

Wilford Community Group

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting held on Tuesday 26th January 2010 at 7.30 pm at Wilford Social and Bowls Club

Present: Stephanie Taylor (ST) Chair
Roger Steel (RS) Vice Chair
Sheila Atherton (SA) Treasurer
Chris Allsop (CA)
Josie Foster (JF)
Brian Hardy (BH)
Bill Roughton (BR)
Frank Wakelin (FW)

Lillian Greenwood - Prospective Labour Parliamentary Candidate, Library Staff
and approximately 30 Residents

Apologies: Dave Boulton

Action

1 Summary of Events to date:

ST gave an outline of a meeting with Cllr David Trimble and Christina Dyer, Head of Libraries and Information.

Christina Dyer feels that the library is not a viable project. At least 6 libraries around the country have tried to function on a voluntary basis but have not been successful.

Cllr Trimble suggested transferring the building to the community.

The staff at Wilford Library have received their formal notice to leave the library at the end of March but have been offered alternative placements.

There has been an offer of a Mobile Library facility; there are only two to cover the whole of Nottinghamshire and at the moment only one is functioning due to funding the books required to fit it out; however, it might only be half an hour once a week.

ST had approached the Emmanuel and Becket Schools with a view to local residents being able to use their library facilities. Becket School invited her to visit and look at their library, it is a wonderful facility for the school and the library consists of 30 computers and 14,000 books for the students and would not be suitable for general use plus the security would make it impossible for public use.

ST had also been in contact with Alan Simpson, MP who was very supportive of our actions and offered to help with advice etc.

To publicise the closure and to make comment on what is the public opinion ST will be giving a telephone interview on Wednesday 27th January at 7.00 am to BBC Radio Nottingham on the Andy Whittaker programme.

Comments from the floor were invited.

(a) Could we make the best of the mobile library by transferring half the books from the closure of Wilford library to each mobile unit?

(b) Concern was voiced about the half hour slot once a week but apparently half an hour stops are usual for mobile libraries.

(c) Could the schedule be varied?

(d) There is no internet connection on mobile libraries although the Library services are trying to get wireless connection.

(e) Saturday has been suggested and should be pushed for.

JSC asked, "Is it a final decision and do we simply accept the library will close? How much money do they save?" £38,000pa.

The theory behind the closure is fewer libraries and those remaining will become better equipped.

Why did we not know two years ago about the closure? It was Cllr Unczar who decided two years ago to close Wilford in favour of developing the Meadows and Clifton. The opinion was that The Meadows and Clifton were better valued and that Wilford is not a deprived area.

Would the County have an interest because of Compton Acres?

Lillian Greenwood. Paliamentary Candidate for the Labour Party, apologised for Ian Malcolm's absence who is very concerned at what is happening in Wilford. LG agreed Wilford had very few facilities.

A suggestion was made to contact people in the Lenton Ward who run their own Community Library.

A complaint was made that many residents were not aware of the closure due to lack of advertising, however, it was pointed out that it had been in the local paper, on local radio and notice boards around Wilford. Offers were then made to leaflet homes and to put posters on posts/trees.

2 Comments on suggested Asset Transfer

This had to be very carefully investigated, as it is a very big task for the community to take on.

Would the Council share the running costs?

Would we have liability for the poor state of the building? Unfortunately, financially the community would be fund raising full time and probably not a viable option.

Cllr Trimble said there was a possibility the City Council would sell the site and give half the money to Area 9 and we then use the monies for another purpose, perhaps a Youth Club.

If we buy the Library for £10, specifically will the Council demolish and clear the site. Cllr Trimble said NO we get the whole lot.

RH said he now worked for a Demolition Contractor and it would not be excessively expensive to clear the site.

If we buy the Library building there will be no books, equipment or staff. The Community would have to buy the books and equipment and pay staff.

Is there any mileage in this offer?

How many people would be committed to fund raise long-term?

The Library closure is the end of March, as there are legal aspects to an Asset Transfer would the Council give us an extension of time while we organise ourselves.

We have to remember there is no precedent for us to follow.

Cllr Trimble is being advised by Officers and he is merely acting on their advice, Christina Dyer is an Officer could we discuss the situation with her or another Officer.

If we apply for funding we have to show that we can make a profit, a revenue source has to be there before we proceed. We would have to match the funding.

We would have to set up costs to be self-supporting plus maintenance.

Could the Carter Foundation be approached, the library provides an education purpose. The loss of a library will impact on the school – could we approach the Director of Education?

Are there ways in which to make people, other than those living in Wilford, care about the closure?

It was suggested we mount a campaign to keep the Library by writing personally to Dominic Heale, local Councillors, MP's, get a petition under way and to leaflet the area including Silverdale and Compton Acres and to place banners at the crossroads.

Adding to all the comments BH said he had made every effort over the last 3 years to keep the library going and had secured £4,000 to have longer hours for 1 year and if more people had used it we would not be here today. We should remember the building is in a very poor state.

106 money is all spent out of Wilford, however, money from the old Becket School site has been promised to be used in Wilford and could have been used to repair and expand the library. In November BH was informed that a meeting would be held later that month to discuss this proposal and then the meeting was cancelled.

RS asked if we could have a new Library but the council said it was a definite NO. The question then was "Do we want to keep the current building?"

A suggestion was that we buy the building and sit on it until we have the finance or 106 money available and then build a Community Centre which could incorporate a post office or, whatever else we feel is required.

If we do not buy, the Area Plan is that all land is assigned for residential use, do we want to risk it will be sold for housing. If the Estates Department bought it the City Council would use for housing or other purposes.

Generally the belief is that the building is actually unfit for any further use and it was suggested that we set up a committee to investigate buying the library.

If we went for purchase would the mobile library still be available to us?

Can anything can be done to stop the library closing in 9 weeks time. There is flexibility in time scale if we try to run it voluntarily providing we generate enough interest, remembering that we have to buy the books and pay for any expertise. The meeting decided to try and fight to keep it going using the previously mentioned methods.

Another proposal was to clear it as a vacant site and then consider it as an asset and find out what we could use it for.

SA as treasurer said at the moment the WCG funds are £400 and as soon as we take it we would have to think about insurance.

RS mentioned that as a group we have had an introduction to a firm to help us run it as an Asset Transfer.

The Council has a moral obligation to hand it over as a safe plot. As a group we are insured by the City Council.

Before we start negotiations we need a basis on which to buy.

Plan of Action

(a) Contact the schools to see if they would mention the library closure in their newsletters

(b) Everyone write to Cllr Trimble via the City Council

(c) Volunteers to ask people to sign a petition

(d) Banners – particularly at the Crossroads

(e) Posters on trees or lampposts

(f) Article in the local Arrow (the cost of one issue of the Arrow is equal to the amount it would cost to keep the library open for 1 year)

(g) Inform people door to door or on line

(h) Use face book site and a fund raising site

(i) Someone to put a sample letter on web site

(j) ditto a Poster on web site and everyone print one out

(k) Talk to the Committee at Lenton Centre

(l) When giving the interview on the radio it is important to mention the short time that has been given to us to allow residents to make decision

(m) We do not have enough time to get our act together and try and find out whether the library really does have to close at the end of March.

ST drew the meeting to a close and said our next Committee Meeting is on Monday 15th February at 7.30 pm and hoped everyone would come along and see what progress has been made.