



Beeston Neighbourhood Forum

Agenda for 11 March 2015 meeting and minutes of 17 February 2015 meeting.

Agenda for 11 March 2015

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence.
3. Approval of minute from 17 February.
4. Matters Arising not included in the agenda.
5. New members and supporting members.
6. Organisation structure.
7. Election of further committee members.
8. Development issues.
9. Annual General Meeting.
10. Wolverhampton Trip.
11. Any other business.
12. Close and date of next meeting.

Minutes of 17 February 2015 Meeting

Minutes of the Inaugural General Meeting of the Beeston Neighbourhood Forum held at 7.30p.m on Tuesday 17th February 2015 at Beeston Village Community Centre

Attendance :- Christine Thornton (in the chair), Mr. R. Bell, Mrs. D. Brooke, Mr. K. Burton, Mrs S. Burton, Mr. J. Cunningham, Mrs L. Dale-Barton, Mrs M. Dinsdale, Mr. J. Fenton, Councillor A. Gabriel, Mrs. S. Gawthorpe, P. Glossop, Mr. K. Hewson, Mrs. J. Kennard, Mr. A. Kirby, Mr. E. Leatham, Councillor A. Ogilvie, Mr. M. Parry, Rev. L. Pearson, Mr. J. Peckham, Mr. R. Scholefield, Mrs. H. Thurston, Mr. E. Thornton, Mr. G. Turton, Mr. P. Whitehead, Mrs. D. Whitehead, Mrs. L. Williamson, Mr.R.J.W. Winfield and Mr. N. Zaman

1. Acting Chairman's Opening Remarks- The Acting Chairman, Christine Thornton welcomed those present to the first meeting of the Neighbourhood Forum. She thanked Greg Turton who has led the process of setting up the Neighbourhood Forum. She noted that an attendance sheet was being circulated around the hall and urged those present to sign the sheet, and look for it if they miss it. She asked those present at the meeting to introduce themselves. The members present duly introduced themselves.

2. Remarks by John Hall, Leeds City Council. It was noted that Ian Mackay, the Neighbourhood Planning Officer for Leeds City Council was unable to attend the meeting and that John Hall was attending in his place. John Hall noted that Ian Mackay had gone over a few matters which he wanted him to raise at the meeting . Firstly, a Neighbourhood Plan should establish a vision for the area; he is encouraging all Neighbourhood Areas to do this . He added that a Neighbourhood Plan should use simple English. People need to understand the Neighbourhood Plan ; there should be no planning jargon. A neighbourhood plan should also be positive ; it should state what Beeston should be like, not what it should not be like . It is also important to keep the Neighbourhood Plan local ; people must recognise Beeston in the vision. A neighbourhood plan should also be different ; something original stands out . It should be aspirational; when we are seeking public support, it is important to reach out with a vision. He read the vision statement from the Holbeck Neighbourhood Forum 'To make Holbeck a more attractive and healthier place for everyone . It will have a thriving local centre with a range of local facilities , a

choice of quality but affordable housing, a variety of local job opportunities, all set in a green environment, respecting the heritage of the area and well connected with the city centre and adjoining neighbourhoods'. John Hall noted that some areas with no vision have struggled. Neighbourhood plans need to consider what is achievable, deliverable and sustainable. A neighbourhood plan must promote sustainability. In addition, when looking at the aims and objectives of a neighbourhood plan, we need to look at contradictions, for example, promoting renewable energy whilst opposing solar panels.

John Hall noted that the Holbeck Neighbourhood Forum organised itself into three subgroups; community projects, for example organising a fashion show at Holbeck Working Mens Club and a bonfire night event. This shows that something is happening. There is also a content group, which examines what policies should be included in the Neighbourhood Plan. There is also a publicity and promotions subgroup which deals with administration and the printing and distribution of leaflets. He suggested keeping the number of subgroups small, for example three, as with Holbeck. More subgroups could be introduced later on in the process. John Hall noted that one neighbourhood forum has introduced twelve subgroups, and suggested that this is unmanageable. John Hall noted that a Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with a local authority's core strategy in terms of site allocations, the local development plan, green space and the provision of affordable housing. He added that proper consultation must take place amongst a diverse range of people such as businesses, landowners, developers as well as residents. However, a neighbourhood Forum should not just stop at consultation. Some groups have used contacts with businesses and others to establish evidence for the neighbourhood plan. John Hall noted that an examiner will wish to see hard data. Groups will therefore need to ask whether they need household surveys, geological surveys and house market assessments. He suggested that groups drawing up a neighbourhood plan should read other neighbourhood plans. They should also test their policies. They should speak to landowners and developers to get their views as to whether their policies are achievable. John Hall added that it is also possible to carry out a healthcheck before a plan is submitted to the examiner. Corrections can be made at this stage. A plan can include either 1 or 100 policies. A group drawing up a neighbourhood plan must be able to compromise, and keep a good audit trail. A group will not want to spend a few months or years seeking to establish a neighbourhood plan, only for an examiner to seek evidence which is not available. An important issue to address is what skills does a group have. Can the members of the group do certain things themselves. A group will also need to identify gaps where funding is required.

John Hall noted that Leeds City Council is managing 33 Neighbourhood Areas, and its resources are therefore stretched. He noted that groups setting up Neighbourhood Plans in non-parished areas are eligible for up to £8000 in grants and possibly an additional £6000 after April. A group could choose to hire the services of a consultant. He suggested that groups making use of grant funding should obtain competitive quotes with a view to cutting costs. Greg Turton queried the figures which had just been mentioned; he understood that £9000 is available for consultancy fees. John Hall noted that this had been replaced by the arrangements which he had just described. He also confirmed that the grants are not a one off, and that groups can keep applying.

John Cunningham asked John Hall whether information, particularly about good activities, will be passed around Neighbourhood Forums. John Hall suggested that groups should look at the Leeds City Council Neighbourhood Planning website; he will want to put information about groups onto that. He noted that he is working in the outer South area of the City of Leeds which includes Oulton Woodlesford, Rothwell and Carlton. He noted that these groups have a joint Forum meeting, as they recognise that they have a lot in common. They have even written a provision for such joint meetings into their constitution.

3. Organisational structure of the Forum

Greg Turton noted that John Hall had mentioned what the Holbeck Neighbourhood Forum is currently doing. He noted that a steering group had been set up to get to the stage where the Neighbourhood Forum had been designated. He noted that there are four lead functions; document writing and contacts with the Council and Government agencies (undertaken by Greg Turton), Community engagement (undertaken by Christine Thornton), the website (undertaken by Richard Bell) and publicity (undertaken by Mark Parry). He noted that all these functions are still needed. If the functions are, indeed kept, and the individuals currently undertaking the roles wish to continue to do so, that is fine; otherwise we would need new volunteers. He noted that we would need to take receipt of issues identified by the community,

and put in place a group to discuss the situation and make recommendations to the committee. The committee would therefore need a representative from each group. The new committee could be structured as a steering committee, with administrative functions and task groups. Such a group could deal with policy, including issues relating to planning, the use of buildings and land. Other areas may be projects. Greg Turton envisaged that whoever is in charge of such task groups will serve on the committee. He noted that the constitution, as currently drafted envisages a committee of 12 members, and that this would limit the number of task groups. Greg Turton noted that he is not one for dismantling a model which has served us well, but suggested that we should look at what other groups do. It would also be nice to get a view from members as to how to go forward. Christine Thornton said that she would wish to know what members think. She would be in favour of the steering group model continuing unless and until it has been shown not to be working well. Greg Turton noted that the steering group had started with four people and had then expanded to include the entire membership of the Beeston Community Forum Committee. There was a suggestion from the floor that format could be tweaked. Greg Turton noted that those who had been working to establish the Neighbourhood Forum had gained experience over the past 18 months and that sometimes things had been painful! He noted that the Holbeck area had been a pilot scheme for Neighbourhood Planning. As such, it has front runner status and has been in operation for a year longer than the group seeking to set up the Neighbourhood Plan in Beeston, which had started in July 2013. He added that on March 21st, members of the Beeston Neighbourhood Forum would be participating in a trip to Heathfield, Wolverhampton; an area with many of the same issues as are faced by Beeston. He noted that Heathfield has adopted its neighbourhood plan, and added that we hope to gain experience from this.

There was a question from the audience asking whether, in the Holbeck Neighbourhood Forum, everyone serving on the Board (Committee) is a member of one or more groups. John Hall noted that there are three subgroups comprising Forum and Committee members. A question was also asked as to whether it is envisaged that ordinary Forum members will be members of task groups. Greg Turton confirmed that that is the intention.

4. The Constitution- Robert Winfield noted that there had been some discussion about whether the first AGM of the Forum should take place in May 2016, rather than May 2015. He noted that the constitution, as currently drafted would require the AGM to be held in May 2015 and that a constitutional amendment would be required to override this. He noted that amendments to the constitution can be passed at a General Meeting of the Forum, provided 28 days notice of the proposed amendment is given. The matter could be decided at a future meeting of the Forum. Robert Winfield noted that he has no strong views as to whether the first AGM should take place in May 2015 or May 2016. In response to a question from the floor, Robert Winfield clarified the minimum age for Forum members. He noted that the minimum age for full members of the Forum is 18. However, he noted that there is also a category of membership, known as Supporter members, open to individuals who do not wish to be full members of the Forum, or who do not meet the criteria for full membership, but who nevertheless wish to demonstrate support for the Forum. There is no age limit for this class of membership. Christine Thornton suggested that as the Constitution had been submitted to Leeds City Council as part of the application for the designation of the Forum, and as designation had been achieved, it would be appropriate to vote on the constitution as a whole. This was agreed. The constitution was proposed by Ken Hewson, seconded by Noor Zaman and passed by the necessary two thirds majority.

5. Election of Officers – Christine Thornton passed the chair to Robert Winfield, as Acting Secretary of the Forum, for consideration of this item. Robert Winfield noted that he would not deal with the election of the Vice Chair of the Forum as he is a candidate for this position

5.1 Chair- Robert Winfield noted that he had received several nominations for Greg Turton (one nomination was proposed by Bill Birch, seconded by Noor Zaman, another nomination was proposed by Mary Dinsdale and seconded by Arthur Kirby and a third nomination proposed by Ken Burton and seconded by Robert Winfield). As Greg Turton was the only person nominated, Robert Winfield noted that he was required to put a resolution to elect Greg Turton to the meeting. The resolution was duly passed; Greg Turton was declared elected as Chairman of the Neighbourhood Forum

5.2 Treasurer- One nomination had been received, for Bill Birch (proposed by John Fenton, seconded by Ken Hewson). The necessary resolution to elect Bill Birch was put to the meeting and carried. Bill Birch was declared elected as Treasurer

5.3 Secretary – One nomination had been received for Mark Parry (proposed by Greg Turton, seconded by Doris Brooke) The necessary resolution to elect Mark Parry was put to the meeting and carried . Mark Parry was declared elected as Secretary

5.4 Vice Chair- Robert Winfield returned the Chair to Christine Thornton for consideration of this item. A nomination for Robert Winfield had been received (proposed by Doris Brooke, seconded by Arthur Kirby) . There was also a nomination for Richard Bell, who had been proposed by Ken Burton with no seconder. However, Richard Bell made clear that he did not wish to seek election as Vice Chairman , or indeed as a member of the Committee as he felt there should be new faces. Accordingly, Richard Bell withdrew the nomination. The necessary resolution to elect Robert Winfield was put to the meeting and carried. Robert Winfield was declared elected as Vice Chairman

6. Issues Identified by the Beeston Community.

6.1 Christine Thornton noted that during January 2014, leaflets had been delivered to 6500 houses. She noted that there had been some hiccups in this process; some households did not receive a leaflet; indeed Christine Thornton noted that she did not get a leaflet delivered to her home address. The questionnaire was also added to the Neighbourhood Forum website. 62 questionnaires had been returned between June and October ; 13 from the website and 49 from the paper leaflets. All except one of the surveys had been completed anonymously. Christine Thornton noted that two respondents did not address the questions as they were intended to, and simply wrote racist remarks on the questionnaire. Christine Thornton hoped that some of the issues raised will form some part of the plan to make Beeston better.

6.2 Christine Thornton started by addressing question six. 48 respondents said that they are residents of the Beeston Neighbourhood Area. One respondent works in the area, one respondent is a business area, one respondent is both a resident and a local worker. No elected representatives responded. Five respondents did not specify whether they are a resident, business owner or employed in the area .

6.3 Christine Thornton then dealt with Question One ‘What do you believe is good about Beeston?’ . Christine Thornton noted that thirteen respondents had identified shops and the range of local facilities. Thirteen respondents referred to the proximity of Beeston to Leeds City Centre. Eleven respondents spoke about the community spirit, whilst eleven respondents also referred to friendly people. There were ten references to Cross Flatts Park, including Bands in the Park.

6.4 Christine Thornton then addressed Question Two ‘ What Improvements are needed in Beeston?’ . Christine Thornton noted that there were several dominant themes. 43 respondents referred to the general untidiness of the area or litter, including dog fouling, flytipping or enforcement measures. Fourteen respondents referred to the need to tackle Anti Social Behaviour in Beeston in general, and Cross Flatts Park in particular. There were references to the incidence of drinking, gangs and urinating in the park. Fourteen respondents referred to housing issues , particularly the lack of affordable housing, and the lack of maintenance of houses by private landlords. Twelve respondents referred to traffic , or traffic calming measures including double yellow lines and speed cameras. Eight respondents referred to untidy gardens, hedges and houses.

6.5 With regard to Question Three; ‘What do you think are the opportunities for Beeston?’ , 15 respondents referred to community cohesion , building on what is there and shaping developments. Twelve respondents referred to business opportunities, including support for and development of businesses. Nine respondents referred to housing , whilst eight respondents spoke about new courses , classes etc for the community.

6.6 Christine Thornton then dealt with Question Four ‘What do you think are the greatest threats to Beeston being a good place to live?’ . Twenty eight respondents referred to housing , including private landlords and the poor maintenance of housing. Twenty eight respondents referred to aspects of the environment, including rubbish and flytipping. Seventeen respondents referred to crime and anti social behaviour, including community cohesion and racism.

6.7 With regard to Question Five 'If there could be one thing you could change to make Beeston Better, what would it be', Christine Thornton noted that twenty respondents had made reference to making Beeston a cleaner, tidier and more pleasant place. Twelve respondents addressed the issue of racism and the need for communities to work together. Nine respondents referred to housing, calling for more accountability and legislation affecting private landlords, and house building on available sites. Eight respondents referred to traffic.

6.8 Christine Thornton summarised the findings by saying that there are six recurring themes; the environment, infrastructure (including poor housing, absent landlords and the poor repair of housing), criminal activity (including drug dealing, Anti Social Behaviour, CCTV and police patrols), traffic calming (including rat runs and speeding cars), community cohesion (including a perceived increase in immigration and racism) and worklessness (including the need to work with businesses to promote jobs). Christine Thornton noted that there had been some comments about unemployment in the local area.

6.9 Christine Thornton concluded by noting that she had analysed the surveys which were completed from the leaflets circulated in the area, whilst Robert Winfield had carried out a similar analysis of the surveys completed online. Christine Thornton then compiled a report from all the responses. She stressed that the report is not a secret and asked anyone who would like a copy to e mail her. The report would be posted on the website.

6.10 Greg Turton referred to two issues which had been highlighted from the survey returns. In connection with affordable housing, there is the Aspiring Communities planning application for the site of the Ice Pak factory. He noted that a number of residents had written to Leeds City Council about this matter. Aspiring Communities second planning application for this site had led to the formation of the Save Our Beeston Campaign.. Greg Turton noted that he had asked Bill Birch to give him note about the activities of the Save Our Beeston Campaign in relation to the planning application, and its impact on the health and well being of Beeston. Greg Turton then referred to the proposal by Asda Stores Limited for a new supermarket on Old Lane. He noted that the Beeston Community Forum had come to an arrangement with Asda regarding the opening hours and delivery hours for the new store, but Asda were seeking opening and delivery hours in breach of these undertakings. Moreover, they had submitted a planning application for a petrol station without informing the Forum. Greg Turton said that we need to look at the themes coming out of local campaigns.

7. Remarks by Greg Turton, Chairman of the Beeston Neighbourhood Forum

Greg Turton thanked members of the Forum for their vote of confidence in him. He said that there are tremendous opportunities available to us. He noted that the Beeston Neighbourhood Forum is a statutory body, and that it had been designated by Leeds City Council. Leeds City Council has a duty to support the Neighbourhood Forum. The Forum is registered with the Department of Communities and Local Government in London as a body working towards a Neighbourhood Plan. This enables us to have certain legal rights and this enables us to produce a plan. If the plan is adopted by a referendum, future planning applications would be required to address the Beeston Plan and the core strategy for the city. Greg Turton noted that only 10 to 20% of areas setting up a Neighbourhood Plan are non parished areas like us, and have had to put in place a Neighbourhood Forum. There is no need to establish a Neighbourhood Forum where there is already a town council or parish council in place. Greg Turton noted that in Tring, Oxfordshire, the local council had delegated all decisions about housing sites and employment to the Neighbourhood Forum, whilst in St. Ives, Cornwall, everything contributing towards the regeneration of the area is within the Neighbourhood Plan. In terms of Beeston, it is not unreasonable to speak to the Council with a view to securing a level playing field. He added that as an urban area pursuing a Neighbourhood Plan, we are in unchartered territory. If people investigate issues without liaising with the council, we could be overtaken by events. Greg Turton noted that it is his intention to speak with Leeds City Council at an early stage about assurances and delegated powers which could be given to us. Greg Turton referred to the qualifications required for membership of the Neighbourhood Forum. He added that his qualification is that you care about Beeston. This is not about whether you have lived in Beeston for 20, 30, or 50 years, but about whether you care about Beeston. There is an opportunity, with the Neighbourhood Forum, to go forward with respect for each other, to seek to produce a Beeston of which we can be proud. This task will require a lot of hard work and plenty of talking. People who are involved will want to roll their sleeves up. He would not want the Committee of the new Neighbourhood Forum to be described as a Board as some directors do not roll their sleeves up. He noted that information about the Neighbourhood Forum had been circulated to all businesses in

the area ; this task had been divided up between himself, Mark Parry, John Fenton and Christine Thornton. Greg Turton noted that he had first thought of the concept of a Neighbourhood Plan for Beeston in March 2013, when he brought the idea to the Committee of the Beeston Community Forum. Work in establishing the Neighbourhood Forum started in July 2013, with the area being designated in February 2014. The Neighbourhood Forum was designated in January 2015. We have come a long way, but there is still a long way to go. If everyone rolls their sleeves up, the strapline 'Lets Make Beeston Better' is achievable. Greg Turton concluded by saying, in the words of Barack Obama, 'Yes we can'

8. Any Other Business-

8.1 Councillor Angela Gabriel pointed out that the Councillors had paid for a free event , on 5th March , at Leeds Civic Hall for people over the age of 55. The event begins at 10 am and includes a free lunch. There are activities, throughout the day, with the event concluding at 3p.m

8.2 Christine Thornton expressed the hope that women will put their names forward for the Committee of the Neighbourhood Forum. Greg Turton hoped that there would be new faces on the Committee. Greg Turton added that we would need to consider task groups, and the structure of the forum. He envisaged that the approval of new members for the Neighbourhood Forum would be an agenda item. Any new members should contact Mark Parry, the Secretary of the Forum, who would verify the applicant's eligibility for membership. He would then update the membership list. New members would be able to vote at future meetings.