reduced by 20%. Since April this year there had been 200 less reported ASB incidents across the District with 80% of people being satisfied with their response.

He confirmed that he would take on board the comments made at the Forum. A meeting of the Community Safety Partnership would be arranged as soon as possible and clarity on roles and responsibilities would be obtained. He would report back with an update at the next meeting of the Forum.

In response to a question from Councillor Mitchell he confirmed that the Police had attended the last 10 reported incidents in respect of Cannock Park. Councillor Mitchell asked the Chief Executive to keep Council Members informed of the outcome of the Community Safety Partnership meeting. The Chief Executive confirmed that he would do this and additionally he would raise the matter at the Responsible Authority Group which met this Friday.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe confirmed that Staffordshire Police were one of the leading Police Forces in the County for the way in which ASB incidents were dealt with. Although the situation at Cannock park was important the Chief Inspector reminded that Forum that this was only one part of the District and ASB incidents throughout the District were reducing.

Councillor Freeman reiterated her concerns regarding the park. She commented that the school summer holidays would soon be here and it was important that the Park Attendants understood their role and for all agencies to work together to tackle this issue.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe confirmed that a meeting with the District Council would be arranged to discuss this situation. He informed the Forum that CCTV in the area was very active and the Control Room were quick to pass any incidents arising at the park to the Police.

Councillor Snape made reference to the difference between offences under the Public Order Act and asked why no arrests had been made even though people had been pointed out to the Police. Chief Inspector Ratcliffe explained that there was a clear difference between an offence under Section 4 of the Public Order Act and to an offence under Section 5 of the Act. He agreed that there was one incident whereby more action could have been taken. However, he became involved in the incident and it was dealt with. He explained that when he was appointed to his role some 15 months ago a similar situation with ASB existed in Cannock Town Centre near St. Luke's Church. He reminded the Forum that this situation had been quickly resolved and he gave his assurance and commitment that the issues in Cannock Park would be resolved as soon as possible.

Councillor Adamson expressed his concern regarding ASB issues affecting Cannock Town Centre. He made reference to a recent incident whereby a PCSO (a young lady) had been sent to attend to a drunken man in the town centre who had been using foul language in front of young children. The PCSO was unable to do anything about the man. He considered ASB incidents should be treated with importance and regular Police Officers, not PCSO's who do not have the power of arrest, should attend to deal with any incidents. He had concern that there would be less Police Officers available during the summer as a number of Staffordshire Police Officers would be in London assisting with the Olympics.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe assured the Forum that he expected the town centre to be a place to be enjoyed without being disturbed by drunken folk. With regard to the incident referred to by Councillor Adamson he explained that the first available appropriate resource would have been sent to the incident. If the PCSO was unable to deal with the situation she could request assistance. In respect of dealing with drunkenness in the town centre he made reference to "Operation Safer Nights". This initiative was aimed at tackling alcohol-related town centre disorder and crime; it brought together a number of policing activities and ensured the town centre was adequately policed. He reassured the Forum that the comments made had been noted and drunkenness in the town

centre would not be tolerated.

In response to a further question the Chief Inspector confirmed that there was a dedicated Police Constable for the town centre – PC Andy Frost.

There was some discussion on whether the bowling green's which the youths were playing football on were actually former or current bowling green's. Councillor Freeman confirmed that the bowling green in the rose garden was a former one and the bowling green behind the tennis courts was still used. The Chief Inspector was asked whether he would advise his Officers to inform the youths that they could not play football on the bowling green's.

The Chief Inspector gave his assurance that he would liaise with his Officers regarding this and reiterated the importance in obtaining clarification on roles and responsibilities. He asked the Forum to note that Cannock Police do not operate or own Cannock park. The Park Attendants should decide where the youths can play football and the Police Officers would offer support to the Park Attendants in ensuring this happens.

Councillor Snape made reference to an article that appeared in a recent edition of the Express and Star which referred to a pioneering scheme between the Council and the Police to vet council house tenants. Councillor Snape sought further information as to why the scheme had been withdrawn.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe explained that the proposal for Staffordshire Police to conduct tenancy checks on every potential tenant had become public knowledge prior to ascertaining whether it was legally viable. After seeking specialist advice it became apparent that the scheme would not be viable. However, he reassured the Forum that Cannock Police continued to work closely with Council Housing Officers to resolve tenancy issues.

5. Questions for Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

No items had been submitted.

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

Stephen Brown, Chief Executive confirmed that there was nothing significant to report on this issue. The negotiations between the Council and Asda continued and no resolution or agreement had yet been achieved. The matter remained in the hands of the respective solicitors. He confirmed that he would advise the Forum once more information was available.

Councillor Adamson commented that Asda had met with the Council to discuss the maintenance of the park opposite the Asda store which was in a very poor condition. He and Councillor Mitchell attended the meeting and informed Asda that they were failing in their responsibility to maintain the park. Since the meeting had been held there had been no improvement in the park and consideration was therefore being given to taking further action to ensure the condition of the park was improved.

Councillor Mitchell asked whether the park was covered by the "Alcohol Restriction Order". Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised that he was unsure whether it was covered by the Order. However, if there was evidence of drunken/ASB issues in this park an application to extend the "Alcohol Restriction Order" could be made.

7. Securing Wreaths to the Town Centre Cenotaph

The Chairman invited Mr. Bob Leighton to outline his request. Mr. Leighton explained that he was requesting whether eyebolts could be fixed to the steps of the cenotaph so that the wreaths could be attached with a wire.

Geoff Winslow, Strategic Assets Manager, explained that he had been in contact with Mr. Leighton regarding his request who had pointed him in the direction of the cenotaph at Bloxwich. However, following a visit to Bloxwich it appears that nothing was permanently fixed to the cenotaph to secure the wreaths to. It was agreed that both Geoff Winslow and Mr. Leighton would make enquiries with Walsall MBC and discuss the matter outside of the Forum.

The Chairman had concern that the stone could be damaged by the elements if it was drilled in order to fix the eyebolts and he considered that this should be taken into account.

8. Possible Closure of Cannock Library

The Chairman invited Mr. Graham Craddock to outline his question. Mr. Craddock had concern that there were plans to close the existing Library, sell the premises for commercial development and relocate the Library within the College. The area being proposed in the College was half the size of the existing premises. He considered that the suggestion should be disregarded as the Library was an excellent facility and provided a positive feature within the town centre.

The Chairman explained that two representatives were in attendance from Staffordshire County Council Library Services – Karen Yeomans and Catherine Mann together with County Councillor Pat Corfield, the Cabinet Member responsible for Libraries.

Councillor Corfield advised that the quality of staff and service provided by Cannock Library was excellent and there had been in excess of 160,000 visits to Cannock Library last year. He emphasised that the Library was a community facility which provided a number of different activities. For example, it offered activities for parents/carers with children, provided assistance to the unemployed and provided a delivery service to housebound individuals.

He confirmed that there was no suggestion to close the Library at Cannock or to locate to inferior premises. The existing building was not large enough to cater for the amount of services it offered and as South Staffordshire College were undertaking a rebuild of Cannock College there was a suggestion that the Library could be located within the newly refurbished College building. However, he stressed that if the facilities being offered were not better and more enhanced than the existing building, the Library would stay where it was. There was no way a building half the size of the existing premises would be considered. He confirmed that a meeting with the College Principal was scheduled for next week when the plans of the College would be viewed.

Catherine Mann, the representative from the Library Service confirmed that there was a real wish to maintain the excellent service provided by the Library in Cannock town centre and to enhance and develop the services offered.

Councillor Adamson was pleased to hear that the Library was to stay in the town centre. He commented that the planning application for the refurbishment of Cannock College had recently been considered by the Planning Control Committee and the College Principal had attended the meeting to speak about the proposals. At that meeting the Principal had been unaware of any plans to relocate the Library at the College. Councillor Adamson had concern with the College location as

he was unsure whether older people who used the Library would mix with the younger people that used the College.

Councillor Kraujalis was of the opinion that the Library service was safe in Cannock but the existing building itself was at risk. He considered that it would be hard to better the existing building. He commented that key people such as the Principal should be aware of the proposals.

Councillor Corfield confirmed that the reason the Principal had been unaware of the proposals was because the majority of discussions had been with staff below the Principal. There was no intention of keeping the Principal of the College out of the discussions with regard to this proposal. He agreed that there were benefits for keeping the Library at the existing location and if, after taking everything into account, there was nothing better being offered the Library would not relocate.

Councillor Mitchell commented that the Library provided an excellent service and considered it was located in a good position as it was easily accessible by the disabled. She did not consider that this could be achieved at the College location and questioned whether there were commercial reasons for considering this proposal.

Councillor Corfield reiterated that the Council would not consider any proposal which offered lower standards. All aspects such as car parking and access for the disabled would be considered. He also confirmed that the local archives would remain in Cannock.

A local resident commented that older persons may feel intimidated by younger people if the library was relocated in the College building and suggested that an independent entrance should be considered. Another resident commented that, in terms of the peace and quiet, a local library was very different to a College/school library.

Councillor Corfield confirmed that all aspects would be considered before making any decisions to relocate. He again reiterated that the Library would remain where it was if there was nothing better being offered.

The Chairman suggested that, as the County Council were looking to expand, enhance and improve Cannock library they should consider that there was an empty District Council owned property adjacent to the existing Library premises. This could be sold to the County Council and used to extend the Library and provide the extra facilities.

9. Questions from Gordon Taylor, a local resident:

- **Parking – Cardinal Griffin School – vehicles spilling out onto Westbourne Avenue especially when events are held/parents evening**
- **Surface of road in Cardinal Way and making up of footpath at bottom. Since the gates have been erected they haven't continued the footpath, and the bushes need cutting back**
- **Proposed Cardinal Way parking restrictions and parking at bottom of Westbourne Avenue**

The Chairman invited Mr. Taylor to outline his concerns. Mr. Taylor referred to a recent event held at the school on a Sunday morning and explained that when events such as these were held parking occurred along both sides of Cardinal Way and Westbourne Avenue. As there were now double yellow lines by the island on Cardinal Way and at the top of Cardinal Way (towards the exit junction)

ten car parking spaces had been lost. He stated that six cars were parked at the bottom of Westbourne Avenue yesterday making it difficult for him to get back onto his drive. Other Westbourne Avenue residents were also annoyed by the parking.

He further advised that when Cardinal Way had been resurfaced approximately 18 months ago a car had been left parked in the road. The workmen had laid the surface having to go around the parked car. He was concerned that this area of road had still not been resurfaced. He explained that when parents parked in Westbourne Avenue to pick up their children from the school, a number of cars parked on the footpaths and, if questioned, the residents received verbal abuse. He stated that there was rarely any police presence in the area.

David Wright, Community Highways Liaison Manager, advised that the double yellow lines were provided in Cardinal Way to protect the roundabout from parked cars as coaches were having difficulty getting passed. Double yellow lines were also placed at the junction to ensure it was kept clear of parked cars for visibility reasons. He considered that there may be an increased amount of parking in Westbourne Avenue at the moment due to the construction work currently being undertaken at the Leisure Centre. The School had been requested to send a letter to parents to remind them to park having consideration for residents. The Highways team would continue to work with the School to educate parents in this respect. However, he reminded the Forum that the issue with parking outside schools occurred throughout the district and not just at Cardinal Griffin School.

With regard to the resurfacing of Cardinal Way, David Wright explained that it was difficult for Contractors when resurfacing roads as they did not have any powers to move the parked cars. The area was leafleted prior to the works being undertaken but there was little more that could be done. However, a defect notice had been issued to the Contractor to rectify the area in question.

In respect of the request for parking restrictions along Westbourne Avenue he commented that although this would prevent parents from parking it would also prevent residents and their visitors from parking. He advised that a timed restriction (i.e. at school drop off and pick up times) could be considered but this would not assist if the problem with parking was occurring during Sundays as Mr. Taylor was suggesting. In order to proceed with a parking order along Westbourne Avenue the support of the majority of residents would need to be obtained.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe considered that the education of parents in this respect was important and agreed that the issue of parking outside schools occurred across the District. The Police had to prioritise and he asked Forum Members to consider whether the issue of parking outside schools was that bad that it took priority over other Policing issues.

Councillor Snape commented that the area in question was partly in his Ward. Cardinal Griffin School attracted students from outside the District and due to the school bus service increasing the travelling fees many parents were choosing to drive their children to and from the school. A number of cars parked in Westbourne Avenue but he had not seen any car parked on the pavement or in a dangerous manner. He commented that cars were allowed to park in Westbourne Avenue providing they were not causing an obstruction on the pavement or blocking a driveway. The situation happened outside schools throughout the area. He added that he had recently asked residents in Westbourne Avenue whether they considered there was a problem with parking in the street. The majority of residents had said they did not think parking was a problem.

Councillor Kraujalis said that he had sympathy for the residents and considered that once the Artificial Turf Pitch was opened on 1 July, 2012 the parking problems may increase. However, he was pleased that the school had agreed to provide additional parking for this facility. With regard to the double yellow lines in Cardinal Way which prevented ten cars from parking he asked whether the

restriction could be relaxed during the evening.

David Wright confirmed that the restrictions had been placed around the roundabout as coaches were having difficulty getting passed the parked cars. However, Highways Officers would keep this area under observations and it may be that the restrictions could be relaxed.

Mr. Taylor commented that residents paid their Council Tax and road tax and considered that they should therefore be able to park outside their own home. Additionally, Mr. Taylor asked why the footpaths had not been continued since the gates had been erected. David Wright advised that he would raise this issue regarding the footpaths with the Scheme Engineer and report back to Mr. Taylor.

10. 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.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe agreed to provide an update on the issues surrounding Cannock park.

11. Date of Future Meetings

The Forum noted that the next meetings of the Cannock Community Forum had been arranged for 18 September, 2012, 27 November, 2012 and 19 March, 2013.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 8.55pm.

CHAIRMAN