

.BOLLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL: GOLD STANDARD
CE Bollington Ward Councillors Report to BTC for May Council Meeting 2024.
We present this Report for consideration and discussion as required.

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We congratulate Bollington Mayor , Helen Ellwood on her year in Office and Welcome the Deputy Mayor who will take over the onerous responsibility for the ceremonial leadership of Bollington for 2024/25 ,

We were pleased to be invited to a celebration of Bollington Town Council's 50th Anniversary celebrations where it was a great pleasure to meet former Mayors of Bollington who in their turn served the community.

This is a short report and deliberately so:

presented as 'different ways of doing things' and no doubt accompanied in some cases by consultations. We need to be clear about this.

Your and our Community will need to be fully aware of the situations as it develops. We hope the Town council will then need to take appropriate action as you see fit.

One example of the new approach relates to a policy being developed in relation to **Library Services:**

1. The Governments guidelines on such services are scrutinised carefully as they were over waste disposal.
2. Those guidelines are applied to Cheshire East's position and service offer.
3. Where we have 'over' provision as we do with waste disposal facilities we plan to readjust (cut) our offer of the service. We do this in a 'rational' manner allowing no ifs or buts for local circumstances. We have the example of Pool Bank Car to note. There is genuinely no other situation in the borough like our spaceless terraced houses and the need for local parking facilities. Literally none.
3. An officer policy for Library provision has emerged following these principles.
 - a) Government policy: Yes a library provision is required by law but there are no specific requirements. According to a Senior Library officer at a recent meeting of the Civic Society a large van travelling from Community to Community serving registered library users with one central library would probably fit the Bill.
 - b) What does Cheshire East do? We review our library provision and find it more generous than Governments legal requirements state are necessary. Hence there is the opportunity for '**Transformation**'.

Councillors will remember that the Cheshire East Library Service has already had hours reduced albeit ameliorated in Bollington after an excellent supportive Report back on the consultation from Cllr. Nigel.

It has been reported that further reductions in service are planned. The Town Council may wish to take a view given the Council took on responsibility for financing and maintaining the Bollington civic Hall in order to ensure the Library premises were offered rent free to Cheshire East thus supporting the Library and reducing costs of the building as a whole to the provider of the Library Service.

Crossfield Road Bungalows no 1-31.

Peaks and Plains have left 3 bungalows within the range 13-31 empty for a period of years. This has caused growing concern to residents. Rumours began circulating that Peaks and Plains had a variety of plans for redevelopment in the pipeline.

Since these rumours would involve complex Planning Applications etc. your Borough Councillors took action to resolve the situation. Residents had asked for a meeting but been rebuffed.

Borough Councillors therefore took on the responsibility of obtaining a meeting with the full cooperation of residents.

As a result of the first letter sent by residents a reply was received from Peaks and Plains stating that there were structural problems being investigated.

This resulted in a second letter from residents: See Below

To Alec Gaston, Assistant Director of Development, Assets and Compliance:

Attention of Mark Howden CEO

From: Residents Crossfield Road.

28th. March 2024

Thank you for your letter sent to residents at Crossfield Road by hand on Wednesday 27th. April and addressed to Mr. S. Smallwood.

Your letter acknowledges problems with our bungalows that we have surmised from the neglected empty bungalows left empty and not relet for a long period of time whereas others across the road have been refurbished and relet immediately.

Residents in Bungalows of Crossfield road at Nos 1,3, 5,7,9,11,15, 17,21,27,31 plus 1 wish to ensure that the overall Directors and Chief Executive are aware of the serious problems we are facing in our

bungalows and why we want a meeting to ensure we understand every implication of what your letter holds for us, your residents, as soon as possible rather in two months time. We really do not want to wait any longer.

Our concerns have recently been increased by Mrs. Barbara Taylor being rehoused across the road and staff informing her that her bungalow will not be relet.

We set out very clearly in our previous letter of the 18th. March the mental distress we are now feeling in relation to the threats now facing our bungalows which you acknowledge:

Namely 'complicated structural issues'.

If those issues are facing the empty bungalows, 23, 25, and 29 and soon 27, then obviously they are probably facing the bungalows we live in as well.

Now you have described the problem to us for the first time in five years and, we presume, you have been analysing the problems during that period as you acknowledge when you state;

'we have been monitoring on advice from our structural engineers over the last 6 months'

and probably have by now at least some outline knowledge of the situation we would expect that knowledge to be shared with us as soon as possible rather than wait to April or May.

Then a meeting should be held to explain what is being monitored and what are the results so far.

We realise it is difficult for landlords like yourselves to treat tenants with respect and dignity in these situations. We note a lacuna in your letter in paragraph 4 where you fail to acknowledge what distress your behaviours to date have caused.

Our mental distress and concern have been caused quite simply by lack of candour, openness and transparency on the part of our Landlord.

We note your ambition:

Our vision for 2028
Be a great landlord

- Repairs done on time and to a consistently high standard.

- Consistent and clear use of customer data and feedback to improve our services.
- Improved energy efficiency of our homes and reduced carbon emissions.
- Consistently positive feedback from our customers.
- Increased numbers of engaged customers

We state in relation to your ambition that at the moment you are failing in relation to us on points 1,2 and 4.

However we are, and want to be continually engaged with you on these serious matters related to our rented housing.

We are writing to you now to express that concern hoping you will respond in a mature and sensible manner by being open with us about:

1. The physical problems the bungalows face.
2. The results of any monitoring done.
3. The threat to our current bungalows i.e. if a resident left for any reason would they be relet or left empty? That now seems self-evident.
4. If in the longer term we have to leave how much support will Peaks and Plains be able to offer to find us accommodation suitable to our needs?
5. What are your long term plans for the site, if any?

We would appreciate a meeting between knowledgeable people at the right level of responsibility from Peaks and Plains who are aware of all relevant information and the affected residents.

We can suggest Bollington Town Hall as a suitable venue.

We realise this may well be a very difficult situation but we need clear understanding of what the problems are and what are the likely outcomes for ourselves.

Thank you

Peaks and Plains Response

As a result of this letter Peaks and Plains offered to arrange a meeting for the evening of the 22nd April 2024. The meeting was held and about 25 residents of Crossfield Road and Kent Avenue

attended. Cllrs Angela and Ken attended representing the Town and Borough Council both being West Ward Councillors.

Peaks and Plains officer Alec Gaston apologised for any distress or confusion caused. He said:

1. There were structural difficulties with some bungalows which is why they were empty.
2. Investigations were being carried out to find out the extent of the problems.
3. These investigations plus reports would be analysed in May and June.
4. Detailed proposals would be presented to their board in early July.
5. At the moment 4 options were being considered.
 - i) Do nothing
 - ii) Repair and relet the bungalows affected.
 - iii) Develop just the bungalow site as a whole.
 - iv) Develop a wider site with a variety of dwellings.

As soon as a decision had been taken a further meeting would be held with tenants to consider the implication.

Naturally a vigorous discussion ensued concentrating on the tenants concerns and requirements. Most of them could not be answered fully.

Cllr. Ken is monitoring the situation through contact with Alec Gaston.

Bollington Recreation Ground

The long awaited SNA Report in draft form is with us. We would hope to be able to discuss improvements with ANSA very soon.

The SNA report is required to inform the allocation of the S106 funds.

Problems: Now the cricket nets have been renewed the next priority are the Tennis Courts. The two tennis courts need a lot of investment to reach match standard.

Rob Webb who is honorary secretary of the revamped Bollington Tennis club has been following the progress of a community grant for 6 Tennis Courts across Cheshire East including Bollington. Unfortunately the SNA Report has come in so late the

application and work cannot be ready this year. In addition the overall project requires the input of a Cheshire East officer from Leisure Services and they have already booked all their time on other projects. Therefore, any funds reserved for Tennis will have to be allocated as matched funding for next year it is thought at the moment.

We need detailed talks with ANSA and the cooperation of the LTA.

The good news is that Prestbury Tennis Club has donated two new Tennis Nets plus ties which were fitted by volunteers Rod and Jimmy.

We just want new surfaces and kickboards to go with the new nets.

**Cllr.Ken Edwards and Cllr. John Place
29/04/2024**