

Northfleet and Gravesend West Neighbourhood Forum

Tuesday, 29 June 2010, 7pm

**Venue – St Johns Ambulance Hall (Eric Harden VC Memorial Hall), Hall Road,
Northfleet, Kent, DA11 8AJ**

Draft notes

Present:

Cllr Jane Cribbon (Chair)
Cllr Harold Craske
Cllr William Dyke
Cllr John Loughlin
Cllr Andrea Webb
Cllr TS Dhesi
Cllr R Leadley
Cllr Makhan Singh
Cllr John Burden
Cllr Ron Bowman

Officers and Cabinet members from Gravesham Borough Council

+ 26 members of the public and organisations (35 attendees in total)

1. Apologies

Mr Leslie Christie, Cllr Wenban, Cllr Sales, Cllr Pritchard

2. Declarations of interest

None

3. Gravesham Corporate Plan

Introduction by Ben Turner

Table discussions and feedback

a) Environment

- Weekly refuse collections
- Reasonable job especially recycling centre
- Pleased with the weekly collection – one for recycling and one for black sacks

Community Safety

- Petition over 90% of residents for school signs
- Traffic calming Colyer Road
- More alcohol dispersal free zones!!
- School being refurbished; gate not safe as a child being hurt

Litter

- Lids not educated on the importance of trying to keep the neighbourhood clean
- How to dispose of it – PCSO to educate, work in partnership for the schools

Recycling – currently do not collect glass!

No dog bins to dispose of dog faeces

Penalty notices; 44 last year increase from last year, 38

Prioritising Air quality

- Fuel efficient vehicles?! Walking/cycling instead of driving

Cigarette ends

- Smoking within the town
- Alcohol bottles, litter
- Drinking in public places

Street cleaners

Carbon footprint

- Lorries using Colyer Road as a shortcut
- Encouraging public transport

No rubbish bins in St Andrew's Gardens – residents picking up the litter

People hanging out in Lord Street car park

- Skateboarders/cyclists not anti social
- Drinking

Alcohol free zones are not policed

- PCSOs do not have the same authority as the police
- Liaising with the correct people

Safety

- Council officers not out at the weekends/bank holidays/evenings
- Wardens not available to private residents

PACT meetings

- Supposed to be community led; no documented minutes; nothing to refer back to; no agenda

People putting their household waste in the bins on the streets

- Building debris /smells/tarmac
- Due to building flats
- Cul-de-sacs not dealt with – KCC functions

b) Communities

- Cultural strategy – do we have an issue?– not perceived to be an issue - focus is more on arts etc
- Sports – clubs promote themselves – no priority used to be on the council
- Sport – motivational which is good – not just for game sake but development of character
- Outdoor events/culture – don't do enough, feel we should do more
- We should have a local museum – very interesting
- Olympics – financially good for the borough but issues potentially in relation to admission accessing tickets – could the council help?
- People have to want to be healthy – has to be something they want to do – council should have encouraging role – not just finance to reward

them – should have cooking etc in schools – relationships with education

- Should engage with the public – difficult but need to work at it – important as they fund the council – essential
- Equalities – important to relate to all groups – education is a key element of this through schools but also outside of schools to older people. Better understanding of cultural differences
- Marketing/Trading Standards re advertising which influences young people
- Obesity – levels of activity have fallen over the years – computers vs outdoor activities
- Litter – is this an issue relating to different types of communities
- Difficult for council not to seem to be imposing – would be better for residents to actually do things with support from the council – more resident led activities for ownership
- Do have Chantry but it is small should put money into promoting history/heritage of the borough – not a waste of money
- Sports – health and safety is OTT and is killing activities
- Should be a dance hall in Gravesend – not much for older people to do – nothing for older people
- Council should be involved (with schools) to promote sports within the borough – use existing mechanisms (Your Borough) to promote this
- Leisure centres – not everyone can afford to go – should there be subsidies to promote healthier lifestyles – cheaper in long run
- Promoting healthy lifestyles – key issue to everything
- Communication of activities, groups and clubs throughout the authority
- Olympics – make the best of it – on commercial side – promote but don't have enough hotels to encourage the number. Promotion through the Olympics
- Utilise River Thames – passenger travel and should use/promote this move – heritage
- Forums – useful, give people opportunity to voice their opinions
- Festivals – continue with these types of outdoor events – funding by lots of other sources. BBQ expenditure a bit too much but fireworks really good. Maybe should charge entry fee if the council cannot afford to run
- Promotion – more widely

c) Housing

- Housing for those on low income and the elderly
- Believed private housing for elderly was only for disabled and those on benefits
- More housing for people as they get older (private house)
- Housing available in areas for elderly that are not as dodgy
- Bungalows rather than flats to be provided (build more bungalows)
- Think there is generally a lack of affordable properties
- Think homelessness is probably a problem but scared for safety in town at night – think there is a lack of transport to get there
- Intimidation by groups in Lord Street car park (during day)

- Immigrants taking housing – rubbish on the streets
- Working towards old person housing most important
- Working to bring empty properties back into use is important – it is a waste – should be doing something about this
- Affordable housing for young people, new developments should allocate to provide for first time buyers
- Some council housing is quite nice – Valley Drive, Westcourt
- Lack of awareness about homelessness
- Think it is difficult to get a council property
- Once homelessness measures in place were explained general consensus was that measures are very good
- Build more suitable accommodation – seems to be doing well
- Develop older persons housing strategy
- Flats not so bad if only a couple of storeys
- More affordable housing for young people – URGENTLY
- Sheltered housing for older people – need more
- Bidding process for sheltered housing takes too long – drawn out process, if it is speeded up get income and bigger houses available
- More bungalows/desirable properties to put in housing strategy
- Homelessness is a problem – sold lots of council houses so are no longer available – housing stock?
- Long housing waiting lists
- Convert car park to flats for homeless?

d) Young Gravesham

- Need to engage with children more to find out what they want
- Vox Box need to go out and talk to other youngsters to encourage involvement
- More smaller activities over wider area rather than one or two larger
- Lord Street – do we need another car park (temporary or not)? Could be site for youth activities (BMX site)
- Schools might assist with questionnaires to engage on what activities they want
- IT cafe in Civic Centre for young people
- Bowling club are looking for new members
- Music events
- Council to work with KCC to have an activity fayre showcasing what is available in the area
- Parents must be willing to change their ways to help children – education – essential to development of children
- How do you get the children to do the things they need to do – diversionary activities – skateboard parks
- More town centre activities are vital
- Need more discipline
- Harder to organise anything for children with so many rules and regulations

- Other organisations should be able to use facilities of schools as they belong to the community. Should be able to use their grounds as we need open spaces
- Make friends locally so less need to travel to meet and do activities
- Schools need to know more about what is going on in local area for young people to choose from
- More partnership working with KCC
- More places to hang out, coke bars, ice cream parlours, younger cafes
- Should continue with SNAP discos
- Not so many leaders to run clubs – possibly due to regulations
- Recognise they will choose their own activities – need good variety of options
- Engage more with young people

e) Business and Regeneration

Heritage Quarter

- Manage how we build in our town centres – carefully plan to protect green spaces
- SMARTS Av – Wrotham Road land

Leisure provision

- Ski slopes in regeneration area – alternative in ... and regen plan
- Hotels/accommodation for leisure facilities

New Bridge – Lower Thames Crossing – further east

Cliffe airport – no

- Concentration of shoppers to control – footfall is not trickling down to old High Street as previously – support for businesses and customer service
- Subsidy of rent for local shops – greater .../broader options for customers

f) Transformation

- Benchmarking to identify opportunities where others are doing things better/in another way and publicise those results
- Customer services – high quality
- Training of staff
- Communication key
- Skills of staff – ability to listen/open questions
- Ability to respond/answer the enquiry
- Get through can be a problem (one person)
- Meet and Greet/Reception area good, welcoming
- Police counter a good addition
- Cut out the baloney?
- Your Borough is a good read – balance of news and information
- Right skills for the right job in staff
- Too efficient at billing?
- Getting ahead of the game – parking restrictions in Kent Road an example
- Publicity and promotion of Gravesend
- Need to deliver what it says it is going to do

- Increase use of ability for fines to increase income – dog fouling, rubbish
- Use of offices out in the Borough for enforcement action – multi tasking
- Direct resources to key services on the street – sends message
- Customer Services – long recording – recording information not always dealing with the issue
- Customer Services need to be able to deal with the queries that they receive
- Money generating opportunities – crossovers from roads to public drives, parking enforcement target campaigns
- Customer Care/attitude of people answering calls/professionalism in dealing with call
- Deal with issues at first point of contact
- Copying facilities at front desk rather than taking documents away
- Recycling/black bags/dog bags – issued from Civic Centre

4. General question time

Need for shared services between councils to save money – e.g. in Surrey
Cllr Warburton explained how GBC are working with T&M BC

Councils required premium from developers – GBC tell them how much to pay. If public object does this affect the infrastructure payment?
Kevin Burbidge answered

Traffic calming in Colyer Road

Speeding vehicles - Calming promised over 18 months ago and promised white lines by 99 Colyer Road and slow signs. Nothing has happened.

New gates erected over the bank holiday weekend by contractor in School rebuilding project, Colyer Road. Young lad hurt himself on these and not in keeping with residential area.

Cllr Harold Craske to follow up and look at both these issues.

Concerned that KCC officer was given big payout

Cllr Harold Craske believes that contracts need looking at.

5. Ideas for future forum agenda items

- Traffic calming for Colyer Road
- Residential properties becoming business units and being a nuisance
- Ebbsfleet Rainbow centre – what is happening
- Tilbury ferry – future of
- Policing