

Blackfen Forum
Notes of a meeting held on 17th October 2007
At Our Lady of the Rosary Church Hall

Present: Councillor K Perrior, Ms J Hollier (Bexley Council), Ms C Robinson (Bexley Community Safety Partnership), Inspector T Noar, Sgt B Sherlock (Metropolitan Police), Mr M Brown (Head-teacher Blackfen School) together with 48 members whose names are recorded on the attendance sheets.

The meeting was "chaired" by R Kelly (V/Chairman).

1 Chairman's Introduction: The Chairman, Ms E Denning welcomed all to the meeting and introduced the guest speakers and also the two new committee members, John Holmes and Jacqueline Harley. She then announced her resignation, as she had sold her business and would be moving out of the area. She felt that the Forum had achieved much and thanked members for their support and wished them every success in the future. Robin Kelly then took over the duties of chairman and thanked Emma Denning for all her hard work in the past.

2 Apologies for absence: were received from Councillors B Beckwith, V Clark, P Cammish, P Catteral, and P Craske, Mr E Dolan and Mr D Rudland.

3 Minutes of last meeting (11th July 2007) had been previously circulated. It was agreed that they were a true record. Proposed R Briggs seconded J Holmes.

4 Matter arising (not otherwise on the agenda): Use of land adjacent to 2 Wellington Avenue. Although signage has been changed it is understood that the premises are still being used for scrap metal purposes and that the Council is now considering prosecution. The double yellow lines in Days Lane have now been extended.

5 Presentation by Students from Blackfen School: Matthew Brown the head-teacher in his introduction reminded members that the school had 1360 pupils (including 80 boys) and with 80 teachers plus support staff was one of the largest employers in Blackfen. He expressed his thanks to local businesses for providing "work experience" opportunities for pupils and hoped that the students' efforts were reciprocal. He pointed out that whilst young people are constantly criticised the vast majority are well behaved and subjected to the same problems that affect the rest of the community. Each of the students then spoke individually explaining the problems that they experienced growing up in Blackfen and gave thought provoking answers to questions from members of the audience. The main points raised included:-

They were appreciative of the free travel facilities and a good public transport system. A general lack of facilities for youth in the Blackfen area necessitated journeying to other parts of the Borough and when doing so they often felt insecure and intimidated by the presence of gangs of youths often indulging in under age drinking.

Fees charged by youth clubs to take part in activities were thought to be expensive. There were a variety of clubs and activities available for them during school hours. The availability of these types of activities outside school hours at the school premises would be welcomed.

At the conclusion of the presentation there was a warm round of applause from all present.

6 Treasurer's report. An account held at the Woolwich had been closed after various costs incurred prior to 30 March 2007 had been met from a "Discretionary Grant" received from Bexley Council leaving 19p balance in hand. This together with a further grant of £445 received for "Core Administrative costs 2007/200822" was paid into a new account held at Barclays Bank. Payments made during the period during July/August total £123 - 87 leaving a balance of £321 - 32.

7 Policing Issues and the role of the Neighbourhood Co-ordinator. Sergeant Brian Sherlock explained how each of the four wards into which Blackfen falls have their own team of police officers and community support officers known as Safer Neighbourhood Policing Teams. Each Ward also has a "Neighbourhood Panel" comprised of residents who meet regularly with the police and set local priorities. The teams work in co-operation to tackle particular problems which affect the Blackfen area. He provided details of specific results achieved. Clair Robinson (Bexley Community Safety Partnership) is the recently appointed Neighbourhood Co-ordinator, Neighbourhood Services Team for the "Sidcup Cluster" which includes the wards of Blackfen & Lamorbey and Blendon & Penhill. She explained that her main task is to liaise with residents and the various groups and sections of the community and act as a "conduit" to the police and other authorities. Inspector Toby Noare, who replaces Inspector Simon Ashenden as the Inspector in charge of the "Sidcup Cluster" then introduced himself and outlined his intentions for the future. Various questions from members were responded to, some individually at the close of the meeting.

8 Street clutter removal and regeneration project: Jo Hollier, Assistant Highways Manager, Bexley Council, outlined "her vision" of the "regeneration project" as presented by her at the last meeting. Since then she has attended a meeting with the sub committee appointed by the Forum from whom she has received comments and suggestions. Stage 2 of the "Clutter clearance" project (Funded by TFL) i.e bollards, painting of railings, new litter bins etc. has been completed with the exception of one litter bin still awaited. She is in contact with her colleague June Unwins with a view to re-organising the "Re-cycling Centre" in Westwood Lane to provide a more attractive appearance as no progress has been made in negotiations with Somerfields to re-site the bins in their car park. £36000 has been allocated for re-paving works with hard wearing attractive materials which are easy to maintain. This will be focused on the area immediately in front of the Woodman public house (and also on the facing corner of Westwood Lane) in conjunction with extensive proposed alterations and improvements to the Woodman p.h. currently awaiting planning approval.

Mr Clive Andrews, the new manager of the Woodman public house was present and provided details of the proposed alterations. He invited those interested to view plans in support of the application at the end of the meeting. He also announced that it was intended to change the name

from the Woodman to the George Staples (the original publican). There was mixed reaction to this announcement.

Ms Hollier then responded to questions and comments "from the floor":-

CCTV - Council officers will be contacting the police to suggest the provision of a camera at Maple Crescent/rear of Blackfen Parade. This raised the question, "Why not the high street?" to which Councillor Perrior responded - "At present the Council CCTV team cannot take the capacity and there is a need to redefine where cameras are needed. Temporary cameras with the advantage of mobility are available and are excellent for evidence gathering."

Hanging flower baskets (on lamp standards). Ms Denning asked if there was any progress. Ms Hollier will pursue this matter further.

Provision of a bollard to prevent vehicles being driven along the footpath adjacent to Gothelfs opticians - This is private property and not within the scope of the Council.

Driving on the footway. Attention was drawn to the increasing practice of vehicles being driven across the footway by drivers using the ATM outside Barclays Bank.

Maple Crescent - Mr Poppat has previously suggested that Maple Crescent should be made "One Way" for its entire length which would then provide opportunity for additional parking bays in proximity to the shops. Was there any progress? Suggested that he writes to his local councillors.

Bus shelters - Mr Hadley again drew attention to the lack of shelters at the bus stops in Blackfen. The secretary will correspond further with Councillor Craske.

Rear alleyways - Research was continuing with a view to "Clean up" projects being undertaken in the alleyways behind Wellington Parade and Gloucester Parade.

9 Any other business:-

A member complained of an apparent absence of further police investigation in relation to a crime he had reported. As this was a specific issue this was taken up by Sgt Sherlock on an individual basis following the meeting.

GGM 21/10/07