

Agenda item

Public Questions and Petitions

- [Meeting of South East Local Area Committee, Thursday 5 October 2023 6.30 pm \(Item 6.\)](#)

To receive any questions or petitions from members of the public.

Minutes:

6.1 The committee received 1 question in advance of the meeting. The Chair (Councillor Kurtis Crossland) stated that this question along with the response will be included in the minutes.

6.2 **Roger Marsh**

By the way of introduction, for those that do not know me, my name is Roger Marsh. I have been a resident of Owlthorpe since 2003. I helped found Owlthorpe Community Forum, and was Chair from 2008 to 2012. In 2012 I formed and chair Owlthorpe Local & Natural History Group. I received a certificate from the South East Community Assembly – Roll of Honour 2010 in recognition of outstanding contribution to the community. Also, its appreciation of the efforts I had made to improve the lives of the people who live in the area. In 2011 Yorkshire in Bloom awarded me a Discretionary Rose Award in the category ‘Community Champion’ the only award of this type in the whole of Yorkshire that year. Over these 15 years we have carried out numerous environmental projects in Owlthorpe in conjunction with Sheffield City Council (SCC). These projects have created a green oasis, in an increasing urban development, for the local residents and visitors to enjoy the green lungs of Owlthorpe. These projects are important to their mental, physical health and wellbeing. Organised health walks continue to take place every Thursday for both striders and strollers. I ask this question on behalf of the many voluntary community volunteers and the then primary school children who have worked tirelessly on these projects. Who are probably not aware of the plan to vandalise their hard work. The agreement that we had with SCC was that we would be supported in this environmental work on the understanding that we would not carry out any work or object to the building of houses on Sites C, D, and E. With regards

to Site F also designated SES 10 in the new Sheffield Draft Local Plan, a statement attributed to SSC on the BBC Website stated that the location had been proposed as a housing site for many years. (bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-66582292). This statement is demonstrably untrue. Following detailed research carried out by Celia Jackson then Secretary of the Moss Valley Wildlife Group, she presented a petition to have Site F removed as a planned housing site. SCC agreed to her petition and accordingly removed Site F as housing land from the current Local Plan. Subsequently I lobbied SCC to get the release of outstanding Section 106 monies (retained by the builder of Woodland Heights housing development at Owlthorpe for 10 years). Once the £67,455 Section 106 monies had been released, we completed many planned environmental projects, all in conjunction with Sally Pereira the then SCC Landscape Planning Officer. The first project we undertook together with SCC was the **Owlthorpe Grasslands Grazing Project**. Once Phases 1 and 1a had been completed we moved on to Phase 2. The site for Phase 2 was the site previously designated Site F that had earlier been removed as a planned housing site. We installed post & wire fencing and access gates. We installed pipework to provide water to the drinking troughs to all phases of the Owlthorpe Grasslands Grazing Project, including Phases 2. The established hedgerows within Phases 2 were laid. New hedgerows were planted around the perimeter of Phase 2. After the completion of Phase 2 the site was grazed by animals from Graves Park Animal Farm. These included rare breeds of sheep, llamas and cattle including Highland Cattle,. This would not have been allowed had the site been allocated for housing. We then moved on to the **Owlthorpe Heritage and Nature Trail Project** creating footpaths around the green areas of Owlthorpe, including Phase 2. We also carried out Drystone Wall Restoration Projects and Hedgerow Planting and Laying Projects. A large proportion of this work was paid for by grants from Sheffield South East Ward Pots. The basis for the grants for hedgerow planting was Carbon Sequestration. The work on these projects was carried out to the plans of SCC Landscape Planning Officer by volunteers from the community supervised by Sheffield Landscape Trust. A large number of the 12,000 trees in the hedgerows were planted by over 150 Primary School Children from the South East of Sheffield. The schools that have been involved in our environmental projects are: Rainbow Forge Primary School, St. John Fisher Catholic School, Birly Spa Community **Primary School**, Reinhead Primary School, Brookhouse Primary School, Mosborough Primary School, and Halfway Junior School. Part of the Owlthorpe Heritage and Nature Trail follows the perimeter of Phase 2 of the grazing project as do the hedgerows. These and our other projects were part of our Owlthorpe in Bloom entries in the Yorkshire in Bloom competition. We received six awards in four years culminating in a gold award in 2012. During our work on these projects, we received many visits from SCC councillors, Council officers, Lord Mayors and our MP who we wish to thank for their support. They are too numerous to mention here but we do have photographs of their visits. I read with interest the South East LAC Community Plan 2022-2023. I note that under Parks and Open Spaces it does not mention the fact that there are no parks in the south east of Sheffield. Also, there is no mention of the environmental projects in Owlthorpe that have opened up its green spaces that the public can access, and have become valuable community assets. The Plan states that it wants to support voluntary community groups and to undertake specific ward projects. The Plan also addresses the public's health and wellbeing. The Plan also addresses the decline in community groups. The Plan suggests the promoting of environmental awareness. Work with schools to educate young residents and promote junior environmental champions. Develop a SE environmental group and environmental champions. How are these aims compatible with the plan to destroy Phase 2 of the Owlthorpe Grassland Grazing Project, its adjacent hedgerows and sections of the Owlthorpe Heritage and Nature Trail, work that was carried out by local community Volunteers and local primary school children. Utilizing Section 106 money and money from the Ward Pot? We assume that reinstating Site F into the

Local Plan was done in error by someone who was not aware of all of the facts, and not a deliberate act of environmental vandalism like the Street Tree fiasco. What are you going to do to correct this glaring error and remove Site F from the Plan as a planned housing site?

Email response from Councillor Karen McGowan

Thank you for your email to the Birley Ward councillors. Not sure if you have sent this to all South East councillors or just to us but to let you know Owlthorpe comes under Beighton ward not Birley. I have sent your email onto the South East LAC officers so they are aware of your question ready for the public meeting on 5 October. My understanding of the situation is and as you may already know our MP Clive Betts has been very active in finding a way forward with the local plan and the Owlthorpe development. Taking into account the council needs to find sites for 40,000 homes across the city (the Government is demanding of us to find 55,000). As a council we have identified 80% of these sites on brown field land. This still means that 20% are going to be green fields. It is not possible to build the homes on just brown fields alone. The last time I was involved in the Housing Committee there were over 26,000 people on the council house waiting list and I'm sure this must be even higher now. The Council's Local Plan will not be approved unless we have identified sufficient sites to do so. The facts as I understand it is that there were four sites which have been in the previous Local Plan for many, many years for the Owlthorpe area. Three of those were Owlthorpe Fields. The recent local plan acknowledges that building has already taken place on one site and that two have now been earmarked for continuation as open space. That is a significant step forward and down to the hard work that our MP Clive Betts has done around this. The land known as Owlthorpe F has been identified for a potential future housing development. However, this does not mean houses are going to be built there immediately. There has not been a planning application received and if there were then everyone living in close proximity would be contacted and consulted along with the Beighton councillors.

Email response from the Council's Planning Service

The site at Moor Valley ("Owlthorpe F") was allocated for housing in the Sheffield Unitary Development Plan (UDP) in 1998; this remains the statutory development plan for the city and therefore housing is the allocated land use for that site. Mr Marsh is correct in that, in the Pre-Submission Draft of the Local Plan in 2013, the site was instead shown as a "Countryside Area" designation, where development was not proposed, because at that time the land was not needed for housing. However, the main reason the Council was not able to proceed with that Draft Plan was due to the need to provide more housing land as a result of changing Government policy in relation to housing land requirements. Given these significant changes in circumstances, the Pre-Submission Draft Plan was not submitted to the Government for public

examination (and was therefore never adopted). Subsequently, the Council was obliged to look again at how to meet its housing land requirements citywide in the Draft Local Plan and the site at Moor Valley, it being a UDP housing allocation and therefore also not being in the Green Belt, was proposed again as a housing site allocation in the latest Draft Local Plan. The Council's Ecology Unit has assessed Site F as part of the site selection process and it is very different in value to the 'Owlthorpe Fields' area (which is to be protected in the Local Plan as a Local Wildlife Site and Local Green Space). The Plan includes conditions on the site allocation to protect the hedgerows and other ecologically valuable areas, including ensuring that connective ecological corridors/areas (including buffers) shown on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and combined natural capital opportunity maps are to be maintained on site and removed from the developable area, plus any development would be subject to at least 10% biodiversity net gain. Objectors to the proposed site allocation will be able to express their views to the Planning Inspector at the Local Plan public examination hearings. These are expected to start early in the new year and the Programme Officer will write to objectors in due course to invite them to attend the relevant hearing sessions. The Local Plan is not due to be adopted until December 2024.

Roger Marsh was in attendance at the meeting to raise further questions. He asked Members of the Committee when they voted for the Local Plan, did they know they were voting to destroy an environmental project in Owlthorpe.

Councillor Gail Smith confirmed that no Member on this Local Area Committee voted for the Local Plan.

Roger Marsh stated that the Council's Planning Service had misinformed members of the public and that it was a disgrace that members of the public and school children put effort into building these projects for them to be destroyed.

Councillor Ian Horner reiterated that no Member part of the South East Local Area committee voted for the Local Plan. He mentioned that no amendments were allowed to be put forward at the Council meeting, leaving the Council to either vote for the plan to go through or not. He stated that some Members of this Committee who did not for the Plan paid a heavy price for voting that way therefore he respected those Members for making that decision.

Councillor Tony Downing stated that he was in support of Mr Marsh's views on this situation. He explained that he had forwarded on Mr Marsh's email to Clive Betts MP who had responded to Mr Marsh agreeing to meet with him. Councillor Gail Smith added that if Mr Marsh would like to extend that invitation out then she would also like to attend.

6.3 The Committee received the following questions from members of the public, in attendance at the meeting.

6.4 David Cronshaw

Can you let us know what organisation in the South East by ward have funding from The Economic Recovery Fund One and how many will be getting funding in Economic Recovery Fund Two and what did they receive this fund was mentioned at a recent Economic Development and Skills Policy Committee on Wednesday 13 September 2023.

Following on from the previous LAC meeting, I'm still waiting on an answer to this question. In the previous month can you confirm what the crime figures were per ward in the South East Area relating to burglaries, car theft and other categories and how does that compare to other areas in Sheffield.

Can you confirm whether the Newstead Housing Scheme is going ahead.

Has The Birley Ward any plans to use the £69,000 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money it has accrued plus how to community groups apply for CIL money.

For future LAC meetings can members of the public have presentations from South Yorkshire's Crime Commissioner Allan Billings and from Parks and Countryside.

The Chair stated that he was a member of the Economic Development and Skills Policy Committee and that there were figures broken down per ward. Therefore, this information could be shared with the member of public. He mentioned there was a presentation from South Yorkshire Police later on the agenda therefore information relating to crime figures in the area could be shared then.

In relation to the Newstead Housing Scheme, Councillor Bryan Lodge explained that he raised the same issue at the Full Council meeting on the 4 October 2023 and that he was also frustrated with the progress of that housing scheme. He stated that at February Full Council meeting, the Council set a property building target of 3,000 properties which had not been fulfilled therefore he would keep pushing for this to happen.

The Chair confirmed The Birley Ward does have plans to use the £69,000 CIL money.

The Chair explained that the LAC intended to have different themes at each of their quarterly meetings. With LACs being quarterly it was difficult to say what presentations could be incorporated into upcoming meetings. He added that the Police and Crime Commissioning role were being deleted next May therefore was reluctant to include a presentation from Allan Billings at a future meeting. He stated that a presentation relating to Parks and Countryside could potentially be brought to a future meeting.

6.5 Public Questioner 3

Referred to the lack of cycling infrastructure in this part of the city. He asked if the LAC had scope and funding to look at improving this.

Councillor Tony Downing stated that he had been talking with the Council officers responsible for Active Travel in the city, and they had said they were working from the City Centre outwards. This meant that Active Travel improvements may take a while to reach this part of the city although they had assured Councillor Downing that it will happen.

Councillor Karen McGowan stated that James Walker (member of the public) was the Active Travel Champion for the South East. He attended a previous meeting where he shared many good ideas relating to Active Travel which the Committee said they would work with him on. She added that the member of public could be put in touch with James Walker so that further ideas can be shared.

Councillor Mick Rooney explained that it was the Transport Regeneration and Climate Policy Committee, Strategy & Resources Policy Committee/Finance Committee that were the decision makers on matters like this therefore he encouraged the member of public to put forward his concerns to the Chairs of those Committees.

Councillor Denise Fox mentioned that Birley Wars Councillors had been supporting cycling in schools for some time now. They had also helped Charnock bike track get established.

6.6 Public Questioner 4

Mentioned she attended the Full Council meeting on the 6 September 2023 and thanked Members for their contributions during a difficult meeting. She emphasised that they were opposed to the infrastructure in regard to the Beighton Site. She would speak with Members on behalf of her group to ensure their concerns were raised.

The Chair mentioned that the questions put forward to the Council and Strategy & Resources Policy Committee were very well put together and that the member of public was very well spoken at those meetings.

Councillor Ian Horner mentioned he had a question asking what the plans were for park and ride in this area, although at that meeting there was not enough time for it to be read out. He stated there was no park & ride in this area although believed it would be a good idea to have as the A57 is really congested therefore that could be a solution. He also added there was going to be more bus service cuts therefore encouraged everyone to fight against that.

Councillor Bryan Lodge reiterated that the members of public put forward a strong case at the Full Council meeting. He also believed that this site was not suitable due to infrastructure issues and it was definitely not an attack on the travelling community, as made out by other Members of the council.

Councillor Gail Smith also reiterated that it was such an amazing speech given at the Full Council meeting. She also stated that it was never about the travelling community at that Site, it was about the traffic that people had to put up with in this area.

Councillor Alison Norris mentioned that the transport data was not up to date therefore this could be challenged. She added that a Transport Strategy was still in development therefore we could put forward ideas to that to relieve some of the pressure. Also, Oliver Coppard was leading a campaign for better funding for busses therefore encouraged members of the public to support that campaign.

Councillor Mick Rooney also reiterated how good the speech was at the Full Council meeting. He said how it was not ok for those Green Party Members to say this was an anti-traveller act.

6.7 Public Questioner 5

Referred to the Moss Way allotments. She stated there was concerns around only having one gate on this site and how that was a safety risk in the event of a fire. She asked if the LAC could support the addition of a pedestrian gate on this site.

Councillor Tony Downing stated that he would speak with a Senior Officer in the parks department at the Council to see if they could work with the member of public on this issue.

Councillor Gail Smith stated that she, along with Councillor Downing would go and visit the allotment site with the member of public.

6.8 At this stage of the meeting, the Chair thanked Councillors Karen McGowan and Denise Fox (previously Chair and Deputy Chair of this Local Area Committee) for all there work on this LAC. He mentioned how good it was to have such a good cross-party relationship on this LAC and that tone was set by the previous Chair and Deputy therefore he thanked them for this. Councillor Gail Smith echoed the Chairs comments.