

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
RUGELEY AND BRERETON COMMUNITY FORUM
TUESDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 2009 AT 7.00PM
AT THE ROSE THEATRE, TAYLORS LANE, RUGELEY

PRESENT: Cannock Chase Council Forum Members:

Councillors

Jones, R. (in the Chair)

Molineux, G.N.

Williams, B.

Stanley, N.K.

Williams, Mrs. P.

Williams, A.

Other Cannock Chase Councillors

Mrs. P. A. Ansell

Cannock Chase Council Officers

Mr. W.L. Trigg

Deputy Chief Executive

Mr. M. Challoner

Principal Committee Officer

Mr. S. Partridge

Democratic Services Manager

Mr. J. Heminsley

Planning Services Manager

Mr. S. Shilvock

Head of Environmental Health

Mr. R. Phillips

Head of Planning and Regeneration

Mr. A. Morris

Recycling and Climate Change Officer

Street Wardens

Representatives from the following organisations:

Staffordshire County Council

Staffordshire Police

Rugeley Town Council

Brereton Parish Council

Press

Approximately 40 local residents

(Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M.R. Grocott (Chairman), Davies, D.N. (Vice Chairman), Mrs. D.M. Easton, R. Easton and R.G. Meaden).

18. Appointment of Chairman

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman, Councillor R. Jones was appointed Chairman of the Forum for the meeting.

19. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The Notes of the meeting held on 16 June 2009 were approved as a correct record.

20. A Low Carbon Community

With the agreement of the Chairman, an additional item in relation to a Low Carbon Community was considered following a request by Rugeley Town Council that the matter be considered by the Forum.

The Forum welcomed Mr. Anthony Morris, the Council's Recycling and Climate Change Officer, who reported that the Council had made a commitment to reduce the consequences of climate change and has signed the Staffordshire Declaration on Climate Change and adopted National Indicator 186 (Percentage CO2 emissions per capital) under the Local Area Agreement. The Council was looking to establish a Low Carbon Community within the district which would look at energy conservation, fuel poverty measures and to work towards a more sustainable lifestyle and encourage behavioral change.

21. Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan – Preferred Options

Mr. John Heminsley, the Council's Planning Services Manager, provided the Forum with a presentation in relation to the Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan – Preferred Options.

The presentation outlined the need for an Area Action Plan (AAP) for Rugeley Town Centre in order to revitalise and steer new investment in the town, following research which had shown that 32% of Rugeley residents shopped outside the area and that the town had seen little retail investment since the 1980's. The AAP provided planning policy context for the next 10 years.

In April 2008 the 'Issues and Options' consultation was completed in order to generate debate, which was based on three options:

- (i) Consolidate development in the existing town centre;
- (ii) Promote edge of center retail;
- (iii) Expand town centre to the east.

Mr. Heminsley outlined the results of the consultation, which had identified 10 opportunity sites and pointed to Option 3, the expansion of the town centre to the east with the provision of a large food store and new shops linking the main shopping centre, as the preferred option.

There were, however, practical deliverability issues within the 10 year timescale as a result of the recent current economic climate and it was anticipated that Option 3 was

more likely to be achieved through a phased development, starting with Option 2 and moving towards Option 3 over the 10 year life plan.

He also outlined the next stages of the Action Plan, which included the publication of the Action Plan during the winter of 2009/10, a further 6 week consultation period and the examination of the Plan by an Inspector in 2011, following which the plan would be adopted.

In response to a number of questions raised by members of the Forum, Mr. Heminsley confirmed that Tesco had acquired the land at the former Celcon site and had given a commitment to build a store in Rugeley, despite a proposed store also being proposed in Hednesford. He also confirmed that planning permission had been granted for 600 homes at the former power station site and indicated that, in his opinion, the additional housing would contribute towards the town's economy. In response to a question regarding the provision of public toilets in the town centre, Mr. Heminsley reported that this matter had not previously been raised as part of the consultation process but there would be an opportunity for members of the public to raise this as a matter of concern during the consultation period following the publication of the Plan in the winter.

A number of residents expressed concern with regard to the proposed timetable for the implementation of the Plan, indicating that the development of the town centre needed to take place sooner rather than later. Mr. Heminsley indicated that whilst the implementation of the plan was proposed to be completed in 2011, it did not mean that the identified sites could not be developed in the meantime.

A local resident referred to the proposed development at the former Alfgar School and sought clarification as to whether the trees on the site would be removed as part of the development. Mr. Heminsley confirmed that whilst a formal planning application had not yet been received for the site, the Council were investigating whether the trees should be the subject of a Tree Preservation Order.

22. State of Repair of Back Lane, Rugeley

Mr. Wayne Mortiboys of Staffordshire County Council reported that following legal advice Back Lane was considered a private road under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 and was not therefore a public highway and would not be maintained at public expense by the Highway Authority. The responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of the road rested with the traders and local residents using the road.

Mr. Mortiboys indicated, however, that County Councillor Geoff Martin had recently been successful in securing funding on behalf of Rugeley Library from the Community Action Fund in order that the road could be repaired.

23. Proposed Water Feature, Rugeley Town Centre

Mr. Les Trigg, Deputy Chief Executive, read the following statement in relation to the proposed water feature in Rugeley Town Centre:

“Council approval for developing a detailed scheme for consultation based on a single open channel finished to a good quality (possibly of stonework and incorporating a

bridge) was obtained in April 2009. Council further approved funding for the scheme at the same time.

The County Council have confirmed their willingness to provide the necessary design service for the project and are due to report back within the next two weeks with a programme for producing and costing a draft design. An advantage of the County Council undertaking the design work is that they would have to sign off the scheme as a structure in the highway.

On completion of the draft scheme an opportunity will then be given for all those with an interest to comment on the proposal before the scheme is finalised.

As it was realised that it would take time to finalise the design for the water feature including undertaking consultations and procurement of the construction, Cabinet at its meeting in April requested that Brook Square was reinstated by the County Council in the interests of Health and Safety and to allow for normal use and provide a period of stability for traders and shoppers alike following the earlier disruption caused by the collapse of the culvert.

However reinstatement of the Square has been undertaken in such a way as to allow the culvert to be easily exposed and the works to the watercourse to proceed with minimal additional cost to the overall scheme.

Whilst the programme for the construction of the scheme has not yet been finalised the timing of the works will be such that no disruption will occur over the Christmas trading period.”

A number of residents expressed concern with regard to the proposed water feature, indicating that it was not considered a priority and that the money should be spent on the provision of other facilities within the town. It was also felt that the water feature would be subject to vandalism and the costs associated with the maintenance of the feature would be significant.

Councillor N.K. Stanley advised the Forum that the Ward Members had undertaken a consultation exercise with residents of Rugeley, the majority of which had expressed support for the water feature. He also added that it was the policy of the Environment Agency to have open water courses and that this had been confirmed at meetings with Council representatives.

Mr. Trigg confirmed that the County Council had been asked by the District Council to reinstate the square in such a way so as to allow the culvert to be exposed and the works to be undertaken to the watercourse with minimal cost to the scheme. Mr. Mortiboys confirmed that this was the case.

24. Problems with Noise Nuisance in Rugeley Town Centre

The following item was requested by Mrs. Feely of Forge Mews, Rugeley:

“For over four years various residents from Forge Mews, Forge Road, Rugeley and, I believe, residents from other parts of Rugeley town have been complaining to Cannock

Chase District Council Environmental Health Department about the unacceptable levels of late night noise created by loud music and thumping bass beats from The Shrew, Market Street and BoJollys, Albion Street.”

Mr. Steve Shilvock, the Council’s Head of Environmental Health, reported that the Council was aware of problems associated with noise nuisance at The Shrew but indicated that a number of actions had been undertaken to mitigate the nuisance, including the installation of double doors and a noise limiter. He confirmed that following a change in the management at the Shrew it was found that the noise limiter had been removed but that this was re-installed in June 2009. It was also reported that the Council’s Environmental Health Officers had been in the town on six separate occasions between the hours of 11.00pm and midnight and had identified that there were no significant problems with noise nuisance.

Mrs. Feely was requested to complete the log forms sent by the Environmental Health Department and Mr. Shilvock agreed that he would arrange for officers to contact her.

25. Request for Improvements to North End Park, Rugeley

The following questions were submitted by Mrs. Brown, Chair of North End Park Association:

- “1. I have not received a response from the Council following a request for the estimated costs associated with purchasing a new bin and park bench in order to apply for funding under the Council’s Local Member Initiative Scheme.
2. Will Section 106 monies from the development at the former Eaton Lodge be used to provide railings around the play area at North End Park?”

With regard to the first question, Mr. Matt Challoner, Principal Committee Officer, advised the Forum that Mr. Mike Edmonds, the Council’s Head of Leisure & Major Projects, wrote to Mrs. Brown in December 2008 providing details of the estimated costs associated with the purchase and installation of a new bin and bench for North End Park. He also added that the Council as part of determining its budget for 2009-12 had agreed to the cessation of the Local Member Initiative Scheme.

With regard to the second question, Mr. John Heminsley, the Council’s Planning Services Manager, reported that Section 106 monies from the development had not yet been received by the Council, although officers would be seeking payment from the developer in due course in view of the fact that the development had recently commenced. He also reported that the Section 106 money was required to be spent on public open space, although no decision had been made with respect to this.

Mrs. Brown was advised that she should write to Mr. Tony McGovern, the Council’s Director of Organisational Improvement, to formally request that the Section 106 monies, once received by the Council, be used for the provision of railings around the play area at North End Park.

26. Bower Lane, Rugeley

The following question was submitted by Mr. Porter of Bower Lane, Rugeley:

“Bower lane is a significant part of the counties transport infrastructure for mineral extraction, local industry, tourism and commuters alike. It is one of the main gateways to Cannock Chase used by over 4,500 vehicles a day. It cannot cope with the size and volume of traffic which use it. Unless a police officer is present a large proportion of motorists including many educated locals still blatantly ignore the 30 mph limit day and night to the detriment of resident’s health and safety along the lane.

In light of the recent resident’s petition, Sid data, community speed watch data, police support for traffic calming and the visible damage caused to the lane for all to see when will you be addressing our problems?”

In response, Mr. Wayne Mortiboys of Staffordshire County Council reported that he had been in contact with Mr. Porter since the last meeting of the Forum and that during this time a number of inspections into the condition of Bower Lane had taken place. The inspections had shown that the highway was not subsiding, was generally in a good state of repair and was sufficient for the size and volume of traffic which used it. Whilst Mr. Mortiboys appreciated the concerns raised by Mr. Porter in relation to the speed of traffic, he indicated that Bower Lane was not alone in this regard. Finally, he reminded Mr. Porter that the County Council had already carried out a number of improvements to Bower Lane and that given the demand for road safety improvements to other sites within the County, it was unlikely that Bower Lane would benefit from such a scheme in the near future. Mr. Mortiboys did however indicate that he would be discussing with Mr. Porter the results of the recent Speed Indicator Device (SID) data.

Inspector Ellerton added that he had met Mr. Porter during the Summer and was appreciative of the work undertaken by the Community Speed Watch volunteers. He also advised that discussions with the Camera Van Partnership had resulted in additional inspections taking place and that the Police would continue to monitor Bower Lane, subject to appropriate resources being available.

A resident of Bower Lane was of the opinion that the number of HGV’s using Bower Lane was not significant and that Police resources would be better spent pursuing criminals rather than monitoring the speed of motorists. She also felt that a number of residents of Bower Lane deliberately parked their vehicles on the highway in order to obstruct traffic, instead of parking on their drives.

27. Traffic Order – Hill Street, Rugeley

The following question was submitted by Councillor A. Williams:

“Can the Community Forum be provided with an update regarding the traffic order for one-way at Hill Street, Rugeley?”

Mr. Wayne Mortiboys of Staffordshire County Council reported that this matter was no longer being pursued by the County Council on the basis that the file had closed in 2007. He advised that the Council were currently in the process of preparing the Area Strategy, whereby requests for highway improvements could be submitted to the Council and these would be determined on a priority basis and if approved would form

part of the highway improvement programme for the year. It was suggested that Members submit a request for improvement to Hill Street to the County Council.

A number of Members indicated that Ward Members had undertaken a consultation exercise with residents of Hill Street and that a petition had also been submitted to the County Council at a meeting of the Community Forum some years ago. Mr. Mortiboys indicated that he was not aware of the petition.

It was suggested that a weight restriction be placed on Hill Street, which Mr. Mortiboys agreed to investigate.

28. Overhanging Trees in Bedford Way, Rugeley

The following item was submitted by Councillor A. Williams:

“I have had several contacts this week from local residents wanting to know when Staffordshire County Council Highways are likely to be trimming the height of trees in Bedford Way, Rugeley now that the nesting season is over. The works need to be undertaken before the autumn arrives and we end up with damp leaves on the footpath again, causing a very serious fall hazard.”

Mr. Mortiboys confirmed that the trees were the responsibility of the Highway Authority and indicated that they had been inspected by the Council's tree specialist and were found to be in a healthy condition. He indicated that no maintenance would be undertaken to the trees at this time and that a further inspection was planned before Christmas.

A number of local residents of Bedford Way expressed concern that the County Council considered that the trees were not in need of maintenance. They advised the Forum that the trees blocked out a significant amount of light to properties in Bedford Way and requested that Mr. Mortiboys meet with local residents to inspect the trees, with a view to have them lopped and thinned.

It was agreed that Mr. Mortiboys meet with residents of Bedford Way to inspect the trees and that a progress report be provided at the next meeting of the Forum.

29. Cannock Chase Council – Members' Allowances

The following question was submitted by Mr. M. Tams of Tithebarn Road, Rugeley:

“Who are the people who recommend the Cannock Chase Councillors allowances? How are they selected and what criteria do they use?”

Mr. Matt Challoner, Principal Committee Officer, read the following statement:

“There are five independent persons who make up the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel and they make recommendations to the Council in respect of the level of allowances that should be paid to Elected Members.

To be eligible to sit on the Panel an independent person must not be a Councillor or an

employee of the Council and they must not be related to, or be a friend of any Councillor or employee of Cannock Chase Council or of any of the Parish/Town Council's within the Cannock Chase area.

They are usually selected following the placement of an advert in the local press and applications are sought from lay persons, local residents, or persons who work in the area who have no political affiliations. They must have a keen interest in local matters; have an open mind and a strong commitment to the local area and local issues. The Council also seeks applications from the various sectors of the community including the business sector and the community/voluntary sector.

Following the receipt of applications, the individuals are shortlisted and interviewed based their experience and interests in local matters. They are usually a member of the Panel for up to 5 years.

In terms of the criteria used for recommending the level of allowances, there are no set criteria which the Panel must use in recommending the level of allowances. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) does, however, issue guidance to local authorities in respect of members allowances and the Independent Remuneration Panel must have regard to this. It is for each local authority to decide its scheme of member's allowances and the amounts paid under that scheme following formal advice from the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The Council on 25 June 2008 determined the scheme of member's allowances for 2008-10 which will stand until the District Council elections in 2011."

It was agreed that Mr. Tams be provided with details of the names of those Members who sit on the Independent Remuneration Panel.

30. Cannock Chase Council Contact Centre

The following questions were submitted by Mr. Heathcote of St. Michaels Road, Rugeley:

- “1. Who was responsible for establishing the Council's Contact Centre?
2. Does the Council benefit financially from the time taken to answer telephone calls?
3. On average, what is the percentage of calls that are answered within 3 minutes by a person (rather than the recorded message).”

In response to the questions submitted, Mr. Les Trigg, the Council's Deputy Chief Executive, reported that the Council was responsible for establishing the Contact Centre following a number of e-government grants awarded to the Council in order to improve communications and information technology. He also indicated that the Council did not benefit financially from the time taken to answer calls and that, on average, 95% of calls were answered with 3 minutes.

31. Replacement of Street Lighting in Rugeley

The following question was submitted by Councillor G. Grant of Rugeley Town Council:

“I welcome the improvements to the street lamp replacement scheme in our area. However, I would like to discuss the time taken to complete this type of work, particularly when electrical cables are showing and the potential dangers to the public.”

In response, Mr. Trigg read out the following statement, which had been provided by Mr. Martin Beavis, Senior Project Manager of E. On Sustainable Energy:

“Every effort is made to ensure that any delay between the erection, connection of the street lights and full reinstatement of the Highway is kept to an absolute minimum. The cables that may be left exposed from time to time do not pose any threat to the public as there are no exposed electrical conductive parts. Unfortunately with such a vast area to cover occasionally our workforce are redirected to deal with emergency events and we also have to consider ‘high risk’ areas such as main pedestrian access in town centres etc and address these first. This compounded with the unpredictable British weather can sometimes leave us with a small gap between connection and final reinstatement. It is not always possible to backfill the excavations immediately as the jointing compound within the final electrical connection does need time to set before being buried.

If at any point members of the public feel concerned we would welcome their call via CLARENCE and we will dispatch a Supervisor to do a risk assessment check immediately. We apologise if this may have caused any concern but do hope that you will appreciate and see the benefits that the new street lighting provides for the Community.”

A local resident enquired whether Bonney Drive had been adopted by the Highway Authority and indicated that a lamppost had recently been erected in the middle of the pathway. It was agreed that Mr. Mortiboys discuss the matter with the local resident following the meeting.

32. Traffic Along Station Road, Rugeley

Mr. Wayne Mortiboys of Staffordshire County Council provided the Forum with an update with regard to traffic problems along Station Road, Rugeley.

He reported that the Council’s Cabinet had recently launched a pilot scheme whereby 20mph speed indicator devises would be installed at 8 schools throughout the County and that one of the pilot schools included Chancel Primary School. He added that speed indicators would be installed during October with speed data being collated over a trial period. A formal report outlining the results of the pilot would be presented to the County Council’s Cabinet in January 2010.

A local resident sought clarification as to whether a 20mph speed limit would be in force around Chancel Primary School during the trial period. Mr. Mortiboys indicated that the existing speed limits would remain and that the purpose of the pilot was simply to gather speed data with a view to possibly introducing a 20mph speed limit at certain times of the day, on certain days of the week.

33. Questions for Staffordshire Police

Members of the public were invited to ask questions of the representatives from Staffordshire Police in relation to local policing matters.

Noise Nuisance in Rugeley Town Centre

Further to Minute 24, Councillor A. Williams enquired as to what action the Police would be doing in order to address the problems of noise nuisance in the town centre, particularly around Forge Mews. Inspector Ellerton indicated that he was aware of the situation and that his officers would continue to work with the Council's Environment Health Department to address residents concerns.

Pedestrianisation of Rugeley Town Centre

A local resident sought clarification with regard to the enforcement of the pedestrianisation of the town centre. Inspector Ellerton reported that the Police were enforcing the 1976 Order governing the town centre and that officers were using their discretion in order to enforce the Order. He referred to an incident which had occurred recently in the town centre concerning a delivery van and advised that officers would be undertaking an enforcement exercise in the coming weeks.

34. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

Suggestions of issues to be discussed at future meetings of the Forum were sought. It was explained that appropriate representatives would be invited to attend and debate issues and answer any questions.

35. Dates of Future Meetings

The Forum noted the dates of meetings of the Forum:

- 16 December 2009 at Brereton & Ravenhill Parish Hall
- 22 March 2010

CHAIRMAN