

# Beeston Community Forum

## Annual Report for the year 2008/2009

### The Tenth Annual General Meeting- 4<sup>th</sup> December 2008

Despite severe weather on the day of the AGM , the meeting was attended by 22 members and was addressed by Councillor Adam Ogilvie, Councillor Keith Wakefield, the Leader of the Leeds City Council Labour Group, and Councillor Ryk Downes, on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group. Councillor Barry Anderson, who would have represented the Conservative Group was prevented from travelling by the weather. The following Officers and Committee were elected; each unopposed

Chair	Christine Thornton
Vice Chair	Mr Bill Birch
Secretary	Mr Robert Winfield
Treasurer	Mr John Hodgson
Ordinary Committee Members	Mrs Doris Brooke      Mr John Fenton Mrs Kathleen Fenton   Mr Mick Mason Mr Bryan Precious

The meeting resolved that Richard Bell and Steve Francis (who were not present at the meeting) be invited to remain as members of the committee. They each accepted this invitation. Peggy Bell and Pauline Johnson declined to seek re- election to the Committee. We thank them for their services to the Committee and the Forum. Bryan Precious joined the Committee for the first time.

The AGM unanimously agreed a number of constitutional amendments as follows:-

- a) to reduce the minimum membership of the Committee to five
- b) to require committee members co-opted by the Committee to be approved by the Forum
- c) to correct a clear mistake in the constitution regarding the notice for Special General Meetings of the Forum
- d) to clarify the procedure by which the constitution is changed , by requiring notice of proposed constitutional amendments to be given in writing to a General Meeting taking place at least 28 days before the General Meeting at which the amendment is to be considered
- e) to provide for the calling of a Special Meeting of the Committee at less than the seven days notice which would normally be required, if the Chairman certifies that an emergency has arisen which justifies the holding of a meeting at shorter notice.

Bryan Precious unexpectedly moved away from Beeston in early April, for what was initially expected to be a temporary period. As the Constitution of the Forum makes clear that members of the Committee must be residents of Beeston , this situation, regrettably, led to him leaving the Committee. We would like to thank Bryan Precious for his services to the Committee. There were no other changes to the membership of the Committee during the year.

### Meetings

General Meetings of the Forum took place on the first Thursday of each month, save that the June General Meeting took place on 11<sup>th</sup> June, in order to avoid a clash with polling day in the European Elections and the November General Meeting took place on 12<sup>th</sup> November, as the Committee felt that it would not be appropriate for the Forum to meet on bonfire night. The General Meetings up to and including that on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> July were held at St. Andrew's Methodist Church. However, the Forum decided on 11<sup>th</sup> June that subsequent meetings would be held in Beeston Village Community Centre (the former Beeston Library Building) . We sent a letter to St Andrew's Methodist Church thanking them for hosting our meetings since January 2007 and explaining the reasons for our decision to change venue. We were very pleased that the attendance at the first two meetings to be held at Beeston Village Community Centre, was around 60% up on the average attendance for meetings at St. Andrew's Church. Unfortunately, the attendance at the October meeting, in particular, was somewhat disappointing. We have been in discussions with Leeds City Council and Health for All (Leeds) (which rents the building from Leeds City Council- Health for All (Leeds) is chaired by Christine Thornton)

about the lighting around the building. The Forum welcomed guest speakers as set out below.

Month	Guest Speaker(s)	Topic
January	Stewart Robinson (International Fun Fairs) Lisa Ashcroft (Leeds City Council Events) Councillor John Procter	Valentine Fair, Elland Road Valentine Fair, Elland Road South Leeds Sports Centre
February	No guest speaker	Discussion about a Parish Council for Beeston
March	Stewart Robinson (International Fun Fairs) Lisa Ashcroft (Leeds City Council Events) Acting Insp. Damien Miller (West Yorks Police) Diane Winder (West Yorkshire Police)	Valentine Fair, Elland Road Valentine Fair, Elland Road Policing issues Neighbourhood Watch
April	Mr Shaun Harvey (Chief Exec. Leeds United FC) Mr Mark Sugden (Operations Manager, John Charles Sports Centre)	Plans for development of land owned by LUFC John Charles Sports Centre
May	No guest speaker	General issues
June	Steve Monks (Leeds City Council Highways Dept) Jonathan Wickham (Mouchelle)	Highways Issues Traffic Calming Proposals- Cardinal Estate
July	Marcus Thompson (Jacobs)  Alan Shaw (Secretary, Friends of Middleton Park) Al Garthwaite (Friends of Cross Flatts Park)	Heritage Lottery Fund Application- Middleton Park Middleton Park Cross Flatts Park
August	Alan Jones (Leeds City Council Fuelsavers) Emma Rooney (Groundwork) Pat McGeever (Director, Health for All (Leeds))	Fuel Saving measures Fuel Saving measures Beeston Village Community Centre
September	Rt. Hon. Hilary Benn (Member of Parliament, Leeds Central)	General issues
October	Chris Edwards (Chief Executive, Education Leeds)	Education issues
November	Councillor Chris Graves (Chairman 'Metro') Neil Holt (Metro) Charles Donnelly (First Leeds)	Bus services Bus services Bus services

### **Committee meetings**

The committee continued to meet on a regular basis on the third Thursday of each month (including August), save that the December 2008 committee meeting took place on 11<sup>th</sup> December. Meetings were held at the homes of Bill Birch and Christine Thornton to whom we extend our thanks for their hospitality.

### **Beeston Village Community Centre**

The Forum has continued to be represented on the committee involving users of the Centre which is in the process of being formalised. At the Forum's General Meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2009, Robert Winfield (who has taken the minutes of these meetings), was elected as the Beeston Forum's representative on the committee, defeating Mr Raymond Nevin by thirteen votes to four. Following a decision of the Committee that the Beeston Forum is entitled to a second representative, Doris Brooke was unanimously elected as such at the Forum meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2009. The representatives have made regular reports of Committee meetings to Forum and Committee Meetings. Members of the Forum are more than welcome to raise issues relating to the Community Centre with the representatives. Robert Winfield is leading the process of drafting a constitution for the Community Centre, which will enable the centre to apply for grants in its own name.

The Community Centre was officially opened by Councillor Angela Gabriel on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May, when a launch event took place, with members of the public being invited to visit the Community Centre . A number of groups including the Beeston Forum set up stalls. The Beeston Forum stall was manned by Robert Winfield and around 40 copies of a specially produced newsletter were given out. Following the decision to change the venue of Forum meetings, Robert Winfield sent a number of letters to individuals who had not attended the Forum meetings in June and July (when the change of venue was publicised), and who had either visited the stall on May 9<sup>th</sup>, or had attended Forum meetings in the past (this version of the letter enclosed a map showing the location of the Centre). Guest Speakers were, of course informed of the change of venue.

The general appearance of the Centre has been widely praised by members of the Forum and others. We feel that all those who have been involved with the conversion of the library into the Community Centre can take pride in the work involved

During the year, Arena Group, a Leeds based photocopier business invited community groups to apply for a free photocopier. The Forum successfully applied for a photocopier, which is kept at Beeston Village Community Centre , and is used for the production of agenda papers for Committee and General Meetings of the Forum. The opportunity was taken to increase the print size from 10 point to 12 point, with the length of agenda papers being increased from 2 to 4 pages.

### **Parish Council**

Following the discussions during 2008 about the possibility of setting up a Parish Council for Beeston, it was decided that the February 2009 Forum meeting would discuss whether we should campaign for a Parish Council in Beeston. The Yorkshire Evening Post publicised this in an article (regrettably, illustrated by a photograph of an area which is obviously outside Beeston). At the meeting, (attendance at which was undermined by severe weather) Christine Thornton made a presentation about the implications of any Parish Council. The meeting voted by a large majority to support the principle of setting up a Parish Council with a boundary similar to the area served by the Beeston Community Forum. The General Meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2009 resolved to establish a Parish Council Steering Committee which would campaign for the establishment of a Parish Council and which currently comprises Bill Birch, Richard Bell, Greg Turton and Robert Winfield. Any Forum member wishing to serve on the Steering Committee (which has yet to meet) should contact Bill Birch or Robert Winfield.

A significant amount of information about Parish Councils (including a copy of Christine Thornton's presentation) has been added to the Beeston Forum website. There are also links to the websites of every Parish Council in Leeds which has a website, as well as Weston Super Mare Town Council, the largest Parish Council in the country.

### **Policing**

During the year, the Policing Pledge, an initiative which is intended to give members of the public a direct input into policing decisions in their area, was introduced. A presentation about this was given to the April meeting of the Forum by Sgt. Sarah Whitworth. As part of the policing pledge, Police Officers and PCSOs attend the Forum on a regular basis. Where time permits, one of the Officers or PCSOs gives Forum members a brief presentation about current developments relating to policing and crime. Much of the information is taken from the Beeston Neighbourhood page of the West Yorkshire Police website to which the Forum website now links. Members of the public can complete forms giving details of the issues which they believe should be given priority by the police. The current priorities are:-

- Beeston: To reduce anti social behaviour on Cardinal Road, Cardinal Square, Waincliffe Terrace and Gipsy Lane on Friday and Saturday evenings between 6pm and 1am
- Beeston: To reduce anti social behaviour on Beggars Hill and Beeston Road on Friday and Saturday evenings between 6pm and 1am.
- Beeston: To reduce anti social behaviour on Cross Flatts Park on Monday to Sunday evenings between 6pm and 1am.

### **Beeston Forum Website and Facebook Group**

The Software used for the Beeston Forum website was changed during the early months of 2009. A

new Beeston Forum website, which takes advantage of superior software, is located at [www.beestonforum.btik.com](http://www.beestonforum.btik.com). The old website ceased to be available from March; anyone attempting to access the old site is automatically transferred to the new one. As stated elsewhere in this report, the website continues to be built up with useful information. We are pleased that despite the change in the web address, the site is still located easily by typing the words 'Beeston Forum' into a google search.

During 2009, a Facebook group for the Forum ('Beeston Community Forum') was established. Registration on Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)), which is a straightforward process, is required to join the group. The Forum website provides a link to the group. Naturally, members of the Forum and others who have an interest in the activities of the Beeston Forum are more than welcome to join the group.

### **Post Offices**

Following the closure of three Beeston Post Offices during 2008, two of the Post Offices were converted to use for other purposes, but Beeston P.O. remains boarded up. In the light of this situation, and the fact that the former Postmaster, Mr Peter Standen is willing to resume his duties, the Beeston Forum wrote to Leeds City Council to determine whether it would reopen the Post Office under a scheme similar to that implemented by Essex County Council which has reopened a number of Post Offices in its area. We were disappointed to receive a reply from Councillor Richard Brett, Leader of Leeds City Council, which stated that the Post Office had made it clear that they would not agree to the reopening of a Post Office unless another one closed.

### **Beeston Festival**

As usual, the Forum took a stall at the Beeston Festival which was held in Cross Flatts Park on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June. The stall was manned by Bill Birch, John Fenton and John Hodgson. 350 copies of a newsletter which had been written by Robert Winfield were given to members of the public.

### **Miscellaneous**

The Forum expressed concerns about possible plans to block off a part of Sunnyview Gardens in order to prevent 'rat running'

The Forum expressed concerns about plans to introduce a 20m.p.h. Zone on the Cardinal Estate. We were particularly concerned that the Forum had not originally been consulted directly about the proposals. We feared that the widespread installation of road humps under the scheme might result in the displacement of traffic to adjacent areas, residents of which had not been consulted. These concerns led to Jonathan Wickham of Mouchelle, the consultants responsible for the consultation process, appearing at the June Forum meeting as a guest speaker.

We continued to take an interest in the future of South Leeds Sports Centre. The January Forum meeting hosted Councillor John Procter, the Leeds City Council Executive Board member for Leisure, who said that many people are reluctant to use outdated sports facilities. Concerns were expressed that John Charles Sports Centre, which had been put forward as a possible alternative to South Leeds Sports Centre, largely caters for elite sportsmen rather than ordinary members of the public. This was strongly disputed by Leeds City Council. We invited Mark Sugden, an Operations Manager at John Charles Sports Centre, to appear as a guest speaker at the April meeting of the Forum. Later in the year, Leeds City Council announced that it would cease to maintain South Leeds Sports Centre, which would close as soon as new facilities in Morley are opened, unless a group can be found to take over the running of the Centre.

The Forum wrote to First Leeds to express concern about further bus fare increases

The Forum made representations with a view to ensuring that the trees on the site of Beeston Manor are preserved. Councillor David Congreve assisted us with this matter and sent the Forum a map of the site, showing the trees which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. The building of a new residential home is in progress. Despite our previous fears, the reaction of forum members to the new

building has been positive.

Whilst Forum members welcomed proposals to build an Ice Rink on land close to Elland Road, we expressed the view that the interests of local residents must not be disadvantaged, and that residents must be fully consulted about any proposals. We suggested that a Liaison Committee, similar to that which was established in connection with the abortive Elland Road Arena proposals several years ago, should be set up.

The Forum objected to proposals by the Liberal Democrats to change the arrangements for polling stations in Beeston. We objected to proposals to relocate the polling station on the car park at Broadway Hotel, to the College of Technology on Westland Road, noting that this would result in practically every voter at the Polling Station having a longer journey to vote. We also objected to a proposal which would result in voters who currently vote at a polling station on land close to Beeston Library, voting either at St Mary's Church or Beeston Juniors. The proposals were also opposed by the Labour Councillors for Beeston and Holbeck and by Leeds Central Conservatives (which is chaired by Robert Winfield)

We expressed concerns about the quality of the road surfaces on Cardinal Road and Old Lane.

The site of Jubilee House, Old Lane was acquired by Tesco Stores which announced plans to hold three consultation meetings towards the end of February in connection with the possible building of a store on the land. Subsequently, Tesco announced that plans to build on the land had been put on hold. The consultation meetings were cancelled. We will continue to take an interest in the site and seek to ensure that the interests of local residents are not disadvantaged by any development.

We acknowledge with thanks a generous donation of £400 from International Fun Fairs

The Forum has been represented on the Beeston and Holbeck Neighbourhood Renewal Regeneration Forum by Christine Thornton.

Christine Thornton and Robert Winfield attended a meeting at Elland Road Football Ground on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2009 about a regeneration scheme which would affect an area bounded by the M621, M1 and M62 motorways. The whole of the Beeston Forum area is included in the regeneration area. It is intended that proposals will be drawn up based on the opinions expressed at the meeting.

The Forum expressed concerns about the somewhat erratic emptying of litter bins during the industrial action by refuse workers.

#### **Vote of Thanks**

- Councillors David Congreve, Angela Gabriel and Adam Ogilvie, who continue support the Forum by attending meetings on a regular basis
- The team of Forum members who serve tea and biscuits following meetings of the Forum
- Mr Raymond Nevin, who dealt with room bookings and the locking and unlocking of our venue, whilst Forum meetings were held at St Andrew's Church. Following the transfer of meetings to Beeston Village Community Centre, these duties have been undertaken by Robert Winfield
- Mrs Edna Newton, for her work in organising the raffle
- The team of Forum members, led by Mr John Fenton, who has helped publicise Forum meetings, by erecting posters, designed by Richard Bell to whom we also extend our thanks, at various locations
- Mr John Hodgson, who has served as the Forum's Treasurer since the foundation of the Forum in 1999, and who has announced that he will not be seeking re-election to this position at the AGM.

