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BEESTON COMMUNITY FORUM

Beeston Community Forum General Meeting- 4th November 2010

Agenda

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks
2. Apologies for absence
3. Guest Speakers, Charles Donnelly, First Leeds and representatives of 'Metro'
4. Minutes of the meeting of the Beeston Community Forum on 7th October 2010
5. Correspondence
6. Report of Committee meeting - 21st October 2010
7. Tesco planning application
8. Beeston Village Community Centre
9. The Forum website
10. Any Other Business

A reminder that the Annual General Meeting of the Forum will take place at 7.30p.m on Thursday 2nd December 2010 at Beeston Village Community Centre. Officers and members of the Committee wishing to remain in office are required to seek re-election. The committee would be delighted to hear from any residents of Beeston who are interested in serving on the Committee (which generally meets monthly, two weeks after meetings of the Forum). Anyone with any queries is welcome to ask any committee member.

Minutes of the Beeston Community Forum meeting held on Thursday 7th October 2010

Attendance:- Christine Thornton (in the chair), Mr. R. Bell., Mrs., D. Brooke, Councillor D. Congreve, Mr. J. Cunningham, Mr. J. Fenton, Mr. S. Francis, S. Gawthorpe, Mr. J. Hodgson, Miss. P. Johnson, Mrs. D. Kenny, C. Kirk, Mr. G.M. Mason, Mrs. M. Mason, Mrs. E. Newton, Councillor A. Ogilvie, Mr. M. Parry, Mr. A. Pointon, Mr. F. Swift, Mr. G. Turton, Mrs. N. Watkis, Mr. R.J.W. Winfield and Mr. R. Wood

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks- Christine Thornton welcomed those present to the meeting.
2. Apologies for absence were received from Bill Birch, Kathleen Fenton and John Peckham
3. Guest Speakers- Christine Thornton introduced the first guest speaker; Chris Edwards of Education Leeds
 - 3.1 Chris Edwards said that he was pleased to see members of the Forum again for what will be the last time, as he is leaving his present position as Chief Executive of Education Leeds at Christmas. There would be a new arrangement for running the Education service in Leeds from 1st April. Nigel Richardson, the Director of Childrens' Services will be putting in a new team to run Education and Social Care. He said that it has been a privilege to work in Leeds for the past ten years and to serve children, communities and families in a fantastic city. He said that Education Leeds had transformed outcomes for Education in Leeds. The number of people gaining 5 GCSEs at A*-C grades had risen from under 40% to 80%. He said that we must work harder with the minority who are still not achieving this. Primary Schools, he added had been transformed, with fantastic results,

and it is hoped that this will feed through to secondary schools.

Chris Edwards referred to school building programmes. He said that it is sad that the capital programme for primary schools and the Building Schools for the Future programme had stopped. In the meantime, it is lucky that bids by Education Leeds had brought 21 new secondary schools and 21 new Primary Schools. In this area; Cockburn High School had received additional buildings and South Leeds High School had been built, representing an investment of £500 million in total. He added that Cockburn High School had achieved some of the best value added for pupils in the country, not just Leeds. He said that we need to concentrate on Primary Education as there is a huge issue involving a population explosion of school age pupils in Leeds. Education Leeds is trying to manage an additional 500 schoolchildren a year in reception. The distribution of these 500 schoolchildren is heavily concentrated in inner South Leeds, inner East Leeds and inner West Leeds. Thus, it is a larger problem than it appears. Some resources are being invested into expanding Hugh Gaitskell School and Beeston Primary. Chris Edwards pointed out that portakabins are no longer used; any additional school buildings are now modular build. The buildings are constructed away from the site on which they will be used, and brought in as a unit. The buildings are bricked round. These are not like portakabins, but are high quality buildings.

There is a healthy schools unit, and schools are also being encouraged to have an allotment. This helps establish the connection between the garden, and the dinner table in the minds of children. Children need to be encouraged to recognise that potatoes are grown, not bought from supermarkets. Schools would be working with allotment holders and gardens.

3.2 The meeting then opened up to questions from the floor. Amongst the issues raised were the opening of a new nursery at Beeston Primary School, the consultation process leading to South Leeds High School becoming an academy, people leaving the area to be educated, the implications of an increase in the school leaving age and reading mentoring.

3.3 Steve Francis noted that Chris Edwards has been here for a long time, and that he is not a fan of Education Leeds. However, he felt that in view of Chris Edwards' support for the Forum, he deserves a vote of thanks. He therefore proposed such a vote of thanks. This was seconded by Greg Turton who said that Chris Edwards had shown real accountability. Christine Thornton wished Chris Edwards well.

4. Christine Thornton welcomed the second Guest Speaker; Tim Hales of the National Union of Teachers.

4.1 Tim Hales commenced his remarks by saying that he cannot claim to have the local knowledge or inside knowledge of Chris Edwards. Tim Hales acknowledged that he is often cast in an oppositional role in order to protect the NUT's members and what is good for education. He acknowledged that he had been unaware that Chris Edwards would be leaving his post at Christmas; he wished him all the best, and acknowledged that he did not often meet him at meetings, as he has done this evening. The most obvious concern of teachers is the pressure which schools are under. He acknowledged that primary education is in a good state of health; over the last decade there had been huge investment in primary education and as a result most parents value schools. Most children have a good experience and many primary schools have been rebuilt. There had been no need for NUT representatives to visit Beeston Schools as staff there had been happy. The chances are that children are also happy. However Tim Hales had to visit Cross Flatts Park school a few years ago. There was nothing wrong with the school but he had been impressed with the work of the teachers. He had seen how much children were enjoying the school experience and how much teachers were committed to them getting this experience.

Tim Hales noted that in June, George Osborne had said that there would need to be 25% cuts across the whole range of government spending; this would lead to huge pressure on schools and education. David Cameron had also said that there is a huge amount of waste in Education, and noted that less than two thirds of the DCF budget goes to schools. Tim Hales said that this figure misses out on a large range of services which Education Officers and the DCF must support, including funding for sixth forms, school building, nursery education, education maintenance allowances, surestart, transport to schools, careers advice and funding for academies and OFSTED. He said that 98% of the DCF budget is in these things and that it is hugely difficult to make efficiency savings without damaging schools. If social and family services are taken away, the stability of children and their ability to access opportunities is removed. Tim Hales also expressed concern about what he perceived as the acceleration of privatisation in schools. He said that the academy programme seems to have taken the worst of the Labour Party's policies and got rid of the best. He said that Labour were, at least trying to put money into areas affected by policy or other challenges. Now, the current coalition government is seeking to set up academies in prosperous areas and inviting outstanding schools, many in prosperous areas, to become academies. Tim Hales felt that academies will damage the ability of local authorities to deliver good schooling to the rest of secondary and

problem primary school children. He added that the NUT was opposed to South Leeds High School becoming an academy. He acknowledged that the school was excellent, had done very well, and that Colin Bell had had a great deal to do with that. He added that South Leeds also benefits from a low turnover of staff. There had been a bumpy period at the start of the amalgamation. There had been strains in the community which had been exacerbated by interference. He acknowledged that the academy system is well intentioned and that academies can work with other schools and not cause too much damage. However, if there are a large number of academies in one area, as the government wants, this would disrupt the ability of the local authority to manage planning and deliver services as the academy would take money from local schools. As each large school leaves a local authority, the ability of the local authority to gain economies is reduced. He added that the idea of free schools is even worse, and is a recipe for disaster. He noted that Free Schools can be set up in an area where there are no schools and an area where there are existing schools. They would undermine local authority planning. The NUT believes that Free Schools will not deliver their intended benefits. A local authority is not perfect but is a safety net against problems such as redundancies, induction, training needs, problems of challenging parents and pupils, fires floods or other emergencies. A local authority can also give advice and guidance to schools. Tim Hales added that economies of scale can be practised by local authorities, and that it is difficult to give schools services individually. He added that he is not a fan of Education Leeds and is glad that Education in Leeds will be reverting to direct local authority control.

4.2 The meeting then opened up to questions from the floor. Amongst issues raised were admission policies for academies and free schools and the quality of teachers

5. The minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday 2nd September 2010 were accepted as a fair and accurate record of the meeting. There were no matters arising.

6. Correspondence

6.1 Robert Winfield read a letter from Charles Donnelly of First Leeds in response to our concerns about bus fare increases. He apologised for omitting any reference to the recent fare increases from the 'First to Know' magazine, and added that the decision to increase the price of the Green Zone ticket came after the magazine was printed. He added that the magazine is not like a daily newspaper; it is prepared months in advance and had already been delayed to allow the inclusion of the change in Managing director from Dave Alexander to Ian Humphreys. He added that First's margin is in line with that of other large bus companies, and is an important part of their plans to invest in the future of transport in Leeds. Charles Donnelly added that we are experiencing a period of higher than expected inflation, and increased costs of pensions and insurance which has led to the increase in some fares including the Green Zone ticket. The decision to increase the size of the boundary has meant a fare reduction for many customers and offers excellent value. Charles Donnelly added that First has made it easier to buy weekly tickets, priced at £12 and £18.50 by making them available through Paypoint. Christine Thornton noted that Charles Donnelly would be attending the November meeting of the Forum as a guest speaker. Robert Winfield pointed out that the meeting will also be attended by representatives of Metro. Pauline Johnson wondered when bus fares had been increased from £1.70 to £1.90. It was noted that this had occurred the previous Sunday.

6.2 Robert Winfield had issued the normal invitations to the Forum's AGM in December. He noted that David Congreve had replied, saying that he hoped to attend; however neither the Lord Mayor nor the Deputy Lord Mayor would be in a position to attend. Andrew Carter, the Leader of the Leeds City Council Conservative Group would be unable to attend as a result of a prior appointment. Councillor Keith Wakefield, the Labour Group leader and Leader of Leeds City Council would be unable to attend as a result of the turning on of Christmas lights in his ward. He would look into whether another member of the Labour group would be able to attend. Hilary Benn MP said that it is unlikely that he will be able to attend as a result of Parliamentary business but he would know for certain nearer the time. Councillor Adam Ogilvie said that he will be attending the AGM.

6.3 Robert Winfield had received a letter from the Leeds City Council Highways Department enclosing a map setting out the current plans for works to be carried out at Tommy Wass Junction. Robert Winfield said that Forum members would be able to inspect the map at the conclusion of the meeting.

6.4 Robert Winfield had brought along a number of leaflets produced by Tesco describing their plans for a new store in Beeston. These would be available for collection by Forum members after the meeting. Robert Winfield stressed that the Forum is neither supporting nor opposing Tesco's plans but it is vital that local residents put forward their views and concerns. Christine Thornton had not seen any formal plans by Tesco. Councillor David Congreve said that he is not aware of any formal planning application having been submitted. Greg Turton noted

that it had been suggested at the Committee that we lodge a holding objection to any planning application, on the grounds of increased traffic. Christine Thornton noted that this was the suggestion of Bill Birch, but that any objection would be a matter for the Forum. John Hodgson said that he would like to see a supermarket in the LS11 postal district. Robert Winfield noted that he had invited a representative of Tesco to the January meeting of the Forum. Greg Turton wondered what the plans of Asda are in relation to the Netto store on Old Lane. John Fenton pointed out that Asda would be required to dispose of 147 sites upon taking over Netto. Robert Winfield noted that he had written to Asda asking them for details of their plans, and inviting them to the January Forum meeting, but had received no reply.

7. Report of the Committee meeting held on 16th September 2010- Christine Thornton noted that this had discussed the plans by Tesco, Beeston Village Community Centre, and raising the profile of the Forum. Robert Winfield pointed out that he had not yet written the minutes of the Committee meeting, as he had been away from Leeds for the vast majority of the previous two weeks.

8. Raising the Profile of the Forum. Christine Thornton noted that although this is the best attended community forum in the area, attendances have tailed off in the past few years, although there is sometimes a larger attendance when contentious issues are discussed. She said that we try to, but do not always succeed in circulating flyers with details of forthcoming Forum meetings. In addition the Forum has a stall at the annual Beeston Festival, as well as producing occasional newsletters. Christine Thornton added that we need ideas for publicising the forum. There was a suggestion that we should try to attract younger members to the Forum. Doris Brooke felt that we should circulate flyers earlier and see what happens. There was also a suggestion that we circulate flyers in schools. Mary Mason suggested putting publicity material on the doors of the Co-op. John Hodgson noted that Steve Francis had said that additional flyers had been circulated at Beeston Primary School.

9. Beeston Village Community Centre- Robert Winfield expressed his concern that the meeting of the Beeston Village Community Centre steering committee scheduled for 9th September had been cancelled with no explanation. A previous meeting, on 12th August, had been dominated by the governance of the Community Centre. Health for All (Leeds) which leases the building from Leeds City Council had taken legal advice from Kathy Faulks of Voluntary Action Leeds about various issues. Robert Winfield noted that Kathy Faulks had advised that as Health for All (Leeds) leases the building from Leeds City Council, it has the power to take decisions in relation to the building, subject to the terms of the lease. It follows that the Steering Committee has no decision making powers, and that any decisions taken by the Steering Committee must be approved by the Board of Trustees of Health for All (Leeds). In addition, Kathy Faulks advised that the Steering Committee can exist only as a sub committee of the Board of Trustees, and as such, there is a requirement for three members of the Board of Trustees to serve on the sub committee. Christine Thornton noted that she is the Chair of Health for All (Leeds), and pointed out that the Board of Trustees did not feel that it is necessary for them to be represented on the steering committee.

10. PEG meeting- It was noted that the PEG meeting, dealing with proposals for the regeneration of South Leeds, which had been arranged for 23rd September, had been postponed because the detailed proposals were not available, and it was felt inappropriate to go ahead with the meeting in the absence of such proposals. Robert Winfield had brought a document setting out a number of ideas to the meeting. This would be available for inspection by Forum members after the meeting.

11. Any Other Business

11.1 It was noted that the Chief Executive of Aire Valley Homes has complained about roaming dogs, dog fouling, litter and bags of litter being ripped open. It was noted that no one has a bin and that as soon as litter had been picked up on a Monday morning, rubbish had returned by the afternoon. Bags had been ripped open by dogs and even foxes. Christine Thornton could not understand why the people involved have no litter bins; she added that some of us have so many bins that we cannot get into the house! Councillor Adam Ogilvie said that he will ask Streetscene and Aire Valley Homes to write to local residents asking them not to put out rubbish so early.

11.2 Greg Turton pointed out that he had received a letter from Councillor Richard Lewis in relation to the resurfacing of Cross Flatts Grove. He noted that there is a proposal, subject to the agreement of the ward councillors, to resurface some of the road in 2011. Greg Turton had replied saying that this is not good enough.