

**CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**HEDNESFORD COMMUNITY FORUM**  
**MONDAY 21 SEPTEMBER, 2009 AT 7.00 P.M.**  
**MUSEUM OF CANNOCK CHASE, VALLEY ROAD, HEDNESFORD**

PRESENT: Councillors

Burnett, J. (Chairman)

Ball, G.D.                      Grice, Mrs. D.

Cannock Chase Council Officers:

T. McGovern, Director of Organisational Improvement  
G. Watson, Economic Development Manager

Also present:

Press  
Cannock Police  
Members of the public – approximately 7  
Hednesford Town Council representative

(Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms. W. Yates and G. Burnett (Vice-Chairman)).

**11.            Notes**

The Notes of the meeting held on 11 June, 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

Arising from the Notes of the meeting Mr. G. Watson, Economic Development Manager reported that interviews had taken place with 2 interested parties regarding the lease for the running of the Aquarius Ballroom. He stated that following the interviews a preferred operator had been identified to operate the ballroom as a dance and private bookings venue.

**12.            Update regarding Hednesford Town Centre**

The Chairman welcomed Mr. Mark Watkins of St Modwen Developments to the meeting.

The Economic Development Manager reported on the phase 1 scheme and stated that a revised planning application was due to be considered to the Council's Planning Control Committee in October. The revised proposals were necessary given the current market situation, and also because the application would provide for the relocation of the bingo

hall which was currently located opposite the bus station.

He referred to the CPO (compulsory purchase order) which was approved earlier in the year and reported that the Council were now at the 'vesting' stage which meant that any land not secured would be transferred automatically into the Council's ownership. He also referred to a recent press article and confirmed that the food store operator Lidl had decided not to proceed.

With regard to phase 2 he reported that negotiations were still continuing and the Council's Cabinet had recently received a final report prior to the start of the development, and confirmed that a food store operator had been agreed.

Mr. Watkins, St Modwen Developments provided background information on the retail sector and additional information on both phases. He stated that Lidl had changed their policy stores and their location and consequently they were not willing to proceed. He stated however that they would endeavour to find a replacement for Hednesford.

A local Ward Member referred to a business that did not wish to be re-located and questioned whether the negotiations would delay the phase 1 development. The Economic Development Manager stated that it would not be appropriate to discuss individual negotiations. Mr. Watkins added that due to the current market conditions it was a difficult time to deliver the scheme although they were still committed to proceeding with the redevelopment schemes.

A Hednesford Town Councillor commented on the plans for the new bingo and its appearance when completed and also raised concern that it would be very close to the footpath. Mr. Watkins stated that the bingo would be further into phase 1 with the retail units closer to Victoria Street. He advised that he would discuss the scope for an alteration to the elevation venting the park and the roof design.

With regard to a question from a local Ward Member on phase 2, Mr. Watkins stated that they were currently in the process of working on a planning application and a retail impact statement. The Economic Development Manager stated that the details of the scheme would be different to those originally considered in 2004, and added that the public would be consulted as soon as possible.

**13. Update on the Possibility of Parking Charges if Introduced in Hednesford**

Mr. T. McGovern, Director of Organisational Improvement referred to the feedback received by the Council it was agreed that parking charges would not be introduced.

**14. Update regarding Cannock Stadium**

The Director of Organisational Improvement provided the Forum with the following statement: -

"The bat survey has been completed and the results were reported to the Council's Cabinet on 23 July, 2009.

1. The survey has found no evidence to suggest that bats are using the main

stadium building. However, a single 'common pipistrelle' bat was found to be roosting in the former clubhouse building. The evidence suggests this roost is used only occasionally by a single bat.

2. The presence of a roost in the clubhouse in no way prevents or hinders the demolition of the main building and running track. Due to the confirmed presence of a roost in the clubhouse, however, this building cannot be demolished without a licence from Natural England. There are a number of strict tests which must be satisfied to obtain a licence and it is unlikely that these requirements would be satisfied at this time.

As bats are a protected species, the Council will meet its obligations under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1984 by spending up to £5,000 to secure the bat roost in the clubhouse.

Tenders for the demolition of the Stadium were received by the closing date of 18 September, 2009. A contractor will be selected by the end of September.

The stadium site remains open to the public. The two lower football pitches are in use by the following teams:-

TNT (adult football)  
Lamb and Flag (adult football)  
Cannock and Rugeley Cricket Club"

A local resident stated that the football pitches were well used by local children all weekend, however Cannock and Stafford Athletics Club were encountering problems with junior membership levels. He reported that he had written to the Council on 3 occasions and only when he contacted the Police the Council then undertook a bat survey, and stated that the Chief Executive had responded to his letter but had ignored his previous ones.

Furthermore, he reported that the goalposts at the Stadium had been taken down by the Council and not replaced until recently and referred to the Government's policy on encouraging sports and fitness; although he stated that the Council were making this difficult.

The Director of Organisational Improvement stated that goalposts across all of the Council's football pitches were routinely removed every year for either the maintenance of goalposts or grounds maintenance and would be removed again at the end of the football season. He advised that he was not aware of any enforcement action taken by Staffordshire Police relating to a bat survey being conducted, and the Council through its Ecology Officer was already aware of its legal obligations.

A Local Ward Member stated that if the Council routinely removed goalposts from all of its playing pitches, why was it that the goalposts on the Brindley Health playing pitches had not been removed at the end of the season and was also keen to know the cost of each football session at the Stadium. The Director of Organisational Improvement stated that the cost was similar to previous years although he would confirm this with the Member.

A Hednesford Town Councillor asked if the Council would be selling anything of value as

part of the demolition process. The Director of Organisational Improvement advised that this issue would be governed by the contract between the Council and the contractor.

**15. Update regarding Stafford Lane Speed reducing Measures**

The following update was provided to the Forum: -

- Work is currently in progress – Staffs Highways,
- 3 speed humps on the service road are now complete,
- Work underway on carriageway speed table near Hill Top,
- All operations expected to be complete by mid-October; however severe weather may cause delays, particularly to road markings.

An Officer from Cannock Police stated that they were in favour of anything that reduced speeding traffic and that they would continue to monitor the area.

**16. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings**

The Chairman reported that the next Forum was scheduled for Thursday 10 December, 2009 and questions from members of the public should be submitted by Monday 16 November, 2009 on the forms supplied.

**17. Dates of Future Meetings**

The Chairman confirmed the following dates of the Hednesford Community Forum:-

- Thursday 10 December, 2009
- Thursday 11 March, 2010

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CHAIRMAN