

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CANNOCK COMMUNITY FORUM
TUESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2008 AT 7.00PM
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK
PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Freeman, M.P. (Chairman)

Alcott, G.	Mitchell, C.
Davis, Mrs. M.A.	Thomas, D.

Cannock Chase Council Officers:

Mr. W.L. Trigg, Deputy Chief Executive
Mrs. W. Rowe, Senior Committee Officer
Mr. G. Watson, Economic Development Manager
Mr. N. Hackney, Partnership Development Manager
Mrs. R. Gudgin, Street Warden Manager

Also present:

Mr. D. Botfield, Divisional Highway Manager, Staffordshire County Council
Mr. A. Hunt, Staffordshire County Council (Passenger Transport and Road Safety)
Mr. M. Stevens, Representative from Arriva
Mr. K. Myatt, Representative from Arriva
Sgt. P. Davies, Staffordshire Police
Representatives from the Press
Local Residents (approximately 20)

(Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. D.J. Bennett, F.W.C. Allen, C.W.J. Morgan and Miriam Derbyshire (Acting District Director of Social Services))

16. Notes

The notes of the meeting held on 1 September 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

17. Chase 3 – Enterprise in Town Centres

Michelle Lucas, Chase 3 Projects Manager, Southern Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce gave a presentation outlining the launch of the Chase 3 programme. She explained that this was a partnership of public and private agencies working together to

improve the quality of economic life through enterprise for those living and working in the Chase area.

She advised that the Chase 3 Programme was looking to invite retailers and businesses to be part of the Traders Association in their Town Centre. The objectives of the Traders Associations would be to work together to make the Town Centres of Cannock, Rugeley and Hednesford vibrant, clean, safe and tidy places for the people who live, work and visit them. Steering Groups would be formed who could organise various events in the Town Centres and the Chase 3 Programme would help to assist these groups.

She stated that in order to promote this programme presentations had recently been held in Rugeley, Cannock and Hednesford and information would be provided to all Community Forums. It was proposed to visit traders within the District to promote the programme further.

18. Issues relating to Pye Green Road

- Details of how many motorists caught speeding along the Pye Green Road in the last 12 months
- Details of how many motorists caught speeding by the Speed Cameras along the Pye Green Road in the last 12 months
- The accident figures along the Pye Green Road in the last 12 months

This item had been requested by Councillor Gordon Alcott. He had been approached by a number of residents who lived in the Pye Green Road vicinity who were seeking to obtain further information on speeding motorists in the area. He requested that he be provided with a written response in respect of this item in order that this information could be given to the residents. The Chairman asked that this response also be sent to all Cannock Community Forum Councillors. Mr. Dave Botfield, Staffordshire County Council agreed to provide this information to Members.

Mr. Botfield advised that, although the attendance of a representative from the Speed Camera Partnership Team had been requested, unfortunately they were unable to attend the meeting. He would be able to provide the information regarding the accidents figures but the information requested regarding speeding was exempt from disclosure under law enforcement.

He stated that the speed cameras situated along the Pye Green Road were in regular use and offences were detected on a monthly basis. He reported that there was a total of 8 recorded accidents along the Pye Green Road for the 12 month period to July 2008, as follows:

A34 to Cemetery Road – no. of accidents: 0
Cemetery Road to Princess Street – no. of accidents: 3
Princess Street to Limepit Lane – no. of accidents: 1
Limepit Lane to Broadhurst Green – no. of accidents: 4

Sgt. Davies, Staffordshire Police, reported that the Police also undertook regular

operations in the area and 15 fixed penalty notices had been issued in the previous 12 month period. Police information recorded damage only incidents whereas the County Council information was targeted at injury incidents. For the 12 month period to 31 October 2008 there were 13 recorded incidents of which 6 were damage only.

Councillor Alcott then raised the issue of the traffic lights by the Cemetery Road crossroads which only allowed 6 seconds for pedestrians to cross. He had requested at previous Forum meetings that this be extended to 12 seconds in order to improve the safety of pedestrians. Mr. Botfield explained that he had passed this matter to the Traffic Signal Engineer and an email had been forwarded to Councillor Alcott on 3 November 2008 advising that it was intended to install crossing detectors on the crossing. However, he would ask the Engineer to contact Councillor Alcott with regard to this matter.

19. Extension of Parking Facilities at Bideford Way Shops

Mr. Botfield advised that Officers had visited the location and spoken to shop keepers. The lay by outside of the shops was currently unmarked but consideration was being given to forming parking bays within this lay by to ease the parking situation.

The Chairman commented that vehicles were parking on the footpath outside of the shops. However, Mr. Botfield stated that there was no evidence of this taking place.

The Chairman stated that he would be pursuing this matter further as he understood that the parking was to be extended in this location.

20. The reasons for the Reduction in Bus Services in the District provided by Arriva

Councillor Alcott had requested this item and he thanked the relevant Officers from Staffordshire County Council and Arriva for attending the Forum meeting. He expressed particular concern regarding the withdrawal of bus service 31 which had ran through Cannock Road, Chadsmoor. He had questioned the County Council and Arriva regarding the reduction in bus services and had been advised that service 31 had been withdrawn due to lack of use. However, there had been no consultation over the reduction in service. He commented that Cannock Chase Council gave £1.3 million to organisations who provide public transport and considered that some of this money could be used to reinstate the service. Residents who used the service had concern regarding its withdrawal and he was hopeful that this matter could be resolved and service 31 could be restored. However, he intended to complain to the MP and the Department for Transport if the situation was not resolved.

Mr. Adrian Hunt from Staffordshire County Council explained that the majority of bus services in the area were commercially run by operators and the County Council had no control over the services that were provided. With regard to service 31 he explained that it was not necessary for the operator (Arriva) to get permission to make changes to the service as they were only required to give 56 days notice of a change in the service. He advised that the County Council had an "accessibility standard" which required an assessment of the other bus services provided in the vicinity to be undertaken. As there was an alternative bus service provided within 400 metres the "accessibility standard" had been met in this case. Additionally, the County Council provided service T3 on a Tuesday and Thursday which ran in the area.

The representative from Arriva informed the Forum that an assessment of the services provided had been undertaken. This had indicated that there was little usage of service 31 along the Cannock Road and the majority of passengers were travelling to Rugeley. Routes had therefore been changed and new links had been provided from Rugeley.

Residents expressed their concern and dissatisfaction with the withdrawal of service 31. They disagreed that the service was underused and explained that many of the older residents who had previously used the service to get into Cannock were now housebound. They requested that consideration be given to reinstating the service.

A number of Forum Members also expressed concern regarding the withdrawal of this service. It was suggested that the County Council should review its "accessibility standard" criteria as 400 metres was considered to be an unreasonable distance for older people to walk to catch an alternative bus. It was also considered that Arriva should review the services provided in view of the concerns being expressed at the meeting.

The representatives from Staffordshire County Council and Arriva agreed to meet with the residents after the meeting to discuss their concerns further. Adrian Hunt stated that he would check that there was an alternative bus service provided in the vicinity within 400 metres. The representative from Arriva agreed to reassess passenger usage and give further consideration to whether it was commercially viable to reinstate bus service 31.

Michelle Lucas from Southern Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce advised that she would undertake a survey to assess the effect the withdrawal of the service had had on the traders in Cannock Road, Chads Moor.

It was agreed that this matter would be included on the agenda for the next meeting in order that an update could be provided.

21. Explanation as to why there are no Facilities available for the Recycling of Waste Cooking Oil

Les Trigg, Deputy Chief Executive stated that Staffordshire County Council had advised that all of Staffordshire's recycling centres, with the exception of Leycett, had containers for cooking oil.

22. Anti Social Behaviour around the area of Clarion Way/Festival Court shops/Pye Green Road and around the Chase Baptist Church

Mrs. Hazel Evans from the Chase Baptist Church outlined the problems being experienced by the Church and shop owners in the area with a group of youths causing anti social behaviour which had escalated over the past 12 months. She was seeking help from the relevant organisations and agencies to assist in alleviating the problems being experienced.

Councillor Alcott explained that he had been involved in this issue and considered that the problems were being exacerbated as the youths had no recreation facilities to use.

Mr. Nick Hackney, Partnership Development Manager outlined the initiatives being

developed in order to assist in tackling the anti social behaviour problems being experienced. He stated that a number of agencies, including the Police, Youth Service, Estate Management, Street Wardens, Police Community Support Officers, Education Welfare and Blake High School had been involved in the process. The agencies had recognised the seriousness of the problem and that a multi agency approach would be necessary. The number of reported incidents had been increasing and the Police Community Support Officers and Street Wardens had been undertaking regular patrols of the area. The problems were intensified as there were limited youth facilities available in the area of an evening.

Mr. Hackney stated that the various agencies had been recruiting additional staff who would be focusing on youth related matters. The Youth Offending Team had secured money to run an "intensive family support programme". This programme would target families who had a history of bad parenting and compulsory action could be taken if necessary. An Anti Social Behaviour Coordinator had been employed by the Council who would be working closely with the relevant organisations with the aim of tackling anti social behaviour. He reported that 9 youngsters were currently going through the Anti Social Behaviour Order Process.

The public were encouraged to report all incidents and provide the names of any individuals. These individuals could then be referred to the relevant organisations for assistance.

Sgt. Peter Davies from Staffordshire Police stated that the Festival Court area was one of a number of hotspots for anti social behaviour problems. He reported that the Police had recruited an Anti Social Behaviour Officer and would continue to work closely with other agencies to assist in tackling this problem.

Members of the Forum were of the opinion that anti social behaviour problems existed throughout the District and the importance of the relevant agencies working together to tackle this district wide problem was noted.

The Forum also noted the success of the KONCAS project in Norton Canes which was designed to meet the shortfall in leisure provision for young people. It was considered that should similar projects be established throughout the District this would assist in tackling some of the anti social behaviour problems. Sgt. Davies commented that a similar project was being considered for the Hednesford area but this was dependent on funding and location.

It was agreed that this matter would be included on the agenda for the next meeting in order that an update could be provided.

23. What are the proposals for Langbourn House as it looks a mess in its current condition?

This item had been requested by Mrs. Yard. The Deputy Chief Executive read out a statement which had been provided by Mr. Graham Hunt, District Partnership Officer, on behalf of Staffordshire County Council (Social Services):

"At the present time, Staffordshire County Council is considering options for the

Langbourn and Hillcroft sites". Whilst the original intention was to consider extra care housing on the sites this is being reconsidered in light of the new development at Lakeside, however no decision has been taken at the present time.

In the New Year the County Council will consult on a county wide needs analysis which is designed to assess extra care demand up until 2025".

Forum Members sought clarification regarding the statement. However, no Officer from Staffordshire County Council (Social Services) was present to respond. It was therefore agreed that this item be placed on the agenda for the next meeting and that Graham Hunt or a relevant officer from Staffordshire County Council (Social Services) be requested to attend.

24. What plans are there for the future of Cannock Town Centre due to the number of shops closing?

This item had been requested by Mrs. Yard who stated that she used the Town Centre regularly and had concern regarding the number of shops that were closing.

Mr. Glenn Watson, Economic Development Manager reported that the Council was in discussion with a number of potential development partners regarding the future plans for the Town Centre. However, due to the current economic climate this was proving difficult to progress.

Planning permission had been granted to develop Avon Plaza on the Walsall Road but this had been delayed due to site assembly problems with the Padma. However, it was anticipated that the development could progress in the next 12 months.

He commented that the Council was committed to securing new investment in the Town Centre and also supported the Chase 3 initiative that was being developed by the Chamber of Commerce.

He advised that the Council had little influence with regard to the specific shops that had recently closed because they were privately owned. The high rents being charged by landlords was considered to be one of the main reasons for the shop closures. However, Mr. Watson was hopeful that new traders would be encouraged to open new shops in the Town Centre.

Mrs. Michelle Lucas from Southern Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce stated that a number of landlords had renegotiated fresh rentals for a number of shops within the Town Centre which it was claimed would close. The establishment of Traders Associations would ensure that traders had a voice and could assist in the development and improvement of the Town Centres.

It was noted that improving the appearance of the Town Centres would also encourage people to shop locally.

25. Update on Golf Course Fundamental Service Review – Cannock Park

This item had been requested by Mrs. Christine Salmon who had not been able to attend

the meeting. It was agreed that the statement which provided an update on the Review would be forwarded to Mrs. Salmon. Anyone else who wished to receive a copy was asked to provide their details to the Deputy Chief Executive.

26. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

The Chairman sought issues to be discussed at the next meeting. The following items were requested:-

- Update on Anti Social Behaviour problems around the area of Clarion Way/Festival Court shops/Pye Green Road and around the Chase Baptist Church – Nick Hackney and Staffordshire Police representative
- Update on the decision by Arriva to withdraw Bus Service 31 – Michael Stevens/Keith Myatt (Arriva) and Adrian Hunt (Staffordshire County Council)
- Update on the plans for Langbourn House – request for Graham Hunt or relevant Officer from Staffordshire County Council to attend
- Problems with flytipping – request for Steve Shilvock (Head of Environmental Health) to attend

27. Date and venue of future meeting

The Chairman advised that the next Forum meeting would be held on Tuesday 24 February 2009 at Bridgtown Community Centre (located within the Ramada Hotel, Bridgtown).