

OSCAR - Past, Present & Future

Despair, disgust, despondency, these are merely three words, but, add anger, resentment, and frustration, to the brew, and you have a potential bubbling cauldron of discontent.

These few words probably start to describe the feelings of a great many Osmaston residents, who, over the last twelve years have been repeatedly courted, then crushed, by the Local Authority.

Osmastons history dates back centuries, in fact it is mentioned in the Domesday Survey. Its Boundary to the north was the river Derwent with Chaddesden. It extended southwards to Sinfin Moor, its other boundaries were Alvaston and Boulton to the east, and Litchurch, Peartree, and Normanton to the west.

In all, the estate encompassed 3,700 acres, as identified by Mr Arthur Shardlow in the booklet, "A potted History of Osmaston". Incidentally, we, the residents of Osmaston do not reside in Allenton!

It has to be said, that all three political parties have a hand in the lamentable state of affairs that now exist in Osmaston. Starting with a decision to demolish a total of 92 perfectly habitable "steel houses" in the year 2,000.

This was the result of one tenant making a complaint about asbestos content (sealed and safe). The demolition took place whilst politicians claimed that there was 60,000 homeless in the U.K.

Initially up to autumn 2004, anti council/anger/ apathy was at a minimum, due to residents feeling that they had been listened to after making their views known through a series of neighbourhood consultations.

Residents expectations of "open space" combined with a play area, and also 50 much needed family homes on the cleared sites on Elton Rd and Glossop St, as agreed after various consultations, suffered a severe setback with the Traveller occupation of the Glossop St site in Oct/Nov 2004.

Over the next few years it has to be said that local residents confidence in the local authority appeared to reach an all time low. We went from crowded local forum meetings to barely double figures, and why?

The answer to that is, complete disillusionment with "the system".

All the effort that residents had put in over the years by co operating in numerous consultations with the local authority was seemingly treated with complete contempt and arrogance.

The often quoted "human rights act" apparently outranked natural justice, and good old fashioned "common sense", but as opportunities presented themselves some residents took advantage of the situation and refused to let apathy dominate the situation.

Therefore when the regeneration team was withdrawn from the area it was deemed an opportune moment for a residents association to be formed.

Membership consisted of a cross section of residents who brought to the table many varied points of view and expertise gained from the various paths they have travelled in life.

First class lines of communication to various Council departments was considered to be of paramount importance.

It was from these first few meetings that the format and structure of OSCAR was decided. Initial work group meetings in January 2011 identified, purpose, problems, needs, aims and ambitions.

Derby homes offered support to help the formation of an association to give power to the residents. They seconded a Community Initiative Officer to support the work, and in April 2011 OSCAR was formally constituted.

OSCAR was offered the use of the former Housing office on Addison Rd by Derby Homes for use as a meeting place, and continues to fund this on OSCARS behalf.

In June 2011 OSCAR was officially launched in the area and volunteers were recruited to help run the offices. The offices became known as the Resource Centre and the team started to offer support to residents. This included the use of Computers, telephones, and advice.

Derby Homes hosted a twice weekly informal surgery through their Community Initiative Officer, and it was by coincidence and good fortune that OSCAR's Birth coincided with the Governments Localism Bill, which OSCAR has taken heed, and full advantage of.

Since the formation of OSCAR we have managed to be instrumental in forming A Neighbourhood watch with 1900 members, (5200 residents) and working closely with the Safer Neighbourhood Team, Derby Homes "Junior Wardens" and local children, it is already the largest established neighbourhood watch in the country.

From an early stage, OSCAR (through the Regeneration Team) took up the dialogue with Rolls Royce to discuss the potential uses for the Marble Hall, and helped support an ERDF bid for funding by Derby City Council Regeneration team. The bid is for the re-development the Marble Hall to a multi-use centre to provide facilities, services and support for the local community. The results of this bid are due in June 2012.

Discussions are taking place with Equipment suppliers for the new play area on Tennyson St, with the final part now just awaiting on planning, with completion anticipated for May/June 2012

In November 2011, a new Joint Venture Vehicle was formed between OSCAR, Derby City Council and Derby Homes. Approved by Derby City Council's Cabinet on 22 November 2011, the joint venture vehicle will work with the local residents, who will also sit on the organisations steering group and help to secure the future of the area by making spending and design decisions. The Council have formally approved OSCAR as the lead on consultations.

OSCAR is a company limited by Guarantee (8th Feb 2012) with membership open to all residents in

the community.

Would a group similar to OSCAR work in other areas? The only honest answer To that is, Possibly, it's all dependent on the people in the area being driven by their determination and ambitions to bring local issues to a satisfactory conclusion.

The formation of an organisation similar to OSCAR is no simple task!
There is a number of crucial factors that have to be taken into account.

Be more than aware that any group is comprised of enthusiastic amateurs, and as such your strength will lie in being non confrontational and persuading Council Officers and others, of your ability and desire to communicate and have your suggestions or criticisms listened to.

Head to Head confrontation will achieve absolutely nothing! In contrast to purposeful dialogue by both parties, which, if successful will lead to a steep learning curve by all concerned and positive steps will be taken to the benefit of the area.

Starting with, motivation, followed by a total and complete lack of ego, and political persuasion. The golden rule is... .. leave both outside when entering the Community Hub!

The community benefits from OSCAR pushing for the regeneration of Osmaston and the provision of quality green open spaces and Housing, especially the Elton Road Quadrant Area, and other available plots. (including the Vacated RR Site)

It is essential that past problems are buried, but always keep one eye on previous issues to ensure that past mistakes are not repeated!

FUTURE AIMS

- Stimulating further investment, and development of other sites in the area.
- Contributing towards tackling wider social and economic problems.
- Contributing towards tackling wider issues around crime and anti social behaviour.
- Raise aspirations of young people
- Positive impact on perceptions of Osmaston
- Carry on working with the Children, they are the key of the future.