

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
RUGELEY AND BRERETON COMMUNITY FORUM
WEDNESDAY, 16 DECEMBER, 2009 AT 7.00PM
AT BRERETON COMMUNITY CENTRE, MAIN ROAD, BRERETON

PRESENT: Cannock Chase Council Forum Members:

Councillors

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

Easton, Mrs. D.M.	Stanley, N.K.
Easton, R.	Williams, Mrs. P.
Molineux, G.N.	

Cannock Chase Council Officers

Mr. K.G. Lawlor	Head of Environmental Services
Mr. S. Partridge	Democratic Services Manager

Representatives from the following organisations:

Staffordshire County Council
Staffordshire Police / Staffordshire Police Authority
Rugeley Town Council
Brereton & Ravenhill Parish Council
Approximately 10 local residents

(Apologies for absence were received from Cannock Chase District Councillors: Mrs. P.A. Ansell, R. Jones, R.G. Meaden, A. Williams and B. Williams).

36. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The Notes of the meeting held on 9 September, 2009 were approved as a correct record.

37. Matters Arising

Item 31 - Replacement of Street Lighting in Rugeley

Mr. Tim Jones of Brereton and Ravenhill Parish Council advised that he was concerned

that, to the best of his knowledge, the Parish Council had not been consulted on the replacement street lighting. Of particular concern was the apparent lack of special attention paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area as covered under Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990. As a result, replacement lights had not been positioned on a like for like basis leading, in some cases, to spoiled views and increased light nuisance. Furthermore, the lamp standard remained in the middle of the footpath in Bonney Drive.

Mr. Wayne Mortiboys of Staffordshire County Council advised that, so far as he was aware, adequate consultation had taken place. With regard to placement and light nuisance, pedestrian and driver safety was the prime consideration when undertaking street lighting replacements / improvements. However, he undertook to investigate these matters further and correspond directly with the Clerk to Brereton and Ravenhill Parish Council.

Subsequent to the meeting, Mr. Mortibys advised that the matter was being dealt with by Mr. Steve Bradbury, Lighting & ITS Manager, Staffordshire Highways. Mr. Bradbury had attended a Parish Council meeting and provided copies of relevant correspondence which had been exchanged between E-On (Staffordshire street lighting contractor) and Cannock Chase Council's planning control section regarding the conservation issues of street lighting replacement in Main Road, Brereton.

Item 21 - Tree Preservation Orders at Alfqaer School

The Chairman advised that a TPO on trees situated along the boundary of the school and the rear gardens of properties in Lion Street was confirmed on 22 October, 2009

Item 24 – Noise Nuisance in Rugeley Town Centre

The investigating Environmental Health Officer had spoken with Mrs Feeley on 14 December, 2009. She advised that the only problem she had had with noise was on the preceding Thursday, but, otherwise, there had not been a problem since the last Community Forum when the matter was raised. Consequently, no written evidence had been submitted to Environmental Health.

Two other complainants, had also advised that the situation was much improved.

Officers would continue to monitor the situation and take action as required.

Telephone Box in Market Square

Mr. Wayne Mortiboys advised that a formal notice had been placed on the owners of the non-BT telephone box in Market Square. If the owners themselves did not remove the telephone box within twelve weeks of receipt of the notice, SCC would remove it and recharge the cost to the owners.

38. Overhanging Trees in Bedford Way

Mr. Adrian Maj of Bedford Way sought clarification on the actions taken to address this

issue; in particular, he was concerned about the potential negative impact on local wildlife.

Mr. Wayne Mortiboys of Staffordshire County Council advised that, following the last Community Forum, he had met with residents of Bedford Way to discuss their concerns. Principally, these were loss of natural light in gardens and houses and impaired radio, television and satellite signals, which were attributed to the height and density of mature trees in Bedford Way. Also there were associated pedestrian safety issues arising from slips and falls as a result of the amount of leaf fall from the trees.

He had subsequently met with specialist tree officers from Cannock Chase District Council and Staffordshire County Council, who advised that simply reducing the height of the trees in the short term would ultimately lead to denser growth in the long term, thereby worsening the situation. Consequently, it was recommended that the best oaks should be tidied up while other, lesser, specimens be removed altogether. Some other trees, such as hollies, and low level bushes had also been identified for removal in order to tidy up the area. The remaining tree stumps would subsequently be ground down, and the trees would then be left for two years, after which time it was intended to start a replacement planting regime to allow for better future tree management. It was hoped that the works undertaken would effectively address the issues raised by the residents of Bedford Way.

Mr. Mortiboys advised that the cost of the works (£3,020) had been funded as a result of a bid for SCC Local Community Fund monies by SCC Councillor R. Easton.

39. Any Other Questions for District / County Council Representatives

The Chairman invited any other questions for the representatives from Cannock Chase District and Staffordshire County Councils.

'Blue Bins'

Councillor Gary Grant, Rugeley Town Council, enquired if any clarification could be given with regard to proposals to replace recycling bags and boxes with a single dry recyclables wheeled bin ('blue bin').

Mr. Kevin Lawlor, Head of Environmental Services, advised that a report on the matter was being submitted to the Council's Cabinet meeting of 17 December, 2009. Whilst not wishing to pre-empt Cabinet's decision, he was able to advise that the report informed Members of the successful limited trial of dry recyclables wheeled bins covering 185 households in the District, and sought approval for the purchase of wheeled bins for all households to replace recycling bags and boxes.

For information, Councillor Neil Stanley, Leader of the Council, advised that the Council was aware that such arrangements would not suit all circumstances, e.g. people living in flats who would not have room for an additional wheeled bin. In such situations, arrangements would be made for them to keep their current recycling bags / boxes, as appropriate.

40. 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.

Violence in Rugeley Town Centre

Councillor Gary Grant, Rugeley Town Council, expressed concern at recent violent incidents in Rugeley Town Centre – especially by, and amongst, young people - and asked what actions the Police were taking to address the problem, and how safe was the town centre at night? In particular, he cited an assault which had occurred the previous week in which a 27 year old man was left with a fractured skull.

Inspector Ellerton advised that an 18 year old man had been charged with the assault in question. Furthermore, under the Safety Nights Initiative, additional resources were being brought in to police the town centre on Friday nights. As part of the initiative, Officers would undertake unannounced visits to licensed premises to raise awareness of the increased Police presence and, hopefully, reduce the likelihood of violent incidents occurring. In addition, Police Officers could also utilise Dispersal Orders under S.27 of the Violent Crime Reduction Act, 2006, to issue directions to individuals aged 16 years or more to leave a locality for up to 48 hours, if they were satisfied that the individual's presence was likely to contribute to the occurrence, repetition or continuance of alcohol related crime and disorder.

Councillor Mrs. P. Williams advised that she had been impressed with the Police's swift response to a reported assault on a young girl walking home from the Rugeley Festival.

Councillor Ray Easton enquired about a reported 80% increase in more visible policing, and sought assurances that: (i) this was, in fact, happening; and (ii) that instances of violence, particularly amongst young people, would reduce.

Inspector Ellerton advised that the Safety Nights Initiative formed part of the increased visible policing policy. Furthermore, he also reported that (reported) violent incidents had actually reduced compared to the same period in the previous year.

Councillor Neil Stanley expressed concern at the implication that Rugeley town centre was unsafe. His observation was that it was no worse, and probably had less violent incidents, than other towns such as Lichfield or Stafford.

Mrs. Rosemary Crawley, Staffordshire Police Authority Member for Rugeley, advised that, in addition to the initiative and powers reported by Inspector Ellerton, other actions to reduce bureaucracy and increase operational effectiveness, such as use of PDA's, would also contribute to the increase in visible policing. In practical terms, this would equate to 60 f.t.e. beat officers.

41. Date and Location of Next Meeting

The Forum was asked to note the date of the next meeting as 22 March, 2010.

Inspector Ellerton asked the Chairman if it would be possible for the meeting to be held in the North end of the Rugeley and Brereton area to facilitate wider community engagement. The Chairman was sympathetic to the request, though he held some

reservations concerning the level of public attendance at “outreach” venues. Nonetheless, he agreed to make enquiries with the Head of Western Springs School, as this might be an appropriate venue.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.

CHAIRMAN