

Notes of a presentation given before the start of Lyneham and Bradenstoke Parish Council meeting held in Lyneham Church Hall on Tuesday 14th April 2015 at 6.30 pm.

More than 70 residents of Lyneham and Bradenstoke attended the public participation session at the start of the monthly meeting of Lyneham and Bradenstoke Parish Council. Some of those who attended expressed anger that they had heard about the meeting only via notes delivered anonymously to their homes. The notes had made false allegations about the possible development of land behind homes in Webbs Court, Lyneham.

The meeting was told that the Parish Council had been approached by a company, Gleeson Strategic Land Ltd, asking for a meeting with the Parish Council to introduce itself and begin to explore an opportunity for development of land in Lyneham. The Parish Council decided that such a meeting should not be closed to the public as that would potentially lead to suspicion that the Parish Council is hiding important factors affecting some of its residents. So the Parish Council invited Gleeson Strategic Land Ltd to make its initial presentation to the Parish Council in public immediately prior to a scheduled monthly Parish Council meeting. The meeting notice and agenda, including notification of the presentation, was published on Parish Council notice boards at least three clear days before the meeting, as required by law.

The managing director of Gleeson Strategic Land Ltd introduced himself and members of a planning consultancy with whom he expected to be working. He explained that his company had been approached by a local landowner following a request from Wiltshire Council to find land to relocate Lyneham Primary School from its present site. No further information about Wiltshire Council's intentions with regard to the future of the Primary School or its site was available to the meeting. A secondary purpose of the presentation was to find out a bit more about the local community before starting to compile any draft plans. It was pointed out that working with a community achieves a better outcome than working against. Gathering additional evidence of local needs, such as the recent publicity given to the need for a GP surgery in Lyneham, all helps to work towards the type of development which benefits a community.

Among the completely unfounded rumours put about before the meeting and unnecessarily frightening quite a few residents, was one that a prison is to be built in Lyneham. This suggestion was flatly denied. Unfortunately, some protesters at the meeting made some inappropriate, politically motivated comments and one bordered on racial hatred. Members of the Parish Council and some of the residents present felt thoroughly ashamed of the behaviour of a few of their neighbours, hoping that the visiting professional people would not carry away that negative impression of the people of Lyneham and Bradenstoke.

The visitors promised to come back to Lyneham in probably about six months' time to conduct a widely advertised public consultation over draft plans which they would in the meantime be formulating. There was some discussion over housing need statistics being worked up by Wiltshire Council and it was recognised that there is a national shortage of housing. It was pointed out that communities must be prepared to work with their local authorities in achieving the most appropriate sharing of housing developments while meeting identified local infrastructure needs.

The presentation, including all the questions asked and answers given took no more than 45 minutes. Since the meeting, there has been further criticism of the Parish Council over the handling of the introduction of this issue to the community. Members of the Parish Council are saddened that their approach to a local issue which demonstrated openness and compliance with the law has been taken by a few residents as an opportunity to exhibit deceitful and malicious behaviour which has caused alarm and distress to vulnerable residents.