

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CANNOCK COMMUNITY FORUM
TUESDAY 24 FEBRUARY, 2009 AT 7.00 P.M.
AT BRIDGTOWN COMMUNITY CENTRE, BRIDGTOWN, CANNOCK

PRESENT: Councillors

Freeman, M.P. (Chairman)
Bennett, Mrs. D.J. (Vice-Chairman)

Alcott, G.	Green, M.R.
Davis, Mrs. M.A.	Mitchell, C.
Dixon, D.I.	Thomas, D.

Cannock Chase Council Officers:

Mr. S.G. Brown, Chief Executive
Miss. J. Tunnicliffe, Senior Committee Officer
Mr. S. Shilvock, Head of Environmental Health
Mr. N. Hackney, Partnership Development Manager

Also present:

Councillor J. Jillings
Councillor A.F. Bernard
Mr. A. Hunt, Staffordshire County Council (Passenger Transport and Road Safety)
Sgt. P. Davies, Staffordshire Police
Representative of Bridgtown Parish Council
Representatives from the Press
Local residents (approximately 20)

(An apology for absence was received from Councillor F.W.C. Allen).

28. Notes

The Notes of the meeting held on 25 November, 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

29. Police Issue – Received from Mr. Rainsbury, local resident

Mr. Rainsbury, local resident was pleased with the work the Police had undertaken in relation to anti-social behaviour in Cannock Park although he was unhappy with the responses received from the Council. He stated that young people were still causing nuisance such as using threatening behaviour and causing criminal damage and there

was not enough awareness amongst local Councillors and Officers at the Council regarding the problems in the park.

He stated that it would be beneficial for the park to be locked at night and went on to state that it was some years ago and also claimed that the local Police concurred with him on this issue. He stated that the cost to the Police was excessive in dealing with the problems and that there was also no legal right of way through the park.

A local resident stated that anti-social behaviour was prevalent not just in Cannock Park but across the District. She reported that a local ward Member Councillor Mrs Bennett had recently been to Cannock Park at night to witness the problems. She also thanked the Manager of the street wardens and the local Police for their involvement with trying to tackle the problems associated with anti-social behaviour. She stated that an operation run by the Police had been working well, although funding was due to run out the end of March and was unsure what would happen after this. She stated that evidence had been gathered from the park keeper and diaries maintained of any incidents, and there had not been any significant problems over the past 6 years.

Local Ward Member Councillor Mrs. Bennett reported that she had been to the park and spoke with the younger children who were keen to see other activities in the area and also suggested ideas. However, she reported that there appeared to be an issue with the older children who were causing problems. She stated that she was liaising with the Council's Leisure Operations Manager in an attempt to arrange some activities for young children at the Chase Leisure Centre. She also stated that she was liaising with Officers at the Council to see what premises were available in the area that could be used for activities for children.

A local resident stated that the park gates were locked during 1998/99 and criminal nuisance and anti-social behaviour was experienced. She claimed that by locking the park gates it made the problem worse and stated that 250 local people signed a petition for shutters to be fitted on the pavilion and the miners club. She claimed that the Trust document did not state that the gates needed to be locked and was pleased with the work that had been done by the Council to try and alleviate some of the problems. She was concerned that if the gates were locked it would be a civil offence to enter the park and the Police would not be able to stop any problems that were occurring within the park.

A local ward Member reported that the street wardens were liaising with youngsters to see what their interests were and what sort of activities they would like to see in the area. He also referred to a conference he had attended where Chief Constables Chris Sims and Doug Paxton were in attendance and spoke about the 'Matrix' project. He hoped that additional funding would be secured so the project could continue.

Sgt Pete Davies, Cannock Police reported that there had been 31 instances of anti-social behaviour since January 2008 which mainly involved local youths. He stated that previously there was a Section 30 in place which allowed the Police to remove groups of 2 or more causing anti-social behaviour, however the Police were having problems given that most of the time they were dealing with large groups of youths, therefore the Section 30 was disposed of. He stated that operation 'Matrix' had been funded with 25K being received from the Home Office for the programme, and in 3 weeks time the funding would cease. He stated that the Police worked in conjunction with agencies, the Youth Service

and Shops (who sell alcohol) to try and prevent anti-social behaviour and underage drinking.

Mr. Nick Hackney, Partnership Development Manager reported on the work of the Crime reduction Partnership. He stated that they had been measuring the increase and decrease in alcohol litter and a decrease had been noted during October/November which showed that operation 'Matrix' had been having an effect. He also provided information on the licensing checks carried out within the District.

Mr. Stephen Brown, Chief Executive stated that priorities for the Council according to the public were activities for teenagers and anti-social behaviour. He stated that with regard to the park gates, the Council were guided by the Police and the park was there for the public to enjoy, if there were problems with anti-social behaviour then this would become a Police issue. Furthermore the Council worked closely with the Police and members of the public comments were taken seriously.

30. Update on the Anti-Social Behaviour around the area of Clarion Way/Festival Court Shops/Pye Green Road and around the Chase Baptist Church

Sgt Pete Davies reported that problems had existed at Festival Court since September, 2008 with the congregation of youths, although the instances were low. He stated that there were 4 fires in 5 days to the stairwells in the flats and a Section 30 at Festival Court was obtained, the order was heavily enforced and the ringleaders were moved. He reported that some clean up work was needed in the area such as the need to remove graffiti and repair fencing. A ward Member stated that a new machine had been delivered and the street wardens would be cleaning up graffiti in areas around the District.

Members were of the opinion that the youths who caused problems within the Clarion Way/Festival Court area did not come from the District. Members were also keen to know if any assistance had been given to Mrs. Hazel Evans of the Chase Baptist Church regarding the problems being experienced by the Church and shop owners with youths causing problems.

Mr. Nick Hackney reported that a representative from the Youth Offending Team and Youth Service had contacted Mrs. Evans following the meeting. He also stated that the Street Wardens were also providing assistance.

31. Problems with Flytipping – Requested at the last meeting

Mr. Steve Shilvock, Head of Environmental Health reported the following information:-

- April 2007 – March 2008 – 524 instances of flytipping (cleanup cost £40K with 7 successful prosecutions)
- 2008/2009 – 471 instances of flytipping (cleanup cost £30K with 4 successful prosecutions)

He reported that most flytipping was either on footpaths, highways or bridleway and most waste would usually be household waste. He stated that an environmental action plan had been developed and was being delivered this year. Businesses had a duty of care to dispose of waste correctly. An exercise had been carried out on local businesses to make

sure they disposed of their waste legally, and were registered carriers where appropriate. Several businesses were found to be non-compliant, and all but one of them quickly changed their practices to comply with the law, arising from this there is the potential for 1 prosecution. He also stated that householders who paid others to dispose of waste for them should ensure that they used registered waste carriers. If they did not and their waste was subsequently fly-tipped Householders would be liable to prosecution.

32. Update on the position regarding bus service 31 – Requested at the last meeting

Mr. Adrian Hunt, Staffordshire County Council reported that the No. 31 service was a commercial service run by the operator Arriva and was not funded by Staffordshire County Council. He explained that Arriva could change their routes at any time and did not require any permission. He stated that the service at Cannock Road would not be reinstated however the County Council provided services T3 and T5 which would run down Cannock Road on a Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

Local residents expressed dissatisfaction with the withdrawal of the No. 31 service and disagreed that the service was underused. Residents were also unhappy that the T3 and T5 service was limited and that they would only be able to shop in Cannock.

A local Ward Member asked if the withdrawal of the No. 31 service could be referred to the Transport Authority for investigation. The Member then provided information relating to the number of journeys made between April and May 2008.

Mr. Hunt reported that the County Council had no power over the bus operator however he would endeavour to provide a service that would benefit residents.

Local residents expressed a number of concerns over the cessation of the No. 31 service including whether bus passes could be used if an alternative service was introduced and the fact that some elderly residents had mobility problems that had previously used the service to get to Cannock and were now housebound.

The Chairman requested that a meeting be arranged to include the County Council, Arriva, local residents and Ward Members to try and resolve the situation.

The matter would be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting in order that an update could be provided on the progress made.

33. Update on Plan for Langbourn House – Requested at the last meeting

The Chief Executive read out the following statement:

"I have been advised that there is currently no further information to add to the statement that was read out at the last meeting on 25 November, 2008. I have been advised that Miriam Darbyshire from Social Services will be attending the next Community Forum on 17 June, 2009 to provide an update".

34. Cannock Athletics Stadium

A question was received by Councillor C. Mitchell and the following statement was read

out by the Chief Executive:

“The Council has not refused financial assistance from Sport England on this or any other matter. Sport England has not offered any financial assistance in connection with Cannock Sports Stadium and this has been confirmed in writing by Sport England dated 29 January 2009. The offer from Sport England is about providing advice on setting up a Trust and not about the direct provision of funding.

Turning to the appropriateness of transferring the Stadium site to a Trust:-

If the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government had concluded that the Pye Green Road site was unsuitable for redevelopment for housing, then community asset transfer may be a viable option for consideration by Members. However, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government agreed with the Inspector that the site is sustainably located for housing development, is a more suitable site than others in the area and also complies with PPS3 (point 25 of the SoS letter). Subject to the Council electing to address a range of issues set out in the Inspector’s report, a new application for planning consent for residential development could be made. In this context, it could fetter the Council’s discretion to transfer the site to a third party and that is why this option is not being actively pursued. The Regional Director of Sport England has been advised of this already.

Finally, as you are aware, the three football pitches on the Stadium site are to be brought back into use as decided at the Council’s Cabinet meeting on 12 February so these are already available to footballers. It is also planned to reinstate the play facilities for children after the demolition has occurred later in 2009”.

A local resident expressed concern by the statement and stated that the Stadium had always been utilised. He stated that anti-social behaviour had escalated since the Stadium had closed and was concerned that the football pitches were not yet up and running.

Local Ward Members also expressed concern that the Council had refused to pursue the possibility of a Trust being set up to run the Stadium.

35. Dates of Future Meetings

The Chairman reported the following dates of future meetings, although they were subject to agreement by full Council.

- 17 June, 2009
- 15 September, 2009
- 1 December, 2009
- 17 March, 2010

CHAIRMAN