

CENTRAL NORWICH CITIZENS' FORUM

Minutes of a meeting of the Forum held at City Hall, Norwich on Tuesday, 6th February 2007 commencing at 7pm.

MINUTES

APOLOGIES: Beryl Bottomley, Maran McKay, Ann Rostron.

IN ATTENDANCE: Pat Daniel, Jim Durrant, Paul Eastaugh, Julian Foster (in the Chair), Don Homfray, Hazel Harrison, John Mawer, Vanessa McGregor (Minute Taker), Barbara Searle, Sue Skipper.

INTRODUCTION: The Chairman, while welcoming members, said he intended to provide an up-date because much had happened since the last meeting that had been in December 2006. He reported that –

1. He had met and talked at length to the newly appointed Chief Constable, Ian McPherson who had replaced Carole Howlett and who was very enthusiastic about partnership policing.
2. Chief Inspector Gavin Tempest had been promoted to work on safety matter policies at Police Headquarters in Wymondham.
3. Kevin Clarke had replaced him as Chief Inspector responsible for safety and the Chairman had had discussions with him to help to devise a strategy for dealing with prostitutes and street sex workers in light of the occurrences in Ipswich in December that has highlighted the problems of displacing them to areas outside the urban centre.
4. Inspector Nick Cheshire had been appointed as Sector Inspector for the city centre.
5. The Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) had been reorganised and more are to be appointed as part of the Government's Respect Agenda. The Chairman had been introducing them to resident groups.
6. A new report by the Civic Trust had been published based on university research on how city centres had been affected by the Licensing Act 2003 and tried to forecast how they might change again in the future.
7. The City Council had published its Statement of Principles relating to the Gambling Act 2005 to which the Forum had contributed its views.
8. Superintendent Jim Smerdon had instituted discussions in which the Chairman had participated to institute a new Safer Taxis scheme and a Taxi Marshalling programme and these were likely to be publicised in March.
9. The proposals for the City Council's Budget for 2007/08 had been presented at a public meeting on 5th February at Blackfriars Hall which had been attended by a very few people.
10. The Network of Residents Associations in English Towns and Cities (NORA) had planned its AGM to take place in Birmingham in March and the Chairman intended to attend since he is an officer but, because the Forum had no funds to pay for his attendance, he would pay for it himself.

1. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Hazell Harrison asked why there had apparently been no consultation by the City Council prior to the decision being made to mount a sculpture on Hay Hill which

would displace some market stalls. **RESOLVED** to seek the advice of the City Council as to why there had been no consultation and the reason for the decision.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held at City Hall, Norwich on 5th December 2006 were taken as read. **RESOLVED** that they be taken as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Unitary Status for Norwich

The Chairman reported that two submissions had been made by the City Council, one based on the existing boundaries and the other based on expanded boundaries. He had not been able to submit advice about the view of the Forum because it had been equally balanced between being in favour, being opposed and wanting some alternative. That being the case he had used his casting vote, as is customary when there is no consensus, to maintain the status quo. His Report was **RECEIVED**.

3.2 A Website for the Forum

Paul Eastaugh reported that the website was up and running and could be found at www.cncf.co.uk. It would need occasional modification and alteration and he hoped it would, in time, become less formal and more interactive. Esther Harris asked if she might use it to seek views on matters to do with health care and the Chairman said that, in principle, it would be available for any contributions from other official bodies and it already had links to partnerships in which the Forum participated but personal contributions would have to be subject to editing because the Forum would be held responsible for anything published on its website which might run the risk of possible lawsuits. Paul Eastaugh was thanked for his work and skill in establishing the website and his report was **RECEIVED**.

3.3 A New Partnership

The Chairman reported that the new partnership with Charles Clarke MP had been established as had been agreed at the last meeting. Letters jointly signed by the Chairman and Charles Clarke had been sent to all residents in the city centre inviting them to a public meeting at Mercy on Friday, 23rd February and a survey form had been attached asking for residents views on a number of matters for return before or at the meeting. Esther Harris expressed her concern that the survey form asked recipients to express their party political preferences and the return address was that of the local Labour Party. The Chairman said he acknowledged her concerns but that there was no compulsion on anybody to answer questions they did not want to, nor any requiring anybody to participate. Additionally, there was also a question contained in the survey form asking recipients if they would like to join the Forum and the fact that it was possible to use the constituency Freepost facility was invaluable to establish a rapport with recipients because the Forum could not possibly afford the cost of postage in doing so otherwise. Sue Skipper also expressed her concern that she would not want the Forum to become too closely associated with a political party. Pat Daniel pointed out that the Forum's financial position was dire and that, without more funding, there would not be sufficient funds to survive beyond June 2007 and this was a means to reach a much wider audience than was conceivable otherwise. The Chairman said that the partnership arrangement provided a substantial link with the constitutionally elected member of parliament whose constituency coincided with that of the Forum and was not associated with the political party of the incumbent member and, to that end, he did not feel that the Forum's integrity would be tainted or compromised. His report was **RECEIVED**.

4. REPORTS

4.1 Norwich City Centre Licensing Forum

The minutes of the meetings held on 7th November and 5th December were **RECEIVED**. The Chairman reported that there was growing evidence that the licensees of fast food takeaways were now attending meetings as required by their licence conditions. The City Council had provided and installed new, improved litter bins in Prince of Wales Road and had provided free litter bags to licensees who were clearing the streets of litter outside their premises as a result He also reported that Luminar plc was continuing to support and provide financial help to the Forum through the work done by their staff at Lava/Ignite.

4.2 Norwich City Centre Area – Annual Environmental Audit 2006; The Norwich Society

The report from the Norwich Society was **RECEIVED**.

4.3 Press Cuttings

The press cuttings since November 2006 were **RECEIVED**.

4.4 City Centre Conservation Area

The Chairman reported that the City Council had invited the Forum to comment on the draft proposals and suggested the Planning Committee might respond. Jim Durrant said he had other commitments that would prevent him from convening a meeting. There being nobody else prepared to convene a meeting it was **AGREED** that the Forum was not able to respond.

5. LIAISON WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

5.1 With the City Council

There was none.

5.2 With the County Council

In the absence of Maran McKay the Chairman read a her report –

The major issue is the proposed budget and setting the Council Tax. Maran is Shadow Spokesperson for Labour on Adult Social Services. This year's budget faces an overspend of over £4.5m which has been pulled back to a year-end overspend of £950,000 thus increasing charges for the bathing service and carers' grant. At Council meeting on 22nd January the Labour Group committed itself to protect front-line services and would restore the carers grant money because they valued cares so much. They would also not carry forward the deficit of £950,000 so Adult Social Services would start with a clean sheet. They would also not increase the meals-on-wheels service to 27% but would hold it to inflation. They would also advocate a Base Budget because the Service has lost £3m in the last 3 years.

At Cabinet on 29th January a proposed 4.75% rise which would produce, the highest in the country. This will be debated at Council on 19th February. The Conservative administration has agreed not to carry forward the deficit of almost £1m in the Adult Social Service budget but to meet it from under-spends on other services. The 27% increase in meals-on-wheels service remains which causes concern for voluntary organisations that deliver this service who fear deprivation of vulnerable people because of cost. The Report was **RECEIVED**.

6 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting would be held at City Hall on Tuesday, 6th March 2007 commencing at 7pm.

