

## St Mary's Community Council

**Date:** Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2008

**Time:** 7.00pm

**Venue:** Groundwork Environment Centre, Shaw Road, Higginshaw, Oldham

**Notes:** Contact Officer for this Agenda is Christine Chester, Senior Constitutional Services Assistant,  
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### Item No:

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Notes of the Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2008
3. Post Office Closures
4. Future of Community Councils – Councillor Rod Blyth
5. “Community Dialogue” Project for Clarksfield/Glodwick – Richard Grossick - OREP
6. Police Update – Sgt Brian McGill
7. Update on Actions from last meeting – Neighbourhood Manager
8. Public Question Time
9. Date and Time of Next Meeting.

## St Mary's Community Council

**Date & time:** Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2008 at 7.00pm

**Venue:** Groundwork Environment Centre, Shaw Road, Higginshaw, Oldham

**Chair:** Councillor Qumer  
**Councillors:** Masud and Salamat  
**Co-optees:** Dilys Fletcher, Waseem Javed, George Kay, George Kenworthy, Asif Rashid Lohdi  
**In attendance:** Penny Barratt, Christine Chester, Angela Longsdon, Bruce Penhale, Mark Simmons, Sergeant Brian McGill.

**1. Apologies:** Co-optees: Abdul Rehman Khayal, Mohammed Sharif and Lisa Woolfenden  
Officers

### 2. Notes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2008

- The Notes were confirmed as an accurate record, subject to the final bullet point of item 3 - Feedback from Community Safety - being amended to read as follows: " Councillor Qumer" requested alley gates.....
- With regard to Item 10 – Suggestions for future meetings - Mark Simmons, Neighbourhood Manager, advised that he had been unable to arrange for a Representative from the PCT to attend this meeting but that he would endeavour to arrange for a Representative to attend the September meeting of the Community Council.

### 3. Post Office Closures

- Bruce Penhale, Assistant Director (Communities), attended for this Item and informed the meeting that figures published by the Post Office the previous week had indicated that a total of 2,500 Post offices would be closed, 67 of which were in Greater Manchester and the High Peak area. He advised that consultation on the closures would take place but this process would be about which Post Offices would close and not how many. Two of the 8 earmarked for closure in Oldham were in the East Oldham Area; those at Egerton Street and Greenacres Moor. The meeting was advised that the consultation would last for a period of six weeks, up until 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008, and that the Council would put a collective response forward which they hoped would include some input from local residents. Any petitions drawn up would also feed into the response and residents were asked to give their full support to the campaign.

### 4. Future of Community Councils

- Councillor Rod Blyth attended the meeting and introduced a report of the Chief Executive regarding the Establishment of Area Committees. The report, that had been submitted to Council on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008, sought approval to develop proposals for the establishment of Area Committee with clear decision making powers, including the option of powers for taking local planning decisions, to consider the resource implications of the changes and the level of budget, to consult existing Community Councils and partner organisations about the proposals and, in the light of this consultation, a report would be submitted to July Council with proposals to implement the changes in September this year.

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Councillor Blyth stated that the Community Councils lacked power and money; they were not formally constituted and therefore were unable to pass resolutions. He informed the meeting that the makeup of the proposed Area Committees could mean that a number of the Community Councils would be amalgamated which would give increased spending power to the Area Committees and make them more financially viable. He also pointed out that where single Ward meetings, that is Community Councils or Area Committees, existed they would not have the power to consider planning applications or take Key Decisions.

Local residents and members of the Community Council commented on the following:

- The lack of options available to St Mary's Community Council – it was considered that no option, apart from that of joining up with St James and Waterhead Community Council, had been given. Residents were of the opinion that they were being dictated to and that the decision had already been made.
- A Co-optee expressed her concern that there was a danger that where the Area Committee consisted of mainly one Political Group Co-optees were being “cherry – picked”.
- Members asked why, if there was money available for use by Area Committees, that money should not be made available to the Community Councils with powers granted to them by the Council.
- Local residents suggested that small groups such as Community Groups or Residents Associations could meet on a monthly basis and feed information from a local level to a larger Committee; in this way the views of local people could still be made known.
- A Co-opted Member stated that he had attended many Area Committees and reminded the meeting that when a consultation had been undertaken last year 95% of the people did not want Community Councils and would have preferred to stay with Area Committees; at that time we were forced to break away from East Oldham. In his opinion it would be a good thing to revert back to Area Committees and to build on the lessons that had been learned from Community Councils.
- An Elected Member informed the meeting that under the present situation Community Councils could only influence decision making; with Area Committees the local people could make a difference; these Committees would be formally constituted and could ensure that services were delivered at a local level. In his opinion working in isolation as a single Area Committee would not benefit the people of St Mary's Ward and we should be working together and sharing information with our neighbours for the benefit of the whole community.

In closing Councillor Blyth assured the meeting that all comments made at tonight's meeting would be fed back as part of the Consultation process.

A vote was then taken on whether or not St Mary's Ward should amalgamate with St James' and Waterhead Wards the result of which is detailed below:

The option for the East Oldham area, as detailed in the report, was that One East Oldham Area Committee be formed comprising all three wards – on being put to the vote 1 Elected Member and 2 Co-opted members voted IN FAVOUR of the recommendation and 2 Elected Members and 2 Co-opted members, voted AGAINST the recommendation, with one abstention.

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### 5. Transitional Communities Project

John Tumon Director of Oldham Race Equality Partnership attended the meeting for this item and outlined the project for members of the Community Council and local residents. He advised that the Project would run until March 2009 and would be supported by £45K funding from EHRC. It would reflect the work and experience of the Community Dialogue Project that had run last year and which had highlighted the need for grassroots work to distinguish between (a) segregated communities and (b) communities with a changing ethnic composition; with both contexts requiring different approaches. To ensure the success of such a project certain support mechanisms would be required and the anxieties of local residents would also need to be address; two areas had been identified those of Chadderton North and Clarksfield/Greenacres. He detailed the staff that would be put in place and outlined the approach that would be taken to ensure the success of the Project; in doing this he pointed out that people making non-traditional moves would be more likely to become part of a successful diverse neighbourhood, as well as being accepted by existing residents if they were able to get involved from the start in the community activities in their new neighbourhood. He advised that studies had shown that, where residents had got involved in this way there had been less tension in the area.

Members of the Community Council and local residents commented on the following:

- There would be a need to ensure that the areas did not get run down and that the Council was doing everything in its power to ensure that the quality of living of existing residents did not suffer.
- Whilst the Project should benefit community cohesion, care would need to be taken to maintain a balance of the communities involved; it was a very complicated issue that needed to be treated sensitively.
- Would people want to get involved in the organised activities in the area?
- How would the project be monitored?
- A local resident pointed out that this was a world wide issue and not just particular to the areas that had been chosen to participate in the project and the Chair requested that the Project be rolled out to cover the whole of the Borough.

The Chair thanked Mr Tumon for his presentation.

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### 6. Police Update

Sergeant Brian McGill attended the meeting and gave an update on recent activity in the area as follows:

- The level of crime in the area from April to June had decreased as a result of the good work that was being done with all partners.
- A resident of Egerton Street informed the meeting that they had requested a visit from a PCSO but so far nobody had been to see him. – Sergeant McGill pointed out that since the last meeting Martin Jones, PCSO, had been transferred to Failsworth but he offered to take up the issue in his absence.
- A resident asked if a car break-in on Egerton Street needed to be reported – he was advised to report the incident in order to obtain a Crime Number and Sergeant McGill pointed out that because of the way incidents on the system were graded this type of incident would not normally generate a visit but one could be requested when the incident was reported.
- In response to a question relating to the recent break-ins at St Stephen's and the Parish Church Schools Sergeant McGill reported that so far no arrests had been made.
- What steps would be taken to ensure the playing fields on Oldham Edge would be made secure to prevent travellers and people in stolen cars and on motor bikes gaining access – This issue had been discussed at the Area Action Team; the Travellers had been issued with a notice to move on and the Chair requested that Steve Smith, Parks Manager, Clean, Green and Parks Scene, be asked to look at the possibility of fencing off the remaining sides of the playing fields. A Co-opted Member asked that the issue be marked for consideration at future meetings of the Area Action team and then reported to the Community Council / Area Committee.
- A local resident asked if a temporary barrier could be put in place on Oldham Edge to prevent the Travellers returning – Mark Simmons, Neighbourhood Manager, offered to look into the matter.

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### 7. Update on Actions from Last Meeting

(a) Angela Longsden attended the meeting for this item and gave an update on Youth activities that had taken or would be taking place in the area.

- Ovid Eastman had met with key groups of people in the area to work closely with residents.
- The Youth Bus was now at Royton and Crompton School
- A Youth Club had opened in Glodwick.

(b) Mark Simmons, Neighbourhood Manager, updated the Community Council on the following:

- The Community Council had funded an event for the Festival of Diversity and was now looking at holding a Fun Day in Alexandra Park, with the theme of Kite Making. The date for which would be either 20<sup>th</sup> July or the weekend of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> August. Mark urged members of the Community Council to get involved in this event and encouraged members of the public to attend.
- Meeting had taken place in some of the smaller community areas – mention was made of the ongoing Project on Sholver that was looking at three themes; Crime and Environment, Health Education and Employment and community facilities and involvement. It was hoped that a similar project could be set up in the Glodwick area with the various partners.
- FCHO Residents Association – Hoping to look at setting one up in Higginshaw, with something similar being set up in the Derker Neighbourhood Renewal area sometime in the future.

(c) The Chair, Councillor Qumer spoke on the following:

- Some funds had been allocated for Alley Gating on Huxley Street/ Lees Road and these had now been installed.
- Litter Bins at Norbury House Car Park - Mark Simmons agreed to look into this issue.
- Co-optees – He urged residents to get involved with the running of the Community Council. One Co-optee pointed out that this could prove quite difficult if there was a move to Area Committees, as the Constitution would only allow 4 Co-optees for each ward.

(d) The Meeting was advised of the following events scheduled to take place in the St Mary's Ward:

- Oldham Community Sports Club – Open Day on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2008

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- Groundwork were also holding and activity day on the same date – 19<sup>th</sup> July 2008 from 10.00am until 3.00pm.

- 8. Public Question Time**  
No Public Questions were received.
- 9. Date and time of next meeting**  
To be advised.

The meeting opened at 7.00pm and closed at 9.00pm.