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BEESTON COMMUNITY FORUM

Beeston Community Forum , General Meeting 2nd August 2012

AGENDA

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks
2. Apologies for absence
3. Guest Speaker- Tom Smith, Inner South Leeds Area Committee, Leeds City Council
4. Minutes of the meeting of the Beeston Community Forum held on Thursday 5th July 2012
5. Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Beeston Community Forum held on 28th June 2012
5. Report from the police
6. Correspondence
7. Report of Committee meetings on 21st June 2012 and 19th July 2012- the Committee has voted not to meet in August.
8. If time permits, Beeston Village Community Centre
9. Any Other Business

Minutes of the meeting of the Beeston Community Forum held on Thursday 5th July 2012

Attendance:-Christine Thornton (in the chair), Mr. Z. Ahmed, Mr. R. Bell, Mr. W.J. Birch, Mrs. D. Brooke, M. Cook, Mr. J. Cunningham, Mr. J. Fenton, Mrs. S. Gawthorpe, M. Hobson, Mr. J. Hook, Mr. J. Hodgson, Miss. P. Johnson Mr. A. Kirby, Mr. G.M. Mason, Mrs. M. Mason, Miss. E. Newton, Mr. M. Parry, Councillor A. Ogilvie, Mr. G. Turton , Sgt. D. Whiteside (West Yorkshire Police) and Mr. R. J.W. Winfield

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks. Christine Thornton thanked the members present for coming to the meeting on a wet night.
2. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Congreve
3. Guest Speakers- Christine Thornton noted that Shaun Harvey, the Chief Executive of Leeds United FC, who had been due to attend the meeting, was unable to do so due to a meeting in London. Christine Thornton introduced Councillor Keith Wakefield , the Leader of Leeds City Council.
 - 3.1 Keith Wakefield noted that he had just recorded a clip for BBC Look North. He noted that it is useful to talk about developments which had occurred earlier in the day. He said that if you ask the media, they will say that there has never been so much news in one day.
 - 3.2 Keith Wakefield addressed the issue of the Childrens Hospital in Leeds. He noted that many of us thought a long time ago that this would go to Leeds. He noted that the future of the hospital had been taken through a review. The review was looking at the best treatments and best consultants. It was thought that this process is going against Leeds. Keith Wakefield noted that he is not a clinician and not a consultant, although his son is a doctor, but acknowledged that it is hard to argue against the best interests of health. However, Keith Wakefield felt that the decision that the Childrens hospital be located in Newcastle is the wrong decision. As a result of the decision 5.5 million people in Yorkshire need to travel to Newcastle. In contrast, 12 million people are within two hours of Leeds. He said that the decision will cause a lot of heartbreak, expense and inconvenience. Wheeling out consultants to talk about the best interests of the Health Service misses the point. The facility needs to be as accessible as possible. Keith Wakefield said he is very angry, and added that if you know that something is not right, you should say it. He noted that the meeting of Leeds City Council next week will consider an all party white paper resolution saying that the decision to locate the hospital in Newcastle is the wrong decision. He noted that when television news programmes covered the decision, many parents, nurses and doctors broke down in front of the camera. The

decision was flawed. The new resource will need as many people as possible. The campaign is neither finished nor defeated. Keith Wakefield said that there should be a new review with different people. He noted that one of the consultants on the review team is from Newcastle Hospital. This was a blow for the 600000 people who had signed the biggest petition ever launched in this country. Keith Wakefield urged people to put pressure on MPs to get the government to intervene. In the end, this is a government decision. Keith Wakefield noted that this development has undermined the good news which had emerged during the day. He noted that at 7.10 a.m., that morning, he had walked into BBC Radio Leeds to be told that they did not want him as they wished to cover the story about the Childrens' hospital. He understood this decision.

3.3 Keith Wakefield noted that after 20 years of campaigning, Leeds had got NGT (New Generation Transport). He noted that the people of Leeds had been lobbying for this with successive governments for 20 years. He noted that some people get cynical as to whether to undermine bad news with good news. We had been given £175 million and should welcome this. However, this will not solve the transport problems in Leeds.

3.4 Keith Wakefield then addressed the developments in relation to the Leeds City Region. He noted that for years the leaders of the City of Leeds had been going down to Whitehall with a begging bowl for money for transport and apprenticeships. Leeds had been treated with contempt. The new powers handed to local government for the first time includes powers relating to transport. Keith Wakefield said that no one would defend the current system of transport, which had not worked since privatisation. He noted that in Headingley, there is bus every two hours, but in Kippax and Micklefield, there is a bus only every two hours. The present transport system is not good enough. We can be very ambitious with transport in the city, and plans to deal with travellers to work. The Leeds City Region area is now recognised as an economic unit.

3.5 Keith Wakefield then addressed the issue of unemployment. He asked what you do when you have a city where over 40000 under 25s are on some form of unemployment benefit. This is an indictment of the economy. Some of those out of work hold first class degrees; some have worked hard. He said that it is hard to obtain work in Leeds. Keith Wakefield noted that the government has allowed Leeds City Council to form a joint venture company with Leeds City College. Instead of an employer needing to go through five doors (five separate government departments) for an apprentice, it will only be necessary to go through one door. Under the scheme, Leeds City Council would employ an apprentice, and an employer would tell Leeds City Council that they need to take on an apprentice. Keith Wakefield added that Leeds City Council has a responsibility to do something for young people with no hope and no job. He had met a person who had applied for 90 jobs, but had not succeeded in obtaining an interview. He does not mind a debate about benefits, but if the benefits system is hardened up, there is a responsibility to provide jobs. He noted that Leeds is one of the most successful cities in the North and provides 411000 jobs. Keith Wakefield said that he is pleased that Leeds is leading on this issue. There will be an apprenticeship academy for people aged 14 to 24 which will provide 17000 to 18000 apprenticeships over four years. Keith Wakefield noted that the average age of a person being able to obtain a mortgage is 38. He could remember when many people left school, started work immediately and obtained a mortgage in their 20s. He said that there is now a crisis with people looking for a home for rent being trapped in the wrong property whilst paying landlords extortionate rents.

3.6 Keith Wakefield addressed the issue of Yorkshire Forward, which had invested £300 million before its abolition. Leeds and other cities had done well. In contrast, only £8 million had been invested under the new system; the Regional Growth Fund. He said that it is time Whitehall gave up and allowed local authorities in the north take responsibility for the economy and transport. He noted that there is one beacon of light in difficult times. He added that local authorities are taking the burden of cuts. For example 200 to 300 police in Leeds will go. Local government is taking a far larger share of the cuts than any other part of the public sector. Whitehall departments as a whole will have their spending reduced by 8% whilst Leeds City Council's spending will fall by 28%. Keith Wakefield said that he had never dreamed of the cuts which are being implemented over the last two years. Issues which arise include what should a local authority's priorities be and what should a local authority stop doing. He added that all of us over 35 can look forward to a longer life. The number of over 65s will grow by 44% over the next 20 years, and those over 80 will grow by over 200%. Keith Wakefield said that this is fantastic but asked how we can afford to look after them. He noted that he had been a worker, a student and then a lecturer under a local authority, and noted that the role of a local authority is to look after the elderly, the disabled and the young. There is a crisis of funding. The other side of the job is how we afford to run social services under huge pressure. There is the upsetting pressure of cutting services which we had never dreamed of cutting. He referred to the cutting of the Yorkshire Battalion, which will result in 7000 positions being cut. Nationally, 20000 positions will be lost in the Army; this is a sad day.

3.7 The meeting then opened up to questions from the floor. Amongst issues dealt with were public transport, with special emphasis on the new trolleybus route, plans for an academy for apprenticeships, the conduct of the Leeds City Council Planning Department, rogue landlords and people with learning difficulties.

3.8 Bill Birch thanked Keith Wakefield for attending the meeting, and explained that he is frustrated with the conduct of the Planning Department. He noted that in view of the passing of the Localism Bill, the views of local people now have to be taken into account. He said that when local people want a supermarket, the planners frustrate it, and when local people say that they do not want a Park and Ride Scheme in the Area, they say that we must have it. They will not allow the building of a multi storey car park in the Elland Road area. We had invited them to the special meeting of the Forum dealing with the Tesco and Asda planning applications but they had refused to attend. This is not right, and Forum members are upset. Keith Wakefield said that he had heard similar comments from the Beeston and Holbeck Councillors. He had asked Councillor Adam Ogilvie what the major issues in Beeston are. With regard to the Localism Bill, he said that the idea promoted by Eric Pickles is a con-trick. He said that if you have localism, most people think that you would be able to veto planning applications. In fact, you cannot. Local people are able to choose the paint colour materials and location of a development, but he noted that planning is development. He noted that the local councillors are opposed to the Park and Ride scheme. He noted that he once lived on the Marleys. If he were a councillor for Beeston and Holbeck ward, he would want to see a lot of benefits for the area before he would give way on the issue of Park and Ride. Until you see he benefits, why should you put up with Park and Ride. He concluded that there is still a considerable amount of work to be done. With regard to the Planning Department, Keith

Wakefield said that he cannot understand why they did not attend the Special Meeting. He noted that there are still negotiations taking place about the Park and Ride proposals. He added that there a number of promising developments in this area. £500 million to £1 billion will be invested in this area and we need to be able to have a dialogue. The concerns of local people are understandable. Keith Wakefield added 'I support this, you can quote me'. He said that we need a conversation before anything can happen in connection with the Park and Ride scheme. Keith Wakefield added that he works with the Leeds United Foundation (which has no connection with the club). The Foundation has little support from the club, although Shaun Harvey is involved with the Foundation. He said that the sooner new owners emerge for Leeds United FC , the better.

4. The minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 7th June 2012 were accepted as a fair and accurate record of the meeting.

5. Matters arising.

5.1 John Hodgson noted that at the last meeting of the Forum , Edna Newton had asked a question about bus passes. John Hodgson said that he had drawn her attention to the fact that it is a key aim of the National Pensioners Organisation to get all bus companies to provide swipe card arrangements so that bus companies charge local authorities for bus rides and that the companies are no better or worse off than if the concession had not increased. Many people wrongly believe that free travel is provided by the bus companies. He noted that individuals travelling to the East Coast puts people in bed and breakfast accommodation and benefits the seaside. He noted that the National Pensioners Organisation had met Norman Baker on 1st May 2012. He acknowledged that Edna Newton had won a large number of awards for her charity work, but said that it is wrong for her to have spoken against the pensioners bus pass. He noted that pensioners are the largest voting group in the country and the bus pass keeps buses running and bus drivers employed.

5.2 Arthur Kirby wondered whether there had been any developments in relation to Crawfords Fish Shop. Robert Winfield pointed out that he had received an e mail from Howard Claxton of the Leeds City Council Highways Department explaining that he would discuss the issues which he had raised with the engineer who covers this area and revert to him within ten days. Councillor Adam Ogilvie said that he had met Steve Crawford at the start of the week and noted that a site visit was still being arranged. He would report back at the next Forum meeting.

6. Police Issues

6.1 Sgt Diane Whiteside explained that she is a new Sergeant in the Holbeck NPT team. She explained that in the interests of continuity, it is hoped that a sergeant will attend all future Beeston Forum meetings; if not a senior PC should be able to be present. She explained that she would remain at the venue after the meeting in order to discuss relevant issues informally with members. She noted that Beeston has a number of local priorities and that the Neighbourhood Policing Team will allocate officers to deal with assessing them. She is not convinced of the relevance of the priorities. She explained that the three priorities are

- i) Anti Social Behaviour on Cardinal Road, Cardinal Square and Cardinal Court between 6 p.m and 1 a.m . She pointed out that there had been designated patrols on four occasions in the past seven days, and there had been nothing of note
- ii) Ongoing theft from diesel and motor vehicles on Parkside Lane and Middleton Grove
- iii) Anti social behaviour on Atha Street and Atha Crescent- 6p.m to midnight. There had been no problems.

Sgt. Whiteside noted that at the last Forum meeting, the issue of speeding on Gipsy Lane had been raised. The police had acquired a speeding device in order to deal with this problem. Arthur Kirby pointed out that there had been speeding at a box junction on Southleigh Road.

6.2 Richard Bell noted that there would be a challenge to generate issues as there are only around 20 people in the room. He noted that someone speeding down the road may not be a big issue but added that he who shouts the loudest gets heard. Sgt Whiteside said that there are PCSOs on the streets on a regular basis , and noted that there are issues with youths causing Anti Social Behaviour on Cross Flatts Park. She urged members of the Forum to tell the police something they do not know. Christine Thornton asked what is the detail of what is going on in the park. She added that she had seen men of all ages urinating. She wondered whether this is deemed to be indecent exposure. Sgt Whiteside said that this is only indecent exposure if it is for sexual gratification. Christine Thornton says that she always challenges people if they are urinating. Sgt Whiteside said that she is aware of youths causing a nuisance and littering. Christine Thornton said that she is aware of men bringing motor bikes into the park; on one occasion during a bands in the park event.

6.3 Richard Bell said that the issue of Drug Dealing on St. Anthony's Drive had been looked at last year, but there had been a number of instances of cars going down and waiting. Sgt. Whiteside said that she would take the issue away and see if there is any supporting evidence. Christine Thornton recalled that last year, a woman attended Forum meeting and made an impassioned plea about the issue of drug dealing in Holbeck Cemetery. She asked whether efforts to combat this had been successful. Sgt. Whiteside acknowledged that she was unable to answer the question, but said that she would report back at the next meeting of the Forum.

6.4 Christine Thornton said that there has been a problem with boy racers driving cars quickly around the area. Sgt. Whiteside said that she hoped that an increase in the number of officers on the beat would deter this.

6.5 Sgt Whiteside then turned to the issue of crime in the area.. She noted that we are looking at break ins, break ins at commercial premises , damage to houses and other buildings and theft of or from motor vehicles. John Fenton referred to the 101 non emergency phone number. Sgt. Whiteside noted that 101 is a 24 hour per day number. It is also possible to telephone the Holbeck Neighbourhood Policing team directly on 0113 241 4629. If the telephone is not answered it is possible to leave a message which should state a contact telephone number. With regard to actual crime figures, there had been a slight increase in the number of break ins to 5 ; however two people had been arrested two days ago, and have been charged and remanded so they are now off the streets. They were local people who had been stripped and searched by members of the Neighbourhood Policing Team , and evidence of burglaries had been found.

There had been an increase in the number of thefts from motor vehicles to seven. However, two people had been arrested charged and remanded. Sgt. Whiteside added that as four of these crimes were on an industrial estate, it is hoped that there will now be a dip. There had also been a number of sneak in burglaries. Sgt. Whiteside noted that the weather had been mild this year, even though wet. She noted that thieves had moved wheeliebins in order to reach the first floor of buildings. There had been twelve instances of criminal damage, in line with previous figures.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 Plans for former Ice Pak Premises, Barkly Road. Christine Thornton introduced Zeb Ahmed, who represents the Aspiring Communities Group, which had acquired the premises. Zeb Ahmed pointed out that the group is a registered charity and had acquired the Ice Pak premises in December 2011. He noted that the charity has three objects; the advancement of health, communities and religion. With regard to health, it is hoped that the premises would provide a drop in centre which would look to address issues such as deaf, dumb and blind. He added that the centre will have a recreation facility on the site for use by local residents. The possibility of five a side football and badminton had been mentioned. Zeb Ahmed said that he hoped to obtain feedback the views of the local community about their plans. He noted that his group had acquired the building for £750 million, and, if the plans go ahead, there would be investment of £2 million in the area.

Zeb Ahmed then turned to the issue of religion. He stressed that this would be on a multi faith basis. He noted that he was born and bred in Beeston, but that he does not represent a particular mosque. He envisaged an Islamic Learning Centre in order to break down barriers. It is also intended to address youth skills, with an emphasis on preparing for jobs, avoiding crime and training with volunteering skills. It is hoped to hold a session on the site in three to four weeks. Zeb Ahmed noted that no formal plans had been submitted, nor would plans be submitted until they had shared their ideas with the local community. It is intended to invite local residents to the premises for coffee and cake.

7.2 There was then a brief question and answer session. Christine Thornton asked Zeb Ahmed what his position is. He pointed out that he is a Director and Trustee (one of four directors) of the charity. He added that he had been working with the police and with Councillors Angela Gabriel and Adam Ogilvie. He stressed that he does not wish to duplicate an existing service by creating another centre as this achieves nothing. Christine Thornton asked whether the building would be an open house for everyone. She noted that although the doors of the Hamara Centre are open to everyone, it is dominated by Asians. Zeb Ahmed said that his group could have acquired a property in an Asian area, but instead chose to acquire a property in Beeston. It is hoped to make a difference to the local community. Christine Thornton asked why the group needs an Islamic learning centre when there is already the Hamara Centre. Zeb Ahmed said that the Hamara Centre is insular, but that it is the aim of his group to break down stereotypes. The agenda will cater for parts of the local community.

7.3 Greg Turton wondered whether the building would be open to people of all faiths, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hindu and Buddhist, and give young people of all faiths the opportunity to get to know each other. Zeb Ahmed said that there had been several meetings with local Christians and stressed that this is what they are seeking to do. He emphasised that the building will be open access.

7.4 John Hodgson asked whether Zeb Ahmed would be employing coaches of any faith. Zeb Ahmed said that locals would get jobs and facilities and the building would be open to anyone. Richard Bell asked whether the group is seeking a return on its investment. Zeb Ahmed said that he hoped to achieve greater community integration and harmony including Islamic integration. Richard Bell noted that all the trustees of the charity have Asian names. Zeb Ahmed said that he would keep the Beeston Forum informed of his group's intentions by e mail, and stressed that no plans would be submitted until they had received the views of the local community. Christine Thornton asked whether there would be a mosque within the centre. Zeb Ahmed said that there would be an Islamic learning centre. The group would try to improve the aesthetic look for the area, and regenerate the area. He noted that the existing office building would be demolished and replaced by gardens. John Hodgson asked whether there would be a madrassa. Zeb Ahmed said that the plans would be a little wider. John Hodgson noted that below the park, there are a number of mosques and the Islamic equivalent of Sunday Schools. Zeb Ahmed stressed that the building would be multi faith and would break down stereotypes. Greg Turton asked whether anything similar exists elsewhere. Zeb Ahmed said that this would be the first building of its type. He acknowledged that this is a high risk strategy, but that the premises are being set up in an area where it is hoped to make a difference to the entire community. It would be a safe bet to set up the premises in a muslim area, but the group is not doing this. Zeb Ahmed added that his group are speaking to councillors and various establishments, but noted that the idea is currently just a concept. Richard Bell said that the feel of people is that the building would turn into a mosque. Zeb Ahmed said that he is aware of this belief, and recognised that he must be prepared for difficulties. However, it is his aim to make the area a better place to live in and to equip local people with better skills.

7.5 Robert Winfield noted that he had sent the minutes of the last committee meeting, and the Agenda for the meeting on 19th July, to members of the committee who are contactable by e mail. He apologised for the fact that owing to his printer having run out of ink, he had not been able to give hard copies to the remaining members of the Committee. Robert Winfield added that he hoped to have the minutes of the recent special meeting of the Forum dealing with the Asda and Tesco planning applications available at the next Forum meeting on 2nd August.

7.6 There was a brief discussion about the distribution of leaflets explaining the Forum's opposition to plans for a Park and Ride Scheme at Elland Road. Christine Thornton noted that the Committee had decided to target areas closest to Elland Road. She hoped that people would have a knowledge of the proposals as a result of reading our leaflet and the newspapers. She noted that Keith Wakefield had said that the scheme will not happen overnight.