

Notes of: WHITWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Venue: Whitworth Civic Hall

Date of Meeting 14th January 2008

Present: Councillor A Neal (Chair)
Councillor T Aldred
Councillor R Wilson
Councillor D Barnes, Whitworth Town Council
County Councillor Sean Serridge, Lancashire County Council
Jo Gibbs, Lancashire County Council, District Partnership Office
Inspector Neil Wilkinson, Lancashire Constabulary
Julie Jackson, NEAT Manager
Catherine Taylor, NEAT Officer
Jenni Cook, Democratic Services

Also Present: 40 members of the Public and 1 member of the press

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed members of the public to the meeting and indicated that the Whitworth Neighbourhood Forum had the highest attendance of the forums within Rossendale.

2. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 18 JUNE 2007

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

a) Action Sheet:

The Action sheet was discussed and updates noted. The following issues were commented on:

Peel Terrace – Councillor Neal indicated that he had information regarding Peel Terrace and he would discuss with the new Leader of the Council shortly.

Blocked Culvert in Shawforth – the NEAT Officer took details of this issue and a site visit will be arranged.

Street Sweeping in Whitworth – Queries were raised about the validity of the information provided on the Action Sheet. The NEAT Officer stated that street sweeping operatives would return to finish areas that were not completed on the same day. A request was made for all data from street sweeping vehicle tracking devices to be made available to members of the public. The NEAT Officer agreed to look this matter and also to raise concerns in respect of sweeping on Wallbank and dog fouling at Eastgate.

Urinal at Market Street, Shawforth – The urinal had not yet been dug up. Councillor Neal agreed to raise this matter with the Leader of the Council and Property Services.

Orama Mill Planning Application – September 2007 – A member of the public raised concerns about an acknowledgement letter received from Planning. He indicated that the specific points within his letter had not been considered and as such he would submit a formal complaint.

Planning Policy Documents – Councillor Neal agreed to investigate when the Supplementary Planning Guidance document and the Village Design Statements would be available.

Felling of Trees on Market Street, Whitworth – It was noted that this particular case had been successfully prosecuted, however the defendant was now appealing the verdict. A further update would be provided at the next Forum.

3. POLICE ISSUES

Summary of Update from Inspector Wilkinson

There had been a reduction of crime figures from last year's figures with a reduction of 10 crimes. Drug offences had increased slightly with 3 drugs warrants being issued. Antisocial behaviour had risen slightly, however 5 fixed penalty notices had been issued. Parking enforcement notices had been issued on Healey Corner and stop checks had been carried out on Market Street. It was also noted that this had resulted in 1 arrest for a stolen plant vehicle.

It was noted that training was being carried out on 15/01/2008 for PSCOs on hand held laser speed cameras as it was hoped that these would also be effective in the dark. It was noted that much of the speeding occurred post 10pm, however PSCO Thomas had indicated that he was willing to use the cameras after 10pm to attempt to catch speeders on Market Street and Cowm Park Way. Inspector Wilkinson stated that all speeding

concerns were passed onto the Traffic Division and he was continuing to press for night time enforcement. It was also noted that motorbikes were a problem with regard to speeding. Whitworth Town Councillor Bradbury noted that if residents were able to ascertain whether they were members of Whitworth Warriors, he would be happy to take up a complaint.

Councillor Neal noted that it was the intention of Whitworth Town Council to purchase 2 electronic SPID signs.

Inspector Wilkinson provided an update on vehicle obstructions on private land. It was noted that no penalty notices could be issued, however the vehicles could be removed with a £120 charge to retrieve the vehicle. It was noted that there were difficulties with catching drivers who parked in a manner that blocked off streets, however, the Police should be contacted if emergency vehicle access was blocked by parked cars.

Questions to the Police

In response to a query from a member of public, the PSCOs were confirmed as Heidi Kirkbright and Rob Thomas.

In response to a question about Amberwatch, Inspector Wilkinson noted that some of the cameras had been in for repair but the system was fully operational at present. He gave an example of the successful use of Amberwatch to prosecute an individual, however noted that the quality of the evidence could be impeded by circumstances such as obscured number plates.

Two instances of antisocial behaviour on Masseycroft were discussed, in particular a burnt-out car. It was noted that debris on the carriageway was the responsibility of Lancashire County Council, and general dust debris in the surrounding area should be reported to the Borough Council, however the NEAT Officer stated that she could be contacted with any queries with regard to who land belonged to with regard to clearing of debris and she would ensure that they were forwarded appropriately.

A member of the public raised concerns in respect of the old Conservative/Reform Club which had been converted to flats, however as more cars were using the access road, it was felt that a 'Concealed Entrance' sign could be beneficial. County Councillor Serridge agreed to investigate this matter.

Concerns were raised about parents parking on zigzags outside schools, with Tonacliffe School given as an example. Inspector Wilkinson noted that from April 2008 it would be an offence to park on zigzags and that in

the first instance the school would be approached, warnings would be issued and then visits would take place and cars would be ticketed. Councillor Neal noted that this matter would be discussed at the Lancashire Local Meeting taking place on 15th January 2008 at Haslingden High School.

4. NEAT UPDATE

Noticeboards - The NEAT Manager stated that there was £1000 available for the provision of two noticeboards within Whitworth, or, alternatively, the money could be given directly to the Town Council to improve the existing signage. After consideration, the Whitworth Town Councillors present indicated that they would prefer the £1000 to be given directly to the Town Council to improve the existing signage and this was accepted by the Forum.

The NEAT Officer provided an update on the Former Conservative Club. The Council had successfully prosecuted the owner under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act and the owner could be brought back to Court if works were not completed. She noted that she was currently in the process of compiling further evidence with a view to taking the owner back to Court.

The NEAT Manager updated the Forum with regard to new bins throughout Whitworth. There had been a small procurement delay, however works would commence in April to provide new bins and street furniture.

Questions to NEAT Officers

A Member of the public raised concerns that when incidents of dog fouling were reported to the Animal Warden, he used a marked van, which drew attention. The NEAT Officer noted that as far as she was aware this was his only means of transport, however she would make enquiries. It was further noted that dog fouling was a serious matter and that any fouling at the Riverside would be caught on camera. The NEAT Officer agreed to look into provision of more signage around the Riverside and to report back to the next Forum how many prosecutions for dog fouling there had been within the past 12 months.

An incident of graffiti at Cowm Reservoir was reported and the NEAT Officer agreed to investigate.

Fly tipping was reported at the Daniel Street Industrial Estate, particularly towards the back of the units, and it was noted that this was having an adverse affect on the nearby football pitch drainage. The NEAT Officer

agreed to investigate. Whitworth Town Councillor Grogan noted that works would also be carried out by United Utilities which may help to alleviate drainage issues.

5. DETERMINING OF GRANT APPLICATIONS

Four applications had been determined as follows:

Organisation	Application Details	Amount Awarded
Meadowhead and Tonacliffe Homewatch	Provision of 2 homewatch signs	£35
Whitworth Historical Society	Assistance for repairs to roof	£350
Whitworth Playgroup	Assistance to purchase new climbing frame	£400
St John the Evangelist Church	Disabled access to comply with DDA	£200
	Remaining in budget	£615

Balance from last meeting £1,600
 Funds allocated this meeting £985
 Budget remaining £615

Councillor Neal noted that the Whitworth Historical Society building was owned by Rossendale Borough Council, however the Society's lease stated that they were responsible for repairs. The Borough Councillors present agreed to pursue this matter further.

It was noted that £615 remained available for March's Forum and that grant forms could be obtained from Democratic Services on 01706 252424 or by emailing democracy@rossendalebc.gov.uk

Update from previous recipient

Mr Ian Mitchell of Whitworth Juniors Football Club provided the Forum with a brief update of how the funds previously awarded had been spent:

- Sports equipment has been purchased for the new Team which includes an Ability Coaching set (15 Balls, Bibs, Ball sacks and cones), Water Bottles and container, First Aid Kit, and Football Pump.
- The new Team Kit is on order which will include the 'Rossendale Alive' logo on the front of the shirts.
- A Team Manager for the new Team has been appointed with CRB checks being carried out via the FA CRB unit. Subject to the checks the new Manager will commence training sessions with the team over the next few

weeks, and hopefully we will have the new Kit by the end of January 08, and the Team will start to play some Friendly matches during February and March 08. It was hoped that the Team will be ready to start playing in Summer Tournaments from May 08 onwards, with registration for a local competitive League starting in September 08.

5. BUDGET PRESENTATION

The Head of Financial Services, Phil Seddon, gave a presentation on the Budget Consultation for the 2008/09 Budget and asked for comments and questions. He noted that there was a more detailed document available on the Council's website at www.rossendale.gov.uk

A member of the public enquired whether Council Tax payers subsidised planning applications. It was clarified that the planning process was a statutory duty of the authority. It was further noted that a planning delivery grant had been obtained, for which the Council invested into non-recurrent projects. Part of the "Pride in Rossendale" theme was to ensure that the cost of Planning ensured the right planning in the right place for the right reasons.

Clarification was requested on how the Council could cut costs further. The Head of Financial Services gave examples such as costs of bulk collections, court fees on non-payment of Council Tax, the concessionary travel scheme, etc.

A member of the public noted that developers had indicated they were willing to fund costs of improvements around the Hall Street area such as playgrounds. It was agreed that further use could be made of Section 106 Agreement in planning applications were possible and that Council officers were currently investigating opportunities.

A member of the public queried why service personnel and their immediate families received free access to leisure facilities. The Head of Financial Services stated that this was a decision taken by the Cabinet in December 2007 which was intended to recognise and reward, without prejudice to other public sector workers, the unique sacrifice made by members of the armed forces.

A member of the public queried whether more funding would be available to upgrade public conveniences within Whitworth. Councillor Neal stated that the Chair of the Public Conveniences Task and Finish Group intended to request additional funding to be included within the budget.

A member of the public queried why agency staff were used by the Council. The Head of Financial Services responded that this was essential for front line service delivery in areas such as refuse collection. He also stated that due to improved levels of sickness absence, the Council was able to reduce its reliance on agency staff and therefore reduce its costs.

In response to queries about debts, it was noted that Council Tax payers did not subsidise housing debts. It was also noted that the rate of Council Tax collection had increased and old debts were actively pursued.

In response to comments by a member of the public, it was noted that areas who failed to meet their targets were, amongst other things, taken to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the Council's performance framework.

6. OPEN FORUM

Councillor Neal noted that there was a meeting of a Disabled Steering Group at St Bartholomew's Church on 24th January 2008 commencing at 10.30am.

Councillor Neal stated that he had attended a Post Office meeting that afternoon and asked all present to visit the Post Office website or Whitworth Post Office to make their views known.

A Member of the public queried the current situation with the Spodden Mill planning application. The application was anticipated to go before the Borough Council's Development Control Committee on 19th February 2008 and Lancashire County Council's on 23rd February 2008. Registration to speak on planning applications for the Borough Council's Development Control Committee could be done by telephoning Democratic Services on 01706 252424/252426 or by emailing democracy@rossendalebc.gov.uk

Concerns were raised about the consultation and proposals to introduce disc parking. Councillor Neal emphasised that the discs were free and reusable and that residents would not have to obtain a new disc each time they wished to park. It was noted that a Working Group comprising Elected Members would be convened in 2008 to discuss parking further. Councillor Neal would provide updates to residents as information became available.

A member of the public queried ownership of land next to the Police Station and Councillor Neal stated that he would investigate this with the Council's Estates Department.

Discussion took place on the crossing issues within the Whitworth area, in particular the lack of crossings and pedestrian refuges. It was noted that discussions with Lancashire County Council were ongoing and a Traffic Management Strategy had been requested.

Discussion took place on proposed repairs to an iron bridge in Shawforth. It was noted that funding had been secured by Groundwork to make the bridge safe, however there was a £3,000 shortfall which Rossendale Borough Council was expecting to provide. Discussion took place on why this bridge was being repaired and Councillor Neal noted that Shawforth residents were quite keen to preserve this piece of heritage.

A member of the public enquired whether Shawforth Chapel would be demolished. Councillor Neal stated that he was aware that the Chapel would not be demolished and the existing building would be renovated. It was noted that this decision was one that could only be made by the Chapel, and not Rossendale Borough Council.

A member of the public enquired about the current status of Brookville flats. Councillor Neal agreed that a member of the public could update the Forum. It was noted that a bid for funding would be determined in March 2008. County Councillor Serridge also stated that Lancashire County Council had pledged £1.5m per annum to cover the running costs of Brookville, which would be done in partnership with Greenvale Homes.

The meeting commenced at 7pm and finished at 9.10pm