

Notes of: WHITWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Venue: Whitworth Civic Hall

Date of Meeting 17 September 2007

Present: Councillor A Neal (Chair)
Councillor T Aldred
Councillor L Barnes
Councillor R Wilson
Councillor D Barnes, Whitworth Town Council
Councillor Judith Driver, Portfolio Holder for a Clean and Green Rossendale
County Councillor Sean Serridge, Lancashire County Council
Jerry Smith, Lancashire County Council, District Partnership Officer, Rossendale
Inspector Neil Wilkinson, Lancashire Constabulary
Catherine Taylor, NEAT Officer
Pat Couch, Democratic Services, RBC

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 indicating that Councillor Judith Driver would provide further information on the subject of side waste, which was in response to recent media coverage and to provide clarity on the Council's position. She provided information on the Council's current recycling rates and reported that 15 tonnes of side waste was equivalent to an increase of 5% in current recycling rates. It cost £40 for each tonne of side waste, however recyclable waste could be disposed of free of charge and in some cases sold to market. She informed the Forum that side waste cost in excess of £31,000 to be sent to landfill, however if this was recycled the income to the Council would be over £20,000. In terms of returning to weekly general collections the estimated costs were between £1,110,200 to £1,129,700 per annum. She gave a breakdown of costs for not introducing the side waste policy, which was £620,000.

Councillor Driver reported that leaflets had been provided to all households explaining what could go in the bins and the website was updated with current information.

Following the presentation, Councillor Driver answered questions from Members of the Public.

One member of the public indicated that in Lincolnshire they have a far higher recycling rate and collect household waste weekly.

There was concern that there had been conflict of instructions on what can and cannot be recycled and Councillor Driver responded by indicating that the Council were constantly trying to improve this issue.

There were further questions in relation to how much waste does get recycled and what process was being used for green/grass waste? Councillor Driver responded by saying that the Council does not have its own facility to deal with this. There was a large compost plant opened at Sharneyford, in which hundreds of residents signed a petition against the plant.

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

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of County Councillor Sean Serridge to be included on those present at the meeting.

a) Action Sheet:

County Councillor Serridge and Councillor Neal provided an update on actions progressed since publication of the agenda.

Councillor David Barnes, Whitworth Town Council, explained the reasons why the pedestrian bridge between the Poodle Parlour and the Sunbed Centre on Market Street had been demolished, explaining that it had been in a dangerous condition and youth issues were also a problem, with the police having to be called on a regular basis due to vandalism of the nearby clinic.

Councillor Lynda Barnes informed the meeting that she had received a petition, signed by over 400 residents asking for the bridge not to be re-erected. Councillor Neal indicated that not having the bridge re-erected would cause difficulty for those attending the clinic, especially for the elderly. A member of the public explained that he had spoken to residents of Tong Lane and since the bridge had been demolished there had been no vandalism at the clinic and that the bridge had been a contributory factor in terms of anti social behaviour issues.

Inspector Wilkinson commented that following discussions with the NEAT Manager it had been confirmed that the bridge had been a crime generator and over the last 18 months juvenile behaviour had reduced since the bridge had been removed.

Inspector Wilkinson indicated that in relation to speed enforcement, they would be considering 2 more site visits in Whitworth.

3. POLICE ISSUES

Summary of Update from Inspector Wilkinson

There had been a reduction of crime figures during the last three months in comparison to the same time last year, April –June 2006 there were 118 reported crimes and in the same period this year this had reduced to 73.

In relation to alcohol and children, Inspector Wilkinson commented that there had been very few confiscations. If youths carry out an offence they could be subject to Restorative Justice, which means they have to clean up and restore any damage they have caused.

Inspector Wilkinson enquired as to whether there were still problems with parking on footpaths near Healey Corner and this was confirmed by members of the public, with one member of the public indicating that there were also problems in Albert Street.

Catherine Taylor, NEAT Officer explained that if cars parked on the footpath they needed to ensure that there was appropriate access for prams and wheelchairs.

Public Questions/Issues

A member of the public asked if there was a Policy for people blocking rights of way on streets. Inspector Wilkinson responded by indicating that he was unsure of the procedure if people had created an obstruction on the streets. He added that if an emergency service did not have access to a road or street then action could be taken. He agreed to check what powers, if any, the Police had in relation to obstruction.

A member of the public commented that it would be valuable to allow people to see a Police Officer at the Civic Hall. Inspector Wilkinson indicated that contact phone numbers of all Police and Community Officers were available on the website. Councillor Neal reminded the public of the Police and Community Together (PACT) meetings and the fact that only 2 residents had attended the last meeting.

A member of the public asked why speed checks were not carried out after 10pm. Inspector Wilkinson advised that mobile speed enforcement was only available until 10pm, after which the only people available were Police Officers. He commented that if they received a number of requests from the community asking for speed enforcement to be available after 10pm they may possibly look at changing shift patterns.

4. DETERMINING OF GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Chair reported that the Council had received one application which had been submitted by Whitworth Juniors Football Club, asking for funding to set up a new under 7s football team. Councillor Neal reported that the Grant of £600 had been accepted.

Councillor Neal encouraged others to take up the offer of applying for the Grants indicating that there was still £1600 available.

A representative from the Football Club gave background information to the Forum on the history of the club and thanked the Council for their support on the application.

Starting Balance £2,200
Funds allocated this meeting £600
Remaining in budget £1,600

5. NEAT TEAM UPDATE

Catherine Taylor, NEAT Officer updated the Forum on the actions from the last meeting in relation to fly-tipping and the change in legislation in 2005, which placed a duty of care on householders who asked a third party to remove their rubbish and it was dumped illegally, they would be held responsible. She reminded the Forum that if the public pay to have rubbish removed they should first ask to see evidence of a waste licence.

The NEAT Officer discussed the issue of dog fouling and asked the Forum to contact her if they know of a specific household who was offending so that a letter could be sent.

She also reminded the Forum that she held a surgery at the Civic Hall every Tuesday between 10am-12 noon to enable the public to raise concerns with her directly.

Public Questions/Issues

A member of the public raised the issue of smells from a chimney on the industrial units on Tong Lane, which occurred outside working hours and

at weekends. He indicated that he had sent a letter to the Council who monitored the situation during a weekday when this was not occurring. He asked if it would be possible to monitor what is actually coming out of the chimney. The NEAT Officer agreed to contact the Environmental Health Manager to look at the issue.

A member of the public asked what sweeping systems were in place around Whitworth. The NEAT Officer explained that the town centres and promenade were swept once a week, but more infrequently on the estates. The NEAT Officer agreed to check that the programme was still in place and she would report back to the next meeting.

There was discussion about the culvert opposite 68 Knowsley Crescent, as this was the responsibility of the Council. Councillor Neal indicated that the repairs of the banking were being sent out to be re-tendered. The NEAT Officer agreed to speak to the Property Services Manager for an update on the issue.

6. OPEN FORUM

A member of the public raised issues in relation to Planning Applications and Councillor Neal and Councillor Lynda Barnes indicated that there would be a Development Control meeting on 18 September where these issues would be discussed.

In relation to Peel Terrace/Market Street and the ownership issue, Councillor Neal informed the Forum that he had seen sight of a letter from the former Chief Executive dated 5 November 2002, which provided further information. It was agreed that he would speak to the Deputy Chief Executive of the Council to resolve the issue and request a formal response which would be discussed at the next Forum meeting.

The meeting commenced at 7pm and finished at 8.55pm