



**Exeter City Council**

To the Chair and Members  
of the J L Thomas Liaison Group

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## **AGENDA FOR** **J L THOMAS LIAISON GROUP**

The **J L Thomas Liaison Group** will meet on **WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL 2009**, commencing at **5.30 pm**, in the **Bad Homburg Room, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter** to consider the following business. If you have an enquiry regarding any items on this agenda, please contact Jo Quinnell on **Exeter 265197**.

**Entry to the Civic Centre can be gained through the Customer Service Centre, Paris Street.**

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# Agenda Item 2

## EXETER CITY COUNCIL

### J L THOMAS LIAISON GROUP

Wednesday 29 October 2008

#### **Present:-**

Councillor John Winterbottom (Chair)  
Councillor Marcel Choules  
Councillor Vanessa Newcombe

Mr T Green, JL Thomas  
Mr B Ratcliffe, JL Thomas  
Liz Taberer, JL Thomas  
Mr J Henthorne, Residents Representative  
Alex Bulleid, Environmental Health Technician  
John Leech, Principal Environmental Health Officer (JL)  
Sarah Prior, Assistant Member Services Officer

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#### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from John Staddon, Residents Representative.

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#### **NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12 MARCH 2008**

The notes of the meeting held on 12 March 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

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#### **PROCESS UPDATE**

Mr Green from J L Thomas updated the group on progress made since the last meeting. Over the last two months, at a cost of about £1million, they have had a new drier installed and when fully commissioned it will provide a greater rate of throughput. A new concentrated odour scrubbing tower has also been installed to the press and drier vapour extraction system. Additionally, upgrading of the control room has been completed and there is now a purpose-built IT system in place to view and control the various plant operations.

Mr Ratcliffe explained that the Company acknowledges the high number of complaints received over the summer and it will make every attempt to identify and implement further improvement works as soon as possible. He explained that there has been a significant improvement to the plant operation processes over the last 6-8 weeks.

The question was raised as to whether there have been improvements to increase throughput which in turn had led to an increase in the volume of material processed? It was explained that the volume of throughput had, to date, remained similar. Improvements that have been made are expected to improve plant reliability and reduce the number of processing hours by means of increased throughput, once the new drier is fully proved.

The question was raised as to whether it is expected that there will be a change in throughput in the future, for example, due to any possible future changes in agriculture etc? It was explained that the Company did not anticipate any reduction in the volume of raw materials processed at the factory.

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### **COMPLAINTS RECEIVED SINCE THE LAST MEETING**

An additional schedule was distributed to the group (attached) and John Leech explained that a further two complaints had been made since the schedule was produced two days ago. Since the last meeting in March there has been a total of 175 complaints. A table of process problems on specific days was also provided.

John Leech explained that Exeter City Council are concerned about the number of complaints received, which has increased considerably since the last meeting, particularly complaints received when there has been no obvious process problem.

Jeff Henthorne raised the question on behalf of John Staddon, Residents Representative, as to whether a letter could be sent to all complainants letting them know what the problem is. John Leech explained that the complainants were all contacted individually to give them feedback. It was agreed that a standard letter is not likely to have any great benefit. However, it does remain a problem convincing the public that every effort is being made to improve the situation. It was queried as to whether the Liaison group notes were available for the public to view. It was agreed that they should be published on the Internet.

Jeff Henthorne expressed concerns over the way in which some of the odour complaints were judged, with 'odour not judged to be offensive' in the case comments notes. There is concern that the public will feel it is pointless to complain. He explained that he felt there had been significant improvements to odour control made over the past few years, however this year has been much worse. It was queried as to why this was?

It was explained that there has been a fairly consistent west / south westerly wind direction over the summer and these consistent wind directions were reflected in the increase in the numbers of complaints from the area to the west of the river. It was mentioned that the majority of complaints, during this period, are usually from residents in the St Leonard's and Rivermead Road areas.

John Leech explained that there has been some media interest in the issue of odour from the factory. Articles were published on 23 June and 4 August in the Express and Echo, and there had been articles in the St Leonard's newsletter. A telephone contact for the Council was given in the latter publication. It is likely that this has had a significant impact on the number of complaints made. Alex Bullied explained that one or two of the complainants had even mentioned that on seeing the articles they were prompted to 'join the campaign'.

The procedure of lorries waiting on the yard at the factory prior to unloading inside the factory was discussed. It was explained that staggered arrival times are arranged where possible to avoid any queuing on the yard. However, when logistical problems do arise, a loaded vehicle may have to wait on the yard for a short period of time. It is normal policy for incoming lorries to be sprayed with scent before entering the City boundary to minimise any odour from the vehicle.

It was explained that on receiving complaints JL Thomas staff will visit the areas and they make daily tours of the boundary and a log is kept, as is required by the Local Authority. JL Thomas acknowledges that the number of complaints is a

serious problem. In a meeting with Council Officers and Cllr Winterbottom, on 29 October, it was agreed that a working party would be set up to look at the incidents over the summer period and identify possible improvements to the process. By 2009 the effects of operational improvements made this year should be more apparent.

The issue of the effects of the wind direction was discussed. It was thought that the last summer has seen a prevailing west / south westerly wind direction. It was suggested that it would be useful to carry out an analysis of the last five years wind direction.

The question was raised as to whether it is possible to ascertain how many complaints have been made as a direct result of the media coverage? Alex Bullied explained that the increase in complaints is difficult to quantify, however, subjectively it would appear that there had been an increase due to the publicity.

Mr Henthorne raised a concern about an incident when there was a very loud 'drilling' type noise coming from the plant in the early hours of one particular morning. It was explained that this may have occurred following installation of the new drier, the likely cause being a steam safety valve blowing off under pressure during commissioning trials. The problem had since been rectified.

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#### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The question was raised as to what progress had been made in negotiations with Cyclerval with regard the possible supply of steam to the factory from the proposed Energy from Waste (EfW) incinerator. It was explained that J L Thomas had not had any further contact from Cyclerval for the last six months. J L Thomas had previously expressed an interest in the supply of steam to the factory from the EfW incinerator, but before this could be possible various technical issues would need to be resolved.

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#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was arranged to be held on Wednesday 22 April 2009 at 5.30pm in Bad Homburg, Civic Centre.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.10 pm)

Chair

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Complaint Date	Odour Date	Address	Details
<b>WK/200814057</b>			
26/11/2008	26/11/2008	Fleming Way	Factory complaint - weather overcast and cool
<b>Case Actions:</b>			
Case Comments	<p>Complaint of bad smell about 15 minutes before complaint made - had noticed it when went out to car in the morning. Was barely detectable by time of call.</p> <p>AB investigated - was one instance of very faint, clean treated air smell, other wise unable to detect in Fleming Way, Gras Lawn, Topsham Road area. Not considered to be offensive.</p> <p>No process problems at factory and towers all OK.</p> <p>Wind possibly NW at time of complaint - ie not in right direction for Fleming Way</p> <p>Rang complainant back - no answer - message left</p>		
<b>WK/200814118</b>			
27/11/2008	27/11/2008	Rivermead Road	Factory complaint - weather overcast and breezy
<b>Case Actions:</b>			
Phone call made	Rang comp. back to discuss findings of investigation		
Case Comments	<p>Complaint regarding smell, which has been noticeable all morning.</p> <p>AB investigated - was clean treated air smell along most of Rivermead Road. Fairly constant odour, but not offensive in nature.</p> <p>No process problems at factory and towers all smelling good.</p>		
<b>WK/200814124</b>			
27/11/2008	27/11/2008	Rivermead Road	Factory complaint - weather overcast and breezy
<b>Case Actions:</b>			
Case Comments	<p>Complaint regarding smell, which has been noticeable all morning.</p> <p>AB investigated - was clean treated air smell along most of Rivermead Road. Fairly constant odour, but not offensive in nature.</p> <p>No process problems at factory and towers all smelling good.</p>		
<b>WK/200814129</b>			
27/11/2008	27/11/2008	Gras Lawn	Factory complaint - weather cold and windy
<b>Case Actions:</b>			
Phone call made	called comp back - no answer		
Case Comments	<p>Complaint that arrived home and noticed 'usual smell'</p> <p>AB investigated - was occasional and very faint odour in Gras Lawn/Fleming Way area. Slight process-type smell however very faint - not offensive.</p> <p>No process problems at factory and towers all ok.</p>		
<b>WK/200815233</b>			
19/12/2008	19/12/2008	Rivermead Road	Factory complaint - weather cold
<b>Case Actions:</b>			
Case Comments	<p>Complaint received regarding 'rank' smell. Complainant noticed this whilst in his car - had turned off Topsham Road into Rivermead Road on his way home.</p> <p>No process problems at factory although operating at full capacity. Towers all OK. One lorry of knacker material on yard, now been moved inside.</p>		
<b>WK/200815889</b>			
06/01/2009	06/01/2009		Factory complaint - smoke coming from factory.
<b>Case Actions:</b>			

<b>Complaint Date</b>	<b>Odour Date</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Details</b>
Phone call made			Message left on the phone leaving my number to get back in contact with me but will try again.
Phone call made			Call to the factory reporting the complaint yesterday, No problems reported yesterday but could have been smoke generated from the boiler start up or dropping to low flame.
Phone call made			Conversation with the complainant about the smoke from the factory. Explained that what is coming out of the back of the building is steam. However, if she sees any per- longed dark smoke to give us a call.

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**WK/200816033**

**08/01/2009      08/01/2009      Rivermead Road      Factory complaint - black smoke.**

**Case Actions:**

Phone call made	No answer on RS's extension or mobile, so an answerphone message left.
E-Mail	I live in Rivermead Road, Exeter and overlook Riverside Valley Park. We occasionally get nuisance smell from the factory opposite and sometimes see black smoke from it. I attach a photo taken today of the latter, which persisted for about 10 minutes.
Attachment	Attached photo from complainant.
Phone call made	Call to the factory about the complaint yesterday. TG said that one of the motors had gone down yesterday afternoon and took approx 30 mins to fix, this would have been the cause of the problem but has now been fixed I will email the photos to him.
Phone call made	message left on answering machine explaining the break down yesterday and left my number if he would like to get back to me.

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**WK/200816651**

**20/01/2009      19/01/2009      Bagshot Avenue      Factory complaint - weather cold**

**Case Actions:**

Case Comments	Complaint made direct to factory out-of-hours. Problem with dryer between 1900 and 2300 - was fuming into process room. Towers all OK Wind SW
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**WK/200816652**

**20/01/2009      20/01/2009      Bagshot Avenue      Factory complaint - weather clear but cold**

**Case Actions:**

Case Comments	Complaint about odour this morning - ?chemical-type smell AB investigated - was occasional but quite strong chemical/process odour - possibly from small flakt. No process problems at factory but probe on LF being replaced. LF and JLT towers both smelt good, SF was reasonably good. Factory to monitor throughout afternoon.
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**WK/200900180**

**02/04/2009      02/04/2009      Marsh Green Road      Factory complaint - weather fine and still**

**Case Actions:**

Phone call made	call to the factory. Nothing on the yard and the factory is running within set points. Will go and have a look around the area as yesterday the recycle waste site was turning.
EPSU Officer Visit	Towers smelling clean and running well, no problems on site all day, they did however have a very smelly lorry come in at 11.32 which may have triggered the complaint.  Walked the area, clean tower smell at the far end of Marsh Green Road, composting smell also in the area. The complainant said that the smell earlier had been a rotten meat smell that lingered in the area for quite a long time. The towers are blowing straight into the workshop area, the smell at the time of the investigation was a clean tower smell which was not unpleasant.