



## **Woodford Community Council**

### **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2010**

#### **WCC members present:**

Mr Ken Coxey            Chairman

Mrs Helen Buszard    Secretary

Mrs Maxine Wood    Treasurer

Mr Ron Beatham, Mr Frank Brown, Mr Stuart Downes, Dr Len Evans, Mr Derek Hall, Revd John Knowles, Cllr Bryan Leck, Mr Paul Rodman, Mrs Morag White.

The Meeting was attended by 60 residents and visitors.

#### **1.     Chairman's Opening Remarks**

The Chairman welcomed residents and visitors, including Mr Mark Hunter MP and two local councillors, Cllr Paul Bellis and Cllr Bryan Leck. He presented the apologies of the third Ward councillor, Cllr Brian Bagnall, who was unable to attend. He also introduced and welcomed the guest speaker, Mr Paul Rubinstein, Service Director, Regeneration, Stockport MBC, who would be giving a presentation on the development of the Woodford BAE Systems site, and his colleague, Mr Ian Harrison, Service Manager, Regeneration.

#### **2.     Minutes of the Last Meeting**

Approval of the Minutes of the AGM held on 26 November 2009 was proposed by Mr Rodman, seconded by Mrs White, and carried unanimously.

#### **3.     Chairman's Annual Report**

The Chairman gave a brief summary of the activities of the Community Council over the previous twelve months. He noted that close links had been maintained with Mr Hunter and with the local councillors and also that regular news releases had been received by email from Stockport Council. Relevant information was posted on the website and also placed on the WCC Notice Board, situated outside Budgens store on Chester Road. The main topic of interest to residents was the closure of the BAE site, which had been scheduled for 2012, but had now been brought forward to 2011 as a result of the Government's decision to cancel the contract following its spending review. There was, of course, considerable regret at the loss of jobs and also concern as to how the site might be developed – and this would be covered with later by Mr Rubinstein. The Community Council was aware that it had an important role in

disseminating information to residents and representing their views. Hence a Sub-Group had been set up to cover this issue and it was the intention to extend communications with residents by use of an emailed newsletter with links to the website. He hoped that many residents would leave their email addresses, so that the Community Council could reach as wide an audience as possible. Finally, on behalf of the Management Committee of the Woodford Community Centre, he drew attention to the New Year's Eve Extravaganza, which was being held at the Centre. Details could be found on the Centre's website.

#### **4. Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer presented the annual accounts and noted that the Community Council had no regular source of income. Apart from the grant that had been used to set up the website, donations were the only source of funding. During the year there had been generous donations from three local businesses and the Council wished to record its appreciation for this support. There was an ongoing need for funding to maintain the website and to cover the costs of newsletters, both of which were essential communication tools, as the Chairman had already mentioned. She therefore hoped that attendees would be generous in their support that evening.

In response to a query concerning the running costs of the website, it was explained that a monthly retainer was paid to Primary Websites for the services of the professional web designer/producer, who maintained and developed the site on behalf of the Community Council and ensured that website standards were met.

Acceptance of the Annual Accounts was proposed by Mr Berriman, seconded by Dr Buszard and carried unanimously.

#### **5. Election of new Council members**

The Chairman noted that in accordance with the Constitution, the Council consisted of 15 members, each of whom served a three-year term before standing down on a rolling basis. There was thus provision for up to five new members each year. There had been no nominations for these vacancies before the meeting, but he hoped that there would be some volunteers from the floor. However, no names were put forward and it was therefore agreed that the existing members would be re-elected.

#### **6. Neighbourhood Policing**

The Chairman presented apologies on behalf of PCSO Maureen Crehan who was unfortunately unable to attend to lead discussions on local policing, as originally scheduled. However he presented the following information on her behalf.

Woodford was generally held to be a low crime area and in the Bramhall South district reported crimes had dropped from 114 to 82 in the last year. However, the pre-Christmas period, particularly during the late afternoon, was a critical time and residents were advised to take every precaution – doors and windows locked securely at all times, lights left on, etc – to prevent opportune break-ins. Woodford already had five Neighbourhood Watch schemes in operation and the police offered encouragement and

advice to people wishing to set up further schemes. Contact details were given on the WCC website or could be obtained by contacting the police directly.

## **7. Development of BAE Systems Woodford Site**

Mr Rubinstein opened his presentation by referring to the cancellation of the Nimrod project, following the Government's spending review, and the consequent earlier closure of the site. BAE was currently in negotiation with the MoD regarding the actual date for closure, which was expected to be in mid 2011, with decommissioning taking three to six months. BAE would be doing its best to redeploy staff wherever possible to avoid loss of valuable skills. The planning framework had been established for a 2012 closure and these timescales were now being reviewed. With regard to the MAELR (Manchester Airport Eastern Link Road), the scheme had not been scrapped because it had not yet been submitted for approval, but it was very unlikely that any central funding would be allocated. Consideration was being given to re-phasing and re-financing the scheme locally.

Mr Rubinstein provided background information about the site: it was set within the Green Belt, covered a total area of 204 hectares, of which approximately 42 hectares were designated Major Existing Development Sites (MEDS) and as such could be lawfully developed as industrial sites without planning permission. The MEDS and most of the site were situated within Stockport Metropolitan Borough, with the eastern undeveloped area being in Cheshire East. Initial discussions with BAE had begun in 2008 and Stockport was actively working with BAE and with Cheshire East. Woodford had been identified as an Opportunity Site in the Stockport Core Strategy and a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was currently being prepared to identify the appropriate level of development and prepare a master plan. To this end a project plan has been put together and agreed between Stockport Council and BAE Systems. The first stage of this involved evidence gathering in 13 areas:

- *Historical Development of the Site*
- *Understanding The Area*
- *Housing*
- *Employment*
- *Other Appropriate Uses*
- *Transport*
- *Sustainability / Energy*
- *Future Runway Uses*
- *Heritage and Conservation*
- *Use of Open Space*
- *Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*
- *Local Infrastructure – Schools etc*
- *Development Appraisals*

It was essential that the proposals included in the master plan were deliverable and a number of main development issues had been identified, including the size, scale and type of the development, viability, impact on highways and public transport, community infrastructure required and demolition and remediation costs. The timescale for the completion of the SPD had been set before the earlier closure had been announced and it would now need to be compressed, which would not be easy because of the need for Public Consultation. It was anticipated that a number of options, based on the evidence

gathered, could be put forward for consultation by mid-May to early June 2011 and realistically the earliest time that the final document could be available would be September 2011, rather than March 2012 as originally envisaged. The main forum for discussions/consultation would be the Bramhall and Cheadle Hulme South Area Committee meetings, but special meetings could also be held in Woodford and representatives nominated by the Community Council could join fact-finding visits to other developments and BAE sites.

Mr Rubinstein then addressed the list of written questions submitted by the Community Council prior to the meeting. (A copy of the questions and responses is attached as an appendix to these Minutes.)

Mr Hunter, who had led a campaign to save the site under the previous Government, expressed his dismay at the early closure and commented that whilst BAE would prefer to sell the site as a whole, it would be obligated to shareholders to obtain the best possible price. If a planning application were submitted, the Council would have to consider it. So far, although there had been a lot of interest in the site, no formal offers had been made. Given the history of the site, he fully supported the idea of a Heritage Centre.

Further comments and questions were put forward and in response, Mr Rubinstein confirmed that the Council had no preference for housing over commercial, or vice versa. It was unlikely, however, that a large retail park would be acceptable, since current policy was to reinforce existing retail areas in town centres. An office park similar to Cheadle Royal could also be problematical because of the impact on traffic flows. He noted, however, that the SPD would be the Council's view of the preferred plan for the area and whilst it was hoped that it would assist BAE in marketing the site, a developer could put forward a completely different scheme or indeed split the site into multiple developments.

Finally, he informed everyone that the next Bramhall and South Cheadle Area Committee meeting would be held on Thursday, 27 January 2011 at 6.30 pm at a venue to be announced.

## **8. Closure of Meeting**

On behalf of the Community Council and all those present, Mr Brown thanked Mr Rubinstein for his excellent and comprehensive presentation. He reminded everyone that it was essential for the local community to participate in the decision-making process and noted that the Community Council, via its BAE Sub Group, would be taking a leading role in this. The proposed electronic newsletter, mentioned earlier by the Chairman, would be used to keep residents informed of developments, but communication was a two-way process and he encouraged everyone to respond with their views and comments.

*Minutes Approved, on behalf of the Community*

Paul Rodman, Chairman

Date 24 November 2011

## **Appendix – Questions with Answers provided by Mr Rubinstein**

### **1 Early closure**

Will the likely early closure of the factory affect the timetable of Stockport Council?

The closure of the site is currently scheduled for the summer of 2012, but following the Comprehensive Spending Review announcement that the Nimrod contract would be cancelled, BAE Systems are currently in discussion with MoD to establish the current position. We understand that the situation will be confirmed in December.

If the site is closed earlier, the council will attempt to bring forward the SPD work and adoption if necessary, but this will not be undertaken at the expense of public involvement in the process.

### **2 Start of redevelopment**

Given the current timetable, when is the earliest that actual redevelopment might start?

The SPD is due for adoption summer 2012, following the closure of the site, after this there will be the requirement for a detailed planning application in relation to the redevelopment proposals.

An actual start on site is dependent on BAE and any potential developers in securing planning permission and agreeing terms for the disposal of the relevant development phases.

### **3 Council's resources**

Will the impending cut backs at Stockport Council affect the resources available for allocation to the project?

The preparation of the SPD to establish the redevelopment for the site is a priority for the council and we will ensure resources are available to complete this work in accordance with the SPD timescales.

### **4 Interaction of Stockport and Cheshire East Councils**

a) Is East Cheshire running a similar project to Stockport Council's?

As the MEDS that form part of the Woodford site are within Stockport, the project is being led by Stockport Council, with regard had to the site being identified as an 'Opportunity site' in the Core Strategy.

Cheshire East is currently going through the first stage of their Core Strategy. It is worth Woodford Community Council looking at this given the potential effect on Poynton. However no specific plans are included at this stage and it is all about a general approach and the options available.

Cheshire East are not undertaking a similar project in relation to Woodford Aerodrome.

b) To what extent are Stockport and Cheshire East Councils working together on this project?

Meetings have been held with colleagues in Cheshire East, (planning and regeneration) to discuss the SPD process that Stockport MBC are undertaking and how this will relate to both authorities. Further dialogue and discussions have taken place and will continue through the process.

c) Is there likely to be a duplication of effort by the two Councils?

As we are in discussion with Cheshire East we are confident that there will be no duplication in work on the redevelopment of Woodford Aerodrome.

## **5 Area available for redevelopment**

a) We understand that the sum of the two areas A and B (about 100 out of the 500 acres) is available for redevelopment. Could you please confirm that redevelopment is not restricted to the current positions of areas A and B and could be moved to anywhere on the site?

It could be combined and located anywhere in the site. The Council though will need to have regard to national and local Green Belt policy, in particular the potential impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

b) If the answer to (a) is yes, some of the redevelopment could be near Poynton and come under Cheshire East. Is Stockport Council's strategy to try to keep the redevelopment within its boundaries (to result in more affordable housing for Stockport for example)?

The simple answer is yes. The 2 MEDS site A&B are currently located with Stockport, and the site identified as an Opportunity site in the Core Strategy.

At this stage there is no requirement or demand from Cheshire East for the development to be in their area.

In terms of Green Belt impact a development at the north of the site is likely to be less than a dispersed development across various parts of the site, however that is not a fait accompli.

The reason for where the redevelopment takes place would be considered to be the best part of the site on which to develop. That forms part of the overall assessment that is being undertaken through the SPD.

c) Again, given (a) is yes, would the unused part of areas A and B be turned back to green belt, and if so what would that mean and whose responsibility would that be (i.e. who would bear the cost)?

All the land is already Green Belt, including that in the MEDS areas.

If A&B are combined then in order to comply with the Green Belt policies, that remaining land would need to be cleared to help maintain or improve the overall level of openness. There will be 42 Ha (100 acres) of developable land within the site.

The future use, ownership and responsibility of the open space are issues the SPD will be looking at.

## **6 MAELR**

If current cut backs result in MAELR being shelved would this affect the viability of this redevelopment from the Council's point of view? In other words, is the redevelopment dependent on improved road structures?

No. Improving the transport infrastructure will be key to the site's success whether the SEMMMS road is constructed or not.

## **7 Restrictive covenants**

At the recent meeting in Bramhall one of the questions related to the possibility of restrictive covenants on future use when the land was sold to create the factory in the 1920s. Given that could have a severe impact on what redevelopment, if any, can take place it is obviously very important that this be researched urgently. Has any progress been made on that front by the Council since that meeting?

We have discussed this with BAE and they were not aware of the restrictive covenant but are currently investigating this further and we will confirm the situation when BAE advise us.

## **8 Affordable housing**

a) Could you please define affordable housing, and explain the implications for this redevelopment?

There are a number of definitions;

- From the Core Strategy glossary: Includes social rented and intermediate housing (e.g. shared ownership), provided to households at a cost low enough for them to afford. Households eligible for affordable housing are those who cannot afford open market housing.
- From PPS3: 'Affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Affordable housing should:
  - Meet the needs of eligible households including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices.
  - Include provision for the home to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or, if these restrictions are lifted, for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision'

In relation to the Woodford redevelopment, there will be the requirement to provide a level of affordable housing. However the implications of that will need to be assessed along with a host of other requirements, e.g. transport infrastructure, services, when looking at the viability of development at the site.

b) Is affordable housing legally compulsory, and are there any impending changes in requirements that the Council is aware of?

It is required through the Council's own planning policies. We can apply those in a flexible way, but only where there is evidence to show that it is necessary to do so.

There are no national changes proposed as far as we are aware at the moment. The Core Strategy sets out the Council's proposed approach to affordable housing for the future.

## **9 Schools, doctors, dentists**

If there is a sizeable housing development are there any requirements or guidelines as to the point at which new schools, doctors, dentists are necessary?

We are in discussions with Education and PCT colleagues both within Stockport and Cheshire East to establish the requirements relating to education, doctors, dentist provision that would be required from differing levels of residential development on the site.

## **10 Green belt**

a) Are there any impending changes to the rules concerning green belt?

The government has said that it will not be changing national Green Belt policy to any significant degree.

b) If so, do you know how this may affect this project?

c) What can green belt land be used for?

Green belt land can theoretically be used for a host of uses. It is about the impact those uses have on the Green Belt that is the issue.

d) Who will be responsible for maintaining the green belt area of the site?

As mentioned earlier, the future use, ownership and responsibility of the open space are issues the SPD will be looking at.

e) If BAE make it a condition that developer(s) do whatever is required to the green belt area could this make the project cost inhibitive?

The future use of the open space would form part of a viability assessment, and this be taken into account when establish how the whole site is redeveloped.

f) The runway is considered green belt. Presumably it would be expensive to remove. Does that mean it is likely to stay?

The cost of removal/re-use of the runway will form part of the assessment of the redevelopment of the site.

## **11 Aircraft museum**

a) Is there a national aircraft museum? If not, would this be a possibility for this site (akin to the railway museum in York)?

Yes there are RAF museums at Cosford and London. The National Museum of Flight in East Lothian. The Air and Space Museum in Manchester. Air Museum in York.

b) If this is considered a good idea how could it be funded?

Part of the SPD process is identifying potential other uses for the site, and the associated financial implications. There is an existing Heritage Centre on the site, that we would look to retain.

## **12. Provision of cycle and footpath routes**

The provision of cycle and footpath routes now seems to be favoured by the planning authorities, with such routes being planned for the whole of the SEMMMS route as and when that comes to be built. The planned closure of British Aerospace at Woodford in 2012 gives an excellent opportunity for cycle routes to be developed so as to link all the surrounding communities. Councillors from Woodford, Poynton, Adlington and Bramhall have all expressed positive interest in the development of local routes. Are SMBC (a) happy to support our approach to Sustrans and (b) willing to link any routes along the SEMMMS into the network of local routes?

Linking routes from the site to existing routes, improving existing routes and providing links to other forms of transport, e.g. the rail station(s) are all things that we would hope to include as part of any future development as part of our approach towards making development at the site as sustainable as possible.

## **13. Manchester airport and Woodford**

Can SMBC now confirm that they now have no plans to attract airfreight traffic from Manchester Airport to Woodford?

This was never a plan of the councils, like other potential uses it is one such use that is being examined.

However Manchester Airport has confirmed through the Core Strategy that it has no desire to use Woodford for its own purposes for this type of use.

## **14. A “centre” for Woodford**

Woodford has always lacked a “centre” or focal point. If additional housing does come to be built upon the airfield, there may well be a need for additional shops and services. Whilst recognising that any “centre” needs to be sustainable, will SMBC aim to foster community spirit within Woodford by the development of just such a centre?

Yes. The SPD will examine the need for shops, schools, health facilities etc that are required from the potential development, as well the existing Woodford Community, to ensure that old and new Woodford form an integrated sustainable community.