

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**  
**NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**CANNOCK COMMUNITY FORUM**  
**WEDNESDAY 17 MARCH 2010 AT 7.00 P.M.**  
**AT CIVIC CENTRE, CANNOCK**

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Bennett, Mrs. D. J. (Vice-Chairman – in the Chair)

Alcott, G.

Mitchell, C.

Allen, F.W.C.

Morgan, C. W. J.

Davis, Mrs. M. A.

Sutton, Mrs. H. M.

Green, M. R.

Staffordshire County Councillors:

County Councillor J. Rowley, Cannock Villages Division

Cannock Chase District Councillors:

Councillor Mrs. P. Ansell

Councillor A. Williams

Councillor G. Ball

Cannock Chase Council Officers:

Mr. L. Trigg, Deputy Chief Executive

Mr. T. Walsh, Parks and Open Spaces Manager

Mrs. W. Rowe, Senior Committee Officer

Miss K. McBey, Marketing Officer

Miss L. Shephard, Arts Development Officer

Also Present

Inspector P. Shannaghan, Staffordshire Police

Representative from the Press

Representatives of Friends of Cannock Park

Local Residents (approximately 18)

(Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chairman paid tribute to Mr. Rainsbury, a local resident who had suddenly passed away. He had regularly attended Cannock Forum to raise issues affecting Cannock Park. She expressed sympathy to his family and friends).

**23. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M. P. Freeman (Chairman), J.T. Kraujalis, D.

Thomas and County Councillor P. Corfield.

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

<u>Name</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>	
Councillor Mrs. D. Bennett	Item 6 – Questions submitted by Hazel Heath – Why do Council tax payers have to foot the bill for the lavish Charity Ball? – husband was previously the Chairman of the Council	Personal and Prejudicial
Councillor. Mrs. P. Ansell	Item 6 – Questions submitted by Hazel Heath – Why do Council tax payers have to foot the bill for the lavish Charity Ball? – was previously the Chairman of the Council	Personal

**25. Notes**

Arising from the notes of the meeting it was reported that problems still existed with cars being parked on pavements and mobility scooters having trouble getting past. Inspector Shannaghan advised that this was a grey area and an obstruction on the highway had to be proved. He reported that where cars were parked on pavements where there were double yellow lines this came under the remit of Civil Parking Enforcement. A meeting was due to take place with the Civil Parking Enforcement Manager in April when a better understanding would be gained. However, should Officers come across cars parked on pavements the registered keeper would receive a £30 ticket for unlawful obstruction.

The notes of the meeting held on 23 November, 2009 were then agreed as a correct record.

**26. Questions for Staffordshire Police**

Inspector Shannaghan was asked to clarify whether Police Community Support Officers could issue fixed penalty notices. He advised that they could issue fixed penalty notices for obstruction, minor offences, anti-social behaviour offences and some motoring offences.

Councillor Alcott, highlighted a problem with cars parking along Station Road opposite the junction. Inspector Shannaghan stated that he would raise this with the Police Community Support Officers and Police Constables for the area.

Councillor Alcott expressed concern regarding cars obstructing the footpath and highway. He considered that the recent bad weather had made the situation worse with roads being blocked making it difficult for emergency vehicles to pass. He asked whether imposing a 20 mile speed limit would mean that parked cars would have to display their lights. Inspector Shannaghan advised that unlawful obstruction had to be proved whether it was on the footpath or highway. He stated that on derestricted roads with a speed limit of above 30 parked cars had to display their lights and on roads with a speed limit of 30 or under parked cars did not have to display lights.

**27. Highway questions submitted by Councillor G. Alcott:**

**The surface dressing in various parts of the District are now disintegrating at an alarming rate causing loose chippings on the carriageway and ruts in the highway – what are the County’s intentions for putting this right?**

Councillor Alcott outlined the problem with the surface dressing in various parts of the District which had disintegrated and was causing loose chippings on the carriageway. Of particular concern were Station Road, Hednesford, Cannock Road, Hightown and Cannock Road, Chadsmoor. These roads had been surfaced dressed as part of last years programme of resurfacing. However, since the bad winter the surface had disintegrated. He suggested that there may be something wrong with the dressing as some roads that had been surface dressed three years ago were still in good condition.

Wayne Mortiboys, Staffordshire County Council Highways Officer, explained that these roads had been surfaced using the “preventative maintenance method” which was a cost effective way to keep good roads in good condition. This method was suitable for roads carrying light traffic (not A or B roads). A mixture of bitumen and stone was laid but due to the bad winter it had been difficult for the stone to bed into the bitumen as it hardens quicker in the cold weather. He confirmed that the whole of last year’s resurfacing programme was to be looked at again during April and May and if necessary a second application would be applied. The expected life span of the dressing was 7 to 8 years.

**Pot holes in the roads – especially Hamelin Street**

Councillor Alcott then raised the issue of pot holes in the roads, in particular Hamelin Street. He had reported this problem to “Clarence” during the bad weather. However, despite leaving an answer phone message he had not had any response. He questioned the process the operators had followed to temporarily fill in the pot holes in Hamelin Street as the tarmac that had been placed in the holes had now all gone. It was reported that the same thing had happened along Saturn Road. A resident asked who employed the Highway Inspectors and how many were employed.

Wayne Mortiboys stated that Inspectors were employed across the County inspecting the roads but could not confirm numbers. Each defect in the highway was categorised according to the danger to cars and pedestrians and given a priority rating between 1 and 4 (1 meaning it would be dealt with in 24 hours). Hamelin Street was due to be completely resurfaced in April. However, in the meantime, it had been made safe by temporarily filling the pot holes. More permanent repairs would be done to the better used roads as the County Council had to balance the risk against claims.

Wayne Mortiboys agreed to provide the Forum with an update on the progress of resurfacing at the next meeting. In addition, he would confirm how many Highway Inspectors were employed by the County Council. He would also bring the 2010/11 preventative maintenance programme to the next meeting.

Concern was expressed regarding a pot hole in Avon Road by the pedestrian crossing. Wayne Mortiboys stated he would check on the current situation regarding this.

**Gritting of roads**

Councillor Alcott asked what the County Council’s policy on gritting was and whether all bus routes, were gritted. He had concern that the side roads, shopping centres and the subway steps in Cannock had not been gritted during the recent bad weather.

Wayne Mortiboys stated that the County Council would grit 43% of the network during a standard winter. However, due to the severe weather conditions a decision was taken nationally in early January to pool all the salt reserves and until yesterday all salt stocks were centrally managed. Each Local Authority had been allocated a tonnage of grit each day to grit their respective roads. This meant that the County Council could grit only A & B routes. Additionally, 30 tonnes of grit had been delivered to Hawks Green Depot in order that critical locations in the town centre could be hand gritted by Cannock Chase Council. Wayne Mortiboys stated that he would provide a footnote on the minutes to confirm the programme of gritting of the Town Centres and subway steps during the recent bad weather and also clarify whether all bus routes are gritted.<sup>1</sup>

Wayne Mortiboys confirmed that salt stocks were based on the past year's usage and the County aimed to never have less than 6 days of salt stocks. He stated that Local Authorities that had planned ahead and had healthy stocks of salt did not receive additional stock if other Council's needs were greater.

[<sup>1</sup> Wayne Mortiboys confirmed that the steps leading from Beecroft car park to the subway and the ramps were sprayed with brine solution regularly by Staffordshire Highways throughout the extended cold spell as a "critical" location. Areas within the pedestrian area were hand gritted by Staffordshire Highways on 14 January 2010 when Cannock Chase Council reported that they had utilised the salt stocks that had been provided for the town centre. He confirmed that whilst many bus routes are routinely gritted during a normal winter there will be certain bus routes which are not routinely gritted in certain parts of the County. All roads in Staffordshire have a categorisation from 1 – 6 based on many different factors. Whether it is a bus route or not is not one of the factors. However, the number of journeys made by Heavy Commercial Vehicles is a factor and as buses fall into this category they do indirectly influence the outcome. However, this tends only to impact where the bus service is very regular, as opposed to twice a day service for example. In a normal winter all roads that are category 1 – 4 are gritted.]

## **28. Questions submitted by Hazel Heath**

### **The Audit Commission awarded the Council a score of two in the new organisational assessment – can someone give an explanation as to what this means?**

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that all Local Authorities were inspected and given a score of between 1 and 4. Cannock Chase scored a 2 and this was the most common score across the County although there were some 3's and a small number of 4's. A score of 2 meant that the Council was managing itself reasonably well but it wasn't doing the little extra bits. Cannock Chase had scored 3 in the previous assessment.

A new system had been introduced on 1 April 2009 and the assessment had been more difficult this time. The Inspectors had advised the Council not to appeal about the score; however, some neighbouring Local Authorities had ignored this advice and appealed. Their score had been increased.

Mrs. Heath then asked the Deputy Chief Executive to explain the Citizen's Panel. He explained that when the Council wished to consult it uses a Panel of 1200 people called the Citizen's Panel. The Panel is compiled by a Marketing Specialist to represent a cross section of the people living in the District. A third of the Panel Members change yearly and the Panel complete 2 or 3 written surveys each year. 60 Panel Members were selected to be consulted on the budget proposals.

The Deputy Chief Executive was asked to clarify the costs of employing the Marketing Specialist. It

was agreed that this would be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

### **Why have concessionary travel tokens stopped being issued?**

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that concessionary travel tokens stopped being issued about a year ago in order to save money. The Dial-a-ride scheme was introduced as it was considered to be better than the travel tokens. However, it had become apparent that this was not working. It was confirmed that the responsibility for Concessionary Travel was being transferred to the County Council within the next two years. It was therefore unlikely that the scheme would be introduced in the meantime.

A number of Forum Members expressed their concern at the Council's decision to stop issuing concessionary travel tokens and they considered that a number of the cutbacks made by the Council affected older persons.

### **Why do Council tax payers have to foot the bill for the lavish Charity Ball?**

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs. D. Bennett had declared a personal and prejudicial interest and therefore left the meeting during the discussion on this item. Nominations were sought for a Chairman for this item and Councillor. G. Alcott was nominated. Councillor Alcott therefore took the Chair during the discussion on this matter.

Councillor Alcott outlined the figures for the Charity Ball's for the last few years. He stated that during 2007/08 there had been a loss of £9,178 despite there being a contribution of £5,800 from two local businessmen. He commented that the last two Charity Balls had only made a profit due to there again being contributions from local businessmen.

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Charity Ball was an event run by Leisure Services. The Chairman did not take the profit or loss from the evening but ran a raffle and this money was donated to his chosen charities. Over the last 3 years the Charity Ball had cost the Council £5,000 which amounted to 4p per year for each Council tax payer. He confirmed that the Charity Ball was a key social event bringing local businesses and people together and promoting Cannock Chase Council.

He confirmed that two of the last three Charity Ball's had made a profit but there had been a big loss three year's ago and lessons had been learned.

Forum Members expressed their views and considered that as it was a Charity Ball the spending should be better monitored. All costs should be outlined prior to there being any decision on expenditure. It was felt that the contributions from local businessmen would be better donated directly to the charities as it was these contributions that were keeping the events afloat. There should be an Officer who was responsible for monitoring the financial situation. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that Leisure Services were responsible for monitoring costs.

Councillor Alcott commented that during the 2007/08 year the biggest expenditure had been on entertainment as the band had cost £18,000. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that following the 2007/08 Charity Ball spending on entertainment had significantly decreased and £3700 had been spent in 2008 and £1780 in 2009. He reiterated that only one Charity Ball in the last three years had made a loss – the other two had made a profit.

Councillor Mrs. P. Ansell advised that when she had been Chairman of the Council she had stated she would not hold a Ball at a cost to Council tax payers. She considered that although the Ball

raised the profile of the Council this should not be done on tax payers' money.

**29. Respect Agenda – Spray Art Project at Cannock Park**

A DVD was shown to Forum Members which provided them with an insight into the work involved in delivering the Spray Art Project at Cannock Park. Officers from Staffordshire County Council and the District Council along with Friends of Cannock Park and youngsters from the District had all been involved in creating a colourful graffiti mural in the park. The project tackled issues around anti-social behaviour and also addressed the misrepresentations of the majority of young people.

It was explained that Cannock Chase High School were producing a drama about anti social behaviour in the park. Performances would take place in the park adjacent to the skate park between Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March and Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> March and tickets would be available at the end of the Forum.

The Chairman expressed her congratulations to Officers for their hard work in delivering this project.

**28. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings**

The Chairman explained that suggestions for issues to be discussed at future meetings of the Forum were sought and a form was available for this. It was explained that appropriate representatives would be invited to attend and debate issues and answer any questions.

The following items had been agreed at the meeting:

Highways Items:

- Update on the progress of resurfacing
- Confirmation on how many Highway Inspectors were employed by the County Council
- The 2010/11 preventative maintenance programme

Other items:

- Clarification of the costs of employing the Marketing Specialist to compile the Citizen's Panel

**29. Date of Next Meeting**

The Forum noted that dates of future meetings of the Cannock Community Forum would be agreed at full Council.

The Chairman reported that the Deputy Chief Executive was due to retire at the end of March and this was to be his last Forum Meeting. She wished him well for a long and happy retirement.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.

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CHAIRMAN