

WEST of WATERLOOVILLE ADVISORY GROUP

Briefing Note for members of the WOW Forum meeting on 6th July 2015

First steps

1. The West of Waterlooville Advisory Group was set up following a meeting between representatives of Southwick & Widley Parish Council, Denmead Parish Council and Winchester City Council (WCC) held in January 2012. This itself followed a meeting of the City Council's Licensing and Regulation Committee which recommended such a step prior to embarking on a Community Governance Review (CGR) which might then enable a new parish to be set up to serve the emerging community which is made up of areas currently known as Old Park Farm, Wellington Gate and Berewood which are primarily marketing names.
2. Its membership and 'terms of reference' were agreed (and were set out in Paper WWF66 appendix3). The first meeting was held in July 2012 and meetings have been held at bi-monthly intervals with the chairmanship alternating on an annual basis between the two parishes.
3. During the period to date the Group has established itself with contributions from residents of the area being co-opted to the Group along with representatives of local bodies (Neighbourhood Watch and the Waterlooville Community Forum). The involvement of all the local ward councillors has been welcome. Of great importance has been the support of the Community Officer for the development (Jamie Bridges) and of the Implementation Officer (Jackie Wilson) who have made themselves available to attend meetings and provide up to date information and answering questions and with the results it has been possible to keep residents aware of changes going on around them.

Progress

4. Progress has been slower than had been anticipated. The initial reason for this was the lack of a community building in which meetings could be held within the WoW area. This problem has been eased by the availability of Berewood School to hold meetings. Thanks are recorded to Mrs Patrick (Headteacher) for her helpful approach to the role of the school in the emerging community. Unfortunately, the lack of easy access to the school from the Taylor Wimpey built houses does remain a problem,
5. The second reason for slowing progress was the impact of the Local Government Boundary Commission's review of wards in Winchester district. It was found that the revised wards would have to be in place and elections held using them before any move could be made to initiate a CGR. This means that a new Council could not be elected before May 2017.

Achievements

6. Following the failure of the first residents Association, WoWAG recognised its role as the only body which gave access to ward councillors and WCC officers. The public session of each meeting has been extended and without formality (but with tea and biscuits!) has taken on that role. It is providing a mechanism for residents to have their say, even if we cannot always provide the answers they want.

7. Each year Denmead Parish Council has put a sum of £500 at the disposal of WoWAG. The first year this paid for a large Christmas Tree and lights which were put up as a focus for seasonal celebrations. It also paid for a “Welcome to the estate” leaflet. Last year’s money has been used to help to finance a Circus Skills activity for young people. This began on the last two weekends of June and from a personal view, it seemed a great success with over 25 children involved when I paid the event a visit. This series of events organised by the Theatre Royal as part of the Hat Fair.

This current year, following approval of the WCC Open Spaces Officer, it is anticipated that a large fir tree will be purchased. It be planted within the community and grow with it, each year being dressed and lit at Christmastime.

Working together

8. Earlier this year members of WoWAG from both Parish Councils attended a joint parish councillors training session, an event which was well received. The two Parish Councils have agreed that in future Planning Applications that relate to anywhere in the MDA will be discussed together at one meeting, with the aim of producing comments and responses upon which both agree. This form of joint working and sharing of experience (to which the residents co-opted members will be invited to attend) will demonstrate how a parish council operates and set the seeds for a future new parish.

9. A further new challenge will be to explain the new electoral arrangements following the Local Government Boundary Commission review of the wards in Winchester District. It will not be easy to explain that from 2016 some residents will be in Denmead Ward and Denmead Parish; some will be in Denmead Ward and Southwick & Widley Parish; some will be in Southwick & Wickham Ward and Southwick & Widley Parish; whilst the remainder are in Havant BC! Some clear and detailed maps at street level will be required.

Cllr Neil Lander-Brinkley
Member of WoWAG for Denmead Parish Council

2nd July 2015