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BEESTON COMMUNITY FORUM

Beeston Community Forum – General Meeting 12th November 2009

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks

2. Apologies for absence

3. Guest Speakers-

i) Councillor Andrew Carter, Deputy Leader, Leeds City Council

ii) Councillor Ryk Downes, Chairman West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority ('Metro')

iii) Other speakers from Metro and First Leeds

4. Minutes of the meeting of the Beeston Community Forum on 1st October 2009

5. Correspondence

6. Report of Committee Meeting 15th October 2009

7. Report of Beeston Village Community Centre Steering Committee

8. Any Other Business

A reminder that the AGM of the Beeston Community Forum will take place at Beeston Village Community Centre at 7.30p.m on Thursday 3rd December 2009. Officers and members of the committee wishing to remain in office will be required to seek re-election. Anyone wishing to serve on the Committee is more than welcome to speak to any Committee member.

Minutes of the meeting of the Beeston Community Forum held on Thursday 1st October 2009

Attendance:-C. Thornton (in the chair), Sgt Aldred (West Yorks Police), Mr. R. Bell, Mr. W. Birch, Mrs D. Brooke, Mr. J. Cunningham, Mr. S. Francis, Ms. P. Heron, Mr. J. Hodgson, Mr. S. Johnston, Mr. G.M. Mason, Mrs M.E. Mason, PCSO Metcalfe, Mr Z. Mwanje, Mrs E. Newton, Mr. J. Peckham, Mr. F. Swift, Mr. M. Unwin and Mr. R.J.W. Winfield

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks- Christine Thornton welcomed those present to the meeting and apologised for the fact that the kitchen was locked , we were unable to gain access to it, and had been unable to track anyone who might be able to tell us how to gain access to the kitchen down. Tea and biscuits would therefore not be served at the conclusion of the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence were received from John Fenton and Kathleen Fenton

3. Guest Speaker- Christine Thornton introduced the guest speaker; Chris Edwards, Chief Executive of Education Leeds. Chris Edwards noted the improvements which had taken place in GCSE results. He then described the challenges which exist in terms of attendance and behaviour. A key issue is the increase of 600 pupils per annum coming into primary schools in Leeds due to a combination of migration, refugees, people seeking asylum and mothers having children later. This would not be such a large issue were it not for the fact that most of these pupils are concentrated in inner west, east and south Leeds thereby creating pressures on the relevant schools. Chris Edwards also said that the

recent introduction of an Academy at South Leeds High School had been positive. Amongst issues raised from the floor were the outside toilets at Beeston Primary School, possible additional funding for schools, particularly in the light of the circumstances above, the absence of school sixth forms in the area and respite centres for disruptive pupils.

4. Minutes of the General Meeting held on 3rd September 2009. Richard Bell was critical of the fact that the minutes had effectively repeated the passage of the minutes of the meeting held on 6th August to which he had objected. The minutes were accepted as a fair and accurate record of the meeting.

5. Matters arising-

5.1 John Hodgson referred to an article in the 'Yorkshire Post' of 18th September 2009, which referred to an increase of 28000 NHS dental places in Leeds. The article noted that 38000 people in Leeds had lost their NHS dentist. He noted that whilst 4000 places had been allocated to North West Leeds, there had been no bidders for South Leeds. He added that whilst Mr Laville, the head of dental contracts for NHS Leeds, said there is reasonable provision for Rothwell and Morley, South Leeds seems to be at the back of the queue. He noted that there had been one application to be a doctor in south Leeds two years ago. Professionals do not want to come to South Leeds as there are easier places to work. John Hodgson asked why it is that we are at the back of the queue for money on education and dentistry. No one can provide us with a service.

5.2 Steve Johnston referred to the situation concerning South Leeds Sports Centre. He noted that SPLASH, the campaign group which had successfully led to the centre being reopened three years ago, would again launch a campaign to keep the Sports Centre open. Steve Johnston noted that it is envisaged that when the new Sports Centre at Morley opens, South Leeds Sports Centre will closed. We would therefore lose valuable resources. Steve Johnston noted that the pool is liked as it is small, warm and local, and attracts the old and young alike. He added that many children are critical of the John Charles Sports Centre which is widely perceived to be anonymous. He said that people making noises in the centre are disliked. He added that on 23rd October, there would be a session at Hillside to make banners, followed by a candlelit vigil outside the centre.

6. Correspondence-

6.1 Christine Thornton had received details of an event concerning an Investment Partnership for South Leeds. The boundary would be the motorways (so that Holbeck and most of Hunslet would be excluded). The event would take place between 10p.m and 3.30p.m on Saturday 10th October. Andrew Carter would welcome those present. There would be discussions on key issues such as assets and weaknesses, activity centres and connections. Four places had been reserved for Forum members.

6.2 Christine Thornton had received a letter from a lady in Hampshire asking whether the Committee knows anything about researching for a family tree. Her father was named E Watson, who was born at 51 Town Street Beeston. Christine Thornton suspected that the family may have given money for the upkeep of the pavilion in Cross Flatts Park, which is known as the Watsonian building. Money had been bequeathed by Mr Watson's will to the Cross Flatts Veterans Association. The will also refers to people named Cooper. It was suggested that Frank Goddard of the Beeston Local History Society, and Eve Tidwell of Friends of Holbeck Cemetery, may be in a position to help.

6.3 Robert Winfield noted that the Forum had received a donation of £400 from International Fun Fairs.

7. Report of Committee meeting held on 17th September 2009. Christine Thornton noted that Councillor Ryk Downes, the Chairman of the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority, who would be attending the meeting of the Forum on 12th November, had asked for details of issues relating to bus services which are of concern to members of the Forum. There was also a discussion about the proposal to block off Sunnyview Gardens. There was also a discussion about possible constitutional amendments. It was hoped that Richard Bell would be able to acquire a cupboard, which is surplus to requirements, for the Forum from his employers. The meeting also discussed the Beeston Hill and

Holbeck Neighbourhood Renewal Regeneration Forum. There was discussion about the demolition in Holbeck and the Beverleys , although there is no demolition in the Beeston Forum area. It was noted that privets on the Cardinal Estate would be cut.

8. Report of Beeston Village Community Centre Steering Committee meeting- Tuesday 22nd September 2009. Robert Winfield explained that Richard Lancaster had referred to the new security system which had been installed on the doors, activated by the same code as that used for the alarm system for the building. Robert Winfield reported that there had been a lengthy discussion about a smartboard which was intended to be used in the building. It was noted that the smartboard is a facility which the building would have, which many community buildings would not have. Richard Lancaster also pointed out that he had acquired new plates, a 'shedload' of cutlery and a teapot for the kitchen. There was also a discussion about the provision of utilities to the centre. There had also been a discussion about the generation of waste and the provision of wheeliebins for the centre. It was also noted that £2000 had been paid for the provision of movable planters which would, when appropriate , divide the large room in the centre into two. Richard Lancaster handed those present a list of activities taking place at the Centre. David Ball from Leeds City Council had visited the centre in order to check up on the use of the funds granted by Leeds City Council in connection with the centre. He had been given a list of the activities. It was noted that Doris Brooke had raised the issue of a noticeboard , and also signposting, bearing in mind the difficulties which one member of the Forum had encountered in finding the building. Richard Lancaster suggested that we might apply for four signboards at a cost of around £200. A noticeboard which had previously been used in a bus shelter had been acquired. There was concern about the lack of lighting outside the centre and it was noted that this would become even more relevant as the nights become increasingly dark. It was also hoped that the bushes close to the centre would be cut.

Kausar Iqbal of Beeston Action for Families wondered whether the photocopier which had been acquired by the Beeston Forum for use at the Centre would be available for use by other groups. Robert Winfield had pointed out that it is not the intention of the Forum to deprive other groups of the use of the photocopier. It was agreed that Robert Winfield would circulate the draft constitution which he had prepared to members of the Committee and other interested parties and seek comments which would be discussed, together with the constitution , at the Steering Committee's next meeting on Tuesday 20th October. Robert Winfield acknowledged that the new security system was intended to enhance the safety and security of individuals using the centre, but wondered whether there is a middle way in which the nuisance factor of having to have someone stood behind the door to let people in could be avoided. Robert Winfield noted that he had occasionally required access to the community centre to undertake photocopying activities for the forum. He suggested a framework of rules governing access to the centre in such circumstances.

Bill Birch noted that the attendance at the meeting is not as great as at previous meetings and wondered whether this had been caused by the lack of lighting outside the centre. Robert Winfield reminded members of the Forum that he does not have the full use of his right hand, and said that he feels a little vulnerable on the footpaths leading to the centre during the hours of darkness. Doris Brooke said that there had been a request for the trees in the area of the centre to be cut. Bill Birch suggested writing to the Council about these issues; this was agreed. Mick Mason said that there used to be lights on each corner of the building , but these do not seem to light up. Robert Winfield noted that as a result of the decision of the Committee not to have the next Forum meeting on bonfire night, there would be a six week interval until the next Forum meeting.

9. It was unanimously agreed that the Forum would make a submission to the inquiry by the Office of Fair Trading about bus services. Steve Johnston described the level of bus fares as appalling and pointed out that it is cheaper for children to get a taxi to school than to get a bus. It was also cheaper for him to make journeys by taxi than by bus, if he is accompanied by one other person. John Hodgson that residents of inner city areas suffer from disproportionately high bus fares. Mick Mason queried the absence of buses down Wesley Street. Edna Newton noted that Cottingley is cut off from Beeston as a

result of the absence of bus services between these two locations. She pointed out that the former 54 bus service was 'ridiculous' as it started too late, and was useless for schoolchildren and people with early appointments. Richard Bell referred to the frequency with which buses get stuck in Headingley. Bill Birch wondered what percentage of buses operating the number 1 service turn back to Headingley from City Square without running onto Beeston. John Preston criticised the reliability of buses on Dewsbury Road on Sundays. Robert Winfield, supported by John Preston criticised the abolition of the third bus stop in Leeds City Centre, for the 2 and 3 services. John Preston pointed out that the bus shelter at the stop which had been phased out is brand new. A member of the audience noted that the Elland Road bus stops in Lower Briggate and not afterwards until Eastgate; there is no stop along Vicar Lane. John Cunningham pointed out that there is not one bus shelter from St Anthony's Church to the White Rose Centre. John Preston criticised the widespread practice of smoking in bus shelters. Robert Winfield noted that this is illegal, that no smoking signs are widely ignored, and urged the police to issue fixed penalty notices to people smoking in shelters. He also called for the removal of ashtrays from bus shelters, pointing out that this might encourage the misapprehension that smoking is permissible. Bill Birch criticised the fact that certain bus stops on Old Lane are located in the road and asked who was consulted about this.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 Steve Johnston referred to the current strike by refuse workers. He referred to the amount of uncollected rubbish and said that it is disgusting that the workers should be faced with wage cuts. He also noted that Leeds City Centre was clean so resources had obviously been focussed on Leeds City Centre to the detriment of other areas. He suggested that the Forum write to Leeds City Council to condemn them, and demand immediate talks. Christine Thornton noted that talks would indeed be taking place on the following Monday. Richard Bell said that any letter would be political, and opposed the writing of such a letter on the basis that the forum is a non political body. Christine Thornton noted that Councillor Andrew Carter would be attending the following meeting of the Forum; Steve Johnston said that he would arrange for the attendance of a number of striking bin workers. John Preston noted that since the strike had started, no bins had been emptied and people had therefore been leaving the bins out all the time. The bins had been causing an obstruction along Cross Flatts Grove and were also starting to smell. However, residents in Armley had had bins collected twice. Richard Bell noted that there have been two collections along Old Lane. He noted that the current advice is to put bins out on the normal day and take them in at 8p.m if they had not been emptied. He noted that people had done that on a Monday, only to find people coming around to empty the bins on the following day. He added that he had written about this matter to Councillor Richard Brett, only to receive a letter back which had been marked 'Private and Confidential'. Robert Winfield pointed out that it is a protocol that all letters sent by a Leader of Leeds City Council are marked private and confidential; he had queried the practice as long ago as when Brian Walker was leader of Leeds City Council.

10.2 Steve Johnston referred to plans by an organisation known as the English Defence League to march through Leeds on 31st October. He said that this organisation is comprised of racist soccer fans who are intent on whipping up racism. There had been no announcement regarding the precise location of the march. He added that 9000 letters, coordinated by the 'Hope not Hate' organisation had been sent to Leeds City Council calling for a ban on the march. Robert Winfield wondered whether the Public Order Act could be used to ban the march

10.3 Robert Winfield referred to comments by John Hodgson at the Forum Committee meeting concerning the Forum website. He noted that John Hodgson had pointed out that if details of Forum meetings are accessed through the calendar facility, the details still state that the meetings would be taking place at St Andrew's Church. Robert Winfield pointed out that following John Hodgson's comments, he had investigated the situation and made the appropriate corrections. Robert Winfield pointed out that in any event the most prominent reference to the venue of Forum meetings on the website (on the homepage) had been changed immediately after the July Forum meeting (the last to take place at St. Andrew's Church) so as to reflect the new venue.

