

# Parklands Residents' Association

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parklands Residents' Association held in the Parklands Community Centre on Tuesday 20 September 2005 at 7.00 pm.

## Present

Ken Dowsett (Chair)	Richard Harrison
Brian Canavan	Maxine Little (Minutes)
Jill Confue	Barbara Muddiman
Vic Confue	John Muddiman
Brian Cooper	Rhett Norris
Wendy Cooper	Liz Percival
John Croft	Jill Sanderson
Christine Evans	Jill Winstanley
Simon Hegarty	Cllr Brandon Eldred

## Apologies

Marion Baker	Ann Livingston
Mike Hallam	John Livingston
Beverley Harrison	Peggy Wayman
Barbara Lee	

## ACTION

### 1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed staff from the Countywide Traveller Unit to the meeting.

### 2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 May 2005

The minutes of the last meeting, having previously been circulated, were agreed as read.

### 3. Matters Arising

#### 3.1 20 MPH Zone

Brandon Eldred confirmed that further speed safety tests had been carried out in September as planned, he was still waiting for the results to be reported and he would share these at the next meeting.

**BE**

Brandon advised that he had submitted a request for a zebra crossing to be sited closer to Parklands Primary school, where it was most needed.

Concern was expressed by the meeting that cars travelling to and from the old Middle School site were speeding (this included teachers as well as parents). A letter had previously been sent to the Headteacher, Penny Westwood, however she had not responded. Cllr Eldred therefore agreed that he would write to her in his capacity as County Councillor.

**BE**

### **3.2. Tescos**

It was reported that TOPPS officers had visited the area at Coppice Drive shops to ticket cars over a three week period from 11/09/05 to 01/10/05 and would be sharing their figures with Cllr Eldred, again this information would be passed on to Residents.

**BE**

There had still been problems with workers parking cars all day outside the shops. Brandon had spoken to residents of Coppice Drive, who had indicated that they were happy for hospice staff and site workers to park their vehicles outside their bungalows thus discouraging other cars from turning in their driveways. He reported that he had communicated this information to the Site Manager and Cynthia Spencer Hospice.

Brandon Eldred explained that there was a new manager at Tesco and many of the improvements that had previously been secured, had now slipped. He would however continue to talk to Tesco management and hoped that this situation could be reverted.

### **9.3 Skateboard Park**

Following the recent vandalism to the play area – plans for a skateboard park were now on hold. Ideas to involve local young people in residents' meetings were still being explored.

Jill Confue described a Youth Café scheme in Corby run by qualified youth workers not volunteers and Cllr Eldred stated that he would discuss this with Cllr Kane (County Councillor for Corby) to find out more.

**BE**

### **9.4 Youth and Policing**

Brandon Eldred stated that he had invited Cllr Dickie, Chair of the Police Authority to the meeting, unfortunately she was at a Conference and therefore unable to attend. However, a request had been made for someone to attend in her place and this had not happened. Cllr Eldred would discuss this with the Deputy Chair and try to secure attendance at the November meeting.

**BE**

A Neighbourhood Warden had now been appointed and would be starting duties during the second week in October. They would attend Residents' Meetings. It was confirmed that Parklands had no Beat Officer. This would be discussed with a representative from the Police Authority at the next meeting.

**KD**

Issues of vandalism in Woodcote Avenue were reported, further details would be passed to the Chairman to be raised with the Police Authority representative at the next meeting.

**KD**

### **9.7 Entertainment Licence**

Brian and Wendy Cooper and Ken Dowsett had attended the licensing meeting for University College Northampton (UCN). They reported that UCN had been granted the entertainment licence for the Pavillion on the Park Campus. However it was to be noted that a condition was imposed that all windows and doors were to be kept closed whilst any function was taking place. Residents were therefore advised to monitor the situation and any breach of their licence conditions should be reported.

**ALL**

Spinney Hill Pub had applied for an extension to their hours. The licensing meeting for this application was due to take place at The Guildhall on 24 November 2005, it was explained that anyone who wanted to appeal could do so in person on that date.

#### **4. Chairman's Report**

The Chairman had nothing additional to report.

#### **5. Secretary's Report**

The Secretary reported that the Association had been awarded a grant from the Borough Council of £250.00, this was for the 2005/06 year and was conditional on agreeing targets. Wendy Cooper would try to make contact with Lesley Russell of the Borough Council to discuss this.

WC

#### **6. Treasurers' Report**

The Treasurers advised that an account had now been opened for Parklands Residents' Association.

#### **7. Countywide Traveller Unit**

Brandon Eldred sits on the Consortium Board for the Countywide Traveller unit (CTU) and had invited Steve Wilkinson, Heather Young and Inspector Mark McDonnell of the CTU to address the meeting about Traveller issues.

Firstly they explained the background to the CTU, that it was a consortium made up of all local authorities (except East Northamptonshire); the Police Authority; Northants Primary Care Trust and the Chamber of Commerce, with Northamptonshire being the primary partner. They dealt with all traveller issues including fixed traveller sites.

From the initial report of an encampment the Unit would record the details – number of vehicles etc. Mark or Heather would then visit within one working day to record further details such as registration details (which would be used in any court orders), all such details being kept on file.

It was heard that there were five or six traveller families in Northampton, generally new groups would take longer to evict (10 -13 days rather than the 8 – 10 days for a known group). This was the standard time assuming that they are no health or welfare issues. It was noted that the health and welfare of travellers was of equal importance to the rights of the settled community. This was always taken into consideration when making any decisions or applying for court orders, the Court would always ask whether welfare checks had been carried out.

They then explained the various powers available for them to evict travellers from an unauthorised site;

#### **Section 77 & 78 (Criminal Justice Public Order Act)**

Most of the time local authority powers under section 77-78 of the Criminal Justice Public Order Act were used. Steve Wilkinson then outlined why the process takes a minimum of 8 days;

1. Assessment of group
2. Papers to legal department
3. Serve section 77 direction (usually giving 24 hours to leave) generally served by the CTU Liaison Officer
4. After 24 hours issue a summons under section 78
5. After further 24 hours – appearance in court
6. After further 24 hours eviction can take place.

Once the travellers were evicted, the court order did not prohibit them from returning. If they did return then the complete process had to be gone through again to remove the travellers from the site.

The meeting asked about the costs of this court action and it was explained that when using section 77 and 78 there were no court costs.

### **Section 66 (Criminal Justice Public Order Act)**

Inspector Mark McDonnell then explained the powers that could be used by the police;

Under section 66 of the Criminal Justice Public Order Act the police were given discretionary powers however certain criteria had to be met;

1. That the travellers were not on Highway land
2. Police had to be able to prove trespass
3. There must be 6 or more vehicles  
or  
damage to the land  
or  
threats to landowner or their agent.

The Inspector then explained how these criteria meant that use of the section 66 powers were extremely limited. Proving trespass was often time consuming, since it was often difficult to trace the owner of the land. 50% of unauthorised encampments in Northampton were on Highway land, so immediately the police powers were useless and they were dependent on Section 77 local authority powers (described previously by Steve).

The major advantages of section 66 where it could be used, was the powers of arrest if travellers refused to leave or if they returned to the land within 6 months. However since April 1990, section 66 powers had been used on just 20 occasions in Northampton.

### **Section 62 (Criminal Justice Public Order Act)**

Six months ago, new powers were introduced. Under section 62, powers similar to section 66 had been introduced to include Highway land. However, when using these powers the local authority must have an authorised site available where the travellers can be moved onto with the right to stay for a minimum of 3 months. There were currently no suitable sites in Northamptonshire and hence these powers were at the present time useless to the CTU.

It was explained that in the Northampton Borough Council area, 60% of the illegal encampments have been from just 5 families and that the average encampment in Northampton is just 5.7 days.

Inspector McDonnell told the meeting that in addition he also checked vehicles regularly to ensure that they were legal, and that although he had powers to cease unlawful vehicles, that most were now legal. Additionally the CTU also worked in conjunction with Trading Standards ensuring that any businesses were properly registered eg as waste carriers etc.

Concerns were expressed about the rubbish left behind by travellers after they had moved on and why they could not be fined for this. It was explained that the difficulty was in catching the actual offender. The meeting discussed the use of CCTV. It was explained that there are strict rules about surveillance, although it was conceded that if travellers parked up where existing CCTV was in place, then this footage may be used in evidence.

Much mention had been made about welfare checks and several questions were raised about this. It was clarified that checks were made by a Health Visitor who would visit the travellers to assess their health and welfare. It was explained that although someone could be deemed too ill to move, this would not prevent the other vehicles from being moved on. In practice what would usually happen is the caravan that the ill person was in and the van of one carer would be allowed to remain at the site, but only until they were well enough to move.

Residents asked about the taking of water from hydrants, the CTU explained that this was an issue for Anglian Water.

The meeting questioned why vehicles were not impounded when the authority had the power to action this if travellers did not move on after a court order for eviction had been secured. It was explained that this was due to the cost of towing vehicles and storage.

Residents were annoyed that travellers did not pay council tax and staff from the CTU explained that there was no liability for council tax if they were not in a permanent residence. Travellers on fixed sites however were liable for council tax.

On behalf of the meeting, the Chair thanked the staff of the CTU for giving up their evening to attend the meeting.

## **8. Any Other Business**

### **8.1 Requests to NCC – Highways and Transportation**

In July Brandon Eldred had met with Cllr Bob Seery (County Council Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation) and put forward the Resident's Association recommendations for road improvements;

- 1) Changes at Coppice Drive Shops – as per plans discussed at the meeting on 10 May 2005.
- 2) Devon Way – weekend parking restrictions
- 3) Coppice Drive corner – repairs to kerbs and verges, installing posts.
- 4) Girls School buses
- 5) Devon Way - Telephone Box

Cllr Seery had committed to submit a proposal to include these in the County Council plan for next year and 2007/08.

## **8.2 Devon Way**

Brandon Eldred informed residents of Devon Way that the new football manager, Paul, had made arrangements for players to park on Nationwide car park. If any cars were continuing to park in Devon Way then this should be reported to Paul and he would ensure that they move.

## **8.3 Banks at Old Middle School Site**

Liz Percival reported that the banks between the school playing fields and the houses had now been strimmed, however they had not cut the area near to the fences. This meant that weeds, overhanging bushes and rubbish were all causing a nuisance to residents bordering the school grounds. Cllr Eldred agreed to take this matter up with the school, who are responsible for the grounds maintenance of that area.

**BE**

## **8.4 Trees**

Ongoing issues with the trees in Druids were reported. Then Jill Confue highlighted a problem with growth at the base of a tree at the junction of Woodcote Avenue and Oulton Rise, that was hazardous, since it was obscuring the view of motorists. Cllr Eldred would report this to the Council.

**BE**

## **8.5 Changing Room Toilets**

Concern was raised that although there were toilets in the changing rooms at Devon Way, they were not being unlocked for use. Wendy Cooper confirmed that this was no longer the case, the toilets were always opened, and it was therefore suggested that people were not aware of the toilets. It was agreed that signage was required, this would be requested from the Council.

**BE**

## **8.6 Telephone Mast**

Brandon Eldred informed the meeting that an application for a further telephone mast had been submitted. He had distributed a letter to residents nearby that they could sign and return if they wished to raise an objection. John Croft, thanked Brandon for his effort with this, stating that it made it much easier for people to raise their objections, and asked him to keep Residents informed of progress.

## **8.7 Bins – Bradlaugh Fields**

A request was made for additional dog bins to be sited at Bradlaugh Fields. It was also noted that litter bins at Bradlaugh fields were not being emptied.

**BE**

## **8.8 Visit to Police Communications Centre**

An invitation had been received for representatives of the Residents' Association to visit the Police Communications Centre on 11, 12, 13 or 14 October at 6.30 or 7.00 pm. Anyone interested should contact Brian Cooper after the meeting

## **9. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 15 November at 7.00 pm at the Parklands Community Centre.

## **Distribution List**

**All Attendees**

**All Officers and Committee Members**

**Mike Hallam**

**Beverley Harrison**

**PC Andy Young**

**Parklands Nursery School**

**Parklands Primary School**

**Northampton School for Girls**

**Northampton Borough Council**

**Shops on Oulton Rise and Coppice Drive**

**Copy to be displayed at The Barn**

**Copy to be displayed at Community Centre**

## **Distributed via e-mail**

Brian Canavan

Brian and Wendy Cooper

Ken Dowsett

Simon Hegarty

Mike Hallam

Beverley and Richard Harrison

Maxine Little

Rhett Norris

Sylvia Shepherd

Anita Smith

Michael Willis

Cllr Brandon Eldred

Northampton Borough Council

Sally Gedney

Penny Westwood

Andy Young