

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
RUGELEY AND BRERETON COMMUNITY FORUM
TUESDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER, 2010 AT 7.00PM
AT RUGELEY ROSE THEATRE, TAYLORS LANE, RUGELEY

PRESENT: Cannock Chase Council Forum Members:

Councillors

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

Jones, R.	Williams, A.
Stanley, N.K.	Williams, Mrs. P.

Cannock Chase Council Officers:

Mr. K. Lawlor	Head of Environmental Services
Mr. S. Partridge	Democratic Services Manager
Mr. J. Heminsley	Planning Services Manager
Ms. K. Wright	Community Safety Officer
Ms. K. McBey	Marketing Officer

Representatives from the following organisations:

Staffordshire County Council
Staffordshire Police / Staffordshire Police Authority
Rugeley Town Council
Brereton & Ravenhill Parish Council

Approximately 10 local residents

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Chairman advised that the Council was undertaking a budget consultation exercise and read out the following statement:

“From April 2011, because of a reduction in the amount of funding we will receive from the Government, Cannock Chase Council needs to make savings of £2 million. This is a huge challenge and some difficult decisions will have to be made. We do not believe it is right to make these kinds of changes without involving our residents. Officers are here tonight with questionnaires. We’d really appreciate you sparing 5 minutes to give your views. They really do matter”.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cannock Chase District Councillors:

Mrs. D. M. Easton; R. Easton; R.G. Meaden; G. Molineux; and B. Williams.
A number of local residents had also sent their apologies.

2. Declarations of Interest

M.R. Grocott Trustee of Rugeley Cricket Club Personal

3. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 16 June, 2010 were accepted as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising

5 (44 (ii)) State of Repair of Footpaths

Councillor Grocott noted that he remained concerned at the condition of the footpath outside Chancel School, which was in a particularly bad condition.

Mr. Mortiboys advised that funds had been secured for this area, and works were due to commence around Easter, 2011.

8 Former Mineral Railway Bridge (Lea Hall Bridge)

Councillor Jones advised that he had received an update from Officers, a copy of which was attached to the agenda.

5. Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan – Pre-Publication Consultation Update

The Council's Planning Services Manager gave a brief introduction to the plan and associated display, explaining that it constituted the final stage of consultation prior to publication. He then invited questions from the public.

6. "Check the Label" Video Presentation

The Council's Community Safety Officer introduced a short video presentation about, and made by, young people, which aimed to challenge negative stereotypes and raise awareness of some of the positive activities they undertook, thereby improving the public perception of people of their age group.

It was explained that less than 1% of Staffordshire's young people were involved in offending. Everyone involved in the campaign lived in Staffordshire and examples were given of what they did in their daily lives.

7. Nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour, Subway at Crabtree Lane

A local resident had raised this matter, but had had to leave the meeting before it was addressed. Sergeant J. Browning advised that a number of works had been done to improve the situation by both Staffordshire County Council and the Police, as detailed at previous meetings. It was true that there had been ongoing complaints, but most of these came from the complainant.

Mr. Mortiboys, Staffs. County Council, confirmed that the County had undertaken

substantial improvement works and had no intention of closing the subway. The cost of filling in the subway and surrounding area; top dressing; providing an alternative crossing point etc were disproportionate to the claimed level of nuisance. However, it was recognized that there was a litter problem, compounded by a lack of bins in the vicinity. SCC Cllr. G. Martin offered to pay for bins from his community fund, but was not in a position to ensure they were emptied and this was something that would need to be taken up with the District Council.

Councillors questioned why the subway could not simply be sealed off. Mr. Mortiboys advised that it was not SCC policy to do this with subways. Furthermore, sealing off would not overcome any problems associated with the environs of the site, and a duty of care and maintenance of the asset would remain, meaning there would be a need to provide a secure means of access for inspection, maintenance etc.

8. Nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour, Heritage Trail, rear of Bank Top off Hagley Road

A local resident had raised this matter. Sergeant J. Browning advised that a number of initiatives had previously been undertaken to improve the situation, however, funding was no longer available. Nonetheless, the Police continued to work with SCC Youth Services and CCDC (former) Street Wardens. She understood that other options, such as planting of trees and bushes to improve the visual amenity and reduce the 'attractiveness' of the area to the trouble makers were also being considered. The complainant considered that the efforts to date had been futile: the problem was an everyday occurrence involving drinking, smoking, "smashing" (against) railings and other acts of vandalism, and it was misleading to suggest that it was simply a youth problem, as many of the participants were obviously over 18. Furthermore, the fencing that had been installed had, if anything, made the situation worse as it provided a sheltered area for the offenders.

Other residents also raised concerns about this area and other sites including parts of the Heritage Trail and woods near Rugeley Cricket Club.

It was generally acknowledged that, some young people simply refused to make use of local facilities and / or participate in organised events / activities, choosing instead to become involved in "anti-social" behaviour.

It was suggested that there may be a number of issues at play including a lack of parental responsibility; and relatively easy access to alcohol.

9. Street Nameplates

Mr. Lawlor advised that monies for the maintenance / replacement of street nameplates had been removed from the Council's budgets for 2009-10. However, he had discussed the matter with Cllr. A. Williams, and they had agreed to investigate the possibility of utilizing the Community Payback Scheme to repair / repaint damaged or worn street nameplates.

10. Site of Former Bow Street Nursery

The Chairman read out a prepared response from the Council's Strategic Assets Manager:

"The intention is to dispose of the site for redevelopment purposes but some legal

issues relating to the land and the subsequent state of the property market have prevented the disposal of the land at present.

Accumulations of rubbish have been removed from the site on a number of occasions but lack of resources precludes regular maintenance. The site is only a short distance from two Council pay and Display car parks which provide sufficient parking for the public using the nearby shops.”

11. Parking Outside Schools

There was a wide ranging discussion in respect of parking outside schools and at other points causing nuisance and / or danger. Sergeant Browning advised that the Police regularly visited schools to work with them on projects such as school trains to encourage pupils to walk to school rather than being driven. In terms of enforcement, unless there are appropriate parking restrictions and / or markings on the highway, there is nothing much that can be done.

On the question of blocked driveways, Mr. Mortiboys advised that enforcement in these matters was the responsibility of the Civil Parking Enforcement Officers.

12. Questions for Staffordshire County Council (Highways)

All matters of concern in respect of SCC Highways functions had been raised earlier in the meeting.

Councillor M. Grocott suggested that there appeared to be confusion amongst several of those present as to exactly who was responsible for what in respect of Staffs County Council / Cannock Chase District Council and Rugeley / Brereton town / parish Councils. Ms. McBey advised that the next edition of Chase Matters would include an A-Z of Council services. Councillor A. Williams recommended that, if people had concerns about any matters and were unsure which body to approach, they should, in the first instance, ask their local Councillor.

13. Questions for Staffordshire Police

A resident asked if Sergeant Browning would attend a future committee meeting at Rugeley Cricket Club. Sgt. Browning confirmed she would if she could be given reasonable notice of the date and time.

The Bank Top resident asked if he could communicate directly with Sergeant Browning, rather than duty Officers, regarding the anti-social behaviour issues he had raised.

Councillor A. Williams suggested that, in the same way he had recommended that residents approach Councillors directly, they should feel comfortable being able to approach the Police if they had concerns.

14. Victim Support

The Chairman advised that Mr. Greatbatch had sent his apologies as a family bereavement meant that he was unable to attend the meeting, however, leaflets were available detailing the services offered by Victim Support.

15. Any Other Business

No other matters were raised

16. Forward Agenda

Crimestoppers - Mrs. Pauline Hadley requested that she be permitted to do a presentation to the next Forum regarding the work of Crimestoppers.

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 and should be returned by Monday, 15 November, 2010.

17. Next Meeting

The Forum was asked to note the date of the next meeting as 29 November, 2010.

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm.

CHAIRMAN