

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
RUGELEY AND BRERETON COMMUNITY FORUM

MONDAY, 22 MARCH, 2010 AT 7.00PM

AT WESTERN SPRINGS PRIMARY SCHOOL, SCHOOL ROAD, RUGELEY

PRESENT: Cannock Chase Council Forum Members:

Councillors

Grocott, M.R. (Chairman)
Davies. D.N. (Vice Chairman)

Easton, Mrs. D.M.	Stanley, N.K.
Easton, R.	Williams, A.
Molineux, G.N.	Williams, Mrs. P.

Cannock Chase Council Officers

Mrs. J. Aupers	Head of Governance & Organisational Development
Mr. S. Partridge	Democratic Services Manager

Representatives from the following organisations:

Staffordshire County Council
Staffordshire Police / Staffordshire Police Authority
Rugeley Town Council
Brereton & Ravenhill Parish Council
Approximately 30 local residents

(Apologies for absence were received from Cannock Chase District Councillors: Mrs. P.A. Ansell; D. Davies; R. Jones; R.G. Meaden; and B. Williams. A number of local residents had also sent their apologies.)

Presentation by Children from Chancel Primary School

Prior to the commencement of the formal business of the meeting, children from Chancel Primary School gave a presentation to the Forum on their impressions of Rugeley and what areas of improvement were most important to them. Of particular concern to the children were the canal environment and accidents / safety in parks and play areas, and they hoped to be able to encourage improvements through the Kids Make a Change Group.

The presentation led to a discussion amongst those present about the children's ideas and how

best to ensure that their efforts would have some positive effect.

The Chairman thanked the children for attending and for presenting their ideas in such a helpful and positive way.

42. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The Notes of the meeting held on 16 December, 2009, were accepted as a correct record with the exception of some of the notes in respect of what Mr. T. Jones had said concerning replacement street lighting in Rugeley. For clarification, Mr. Jones provided a correction which is reproduced below in order to avoid further confusion:

“1. I did not say that “to the best of my knowledge”, Brereton & Ravenhill Parish Council had not been consulted on the replacement street lighting. I said:

- (1) that the Parish Council had not been consulted (no qualification);
- (2) that SCC had incorrectly told the press that the Parish Council had been consulted;
- (3) that SCC had subsequently recognised the BRPC had not been consulted; and
- (4) that SCC did not tell the press that its earlier statement was wrong.

2. I did not say that there was an “apparent” lack of special attention to preserving the character and appearance. I said, without qualification that that was such a lack of attention. In support of that I pointed out that none of the following had been consulted: BRPC; the Brereton and Ravenhill Heritage Committee; the Landor Society (Rugeley and Brereton’s built heritage society); and the vicar and church authorities of the list St Michael’s Church, a Listed Building, whose setting (which was given its present form by the very eminent Victorian architect Sir G G Scott) was particularly badly affected.

3. I did not refer to “spoiled views” but to the (more important in planning terms) harm to the setting of Listed Buildings and to the Brereton Conservation Area. I did refer to the impact on residential amenity in the form of newly positioned street-lights shining directly into bedroom windows.

Matters arising [in respect of page 20]

BRPC did not accept that the repositioning was based upon safety. There had been no safety audit; there was no record of accidents being caused by the previous lighting; there had been no complaints that previous lighting caused safety problems; and there had no expressions of concern from the police. This contrasted with Old Engine Corner on Colliery Road, a bend that was obviously dangerous to drivers and in respect of BRPC had often (without result) requested SCC to take action by extending Brereton’s 30-mph speed limit so that it applied to this corner.”

The clarification was also copied to Councillor M. Grocott, as Chair of the meeting, as well as to Brereton & Ravenhill, County, District and (e-mailable) Parish Councillors.

Further to the above, Mr. Wayne Mortiboys, Staffordshire County Council, advised that

a colleague, Steve Bradbury, had since been in correspondence with Brereton and Rugeley Parish Council, in respect of their concerns.

43. Matters Arising

There were no other matters arising from the notes of the meeting.

44. Questions for Staffordshire County Council

No questions had been submitted in advance for the Staffordshire County Council representative, Mr. Wayne Mortiboys.

The Chairman invited any other questions for the representatives from Cannock Chase District and Staffordshire County Councils.

Ironworks in Anson Street

It was reported that a number of drains were dipping substantially between the Police Station and the roundabout.

Gritting / Salting During Bad Weather / State of Repair of Footpaths

A resident complained about the lack of salting on the Pear Tree estate during the recent bad weather. This was considered to be totally unacceptable, particularly as the estate incorporated schools and a bus route.

Mr. Mortiboys advised that Government appeals and intervention to preserve salt stocks had meant that A and B routes only were salted; representing a reduction from 43% to 21% of roads being treated. At the peak of the disruption, the County was dealing with 300 calls per hour and the usual team of 6 was temporarily increased to 15.

Other residents raised associated concerns about gritting / salting of particular roads and whether or not these should have greater priority, e.g. because of the demographic of the residents, location of schools etc. Questions were also asked in respect of the County's priorities for (re)filling particular grit bins, and repairs, or not, to pot holes and degraded surfaces. An enquiry was also made as to why the County's repair programme appeared to favour footpaths on estates that were generally in a reasonable state of repair.

Mr. Mortiboys advised that the bad weather had caused much wider spread damage than anticipated. As a consequence, there had been a significantly higher level of back filling and temporary / short term repairs. Some streets were due for resurfacing anyway, so had been back filled in the short term. At the time of the meeting, no grit bins were being refilled. With regard to the wider programme of work, he advised that, generally, newer footpaths on estates required a top dressing only as the sub structure was generally sound and required little or no repair. In spite of appearances to the contrary, it was actually more cost effective to keep these footpaths in a good condition. Other, older, footpaths required more substantial repairs in addition to resurfacing and, therefore, these had to be prioritized to reflect current budgetary constraints.

45. Presentation by Staffordshire Police

Mr. Anthony Small, Consultation Coordinator, Staffordshire Police, handed out copies of a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Feeling the Difference" which was a summary of the feedback from a survey of 268 residents on the Springfields estate. Mr. Small talked the Forum through the findings slide by slide and invited comments and / or questions.

Generally, the findings of the survey were positive, but it was acknowledged that problems remained. Residents gave examples of the types of behaviour that they considered unacceptable, but appeared to be allowed to carry on unabated, such as intimidation from loutish / drunken children.

The Police promised to increase visibility; engage more with communities and make greater use of the powers available to them, as well as working with partners, such as the Council. Inspector Ellerton advised that this was one of the reasons why he had particularly requested that the Forum meeting be held on the Springfields estate.

46. Questions for Staffordshire Police

There were no other questions for the representatives from Staffordshire Police.

47. Dog Bins

This matter had been raised in a letter by Mrs. C. Smith of Pool Meadow Close.

The Chairman read out Mrs. Smith's letter which raised concerns about a lack of dog waste bins in the Rugeley area and on the Heritage Trail running through the district.

The Head of Governance and Organisational Development advised the forum that it was Council policy to not have separate bins for dog waste, as it could be disposed of in any waste bin, other than recycling bins. There are approximately 350 bins in the district excluding parks, play areas etc., however, it should be noted that there is no obligation on the Council to provide bins though, clearly, doing so affords people the opportunity to dispose of their waste in an appropriate manner.

With regard to the Heritage Trail, the creation of the walk was part funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which did not provide for bins, or the ongoing costs associated with emptying and maintaining them. Additionally, it should be noted that large stretches of the Trail are in private ownership which means that, costs aside, it would not be appropriate for the Council to provide bins; however, where it crosses Council owned parks, bins are provided.

48. Future Agenda Items

The Chairman reminded the Forum of the need to submit written questions in advance of the meeting to Officers of the Council in order to allow Officers time to gather information and prepare a comprehensive response. Forms were available for this purpose at the Forum.

48. Date and Location of Next Meeting

The Forum was asked to note the date of the next meeting as 16 June, 2010, at the Rugeley Rose, Taylors Lane, Rugeley.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

CHAIRMAN