

Minutes of Semilong Community Forum meeting April 11th 2007

Present: Alistair Melton, Daphne Barritt, Andy Langton, Brian Crutchley, Rob Chadwick, Steven Welyczko, Zoë Martin, Pam Thompson, Mr Thompson, Sgt. Paul Valentine, Sgt Matt Philips, MP Brian Binley

Apologies: Jen Kenny, Steven Richards, Peter Slack, Karen Fruish, Elizabeth French

Abbreviations Used:

SCF - Semilong Community Forum

NBC – Northampton Borough Council

NCC – Northamptonshire County Council

AGYCC – Alliston Gardens Youth and Community Centre

MUGA-Multi use games area (at the bottom of Semilong Road)

WDNC-West Northamptonshire Development Corporation

PCSO- Police community support officer

SCT – Safer Communities Team

ASBO – Anti Social Behaviour Order

The meeting opened at 7.33pm and was chaired by Zoë Martin

Minutes of the last meeting were not available, therefore:

1. Matters Arising from the last meeting 14/3/2007

No matters arising

2. Further actions outstanding from previous minutes

There were none to report

Crime

Sgt. Paul Valentine reported that crime was 39% down in the past 6 months, since the SCT had been established. This figure would have been 45% but the police had performed a number of sting operations that had resulted in charges being made against known drug dealers and this had pushed the crime figures up. However, Paul added that Castle Ward still had a very low figure compared to Northampton as a whole.

Operation Uncanny, which has been targeting the vice trade in the Quorn Way area would be increasing its operation from its existing maximum of 5 nights a week to 6 nights a week.

There have been a few disturbances recorded around the MUGA on Semilong Road after 12 midnight which will be monitored closely to ensure the issues that arose in 2006 are not repeated in 2007.

Last week was the first JAG (Joint Action Group) meeting of residents from Castle ward and the SCT that covers it. The next meeting will be held on 18th April and Paul hoped that someone from Semilong would be able to attend.

Mrs Thompson said that a number of youths had been congregating at the back of Alliston Gardens flats; this was caused by the group that met on a Wednesday night at AGYCC. Paul Valentine offered to ensure this matter is investigated, firstly by discussing the issue with Stephen Richards at AGYCC.

Brian Binley congratulated Paul Valentine and the SCT for the good work that they had done in the past 7 months and reiterated how important it is that the police had a presence in the community.

Rob reported that he had seen sex workers working outside the area of the Grafton Street Industrial Estate and beyond the official 'opening hours'. Paul said that any sex worker found doing this would almost certainly be given an ASBO, but the Police needed to be told as soon as possible. The number to call is 08453 700 700, then ask for Sgt. Paul Valentine.

Alastair was concerned about the sustainability of the policing of the vice area and how will this continue when the funding ran out. Paul was only able to say that he had committed to working in the Castle Ward for a minimum of two years and would continue to tackle this problem while he was in his current post. Paul added that an operation to tackle curb crawlers is now being increased to at least four and to a maximum of six nights per week. Brian

Binley asked about when this approach will be rolled out across other neighbourhoods in Northamptonshire. Paul explained that the SCT in Castle ward was the first in the county and that this policing approach is now being rolled out across the county.

Action

Paul Valentine to ensure Mrs Thompson's concern is investigated, firstly by discussing the issue with Stephen Richards at AGYCC

Social Housing

Zoe reported on her progress with finding out from council officers what was meant by "Affordable Housing" (AH). Zoe was able to report that AH made up 35% of new developments of a significant size. AH was usually made up of shared ownership or low rentable properties, usually reserved for key workers. She mentioned that it is not clear as to how NBC judges the matter compared with WNDC. The meeting agreed that it was unsure how "Affordable Housing" was considered between neighbourhoods e.g. what affordable in Abington means compared with that in Semilong.

This matter remains unresolved and Zoe confirmed her desire to establish clarity from NBC and WNDC as to how this issue can be clarified for all and how it impacts upon Semilong.

Rob asked the meeting if it was worth asking the housing officers that cover properties in Semilong if they would still like to attend. Zoe agreed to check this along with continuing to pursue the "Affordable Housing" issue.

Actions

1. Zoe to establish if an NBC housing officer will still be attending meetings and if so, who this will be.
2. Zoe to continue to establish what constitutes "Affordable Housing", from NBC and WNDC and how it relates specifically to this neighbourhood in comparison with others.

Neighbourhood Warden - Andy Langton

Andy had been spending a couple of weeks in another area of the town but he had delivered a number of Section 46 letters around the Castle area warning of a £75 fine to those people who leave bin bags out in the street too soon before collection. If these fines are not paid within 14 days NBC, can take those responsible to court and this could incur charges of up to £2,000.

Andy reminded us to report any fly-tipping by phoning 01604 838281, each case reported will be given a reference number which is useful to keep in case you need to call the council again.

Rob asked about the Section 47 letters (items on private land – e.g. front gardens), that Andy mentioned in the March SCF meeting. Rob asked if Andy knew if they are still being considered by NBC but without a confirmed date for implementation of enforcement activity. Andy confirmed that he had been given no new news as to when his powers will be enhanced. Rob referred specifically to the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 which received Royal Assent on 7 April 2005 and that he had been given assurances by a still present NBC senior manager, that their cabinet would be agreeing their approach to enforcing this legislation in March 2006. Rob voiced his frustration that he considers that residents of other towns in the UK are now benefiting from this legislation yet Semilong (which is still blighted particularly by detritus left in front gardens) seems to be suffering from a lack of action from a slow moving council. In closing, Rob highlighted the sympathy he feels for Andy who is so often powerless at the 'sharp end' and yet has to be apologetic to residents because NBC takes ages to agree powers that are available for him. Brian Binley offered to contact NBC to establish a timetable for when the powers under the above mentioned act will be made available to their staff and when those staff will begin enforcement of those powers.

Actions

Rob to email Brian Binley in order for him to contact NBC to establish a timetable for when the full powers under the 'Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005' will be made available to their staff and when those staff will begin enforcement of those powers.

Alliston Gardens Youth and Community Centre

Steven was not present but Brian Crutchley, as a committee member of AGYCC, mentioned that the community centre was still trying to establish terms for its lease yet NBC managers seemed to be unresponsive to correspondence. Brian explained that AGYCC has been wanting to apply for charitable status for months now and needs NBC managers to start providing a customer service in order for the terms of lease to be resolved which will then enable an application for 'Charitable Status' to begin. Brian Binley offered to take this matter up with NBC.

Actions

Brian Binley would take up the lease issue with NBC regarding AGYCC and report back to Stephen Richards at AGYCC.

Events

Zoe said that Lucy Liesowic from 'Base' is looking to run a 1 hour / month sexual health session at Jimmey Patel's shop on Barrack Road for young people.

Spring Boroughs are holding a multi cultural event on the 21st April from 11 – 3 around the Spring Boroughs area. Zoe said that we should think about organising our own Community Festival this year and hoped that by attending the Spring Boroughs event, we would be able to learn what works well and what doesn't. Zoe suggested some possible dates and the 8th September was agreed upon.

Actions

Brian and Zoe will attend the Spring Boroughs event.

Treasurers update

Steven said that the balance is currently £508.36

Zoe said that she had managed to log into the bank account online.

Brian said that he had a receipt for about £62 for the website hosting – he would bring the receipt to the next meeting.

Actions

Brian to bring website hosting receipt to next meeting.

Environment Green

Brian read a letter that had been printed in the Chronicle and Echo commending the improvements made to Victoria Park and Millers Meadow.

Zoe said that she had an update from Steve Summers, from Friends of Northampton Racecourse, an artist had been appointed to draft some designs for the trim trail and SCF volunteers had already been identified to work with the artist.

Zoe had an update on the improvement to Millers Meadow. The reasons why some of the trees had been removed was due to them deemed to be dangerous or to pose a future danger to the public. There are plans to do some replacement plantings of trees later in the year.

Other improvements may include dredging of the river to increase the river flow.

Zoe commented that she felt the amphitheatre that had been constructed added value to the park.

Actions

No actions this month

Environment Urban

Rob asked what people generally felt about the cleanliness of the streets. The meeting agreed that cleanliness is still better than 12 months ago.

Brian Crutchley said that there had been an amount of litter over the Easter weekend due to the street cleaners not

working on the bank holidays.

Pam Thompson asked about the closure of the Duke of Edinburgh, no one was really sure but there was a rumour that the doctors surgery would be looking to use the space.

Brian informed the meeting that there were plans for a couple of road junctions in the town that he had details of and the closing date for comments was the 20th April. The details would be on the NCC website in the next couple of days.

Actions

No actions this month

Communication

Brian has produced some posters promoting the local elections on May 3rd. which encourage people to vote. They will be available to download from the Semilong website soon.

Actions *no actions this month*

AOB

Zoe said that she would like to thank Lee Barron, who will not be standing for election this year in the local elections, for his good work and support of the local area.

Zoe had also been invited to attend a Neighbourhood Renewal seminar organised by the University of Northampton but was unable to attend and the first meeting was being held during the day. She asked if anyone was able to attend in her place. Pam Thompson said she would consider attending.

At the next meeting there will be a representative from 'Neighbourhood Watch' in attendance.

The meeting was closed at 9.03pm

Actions

Pam Thompson to attend the university 'Neighbourhood Renewal' seminar

Zoe to send thank you letter to Lee Barron

The next meeting is on 9th May 2007 at the BBOB Rugby Club on St. Andrews Road at 7.30 – 9.30pm

Minutes Agreed (signed)

Chair Date

Secretary Date