

STEPPING HILL WARD COMMITTEE

Meeting: 25 June 2008
At: 6.30 pm

PRESENT

Councillors Ben Alexander, Maggie Clay and Mark Weldon.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED – That Councillor Ben Alexander be elected Chair of the Ward Committee for the period until the next Annual Council meeting.

Councillor Alexander in the Chair

2. MINUTES

The minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meetings held on 19 March 2008 were approved as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declaration of interests were made.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

(i) Neighbourhood Policing

Inspector Mark Gallichan, Neighbourhood Inspector from Greater Manchester Police, attended the meeting to answer questions from Councillors and members of the public in relation to neighbourhood policing issues within the Stepping Hill Ward.

Inspector Gallichan reported that since the public meeting regarding the recent incidences of anti-social behaviour in Great Moor, there had been a decrease in the number of reports to the police, though there may have been some displacement of activity to other part of the area.

Inspector Gallichan also reported on the assignment of a further PCSO in the East Area, Ed Palmer, who would be assigned to the Great Moor area. Members of the public welcomed the work of the PCSOs, and paid tribute to the response of the officers in the Neighbourhood Policing Team.

Members of the public reported on increased anti-social behaviour in Great Moor Park, and on Great Moor Lane where there had been a recent arson attack.

(ii) Public Question Time

No public questions were submitted.

(iii) Petitions

No petitions were submitted.

(iv) Area Flexibility Funding

There were no applications to consider.

5. POST OFFICE REORGANISATION

A representative of the Service Director (Regeneration & Leisure) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the proposals from the Post Office for the closure of 2,500 of the country's 40,000 post office branches. It was proposed that eleven of the 41 branches in Stockport be closed, including the Great Moor branch. The Council was currently undertaking consultation with the community and local businesses about the proposals that would inform the Council's response to the Post Office's consultation.

The report also included a copy of the Post Office's Branch Access Report, which provided an assessment of the branch proposed for closure and identified alternative branches that would be expected to meet customer demand.

Members of the public made a number of comments, including the following:-

- The branch access reports showed that the Great Moor branch was widely used, and indicated that it was a viable post office. Why was the Post Office planning to close it?
- Stepping Hill Hospital was behind the Great Moor branch, which was the only accessible post office for some patients and staff.
- The increase in internet shopping and auctioning meant that residents were increasingly using the local post office for the shipping of parcels. This would put pressure on the Woodsmoor and Hazel Grove branches.
- There were a number of developments in and around Great Moor and Hazel Grove (such as Manston Lodge and the office developments on Bramhall Moor Lane) which would make it difficult for older residents to access services, and put pressure on the already busy Hazel Grove Post Office.
- A number of the buses that the Access Report suggested the public could use only travelled as far as Stepping Hill Hospital, not as far as Hazel Grove.
- There were a number of errors within the Access Report, which called into question how robust the process had been.
- The closure of 28% of the branches in Stockport seemed unfair, as the average elsewhere was only 17%.
- There were a number of elderly and disabled users of the Great Moor branch for whom the alternatives were not viable.
- The closure of Great Moor would mean a very long stretch of the A6 would be without a Post Office, from Stockport Town Centre to Hazel Grove.
- The closure of Great Moor would have a significant impact on the businesses in Great Moor – people would shop elsewhere if they were using another Post Office.
- The Council should be putting as much pressure on the Government as possible about this matter.
- The Government appeared to be dismantling the country's postal service on an incremental basis.
- Where would the closure programme end? It was likely that it would get worse still.

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Councillors suggested that concerned local residents and businesses needed to provide a robust case for the retention of both the Great Moor and Woodsmoor Post Offices, as experienced had shown that a simple petition would not be sufficient to alter closure programme, and invited volunteers to assist with preparing these cases.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted, and the Service Director (Regeneration & Leisure) be requested to give consideration to the comments made when preparing the Council's response to the Post Office consultation.

(2) That a group comprising residents, local businesses and Councillors be established to prepare a business case for the retention of the Great Moor and Woodsmoor Post Offices, for submission to the Post Office.

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That the Head of Area Governance be requested to make arrangements for meetings of the Ward Committee on the following dates:-

Wednesday 10 September

Wednesday 15 October

Wednesday 21 January

Wednesday 18 March

The meeting closed at 8.01 pm.