

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
RUGELEY AND BRERETON COMMUNITY FORUM
MONDAY, 11 MARCH, 2013 AT 7.00PM
AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, RUGELEY TOWN COUNCIL, TAYLOR'S LANE,
RUGELEY

PRESENT: Cannock Chase Councillors:

Jones, R. (Chair)

Ault, Mrs. A.	Lovell, A.
Bennett, C.	Molineux, G.N.
Bottomer, B.H.	
Davies, D.N.	Other District
Dudson, A.	Councillor(s):
Fisher, P.A.	Rowley, J.

Cannock Chase Council Officers:

K. Lawlor	Head of Environmental Services
S. Partridge	Democratic Services Manager
J. Morgan	Showing the Local Plan

Representatives from the following organisations:

Staffordshire Police	(Sgt. D. Edge)
Staffordshire County Council	(SCC Cllr. G. Martin)
Staffordshire County Council	(SCC Cllr. R. Easton)
Staffordshire LINK	(Hester Parsons)
Lichfield Diocese	(The Ven. Chris Liley, Archdeacon of Lichfield)
Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust	(Ms. J. Jones, Non-Executive Director)

Approximately 12 local residents

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from CCDC Councillors M.R. Grocott; J. Johnson; SCC Councillor G. Martin; a number of Town / Parish Councillors; Mrs. L. Hill-Tout, Chief Executive, Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust; Ms. V. Singleton, Neighbourhood Watch; and

some local residents.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Notes

The notes of the meeting held on 26 November, 2012 were accepted as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising (Not Otherwise Covered on the Agenda)

Bins in Arch Street (Item 5) – Mrs. Southwell advised that the number of bins left out on the pavement had reduced dramatically, and she wished to record her thanks for the improvement. Mr. Lawlor confirmed that the situation was being monitored and enforcement action would be taken, if necessary.

SCC Cllr. R. Easton commented that there remained a lot of litter lying around in some streets even though road sweepers did cover the area. He believed the problem was as a result of parked vehicles, which prevented the sweepers fully accessing the area. Mr. Lawlor advised that the situation would be monitored and residents written to, if necessary.

Heritage Trail (Item 6) – Mr. Partridge advised the meeting that Mrs. Robinson had asked for her thanks to be passed on to those responsible for the works that had been undertaken to improve the Heritage Trail.

Closure of Kitchens at Cannock Hospital (Item 9) – Cllr. Bottomer enquired about contingency plans in situations if, for example, the recent heavy snowfalls had led to extended transport problems between Stafford and Cannock hospitals. The Chairman advised that the matter should be dealt with later in the meeting.

Further to a request from the Police, the Chairman agreed that this item should be brought forward on the agenda to minimise the impact on local operational policing.

5. Questions for Staffordshire Police

Sgt. Edge advised that operational policing statistics for the 12 months to date showed an improvement on the preceding 12 month period. Incidents of crime, generally, had decreased in the Rugeley area, and incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour had fallen from 2,870 in 2011-12 to 2,420 in 2012-13.

Sgt. Edge also advised of upcoming initiatives, including:

- National Road Safety Week.
- Scrap metal theft.
- Force reorganisation, including introduction of separate “quick dial” contact numbers – ‘traditional’ 999 for emergencies; 101 for a local Neighbourhood Team, dealing with non-emergency matters.

Other Concerns Raised by Residents

- Brereton Boundary Canal towpath and disused railway bridge supports – Sgt. Edge responded to concerns raised by e-mail by Margaret Beardsmore of the Inland Waterways Association about increased graffiti and anti-social behaviour since the opening of McDonalds. Mrs. Beardsmore had requested an increased Police presence in the area. Sgt. Edge advised that two local PCSO’s both used the towpath themselves, and considered this to be adequate coverage under the circumstances. However, the situation would be monitored and reassessed, as necessary.
- Mrs. Beardsmore had also raised concerns about graffiti, which he understood to be on the bridge supports. Sgt. Edge advised that he believed the supports were due to be repainted.
- Path from Wolseley Road to Bloody Steps – Dog waste. Mrs. Beardsmore had advised that people seemed to be prepared to bag dog waste, but had nowhere to put it and weren’t prepared to take it away with them. She requested a bin (for dog waste) on Wolseley Road by the entrance path. Mr. Lawlor advised that he would follow up on this matter.

Members enquired if the proposed reorganisation would mean less Officers on the beat. Sgt. Edge confirmed that this would be the case overall, but the majority of job losses would be back office and should not impact unduly on front line policing thanks to the use of new technology in both back office and in car.

Concern was expressed at the actual impact in terms of on street policing presence. Sgt. Edge advised that there would still be dedicated local Officers and PCSO’s but that going forward there would be a requirement for increased flexibility. Although the Response teams would work from Cannock, to the best of his knowledge, it was not intended to close Rugeley police station, and it would remain a base for the local policing teams and PCSO’s.

Cllr. Bennett commented that it seemed iniquitous that cuts to policing were happening while at the same time the Staffordshire Police and Crime Commissioner was appointing to senior posts with salaries totalling nearly £1/4 million.

Concern was expressed at anti-social behaviour in the vicinity of the bus station toilets, and the smell of urine in the stairwells of the multi-storey car park. Sgt. Edge advised that patrols in the area had been increased and additional help would be sought from the Council’s CCTV

monitoring. Mr. Lawlor advised that he would follow up on this matter, and would also arrange for a deep cleansing of the stairwells.

Cllr. Molineux raised concerns about vehicular movement in the pedestrianised areas of the town during shopping hours. The Chairman advised that he had raised the matter at a recent Town Centre Regeneration PDC.

6. The Old Chancel, St. Augustine's Church, Rugeley

The Venerable Chris Liley, Archdeacon of Lichfield, advised that matters were moving on and he was very hopeful about the progress being made. Graham Hunt from Staffordshire County Council had been providing invaluable support, including putting the Diocese in touch with appropriate other organisations. They were hopeful of receiving grant aid, and a local builder had offered assistance for immediate repairs. He advised that, legally, the building had to be declared redundant for the purposes of worship in the town as the church belonged to the town and it had to be shown that adequate, or better, facilities existed elsewhere. The Church Buildings Council had visited the building and prepared an assessment report.

A working group was preparing an outline plan for potential future use and a suggested charitable management trust, with the intention of bringing both proposals to a public meeting to be held later in the Spring.

Finally, Chris advised that he would be retiring imminently, and a new Archdeacon would be in post within 3 months. He would ensure that all contact details would be handed over to his successor and was sure they would continue the good work.

The Chair thanked Chris on behalf of the forum and the people of Rugeley and Brereton, and wished him all the best for a long and healthy retirement.

7. Staffordshire LINK (Local Involvement Network)

Hester Parsons introduced the Local Involvement Network (LINK); starting by advising that, with effect from 1 April, 2013, the organisation would become Staffordshire Healthwatch. Healthwatch would operate at local and national (Healthwatch England) levels, acting as a conduit for people's concerns about health related matters, ensuring that health and social care organisations in Staffordshire worked better together to engage with service users.

Healthwatch would also:

- Represent the views of people who use services, carers and the public on the Health and Wellbeing boards set up by local authorities.

- Provide a complaints advocacy service to support people who made a complaint about services.
- Report concerns about the quality of health care to Healthwatch England, which can then recommend that the CQC take action.

Healthwatch (and Staffordshire LINK before it), had a right to enter and view any health / care service or facility, and prepare reports thereon, and had done so with Stafford Hospital, providing input to Monitor.

In response to questions from the floor, Hester advised that LINK had carried out enter and view visits to Stafford Hospital and had given input to Monitor.

There was also discussion about the increasing cases of dementia / Alzheimer's disease, and the support offered locally, including the MASE group which met monthly in Rugeley, and also in Cannock, Great Wyrley, and Haughton.

8. Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust

Lyn Hill-Tout, Chief Executive had submitted late apologies; however, Jayne Jones, Non-Executive Director, was present and promised to try and answer any questions, or provide a subsequent response, if she was able, in respect of Trust related matters.

Jayne explained her own role on the Board of the Trust as being broadly equivalent to an elected local Councillor. Firstly, she apologised that she had not had time to consider the full implications of the Monitor report that had been released to the media at noon that day and the Board had received it only a couple of hours before the press. However, she was able to advise that, in spite of the ongoing negative press relating to past events (between 2006 and 2009) at, in particular, Stafford hospital, the hospital today was completely different and the latest Care Quality Commission reports had been very positive. Jayne acknowledged that there was nothing in the Francis Report that the Board wouldn't agree with, and two key principles emerged: the need for candour / transparency; and the need for nurses to have basic care training.

While response rates and services across the board were much improved, unfortunately, they were unaffordable. Cannock hospital was under used and under utilised, and cost the Trust a lot of money to maintain. Previous negative publicity had resulted in reduced patient numbers at both hospitals. While the Trust had identified a potential £10m in savings, it remained on target to be running a £15m deficit in the current year.

Other points of note raised:

- Stafford and Cannock classed as small hospitals.
- Whilst operationally good, clinically and financially unsustainable.
- Specialism rather than generalism better for patients, e.g, trauma centre in Stoke – might be longer initial journey, but better specialist treatment once there and better long term recovery prospects.
- Cannock, in particular, is lacking patient numbers. Needs to be used more now to make case for long term future.
- Need to fight for maternity services at Stafford.
- In 2008 when hospitals achieved Trust status, 200 nurses laid off. Within 12 months of attaining trust status, the Trust was already £2m in debt and the financial situation has worsened year on year.

Members and Members of the Public present expressed their dissatisfaction at the non-attendance by Trust's Chief Executive, as they felt there were a number of matters on which further clarification was required, including:

The Chairman thanked Jayne, and previous attendees from the Trust / hospitals for their candour and openness when attending the forums. He urged those present to lobby friends and family to support the hospitals and make use of them when they had to (i.e. as opposed to alternatives) to provide evidence to monitor and others that they were needed in the local community.

9. Questions for Staffordshire County Council (Highways)

There were no Officers in attendance from the County Council, however, written responses had been provided to questions earlier on the agenda.

The Chairman said that it was disappointing to once again note the absence of a County Council representative to answer Highways related questions.

10. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services

No questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting for the Fire and Rescue Services, consequently no representative had been sent to the meeting.

No other matters were raised for referral back to the Fire and Rescue Service.

11. Any Other Business

Green Lane playing fields - Mrs. P. Edgington, Huntsmans Walk, advised that refuse vehicles were causing unnecessary damage to the playing fields. She provided evidence in the form of photographs, which

Mr. Lawlor took from her and said he would look into the matter for her.

12. Next Meeting

Monday, 10 June, 2013. Venue to be confirmed.

13. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

The Chairman reminded those present that pro formas were attached to their agendas for questions / items to be raised at the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

CHAIRMAN