

Benton and Longbenton Elected Mayor Listens Event

Note

18 August 2015

Present: Norma Redfearn, Elected Mayor
Councillors Eddie Darke, John Harrison, Bruce Pickard, Lesley Spillard, John Stirling, Alison Waggott-Fairley, Janet Hunter, Pat Oliver, Peter Earley and Karen Clark. Officers and Partners Stephen Corkin, Bill Vaughan, Vanessa Phillips, Anthony Howe, Mark Newlands, Malcolm Frazer, Jennifer Newbold, Bev Oakley, Inspector Ray Smith and Linda Hoffman Springfield Community Association.
49 residents.

Apologies: Councillors Carole Burdis, Ray Glindon and Ian Grayson

The Elected Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting. She explained that the aim of these events was to bring the Elected Mayor and Cabinet into the community to talk to residents about what is going on in their area. There were budget reductions of at least £44 million required over the next few years and some very important decisions needed to be made. The Elected Mayor urged residents to either contact their Ward Councillors or write to her about what their priorities were.

At this point those Cabinet Members present introduced themselves and outlined their responsibilities.

Flooding and Highways

Mark Newlands, Highways and Infrastructure Manager, gave a detailed presentation on the Killingworth and Longbenton Sustainable Surface Water Management Project. The project involved partnership working involving North Tyneside Council, Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency.

The presentation included information on the catchment area; the benefits of the project; work undertaken to date; funding arrangements and communications strategy.

Mr Newlands answered various questions from residents in relation to the project.

In relation to a question on rat infestation, Mr Newlands indicated that he would consult with his colleagues about whether the project would have an impact on this issue.

Dementia Friends

Anthony Howe, Training Development Team, gave a presentation on how to become a Dementia Friend in the community. He explained the aims of Dementia Friends

and outlined the key messages that people needed to know about dementia. A short film was also shown and an interactive activity undertaken.

Springfield Community Association

Linda Hoffman gave a presentation on the work of Springfield Community Association. The presentation included the history of the Association (formerly known as the Institute) from the 1870's up to the present day. Activities recently undertaken included an Annual Fun Day (in consultation with North Tyneside Council) and a project involving residents of three care homes and children of Ivy Road Primary School.

Justice Prince

Karen Clark, Chief Officer of Justice Prince gave a presentation on the work of Justice Prince. The Justice Prince Annual Review 2014 was also circulated which gave details of the social objectives and key achievements of Justice Prince. Two key areas of work were local conversations and the Working Roots programme. Short DVD's were also shown.

Updates on Resurfacing

The Elected Mayor apologised to residents for the dreadful experience of the major road improvement scheme at the A188 – Goathland Avenue Roundabout – Four Lane Ends. She said that the work was mainly complete and many lessons had been learned.

Malcolm Frazer, Highways Team, Capita, gave a presentation on road resurfacing in the area. He outlined in detail the different stages of the programme which were a) localised repairs (e.g. potholes etc.); b) micro-asphalt resurfacing; and c) roads resurfacing.

He pointed out that it was intended to have a forum with Ward Councillors to identify any areas that required localised repairs.

Mr Frazer answered various questions from residents and stated that he would follow up on the following issues that were raised:

- i) consideration of carrying out localised repairs as necessary at Wilson Terrace;
- ii) inspecting the traffic lights at the top of Station Road (from Asda) – the 'File Right' signal not working; will there be a pedestrian phase?
- iii) getting further information on the widening scheme at Sandy Lane;
- iv) inspecting the drainage at Forest Hall Shopping Centre.

Open Question Time

The floor was opened up to questions from residents. The following questions were asked:

1) Inadequacies of the bus shelters on Benton Lane

Because the one on the northbound side is too far back from the road you cannot see the buses as they turn the corner from the Findus roundabout and therefore have to stand outside of the shelter to avoid missing the bus leaving elderly residents without protection against the elements.

The one on the southbound side causes people to have to push past the queues waiting for the bus outside of Somals owing to the shelter not being far enough forward and the path not wide enough for the pedestrians to pass.

Both bus shelters, 03001 (north-bound) and 03021 (south-bound) are owned and maintained by advertising company Clear Channel. These shelters were installed under contract with North Tyneside Council.

Councillor John Harrison replied as follows:

The bus shelters are not managed by North Tyneside Council but we do have a responsibility to look at this. There needs to be a solution to ensure bus shelters are accessible. I will ask officers to look into this.

2) Uneven path surfaces

This is a problem throughout West Moor. Chiltern Drive was particularly highlighted as in need of repair or replacement as many paving slabs are not level which could result in a resident having a bad fall.

Councillor John Harrison replied as follows:

I share residents' concerns and footpath maintenance is a high priority for the Elected Mayor. Although we are currently investing an additional £2m per year in road and footpath improvements, the issue is always challenging due to the overall size of the footpath network we have to look after. However, we are committed to undertaking footpath repairs as it is important to reclaim our paths to walk along. We do not have any immediate plans to undertake major footpath improvements at Chiltern Drive. I have however asked our highways team to inspect the area to identify and repair any localised defects that may be causing a safety issue. The inspection will take place this week with any necessary repairs being done within the following 10 working days.

3) Japanese Knotweed

Residents have already reported to the council several times, the presence of this very invasive weed growing in the Park Terrace back lane. Nothing has been done about it.

Councillor John Stirling replied as follows:

This issue is taken very seriously. However, the treatment can only be sprayed in dry weather and June and July have been very wet. In addition, only certain treatments (e.g. environmentally friendly) can be used. Park Terrace back lane was sprayed last week to alleviate this problem.

4) Roadworks

The roadworks in the area, particularly from West Moor to Four Lane Ends and also to Sandy Lane, were all scheduled to be completed by Spring 2015, according to NTC publication. Clearly this has not happened. We would request that you give us an updated picture of exactly when these roadworks are now scheduled to complete and the reasons for the delays.

Councillor John Harrison replied as follows:

This very important project is now complete subject to some minor snagging work to be done. The traffic lights at Four Lane Ends are working satisfactorily. As the Elected Mayor has previously stated, a lot of lessons have been learned and we would like to thank everyone for their forbearance.

5) Before and After Traffic Flows at Four Lane Ends

At a couple of public meetings I asked highways officers if 'before and after' flow figures/delay times could be published in relation to the Four Lane Ends junction. Can they be published on the Council's website?

Councillor John Harrison replied as follows:

Yes I will ask that this information be published.

6) Drive Carefully Signs

There are six schools in a one mile radius in this area. There are not enough 'Please drive carefully' signs on the Benton and Longbenton estates. Can more signs be installed?

Councillor Eddie Darke replied as follows:

Yes I will look into this.

7) Sea Gulls

I am raising a question on behalf of a friend who lives in North Shields (and provided an address) who has been attacked on numerous occasions by sea gulls. She said she looks after small grandchildren but is unable to let them play in the garden because of the gulls attacking. She explained that a neighbour was encouraging the seagulls by feeding them on a daily basis. She had asked the neighbour to stop but this has caused ill feeling between the two so she has asked if the Council can help?

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

This matter is being dealt with and officers have visited the resident concerned to advise them to refrain from feeding the birds.

8) Traffic Lights on Coach Lane

Only four or five cars can turn onto Coach Lane before the lights change, sometimes as few as three if an inexperienced driver is at the front of the queue. This causes tailbacks. One night I waited five minutes and could not get out. I took a detour in absolute frustration. Traffic is always able to exit from Manor walk though.

Councillor Eddie Darke replied as follows:

Your Ward Councillors who are present this evening will look into this.

9) Southgate Court Address

We live in Southgate Court sheltered housing scheme and none of us know what our address is. Three addresses have been suggested – Southgate Court – Mendip Way; Southgate Court – Camsey Court; Southgate Court – West Farm Rise. None of the tenants have been informed of the change of address. We do not have TV licences because of the change of address.

Councillor Eddie Darke replied as follows:

Residents voted to call the scheme Southgate. The address was finally determined as Southgate – West Farm Rise although officers appreciate residents were not informed of this. I have taken up this issue together with the issue regarding TV licences with the relevant officers.

10) Sheltered Housing Officers

We previously had a situation where the Housing officer was not always on site Monday to Friday. We currently have a housing officer on site during that period and would like to thank you for that. However, we are concerned that once the development has finished, the previous situation may reoccur.

The Elected Mayor replied as follows:

I can reassure you that a Sheltered Housing Officer will be on site from 8.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday.

11) Turning Right at Four Lane Ends Traffic Lights

The new junction at Four Lane Ends may improve traffic flows but I am nervous when turning right. With the high volume of traffic coming in the opposite direction I

feel trapped and vulnerable in the middle of this junction. Will engineers be monitoring the situation to make sure this situation is addressed?

Councillor Eddie Darke replied as follows:

Yes officers will be monitoring the situation

The Elected Mayor thanked residents, staff and speakers for their attendance. She thanked Inspector Ray Smith from Northumbria Police for his attendance and thanked St Andrew's Church for the use of their facilities.

She pointed out that if a resident had any further questions they could leave them, together with their name and address, with her staff who were present at the meeting or by ringing the Elected Mayor's office on 0191 6435314.