

## SWADLINCOTE AREA MEETING

4th February 2003

### **PRESENT:-**

#### **District Council Representatives**

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

T. Neaves (Chief Finance Officer), P. Spencer (Democratic Services) and B. Jones (Helpdesk).

#### **Derbyshire County Council Representative**

Councillor Southerd.

#### **Derbyshire Drugs and Alcohol Action Team**

L. Millburn.

#### **Members of the Public**

R. Abley, E. Bird, R. Causer, G. Darrett, J. Fairall, M. Forbes, N. Forbes, T. Harvey, J. Haynes, Mr. and Mrs. S. Hill, K. Hough, J. Johnson, R. Lane, M. Lunn, Mr. and Mrs. Poston, A. Sheriff, and D. Simpkins, G. Sutton, D. White, J. White and B. Wright.

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Harrington (Vice-Chair) and Mr. M. Todd MP.

#### SA/21. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Area Meeting held on 23rd October 2002 were noted.

#### SA/22. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair gave an update on the Friends of Eureka Park. The group was becoming well established and further members were sought. Its current plans included bulb planting and any person wishing to find out more about the group could contact the Chair, Mr. Lunn or Mr. Sutton. On behalf of Councillor Rose, the Chair spoke of the formation of a similar group for the Maurice Lea Memorial Park. Any person wishing to find out more about this group could contact Councillor Rose after the Meeting.

Complaints had been received from people with disabilities about misuse of the disabled parking spaces outside the Council Offices. After discussions with Councillor Harrington, who was Chair of the Local Access Group, it had been agreed to erect a sign and to take action against car owners who misused these spaces.

It was noted that this would be the last Swadlincote Area Meeting before the District and Parish Council elections in May. Councillor Southerd advised that Councillors Chris and Maria Rose would not be seeking re-election. He paid tribute to both Members and particularly to Councillor Mrs. Rose who had Chaired the Swadlincote Area Meeting in recent years.

SA/23. **REPORT BACK ON ISSUES RAISED AT THE LAST MEETING**

A progress report was provided on issues raised at the last Meeting. With regard to the adoption of roads on the Thorpe Downs Estate, a site meeting had been held involving the developer, local district and county councillors and Officers of each authority.

Derbyshire County Council was not satisfied with the quality of the road surface. The developer had agreed to remedy this, but there was some concern amongst residents of the method proposed to reheat and to refinish the road surface. Derbyshire County Council would require that the resurfaced road be allowed to settle for a period of three to six months before adoption was considered.

Residents were angry at the current situation and felt that the Council should not allow further development by this company in its area until the problems had been resolved. Councillor Southerd explained the different roles of the District Council as the planning authority and Derbyshire County Council as the highways authority. Whilst he shared residents' concerns and pressure could be placed on the developer to remedy these defects, they were not a legitimate reason under planning law to refuse further planning applications. If the roads were adopted at this time, the costs of improving the road surface would fall to ratepayers.

At the last Meeting, a number of road safety concerns had also been reported regarding the entrance to the Thorpe Downs Estate. Correspondence had been exchanged with Derbyshire County Council and the Chair read the response received. With regard to the parking problems and the restricted visibility for drivers emerging from the estate, the police had exclusive enforcement powers. It had been suggested that the matter be referred to the Derbyshire Constabulary. The issue had previously been raised with Inspector Hargreaves. Unloading restrictions were considered inappropriate for this location, where unloading took place throughout the day. The suggestion for a pedestrian barrier was also considered to be inappropriate as the footway width was insufficient. Residents disagreed with this assessment and it was suggested that the matter be pursued with the local Ward Councillors.

SA/24. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE LOCAL DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Further discussion took place on the adoption of highways on the Thorpe Downs Estate. A resident discussed the merits of the proposed reheating and retexturing of the road surface. He felt that a more traditional road resurfacing method might have been preferable and would have led to the roads being adopted at an earlier date. The developer had guaranteed to provide the same service level to residents, as if the road been adopted.

Questions were submitted on a current planning application for a site at the entrance to the Thorpe Downs Estate. Residents were concerned that the proposed development of flats would have an adverse impact on this area. The Chair explained that the discussion of specific planning matters was outside the remit of Area Meetings. Councillor Southerd added that a number of the Councillors present were Members of the Development Control Committee. Any discussion of this item could prevent them from considering

the application when the Development Control Committee met the following Tuesday. There was an angry response from residents who felt that there had been insufficient publicity of this application and that residents should have been able to air their views at this Meeting. The application had been publicised in the same manner as all those considered by the Council and residents were able to attend the Development Control Committee Meeting if they so wished. The depth of feeling was noted and would be raised by Members at the Development Control Committee.

Councillor Southerd advised of road resurfacing works in George Street, Church Gresley. These would commence on 10th February and last for approximately one week. Traffic calming measures would also be introduced in this area, in consultation with local residents, after the road resurfacing works had taken place. Further resurfacing works were planned for Common Road and Councillor Southerd spoke of the additional monies which the County Council had for highway works. He urged residents to advise him of problems, so that these could be reported and works included in the maintenance programmes.

A resident referred to the earlier discussion on problems caused by vehicles parking adjacent to the 'One Stop Shop', at the entrance to the Thorpe Downs Estate in Church Gresley. He suggested that a central reservation be installed at this location to restrict the road width and discourage drivers from parking outside the store. Councillor Southerd agreed to pass on this suggestion to Officers at the County Council. He spoke of the plans for a pedestrian crossing in this area, the parking problems and the lack of effective enforcement by the police. Several residents discussed other problems which added to the current situation and with hindsight, the car parking for this development should have been in front of the store.

A request was submitted for a disabled person's parking bay to be marked outside a property. County Councillor Southerd agreed to discuss this with the resident after the Meeting.

At the last Meeting a presentation was made by the Primary Care Trust (PCT) on plans to develop the former ambulance station site in Civic Way, Swadlincote. An update was sought and it was understood that outline funding approval had been received by the PCT for a LIFT project to improve local health services. Residents spoke of the substantial housing developments in parts of Swadlincote and Church Gresley. They felt there was a need to improve local health facilities and other services. The Council sought to achieve this through planning gain agreements and the PCT was aware of the need to provide additional services. A recent example was the dentists' surgery opened in the Town Centre. Additional general practices were only usually provided when there was sufficient demand, typically after extra housing developments had taken place. It was agreed to seek a progress report and to invite Nina Ennis, Chief Executive of the PCT to attend the next Meeting.

Residents were pleased that bollards had been installed around the Church Gresley Common, in an attempt to prevent its occupation by travellers. It was questioned whether the Council had similar controls over the Woodhouses site, adjacent to the Swadlincote Ski Centre. The Chair spoke of development plans for a BMX and skateboard facility in this area, hopefully in the next financial year.

An update was sought on the restoration of the Maurice Lea Memorial Park. Councillor Rose explained that a small group was meeting regularly to develop this project. Another member of the group felt that the plans were taking shape well and feedback was currently being sought using questionnaires, so that the development plans could be finalised. Monies had been provided for a feasibility study and it was hoped to submit a further funding bid for the total scheme later in the year.

A resident applauded the improvements made to the Church Gresley Common and welcomed the update on the Park restoration plans. However, the frustrations raised earlier in the Meeting about the planned development of flats at the entrance to the Thorpe Downs Estate were repeated.

SA/25. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Due to District and Parish Council elections in May, the date of the next Swadlincote Area Meeting would be delayed. Details would be confirmed in due course.

SA/26. **DERBYSHIRE DRUGS AND ALCOHOL ACTION TEAM**

A presentation was made by Llynn Milburn, Co-ordinator of the Derbyshire Drugs and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT). She explained the partnership approach which sought to tackle drugs problems. It involved amongst others, the Police, the Primary Care Trust and appropriate departments of the Derbyshire County Council. The partnership delivered the National Drugs Strategy, but applied this to meet local issues. DAAT had a role on the Crime and Disorder Partnership and was specifically concerned with the local drugs group.

It had a number of key roles and sought to educate young people, working with the most vulnerable in society. DAAT sought to develop better treatment services, to address crime and community safety issues and to reduce the availability of drugs, in conjunction with its partners. There was a County-wide project which had received national recognition where enforcement was linked to support and treatment. Llynn explained the benefits of the partnership approach and examples were provided of recent improvements to treatment services in Swadlincote. There were challenging Department of Health targets to reduce waiting periods for treatment. New treatment services for young people had been introduced, with a flexible and responsive service to meet clients' needs. There was a recognised shortage in experienced staff at the present time.

Llynn Milburn responded to questions from residents and the first concerned the link between drug or alcohol abuse and domestic violence. The resident also repeated the earlier concerns raised about a proposed development in the Church Gresley area. In response to a question from the Chair, it was confirmed that waiting periods for treatment by the group 'Ad-action' had reduced to three and a half weeks. Llynn Milburn explained DAAT's approach to provide individual assessment and a tailored package of care. This ensured that people ceased taking drugs in a planned and controlled way. In some cases, it was necessary to prescribe the drug methadone as a substitute for heroin. In addition to medication, drug users might need debt counselling, they might be homeless or have relationship problems. There

was a range of support provided including counselling and practical assistance. A key objective was ensuring that people who had ceased taking drugs did not become addicted again.

Questions were submitted on the success rate of the programme and the proportion of drug users that had committed offences. Treatment success rates were increasing and currently stood at about 20%. A resident questioned the likely success rate if offenders were imprisoned. Lynn Milburn felt that imprisonment did not always provide a solution and once released, people often resumed drug taking. There were wider benefits from the current partnership approach with links provided to housing and employment opportunities. The programme sought to help people make a lifestyle change. The Chair thanked Lynn Milburn for the presentation.

SA/27. **BUDGET CONSULTATION**

The Area Meeting received a presentation from Terry Neaves, Chief Finance Officer at the District Council. He explained the aims of this consultation exercise and gave an overview of the topics covered in the presentation. Feedback from previous consultations had identified residents' key priorities and the other aims that the Council should pursue. The total cost of General Fund Revenue Services was some £9.61million and a series of charts showed the cost of Environmental Services, Community Services and Finance and Management Services. A further chart showed the respective proportions of Council Tax income that funded services provided by the District Council, the Police Authority and the County Council.

Mr. Neaves explained how the Council managed its finances through close monitoring of its expenditure, a more open budget process and by improving efficiency. The Council's current financial position was stable with improving levels of reserves. However, there was a need for caution as the Council was spending slightly more than it received in income at present. Mr. Neaves explained the financial constraints that the Council faced and how this affected the level of Council Tax increase. The Revenue Budget proposals were reported and these sought to maintain existing services and provide additional resources for service improvements. There was the potential for a low Council Tax increase for the second successive year.

Details were then provided of current capital spending, the constraints in place and capital spending proposals. Feedback from the Area Meetings would be submitted to inform the Council when it set its budget and Council Tax on 27th February 2003.

Questions were invited on the budget proposals. A resident commented that the likely Council Tax increase of 3.5% would be higher than the current rate of inflation. Mr. Neaves responded that this level of Council Tax increase had been charged last year and was one of the lowest in the Country.

The resident felt there were no controls in place to restrict Council spending and Mr. Neaves explained the powers available to the Secretary of State in this regard. It was questioned whether the Council provided financial support towards the work of DAAT. Funding was provided through the Crime and Disorder Partnership. Councillor Southerd spoke of the Council's efforts to improve the local area and feedback was sought on residents relative priorities.

Consideration was given to the revenue budget proposals, the schemes proposed for inclusion from next year, the summary of all schemes submitted and those likely to be funded through Section 106 monies. It was explained that if no service developments were included this year, there would still be an increase in the level of Council Tax, because of the increased costs faced by the Council. Comment was made on the planned skateboard and BMX park at Woodville and the likely increase in costs due to animal by-products legislation. Further questions were submitted regarding private sector housing grants and the sale of the Council's housing stock. Many local authorities were transferring their housing stock and any decision to sell Council houses in South Derbyshire would ultimately rest with the tenants.

MRS. M. ROSE

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 9.05 p.m.