

**Notes of: WHITWORTH AREA FORUM**

**Venue: Whitworth Community High School**

**Date of Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> January 2006**

**PRESENT Councillor A Neal (in the Chair)  
Inspector Dave Shepherd, Lancashire Constabulary  
Steven Pimlott, Planning Officer, RBC  
Dave Whiteman, NEAT Manager, RBC  
Catherine Taylor, NEAT Officer, RBC  
Julian Joinson, Democratic Services Manager, RBC**

**Approximately 9 members of the public and press and representatives of Whitworth Town Council and local interest groups attended the meeting.**

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**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

In the absence of elected member representation at the commencement of the meeting, Mr Joinson took the chair. He welcomed members of the public to the meeting. It was understood that there had been some confusion about the start time of the meeting due to conflicting information provided.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been received from Rossendale Borough Councillors D and L Barnes and H Steen.

Councillor Neal arrived during the following item and took the Chair.

**3. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2005**

**Minute 3 – Notes of the Last Meeting – 16<sup>th</sup> June 2005**

Councillor Neal reported that the proposed 20mph speed limit on Hall Street, Whitworth, had been raised with the relevant County Councillor. It was understood that there had been some delay in erecting the necessary signage.

Councillor Neal reported that the issue of the gents toilet on the Promenade was being addressed.

## **Minute 6 – Civic Hall Update**

It was reported that there would be a public drop-in evening about the Civic Hall on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2006, which would involve representatives of the builders, quantity surveyors, Town Council, Borough Council and the Community Leisure Association of Whitworth (CLAW). The meeting had been advertised in the local press.

## **Minute 7 – Public Question Time**

A member of the public complained that items raised did not appear to be progressed. It was suggested that an Action List be provided for the next meeting. Mr Joinson agreed to provide an Action Sheet, although often the issues raised were complex and could not necessarily be finalised before the next meeting. He also indicated that a reorganisation of Democratic Services had led to additional staff resources becoming available which should improve the administration of the Area Forums.

A member of the public enquired about the location of the proposed Adrenalin Gateway. Mr Pimlott responded that this might be centred around Lee Quarry near to the Kingfisher Business Centre at Futures Park. An advert had appeared in the press recently for a feasibility study.

Mr Jackson, Whitworth Town Clerk, enquired about progress in relation to the street light at the top of the steps at the Civic Hall Car Park, which was still not working. Councillor Neal reported that the electricity supplier had been alerted to the problem and was looking into this matter.

## **4. POLICE ISSUES**

Inspector Shepherd provided an update in respect of police issues. He reported that on two recent occasions the Community BEAT Officer had worked with Greater Manchester colleagues to address the issue of the misuse of moorland by off-road vehicles. He also indicated that the use of mobile speed cameras in Facit had been as a result of concerns raised at previous Area Forums. The fixed speed cameras on the A671 had been correctly located at sites with a high incidence of serious accidents.

Detailed figures in relation to crime reduction in the East of Rossendale were provided. 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 a small increase in violent crime in Facit and Shawforth, action taken to identify car-jacking offenders from Manchester, the late shop incident and work undertaken to target young people responsible for youth nuisance.

Councillor Neal pointed out that Police and Community Together (PACT) meetings normally took place during the day. He enquired whether the meetings could alternate between daytime and evening in order to improve attendance. A member of the public asked what reasons had emerged for the reduction in crime figures. Inspector Shepherd reported that Lancashire Constabulary was proactive and tenacious and that targeted policing and local knowledge had contributed to improvements. It was acknowledged that spates of crime sometimes occurred and that policing in neighbouring Rochdale also had an impact. In addition, the Persistent and Prolific Offenders Strategy and the Prevent and Deter Group of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) had a positive impact.

## **5. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – CONSULTATION FOR THE CORE STRATEGY ISSUES AND OPTIONS REPORT**

Mr Pimlott, Planning Officer, reported that the Council was currently preparing documents for the first time under the Local Development Framework (LDF). New legislation had reformed the planning regime, which meant that there would no longer be a single Local Plan, but rather a portfolio of documents. Each document would take time to prepare and would be subject to consultation and a sustainability appraisal.

The Core Strategy document was the main ‘umbrella’ document of the Framework. That document would be consistent with the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Community Strategy. Following the Issues and Options Report, there would be a Preferred Options Report, and Submission to the Secretary of State. Each document would be subject to a public consultation stage. There were four main themes in the document comprising living; working; enjoying and managing the environment and transport. The consultation period was due to finish at the end of January 2006. The Preferred Option Report would be published at the end of March 2006.

A number of questions and comments were raised by those present at the meeting, as follows:-

- An application had been deferred at a recent meeting of the Development Control Committee, where the officer recommendation had been for approval, but a large number of objections had been received. Mr Pimlott was unable to comment on an individual application tonight, but indicated that the Council’s policies were clear.
- Would residential conversions of listed buildings be permitted if they were in danger of collapse as a means of preserving them?

Mr Pimlott reported that English Heritage usually preferred safe decay. However, there were some exceptions and cases would have to be determined on balance on their own merits. Residential development in Rossendale was permitted in limited circumstances, notwithstanding the current situation of oversupply.

- Members of the public found it difficult to contribute to the discussions on individual planning applications, because of the lack of publicity of what was due to be considered.
- Concerns were expressed that the Regional Spatial Strategy was produced by a North West body, which was not directly elected by the public. Mr Pimlott indicated that Rossendale's documents under the LDF were subject to independent scrutiny at the submission stage.
- Concerns were expressed that there would be no opportunity for the public to discuss specific sites in detail. Mr Pimlott reported that, ultimately, an Action Plan might be produced for Whitworth. However, at present, the Council had prioritised Rawtenstall Town Centre and Bacup, Stacksteads and Britannia for detailed Action Plans.
- The problem of oversupply of housing in Rossendale was as a result of previous permissions granted. However, a number of developments had not yet commenced. How would future development be permitted? Mr Pimlott explained that under the new planning regime additional housing under the new Regional Spatial Strategy would be planned monitored and managed so that a set number of permissions would be allowed in each year. 'Land-banking' was an area of concern. Mr Pimlott indicated that any expired permissions would be identified. The Urban Potential Study would identify these issues and a report was due to be considered by the Cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2006.
- The Regional Spatial Strategy took account of issues included in the Northern Way Initiative.
- It was likely that the next round of Area Forums would coincide with the consultation on the Preferred Option Report. A robust consultation would be undertaken.

## 6. STREET SCENE AND LIVEABILITY – INTRODUCTION OF THE NEAT TEAM OFFICERS

The Chairman introduced Mr Whiteman and Ms Taylor from the Neighbourhood Environmental Action Teams (NEAT). Mr Whiteman indicated that local teams had been developed to take ownership of issues including refuse, street cleansing, enforcement, abandoned vehicles, trade waste and recycling. NEAT Officers would also engage the local community in street scene issues. Ms Taylor had been working on Whitworth issues for around 4 months and worked closely with the Town Council. There had been numerous successes, although there was still much to do.

The following specific issues were raised:-

- Councillor Grogan, Whitworth Town Council, referred to the theft of 5 manhole covers on Saturday. The matter had been reported to the County Council and the openings made safe. The Police were also aware of the problem.
- A member of the public referred to litter on the steps leading to Knowsley Crescent, Shawforth. Ms Taylor agreed to take this on board. Concern was expressed at the quality and cost of a mural used to cover graffiti. However, this was generally felt to be an improvement.
- A gully opposite Peel Terrace by the garages was blocked. Mr Jackson indicated that the lengthsman would undertake this work.
- A question arose about tree preservation. Mr Whiteman responded that some trees were subject to protection and others were not. It was suggested that Avril Dunn of the Development Control Section should be contacted if further information was required. Concern was expressed that the trees on the Promenade close to Healey Grove were in a poor condition.
- The poor state of the footpath from Station Road, Whitworth, to Healey Dell was raised.
- Pot holes were reported at the following locations:- Thorneylea, Whitworth, near the Co-op; Tonacliffe Road, Tonacliffe opposite Moorland Avenue
- Members of the public offered to give up their time to assist in any clean up initiatives. Mr Whiteman indicated that the cost of skip

hire was prohibitive, but that a vehicle could be dispatched if there was sufficient demand.

- Work was taking place on a former children's playground. This was to become a Ball and Games Park.
- The incidence of dog fouling in, Whitworth appeared to have reduced and a member of the public enquired whether any prosecutions had taken place. NEAT officers had worked closely with the dog warden. Education was a key factor. In addition, some 20 fixed penalty notices had been issued to date and non payment would be pursued by the Council's legal officers.
- The dog waste receptacles had been full over the Christmas period. Mr Whiteman explained that this was due to a break down of the 'poop-scoop' machine, which had now been repaired.
- Waste containers at 447 Market Street, Whitworth and in the vicinity of Shawforth Chapel were frequently missed. A number of other bins were full.
- Some properties had not yet received their bags for green waste. It was envisaged that information would be provided to households by the beginning of April 2006. Bins or bags would be provided appropriate to the amount space available. The Monday collections would change to a new day with effect from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2006, in order to avoid disruption on Bank Holidays. The changes could be publicised in the Parish magazine, which was due to be published in March 2006.
- It was reported that there were three bins in front of a residence on Market Street, Shawforth, which was not permitted. A request was made that the bins should be removed.
- A rodent population had been identified in Market Street, Whitworth, near Daniel Street.
- A member of the public had received two green waste bags and notification of a collection date. However, the collection had not taken place. The bags had now begun to disintegrate. Mr Whiteman indicated that the bags were biodegradable and that a number of models were currently being tested. The collections were currently being rolled out across the Borough.
- A member of the public commented that the recycling scheme had been well organised.

- A large amount of leaves fell in Healey Dell during the Autumn. Mr Whiteman indicated that the Council now hired blowers and a collection machine in order to composted these.

## **7. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

- Councillor Neal indicated that Development Control Section had written in March 2005 to a haulage contractor operating unlawfully in the area. A further letter had been sent in December 2005 indicating that enforcement action might be taken by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006. However, the deadline for enforcement had now been extended to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2006.
- A complaint was made about the poor street signage on Cowm Park Way, Whitworth.
- Councillor Neal indicated that he had asked the Council's Facilities Management Section to look into the matter of a trough at the Cemetery. A question was also raised about the heating at the Cemetery Chapel.
- Concern was expressed that no new bus shelters would be installed on the 464 Quality Bus Route beyond Bacup. Mr Jackson indicated that he had been assured that new shelters would be rolled out.

**The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.25pm.**