

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CANNOCK COMMUNITY FORUM

TUESDAY 17 DECEMBER, 2013 AT 7.00 P.M.

AT CIVIC CENTRE, CANNOCK

PRESENT: District Councillors:

Alcott, G. (Chairman)
Allen, F.W.C. (Vice-Chairman)

Anslow, C.	Mitchell, C.
Davis, Mrs. M.A.	Snape, P.A.
Freeman, Miss. M.	Toth, J.

Staffordshire County Councillors:

Spicer, Mrs. A. (Cannock Town Centre Division)

Cannock Chase Council Officers:

Mr. M. Edmonds, Head of Commissioning
Mr. M. Walker, Environmental Protection Manager
Mrs. W. Rowe, Senior Committee Officer

Also Present

Angela Schulp, District Lead Commissioner, Staffordshire County Council
Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliffe, LPT Commander (Cannock Chase District)
Chief Superintendent Jon Drake, Staffordshire Police (Cannock Chase District)
Local Residents (4)

(A Notice of Proposed Post Submission Main Modifications to Cannock Chase Local Plan (Part 1) (November 2013) was enclosed with the Agenda for the Forum's information).

26. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor G. Adamson (Leader of the Council), Councillor J.T. Kraujalis, Councillor Mrs. H.M. Sutton and S. Brown (Chief Executive).

27. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

There were no interests declared.

28. Notes

The notes of the meeting held on 17 September, 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

Arising from consideration of the notes Councillor Mrs. M. Davis advised that, with regard to Stafford and Cannock Hospital, the Trust Special Administrator's final report was being sent to Monitor today. Monitor would have twenty working days to consider the final report and, if approved, it would be passed to the Secretary of State. Upon receipt of Monitor's decision, the Secretary of State will have a period of thirty working days to announce his final decision on the recommendations.

She also made reference to an article that had recently appeared in the Express and Star which outlined proposals for patients from New Cross Hospital to be treated at Cannock for elective surgery. However, she was not certain whether this aspect would form part of the TSA's response.

29. Questions for Staffordshire Police

The Chairman welcomed Chief Inspector Carl Ratcliffe and Chief Superintendent Jon Drake to the meeting who were in attendance to answer questions relating to local policing matters.

Prior to taking any questions Chief Inspector Ratcliffe advised the Forum that over the last 2-3 years there had been a reduction in crime across the District. In relation to Cannock he commented that crime levels were comparable to the same time last year.

He made reference to the anti social behaviour on the car park/ramp adjacent to the Prince of Wales Theatre which had involved offenders throwing fruit and other items from the waste bins. He advised that the offenders had been identified through CCTV and were now being progressed through the ASB route.

He commented that during the last 3 months a lot of work had been undertaken on enforcement and education of the restrictions regarding the high court injunction in relation to car cruising. This had led to a reduction in this type of activity.

He confirmed that Officers had worked with the Highways Team and Fire and Rescue Services to resolve the parking issues along Old Fallow Avenue and Ward Street which were raised at the previous meeting.

The Forum noted that it was a busy time of year for the Police and the Chief Inspector confirmed that the Christmas operation plan was to i) ensure extra visibility of Police Officers in the town centres, ii) concentrate on tackling shoplifting and theft, and iii) prioritise road safety initiatives, such as speeding

and drink driving.

The Chief Inspector then asked if there were any questions. A County Councillor made reference to complaints she had received from residents in Sandy Lane, Cannock where motorists were cutting through at high speeds to access the A5, particularly during morning and evening rush hour. The Chief Inspector confirmed that he would arrange for the speed safety camera van to be deployed at that location along with Officers on foot.

A local resident referred to drug activity he had witnessed on the corner of Westbourne Avenue/Cardinal Way. The Chief Inspector confirmed that over the last 6 months there had been a purge on drug activity in the District with some good results. For example, £35,000 worth of cannabis, which was being cultivated in a hidden cellar, had been recovered from premises just outside of the town centre. He reassured Forum members that Officers would look at the locations identified and any drug offenders would be dealt with.

A District Councillor referred to parking problems being experienced by residents in Hamelin Street/Old Fallow Road following the recent introduction of double yellow lines. Chief Inspector Ratcliffe confirmed that he would ask Officers to investigate.

A District Councillor made reference to the recent Pumpkin Patrol initiative and asked whether any figures were available on the number of anti social behaviour incidents and Fixed Penalty tickets that had been issued on Halloween. She commented that a press article had indicated that the initiative had been a success. However, she had to report an anti social behaviour incident on that night involving youths throwing eggs at the Kelvestone House apartments in Park Road. Egg boxes had been recovered from the play area on the park and 108 eggs had been stolen from the Tesco Express store. A PCSO had dealt with the incident and, following a description of the youths, cautions had been issued.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe explained that the press release relating to the Pumpkin Patrol initiative had been issued by Cannock Chase Council. The draft he had seen had made reference to the fact that there had been a decrease in ASB incidents on that evening when compared to the same time last year. He commented that numbers were not usually quoted in press releases; reference was normally made to whether there had been a decrease/increase on previous years.

With regard to ASB generally, he commented that there had been an increase across the District. Reported incidents of ASB had also increased in Cannock town centre and around the off licence by the Beecroft Road island. The reason for the increase was due to the Police encouraging the public to report incidents. This helped to build up a file of incidents which was useful when seeking injunctions.

He informed the Forum that over the Christmas period highly visible patrols (on foot) would be deployed to relevant locations.

Reference was then made to the recent Rugeley and Brereton Community

Forum where it was noted that there had been no increase in cultivation of drugs in the Rugeley area. However, it was considered to be an issue in the Cannock area and the public should be encouraged to report any drug dealing or activity to the Police.

Chief Inspector Ratcliffe explained that criminals from other areas often came into the Cannock area and operations were planned to deter these visitors. For example, cameras, which were located at certain areas, alerted the Police to their visits. He referred to figures regarding the number of drug offences in the District compared to the same time last year and advised that offences had increased which proved that the Police had been more proactive and more people had been caught. Up to 9 December, there had been 249 drug offences in the District compared to 215 in 2012. He confirmed that any cannabis plants that were seized were disposed of in an appropriate manner.

The Chairman invited Chief Superintendent Jon Drake to address the Forum. The Chief Superintendent outlined that the Police have had a very visible presence in the town centre over the weekends in the run up to Christmas; this was a big operation with the aim of keeping the public safe. He was impressed with how partners worked together in the District and he expressed his thanks for the support provided to enable the police to keep the community safe. He also commented on the importance of not driving after consuming alcohol and for motorists to be especially careful the following morning as they could still be over the limit.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for their attendance at the meeting.

30. Questions for Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

No questions had been submitted.

It was noted that a representative from Fire and Rescue Services had not attended a recent Forum meeting. The Chairman suggested that a representative be asked to attend a future meeting to give an outline on the safe use of home electrical appliances such as electric blankets/Christmas tree lights etc.

31. Question for Staffordshire County Council Highways – submitted in advance

Question from Mr. G. Taylor, local resident:

“The lights set out along the road leading to the Leisure Centre are left on all night, wasting money and energy, and causing light pollution into the ancient wood. The lights around the football pitch go off at 10pm. Why are the lights along the road left on all night? There is adequate security lighting around the school to alleviate any vandalism etc”.

The Chairman reported that this had been withdrawn by Mr. Taylor as the question should have related to the pathway on the school grounds leading to the ATP. Mr. Taylor was advised that he would be provided with a response in due course following the Forum meeting.

32. Questions for Cannock Chase District Council – submitted in advance

Question from Mr. G. Taylor, local resident:

“Litter in Cannock Town Centre and in the area where I reside i.e. Westbourne Avenue is on the increase. It would be interesting to know how many Fixed Penalty tickets have been issued to persons dropping litter. There are 3 shops, including a fish and chip shop at the junction of Westbourne Avenue and Stafford Road and the proprietors should be responsible or clearing litter from their frontages. I believe there is already a local Byelaw in place for this to be done, therefore this should be enforced”.

Mike Walker, Environmental Protection Manager was in attendance and the following response had been detailed on the agenda:-

“The no. of Fixed Penalty Notices issued for littering:

- April 2012 to March 2013 - 54 issued, 5 prosecutions
- April 2013 to 4 December 2013 - 49 issued, 1 prosecution pending
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Contrary to Mr Taylor's belief enquiries indicate that there is currently no local Byelaw requiring a proprietor to clear litter from the frontages of their property.

However, the Council has the power to tackle street litter generated by premises. There is no restriction on the type of litter for which this may be used, but it is intended primarily to help deal with food and drink packaging and other litter caused by eating ‘on the go’ as well as litter from cash points and lottery tickets dropped outside shops. The legislation enables local authorities to serve Street Litter Control Notices requiring businesses to clear up the litter and implement measures to prevent the land from becoming defaced again.

In order to issue such a Notice it would be necessary to establish that a significant litter problem was occurring and could be attributed to specific premises. Inspections of the area have revealed that the extent of litter present would not warrant such a course of action at present. It is understood that the area is also litter picked by the Council's Cleansing Service on a weekly basis.

In addition there is a planning condition on the permission for the Fish and Chip Shop requiring the operator to provide a litter bin. I am informed that this condition has been complied with”.

The Chairman invited Mr. Taylor to comment. Mr. Taylor considered that the number of prosecutions compared to the number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued was fairly low. The Environmental Protection Manager explained that when a Fixed Penalty Notice was issued this discharges the liability to prosecution. If a Fixed Penalty Notice was paid no further action could be taken. This was the Government's idea to assist in reducing the burden on the Courts. 49 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued this year, 36 had been paid. Offenders were given 14 days to pay with a reminder being issued giving them an extra 7 days (21 days in total). He further advised that where a Notice was not paid a case for prosecution would be put together. If the Legal Team were

satisfied that they could get a conviction it would be passed to the Court to process. He commented that it was better to receive money from the Fixed Penalty Notices as the Council received the income.

A District Councillor praised the staff involved for the hard work involved in ensuring that 36 out of 49 Fixed Penalty Notices had been paid.

The Environmental Protection Manager confirmed that the fine for littering was £75 if paid within 14 days. However, if payment was made within 10 days the fine was reduced to £50. He also explained that a press release had been issued advertising the number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued and the fact that 5 prosecutions had been made. He stressed that, although a press release had been issued, the press would decide on whether to print an article.

Mr. Taylor (the local resident) made reference to the planning condition to require the Fish and Chip Shop operator to provide a litter bin and commented that the Council had actually provided the litter bin and not the operator. The Environmental Protection Manager was unable to comment on this as the information had been provided by the Planning Department. He would check with the Planning Department and advise Mr. Taylor accordingly.

33. Mid Staffs NHS Foundation Trust - Update

Deborah Neal, Head of Communications, Mid-Staffs NHS Foundation Trust, has provided the following update:

‘The Trust Directors have concluded that, as the Trust continues to be going through the Trust Special Administration (TSA) process, it would not be appropriate for them to attend the Community Forums at this time. The Directors would like to assure local people that services at both Cannock Chase and Stafford Hospitals continue as usual and would encourage people to continue to use them as appropriate. If there are any questions on the day-to-day business of the hospitals, we would be very pleased to email you answers/updates from the Directors.

The TSA has been granted an extension of a maximum of 40 working days before submitting its final report to Monitor, who will then have a maximum of 20 working days to consider the report and lay it before Parliament. At that time the report will become a public document. The Secretary of State then has a maximum of 30 working days to announce his decision. Because these are all ‘maximum’ numbers of days permitted, we do not know when each stage will be reached.

If you have any questions around the TSA process and future of services, these would need to be addressed to the TSA.’

The TSA can be contacted at: www.tsa-msft.org.uk/contact-us or for confidential matters at: TSApublic@MidStaffs.nhs.uk

34. Update on the position of the negotiations in respect of the Asda s.106 monies for the Artificial Turf Pitch

Mike Edmonds, Head of Commissioning advised that there had been recent contact with ASDA and negotiations would continue with the aim of resolving this issue. However, as yet, it remained unresolved.

The Culture and Sport Portfolio Leader commented that ASDA had been advised that the Council intended to spend the money and confirmed that negotiations would continue to resolve the issue.

35. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

The Chairman explained that a form was available for any issues to be discussed at future meetings of the Forum. Appropriate representatives would be invited to attend and debate the issues and answer any questions.

The Chairman advised that Councillor Mrs. Muriel Davis had requested an item for the next agenda on the Public Health initiative to help address obesity in children.

36. Date of Future Meetings

The Forum noted that the next meeting of Cannock Community Forum had been arranged for Tuesday 4 March, 2014.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and wished all those present a Happy Christmas and New Year. He closed the meeting at 7.40pm.

CHAIRMAN