

Notes of: RAWTENSTALL AREA FORUM

Venue: Kingfisher Centre, Rawtenstall

Date of Meeting 23rd March 2006

PRESENT

- Councillor Swain (in the Chair)**
- Councillor Allcroft**
- Councillor A Barnes**
- Councillor Entwistle**
- Councillor Forshaw**
- Councillor Graham**
- Councillor Hancock**
- Councillor Robertson**
- Councillor Young**
- Inspector Dave Hodson, Lancashire Constabulary**
- Gareth Henderson, Lancashire Constabulary**
- Dave Whiteman, NEAT Manager, RBC**
- Eugene Leal, Traffic & Parking Manager, RBC**
- Julian Joinson, Democratic Services Manager, RBC**
- Jenni Cook, Committee Officer, RBC**

Approximately 25 members of the public and press attended the meeting.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed members of the public to the meeting and introduced the panel.

2. APOLOGIES

Councillor Crosta
Councillor H Steen
Mr A Thomas, NEAT Team, Rossendale Borough Council

3. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 19TH DECEMBER 2005

The Chair noted an Action List noting actions from the last meeting.

Councillor Entwistle noted that at the last meeting he had made a statement on the bus station which had not been included within the minutes.

4. POLICE ISSUES

Police representatives were Inspector D Hodson and PC Gareth Henderson, Community Beat Manager for Rawtenstall.

It was noted that Inspector Hodson was newly appointed to the post and he outlined his experience and commitment to policing in Rawtenstall.

Crime statistics for Rawtenstall were reported as followed:

Vehicle crime down 67.9% on last year
Violent crime down 46.5%
Ring of Steel operation had been very successful
Increased partnerships within Pennine Division

It was noted that there had been an increased visibility of Police Officers within Rawtenstall and that this would continue for the foreseeable future.

Public & Councillor Questions to Police

- Q. Rapid turnover of staff in Inspector's position, did Inspector Hodson intend to stay?
- A. The previous Inspector had been in the post for 2 years. Inspector Hodson reaffirmed his commitment to the role.
- Q. What can be done about cars driving up and down streets playing car radios between approximately 3-5am? (Note: Home Office had informed member of public that that this was deemed a criminal offence).
- A. Inspector Hodson confirmed that action would be taken and encouraged anyone affected to gather evidence. It was noted that operational requirements do affect the Police's ability to respond to these types of complaints.

The Chair Noted that this was in fact a Bacup issue.

- Q. Councillor Young asked Inspector Hodson to clarify that there was a link between the encouraging statistics reported and the Prolific Offender Profiling.
- A. There were regular meetings held between agencies to discuss targets. It was felt this was working well and re-offending levels were low.

Action Point: Inspector Hodson to provide figures on Prolific Offender Profiling to the next Area Forum.

5. NEAT TEAM UPDATE

NEAT Team update presented by Dave Whiteman, NEAT Team Manager (01706 252536).

The new refuse collection plans were outlined and explained. It was noted that the changes were necessary to reach new recycling targets set by the Government and to ease the pressure caused by the closure of the Deerplay tip. 4th April was noted as the day for “roll out” of the new plans.

Public & Councillor Questions to NEAT Team Manager

Questions on New Refuse Collection:

- Q. Councillor Hancock asked for clarification that brown and blue bins would be collected together.
- A. All recycling would be collected on the same day, although different vehicles would be used.
- Q. Recycling at present was often not picked up – the new system could cause even more “misses.”
- A. There may be a few early hiccups but it was emphasised that any misses should be reported immediately. Vehicles would soon be fitted with trackers in order to help solve this problem.
- Q. Councillor A Barnes noted a concern for people who did not have room for another recycling receptacle.
- A. As long as items were left by the roadside in a neat manner (e.g. cardboard from flat pack furniture flattened and tied up) at the appropriate time they would be collected.
- Q. Councillor Entwistle asked for clarification that a Saturday morning service would be provided.
- A. There would be some coverage and an answer phone system.
- Q. Several concerns were raised by members of the public and Councillors about the new collection system including breakdown of fleet, unfinished rounds and failed collection of blue bins when they were concealed by another bin.
- A. A new fleet had been purchased and would be in operation soon. Trackers fitted to vehicles would help ensure that no collections were missed or left unfinished. The refuse team would be asked to check blue bins were present.

Questions on other NEAT matters

- Q. Councillor Forshaw asked for confirmation that the toilets near the Astoria would be cleaned. She also requested a timetable for the Whittaker Park toilets to be re-opened. It was also noted that Haslingden Market toilets appeared to be poorly maintained.
- A. Dave Whiteman would arrange for the toilets to be cleaned and would investigate when the Whittaker Park toilets would be re-opened.
- Q. Councillor Forshaw noted that people may be prepared to pay 20p for cleaner facilities.
- A. Councillor Hancock noted that the issue of toilets would be discussed at the next Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

Action Point: Dave Whiteman to arrange for public toilets near Astoria to be cleaned and checked on a regular basis, to let Councillor Forshaw know when the Whittaker Park toilets would open.

- Q. A member of the public asked that trade refuse for shopkeepers be clarified.
- A. This was as per municipal waste – all recyclable material should be placed in the green bin until April. If shopkeepers encountered any problems they should call the Henrietta Street depot immediately.

Action Point: Dave Whiteman to ensure trade in Rossendale are aware of the new collection procedures as a priority.

- Q. Would there be charges for excess weight of rubbish?
- A. Although there had been charges in the past this was no longer the case.
- Q. Councillor Young asked how long it would be before fly posting was tackled.
- A. From 1st April 2006 the Fly posting legislation would come into effect. New procedures meant that enforcement would be a lot easier and the person featured on the poster could be subject to a fixed penalty. New machinery to remove posters was being tested and would be in place within the next 3-4 months.
- Q. There was a problem of graffiti within the subway in Rawtenstall. It was also noted that CCTV within the subway should be considered. A member of the public asked that Councillors view the problem for themselves.

- A. The issue of offensive and racist graffiti would be resolved as a priority. Members of the public were encouraged to report all issues to the NEAT Team immediately. CCTV would be considered. Councillors to consider viewing the subway.

Action Point: Dave Whiteman to arrange for graffiti in Rawtenstall subway to be cleared as a matter of urgency. Councillors to consider viewing subway.

- Q. Role of Footpath Managers to be clarified.

A. In charge of street cleansing.

- Q. A wall at the top of Bank Street had been knocked down, when would this be rebuilt?

A. Dave Whiteman would investigate and arrange for rectification.

- Q. Could the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council consider touring the Valley at regular intervals to inspect potential problem areas?

A. Committee agreed this was a good idea. This idea would be sent to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council.

Action Point: Democratic Services Staff to pass this action point to Chief Executive and Leader of the Council.

- Q. The Phipps Car Park signs were covered with graffiti making it difficult to read the parking regulations. It was noted that this could mean penalty notices could be challenged.

A. The graffiti would be removed.

Action Point: Dave Whitman to arrange for removal of graffiti.

- Q. How often did NEAT Team sweepers go round estates in Rossendale, particularly Rawtenstall areas?

A. This information would be presented to the next forum.

Action Point: Dave Whiteman to present up to date information at the next Area Forum and to include up to date information/statistics at every Forum.

- Q. It was asked whether a NEAT Team update be included on the agenda for every Area Forum and that a member of the Operations Team be asked to attend.

A. This was agreed.

Action Point: The Head of Community and Partnerships would be informed of these requests.

6. REVIEW TEAM ON THE PROVISION OF COUNCIL CAR PARKS

Presented by Eugene Leal, Traffic & Parking Manager.

Councillor Entwistle 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

Eugene Leal presented a brief report to the Forum outlining the current condition of Rawtenstall car parks. It was emphasised that no decisions had been made and that consultation with the public was a key factor in the Review Team's remit. Charging was only one option to be considered.

Public & Councillor Questions to Traffic & Parking Manager

- Q. Could the provision of more on-street parking be considered as this would have a knock-on effect of traffic calming? Also would residents be prepared to pay £20 on their Council Tax for exclusive parking outside their own home?
- A. This would create a safety issue i.e. children crossing between parked cars, etc. The issue of charging residents as suggested above had been considered and unanimously rejected by the Council. It was further noted that there was no right of ownership on public highways.
- Q. The Rawtenstall Area Action Plan Preferred Options Report was raised as a consideration with particular reference to Section 5.10 *"The Strategy will consider both the level of parking provision and arrangements for management of short and long term parking along with future arrangement for parking charges"*. The Council were asked to clarify that charging was not being brought in through the "back door."
- A. It was confirmed that the sentence of concern was an error, the report had been amended and the press had been informed. The report was being sent to the next Cabinet Meeting (29th March 2006) for discussion. It was re-emphasised that no decision had been made and that charging was one option.

- Q. Councillor Hancock raised concerns about the question “What’s wrong with Council Car Parks” and asked for clarification of the Officers’ intentions.
- A. Eugene Leal stated that the consultation was a genuine attempt to find out people’s views and that unless problems with car parks were identified i.e. “What’s wrong with car parks” then no problems or issues could be addressed and fixed. It was also emphasised that the Review Team was not a decision making authority and would report back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee with information and ideas.
- Q. Councillor Hancock asked for the phrase “viable decision” to be clarified and asked viable for whom?
- A. It was confirmed that this meant the provision of a service that did not cost council tax payers extra money. Again it was noted that the Review Team was a consultation exercise.
- Q. Would the issue within the car park at Crawshawbooth Village be addressed?
- A. This particular issue was the concern of Lancashire County Council and would be passed to Jerry Smith, the County Liaison Officer.

Action Point: Eugene Leal to pass this issue to Jerry Smith.

- Q. Would the issue of commuters parking all day in Kay Street be addressed?
- A. Although it was unclear as to exactly who was parking in Kay Street, this would be looked at by the Review Team.

Action Point: Eugene Leal to feed back to next Review Team.

- Q. Would the Town Centre Plan make any suggestions raised by the Review Team on Council Car Parks irrelevant?
- A. Although it was noted that there was a large amount of change planned for the Town Centre, the car parking would be an integral part of this and there were no pre-determined decisions. Councillor Entwistle stated that this was a consultation exercise. The Chair also stated that the Town Centre Plan would be taken into account by the Review Team and encouraged all present to fill in feedback forms which were available at the meeting.

Q. Councillor Young stated that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister under the terms of Rossendale Borough Council's Recovery Plan, could intervene if they felt that the best use of land resources was not being considered and noted that this should be a factor in the Review Team's deliberations.

A. This was noted.

Q. With specific reference to off-street parking what is the difference between permit parking and disc parking?

A. The enquirer, Mr Balchin, has been responded to directly and has asked that the response be included within the minutes:

Permits and discs are both devices used to control parking. They are both required to be displayed in the windscreen. The permit is valid for a defined period of time whilst a disc is valid for a set period from the time of arrival. Therefore for enforcement purposes there is no practical difference. The administrative difference is the issue of a permit is normally for a period of time i.e. one month, or one year. Where as a disc can be used repeatedly. However, the Disabled Badge Scheme uses a disc to show the time the vehicle has been parked from, yet the badge itself is only valid for 3 years.

Q. Under what section of the Road Traffic Act or indeed any relevant statutory legislation is disc parking covered?

A. The enquirer, Mr Balchin, has been responded to directly and has asked that the response be included within the minutes:

The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, Section 35(1)(b)(ii) provides for a local authority to set down the conditions of use of an off street car park and Section 35(3) allows a specific apparatus or device to be used to 35(3)(a)(i) as a means to indicate the time of arrival. This legislation therefore provides for the use of discs as the specified device (specified in the Order).

Q. Can you confirm that since Parkwise began to enforce on behalf of both Rossendale Borough Council and Lancashire County Council on-street and off-street parking that all traffic orders, signage and road markings have been in order (i.e. correct with all legislation). If this is not the case would any car owners who had been issued with a Penalty Charge Notice that had been paid be entitled to a refund – with specific reference to Bank Street. Please give a response that is capable of vigorous examination under oath.

A. The enquirer, Mr Balchin, has been responded to directly and has asked that the response be included within the minutes:

Rossendale Borough Council has made a consolidated order for Off-Street Parking. The Borough of Rossendale (Off-Street Parking

Places) (Rawtenstall Town Centre and Waterfoot)(Consolidation) Order 2004 refers.
Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 2028 The Road Traffic (Permitted Parking Area and Special Parking Area) (County of Lancashire) Order 2004 enables enforcement of off-street and on-street traffic regulations under the Road Traffic Act 1991 without the need to amend on-street orders, and as stated before, RBC have produced a consolidated order for off-street parking to include these provisions. Lancashire County Council are undertaking a review of all traffic orders across the county, however, for further information please contact Kevin Almond, Network Policy Manager, Environment Directorate, Lancashire County Council, PO Box 9, Guild House, Cross Street, Preston PR1 8RD. Additional information is available on the following web sites:
www.parking-appeals.gov.uk (National Parking Adjudication Service)
www.parkwise.org.uk (ParkWise, Lancashire County Council)

- Q. Would the Council consider a “People’s Plan” on car parking to be put together by interested members of the public including the Civic Trust?
- A. It was confirmed that it was the public’s right to do so and that any such Plan would be welcomed.

Action: Council to consider any “People’s Plan” that is submitted.

Councillor Entwistle also confirmed that he intended to hold Public Meetings to discuss solely car parking in the near future.

7. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- Q. Why was Public Question time last on the agenda? Please could this be moved to Item 1?
- A. The next round of Area Forums would have Public Question Time at the top of the agenda.

Action Point: The Head of Community and Partnerships would be informed of this request.

- Q. If the Council are selling the Town Hall site and the District Valuer is involved, does this mean that any payment to the Council cannot drop below the market value?
- A. No legal opinion could be given at the Forum although it was put forward that a payment in kind may be acceptable.

- Q. Alnwick in Northumberland had been voted the “Best Place to live in England.” Would the Council considering visiting Alnwick?
- A. It was agreed this was an interesting suggestion although the cost of a visit might not represent good value for money.
- Q. Are NEAT Teams in charge of pest control?
- A. Yes and after April this will be a partnership system with Bury and Rochdale. It was emphasised that the service levels would not change.
- Q. Why is the Revised Preferred Option Early Action Plan not available on the Council’s website?
- A. Councillor Hancock confirmed that this issue was going to Cabinet and advised the member of public to look on that section of the website.
- Q. Regarding the issue of Roadwork on Burnley Road raised at the last meeting, two questions were raised:
1) Had the consultation period finished?
2) Had anything been agreed?
- A. This information would be presented at the next Forum and the member of public responded to directly.
- Q. Was the issue of Christmas Lights being taken over by Council Officers? Councillor Forshaw confirmed she had been requesting a meeting for the past month.
- A. It was confirmed there would be a meeting with the Lead Member and Councillor Sandiford in the near future.

The meeting commenced at 7pm and closed at 9.05pm