

MINUTES OF WEST SWINDON CLUSTER FORUM MEETING MONDAY 9TH NOVEMBER 2009

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Nick Martin (Chair), Michael Bray (Vice Chair),
Mary Martin, Garry Perkins, Keith Williams,
Peter Greenhalgh, Mick Bray, Michael Dickinson.

Police:

Adrian Burt (Inspector)

Swindon Borough Council:

Martin Hambidge (Parks),
Christabel Banks (Waste & Recycling),
Margaret Tester (Traffic Management & Road Safety),
Richard Fisher (Waste Management – Street Smart),
Andy Reeves (Community Facilities),
Chris Hunt (Community Facilities),
Simon Lymn (Transport – Cycling),
Frank Donachie (Parks – Trees),
Ed Stanford (Landscape & Countryside),
Gwillam Lloyd (Planning & Transport),
Carole Jamieson (Leisure)

Residents:

Brian Miller, Susan Camburn, Pat Porter, Donald
Brunwick, Ruth Kiddle, Norris Kiddle, Andrew Parfitt,
Chris Shepherd, Lesley Shepherd, Steve Nell,
Martyn Parrott, Jo Osorio, Roger Ogle,
Gavin Beaton, Geoff Reid, Rachel Reid,
L Richardson, 6 other residents.

Apologies:

Steve Wakefield (Councillor), Bernie Brannan (Swindon
Borough Council), Roger Byrne (Swindon Borough
Council)

1. Minutes of Last Meeting

The Chair said that we do not normally go over the previous minutes, but they are there in the public domain. People can raise questions borne out of them, should they wish, on the next agenda item.

2. Questions from the Floor

- (i) Chris – allotments and lack of opportunity locally in West Swindon.
- (ii) Brian Miller – pathways around West Swindon, the shrubbery is so overgrown and nothing seems to be done unless the public tells the Authority.

- (iii) Toothill Cottages, there was a “For Sale” sign. What is the current situation?
- (iv) Jo Osorio – these forum meetings are for the public, but the style of meeting does not lend itself to participation / debate or democracy.

The rest of the agenda did not follow fully in order due to Officers having to be at other meetings.

3. **Freshbrook Community Centre - Closure**

Chris Hunt from Swindon Borough Council Community Provision informed the group briefly about the history of closure and the lack of insurance cover. There has been a public meeting trying to rebuild a new Committee. There is a steering group working on a new constitution and new charity status looking for funding opportunities. There are around 20 people involved. If anyone would like to help, or has any ideas please get in contact.

The steering group have given themselves a year to become fully set up. It will take around 6 months to formalise and prepare a business case for a lease and can then open sometime after that.

The Chair reminded the forum that this is **not** a Council provision.

Question from the floor – Will there be a Bar within it?

Reply – The steering group, when discussed previously, were not in favour of a Bar, but will bring in Bar service for events.

4. **Replies to Questions from the Floor**

- (i) Allotments:
 - * Akers Way – hoping to extend. Planning permission.
 - * West Swindon – trying to find a suitable site, but need vehicle access. Cannot take away public open space. Mains water needed too. It is also an area of very heavy clay.
 - * Mannington – will be very expensive to make suitable due to the ground being covered in hard core.
 - * Toothill – member of the public observed that there are several plots that look as though they have not been cultivated for some time. What is the process to move on to new “rents”? Martin Hambridge (Parks) said it was an ongoing battle, but there is a set procedure in place for “notice to quit” – 28 days, but 75% of land must be cultivated all year round.
 - * As allotments are coming up, the size of land is being looked at and some allotments are now being re-valued as many people only want to do salads / beginner plots.
 - When is the best time to apply? None really – requests all year round.

5. **Public Pathways**

Shrubbery / trees / hedges – long debate as many residents shared similar examples of the issues. Ed Stanford (Head of Landscape & Countryside) said that West Swindon was over planted and needs a radical cut. This will be quite shocking for some, but the thinning out will allow trees to mature.

Residents expressed their frustration that at the very least, all pathways should be cut back, not just trimmed once a year and not just when a resident complained. They also asked for the Council to take a stand with residents who allowed shrubs to hang over. Ed Stanford explained that whilst it may seem “jobs worth” that a team cutting trees doesn’t go on to cut shrubs as they are all there. He explained the ineffectiveness of using specialist tree gangs if this was to be applied.

In order to complete a full thinning out in West Swindon there will need to be considerable resources put to it, but Ed said that with the help of:

- the local community
- private organisations – who get to take away bark / trees for less cost may help.

Also, by working in synergy with the Cycling Initiative who have some part of their funding towards cutting back shrubs by the new signs going up.

Action – Ed Stanford to draw up plan. Work with Simon Lymn to see who is doing what.

6. **Toothill Cottages**

Still for sale. Too expensive for Council to bring up to standard to rent. Resident said that the garden was big, and part of the garden was not attached to the cottage, but across the road. Could the Council break up that parcel of land and use this for an allotment?

7. **Room for Meeting**

The Chair asked Carole Jamieson (Link Centre Manager) her thoughts. She suggested the Library as it’s very well placed. In good view for the public – easy access and not used on a Monday.

Action – Carole Jamieson to discuss with Bernie Brannan.

8. **Toothill School – Safety Issues**

Safer Schools Officer spoke about the issues:

- No Lollipop person(s) – cannot fill post – lots of suggestions given from the floor
- Residents were asking for the same as Millbrook – zebra crossing.

The Chair said that at the very least, all new / improvements to schools should consider this aspect. Councillor Garry Perkins (Portfolio for Schools) said that

he would discuss the budget, but all monies for capital spend is held centrally and any underspend goes back. They are not left for the school to spend.

Police Inspector Adrian Burt said that he may be able to help and would send Police Community Support Officers to the school as often as their work allowed.

The floor were very pleased and hoped the PCSO would also have the chance to give advice to children who may behave inappropriately.

9. **Police**

Police Inspector Adrian Burt explained that whilst CPCP has been geographically split as it is for the Borough, his Police area covers West and north central, the new CPCP areas (Bernie Brannan and Ian Bickerton). It would be excellent if these two officers could make an agreement on priorities so that the police priorities were the same in both areas.

For the West generally though, the records were encouraging with pockets of isolated incidents. Covering both areas there are up to 60 staff involved in policing the area.

Ruth Kiddle proposed that this forum be the place that safety / priorities be discussed rather than the neighbourhood group as she goes to both and this forum has far bigger representation than that 6 people who attend the neighbourhood group.

10. **Update on Speed Humps Removal and Condition of Freshbrook and Grange Side Roads – (Gwillam Lloyd)**

Lots of consultation taken place – various models looked at, Portsmouth being one.

The bus companies and Police have been consulted – no issues.

Various features will be installed, but Police will need to be satisfied that these are correct and can be managed, i.e. issue of 20 miles per hour.

Features include: gateways, raised beds, repeater signs. Start February and will take 4 to 8 weeks in duration.

11. **Supply of Wheelie Bins / Resident Volunteer**

Richard Fisher and Christabel Banks briefly outlined the work of Street Smart.

They would like more volunteers in the community to be the eyes and ears and report problems like graffiti. If people want to become more involved then we have people who are volunteer litter pickers (training / litter clippers given).

Also, would like to use this forum to get the message out that Shaw Forest Park has got major works at the rail bridge as there is 80,000 cubic metres of soil

being moved – 3 to 6 months work. Please tell people to watch out for large machinery.

Wheelie Bins

5 plus in family – 300 properties in West Swindon. These families are being asked if they still want 2 wheelie bins as now there is more recycling available they may need more recycling boxes than the wheelie bin. Each of these properties is being given options.

12. **West Swindon Cycle Routes – Simon Lymn**

Really positive news for West Swindon – new scheme approved. Forum saw the proposal and was very pleased. Blue signs getting replaced (see item number 5) as shrubbery can be cut back around the signs as part of the project. Some benches will be installed too.

Request from the floor that Simon can help West Swindon ([Link](#)) for appropriate bike locking facilities (proposed by Mary Martin).

The meeting closed at 10:00pm