

Chorley East Community Forum

Wednesday, 14 March 2007

Meeting held at Saint John's CE Methodist School, Brinscall

Present: Councillor John Walker (Chair), Councillors Peter Baker, Alan Cain, Magda Cullens, Mrs Marie Gray, Michael Muncaster and Shaun Smith

Also present: Councillors Eric Bell (Executive Member for Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment), Alan Cullens (Executive Member for Resources) and Peter Malpas (Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration)

Co-opted Members: Mrs Pat Case (Lancashire County Council - Chorley Rural East / Chorley Borough Council), Mrs Margaret Livesey (Lancashire County Council - Chorley Rural North), Alison Johnson (Central Lancashire Primary Care NHS Trust), Laura Lennox (Astley Village Parish Councillor), Darren Cranshaw (Brindle Parish Councillor), Anne Smith (Clayton Parish Councillor), Walter Ashton (Euxton Parish Councillor), Diane Wallbank (Euxton Parish Councillor), Janet Ross-Mills (Heapey Parish Councillor), Marel Urry (Hoghton Parish Councillor), Alison Hansford (Withnell Parish Councillor) and Stafford Woods (Whittle-le-Woods Parish Councillor)

Chorley Borough Officers: Lesley-Ann Fenton (Director of Policy and Performance), Jamie Carson (Director of Leisure and Cultural Services), Cath Burns (Economic Development Manager), Alison Marland (Principal Planning Policy Officer) and Ruth Hawes (Assistant Democratic Services Officer)

And 5 members of the public.

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 East Community Forum.

The Chair 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 East Community Forum covers the Parish Council areas of Angelzarke, Astley Village, Brindle, Clayton-le-Woods, Cuerden, Euxton (North East Ward), Heapey, Hoghton, Wheelton, Whittle-le-Woods and Withnell.

Representatives from the following organisations would be invited to attend the Community Forum meetings, 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 Mrs. Iris Smith (Borough Councillor), Mark Perks (Lancashire County and Borough Councillor) and Chris Howard (Withnell Parish Councillor).

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 South 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 vision 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.

The Chair indicated that the Council had appointed himself (Councillor John Walker) as Chair of 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.

07.04 CHORLEY COMMUNITY AGENDA

(a) Lancashire Police Issues

The Chair welcomed Chris Evans, the Community Beat Manager for the Wheelton rural area, who was accompanied by several Police Community Support Officers.

PC Evans advised that the crime figures had reduced in the area, in particular in relation to criminal damage. The Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings were continuing to develop, with monthly public meetings that influenced the policing priorities for that month. The target for the previous month had been youths on mini motorbikes and had been successful.

There were no questions from members of the public for the Police.

(b) Chorley Borough Council Issues

(a) Chorley Town Centre Strategy

Cath Burns, the Economic Development Manager, gave a brief presentation on the Town Centre Strategy and the Market Walk development proposals.

Mrs Burns 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.

Questions raised at meeting:

1. A Parish Councillor queried whether any car parking spaces would be lost in the town centre during the redevelopment work.
Response: Mrs Burns advised there will be an additional 303 car parking spaces provided as part of the multi-storey car park.
2. A resident raised the issue of car parking spaces for disabled people.
Response: Mrs Burns confirmed this will be built into the design of the car park.
3. A Parish Councillor noted that people who work in Chorley were taking up valuable car parking spaces in the Town Centre and queried whether any action could be taken.
Response: Mrs Burns clarified this will be considered as part of a comprehensive review of car parking in the town centre.
Councillor Peter Malpas (Executive Member for Development and Regeneration) commented that the car parking tariffs were designed to encourage workers to use the long stay car parks. The electronic signs showing where spaces were available had helped.

4. A resident advised that people were discussing the number of empty and boarded up shops and questioned the need for new shops.
Response: Mrs Burns explained the Council monitors this and in October the figure was 4%, which compares well with other areas. The windows of vacant shops are being dressed where possible to reduce the visual impact.
5. A Parish Councillor queried the way forward for the former Grahams and McDonalds site, noted the sad loss of the view of the hills and the car parking spaces on the Flat Iron. She noted that large stores seem to prefer to be located in out of town retail parks.
Response: County Councillor Pat Case commented on the need to encourage quality shops in to the new units and that other shops would benefit from the increase in trade.
Councillor Eric Bell (Executive Member for Streetscene, Neighbourhood and Environment) advised that the larger unit were designed to attract the larger stores. A Town Centre Manager would be appointed to co-ordinate the implementation of the Town Centre Strategy, this would include work on the Markets.
Councillor Peter Malpas (Executive Member for Development and Regeneration) commented that Chorley needs to move forward and there were not many areas where a development of this nature could be built. The proposed development area was part of the original plans for Market Walk and was the site of the baths at one time.
6. A Parish Councillor commented that the footprint for the new stores did not seem large enough to attract the desired stores.
Response: Mrs Burns advised that the developers were happy with the footprint and were in discussions with several large stores.

Further information on the development would be available from the shop on the corner opposite Iceland.

(b) The provision of leisure and cultural activities

Jamie Carson, Director of Leisure and Cultural Services, gave a brief presentation on the provision of leisure and cultural activities in the east area of Chorley.

Mr Carson explained that the Directorate has responsibility for the Leisure Centres and Community Centres in the Borough and other facilities such as Astley Park.

The aim of the Directorate was to get the people of Chorley active and the flagship project was "Get up and Go" where young people are given the opportunity to take part in a range of sports, arts, music, drama, dance and environmental activities.

The scheme has been running since summer 2003 and has been providing activities every school holiday. The programme has grown greatly in size and success offering hundreds of places for young people.

The Directorate was keen to work with Parish Councils and community groups and was working with Euxton, Clayton and Wheelton Parish Councils. Support could be given in applications for Lottery funding up to £10,000 for sports coaches or artists. The Council would promote the activities, undertake risk assessments and help wherever possible.

Work had been undertaken at All Seasons Leisure Centre, including refurbishment on the gym and the crèche, two more phases of work were scheduled, including refurbishment of the changing rooms. Later this year works would be undertaken on Brinscall Baths to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act. Works were progressing at Astley Park and also at Duxbury Golf Course.

Three schemes had been submitted recently as part of a bid for Lottery funding. Two of the schemes were in the area of the Forum, children had been consulted as to their priorities with the highest being safety. To respond to this nine part-time rangers were employed to work in play areas.

A resident thanked the Directorate for their help and support for the Chorley Older People's Forum.

7. A Parish Councillor queried the position with Pets Corner in Astley Park and the silt having been removed from the lake.
Response: Mr Carson advised that in a few weeks display boards would be situated at the gateways of the Park that would be updated on a regular basis. The landscaping would commence this week; it was delayed to honour a long-standing booking for a wedding. Consultation was undertaken in relation to Pets Corner, the results of which would be reported to the Executive Cabinet at the Council for a decision on 29 March. The completion date for the project was the end of 2008.

(c) Lancashire County Council Issues

County Councillor Margaret Livesey reported that five areas had been identified for the speed limit to be reduced to 50 mph. Plans would be produced and sent to the Parish and Borough Councils for consultation.

The Children's Centre Initiative is a government funded initiative which aims to support families by providing a 'core offer' of services, aimed at families with children 0-5 years old, which include provision of early education integrated with day care, family support, health services and training. This initiative is being introduced in three phases to reach all communities by 2010.

Phase 1 (2004-2006) focused on introducing these services in the most disadvantaged areas. In Phase 2 Lancashire must reach an additional 31,476 children aged 0-5 by March 2008. Agreement has been received from the Department for Education and Skills that this can be achieved through the creation of 31 Phase 2 children's centres.

Four children's centres will be developed in Phase 2 in Chorley on the following four sites: Buckshaw Primary School, Clayton Brook Primary School, Coppull Primary School and Duke Street Nursery/Primary Schools. This is in addition to the children's centre being developed in Phase 1 at Highfield Nursery School, Chorley. Development of the centres has progressed this past year and it is expected that several will receive official designation as Children's Centres in May.

1. A Parish Councillor raised the issue of standing traffic at the Hartwood roundabout for Buckshaw Village as the traffic lights were only operational during peak times.
Response: Councillor Livesey advised that this issue was under discussion and a decision would be taken once the road through to the Sea View public house was completed. There was a possibility of an overhead gantry to direct traffic into lanes but no decision had been taken on this.
2. A Parish Councillor queried the maintenance program for 'cats eyes', this was a particular issue on the road up to Abbey Village.
Response: County Councillor Case advised that there is budget for this at the County and that the Lancashire Locals would deal with this. Councillor Case would highlight the need on the road up to Abbey Village at the next Lancashire Locals meeting at Woodlands on 4 April at 6.15pm.

3. A Borough Councillor queried the action to be taken at the junction of Millennium Way and Blackburn Road in Whittle-Le-Woods.
Response: County Councillor Case advised that this was the subject of discussions and that proposals would be consulted on.
Councillor Bell reported that there might be traffic lights here although it could take a number of years to come to fruition.

(d) Central Lancashire Primary Care NHS Trust Issues

The Chair welcomed Alison Johnson (Associate Director Commissioning and Community Engagement) from the Primary Care Trust. Ms Johnson 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. It was noted that the local hospital trust would bid to provide the service.

1. A Parish Councillor queried how pharmacies were licensed. There was a concern that pharmacies within superstores would have a detrimental effect on community pharmacies and the customers they serve.
Response: Ms Johnson undertook to investigate the licensing process for pharmacies.

(e) Parish Council Issues

It was agreed to take the Parish Council issues as part of the Open Forum item later on the agenda.

07.05 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK ISSUES

Alison Marland (Borough Council Principal Planning Officer) addressed 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 Plans, 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 web-site and Alison advised that she would welcome resident's views and comments on the Paper.

Ms Marland explained that the collaborative working arrangement was in no way a precursor to the planned merger of the three Authorities.

Sustainable Resources

Ms Marland 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.

Transport Accessibility Planning

Ms Marland also referred to a Transport Accessibility Planning Study being undertaken across Lancashire under the lead of the County Council.

The study aimed to examine the issues surrounding people's ability to access key services and places of work at reasonable cost. The Authorities would be working directly with transport operators and service providers to identify current barriers and means of resolving current problems.

1. A member of the public noted that transport was an issue for elderly people in Brinscall.
Response: County Councillor Case advised that there were a lot of alternative methods for transport via the Older People's Forum.
Ms Marland undertook to send the Transport Accessibility Planning information to all Parish Council clerks.
2. A Parish Councillor advised that there was a bus only every hour and to get to the hospital people had to then get another bus, this was expensive and took a lot of time.
Response: Ms Marland would feed this information into the study.
3. A member of the public advised that the buses in the area were dirty and often broke down.
Response: This would be fed back to the service provider.

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 services or issues affecting the Angelzarke, Astley Village, Brindle, Clayton-le-Woods, Cuerden, Euxton (North East Ward), Heapey, Hoghton, Wheelton, Whittle-le-Woods and Withnell Wards.

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 Officer 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:

1. A member of the public advised that they had not received their copy of Chorley Borough News and that the photograph on the front page was owned by the Older People's Forum.
Response: Mrs Fenton undertook to investigate the photograph. She advised that every effort was made to ensure the delivery of Chorley Borough News to every household and that copies were available at civic buildings and libraries.

2. A member of the public queried whether Preston Road in Whittle-Le-Woods could be a residents permit area as the parking is a real problem.
Response: Councillor Bell advised that residents permit schemes only currently operated in the town centre. It was noted that even with a residents permit there was no guarantee that people would be able to park outside their own house.
3. A member of the public raised the issue of a quarry to the rear of Preston Road, Whittle-Le-Woods, as it was not maintained and would be dangerous for children if they played nearby.
Response: Councillor Bell believed that the area was waiting to be developed. This would be queried with the Planning Department.
4. A member of the public queried whether there were any plans to make car parking free in the town centre to encourage visitors and shoppers. A lot of bays around the Bingo Hall are given over to taxis.
Response: Councillor Malpas advised that the charges for car parking was competitive in comparison with other local towns and had been frozen. Investigations were ongoing into having free limited stay bays on Market Street although if all parking was free all of the spaces would be taken up with people who worked in Chorley. The issue of the taxi rank would be raised as part of the parking review, it was noted that spaces needed to be provided for taxis.
5. A Parish Councillor queried the area of the Community Forum, whether it could be incorporated within Parish Council meetings or split down into areas that had more in common with each other. More work is needed on publicity for the meetings.
Response: Councillor Walker explained that a working party had been set up to determine the way the Community Forums worked. Chorley had been split into four Forums and this had been a democratic decision. This would be reviewed annually and people who had attended the meetings would be asked for their opinions.
Mrs Fenton advised that from previous experience at another Authority it did take time to build up attendance and raise awareness of the Forum. The fact the venues rotated would help with this. If there were any ideas on publicity please forward them to the Council.
6. A member of the public queried what were the plans to encourage new shops and cafes as currently there were a lot of charity shops. Shoppers go to Preston and Bolton instead.
Response: Councillor Malpas advised that when the second phase of Market Walk was complete and the footfall through the town increases this should encourage new businesses. The two are linked.

07.07 FEEDBACK / ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The Chair 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.

It was noted that the venue for the meeting would be difficult to travel to by public transport.

07.08 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Future meetings of the Forum will be held on the following dates, commencing at 7.00pm:

- Thursday 12 July 2007
- Wednesday 14 November 2007
- Thursday 7 February 2008

The venues will be determined in the near future.

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 representatives for their contributions.

Chair