

Chorley West Community Forum

Wednesday, 21 March 2007

Meeting held at Quality Hotel Chorley, Moor Road, Croston

Present: Councillor John Walker (Chair), Councillors Francis Culshaw, Daniel Gee, Peter Goldsworthy, Harold Heaton, Miss Margaret Iddon, Rosemary Russell, Geoffrey Russell and Edward Smith

Co-opted Members: Mr Thomas Wilson (Bretherton Parish Council), Ms Ann Peet (Croston Parish Council) Helen Bradley (Eccleston Parish Council), Mary Gray (Euxton Parish Council) Ian Paterson (Mawdesley Parish Council), Derek Ormerod (Ulnes Walton Parish Council), Edward Forshaw (Lancashire County Council), Cindy Lowthian (District Partnership Officer, Lancashire County Council), PC Paul Harrison (Lancashire Constabulary) and Alison Johnson (Central Lancashire Primary Care NHS Trust)

Chorley Borough Officers: Gary Hall (Director of Finance and Lead Officer), John Lechmere (Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhood and Environment), Jane Meek (Director of Development and Regeneration), Julian Jackson (Planning Policy Manager), Steve Pearce (Assistant Head of Democratic Services) and Gordon Bankes (Democratic Services Officer)

28 residents of Bretherton, Charnock Richard, Croston, Eccleston, Euxton (Part), Heskin, Mawdesley and Ulnes Walton

07.01 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIR OF THE COMMUNITY FORUM

The Chair (Councillor J Walker) welcomed everyone present to the first meeting of the Chorley West Community Forum.

He explained that, following the success of the three Area Forum pilot schemes in 2006, the Council had agreed to establish four Community Forums (Central, East, West and South) to cover the whole of the Chorley Borough area. The West Community Forum covered electoral Wards and Parish areas of Bretherton, Charnock Richard, Croston, Eccleston, Heskin, Mawdesley, Ulnes Walton and Euxton excluding that part of Euxton Parish which falls within the boundaries of the East Community Forum.

Representatives from the following organisations would be invited to attend the Community Forum meeting, appreciating that their attendance at every meeting could not be guaranteed:

Chorley Borough Council
Lancashire County Council
The respective Parish Councils
Lancashire Constabulary
Central Lancashire Primary Care NHS Trust

The Chair then asked the Council Officers and representatives of the partner bodies present to introduce themselves.

07.02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Borough Councillors Henry Counce, Keith Iddon, Doreen Dickinson, Peter Malpas, County Councillors Alan Whittaker and Mark Perks and Mrs Terry Williams (Governor of HMP Garth)

07.03 MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE FORUM

The Forum received, for information, details of the agreed membership and terms of reference of the Chorley West Community Forum.

Each attendee of the meeting had been provided with a copy of the membership details and terms of reference which were attached to the meeting's agenda.

The Chair gave a brief resume of the Council's Corporate Strategy, which outlined the Council's issues and strategic objectives for the period up to 2009. In particular, the Chair drew attention to two of the aims of the strategy; to involve people in their communities and to improve equality of opportunity and life chances for the Borough's residents.

In response to a question from a Borough Councillor querying why the Community Forums were not chaired by an appointed Ward Councillor, the Chair indicated that the Council had appointed himself (Councillor John Walker) as Chair for all four Forums in order to achieve a level of consistency and co-ordination across the Borough. This arrangement would be reviewed when the Council came to monitor the first year's operation of the Forums.

The Borough Councillor also expressed reservations on the size of the four Community Forums and that it would have had a better response and representation if there had been smaller areas. The Chair in response indicated there would be a review after the first year's operation of the Forums.

07.04 CHORLEY COMMUNITY AGENDA

(a) Lancashire Police Issues

The Chair welcomed PC Paul Harrison from Lancashire Police who covered the Charnock Richard and Mawdesley area.

PC Harrison reported that he was part of a neighbourhood team for the whole area and was dealing with anti-social behaviour and reducing criminal damage. Although this was not classed as major it did have a detrimental effect on the community.

The team had targeted those people responsible for criminal damage as well as gathering information for anti-social behaviour orders.

Questions raised at the meeting:

- i) **A letter had been circulated to Parish Councils from the local Police Inspector inviting sponsorship for a police car to be used in the area. The Parish Council had taken exception to this, regarding it to be double taxation.**

Response: PC Harrison pointed out that he was not based centrally in Chorley but lived in a village. He did not have his own police car and that there was a transport problem covering the rural areas.

- ii) **A Borough Councillor requested that he had not seen much police presence in his particular area for 9 months.**

Response: PC Harrison informed the meeting that another police officer was covering the Heskin and Eccleston area.

(b) Chorley Borough Council Issues

(a) Chorley Town Centre Strategy

Jane Meek (Chorley Council's Director of Development and Regeneration) gave a short presentation on the recently adopted Chorley Town Centre Strategy.

Mrs Meek explained the background to the development of the Strategy, which had evolved over 18 months following publication of the Economic Development Strategy and the findings of a Consultant's retail study.

The Strategy's overall vision was 'to assist in improving the vitality and viability of Chorley Town Centre, so that by 2016 it provides a place to successfully do business and visit through a unique offer of attractions'. This should help to curb the leakage of business from the Borough to neighbouring towns.

In order to deliver the vision, the following four key priorities for the strategy had been identified:

- Town Centre Environment

The strategy would need to safeguard the distinctive character of the town, as well as delivering environmental improvements. The Council's officers would undertake an audit of the town and develop a design strategy to guide future development and prominent features, such as town centre gateways and shop fronts.

- Accessibility and Movement

The Consultant's survey had revealed that 71% of people surveyed had not found difficulty in accessing the town centre car parks. However, there would be a comprehensive review of car parking in the town centre and plans were being developed to improve pedestrian access at the junction of St Thomas's Road and Market Street and to create an attractive Town Hall Square.

- Business Promotion and Support

More effective marketing and promotion of Chorley as a 'Contemporary Market Town' was crucial to the Strategy and the Council would be meeting shortly with market traders to discuss ways of enhancing the vitality and viability of the Markets.

- Town Centre Diversification

The Council accepts the need to attract a new range of visitors and leisure uses to the town centre if it is to maintain its competitiveness and attract shoppers and visitors. The Council will be working in partnership with land owners and developers to promote and assist, where possible, the development of key sites (eg the former Grahams and McDonald's sites and the Pall Mall Triangle). The principal focus of attention in the near future would be assist the development of a second phase of Market Walk. Plans were being examined to construct four new large retail units and a multi-storey car park on the eastern part of the Flat Iron Car Park (resulting in a net increase of 303 spaces), with associated environmental improvements. The attraction of recognised retailers to the extension was paramount and the Council would be working with the developers to encourage suitable middle-range retailers, such as Debenhams and Next.

(b) Questions raised at the meeting

- i) A Parish Councillor raised the issue that the western parishes were rural in character and asked what was being done strategically for this area.

Response: Mrs Meek indicated that the Town Centre is the focus but work is being done with Parish Councils/Parish Plans regarding the Accessibility Study concentrating on access for people in rural areas to vital services such as education, employment, health care and shopping as well as access to the town centre services for those living in the rural community.

- ii) A local resident expressed her concern that there were no means of transport from Bretherton to Chorley for those without a car. Market Street, Chorley was good but over the years has lost its character.

Response: Mrs Meek indicated that transport provision from the rural areas to Chorley town centre had been taken up in the Accessibility Plan. A feasibility study was being looked at for a park and ride service as part of a review of car parking, however, a recent study had shown that there was no trouble with car parking. Changes in the town centre would hopefully attract more customers.

The Chairman informed the meeting that the Transport and Services Accessibility Plan with action plans produced would shortly be going to the Council's Executive Cabinet for approval.

(c) **Lancashire County Council Issues**

It was under this item that the following question raised by the Ulnes Walton Parish Council was taken.

"Road gritting – clarification is sought as to which roads in the Borough are gritted when freezing/wintry conditions are expected".

Response: Cindy Lowthian (Lancashire County Council's District Partnership Officer) reported that there were two elements of road gritting, precautionary treatment and removal. The gritting season was generally between November and March with the County Council monitoring the forecast and anticipating the weather. Priority was given to motorways and trunk roads by the Highways Agency then all A and B roads and C roads in busy parts and roads in large centres of population, access to hospitals, centre of employment and villages.

There is a network of private roads on which the County Council will carry out salting and gritting in advance of poor conditions such as early morning ice and frost.

A reminder was made of the introduction of Lancashire Locals meetings where there was an opportunity for Chorley residents to question the County Councillors for the Chorley Division on relevant issues falling within the remit of Lancashire County Council.

(d) **Central Lancashire Primary Care NHS Trust Issues**

The Chair welcomed Alison Johnson (Associate Director Commissioning and Community Engagement) from the Central Lancashire Primary Care Trust.

Mrs Johnson talked about how the Primary Care Trust was working to improve on the services that were available to everyone and explained that the PCT had been merged and the Central Lancashire PCT was formed on 1 October 2006.

She also reported that the PCT were pleased to hear the views of local people on any local health care issues and noted that there had been a lot of response to the recent CATS consultation.

In respect of the CATS consultation she was aware that the Parish Council's had not been consulted and papers had gone to Chorley Council. The PCT will learn from this and will take on board the comments raised for future consultations.

Under this heading a Parish Councillor from Ulnes Walton Parish Council raised the issue received at the previous Area Forum Pilot meetings held in Lostock Ward on the ambulance response times for rural areas.

Response: Mrs Johnson explained that the latest performance figures for ambulance response times indicated that ambulances arrived within 8 minutes of the call (target of 75%) with 64/65% of Category A ambulances for this area arriving in the rural areas and that this was not a good performance. Lancashire Ambulances met the targets in overall terms but the response times for the more rural areas was lower.

Work is currently underway with the Ambulance Trust to improve these figures and are looking at the key issues to improve the response times and feedback will be presented to the next meeting of the Forum.

(e) Parish Council Issues

1. A Parish Councillor expressed concern that the unpleasant smells associated with the depositing on fields around the Lostock area of trade effluence waste had returned to the area. The issue was initially raised at the September 2006 meeting of the Area Forum. An investigation had been made indicating that a local landowner had given permission for United Utilities to carry out the depositing within the boundary of the guidelines.

Response: The Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment indicated that the Environmental Services are aware of the situation and have investigated the cause of the problem following the receipt of complaints. He confirmed that United Utilities were the producers of the enhanced treated sewage sludge being deposited on agricultural fields in the Bretherton and Croston areas. The disposal of the waste was overseen and regulated by the Environment Agency who had been made aware of the complaints from local residents. Mr Lechmere explained that there were currently very few available options for the disposal of sewage sludge and that the Council had been advised that there was no alternative spreading method, which did, in fact comply with adopted Codes of Practice.

United Utilities would be requested to provide details of the land records as it understood that the amount of waste allowed on land was dependent on the quality of the land used for deposits. Whilst the Borough Council had no regulatory power in relation to United Utilities operations, the Council could instigate action under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 if the odours were deemed to constitute a statutory nuisance. The justification for such action would be linked with the frequency and duration of the odours affecting local residents in their homes with monitoring forms already sent to resident who had lodged complaints with a request that they record the frequency and degree of the smell nuisances so the Council could gauge whether or not enforcement action was warranted. It was explained that a statutory nuisance was a complex issue.

County Councillor Edward Forshaw pointed out that Lancashire County Council Scrutiny Committee had invited United Utilities to a meeting in which

questions will be asked of them on these issues and the outcome will be reported back to the next Area Forum meeting.

2. A Parish Councillor raised the issue of speed limits in the rural areas and the government guidelines but no indication had been received from Lancashire County Council and the promise of action in the future.

The second issue raised by the Parish Councillor was the safety of disabled children, producing a hazard at a location where a school will be built.

Response: Cindy Lowthian reported that the Lancashire County Council had recently published for consultation the Speed Management Strategy and this was available on their website. The aims of the Strategy were to:

- set appropriate speed limits within Lancashire
- encourage drivers and riders to travel within those speed limits and at a level appropriate to the immediate environment and prevailing conditions
- to establish a monitoring system to review and measure performance

07.05 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK ISSUES

(a) Local Development Framework

The Chair welcomed Chorley Council's Planning Policy Manager, Julian Jackson to address the meeting on the planning issues in relation to the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF, which replaced the former Local Development Plan would be made up of a series of different planning documents.

Chorley Council was currently working actively with Preston and South Ribble Councils to define and take forward major planning issues that affected all three authorities. The three Councils had produced an LDF Core Strategy Joint Issues and Options Paper which identified the principal planning matters common to the three Borough areas on such issues as housing, employment, land, transport, road infrastructure etc together with potential ways of dealing with the problem issues.

A copy of the document was available at the meeting and on the Council's website and Mr Jackson said that he would welcome residents views and comments on the Paper.

Mr Jackson explained that the collaborative working arrangements was in no way a precursor to the planned merger of the three Authorities.

(b) Sustainable Resources

Mr Jackson also drew attention to the draft Preferred Options Document on Sustainable Resources, which had been published for consultation purposes and would eventually form part of the Local Development Framework.

The document set out alternative options for measures aimed at ensuring sustainable developments, the reduction of carbon emissions, recycling and renewable energy projects.

Local residents' views on the Options Paper would also be welcomed.

07.06 OPEN FORUM

The Chair invited the local residents present at the meeting to raise questions and express views on any matters relating to the provision of local service or issues affecting the areas of Bretherton, Charnock Richard, Croston, Eccleston, Euxton (Part), Heskin, Mawdesley and Ulnes Walton. In addition, a supply of Question Cards was made available at the meeting as an opportunity for residents to write their enquiries or views on the cards.

The Chair indicated that the appropriate Officers and/or Partner representative would endeavour if possible to provide a direct response to questions and issues raised at the meeting. If this was not possible, a written reply would either be sent to the questioner as soon as possible after the matter had been fully investigated or a response reported to the next Forum meeting.

The following issues/questions were raised at the meeting:

- i) A resident of Eccleston since moving into the area 8/9 years ago raised his concern that traffic in the Eccleston area has increased with many container lorries passing through the village. Where do they come from?

Response: Cindy Lowthian agreed to take up this issue with the County Council.

- ii) A resident of Croston expressed concern that when there is heavy rainfall the sewers overflow and raw sewage flooding the highway creating a possible health hazard.

Response: The Council's Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment, John Lechmere, reported he was aware of this problem and although it was United Utilities responsibility invited the questioner to ring the Council when it happens again.

- iii) A resident of Croston raised the issue of road maintenance in the area and the process of tarring and chipping the road creating a raised crown of the road and sunken manholes as well as heavy lorries causing damage to the roads and to surrounding properties.

Response: Cindy Lowthian agreed to take back to the County Council once she had established the details of the road concerned.

- iv) A Borough Councillor commented on the issue raised by the Parish Councillor earlier in the meeting concerning speed limits in the rural areas. This was a complex issue but there was a need to review the speed limits particularly on Runshaw Lane and Dawbers Lane and requested the County Council to carry out a review.

Response: Cindy Lowthian agreed for a LCC highways representative to be present at the next meeting of the Forum to answer any questions/queries.

- v) A resident raised a general comment regarding traffic in Eccleston as well as sewage problems in the area. He pointed out that it was always the Parish Councils that took up these issues with Lancashire County Council and not Chorley Borough Council and that there should be a mechanism to get support from the Borough Council.

Response: A Borough Councillor reported that improvements had been made in 2 tier working to make it clear as to who did what.

- vi) A Parish Councillor raised the issue of a number of mini-buses parked in greenbelt area of Runshaw Lane despite an Enforcement Notice being served on the landowner 6 months ago. The number of mini-buses looked to have increased since the Notice was served.

Response: Jane Meek undertook to notify the Enforcement Officer and get back to the Parish Councillor.

- vii) An Ecclestone resident expressed concern at the amount of redevelopment in the Ecclestone area causing excessive traffic and demand for school places. Particular reference was made to the new development in New Street, Ecclestone creating a problem of traffic access and made a request for the development to be either stopped or curtail.

Response: The Chair of the Council's Development Control Committee, Councillor Heaton pointed out that the Government was encouraging local authorities to develop brownfield sites and that this was happening throughout the Borough. The Government specifies so many homes per hectare as stated in guidelines.

- viii) A Parish Councillor for Ecclestone expressed concern that the development in the area had a knock-on effect on land drainage and problems with the sewage system back up into the older part of the village. The sewage infrastructure does not get expanded to help the new development.

Response: Jane Meek pointed out that United Utilities are consulted regularly on new development and requested to respond to planning applications.

- ix) A Parish Councillor for Croston asked how many homes per hectare were included in the guidelines.

Response: Jane Meek reported that 30 homes per hectare with developers encouraged to develop to maximise the site available, however a number of factors are taken into consideration with each site looked at on its own merits.

The following additional issues/questions were raised on question cards presented at the meeting.

- x) Will the Forum be willing and able to support charitable organisations such as Villages in Partnership which in its first year has facilitated more than £200,000 of grants for Community Groups in Chorley Borough Council's western sector?

Response: The Director of Finance, Gary Hall, reported that the Council's recently approved budget for 2007/08 had set aside funding for charitable/voluntary organisations to support those in rural areas. This will support village halls in the parishes.

The following additional issues/questions were raised on question cards presented after the close of the Forum meeting:

- xi) Issues with British Telecom. Need access to web improving. Problems with Broadband in this area. Lowest level you can get.
- xii) Chorley town improvement does not help the villages – we need help for our own areas. The development does not help us and the time spent on this presentation could have been spent on our local issues.

- xiii) My grandson wants to register with an NHS dentist. He was sent a list, but despite contacting them all no-one could take him. He is a low wage-earner. What can he do?
- xiv) Condition of road on Grape Lane. Tar and chipped regularly but had raised road in middle, problems in damage caused to cars and raised manhole covers.
- xv) As more parish councils are heading towards quality status, are CBC considering devolving any powers to parish level. If so which, and will there be any finance available if needed?

07.07 FEEDBACK / ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The Chair then drew attention to the feedback cards available at the meeting and invited the attendees to complete them to express their views on the format, arrangements and conduct of the Forum meeting. The cards could also be used to suggest items for consideration at the next meeting.

The Chair requested the attendees to indicate by a show of hands how they found out about tonight's meeting.

A majority of those attending indicated they found out by the posters distributed in the area and through their own Parish Councils.

07.08 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chairman indicated that future meetings of the Forum were to take place on the following dates commencing at 7.00pm at venues yet to be decided:

- Thursday, 5 July 2007
- Tuesday, 16 October 2007
- Wednesday, 30 January 2008

07.09 CLOSING REMARKS

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chair thanked all the members of the public present for their attendance and participation in the Community Forum meeting and expressed his gratitude to the Council Officers and Partner organisations for their contribution.

Chair