

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CANNOCK COMMUNITY FORUM
WEDNESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2010 AT 7.00 P.M.
AT CIVIC CENTRE, CANNOCK

PRESENT: Councillors:

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

Allen, F.W.C.	Mitchell, C.
Bennett, Mrs. D.J.	Morgan, C.W.J.
Davis, Mrs. M.A.	Sutton, Mrs. H.M.
Dixon, D.I.	Thomas, D.
Green, M.R.	

Staffordshire County Councillors:

County Councillor J. Rowley

Cannock Chase District Councillors:

Councillor M. Sutherland
Councillor G. Adamson
Councillor G.D. Ball

Cannock Chase Council Officers:

Mr. S. Brown, Chief Executive
Mr. J. Presland, Waste and Engineering Services Manager
Mr. S. O'Meara, Senior Licensing Officer
Mrs. W. Rowe, Senior Committee Officer

Also Present

Inspector P. Shannaghan, NPU Commander, Cannock Police
Representative from the Press
Local Residents (approximately 22)

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chairman advised the Forum that he was Chairman of the Council for this Municipal year. He would be holding a Civic Ball on 18 March 2011 and a charity evening at the Prince of Wales on 6 March 2011. This was to raise money for his charity, which this year was the Royal British Legion. Tickets would be available should anyone wish to attend these events.

23. Apologies

No apologies for absence were received.

24. Notes

The notes of the meeting held on 14 September 2010 were agreed as a correct record.

Reference was made to the resurfacing of Station Road which had been delayed until next year. It was noted that the surface dressing had nearly worn away and there was concern that it would become extremely slippery during frosty conditions. Clarification was sought regarding the gritting programme. This matter would be raised with Staffordshire County Council Highways.

25. Questions for Staffordshire Police

There were no further questions raised for Staffordshire Police other than those detailed on the agenda.

26. Items submitted by Maureen Freeman:

Update on the effects of the Comprehensive Spending Review on Local Policing

Inspector Shannaghan advised that it was too early to say what effects the Comprehensive Spending Review would have on Local Policing, however, he confirmed that there was to be a 4% cut over the next four years. The Chief Constable had indicated that front line services would not be affected and the number of Police Officers and PCSO's would remain the same and there would be a leaner Management Structure. He confirmed that from 1 April 2011 Rugeley and Cannock Police Stations would merge. Both stations would remain open although the two Inspectors post would be deleted. The effects of the Comprehensive Spending Review of Local Policing would be publicised when they were known.

He confirmed that there was no guarantee that front line services would not be affected but the Chief Constable had indicated that neighbourhood policing would remain the same. He confirmed that there was a recruitment freeze and any Police Officer retiring would not be replaced. Back office staff would be used to replace these front line posts.

It was considered that the proposals for the use of Special Police Constables was a good initiative and would work well. Inspector Shannaghan explained that the recruitment of Specials had increased from 8 to 30. There would be a focus on planning their activities better although they would not replace frontline Officers.

Update on the powers of the Police Community Support Officers

Inspector Shannaghan confirmed that the powers of PCSO's were currently under review. If they were given too many powers this would lead to them being taken off the streets. Their powers currently included:

1. Impose requirements and dispose of alcohol consumed in designated public places
2. Enter any premises to save life and limb or prevent serious damage to property
3. Carry out PACE road checks and stop vehicles to do so
4. Stop and search vehicles & belongings in areas authorised under the Terrorism Act 2000.
5. Seize vehicles used to cause alarm etc.
6. Issue Fixed Penalty Notices for offences of cycling on footways, dog fouling, litter
7. Require name and address from suspects
8. Require name and address from person acting in anti-social manner

9. Confiscate and dispose of alcohol from young persons
10. Seize and dispose of tobacco from young persons
11. Authorise removal of abandoned vehicles
12. Stop vehicles for testing
13. Make traffic directions for abnormal vehicles.

Concern was raised that young people were cycling and skateboarding in the town centre and there did not appear to be a PCSO presence in the town centre. Inspector Shannaghan confirmed that there were two PCSO's deployed in the Cannock Town Centre area, although one was undertaking restricted duties due to being pregnant. They worked both in the day and evening on a shift system. However, he would advise the PCSO's of the concern raised.

Update on the role of Street Wardens

Karen Sulway, Environmental Protection Manager and Kathryn Cooper, PR & Marketing Manager provided the following response which was read out by the Chief Executive:

"Cannock Chase District Council decided to cease the street warden service with effect from 26 September 2010 and to have more of a focus on environmental enforcement with 4 officers and community engagement with 3 officers.

The Environmental Enforcement Assistants are undergoing training at present. Their roles will focus on delivering the Environmental Enforcement Action Plan and tackling Anti Social Behaviour. It is envisaged that they will be predominantly involved with litter patrols, dog fouling patrols, investigation of fly tipping, assisting Pollution Control Officers in their duties and working with other departments and outside agencies to reduce anti-social behaviour.

The Community Engagement Officers roles will be changing from the old street warden role and we are looking at how some of these functions can be picked up within other departments. In terms of priorities, we are scoping this. The roles will change though".

Lack of consultation with the public, in particular, the lack of communication/consultation regarding the Executive Arrangement (Leader/Mayor)

The Chief Executive explained that the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had issued guidance on the consultation that would be necessary. As the law was due to change they had said that the consultation need not incur expenditure and should be done at minimal costs.

The Council therefore uploaded the survey on to the Council's website between 7 September and 12 October 2010, paper copies of the survey were placed in reception areas at a cost of approximately £10 and a press release was issued. There was no budget to place an advert in the local press. It was considered that this complied with the requirements.

Maureen Freeman raised concern regarding the lack of consultation that had been undertaken and considered that this matter could have been raised at the Community Forums in September. It was only through the pressure from residents that the consultation had been extended for one week and surveys had been placed in reception areas. A number of residents and Members had telephoned Alistair Welch (the Council's Solicitor and Monitoring Officer) regarding this matter but were still awaiting a response.

The Chief Executive responded to the concern raised and explained that the Council had a good track record regarding consultation. However, the Consultation Officer post had been removed from

the budget and the PR & Marketing Department were lacking the staff to undertake this work. The DCLG had instructed the Council not to waste money on consultation regarding the Executive Arrangements and the Council therefore did the bear minimum that was necessary.

It was considered that the public should have been informed that the law was due to change with regard to the Executive Arrangements and this was the reason why there was limited consultation.

Maureen Freeman then expressed concern that the Anti Social Behaviour Strategy and the Licensing Street Trading Policy had not yet been finalised. She considered that the consultation undertaken online via the Council's website was not working adequately and referred to the recent consultation regarding the budget whereby there had only been 83 online responses compared to 203 responses via Chase Matters and 207 via face to face interviews.

The Chief Executive agreed that website consultation alone was not adequate and that was the reason the budget consultation had been extended. He commented that the Council's website was actually one of the most successful websites in the Country. With regard to the Anti Social Behaviour Strategy he explained that there was a vacant post in this area and this may have led to the delay, however, he would chase this up. He also confirmed that he would speak with Alistair Welch to ensure that he contacted Maureen Freeman. Sean O'Meara confirmed he would pick up the issue of the Licensing Street Trading Policy later in the agenda

27. Update on designated areas for alcohol especially in the town centre

This item was requested by Anne Ames who expressed concern that drinking occurred in the Town Centre whilst funerals and weddings were taking place. However, there had been an improvement in the situation over recent weeks.

Sean O'Meara, Senior Licensing Officer advised that the Council implemented Designated Public Places Orders (DPPO's) although enforcement was a Police matter. Cannock Chase District Council had five DPPO's: 3 covering the Town Centres of Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley, 1 at Fernwood Drive in Rugeley and 1 at Ravenhill Park in Rugeley.

The Police advised the Council if they considered it necessary to implement a DPPO in a particular area if they considered it was suffering from alcohol related crime and disorder. A process would then follow to assess the viability of implementing a DPPO and consultation was undertaken with the public. Once an order was confirmed appropriate signs were erected to advise the public they were entering a DPPO area and the Home Office would be notified. He confirmed that the DPPO areas were currently under review.

Inspector Shannaghan commented that if someone was drinking in a DPPO area it only became an offence if they continued to drink once they had been confronted. With regard to the improvements in recent months the Police had been targeting the group of core individuals who had been drinking in the town centre and involved in sexual acts. With the use of other acts and legislation a number of these individuals had been sent to prison for 10 weeks.

Confirmation was sought as to whether the DPPO covered the areas outside the pubs within the town centre as there was concern regarding anti social behaviour should drinking outside take place. Sean O'Meara explained that there was an exemption for licensed premises located within a DPPO area. Bar Sport had licensed the curtilage outside their premises under the canopy and therefore people could legally drink outside. The Police and the Council's Enforcement Officers undertook regular visits to premises to ensure the licensing objectives were met. There were powers under the Licensing Act to revoke a Premises Licence through the Council's Licensing Sub Committee.

The Police were congratulated on their success in dealing with the anti social behaviour and drinking which had been happening in the Church Street area of the town centre. Inspector Shannaghan confirmed that partners would work together to ensure the anti social activity did not return to the Church Street area.

28. Questions submitted by Mr. & Mrs. Haywood

As Cannock Town Centre is fast becoming a '6 day a week' market area, what is the Council's policy on this matter, in particular monitoring and Health and Safety?

Mrs Haywood raised concern about the state of the town centre which she considered was a hazard due to the amount of street traders that were being allowed to trade from the Market Place area. She had particular concern regarding stalls being set up blocking access to the War Memorial and objected to the railings being covered with advertising banners. She sought confirmation on the current rules regarding the amount of traders allowed in the town centre and who monitored them. She had concerns regarding Health and Safety issues and access for emergency vehicles and questioned whether risk assessments had been undertaken and whether there had been any consultation with local businesses. She had taken photographs and these were circulated for the benefit of those present.

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

"I have been asked to respond to this Forum with respect to the Council's current position on its Street Trading policy as it relates to Cannock Town Centre.

Street trading outside London is controlled by the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1982 and Cannock Chase Council has a simple policy which reflects the early years of this legislation.

As time has worn on however, it has become increasingly apparent that this Policy is no longer fit for purpose. This has become more obvious over the past 18 months or so with the economic down turn which has led to more and more traders wanting to come into the district, primarily Cannock Town Centre, to trade in an itinerant manner.

Cannock Chase Council has always attempted to facilitate these people on an occasional basis however, it has become clear that some larger scale traders and utility companies and organisations wish to trade in the town centre 2-3 times a week. This indicates to the Council that the traders are well received by the public and are providing goods and services that are wanted but it has also highlighted the lack of control that currently exists for matters such as the size of a stall and its appearance.

There is no doubt that these traders encourage a vibrancy within the town centre as well as income to the Council however it has become clear that the existing street Trading Policy is in need of review. The existing policy only applies to a few consented streets and does not provide sufficient administration or enforcement capability. It is near silent on the issue of visual amenity of stalls and whether or not the Street Trading Permit allows traders to bring a vehicle into the town centre.

In consequence, the Licensing Unit developed a new Street Trading Policy in early 2010 and consulted upon it in July/August of 2010. The majority of the consultation responses were in favour of the proposals but the process raised two important issues relating to the proposed fee

structure and the Council's intentions towards the issue of private land.

Having consulted with other authorities on these matters it became clear that there is no simple answer to either question. It has been suggested that several local Councils may develop a common framework policy which is fit for purpose in the 21st century and a meeting has been arranged for early December with a view to exploring this option. After this meeting, a revised draft of Cannock Chase Council's Policy will be produced and it will be consulted upon. A link on the Council's web site will be available for the public to access the document.

After the consultation, comments will be appraised and the draft document amended as appropriate. The final version will then be presented to a meeting of the Full Council with a recommendation to adopt.

We are hopeful that a new Street Trading Policy will be in place and readily enforceable in the Spring of 2011. This Policy will endeavour to strike a balance between the needs of the Street Traders and the appearance and image of the town and with the clear aim of helping to improve the local economy."

Mrs. Haywood requested that she be provided with a copy of the "simple policy" referred to in Mr. O'Meara's reply and sought clarification regarding the use of the term "itinerant". Mr. O'Meara agreed to send Mrs. Haywood a copy of this the "simple policy" and confirmed that the term "itinerant" normally referred to pedlars who come into the Town Centre as and when they wish.

A number of local residents expressed their concerns regarding the positioning of the stalls in relation to the War Memorial, objected to advertising banners being attached to the railings, had concern regarding emergency access to the town centre and advised that some traders were leaving their vans in the town centre once they had unloaded. The Chairman objected to the advertising banners being attached to the War Memorial railings and considered that this should not be allowed to happen again in the future.

Mr. O'Meara explained that the current Street Trading policy was no longer fit for purpose and consultation was being carried out on a new policy. He confirmed that there should always be sufficient access for a fire engine to gain entry into the town centre. He explained that the Council informed the traders where to erect their stalls and confirmed that the Council do not and would not permit traders to attach banners to the War Memorial railings. Traders were not permitted to leave their vehicles next to their stalls. With regard to fly posting he confirmed that this was a Planning matter and assured the Forum that Planning and Licensing Officers work together to deal with any complaints received.

Councillor Allen, who was Chairman of the Licensing and Public Protection Committee, requested that the draft Street Trading Policy be placed on the agenda for the next Licensing and Public Protection Committee for discussion.

Councillor Adamson, who was the Chairman of the Planning Control Committee, advised that he would liaise with Planning Officers to ensure action was taken against fly-posting.

The Chairman thanked the resident for bringing the matter to the Forum's attention.

Now that the local authority has taken over responsibility for parking enforcement and associated offences, when will the Council be enforcing the offences of parking on footpaths?

Mr. Haywood outlined his concerns regarding parking on footpaths within the District.

Joss Presland, Waste and Engineering Services Manager, read out the following statement:

“Civil Parking Enforcement was introduced in Cannock Chase in April 2009 with enforcement of parking contraventions being undertaken by Cannock Chase Council both on-street (Public Highway) and off-street (Car parks).

On-street parking enforcement is undertaken where parking contravenes a Traffic Regulation Order, e.g. Double Yellow Lines; however, enforcement of vehicles parking on a footpath can only be undertaken if there is a Traffic Regulation Order covering the site or road where the vehicle is parked. If there isn't a Traffic Regulation Order in place, then no enforcement can be undertaken, however, if the vehicle is causing a dangerous obstruction then the Police Authority has powers to enforce action.”

Mr. Presland asked Mr. Haywood to advise him of any areas within the District where he considered there was a problem with parking on the footpath. Action would be taken to address the problem in conjunction with the Police. He reminded the Forum that footpath parking could only be enforced where a Traffic Regulation Order was in place. It was not feasible to obtain a blanket order to cover all roads within the District as no-one would be able to park on any road.

The Chairman suggested that this issue be placed on the agenda for the next meeting of the Joint Parking Committee on 19 January 2011. Mr. Haywood would be contacted after the Joint Parking Committee meeting to advise him of the outcome of the discussion.

29. 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. Appropriate representatives would be invited to attend and debate the issues and answer any questions.

30. Date of Future Meeting

The Forum noted that a meeting of the Cannock Community Forum would be held on 16 March 2011 in the Council Chamber.

The Chairman took the opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

CHAIRMAN