

BRINDLEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, MOUNT ROAD, RUGELEY

PRESENT: Parish Councillors: P. Adams (Chairman)
R. Turville (Vice Chairman)
D. Cotton
Mrs M. A. Turville
A. Pearson
M. Sutherland
Mrs S. Pearson

IN ATTENDANCE: Sarah Bentley, Environment Advice Manager
(Attended for the talk before commencement of the agenda)
Eight members of the public (for first item)
Mrs T. Williams (Clerk)

Before the meeting began Staffordshire County Council’s Environmental Advice Manager, Sarah Bentley, joined members of the Council to talk about her work on Cannock Chase and the County Car Park Review.

The Chairman welcomed Sarah to the meeting.

Sarah advised the Council that a lot of work was currently underway on Cannock Chase and she would provide an update on both the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation Partnership proposals (which includes car parking plans) and wider conservation work.

Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation Partnership Proposals

Sarah advised the Council that car parking proposals had been developed by the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation Partnership which is looking to mitigate the impact of an estimated 15 to 20% increase in visitor pressure over the coming years on Cannock Chase. The need to mitigate the impacts on the SAC is a legal requirement under the Habitat Regulations.

The mitigation package to address the increases in visitor numbers to the SAC consists of two components:

- Changes to car parking arrangements on Cannock Chase
- Infrastructure, education, and engagement relating to how people walk around and use Cannock Chase

The implementation of the plans will be supported by contributions from housing development within a 15km zone around the SAC. Funding will come in phases as houses are constructed – there isn’t a big pot of money that is available right now.

Chairman’s Initials

16/2021-22

Sarah advised the Council that a range of measures will be introduced to reduce the pressure on the most sensitive areas of the SAC and to increase capacity both for car parking and other uses in the more robust areas. The aim is to rebalance some of the recreational impacts by closing smaller car parks and laybys and increasing parking capacity in the more robust locations. There has been a lot of analysis to identify which areas are most sensitive and where the biggest issues are likely to be. The proposals will redistribute the availability of parking, not reduce parking capacity as a whole.

There has been a lot of discussion and debate about the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation Partnership proposals and the County Council, as one of the main landowners, has taken them through its own process. This happened earlier in the year and the proposals have been agreed for implementation over a 15-year period plus. This is a long-term plan; nothing will be happening suddenly.

The infrastructure, Education and Engagement Strategy will look at the footpaths, way markings, signage, and informal paths that have developed over the years. Currently informal paths disperse from informal parking areas which negatively affect habitats and cause problems from an ecological perspective. Improving the infrastructure through way marking will make it clearer how people can get around and hopefully make the site more usable and achieve a balance between accessibility and looking after the land, wildlife and heritage of Cannock Chase.

The areas of work being focussed on at present include:

- Bunds – Installing bunds along some roadsides where there is parking on the verges. This will be done in particular in Brindley Heath Road, near to Marquis Drive where at busy times motorists have double parked and blocked roads causing dangerous conditions. Over the last year there has been a huge increase in visitor numbers due to Covid-19.

The County will be writing to the Parish Council formally about this as the land is registered common land. There is a formal process to be followed which involves engagement with stakeholders.

There are similar plans for Milford Common following a problem with anti-social behaviour.

There will be a need to address displacement parking before the county take any action.

- Car Parks – There are plans to make the Punch Bowl Car Park in the area of Seven Springs more functional and introduce dedicated parking for horseboxes.

Strategists have zoned the area and this car park, one of the first to be looked at, is in Zone 1.

Designing the changes will involve engagement with stakeholders, particularly the horse riders to make sure the job is done well. The time scale is 12 to 18 months.

Sarah advised the Council that the SAC car park plans will be introduced over the long term, for which there will be lead in processes. Nothing will be closed imminently. Carpark charges will be introduced later on in the process. The first priority in each zone is to improve the car parks, sort out any issues around where cars might be displaced to and only at that point will the County look at closing anything or bring in any charges.

- Engagement Staff – The County will be working with the SAC Partnership to bring in additional engagement staff to work on the ground and to be out and about patrolling the site and talking to visitors.

One of the big parts of the strategy is engaging with visitors, talking about the conservation needs of the site and some of the things everyone can do to influence behaviours that help the County manage the site effectively.

- Developing a Cannock Chase Conservation Code – Visitors can use the Conservation Code to think about some of the things they are doing and encourage everyone to support one another to enjoy the site in ways that don't impact others. The Code has been developed by the AONB and SAC Partnership together. As landowner the County is happy to offer its support and to promote the Code in the coming months.

In the meantime, Staffordshire County Council over the next few months will be carrying out some car park repairs and sorting out some of the potholes (on a lot of car parks) in an effort to maintain the existing assets.

Updates on other work

Sarah advised the Council that other work currently underway on Cannock Chase includes:

- Bracken spraying – which is drawing to completion
- Creating some bare ground – there isn't enough bare ground on the site and bare ground scrapes are important, particularly on south facing areas, as they warm up and encourage invertebrates to nest and reptiles to bask.
- Heather cutting
- A grazing pilot scheme on Moors Gorse where a small number of cattle (currently six) assist in managing vegetation to conserve the heathland.
- Scrub management - some scrub is good for wildlife but too much results in loss of the heathland character and wildlife.
- Brocton Coppice – Veteran Oak trees are being kept going by replanting their acorns to grow on for the next generation of trees for the coppice.
- Conservation plans for white clawed crayfish – a rare species but there are still some on the Chase.
- Installation of a new play area at Marquis Drive. Funded through Rural Development Funding and use of some car park income to lever additional money.
- A trail that links Cannock Chase and Chasewater Country Park to enable people to walk between the two sites.
- Improvement to visitor facilities at the Marquis Drive Visitor Centre and Chasewater (long term). In the shorter-term plans involve making the best of the existing facility with new interpretation material and multimedia kiosks so that people can learn about the Chase.

- Working with the Legacy Group to introduce new interpretation material on trails; one at Brindley Village and another on the RAF trail at Hednesford. A leaflet is also being developed.
- Working with a range of partners on a bid to Sport England to bring in some additional money for substantial improvements to the Top H trail and as part of that upgrading Camp Hill car park which will become a car park specifically for that trail. The time scale is 18 months. Focus will also be on walk routes from Hednesford town with rest stops.
- The Great War Hut is open now with the help of volunteers.
- A project with Friends of Cannock Chase and volunteers from the Heritage Project to look at apple trees associated with the Great War camps. Mapping the trees and undertaking DNA analysis in consultation with the National Fruit Collections at Brogdale in Kent, to determine their variety and origins.
- A project with Friends of Cannock Chase 'A Lens on the Past' looking at old photographs, identifying their locations and commissioning new photographs as they look now.

Questions to Sarah

What involvement have you had with the field on Penkrige Bank Road which will be converted to a car park to serve the forest concerts and other events?

Sarah advised the Council that she was aware of the issue but hadn't had any direct involvement or input. She said that any proposal would require a Habitat Regulations Assessment.

Councillors expressed the view that a large-scale car park raised big concerns on road safety in respect of crossing points and roads not coping with the high volume of cars. They believe that an overarching view was needed.

Have you considered the effects the car park review plans will have on local roads? On street parking has increased significantly over the previous 18 months and will worsen again when car park charges are introduced. There is a need to look at the impact on local roads as residents should not have to take the brunt of its consequences.

Sarah advised the Council that displacement of vehicles and the highway implications will be considered at each stage of the process. The County Council will not wish to create more problems on the roads and a variety of measures will be considered to stop people parking on verges. These include bunds, traffic regulation orders and double yellow lines. The County will not want to urbanise the area or change its character but if there are issues, they will have to be managed.

The Council expressed the view that unintended consequences have got to be dealt with through communication at an early stage and before the project has progressed too far. If they are not, it will be too late and negate what action might be possible. The problems will be there for the Police to deal with on a daily basis.

The Council made clear that it was not against enterprise or encouraging exercise and outdoor pursuits but with Go Ape, forest concerts, cycling, horse riding, and other activities there is concern about erosion from the high footfall.

Chairman's Initials

19/2021-22

Too many visitors all at one time bring parking issues on Stafford Brook Road, Penkridge Bank Road, Bevan's Birches, Marquis Drive and Shooting Butts Road. The parking causes a range of problems and is not managed or controlled.

The Chairman brought forward the Public Participation to the beginning of the agenda.

1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The following questions and comments were made by members of the public:

Is planning permission needed for a change of use on land adjacent to the SAC so that residents have an opportunity to comment?

This is a District Council/local planning authority matter. Applications near to Cannock Chase will need a Habitat Regulations Assessment for consideration of the ecological impacts on the SAC.

Introducing double yellow lines should be a priority so that Staffordshire Police are able to enforce parking breaches. The Police have previously commented that they have no powers to act. There are also follow-on impacts from litter being left on the verges etc.

Is there a ceiling on the number of visitors on Cannock Chase in order to manage the vastly increased footfall which is causing erosion and safety issues (in relation to bikes)?

Sarah advised the Council that the County will manage visitor numbers by the way people access the Chase, by rebalancing use of the sensitive and robust locations and visitor engagement. Engagement will influence people's behaviour and use of the Chase but limiting the number of people visiting isn't possible.

The Chairman suggested a blanket order might be put on roadside parking. He gave an example where yellow lines were not needed as the entrances to car parks had signage stating that there was no on-street parking. This worked well and made money from people who did attempt to park illegally. Staffordshire County Council might not want street furniture and signage and this arrangement might provide a solution.

Sarah advised the Council that the County had been having conversations with highways about the options in respect of different controls and regulations how they work.

Would a planning application be needed for a landowner to create a new entrance and take out a section of hedgerow?

There is no protection on hedges except in certain circumstances a new access point would require planning permission.

Concerns were raised about wildlife being taken away by the development of land and there appears to be inconsistencies on what is and what isn't permitted.

People who live in rural areas should not have festivals or similar imposed upon them. There is no engagement with local residents on these matters.

A car park for 1500 cars on a specified number of days in a year will lead to safety issues for pedestrians and motorists. Who is making the decision on what constitutes permitted development? How is the car park going to be managed?

Planning decisions are a Cannock Chase Council matter, but Forestry England will have an input.

Pedestrians crossing these fast roads from the parking area will be an accident waiting to happen where the speed of vehicles is often way over the 60mph limit.

Forestry England, Highways Department, Police, Natural England should communicate together all at one meeting and not rely on separate communication channels.

Sarah advised the Council that consultation with agencies/stakeholders happens in a variety of different ways. All of these bodies are part of the SAC Partnership and have developed the proposals together. These include the landowner, district council, planning authorities, all considering how it is going to work.

Communication takes place at a number of different levels – strategically and more locally at implementation stage. A lot of meetings will take place to look at the detail. These will be with all of the different landowners including the emergency services to look at how things are being managed. This happens on a fairly frequent basis – looking at whatever the main issue is at the time.

Have you heard from Cemex and the Bird Club on what has been happening with the adjoining land? The issue has been ongoing for six years and there needs to be a conclusion.

Sarah advised the Council that she hadn't heard anything directly. She has spoken to Natural England as the site is still an SSSI and SAC and they have been communicating with Cemex. Cemex still have the ongoing responsibility for the land and the option to work with who they wish, or not.

Before Sarah left the meeting the Chairman thanked her for her attendance and for providing the update on the management of Cannock Chase.

2. APOLOGIES

No apologies from Parish Councillors.

Apologies were received from County Councillor P. Hewitt.

3. POLICE REPORTS

PCSO Dale's apologies were noted as she had been unable to attend the meeting.

The Council noted the Police Report (forwarded by email) detailing the work undertaken during the period 1 September to 14 September 2021. This had involved:

1 transport matter (deer hit in Penkridge Bank Road), 2 road traffic collisions (Rugeley Road/Slitting Mill Road and Chaseley Road/Shooting Butts Road), 1 firearms incident (Shooting Butts Road), 1 sexual offence (Stile Cop Road), 1 vehicle crime (Stile Cop Road), one concern for a male in the street (Jones Lane), 1 robbery (Stile Cop).

Councillor Sutherland advised the Council that (with regard to road traffic collisions) he had agreed with Highways for new signage to be installed in the form of road markings indicating 'Slow' on Shooting Butts Road at the junction and '30 mph' on Chaseley Road where the speed limit changes. Frustratingly the work hasn't been done but Councillor Sutherland hopes for good news when he next receives an update.

Chairman's Initials

21/2021-22

Councillor Cotton informed the Council that another accident had occurred at the Stafford Brook Road and Penkrige Bank Road junction.

It was confirmed that PCSO Dale had given the Parish Council some names of contacts while she was away on leave.

4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No Interests were declared.

<u>Member</u>	<u>Interest</u>	<u>Type</u>
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No interests declared

5. MINUTES OF LAST MEETINGS

Resolved: That the minutes of the Meeting held on 20 July 2021 be approved as a correct record.

The draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 20 July 2021 were noted.

6. UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

A letter to Cannock Chase Council about the use of Community Infrastructure Levy was noted.

A letter to the Boundary Commission for England expressing the Parish Council’s support for the proposed boundary for Cannock Chase County Constituency, was noted.

An email to Stafford Borough Council about outdoor events at Oakedge Shooting Ground was noted.

The Chairman advised the Council that a three-day event was due to be held at Carney’s Pools and another at Hanson’s Auction House.

7. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT/ANNOUNCEMENTS

No report was given under this section of the agenda.

8. CORRESPONDENCE

a. Items of Post

Community Diagnostic Hubs

An email (dated 9 August 2021) from NHS Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit is proposing changes to the way diagnostic services are delivered (such as blood tests, scans, x-rays and imaging). The plans are at an early stage and the Commissioning Support Unit is keen to hear how people currently access these services, what they think about the plans for elective diagnostic centres and what other services could be provided in Community Diagnostic Hubs.

The Council suggested the proposal was a good idea in practice but the availability of appointments in General Practice needed to be addressed in the first instance.

Resolved: That more information was needed before the Council could respond to the request for feedback.

Chairman’s Initials

22/2021-22

NHS 111 first Programme & Urgent Emergency Care

A letter (dated 18 August 2021) from the Senior Responsible Officer of NHS 111 First Programme & Urgent Emergency Care, provides an update on the NHS 111 First Programme and the next phase of its evaluation.

It is a national ambition to enhance the use of NHS 111 to help reduce the number of avoidable attendances in the Emergency Departments and other urgent care settings. The public are encouraged to use www.111.nhs.uk or download the NHS app. Both platforms take users through the same questions as the phone service and signpost people to phone 111 if their query cannot be dealt with online.

The local NHS Programme has been selected as an early adopter site for the new national initiative to launch digital triage clinics in a number of Emergency Departments, Walk in Centres and Minor Injury Units.

b. Consultations

Cannock Chase Council's Revised Gambling Act Statement of Principles 2022

The Council considered an email from the Senior Licensing Officer at Cannock Chase Council advising that the District Council had now published its consultation on the revised Gambling Act Statement of Principles.

Comments are invited on the Plan during the consultation period of 1 September to 1 October 2021.

Resolved: That no collective parish council comment would be made on the Revised Gambling Act Statement of Principles 2022.

9. ROAD SAFETY

Councillor Sutherland advised the Council that a number of local Councillors were going to be Speed Watch trained and the training had been due to take place on Saturday. Unfortunately, through injury the Police Officer involved was unable to take the session.

Councillor Pearson advised the Council that he had experienced aggressive behaviour from motorists when he attended a recent Speed Watch session (for another area). In one case the driver tried to take the gun from a volunteer, and it took ten minutes for the police to answer the telephone call.

10. PARISH ISSUES – CHASE SIDE

The main issue in the parish is speeding.

11. PARISH WARD ISSUES – BRINDLEY VILLAGE

The main issue in the parish is speeding.

12. CANNOCK CHASE FOREST

a. Ironman Competition

A letter from Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture (dated 27 August 2021) advises the Council that Jude Taylor from Together Active will be contacting the Parish Council regarding the information that has been requested.

b. Cannock Chase AONB – Membership of the Joint Committee

The Council noted an email from the AONB Development Officer (dated 27 July 2021) in response to the Parish Council's request to be represented on Cannock Chase AONB Joint Committee.

The AONB Development Officer advised the parish council that it was already represented on the Joint Committee, together with all of the other parish councils within the AONB, through Staffordshire Parish Councils Association. He said that parish councils are able to engage with the AONB Joint Committee by raising issues through the Association. In addition, all meetings of the Joint Committee are held in public and include a public questions slot, where parish councils are welcome to attend in person and ask questions (if received in advance).

The AONB Development Officer said community interests were extensively represented on the joint committee through the Association, elected members of local authorities, landowners, business and community representatives and environmental groups supported through an Officer Working Group and 4 Task and Finish Groups. He said he would be pleased to attend a meeting of the Parish Council to talk about the AONB and its work.

The Council discussed the reply and concluded that the various organisations and societies represented directly should not be taking precedence over Brindley Heath Parish Council and the people they represent who live in the AONB.

Resolved: That the Council considers its response to the AONB Development Officer.

c. Managing Cannock Chase

The Council noted the Managing Cannock Chase Update August 2021 and commented on the number of Silver Birch trees and the need for a programme to manage them.

13. INVITATION TO MEETINGS/EVENTS

The Chairman asked the Deputy Chairman, Councillor Turville, if he would accept the Chairman's invitation to attend Cannock Chase Council's Christmas Carol Service on Thursday 16 December at St Luke's Church, Cannock.

Councillor Turville agreed to attend the event.

14. REPORTS ON MEETINGS ATTENDED

There were no reports on the NHS First Programme Webinar (on Thursday 2 September 2021), Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent CCGs – Access to Primary Care – (on Monday 6 September 2021) and Briefing on Covid-19 Vaccination Program (on 29 September 5.00- 6.30pm (on Microsoft Teams)).

Councillor Cotton advised the Council that Etching Hill Village Hall was now operating normally, with all the groups having the opportunity to meet again subject to compliance with Covid safety. The WI, Camera Club and Zumba are now meeting but the Gardening Club hasn't returned just yet.

The Consultation and Engagement Officer at Cannock Chase Council has asked for information on which groups are back and which are not so they can scope out whether people are returning to groups and get a picture of where there may be gaps and whether there is a need for services such as befriending etc.

Councillor Cotton said that he would advise on the groups that had returned to Etching Hill Village Hall.

Chairman's Initials

24/2021-22

The Chairman reported that Rugeley Probus has had to close.

Councillor Sutherland confirmed that the groups using Slitting Mill Village Hall had all returned to normal meeting arrangements.

Councillor Sutherland advised the Council that the Covid-19 Vaccination Briefing Programme was being led by Dr J. McMahon. Concerns have been raised about how the winter program was going to be implemented. It was reported that there was better access in GP surgeries now.

15. COUNCILLOR REPORTS

Councillor Pearson appealed to all Councillors to be careful when volunteering on local Speed Watch schemes as motorists can be unhappy that their speeds are being monitored.

16. FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) Financial Position of the Council

A breakdown of income and expenditure for the financial year to date was given in the Clerks Report (dated 14 September 2021). The budget statement showed the current financial position of the Council with reserves totalling £16,352.85.

Resolved: To note the financial position of the Council.

b) Notice Board Project

The Clerk advised the Council that she had attempted to obtain new quotations for a notice board from local joinery companies but was having difficulty getting responses. This was probably due to construction companies being busy and difficulties with obtaining raw materials.

Resolved: That the Council seeks to obtain additional quotations for a notice board while waiting for a formal agreement to be drawn up by the District Council's Property Services Department.

The Chairman congratulated Councillor Cotton for arranging replacement of the bus shelter roof in Stafford Brook Road. Cannock Chase Council has undertaken the work and supplied the stain to Councillor Cotton who had very generously agreed to apply it. The Principal Waste and Engineering Services Officer at Cannock Chase Council has made the arrangements and been very helpful with this matter.

c) Councillors use of private email addresses

The Council had previously noted information provided by Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association recommending use of dedicated parish council email addresses for council business as an alternative to use of their personal email addresses. Although this is not an absolute requirement there can be issues with the use of private email addresses.

The Clerk advised the Council that Staffordshire County Council had confirmed it was not able to provide each Councillor with a designated Brindley Heath email address and that this would need to be set up privately. The cost through Hover, where the domain name is held, is around £14.50 per Councillor per year.

The Council concluded that as it was small and most correspondence of a general nature, there was questionable justification for the cost of generating personal email addresses. The Clerk would always use the Clerk@ email address for correspondence with external contacts.

Resolved: That the setting up of business email addresses was kept under review.

d) To authorise cheques for payment

100190	Church of the Holy Spirit	£20.00	Use of room on 14 September 2021
100191	Parish Online	£67.20	Mapping Subscription 2-9-21 to 1-9-22

Resolved: To authorise payment of the cheques listed.

17. ANY OTHER ITEMS FOR INFORMATION AND ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

None

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Council will be held on Tuesday 30 November 2021 at the Church of the Holy Spirit, Mount Road, Rugeley.

The Chairman thanked everyone present for their attendance.

Signed.....

Chairman, Mr. P. Adams

Date.....