

BEECHES COMMUNITY GROUP

Notes of Meeting held on 18 September 2014

Present:

Stuart Tarr (Chairman), Anne Rawlins (Notetaker), Mike Jupp (Social Secretary), Keith Handley (Neighbourhood Watch/Community SW), Patrick Coleman (Town Councillor Beeches Ward), Christian Chambers (Project Manager Britannia Construction), James Trotter (Bromford Housing), Nick Bridges (Town council), Sarah Gardiner (Resident and Business Manager at Kingshill School), Michael Grout (S.O.C.), Mark Pratley (S.O.C.), John Nicholas (S.O.C.), Lynn Hilditch (Resident).

1. Welcome and Apologies

Stuart Tarr opened the meeting and welcomed Christian Chambers from Britannia Construction, Nick Bridges from Cirencester Town Council and the representatives from Save Our Cirencester (S.O.C) group. The following apologies were received from: Cllr Nigel Robbins (GCC and CTC), PCSO Renee Broad (crime and statistics report submitted), Paul Maidens (Vice Chair BCG and Chair Corinium Via Residents Association), Caroline Braidwood (Treasurer and BCG website), Jackie Brown (Business Manager at Watermoor School), Cllr Shirley Alexander (Town Councillor – Beeches Ward), Malcolm Lewis, Roger Sweeting. Two presentations then followed – one from Britannia Construction Ltd on the Burford Road junction improvements and a second from Save Our Cirencester (SOC) – which are reported at the end of these minutes before the meeting resumed.

2. To Approve the Minutes from Meeting held on 13 March 2014

Proposed by Mike Jupp and seconded by Anne Rawlins: approved and signed by the Chairman, after noting that Shirley Alexander had arrived at 7pm, not 8pm, and left at 8.25pm.

3. Action Points from Minutes that are not included on the Agenda

Patrick Coleman had not been referred to as a Town Councillor in the Town council report (noted).

Stuart Tarr asked Nick Bridges from the Town Council to take up the issue of overhanging branches in the Beeches Road, London Road, The Smithy, Crabtree Lane and the Fry Close areas where the footpaths are being obstructed.

4. Chairman's Report

At the July meeting Stuart had reported that he would be standing as a prospective District Councillor candidate for the Stratton ward so that it would not conflict with his role as Chairman of the BCG. After taking advice that provided a proper separation is maintained between the two roles to avoid a potential conflict of interests, Stuart has agreed that he will stand as a Conservative candidate for the Beeches ward where he resides. He will continue as Chairman of the BCG until the AGM in November when the committee is due to be reviewed and will campaign on behalf of the Conservative party from now until the general and local elections in May 2015.

5. Treasurer's Report

Bank balance £251.88. No report received from the Treasurer (Caroline Braidwood acting as Treasurer until the AGM in November) to update this figure.

6. Town, District and County Councillors' Reports

Town Councillor's Report: Cllr Patrick Coleman reported on the Town Council meetings held on the 29th July and 9th September. Plans were being made to reduce the speed limit on the A429 dual carriageway from the Stroud/Tetbury road roundabout to the Waitrose roundabout due to the accident rate being high. St James's Place expansion plans are being discussed by the Town Council. The Park Community group are getting involved with the appearance and regeneration of Cricklade Street. The Amphitheatre project is being worked on.

County Councillor's Report: Cllr Coleman read out Cllr Nigel Robbins's (County councillor) report. He noted concerns about delays in the attendance times taken by the ambulance service in the area. The quality of street signs was being looked into, as many are damaged, degraded and overgrown. Cllr Robbins would also like feedback on cycle paths in need of repairing as part of the Active Together Fund initiative mentioned at the May BCG meeting. Cllr Robbins had also met with residents of North Home Road in connection with the proposed new bus route.

Cirencester Town Council: Nick Bridges is to attend a meeting with Richard Gray (Gloucestershire Highways) on 14th November to discuss various road issues in the area, e.g. the London Road surface improvements and pavements that have potholes and raised ironworks. Richard Gray may say that this is a matter for Amey Plc, GCC's highways contractor, although final responsibility for highways maintenance does rest with GCC. Stewards are required for 2hr slots at the Assembly Rooms where the Hares that have been on display around Cirencester will be on display prior to being auctioned off.

7. Reports

Police, Community Speed Watch & Neighbourhood Watch – Keith Handley

Police crime figures are available on the BCG website.

Neighbourhood Watch is pretty stagnant at present; a Whitelands Road Co-ordinator is required.

Community Speed Watch will become a Cirencester Town Group due to patchy interest and the small groups involved. A town group could then function in any area not just part.

Litter Picking

Nick Bridges reported that there was to be a town clear up of litter on Saturday 20th September.

Bromford Living

No feedback concerning the email sent in July about St Mary's Road lighting and pavements. Stuart Tarr asked James Trotter to communicate with Nick Bridges about problem areas.

Housing Associations

Cottsway – no apology and no report

Sovereign – no apology and no report

Corinium Via Residents' Association

Nothing to report other than that residents with young families had expressed concerns about the proposed gate in the fence separating the children's play area from the Burford Road. These were about maintaining the safety and security of children, direct access on to a fast and very busy road, the potential for increased crime from uncontrolled and unobserved access from the Burford Road, and potential anti-social behaviour issues noting that the BP filling station sells alcohol and tobacco. CDC planning officials and the s.106 developer, Robert Hitchins Ltd responsible for the Burford Road improvements, had agreed to keep the fence closed noting these safety and security concerns.

Kingshill School Community Facility

No report.

Kingshill Meadow/North Home Road Bus Service

Mike Jupp read through a prepared update report highlighting the access and safety concerns which had been the subject of a 500 signature petition in 2013; he remained very concerned that these issues had not been fully or adequately addressed in responses received from GCC officials to the many observations and enquiries which had been made – see also item 9.

Stuart Tarr reported that the Police Traffic Management Unit had not been asked to assess the junction on North Home Road in previous safety audits but there was now to be a further Route Test Safety Review that would include the police. This review will be held once Alan Barrett from GCC has completed another desk review.

8. Social Events – Mike Jupp

Mike has decided not to organise a BCG Christmas meal due to a perceived lack of interest. He may however organise a meal for Beeches residents and friends as a private individual.

9. Any Other Business

BCG equipment - Mike reported that the Golden Farm Inn had asked for all the events equipment they currently store to be removed. Stuart commented that the group should respect the landlady's wishes whilst accepting Mike's offer to negotiate the timing of the removal. Mike added that Malcolm Lewis currently had the candyfloss machine should anyone wish to hire it. Stuart again reported that the group might not continue beyond the AGM in November if committee roles cannot be filled, making it imperative to sort the issue of storage. Nick Bridges said he would ask Roly Hughes (Chairman of Chesterton Community group) if the BCG equipment could be stored with theirs. James Trotter mentioned that the Opportunity Group may be able to help; Nick Bridges to ask them as well.

Secretariat note: Since the meeting the equipment has been safely removed by Mike and Nick to St Lawrence Church, Chesterton, courtesy of Roly Hughes and Chesterton Community Group. The candyfloss machine is to be donated to the Churn project for community use.

Dog and grit bins - Stuart asked Mike if he would chase up the outstanding dog and grit bins along North Home Road as they were not yet in place noting that Jamie Walton, who was going to speak to Martin Conyers (CTC) about the installation, had now left the council. (Cllr Robbins in his report had also expressed concern about the provision of a grit bin in North Home Road with the prospect of icy roads as winter approaches.)

Community wardens – Nick Bridges told Keith Handley that it would be worth him getting in contact with Roly Hughes (Chesterton Community Group) about this issue.

Bus Gate - Mike Jupp again raised concerns about the role and interest of ward councillors in helping to resolve the Bus Gate issue and of their delays in responding to emails he had sent. Cllr Coleman replied, explaining that both he and Cllr Robbins took the bus gate issue very seriously, that they were concerned to see a much-needed service provided to Kingshill Meadow and Mulberry Court once the safety issues discussed at this and previous BCG meetings had been properly assessed and addressed. A frank and constructive exchange of views then followed in which Cllr Coleman acknowledged Mike's perseverance and determination to get these issues addressed. Mike thanked Cllr Coleman for his recognition of these issues and of the efforts made to address them, that he remained committed to seeing them satisfactorily resolved.

In closing this discussion Stuart asked if Cllr Shirley Alexander and/or Cllr Patrick Coleman would attend the planned safety review in October.

**10. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Thursday 13th November 2014 at 7pm
Ingleside House**

The meeting closed at 9pm

Presentations

Burford Road/London Road Junction Work

The meeting was given an update by Christian Chambers (Project Manager Britannia Construction Ltd). Overall, the project was keeping to the time schedule due to the good weather despite a few issues with design changes and a delay of a few days in reopening the Burford Road to two-way traffic early in September. It was expected the work should be completed in the week before Christmas. There have been some design changes to the log walls retaining the woodland bank as some trees had not appeared on the design drawings requiring an extra 70m of logs which then had to be ordered (the materials specifications are for pine with a 20yr performance guarantee). There had also been a design change at the BP garage and some of the temporary surfaces required more tarmac to raise the levels to ironworks. The new pedestrian crossing will be uncontrolled until the project is nearing completion but Britannia personnel will be happy to help the public, especially the disabled and/or those with small children, safely cross the road.

Keith Handley asked about the grass reinstatement on the roundabout – the specification will be for seed, not turf - also synchronising the traffic lights. Christian replied that the sequencing of the traffic lights is a matter for GCC Highways.

Stuart Tarr concluded Britannia's update by thanking Christian Chambers; Christian left the meeting at 7.20pm.

Save Our Cirencester (Land at Chesterton)

John Nicholas from Save Our Cirencester informed the meeting that the SOC campaign group was set up 18 months ago as an email group in response to Cotswold District Council's plans to expand Cirencester with additional new housing. He explained that Cirencester Town Council was not happy with the new plans. Secondly, the large-scale anticipated growth of Cirencester would deplete the number of new homes needed in other small town and village settlements because smaller projects in these areas would help make them more sustainable by reversing the loss of much needed services (post offices/shops, schools, etc).

The group was also worried about the need for supporting infrastructure and the congestion that would result in the town from the 2500 new homes development in Chesterton. Nor does the group consider that all the draft Local Plan consultation documents which contain these proposals are being given sufficient visibility to the public to fully understand and make their views known. The majority of social housing (up to 50% of the new homes planned at Chesterton) is being built in Cirencester, not elsewhere in the Cotswolds. There was also a concern that the way planning decisions are being made between planning officials and the district council seems to be too close, as illustrated 20-30 years ago when there was a large amount of housing built in Cirencester with poor road access and supporting services. There is a risk that this might be repeated, noting that parts of the proposed Chesterton Farm development will be up to 40 minutes walk from town. As part of its initial response to these concerns the SOC campaign group is presenting a petition, approaching 3000 signatures, to Cotswold District Council in the following week.

Stuart Tarr reported that the 2011-2031 District Council draft Local Plan contains proposals for 6900 new homes to be built in the Cotswolds of which 3360 were planned for Cirencester. Of this total circa 800 homes had already been planned or built at Kingshill South and Kingshill North, leaving 2500 still to be built. Residents want to see a reduction in the 2500 new homes planned for Chesterton, say to no more than 1500 homes with supporting services and infrastructure, but where would the remaining 1000 go? This will be an important question to address in public consultation responses to the draft Local Plan in December, with the Plan due to be submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in late 2015 after the district and general elections in May 2015, for approval in 2016.

In summary, the SOC campaign group wants to see the 2500 new homes proposed for Chesterton reduced to sustainable numbers supported by sufficient and adequate infrastructure (including plans by Thames Water to upgrade flood prevention, drainage, sewerage and the water supply works).

Stuart Tarr thanked SOC for their professional input to the meeting (Lynn Hilditch left the meeting at 7.40pm).

End