

BLAKENALL AND BLOXWICH LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP

Wednesday 6 September 2006 at 6.00 p.m.

at Sneyd Community School, Vernon Way, Bloxwich, Walsall

Present

Councillor Rob Robinson (Chairman)
Inspector Greg Bates
Councillor Leslie Beeley
Mr. Peter Brown
Caroline Crolley
Mrs. Gail Gregory
Councillor Kath Phillips
Councillor Desmond Pitt
Councillor Melvin Pitt
Councillor Ian Robertson
Florence L. Smith
Councillor Bill Tweddle
Mr. Alan Venables
Mr. Fred Westley
Mr. Kenneth Worley
Councillor Patricia Young

Implementation Team

Paul Nicholson
Parveen Sangha
David Hancock
Mark Chaplin

120/06 Introductions

Members of the Local Neighbourhood Partnership (LNP) introduced themselves to the meeting.

121/06 Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Trish Skitt, Flo Smith and Councillor Louise Harrison.

122/06 **Minutes**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2006, a copy having been previously circulated to each Member of the Local Neighbourhood Partnership be approved as a correct record.

123/06 **Matters arising from the minutes**

In relation to minute no. 118/06, Caroline Crolley reported that after further investigation, she had been advised that the Splinter Island should now be referred to as the Buxton Road Island.

Councillor Phillips reported that the LNP were advised at the last meeting that detached youth workers were now in post on the Lower Farm Estate. However, Councillor Phillips advised that she had been reliably informed that this was not the case and that there were still no detached youth workers in post. Councillor Phillips requested that an investigation be undertaken into the above issue and reported back to the next meeting of the LNP.

Councillor Robinson reported to the LNP that he had received an update further to minute no. 115/06 (Brown Bin Scheme). Councillor Robinson conveyed the response to the meeting. Parveen Sangha advised that the response from Councillor Walker should be taken to the relevant CAG meeting for it to consider the issue further. The LNP felt that the CAG should also look at brown bin provision for flats and high rise buildings within the LNP area when looking into this matter.

With regard to minute no. 115/06, Councillors Phillips and Young raised the issue of parking on grass verges. Nothing had still been resolved with this issue and an update was expected. Councillor Young asked for an investigation into why bylaws to prohibit parking on grass verges were introduced along some roads in the Borough, such as the Sutton Road, but were not allowed on other roads in the Borough. Parveen Sangha reported that this issue had been discussed at a previous CAG meeting and that there would be further discussions and an update at the next CAG meeting.

Resolved

That the issues above be referred to the relevant Council officers for them to investigate and report back to the next meeting of the LNP.

124/06 **Declarations of Interest**

Fred Westley, Chair of Mossley Resident's Association.

125/06 **Petitions**

There were no petitions received at this meeting.

126/06 **Bloxwich Cemetery**

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Steve Billings was in attendance and presented his report to the LNP and highlighted the salient points contained therein.

In view of the fact that the report covered a sensitive issue, the Chair allowed members of the public to address the meeting during the consideration of this item.

A Mr. P. Smith was in attendance and highlighted various concerns to the LNP. Mr. Smith spoke on behalf of several frequent users of the cemetery, some of whom were elderly or disabled, and who found the current vehicular restriction scheme extremely difficult. Whilst Mr. Smith acknowledged the reason for the introduction of the current scheme at the cemetery, he highlighted the following problems:-

- The current restricted vehicular access scheme causes many problems for the elderly and/or disabled who wish to visit the cemetery on a regular basis
- Some elderly/disabled people are not as independent as they would like to be and do not have family or friends who may be able to assist them in visiting the cemetery
- The current appointment scheme whereby people can phone up and book a time slot for a cemetery officer to open the gates and allow them access to the cemetery is not satisfactory. This scheme is only operated on certain days. He and many members of the public felt that people should be able to visit the cemetery at any reasonable time on any day they wished
- The current restrictions were not DDA compliant. This could possibly bring about a resulting Court case
- Mr. Smith thanked Steve Billings and Judith Sunley as they had met with the various cemetery users and were always empathetic to the problems experienced

In closing, Mr. Smith re-iterated that he understood the LNP's initial reason for introducing the restricted vehicular access at the cemetery following the appalling events which had occurred there in recent years, however, Mr. Smith stated that the current scheme did not support equality and made it very difficult for elderly and disabled users to visit the cemetery at a time which was convenient to them. Furthermore, he stated that this resulted in an infringement on their human rights and called for the LNP to re-address the issue and consider a more suitable scheme.

The LNP then heard from various members of the public, some of whom were elderly and/or disabled, and who had problems with the current scheme at the cemetery and found it difficult to visit the cemetery. The various speakers conveyed their individual experiences and circumstances to the LNP for it to consider when deciding upon a way forward with this issue.

Of the various problems reported, several complaints were made with regard to problems experienced with the current time slot booking system. Several users had booked a time slot only to find that the cemetery had not been opened at the agreed time. Another pertinent issue raised was that there was insufficient staff to cover the maintenance and upkeep of the Borough's cemeteries. There were also reports that contractors had driven over or parked on graves during maintenance visits. Steve Billings sincerely apologised for the users who had experienced such problems and requested that any further occurrences were reported to him directly.

Members of the LNP suggested and considered many different possible solutions, all of which were put to the meeting. The main suggestions being:-

- Introducing a one-way system throughout the cemetery
- Providing blue badge holders with a padlock key to the cemetery gates
- Introducing a high kerb rail to stop cars from being able to drive over graves
- The introduction of a card key type access barrier to the cemetery

After much deliberation and a response from Steve Billings concerning the issues raised and possible solutions put forward, the LNP:-

Resolved

That Steve Billings liaise with Parveen Sangha and provide costings to the next meeting of the LNP for the provision of a barrier at the entrance to the cemetery (with card key pass) for both a barrier that sinks into the floor and a more conventional 'raise arm' barrier. Furthermore, that when costing such a provision, that it be taken into account that card key passes should

be made available not just to blue badge holders but anyone who visits the cemetery on a regular basis and finds the current restrictions difficult, providing they can produce a doctor's note verifying the individual's circumstances.

127/06 **Mossley Resource Centre - Planning Brief**

A report and supplementary report were submitted:-

(see annexed)

Paul Nicholson was in attendance and presented his report to the LNP and highlighted the salient points contained therein.

There were various members of the public in attendance at the meeting who wished to speak on this issue and, in view of this, the Chair allowed members of the public to address the LNP during the consideration of this item.

Fred Westley stated that he had called for a wider consultation than that which had taken place as he felt the Resource Centre served a wider area than where the consultation had reached. He also felt that key community user groups had not been consulted. Furthermore, he felt that if the land in question had to be developed, then it would be essential that a replacement community building be provided. He called for the LNP to seek a wider consultation before any decision was taken.

Various other comments were made and, in particular, the following views were highlighted:-

- The area is deprived and a community facility within the area is essential to the well being of the estate
- The Resource Centre serves the whole of the Mossley Estate, not just the immediate vicinity of the Centre and is frequently used by many groups with users ranging from children to elderly citizens
- The current building is in desperate need of repair/renovation or a new building is required. Some speakers felt that the building was irreparable
- There is a need to ensure that whatever the eventual outcome, an alternative facility for the current user groups needs to be identified
- Explore the possibility of using the local Church as an alternative community facility and the possibility of having a purpose-built extension for a community facility at the Church. However, there were some deliberations as to the suitability and feasibility of this option

- There has not been sufficient consultation within the Mossley Estate and not all user groups have been consulted
- The possibility of requiring a developer to build as a part of new housing development a new community centre

After plentiful deliberations and a response from Paul Nicholson concerning all the issues raised, the LNP:-

Resolved

That a development plan be produced for the Mossley Estate and Chepstow before any decision is taken on New Build and, in doing so, the provision made for children, youth and senior citizens be taken into account. The Plan should be a short, medium and long term plan as the estates are already suffering as a result of the obvious lack of facilities for all age groups.

128/06 Master Plan for the Regeneration at the Goscote Lane Corridor

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Mark Chaplin was in attendance and presented the report to the LNP and highlighted the salient points contained therein. The report sought to establish a Project Reference Group and also sought nominations for the group comprising of up to five Members from amongst the LNP's membership and up to five local organisations.

Members of the LNP questioned the boundaries for the land which was included in the Regeneration plans at the Goscote Lane Corridor. Mark Chaplin advised that he would arrange for a detailed plan/map to be forwarded to all LNP Members as soon as possible.

Members expressed their concerns with regard to the timescales involved as it was felt that it would be too rushed and its achievability was questioned. The LNP requested that officers look into the feasibility of the timescales contained within the report.

A Mr. K. Turner, Chair of Moore Farms Resident's Association, was in attendance and reported that very few people from the Goscote area were aware that a master plan was being developed. Councillor Robinson agreed to inform Mr. Turner of the dates of the Project Reference Group so that he could disseminate the information to local people.

Resolved

That:-

- (1) The contents of the report be noted;
- (2) The LNP supports the establishment of a Project Reference Group to oversee the Goscote Lane Corridor Master Plan;
- (3) Councillors Robinson, Robertson, Young and Phillips and Trish Skitt be nominated to join the project reference group from amongst the LNP membership;
- (4) The Goscote Resource Centre, Harden Resident's Association, Harden Close Resident's Association, Blakenall Community Association and Harden Alliance be nominated to join the project reference group from amongst the local community groups;
- (5) A detailed map of the area in question be sent out as soon as possible to all LNP Members and to the Goscote Resource Centre for it to be displayed in a prominent location;
- (6) Councillor Robinson undertakes to inform Mr. Turner of the various dates for meetings of the Project Reference Group.

129/06 Feedback from CAG meetings

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Resolved

- (1) LNP Members continue in attendance at the Community Action Group meetings;
- (2) That the LNP notes the progress of the Community Action Groups.

130/06 LNP Funding Report

A report and supplementary report were submitted:-

(see annexed)

Parveen Sangha introduced her reports.

Caroline Crolley questioned what had happened to the Time to Talk Initiative. Parveen informed the meeting that she had not received any contact from Mr. Martin Blunt and her attempts to contact him had failed. For this reason, therefore, she had not been able to progress this item.

Resolved

- (1) In relation to Walsall Domestic Violence Forum, that funding be recommended for approval, by the relevant Council officer, subject to Parveen amending the scheme so that the show was taken round all schools within the LNP area;
- (2) With regard to one-off funding to remove overgrown shrubs and trees on the footpath which runs along North Walsall School, that funding be recommended for approval, by the relevant Council officer, as set out in the report now submitted;
- (3) With reference to funding to purchase lights for Christmas tree decorations in the Lower Farm area, that funding for the infra-structure supply and installation costs totalling £1,116.25 be recommended for approval, by the relevant Council officer, only.

131/06 Public Forum

No questions were raised.

Termination of Meeting

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 9.32 p.m. with an adjournment between 7.45 p.m. and 7.50 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: