

NEW FRANKLEY IN BIRMINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council held at St Christopher's Church Centre, New Street, Frankley on Monday, 16 January, 2006 at 1930 hours.

Present

Councillor Gareth Griffiths (in the Chair)

Councillors Linda Banks, Ian Bruckshaw, Eric Carter, Michael Denny, Sidney Grey MBE, Bill Hollis, Len Lovett, Geoffrey Stephenson, Stephen Trefor-Jones, Joanna Walker and Geoffrey Williams

Also in attendance Marion Chute – Community Librarian
Judith Parry-Evans – Manager, South West Regeneration Team

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies.

MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Trefor-Jones, seconded by Councillor Hollis and –

- 1269 RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 19 December 2005, having been previously circulated, were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

AT THIS POINT IN THE MEETING, THE CHAIRPERSON PROPOSED, AND IT WAS AGREED, TO VARY THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA AND CONSIDER ITEM 9

FRANKLEY CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

- 1270 At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms Judith Parry-Evans, Manager, South-West Regeneration Team, gave a presentation on the background to the current situation. She gave an assurance that as far as the Regeneration Team was concerned, the redevelopment of the Centre was still on its work program. There were, however, a number of conflicting demands from the various land holding Departments of the City Council. When the land at Frankley Centre was transferred from Bromsgrove District Council, the allocation of the land to the various Committees did not necessarily follow the ownership of the buildings located on the land. However, she was of the opinion that the difficulties could be

overcome. A brief report had been prepared by the Regeneration Team for consideration by the Housing Department's Senior Management Team. Although that report had been submitted to the previous Friday's meeting, in the absence of the Director, no decision had been made. Basically the report requested that the Housing Department indicate whether or not it was prepared to continue the process of considering the options for the redevelopment – if the Consultant's first option was deemed to be unviable as far as the Department was concerned, would it agree to exploring other options with a view to arriving at an option which meet the constraints of the Department as well as the aspirations of the Frankley community. Ultimately it was hoped that a consensus could be reached and the agreed option forwarded to the City's Gateway Process to gain Cabinet approval and access to funding. Currently the position of Housing was that any agreed redevelopment of the Centre had to be resource neutral and in its opinion, the options currently being considered were not.

Even if agreement was reached on an option for redevelopment, because of the restraints on the City Council any redevelopment would have to be a commercial project and, if there was no market for the redevelopment, then even if the City Council had corporately agreed to a preferable option, the redevelopment could not proceed. Unfortunately, in the current economic climate, it was unlikely to attract an acceptable developer.

Councillor Grey commented that everybody seemed to assume that the redevelopment referred solely to the shopping parade but what the Parish Council was seeking was the redevelopment of the whole of the Centre including Sites A, B and C as well as the incorporation of the community buildings such as the two schools, the library, the leisure centre, the health centre and the proposed Children's Centre into a redeveloped Centre. He therefore asked why the redevelopment of Sites A, B and C could not proceed and the funds generated by that development finance the redevelopment of the shopping parade. There was a need to consider Frankley Centre as a whole and while the shopping parade was an important part of the Centre it was the issue of the whole of the Centre which needed to be addressed. He went on to point out that in contrast to the improvements made to Frankley in the past 12 months, in the 10 years since the incorporation of whole of Frankley into Birmingham, little or progress had been made regarding the redevelopment. While the Housing Department may be happy with the tenancy of the parade, he was concerned over the continuing decline in the parade – the butchers shop had closed the previous weekend, he was also aware of trading difficulties being faced by other shops which, together with the possible move of the chemist into the health centre once the health professionals moved into the Children's Centre, would only accelerate the demise of the parade. He questioned why, if the City Council were not prepared or able to redevelop the whole centre, it did not allow private developers to have a go. Additionally, after 2½ years, he felt that there should have been more progress on the Consultants' proposals.

Councillor Carter, while accepting that the City could not force retailers to locate on Frankley, expressed the view that unless a key retail outlet which would attract shoppers was persuaded to locate in the Centre then the current shopping parade would continue to decline.

Councillor Trefor-Jones stated that it was the view of the Police Liaison Board for

Frankley that unless the decline was arrested, the centre would become a run-down, crime ridden, no-go area. There was a need for the City Council to take action to arrest the decline.

In response to the points raised Ms Parry-Evans stated that when the Consultants were first appointed, part of their brief was to produce resource neutral options for the regeneration of the Centre. That they had done. Since the Consultants had been appointed the Administration of the City Council had changed and, additionally, there was approximately £1.3m of Government money which was to be used on regeneration projects but which had to be bid for. The Regeneration Team was, therefore, putting together a bid to go through the Gateway Process in the hope of being allocated some of the available funding. However, any proposal going through the Process had to have the support of all the affected departments.

With regard to the possibility of attracting a 'key' retail outlet to the Centre, in her opinion that would hasten the decline of the existing shops and therefore, any proposal was unlikely to get Planning Consent. As far as Housing was concerned, all the units on the parade were leased, and the parade was therefore considered to be viable. However, she accepted that with the recent closure of the butchers, the probable relocation of the chemists and the uncertain trading conditions for other retailers, it did appear that the parade was not as healthy as Housing believed.

Councillor Grey reiterated that in his opinion the parade was in terminal decline and, unless remedial action was taken quickly to halt that decline, then in 1 to 2 years the parade would fail. He considered that, if the complete demolition/replacement of the shopping parade was not a viable option then urgent consideration must be given to the production of viable and acceptable options such as reversing the frontages of the shops to change the current service area into a village square. He also stressed the need to approach the EU regarding the European funding used to decontaminate Sites C and D with a view of persuading the EU that, because of the change business conditions in the area, the condition that Site C could only be used for Commercial Use be relaxed.

Councillor Denny referred to the City Council's Flourishing Neighbourhood initiative and suggested that the redevelopment of the Centre could help that process. Additionally, over the past 20 years a lot of funding had been directed at the inner city areas to the detriment of the outer-city areas such as Frankley; it was now time to redress that imbalance of funding.

In conclusion, Ms Parry-Evans indicated that there still was the potential for the City Council corporately to approve the project which would require all affected departments to co-operate. However, she considered that Option 1 appeared to be unacceptable and therefore it would be helpful if the Parish Council supported Option 2.

The Chairperson thanks Ms Parry-Evans for the presentation.

CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none

QUESTIONS

Frankley Centre Regeneration Working Party

- 1271 On the suggestion of Councillor Carter, it was agreed to establish a working party to formulate a strategy to promulgate the Council's viewpoint on the regeneration of the Centre and the Cross City Rail Link. On receipt of nominations it was agreed that the Working Party should comprise of Councillors Carter, Denny, Grey, Griffiths and Trefor-Jones.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT IN ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE FUTURE

- 1272 It was noted that the Government had recently published a discussion paper which sets out its vision for the future comprehensive conduct regime for Local Authority Members and employees.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

There were none.

DECISIONS MADE ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS

S/01310/05/FUL

Land at Rubery Lane

Erection of 45 dwellings and associated infrastructure works

- 1273 It was noted that Planning Consent in respect of the above application had been granted by the City's Planning Committee subject to the conditions set out in the schedule to the notification.

(see interleaved document no. 1)

CROSS CITY LINE EXTENSION

The Clerk advised that he had not received a response from CENTRO to his earlier letter and would therefore be writing again.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Prohibition of Alcohol Consumption on Public Land

- 1274 Councillor Grey referred to the signs recently erected on lamp-posts in Rubery Lane and Cock Hill banning the consumption of alcohol in public places and requested that approaches be made to those responsible for similar signs to be erected in Frankley. The Chairperson advised that the initiative was currently being rolled out across the Northfield District and would soon extend to Frankley.

Post Coding of Bicycles and Electrical Goods

- 1275 Councillor Trefor-Jones advised that the local police would be at the Reaside Centre on the coming Saturday and would be post coding small electrical power

tools and Children's bicycles and free of charge.

PAYMENTS

A Business Visa Credit Card

1276 The following Business Visa Credit Card Statement was noted -
(see interleaved document no. 2)

B Schedule of Payments

The following Schedule of Payments was submitted -
(see interleaved document no. 3)

It was proposed by Councillor Carter, seconded by Councillor Trefor-Jones and –

1277 RESOLVED: That the payments, as set out in the Schedule now submitted, be approved.

LOCAL ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

At 2032 hours, the meeting adjourned to enable the Members of the Public to raise issues of concern.

Frankley Centre

Ms Chute reminded Members that the fact that a Children's Centre was currently being built on Frankley was due to pressure from the community which had been concerned that the children of Frankley were not receiving their entitlement.

She therefore suggested that a similar pressure group should be set up to advance Frankley's case for the redevelopment of the Centre which, it was generally felt, to be dying on its feet.

The meeting was reconvened at 2037 hours.

The meeting ended at 2038 hours.

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Chairperson