

Chair: Christine Thornton, 40 Cross Flatts Avenue, Beeston, Leeds, LS11 7BG. Tel 0113 270 0875

Secretary: Mr Robert Winfield, 7 Allenby Gardens, Beeston, Leeds, LS11 5RW. Tel 0113 271 6985

E mail robert.winfield1@ntlworld.com Forum Website- www.beestonforum.btck.co.uk

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BEESTON COMMUNITY FORUM

Beeston Forum General Meeting - 3rd January 2013

Agenda

- 1. Chairman's Opening Remarks**
- 2. Apologies for absence**
- 3. Guest Speaker - Shaun Harvey , Chief Executive, Leeds United FC**
- 4. Guest Speaker- Zeb Ahmed, Aspiring Communities**
- 5. Minutes of the meeting of the Beeston Forum held on Thursday 1st November 2012**
- 6. Police Report**
- 7. Correspondence**
- 8. Report of Committee meetings - 22nd November 2012 and 11th December 2012**
- 9. Possible Co-options to the Committee**
- 10. Any Other Business**

Minutes of the meeting of the Beeston Community Forum held on 1st November 2012

Attendance:- Mr R. Bell (in the chair in the absence of Christine Thornton) , Ins. P. Akerman (West Yorkshire Police), Mr. R. Almond, Mr. W. J. Birch, Mr. D. Bottomley, Mrs. D. Brooke, Mr. K. Burton, Mrs. S. Burton, R. Casserley, D. Copsey, Councillor D. Congreve, Mr. J. Cunningham, J. Dickinson, S. Goulding (West Yorkshire Police), Mr. J. Hodgson, Mr. J. Hook, Mr. R. Hunter, Mr. A. Kirby, Mr. G.M. Mason, Mrs. M. Mason, Miss. E. Newton, Mr. M. Parry, J. Rooks (West Yorkshire Police), Mr. F. Swift, Mrs. D. Whitehead, Mr. P. Whitehead and Mr. R.J.W. Winfield

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks- Richard Bell welcomed those present to the meeting and explained that as Christine Thornton was away, he would be chairing the meeting .
2. Apologies for absence were received from John Fenton, Kathleen Fenton, Steve Francis, Councillor Angela Gabriel, Councillor Adam Ogilvie, John Peckham, Christine Thornton and Greg Turton. Robert Winfield wished Councillor Angela Gabriel a speedy recovery from her recent accident. Councillor David Congreve pointed out that she had recovered and had returned to work earlier in the week.
3. Guest Speakers- Richard Bell introduced the guest speakers; Gerald Jennings and Tim Flanagan. Gerald Jennings noted that he is from Land Securities , which owns the White Rose Centre, and that his colleague , Tim Flanagan is part of the team looking at the White Rose Centre. He noted that Richard Bell had mentioned the South Leeds Investment Partnership. He noted that Land Securities had founded the South Leeds Investment Partnership, with Leeds City Council, in order to look at what is happening in South Leeds, and build on the key successes which have been achieved. The partnership was also set up to address such issues as how we can generate more employment and economic activity. As part of this process, the White Rose Shopping Centre was identified as a hub. The Centre employs 3500 people, 40% of who live in neighbouring Leeds City Council wards. Visitors to the centre also live nearby. It was noted that 16% of visitors to the centre come by bus. Gerald Jennings added that not only has the White Rose been successful , but it also has the chance to do more by way of job creation. Land Securities has looked at this issue in detail, spoken to people in Beeston, Middleton and Morley and had come up with a detailed expansion proposal, which had been described in public display boards at the White Rose Centre. The expansion plans would involve the building of a new cinema; adjacent to which would be four restaurants. On the east side of the centre, Primark, which is trading well and wishes to expand from its present 35000 square feet. It wishes to expand by

100000 square feet, so that it would become one of the largest Primark stores in the UK. Much the same situation applies at Debenhams, which wishes to expand by 35000 square feet. There would also be three new shops adjacent to the extension. It is proposed to improve the bus station; it is noted that around 30% of the employees at the White Rose Centre travel to it by bus. It was acknowledged that the bus station could be better. The extensions to the centre would involve building on the existing car park. Additional car parking would replace most of the car parking spaces lost; however there would be a loss of 160 car parking spaces overall. It is hoped that this would be compensated for by bus improvements.

3.1 The meeting then opened up to questions from the floor. Amongst issues raised were the possibility of a railway station at the White Rose Centre, improvements in bus services to the centre, the possible implications of the reduction in the number of car parking spaces at the centre, the road surfaces in various parts of the centre, the footpath on the perimeter of the centre, the possibility of opening a new bank in the centre, the availability of real time bus information at the centre, the implications for the centre and staff travelling to it of the Elland Road Park and Ride Scheme, and security at the centre, particularly if a cinema is built.

4. The Minutes of the meeting of the Beeston Community Forum held on Thursday 4th October were accepted as a fair and accurate record of the meeting.

5. Correspondence- Robert Winfield said that he has one item of correspondence unrelated to the Asda and Tesco planning applications which would be dealt with later.. He had received an e mail from Sheila Fletcher of Leeds City Council, who pointed out that she had been in contact with Christine Thornton in connection with the renaming of Harry Booth House. She noted that she had arranged to attend the meeting presently taking place, but they do not yet have the shortlist of names and she has not therefore had the opportunity to discuss this with ward councillors. She wondered whether it would be possible to raise this matter at the December meeting. Robert Winfield had replied pointing out that the December meeting is the AGM of the Forum and that this is traditionally confined to AGM business. He would, however put this request to the meeting. The meeting supported the view of Bill Birch who felt that unless there is any urgency in relation to the matter, Sheila Fletcher should attend the January meeting. Robert Winfield objected to the proposal to remove the name of Harry Booth, who had been a long serving councillor for Beeston and the Lord Mayor of Leeds in 192. Richard Bell noted that there would be a change of purpose for the building.

6. Report of Committee meeting held on 18th October 2012. Richard Bell noted that the meeting had considered the failure by Insp. Paul Akerman to attend the October Forum meeting, as invited. It was noted that Insp. Akerman had e mailed Robert Winfield to explain that he had been misinformed that the meeting had been cancelled. The meeting had also discussed the constitutional amendment which will be discussed at the AGM. Richard Bell noted that the details of the amendment are set out on a separate sheet which had been circulated to members at the meeting. There was also a discussion about the Asda and Tesco planning applications. The meeting agreed to write to Hilary Benn with our concerns about the conduct of the Leeds City Council Planning Department in relation to the applications. There was a discussion about the Elland Road Park and Ride scheme and what we are doing in opposition to it. There had also been a discussion about the behaviour of members in meetings, arising from the controversy which had been caused by John Baron's live blog.

7. Asda and Tesco planning applications- Robert Winfield noted that he had been informed that the meeting of the plans panel which will consider the Asda and Tesco planning applications will take place on Thursday 8th November. Robert Winfield had telephoned Pete Wrathmell of IPB Communications (which is assisting Tesco in relation to their planning application) and Richard Anderson (which is assisting Asda). Robert Winfield noted that they had both told him that their clients have not taken a decision as to whether to take the matter further if the applications do not go in their favour, but they would take this decision in the light of what was actually said at the plans panel meeting. If they feel that the planning applications have been rejected on perverse grounds, it is more likely that they would appeal. Robert Winfield noted that the Forum has three concerns in relation to the conduct of the Leeds City Council Development Department; firstly, the delays which have taken place in relation to the consideration of the two planning applications, secondly, the reliance of the department on Colliers International, despite the fact that Colliers apparently ignored an invitation to attend our Special General Meeting on 28th June. The third concern is the Development Department's inaccurate statement that the site of the proposed Tesco is occupied by a mill. This had seriously undermined the credibility of the Department.

Robert Winfield referred to an e mail which he received from Victoria Hinchliff Walker of the Leeds City Council Development Department. She explained that both schemes are going forward with recommendations for refusal which would mean that anyone supporting the scheme will have the opportunity to address Plans Panel Members on the day; this includes the applicants and for each scheme only three minutes is allocated to be split between the relevant speakers. Each allocation is dealt with separately, although it will be made clear that the issues are very similar. If it looks like members are not going to accept the recommendations on both applications then Officers would advise that both schemes be deferred to allow cumulative impact issues to be assessed (particularly with regard to traffic matters). Victoria Hinchliff Walker said that if we wish to speak, we should contact the Development Enquiry Centre; the plans panel is now called South and West. She added that site visits are being organised on the morning of the panel day; Tesco at 10.45 a.m and Asda at 11.05 a.m. Robert Winfield had received an e mail from Pete Wrathmell of IPB Communications explaining that Asda plan to open 24 hours a day. Robert Winfield noted that one of the conditions under which the Forum withdrew its objection to the Asda (and indeed

Tesco) planning application is that the store would not open for 24 hours a day. Bill Birch wondered whether, in these circumstances, we should say that we want Tesco. Robert Winfield said that it would be possible for the Forum to support the Asda application, but subject to the proviso that the store does not open for 24 hours per day.

John Hook noted that Asda already has the Middleton store. Councillor David Congreve wondered whether anyone has read the reports from the planning officers about the planning applications. He noted that these are available and felt that it would be useful to read them. He added that he had read them but was unable to find any reference to plans by Asda to open 24 hours per day. Robert Winfield noted that he had learned of Asda's supposed plans to open 24 hours a day from the PR firm advising Tesco. David Congreve felt that we should read the report before taking any action based on the assumption that Asda plan to open 24 hours per day. Robert Winfield agreed with this view. Bill Birch said that he cannot see this being the end of the matter and said that he would be amazed if there is no appeal to the Planning Inspector. Robert Winfield noted the practical difficulties which could arise if the Forum wishes to react to a decision of the Plans Panel which is not in accordance with the Forum's wishes. He noted that as the December meeting is the Forum AGM, which is normally confined to AGM business, the next business meeting of the Forum is on 3rd January. David Congreve felt that the Forum has made its own views about the planning application clear. It is not as though the Forum needs to express any concerns it has quickly. Any concerns would be expressed by the applicants. Richard Bell noted that Christmas will intervene before the next business meeting of the Forum, and, as little happens over the Christmas period, 3rd January would be okay.

Robert Winfield noted that he had received an e mail from Councillor Stewart Golton, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group on Leeds City Council, suggesting that he give Councillor Golton a call on his mobile phone to discuss the issues raised by the Forum in its letter to the three major party leaders on Leeds City Council. Robert Winfield noted that he was initially unable to phone Councillor Golton as he had been unwell; he then raised the matter at the Beeston Forum Committee which suggested that there could be a meeting with Councillor Golton in order to discuss these issues. Richard Bell suggested deferring this matter until we find out more.

Councillor David Congreve suggested that we write to the representatives of the political parties attending the AGM to give details of issues which concern the Forum. This was agreed. Robert Winfield noted that these issues will also be described in the Annual Report of the Forum, of which anyone attending the Forum can collect a copy.

8. The Police Report.

8.1 Inspector Paul Akerman apologised for the complete misunderstanding, which led to his non attendance at the Forum the previous month. He pointed out that he has been the local police Inspector since January 2012. He noted that those giving the police report have traditionally come and said how great the police are. To some extent, he will do that. However, he is also talking to Forum members about how they feel about the police service. He noted that the City and Holbeck Police division has had 960 fewer crimes than last year. This has included an impressive reduction of 680 crimes (representing 6 to 7% of the total) in the Holbeck division. Despite this, when the Police Authority send out surveys, people often say that they do not have confidence in the police. Paul Akerman noted that he comes from Halifax, and asked what is the point of the police if people do not feel safe. There is little point in police officers doing work if it does not make residents feel better. He noted that he is the fourth person in three generations of his family to have been a police officer in West Yorkshire. He noted that policemen walking the streets make people feel safer. He noted that officers recently raided a brothel and arrested three Eastern European Nationals. The police have also found stolen audio equipment and removed stolen equipment from shops. Heroin has also been recovered from a house in Beeston.

8.2 Roy Casserley said that policemen who walk the streets are likely to get to know the neighbourhood. Bill Birch said that the real problem is the media. The police are great but the media only report bad news. We are told that we live in a place like CSI Miami. Paul Akerman said that in terms of the media, the police have no real coverage. It is often said that the police have no chance of getting coverage in the Yorkshire Evening Post, but Sam Casey often approaches the police for news. Bill Birch noted that Leeds City Council has £1 billion of debt, but there were two idiots in a plastic duck paddling down a canal for half an hour. Paul Akerman said that he cannot influence this, but would instead look to areas which he can influence. He noted that his grandfather was in the police service between 1966 and 1968. I was then a different universe; there were three TV channels at that time, but there are now websites, such as facebook (where 224 people follow West Yorkshire Police) and twitter. Facebook is used to explain what the police do; for example, officers had seen a suspicious youth on a bike. They recovered a large roll of cash and some cannabis. As a result of this, a drug dealer was put out of action. Insp Akerman wondered whether facebook is the modern equivalent of the policeman on the street. However, this only works if people go on facebook.

8.3 Richard Bell noted that he had received a phone call two weeks ago about a call which he had made to the police. Paul Akerman said that there are two important measures; confidence and satisfaction. The level of satisfaction with the police is 90%; a very impressive figure. He noted that the police authority randomly e mails people. It is noted that crime in the Holbeck area is low.

8.4 John Hodgson was pleased that the police have a good working relationship with Sam Casey, but felt that he should learn where Beeston and Hunslet are. Paul Akerman noted that his area is known as Holbeck NPT, even though it is a wider area

than Holbeck. Holbeck NPT is frequently shortened to Holbeck, although the police try to be more specific.

8.5 Roy Casserley felt that crime prevention is non-existent, no one is available to replace the crime prevention officer who had recently gone on long-term sick with cancer. Paul Akerman said that there were two crime prevention advisors; Paul Cockcroft, and the person who had been based in Morley who has taken long-term sick leave. Paul Akerman noted that Paul Cockcroft, who was a police officer in this area for 25 years, is now the Schools Officer based at Morley, but will help with crime prevention issues. He acknowledged that one crime prevention officer covering the whole area does not give the same coverage.

8.6 A member of the audience acknowledged that the police do a good job, but watches TV programmes about crime highlighting the fact that criminals are frequently given 200 hours of community service. He asked whether the police apply pressure to get stronger sentences. Paul Akerman noted that sending people to prison work, however restorative punishment (such as getting vandals to paint over graffiti) and community orders also work.

9. The Annual General Meeting- Robert Winfield drew the attention of members of the Forum to the separate sheet of paper describing the AGM. He said that anyone considering seeking election to the Committee is more than welcome to speak to him, or to any member of the committee. He also drew attention to the constitutional amendment which will be considered at the AGM. He noted that the Forum constitution requires that notice of the amendment is given at the present meeting. There is no requirement to discuss the amendment at the present meeting; the discussion takes place at the AGM. The constitutional requirements are fulfilled simply by publishing the text of the amendment.

10. Any Other Business-

10.1 Donna Whitehead, a resident of Wooler Drive, expressed concerns about the plans by the group Aspiring Communities for the former Ice Pak factory on Barkly Road. She noted that when Zeb Ahmed had appeared before the Forum, local residents had known nothing about the plans. She had also seen the minutes of the Forum meeting at which Zeb Ahmed had appeared. She noted that Zeb Ahmed had assured the Forum that the building would not become a mosque. She added that a lot of things had been happening over the weekend. The roof of the building had been removed, leading to concerns about the removal of asbestos. Local residents had asked about this, and were told that there were no worries and no cause for concern. Donna Whitehead added that four or five local residents had been told that the building would be a mosque, contrary to what the Forum had been told. Local residents had seen Councillor Adam Ogilvie, and had spoken to the Planning Department. She also noted that some local Muslim residents do not know Zeb Ahmed who does not attend the local mosque. Councillor Adam Ogilvie had sent him a letter about residents' concerns around four weeks ago, he had not received a reply. Bill Birch pointed out that asbestos is a large environmental health issue. Donna Whitehead said that she had heard that the company which had removed the asbestos is being investigated. Zeb Ahmed, she said, had promised a lot but there was nothing concrete. Richard Bell said that as the building was a factory, any other use for the building would require planning consent. David Congreve said that no planning application has been submitted. Peter Whitehead noted that the manner in which the roof was removed is a concern and it is now easier to get into the building. Donna Whitehead said that the perimeter to the building had not been closed, as asked. As a result of this, children are able to get into the building. She added that Zeb Ahmed had promised to contact and consult local residents about the plans but had not done so. No local resident had seen him, even though they live close to the site. Adam Ogilvie had written to him suggesting a meeting, but had received no reply. David Congreve said that consultation with residents is required. Bill Birch said that the whole operation sounds amateurish, and was particularly concerned about the removal of asbestos with no protective equipment. Peter Whitehead said that the Health and Safety Executive had declined to intervene as local residents were unable to prove anything which gives rise to concerns. David Congreve noted that there are a large number of rumours in circulation about the site. John Hodgson said that he was concerned about the matter. He was surprised that the Council seem to be ambivalent about the matter and felt that the planning department should be in a position to say whether there is asbestos in the building. He said that this area suffers enough through bad health. It was noted that Aspiring Communities have offices in Leeds and London. Richard Bell noted that the organisation had received a grant of £500 from the Inner South Leeds Area Committee of Leeds City Council. Donna Whitehead noted that there are many good organisations helping people in this area; the money going to Zeb Ahmed means that other organisations have lost the same amount of money.

Several Forum members suggested that Zeb Ahmed be invited to the January Forum meeting. However, Robert Winfield pointed out that this meeting is already due to host Shaun Harvey, Chief Executive of Leeds United FC, and had resolved to invite Sheila Fletcher, of Leeds City Council. Accordingly, it was agreed to invite Zeb Ahmed to the February meeting. Bill Birch noted that a licence is required to remove asbestos from a property. Questions which need to be asked is Who has that licence?; Who removed the asbestos?; Where are the relevant certificates and Where was the asbestos disposed of? It was agreed that Robert Winfield would write to Zeb Ahmed about the issues which had been raised. Donna Whitehead wondered who is helping the group (volunteers) and who is and is not qualified. She noted that people are always working on Saturdays and Sundays. Richard Bell said that he had read information online which appears to contradict what Zeb Ahmed had told the Forum.

10.2 Mick Mason noted that there was no hot water in the building and that as a consequence of this, he would be unable to serve tea to Forum members.

