

SEFTON MBC/PARISH COUNCILS' 11TH ANNUAL EVENT

HELD AT THE HOPE CENTRE, OLD ROAN BAPTIST CHURCH
THURSDAY 9TH JULY, 2015

Present:

Representing Sefton MBC / Invited Guests:-

| | | |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Margaret Carney | - | Chief Executive, SMBC |
| Andrea Watts | - | Head of Governance / Civic Services, SMBC |
| Angela White | - | Chief Executive, Sefton CVS |
| Steven Penn | - | Deputy Chief Executive, Sefton CVS |
| Steve Kermode | - | Mayor of Sefton |

Representing the Parish and Town Councils: -

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|-------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Jack Colbert | - | Aintree Village Parish Council |
| Albert Collins | - | Aintree Village Parish Council |
| Godfrey Downey | - | Aintree Village Parish Council |
| Colette Forrest | - | Aintree Village Parish Council |
| Fred Forrest | - | Aintree Village Parish Council |
| Peter Gill | - | Aintree Village Parish Council |
| Anne Morton-Woods | - | Aintree Village Parish Council |
| Ian Morton-Woods | - | Aintree Village Parish Council |
| Geoff Payne | - | Aintree Village Parish Council |
| Ray Preston | - | Aintree Village Parish Council |
| Derek Bennett | - | Formby Parish Council |
| Maria Bennett | - | Formby Parish Council |
| Tim Asbury | - | Hightown Parish Council |
| Ann Triggs | - | Hightown Parish Council |
| Pete Walker | - | Hightown Parish Council |
| David Warren | - | Hightown Parish Council |
| Ian Cowell | - | Clerk, Ince Blundell Parish Council |
| Kevin Sharpe | - | Ince Blundell Parish Council |
| Anne Ibbs | - | Little Altcar Parish Council |
| John Bailey | - | Lydiate Parish Council |
| Johnathan Desmond | - | Maghull Town Council |
| Pam Crilley | - | Clerk, Melling Parish Council |
| Ron Baker | - | Melling Parish Council |
| Gerry Lee | - | Melling Parish Council |
| Tony Carr | - | Melling Parish Council |
| Barry Draper | - | Sefton Parish Council |
| John Duffy | - | Clerk, Sefton Parish Council |
| Marie Duffy | - | Sefton Parish Council |
| Carol Jones | - | Sefton Parish Council |
| Ann McKeating | - | Sefton Parish Council |

Apologies:

| | | |
|------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Mike Coles | - | Formby Parish Council |
| Maurice Byrne | - | Maghull Town Council |
| Ken Hounsell | - | Thornton Parish Council |
| Bill Esterson MP | | |

1. Welcome and Introductions

Cllr Gerry Lee – Chair, Sefton Area Partnership of Local Councils

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting, and thanked everyone for their attendance before going introducing the Guest Speakers. Special thanks were expressed to Steve Kermode, the new Mayor of Sefton, and a former member of the 10 Parishes Committee for his attendance, and he was also congratulated on his new posting. Apologies were also expressed on MP Bill Esterson's behalf, who was unable to attend due to a prior engagement he had overseen when first accepting our invite.

Margaret Carney – Chief Executive, SMBC

Margaret explained that she intended to cover the points listed under Agenda item 4 in her presentation, and commented on this wide ranging Agenda point. Margaret added that she was happy to answer questions at any time, and to expand upon any points if necessary.

"The changes, the challenges & opportunities for the next 5 years"

Margaret commented that this really was a massive question, and that she really didn't know what SMBC, the Parishes and the Boroughs will look like in 5 years time. Although SMBC might not like the challenges and cutbacks they will face, they have to deal with these constraints. Personally Margaret thinks this is a scary but exciting time.

'Sefton 20 20' is an initiative by which SMBC are looking at making the most of what they have, and looking at ways of minimising the challenges ahead. Notably the coastline is one of their best features, and is not only crucial for tourism and the economy, but also has clear benefits for the health and well being of residents. Therefore it is important to promote this feature effectively in order to generate as much income as possible from it, and the provision of quality retail outlets will be key. Similarly it is vital to develop opportunities for partnership working with key Agencies and organisations.

There are clearly a range of *challenges* that SMBC face and will continue to face. SMBC has an increasing population of over 65s, which in turn brings with it its' own challenges in terms of meeting their needs. Similarly as a Borough SMBC does not only 'import' vulnerable older residents, but also residents with other significant needs who come here to live. SMBC currently has the highest number of Looked after Children they've ever had. Whilst there is clearly a need to attract younger people to the area to address the generation gap, this too will bring with it its' own demands, i.e. the need for diversity of education in the region's High Schools to improve the skill level of School Leavers and their employability, and also the need to provide quality affordable housing.

Looking to the future this is one of the most exciting times for the *economy*. Solutions to old problems will need to be found, and the issue of high unemployment levels will need to be addressed. SMBC's Budget Plan was approved in March 2015. As a result SMBC will have 48% less to spend than the budget they were allocated in 2010. The Liverpool City Region has a key interest in the economy, growth and transport. SMBC is 1 of 6 Local Authorities that has full membership of this. The 'devolution deal' saw certain powers devolved from Central Government to local areas. As such talks are currently ongoing to explore opportunities for improving the delivery of the health, police and fire services. In the short term SMBC will need to develop a Budget Plan in order to deliver the £55 million savings, which have to be made, whilst at the same time managing residents' demands and expectations.

"Local Plan for Sefton"

Last Friday 3rd July, 2015 SMBC sent the results of the Local Plan Consultation to the Planning Inspector. The new DCLG housing figures have been published, and these are considerably higher than SMBC previously consulted on. Cabinet agreed to SMBC submitting a Plan based on the existing numbers as a 'Special Case'; given that Sefton is bordered by water and SMBC has stated they will work with neighbouring Authorities. Many member Councils did make submissions, and they could well be invited at a later date to make further comment at the discretion of the Planning Inspector. If the plan is accepted work with the neighbouring Authorities will need to increase. Should the plan be deemed unsound revisions will then need to be made to it.

"Transport"

Sefton's position around the Liverpool City Region and in the North of England, coupled with its existing good road and public transport links, and proposed improvements, have the potential to attract investors and employers to the area; thus promoting the area as a good place to work and live.

The Strategic Plan for Sefton comes under the Combined Authority, and includes several key projects, i.e. Maghull North Station, and improvements to Dunnings Bridge Road and Derby Road to improve access to the Port of Liverpool. Investment of £100 million is proposed; subject to Government releasing the finances.

Questions / Comments

- (a) When will the new Switch Island Link Road be operational?
- It's hoped this will be very soon. There are still some bits, which are yet to be completed.
- (b) It came as a great surprise that the old Aintree Library was open to tender from residential companies when it was previously thought this was a Community Asset. Two local groups did a great deal of work in submitting a tender for this building too. A.V.P.C stressed they are keen to work with SMBC, and reminded Margaret that Parish Councillors work on a totally voluntary basis. As such they feel let down by what happened.
- Margaret was unclear how this message was lost, and expressed her sincere apologies. Margaret also gave her commitment to looking into this matter, and is keen to know if there has been any lack of communication between the Parish Council and SMBC Officers. She thought the way this was advertised gave sufficient time for both community and commercial bidders to tender.
- (c) KMBC are reducing the number of their Councillors. Do SMBC plan to do the same? Could the number of Ward Councillors be reduced?
- There are no plans to reduce the number of Councillors, although a restructure of the Senior Officers is currently underway which is estimated will save SMBC £1.3 million over 2 years. KMBC made cuts to their Councillor numbers due to Boundary Changes. Clearly SMBC need to work more closely with Partners, Parish Councillors, and the local Police and Fire Services, etc. There are always opportunities for Partners and members of the Public to make suggestions from a technical stand point to reduce the number of Ward Councillors.
- (d) In view of the savage disproportionate Government cuts, which SMBC rightly complained about, it was queried why SMBC had spent £47 million on Southport Library, when libraries in other SMBC areas had closed leaving them without? Also do SMBC operate fair ration dealing taking into account all areas? The suggestion was made that the population size of each area pro rata should be considered to ensure money is distributed fairly.

- SMBC has no Policy to favour one area over another. Margaret can however understand how this can appear given the significant investment to Southport Library and Atkinson Gallery, and agreed to give careful thought to the mapping of SMBC assets according to population numbers. Discussions have already taken place in SMBC regarding the 'Locality Approach'.

- (e) The need to address 'extremism' in SMBC Agendas in view of the changing world we live in was raised.
- *The Growth Deal covers Government distribution of money for transport and skills projects that benefit the local area and economy. Halton MBC successfully secured massive investment to enable the building of the new bridge. North to South of the Country there are good rail links, but West to East there is a clear need to improve rail infrastructure. It's very important that SMBC understands their Communities and how they're changing; be it in terms of extremism or ageing populations. Cllr Warren added that the issue of 'terrorism' is being taken very seriously in Hightown due to the MOD Range.*
- (f) Fears were raised over the potential loss of use of the Community Youth Centre on Oriel Drive, Aintree in view of Budget Cuts and this building being owned by SMBC. An extension of the lease from 5 years to 25 years was requested.
- *Margaret agreed to look into this, and admitted she found this length of lease unusual.*
- (g) Concerns were raised about the increased risk to health due to increased emissions from vehicles using the Dunnings Bridge Road to Derby Road link following proposed improvements to the Port Access. It was queried whether any Risk Assessment had been done into this?
- *All assessments conducted to-date by SMBC, Government, and the City Region have also stressed the need to consider the long term Rail Strategy, as there is a clear need for some of this traffic to go by rail in order to minimise such risks. There will also be increased transportation of certain goods by canal to Salford. As yet no detailed surveys have been undertaken about possible impacts and environmental factors for areas surrounding these roads.*
- (h) What happened to the books from the Libraries that have closed? SMBC were asked this question by Hightown Parish Council, who have recently opened a Library, but they never received an answer.
- *Melling Parish Council commented that they have recently put some books in the Horse & Jockey Public House, and in the Ratepayers Club. Margaret stated this was inappropriate as SMBC had made a commitment that these books would be made available for Communities.*
- (i) It was queried how we can regenerate and attract independent traders to our high streets in view of the excess of Betting and Charity Shops throughout Sefton.
- *Work is ongoing in Crosby and Southport to engage Communities about their shopping habits. Admittedly many retailers now retail predominantly on the internet, and other areas have other 'key draws' besides retail, i.e. Liverpool One where people combine shopping and entertainment. Interestingly Southport's footfall is up, although retail spending is not. SMBC are supportive of 'pop up' shops and Click n Collect stores, but recognise there needs to be the right balance between service (i.e. coffee shops, bars, cinema) and retail. Even larger retailers are now seeking smaller premises.*

2. Notes of the Event Held on 08/11/12

Cllr Warren proposed that the Minutes of the Previous Annual Event were a true and accurate record of the Meeting, and Cllr Asbury seconded this. Those present were in agreement.

3. Chairman's Annual report for 2014-15

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Cllr Gerry Lee explained that he had recently taken over the Chairmanship of the group, following Cllr Coles' recent resignation after 6 years of dedicated service as Chair of the group. As a mark of respect and recognition for the work undertaken by Cllr Coles for the group, Cllr Lee explained that he would be referring to the presentation prepared by Cllr Coles, who was unable to attend the Event due to a recent Operation.

3.2 CHANGE OF POLITICAL CLIMATE

- The Chair paid credit to the 7 members of the Steering group who had worked very hard to revise the **Parish Charter** and to get it recognised by SMBC.
- The Chair stressed it was more important than ever that we see **value for money** and get the best for the Communities we represent; despite the financial constraints SMBC will have to face.
- The fact that Margaret Carney and Andrea Watts were in attendance at the Event surely goes to show that we are getting **greater commitment from, and developing better relationships with SMBC.**

3.3 THE CHALLENGES

- At the last Annual Event the need to work more closely with the **Ward Councillors** was raised. Sadly this working relationship does not seem to have improved. Aintree Village, Hightown and Little Altcar Parish Councils all responded despondently on this matter, and there has been no clear improvement.
 - There is a clear need for SMBC to demonstrate that they recognise that the **Greenbelt** of the Borough is 40% of its' land mass. It was also queried who needs these houses when the population is seemingly declining? It was stressed that **infrastructure** must be considered alongside proposed housing development and not as a separate matter
- ⇒ *Margaret was keen to stress that SMBC clearly understand this but they are dictated to by Government set targets. Given Sefton's ageing population and divided families there is a need for smaller households, which developers would not invest in if they didn't think they could sell them. In order to attract younger families the right housing is needed for those people to access. SMBC would favour rented social housing; since the price of housing means many younger people will never be able to afford to buy their own home. Interestingly the 2012 Census actually understated the population of Sefton.*

3.4 OUR WORK SO FAR

- There have been noticeable **Street Scene Improvements** throughout our parished areas. In Melling 'Community Clear Up Days' have taken place and the Melling in Bloom Scheme continues to provide beautiful floral displays throughout the Village. Comment was made that deployment of a mechanical sweeper in the Village instead of a manual road sweeper is not as effective. In Formby the Parish Council has also invested in planters, street furniture and floral displays on the roundabouts.
- Concern was expressed that the granting of **Licensing for Betting Shops, Fast Food Outlets and Off Licenses** is seemingly out of control. It was queried how SMBC intend to attract new businesses and generate income to regenerate our High Streets when they are swamped with such premises?

3.5 _2015 & BEYOND

- There is a need to cut out **petty politics** and to **establish a realistic Area Committee Agenda and Structure**. The general current consensus of members present is that CSAC meetings have a clear lack of structure, are too long and a waste of time. This clearly needs rectifying.

3.6 QUESTIONS

- (a) An SMBC grant enabled Formby Parish Council to install Wi-fi in their Village. How do Parish/Town Councils know what grants are available?
- It was one off SMBC Capital Priorities Funding, which enabled this work to take place. Neighbourhood Officers can always assist with information about other sources of funding.

4. Sefton MBC Reports and Progress

4.1 LOCAL PLAN FOR SEFTON

This was covered by Margaret Carney under Agenda item (1), Welcome & Introductions. However the following question was posed.

*If a Planning Application for Greenbelt land is submitted, can SMBC turn it down?
- SMBC responded by saying that although they don't support Planning Applications submitted for Greenbelt land, this would more than likely have to go to Appeal. However, many Local Authorities see many such applications being upturned and believe many developers are just 'chancing' things. More positively further brown field sites have been identified for future housing development.*

4.2 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

4.2.1 Formby Parish Council

Sadly Formby Parish Council were unable to provide an input on the current status of their Neighbourhood Plan due to major restructure of the Parish Council representatives following the recent Election; as the new representatives appointed to the Steering group for the Plan are not yet totally familiar with its' content.

4.2.2 Maghull Town Council

Maghull Town Council has had problems holding meetings regarding their Neighbourhood Plan due to the Perdure period prior to the recent Election.

4.2.3 Melling Parish Council

A Steering group chaired by Chad Thompson comprising of 2 Community representatives, Parish Councillors and Ingrid Berry from SMBC's Planning department was formed to consider the Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan Boundary was designated on 5/1/15. A Consultation Day took place, which was well attended. Residents stressed that they wished to maintain the look and feel of the Village, and also commented on infrastructure issues including the lack of public transport and reduced Surgery hours. The Aim of the Plan is to preserve and enhance the character of the Village and to bring about notable improvements.

() Lydiate Parish Council has also submitted an application to be designated as a Neighbourhood Plan area.*

5. The Future

Voluntary Services - Angela White, Chief Executive – Sefton CVS Nigel Bellamy, Deputy Chief Executive – Sefton CVS

Angela opened her presentation by thanking those present for their services to their Communities, and explained that she would provide an overview of what's happening in our local Communities and about the challenges we may face. She expressed her wish for Sefton CVS to be an active and constructive Partner, and added that in future we may need to think creatively and imaginatively as to how to make best use of resources, skills and finances.

5.1 WHAT IS THE VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY & FAITH SECTOR?

This consists of the following type of groups/organisations:-

- Community groups
- Not for Profit organisations
- Advisory groups
- Co-operatives
- Civic Societies
- P.T.A's
- Charities

5.1.1 What is Sefton CVS?

Sefton CVS is a local infrastructure organisation that provides support services to the Voluntary Community and Faith Sector. They actually helped "The Hope Centre to get going, and they provide the following services listed below.

- Volunteer Centre - Networks & Forums - Help with Policies & Partnerships
- Information/Advice & Signposting - Funding/Sustainability Advice
- Youth Participation - Accountancy - Capacity Building
- Training & Development

Interestingly the area has,

- 1,100 mostly home grown organisations working on a locality basis
- 1 in 4 organisations, which specialise in working with older people
- 90% of its' organisations, which are self funded
(10% are commissioned by the LA/CCG)
- 14,000 volunteers, 50% of which are over 65 years
- Secured £4 million funding through Sefton CVS assistance since 2013

5.1.2 What Sefton's VCF Sector does for Older People

- Social activities in the Community & in Care Homes
- Practical Help (i.e. Gardening, DIY, Shopping)
- Health Trainers
- Befriending
- Luncheon Clubs
- Volunteering Opportunities

5.1.3 Challenges facing Sefton's VCF Sector

- Public Sector reductions leading to instability of funding; thus threatening sustainability of services. Available funding will becoming increasingly more competitive to secure, and bidders will need to ensure they prove their case and need.

- The increased pressure on Public Sector Services will lead to an increase in the number of referrals, particularly those with more complex needs.
- Public Policy & impacts (e.g. Welfare Reform & Care Act)
- There will be constant changes in terms of policy, people, priorities and structures, which will be continually reviewed whilst trying to maintain service delivery and a personal approach.
- Maintaining services and supporting the Community.
- Responding to increased digitalisation and ensuring people are not disadvantaged by not having access to this.

5.1.4 New Realities

This is a 'Can Do' Collaborative Agreement, which involves Sefton CVS working together with SMBC to find solutions to local problems. Both parties have agreed to the following terms.

- To be solution focussed
- To show mutual respect
- To be risk aware and risk share

Angela extended an open invitation for the group to attend the Sefton CVS 'New Realities' Annual Conference & AGM which will take place on Tuesday 20/10/15. Dawn Austwick, Chief Executive of the National Lottery will be in attendance.

5.1.5 Opportunities & development

The following opportunities and possibilities were suggested.

- Collaborative working within the Sector, and with other Partners (Eg. Consortiums, bidding vehicles, shared services)
- Enhanced referral mechanisms between Organisations; both voluntary & statutory
- Imaginative use of assets & resources (Eg. Buildings, land, green space)
- Promoting Sefton outside of the Borough
- Sefton CVS expressed an interested in working with Parish & Town Councils

5.1.6 Contact information

Tel: (0151) 920 0726
www.seftoncv.org.uk
mail@seftoncv.org

6. **The Role of SAPLC 2015-2020**

The Chair commented that the Sefton Area Committee of Local Councils actually formed in 1978, and the group is extremely appreciative of the support of the Parish/Town Councils we represent. He then identified 2 clear aims for the next 5 years,

- To maintain a good working relationship with SMBC
- To maintain Guest Speakers from SMBC and other key organisation

7. **Conclusions**

In conclusion Cllr Lee thanked everyone present for attending, and added that he was delighted with the turn out.

Meeting Closed: 2130 hours