

WALTHAMSTOW WEST COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**Minutes of a meeting held at the Mission Grove School,
Buxton Road, Walthamstow E17 6EJ**

On Monday 2nd July 2007 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor Chair:
Patrick Smith

Councillor Vice-Chair:
Adam Gladstone

Councillors:
Bob Wheatley
Peter Woollcott
Bob Belam
James O'Rourke

Geraldine Reardon
Robert Carey
Johar Khan
Sean Meiszner

Community Chair:
Philip Herlihy

Community Vice-Chair:
Faisal Raja

Cabinet Champion:
Afzal Akram

Officers in Attendance:

Sam Neal
Cathy Low
Bill Nisbet
Ben Manku
Brian Whiteley
Claire Witney
Shirley Haynes
Penny Allier
Alessandra Awolowo

Regeneration
Regeneration
Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator
Street Services, Officer
Community Council Lead Officer
Community Councils Manager
Community Council Officer
Community Council Officer
Committee Manager

Also Present:

Insp. Denise Canderton
Srg. Phil Steedman
Insp. Claire Aubrey-Robson
Naaman Murphy
Matt Perry
Eammon Bolt

Safer Neighbourhood Team
Safer Neighbourhood Team High Street
Assistant Chief Inspector
Worth Unlimited, Representative
Worth Unlimited, Representative
Ascham Homes, Representative

Residents Present:

There were approximately 64 residents present at the meeting.

PART 1 – COMMUNITY FORUM

Item	Action
<p>1 WELCOME and INTRODUCTIONS P Herlihy (PH) welcomed residents to the meeting and introduced ward Councillors, partner groups, speakers and presenters. In particular, he welcomed Councillor Patrick Smith as the new Councillor Chair. He requested residents present to complete evaluation forms handed out at reception because they were a valuable tool for improving the Community meetings and making them more effective.</p>	
<p>2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
<p>3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies were received from Cllr Liaquat Ali (newly appointed Mayor of Waltham Forest), Cllr John Macklin, and representatives of the Primary Care Trust.</p>	
<p>4 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING This standing item is intended <u>only to confirm the accuracy of the Minutes of the last meeting</u> and any matters arising are discussed during the <i>Open Forum/Community Discussion</i>. The minutes of the last meeting were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair, with the following amendment(s) noted: Page 8 K Lord stated that there was a mistake in the reporting of the facts regarding the land sold to the Muslim Burial Trust. The minute taker had taken in consideration the comments of K Lord. On 20th March, the Cabinet accepted the recommendation for the disposal of the plot of land between Folly Lane and Cheney Row. Further details could be found on the Cabinet Report http://www1.walthamforest.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.asp?CId=287&MId=1508&Ver=4&J=3</p>	
<p>Page 24 Insp. Denise Canderton stated that "<i>Johar Khan does not sit on the High Street Panel</i>"</p>	
<p>5 NEWS REPORT B Whiteley (BW), Community Councils Lead Officer gave a brief summary of the item(s) on the (blue) response sheet included in the papers. P Spiro stated that he was not entirely pleased with the response given by Clive Morton to Query 3 on the response sheet. BW also gave an update on the Community Council spend 2006/07 and advised that: – An update had been received from the Waltham Forest Disability Resources Centre for the £1,600 grant. – £2,000 had been allocated to the Sport Facilities for Young People in Lloyd/Aveling Parks. Free football sessions, and tennis coaching sessions would be set up in Lloyd Park/Aveling Parks. Also, flyers and articles in the local press</p>	

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advertising the activities would be arranged.

- £2,000 had been allocated to the Anti-Litter Environmental Campaign.
- £3,000 to Schools Environmental Projects had not been allocated to date, but the Chairs and the Community Council officers were working with schools in the Walthamstow West area and local environmental voluntary groups.
- £400 for the post socket for the Cheney Row Goal Posts had been spent and the socket had been fixed.

Naaman Murphy (NM) from Worth Unlimited gave information about the Mobile Youth Van funded by the Community Council. He stated that the van had been very important for carrying out the work of Worth Unlimited in the area, providing a safe haven for children and young people living in estates where there was no provision of youth centres. The aim of the organisation was to help young people become a positive part of the community.

The grant had helped young people to organise trips and events – he reported that last week, more than 25 young people were using the new van. Finally, he thanked the Community Council for its help.

Cllr Wheatley said that he had never heard of the organisation and work was needed especially in areas like Priory Court.

NM replied that he had spoken personally with Cllr Wheatley on a previous occasion. He explained that the van worked particularly during school holidays, when young people organised activities.

Cllr Wheatley added that Worth Unlimited should have contacted local councillors to inform them of its work in the community.

A resident (representative of Worth Unlimited) replied that because councillors did not know us, did not mean that the organisation did not do any work in the community.

F Raja asked what kind of issues were they faced when dealing with young people.

NM replied that they provided mainly education activities -including reading and writing; activities and training geared to finding jobs; and raising awareness about knife crime – for example, young people were encouraged to sign a pledge banning knife crime in the Estate.

P Harms (Edward Road) said that he was concerned that the shop near Argos sold ex army weapons. He reported the issue to the Police at the station near the market but no action was taken. He understood over-18's buying items from the shop, but he believed that selling these items to minors was unacceptable and the Council should stop their licence. He said that something should be done about it in light of the rise in gang culture in the Borough.

Cllr Akram replied that the shop in question was trading legally – it was not illegal to sell knives, unless to under-age kids. He said that the only thing the Council could do was to observe how the shop was doing by sending minors in and check if the owners would sell these items to them – so far it had not happened.

A Hussain (observer PCCG) said that the report on the Waltham Forest Guardian had been discussed at the last Police and Community Consultative Group (PCCG)

and he encouraged residents to read the response by the Borough Commander.

BW gave a summary of the news item in the current edition of the Waltham Forest Magazine, which included:

- The enforcement of the smokefree legislation from the 1st July 2007;
- The introduction of "Score on Doors" to control hygiene standards in food outlets in the Borough;
- An update on the Blackhorse Lane Project;
- Information regarding the swimming pool at the Walthamstow Academy.

The item was closed at this point.

6 IMMIGRATION PILOT IN WALTHAM FOREST

Assistant Chief Inspector **Claire Aubrey-Robson (CAR)** gave a presentation on the Nationality Identification Pilot (NIP) launched in May 2007, with details of the new procedures relating to Immigration checks carried out by police officers.

CAR stated that as well as the London Borough of Waltham Forest, the NIP has been launched in two other Boroughs – Hillingdon and Westminster. It would be a comprehensive approach to the enforcement work of the Border and Immigration Agencies with new inter-agency partnerships and information sharing. Also, it would promote a systematic way of identifying Foreign National Offenders when they enter the Criminal Justice System – making it easier to consider deportation for criminals eligible for such measure earlier in the process. In practice, it would mean that there would be Immigration agency and Border control Officers working in the local police stations from July 2007.

The introduction of the NIP came as a response to public concerns in the last 6 to 8 months and to criticism in the media on how the criminal justice system had handled Foreign National Offenders.

CAR then explained the process of the NIP. She said that any person arrested would be taken to Chingford Police Station, which is the main custody site in the LBWF, and would be asked 3 questions relating to their immigration status and their health. If it appeared that further clarification would be needed, the Immigration and Nationality Directorate could carry out more robust checks.

Data would be recorded on the Police National Computer, which would allow it to be shared with relevant agencies such as the Prison and Probation Services. She made it clear that the Police would not have absolute access to personal records.

The aim of the NIP would be to identify early on in the process those individuals (over 17 years of age) who, charged with an offence which could lead to imprisonment, could be deported if convicted. The relevant paperwork informing of this fact could be served while at the Police station. However, deportation would be one of the several options that could be considered. Another advantage brought by the NIP could be that individuals would be followed through each stage of the process in the Criminal Justice System, making it less likely to lose them.

However, **CAR** emphasised that the NIP would not be used to target anyone because of his or her actual or perceived nationality or immigration status. It would not allow detention in police custody to be extended beyond the defined time to

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investigate the immigration status. Finally, she emphasised that arrest and charge would not mean automatic deportation – all gathered information would be available to be considered at every stage of the Criminal Justice System.

Here reported, a summary of the discussion which followed the presentation:

Cllr Wheatley was concerned that civil liberties would be threatened by the NIP. He believed it would be a move towards the introduction of ID cards – giving ground for the State to gradually creep into our privacy.

CAR replied that the reason the Police presented the NIP to different Community Councils across the Borough was to explain and address residents' concerns like this – the NIP was not a move towards the introduction of ID cards. The pilot would only apply to individuals arrested and the Police were not actively seeking immigration offences.

Cllr O'Rourke asked what would happen if an individual did not have a passport.

CAR replied that in that case, the immigration officers would carry out checks to have a better understanding of the immigration status of the arrested individual.

A Hussain said that he welcomed the NIP because it would have a positive impact in the fight against illegal immigrant and criminals.

M Leigh (Edward Road) asked how long would an individual be detained for.

CAR replied that the Police would detain an individual for a maximum of 24 hours. If no positive results had been achieved, he/she would be handed over to the immigration officers who have a different set of rules and regulations.

The item was closed at this point.

7 COMMUNITY FORUM/ MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

H O'Brien (Edward Road) submitted the following written question: "Although planning permission has not yet been applied for please state the maximum density of housing which would be considered in an application for site BHL2 (Industrial land south of Blackhorse RD Station owned by English Partnerships and Circle Anglia). Please state maximum height (in storeys) and maximum housing units i.e. 2 bed, 1 bed, 3 bed (please give analysis)".

P Hounslow believed that the whole recycling process had been inefficiently done. He asked if recycling could be carried out more neatly and why many plastic items could not be recycled.

Cllr Belam replied that he was pleased that finally the recycling process was carried out correctly. Unfortunately, the new management had found it difficult to get into the system.

Then he added that, even though many manufactures would say their products could be recycled, some recycling companies would not have the facilities to process them.

M Keegan (Pearl Road) stated that last summer there was a brief consultation on introducing the CPZ between Forest Road and Hoe Street. However, local residents

Query 1

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gathered around 1200 signatures to stop the plan from going ahead. He wanted to have clarification on how local petitions would fit into the consultation process, including who precisely the petition should be sent to; who would deal with it; and would all the signatories be contacted and informed of the outcome.

C Witney (Head of Community Engagement) replied that the role of Community Engagement was to improve the service given to local residents and there were very good and effective consultation processes being carried out by the LBWF. With regards to petitions, Councillors would take them in consideration when taking decisions in Council meetings.

Query 2

P Herlihy asked Claire if she could provide a written response statement of policy regarding petitions.

M Keegan also wanted to know why is the one-way scheme still not implemented as it was funded from last years budget from TfL and at that time he was told that the scheme had to be completed before the end of the financial year.

Query 3

A resident (representative of the Blackhorse Lane Action Group) stated that the group had encountered similar problems. He said that a lot of correspondence had been sent to Cllr Terry Wheeler; however no one received a reply from the councillor. He remarked that for a Council that wanted to emphasise people's participation in the democratic process, it was showing little appreciation to those who did.

V Lowther asked why No Entry signs could not be erected on Market Street/High Street. Drivers from side roads were ignoring the one-way in High Street and proceeding in the wrong direction. He pointed out that even the Police were traveling in the wrong direction.

Query 4

S Kinson asked why the Council closed St James Street Library without undergoing any form of consultation. She said that, with others, she organised a petition which raised more than 1500 signatures.

P Tan asked what would the Council do with the saving of £70,000 and what would happen to the building.

Cllr Reardon replied that the library was closed to save the £70,000 but also to ensure that the building met the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). The decision was taken between 2002 and 2003 when there was a plan to build a new library. The Scrutiny Committee looked at both Leyton Library and St James Street Library and decided not to close the former. In December 2006, the Cabinet decided to take action and in February 2007 the Council decided to close the Library. The decision was taken for two reasons. First, to achieve the Council's commitment to only raise Council Tax by 2.5% - therefore, cuts must be made into other services. Second, St James Street Library ranked lowest in terms of usage. The Council invested £10 million to open new, good-sized libraries and people using St James Street would be able to use the Lea Bridge and Walthamstow Central Libraries.

S Kinson asked why there was no consultation carried out.

Cllr Reardon replied that consultation was not carried out but there were signs inside the Library warning users that it would close. She said that the Council should have made a formal warning but there were problems with the original timescale which meant that it had to be rushed through.

J Wright stated, in a written question, that the information given by Cllr Reardon on

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St James Street Library was wrong, and her speech contained misleading and inaccurate statements. “St James Street Library had the lowest usage” – it was a misleading statement because it was only lowest by 0.2% compared to the others. “£10 million investment in new libraries” – it included at least £3.5 million wasted on poor refurbishment of Walthamstow Central Library. “St James Street Library needed to much work too make it DDA compliant” – the Library was the only public building that had disabled access toilet at that end of the High Street. Finally, she said that had not seen any notification stating that the Library would close.

P Tan said, in a written question, that Cllr Reardon did not answer the question she posed, which were the following:

“The Council closed St James Street Library just to save £70,000 - what the Council was planning to do with the money saved”:

“Had the Council considered the extensive benefits over the cost of St James Street Library”;

“was there an intentional under-investment on St James Street Library over the past two to four years”;

and “Had the Council consider the welfare of schools children and local residents over this un-consulted closure”.

D Martin remarked that after so much money, Walthamstow Central Library was not fit for purpose – it was not soundproofed and the laminated flooring screeched.

A resident (Suffolk Park Road) said that she was concerned by the lack of cultural activities and facilities in the Borough.

J Harkin said that he was disappointed that the rail connection between the Chingford to Liverpool Street line and the Lea Valley line (the Hall Farm Curve) would not be implemented and wondered what would be the benefits the Borough would receive from the 2012 Olympics.

Cllr Wheatley replied that he was a member of the transport liaison committee and he would be able to come back with an answer.

P Spiro submitted the following written query regarding the appointment of Mrs L Lee as Head of Museum, Gallery and Libraries: “when and where was the post advertised?”; “when and where was the formal interview for this post held, and were other candidates considered and interviewed?”; “what were Mrs Lee qualifications and experiences which enabled her to take on the additional responsibilities for the Libraries?”.

PART 2 – FORMAL COMMITTEE

8 Sam Neal (SN) and Cathy Low (CL), Town Centre Regeneration Team, gave a feedback on the results of the consultation process on the development of the Walthamstow Town Centre.

SN explained that an extensive consultation process had been carried out, involving more than 120,000 residents, businesses, market traders and other stakeholders who all had the opportunity to view the various options. Over 820 responses were received through questionnaires, correspondence and workshops. In March 2007 a consultation team together with the Prince’s Trust Foundation (PTF) had a day of discussion and brainstorming with all the Community Council Chairs.

Overall, 52% of those questioned supported the principles of Option C which

Query 5

Query 6

Query 7

Query 8

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include:

- Central location of community facilities;
- Location and type of housing;
- Low level buildings on a more human scale, sympathetic to local the community;
- Drawing from existing strength in Walthamstow, like the market, the diverse community, local leisure activities;
- Development and promotion of an evening economy (especially through cinema and restaurants);
- Break up of Selborne Walk and increasing permeability;
- Extension of Queens Road Station improving access;
- Good balance of size, use and lower rise buildings;
- Good walkability;
- Welcoming and attracting visitors.

The consultation programme also raised issues that people disliked and which would be borne in mind in future developments:

- An undeliverable vision;
- Not addressing the issue of the EMD cinema;
- Lack of additional green space;
- Need to address transport links with Stratford City and the Olympic Park;
- Use of appropriate infrastructure accessible to an increasing number of residents;

SN then showed to the residents the first plans for the Walthamstow Centre, which had taken into account all the principles and issues raised during the consultation. She said that the plans would create an additional street market, keep the present length but with more gaps between the stalls as well as spaces for arts centres and offices. She informed residents that the plans were available on the LBWF and PTF web site.

SN informed residents that the next steps would be for the LBWF and PTF to test emerging options for robustness and deliverability; to present the preferred option to Cabinet in 2007; to undergo a public consultation on the preferred option in October 2007; to develop a blueprint into policy documents for formal adoption by the Council in December 2007/ January 2008 which would become a framework for private investors.

A number of residents asked further questions regarding the presentation on the Town Centre Regeneration– reported here is a summary of some of the questions and answers:

P Spiro pointed out that the presentation did not mention that there was a preferred bidder - the fact was even omitted from the article in the Waltham Forest Magazine. He also asked what guidance had been given to the bidder and why there should be a compulsory purchase order.

SN stated that the bidder for the Arcade site was St Modwen Properties PLC. However, the details of their proposals were still to be finalised.

C Queen stated that in April Cllr Wheeler confirmed in the WF Guardian that the

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Council had already decided that the bidder was St Modwen Properties PLC. She said that she was concerned by the height of the buildings on the preferred Option C. Finally, she asked why the Council was carrying out a policy of secrecy over the Arcade site – she said she made a request to the Council on relevant information under the Freedom of Information Act. However her request was not accepted.

SN replied that six developers were able to look at the consultation results in order to have a clear picture of what residents and stakeholders wanted. She explained that the Council wanted to appoint a developer rather than a scheme – in order to have a flexible framework.

Regarding the question on the suggested height of buildings under Option C, she said that the developers would still continue to carry out a consultation before applying for planning permission.

Finally, she stated that the Council had a policy of openness regarding its information.

A resident (representative Blackhorse Road Action Group) said that in the plans showed and the in the questions that were asked to residents, it was not clear that they could mix details of one Option with those of another – it was more “either this Option or that Option”. As an architect, he was concerned that the majority of the residents would not have understood the plans. He suggested that the plans should be published for a longer period of time and more often

SN replied that the team had learned how to improve their consultation process, and would take the comments received on board for the future.

A resident asked if it was possible to view the plans on the LBWF website.

SN replied that they were on the website

A Stannard said that he was disappointed by the way the Council conducted its consultation. He said that what people would have wanted was more involvement - for example, setting a day when all the community got together to suggest comments and then passed to others stakeholders. Instead, in this instance, residents were given what the Council had already decided.

SN explained that the ethos behind “Inquiry by Design” was to invite everyone who had a stakehold in the community (e.g. Community Council Chairs) to give their opinions on the future of the Town Centre. It was an engagement process, which wanted to produce a framework for a 25/30 years plan.

Cllr Wheatley said that the High Street in Walthamstow was appalling and at present it was not possible to envisage an evening economy – the area was not looked after and very unpleasant. He said that stallholders should clean the high street.

F Raja asked residents if there was anything they liked in the consultation.

A resident believed that these plans were going in the right direction for absorbing the future democratic growth in London – mixing low level shops with apartments

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would target the housing shortage.

Cllr Meiszner said that he was disappointed with the timescale, which he believed should be more within a 10 years period to avoid a fragmented regeneration strategy.

SN replied that they decided a 25/30 years plan because, some parts of the regeneration would be a longer term and it would give space to market interest to lead the regeneration process.

C Queen asked what form was the consultation in October going to take.

SN replied that the consultation would include two sets of events, and the use of focus groups.

P Herlihy said that he took part in the consultation process "Inquiry by Design" which was by invitation only (and should have been open) and was positively impressed with the work and effort being put into the development of the these plans. He said that in his view, the three options represented what would happen if (A) We largely missed the opportunity and did very little, (B) We allowed unrestrained commercial interests to control the future of Walthamstow, or (C) We applied a very thorough and detailed long-term planning process to get the very best possible outcome for our community.

SN finally said that she would come back later in the year to give a further update.

9 FORMAL COUNCIL BUSINESS

There was no formal business for discussion.

10 FUTURE MEETING

The meeting is asked to note that the next Community council meeting will take place on:

10th September 2007
Waltham Forest Theatre
Winns Terrace, Off Forest Road
E17 5EH

The meeting ended at 10.00 pm

Chairs Signature_____

Date_____