

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CANNOCK COMMUNITY FORUM
WEDNESDAY 15 JUNE 2011 AT 7.00 P.M.
AT CIVIC CENTRE, CANNOCK

PRESENT: Councillors:

Allen, F.W.C. (Vice-Chairman-in the Chair)

Bennett, Mrs. D.J.	Morgan, C.W.J.
Davis, Mrs. M.A.	Snape, P.A.
Dixon, D.I.	Sutton, Mrs. H.M.
Kraujalis, J.T.	Toth, J.
Mitchell, C.	

Staffordshire County Councillors:

County Councillor P. Corfield
County Councillor J. Rowley

Cannock Chase District Councillors:

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

Cannock Chase Council Officers:

Mr. T. McGovern, Corporate Director
Mr. S. Shilvock, Head of Environmental Health
Mr. S. O'Meara, Senior Licensing Officer
Mrs. W. Rowe, Senior Committee Officer

Also Present

Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliffe, LPT Commander for Cannock Chase District
Sergeant A. Richards, Cannock Local Policing Team
Wayne Mortiboys, Staffordshire County Council Highways Officer
Representatives from the Press
Local Residents (approximately 20)

1. Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Councillor G. Alcott was appointed as Chairman and Councillor F.W.C. Allen was appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Community Forum for the forthcoming Municipal Year. As Councillor G. Alcott had submitted his apologies Councillor F.W.C. Allen, the Vice-Chairman, took the Chair for the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Alcott and M.R. Green and Wes Southall, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue.

3. Notes

The notes of the meeting held on 16 March 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Questions for Staffordshire Police

Maureen Freeman asked the new LPT Commander for Cannock Chase District, Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliffe to provide an update on the Operations Matrix and for a brief outline of Neighbourhood Policing. She commented that a number of local residents and Councillors had recently met with Staffordshire Police and it had been agreed that communication with the public needed to improve. There had been some improvement over recent weeks and she hoped that this continued.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe explained that Operations Matrix runs in the Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley areas with the aim of addressing anti social behaviour. The matrix was a partnership approach involving various agencies including the Youth Service and Head Teachers of Schools with the purpose of reducing anti social behaviour and offering diversionary activities. The matrix was nationally recognised and very successful, having won an annual award. The initiative fits in well with the Police Forces priorities of delivering a quality service, reducing Crime and Disorder and protecting people from harm. He commented that from April to the present day there had been a 25% reduction of reported anti social behaviour incidents.

With regard to Neighbourhood Policing he explained that there had been a recent restructure and nine Local Police Teams had been created to replace the policing divisions – Cannock Chase District being one of the nine. Despite the restructure he informed the Forum that Police Constables, Beat Officers, PCSO's and response staff had all remained the same.

He was pleased that communication with the public had improved and his intention was for the Local Policing Team to be extremely visible in the District patrolling the town centres and he would be making regular announcements on Twitter and circulating newsletters to Councillors.

A local resident then asked the Chief Inspector to outline the minimum manning levels for the 24 hour response unit. He explained that there were 5 teams, each having 2 Sergeants and 12 Police Officers (therefore there were 10 Sergeants and 60 staff covering the District). The manning levels were very much dependent on the time of day, however, there would be adequate staffing levels provided throughout the day.

The resident had concern that manning levels would reduce during prisoner handover times. The Chief Inspector assured the Forum that resources would match demand and a Police Officer would always be available when necessary.

The resident asked how many times in the last 28 days had minimum manning levels not been achieved. The Chief Inspector stated that he would be disappointed if minimum manning levels had not been achieved and confirmed that it had not been brought to his attention.

Another resident asked the Chief Inspector to outline the priorities with regard to indiscriminate parking. The resident outlined a number of incidents throughout the District that he had recently witnessed with cars parking on double yellow lines, blocking dropped kerbs or parking too close to a

junction. The Chief Inspector explained that road safety was one of the Police Force's top 10 priorities, this including speeding, reducing collisions and indiscriminate parking and Staffordshire was recognised nationally for reducing casualties. He asked residents to highlight specific areas where problems were being experienced and he would take the necessary action to address them.

County Councillor Corfield explained that he had attended the meeting with residents and the Police. He reported that there had been a Police presence in Cannock Park and around St. Luke's Church since the meeting and expressed his thanks to the Chief Inspector. The Chief Inspector explained that on his arrival in the District he had been informed about the problems in the town centre with drunken folk during the day, alcohol bottles littering the town centre and damage being caused in Cannock Park. He had made his expectations clear that he wanted the town centre to be a safe, attractive and vibrant place and he was pleased that there had been an improvement over recent months.

Councillor Snape echoed the comments of Councillor Corfield and asked the Chief Inspector to confirm whether there had been any changes to the Sergeants in the recent restructure. He confirmed that two Sergeants had been lost to accommodate the necessary changes and confirmed that Police Constables and PCSO's had remained the same in order to offer continuity.

A local resident then outlined parking issues around Longford Primary School, where parking on double yellow lines, on footpaths and near to junctions were causing problems at school opening and closing times. Additionally, the ice cream van parked outside the entrance to the school jutting out into the road. Inspector Richards explained that parking on double yellow lines was now dealt with by Local Authority Parking Enforcement Officers. However, obstructions could be dealt with by Police Officers and PCSO's. He would request that an Officer attended the area to look at the situation.

Councillor Adamson outlined problems being experienced at Moorhill Primary School where cars were being parked on footpaths causing an obstruction for pedestrians and the area was heavily congested making it dangerous for the children. Sergeant Richards explained that some parked vehicles in an area did help to provide a natural form of traffic calming. However, he would send an Officer to the area to assess the situation.

The Chairman thanked Chief Inspector Ratcliffe and Sergeant Richards for their attendance at the Forum.

5. Items from previous meeting – Questions submitted by Mr. A. Haywood:

- (a) The Council has decided to re-allocate £305,000 of s106 funding towards the cost of providing an Artificial Turf Pitch at Cardinal Griffin School:**
 - (i) for which projects were these funds originally intended?**
 - (ii) what criteria were used for diverting the funds?**

- (b) I understand that as part of the Asda store planning application there was a commitment from them to fund an Artificial Turf Pitch to the value of £500,000. This was to be located at the Stadium site. What has happened to that funding?**

Tony McGovern, Corporate Director advised the following:

- (i) for which projects were these funds originally intended?**

- The S106 Agreement related to the former Automotive Lighting factory site on Walkmill Lane and was dated 29 Feb 2008.
- The developer who entered into the S106 Agreement was Project AML Limited, part of the Pritchard Group.
- Under the terms of the Agreement the Council received the sum of £305,000 'being a contribution towards providing a minimum of a two team changing pavilion and providing a grass playing pitch as part of the Council's playing pitch strategy.'
- There was no pay back provision and no requirement as to where the money was to be spent – it can be anywhere in the District.
- On 7 October 2010 the company confirmed that they had no objection to the money being spent on an artificial turf pitch instead of or as well as a grass pitch.

(ii) What criteria were used for diverting the funds?

- Cabinet decision on 25 November 2010 to allocate these S106 funds to the ATP project at Cardinal Griffin School
- Cabinet recognised that the unresolved issues with Asda over that S106 would compromise the delivery of an ATP on the Cardinal Griffin site.
- Therefore, Cabinet decided to allocate these S106 funds so that progress could still be made in establishing an ATP on the Cardinal Griffin site in partnership with the School, Staffordshire County Council and the Diocese of Birmingham.
- Two other points were also relevant to this decision:-
 - 1) There are no full size ATPs in the District and the evidence of need supported by Sport England is that the District should have at least two ATPs and possibly 3 in the period to 2026.
 - 2) The health needs of the District justify proceeding with the ATP project at Cardinal Griffin School.

b) I understand that as part of the ASDA store planning application there was a commitment from them to fund an artificial turf pitch to the value of £500,000. This was to be located at the Stadium site. What has happened to that funding?

- The Council received the sum of £527,500 from Asda on 4th May 2005 to construct an ATP on the Stadium site and to improve football facilities at Newlands Lane, Heath Hayes.
- These S106 funds are in the possession of the Council and currently amount to approximately £650,000 which is the original sum plus indexation and interest.
- As a result of a decision by Cannock Chase Council Cabinet on 14 December 2006 to dispose of the Stadium site for residential development subject to planning consent, there was no logical basis for establishing the ATP at this site.
- Agreement was reached in principle with Asda in 2006 to vary the requirements of the original S106 to enable the ATP to be constructed elsewhere. In 2008 the Council put forward Cardinal Griffin RC High School as a site for the ATP and Asda then agreed as follows:
 - location of ATP to be at Cardinal Griffin RC High School or within a 5 mile radius of Avon Rd Asda store to be approved by Asda
 - remove requirement to improve football facilities at Newlands Lane
 - extension of time to spend funds from 4th May 2010 to 4th May 2012.
- The wording of a Deed of Variation which set out these changes to the original S106 was agreed between the Council and Asda by June 2009.
- In January 2010, Asda then refused to execute the agreed Deed of Variation.
- The original S106 Agreement has a payback clause after 5 years if funds are not spent in full by 4th May 2010.

This date has now passed and the Deed of Variation has not been executed by Asda.

- The current position is subject to negotiation between the Council's Legal Services and the solicitor acting on behalf of Asda.
- No agreement or resolution of these matters has yet taken place and Council officers continue to pursue resolution in the best interest of the Council.
- This issue may be subject to litigation in the future and the Director was therefore limited in terms of the further detail that could be entered into on this.

Mr. Haywood was grateful for the full and clear explanation from the Director and he hoped the issues with Asda would be resolved in the near future. He asked whether there were any plans for the Stadium site in light of recent events. The Director confirmed that there were no active proposals at present. The current policy had identified the site for housing; however, this policy was currently under review.

Councillor Adamson commented that had the Labour party been in control over the last few years the Artificial Turf Pitch would have been built at the Stadium site. He stated that the Chief Executive had confirmed at the previous meeting that the previous Cabinet were aware of the risks involved with regard to the s106 contribution from Asda when they took the decision to demolish the Stadium. The new Labour Administration now had to deal with the decisions taken by the previous Administration.

A local resident who was also a teacher at Cardinal Griffin confirmed that the school were creating a new football pitch and upgrading the changing facilities using £20,000 of their own money. The school would then be able to provide 4 grass pitches and one ATP to serve the whole of the community.

6. Update on the Street Trading Policy – Requested by Mrs. P. Haywood

Sean O'Meara, Senior Licensing Officer read out the following response:

"I have been invited once again to provide an update on Cannock Chase Council's proposed Street Trading Policy. I first did so to this Forum on 24 November 2010.

There are some people here that will recall that we first consulted upon the proposed policy between 16 July to 22 August 2010 and after careful consideration of the comments provided we decide to re-consult upon a second draft.

That second consultation period ran from 14 March 2011 until 6 May 2011. The comments we received have now been evaluated and the draft policy has been amended accordingly.

The finalised document has been prepared and will be considered by the Council's Licensing and Public Protection Committee on 28 June 2011. Subject to their comments, it will then be offered for formal approval by the full Council at the first possible opportunity.

As a result of the proposed policy being finalised, I have written to all of the street traders within the Cannock town centre and advised them of the forthcoming adoption of the new street trading policy. Where appropriate, the traders have been advised to transform the manner in which they carry on their business so as to contain their stall into a more reasonable area and prevent sprawl over the town centre in order to comply with the requirements of the new policy.

The new policy will be clearly administered to ensure that encroachment onto any street furniture, the war memorial or bandstand is prohibited".

Mr. Haywood explained that his wife had been unable to attend the meeting for health reasons. However, he commented that there had been a market in the town centre a couple of weeks ago whereby a trader had once again placed a banner across the war memorial. Additionally, the ice cream van parked within the bollards close to the war memorial railings. He considered that the terms of the new policy appeared to be “wishy washy” and sought confirmation on monitoring/enforcement.

The Senior Licensing Officer confirmed that the new policy would provide proper control requiring traders to comply with the conditions of the street trading permit. He considered the new policy addressed the concerns of the forum and officers would be in a far better position to enforce any breaches of the policy.

He was aware of the issue with the war memorial and the Licensing Unit had been unimpressed with the organiser of the market. Officers had spoken with the organiser regarding this matter and the situation would be monitored. He and the Head of Environmental Health had visited the town centre on Tuesday and accepted that the location of the ice cream van needed to be addressed.

With regard to the concern that the policy appeared to be “wishy washy” he commented that no policy may fetter the discretion of the Council or the Councillors. There must be discretion to work within the framework of the policy. Although regular monitoring of the town centre took place it had been difficult to enforce something that had no mandate to be enforced. However, the new policy, once adopted, would provide a framework to enable Officers to enforce the conditions. He confirmed that Enforcement Officers regularly patrolled the town centres.

He explained that the Licensing and Public Protection Committee would consider the Policy on 28 June 2011 and it would then be adopted by full Council at the next available meeting.

A local resident expressed concern with regard to the number of fast food outlets trading in the town. The Senior Licensing Officer noted the concerns but confirmed that there was a baked potato van, a burger/chip van, a Mr. Simms sweet van and a doughnut van on a Saturday.

Another resident asked whether it was appropriate to allow butchers for example to have a street trading permit with the possibility of taking the trade off the butchers already situated in shops or on the market. The Senior Licensing Officer commented that street trading promotes vibrancy within the town centre. There were clear rules that traders must adhere to, for example they would not be permitted to trade within 50m of a similar trader. Prior to issuing a permit the Chamber of Commerce were consulted and they could say if they preferred for a permit not to be issued.

7. The following question was submitted by Mrs. Westwood, local resident:

“As you turn into Old Fallow Avenue there is always a car parked on the footpath. The car is not visible as you approach and turn into the avenue. It is dangerous for other motorists and also young children who play outside”.

Councillor Dixon confirmed that Mrs. Westwood had contacted him today to explain that she was unable to attend the meeting due to ill health.

Wayne Mortiboys, Staffordshire County Council Highways Officer explained that there were no double yellow lines to prevent parking so it would depend on whether the vehicle was causing an obstruction as to whether any action could be taken. However, a parked vehicle would make it harder for people to enter the road at speed but if it was parked in the access it could impede

passage in and out.

The Chairman asked Councillor Dixon to inform Mrs. Westwood of the response and ask her to report the incident next time it occurred.

8. The following items were submitted by Mr. G. Taylor, local resident:

Excessive speeding along A34 – speed camera near Leisure Centre frequently not operating

Wayne Mortiboys explained that he was providing the response on behalf of the Safer Roads Partnership Team. There were 210 cameras installed throughout Staffordshire but not all would be working at any one time. Sites were categorised as either low, medium or high. The County do not publish whether a particular site was classified as low, medium or high as sites which were categorised as high were working more often. It was not possible to reveal how often a particular camera was working. A fixed loop was located at each camera site and this gathered speed and volume data which was fed back to the office. This data was used to determine the classification of the sites (low, medium or high) based upon speed limit compliance.

Mr. Taylor commented that quarry lorries and buses that used this stretch of road regularly were aware the camera was not working and therefore took no notice of the speed limit. There did not appear to be a Police presence in the area so motorists knew they would not be caught. He referred to the pedestrian crossing just passed Cardinal Way which lorries had gone through on red. He considered that someone could get hurt.

Sergeant Richards explained that Police Officers did undertake regular patrols in this area. However, if the public provided the relevant information drivers could be interviewed or prosecuted for the offence. He asked that the public come forward so any offences could be investigated. As part of the A34 (by the quarry) was in South Staffordshire area he would also pass the concerns on to PC Tim Reece.

Councillor Toth asked whether foreign drivers who offended were treated any differently due to the language barrier. Sergeant Richards confirmed that they had to understand what was being asked of them so interpreter facilities were available if necessary. Additionally, "language line" could be used if the problem was of a simple nature. This involved an interview over a mobile phone.

Indiscriminate parking on footpaths at junction of A34 and Westbourne Avenue by people collecting students from Cardinal Griffin School, pedestrians forced to walk between vehicles

Sergeant Richards commented that there were four commercial premises on the junction of Westbourne Avenue and Stafford Road which attracted a number of vehicles and the cars collecting children from the school added to the problem. As Cardinal Griffin had a larger catchment area the vehicular traffic was more significant. Officers did patrol the area regularly and they worked in conjunction with Parking Enforcement Officers from the District Council. He explained that enforcement was important but it was also necessary to work with the school to educate parents regarding indiscriminate parking.

The gentleman who taught at Cardinal Griffin School advised that part of the ATP development involved creating 20 parking spaces. Each year a letter was forwarded to parents informing or reminding them to meet their children at the Leisure Centre Car Park and encouraging them to move away from the school when picking up their children.

Youths and girls congregating at bottom of Cardinal Way consuming alcohol and smoking drugs also interfering with road signs, i.e. turning them around

Sergeant Richards explained that problems occurred mainly on a Friday evening in this location. Officers had been focused on tackling the anti social behaviour in the park and on the golf course and this had moved the problem to another location. He would add this location to the Operations Matrix to ensure it was patrolled regularly.

Mr. Taylor commented that the problems with the road signs had been reported to Clarence on two occasions, however the "No Entry" road sign was still facing towards the school and had been doing for the past two weeks.

9. 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.

Councillor Adamson and Councillor Mrs. Davis asked that an item be placed on the agenda relating to the NHS as it was considered important to discuss health related matters at Forum meetings. A local resident who was a Governor at Mid Staffs had indicated they would be happy to attend Forums to speak about health issues and take on board any problems.

A local resident asked whether any temporary play equipment could be installed on the Stadium site. Councillor Mitchell expressed her disappointment that the Stadium site had been left as a wasteland. It was explained that the previous Cabinet's decision to allocate the land for housing still stood. However, the new Cabinet were giving consideration to the future use of the site. With regard to the suggestion to install temporary play equipment it was explained that for health and safety reasons this would prove difficult. However, children were welcome to erect goal posts and use the site.

Councillor Kraujalis indicated that he may have an item regarding allotments and explained that he would complete a form outlining the specific question.

10. Other Item

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe took the opportunity to update Forum Members on Crime and Disorder performance. He advised that crime figures relating to burglary, theft from vehicles and theft of vehicles, violence with injury, robbery and anti social behaviour incidents had all gone down. He commented that this was positive news on how the Force was dealing with Crime and Disorder through partnership working and in conjunction with residents.

11. Date of Future Meetings

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

- Tuesday 20 September 2011
- Tuesday 22 November 2011
- Tuesday 20 March 2012

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.00 pm.

