

LICHFIELD DISTRICT PARISH FORUM

25 JUNE 2019

PRESENT:

Councillors Salter (Chairman), Tapper (Vice-Chair)
Anketell, Ball (also representing Lichfield City Council), Binney (also representing Armitage with Handsacre Parish Council), Brown (also representing Burntwood Town Council), Checkland (also representing Lichfield City Council), Cox (also representing Armitage with Handsacre Parish Council), Grange, Gwilt and Robertson – Lichfield District Council

Councillor A Castle (Armitage with Handsacre Parish Council)
Councillor C Gittings (Burntwood Town Council)
Councillor T Loughbrough Heron (Burntwood Town Council)
Councillor S Woodward (Burntwood Town Council)
Councillor S Plater (Colton Parish Council)
Councillor J Meikle (Edingale Parish Council)
Councillor N Biden (Elford Parish Council)
Councillor J Wright (Elford Parish Council)
Councillor J Sadler (Fazeley Parish Council)
Councillor G King (Hammerwich Parish Council)
Councillor K V Wasdell (Hammerwich Parish Council)
Councillor S Clarke (Hints with Canwell Parish Council)
Councillor H Ashton (Lichfield City Council)
Councillor D Dundas (Lichfield City Council)
Councillor M Field (Lichfield City Council)
Councillor J Greaves (Lichfield City Council)
Councillor J Marks (Lichfield City Council)
Councillor P McDermott (Lichfield City Council)
Councillor P Stevenson (Mavesyn Ridware Parish Council)
Councillor G Stockdale (Mavesyn Ridware Parish Council)
Councillor K Vernon (Mavesyn Ridware Parish Council)
Councillor M Cox (Shenstone Parish Council)
Shirley O'Hara (Shenstone Parish Council Clerk)
Jayne Minor (Swinfen & Packington Parish Council Clerk)
Councillor J Crowe (Wall Parish Council)
Councillor K Stevens (Wigginton & Hopwas Parish Council)

Officers in Attendance: Mr A Baldwin, Mrs C Billings, Miss W Johnson and Ms C Tims

Also Present: Mr Mark Smith, Chief Inspector – Staffordshire Police

1 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Councillor Salter (Chairman) introduced himself and welcomed everyone to the first Lichfield District Parish Forum meeting of the new municipal year.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barnett (Lichfield District Council), Harrison (Mavesyn Ridware Parish Council), Marshall (Lichfield District Council and Armitage with Handsacre Parish Council), Place (Burntwood Town Council and Hammerwich Parish Council), Silvester-Hall (Lichfield District Council), Thompson (Shenstone Parish Council) and Warburton (Lichfield District Council and Fradley & Streethay Parish Council).

3 TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 22 OCTOBER 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2018 as circulated were received and signed as a correct record.

4 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Mr Ashley Baldwin, Spatial Policy & Delivery Manager at Lichfield District Council introduced himself and presented a power point presentation entitled "Neighbourhood Plans & Planning Policy". Mr Baldwin assured all attendees that the presentation would be circulated to all parish clerks for onward transmission.

Mr Baldwin said he and his team would also be willing to visit any parish council should they feel it helpful and said the first point of contact if anyone was interested in achieving a neighbourhood plan was his colleague, Mr Patrick Jervis. Mr Baldwin advised that there were already 11 neighbourhood plans in place and if any other parish was thinking of going through the process he would suggest they engage with these other parishes that have achieved theirs i.e. Little Aston and Stonnall/Alrewas as they would have good lessons to share, however, if any one was considering beginning their neighbourhood plan or even considering a review of a current one he asked that they look at the Lichfield District Council Local Plan timetable because Lichfield District Council has a requirement to keep their Local Plan up to date and there is an open consultation on it at the moment which is due to end in November 2019 which went to last week's Economic Growth, Environment & Development (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee meeting for discussion.

The following questions were asked:-

Q – As you say a neighbourhood plan is to be reviewed every 5 years – does this mean the whole process needs to be repeated?

A – No, not necessarily – it must be fit for purpose – A review might be about looking at a specific component and focusing on reviewing that aspect. If the parish look at it in the context that if the local plan changes the implications for the Neighbourhood Plan i.e. there are going to be significant conflicts with it then yes, you will have to go through the whole process. This will be a decision for the parish.

Q - What growth is needed for Birmingham?

A - Birmingham went through with their plan and managed to get it signed off by an Inspector even though there was circa 60,000 dwellings shortfall inclusive of other areas including the Black Country. Lichfield have been working with Birmingham and the wider housing market area to reduce that figure down to a much more negligible figure, however, there will be a need for the Authority to accommodate some cross-border growth.

Q – What might this look like and how does it compare to the current Plan?

A – The current Local Plan has a housing figure of just over 10,000 dwellings. The Birmingham shortfall is to be addressed through the Plan Review. Government have identified a standard method for calculating housing needs. For Lichfield District this identifies a Plan Review requirement of 6,600 or 330 per annum. However, this is considered the baseline. In the last consultation the Council identified accommodating an additional 3,000 – 4,500 on top of its baseline need.

Q - What growth is being provided by the surrounding authorities?

A - It is a real mixed bag – South Staffs have identified similar to Lichfield District Council. However, the Council have objected to other Plans such as Bromsgrove and Solihull because it is considered that they could contribute more. Subject to our Members' agreement, we will attend their examinations. In practice this works more effectively - when done jointly with other authorities there is more credence given i.e. Tamworth attended our examination as wanted an uplift but they were unsuccessful.

Q - How important is the call for sites document?

A - It identified the potential supply out there. An example would be Thorpe Constantine was never promoted so we discounted that option.

Q – If land is not submitted to the Authority would the Authority still pursue it through the Local Plan?

A – This is unlikely because we are not in a position to persuade land owners to bring land forward i.e. there is sufficient supply to meet the needs of the area.

Q – Are the Council currently consulting on a Green Belt Review, if so what does this mean?

A – Yes, at the moment we are consulting on the Green Belt Review methodology. We want to know whether the principles we are proposing are correct.

Q – In Armitage with Handsacre – southbound – there is a green belt and developers have invited the Parish Council to meet as they are looking at a potential build of 300-400 houses within the green belt. Due to the concerns that the Birmingham equation is putting pressure on developers to put pressure on Planning Authorities to build developments – what is the best action for the Parish Council to take? What advice would you give?

A – Firstly, consider and hear what the request is. It can be appropriate to meet and at the end of the meeting remain completely neutral. However, always ask for them to put something in writing; agree some minutes; as wouldn't want developer to say the parish is in favour when keeping neutral, always keep some sort of audit trail.

Q – There is disparity across the district regarding the CIL rates. Any indications that there will be a review of CIL?

A - Rates across the district are low when compared with neighbouring areas. However, the rates were calculated based on viability, specifically land value. This does require review and will follow the Local Plan Review.

Q - S106 query – since CIL is defined by square meterage does the S106 get the left overs – If there is a low CIL parish will they get low S106 money too?

A - S106 monies is dependent on the site dynamics, therefore the level of S106 will vary from site to site.

Q – As apartments have a £0 rating are we intending to review this? The foot print can be very large – would we look at infrastructure delivery?

A – Yes, at the moment the apartments are £0 rated. However, where development occurs such as apartments and commercial units (also £0 rated) there is clearly an incentive for the developer. We need to investigate this further and it will be reviewed as part of the CIL review.

Q – There are 3 wards which have independent Neighbourhood Plans as they were early birds before the boundary changes of 2015 – Little Aston, Shenstone and Stonnall. However,

the newly created Little Hay was part of Shenstone originally – will the de-joining affect the Plans?

A – He would like to get a legal view on this one as the Neighbourhood Plans would have been based on the boundaries in place at that time. (Mr Baldwin to report back to the Chairman on this).

5 AN INTRODUCTION TO PLANNING AND MAKING DECISIONS ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Mrs Claire Billings, Planning Development Manager at Lichfield District Council introduced herself and presented a power point presentation entitled “An Introduction to Planning & Making Decisions on Planning Applications”. (Presentation to be circulated to all parish clerks for onward transmission after the meeting as requested).

The following questions were asked:-

Q – Query relating to abandoned hedges - Whose responsibility?

A - If a hedge is an important part of a development site then often a condition would be included on the decision requiring retention and maintenance, but the maintenance period may be limited to up to 5 years. The developer or subsequent landowner is responsible to conform to the condition. However, if not a condition matter/related to a particular development, then maintenance would be a private civil matter between neighbours/landowners.

Q - Can a Parish Council call-in a planning application?

A – No, but if there are significant planning objections received from the Parish Council or a statutory consultee and officers are minded to approve then this will be considered. Only a Ward Councillor can call-in an application for consideration by Planning Committee.

Q – As presentation said when planning application comes in for local authority owned land it always goes to Planning Committee, is this the same with Certificate of Lawfulness applications?

A – No, Certificates of Lawfulness for Existing Development are dealt with differently – there is no call-in process regarding these types of applications, as it is not about the planning balance it is whether there is evidence or not to prove the development or use has been there for a certain length of time.

Q – If a Parish Council supports an application but other statutory consultees have objected then will it definitely go to a Planning Committee meeting?

A – Yes, if the Planning Officer is minded to recommend approval and a statutory consultee has objected.

6 UPDATE ON LICHFIELD POLICING (INCLUDING Q&A SESSION)

Chief Inspector Mark Smith attended the meeting and gave a verbal update on Lichfield Policing to the forum.

Due to financial constraints Mr Smith advised that over 800 officers had left the police force over the last 10 years and, as a consequence, the Chief Constable, quite rightly, had said things had to change and introduced the new target operating model. They were now operating from two sides: - one side was the uniformed police – 24/7 – police immediate

response unit which used to be provided from Lichfield, Tamworth & Burton but now they come from Burton only but he assured all that there are always 2 response cars in Lichfield at all times. And the other side was the Neighbourhood team – his responsibility – he is responsible for 20 Police Officers and approximately 20 PCSO's; split down in to four shifts. There is also a small team - County Lines - who look at organised crime. Mr Smith confirmed the PCSO's are ward aligned with the Police Officers.

Mr Smith summarised the issues and priorities for Lichfield which included car crime particularly as this was still an issue for Lichfield. He said last year's rise was now stabilising and hoped we would be looking at a down ward dip now as 18 offenders had been convicted and serving custodial sentences. He said there were two types of car crime either forced entry to a property to steal the keys from the house and keyless thefts – where thieves use a relay device which communicates to the house to the keys and, of course, a lot of cars are keyless now. The best evidence which helps with these crimes are CCTV, forensics and witnesses/neighbours in the street along with ANPR.

Anti-social behaviour was another focus – Mr Smith confirmed that the PCSO's focus on repeat locations, victims and offenders and hoped everyone saw some PCSO focus in certain areas.

Vulnerabilities/Domestic abuse was another focus – there is a harm reduction hub within the neighbourhood and they meet every day to overview all cases which have come in over the night and discuss fast track options available. Mr Smith said some progress had been made with this but there was still a lot more to do. He said there was a series of programmes for victims and offenders available through the providers NEW ERA.

Mr Smith advised that the new office on Eastern Avenue homed 50 detectives also so there was additional capacity nearby as well as a Priorities Team which is there too which focuses on the car crime in Lichfield.

Mr Smith said there were many challenges in the next 12 months but wanted to reassure the community that there is some good work taking place – County Lines is very prevalent in Burntwood and have recently eradicated fairly swiftly a major drug operation. He said he does not tolerate any drug activity as these only bring a series of other crimes along with them.

Challenges:-

- Mental Health and mental health provision – a lot of Police Officers get tied up with vulnerabilities which is restricting capability so nothing else gets done. This is currently a National issue and a very big challenge and although a joint issue around vulnerability – better provision would assist in freeing up Police Officer time.
- Establishment – Increase in precept – He wants to increase his establishment to 25 Police Officers – some may have seen the Police force have taken a fairly significant recruitment drive including a degree entrance criteria so hopefully new recruits will join with a number of officers due to transfer from other regions so they can retain some proactive capability and experience.
- Organised Crime Groups – Haven't got any in Lichfield but there is cross-border criminality taking place. The PCSO's or Police Officers are visible at key locations on roads/train stations etc.
- Knife Crime – Haven't got a problem in Lichfield but offenders linked to robberies in the area are using knives to remove people of their mobile phones and bicycles. A National issue with potential to grow over the coming years – daily focus in the hub on intelligence linked to weapons being carried.

- Loss of Partnership Manager, Marisha Place – Although the loss of this key member of staff is disappointing, it is the way forward. Mr Smith said he was not part of the review or decision-making process but accepts the role has moved on and covered in other areas so there is duplication in the role and the hub as well as PCSO's pick up a lot of what the Partnership Manager used to do, however, rest assured there won't be any gaps from Marisha's involvement. Although she will be greatly missed she will leave the contacts/pathways she has made and the Police Force will fill the gaps with PCSO's and additional Co-ordinators employed by Staffordshire Police and will also look after Marisha planning her future.

Good news:-

Successfully moved a number of drug dealers from the area.

Car key burglaries reduced albeit still a pattern and series in Lichfield and South of the County – this is a National challenge and being experienced across the UK; there can be up to 9 car key burglaries a day in Staffordshire against 50 a day in the West Midlands so we have to put that into context.

Closure Notice served x 2 the first ever served in Lichfield.

A Youth Injunction has been served on a well-known youth causing problems in the area.

Integrated support is now offered by Claire who has set up a support group for drug and alcoholics in the area; she will also support individuals to hospital appointments/counselling/doctors etc. and goes over and above to help those who engage.

Mr Smith summarised by saying that Lichfield crime is level/static and assured all that we live in a safe place even though there are some spikes in some areas.

The following questions were asked:-

Q – How many Special Constables are there in the area?

A - 20

Q – Because of the Cross City line and the increase in late night services, are plans in place to deal with the increase in problems?

A – The railway stations are repeat stations and known as hot spot locations so direct radio contact with the Town Centre CCTV and intelligence-led cross county line staff is always available along with regular contact with colleagues in BTP.

Q – The less affluent area of Chadsmead in Lichfield is suffering from open drug taking/dealing in Oakmead Park. How can we convince resources in to North Lichfield?

A - Every shift has a North Officer as actually the North of Lichfield is the busiest. They also have a PCSO who has an engagement meeting there every month. Use these resources, engage people to use them and start the conversations – Will gladly meet up after tonight's meeting to try to help more.

Q - Marisha going – what is the impact on operations if cover for Marisha's Partnership Manager post is with existing resources?

A – As the neighbourhood policing has developed with weekly partnership meetings where all partners attend, all Marisha's avenues (over time) can be picked up, these partnership meetings could quickly be moved to daily meetings if required and he is confident that all

contacts Marisha has made will evolve and we will continue with developing those relationships in Marisha's absence and build on the excellent work Marisha has done over the years.

Q – There is concern that there is no longer a local police presence in Lichfield as the front desk at Frog Lane has been closed recently. From time to time someone may find a wallet/purse - where should this now be handed in to?

A – Ideally everywhere should have a front desk but the Police & Crime Commissioner made a decision to close all front desks and the financial constraints meant that we had to operate more efficiently – footfall through the front office counters had reduced considerably meaning that they were not all required. The force community engagement plan provides opportunity for the public to meet their local officers on every ward every month and this would allow the face to face contact if required. Staffordshire Police will be visible again within Lichfield District Council at a weekly engagement session perhaps between the hours of 2pm-4pm one afternoon but as there was a real problem with lost property it was decided to not keep it all as there was nowhere to store items nor no one to take responsibility for the auditing of it so people are asked to either take lost property to Cannock, Burton or Hanley or ring 101 to report and await advice if they believe the items have been involved or the subject of a crime. Private property would need to be disposed of by the individual themselves.

Q – Applaud the work you are able to do with the resources but is there work with the Greater Manchester Police Force being done because of the close proximity to M6/Toll Road?

A – Intelligence is shared and automatic number plate registration mark reading is used as a tactic so the Central Motorway Policing Group/West Midlands Group and Greater Manchester Police Force can stop criminals on any network.

Q - Are Staffordshire looking at a more community approach?

A – A program of recruiting for PCSOs in the community on a wider scale is taking place next year and for special constables. There is a volunteer co-ordinator at HQ in Stafford who is looking at this and they have set up a Citizens Academy where 30 volunteers from the community will have a series of training days and then go out with PCSOs and be visible (they will not have any special powers above a citizen, however). As yet, there are no plans for these volunteers to come in to Lichfield – they are just being placed in Stoke because the need is greater but the citizens' academy will be delivered in Lichfield in the next 12 months.

Q – Is there not a case to push Neighbourhood Watch again?

A – Yes, but the Police & Crime Commissioner's Office had ownership of smart alert, OWL and neighbourhood watch all incorporated into smart alert. This has all been handed back to the police and via corporate comms who own social media this has gone out for tender and will be re-launched.

Q – There has been numerous robberies/burglaries on the Britannia Business Park, can any resources be put in there during the day and night please?

A – As a neighbourhood team we have no resources at night but support can be given to the businesses on-site to prevent repeated crimes. As well as a request for patrols from the 24/7 response to visit and provide reassurance. What does the crime prevention strategy look like in that area? Usually, if somewhere has been a subject more than once the police would look at it a bit more – point of contact to be passed on to Mark Smith for more investigations to take place as usually the Crime Scene Investigation team would attend for forensic opportunities and this may be dealt with by the desk based officers in the resolution centre.

Q - If a PC arrested someone in Lichfield where is the nearest custody suite?

A – The nearest custody suite is Watling Street or Hanley.

Q – If both were full, what then?

A – Hanley is a large property and he has never seen Hanley full. However, it is appreciated that to take an offender to Hanley is a good hours drive away and has to be done by two members of staff – therefore capability is written-off because of the travel. The closure of Burton was made based on finances and the fact that operationally it was also under-utilised.

Q – Thank you for your visibility tonight – it's just been noted there are more District Councillors than Police Officers in Lichfield and communication is two-way. Would like to inform the group that Mark Smith and his team are happy to meet with the public and they can only work with the information they get. As Councillors, everyone needs to ensure incidents are reported to the police as if it's important to our residents then it is important. We can make demands of the police but what are we doing to reinforce communications – We must publicise calling 101 or Crime Stoppers and report it.

Q – The two PCSO's at Curborough Community Centre, are they covering the Chadsmead area too?

A – Yes, they are in an office at Curborough as have premises and there is no public premise in Chadsmead. The whole of Lichfield has 6 PCSO's and a Neighbourhood Officer as well per shift (x3). Jigsaw host drop-in centres with the PCSO's.

Q – Where does traffic and motoring offences feature in the priorities?

A – The investment of 2 sergeants and 18 officers has been agreed for the force to focus on the new roads policing strategy. Community speed watch are a valuable asset and we need to invest in officers who are trained in using laser devices. One of our roles to promote.

Q – Are Lichfield resources actually coming from Burton then?

A – Yes, we get the resources from Burton. The sergeant will allocate police officers at the briefing every day but resources will move to where the demand is.

Q – Would it be possible to circulate a map of where Police Officers and PCSO's are in Lichfield?

A – Yes, this can be arranged and circulated. For information a single on-line home is imminent also to inform local community on local issues and community engagement opportunities.

7 BEST PRACTICE/SHARED PRACTICE

The Chairman explained that this item had been added on to tonight's agenda with the intention of having a short brainstorming exercise to share best practice. However, due to the lateness following such well received agenda topics, the subject would be deferred to another meeting. He said the idea had stemmed from the fact all Parish Clerks are invited to attend SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) meetings where they are given an opportunity to share best practice and discuss initiatives and, after receiving a couple of ideas for tonight's meeting, he had felt it may be a beneficial platform to discuss ideas at this meeting. For example, in Shenstone, because of the cuts in the provision of maintenance from higher tiers, the parish council now employs a lengths man two days a week. He said the Shenstone Parish Clerk, Shirley O'Mara, and he would be happy to discuss this with anyone if they were interested in doing the same.

8 THE FUTURE OF THE LICHFIELD DISTRICT PARISH FORUM

The Chairman appealed for any ideas for future Lichfield District Parish Forum meetings as it was noted that tonight had been very successful and engaging. He said it was good to see such a good attendance as previous meetings had not been so well attended.

Ms Christie Tims, Head of Corporate Services, said this forum was meant to foster relations between the district and the parishes yet very little agenda items ever came forward. She said it would only continue if there was engagement as the coordination of this meeting was very time consuming and dependent on officer resources. Ms Tims asked if members felt it was useful and asked for outcomes of what members were looking to achieve from this meeting – should it now be done differently. Perhaps through discussion forums/newsletters/in a more timely way? Ms Tims appealed for ideas ahead of September's scheduled meeting and agreed that it had been a valuable night tonight with two sets of training as well as a verbal update from the Chief Inspector, Mark Smith, but asked for members to consider the future.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman introduced Lichfield City Councillor Jayne Marks as she had asked if an agenda item on the "waste management of the district" could be included in the future as an agenda item. She felt it would be beneficial to receive an update on this and the importance of still using the brown and blue bins. Councillor Marks also asked if there could be an opportunity to offer a trip to a recycling centre for which she would be happy to pay up to £20 for and this was noted for the next meeting.

The Chairman introduced Lichfield City Councillor David Dundas who had asked what LDC's policy on the maintenance of street furniture was as the results of the Lichfield survey of 70 streets in the city conducted by the U3A was imminent but early indications suggested that a lot of maintenance had been neglected over the last decade making the city untidy and unkempt – even the planters around the city were untidy.

Ms Christie Tims, Head of Corporate Services, replied to say that there was no published policy on street furniture in the Lichfield district and she would be very interested to receive the results of the survey. Ms Tims said that after initial investigations, the only remit for the Operational Services Manager at Lichfield District Council were the street litter bins and most of these had been replaced over the past few years. Discussions took place around planters, benches, notice boards and road signs and it was queried if the parishes were responsible for the notice boards and perhaps Staffordshire County Council for the road signs and/or perhaps BID had some responsibility? It was agreed to circulate the results of the survey and set up a meeting to discuss this further.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 17 September 2019 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Frog Lane, Lichfield, Staffordshire.

(The Meeting closed at 9.45 pm)

CHAIRMAN