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# KATESGROVE NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION GROUP

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*Date & time of meeting:* 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2008, 7pm.

*Location:* New Christ Church Primary School, Milman Road, Reading, RG2 0AY

*Apologies:* Chris Bailey (CBA), NHW Co-ordinator for Milman Road.

*Chair:* Insp. Kevin Sinfield (IKS), Acting Chair.

*Present:* Dave Aldred (DAL), Midge Dwyer (MDW), Cllr. Gareth Epps (GEP), Lorna Grigg (LGR), Omendra Gurung (OGU), Peter Kennedy (PKE), Kath Langdale (KLA), Mary McManus (MMC), Peter McManus (PMC), Rob Oldham (ROL), Heather Plummer (HPL), Carole Porter (CPO), Sgt. Nikki Pocock (SNP), James Sankar (JSA), James Schlackman (JSC), Carole Shepherd (CSH), Maria Soulsbury (MSO), Cllr. Warren Swaine (WSW).

*Guest:* John Howard of the Reading User Forum, also Chair of Whitley North NAG.

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## MINUTES

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### 1. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

IKS, acting as chair, solicited feedback on the previous minutes. No issues arose and the minutes were approved.

IKS briefed the NAG on today's Agenda.

### 2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

KLA stood as Chair, seconded by MDW, and was elected unopposed.

KLA will commence Chair duties at next meeting following an induction with MDW and JSC by IKS and SPO.

### 3. DRUGS TALK BY JOHN HOWARD, READING USER FORUM

John briefly explained the different types of drugs.

IKS explained how dealers in Mandela Court formerly made up to £100,000 per week dealing herbal cannabis. Orts Road remains a problem – while the NAG was examining herbal cannabis, IKS explained how a recent incident in Orts Road saw 'dealers' attempting to sell actual normal grass in place of cannabis, highlighting inexperience of some people in what cannabis actually looks like.

IKS also noted that the class of cannabis has been recently re-upgraded to class B after being formerly downgraded to class C, and that cannabis is predominantly a problem with younger people.

John talked about the concept of 'gateway drugs', and the effects of addiction.

IKS explained that heroin addiction can cost a single user hundreds to thousands of pounds per week and so drives crime such as auto crime to fund it. Noted that heroin is probably the biggest problem drug in Reading.

GEP enquired about the effectiveness of heroin substitutes such as Methadone; John explained that sometimes it is not effective and users can become 'trapped' in drug treatment programs which can be detrimental.

IKS explained how dealers often prey on vulnerable users to become sub-dealers in return for cash and free supply of the drug they themselves are addicted to.

IKS talked about the sophisticated nature of the problem in Orts Road, with dealers employing spotters and radio systems to evade police detection, and that the area has very little other crime due to dealers preventing other crime from taking place.

IKS and John explained how cocaine, formerly restricted to the wealthy, has dropped in price significantly in the last decade.

John explained the difference in intensity of effect between cocaine and crack cocaine.

John explained how 'cutting' of drugs happens at all tiers of the supply pyramid in order to maximise the amount that can be sold, and that a large proportion of the danger of street drugs can be the often harmful substances used to cut the drugs, not solely the risk of the substance.

IKS explained the length of time taken to catch high-level dealers (several years) and expressed his concern over the lack of drug treatment facilities in Reading. John explained that this is reflective of the government view appearing to be focused on drugs as a crime issue rather than a health issue.

MDW asked about availability of rehab centres in Reading and mentioned that the Salvation Army do run their own centres (though not in Reading).

MSO asked about some hoax drugs scares and myths.

WSW passed on details of <http://www.snopes.com>, a source of information about 'urban legends' and myths of all kinds, including hoax drug myths.

IKS mentioned that dealers have got smarter and only carry small amounts of drugs these days.

IKS asked DAL (RBC Youth Development) about attitudes to various substances in the younger population in Katesgrove.

DAL explained that alcohol use is prevalent and cannabis is seen as 'normal' by many.

MDW expressed her concern that there was no youth club in the immediate area of Katesgrove.

KLA talked about how the Brownies group closed. Suggested a return of the evening sports provision at Katesgrove Primary School park. DAL talked about current provision in neighbouring areas.

DAL said that an area of focus for Youth Development was to create more 'street work' to engage young people as these have previously been very successful in getting people involved in local activities.

### **IKS suggested the NAG work with RBC to improve youth provision.**

GEP raised the Safer Reading initiative, next meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 7pm, South Reading Community centre (IKS and KLA will attend).

KLA described a Bracknell system of drop-in sessions at a secondary school with agencies offering advice and help on drug use to interested parties.

JSA mentioned how the Katesgrove Residents Association has involvement in this area but not so much from 'this end'. Working Group to improve this?

KLA noted that the noticeboard in Whitley Street could be used to drum up involvement.

**IKS suggested the group recruit 3-4 more local residents for NAG** - MSO pledged to recruit parents.

JSA described a perceived lack of 'community feeling' in the north part of Katesgrove.

MDW described how Waterloo Meadows Community Centre was formerly used as a youth centre.

IKS announced that the Aveley Walk Police office is to open imminently. Future NAG meetings may be held there if necessary.

#### 4. PROBLEM SOLVING (TVP)

Deferred to next meeting due to time constraints.

#### 5. EVA (ENVIRONMENTAL VISUAL AUDITS)

First EVA held last Friday (16<sup>th</sup> May). This was attended by Police, Year 6 pupils from New Christ Church Primary School, but no local residents, possibly due to late notice. Coverage should appear in Evening Post and Reading Chronicle this week.

IKS has EVA dates for the rest of the year:

- Next EVA is Tue 27<sup>th</sup> May 10.30am, meeting in Katesgrove Lane, junction of Pell Street (KLA will attend)
- Following that, Tue 24<sup>th</sup> June, 10.30, Elgar Road South, junction of Waterloo Rise.

ROL explained that while involvement is encouraged, the groups can get too large, and that the ideal is 8-10 people.

ROL explained how an EVA works.

IKS passed around an example EVA record.

The EVA record from last Friday is to be distributed to NAG members, as will future records.

MSO described the usefulness of the children's involvement.

IKS suggested future use of graffiti kits in the community by residents. KLA described a previous resident-driven street cleanup that was successful. JSA can provide litter pickers.

IKS passed around copies of the Redlands & University NAG bulletin and emphasised that a Communications Team for the Katesgrove NAG should be set up. WSW and GEP volunteered, but WSW expressed concern that his involvement could be seen as partisan. IKS pledged to enforce the non-partisan nature of the newsletters. MSO offered to sit if the time commitment is not too great. WSW asked about printing funding, KLA emphasised that a sponsor is needed. John suggested advertising space could be sold to local businesses.

JSA suggested an article in the Neighbourhood Newsletter. KLA suggested use of Ringmaster to distribute information.

WSW suggested a 'neighbourhood welcome pack' for new residents could be valuable to let people know about local groups, including the NAG. IKS said that the University of Reading already have a good pack for students. MSO noted influx of Nepalese families that may need to be targeted.

#### 6. INTELLIGENCE FEEDBACK

- a) Residents
- b) Community Wardens
- c) PCSOs

Deferred to next meeting due to time constraints

## 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### A. COMMUNICATIONS TEAM ELECTION

Volunteers: GEP, JSA, MSO, CPO, WSW

IKS assigned Rod Holmes (PCSO) as Thames Valley Police member for Communications Team.

CSH volunteered to help distribute communications.

### B. THANKS TO JOHN HOWARD

The group expressed its thanks to John Howard for his valuable talk this evening.

## 8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June, 7pm

Apologies in advance from GEP.

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## ACTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING

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1. JSC to pass on contact details for KLA to the rest of the group.
2. JSC to pass on NAG meeting dates, EVA dates, and last EVA findings once received from SNP.
3. First communications team meeting to be held.
4. KLA, MDW, and JSC to attend meeting with IKS and SNP for a full induction into the NAG committee duties.
5. Press to attend next meeting to photograph NAG members.
6. IKS will speak about Crimestoppers at next meeting.
7. Problem Solving will be revisited at next meeting
8. Further intelligence on drug use will be solicited at the next meeting from Residents, Community Wardens, and PCSOs.