

# Diggle Community Association Open Meeting

19<sup>th</sup> November 2015 at Diggle Band Club

**Present:** Mark Brooks (Chair), Glenise Eason (Treasurer), Nick Cox (Secretary)

Committee: Julie Johnson, Ken McWatt, Stuart Coleman, Duncan Rhodes, Jo Taylor

Dilys Redfearn, John Redfearn, Margaret Payne, David Wood, Herbie Davies, Diane Davies, Kathleen Lambert, PC Mark Clough, PCSO Monica Rowley, Rosalind Gartside, Steve Scholes, Phil Sewell, Barbara Barnes, Keith Lucas, M. Kostecky,

**Apologies:** Rachael Payne, Duncan Anderson, Mike Buckley, Charlotte Coleman, Lorna Gartside, Glynis Wilkinson, Lesley Brown, Lynda Barlow, Howard Sutcliffe, Ray Withnall, Marlene Maclean, Margaret Hardy, Royce Franklin.

## **Minutes of the last meeting**

Accepted as a true record

## **Matters arising**

Following the attendance of Sue Palfrey at the previous meeting there had been some progress on the idea of establishing a Youth Club with discussions currently under way about a possible start in January 2016.

A Balsam Bash had been carried out as promised at the last meeting and, although it was relatively late in the season, a considerable number of plants had been removed from the area near the Diggle Brook and Diggle Tip.

### **1. Police up-date**

PC Mark Clough indicated that there had been 77 crimes in the Saddleworth North district (which includes Diggle) since the last DCA meeting (77 days) but this is lower than the crime rate in either Saddleworth West and Lees or Saddleworth South. Crimes included:

1 incident of harassment

1 vehicle being interfered with

1 burglary (Harrop Green)

5 incidences of damage (window, vehicle, property)

MC advised members of the public to be vigilant and to note 'unfamiliar faces' in the locality as this was the advice from the Chief Constable in relation to possible terrorist/extremist activity in the Borough.

Reported crime in Saddleworth was relatively low in part because of the effectiveness of the police in establishing and maintaining good channels of communication with the public who often contact the local police directly via the phone. MC was now having to cover a larger area, incorporating Saddleworth South so the demands of the role are increasing. The number of PCs across Oldham had been reduced from 29 to 22.

Much of the crime reported is preventable and occurs because property is not left secure. Crime reduction advice is available from the police and PCSOs.

MC reminded residents to be careful when defrosting cars in the coming weeks and months and remain in the vehicle whilst the engine is running to defrost the windscreen as cars left unoccupied with engines running are vulnerable to theft.

There had been a number of break-ins to sheds and garages recently in which the perpetrators appeared to be looking to take bicycles (many of which are now very valuable). A reminder to ensure outbuildings are secure.

With darker evenings it is sensible to use timer switches as houses left in darkness are more vulnerable to burglary. Ten houses in Saddleworth North had been burgled and these incidents had taken place in the early evening.

Automatic Number-plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras were now in operation at some sites in Diggle - these will identify cars which had been involved in crime or which have been stolen.

Information supplied by residents had recently resulted in 3 arrests, the vigilance of members of the public is therefore vitally important to the work of the Police.

Question from the floor: what is the best way to contact the police?

MC responded: 999 for emergency, 101 for non-urgent issues, for information and advice MC's direct number: 0161 856 4525.

The Chairman asked if there had been any developments in relation to the vandalism of the clock tower at Dobcross Loom Works and the attempted arson attack in August. MC indicated that no new information had been provided.

## **2. Community Associations Meeting**

Glenise Eason and Julie Johnson had attended. JJ explained that a new Uppermill Community Association had been formed with Nick Watts as Chair. JJ felt that the establishment of the new association was very beneficial and the DCA could benefit from forming links with it. Information about the Uppermill Community Association can be found on the In Saddleworth website.

Other issues raised at the meeting included public seating – all community groups had reported damage to public benches and this survey will be completed by 30 November.

Royce Franklin had given a very good presentation about home watch pointing out that there are now only 2 Police Officers for Saddleworth and only 1 Home Watch participant in Diggle. Greater community involvement was needed. Home Watch Meetings are held at Uppermill Conservative Club MB every month.

Some community associations were securing land as community assets (Dawson's Field at Austerlands, for example) and the GGRA were also negotiating a lease on land at Greenbridge Lane in an attempt to secure it for the Community. It was suggested that this approach might be appropriate in Diggle, for the new Christmas tree and village green sites.

GE indicated that the meetings were very good and she felt there was much that could be learned from the proactive approach of other associations.

KL intervened to stress the need for community associations to link up with the Parish Council in order to strengthen the legitimacy of the PC and also to provide a strong community voice to speak up on behalf of Saddleworth communities at OMBC where for too long the Saddleworth community's concerns had been ignored. Further to this Mike Buckley reported that 10% of new homes in the Borough were to be built in Saddleworth – a significant increase in pressure on the greenbelt.

Civic Trust's involvement with the new stepping stones at Brownhill had been mentioned, as had the out of date information boards which were potentially misleading to visitors. The Parish Council is currently working on developing an interactive map of Saddleworth.

JJ had raised the issue of the playground off Ward Lane and asked if there was money available through the community fund for this. Parish Councillors to raise this with the Parks Division of OMBC and seek funding for resurfacing. KL indicated that District Partnership funds should be available for this. He went on to mention the Green Dividend fund of £5000 available to support environmental projects. The best point of contact for this is Christine Wilson. KL suggested that DCA should apply for funding as Saddleworth is often overlooked.

Community toilets: funding for this had been withdrawn from OMBC but the Parish Council was now looking at funding this scheme.

### **3. DCA Fundraising and notice board.**

MB explained that funds raised through the raffle at the previous meetings had been used for a new notice board. JJ had sourced and purchased a new notice board and will manage the posting of information on it. Paul at Diggle Post Office had been very supportive of the DCA and helpful with the notice board but had stipulated that it must be for community use only.

### **4. Lighting on Harrop Green and other conservation areas.**

NC reported that Eon had confirmed that they would be replacing existing cast iron lighting columns and lamps. He had stressed the need for a proper bat survey to be undertaken because increased light could have a negative impact on bats roosting, foraging and commuting through the area. As yet no response on this issue.

#### **5. Christmas lights switch-on and carol service**

MB acknowledged the hard work that had gone into establishing a new site for the tree in Diggle, notably by Stuart Coleman. The site opposite Ellis Mill was now close to ready: power installed, support and surround for tree to be provided by Mick Harrington. Diggle Band Club had been very supportive and the carol service would be hosted by them on 6 December. Diggle School Choir and Diggle B Band would be involved, a procession to the tree would follow the Christingle/carol service. Lights to be switched on by the winner of the competition: 'why I would like to switch on the Christmas lights in Diggle'. A request for help with baking of mince pies.

#### **6. Garden group and plans for 'greening' of Diggle**

There was a discussion of possible plans for the establishment of both a memorial garden in memory of Nicola Hughes and also the use of large planters throughout the village to give identity to the village, improve the environment and foster a sense of pride in the community. It was suggested that engaging local residents with the project is important as they could be important in maintaining beds or planters. It was also suggested that local businesses could be involved in the scheme, perhaps sponsoring planters in some locations. Steve Scholes suggested a decorative planter at the entrance to the village as a way of both asserting the identity of Diggle as a village and also to provide an advertising opportunity for local businesses. A sub-group now established to take some of these ideas forward (Stuart Coleman, Charlotte Coleman, Joy Lucas, Nick Cox, Julie Johnson, Steve Scholes)

#### **7. Saddleworth School and Highways Up-date**

Keith Lucas noted that OMBC and Unity Partnership are expected to reveal a 'final' proposal for alterations to the highways relating to the proposed new Saddleworth School at the former Shaw's Pallet Works site in Diggle. These would be part of a 'new' planning application which would involve a revised

application for the school site and separate applications concerning demolition of the link bridge to the Grade II Listed Office/Clocktower building and of the other buildings on the site, some of which are considered to be 'curtilage listed' because of their historical association with the listed structure. KL indicated that the highways proposals would be little different from the option presented at the earlier consultation event involving the creation of a single carriageway at the 'pinch point' at the southern end of Huddersfield Road in front of the terraced houses, the installation of traffic lights and the widening of the pavements. KL indicated that, as far as SDAG were aware, no consideration of the wider impact of the school and this traffic scheme on surrounding areas was being given. Impacts on Spurn Lane, Carr Lane, Ward Lane and on Dobcross were not being considered as part of the application which was narrowly focussed on the aspect of the highways work that OMBC knew they had to get through the planning process. All the indications were that the scheme would be unworkable, would generate congestion and that, when details were revealed, residents would be outraged. SDAG would be encouraging residents to attend the proposed 'consultation' event and to submit their views on the scheme.

KL also noted that OMBC had appointed a new Head of Planning, Steven Irving, who was aware of public concerns about the project to build a school. He is reported as stating that 'when large numbers of people object to a proposal they are probably right'. KL suggested that the decision over the school was still very much in the balance and that, when the planning application was finally submitted, it would again be a matter of residents making use of their opportunity to express their views on the proposal and SDAG would be campaigning to ensure that a proper opportunity was provided for members of the public to do this.

## **Events for 2016**

### **Suggested events include:**

- Diggle dog show on Diggle tip (summer)
- A concert or other event on the tip
- An event to celebrate the canal heritage
- A summer barbecue or picnic

There will be further discussion of these ideas at the AGM in January

**Anyone interested in joining the DCA committee should contact the Chairman to put their name forward in advance of the AGM**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING: AGM on 21 JANUARY 2016 8.00pm at Diggle Band Club**