

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CANNOCK COMMUNITY FORUM
TUESDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2011 AT 7.00 P.M.
AT CIVIC CENTRE, CANNOCK

PRESENT: Councillors:

Alcott, G. (Chairman)

Davis, Mrs. M.A.	Snape, P.A.
Mitchell, C.	Sutton, Mrs. H.M.
Morgan, C.W.J.	Toth, J.

Staffordshire County Councillors:

County Councillor J. Rowley

Cannock Chase Council Officers:

Mr. S. Brown, Chief Executive
Mr. G. Watson, Economic Development Manager
Ms. V. Pottinger, Anti Social Behaviour Prevention Officer
Mrs. W. Rowe, Senior Committee Officer

Also Present

Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliffe, LPT Commander for Cannock Chase District
Ms. V. Singleton, Staffordshire Police, Neighbourhood Watch
Wes Southall, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services
Mrs. J. Bamber, Fusion Credit Union
Representatives from the Press
Local Residents (approximately 20)

(Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chairman advised that agenda items 8 and 9 had been withdrawn at the request of Mr. Taylor. These two items would therefore be deferred until the next meeting on 22 November 2011).

12. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Adamson (Leader of the Council), F.W.C. Allen (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. D. Bennett and M.R. Green, Staffordshire County Councillor P. Corfield, David Wright, Staffordshire County Council Highways and David Bailey, Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator.

13. Notes

The notes of the meeting held on 15 June 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

Councillor Mrs. Davis made reference to the request for a health related item to be placed on the agenda for future meetings. She advised that discussions were taking place with the Chief Executive from Mid Staffs Hospital regarding her attendance at the Community Forums.

The Chairman advised that he had requested an update on the reorganisation of the PCT and this would be provided at either the November or March meeting once the relevant Bill had been passed through Parliament.

14. The establishment of a credit union across Cannock Chase District

Glenn Watson, Economic Development Manager, introduced Janet Bamber from Fusion Credit Union. She would be providing Forum Members with a short presentation outlining the concept of establishing a Credit Union in the Cannock Chase area as part of a local response to the effects of the recession. Fusion Credit Union had been operating in the Lichfield District area for 6 years and was seeking to extend its operation to cover the Cannock Chase District. FCU was currently working with Officers to gather evidence of demand for a Credit Union and this would be submitted to the Financial Services Authority at the end of October. He therefore asked those present to complete the questionnaire and leave it with the Clerk or return in the SAE provided.

Janet Bamber then explained that a Credit Union was a community based, not-for-profit, savings and loans organisation, owned and operated by its members. It was managed by a volunteer board of directors, drawn from and elected by members. Credit Unions were authorised, registered and monitored by the Financial Services Authority and there were over 300 Credit Unions successfully operating in the UK.

15. Questions for Staffordshire Police

A local resident expressed concern regarding indiscriminate parking across the District and asked what action the Police were taking to tackle this problem.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised that he received a number of complaints regarding parking in the District and these were dealt with in conjunction with the District Council. He outlined the recent operation in Norton Canes which was targeted at traffic related issues. 12 people had been given advice regarding speed and 3 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued for speeding. He asked that any incidents of indiscriminate parking be reported to the Local Police Officer.

A local resident raised the issue of footpath parking which he had previously raised at a Forum meeting some months ago. He referred to the blanket parking ban that operated in some London Boroughs and asked whether the Police and the Local Authority would support such a ban in order to control footpath parking in the District. He considered that Local Authorities should be given the powers to enable them to enforce footpath parking.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe explained that the Police had to prioritise and adopting a blanket ban on footpath parking would have to be enforced which would inevitably lead to manpower issues. However, he asked that any particular problem areas be reported to the Police so that the area could be targeted. Additionally he would ask an Officer to take a look at the bans operated in the London area so as to be kept up to date with the position.

The Chairman advised that the Joint Parking Committee dealt with parking related issues. County Councillor J. Rowley was a Member of the Committee and would raise this matter at the next meeting.

Councillor Toth raised concern regarding the large number of youths in motor vehicles who gathered outside McDonalds at Longford Island in the late hours of the evening. He asked whether the area was policed.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe explained that he had been asked to look at the issue of “modified car users” in Staffordshire and plans were being developed to address any concerns. There was a particular issue in the West Midlands area at the moment and it was important that the problem was not displaced in Staffordshire. He confirmed that Sergeant Richards policed the area and was known to the “modified car users” at Longford Island. The Police would continue to enforce the area and educate the youths.

A local resident referred to the number of youths on skateboards, bikes and scooters in and around Cannock town centre who travelled at speed. He explained that he had recently been injured by a youth and considered the Police should be able to confiscate the skateboards, bikes or scooters.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe explained that the Police were bound by legislation and to what could and could not be seized. The matter was more related to anti social behaviour and the youths having no consideration for pedestrians. He confirmed that there were three full time Police Officers and a PCSO who patrolled Cannock town centre. There was a rigid structure in place and the Police worked in partnership with the Local Authority to deal with anti social behaviour incidents. There was a need to educate the youths in order to address these type of incidents. The problem was widespread throughout the County and not just in Cannock. He would ask Police Officers to raise the issue with local high schools and colleges and also inform the Police Officers who patrolled the town centre.

Councillor Mrs. Davis referred to the incidents of improper parking in Baltic Close, Cannock. Motorists were parking in Baltic Close and walking into the town centre to avoid paying parking charges. Some residents were having difficulty accessing their driveways and, although there were no double yellow lines, she felt it was inconsiderate to residents.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe agreed that motorists should be more considerate to residents and it was important to get this message across through the Press/Councillors/Police.

16. Anti Social Behaviour Strategy

Val Pottinger, Anti Social Behaviour Prevention Officer provided the Forum with a presentation outlining the strategy for tackling anti social behaviour which had been produced after widespread consultation with local agencies and organisations, including a workshop to agree the way forward.

She explained that the Cannock Chase Community Safety Partnership had developed an anti social behaviour strategy which aimed to set out the principles by which local partners should work together to address anti-social behaviour. The strategy set out the need to improve and simplify the way victims and residents could report anti social behaviour incidents to either the Police or the Local Authority and the need for partner agencies to share appropriate and relevant information when dealing with cases of anti social behaviour. The multi agency anti social behaviour Case Conference had been established to manage cases of anti social behaviour and to agree interventions to support victims and act against perpetrators. Furthermore, the Joint Operational Group had been established to address those issues requiring an urgent multi-agency response.

She explained that supporting victims and witnesses was at the centre of the strategy for tackling anti social behaviour and she outlined the role of the Victim and Witness Champion. The Champion

provided a single point of contact for victims and witnesses and provided help and support to anyone having to give evidence in court in addition to promoting the service and the support available amongst local communities.

She further advised that a critical element of the work was to ensure victims and witnesses were kept informed throughout the process. Furthermore, an important element of the strategy was to use prevention and early intervention to reduce anti-social behaviour, take robust action against perpetrators and particularly against serious and repeat offenders using a range of legal and non-legal tools and powers.

Maureen Freeman, who had requested this agenda item, thanked the ASB Prevention Officer for attending the Forum and providing the presentation. However, she outlined a number of concerns regarding the strategy, which included the need for robust enforcement and for effective communication to ensure that victims and witnesses were provided with feedback on any incident. She sought confirmation on how often the strategy would be reviewed.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe reassured the Forum that anti social behaviour remained one of the top ten priorities for Staffordshire Police. He advised that anti social behaviour incidents had decreased by 20% in the Cannock Chase District (there were 500 less reported incidents than this time last year). The Police would continue to work closely with other agencies to tackle anti social behaviour and ensure that victims and witnesses were kept fully informed. Recent surveys had indicated that within the Cannock Chase District 83% of victims surveyed were satisfied with the service they had received.

The ASB Prevention Officer agreed that effective communication was very important along with the need to keep victims and witnesses informed. She confirmed that the strategy was a working document and was therefore being reviewed regularly.

A resident raised concern regarding two anti social behaviour incidents she had recently tried to report to the Police. However, these could not be logged by the operator due to her being unaware of the postcode. She gave the name of the park and the street name but the operator insisted upon a postcode. She eventually reported the incidents to a Police Officer. Although she had requested someone get back to her, she was still awaiting a response. Chief Inspector Ratcliffe agreed to liaise with the lady following the meeting regarding this matter.

17. Update on the position of the negotiations in respect of the Asda monies for the Astroturf project

The item had been requested by Mr. & Mrs. Haywood. The Chief Executive advised that a full and detailed response had been given by the Corporate Director at the previous meeting. He asked the Forum to refer to the minutes attached with the agenda. There was nothing further he could add to the update provided by the Corporate Director.

However, he confirmed that the current position was still subject of negotiation between the Council's Legal Services and the solicitor acting on behalf of Asda. No agreement or resolution of these matters had yet taken place and officers would continue to pursue a resolution in the best interest of the Council. As the issue may be subject to litigation in the future the Council was limited in terms of further detail that could be provided at this stage.

18. Name plates on roads in the area are in a very bad state of repair and many cannot be read

Although the item had been requested by Mr. Taylor he was unfortunately unable to attend the

meeting and had therefore asked that the question be deferred until the next meeting.

19. Speed of vehicles travelling along the A34 between the White Lion Public House and Cannock Town Centre is still excessive. On this stretch of road is a large school and pedestrian lights. Speeds of up to 50mph are reached.

Although the item had been requested by Mr. Taylor he was unfortunately unable to attend the meeting and had therefore asked that the question be deferred until the next meeting.

20. 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.

The following two items which had been requested by Mr. Taylor would be deferred to the next meeting:

- Name plates on roads in the area are in a very bad state of repair and many cannot be read
- Speed of vehicles travelling along the A34 between the White Lion Public House and Cannock Town Centre is still excessive. On this stretch of road is a large school and pedestrian lights. Speeds of up to 50mph are reached.

21. Date of Future Meetings

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

- Tuesday 22 November 2011
- Tuesday 6 March 2012

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 8.15 pm.

CHAIRMAN