

ST. MATTHEWS AND BIRCHILLS/LEAMORE LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP

Thursday, 16th November, 2006 at 6.00 p.m.

at the Central Methodist Hall, Ablewell Street, Walsall

Present

Councillor Tim Oliver (Chairman)
Councillor Mohammed Arif
Councillor Joan Barton
Mr. Malcolm Barton
Mr. Terry Edis
Mrs. Jane Evans
Mr. Christopher Jones
Ms. Margot Lambert
Police Sergeant Long
Mr. Aftab Nawaz
Mr. A. Paxton
Councillor Jonathan Phillips
Rev. David Sims

In Attendance

Bruce Bennett, Frank F. Harrison Community Association
Paul Thomas, Supported Housing

147/06

Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Mr. M. Cain (CAP), Inspector A. Gilbert (CAP), Mr. J. Kempson (Fire Service), Mr. A. Moulton (LAP), Councillor Khan and Councillor McCracken.

148/06

Declarations of Interest

Mr. T. Edis declared an interest in Item 9 on the agenda relating to LNP Funding - Greenhouse Project and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

Mr. M. Barton and Councillor T. Oliver declared an interest in Item 8(b) on the agenda relating to FFH Community Association and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

149/06

Petitions

There were no petitions submitted.

150/06

Late Item

Appointment of Locally Appointed Partner

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Resolved

That Mrs. Maureen Woodcock be appointed as a Locally Appointed Partner for the period expiring at the end of the 2008/09 Municipal Year.

151/06

Election of Vice-Chairmen

Resolved

- (1) That Mrs. J. Evans be appointed as WBSP Vice-Chair for the remainder of the 2006/07 Municipal Year;
- (2) That Mr. T. Edis be appointed as Locally Appointed Partner Vice-Chair for the remainder of the 2006/07 Municipal Year.

152/06

Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21st September, 2006, a copy having previously been circulated to each Member of the Partnership, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

153/06

Progress report

Caldmore Green Working Party

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the report of the Caldmore Green Working Party be noted.

Birchills Playing Fields

The LNP was informed that a meeting had been convened last night by the Chair as part of the process of addressing the community facility provision of the area. It was noted that a reference group had been set up.

Alleygating

It was noted that an update on this issue was included in the report at Item 9 on the agenda relating to LNP funding.

Public Forum item Re: 'gulley' area at rear of library, Beechdale

Resolved

- (1) That the action taken to date be noted;
- (2) That a progress report be submitted to next meeting of the LNP on 8th January, 2007.

Former Mellish Road Methodist Church

It was noted that a meeting with the owner had been arranged for next week. In addition, it was also noted that the Fire Service had inspected the premises and found them to be secure.

The point was made that there was a need to consider the proposed use of the building after CPO.

The owner of the building was in attendance at the meeting. He indicated that he was prepared to spend money on the building and had commissioned various reports, including a structural report which indicated that the ground was not stable. He was working with Council officers to find a way to bring the building back into use.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

Gladstone House

Margot Lambert, from Caldmore Housing, indicated that they had reached a settlement on the purchase of the property which would be sold on when the purchase was completed. Housing Corporation consent had been obtained for this. The intention of the eventual purchaser was to erect dwellings for sale, but planning status of the proposals needed to be clarified.

Resolved

That the report be noted and that officers be requested to clarify the planning status of the proposal.

Comfy Cushions

Keith Stone indicated that ownership of the premises had been confirmed. It was also confirmed that the building was within the area covered by the Palfrey and Pleck LNP.

Resolved

That the information be noted, that this matter be progressed for further information and that this matter be discussed with the Chair of the Palfrey and Pleck LNP.

154/06

Public Forum

Mr. A. Chand

With the approval of the Partnership, Mr. A. Chand was invited to address the Partnership.

Mr. Chand addressed the LNP on various issues which he had previously reported to the Police and Walsall Council officers and on which he had also addressed the LNP at an earlier meeting. No action had been taken on his concerns.

His concerns related to parking on pavements by vehicles and buses mounting the pavements in the Caldmore area, fly tipping and uneven pavements. He displayed photographs showing the problems in Weston Street, Hart Street, Bray Street, Caldmore Road, Bath Street and St. Michael Street.

Mr. Chand referred to M. and T. Stores and the fly-tipping of fridges and other articles in the alleyway by M. and T. Stores. He also referred to CCTV in that alleyway and questioned whether this was working. He referred to the Police base in Hope Street. Sergeant Long explained that it would be opening soon but timings would only be available from the Beat Sergeant.

Mr. Chand asked why a one-way system could not be introduced along Caldmore Road. He referred to fencing/alleygating in Buckle Close, an issue he had raised at a previous meeting. The issue was being investigated by Caldmore Housing with regard to options and costs for fencing.

It was suggested that Mr. Chand be invited to attend future meetings of the Caldmore Green Working Party.

Resolved

That the issues raised by Mr. Chand be investigated and progress be reported to the next meeting of the LNP.

Ms. S. Cyster, Phoenix Business Park

With the approval of the Partnership, Ms. S. Cyster, Phoenix Business Park, was invited to address the Partnership.

Ms. Cyster informed the LNP of problems with rats in the Portland Street area, exacerbated by pile driving in the area. The issue had already been reported to Environmental Health Section.

Resolved

That a report be submitted to the next meeting.

Councillor T. Oliver

Councillor Oliver referred to derelict flats above shops in Stephenson Square and pointed out that this was an issue that had previously been reported on at the LNP but that there appeared to be no progress.

Resolved

That an update report be submitted to the next meeting.

155/06

Presentations

(a) Frank F. Harrison Community Association

Bruce Bennett gave a brief insight into the work of the Community Association within the area covered by the LNP. He outlined the facilities provided by the Community Association, including Youth and Adult Education and the fact that the Community Association was committed to lifelong learning. He emphasised that the Community Association was committed to partnership working and highlighted the partnership networks which the Community Association had formed.

A new fitness suite had been built at the Frank F. Harrison School and this was managed by the Community Association. A new stem centre had also been built at the school. The Community Association would continue to work in partnership with the school. A nurse was also employed by the Community Association. Jane Evans offered to work in partnership with the Community Association on this issue and provide assistance when required.

Resolved

That the presentation be noted.

(b) Drugs Issues

(i) Supporting People

Paul Thomas, from Housing Services, gave a short presentation on the Supporting People Programme which offered vulnerable people the opportunity to improve their quality of life by providing a stable environment which enables greater independence. He explained the objectives of the Programme and the preventative approach and indicated that people with drug or alcohol problems, along with other vulnerable people, were helped by the Programme. He went on to say that support could be given in different ways, such as help in finding accommodation, accessing other services, managing finances and developing domestic and life skills. The Programme and the Supported Housing Team worked in partnership with other organisations such as Caldmore Housing and the Domestic Violence Unit.

Mr. Thomas was congratulated on the work of his section as were the Police and Fire Service in relation to their scheme for safer housing.

Resolved

That the presentation be noted.

(ii) Police presentation

Sergeant Tony Long indicated that the main involvement of the Police in drugs issues was the detection of offenders, either users or suppliers. He added that this could be done through incidents of domestic violence or criminal damage. There was a Drug Intervention Programme and in 2005/06 in the Walsall area, there were 774 tests completed, 60% of which proved positive.

Sergeant Long went on to say that 75% of all information received was drugs related. Those relating to shops/stall offenders (shoplifting) proved most positive.

In 2005, there were 105 offences for possession of heroin in the area. Although there was a slight increase of 5.6% in cases in the North Walsall area, 84% of those offences were detected.

The issue was high on the priorities for Police in Walsall but intelligence from the public was obviously confidential, as was surveillance exercises carried out. Sergeant Long pointed out that all information given was recorded, but there was a need to look at the bigger picture, such as human rights, before action could be taken.

Although a large amount of work was done by the Police in relation to drugs, Sergeant Long indicated that the biggest problem they faced was from alcohol related offences.

The Chair expressed the view that the drugs related agenda was a major issue. Whilst the LNP had now been made aware of the agencies involved in combating this issue, there remained a need to establish how all of the agencies worked together.

The point was made that the Police information related to H1 and the issue of how H2 related to the LNP was raised.

Resolved

That the presentation be noted.

(iii) Increasing Life Expectancy

The presentation by Jane Evans, tPCT, was deferred to the meeting on 8th January, 2007, although lack of attendance at Health CAG meetings was highlighted.

156/06

LNP Funding

A report and a supplementary report were submitted:-

(see annexed)

It was reported that Phase 1 of the alleygating scheme relating to Croft Street, Mary Street and Lewis Street was now due to be forwarded for planning permission.

With regard to the original report it was,

Resolved

That the funding priorities for 2005/06, the current spend, the criteria for the allocated 2006/07 funding and the deadline for spend of 2006/07 of 31st March, 2007 be noted.

With regard to the supplementary report, the following projects were considered:-

(a) Burrowes Street Growing Project

Resolved

To recommend funding of £1,500 to Burrowes Street TMO to grow its own plants to enhance the high standard of the environment on the estate.

(b) Croft Primary School Environment Project

Resolved

To recommend funding of £560 to the School to allow pupils to create their own garden to teach them to take ownership and responsibility for their environment. Funding to be used to purchase equipment and gardening materials and to be subject to confirmation that there is no funding elsewhere for the project and that the community/parents of the pupils are engaged in the project.

(c) Provision of litter bins in Long Street

Councillor Arif declared an interest in this item due to the fact that he had industrial premises in the area. He questioned whether this was a good scheme to support and felt that the Council should accept responsibility.

The question of contributions from businesses on the Business Park was raised. The majority of businesses on the Business Park were members of the Business Park and contributed through that membership.

Resolved

To recommend funding of £520 for the provision and installation of 2 universal litter bins located in Long Street, subject to confirmation that the Council has agreed to future maintenance and emptying of the bins.

Resolved further

- (a) That for all future schemes submitted for consideration, there is an expectation that alternative sources of funding will be explored before they are submitted for consideration;
- (b) That officers be asked to investigate the possible provision of recycling bins for the area covered by the LNP.

157/06

Community Action Groups

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Resolved

- (a) That LNP Members continue to attend CAG meetings and that progress of CAGs be noted;
- (b) That it be noted that the appointment of CAG Chairs had already been dealt with at an earlier meeting.

158/06

Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust - Request for nominations from LNPs to join Foundation Trust Stakeholder Reference Group

A letter from Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Resolved

That Malcolm Barton be nominated to join the Foundation Trust Stakeholder Reference Group.

159/06

Date and venue of next meeting

Resolved

That the next meeting of the St. Matthews and Birchills/Leamore Local Neighbourhood Partnership be held on Monday, 8th January, 2007 at 6.00 p.m. at Croft Street Community Association.

Termination of Meeting

The meeting terminated at 8.00 p.m.

Chairman

Date