

SWADLINCOTE AREA MEETING

28th August 2001

PRESENT:-

District Council Representatives

Councillor Mrs. Rose (Chair) and Councillors Harrington, Rose, Southerd and Stone.

T. Neaves (Chief Finance Officer), P. Spencer (Members' Services), G. Hague (Local Plans) and B. Jones (Help Desk).

Derbyshire County Council Representatives

Councillor Southerd and Mr. N. Elliot (Emergency Planning).

Members of the Public

C. Bates, E. Bird, A. Colman, C. Harvey, R. Harvey, A. Lager, M. Lunn, A. Sheriff, D. Staley, G. Sutton, R. Sutton, J. Tomlinson and Mr. and Mrs. J. Williamson.

SA/1. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

It was noted that Councillor Mrs. M. Rose had been appointed Chair of the Area Meeting at a Council Meeting held on 21st June 2001.

SA/2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Ford, K. Allies, M. Barsby, Mr. and Mrs. Forbes, Mr. and Mrs. Newman and D. Rider.

SA/3. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

It was agreed that Councillor K. Harrington be appointed Vice-Chair of the Area Meeting.

SA/4. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Area Meeting held on 13th February 2001 were noted.

SA/5. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair paid tribute to Councillor Southerd who had recently stepped down as Chair of the Area Meeting following his election to Derbyshire County Council.

SA/6. **REPORT BACK ON ISSUES RAISED AT THE LAST MEETING**

The Chair reviewed those items raised at the last meeting and explained the progress made in each case. With regard to the parking of vehicles in the vicinity of the Belmont Street School, it was understood that illuminated signs were to be provided by the County Council at the junction of Church Street and Hall Farm Road, Swadlincote. The problems with traffic congestion at Coronation Street, Swadlincote and at the junction of

Alexandra Road and Stanhope Road, Swadlincote had also been referred to the County Council. This matter would be pursued and a progress report would be submitted to the next Area Meeting. The Chair advised that the road surfacing works had been completed on the Thorpe Downs development in Church Gresley. She also explained that items had been included later on the agenda to respond to the requested discussion items from the last Meeting.

SA/7. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE LOCAL DISCUSSION ITEMS**

The Chair advised that notice had been received of two questions. Mr. Sheppard, a resident of Swadlincote, was concerned over increasing levels of fly-posting in the area. He sought the Area Meeting's support to lobby Derbyshire County Council to address this matter. County Councillor Southerd explained that a recent review of the fly-posting policy had been undertaken and the display of election materials would no longer be permitted. It was agreed to refer this matter to Derbyshire County Council.

A letter had been received from residents of Park Road, Church Gresley who were concerned about the condition of this unadopted road. Whilst the Council was not responsible for the maintenance of unadopted roads generally, the residents felt that assistance should be provided on this occasion. Park Road ran adjacent to a section of the Gresley Common which was used for fun-fairs, other events and to provide parking for major events on the adjacent Maurice Lea Memorial Park. As the Council received income from letting the Common it was felt that some of these monies should be used to repair the road surface. The residents had also commented on the recent occupation of the Common by itinerants. It was suggested that, should the travellers return, a refuse skip be located on the Common in an attempt to avoid the problems with litter and reduce the cost of clearing the site after their departure.

There was a general discussion on the problems caused by travellers occupying land. A brief outline was provided of the duties imposed on councils in dealing with such situations and the procedure required to secure the removal of travellers. Terry Neaves, Chief Finance Officer at the Council, explained that a court order had recently been obtained. In the event of the same family of travellers returning within a three month period to any common land in Church Gresley, the Order would enable the Council to move them on immediately. It was agreed to include an item on the agenda for the next Area Meeting and to invite representatives of the Police, so that a full discussion could take place on the problems caused by travellers occupying land, the welfare issues and the procedure to be followed in securing their removal.

A complaint was submitted about the condition of the Maurice Lea Memorial Park and the adjacent war memorial. Councillor Rose explained that he was pursuing officers at the Council about the maintenance of the war memorial and that a bid had been submitted to the National Lottery for refurbishment of the Park. There were particular concerns raised about the bandstand, the ornamental pond and the lack of cultivation of the Park. County Councillor Southerd questioned whether a parish council could be formed for Church Gresley as a means a securing additional local finance to enable the refurbishment of the park.

A number of highway related matters were reported. There were concerns over the mess caused by verge maintenance, the problems caused through flooding, including damage to ironworks and the poor reinstatement works that had taken place, which subsequently had to be repaired again. County Councillor Southerd explained that Derbyshire County Council had secured some £80m of funding over a four year period for highway repairs. He urged local people to contact himself or their District Councillors in order that these problems could be reported to Derbyshire County Council for attention.

Mrs. Coleman asked for an update on the identification of a site for BMX cycling. The Chair explained that the Friends of Eureka Park had been discussing this issue and were looking to identify a suitable site. She agreed to speak to Mrs. Colman after the Meeting as part of the ongoing consultation on this matter. Councillor Stone concurred with the need for a BMX cycling facility.

Mrs. Staley sought further information about the establishment of a parish council for Church Gresley. County Councillor Southerd explained that following a change in legislation the procedure for creation of a parish council had been simplified. Mr. Neaves gave an overview of the funding aspects, advising of the ability for parish councils to raise a precept from local tax payers to provide funds for their area and that this would be in addition to the existing Council Tax Charge.

SA/8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next Swadlincote Area Meeting would be confirmed in due course. It was proposed that the Town Hall, Swadlincote be used as the venue for this Meeting, subject to its availability.

SA/9. **COMMUNITY RESPONSE PLAN FOR CIVIL EMERGENCIES**

The Area Meeting received a presentation from Nick Elliott of Derbyshire County Council's Emergency Planning Division. He explained that increasingly, the public expected a pro-active response to emergencies irrespective of legal obligations and potential costs. The County Council was seeking to raise awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies and to highlight the potential for a new partnership approach where the community could help to protect themselves and each other during an incident. The document had been produced in conjunction with the Derbyshire Association of Local Councils and the County's Emergency Services. The document would be made available to town and parish councils throughout Derbyshire to provide guidance on dealing with emergency incidents and the collation of local information.

It was stressed that the emergency services should always be contacted and details were provided of the County Council resources available to respond to incidents. Potential hazards and threats for Derbyshire included road and rail accidents, air disasters and terrorist attacks. There were a number of companies throughout Derbyshire which handled potentially dangerous chemicals and details were provided of those statutory and non-statutory hazardous sites throughout the County. The potential for football stadia disasters and incidents resulting from large organised events such as open air concerts was also recognised.

The Chair thanked Mr Elliott for the informative presentation.

SA/10. **BEST VALUE**

The Area Meeting received a presentation from Terry Neaves, Chief Finance Officer at the District Council. Information had been circulated prior to the start of the Meeting to provide a summary of the Best Value process. Mr. Neaves gave an outline of the requirements placed on local councils by Best Value, the need to publish a Best Value Performance Plan and to establish a Best Value Review Programme to examine all services over a five year period. Details were provided of those reviews completed in year one of the Programme and those proposed for the current year which were either underway or due to start shortly. Services might be subject to an inspection by an independent assessor appointed by the Audit Commission. The inspector would make a judgement on how good the service was and whether it would improve in the future. For South Derbyshire, the two services inspected to date were the Development Control function and Sheltered Housing and the results of both reviews were reported. Information was provided on the community consultation requirements for the Best Value process.

A question was submitted on the Best Value Review of the Sheltered Housing Service. Mr Neaves explained that since the inspector's report had been received, substantial work had been undertaken and a number of options were being considered. A resident questioned why wardens were being removed as part of this review and the Chair confirmed that no decision had yet been taken on the future of this service as consultation on the review was ongoing. Questions were also submitted about continuous improvement and whether the Council was likely to achieve the highest possible score for any of its Best Value Reviews. It was felt that resource availability affected service delivery and impacted on the results of all Best Value Reviews.

SA/11. **CONSULTATION EXERCISE ON THE MODERNISATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH DERBYSHIRE**

Two documents had been circulated prior to the Meeting to provide information on this subject. Terry Neaves, Chief Finance Officer at the District Council explained the options available to the Council in implementing the Government's Modernising Agenda. There had been widespread consultation through the publication "Which Way, Have Your Say". Some 32,000 copies of this document had been circulated through the local free newspapers. Consultation had also been undertaken with parish councils and details were provided of the responses to the consultation exercise.

Since that time a modernised committee structure had been introduced and information was provided on the key features of this structure. There was increased notice of meetings and new rights for the public including a question time slot at all meetings. Mr. Neaves also explained the roles of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The new structure would provide for open and transparent local government.

SA/12. **TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT**

Following a request at the last Meeting, a report was provided about telecommunications development. Planning permission was required for masts of over fifteen metres in height or those erected in conservation areas or sites of special scientific interest. For ground based masts of up to fifteen metres, the prior approval of the Council as local planning authority, was required with regard to the siting and appearance of the masts. Details were given of the procedure followed for such telecommunications development to be approved. The report was noted.

SA/13. **THE LOCAL PLAN**

A presentation was made by Gill Hague, the Local Plans Manager at the District Council. She explained that the Local Plan provided a framework for rational and consistent decision making about the development and use of land. A local plan normally covered a ten year period which was rolled forward every five years to be kept up to date. A plan would include policies on a variety of subjects including the physical and natural environment, leisure and tourism, transport, employment and housing. The Local Plan had to conform to Regional Planning Guidance, the County Structure Plan and current Government planning guidance. The review process involved survey work, an analysis of the information gathered and the formulation of appropriate policies.

To inform the new South Derbyshire Local Plan, a Town Centre Vision and Strategy had been produced, an urban capacity study undertaken and a draft working strategy for Swadlincote was out for public consultation. A first deposit draft Local Plan was due to be considered in early November, and subject to its approval, there would be the opportunity for public comment. Mrs Hague provided an explanation of the rest of the review process to be undertaken and it was hoped that this would be completed by the end of 2002. The Chair thanked Gill Hague for the presentation.

MRS. M. ROSE

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 8.50 p.m.