

MIDDLETON TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE FORUM

Thursday 6 April 2017 at 6.15pm
Middleton Library, Long Street, Middleton M24 1AF

MINUTES

Present

Councillor June West	RBC (Chair & Middleton Township Chair)
Councillor Malcolm Boriss	RBC
Councillor Sara Rowbotham	RBC
Councillor Carol Wardle	RBC
Councillor Chris Furlong	RBC
Councillor Sue Smith	RBC
Lauren Mason	Township Officer RBC & Minutes
Sue Oakley	Conservation Officer RBC
Nick O'Neill	Environmental Management RBC
Andrew Entwistle	Facilities Manager – Link4Life
Diane Higgins	Youth Services RBC
David Lappin	Resident
Geoff Grime	Friends of Middleton View
John Burton	Middleton Cricket Club & St. Peter's RC Church
Jerry Stokes	Friends of Alkington Woods
Keeley O'Mara	Friends of Hopwood Woods
Martin Cove	Friends of Mellalieu Street
Paula Hickey	Friends of Mellalieu Street
John Wilkins	BOLD & Middleton Resident
Mathilde Vautier	Homeshare
Carol Geddes	Friends of Alkington Woods

Apologies

Councillor Donna Williams	RBC
Councillor Donna Martin	RBC
Councillor Neil Emmott	RBC
Councillor Phil Burke	RBC
Councillor Linda Robinson	RBC
Councillor Andy Bell	RBC
Councillor Susan Emmott	RBC
Councillor Peter Williams	RBC
Councillor Peter Joinson	RBC
Ian Trickett	Environmental Management RBC
Gillian Bishop	Chief Executive - Link4Life
Eric Holliday	Community Safety Officer RBC
Anthony Jackson	Middleton Town Centre Management Company
Jean Bunner	Resident
Christine Grime	Middleton Heritage & Conservation Group
David Lees	Friends of Jubilee Park & Cemetery
Eric Larmett	Friends of Bowlee Park
Simon Bennet	Friends of Mellalieu Street
Sharron Stevens	Friends of Mellalieu Street
Mike White	
Shirley Waller	
Brenda Stringer	Middleton Floral Arts & Friends of Boarshaw Cemetery

1. WELCOME, APOLOGIES AND INTRODUCTIONS

All were welcomed to the meeting by the Chair, introductions were announced and apologies were noted as above. Councillor West requested that all turn off or put on to silent mobile phones.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

A discussion took place regarding the presentation from Link4Life, which was delivered to the group at the last meeting, and the following points were noted:

- Members of the meeting felt the booking system is still not fit for purpose, as if you want to pre-book, despite being able to do so tickets, unless collected an hour before the show, have to be picked up in person from Heywood. Andrew Entwistle advised that tickets can also be posted out. Andrew confirmed he will provide a full update under the Link4Life update on Item 7.
- A number of groups which used to use the venue, and its predecessor Middleton Civic, can no longer afford to do so, due to the massive increase in prices.
- David Lappin advised that as previously mentioned, he had tried to use the toilets in the centre, and the gate was opened for him, as promised by Gillian Bishop at the last meeting.

3. HOMESHARE PRESENTATION

Mathilde Vautier from Homeshare introduced herself, and explained she had been invited along this evening to inform and advise the members about Homeshare. Middleton Councillors had also received an update at the Middleton Township Committee meeting.

Mathilde stated Homeshare is effectively about bringing those people together who need a home with those who own a home with a spare room. In exchange for the spare room, sharers are expected to offer 10 hours support a week, this is not personal care, but maybe shopping or cooking or other activities as required. There is no cash paid for the use of the spare room, but a contribution to utility bills is expected, and many Homesharer's have a kitty.

Mathilde explained that there are a number of safeguards in place, and DBS checks, etc are run to ensure that everyone is kept safe. A discussion took place regarding the impact on any benefits, etc and Mathilde confirmed that as it is not a tenancy as such, with no financial gain, then it should not affect benefits. Additionally the Homeshare 'tenant' would cover any increase in Council tax or other bills.

Mathilde provided a number of leaflets and business cards and explained that she was happy for her information to be passed on and any referrals made to her. The email address for anyone wishing to get more information on the scheme is homeshare@possabilities.org.uk or via telephone on 01706 626747.

4. MIDDLETON IN BLOOM UPDATE

Diane Higgins advised that since the last meeting, the scheme is now up and running, and is formally constituted. Diane advised that there is lots of work to do over the coming months and two action days have already taken place with another planned for Saturday 8 April 2017, meeting at the Ring 'O' Bells at 10am. The group have had a flower bed, which is currently empty, donated by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing outside the above location.

There are lots of activities taking place with young people, who have helped to shape the scheme and continue to show lots of enthusiasm. Diane explained that having looked at other 'In Bloom' schemes locally and nationally, it is very unusual to have young people playing such a prominent role. Members were advised that there has been lots of social media activity and the group have also adopted the Middleton Coat of Arms as their logo.

Diane formally introduced Paula Hickey as the Chair for Middleton In Bloom, and Paula explained that the group need more involvement from 'Friends of Groups', and explained that the ethos behind the Middleton In Bloom is intergenerational work. Any groups wishing to get involved can contact Diane or Paula via Lauren, or direct via email. Paula explained that everyone is welcome to attend the monthly meeting, which takes place at 6pm on the first Monday of the month at Springvale

Youth Club (although the May meeting will be on Tuesday 2 May at 6pm).

Following a discussion around sponsorship, Councillor June West advised that she had contact with the former manager of McBride's, and would see if he could direct the group to a relevant contact within the company. A suggestion was also put forward that the group contact JW Lees.

Paula advised the group had previously looked to do some planting in Jubilee Park, but had been advised that without the permission of the Council and Middleton Township this isn't possible. Following a discussion around contacts within Environmental Management, Nick O'Neill advised that any emails could be sent to him, as he manages the team that assist the 'In Bloom' groups. Nick's email address is nicholas.oneill@rochdale.gov.uk

Paula advised that the route for the judging panel had now been finalised, and there are currently two parks on the route; Jubilee and Truffet. Carol Geddes suggested that some work be done at the shops on Kirkway. Councillor Wardle also suggested that the group make contact with the business/industrial estates such as Stakehill.

5. STREET CLEANING, WASTE, CLEAN AND GREEN

Nick O'Neill formally introduced himself to the group, and advised that he is the Middleton 'link' officer for Environmental Management (EM), and that there have been a number of changes taking place within EM, resulting in new roles and responsibilities with more work being done around local knowledge and ensuring the supervision of individual areas is undertaken.

Nick explained that with the introduction of the new roles and responsibilities, EM is also trialling a 4 on/4 off rota over a seven day period; this has shown to improve the cleanliness.

The meeting was informed there is currently a 'waste campaign' ongoing to encourage individuals to recycle more food waste, which will in turn decrease the 'tippage' charge the authority has to pay to Greater Manchester and therefore save money, whilst also reducing landfill.

Nick advised that the Clean & Green work is ongoing, with all requests going through the Township Offices, who then log with a dedicated team; this is making a brilliant visual impact.

Nick stated there is a trial taking place in Rochdale Town Centre involving the introduction of 'triple' recycling bins to hopefully reduce the amount of tippable waste created by the Town Centre. If this pilot is successful then it will be rolled out to other areas including Middleton. Nick will feedback at the next meeting. Following a discussion regarding this matter, Councillor Wardle suggested that a request be made to Councillor Emmott for the trial to be extended to Middleton.

Councillor Boriss requested that a timetable be provided for when the street cleaning vehicles are expected to visit certain areas, as some residential areas seem to be visited on a far more regular basis than others. Councillor Boriss advised that he is also concerned about the lack of cleaning under the two railway bridges at Joshua Lane and Baytree Lane, both pavements and roads are covered in bird faeces. Nick advised that the new structure will allow the officers assigned to each area to become familiar with the issues and ensure that works are undertaken when and where necessary.

David Lappin raised concerns about the suitability of the street cleaning vehicles, as he felt the machines used just move the debris from the gutter area to the middle of the road, especially where he lives. Nick advised that he would look into this issue and request an officer visit after the road-sweeping.

6. THI (TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE) UPDATE

Sue Oakley advised that the end of the scheme is nearing, it has been extended to July 2017, but the team are working to get permission to extend the programme until March 2018. Sue will report back to the next meeting as to whether this has been successful.

- La MinHaz on Market Place is complete and looks fantastic.
- Restoration work to 51 and 53 Rochdale Road is well underway and when finished will be a really good scheme.

- The Exedra works are now fully underway, and the current boundary fencing for the scheme is expected to reduce over the coming days. The scheme is expected to complete in June 2017. Sue advised that any damage to the park will be made good once the scheme is completed. Councillors asked that sheeting be put over the fencing around the Exedra scheme as a number of birds have been trapped and subsequently killed due to getting stuck in the fencing.
- The new railings, for the top of the retaining wall at Jubilee Park, have been ordered and are currently being manufactured.
- A new architect is now on board for the Long Street Methodist Church and School, and thanks were noted to Christine and Geoff Grime for all their hard work relating to this scheme. Following a discussion regarding linking this magnificent building into the In Bloom project, it was agreed that Geoff will provide access for a planting project at the school/church.

7. TRANSPORT ISSUES

Carol Geddes advised that on a number of occasions now, whilst waiting for the number 17 bus, despite not being full, and her putting her hand out, the bus has sailed past her without stopping. Carol has made a complaint to TfGM regarding this issue, and it was suggested that this also be passed to Councillor Burke, as the TfGM representative.

8. UPDATES

a) Friends of Middleton View

Geoff Grime explained that despite numerous repairs to the pathway at Tonge Field, there is still the ongoing issue of horses on non-grazing land. In order to facilitate the horses being moved round the field, the owner has removed some of the knee-rail fencing, which Geoff advised was originally paid for by the Township. Geoff explained that he had made contact with Elaine Clough, who works in Rochdale Council Estates, regarding this issue and although the licensee of the land has been spoken to, the issue is still ongoing.

Following a discussion it was agreed that Lauren will contact Elaine Clough for clarification of when the new inspection is expected to happen. Councillor Carol Wardle advised that as all three fields have rag-wart, no horses should be allowed on the land.

b) Friends of Jubilee Park

As the group were not present the meeting was advised that the AGM, for the Friends of Jubilee Park, is due to take place on 24 April 2017 at the Olde Boar's Head.

c) Friends of Wince Brook - Anti-social Behaviour Issues

No report was provided and no representative was present to give an update.

d) Green Volunteers

No report was provided and no representative was present to give an update.

e) Friends of Alkington Woods

Jerry Stokes advised that Spring is well underway in the Woods, and there is a constant flow of visitors to the area. Jerry advised that due to the pathways being overgrown, the group is unable to hold children's events in the Woods. The hawthorn hedges planted by the Green Volunteers are looking very healthy.

f) Friends of Boarshaw Cemetery

No report was provided and no representative was present to give an update.

g) Friends of Hopwood Woods Nature Reserve

Keeley O'Mara advised that following the concerns raised at the last Middleton Environment & Culture Forum, a meeting took place with the college, who are now working alongside the Friends of Group and the Rangers.

The cycle route is now underway, although there are issues with drainage. There has been an increase in off-road bikes and quads. It was suggested that as this is a police issue the group report their concerns to the next PACT meeting. Councillor Rowbotham advised that when the cycle paths were first discussed there were concerns about this issue, and the Councillors were advised by Steve Reay and Alex Whittaker that kissing gates would be installed to reduce this issue. This issue

will be passed onto Highways by Lauren.

A discussion took place regarding a resident of Cooper Fold who continues to dump rubbish; this will be reported by Councillor Wardle.

Keeley advised that Middleton Parish School want to do a 'Forest School'. She was informed that there is already one at Sunnybrow Nursery School, but Keeley advised that she was under the impression this was only for the nursery's use.

Keeley explained that she is looking to get funding to repair/create pathways in the Nature Reserve. She was advised that there may be the opportunity for Section 106 funds to be allocated, or alternatively a request could be made for Township Funds.

h) Absolute Angling

No report was provided and no representative was present to give an update.

i) Friends of Bowlee Community Park

No report was provided and no representative was present to give an update.

j) Friends of Mellalieu Street

No report was provided and no representative was present to give an update.

k) Status4All

Councillor Smith advised that the organisation has secured £22,000 Viridor funding for electricity to be provided on the site, and toilets installed. Once these works have been completed, the group is also looking for solar power to be installed on site.

The group are currently working with the 'Your Place' scheme, organised with Rochdale Borough Council and Riverside HA to train volunteers and organise volunteer clean up days, etc.

Councillor Smith advised that the 'My World' project is well underway and expected to be completed by September 2017.

All of the allotments on the site are now full (10).

l) Middleton Lads & Girls Football Club

No report was provided and no representative was present to give an update.

m) Middleton Civic Association

No report was provided and no representative was present to give an update.

n) Middleton Roundtable

No report was provided and no representative was present to give an update.

o) Middleton Cricket Club

John Burton advised that the club applied to Lancashire League, due to the club not feeling the Pennine League was appropriate, and this new league seems to be working well.

There are around 24 different groups and society's using the cricket club facilities for meetings, events, etc and this is provided by the club free of charge to support local organisations.

John advised that the club made applications to other funders for specialist fencing to be provided, for which they have been successful, but are still looking for funding to pay for an 'electronic scoreboard'.

Councillor Rowbotham advised that there are flooding issues, outside the club fencing at the bottom of Hollin Lane, which has previously been looked in to by the club, but John advised that it would be very expensive to sort this out. It was agreed that Lauren would report this to Highways for consideration. A discussion took place about the use of trees to absorb some of the flood water, but it was felt that residents in the area may not want this, but this would need further investigation.

p) Link4Life Update

Andrew Entwistle advised that Link4Life is now coming to the point of implementation from the results of the consultant's review, which were discussed at the last meeting.

Andrew stated that following the concerns raised, Link4Life have bought in the booking system, Spectricks, which is in the top three of booking systems in the world. This system should make bookings much easier for shows, etc at Middleton Arena, and other venues owned by Link4Life.

Andrew advised that the opening of the new 'Exercise4Less' gym in Middleton Shopping Centre has had an impact on Middleton Arena, as expected.

Last year, Middleton Arena hosted a Children's Cinema and this will again be run throughout the summer holidays, with one showing per week.

David Lappin advised that following the last meeting, he tried to book two seats for a show, as there were three seats left in the row, which were seated together, he was not allowed to book these seats. David felt this was very unfair, and following a discussion it was agreed that Andrew would feedback this to Gillian Bishop (CEO). David also advised that following the last meeting he had written a letter to Gillian, which was handed in at Middleton Arena, and it appears that this has not been received by Gillian. This matter will also be fed back by Andrew.

Andrew reported that at the moment he is concentrating on improving the customer service experience of customers using the venue, and explained that the organisation do employ mystery shoppers. As an organisation Link4Life are keen that this be the selling point of its venue; excellent customer service is what most of the customers surveyed want from the company.

Concerns were raised about the increased hire cost for the venue, and Andrew advised that this is in part due to Link4Life not previously charging VAT when they should have been, so this has increased costs by 20%. A discussion took place regarding the costs to hire the venue, and a number of people fed back to Andrew that the facilities are out of the price range for local organisations to hire the venue.

q) Any other groups/events

No issues to report.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- a) David Lappin stated he attends the Oddfellows, which due to anti-social behaviour (ASB) is closing down. He is concerned that due to the ongoing issues being caused in the town by offenders, there is an element of fear. A discussion took place and people agreed that there are issues constantly ongoing due to ASB, such as the recent spate of windows being smashed at buildings throughout the town centre, including Tesco's and Middleton Arena. Councillor Rowbotham attended a meeting with Middleton Police and other partners yesterday and the issues around young people causing ASB in the town centre were discussed. The Police are working with victims to identify and hopefully prosecute the perpetrators, but people must report all issues to allow the Police to build up a picture of crimes and hot-spots.
- b) John Wilkins advised that the next meeting of Middleton Community Voice is on Tuesday 9 May 2017 at the Lighthouse Project and invited all those interested to attend the meeting.
- c) John explained that BOLD is a non-political group, who discuss various issues such as mental health, and advised that both Councillor Furlong and Councillor Boriss attended the last meeting. He invited all to attend the next meeting on 24 April 2017 at 8pm.
- d) Councillor Rowbotham stated that she had seen the charity collection coins in Tesco for Boarshaw Clough Buddies, but advised that she had been unable to get any information about the scheme. Following a discussion Keeley advised that she would forward Councillor Rowbotham the details for the Middleton 'Tesco Bags for Help', who may be able to provide the contact details of the organisation.

- e) Councillor Rowbotham has asked officers from Environmental Management to ensure that the '24 Steps' are cleaned up.
- f) It was agreed that the request for air monitoring would be chased up with colleagues in Highways.

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

All meetings commence at 6.15pm and take place 1st Floor, Middleton Library.

- Tuesday 18 July 2017
- Wednesday 30 August 2017
- Wednesday 4 October 2017
- Wednesday 6 December 2017
- Wednesday 14 March 2018