



Woodford Community Council

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2009

WCC members present:

Mr Ken Coxey Chairman
Mrs Helen Buszard Secretary
Mrs Maxine Wood Treasurer

Mr Paul Rodman, Mr Stuart Downes, Mr Bryan Leck, Revd John Knowles, Mr Derek Hall, Mr Ron Beatham.

The Meeting was attended by over 90 residents and visitors.

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, and presented apologies from three members of the WCC – Mrs White, Dr Evans and Mr Roscoe – and from Mr Mark Hunter MP, Cllr Paul Bellis and Cllr Brian Bagnall. He also welcomed Cllr Bryan Leck and Mr Ben Jeffreys, Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Cheadle, and two local community police officers, who had kindly agreed to attend to answer any questions relating to crime.

He then introduced and welcomed the guest speakers, Mr Mike Gallagher, Web Designer and Producer, Mr Dave Bryant, SMBC Planning Policy Manager, and Ms Sue Stevenson, SMBC Transport Policy and Programmes Manager.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the AGM held on 27 November 2008 were approved.

3. Chairman's Annual Report

The Chairman gave a short account of the various activities undertaken by the Community Council over the previous twelve months. He noted in particular the development of the new website, which had been made possible by the award of a grant of £1,696 from the Grassroots Fund of the Community Foundation for Greater Manchester. The website had been set up to improve communication between the WCC and residents and to provide an easily accessible and user-friendly source of information

about the local community. He praised the excellent work undertaken by Mike Gallagher in designing and producing the website and noted that Mike would be talking about it in more detail later in the meeting. He also pointed out that information was given, and regularly updated, on the WCC Notice Board, located outside Budgens Stores on Chester Road, and that further newsletters would be produced and circulated on occasion, subject to availability of funds.

The Chairman then referred to one of the most important matters affecting Woodford residents – the future of the BAE Systems site after the current work programme was concluded in 2012. He explained that the WCC has been keeping in very close touch with this issue and had maintained long-established links with BAE management in order to keep residents informed and provide a platform for them to make their views known. To this end the second guest speaker, Mr Bryant, had been invited to address the meeting later.

The Chairman also mentioned the link between the WCC and the Management Committee of the Woodford War Memorial Community Centre. He noted that over the past year or two particular issues had arisen and had been the subject of much debate and concern, but he was pleased to say that this had now been amicably resolved.

He commented on the disturbing increase in crime in the Woodford vicinity over the last year and noted that the WCC had liaised with the local police and had disseminated the information and guidance they had provided, including recommendations regarding the establishment of Neighbourhood Watch schemes. Other matters in which the WCC had been involved included local developments and planning applications, public footpaths and rights of way and environmental issues, such as traffic, roads and litter. Another ‘Clean up Woodford’ day was planned for the following Saturday, when all volunteers would be welcome.

Finally, the Chairman thanked the members of the WCC for their time and commitment and everyone for their support.

4. Treasurer’s Report

The Treasurer presented the annual accounts. She reported that at the start of the financial year, the opening balance had been £315 and that during the year £145 had been received in donations (most of which had been made at the 2008 AGM), approximately £20 had been paid in bank interest and £1,097 had been received as the first payment from the grant awarded for the website. Most of the outgoings throughout the year related to the costs of the website and the closing balance on 31 October 2009 stood at £420. The second part of the grant would be available at the beginning of 2010 and this would help to cover the basic running costs of the website for a year or so. However, further donations or other forms of income would have to be found if the website was to be maintained and developed.

5. Election of new Council members

The Chairman noted that there were two vacancies on the Council. Mr Frank Brown and Mr Irvin Hanson offered to serve and were duly elected.

6. Woodford Community Council Website

Mr Gallagher, Web Designer and Producer, gave a short presentation on the new WCC website, demonstrating many of its pages on screen. He drew attention in particular to the 'Have Your Say' page, which could be used to submit comments on any issues affecting Woodford, and to the Gallery page, which displayed many excellent photographs of the locality taken by Woodford residents. He concluded by giving some statistics showing that the number of visitors to the site had increased over the few months that it had been running and he encouraged everyone to use and contribute to the website, which was an asset for the whole community.

7. Development of BAE Systems Woodford Site

Mr Bryant, Planning Policy Manager, gave a brief review of the changes in planning procedures that had come into force in September 2004, explaining that this meant that Stockport's Unitary Development Plan had now been replaced by the Local Development Framework (LDF). The Core Strategy Development Plan Document – Preferred Options, which covered the whole of Stockport Metropolitan Borough, was now at the consultation stage and this was of particular relevance to Woodford because of the closure of BAE Systems and the need to plan for the future development of the site. The Public Meeting held in Woodford on 15 October had been very well attended by over 250 people and a summary of the comments made during the workshop sessions was now available. Mr Bryant then outlined the various options and factors to be taken into account with respect to the site and pointed out that the consultation period had been extended to 1 December 2009 to allow a little more time for submission of comments. These would be considered and further work undertaken over the next few months, leading to the preparation of a draft spatial plan, which would be subject to a further consultation process.

Ms Sue Stevenson, Transport Policy and Programmes Manager, spoke about the proposed new relief road scheme based on the South East Manchester Multi Modal Strategy (SEMMMS). She gave a brief review of the various stages through which the scheme had passed over the years and explained that the business case for the scheme had eventually been recognised by the Government, although it had been unable to offer full funding and had suggested that the development be phased. In 2008 an allocation of £165m was made from central funds, on the condition that the balance be provided locally. This was agreed by the local authorities involved in 2009, but it would only pay for the completion of the loop from the airport to the A6; the Poynton Bypass would be excluded. However, because of all the time that had gone by since the original application, it was now necessary to provide a new business case and submit a new planning application. Work was currently in hand to do this and a further public consultation exercise would then be undertaken. Ms Stevenson emphasised the importance of responding to this, since it was just as important to register support for the scheme, as it was to put forward any objections. If the application were successful, construction could probably begin in 2012 with completion anticipated by 2015.

The floor was then opened for questions and comments and some lively discussions ensued. Particular concern was expressed over an indication that Manchester Airport might be in discussions over the use of the Woodford site as an air freight terminal. Mr Bryant responded that this was extremely unlikely and that Manchester Airport itself

had ruled it out and would be opposed to such a use. Other points made included recognition that whilst the site could not be left derelict, residents did not want to see Woodford totally swamped by an excessive number of new houses. It was felt that any new housing should be in keeping with the existing housing stock in the locality and that factors such as road congestion (with note being taken that there was no guarantee that the SEMMMS scheme would go ahead) and the need for new schools and medical facilities and improved public transport to meet the increased demand must all be taken into account. There was also a strong view that the existing Green Belt should be protected and that the MEDS areas should not be extended. Mixed use for these areas was preferred with the hope that employment opportunities could be created. There was considerable support for linking the site to Woodford's aviation heritage and a desire to see the open spaces maintained for recreational use or as a country park or woodland.

8. Closure of Meeting

The Chairman thanked all the guest speakers for their excellent presentations and clear responses to queries. He also thanked residents for attending and formally closed the meeting.

Minutes Approved, on behalf of the Community

..... Chairman

Date.....