

**Notes of:** WHITWORTH AREA FORUM

**Venue:** Whitworth Civic Hall

**Date of Meeting** 8<sup>th</sup> January 2007

**Present:** Councillor D Barnes (in the Chair)  
Councillor L Barnes  
Councillor A Neal  
Councillor H Steen  
Inspector Dave Shepherd, Lancashire Constabulary  
Phil Seddon, Head of Financial Services  
Jenni Cook, Committee Officer, RBC  
Julie Jackson, NEAT Officer  
Jerry Smith, Lancashire County Council Partnership

**Also Present:** Approximately 20 members of the Public and Press

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**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed members of the public to the meeting and asked the Council Officers and other representatives present to introduce themselves.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been received from County Councillor Serridge and Catherine Taylor (NEAT Officer).

**3. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 4<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2006**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a correct record subject to clarification on the position of the Spring Mill site. The Legal Department would be asked to respond directly on this matter.

**Action Sheet:**

- NEAT Team actions had been updated since publication of the agenda and the updated actions had been circulated.
- Councillor Neal updated on the issue with vermin at Peel Terrace. The NEAT Officer would respond directly to the member of public concerned.

## 4. POLICE ISSUES

### **Summary of Update from Inspector Shepherd**

- Reduction of crime figures as a whole in Rossendale East – 17.7% reduction in all crime.
- Car crime is still an issue – all present urged to be vigilant and not to leave items in cars.
- “Don’t Bother” stickers were available and all present urged to collect one on their way out.
- Police are working with the Town Council (e.g. Rushcart, Remembrance) and currently carrying out risk assessments on future events.
- New Community Safety Officer’s office at the Civic Hall almost ready for use.
- Several incidents of graffiti in the past few months had been dealt with and arrests had been made. Inspector Shepherd thanked the NEAT Team for their prompt cleaning of graffiti.
- A dispersal notice had been issued to tackle anti-social behaviour in the Shawforth area and was working well.

### **Public Questions/Issues**

- Request that Inspector Shepherd give his view on the effectiveness of Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). Inspector Shepherd stated it was felt that despite national press, these were effective in Rossendale.
- Incidents of youths causing a nuisance on the Cowm Park Way play area. Inspector Shepherd commended the public for taking action, however, warned them to be vigilant for their own safety. He asked that in future the police be contacted with the names of these youths if available.
- A query was made in relation to the provision of a vehicle for the Community Beat Officer. Inspector Shepherd confirmed that talks were ongoing with Whitworth Town Council.
- A query was made in relation to the issue of speeding on Market Street. It was noted that this issue had been answered within the previous meeting’s Action Sheet, however Inspector Shepherd noted that in other areas of the Borough cameras had been installed informing drivers of the exact speed they were travelling and suggested that residents raise this issue at PACT Meetings.

### **Amberwatch Update:**

- Dave Jackson, the Whitworth Town Clerk, stated that the Amberwatch system was being installed on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2007.
- In relation to a query it was noted that only retrospective use could be made of the Amberwatch CCTV.

## 5. NEAT TEAM UPDATE

Julie Jackson, NEAT Officer, gave a further update to the Action Sheet from the previous meeting.

- Councillor Neal clarified the blocked culvert location as opposite 470 Market Street, Shawforth and opposite Shanter Flats.
- The issue of the boundary wall at Healey Dell would be investigated.

### **Public Questions/Issues:**

- A member of public had submitted a question on the issue of vermin at Peel Terrace. It was noted that there was an ongoing investigation into this matter and that the NEAT Officer would respond directly to the member of public.
- It was noted there were concerns about un-cleared leaves in Shawforth. The NEAT Officer noted this and stated she would be out with Street Cleansing the following week to view the area.
- It was requested that the NEAT Team arrange further talks with Whitworth High School in respect of litter in the area. The NEAT Officer confirmed that this would be timetabled.
- A member of the public requested information on waste collection for new businesses. The NEAT Officer agreed to clarify directly with the member of public after the meeting.
- An issue was raised with the retaining wall to the bottom of Mill Fold. It was noted that stones were loose and dangerous. The NEAT Officer stated that this would be reported to LCC Highways.
- The state of the road near St Anslems was raised. It was noted this was an LCC Highways issue and would be reported by Councillor Neal at a meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2007.
- A timescale was requested in respect of lighting at the bus shelter in Shawforth. Councillor Neal agreed to investigate and respond directly.
- The wall opposite the Mercedes Garage in Shawforth had large pieces of stone missing. The NEAT Officer agreed to investigate this matter.

## 6. BUDGET CONSULTATION

The Head of Financial Services, Phil Seddon, gave a short presentation on the Budget Proposals for the new financial year and asked that all present take the time to view the full detail of the consultation document which is available at [www.rossendale.gov.uk](http://www.rossendale.gov.uk) or at local libraries. Mr Seddon highlighted the importance of the public providing comments and feedback on the proposals.

### **Questions from Members of the Public**

- A member of the public enquired what Rossendale Borough Council retains out of the £11million collected in business rates. This was

confirmed as £4.9million based on the Rossendale population of 66,000.

- It was enquired whether the new properties being built around the valley would contribute to the budget. It was confirmed that this would in part be the case with properties, assessed on a Band D equivalent, anticipated to increase by 1.1%
- The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy assumes a Council Tax increase of a maximum 3%. It was further noted that there would be a national cap of 5% on Council Tax.
- Mr Seddon was asked to clarify the priorities and exactly what areas may cover in the next budget. These were confirmed, amongst others, as improvements to the planning function, Area Forum grants, mystery shopper exercises, regeneration, refuse and street scene improvements, marketing of the Borough, Smoke Free Rossendale.
- A member of the public enquired as to what other services could be outsourced or moved into partnerships. Mr Seddon stated there were a number of recent examples (Highways, Leisure, Housing, Revenues and Benefits).
- It was enquired whether any funds would be available to help small businesses. Mr Seddon confirmed funds for Regeneration projects should now become available, able as part of the budget due to the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Scheme (LABGIS) and urged the member of public to make this suggestion as part of the formal consultation. The LCC representative also agreed to investigate this matter from County's perspective.
- It was enquired whether Rossendale Borough Council intended to apply for Whitworth to be a regeneration area, however it was noted that this was not something that was decided at Borough Council level and was not within the budget consultation.
- A comment was made in respect of improving leisure facilities within the Rossendale area and the marketing of the valley as a whole. Mr Seddon urged the member of public to make this comment as part of the formal consultation.
- Councillor Neal enquired whether Rossendale Borough Council intended to fund Neighbourhood Watch signs in view of the fact that a picture of one had been used in Mr Seddon's leaflet. It was stated that this was not a specific areas within the budget proposals, however this was a legitimate part of the consultation exercise.

When asked, Mr Seddon stated that he could be contacted directly but urged members of the public to use the contact details specially arranged for the budget consultation exercise and to make use of their Ward Councillors for this and certainly other more general ward matters.

## 7. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Questions Submitted prior to the meeting are summarised and answered below:

### **In the light of the recent Barker Report what is the Borough Council's current view on the performance or longevity of the green belt in Whitworth?**

Although the Barker report may inform future national policy, at present the Council is obliged to consider existing planning policies contained in the following documents: Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 on Greenbelts; the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North West 2003; the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan (2005); and some policies in the Rossendale District Local Plan (1995). None of these plans suggest imminent changes to the Green Belt boundary within Rossendale and the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan in policy 6 states "the general extent of Green Belts in Lancashire will be maintained." Policy RDF5 of the emerging review of RSS notes that post 2011 the North West Regional Assembly will need to undertake strategic studies of existing Green Belt boundaries which will inform future views of RSS. It is acknowledged that exceptionally small scale changes can be made through the Local Development Framework though any changes will be minor boundary changes, with little, if any, significance to the overall Green Belt boundary or to its function and objectives.

### **What is the Council's view on what constitutes "exceptional" or very special circumstances that may permit development in the Green Belt?**

Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 notes "the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.....help[ing] to protect the countryside." PPG2 discusses the type of development that may be suitable within the Green Belt (which includes development associated with agriculture and forestry, essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation and limited alterations to existing dwellings, re-use of existing buildings and temporary mining operations, as well as possibly other development such as engineering operations).

PPG2 states "very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm....is clearly outweighed by other considerations." It is for the applicant to demonstrate why permission should be granted in exceptional circumstances.

When considering a planning application for inappropriate development (which by its nature is harmful in terms of PPG2) the Council needs to take into account effects on the openness of the Green Belt and if the

proposed development conflicts with the purposes of including land within Green Belt are listed below:

- To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- To prevent neighbouring towns from merging
- To safeguard the countryside from encroachment
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
- To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other land.

In addition development proposals should be assessed for their contribution to achieving objectives for the use of land in Green Belts as listed below:

- Providing opportunities for access to the open countryside
- Providing opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation
- Retaining attractive landscapes
- Improving damaged and derelict land around towns
- Securing nature conservation interest
- Retaining land in agriculture, forestry and related uses.

**What legal action is the Council currently taking in response to the unauthorised felling of trees in the garden of a house in Tonnacliffe Road overlooking Market Street, Whitworth?**

The situation is being investigated by Enforcement Officers. As this is an enforcement/legal matter the Council are unable to update the public with exact details of the investigation. The Forum can be reassured that the matter is being pursued.

**Questions asked at the Forum**

**A Question was submitted in respect of the ownership of Peel Terrace and the ongoing investigation.**

It was noted that this was a legal matter and investigation was ongoing.

**A question was asked in respect of a planning application due to be heard by the Development Control Committee.**

The Members present noted that they were members of the Development Control Committee and could not answer any questions on this matter as they had to reserve their position. Any comment on the application could mean they would be unable to determine the matter at committee.

**It was enquired as to when works would be commenced on the Cemetery and exactly what works would be carried out.**

The member of public was referred to the answer contained within the action sheet. However it was agreed that the Director of Resources would be invited to the next Area Forum.

**An enquiry was made as to when the 20mph speed limit on Hall Street would be in place**

The LCC representative agreed to investigate this matter.

**An enquiry was made whether the road surface of Peel Terrace could be “patched up” until the investigation into the ownership was completed.**

The LCC representative agreed to look into this matter.

**A member of the public questioned the effectiveness of the Forums and stated that the same issues were being discussed each time.**

The Chair and Councillor Neal suggested that the Deputy Chief Executive be invited to the next Forum.

Councillor Neal asked all present to note that there was a meeting of the Healey Dell Management Committee on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2007 in the Whitworth Town Council Chamber at 7.30pm.

Mr Dave Jackson asked the Forum to note that Whitworth Town Council had now been awarded Quality Status.

**The meeting commenced at 7pm and closed at 8.45pm**