

CASTLETON AREA FORUM

Wednesday 21 June 2023
Castleton Community Centre, Manchester Road,
Castleton, Rochdale OL11 3AF

MINUTES

Present: Approx. 130 members of the public

Councillors: B Sheerin and AB Gallagher

Officers: R Hudson (Townships - Rochdale Borough Council)
V White (Townships and Communities Manager - Rochdale Borough Council)
M Dalzell (Head of Neighbourhood Services - Rochdale Borough Council)
A Whittaker (Team Leader Network Improvement & Development, Highways - Rochdale Borough Council)
Insp J Partington (GMP)
Sgt D Hartley-Pickles (GMP)

Apologies: PCSO S Pemberton (GMP)
Y Pickering (Community Safety - Rochdale Borough Council)
3 members of the public

1. INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES/CODE OF CONDUCT

Introductions were made by officers present and all were welcomed to the meeting. The code of conduct was read out to all in attendance who were asked to abide by it for the duration of the meeting. The Chair stated that all area forums rely on residents taking the role of Chair of the meeting, supported by Townships Officers, and this has not happened in Castleton for a long time. The next meeting, scheduled for 11 September 2023 will therefore be an Annual General Meeting and a Chair will need to be appointed. If the meeting does not succeed in identifying and voting in a Chair for the following 12 months, the meeting will close and the meetings planned for November and February will not take place.

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING/MATTERS ARISING/UPDATES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 March 2023 were approved and the following updates given.

Albion Street refuse bin removal

A resident previously queried why the refuse bin had been removed from outside the location of the paper shop on Albion Street. Townships acquired an update from the Council's Environmental Management Department who advised there is already a bin further up on the corner of Albion Street/St Martin's Street and the placement of two litter bins in close proximity was not supported. The bin was also removed due to being misused as a fly-tipping spot and the service had received a number of complaints from residents on Albion Street requesting the Council relocate it. The site for the bin is considered a better location and the footfall on Vicarage Road North means the bin has greater use.

Slattocks roundabout damage

A resident had previously requested Highways inspect and repair the roundabout at Slattocks, stating it is badly damaged, along with the grass island. The Council's Highways Department have raised this matter with Highways England, as they need to firstly acquire permission before

commencing remedial works due it being a slip road to a motorway. The materials for the repair have already been compiled in readiness for the approval.

Tyre Outlet - Manchester Road

Residents' concerns regarding the tyre outlet business at the site of the former car lot on Manchester Road were raised again and an update requested on the action being taken by the Council's Planning Enforcement Department. Update received was officers are still compiling the necessary information required in order to take the appropriate legal action. No further details regarding this process can be released for legal reasons. Residents wanted their concerns escalated again with the Council's Planning Enforcement Department with a request action needs to be taken immediately.

Action: Townships to raise the issue again with the Council's Planning Enforcement Department

3. GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE

Inspector Partington (GMP) provided the update with Sgt Hartley-Pickles who has been covering the area of Castleton for the past five weeks in attendance. Inspector Partington advised residents that the policing team has increased in numbers recently with two beat officers as well as PCSO Pemberton. Apologies were given for the non-attendance of officers at the recent Police surgery which was due to sickness so it proved too late to advertise its cancellation.

The Chief Constable of GMP wants emphasis placing on 'strong, proactive community policing to target those individuals in the community who are causing the most harm'. With that being said, Inspector Partington advised the area forum that the key issues for the area have been identified as speeding, drugs and anti-social behaviour.

Speeding

Officers now have access to speed guns which can be used day or night on speed operations. If any residents have areas of concern, please inform Elected Members or the Police. Some additional Neighbourhood Officers are participating in a course to enable them to pursue speeding vehicles. Also GMP are working with the Council on the process to apply for a Public Space Protection Order to cover the whole of the Rochdale Borough which will enable them to enforce and issue fixed penalty tickets to off-road biking offenders.

Drugs

A proactive team is in place to address issues comprising of one Sergeant and four Police Constables who are a committed unit with the intention of targeting the dealers on the streets by using intelligence put forward by the community. Residents are urged to ring Crimestoppers with any information they witness which could support officers in their attempt to issue warrants and seize the necessary individuals involved in this criminality.

Anti-social behaviour

Statistics from the past three months of April to June do not show that this is a major issue in the area at present. Should any residents have any matters of concern in their area, please raise with officers accordingly.

Burglaries

Statistics from the last three months show two shed break-ins for the month of June, no robberies and no theft of motor vehicles reported in the area of Castleton.

'Bee in the Loop'

This is a new initiative by GMP which is a messaging service, in addition to their social media channels, to communicate with residents/businesses in each area regarding incidents/emergencies, to pass on crime prevention advice and to help shape local priorities for officers to concentrate on. Residents can sign up to it via the website www.beeintheloop.co.uk

A resident raised a query regarding the use of sirens by officers after 11pm, which was also mentioned at the previous meeting. The Inspector advised that comments will be passed back to officers on response.

4. OPEN FORUM

Castleton Bee Network Scheme

Residents at the area forum voiced their disapproval again about the scheme. An officer from the Council's Highways Department was in attendance to respond to all questions and enquiries raised. Residents discussed the road closure currently implemented on Keswick Street (prohibiting access both ways to Manchester Road) and they were advised that it was currently a temporary order which acts like a trial of the change to the road network, giving the flexibility to be amended. Residents expressed concerns, stating the signage in place looks a permanent fixture, questioning just how long the closure will remain. The Highways Officer advised that any signage in place has to be regulatory in order to legally enforce the order. It was reported that the diversion is causing safety concerns for older residents on foot living in that area. The officer explained that the diversions and signalisations in place are necessary in the short term, so that works to the main thoroughfare can be completed which inevitably will then assist pedestrians and provide much more crossing points along with safe zones and tactile pavements for the blind. Residents advised the temporary lights are causing issues for coaches accessing the road to get to the rugby club and they requested the signage is reviewed within the Keswick Street zone as it was claimed drivers are failing to see the signs in advance before they are within the closure/diversion. The Highways Officer agreed to take back this suggestion to the Highways Department for review.

Residents also expressed their censure of the scheme due to the direct impact they feel it will have on the local businesses as a result of less footfall/passing trade because of the removal of adjacent parking for customers outside premises. Councillor Sheerin advised the Council will do all they can to support and assist shop owners in sustaining their businesses in the area in the future. He stated the intention with walking and cycle schemes like this one is to support climate change initiatives for future generations. The Highways Officer advised the walking and cycle scheme is also to improve the road safety for all users of the network. He explained how features such as the raised junction areas provide traffic calming measures and how buses using the route force traffic to reduce speed in general on the network and make drivers take more care on the roads. A resident expressed their opinion that the scheme is not wide enough for double pushchairs to access the pavement.

Castleton sidings proposed development

Residents raised this proposed development again, expressing concerns over the use of a one-way system on Partington Street feeding as an access route into the housing site. The Highways Officer advised that although there is currently no formal application submitted yet for this development, they do intend to challenge these proposals with the developer and explore other options regarding the access to the site that they feel would be more suitable. Residents stressed the need for separate access and egress roads into the site.

Residents expressed concerns about safety on Fairway recommending that any future traffic surveys will need to include data for weekends as well as mid-week. Comments were made that this area experiences high levels of parking causing visibility issues for road users, safety concerns for children and restricted access for emergency vehicles. It was also stated that there are no junction markings on Fairway.

Councillor Sheerin stressed the importance to residents on making their views and concerns heard by commenting on and/or objecting to any future planning application being submitted.

Section 106 Agreements

A short discussion was held about Section 106 Agreements and developer's responsibilities to adhere to the planning conditions. A question was raised as to whether the Council has taken any developers to court for breaking the agreement or non-payment.

Action: Councillor Sheerin to raise the enquiry with the Council's Planning/Legal Department

5. NEIGHBOURHOOD LITTER ISSUES

No update.

6. MEMBERS/WARD FUNDS

No update.

7. REPORTS

Castleton EC Residents

No update.

Friends of Carnegie Castleton

No update.

Friends of Castleton Station/Support the Oldham, Rochdale & Manchester Rail Lines/East Lancs Railway

No update.

St Gabriel's

No update.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

Councillors' surgeries

Surgeries are held on Saturdays at 10.30am –11.30am at the following venues:

First Saturday in month - St Aidan's Church Hall

Second Saturday in month - Castleton Community Centre

Third Saturday in month - Thornham Cricket Club

Fourth Saturday in month - Carnegie Library

9. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 11 September 2023 at 7pm