

Minutes to the meeting of  
Lowton East Neighbourhood Development Forum (LENDF)  
held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2011, at Lowton Labour Club as per agenda.  
<http://www.lendf.co.uk>

- Chairman - Ed Thwaite (ET), Secretary - Jan Johnston (JJ)
- Welcome to members, visitors and guests
- Also present: PCSO Anthony Coyne (AC)  
                  Cllr James Cowley (JC)  
                  Cllr Pam Gilligan (PG)
- *Apologies received from Cllr James Grundy (JG)*
- *Apologies received from Inspector Kennedy, Great Manchester Police*

No. of Attendees = 24

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1. Minutes from last meeting - not read at meeting but copies had been sent out by email and paper copies were available.
  2. PCSO Anthony Coyne reported to the group on the following issues:
    - A resident on Church Lane had recently had some roof repair work done by a company who are running an advert in the Leigh Reporter (3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> November)...



The work turned out to be very unsatisfactory and the roof is now leaking. The resident has not been able to recontact the company and has reported the matter to the Police. The Police have also been unable to contact the company via the two telephone numbers displayed in the advert. The matter has been raised with Leigh Reporter to ascertain who placed the advert so that they can be reported to the appropriate Ombudsman Service.

- AC reported on recent burglaries in the area:
  - Ranworth Drive - 4 males from Merseyside arrested
  - Heath Lane - (occurred midday) - still investigating
  - Byrons Lane - (occurred midmorning) - still investigating.
- AC also reported on the covert police operation 'Goshawk' which had been running throughout the borough with the main aim being vehicle thefts. It had been such a success that a second operation is now in place.

A resident queried the crime figures on <http://www.police.uk/> which showed 102 crimes in Lowton and Golborne during September. The data does not reveal which day of the week these have occurred. AC was asked to find out what percentage happened at weekends AC confirmed he would do his best to find the information and report back to LENDF.

*At this point AC left the meeting to attend to his police duties.*

3. Cllr Pam Gillian - Reported to the meeting that 25 residents have submitted complaints to her about Lowton Civic Hall. She was not able, at this point, to give any details but is taking action by having a meeting with the owners 8<sup>th</sup> Wonder on the day after this meeting (15<sup>th</sup> November). She had previously met with 8<sup>th</sup> Wonder when they first became the owners and had asked them to put into writing their intentions for the Civic Hall. She will be questioning them about these 'intentions' in light of the residents' complaints.

ET recapped on LENDF's previous communication and meetings with 8<sup>th</sup> Wonder and also on the FOI request put to the Council. The Council have informed LENDF that the 'deal is not yet complete' though they did not say why. ET also wrote to 8<sup>th</sup> Wonder who confirmed that their plans, as described originally, still stand.

Due to the uneasiness of the situation ET put to the meeting that an investigation needs to be done into the status of the playing fields as it is labelled as 'Sports England' on Wigan Council assets website. As LENDF has previous experience with the Village Green Application, we may have to go through a similar process to protect the hall and fields. 'Save the Civic Hall' !! As information from Wigan Council is still awaited nothing can be started just yet and it may be that an invite to attend a LENDF meeting is sent to 8<sup>th</sup> Wonder to discuss the issue. In the meantime LENDF will check the 'sale protocols' for Local Authorities when disposing of assets.

A resident did report that 8<sup>th</sup> Wonder were still 'talking' to local football clubs.

PG and JC needed to leave the meeting in order to attend another, but PG first wanted to point out that the 18 Community Cadets at Compassion in Action had been involved with the police and their 'Goshawk' operation, together with other community tasks including awareness sessions on various topics, and information leaflet drops. There are a number of future 'lessons' planned for the Cadets and she wanted to say thank you to them for their volunteering work. ET confessed that he had recently been 'approached' by two police officers and three cadets when he momentarily left his van doors open !!

4. Errors on previous minutes - Malcolm Jones wanted to point out that he was not Chairman of OMRA.

Also PG wanted to correct the statement regarding repairs requested by Oaklands Residents Group as having been done. PG and Andrea Toole had surveyed the work needed and it was on a '28 day ticket' - that period of time has now lapsed but the work is still not complete.

*PG and JC left the meeting at this point.*

5. LENDF's Bank Balance - a copy of the bank statement was available to the meeting which showed LENDF's financial activities.
6. Lowton and Golborne Township Forum - The issue of winter flowerboxes was discussed and a majority of our 6 Cllrs needed to say yes to their reinstatement. Cllrs PG, JC and JG had already stated they would vote yes. Cllrs Klieve and Keen from Golborne voted no and Cllr Bretherton from Golborne stated he would go with the majority. The budget for the boxes was reduced from £4k to £3k meaning we would get fewer boxes and we cannot understand why Cllrs took this decision (a member from the Lane Head Group thought that this was because a better price had been negotiated). ET said this was not the case and we are getting fewer boxes. This was confirmed by Damien Jenkins who deals with the boxes for the council

Wigan Council has confirmed that the winter boxes will be reinstated.

ET stated that all this was due to the pressure applied by LENDF and its members. Ed Hulton applauded LENDF's hard work.

Remaining budget monies for L&G, after deduction for winter boxes, was indicated as £13,000. We applied under F of Info for the accounts and on first inspection these indicated a balance of £21,500. After questioning the difference an extra amount of spending, i.e. lighting on Rowan Ave, was presented. However an error had been made. So together with other monies the total balance between Lowton and Golborne after winter boxes is £14,837

and this is labelled as 'Environment'. Local Councillors allocate this money in response to requests for help with projects by members of the community. There is an annual budget (formally £20k) which has been cut back to £15k and any remaining monies from the previous year are carried forward.

There is a concern that there is no 'community involvement' at present with regard to the management of this money. JJ has spoken with Andrew Sharrock to bring this to his attention because now that the Forums have ceased only Councillors can make decisions. During any one year there are only 2 meetings at which residents requests are considered.

ET suggested that LENDF could be a voice for the community as there are no longer any Township Forums. Currently there is a new Act going through parliament which will enable communities to have more say. LENDF was originally formed to look after Lowton East Ward and will continue to do so. New laws going through parliament will require builders to attend a LENDF meeting so that residents can have their say before an application is submitted. LENDF invites all residents of Lowton East to get involved.

LENDF's AGM is in January, at which voting will take place for 'Chairman', etc. Ed Hulton stated that the position of the LENDF committee must continue to be non-political. This was agreed.

7. Local Development Framework (LDF) - On Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November LENDF and some residents attended the Examination in Public exploratory meeting held at Wigan Council. This EIP was held by a Planning Inspector whose role is to examine the 10 year plan (Core Strategy) put forward by Wigan.  
<http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/Planning/Policies/DevelopmentFramework/CoreStrategyExamination.htm>

Please also click on **Planning Inspector's note of concerns regarding soundness of the Core Strategy**  (47KB) and read the Inspector's initial comments.

A further Inspector's meeting is planned for 13<sup>th</sup> December when the Council will submit responses to the Inspector's initial queries, and then in January there will be an opportunity for our objections to be submitted.

For those who didn't get an invite to the EIP you can contact Rachael Huxtable on 01942 487321. She is the co-ordinator of all paperwork in relation to these meetings.

It was noted that the Inspector questioned the Council thoroughly on the 'allocations' of land. They showed particular vagueness with regard to East Lancs Rd corridor as to what, if any, pockets of land would be used.

The Inspector stated that he would like to interview a selection of objectors.

A number of facts did emerge:

- 88% of the proposed development is in the southern half of the borough.
- Lowton is apparently an 'aspirational community'.
- Development money gained by Wigan will be spent in Hindley.
- Development will not commence for 5 years.
- The Council may not use all of the allocated sites, though all sites will remain as allocated in case of issues arising at chosen sites.
- Pocket Nook is the largest site.
- High value residential properties preferred by the Council.

ET would like LENDF to work through some of residents' views in order to 'make a presentation' to the Council in January. It was agreed that a sub-committee would be formed to put together the presentation on behalf of Lowton East residents. 8 members volunteered to be part of the sub-committee and will meet on 24<sup>th</sup> November at ET's house.

The Inspector had noted that builders could push the Council to release sites and that they have 3 options:

- 1) Redo the whole plan
- 2) Come back within a week with new information on his concerns
- 3) Have a 3 month delay

The Council indicated that they would prefer option 2.

Members of the general public who objected are allowed to attend the EIP in January though space will be limited.

One resident pointed out to the LENDF meeting that the recent Transport for Leigh's rail link proposals showed the railway line running through the same area as the Council's allocated land for housing !!

8. Lowton Alive - Five LENDF members volunteered to be on the Steering Group to organise the event. The day was a success and as is good practice an evaluation and feedback report was produced and submitted for discussion at a future meeting. The copy report was submitted to Pam Gillian (Chief Executive of Compassion in Action) and to Rev Stalker of St Mary's, to highlight the things which did work and those that didn't. It is hoped that by recording all the events it would prove useful in future years and that the wheel is not reinvented each time.

It had been agreed to have a meeting to discuss the findings in the report but as yet this meeting has not taken place and a proposed date is still awaited from Pam Gillian.

Part of this report requested new Terms and Conditions for next year's Lowton Alive event, so that equal responsibility and activities are shared amongst all the volunteer groups taking part and giving their time and expertise for the good of the community.

Some suggestions for example was for an elected committee or Steering Group to have more control, appointment of a Treasurer to monitor spending, pre-event meeting with volunteers to clarify roles on the day, etc. All meetings to be minuted and all documentation backed up by email and computer recording.

LENDF has had thoughts of putting on a Community Day of its own.

9. Travellers' Site at Bulls Head - The application has been rejected by St Helens Council. The applicant has 6 months to appeal. .
10. Proposed Rail Station, Pennington - Stan Walker reported that the latest consultation was complete and that a report is due out. The feedback is positive and following a review of the report by Transport for Greater Manchester a further consultation will take place before a final decision in 2012.

Part of the Pocket Nook land already has a track bed from the previous rail line and using this will keep the cost down. SW will investigate if there is a conflict of land use in relation to the Core Strategy.

LENDF's website has links to Transport for Leigh's website.

11. Participatorybudgeting.org.uk  
<http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/>  
Item to be carried forward to next meeting.
12. Boundary Changes  
Item to be carried forward to next meeting.
13. Any Other Business

JJ reported on the activities of Lowton Bridges:

- Concert held at Civic Hall on 11<sup>th</sup> October. JJ thanked those who volunteered their time to help. All who attended (young and old) thoroughly enjoyed the event.

- 'Life Books' Lowton High School - Alex Hughes attended and brought with him 'ancient' items like a morse-code machine . The kids loved it. Alex gave a talk on Lowton and its history. This is something he regularly does and LENDF proposed to invite him to speak to our members at a future meeting.
- 24<sup>th</sup> November - 'Make do and Mend' event at Lowton High School, and Lotions and Potions by Wigan History.
- 14<sup>th</sup> December - 'Carol Concert' for the kids and elderly. If you wish to volunteer your help please contact JJ.

Wigan Heritage DVD still available. 88 mins of quality footage and pictures of Astley Pit, Step Houses in Lowton (showing 5 steps !), Chowbent Chapel, any many more local sites. Alex Hughes also appears on the DVD. Cost £10 but can be obtained through JJ for £6.

It was reported to the meeting that at the Londis Post Office the large postage scales were incorrect. This was reported to the Weights and Measures Dept at Wigan Council who has informed the staff and matters are underway to correct this problem.

Comment was made with regard to the Welcome to Leigh sign which now has 'Home of Leigh Centurions' underneath.



Where is a 'Welcome to Lowton' sign and why do our Councillors spend money on Leigh? The Leigh Centurions sign was paid for out of Brighter Borough money by Cllrs Gilligan and Cowley.

Should you find any omissions or discrepancies in these minutes, please let me know as soon as possible and I will do my best to rectify any errors.

Many thanks to Irene Thomson who took the minutes at this meeting and typed them up for emailing out to all members and the website.

Jan Johnston  
Secretary  
LENDF