

Boscombe Area Forum, Monday 4 February 2008 7.30-9pm
Avon Room, St George's Wellspring Centre, Haviland Road, Boscombe.

Apologies

Councillor Russell, Cllr Chapman, Dawn Bevan, Neighbourhood Manager

Present

Councillors: Stephen MacLoughlin (Council Leader), Robert Lawton (Cabinet, Highways),
Boscombe West: Chris Wakefield, Lisa Northover, Phil Stanley-Watts, Boscombe East:
Linda Bailey, Chris Rochester. Ben Grower (as a resident)
Council: Mike Holmes, Head of Planning, Communities: Tejinder Birk, Amanda Catlin,
Licensing: Sarah deBruin, Carol Butler - our urban centre manager
Committee: Stephen Humphrey, Gary Sherbourne, Mike Bunney, Chris Green, Ben
Prescott, Kathie Pearce, Peter Castle,
Police: Gordon Wallis, Ben Martin, Clodie Sutcliffe
20-30 residents.

The Chair welcomed Forum Members who hadn't attended previously.

Highlights

- Call into the Police Shop in the Sovereign Centre and get a tether for your purse, to stop it being stolen from your hand bag. (see Police section)
 - Report crime and antisocial behaviour to the Police; where residents do that: it gets results.
 - If you're interested in licensing policy, you have until the 18th February to make detailed input into the new policy.
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Statement of Licensing Policy

Until 18th February, you can download the new draft policy from the Council Website. The following link goes to the right page: <http://tinyurl.com/2pgu4u>

- New policy requested by new administration; draft version brought to meeting.
- Deadline for comment 18/2/08 - end of 12 week consultation.
- Council has an existing policy, as required under the 2003 legislation.
- This policy is relating to alcohol licensing, rather than gambling, which the same department is responsible for.
- Dorset Police have raised the issue of cumulative impact: Central area in Bmth is already designated a cumulative impact zone, and Police believe it has been beneficial. Wimborne Road, Boscombe, Charminster Road proposed for a cumulative impact zone.
- Police also suggested a last entry time, which couldn't be put in as a policy, but its under consideration.
- The Chair made the point that the subject of tonight's meeting was the future of Boscombe precinct and that this had been advertised as such for three months.

She felt it inappropriate for the Council to 'parachute' in matters for consultation so late in the consultation period that were not specific to the subject of the meeting and queried why, if the consultation period had been running for twelve weeks, officers had not attended an earlier forum meeting.
[Cllr MacLoughlin apologised for this at the end of the meeting.]

The Police - Three Priorities and The Precinct

New member of the safer neighbourhoods scheme, Ben Martin, introduced himself.

As part of involving community, police are looking for communities to give their views on their three priorities.

In the precinct: residents concerned that drinking or drug use is becoming more visible. Police are taking a zero tolerance approach. Police have power (Section 27 order) to tell people behaving antisocially to leave the area for 48 hours. Half a dozen issued in precinct area, including a second ban for a aggressive begger.

Two officers, Operation Hydra, are targetting antisocial behaviour in precinct.

Bag dippings, handbag thefts: Police and Neighbourhood Management have funding for tethers for people's purses to stop them being taken from handbags.

A member of the Forum was able to vouch for their effectiveness.

Come to Police shop in Sovereign Centre and get a tether.

Report issues: Forum Members reported that in areas where residents report issues to the police, wardens, and Police Community Support Officers, things are getting better.

Boscombe Precinct

Presentation from Cllr Stephen MacLoughlin

Economic strand in regeneration

Not uniformly good news, but there are positive aspects.

Retail in the area is, statistically, doing well: Nationally, particular sectors impacted by Internet sales, such as Travel Agents.

There was concern about impact of Castle Point, but footfall is up in 2007 compared to 2006.

Opera House, new restaurants, and investment in guesthouses are evidence of success

Social strand in regeneration: some progress evidenced by the fact that some types of crime are falling.

Physical regeneration: there is something of a different story north and south of xch road.

Barratts: Due to complete Autumn '09. Boscombe Chine Gardens - 2.2m

The Pier Refurbishment and piazza area are due to complete before May 2008.

Surf Reef will be in place by end October. Publicity about surf reef, the first in the northern hemisphere, is very valuable to Boscombe. Reef is expected to attract £3M in additional spending. Need to spread that through Boscombe to the precinct.

Precinct isn't up to standard; needs some investment.

Options:

- minor maintenance, paint street furniture etc - £100K
- Resurfacing, replace street furniture - £250K
- School of thought that limited vehicle access may have benefits: £1M scheme buses would go east to west.
- Full vehicle access £1.3M

Funding sources:

- Council Tax - not likely, budget is too tight
- Borrowing - has to be repaid; doesn't generate income for Council to do this
- Development opportunities on Council land.

Peter Castle pointed out that Council support for advertising (a-boards/banners) would help businesses and customers find each other, and that Santa Monica should be looked at for inspiration for Boscombe and Bournemouth.

Carol Butler highlighted some strengths and weaknesses of Boscombe's shops:

- Flat pedestrian area is a plus for families - safe for children, easy for mobility scooters and buggies.
- Boscombe doesn't do so well in November/December - 'bargain shop' character does OK rest of the year. Need a more diverse shop offering.
- Transport link between sea front and precinct would help - the hill plus people don't realise how close it is.
- No large sites available for a major store.
- We have a premises license for the precinct, and can use it as a 'stage.' Contact Carol about using it. Evening events would be good to see in the summer

Steven Humphrey asked whether investment in Boscombe should be made to bring it up to par with Bath, Salisbury, or Bournemouth Square - which is higher quality and more attractive area.

Gary Sherbourne made the point that the precinct is still technically a highway, and that part of the challenge is juggling that conflict. Deciding which it is, once and for all, might help.

Mike Holmes advised that it has to remain technically a highway because of the services that run through (under) it; they would have to be re-routed.

No dissent to the view that the sale of the Owls Road day-care site should be ring fenced for the area.

One resident highlighted the independent shops, rather than corporate chain stores, as a key selling point for Boscombe; like Brighton's lanes. Boscombe has a unique character

that must be maintained

Barry Barnes, independent retailer, spoke in favour of the pedestrian precinct, having traded before and after the pedestrianisation, and said it should stay.

Ben Prescott raised the issue of poor access on foot between the precinct and the rest of the Christchurch Road, particularly the north side, at both ends of the precinct. Planning inspector cited the poor access as justification for parking on the Aldi site.

Vote taken: Should the precinct be opened up to traffic, in whole or in part?
No - virtually unanimous.

Summary: Small shops are to be encouraged. Pedestrianisation retained but upgraded. Link between seafront and precinct via Sea road, perhaps using innovative transport link, is essential. Well thought out traffic management plan essential. A source of funds and a dedicated budget needs to be identified. Any changes must involve local traders, residents and the forum,
KP thanked everyone for their contributions and to Cllr. McCloughlin for his presentation

Date & Time of next meeting

April.

Committee meeting in March to arrange and publicise.

website: <http://thewatertower.org/forum>