

Minutes to the Meeting of
Lowton East Neighbourhood Development Forum (LENDF)
held on Monday 12th March 2012, at Lowton Labour Club as per agenda.
<http://www.lendf.co.uk>

- Chairman – Ed Thwaite (ET), Secretary – Irene Thomson (IT)
- Welcome to members, visitors and guests
- Also present:
 - Cllr James Grundy (JG)
 - Bob Craddock (BC), Chairman of East Leigh JFC
 - Lynn Kay (LK), Wigan Council's Local Development Manager for Lowton, Golborne and Leigh
- *Apologies received from Scott Lancaster, Groundwork*

No. of Attendees = 39

1. **Minutes from last meeting** – not read at meeting but copies had been sent out by email and paper copies were available.

Some members do not have computers and paper copies are delivered to those individuals. In the case of a meeting date change, or police alerts, it would be useful to have mobile numbers so that 'text messaging' can be used. Please contact ET.

2. **Bank Balance**

LENDF current balance details on view at the meeting for those present.

3. **Bob Craddock, Chairman of East Leigh JFC**

Bob Craddock informed the meeting that East Leigh JFC are looking to lease the playing fields associated with Lowton Civic Hall (Rose Centre).

BC gave an outline of the structure of the club and its teams. The Club was established 25 years ago and uses different locations in order to provide playing pitches. All of these are rented from Wigan Council. The players' ages range from 6 to 18 and there are currently 22 teams. This is an approximate total of 300 children. The Club follows the 'Chartered Standard' provided by the FA and they have 22 football managers who are qualified to these standards. They also have qualified coaches for the teams. All have first aid qualifications and CRB checks.

The cost per child to be a member of the club is £5 per week and this covers the provision of matches, pitches, referees, training. Football kits are obtained from sponsorship and the child only needs to use their own boots and chin pads.

There are 5 teams who play at Civic Hall. The Club would like all the teams to be able to play at one location to improve on fellowship of players, social skills, and increased awareness/activity in other club events. Hence the reason for looking into the leasing of the playing fields themselves rather than paying a rent to Wigan Council.

Initial discussions with the Council have already taken place and The Club have confirmation that Sport England will support them. BC had come to LENDF's meeting to ask for support from Lowton residents for their proposal. It would mean

the land would be safe from development and The Club intend to make improvements to the drainage of the area.

BC stated that they would not need any changing facilities for the players as they follow the Child Protection Laws and the Under 8s, 9s and 10s must arrive already kitted for play and then leave as soon as the match is over.

The largest event on their calendar is an Annual Tournament which is held the first weekend of August. Teams from all over the North West travel to Lowton to play in the Tournament.

BC then invited questions from the group:

Question	BC's answer
What do you want from LENDF?	Support please. FA could provide support/funding but not without a lease. The Club is hoping for 20/25 year lease. The initial talks with Wigan Council have been to 'sound out' the viability of 'taking over' the fields.
Will you be looking at how to alleviate the parking problems associated with events at the Civic?	During the Tournament the Club is given the key for the 'first gate' reached by drivers coming down Hesketh Meadow. This allows the Club to direct traffic onto the fields and reduce the amount of street parking.
Would you be looking at merging with other Clubs?	Possibly – It would be a gradual move to bring the all the teams to Civic Hall. Pitches would need to be realigned to give maximum number of 'playable' pitches.
Do you plan to provide more pitches?	Yes – we want to increase the number of pitches available for 7-aside matches. Also the FA are introducing 9-aside matches in the future and the Club will want to accommodate these.
Will horseriders still be able to gain access to the bridleway?	Yes – the Club will continue to allow horses to passover. Though they would request that they continue to be respectful of playing pitches.
Will you fence off the fields?	No definitely not. The Club want to encourage children to play on the fields.
Would you want 'any' part of the Civic Hall.	The Club doesn't 'need' to use it but if there was a possibility they would look into it.
How often do the teams play?	Saturday mornings and Sunday mornings. The season is from September to May. Pitches are also used by teams from Golborne. Two teams per pitch. Rota used for home and away matches. The Club is careful to protect the pitches from over-playing.

Question	BC's answer
Civic Hall – would you take in partnership with other organisations e.g. Three Towns Operatic Society.	Yes – a partnership could be considered.
<i>One resident offered contact details of Football Club who had experience of successfully obtaining pitches. BC gratefully accepted the assistance offered.</i>	

ET thanked BC for coming to LENDF's meeting to explain the Club's aspirations for the future and confirmed that LENDF would support their efforts in obtaining a lease for the fields.

BC promised to keep the group informed on progress. Cllr Grundy also offered his support with communication and meeting with Council Officers.

4. Solar Panels

Wigan and Leigh Housing are rolling out a programme of installing solar panels on their properties. A number of properties in the Oaklands Road area already have them installed. The aim is to reduce costs not only for those particular tenants but for all those in Wigan and Leigh Housing schemes. Click the following link for more information <http://www.walh.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/F13BB163-57CE-4937-AE94-27044A19BE9B/0/090312SolarPanelsFurtherInformation.pdf>

5. The Green Deal

This Government initiative is to be available to all homeowners and businesses and will be a cost saving for everyone. The following link will give you all the basic details of how it works and how to apply. <http://www.green-deal-guide.co.uk/>

6. Lynn Kay (LK), Wigan Council's Local Development Manager for Lowton, Golborne and Leigh

Lynn Kay was invited to LENDF's meeting following a discussion between ET and Andrew Sharrock with regard to the closure of the Township Forums and the new process to be put into place. Lynn confirmed that the five Area Management Groups (AMG) are to continue with 'Local Development Managers' responsible for liaison with community members and for Lowton/Golborne/Leigh area this was Lynn Kay.

LK then addressed the meeting giving an explanation of her role and the 'refreshed approach' that the AMG wish to proceed with. This includes a focus on community issues / police / fire / frontline staff. By using data and statistics they can pinpoint hotspots and deal with issues directly. Broader issues are also to be developed for example health, environment and local intelligence.

All these factors, together with help from community leaders and representatives, will help to develop a 'Local Action Plan' to match with the information gathered and to plan for the future i.e. football for children. LK offered her help to East Leigh JFC in their desire to purchase a lease for the fields at Civic Hall.

This new system for AMGs is in the early stages of development. LK will keep a connection with LENDF and work together with its members to help get the residents' voice heard by the decision makers.

LK then invited questions from the group.

Question	LK's answer
How do residents become a member of the AGMs?	The process has not yet been agreed. At the moment please use your local councillor to bring issues/views to the table. As things develop the process of how issues are being dealt with will be made available.
Many people don't want to use local councillors as some of those present were on the previous Township Forum and want a similar role.	All issues brought to the AGMs, whether by a councillor or community group rep, will be addressed by the appropriate decision maker, i.e. police officer or health provider.
Who do you actually work for?	Wigan Council. Andrew Sharrock is her line manager and is based at Unity House. There are currently 5 managers and LK works full time.
Dog Warden working hours are 9am to 5pm which is not suitable to catch those who allow their dogs to foul the pavements before going to work. Can the hours be changed?	LK will look into this and suggested that residents use the customer helpline to report incidents. Also residents can meet with local councillors at their surgeries.
Hierarchy of Council members blocks the community – how can this be changed?	LK will assist Lowton residents to get their voice heard and help clear the path of communication so that any concerns are listened to by the right officer within the Council. Her hopes are that LENDF gain a 'presence' for Lowton and establish a direct link to the Council via the Area Management Group.

LK then reported on the recent grant application which LENDF had submitted in line with Cultural Olympiad Grant. 86 groups had applied for the £40,000 available. The maximum any group could apply for was £2,000. Due to the number of applications the council decided to award 62% of the total amount asked for. LENDF was awarded £836. There were also seven other groups in Lowton/Golborne who were awarded monies for events.

ET confirmed this, though there had been a sticking point over Public Liability Insurance as LENDF intend to use the Civic Hall for an event and therefore would be covered by their insurance. LK offered to help with obtaining a low-cost insurance policy for LENDF.

ET thanked LK for her attendance to the meeting and we all look forward to working with her on local issues.

7. **Meeting with Government Inspector**

ET described the formal procedure for such a meeting and gave a short description of those present, i.e. Inspector Kevin Ward, council members (x4), house builders (x5), Peter Sergeant, Colin Sinclair and of course himself on behalf of LENDF. The 'audience' consisted of LENDF members (x8), Cllr Grundy, other interested

parties and a reporter, who were there to witness the proceedings but could not take part.

Barry Hodgkinson (who had been in the audience) then gave a synopsis of the general events/discussions which had taken place. The Inspector had been very thorough with his questioning of both the Council and the house builders who were present. On a number of occasions the Inspector asked the Council a direct question and they often responded 'we don't know'. This is due to the fact that a lot of assumptions have been made in respect to land actually being 'developable'. They admitted that they had not done full assessments of the areas.

One particular question had been with regard to traffic access to these proposed sites. To which the response from the Council was 'there are no issues with access' !! At this point there was a sharp intake of breath and gasps of astonishment at such a statement. ET was very agitated by this and indicated to the Inspector that he wished to speak. ET then explained that this same council representative had made the same 'assumption' previously in relation to the 'mega-school' application which had been withdrawn due to access problems!

Peter Sergeant had initially stated at the beginning of the meeting that he would need to leave at 1pm to attend another meeting but changed his mind as Wigan's examination by the Inspector was bringing out crucial points of inconsistency and lack of knowledge base.

Cllr Grundy had been a witness to the Council's 'grilling' by the Inspector and requested a follow up meeting with Cllr Mike Worden, especially in respect of TfL's proposals for a railway station at Pennington. Cllr Grundy asked if Wigan Council had ever told TfL about the safeguarded land for housing which their railway line was proposing to run through. Cllr Worden admitted that they had not.

Next Steps

The Inspector's Report is expected by 27th March and it is already clear that Wigan Council will have to make changes to their Core Strategy following this Examination. There will be a further round of consultation when planning applications are presented and it is at this point that we need as many people as possible to write objections. It is important that letters are written rather than submitting an objection online. As more detail of this consultation comes to light LENDF will keep everyone informed. Please ask your neighbours, friends, relatives in the area, even your boss if applicable, to have the LENDF website 'latest news' as a quick link on computers so that deadlines are not missed.

[Post Meeting Note] The Inspector has written to the Council requesting a further meeting on April 18th to discuss the options i.e. changes to the plan, withdraw the plan !!, take a step back and review the plan. Details have been posted onto LENDF's website – follow this link <http://www.lendf.co.uk/LENDF%20-%20latest%20news.html>

Present at LENDF's meeting tonight were some residents from The Poplars estate who were concerned that the land adjoining the estate was owned by house builders and that they were never aware of this. They will now follow the above proceedings carefully and ET offered to provide them with LENDF leaflets so that they could inform their neighbours of LENDF and its work for the residents of Lowton, and especially the correspondence uploaded to LENDF's website.

Ed Houlton pointed out to the meeting that Wigan Council has a habit of putting things right as they go along. There are a number of housing estates in the area which have been designed with future building in mind.

A question was asked about the land at the end of Slag Lane which has still not been developed? Cllr Grundy stated that no house builders have come forward with proposals – in fact the Council have been advertising abroad for house builders to develop the land. Also VAT has to be paid on Brownfield sites but not on Greenfield sites which is why house builders are more interested in the land around Lowton.

8. Meeting with Emma Barton, Transport Strategy Manager

ET, IT and Colin Sinclair had a follow-up meeting with Emma Barton (EB) who was one of the council representatives at the Inspector's Meeting.

The issues of traffic congestion in Lowton was put to her and she does recognise that Lowton is a 'congestion hotspot' within the Borough. She assured us that our concerns and comments would be noted and she will keep us informed of her department's work on 'transport'.

She was asked where her evidence came from to make proposals for road infrastructure improvements and where? She stated that evidence came from various sources, i.e. Government Population Census, Wigan's own Annual People Travel Survey, Strategic Transport Route Assessment Plan, all available to view at this link

<http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/GettingAbout/TransportStrategy/EvidenceReview.htm>

Another source was the Citizens Panel. This is a panel of 1200 residents of the borough who are sent questionnaires in relation to various elements of Wigan Council services. This panel is refreshed each year by one third and anyone interested in applying to be on the panel can follow this link for details

<http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/CouncilDemocracy/Consultation/GetInvolvedandHaveYourSay.htm>

EB was asked about the Kenyon Lane railway line and its junction. As this is within the boundary of Warrington Borough she could not discuss it.

9. Any Other Business

Kenyon Lane Junction

Colin Sinclair reported to the group that he had been communicating with the owner of Kenyon Lane Junction with a view to helping him to bring it to fruition via Warrington Borough Council. Colin gave a brief history of the site and its suitability as a modern rail station. He will keep LENDF up to date with his progress.

Lowton Bridges

Jan Johnston recently had a meeting with Lowton High School with regard to her project 'Lowton Bridges'. The school are interested in going ahead with a project which will mix the school children and the older residents of the area with different

subject matters i.e. Life Books. If you are interested in finding out more please pass your details to Irene Thomson on the LENDF email lendf99@gmail.com

2nd June – Golborne House, Derby Road

Jubilee Party. They are looking to involve the local community and need volunteers to help with the party, and to put forward ideas. Please contact Jan Johnston for more information at janjohnston86@hotmail.co.uk

LENDF website

Following the refresh of our website we would like to know what you think – does it work? Can you find information easily? Please send your comments to lendf99@gmail.com

10. Date of Next LENDF Meeting

Monday April 2nd 2012

Should you find any omissions or discrepancies in these minutes please contact me on lendf99@gmail.com and let me know as soon as possible and the errors will be rectified.

Irene Thomson
Secretary – LENDF