

Northampton Borough Council

Youth Forum

Tuesday, 11 January 2005

Present:	Sean Silver	-	NBC (in the Chair)
	Antoine Allen	-	Northampton School for Boys
	Lindsey Ambrose	-	NBC
	Ray Bowmer	-	NBC
	Ady Culpin	-	First Bus
	Councillor Michael Hill	-	NBC
	Rebecca Jones	-	Northampton Academy
	Gavin McFarlane	-	Shoosmith Solicitors
	Daniel Opey	-	Weston Favell Upper
	David Tranter	-	Northampton School for Boys
	Morcea Walker	-	NCC

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mark Butler (Stagecoach), V Carter, Councillor Eldred and Alice Manser.

It was agreed that Sean Silver would Chair the meeting.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2004 were agreed.

3. Matters Arising Not Already On The Agenda

Regarding the Level 1 police meetings held in each ward, Sean Silver advised that members of the Youth Forum would be invited to these, and that the dates of these meetings would be circulated in due course.

Morcea Williams commented that volunteers for the Website were still needed. She hoped to set up and trial the site by half-term (14 February) and to promote it in the Eastern Newsletter. Morcea Williams would liaise with Lindsey Ambrose and a letter requesting volunteers would be sent to Forum members.

Sean Silver reminded the Forum about the sports cards and encouraged members to be involved with the production of these.

4. Black History Project

Item deferred to the next meeting.

5. Bus Issues

The Chair introduced Ady Culpin, Marketing Manager (Midlands), First Bus.

Members of the Forum expressed disappointment that the Operations manager for Stagecoach had been unable to attend the meeting, as they had complaints

regarding reliability of service and cleanliness of the buses run by Stagecoach.

Ady Culpin advised that he could not speak on behalf of Stagecoach, but commented that bus companies had a duty to ensure that all buses and timetables operated as specified when registered by the company. However, there were reasons why buses did not operate on time. For instance, the main arteries into town during peak times were very congested, and where there was not a bus lane, this would cause buses to run late.

Gavin McFarlane observed that the increase in bus fares resulted in an increase in the numbers of people using cars. Ady Culpin advised that research into this had shown that, given the choice, people would use cars over buses. He commented that it was difficult to find a balance between charging acceptable fares while remaining competitive. Forum members complained that fare increases were not advertised well in advance. Ady Culpin responded that it was not always possible to do so, as there were occasions when a directive to increase fares would be received from the Group, sometimes only a few days ahead of implementation. He pointed out that there had been a 4% patronage increase, which indicated acceptable fare increases and increased reliability of service.

Forum members questioned why buses stopped running so early on Sunday evenings. Ady Culpin commented that the bus service would not run at all on Sundays, without subsidies from the local authority.

Regarding cleanliness, it was pointed out that the buses were clean at the start of each day, and that passengers were responsible for leaving litter. It was not feasible for the driver to clean the bus after each journey, as this would cause delays. The Forum discussed whether smoking on buses was acceptable. Ady Culpin commented that he received 5-10 letters a week, complaining about smoking on buses. He advised that it was planned to implement a 'no-smoking' policy on all buses, but this would be difficult as there would be no-one to uphold it.

Gavin McFarlane commented that there always seemed to be a lot of buses in the depot at St James, particularly at weekends. Ady Culpin advised that First had a fleet of 70 buses, and that at various times these would be in the depot for servicing, MOTs and so on. He also commented that the demand for buses was not as high at weekends. There were plans to introduce new buses in Feb/March, and it was anticipated that by October of this year, the fleet would be no older than 3 years old.

Ady Culpin noted that service changes were due to take place on 20 February, and it was agreed that he would come to a future meeting to update the Forum about these. Mark Butler from stagecoach would also be invited to the same meeting. The Chair thanked A Culpin for his attendance.

6. Budget Consultation

Ray Bowmer, Head of Financial Strategy was introduced to the Forum.

He explained that the Council was currently consulting on its draft budget proposals,

which were outlined in the leaflet circulated. All Forums were being consulted with, and any comments or suggestions would be taken back to the Executive before the budget was finalised. Comments could be made by telephone, letter or e-mail.

Gavin McFarlane commented that there did not appear to be any proposals to provide facilities for young people aged between 13-18 years old. The Forum was advised that this was primarily a County Council responsibility. However, the Community Safety Partnership, in partnership with the County Council, was looking to resource some facilities.

Forum members questioned the future of The Roadmender. Councillor Hill advised that while this was an independent organisation, it was heavily subsidised by the Borough and County Councils, as well as the Arts Council, and was facing financial difficulty. Concerns were also raised about the future of the leisure centres.

Rebecca Jones queried what increased efficiency for councillors meant. Councillor Hill commented that many Councillors worked full-time, so, in order to help Councillors work more effectively, it was hoped to assign a research assistant to each of the parties. This had also been a recommendation of the recent Government review of the council.

Ray Bowmer advised that all the comments would be summarised in the report for the Executive.

At this point, the Chair invited items of Any Other Business.

(A) Lindsey Ambrose told the Forum about the emergency contact cards being issued by the fire service, for people with hearing impairments or English as a second language. These were also available in Braille.

(B) Sean Silver reminded Forum members about Holocaust Memorial Day, and circulated the programme of events.

(C) Lindsey Ambrose advised that it had been agreed to profile each of the Forums in Northampton Now! Volunteers to write an article were requested.

(D) Sean Silver advised that he would be writing to Forum members about the upcoming Forum election, after which it was hoped to hold another residential weekend at Grendon.

7. Date Of Next Meeting

Thursday 24 February, 1:00pm, venue to be confirmed.