

Bedlington Forum



A Community in Partnership

Minutes of the meeting held on 6th September 2011 at the Salvation Army, Hartford Road, Bedlington.

Present:

Brian Oliver – Chair

Margaret Oliver – Secretary

Mary Allen WBTC

Bedlingtonshire Chamber of Trade

Northumbria Police

Friends of Gallagher Park

Northumberland County Council

Malcolm Robinson – Vice Chair

Pauline Hicks West Bed.Town Council

Paul Hedley WBTC

SNRG Radio Group

U K Online

Salvation Army

17 Residents

Tribute

Before the meeting commenced the Chair paid tribute to one of the original members of Bedlington Forum, Margaret Penny, her funeral took place that day. Margaret gave many many, hours doing voluntary work of one form or another. In recent years she was especially known for the single handed organisation of The Remembrance Day Parade, right down to ordering each wreath required for those who wished to lay one as well as having the order of service printed up and handed out to those who attended. She was one of the original team who many years ago raised monies for the Christmas Lights appeal, which in part continues to this day in St Cuthbert's Church Yard. She will be sadly missed

1. Introductions & Apologies:

Arthur Pegg; Davy Graham; Alex Wallace; Joan Douglas; Val Tyler; George Todd

2. Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 14th June 2011

These were confirmed as a true record by George Webster and Russell Hogg.

3. Police update

Overview – General crime in Bedlington is DOWN over the last 28days with a significant increase in the detection rate.

Crime Numbers	July 2011	August 2011	Difference
Burglary Dwelling	1	7	+6
Burglary OTD	4	5	=1
Criminal Damage	26	16	-10
Vehicle	14	6	-8
Violent Crime	25	27	+2
Total Crime (All categories)	97	93	-4
	2010	2011	
Year to date comparison	111	97	Down14
Detection Rate % [Target 38%]	45.5%	53.5%	Up 8%

Anti-Social Behaviour			
Youth ASB	67	54	-13
Non Youth ASB	103	127	+24
Total ASB	170	181	

There has been an increase in Burglary Dwellings however when analysed this increase can be attributed to crime recording mechanisms where at least two of the six offences are where vacant properties have been targeted for boiler and copper piping. Another burglary was committed by a person known to police and that resulted in an arrest, charged and remanded in custody hence offence detected.

One offence of concern is where a bogus workmen/people have attended an elderly female's address and taken cash from a hiding place in her bedroom. It is vital that we ask community members to look out for such people knocking on doors, particularly if elderly are known to live in the area. If you see anything like this happening please contact the police on **03456043043**, this is the direct line number for the control room, where the staff can contact officers via their radios and direct them to the location.

Violent Crime is showing a slight increase from the previous 28 days the level is comparable with the same period last year. Most of these offences are committed by persons generally known to the victim and are in the main detected so there should be little cause for concern.

Youth ASB is down in this reporting period, it is down by 28 incidents on the same period as last year. Although None Youth ASB is showing an increase this period, it is only up by four, therefore it should not be of any concern.

Bedlington recently held an Online PACT meeting which was considered successful, these will be held more regularly and will be publicised on the Force website and in the press.

In conjunction with Trading Standards the NPT at Bedlington conducted a Test Purchase Operation around the public houses of Bedlington to see whether youths were served alcohol. Five were visited and three sold alcohol to the youths and will be prosecuted; two correctly challenged the youths and no sales were made to them. This operation was conducted following information received from the community about concerns over the licensed premises' behaviour.

Chair's note: When our Community Support Officers (CSO) attend our meetings they are only there to present the report compiled by the regular officers and answer general questions. When there is no police officer present anyone wishing to ask questions about specific incidents should contact the Neighbourhood Police Officers.

At the end of the briefing the Chair reported that following a further metal theft from St Cuthbert's Church and as the environmental champion for our area, a partnership was brokered between the Forum, Northumbria Police and NCC Green Spaces Officer to tackle the on-going problem of under growth and bushes which helped to hide anyone up to mischief in the church yard.

5. Northumberland Community Development Network

Trish Coonan presenting for UK Online, on behalf of the Bedlingtonshire Development Trust, gave a presentation concerning the delivery of informal adult learning for those who wish to learn how to use and access the internet using a computer. The courses will be open to all and

free of charge. The Government hope by 2013 to get 1million extra people on line. A lively discussion followed the presentation with a small number of members expressing concerns about the Internet in general and one saying she wouldn't have a computer in the house. However the vast majority of members welcomed this initiative and more than a dozen expressed interest in doing the courses. It is hoped to start rolling this out in October after the first group of volunteers have been trained.

6. Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)

Richard Schofield gave the meeting an update for the above, which is now in its third year. Beatrice's hairdresser and the adjoining shop had just been started that day, with the replacement of their front windows followed later by the roof being replaced with pan tiles. J R Johnson and the Flower Stop are set to commence soon. Explanation of the Building Grants progress was discussed. Richard informed the meeting that 25th November 2011 was National Gutters Day and reminded everyone that work should be done at this time of year to clean all the old debris from their gutters so that they will be clear in readiness for the winter weather. Anyone interested can come along to the Market Place on (provisional date) Frid. 25th Nov.

He also commented that some members of the meeting had attended a days training for lime mortar pointing which is used frequently used in conservation areas. He announced that it was Heritage weekend when many activities would be carried out in the Bedlington Market Place, St Cuthbert's Church as well as at Gallagher Park in the afternoon Sustran was having their grand opening of the Cycle Routes which is now completed and also the unveiling of the Portrait Bench.

7. South Northumberland Radio Group (SNRG)

Colin Heathcote & Neal Younger updated our group, stating their sign had been installed above the premises in June (90A Front St East). They have managed to get the business rates waived in an agreement with NCC and stated that it had taken them three and a half years to get this far!! They have managed to make some savings to their original estimate of costs. They have received a sizable donation from builders C W Davis as well as £3,000 from Bernicia Homes. Offer of help has also been given by some members of this Forum to help complete the works necessary to the building. He explained that this is a community led radio station so they will broadcast active community campaigns that may be on-going or make any community based announcements that groups may feel they wish to make. They will however depend (50%) on advertising revenue which will be needed to help finance the station. The music to talk ratio will be around 70/30. Some questions followed.

8. Bedlingtonshire Development Trust (BDT)

- Are currently working on a Coalfields Regeneration funding application with regards to regenerating the building they are hoping to take over. They have succeeded in making it into the third round; however this is the most difficult and technical round to progress! Held an onsite meeting with new NCC Conservation Officer.
- In conjunction with the Townscape Heritage Initiative (T.H.I.) the Trust held a training course in Conservation Building Techniques. Many thanks to Richard Schofield for organising that and the builders, Gary Simpson of Greenhead, who gave their time, materials and tutelage for free!
- BDT has successfully applied to have a UK Online Training Centre in Bedlington; this will be at The Salvation Army Building. The Centre will be rolling out basic training in computer/internet usage. We need as many people as possible to take the small courses because we can then show our community is willing to embrace IT if we are given the help and training. That could lead to further courses, including qualifications. The Community Hub has agreed to signpost people they work with to us. Bedlington Conservation Area Guide. Malcolm felt this is the first time we have had something positive to promote our town with and has and is using it to promote Bedlington within the networks the Trust has built up over the last year and farther afield. There should now be some on display for any member of the public visiting a

Development Trust ran information centre within Northumberland. A blown up version now adorns the foyer at County Hall!

- BDT is doing further training this month with regard to e-procurement.
- Held our first AGM, basically same officers have been re-elected but we have appointed two new directors.
- We have also helped The Friends of Gallagher Park at their meetings with NCC and taken on the role of organising a community wide questionnaire on their behalf.

9. Friends of Gallagher Park Val Tyler (Chair) was not in attendance Malcolm Robinson gave a brief update:

After 2 meetings with NCC officers we now have the beginnings of a framework to see what developments we can go for in the Park. The questionnaires which have gone out are an important part of that partnership and shows community consultation. The next meeting, to be held in October, is where the options on the way forward are to be discussed, based on the questionnaires results. FoGP made up the shortfall in funding for the Sustrans event thanks to much appreciated donations by East Bedlington Parish Council and West Bedlington Town Council.

Sustrans will unveil their Portrait Bench on Saturday 10th September

10. Any Other Business

Hartford Hall Gates

Malcolm commented that having been present when questions about these gates had been asked but with no real answers forthcoming, he decided to make enquiries himself. After several phone calls and using internet searches he was no further forward so he asked the question, on the Bedlington.co.uk web site, does anyone know where these gates are now? An answer immediately popped up from an ex Bedlingtonian who lives in Leicester (Pete) telling him to try Chris Topps Specialist Ironworks in Yorkshire. Malcolm phoned the company and spent a good while getting the full account of the sorry tale which has resulted in our Heritage being held to ransom!

With the demise of the original developer (whose original remit was to renovate the gates as part of the building development) and with the original estimate being revised quite sharply upwards, once the company had the opportunity to do a detailed inspection at their factory, the money was never forthcoming. Even the funding granted by English Heritage was sequestered by the administrator brought in to oversee the now bankrupted developer. This in turn has led to the company holding the gates as a form of collateral, as they have unpaid bills for associated work already completed! Really a sorry tale all round but with the Hartford Hall Residents Association, NCC, English Heritage and others working together towards a solution we might eventually see these gates brought back to the Town where they belong.

Footnote: The Grade 2* listed cast iron gates were originally made by the Coalbrookdale Company in Staffordshire circa 1873 for an exhibition held in Vienna to celebrate the very best of products available in the world at that time.

VCS Alliance The Chair reminded everyone of the forthcoming alliance meeting as well as the Heritage & Sustran events planned for Bedlington

DATE OF OUR NEXT MEETING:
Monday 28th November 2011
6.30pm at the Salvation Army, Hartford Road.