

WESTHOUGHTON WITH CHEW MOOR AREA FORUM

MEETING, 4TH SEPTEMBER, 2007

Present – 29 members of the public attended the meeting.

Councillor J. Higson (Chairman)	-	Westhoughton North and Chew Moor Ward
Councillor Chadwick (ViceChairman)	-	Westhoughton South Ward
Councillor P. Allen	-	Westhoughton North and Chew Moor Ward
Councillor Gradwell	-	Westhoughton North and Chew Moor Ward
Councillor D. Wilkinson	-	Westhoughton South Ward

Also in attendance

Mr. J. Shannon	-	Area Working
Ms. A. Boles	-	Area Working
Ms. V. Cloynes	-	Area Working
Mr. S. Rowson	-	Area Working
Mr. M. Longhi	-	Audit Commission
Ms. J. Hargreaves	-	Bolton at Home
Ms. J. Spencer	-	Adult Services
Mr. A. Allen	-	Planning Team
Ms. C. Greer	-	Children's Services
Ms. M. Hill	-	Children's Services
Mr. J. Farrow	-	Children's Services
Ms. S. Sollazzi	-	Children's Services
Mr. K. Dowd	-	Environmental Services
Mr. D. Houghton	-	Environmental Services
Mr. D. Carolan	-	Environmental Services
Mr. A. Costello	-	Development and Regeneration
Mr. J. Smethurst	-	Development and Regeneration
Michelle Moore	-	Greater Manchester Police
Keith Atherton	-	Greater Manchester Police
Shaun O'Donnell	-	Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service
Mrs. V. Ridge	-	Democratic Services

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor J. Silvester.

Councillor J. Higson in the Chair.

11. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Councillor Higson welcomed and introduced everybody to the meeting.

12. FEEDBACK SESSION ON ISSUES RAISED AT THE LAST MEETING

The Area Co-ordinator circulated an information leaflet which updated members on events since the last meeting and feedback on issues raised previously.

With regard to the issue of developers using lamp posts and road signs to advertise developments, a question was asked as to whether these would be removed. In response, it was stated that those signs which had received the agreement of the Local Authority were time limited. However, developers had now started to make imitation signs to avoid paying a fee. In terms of action being taken, officers went out every Saturday to take down the signs which were approximately 200 every time, in addition officers would also undertake extra visits if members of the public reported any of the illegal signs. A request was made that officers undertake visits to the Westhoughton area and this was acceded to.

With regard to the proposed closure of Westhoughton County Primary School, a question was raised as to what would happen to the extra curricular activities currently provided by the school. It was stated that the majority of facilities were provided in the existing College building and this would continue. Furthermore, there was no proposal to demolish the building and, therefore, some activities might continue in the school.

With regard to the turning circle and winter quarters, it was stated the top end of Park Road was not out of the area and,

therefore, why could signs not be erected indicating weight restrictions. It was agreed that this would be investigated.

Concern was expressed regarding the fact that there were no plans for a new surgery in Wingates, Westhoughton, despite the fact that the Section 106 Agreement attached to the planning application at Metal Box identified a piece of land for such purpose. It was agreed that this would be investigated further.

Resolved – That the updates and action proposed be noted.

13. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Committee held on 19th June, 2007 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

With regard to Minute 3 of the previous meeting, members felt that due to a change in the forum arrangements, there was a need to increase the publicity of the forums. It was, therefore, suggested that an article should be placed in Bolton Scene and Bolton News explaining the role of Area Forums and encouraging people to attend. It was agreed that this would be undertaken.

14. SERVICES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Ms. C. Greer, Head of Early Start, gave a presentation to the Forum which outlined the service provision for 0-5's and their families in the Westhoughton and Chew Moor area.

Information was provided in relation to the following, viz:-

- (a) details of where 0-5's lived in the area;
- (b) what services were currently available in the area;
- (c) what were Children's Centres; and
- (d) what children's centres offered.

The Forum was also advised that there was approximately 1,182 0-5's who lived in the area and, of these, 290 lived in the most disadvantaged areas. In terms of provision, there were enough childcare places in the area to allow parents to return to work, however, there was a need to plug some of the gaps to meet the needs of families. One of the initiatives to address this was the establishment of Children's Centres. It was stated that every area would eventually have their own children's centres which would be rolled out in three phases. In terms of Westhoughton, Washacre County Primary School was currently undergoing a large extension which would enable additional services to be provided in addition to those already being provided.

Resolved – That Ms Greer be thanked for her informative presentation.

15. HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE PARTNERSHIP BUDGET 2007/2008

The Area Co-ordinator advised that the Forum had received an allocation from the Council's Highway Maintenance Partnership Budget of £29,600 for the current financial year. To date £400 had been allocated to a scheme at 36 Cherwell Road which left £29,200 unallocated from the Highways Maintenance Partnership Budget for 2007/2008.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

16. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE PARTNERSHIP (COMMUNITY SAFETY) BUDGET 2005/2008

The Area Co-ordinator advised that the Forum had received an allocation of £10,000 and the following projects had been approved:-

- kissing gates installed at Mill Street/Southfield Road Playing Fields - £2,400; and
-

gating and fencing to various entrances that bounded Bretherton Lane open space and woodland - £7,600.

The above projects represented the whole of the Highways Maintenance Partnership (Community Safety) budget for 2005/2008.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

17. VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANTS 2007/2008

The Area Co-ordinator advised that there had been three applications for Voluntary Sector Grants, as follows:-

- Active Minds Drop In - £500 towards purchasing materials and a tutor to run the workshops once a month for a ten month period;
- Westhoughton Age Support Project - £450 towards the provision of a Christmas party for 150 elderly people living in Westhoughton; and
- Lostock and Chew Moor Conservation Group - £500 towards the payment of insurance and hedge flailing; planting new saplings; and carrying out general maintenance of St. John's wood and meadow.

If the above grant applications were approved, there would be £1,650 remaining for allocation.

Resolved – (i) That the application from Active Minds Drop In, in the sum of £500, be approved.

(ii) That £225 be awarded to Westhoughton Age Support Project; and

(iii) That £300 be awarded to the Lostock and Chew Moor Conservation Group.

18. NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL FUND 2006/2008

The Area Co-ordinator advised that the Forum had received a total allocation from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund budget of £35,000 for the period 1st April, 2006 to 31st March, 2008.

Currently, the Forum had funded four projects and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman under delegated authority had also approved a contribution to a borough wide project to tackle residents' concerns about traffic speeds. The intention was to use two signs per Area Forum. One sign type would give a positive message to drivers if they were driving at, or below, the speed limit and the other would indicate the measured speed limit and the degree to which the vehicle was complying with the speed limit or was speeding. Each sign would be moved three times per year. The cost of the project for this Forum was £2,500 which left £11,660 unallocated from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund for 2006/2008.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

19. OPEN FORUM

Verbal and written questions were received which detailed the following issues:-

- a) An issue was raised regarding a website 'www.boltonmail.net' which was operated by the Local Authority. Previously use of this was free of charge, however, fees had now been introduced.

The Area Co-ordinator agreed to investigate the issue and report back.

- b) What was the current situation regarding the core planning strategy?

It was intended that meetings were due to be held in Autumn, separately from the Area Forum, to look at the implementation of the Strategy.

- c) Concern was expressed that public documents were not being made available for public scrutiny, together with, the fact that the planning department had now changed to a computer based system rather than a paper based system.

It was stated that one of the reasons for the change was to allow the information to be more accessible for members of the public, however, if someone wanted to see a copy of the plans in paper format this could be undertaken.

- d) Why did signs relating to planning applications not detail the address of where to send a letter objecting/supporting the application?

It was agreed that this would be investigated.

- e) The on-line documentation was fine, however it would be easier if on the document the reference number, together with a description, was displayed.

- f) Concern was expressed regarding the increasing amount of ragwort in the Borough which was very toxic and a danger to both animals and humans.

It was agreed that this would be investigated.

- g) The grass verges were hanging over onto the footpath on Platt Lane and there was a need to cut the brambles and hedges.

It was agreed that this would be investigated.

- h) Could an update be provided as to the current position with Westhoughton Market?

It was stated that a report was to be submitted to the Executive Member for Corporate Strategy and Finance shortly and the decision would then be reported back to the Forum.

- i) Recently, Estate Agents had started to erect house for sale signs on railings which were on the highway.

It was stated that enforcement officers would investigate the areas where this was happening.

- j) Why was the planning application to relocate Lostock Sports Club to Chew Moor deferred at the Town Council meeting?

It was explained that the reason for the deferral was due to the short notice members had received on the information to be considered.

- k) Parking problems on Alma Road.

It was agreed that the Traffic Management Unit be requested to investigate the issue.

Resolved – That the questions be noted and the questions that have not been answered at the meeting be directed to the appropriate Council Department or external agency.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved – That the next meeting of the Forum would be held on Tuesday, 13th November, 2007 at 7.00 p.m. at Westhoughton Leisure Centre.

(The meeting started at 7.00 p.m. and finished at 9.15 p.m.)