



Woodford Community Council

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2013

WCC members present:

Paul Rodman Chairman
Robin Berriman Treasurer
Ken Coxey, Cllr Bryan Leck, Stephen Taylor, Morag White

Guests

Cllr Brian Tolver, Handforth Parish Council

In addition, the Meeting was attended by 32 residents, Mark Hunter, MP and several visitors from neighbouring localities.

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Mr Hunter MP for attending. He introduced Mr Stephen Taylor, Chairman of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum, Mr Robin Berriman, WCC Treasurer and Ms Evelyn Frearson, who would be taking the Minutes in the absence of the Hon Secretary.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The approval of the Minutes of the AGM held on 29 November 2012 was proposed and seconded by two attendees and carried without objection.

3. Chairman's Annual Report

The Chairman reported that WCC had organised the annual litter picking day as usual, collecting 25 bags of litter this year.

The Chairman explained the purpose of the four committees with confusingly similar acronyms in operation in Woodford at the time:

The Woodford War Memorial Centre (WWMCC) Management Committee is concerned solely with the running of the Woodford Community Centre.

Woodford Community Council (WCC) was set up in the mid-1970s as a residents' association. Its remit is to look into matters relating to Woodford, such as planning

applications, environmental issues, etc. He explained that this meeting was the AGM of WCC.

Woodford United (WU) was formed by WCC as an open sub-group to focus on the redevelopment of the former BAE site. Additional people and expertise from the village and the wider community were recruited into this group to handle the additional work load.

Woodford Neighbourhood Forum (WNF) arose as an initiative of WU members in response to the new Localism Act. The Chairman explained that Mr Taylor would be expanding on the remit and activities of WNF later in the meeting.

4. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer, Mr Robin Berriman, informed the meeting that there were two separate bank accounts – the original WCC account and an account for the funds received by WU.

The WCC account had held a balance of £1,000 at the start of the financial year (1/11/12). The year-end balance was £900. Sponsorship and donations were lower for this financial year compared with the previous one.

One of the biggest costs for WCC was maintenance of the website, which Mr Berriman outlined for the meeting. Therefore, WU made a contribution of £250 to WCC for use of its website.

WU had received £4,600 in total in donations a year ago, of which £1,000 had been used last year. There had been less expenditure this year. Fees for legal advice on inclusion of the Aerodrome site in the Forum Neighbourhood Area had been a large expense, which will appear in the accounts next year. At the end of the financial year £3,240 remained in the WU bank account and will be available to help WNF.

Mr John Cooke, Woodford resident, asked for clarification of the website expenses. He commented that the website maintenance fees seemed high and volunteered his services for a lower fee. Mr Berriman thanked Mr Cooke for his offer and it was agreed that Mr Taylor would discuss the issue after the meeting.

5. Report from Woodford United

Mr Paul Rodman, Chairman of Woodford United, reported that it had been a busy year. WU had held an exhibition and made representations to SMBC on the Woodford Aerodrome SPD. The Council had received 500 individual responses to the consultation. The effort had made a difference and modifications had been made to the SPD in response to the comments received. The Planning Application from Harrow Estates had followed 9 months later. An initial application was sent in on the day before SMBC discussed and voted on the Woodford Forum application, but was subsequently rejected because it was incomplete. A Planning Application had been submitted for the demolition work, which was deemed to be adequate. Much work was needed by Woodford residents' groups to analyse the planning applications in detail. WU had maintained links with Harrow Estates and the Chief Planning Officer at SMBC. The

clock was ticking with respect to the time allowed prior to the Council determining the planning applications. They have to be determined together so the demolition planning application cannot be determined ahead of the building planning application.

6. Report from Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

Mr Stephen Taylor, Chairman of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum, provided the meeting with an update on progress. He reported that the Forum had evolved from Woodford United, which was originally set up by WCC to address the Supplementary Planning Document produced, and now adopted, by Stockport Council. This was to provide guidance, although not planning policy, for developers of the former British Aerospace Site. As such, the Forum has a different brief to that of the Community Council.

It had become clear that Woodford needed a more statutorily recognised say in what was going on in and around the community. The Localism Act 2011 was adopted by Parliament and part of its purpose was to provide a means for communities to achieve just that. At the AGM last year it was agreed that the Community Council would apply to Stockport for the approval of a Forum.

Two applications were needed: one for the Forum itself, and a second for the Area to which it relates. Rapid progress had been made after the last AGM, legal and planning advice obtained, the content checked with Stockport officers and the full documentation required had been produced. The Forum has a separate Constitution, and that, together with other application documents, was published by SMBC at the end of May. The Area applied for was the parish of Woodford, coinciding broadly with the polling district.

Following a 6-week consultation period, the applications made their way through the Council Committee stages. WCC members attended these meetings and made further representation in support. The Council finally made its decision on 17 October 2013. When the process started, Woodford was one of the first 200 in the country.

The Forum had been approved, but Stockport Council used its discretion to exclude the BAE site. WCC had been made aware previously that the SEMMMs road corridor would be excluded, but that does not stop it being involved with the consultation process.

WCC continued to maintain that the BAE site should have been included. Legal advice supported this, as did guidance from planning advisors. WCC was reviewing options for further action regarding the exclusion. Meanwhile, it was important to establish the Forum in order to move forward.

An additional concern was that the decision by the Council may disadvantage those who ultimately take up residence on the site, since they will not by default have the opportunity to be part of the Forum. Mr Taylor reported that he personally found this wrong, since a not inconsiderable part of the presentations on the development related to integration within the existing community, yet the Council clearly, in this instance, opted for a counter stance. The exclusion of the BAE site causes issues that are not entirely consistent with good planning under the Localism Act guidelines.

Mr Taylor explained what the Forum **cannot** do, which included:

- Determination of planning applications
- Speaking for individuals
- Making policy for the whole of Stockport
- Blocking development
- Overturning previously determined applications

Mr Taylor went on to explain what the Forum **can** do, which included having the statutory powers to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for its Area, conforming with the strategic policies contained in the local authority development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

This Plan would set out guidelines for the future of Woodford, not just for now but as part of planning for the next ten to fifteen years. At the moment this could not include the BAE site directly, but the Forum will continue to address that matter. The Plan would then become a policy document, which Stockport must adopt as part of its own planning policies.

Over the coming months the Forum Committee would be producing quite a detailed questionnaire, which will be asking for the views of residents. This is most important in order that the Plan be community driven. Amongst other aspects this will cover housing needs, local employment and economy, environmental issues, community services and sustainability. The Forum Committee would be contacting schools, organisations and businesses for a similar input. Once the responses have been returned they would be collated and used as a foundation for the Plan, which would then be developed with the support of professional planners.

Once the plan is written, there are still safeguards provided for the community. It is first independently inspected and then, subsequent to it satisfying legal and planning requirements, it is put before the voters within the Area for a referendum. A majority of those voting is required for the Plan to be adopted. It is a democratic process, which brings some of the decision-making more relevant and closer to home.

Additionally, the "status" of a Forum means that it has a slightly greater voice when speaking to other public bodies and developers and has more opportunity to be recognised as a stakeholder for consultations.

The Forum has a Management Committee for the day to day activities, and would continue to make representations regarding developments within and around our borders, supporting and working with Woodford Community Council.

Woodford Forum had established a working relationship with neighbours in Poynton and Adlington and members were attending Local Area Partnership meetings. Members also had close ties with Handforth to the West, where considerable developments were being proposed. The Forum would co-operate with the Bramhall community to learn of their concerns and vision for the future.

Mr Taylor informed the meeting that it is vitally important that we maintain our own identity, but recognise that we are not an isolated community. Therefore, members were considering how best to benefit Woodford, which is our first priority, by exploring options and developing further relationships with our neighbours.

Joined-up thinking was needed about how we are all affected by cross-authority large scale proposals, as there seemed little co-ordination or co-operation between the authorities themselves.

Poynton and Adlington were working towards developing neighbourhood plans and close liaison had been agreed. Wilmslow had a public meeting to approve progressing their own plan and Cheshire East were in the midst of their third consultation on their own local plan! All of these are on our borders and can affect Woodford.

Representation would be made to Stockport MBC regarding the Planning Application for development on the BAE site. Information available at the time suggested that it may contain detailed information for about 145 homes starting at the Bridle Road end of the site, with outline planning for an additional 700 to 800 homes. The second phase was likely to include a single form entry primary school, shops, a pub/cafe, a village green and limited business facilities in the form of office accommodation. Parking and public transport facilities were expected. The actual build size would be about 40 hectares spread over 72 hectares in total. The complete site is about 200 hectares. The WCC and Forum representatives had already been involved in consultations and had established contacts with Harrow, but when details of the application become available they will require analysis and a prompt and proper response.

Mr Taylor explained that the Forum Management Committee would be making representation on the Cheshire East Local Plan, which includes a proposal for the North Cheshire Growth Village at Handforth on the land around Total Fitness bordering Woodford and comprising 1,800 new homes, on approximately 65 hectares, 12 hectares for business use, and a further 26 hectares of safeguarded land (this means in fact safeguarded for development albeit after probably 2030). It would require greenbelt boundary changes.

East Cheshire had advised that it will provide funds towards a Poynton Bypass. The Forum would be consultees on this and how it affects current and future plans for our area.

Although the Forum would make representations, Mr Taylor encouraged members of the audience to have their say and respond directly as well.

The Forum Constitution is open, to make it easy for residents of Woodford, businesses and those who work within Woodford to become members of the Forum, and it was hoped that more people will want to join.

Mr Taylor explained the duties as a member of the Forum.

The commitment need not be onerous and would not require attendance at weekly or monthly meetings, since there is a committee for the day to day workings, although there will certainly be the opportunity to get as much involved as you want.

Members would be advised of major activities by email or through updates to the WCC Website, but it was hoped that members would become actively involved, particularly during the questionnaire phase, as this is most important to get a balanced view.

Mr Taylor encouraged attendees to join the Forum and leave contact details on the sheets provided.

7. Election of WCC members

The Chairman reported that there were 12 current members. Mr Ron Beatham wished to stand down, but was happy to be co-opted back on to the Committee. The Chairman proposed that all other Committee members were re-elected onto the Committee. The Rev David Russell, the new vicar of Woodford, was currently co-opted and it was proposed that he would be elected tonight. The Chairman's proposal was seconded by Mr Andrew Freeth and a show of hands revealed a majority in favour with no objectors. No other candidates came forward, so three vacancies remained on the Committee.

8. The Cheshire East Council Core Strategy (Local Plan), Handforth East

The Chairman introduced Cllr Brian Tolver, of Handforth Parish Council, who had been invited to speak about the proposed development at Handforth East, adjacent to Woodford.

Cllr Tolver explained that he and Ms Evelyn Frearson were neighbours on opposite sides of Handforth meadows, which would be affected by the Cheshire East Council Local Plan. This included a proposal for a large new development comprising 1,800 houses on land to the East of the A34 bypass around Total Fitness and running up to the boundary with Woodford along Blossoms Lane. Cheshire East Council (CEC) owns much of this land and appeared to be using it to satisfy the housing requirements of other areas in Cheshire East. Financial motives seemed to be a strong driver since the Council would benefit substantially by sale of this land for development. The Parish Council and the residents' action groups in Handforth were opposed to the plan and had identified flaws in the logic and faults in the process, including failure of CEC to comply with the Duty to Cooperate with neighbouring authorities. This was exemplified by the facts that SMBC had not been involved correctly in the very early stages of the planning process and the plan had not been factored into SEMMMS planning. The extra loading on the road network would cause traffic chaos. Handforth Parish Council and residents' action group would be objecting on the basis of lack of justification for use of Green Belt land, failure in the Duty to Cooperate and traffic issues.

Ms Frearson invited everyone to view the posters on the Handforth East proposals at the back of the room.

9. SEMMMS progress update

Mr Paul Goodman informed the meeting of progress with SEMMMS, now renamed the A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road. A huge planning application had been submitted and was open for consultation. It remained unchanged from the plan presented for the previous consultation and had been worked up to a very high level of detail. The contractors had been appointed. The design allows a Poynton bypass to be built. A public enquiry was not essential as three local authorities had been involved in the planning. There would be a public enquiry only if the Secretary of State called it in and he would only call it in if the objections outweighed support. Mr Goodman pointed out there are very active objector groups and that supporters should make representations as well as objectors in order for their views to be heard. The period for consultation was open until Christmas.

Mark Hunter MP confirmed that from his understanding of the timing it seemed likely that the PA for the Woodford Aerodrome development would be discussed by SMBC at the same time as the SEMMMS PA at a January meeting. He noted that the PA for the Aerodrome development was in two parts that would go forward in one application in January: Part 1 is a detailed application for 145 houses; Part 2 is an outline application for 805 houses. This would coincide with the same process in CEC. The consultation period for the Harrow application was 16 weeks.

With regard to the Handforth plan, Mr Hunter noted that he was acutely aware of the local traffic problems which would arise from the Handforth development in addition to the development at Woodford.

10. Open discussion of Harrow proposals

The Chairman invited attendees to take part in an open discussion of the Harrow proposals for the Woodford Aerodrome development. There was a wide ranging discussion, which included the following points among others.

- No smaller houses for young and older people were included in phase 1.
- Traffic was the biggest concern. If the traffic doesn't work, the development will not work.
- Assumption has been made that SEMMMS will be built. No modelling without SEMMMS had been carried out, although the SPD required a new zero baseline.
- The number of houses in the PA will have to be tied to the traffic analysis.
- Congestion on local roads to gain access to SEMMMS was a concern.
- Cllr Bryan Leck noted that a FOI request could be submitted to get the numbers.
- Is there is a risk that objections from action groups could result in only part of the road being built, which would be worse locally?
- Mr Hunter reassured the meeting that there is no risk of a partial build and the Government funding is conditional on ultimate completion as far as the M60.
- Simultaneous consideration of the PAs for Harrow development and SEMMMS could result in insufficient time and effort on the former.
- Elections could interrupt determination of the Harrow PA.
- Harrow PA will be available to view online and in libraries.
- Should we focus on the issue of exclusion of the airfield from the Woodford Forum Neighbourhood Area, which is totally at odds with the Localism Act?
- Mr Hunter reported that the Council had taken legal advice.
- Mr Goodman noted that the result of the Daws Hill Case was expected in March. An airfield was excluded from a Neighbourhood Area and the case went to court. The result would be a key factor in determining case law.
- As considerable time and resources would be needed for the WNF to produce a plan that was better than Harrow's, would it be better to work in consultation with them and SMBC to get our wishes incorporated?
- Mrs Mary Robinson, prospective Conservative Party parliamentary candidate, agreed that the exclusion of the aerodrome site was not in line with localism and encouraged residents' groups to keep pressing for inclusion.
- Those attending the SMBC meeting that made the decision about the Neighbourhood Area got the impression that the decision had been made just prior to the meeting under threat of legal action.

- Mr Hunter noted that SMBC had taken and continues to take legal advice on the matter, which had been that if the area was included the Council would be liable in a legal challenge.
- WNF would have a number of opportunities to reapply for inclusion of the Aerodrome site.
- Communication with Redrow (parent company of the subsidiary Harrow Estates) indicated that they wanted complete control over the development of the Aerodrome site.
- WNF would not be able to influence phase 1 but could influence phase 2.
- WNF would proceed with the questionnaire while awaiting result of the Daws Hill Case.

11. Closure of Meeting

The Chairman thanked Mr Ian Willis and the Church for printing. He invited donations to WCC, which would be very welcome. WU would need assistance with analysis of the Harrow PA, so any help offered in that regard would also be welcomed. He thanked the attendees for their time before formally closing the meeting.

The meeting closed at 21:36.

Minutes Approved, on behalf of the Community



Chairman

27 November 2014