

BAMFORD AND OAKENROD AREA FORUM

**Monday 21 September 2015
Bamford Chapel, Norden Road
Rochdale**

MINUTES

Present: H. Colligan, B. Colligan, A. Shorrocks, D.J. Armbrister, J. Clarke, S. Slimane, J. Howard, J. Warner, G. Sherratt, R. Doyle, S. Doyle, P. Garvey, K. Flett, R. Mallinder, W.E. Griffiths, A. Teuton, M. Akhtar, T. Akhtar, S.J. Nangle, S. Grindrod, P. Galvin, J.S. Taylor, J. M. Taylor, S. Williams, J. Crean and B. Griffiths.

Officers: Rochdale Council: S. Hay, Township, D. Lodwig (Chair) Community Safety and L. Dunn, Environmental Management. GMP: PC 4409 K. Wynne.

Councillors: Ian Duckworth, Jane Gartside and Pat Sullivan.

Apologies: I. Sturrock, L. Kerford, Dr. J. L. Pearsall, B. Bulcock, C. Lord, D. Moss and P. Moss

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

2. CODE OF CONDUCT

A copy of the code of conduct was circulated with the papers and all were asked to abide by the code for the duration of the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 8 June 2015 were agreed as an accurate record and the following updates were given:

White lines at junction of Sandy Lane, Bury Road & Roch Valley Way

Councillor Duckworth requested in writing that Highways renew the white lines at the junction of Sandy Lane, Bury Road and Roch Valley Way pointing out just how extremely busy and hazardous the junction is.

Pegasus Court Pedestrian Island

The pedestrian island near Pegasus Court was installed just after the last forum meeting.

Japanese Knotweed

The Japanese Knotweed on all the Council owned land in the River Roch Valley, has been treated. The land to the rear of Oakenrod Hill is all in private ownership. The actions last year of North West Electricity in totally clearing a large strip of land in the Roch Valley along the path of pylons, which has since been colonised by Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed, was questioned in relation to the designated Site of Biological Interest as mentioned in the last minutes. It was asked how they were allowed to do it in such a brutal manner and whether Rochdale Council should have overseen the work. North West Electricity believe they acted in a reasonable manner. Sites of Biological Interest are a non-statutory local designation and whilst they can be taken into consideration when considering planning applications which may affect them, they are not protected by law and if they are damaged by the landowner the Council is unable to take action in the way that

it can in the case of, for example, trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders. The Greater Manchester Ecological Unit does try to liaise with landowners to give advice on the best management of these sites and the information will be passed to them.

Drains on Norden Road

The problem drains on Norden Road highlighted at the last forum have been cleaned and jetted and appear to be working correctly apart from the two drains near the junction with Highlands Road which require further work. These drains have been placed on a list to carry out further investigations in the future, however, they carry a low priority as there is no risk of flooding to properties. The rest of the drains on Norden Road from War Office Road to Bury and Rochdale Old Road are to be cleaned and jetted within the next seven days.

Pedestrian crossing on Norden Road

The timings of the pedestrian crossing on Norden Road are still no better. The lights only ever change after waiting till there is no traffic. A request was made to write to the central control office to have this reviewed.

Action: Write directly to those in control of crossing settings (Stuart Hay)

Street lights on Highlands Road

The defective street light on Highlands Road near the junction with Caithness Avenue had been reported to EON for repair and passed to their maintenance team.

Public footpath off Bamford Way towards Teal Court

The signed public footpath off Bamford Way going towards Teal Court and all paths off it were cleared by the Clean and Green Team. The path off Highlands Road had also been cleared. Councillor Sullivan urged people to report any footpaths in need of clearing which will be attended to quickly.

Swift Road Green

Site meetings had been held on Swift Road Green with the Chair of Rochdale Township. Historically the Green was left to the people as an open space and Village Green status is now being considered. The question of what to do with the land by the Council is now on hold.

Tree on War Office Road land

The tree on War Office Road land at Norden Road is to be replaced and Environmental Management has been in touch with residents on Wood Top Avenue and a grove of trees are to be planted.

Martlet Avenue planter

Environmental Management has apologised for neglecting the Martlet Avenue tiered planter and will fill it with winter bedding.

4. POLICE AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

PC Wynne gave the crime statistics for the area from last July to date and made a handout available to all.

She was pleased to report that burglaries had reduced, however, there had been two hook and cane type offences. There had been more thefts from vehicles but 9 out of 13 were from unlocked vehicles presenting an easy opportunity for the offender.

A resident had captured a suspicious male on CCTV walking a circuit in the early hours looking for an opportunity. This male walks with a limp and ironically wears bright luminous gloves. Police have him as a suspect and the resident will share this CCTV with the Police. The need to report all suspicious activity was stressed to allow intelligence to be built.

Residents of Hawthorn Road want to set up a Home Watch Scheme and the Police will send a representative.

There were numerous complaints of speeding vehicles along Norden Road, Bagslate Moor Road, War Office Road and Martlet Avenue. Times varied with some saying it was occurring all day, others that it was worse in the evenings when the boy racers were out. PC Wynne will put the locations on the Patrol Plan, conduct stop checks, inform the Traffic Division and consider the use of an ANPR vehicle and consider publicising as a deterrent. It was explained that the installation of fixed enforcement cameras is strictly controlled by the number of Killed or Serious Injury road traffic collisions (KSI's) and that despite speed related collisions this area does not fit the criteria.

5. ROCHDALE CIRCLE

Nothing to report.

6. OPEN FORUM

Travellers on Bamford Green

Rochdale Council's Enforcement Team dealt with travellers who had set up site on Bamford Green. The site was vacated and Environmental Management cleared the area of all waste and litter and arranged for the bund around the site to be built back up as soon as the travellers left.

Lindsay Dunn from the Team outlined their actions, namely they received the report of the travellers having set up camp on Thursday 23 July 2015. They completed the statutory required health and welfare checks that day and found there to be no factors which would need to let the travellers remain. Notice was served that same day requiring them to leave within twenty four hours and a summons was served on 28 July 2015 and a Court Hearing took place on 29 July 2015. The site was vacated on 30 July 2015 and the site cleaned up.

The following comments and questions in relation to travellers setting up site on Bamford Green were submitted in advance and copies made available to all:

As you will be no doubt aware, the community has recently had unwelcome visitors on the piece of land opposite the Bamford precinct. Although apparently not formally designated as such, this piece of land in the eyes of most Bamford residents is regarded as 'The Village Green'.

This incident, with which the Bamford community is unfamiliar, (there is no record of this green being used for this purpose before) has incensed opinions, and the inability to deal with the matter straight away has infuriated residents. It appears that the traveller community takes advantage of the numerous bodies that should be interested in on arrival, but which none of whom individually appear to have power to act. The result appears to be that an apathetic zombie-like approach takes over with everyone pleading it is not their fault, as they have no power to act.

As a layman, never before faced with this problem, it appears that a number of the zombie agencies which should be showing an interest and coordinating their efforts, are in fact using their individual lack of power to absolve themselves from responsibility.

The residents of Bamford therefore demand to have explanations to the following questions: When the Local Authority has been to the expense of creating a raised earth mound around the perimeter of the green, to prevent vehicular access, would the gaining of such access be regarded as a flouting of bye-laws and be punishable by a fine? If not, why not, and if so, have fines been issued?

Having gone to the expense referred to above, why have the Local Authority neglected to maintain the earth mounds to the point where vehicular access is now clearly possible? Who is responsible? Have those responsible been brought to account?

Will the Local Authority now consider erecting a discreet low level fencing, similar to the one erected on the Kirkholt estate, which consists of strong steel bars secured by stanchions concreted into the ground?

When there is a police sign on the edge of the green prohibiting parking, (stating clearly, at the cost of prosecution and impounding of the offending vehicle) surely such parking must then be regarded as breaking the law? If so, is a prosecution pending? Have any vehicles been seized? if not, why

not?

Given the use to which the green is being put, and the damage done, would this be regarded as vandalism as well as trespass? And again, if so, subject to a fine?

Do the perpetrators have special rights beyond those of the ordinary residents, entitling them to immunity from the rules and regulations which apply to everyone else?

Are the perpetrators entitled to the non-payment of Council Tax during their period of residency? And if so why? If not, has any payment been made?

Are these temporary residents entitled to soil the footpath leading to the playing fields with human excrement? A footpath used by young children who wish to play sports, etc. Also in the copse adjacent to the green, there are at least a couple of dozen other instances of human excrement being left exposed to the elements.

When the site is vacated, who will be responsible for re-levelling the site and tidying the human detritus left behind? And who will bear the cost?

Do the perpetrators have special dispensation to keep their children out of school, an action which could result in imprisonment for the ordinary citizen? And if so why?

Are the vehicles that are designated for towing the caravans of the correct legal weight and power to travel safely on the road?

Are the vehicles parked on the green properly insured?

Are the vehicles parked on the green covered by an up-to-date road fund license?

Do all the drivers of the vehicles parked on the green have an appropriate license to drive?

Is it considered unreasonable that ordinary tax-paying, law abiding citizens should have the right to expect that an invasion of their amenities be dealt with to effect an instant, immediate removal of the offenders? If not, how can any delay be justified and excused? More importantly, why have the police not got the authority to act immediately? And if they have, why did they not do so and who made that decision?

Is there any truth in the rumour that there has been an increase in the incidence of children shop-lifting on the precinct? With the help of CCTV has any effort been made to bring the offenders to task? If not, why not?

Is there any truth in the allegation that the Local Authority actually pay the travelers to move? Usually when they plead they don't have sufficient money to buy vehicle fuel to move their vehicles?

Do any of the perpetrators claim any form of benefits from the State and if so how much? And what is the basis of their claim?

Given that a number of the vehicles parked on the green were sign-written with business names and activities, do any of the traveler community submit business accounts to HMRC, and pay income tax or national insurance? If not, when was the last time anyone in this band of travelers the subject of an investigation?

All of the above questions are either relevant to the wellbeing and upkeep of the Bamford area or are matters for which the ordinary, law abiding, tax paying citizens of Bamford would be held accountable. I do not think therefore, that it is unreasonable for you, with help of the three local councillors and the responsible national and local bodies to furnish answers in time for the forthcoming meeting of the Bamford Forum on 21 September.

In summary, the whole of British society is based on the assumption that everyone should be treated equally under the law. The law is the law and there should be no exceptions for minorities, at the expense of everyone else. Therefore, if the law is failing, the law must be changed!

A resident had sent a letter to Member of Parliament Liz McInnes on the larger national issues submitted and had asked for a response in time for this forum but no response was forthcoming.

Lindsay Dunn confirmed the Council pays for the clean-up and any reparative work. The cost varies from site to site dependent on the type and amount of waste left behind, such as some leave tarmac behind which is costlier to remove. In this case the travellers were roofers and domestic only type waste was left behind so the costs were not that high. Costs are usually under £1,000, sites such as the John Milne Avenue was costlier.

The earth mound had sunken somewhat since it was put in years ago and the utility companies had made it worse.

Rochdale Council has set up a temporary site near the Croft Shifa Centre for any travellers in the Borough but they will not use it saying the stony surface is not suitable for children. The cost of tarmacking that site is £80,000 and there is no guarantee they would use it.

There had been two cases of shoplifting at the Precinct whilst the travellers were encamped and the Police did not attend or investigate. This decision was based on the fact that one of the offences was the theft of a bar of chocolate and the other the theft of two bottles of washing up liquid of low value.

The Council removed the rotting carcass of a small animal from the area as soon as it was reported. It is not known if this is connected to the travellers.

There is a Section 59 Police Reform Act 2002 sign on the Green but this requires a week's notice.

Of the travellers' vehicles checked, all had correct documentation.

If damage is caused or force used when going on to and setting up camps, it is usually difficult in proving who had caused it. Travellers will always say it was like that when we got here. Residents cannot use CCTV to cover a public place and the Council is also governed by the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

On the day the travellers arrived, Police resources were stretched due to a murder in Shawclough.

A discussion over preventative measures took place as to what has worked elsewhere, including the use of large boulders, fencing, steel barriers, rising type bollards, earth mounds and gates. It was accepted that if determined travellers have the equipment, know-how and resilience to get round measures taken. The forum was in favour of the use of large boulders but these would have to be completely around the site with a secure provision for Utilities to access whether a gate or rising bollards. Cronkeyshaw Common has earth mounds with access points.

There is a high level Council Working Group looking at the issues and Councillor Duckworth asked to be on it. Lindsay Dunn will look into this.

Questions not considered during this meeting will all be looked at and answers obtained.

Action: Request Councillor Duckworth sits on Working Group. Answer outstanding issues (Stuart Hay)

Bury Road, Lansdowne Street, Beatrice Street, Leopold Street TRO

Objections to Traffic Regulation Order, reference number H60/1161, for double yellow lines on Bury Road, Lansdowne Street, Beatrice Street, Leopold Street, were made together with a petition of forty signatures following the posting of Legal Notices on lampposts on 15 August 2015 informing residents that the scheme was going ahead. The original Notices of Consultation were posted in

December 2014 of which some residents were unaware. Highways' response is below:

The promotion of a traffic order is a legal process which is laid down in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. This requires us to advertise our intention to implement an Order and provide an opportunity for the general public to comment on the proposal. As is usual we placed notices on all affected streets and in the Rochdale Observer. We can only accept objections during the advertising period and via the addresses shown on the notice of intent. The closing date for objections was 10 December 2014 when we did receive some. Those objections have since been reported back to council who in turn took the decision to reject the objections and proceed with the traffic orders.

The new restrictions were a result of complaints from local residents who were experiencing difficulties in exiting the side streets due to parked vehicles on Bury Road. The restrictions only reflect the requirements of the Highway Code. Our primary concern is the safety of those using the public highway rather than the provision of parking spaces. For this reason we have the full support of the local ward councillors.

In conclusion we are aware that there are ongoing objections however we are not in a position to change the restrictions as the orders have now been processed and sealed. We will be contacting those residents who have expressed concerns in the near future but our response will be along the lines of the above”.

The complainant had expressed the view that Highways doing the bare minimum required to comply with legislation when advertising any scheme is not always enough and consequently that not all residents that will be directly affected always find out. A letter drop to such residents would be the answer, but this is not done on grounds of cost, despite the fact it could save later time, stress and anguish to residents and allow all residents' views to be taken in to account. Residents have taken legal advice and challenged Rochdale Council on the implementation of the Order.

The forum felt that these restrictions are reasonable and required on safety grounds.

Ward Councillors' Surgery/Contacts

Ward Councillors hold a surgery from 10am to 11am on the first Thursday of each month in Bamford Chapel, although they often go beyond 11am. Ward Councillors contact details available on the Council's Website are:

Councillor Ian Duckworth Tel: 01706 648393
Email: ian.duckworth@rochdale.gov.uk

Councillor Jane Gartside Tel: 01706 658443 or 07812 228281
Email: jane.gartside@rochdale.gov.uk

Councillor Pat Sullivan Tel: 0161 762 1129 or 07967 985240
Email: patricia.sullivan@Rochdale.gov.uk

Township Officer Stuart Hay Tel: 01706 922230
Email: stuart.hay@rochdale.gov.uk

7. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 7 December 2015 6:30pm at Bamford Chapel