

## **ASTLEY BRIDGE AND SMITHILLS AREA FORUM**

MEETING, 11TH JANUARY, 2007

25 Members of the public attended the meeting.

Councillor Mrs. C. Swarbrick	-	Smithills Ward
Councillor R. Hayes	-	Smithills Ward
Councillor R. Silvester	-	Smithills Ward
Councillor Mrs. H. Fairclough	-	Astley Bridge Ward
Councillor S. Lever	-	Astley Bridge Ward
Councillor J. Walsh	-	Astley Bridge Ward

### Also in attendance

Mr. I. Jeewa	-	Area Co-ordinator
Ms. S. Sameja	-	Area Co-ordinator
Mr. I.D. Mulholland	-	Legal and Democratic Services Department
Mr. S. M. Arnfield	-	Corporate Resources Department
Mr. B. Shaw	-	Environmental Services Department
Mr. S. Croudace	-	Environmental Services Department
Ms. J. Selfe	-	Environmental Services Department
Mr. J. Fox	-	Environmental Services Department
Mrs. C. Binks	-	Corporate Resources Department
Mr. R. Binks	-	Corporate Resources Department
Mrs. S. Curran	-	Corporate Resources Department
Mrs. A. Gorton	-	Children's Services Department
Mr. G. Luczka	-	Children's Services Department
Mr. D. Fillingham	-	Bolton PCT
Mr. A Kilpatrick	-	Adult Services Department
P.C. Neil	-	G.M. Police

PSCO Fox	- G.M. Police
PSCO Hussain	- G.M. Police
Mr. M. Massey	- Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service
Ms. C. Lucas	- Area Working
Ms. M. Thornley	- Bolton at Home
Mr. O. West	- Development and Regeneration Department

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Mr. D. Crausby MP.

Councillor Mrs. Swarbrick in the Chair.

## **22. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME BY THE CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Mrs. Swarbrick welcomed Members, Officers and the public to the meeting.

## **23. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Astley Bridge and Smithills Area Forum held on 9th November, 2006 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be signed as a correct record.

## **24. BOLTON HOSPITAL TRUST - CONSULTATION ON FOUNDATION TRUST STATUS**

Mr. D. Fillingham of Bolton Primary Care Trust gave a presentation which advised the Forum of a consultation exercise undertaken by the Bolton Hospital Trust prior to the submission of an application to HM Government for Foundation Trust Status.

Mr. Fillingham advised the Forum of the reasons for the application for Foundation Status, which were as follows, viz:-

- more of a co-operative arrangement;

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- more interested in the views of local people;
- focus on local need;
- additional freedom to innovate and improve services;
- patients and carers would receive greater choice; and
- greater financial flexibilities.

The Forum was informed that the securing of Foundation Trust Status would mean that accountability switched from Whitehall to the appointed Foundation Trust Governors.

It was explained that there would be a Foundation Trust Board, the Membership of which would be drawn from the public, patients and staff. The Governing Council would be elected by the Members. A Board of Directors would also be appointed by the Governors.

Mr. Fillingham also explained that the current consultation exercise being undertaken ended on 2nd February, 2007. Following this a formal application would be made to the Secretary of State, the result of which would be known by 31st March, 2007. Should the application be successful then this would be implemented by July, 2007.

In conclusion, Mr. Fillingham encouraged Members of the Public to submit comments for inclusion in the consultation exercise.

Various comments and questions were responded to.

Resolved - That the position be noted.

## **25. THE COUNCIL BUDGET, 2007/08**

Mr. Steve Arnfield of the Corporate Resources Department, gave a presentation to the Forum which outlined the overall

budget position for 2007/08, the impact of Council Tax and also sought the views of Members of the Public on the budget allocation.

The Forum was advised that for 2007/08 central Government Funding had increased by 3.2% for general services and 6% for schools. The funding for schools was by way of a direct grant. The Government had also indicated a wish for Council Tax rises to be below 5%.

Mr. Arnfield also mentioned that as per last year the Council was losing Government grants monies to protect other Council's in England.

Mr. Arnfield went onto explain that the budget for 2007/08 would be about £352 million.

The increase in the direct grant for schools would be approximately £10 million, Capital Projects including road schemes would receive an extra £1 million, inflation would result in an increase of £12 million, waste collection and recycling would increase by £1.5 million and other charges including the Passenger Transport Authority and Waste Disposal Authority would require an extra £2 million.

The Forum was advised that if Council Tax was set at 4% then there would be a budget shortfall of £10.8 million.

Mr. Arnfield explained that Departments of the Council had been asked to identify savings of 7% which amounted to £11.3 million, compared to the £10.8 million pounds required to balance the budget.

The Forum was advised that Council Tax was likely to be around 4% or below, but the Council now needed to consider its options including the level of Council Tax for 2007/08.

In conclusion, the public were encouraged to complete and return a questionnaire which had been circulated, principally seeking views on how the Council's budget should be allocated and what level the Council tax should be.

Various comments and questions were responded to which related to the following:-

- why Bolton Council did not run its own buses;
- stationary Council vehicles wasting fuel by running engines for long periods;
- how services would be affected by possible cuts;
- whether the Council contributed any funding to London Transport; and
- the spending of monies on road schemes that did not require any attention.

Resolved - That the position be noted.

## **26. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE BUDGET**

The Forum was advised of the proposed funding of the following schemes for the Astley Bridge and Smithills areas of the Borough.

- Brentford Avenue (Smithills Ward) £9,800.

Reconstruct footway in bitmac with new kerb. The total cost of this scheme was £17,265 and therefore Members had agreed that, if approved, the scheme would be commenced with this year's allocation and completed with next year's;

- Back Baxendale Street (Astley Bridge Ward) £4,800.

To complete the carriageway overlay work started last year.

- Holland Street (east footway only) (Astley Bridge Ward) £5,000.

Footway reconstruction.

The Forum was advised that, if approved, the cost of the above schemes totalled £19,600 and therefore the budget allocation would be spent.

Resolved - That the Highway Maintenance Budget Schemes as now indicated be approved.

## **27. VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANT APPLICATIONS**

The Forum was advised that two applications had been received for Voluntary Sector Grant Funding; viz:-

- Moss Lea Model Allotments Association. A request for £371.39 for equipment including a petrol strimmer and a notice board.
- Holy Infants Primary School. A request for £378.24 for flower arranging equipment for the purposes of demonstrations

The Forum was advised that there was currently only £666.06 in the Fund for allocation.

Resolved - That approval be given to both applications receiving £333.03 of Voluntary Sector Grant monies.

## **28. OPEN FORUM QUESTION TIME**

Prior to the commencement of the Open Forum Question Time section of the meeting, the Area Co-ordinator referred to a circulated update on questions asked at previous meetings of the Forum.

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

- (a) A question regarding whether back street lighting could be installed on back Broad Oth

Lane, on the even numbers side.

The Forum was advised that it was not Council Policy to provide back street lighting but this would be explored further in terms of the options.

- (b) A question regarding why the Council was proposing a car parking charge of £1 per visit to Moss Bank Park. Some individuals already paid a fee for use of the Bowling Club and the Leisure Card.

It was explained that at the present time the introduction of such a charge was a budget option under consideration. No further details or actual proposed charges had been put forward at this time and if Members of the Council resolved to proceed, issues such as that raised regarding the bowlers would be considered when detailed proposals were put forward.

- (c) A question regarding what had been the cost to Bolton Council/Council Tax payers for gardens being maintained for asylum seekers by Bolton at Home.

It was explained that the same arrangements were applied to asylum seekers as to any other tenant of Bolton at Home. The financial breakdown in this regard was not currently available.

- (d) A question regarding what fundamental changes had taken place within current negotiations on single status, particularly in relation to the Refuse Collection Service Task and Finish Working Practices.

It was explained that a response would be sought on this issue.

- (e) A question regarding what had been the cost to Bolton Council/Council Tax Payers for certain people having carpets and soft furnishings cleaned and who had authorised this.

It was indicated that this was a standard practice operated by Bolton at Home prior to the re-letting of certain properties.

- (f) A question regarding whether it was necessary for Refuse Collection Staff to work over the Christmas and New Year periods. Would it not have been more prudent to cancel the green bin collection for those two weeks and transfer staff to grey bin collections. Furthermore, why on 6th January, 2007 was only one person required to drive and empty the grey bins when at other times there were two or three people.

It was explained that this matter would be looked into and reported back to the Forum.

- (g) A question regarding the poor condition of the Moss Lea road way near to Thornleigh together with the problem of a blocked gulley in the vicinity.

It was indicated that it was thought that the said road was unadopted highway and therefore the Council had no maintenance responsibility. In terms of the blocked gulley, it was indicated that this would be explored. The status of the road way would also be confirmed.

- (h)



A question regarding vehicles illegally parking on the zig zag road markings on Belmont Road, near to Barr Lane.

The Forum was advised that the Police had noticed this on occasions and had notified the traffic wardens.

In future, members of the public could also inform the Council's Parking Services of such problems.

The issue of a possible future presentation by Parking Services was also referred to.

- (i) A question regarding the need to address the poor condition of the road surface on Athlon Avenue.

It was explained that the road would be included in the Highways Maintenance Programme for 2008.

- (j) A question regarding the general provision of youth services, in the Astley Bridge area.

It was indicated that Barlow Park Youth Centre was still functioning although there was a consultation exercise being undertaken regarding the possibility of locating Young People who were in danger of exclusion from mainstream schooling at this venue. In terms of the new building on Forfar Street, it was explained that this was going to be used as a Sure Start Centre.

In conclusion, Members indicated that a meeting was going to be arranged with the Director of Children's Services to discuss youth provision in the area.

- (k) A question regarding the problem of inadequate road markings at the Moss Bank Way/Chorley Old Road roundabout as it was currently difficult to establish which way drivers were intending to go.

It was indicated that this would be looked into.

- (l) A comment regarding the problems of congestion caused by the central reservation on Belmont Road in the vicinity of the fish and chip bar.

It was indicated that the reservation was installed because of the poor accident record but officers would be asked to look at this matter.

- (m) A question regarding the problem vehicles have in manoeuvring into the centre of the road adjacent to the Chorley Old Road central reservation.

It was explained that the Environmental Services Department would be notified of this matter.

- (n) A question regarding the problem of vehicle manoeuvres at the Chorley Old Road/Scot Road Junction owing to the position of the bollards.

It was indicated that the Environmental Services Department would be notified of this matter.

- (o) A question as to why access to the footpath to the Thornham Estate near to Layton Heath was currently barred by a locked gate.

It was indicated that this would be explored.

- (p) A comment that road way central reservations and island refuges should not be removed as they are valuable for pedestrians.

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.

## **29. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS**

The Chairman thanked Members, Officers and the public for their attendance and the views expressed during the course of the meeting.

## **30. NEXT MEETING**

Thursday, 1st March, 2007 at 7.00 p.m. at Church Road Primary School.

(The meeting started at 7.00 p.m. and finished at 8.16 p.m.)

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**NOTES**