

BRIGHTMET AREA FORUM

WEDNESDAY 7th March 2018

Present: 38 members of the public attended the meeting.

Councillor John Byrne	Brightmet Ward
Councillor Lynda Byrne	Brightmet Ward
Councillor Debbie Newall	Brightmet Ward

Also in attendance

John Shannon	- Area Co-ordinator
Kath King	- Department of Place
Tony Cottam	- Bolton at Home
Marion Griffin	- Business Support Officer
PC Paul Milligan	- Greater Manchester Police

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Sir David Crausby MP, Linda Duckworth and Vanessa Hamnett, Bolton at Home

Councillor Lynda Byrne in the Chair

1. INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME

Councillor Lynda Byrne welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the Councillors and Officers in attendance.

Councillor Lynda Byrne obtained the consent of those present for the meeting to be videoed by a resident.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM COUNCILLORS AND OFFICERS

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st March 2017 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

4. PRESENTATION ON BRIGHTMET UCAN

Tony Cottam, Head of Employment and Enterprise, Bolton at Home gave an update on the Brightmet UCAN covering activities and projects as follows:-

- The Brightmet UCAN, New Lane, employs one manager and two project officers
- Five hundred people have visited the New Lane UCAN over the past month
- Employment support; drug and alcohol advice and debt management support are just a few of the services offered to residents.

A number of questions were asked and answered at the meeting.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

5. UPDATE ON AREA FORUM BUDGETS

Councillor Lynda Byrne introduced John Shannon, Area Coordinator, who gave an update on budgets devolved to the Area Forum as follows;

Area Forum Budget Allocation for 2015/17

**Highways Maintenance Budget (HMB); Allocation - £19,200
Balance - £0**

**Area Forum Flat Rate Budget (AFFRB); Allocation - £9,375
Balance - £275**

Decision made since the last meeting were;

Project	Amount
Award to Men in Sheds group (AFFRB)	£250
Award to Scarecrow Festival Project (AFFRB)	£500
Brightmet Christmas Tree and carol singing event (AFFRB)	£1,000

Remembrance Day poppies (AFFRB)	£500
Remembrance Day bench (AFFRB)	£500

Area Forum Budget allocations for 2017/18

**Highways Maintenance Budget; Allocation – £9,600
Balance - £0**

**Area Forum Flat Rate Budget; Allocation – £3,750
Balance - £3,750**

Decisions made since last meeting were;

Project	Amount
Contribution to cost of resurface of Oakenbottom Road and repairs at Brightmet Fold Lane (HMB)	£9,600

A number of questions were asked and answered at the meeting.

Resolved – That the report, together with those projects approved under the Council's Scheme of Delegation, be noted.

6. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SESSION

Councillor Lynda Byrne introduced this item on the agenda. and explained that John Shannon, Area Coordinator, had received a number of written questions and responses, which he would read out to the Residents, who would then be invited to ask questions or put forward any comments they had regarding issues and concerns in the Ward.

Q1. Neighbouring wards have for quite a few years provided community based events that restore a sense of pride in the wards, providing poppies on lampposts for remembrance Sunday, wildflower meadows and flower boxes, Christmas lights and a Christmas tree. They might seem minor things but I believe these events and actions are important as they show people care about their ward and where they live.

As an example last week the Astley bridge area forum through the friends of Astley Bridge which is run by the councillors, held an all-day event to encourage volunteering in the community and to allow people to better understand the services provided by the council. Yet when I as the leader of a local community group, based at the south side of Brightmet asked if we could have just five minutes to try and encourage volunteering and a sense of pride in our areas and despite asking this 7 working days before the meeting, we were told no. Last year St James's Action Group was given an opportunity to talk about their community group, so I find it quite unfair that we've been treated differently when all we want is to make improve our community just like St James's Action Group or Bolton UCAN who have also been allowed to talk.

The area forum agenda was not an immovable obstacle, all that was involved was adding an extra paragraph on a word document. Which is why I'm concerned that the promises made to provide the poppies on the lamp posts, wildflower meadows and flower boxes, Christmas lights and a Christmas tree are empty promises made only to try and retain votes for the upcoming election. What reassurances can this council provided that after the elections, the effort will still be made to ensure they all go ahead?

A Response from Dept of Place: The agenda for the meeting was made public and put on the Council's website eleven working days prior to the meeting. If the agenda has been made public changes are made only in emergency or exceptional circumstances. A community themed event will take place at a future meeting at which this request could be accommodated.

Q2. I have made thousands of reports and I have cleared hundreds of tonnes of fly-tipping. I recently asked Councillor Debbie Newall in person to join me on a fly-tipping clearance with other Brightmet Volunteers as she was out delivering Christmas leaflets for Labour. Her reply was "I don't think so".

Since early 2017 I have repeatedly asked all three Councillors to attend so that they can understand the scale of the problem, as all three councillors do not live in Breightmet. Not once have any of them attended, with Christmas being the only time a legitimate reason for not attending was provided. Bolton at Home and other social housing providers are failing in their duties to help tackle fly-tipping, the vast majority of fly-tipped waste is dumped into Bolton Council land from a mere handful of tenants who are struggling with the slim bins.

It is not acceptable that Bolton Council and Bolton at Home are allowing refuse and litter to accumulate on their land. What actions will this council be taking to ensure that council owned land is kept to a Grade A standard as defined by the Governments code of practise on litter and refuse?

A. Response from Dept of Place:

As required within Section 89 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 the Council has taken regard of the Code of Practice and have done so since its introduction. In taking account of the requirement the Council has planned the street cleansing service, on land that the Council is responsible for, as effectively and efficiently as possible within the practicable resource available. This plan is based on the land classes set out within the Code of Practice, along with land uses, population density and historic local knowledge which has enabled us to target areas appropriately within our available resources.

Where possible there currently is a street cleansing presence in town centres on a daily basis. Those zones which have identified as high or medium intensity are cleaned on one of three frequencies (18 times, 6 times or 3 times per year) dependant on population density and local knowledge. In addition, we have a limited amount of reactive resource to respond where specific issues arise and if there is an immediate health or safety risk

associated with the accumulations of litter the Council will operate outside the scheduled programme.

As well as street cleansing, the Council also has a proactive Environmental Education and Enforcement Unit which carries out community engagement and behaviour change work. The unit also investigates fly-tipping and littering including business waste with offenders being prosecuted.

Information regarding the street cleaning programme is available on the Council's website:

A3 <http://www.bolton.gov.uk/website/pages/Streetcleaningprogramme.aspx>; information on when a particular street is due to be cleaned can also be available via the following link:

<http://maps.bolton.gov.uk/residents/mybolton.aspx>"

Cllr Debbie Newall responded that she was asked to attend the above litter pick two days before the event which took place on a Sunday. She had other commitments already in her diary for that day and asked that more notice be given to Ward councillors who often had prior commitments in diaries, especially at weekends.

- Q3. In 2014, 88% of the area forum budget was allocated by our three councillors to projects north of Bury Road and in 2017, 91% of the area forum budget was allocated by our three councillors too projects north of bury Road. On review of the wildflower budget from the past few years you somehow wasted thousands of pounds on a project that should have cost an 1/8th of the budget.

North of Bury Road, there is the Wildlife Trust Men In sheds, Brightmet UCAN, Brightmet Men In Sheds, Deepdale centre, Elderdale Centre, Waggon Road Centre. In the south of Brightmet we have a closed Childrens, Centre, closed café and closed community centre at Leverhulme Park.

What actions is this council and Bolton At Home doing to ensure that the south side of Bury Road is given fairer treatment in the distribution of the Area Forum Budget and council resources?

A. Response from Department of Place:

It would appear that the information in above statement has been drawn from the budget approvals reported to the Area Forum meetings since 2014 (minutes available on the Council website). This analysis can however be misleading; members of community and voluntary groups, or those participating in projects, are drawn from across the ward regardless of the community group or project.

Services provided by the Council address issues across Brightmet and are not determined by the location of roadways such as Bury Road.

Q4. Can you please provide the total number of requests from community groups or other, that have applied for funding from the Area Forum this year that are situated south of Bury Road? An example would be the Bolton North East Wildlife Trail. Can you also please provide the total amount of funding requested from all these groups south of Bury Road and what was requested. Finally can you provide the total amount of funding that was approved south of Bury Road via the area forum budget that our three Brightmet Councillors allocated?

A. Response from Dept of Place; information available on successful applications only, approvals are recorded in minutes from Area Forum meetings.

Q5. Councillor John Byrne and his wife Lynda Byrne had been personally responsible in the late 90's for the disposal of charity land at Leverhulme Park to allow the construction of the five a side football pitches. Which is a great thing for the community, but that money generated from the land belongs to the charity 'Leverhulme Park'

which this council had been putting into their own finances. You may remember how this Council openly lied about the trustees being an external group, when in fact it was then acting Council Leader Clifford Morris who failed to declare his trustee role nor his conflict of interest in approving the construction which was a violation of the covenant

By late 2017, this council had to make a full disclosure of its failure over the finances of the charity, the allocations of land and recently they've been reported again for subsidising their own expenses in the management of the charitable land by helping themselves to charity incomes generated from the land. Will Bolton Council appoint a charity trustee, external from the council, somebody without political association so that the people of Bolton can be properly represented by someone who will uphold the covenant and put them first?

A. The question was passed to Legal Services for response

Q6. BRASS, befriending refugees and asylum seekers releases an annual report. In the 2015-2016 report it highlighted that Bolton At Home was responsible for housing over 60% of refugees (when you removed the SERCO figures which house asylum seekers). Upon further communication with BRASS, it was stated that Bolton At Home refugees are classed as vulnerable status which puts them ahead of local residents.

Is Bolton Council at all concerned that local Brightmet residents who wish for their children or grandchildren to live in the same ward as them are being denied this opportunity because this council has voluntarily signed up to the Gateway Protection Programme and has housed over 2,400 refugees? What action is this council taking to ensure that local residents who have lived here all their lives, those who are being denied opportunities to be housed locally do not become resentful towards vulnerable refugees because of policy that has accepted

27% of refugees under this scheme for the entire country?

- A. **Response from Dept of Place;** Bolton at Home, as other independent social housing providers operating across Bolton, is bound to operate within an allocations framework defined through central Government legislation, guidance and case law requiring adherence to Part VI of the Housing Act 1996. Applicants cannot be excluded on the basis of local connection. Landlords may however seek to apply a preference for a proportion of applicants for a number of reasons, such as employment, community activity or indeed local connection, provided this does not discriminate, directly or indirectly, against anyone within the protected characteristics as defined by s4 of the Equality Act 2010 across the scheme as a whole.

Within this context there have been a number of examples across Bolton whereby preference has been afforded to applicants with connections to particular localities – these connections being defined by residence, familial connection, employment or other special reason albeit also within the context of the Equality Act.

Indeed, one of the boroughs largest new build schemes in recent years in the Waggon Road and Milnthorpe area of Brightmet in 2014, delivered by Great Places, covering over 120 two and three bed properties, provided for upward of 50% preference for those with a local connection to the Brightmet area for households in housing need. There have been similar approaches adopted across the borough”.

- Q7. The streets throughout Bolton are strewn with litter. A Freedom of Information request revealed that Bolton has roughly 900 litter bins whilst similar sized authorities to Bolton have as many as 2,700 public litter bins. A previous request for a bin outside St Osmond’s and Andrews on Brodick Drive was refused at last years Area Forum. Are the Councillors here aware that there are 18

litter bins along Darwen Road in Bromley Cross with some even opposite each other and one at nearly every bus stop. Are the Councillors aware that there are none along Blenheim Road, Brodick Drive and Somerton Road? Bolton Green Umbrella will provide a volunteer litter bin for £65. If the Councillors cannot get my area of Brightmet a litter bin will the Area Forum allocate us a volunteer litter bin and I will empty it myself. Are the Councillors aware that we have a resident who puts out 3 black bin bags for dog poo on the Bolton to Bury cycle lane and then empties them on a weekly basis. The Council has provided a good facility with the Bolton to Bury cycle lane but are falling short on the Government Code of Practice for litter and refuse as Brightmet suffers from a significant number of sites that can be categorised as grade D - the worst possible.

- A. **Response from Dept of Place;** Bolton Council work closely with Bolton Green Umbrella and have supported their use of volunteer litter bins in low footfall areas such as this. The Council would be happy to discuss the issue with the Green Umbrella group to look into the feasibility of purchasing demountable litter bins for this location to be serviced by volunteer groups.

Cllr John Byrne responded that the reference to the number of bins on Darwen Road would be investigated. Neighbourhood Services had carried out an assessment of the need for a bin at Brodick Road the previous year and not found littering to be a significant issue. The issue would be reassessed as above.

- Q8. The condition of the roads in Bolton is disgraceful. In my opinion our roads are some of the worst in Greater Manchester. When was the last time any of our Councillors drove along Blenheim Road? The speed humps are a disgrace and are nothing short of dangerous. Will the Council either replace them or completely remove them? I do not see any of my council tax money being spent on road repairs in the area south of Bury Road. I think it is high time that some of the large reserves held by Bolton Council was spent on road

maintenance. What do the Councillors think of the condition of our roads?

A. The question was passed to Highway Services for response.

Q9. A resident asked; My understanding is that all UCAN centres are run by Bolton At Home, yet the ward of Halliwell is given special privilege by being given a UCAN centre financed by Bolton Council. In a time of austerity in which budgets are being drastically cut (yet the Council managed to find £300K to give to Asons) is it acceptable or ethical that one ward should be given special privileges with a UCAN Centre that uses council tax payers money? Is this because Halliwell ward is home to the former Council leader Clifford Morris and acting Council leader Linda Thomas?

A. **Response from Dept of Place;** the UCAN centres are managed by a range of partners including Bolton at Home, Irwell Valley Housing, Mosscafe St Vincent's and the Council. When Bolton at Home was formed the management of some UCANs became its responsibility as a result of the stock transfer process. Halliwell UCAN was not part of the stock transfer process and remained under Council management. The Council is currently looking to develop another UCAN and will continue to work with partners to sustain Bolton's UCAN network.

Q10. Are you aware that St Osmund and Andrew's primary school may be losing up to twelve Teaching Assistants? The schools are struggling with budgets for support staff. I cannot see how we can maintain standards.

A. Councillor John Byrne explained that the funding allocation for schools comes direct from the Government; the Local Authority does not have control over how much is paid to each school. He was aware that many schools in Bolton were facing budget shortages.

Q11. How regularly are the roads and the potholes inspected?

A. The question would be passed to Highways Services for response

Q12. At the back of Connel Close people walk their dogs, and the bin gets full with waste bags within a week. This is not emptied for 2/3 weeks, therefore, litter is left on the grass and it is a mess. Please could we have another bin placed in this area?

A. Councillor Debbie Newall would ask Neighbourhood Services for a bigger bin to replace the existing one, and the smaller bin could possibly be re-used elsewhere.

Q13. A resident raised concerns regarding traffic congestion at the Bury Road/Milnthorpe Road/Brightmet Fold Lane junctions due to additional traffic generated by the new Aldi superstore, there were also concerns regarding speeding traffic using Crossdale Road as a cut through. The resident had made these concerns known before planning permission for the new store was granted.

A. Councillor John Byrne had made representations regarding these concerns at the time of the planning application; he would make further inquiries to seek a resolution to the issues raised.

Q14. Near the Petrol Station at Bury Road there is a demolished church, which has now become a fly-tipping area. What can be done?

A. Councillor John Byrne would contact Neighbourhood Services regarding this issue.

Q15. The Headteacher of Red Lane Primary School raised concerns about Anti-social behaviour and vandalism happening in and around the school grounds, including vandalism to the school mini-bus.

A. PC Paul Milligan would pursue this issue with the Head teacher

Resolved – That the questions be noted and any not answered on the night be referred to the appropriate service for response.

7. CLOSING REMARKS

Councillor Lynda Byrne concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for attending. She advised that the date of the next meeting had not yet been set, however residents would be notified through the usual channels.

(The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8.15pm.)

NOTES