

Articles and contributions to Phoenix, c/o Cath, 62 Humberstone Ave, Hulme, M15 5FD

## Hulme Park opening - some personal views

Thursday July 15 saw the opening of the new Hulme park, no doubt the City council saw this as an opportunity to reassure the local people of their commitment to the community, unfortunately local reaction was mixed.

"New municipal parks were one of the crowning achievements of Manchester's Victorian forefathers and I believe Hulme Park is one of the jewels in the crown of the 1990's redevelopment of Hulme.....Cities need parks and and I am still hoping this park will be extended right into Castlefield with the new bridge over the Mancunian Way .... and parks need people. I hope this park will be used ..... now is the time for people to come forward who are interested in forming the park management trust."

"I arrived at Hulme Park at 3.10 pm to see for myself what the opening ceremony was all about.

As I walked through the park from St Wilfred's school, a brass band was playing. The children from St Wilfreds were being marched back into the school, having been used to make the ceremony look good.

Then Councillor Leese got up on this stage and started congratulating himself and his fellow councillors for their hard work. I sat with a number of other mothers who have children at St Wilfreds and who have grown up in Hulme themselves. We all agreed that whoever councillor Leese was referring to as the 'Hulme Community' in their consultations, it wasn't us.

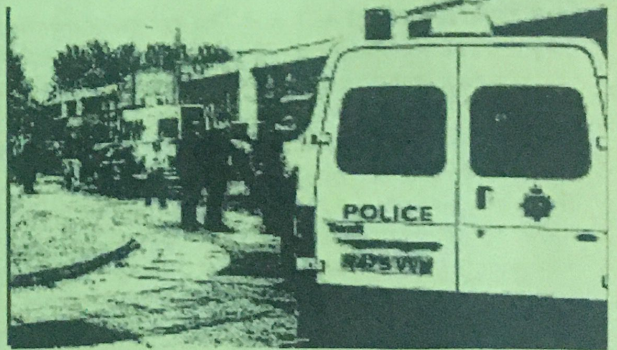
We then started noting who had attended. Quite a lot of business people as well as sales people for the adjoining Bellway Homes. We then had to leave to get our children from St Wilfs as they finished at 3.30pm. The following day as I drove past a security with his two dogs were walking through Hulme Park. He was allowing his dogs to poo on the grass."

"While listening to the self congratulatory speeches of Richard Leese and other city councillors, & so-called community representatives, my attention focused on the four lines of metal plaques depicting various scenes, supposed to represent a potted history of Hulme. These include a picture of the Birley Tree and the Leroy and James Park, these are already history in the minds of the council, apparently.

Later on, while the Lord Moyer and other VIPs were being shown around, the architects were particularly proud of the gates to the children's play area. These had been removed from the Leroy and James park only the day before. The gates had been installed in such a hurry, that children were advised not to get too close as they might 'fall on them'. Overall the park opening seemed to be more a PR exercise for the city council pitched at the media and the representatives of business, rather than a community event."

## 'Robocops Raid Redbricks shebeen to confiscate Lucozade!'

Residents on Bentley (redbricks) estate were shocked and angered last week when police heavies battered their way into a local games and social house. The flat is regularly visited by members of the Afro-Caribbean, and wider community from the area, to play dominoes, games, have a drink, and chat. The six men inside at the time were bemused when over 6 van loads of officers, dressed in full riot gear, bullet proof vests, helmets, masks and all over body plastic padding battered through the doors and windows. Said Winston "If they'd have knocked we could have let them in - we didn't have nothing to hide". The only thing the police got was alcohol, lucozade, ginger beer and tea which they confiscated from the flat. Two people were arrested - after police found a negligible amount of marijuana and a pocket knife. Police also threatened to deprive one man of his swiss army penknife.



Residents watched in shocked disbelief, as the police proceeded to pour all their efforts at community relations down the drain. Cae Gest, was threatened by police because he was committing the heinous crime of attempting to record the police activities on camcorder. Many officers point blank refused to speak to other residents when asked their names and rank, and others were grabbed and pushed around for trying to cross the road. No explanation was given for this ridiculous over-the-top operation, although Chief Inspector Huntbach, who was the commanding officer on the scene, agreed that it may be "possible" the police had received false information. Driving off rudely in the middle of conversation with residents, he claimed that the police "were not accountable" to the community representatives who were talking to him

A number of angry residents questioned police as to why they did nothing about the smack dealers who live only round the corner, do nothing about the muggings which happen regularly, and instead, waste time and money by sending out over 30 officers and specialists, for some drinks, a tiny bit of marijuana and a pocket knife.

"This is Greater Manchester Police pouring contempt on a community - they storm into where we live, break up a community social club, ignore our questions, threaten onlookers, and generally treat us as if we were worth nothing. It is no wonder that few people trust the police around here, when this sort of thing happens. Call this community policing? I call it community disruption, especially when so many people are trying to forge a strong positive community spirit" (Will, local resident)

Winston added "The only thing I approve of is that the police have finally decided that alcohol and cigarettes are the real drugs. Not sure about the lucozade though!" by Cath



## The Future of Social Housing in The UK

For some people the idea of choosing to rent from the Council is a last ditch attempt to provide shelter in a storm. This is not the general rule, many families have been residents and benefactors of this service - set up at a time of great need, over 60 years ago. Local Authority Housing has been with this country for generations, But this is all set to change.

Government Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) in April this year, produced a policy guideline for the future of Council Housing, their tenants and residents and the Authorities that run them.

The full title "BEST VALUE in HOUSING FRAMEWORK" and the compulsory "TENANT COMPACT" are now working policies that have to be followed, if not the Local Authority in question will find itself financially restricted.

In the case of Manchester with a massive 77,000 council properties the answers are clear, as have been demonstrated around the country.

### LARGE SCALE VOLUNTARY TRANSFER

Under this program a Housing Association or New Housing Company will seek to convince tenants that by a majority vote their housing will be looked after better. The New Landlord will receive a tidy lump sum from government and seek private investment for refurbishment.

Many of Manchester's outer area (overspill) estates are now in this process of transfer. (estimates that there will be up to 40% of the City's housing stock going to new Landlords has yet to be confirmed)

It is not just the outer areas that are being selected, Willow Park in Wythenshawe (6,000 properties) has just become a new Housing Company.....receiving £20 million in one off grant! (plus the buildings and land and sitting tenants).

Speculation that estates have slowly been left to fester and have been run down to lower tenant morale and allow climates of fear on estates is also not confirmed, but people are now asking why nothing has been done for so long.

Estates all over the City are in desperate need of repair and proper maintenance, as the Direct works Department scales down and looks for work in Housing association properties (that can afford to pay them!)

**WATCH OUT IT'S YOUR HOUSE THEY'RE ON ABOUT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

### THE TENANT COMPACT and The ordinary mortal. Part 1

So you think you live here, The only route to involvement and participation is in the debate, and Discussions on your housing future, have to be made through your Tenants and Residents Association. IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE - MAKE ONE. IF YOU DO - JOIN IT AND SPEAK YOUR MIND.

The process started in April 99 and is to be completed by April 2000. All estates are now to review the issues and concerns of their estates and find ways of fixing them. Manchester Housing launched their "CITY WIDE COMPACT PROGRAM" at a Town hall meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. Since then there has been three strategy meetings to discuss the issues

These meetings are only for tenant groups registered with Manchester housing (tenant participation unit). Your tenants association is under obligation to attend, as it is their responsibility to look after the interests of tenants and residents. Along side the local TA's is the larger organisation "TRACC" (tenants and residents associations consultative committee) - set up to assist all city council estates. Tenant representatives are urged to be involved, find out what is happening and let your estates know what is available.

There is a General meeting to take place at the Town Hall - 29<sup>th</sup> July 99.

### All work and no pay

Unfortunately the mammoth tasks ahead have not been backed with financial support - and many people are already burdened with working voluntarily. The "Compact" means more of the same. DETR have allowed for money to be requested to hold a **Tenants Option Study**, and later this year money will be available for Innovation and Capacity building. Your TA has to apply for it NOW!

### THE FUTURE OF YOUR ESTATE IS IN YOUR HANDS

By Cae Guests

## A new call centre for Hulme - an alternative view

Moss Side & Hulme Partnership recently announced that there was to be a new development on Birley Fields site, opposite Asda and next to the petrol station. It will be a call centre, which is one of those large offices where lots of people sit answering phones; companies like BT operator service, or national rail enquiries use call centres for instance, but increasingly they are being used by other companies from insurance agents to marketing companies etc. They claim it will create about 300 new jobs. In the Partnership's eyes it is another coup - a top notch company wanting to build flash offices and create jobs here in Hulme - a major step forward in the regeneration process. Its location also keeps the Princess Rd corridor, the main route into Manchester from the south, looking posh, slick, and successful.

However, there is another way of looking at this. Now I'm all for job creation - it is clear that creating meaningful employment improves peoples lives, reduces some of the social problems such as drugs and crime. But I'm not convinced that a call centre is so appropriate for Hulme - I don't think it would improve peoples lives half as much as if they could get jobs in small scale community / self run businesses or workshops. Getting paid the minimum wage or just over to sit in a vast room full of people answering phone calls all day, is surely not as rewarding as doing something socially useful, where the worker has control over their jobs and their lives. I don't deny that jobs do help people, but I don't want to see Hulme become a place full of flash offices, which offer the usual dull 9-5 slog of a job for poor pay and a poor deal.

What we need is more emphasis on jobs which are meaningful, and which contribute positively to the community. These sort of small scale developments may not be as profitable or be in such fancy offices, but what the benefits they would offer to the community far outweigh the money issue.

*It strikes me as having your priorities in the wrong place when the established community self run businesses such as Market Traders from the Hot Pot have to disperse and go elsewhere or go bust because no replacement market is yet available, while the Partnership concentrates on these posh centres which don't have nearly as much benefit and meaning for the local community as their market once did. This is a sure-fire way to destroy the community, rather than build it up.*

By Cath

### "OUR MANCHESTER"

#### A project for and by young people

Are you 11-16? Would you like to make a computer animation about what its like to live in Manchester? -using photos, music, video clips, newspapers, poems, -anything you like-bring it along and join in the fun. We'll edit it together to make "Our Manchester"

Fri 27th / Sat 28th August.

WFA, Media and Cultural Centre, 9 Lucy St, Hulme. M15

The articles in Phoenix do not necessarily represent the views of the Hulme Alliance