

Minutes of: RADCLIFFE TOWNSHIP FORUM

Date of Meeting: 11 January 2016

Present: Councillor Colin Jones (in the Chair)
Councillors Preston, Walker, S Briggs, T Isherwood, J Lewis,
N Parnell and Skillen

Advisory Group Representatives Gill Stainthorpe, Withins Community Association
Colette Jones, Friends of Close Park
David Lewis, Chapelfield Village Association

Public Attendance: 110 members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor D Bailey, Councillor R Shori and Roy Vevers
and Carol Kemp

RTF606 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

RTF607 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was agreed:

That the Minutes of the last meeting of the Township Forum held on 18 November, 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Deputy Chair.

RTF608 OPEN FORUM

The Chair welcomed the Leader of the Council, Councillor Connolly and the Bury MBC's Chief Executive, Mike Owen to the meeting who were in attendance to give a presentation on the Council's 2016/17 Budget Consultation and who had agreed to deal with the following questions/comments and representations from members of the public present at the meeting in relation to the recent flooding incidents in Radcliffe :-

- Councillor Connolly reported that arrangements were being made to hold a public meeting regarding the recent flooding incidents in Bury, to be held at the Town Hall as soon as possible. Representatives from the Council, the Environment Agency and United Utilities would be asked to attend this meeting. A date for this meeting would be published on the Council's website and be advertised widely across the Borough.
- Mike Owen informed the meeting that the Council had particular statutory obligations to meet for Six Town Housing residents in relation to those who may have been affected by the floods.
- A resident from Selby Close, Radcliffe raised particular concerns relating to their personal experiences of the floods. This resident was still living in temporary accommodation and felt let down by the agencies involved in dealing with the floods, was concerned that the flooding had been exacerbated by houses recently being built on flood plains in Radcliffe and

felt that the public meeting to answer questions and deal with residents' concerns should have been held immediately following the floods, not weeks later. In response, the Chief Executive explained the statutory obligations held by the Environment Agency as opposed to Bury Council and that answers to many of the questions needed to be provided by the Environment Agency. The Council Leader and Senior Offices were in discussions with the relevant Government Department and a meeting had also been scheduled between the Council and Environment Agency where all of the concerns raised by residents would be raised by the Council representatives. It was reported that the Environment Agency were looking into the provision of future flood defences in Bury but had asked for £3 million from the Council towards the cost of implementing a scheme. The Council would discuss flood defences at this meeting.

- Mike Owen detailed some of the emergency procedures carried out by Council staff as part of the Council's emergency planning response. The Council had needed to priorities their response to the flooding. The Council had secured a Government grant which had been passed on to residents affected by the floods in the form of an emergency £500 payment. It was reported that DEFRA rules dictated the distribution of flood payments to residents, not the Council.
- Mike Owen explained that the sheer amount of rainfall, over 1200 mm in such a short space of time had caused the River Irwell to burst its banks which had been the main reason for the flooding in the Radcliffe and Ramsbottom/Summerseat areas of the Borough. Any issues relating to planning permission being granted for new housing developments in areas of the Borough would be investigated although it was explained that all relevant agencies are consulted as part of the process for determining planning applications by the Authority.
- A resident raised concerns about the flooding of Close Park and asked if the Council had undertaken a risk assessment in relation to the need to clean the equipment in the park from sewage contamination. The resident explained that equipment had been cleaned following the 2012 flooding incidents and signage had been erected in the park warning residents of a contamination risk. The Leader and Chief Executive would investigate the matter.
- Colette Jones thanked all of the volunteers who had helped with the clean up. Colette explained that it had taken 3 days for a Council representative to attend Close Park following the flooding, although local Councillors had been a great help. Colette felt let down by all of the agencies involved in dealing with the floods and explained that a list of questions had been submitted to the Council and was awaiting a formal response to these questions. Both Councillor Connolly and Mike Owen acknowledged receiving the questions and that the Council would respond to those questions it could answer, however, legal implications had arisen from the list of questions submitted which needed to be considered as part of any Council response.
- A number of residents raised concerns relating to the need for more skips to be made available on Waterside Close, Parkside Close and on the river side of Dumers Lane so residents did not have to cross the busy road with heavy furniture to access the existing skips on Dumers Lane. Mike Owen gave an assurance that this would be dealt with as soon as possible.

- Councillor Parnell reported on the volunteers who had worked on the Close Park clean up but more was needed to be done. Councillor Parnell commented on the need for assistance from the Environment Agency with this. A resident informed the meeting that a further clean up at the park had been scheduled to take place on Sunday 17th January, co-ordinated by volunteers from Mersey Basin Canal Trust who had assisted with the initial clean up at the park.
- A resident raised concerns relating to the provision of flood plains in Radcliffe in relation to open land on previous industrial sites such as old Papermill site and asked if this was going to be considered as part of a future flood risk assessment. The resident also raised the issue of dredging the River Irwell and provision of sandbags in Ripon/York St area. It was reported that the Environment Agency were responsible for these issues raised and that they would need to provide the answers to residents and the Council, who shared these concerns.
- A resident from Morris Street raised concerns relating to the 12 properties affected in this particular area. Residents were anxious that this could happen again at any time and were concerned of the timescales involved in responding to the flooding by all of the agencies involved and in terms of action needed as part of a flood defense programme.
- A resident of Ripon Close informed the meeting that a man-hole cover had been blocked on this road within the last 12 months and asked if this issue was linked with flooding in this area. The resident also raised the issue of building contractors on York Street who had left the site without completing building works.
- Gill Stainthorpe informed the meeting of the campaigning undertaken by Withins residents in relation to the goits, canals and reservoirs in Radcliffe over recent years which led to some action being taken to help maintain these water courses. Help had been received from the Council in support of their campaign. Residents needed to work together as part of a community response in dealing with these issues of flood risk.
- A resident raised concerns relating to the affects on property values and inflated insurance premiums for those affected by the floods.
- A resident raised concerns about the issue of climate change and felt that the Government were not dealing with this issue affectively. The lack of Government intervention in dealing with the effects of climate change would only lead to more frequent and greater flooding incidents across the country. Following on from this point, another resident commented that housing developers should be required to install solar panels on new houses and asked if there was an obligation on house builders at present to make provision for solar panels.

The Chair, Colin Jones thanked Councillor Connolly and Mike Owen for addressing the audience on the issues raised. The Chair also thanked residents for their contributions to the discussion and hoped that all those affected would soon recover from their experiences.

Questions/comments were invited from residents on any other issues during Open Forum and the Township Co-ordinator undertook to obtain a reply to matters that could not be dealt with directly at the meeting:-

- A resident asked for a public crossing point to be installed on Church St West near to the Health Centre as cars were parking illegally.
- Colette Jones raised concerns regarding to rubbish being dumped outside the old Radcliffe Times building.

RTF609 2016/17 BUDGET CONSULTATION

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Connolly and the Chief Executive, Mike Owen gave a presentation setting out the budget consultation for 2016/2017.

It was reported that funding received from central government would continue to reduce and 2016/2017 it was estimated that the Council would have to cut £11.6 million from its budget as core funding was being reduced by 10.75%.

It was anticipated that the Council's funding would be cut by over 30% in the coming 4 years. This is on top of the £54million lost since 2010 and at a time when residents' needs are changing, demands are increasing and expectations are high. The Council and its partners would have to work differently to deliver the best outcomes with the resources available.

The Council would need to prioritise services covering its legal obligations and its priorities to look after the vulnerable;

- promote a strong local economy and be a good place to live and invest.

The impact of the reduction in budget was set out:-

- Service changes – can't rule out service closures and/or a reduced range of services in future years.
- Explore different ways of delivering services and greater use of partnership working.
- Increased waiting times and /or reduced quality of service
- Limits to what the Council can afford to provide and carry out
- A different relationship with residents – understanding what the Council can and can't do
- Greater use of technology

The Chief Executive set out the cuts that the Council had experienced since 2011 and explained that these added up to £53.561million. The meeting was informed of where the Council spent its money with the top three areas being Older People – 30p per £1, Children's Services (non schools) – 24p per £1 and Cleansing, Refuse Collection and Disposal – 13p per £1.

It was explained that the way that the funding was allocated was based on a formula which looked at specific areas such as levels of deprivation and other demographics. This meant that Bury received £331pp compared to the national average of £387pp.

There would also be cuts to a number of grants that the Council receives as well as new concerns such as Apprenticeship Levy, Employers National Insurance and the Living Wage. It was also reported that there was uncertainty around the localisation of business rates and how this would impact on the Council.

Work had been carried out to address the cuts and the following measures had been or would be carried out :-

- Alternative Service Delivery Models
- Grant Optimisation
- Grants to Voluntary Sector
- Income generation
- Better use of buildings and Assets
- Procurement saving
- Service Redesign
- Staff Restructuring
- Use of new technology

The consultation had been launched on 10 December 2015 and was asking residents to consider how savings could be made and suggest new ways of working. The consultation was due to close on 9 February 2016 and all findings would be fed into the budget setting process. The budget was due to be debated at the full Council Meeting on 24 February.

Comments could be sent via e-mail, letter or to a dedicated telephone number.

The Chair invited comments/questions from those present were and the following points were raised:-

- A resident enquired about the costs involved in and the revenue acquired from the Bury in Bloom competition. The Chief Executive reported that the competition does not cost the Council any money as it is funded by sponsors and contributes to the £300 m revenue from retail and tourism in the Borough.
- A resident commented on the need to get more businesses established in Radcliffe Town Centre.
- A resident asked if the reduction to Government funding to the Council were politically motivated. The Leader of the Council explained that the Authority had always disadvantaged in terms of the funding formula it had received from successive Governments over the years. The cuts were now hitting harder than ever before and by 2020, this Government had stated that all grants to Local Authorities would cease and that Council funding would be reliant upon local taxation and business rates.
- Colette Jones asked if Greater Manchester Devolution would help. Both the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive saw Devolution plans as having a positive impact on the Council in terms of having a greater influence on areas devolved to the Authority.

It was agreed:

1. That Councillor Connolly and Mike Owen be thanked for their presentation.
2. That the information provided be noted.

Christine Maksymowski, Township Co-ordinator presented the draft report which included the issues raised by those who had taken part in the general round table discussions on each of the key priorities contained within the Township Action Plan for 2014/15, for approval by members of the Township Forum.

It was agreed:

1. That the report be approved.
2. That further ideas/comments on the Plan be forwarded to Christine Maksymowski, Township Co-ordinator.

RTF611 ADVISORY GROUP UPDATE

Colette Jones, Friends of Close Park thanked all of the volunteers who had assisted in the clean up after the floods, including the Mersey Basin Canal Trust. The Chair also thanked all of the volunteers for their assistance in the clean up operation. Councillor J Walker made reference to the support provided by Radcliffe Boys and Girls Club who had over 200 volunteers working on the clean up and had co-ordinated donations from local businesses and who were still providing a support network to the community. A member of the public who is also employed by the Council asked if Council workers could still volunteer for the Council's Emergency Planning register. It was reported that Council workers could still register via the Intranet.

It was agreed:

That the information provided be noted, with thanks.

RTF612 COMMUNITY FUNDING REPORT

A copy of the Community Funding Report for Radcliffe was submitted setting out details of the funding allocations to date in support of the work of local, voluntary and community groups. The Township Co-ordinator provided clarification on the allocation of funding and the amounts available to the groups.

It was agreed:

That the report be noted.

RTF613 FUNDING PANEL - RESULTS

It was reported that there had been no applications to the Township Forum Funding Panel since the last meeting of Radcliffe Township Forum held in November, 2015.

RTF614 DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was agreed

That the next meeting of Radcliffe Township Forum would take place on Monday 7 March, 2016 at 6 pm, at Radcliffe Civic Suite.

COUNCILLOR COLIN JONES

Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.05 pm)