

## WALTHAMSTOW WEST COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting held at the Lloyds Park Theatre,  
Winns Terrace, Forest Road, Walthamstow, E17 5EH.

On Monday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2007 at 7.30 pm

### PRESENT:

**Councillor Chair:**  
Patrick Smith

**Councillor Vice-Chair:**  
Adam Gladstone

**Councillors:**  
Bob Wheatley  
Peter Woollcott  
Sean Meiszner

Geraldine Reardon  
Robert Carey  
Johar Khan

**Community Chair:**  
Philip Herlihy

**Community Vice-Chair:**  
Faisal Raja

### **Officers in Attendance:**

Clive Morton  
Lorna Lee  
Bill Nisbet  
Mario Demetrious  
Penny Bond  
Shirley Haynes  
Bettina Aruoture  
Alessandra Awolowo

Head, Culture & Leisure Services  
Head, Libraries, Museum and Gallery  
Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator  
Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator  
Cleansing Manager, Street Services  
Community Council Officer  
Community Council Officer  
Committee Manager

### **Also Present:**

Martin Stuchfield  
Insp. Denise Canderton  
Sgt. Phil Steedman  
Howard Bowman  
Bob Yeo

Chair, Friends of William Morris Gallery  
Safer Neighbourhood Team  
Safer Neighbourhood Team High Street  
Representative, DC Mediation  
Ascham Homes, Representative

### **Residents Present:**

There were approximately 59 residents present at the meeting.

## **PART 1 – COMMUNITY FORUM**

Item

### **1 WELCOME and INTRODUCTIONS**

**P Herlihy (PH)** welcomed residents to the meeting and introduced ward Councillors, partner groups, speakers and presenters. He advised residents to use help forms, available at the reception, if they wanted to hand in questions and assured them that they will be minuted. Also, he pointed out to those present that budget suggestion forms for the new financial year were available and he invited

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Item them to fill them out. Finally, he asked everyone to complete evaluation forms, which were used as a valuable tool for improving the Community Council meetings.

**2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / MEETING CONDUCT – GUIDELINES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Belam, Cllr O'Rourke, Cllr Woolcott, Cllr Akram (Cabinet Champion) and A Hussain (Community Council observer to the PCCG).

Also, **PH** gave guidelines on behaviour at Community Council emphasising that everyone present was entitled to participate and have a say.

**4 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

This standing item is intended only to confirm the accuracy of the Minutes of the last meeting and any matters arising are discussed during the *Open Forum/Community Discussion*.

The minutes of the last meeting were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair, with the following amendment(s) noted:

**Page 6 K Lord** stated that there was a mistake in the reporting of his assertion that land had been *given away* to the Muslim Burial Trust.

**K Lord** also added that he requested a report relating to the Cabinet decision on the issue. It was not added in the response sheet.

**PH** replied that the report, like other documents were available on the Council website. He added that he had read papers regarding the issue and stated that in his view, due process had been followed. Although there had been many issues to consider, the Cabinet had reached a decision that could not be reversed. He said that he was also conscious that the issue was potentially a sensitive one.

He asked residents to vote by show of hand if they felt that the issue did need further examination. 17 people voted in favour of further discussion on the issue and 7 voted against it.

**Cllr Meiszner** said that he was unclear on how further this decision would go.

**PH** replied that the majority of those present wanted the issue to be discussed further. He suggested Councillors should decide a way forward during the Councillor Forum.

**Response  
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**5 NEWS REPORT**

**5a Brief Summary of the Response Sheet:**

**Shirley Haynes (SH)**, Community Councils Officer gave a brief summary of the item(s) on the (blue) response sheet included in the papers.

Here reported is a summary of the discussion that followed:

Query 1

**H O'Brien** said that she was not happy with the answer she received and she was concerned that everything would be decided by the time residents were consulted.

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Item **Cllr Wheatley** explained that the officer could not have made any further comments without risking apparent bias towards or against the application. Also, all applications must be presented to the planning committee where residents had the opportunity of raising their concerns.

**PH** asked residents whether they believed that the response given by the Planning Development Control Manager was satisfactory and whether a more specific response was needed. 18 residents voted in agreement.

**Cllr Meiszner** said that officers, particularly in Planning, had to follow specific guidance and cannot prejudge the application before it went to the committee.

**Cllr Carey** proposed a rephrasing of the original question such that a fuller answer could be given without risking prejudice, and it was agreed that this should be returned to the department concerned for consideration.

**Response  
item 19**

Query 7:

**Cllr Wheatley** assured that, as a member of the Transport Liaison Committee, the Council was looking into the issue of the Hall Farm Curve. It was an issue, which was often on the Committee agenda. He said that very little would be done before the Olympics, unless there were funds available from Central Government.

Query 8:

**C Morton** (Head of Culture & Leisure Services) read out the following written response to the query:

"The post of Head of Libraries, Museum and Gallery was filled through the Council's Managing Change procedure in common with many posts in the new Museum, Gallery and Libraries Service structure. Ms Lee underwent both a formal presentation and an interview on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007. She met the requirements of the person specification demonstrated by her previous experience and responses during the interview, and was consequently offered the post".

**5b News & Announcement:**

**Faisal Raja (FR)** gave a briefing on issues, which affected the local area, it also included an update from the local Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

Finally, **SH** gave an update on the budget spend and the progress of two main projects funded by the Community Council: the anti-litter campaign – 'Drop the litter, the price is bitter'; and the primary school environmental project. The DVD for the anti-litter campaign was then shown to residents.

**6 2007/08 BUDGET SPEND**

**PH** congratulated SH for her hard work and asked residents if they had suggestions for the 2007/08 Budget. He reminded that completed suggestion forms should be submitted by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007 and the results would be brought back at the meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

**J Beaton** (Highams Park Forum) suggested funding the youth project set up by the minister of the Methodist Church.

**CC Officer**

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Item **E Poulsen** asked if the budget could be used for adding more benches in the town square, particularly on the footpath between the bus station and the shopping centre.

**CC Officer**

**7 COMMUNITY FORUM/ MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**P Spiro** said that the reply he received from C Morton was not acceptable as it did not answer three of the questions he submitted in his query: when and where was the post advertised; were other candidates considered and interviewed; what qualifications did Ms Lee have to obtain the post.

**C Morton** replied that he was not able to give any further information on the matter as he had asked both Human Resources and Legal Departments to prepare a detailed response. He was happy to come back with further responses. However, he emphasised the appointment was carried out following all the legal procedures.

**Response  
Items 1, 2,  
3, 4 & 5**

**J Wright** asked to receive copies of the publications in which the post was advertised.

**K Lord** also asked to have the text of the advert and job description.

**PH** asked C. Morton to come back with specific answers to these requests at the next Community Council meeting.

**Cllr Macklin** pointed out that it was inappropriate for public discussion to focus on an individual.

**PH** agreed reminding the meeting that the guidelines stated that discussion should be concerned with issues, and not any individual or group.

**Cllr Meiszner** asked the Police about the dispersal order in Priory Court. In particular, what were the considerations taken when it was decided to extend it and whether there was an increase in anti-social behaviour on the streets bordering the dispersal zone.

**(Higham Hill SNT)** replied that extra patrol units have been introduced since the dispersal zone was introduced, as they did not want to push the problem in other areas like Warwick Road.

**K Lord** submitted the following queries:

"1) At the Community Council meeting in February, it was stated that £250,000 had been given to Henry Boot as a penalty charge and compensation for the work undertaken. Why did the Council waive the tendering process? Why was this fact not included in the Scrutiny report? Also why were there no details of the Scrutiny Panel regarding waiving tendering process to continue dealings with Henry Boot?

2) Why has Scrutiny not recommended that there should be further investigation into the background process and responsibility of the Arcade Site having seen that the Panel a) did not have access to a full documentation; b) that some documentation was withheld; that some people called as witnesses did not attend or refused to attend the Scrutiny meeting.

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3) When £400,000 was spent in the year 2005/06 (cfr. February 2007 Community Council Meeting); why has a further £300,000 been spent in the year 2006/07 (cfr. January 2007 Cabinet Monitoring report) on an empty Arcade Site.

4) Why Scrutiny has not recommended that people responsible be brought to account?

5) Could the Council use traffic wardens to stop people, including Councillors, from parking in the double yellow lines at the Town Hall?

6) Why are Police officers being asked to pay up to £500.00 to come into the Borough to fight crime, when there is a CPZ extension being proposed in the Greenleaf area, near the Police Station. There is no parking provision for the police. The Council should make this provision."

**Cllr Meiszner** said that on the issues relating to the Arcade Site, K Lord had the right to raise them at Scrutiny meetings personally.

**Cllr Wheatley** added that although he was happy to raise the matter as a Council member, he was concerned that any decision would be taken by the time of the next Community Council meeting. He reiterated that it was better if K Lord attended the Scrutiny meeting.

**PH** replied that he understood the Councillor's concern, but believed that Community Councils and Scrutiny had two different systems in which the former provided a more public reply. Therefore, he would hope that K Lord's query would receive a comprehensive response by the next meeting.

**D Allan** enquired about the cleaning in the grassed areas in Lawrence and McEntee Avenue. Also, he noted that with the introduction of mechanical street cleaning some areas were not properly swept. He then suggested that street cleaners should carry radios to report back to depot any fly tipping.

**P Bond** (Street Services) replied that since the introduction of mechanical street cleaning they have experienced some difficulties in keeping the street properly cleaned. She added that she was happy to have residents who were willing to meet an Environmental Team officer to show where was the problem.

**H O'Brien** handed in the following query, read out by **PH**:

Why had the Council not taken any active role in promoting the E17 Art Trail which ran from the 1<sup>st</sup> September to the 9<sup>th</sup> September. For example, by displaying posters, leaflets in libraries and Council notice boards. The E17 Art Trail has been running for at least three years and is a fantastic opportunity to promote the Arts within Waltham Forest (and the vibrant community of working artists)".

**C Morton** replied that the Council had always sponsored the Art Trail through the WF Arts Council. However, the document was not distributed in libraries or posted on Council's notice boards because it was perceived that some elements of the document were attacking the Council and its policies.

**Response  
items 6, 7,  
8 & 9**

**Response  
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A **resident** replied that she was hoping for a more positive support from the Council. She said that the response given by C Morton was not plausible: she believed that in a democracy anyone had the right to express different views.

A **resident** asked whether street sweeping could be coordinated with recycling collection as he found that there was always litter left on the street after a collection.

**P Bond** replied that it would be difficult, as the frequency would vary.

A **resident** said that would like to see more weed clearing.

A **resident** wanted to know what was the estimated cost for the refurbishing work at St James Street Library in order to make it DDA compliant.

**Response  
14**

**C Morton** replied that he did not have the figure at hand but he would be able to come back with a response. He added that after an attentive assessment, St James Street Library came out as the least used within the Borough.

A **resident** asked how many books have been bought in Walthamstow Central library.

**C Morton** said that he did not have the specific figure, but the Team had a budget of £450,000 to be spent on books.

**E Poulsen** said that since the new contractor handled the recycling collection, the service has been very erratic. However, she wanted to know why wheelie bins were not returned to their original positions.

**J Beaton** (Highams Park Forum) submitted the following queries:

1) "Why are we no longer allowed to put bagged shredded paper out for recycling (cfr Cllr Belam, Local Guardian 06/09/2007). I have been in trial recycling area for over a year. In 2006, I phoned WF Direct to ask if I could put out shredded paper and the answer received was 'Yes, if it is bagged'. If it is not collected with the black box, can the shredded paper be put in the brown wheelie bins".

**Response  
13**

2) "Could the Community Council have a list of previous recipients of the budget to see that all sections of the community receive a fair share of the budget".

**Response  
15**

**J Eaton** submitted the following query:

"How many arrests have taken place in the Banbury Road, Cormorant Close, Greenshank Close area by PCSOs. There has been an increased level of youth gang activity in the area over the last six months".

**Response  
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**J Wright** submitted the following query:

"What has been done in the last three years to extend museum and gallery services to increase revenue or to improve publicity."

**Response  
17**

**PART 2 – FORMAL COMMITTEE**

**8 WILLIAM MORRIS GALLERY**

**Martin Stutchfield (MS)** Chair of the Friends of William Morris Gallery explained his concerns about the future of the Gallery. This was followed by presentations of the Council strategy delivered by Cllr Geraldine Reardon (GR) Cabinet member for Leisure, Arts and Culture, Lorna Lee (LL) Head of Libraries, Museum and Gallery and Clive Morton (CM) Head of Culture and Leisure Services.

**MS** stated that the Council cut the budget by £56,000. It resulted in both the curatorial and attendance staff being dismissed. He said that from the end of 2007 and the beginning of 2008 a new structure would be put in place. Neither the Gallery nor Vestry House Museum would have dedicated staff. Instead, employees would be spread around the two locations – a situation which would be also influenced by the reduction of the opening hours.

**MS** was concerned that the new structure would tarnish the international reputation of the Vestry House Museum and William Morris Gallery. He added that they provided a unique specialist area of study and an invaluable educational use with its extensive collection.

**MS** added that the Friends of William Morris Gallery had made a proposal for the National Lottery bid which would help to address a number of issues:

- it would make the building DDA compliant;
- it would fund works to reinstate the east wing. Here it would be possible to have a lift, as well as a shop and café (which would help generate income);
- it would fund works to refurbish and use the basement which would increase the footprint of the of the building by 25%.

Finally, he said that he was concerned that the new opening hours and the dismissal of specialist curatorial staff would undermine the National Lottery bid.

**LL** explained that she started working at the William Morris Gallery and Archives three years ago and she had an extensive knowledge of the collection stored in the Gallery premises. She argued that with the budget cut, the service could not afford to maintain the present opening hours. The new opening hours would be implemented from next year and 9 out of 11 members of staff have been kept at the William Morris Gallery.

**LL** then explained that the services had 5 key objectives: enable a wider range of people to visit; develop the educational aspect, which she believed had not been fully realised and a need to reflect the diversity of the borough; develop informative exhibitions; explore income opportunities to sustain the gallery.

She also explained that the majority of the visitors were tourists from outside the borough and schools; the latter would be accommodated even outside the gallery normal working hours.

Finally, **LL** highlighted the main focus for the Gallery at the moment, which included maintaining the audience and working to make the Gallery more accessible,

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Item enjoyable and relevant. For example, the service was looking into dividing the gallery into zones to accommodate different types of visitors.

**GR** emphasised that the Council strategy was to make the gallery more enjoyable and accessible and she was happy to receive suggestions from residents on how to achieve this objective. She believed that although the gallery was an academic resource local residents should not be requested to pay for its maintenance directly – she was looking into new ways to share the cost.

Here is a summary of the discussion which followed the presentations:

**P Spiro** asked about the 9 members of staff who decided to remain in their present position. He asked whether these employees had to face a hard decision between the prospects of unemployment and cope with the new structure. He also asked whether they had been offered full time positions.

**LL** replied that not all positions in the new structure were full time. She said that the staff had the choice between redundancy and working within the new structure. She emphasised that retaining these employees meant that the new structure would have a professional and experienced staff.

A **resident** (Pearl Road) asked what was the percentage of foreign visitors out of the 22,000 people who visited the gallery every year.

**H O'Brien** suggested that the gallery should encourage residents to repeat their visits like hosting a contemporary art exhibition. Also, it should increase the way it has been used by local schools - at the moment there were no facilities for children or practical workshops for younger adults. She said that she was concerned that the staff would be spread over the two sites, because William Morris Gallery had a very good archivist.

**LL** agreed that the recent contemporary art exhibition had a very good impact. She also said that the archivist in question would be based at Vestry House Museum.

**N Pallet** (Brookdale Road) wanted to know why there was a need to make the William Morris experience relevant to contemporary society rather than emphasise its value for what it was.

**LL** replied that at the moment few schools took enough advantage of the gallery. There was a need to make the gallery more relevant in order to create a connection with today, people and their histories.

**M Spiro** asked why the staff had been told that they should not tell anyone what was happening.

**LL** replied that staff was advised not to disclose information as the situation at the time was uncertain.

A **resident** said that he was astonished that the Heritage Lottery Fund did not fund the salary for the curator post. He also pointed out that William Morris Gallery and Vestry House Museum needed volunteers to maintain the present opening hours

**Response  
18**



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Item and the Council should look into that.  
Finally, he asked that both the Gallery and the Museum were seeking accreditation from the Museum & Library and Archives Council. Now that they had both received it, was the MLA aware of the change in opening hours.

LL replied that there was potential for the HLF to fund an education post. MLA had been informed of the restructure and continued to be involved in supporting further developments of the service.

The item was closed at this point.

**9 FORMAL COUNCIL BUSINESS**

The Councillors agreed to pursue a full response on the following issues:

To the Councillor Chair:

- Actions to further investigate whether there had been any impropriety in the decision making process that led to the sell of the Cheney Row Plot A to the Muslim Burial Trust.

**Response  
item 20**

To Culture Services:

- When and where was the post of Head of Gallery, Museum & Libraries Services advertised;
- Were other candidates considered and interviewed?
- What qualifications did Ms Lee have to obtain the post?
- Copies of the publications in which the post was advertised.
- Text of the advert and job description.

**Response  
Items 1, 2,  
3, 4 & 5**

To Planning Officers:

- What range of housing densities are considered acceptable in the relevant policies and guidance for planning applications in the Blackhorse Road Station area?

**Response  
item 19**

To Scrutiny Unit:

- A response to the questions raised at the Community Forum.

**Response  
items 6, 7,  
8 & 9**

**10 FUTURE MEETING**

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

**19<sup>th</sup> November 2007  
Walthamstow Academy, Billet Road, E17 5DP**

The meeting ended at 10.05 pm

**Chairs Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_