

Geof Muggeridge
Peter Brooker
Three Rivers District Council
Three Rivers House, Northway
Rickmansworth WD3 1RL

16th July 2012

Dear Mr Muggeridge and Mr Brooker

Please accept these documents as an application for Rickmansworth Neighbourhood Forum to become a designated body under the Localism Act 2011.

With this letter you will find enclosed a copy of our constitution including appendix A which is a map showing the Forums area. Also enclosed is a statement from the Forum and a list members.

We have appointed three (interim) officers, Chairman - Cllr David Sansom, Vice Chairman - Cllr Paula Hiscocks and Secretary - Penny Thomas. The appointment are interim because we will be holding our first AGM under our constitution in October/November.

Cllr David Sansom (Chairman)
59 Winton Drive
Croxley Green, Rickmansworth WD3 3RB

Cllr Paula Hiscocks (Vice-Chairman)
4 High Close
Rickmansworth WD3 4DZ

Penny Thomas (Secretary)
4 the Cloisters
Rickmansworth
WD3 1HL

All three of the above sets of contact details can be made public.

RICKMANSWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

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STATEMENT 10th July 2012

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The area as shown in the map in appendix A of the Rickmansworth Neighbourhood Forum Constitution is to be called the Rickmansworth Neighbourhood Forum Area.

The Forum's purpose is to safeguard and improve the social, economic and environmental well being of the Rickmansworth Neighbourhood Forum Area for all residents and workers. Also to allow residents and workers to have a say in decisions which will affect the Forum's area.

The Forum wishes to promote a vibrant Town Centre with varied local shops and we want to promote a strong community that supports local residents .

Membership is open to anybody who lives or works in the Forum area as detailed in the map in appendix A. Business groups based in the Forums area can nominate two representatives who will be full voting members.

District and County Councillors who's ward/division cover any part of the Forums area are automatic members.

We have in excess of twenty one individual members who are qualified to be members as set out above.

Rickmansworth Neighbourhood Forum Area is considered appropriate to be designated as a neighbourhood area because Rickmansworth is a self contained historic town with an engaged and active community.

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It has Churches, Primary schools, two Secondary schools and Cemeteries within the Forum area. There are two major shopping areas, the Town Centre and Moneyhill Parade with a very varied selection of shops, restaurants and pubs. There is also a Waitrose and a Tesco supermarket in the Forums area. There is some light industry but most employment is office based with a sizeable number of small offices and office blocks.

There is a Theatre / Community Hall called Watersmeet owned and operated by Three Rivers District Council. There is a Library and a Local Museum. The Grand Union Canal goes through the town along with the Rivers Gade, Colne and Chess, they all flow into Rickmansworth Aquadrome which is also owned and operated by Three Rivers District Council. There are a number of community events including Ricky Week, Rickmansworth Canal Festival and the Starlight Parade in November. The housing is a mix of older housing and new apartments with the Cedars Estate which was built in the 1930's.

The Forum's area includes some open land, either farm land or playing fields; these are included because the Forum considers the issues of :- 'preventing urban sprawl, preventing towns from merging into one another and preserving the setting and character of the historic town' to be of the highest importance. (Three Rivers District Council Local Development Framework 4.1)

The Royal Masonic School site is included as a 'locally important building' it occupies a very large and important site for the Town and plays a key role in the Historic Environment. (TRDC LDF 5.8)

When drawing up the Forum's area attention was paid to the walking distance from housing to the town centre. In line with carbon reduction the Forum supports a reduction in the number of car journeys for the purpose of shopping. All parts of the Cedars Estate included are within one to two miles of the Town Centre and Money Hill Parade which is considered reasonable walking or cycling distance.

The Forum's area includes the Grand Union canal, the Chess, Gade and Colne rivers, Rickmansworth Aquadrome and several other lakes and streams. Water is very important to Rickmansworth as an amenity for sports and recreation and bio-diversity but also presents a risk of flooding. Rickmansworth has experienced flooding in the 1960's and the 1980's. Whilst the causes of flooding may well be beyond the borders of the Forum's area the flood plain within the boundary of the Forum's area must be managed successfully to mitigate the risk of further flooding.

The Forum's area includes open space for sport and recreation and children's play areas. The Forum considers the availability of open land for play, sport and recreation to be vital for the well being of the community and 'contributes to quality of life and health benefits for the community' (TRDC LDF 13.6)

Rickmansworth has an identity and strong local community but does not have a Parish or a Town Council. Being un-parished means that there is no umbrella organisation to unite the needs of the community groups already working in the Rickmansworth neighbourhood area, the Forum will be able to take on this role. This is not to say that Three Rivers District Council has not offered some support. But as an example The Rickmansworth Chamber of Commerce historically paid for Christmas lights for the town, when they were unable to afford them they approached TRDC for support and were turned down, despite other towns in Three Rivers funding Christmas lights from the public purse via their Parish Councils. The Forum would act as an advocate to put pressure on the correct body to fund Christmas lights in the future. This issue like many others is an issue of sustainability, keeping a vibrant High Street is essential and Christmas is a very important time for traders. The High Street is a public space and a public body should make decisions and fund what ever is needed to ensure its viability. ('To revitalise town centres to promote a return to sustainable living' table 2.1 Sustainable Appraisal Adoption Statement - Three Rivers Core Strategy)

Council tax is collected from the Forum's area as an un-parished levy to pay

for expenses that the District Council have to meet that in other areas is paid for by a Parish Council. Local people don't have any say in how this money is spent. Decisions on millions of pounds of expenditure in Rickmansworth by the District Council are made without local people being consulted. Ward Councillors who are sole representatives of the Forum's area at the moment are not informed or consulted on most decisions within their Wards, however large. There are forty eight councillors in Three Rivers four of which represent Rickmansworth and Rickmansworth West, as TRDC is a political organisation the majority of decisions are made by the forty four councillors who do not represent Rickmansworth. This explains why local people in the Forum area have felt left out of the decisions making process.

A particular reason why the Cedars estate part of the area has been included is because the community groups draw a significant number of their working members from the estate.

An example of this is the Rickmansworth and District Residents Association, their membership is very strong in the town centre and in the Cedars but gradually decreases the further you go west down the Uxbridge road. The Forum boundary has been drawn at Field Way and Berry Lane, both down the middle of the road. At the Forum's first meeting on the 18th June we debated where on the Uxbridge road the boundary should be. We had twenty five members at the meeting and over four to one voted to include the Cedars estate (part of Ricky West ward) in the Forum's area.

END.