

Notes of: RAWTENSTALL AREA FORUM

Venue: Longholme Methodist Church, Rawtenstall

Date of Meeting 18th September, 2006

**PRESENT Councillor Swain (In the Chair)
Councillor Alcroft
Councillor Entwistle
Councillor Forshaw
Councillor Robertson
Councillor Unsworth
County Councillor H Harding**

**Inspector Dave Hodson, Lancashire Constabulary
PS Carole Langhorn, Lancashire Constabulary
Aled Thomas, NEAT Officer for Rawtenstall
Jo Jackson, Assistant District Partnership Officer, Lancashire
County Council
Rachel Marsden, Groundwork
Julian Joinson, Democratic Services Officer, RBC**

**Approximately 20 members of the public and press attended
the meeting.**

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed members of the public to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor A Barnes, Councillor Crosta, Councillor Gill, Councillor Graham, Councillor Hancock, Councillor Ormerod and Jerry Smith (LCC District Partnership Officer – Rossendale).

3. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 19TH JUNE, 2006

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a correct record.

Members of the Forum considered the Action Sheet arising from that meeting. In respect of the road works on Burnley Road the Forum noted that the consultation period had been extended. Information was provided that the Burnley Road Action Group had been subsumed into the Cribden Residents' Association.

The appearance of the Memorial Gardens had improved following action by the Parks Team. Councillor Forshaw indicated that the memorial itself required some cleaning and maintenance to replace missing tiles. It was understood that this

work was on-going. The park benches had now been bolted in place. The litter bins provided were considered to be adequate.

Performance in respect of household refuse collection had improved over the period.

4. POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Hodson provided an update in respect of the crime figures for Rawtenstall. The figures showed an overall reduction in crime from 1st April to date. There were 140 fewer crimes which represented a reduction of 17.3%, as follows:-

- 16 fewer (44.5%) burglary/dwelling crimes
- 18 fewer (18.5%) vehicle crimes
- 6 fewer (2.8%) criminal damage
- 35 fewer (20.7%) violent crimes
- 9 fewer (64.3%) hate crimes
- 37 more (3.6%) anti-social behaviour incidents

The increase in the latter category was due, in part, to changes in the recording system.

Operation Summer Nights, which had run from 21st July to 2nd September 2006, had been very successful. The focus of this had been on damage and alcohol related crimes. In addition Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings had provided useful intelligence, which had led to the targeting of certain licensed premises, hot spots and the issuing of penalty notices. This targeting had also contributed to the increase in anti-social behaviour figures.

Carole Langhorne, who co-ordinated Operation Summer Nights across the Borough, provided further details about the initiative, as follows:-

- 676 licensed premises visits had been carried out
- 40 off-licence test purchases had been made
- 10 test purchases had taken place in public houses
- 155 seizures of alcohol had taken place (comprising 290 cans of lager, 52 bottles of alco-pop, 95 cans of cider, 7 litres spirits, 17 litres of wine.)
- 47 fixed penalty notices had been issued
- 59 custodial actions had taken place
- 60 multi-agency visits had taken place
- 1,526 visits to hot-spots had taken place to check for nuisance

Inspector Hodson indicated that Pennine Division had achieved the best results in the County and asked the Forum to commend PS Langhorne for her efforts. This work would continue under the banner of Operation Frustrate.

PS Langhorne stated that the Longholme Multi-Agency Problem Solving (MAPS) Team had been particularly effective. Police, Fire Officers and councillors had

carried out a door to door survey and had gathered information about anti-social behaviour, litter, graffiti, noise nuisance, traffic/parking issues. The information was now being collated. A Residents' meeting had been arranged to give some feedback. A visual audit had also been arranged for 4th October 2006 to inspect areas of concern.

Further work was underway to target offenders travelling into Rossendale from the Greater Manchester area.

A number of issues were raised by the public as follows:-

- Given that Rawtenstall Forum covers town centre shops, could figures in respect of thefts from shops and non-dwellings be provided? Inspector Hodson responded that there were many categories of crimes recorded. Figures for 'Shops and Stalls' would be provided to future meetings.
- There was a perceived inequity in that shops had been asked to remove advertisement boards from pavements, but vehicles continued to park on the footpaths on Bank Street and Kay Street. It was noted that the Traffic Wardens were no longer a Police function.
- Could actual totals for crime be reported rather than percentage changes? Inspector Hodson confirmed that this was possible.
- If a vehicle was parked on zig-zag lines which agency would issue the penalty notice? Inspector Hodson confirmed that this was still a police matter because the offence carried driver's licence penalty points.
- A member of the public complained that she had asked to meet the community police officer for Balladen Estate, but had not yet received a reply. Concerns included motor-bike nuisance and a youth carrying an iron bar. Police representatives agreed to take her contact details after the meeting.
- Councillors encouraged members of the public to attend the next PACT meeting.
- How did the MAPS system fit with PACT areas? PS Langhorne indicated that there was some overlap between the areas. The MAPS areas were defined by the Home Office and targeted houses in Longhome, Stacksteads and Irwell.

5. NEAT TEAM UPDATE

Aled Thomas, NEAT Officer for Rawtenstall, provided an update of the work of the NEAT Teams.

Fly tipping remained a nuisance and offenders were difficult to track down. Residents could be liable if their own waste was found dumped. Some basic checks could help to reduce this risk, such as checking on the Environment Agency's website that the waste collector had a waste carrier's licence. Firms canvassing business door to door were unlikely to be legitimate and should be avoided. If anyone witnessed fly tipping a note should be made of the vehicle registration number and this should be reported to the Council.

There had been an number of instances where blue bins had been contaminated with other materials. Street Collection officers had adopted an approach of educating residents who breached these rules. Blue bins were for glass, cans and certain plastic containers. They should not be used for plastic lids, or low grade plastic cartons such as margarine or yoghurt tubs.

A number of question/issues were raised as follows:-

- A local trader indicated that there was a £300 charge for a trade waste bin and that all such waste a was placed in the same bin bag. He asked if trade waste could be sorted into recyclable/non-recyclable waste. Mr Thomas indicated that under the legislation a licence was required for controlled waste. The current collection system in Rossendale was within the Government framework.
- A member of the public reported that her bags of green waste had not been collected and had disintegrated. Officers reported that more bags could be obtained by ringing the Henrietta Street depot and collections would take place.
- The Chair suggested that leaflets reminding the public of which receptacle to use for each different kind of waste might be useful.
- It was reported that the litter pickers had made a significant contribution to improving the street scene, although there was some criticism that they did not always remove litter deposited near to street waste bins.
- It was reported that a hearse parked on Burnley Road advertising 'scrap cars wanted' was an eyesore. Mr Thomas indicated that The Council had powers to remove a vehicle if it had been abandoned, regardless of whether or not the vehicle had a current road tax. However, it was believed that the vehicle in question was still in use.
- A member of the public indicated that an earlier request for a brown bin for green waste, had been refused. Mr Thomas indicated that not all areas were currently covered by a brown bin collection. He agreed to take the address details and to check if that area was now covered.
- Councillor Forshaw congratulated the NEAT Team for their hard work in Rawtenstall. She expressed the view that the waste bin opposite the Free Press Offices was too big and that the door presented an obstruction to prams. She also reported that a waste bin on the Phipps car park had gone missing. Mr Thomas agreed to report these matters for further consideration.
- The Chair enquired whether a list of the rolling programme for the replacement of waste bins could be made available.
- The Chair indicated that the Head of Street Scene and Liveability would be invited to attend a future meeting.
- It was reported that the tender notice posted at the site in respect of the Cemetery Lodge needed to be removed.
- Residents reported a build up of litter in the vicinity of the Oakenhead Centre and St Mary's CE and St James the Less RC Schools, off Haslingden Old Road, Rawtenstall. Mr Thomas reported that Civic Pride had previously carried out a clean up in this locality. A member of the public also reported that there were issues in relation to the gully emptying,

sweeping and grass cutting of the land in question. County Councillor Harding indicated that the land belonged to the County Council, although she was uncertain of the position regarding land at St James the Less School which might be the responsibility of the governors. The priority for grass cutting for the County Council was verges on the highway rather than spare land.

- A member of the public enquired whether the Council had recently disestablished its fitters posts and if this was due to the imminent arrival of a new fleet of refuse vehicles.

6. OPEN FORUM

Presentation by Groundwork - Open Space and Play Strategy

Rachel Marsden from Groundwork gave a presentation on the development of the Open Space and Play Strategies. She indicated that the condition of most sites had now be assessed and the Open Space Strategy would start to look at those most in need of improvement. Play areas were also being considered, including after school clubs.

The development of the Strategies was at an early stage and Groundwork were seeking feedback from the public. A questionnaire was provided, which looked at issues such as what areas people used and what organisations utilised the land. The overall aim of the Strategy was to enable an approach to be agreed between the Council and Groundwork as to how the sites could be improved.

A number of questions were raised by members of the public, including the likely levels of funding available. Ms Marsden indicated that this would depend on the bids submitted. Certain sites or projects might attract substantial funding, for example from the Lottery Fund. The first step would be to identify appropriate sites. Responses could be made by letter or questionnaire in the pre-paid envelopes provided. Further information could be obtained from Groundwork's Open Spaces Team on Tel: (01706) 211421.

Public Question Time

Members of the public raised the following issues:-

- When will there be a prosecution for dropping litter?
- The prohibitive cost of drop kerbs to enable vehicles to cross pavements on Grange Raod to park on private land. County Councillor Harding responded that legislation required residents to obtain permission from the highways authority and to pay for the drop kerbs. The County Council was aware of the difficulties facing residents throughout Rossendale and the Portfolio Holder was looking into possible options. A long-term repayment scheme was suggested by a member of the public.
- Had the Masterplan consultants Hall Barrett been consulted regarding the Valley Centre proposals by CNC? The Chair undertook to provide a reply direct to Mr Winder on this matter.

- Cars continued to park on the pavement on Bank Street and at Marl Pitts. The Chair indicated that since decriminalisation, parking attendants were provided by a partnership comprising Rossendale, Lancashire Districts, the County Council and NCP. County Councillor Harding agreed to look into the matter of Bank Street and to provide a response. The possibility of providing posts at Marl Pitts would be referred to the Leisure Trust.
- Were calls to the Borough Council being diverted to Coventry? County Councillor Harding replied that the County Council and Rossendale were partners in a shared call-centre initiative. The call-centre was based in Lancashire.
- How extensive were the children's centre facilities proposed for Balladen School and would this increase traffic flow on Lavender Hill? County Councillor Harding replied that she had not had sight of the detailed designs, but that traffic should not increase significantly as this facility was for outreach work with local families. The provision of off-street parking was requested. Councillor Forshaw indicated that the planning application had considered improvements to access to the school.
- Given that Asda had meet the relevant planning criteria for its new store, what assurances could be given that the new Valley Centre would be more in-keeping with the area? Councillor Swain responded that the planning application was not yet fully developed. The application would be determined on its merits, but the public's concerns about its appearance were understood. Various national, regional and local guidelines would have to be followed. Further landscaping proposed at Asda might help to improve its aspect.
- The display of plans for the new Valley Centre in a vacant shop unit received some criticism. The Chair reminded members of the public that the applicant, CNC, was responsible for the publication of those plans.
- A complaint that building work had commenced at buildings at Willow Farm, Loveclough, despite refusal of a planning application. Officers had been notified but no response had been received by the complainant.
- Poor surface on Oakley Road, Craven Street and Schofield Road. County Councillor Harding indicated that the highways budget was limited.
- Would a full public consultation take place in respect of the Rawtenstall Town Centre development, such as the suspension of standing orders at Committee and removal of the time limits regarding public speaking? The Chair confirmed that the Council was a significant stakeholder in the regeneration of the town centre and that indicated that the issue of public consultation had been raised with CNC. The Chair reiterated that he was not in a position to comment upon the merits of their application. Councillor Entwistle requested that a full public debate be held on the proposed development to enable the community to have an input.
- Would it be possible for Asda to take over maintenance of the clock tower near to the Astoria.
- The gulley next to the pavement on Haslingden Old Road was blocked which caused ice to form on the pavement and road surface in Winter. In addition the hedges needed trimming.
- A query as whether weed killer had been used on footpaths in Balladen and complaint that this was leading to the break-up of the macadam

surface. County Councillor Harding indicated that old weed killer had been banned for environmental reasons. The replacement substance was less damaging to the environment, but not quite as effective.

- A request that more councillors and senior managers attend Area Forums. The Chair and County Councillor Harding responded that some Members and senior officers had other diary commitments this evening. The Forum noted the request for more representatives of Senior Management to attend Area Forums.
- Councillor Forshaw raised a query concerning the removal of a stall from Rawtenstall Market.
- Concerns were expressed that public attendance at the Forum was poor and it was suggested that advertisement could be improved.
- A query about whether Tesco intended to increase the size of the building on the former Asda site in Rawtenstall. The Chair indicated that he was not aware of any proposals or application for construction on the site. Planning permission would not be required where the new owners intended to carry out internal adaptations only and to continue the previous use of the building as a supermarket.
- A comment that flag-stones had been removed from the area adjacent to the river bridge to the former Asda store.

THE MEETING COMMENCED AT 7 P.M. AND CLOSED AT 9.05 p.m.