

St James' & Waterhead Special Community Council

Date & Time: Monday 14 January 2008

Venue: St Thomas Primary School, Coleridge Road, Sholver, Oldham OL1 4RL

Present:

Councillors: Hindle, Stanton, McArdle, Knox, Thompson, Anchor

In attendance: Mark Simmons, Tom Flanagan, Kevin Clarke, Sue Walker

Co-optees: Stephen Fairbrother (Chair), Eugenia Alexander, Pat Gray, Myra Wyres, Bessie Halliwell, Valerie Smith, Angela Cosgrove, Sonja Costello, Kim Hutchinson, Rob Trueblood & Kevin Dawson.

Apologies: Mohammed Masud

1. Alija

- Congratulations given to Alija. Card to be sent from CC. Councillor Hindle to arrange.

2. Update

- Tom Flanagan, Executive Director Regeneration and Lead Officer verbally updated the meeting. He gave background to the situation including;
- Council along with partners and residents to create sustainable communities that are long lasting, the Government's key initiative is for new affordable homes and mixed communities, Oldham has a lot of green belt which creates pressure but Oldham has a good record on building in urban areas.
- He explained that consultation was currently taking place along with a review of primary schools and Building Schools for the Future in the area. In addition, it was noted that the Council was reviewing it's housing stock. It was highlighted that developers had not been in contact and it was felt that there was sufficient time to make decisions.
- Kevin Clarke, Sustainable Neighbourhoods Manager, explained that he had met several people at discussion sessions and forums. He highlighted that the Bottom Sholver was developed in the 90's and the problems moved to the Top Sholver. Since 2003 he described the crime and disorder in the area as severe and an option was to bring in developers. It was agreed that a private/public partnership be established to attract investment. Between July and September 2006 consultation sessions were held but were poorly attended, then in November 2006 200 residents attended an 'Ideas for Change' meeting. Further consultation was held between September and November 2007 on the current proposals/plans.
- The likes and dislikes put forward included estate layout, lighting, sense of space and environment

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3. Friends of Sholver Green

- Andrea Biggs thanked the Community Council for holding the Special Meeting. She raised her concerns over protecting Sholver Green, which held over 1,000 years of Sholver history. Her main questions were: What was a community hub? Village green status meaning what is allowed? Hub including shops and schools, what will this do? Will the ASB be moved to the hub, activities should mean no left footprint? Will proposals change if electoral power changes in May?
- In response, it was explained that, there was a broad scale of change with the opportunity to combine housing and educational issues/investment. Shops have different issues eg, creating attraction and ASB but equally much needed asset. The topic of 'protected status' was a big issue. It was noted that the Millennium Green was in the plans land had not become the community treasure it was intended to be as identified by residents. However, the Council had to take on board investment and use of assets but were aware of the fact that people like a lot of open space.
- A co-optee asked if the plans for Bottom Sholver were to fund Top Sholver. In response it was explained that there were 150 Council properties on Bottom Sholver and in the 90's people bought them on an understanding that there would be no more development. It was noted that change would happen slowly and there was an option to build first.
- The question was asked about Liberal Democrat support should power change in May. Cllr Hindle stated that the Government was determined to build houses and the issues would not go away. Councillors McArde and Stanton would not support building on a green belt area and the demolishing of family houses. He felt it was better to build on Bottom Sholver but decisions would still have to be made.
- A co-optee asked if Sholver Lane would be affected and in response it was explained that it would not. Cllr Hindle explained that he would inform people personally if there were any changes to this. He explained that the Planning Committee would not take any decision about building on a green belt area lightly.
- A co-optee explained that over the last two years millions had been spent on the estate. She paid particular attention to the fact that the Alt/Sholver project would take 10 – 15 years to complete and asked if Top Sholver would be left for 15 years? In response, it was explained that there was a block placed on housing funding in 2003 based on viability of flats and long-term solution of the Sholver.
- A school representative asked how much investment would go to people and not properties? It was explained that in projects like this time would be spent on building capacity and Tom Flanagan will investigate this. It was noted that some houses were past their sell by date and new houses would last longer.
- A resident stated that some houses were only 40 years old and they could not afford to move into a new property. It was explained that some houses would not be demolished.
- A resident from Swift Road paid particular attention to the fact that she had spent thousands of pounds on her property, she was very happy there and was extremely concerned that someone else could make the decision about her losing her home. In response it was stated that partners wanted to re-visit the plans with residents and make amendments.
- In response to a question raised by a resident, who faces prime land, about refurbishing the houses instead of demolishing them, it was explained that nothing had been decided and that the plans were only proposals. However when looking for investments then OMBC would have to look at using its assets as money will not be attracted easily.

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- A resident asked for the opinion of the Council as she wanted to move an aunt in with her. It was explained that it would be some years before plans would be finalised and people would need to make their own quality of life decisions.
- A resident stated that they were told they would have a vote on the decision (in November). In response, it was explained that this was never the intention but this would be fed back into the questionnaire.
- A comment was raised in relation to protected species such as kestrels and bats on the Millennium Green.
- A resident from Doyle Close asked if they had to live in sub-standard housing for another 15 years as the houses had been left unrepaired and she felt residents were suffering due to bad residents. In response, it was explained that people say they do not like flats. The Council had a duty to maintain the structure of the properties and the repairs service was still in operation and remained unaffected by the proposals.
- A question was raised in relation to the questionnaire and asked if everyone on Sholver received one. In response it was explained that only the people who attended the meeting received a questionnaire although an invitation to the meeting was sent to the whole area (1,700 properties).
- An Elected Member agreed about not removing good property. Also stated that there had been 10 years of tipping on Beal Valley and no complaints have been made due to listening to residents. The Councillors explained that they would listen to residents.

4. **Steve Yorke and Sue Walker, Housing Manager for Sholver**

- It was highlighted that there were jobs to be done now and in the next few years. It was noted that they had been working with Keep Britain Tidy and wanted to start work on Sholver to keep things clean and safe. It was noted that active involvement of partners and residents was required and that a satisfaction survey would be carried out to develop an Estate Agreement between residents/First Choice Homes/partners. It was explained that they were carrying out two community action days and the details would appear in the next Newsletter.
- A resident stated that they had never seen a Street Sweeper for 5 years in the area. It was explained that less than 100 residents had attended the consultations. It was acknowledged that attendance was disappointing.
- Residents felt that 50 people could not dictate changes in the estate and it was noted that feedback would be presented on the exact numbers that had responded and their comments.
- Regarding the invite to the consultation, it was explained that people were invited to a 'fun day' and residents felt the information should have been laid out better/clearer. In response, it was explained that it was an invitation to start discussions.

Everyone was thanked for the orderly way the meeting had been conducted.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.