

**Notes of: WHITWORTH AREA FORUM**

**Venue: Sunnyside Day Care Centre, Market Street, Whitworth**

**Date of Meeting 6<sup>th</sup> March 2006**

**PRESENT**

**Councillor D Barnes (in the Chair)**  
**Councillor A Neal**  
**Councillor H Steen**  
**County Councillor Serridge, Lancashire County Council**  
**Inspector Dave Shepherd, Lancashire Constabulary**  
**Dave Whiteman, NEAT Manager, RBC**  
**Catherine Taylor, NEAT Officer, RBC**  
**Sean Spencer, Business Management Assistant, RBC**  
**Eugene Leal, Traffic & Parking Manager, RBC**  
**Julian Joinson, Democratic Services Manager, RBC**  
**Jenni Cook, Committee Officer, RBC**

**Approximately 40 members of the public and press, representatives of Whitworth Town Council and local interest groups attended the meeting.**

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**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed members of the public to the meeting and thanked Councillor Neal for taking the Chair at the last meeting. The Council Officers present introduced themselves at the Chair's request.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been received from Rossendale Borough Councillor L Barnes.

**3. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 24<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2006**

The Chair thanked the Democratic Services Manager and his team for producing and circulating an Action List on matters that had arisen from the last meeting.

The Chair agreed to take Matters Arising and items were raised as follows:

#### **Minute 4 – Police Issues**

In response to an enquiry from a member of the public, Inspector Shepherd stated that the last PACT (Police and Community Together) Meeting had produced a good turnout due to its 7pm start time. The Democratic Services Manager provided a list of date of 2006 PACT meetings as follows:

3 <sup>rd</sup> April – 10am	2 <sup>nd</sup> May – 7pm	1 <sup>st</sup> June – 10am
4 <sup>th</sup> July – 7pm	2 <sup>nd</sup> August – 10am	5 <sup>th</sup> September – 7pm
4 <sup>th</sup> October – 10am	2 <sup>nd</sup> November – 7pm	6 <sup>th</sup> December – 10am

The venue for all meetings would be Whitworth Library, Lloyd Street, Whitworth until the Civic Hall was available.

#### **Minute 6 – Street Scene & Liveability – Introduction of NEAT Team Officers**

- Cllr Grogan updated the meeting on further thefts of manhole covers at Old Lane and Quarry Street. It was confirmed that these further thefts would be reported to the County Council as this was a County Matter.
- A member of the public complained about the quality of a mural used to cover graffiti at Knowsley Crescent, Shawforth. Ms Taylor informed the forum that the poor quality of the mural was due to the fact that it had been raining at the time of painting, however the contractor had pressed ahead as there had been pressure to cover up the graffiti. She confirmed that the mural would be redone in the very near future to a better quality.
- A member of the public thanked the Whitworth and Rossendale Councillors in respect of their work on a new Ball and Games Park.
- A member of the public reported that the biodegradable bags were still not being picked up on the appointed day, resulting in the bags beginning to degrade. All member of the public were asked to inform the NEAT Team if their refuse was not collected in order that ensure that it was collected the next day.
- A member of the public asked if a Community Worker could be engaged to promote watersports, riding and football pitches locally to maximise usage.

### **Additional Item**

- A member of the public complained that several new developments in the area had put extra pressure on Hall Street and asked when the new street signage could be expected. It was confirmed that the signs were anticipated within the next 4 weeks.

#### **4. COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE PRESENTATION – BY HELEN NEAL**

The Chair introduced Helen Neal who provided the Forum with a Community Safety Update as part of her Queens Guide Award. Ms Neal presented her update and outlined several achievements that she had made with regard to personal safety of vulnerable people within Whitworth. At the end of her presentation, Ms Neal thanked Lancashire Constabulary and Mr Ian Garside for helping with her research and thanked the Chair and Forum for including the Update within the Forum Agenda. The Chair thanked Ms Neal for her presentation.

#### **5. POLICE ISSUES**

Inspector Shepherd provided an update in respect of police issues. Detailed figures in relation to crime reduction in the East of Rossendale were provided up to the end of January 2006. Inspector Shepherd reported that Rossendale, as a whole, was one of the best performing areas for the reduction of crime.

Inspector Shepherd provided further information in relation to specific issues including in particular the theft of cars in Whitworth. He outlined his concerns regarding members of the public suffering theft of cars through leaving their engines running whilst cars defrosted in cold weather.

Inspector Shepherd informed the Forum that whilst crime in the Whitworth area was reducing, it was imperative that the public continue to work with the Police and attend PACT and other local meetings.

- A member of the public requested clarification on airgun crime within Whitworth as she had witnessed an adult and two children shooting ducks in Healey Dell. Inspector Shepherd confirmed that the use of airguns in this manner was illegal and urged anyone who had any information to contact the Police.
- A member of the public enquired about the success of Dispersal Orders and stated that Orders at either end of the Valley simply moved the problem to the middle of the Valley. Inspector Shepherd pointed out that an Order could not be placed on the whole Valley

as this would prevent well-behaved youths from meeting lawfully. Inspector Shepherd confirmed that Orders were put in place in response to numbers of complaints and that any issues with youths congregating should be reported to the Police.

- A member of the public asked that Alcohol Free Zones be considered in Whitworth. Inspector Shepherd noted that this was a Local Authority matter but that the Police would consider supporting this issue however, the issue of youths drinking alcohol was covered by the Dispersal Orders. A member of the public commented that an ASBO served in Shawforth seemed to be working and additional progress had been made by a shop no longer selling alcohol. In response to a query from a member of the public, Inspector Shepherd also confirmed that Test Operations were frequently carried out in order to stop shops selling alcohol to minors.
- A member of the public asked the Council to consider CCTV within Whitworth. It was also noted that better lighting within areas such as Healey Dell, etc could help security issues. The Chair confirmed that this was a matter for Amber Watch, might have a positive impact on crime and disorder.
- In response to an enquiry from a member of the public, Inspector Shepherd confirmed that truancy was an Educational Welfare Officer issue (EWO). However Police Officers did take action if they believed a child was playing truant.

## **6. NEAT TEAM UPDATE**

The NEAT Team introduced Mr Spencer who presented a report to the Forum outlining new procedures for refuse collections to commence in April. The new procedures included a change in all Whitworth residents' collection days to take into account Bank Holidays and the closure of the Deerplay tip. Mr Spencer confirmed that all residents would shortly receive an information pack to include a new collection calendar. The new procedures would also take into account a greater emphasis on recycling throughout the Borough with card, paper and clearly marked textiles being accepted from 20<sup>th</sup> March.

- A member of the public expressed concern about wagons taking trips to the new Accrington tip ½ full. Mr Spencer assured the Forum that this would not happen and that the new collection days had been scheduled to prevent this. It was also noted that the provision of a new tip was not a RBC matter.

- Several complaints were raised about refuse collection which included the issue of rotting food in summer, failed collections etc. It was confirmed that if any resident had a complaint about collection issues, they should contact the NEAT Team who would rectify failed collections as soon as possible. Anyone experiencing problems fitting their waste into their bins should also contact the NEAT Team to arrange a free waste audit.
- A member of the public complained that bags of waste were often left outside his house as the opposite row of houses had no pavement to store bins/rubbish on. It was confirmed that if this was reported to the NEAT Team it would be looked into. Ms Spencer emphasised that only the people dumping the rubbish incorrectly would be investigated.
- A complaint was raised about the loss of one newspaper recycling bin at Hall Street. This was noted, however it was hoped that the new recycling procedures commencing on 20<sup>th</sup> March would reduce the need for two bins in this location.
- A member of the public asked the NEAT Team to confirm the target percentage for recycling this year. It was confirmed as 22.5% and RBC looked to be on target to achieve this. It was noted that within Europe percentages were much higher due to stricter enforcement and penalties. Ms Taylor responded that the emphasis was currently on education and there was no intention in the near future to take a similar hard line.
- A member of the public complained that he was unable to take useful items from the tip, thereby recycling more. Inspector Shepherd pointed out that this did have a crime aspect as metal was often stolen from tips. Councillor Neal pointed out that paper and card could also be taken to Shawforth Chapel's skip Monday to Saturday with all money raised from this benefiting the chapel directly.

## **7. REVIEW TEAM ON THE PROVISION OF COUNCIL CAR PARKS**

Councillor Entwistle addressed the Forum and outlined the aims of the Review Team on the Provision of Council Car Parks. He stated that this was an opportunity for consultation with the public to establish their wishes for car parking in Rossendale as a whole and then report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that Councillors Entwistle, Neal and H Steen were all members of the Review Team and could be contacted regarding this matter.

Eugene Leal then presented a brief report to the Forum outlining the current condition of Whitworth car parks, stating that there were currently 6 car parks in Whitworth. It was reported that the members of the Review Team had toured many of the car parks in the area to ascertain their condition. Visits to other local authorities had also been arranged. Mr Leal noted that at the present time there was currently only £5,000 in the budget to maintain all Rossendale car parks and there were several solutions to this being considered such as sign sponsorship, charging in car parks etc. However, it was emphasised that consultation with the public was a key factor in the Review Team's remit and that charging was only one option to be considered.

Members of the public raised several questions regarding Car Parking as follows:

- A member of the public raised concerns about increased parking following the provision of a kickabout pitch on Wallbank. It was noted that this pitch was designed for young local children and parking should not increase.
- Several members of complained about inconsiderate parking on unadopted roads, which sometimes blocked off lanes within Whitworth, in particular Tong Lane/Milner Street. Mr Leal agreed to clarify the responsibility for enforcement on unadopted roads with the Estates Manager. The upkeep and state of unadopted roads was also an issue, in particular the road to the side of the Post Office Car Park. It was noted that adopted roads were the responsibility of the County Council but that unadopted roads were the responsibility of the private owner.
- A member of the public asked Mr Leal to clarify the Councils' stance regarding the use of car parks to sell cars. Mr Leal stated that it was important that a distinction was drawn between those who were simply parking their cars and going to work/shopping etc and those using it to trade. Mr Leal stated that any such cars could be reported to him, personally and that he would take action to have the cars moved.

## **8. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

A number of issues were raised under this item, as follows:-

- A member of the public asked the Councillors present to comment on the proposed closure of the A&E department at Rochdale Infirmary. The Chair noted that he had attended a meeting at Rochdale Town Hall and asked questions but answers had not

been forthcoming. It was confirmed that there was an open meeting at Masseycroft at 1pm on 6<sup>th</sup> April which the PCT would be attending. It was felt that this would be the most appropriate forum at which to raise this issue.

- A member of the public asked when the temporary road surface fillings on Cowm Park Way within Whitworth will be permanently repaired. County Councillor Serridge confirmed that this would be rectified within a programme of resurfacing to commence in 2007.
- A member of the public enquired why Shawforth and Whitworth had not been included within the Local Area Development Plan. Councillor Neal stated that the government funding had applied to the Bacup, Stacksteads and Britannia areas only but that Whitworth Town Council and the Borough Council would apply for more funding in the next tranche.
- The owners of Whitworth Post Office addressed the Forum and highlighted the problems that village Post Offices were generally facing and that there may be a risk of closure in the future. It was pointed out that if people have to travel elsewhere to get their money, they will spend it elsewhere, thus having a negative impact on local businesses. They asked all members of the public present were asked to lobby their MP and help raise awareness of the uncertainty faced by Post Offices.

### **Greencorns Care Home**

- The Chair stated that he had that afternoon been contacted regarding a private care home owned by a company called Greencorns that was proposed at Stoneyroyd Whitworth. The home would be used to house 1 child aged between 10-18 who would be looked after by 2 carers. A statement from Angela Glynn of Greencorns was read out and it was noted that Ms Glynn had declined an invitation to address the meeting. It was noted that Greencorns appeared to be backed by a large company called 3i.
- Various community and security concerns were raised and discussed, including the fact that the company may not have to apply for planning permission for change of use, and may only have to possess a Certificate of Lawfulness.
- The Chair noted that there had been a successful prevention of Greencorns developments at Sandwell Council and stated that he would make contact with them in order to find out how this had been achieved.

- Councillor Neal agreed to contact the Development Control Department in order to clarify the change of use situation and for further advice and to enquire whether a Certificate of Lawfulness had been applied for.
- All Councillors present agreed to investigate the situation further with respect to the Certificate of Lawfulness, Sandwell Council and any legal avenues that could be explored.

**The meeting commenced at 7pm and closed at 9.05pm**