

## SWADLINCOTE AREA MEETING

6th August 2002

### **PRESENT:-**

#### **District Council Representatives**

Councillors Harrington, Rose, Southerd and Stone.

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

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

Councillor Southerd.

#### **Derbyshire Constabulary**

Inspector D. Hargreaves.

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

R. Abley, P. Bailey, M. Barsby, R. Causer, A. Corner, J. Fairall, M. Forbes, W. Hardwick, R. Harvey, C. Harvey, M. Hudson, M. Lunn, A. Sheriff, D. Staley, D. Sutton and G. Sutton.

### SA/1. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

It was agreed that Councillor K. Harrington be appointed Vice-Chair of the Swadlincote Area Meeting for the ensuing year. In the Chair's absence, Councillor Harrington Chaired the Meeting.

### SA/2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Mrs. Rose (Chair), Councillor Ford (South Derbyshire District Council) and Mr. and Mrs. Lane.

### SA/3. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Area Meeting held on 8th May 2002 were noted.

### SA/4. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair explained that later in the Meeting, a presentation would be made to consult on the Council's budget proposals. A questionnaire had been circulated to seek feedback on aims and priorities and those present were asked to complete the questionnaire and to return it to the Helpdesk at the end of the Meeting.

### SA/5. **REPORT BACK ON ISSUES RAISED AT THE LAST MEETING**

A progress report was provided on issues raised at the last Meeting. County Councillor Southerd had spoken to Mr. Sutton about the reported traffic problems in Belmont Street, Swadlincote. A number of suggestions had been made and these would now be referred to Derbyshire County Council for consideration. A new "access only" sign had been erected, but its location meant that it could not be seen clearly by drivers emerging from the McDonalds Restaurant. Councillor Southerd felt that such traffic

restrictions were not always observed and he recognised that the Police could only undertake a limited amount of enforcement with the resources it had available.

There was a discussion about the costs of tidying Church Gresley Common after its occupation by travellers and the Council was congratulated for the low cost reported. The Chair outlined a project which sought to restrict vehicular access to the Gresley Common and hopefully to prevent traveller occupation in the future. A budget had been identified and details of the scheme would be finalised in the near future.

County Councillor Southerd had pursued the request made at the last Meeting for the installation of railings at the entrance to the Thorpe Downs estate in Church Gresley. The request had been considered by the County Highways Department and a traffic survey had been undertaken. The installation of a “vis-rail” was not considered appropriate, because these were normally used near to school premises rather than to deter motorists from parking. It appeared that the car park at the “One Stop Shop” was under-used and signage was proposed to encourage motorists to make use of the car park. Residents complained that delivery vehicles were still unloading at the front of the store which impaired visibility for motorists emerging from the Thorpe Downs estate. There were no planning conditions requiring deliveries to be made to the rear of the shop. Unloading at the front of the store was still permissible even though there were “no waiting” traffic restrictions in place. A request was made for the Police to patrol this area occasionally to deter motorists from parking outside the store.

An update was provided on the former “tram standard” adjacent to the Church Gresley War Memorial. Councillor Rose reported that this was in fact a vent pipe from the Victorian sewer system beneath Church Gresley. Tram signs had been affixed to the pipe, although these had been removed some years ago. The vent pipe had been hit by motor vehicles, become damaged and had corroded. The pipe was not worthy of preservation and had been removed by Severn Trent Water Company. There were a number of genuine tram standards within South Derbyshire and the Chair felt it would be appropriate to identify these formally and seek to ensure their preservation.

SA/6. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE LOCAL DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Mrs. Hudson sought the assistance of the Derbyshire Constabulary to enforce Town Centre Traffic Orders, to prevent vehicles accessing the High Street from Church Street in Swadlincote. Similar problems were reported with vehicles accessing the Town Centre via Belmont Street and there were concerns for the safety of pedestrians. Inspector Hargreaves agreed to pursue the issues reported. He also responded to an observation that Police Officers were rarely seen in the Town Centre, explaining that six new officers had recently been recruited for the South Derbyshire Division.

Problems were being experienced with vehicles parking and turning in East End Drive, an access road serving properties in Church Street, Swadlincote. Inspector Hargreaves sought confirmation that this was an adopted highway and felt it should be possible to take action against motorists causing an unnecessary obstruction. Councillor Stone voiced his thanks to the

Inspector, outlining a recent incident and the positive way in which the Police had responded to it.

A further problem reported concerned speeding traffic in Church Street, Church Gresley. An enquiry was made about the legal position on motorised scooters known as “Gopeds”. Following case law, these scooters were now classed as motor vehicles and could not be used on the highway or footway. There was some ignorance of the legal position and residents’ assistance was sought to report the use of such scooters so that the Police could act accordingly.

Mrs. Staley referred to the motor cycle display provided as part of this year’s Festival of Leisure. Members of the public had been offered rides on the motorcycles and were observed not to be wearing safety helmets. She hoped that for future years, the Council would require the event organisers to provide safety helmets if this was repeated. Mrs. Staley referred to the Church Gresley War Memorial and explained that the Remembrance Wreaths had been removed prior to the Festival of Leisure. The Chair agreed to investigate this matter and to provide a report back to the next Meeting.

An update was sought on maintenance works to the Charles Street entrance to the Church Gresley Cemetery. The Chair explained that a site meeting had recently been held to look at this and other problems at the Cemetery, including unsafe headstones and people parking in the cemetery to collect their children from an adjacent school. The Council was considering a range of options to address these problems which were felt to be related.

Mr. Harvey referred to recent land sales by the Council and he enquired how the money received would be re-allocated to provide new services. Terry Neaves, Chief Finance Officer at the District Council explained that only a proportion of the money received could be used for new capital projects. It was unlikely that the Council would receive this level of income in the future as it had only limited amounts of land available for disposal. Consideration would be given to a number of projects. Later in the Meeting, a presentation would be made to consult on the Council’s budget proposals for 2003/04. The Council was seeking feedback from residents on their priorities for service delivery. A questionnaire had been circulated and residents were encouraged to complete this and return it to the Helpdesk after the Meeting. The questionnaire had been circulated at all of the Council’s area meetings and to a Citizens Panel, a group of one thousand people who were consulted on Council initiatives periodically. The feedback from this exercise would inform the budget process for 2003/04.

SA/7. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next Swadlincote Area Meeting would be held on 23rd October 2002 at the Swadlincote Town Hall.

SA/8. **DIVISIONAL POLICING CHANGES – A TWELVE MONTH UPDATE**

Inspector Hargreaves gave a presentation and reminded that Divisional Commander Hurrell had addressed this Meeting previously. He outlined the changes to the Police Service which had taken place since then. Traditionally the Police had acted in isolation, but this had changed in the 1990’s with the introduction of Crime and Disorder Initiatives. A divisional review had been

undertaken across the County of Derbyshire and particularly in South Derbyshire. The South Derbyshire Section's boundaries had been made coterminous with the boundaries of the District Council. This had resulted in an effective Crime and Disorder Partnership.

Inspector Hargreaves advised that a beat constable scheme had been introduced for certain areas. This provided a two-tier approach to policing. In addition to the traditional 'Reactive' officers, the beat officers could tackle local problems and there were ten officers for the South Derbyshire area. Four beat officers were located in the urban areas and six were located in the rural areas. Their role was to establish links in the community, to be visible, to be a local point of contact and to deal with ongoing problems.

In February 2002, two rural officers had been introduced into South Derbyshire. These officers covered the whole of the District, but concentrated on the rural areas. Their remit was to work with farmers and landowners to resolve localised issues.

In January 2002, a new call handling system was introduced to improve response times. This had led to more accurate crime statistics being recorded. A mobile police station had been provided for South Derbyshire and a rota for the mobile station was available on the helpdesk. All beat officers were provided with mobile telephones and could be contacted direct by members of the public.

Inspector Hargreaves emphasised the need for the Police to be kept informed of problems. It was important that people reported crime, as all incidents were logged. Statistics were examined on a weekly basis to identify trends and 'hotspots', so that resources could be targeted appropriately.

The Inspector reported on the long-term staffing plan. Ideally, he would like to see beat officers in post for three to five years, but he recognised that officers would move on to progress in their career. The Chief Constable was currently applying for funding to enable the recruitment of more police officers.

It was reported that recently, twenty-one drug supplier arrests had taken place in Newhall which had had a significant impact. The Inspector spoke of other initiatives undertaken by the beat Officers, including recent work with Trading Standards to identify off-licenses selling alcohol to minors. Using video technology, the Constabulary had addressed nuisance problems caused by young people on motorcycles.

A resident of Church Gresley felt the public's perception differed from that reported and that beat Officers did not patrol the area frequently enough. The ten beat Officers for the South Derbyshire Division had a large geographic area to cover and there was a prioritised approach used in responding to incidents. Inspector Hargreaves accepted that the Police had traditionally been poor at keeping residents informed of progress with cases. He hoped that communication would be improved in the future. A question was submitted about staffing levels for the South Derbyshire Division. As reported earlier in the Meeting, six new Officers had been recruited and were currently receiving training. However, there were approximately twelve or thirteen Officers abstracted from front line services at the present time either through long-term sickness, training courses or on "light duties".

Comments were also made about the new call handling arrangements and the valuable role which could be performed by Special Constables. The Chair thanked Inspector Hargreaves for the presentation.

SA/9. **CONSULTATION ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET**

The Area Meeting received a presentation from Terry Neaves, Chief Finance Officer at the District Council. The Finance Consultation sought to follow-up presentations made during the last budget round in January and provide the next stage in developing budget consultation. It sought to raise awareness about the cost of current services, the spending pressures which the Council faced and to seek feedback on priorities. The annual cost of general fund revenue services amounted to £9.61million. A breakdown was provided of the cost of Environmental Services, Community Services and Finance and Management Services. Details were given of current capital spending from the General Fund which amounted to £1.1million this year.

To provide a context, it was shown that South Derbyshire's expenditure amounted to only 11% of the resources generated through the Council Tax. Current spending pressures were reported and an outline was given of the Council's key aims. Feedback was sought about the Council's priorities and whether residents would be prepared to pay increased Council Tax for service improvements. A questionnaire had been circulated to gauge residents' views and it was hoped that this could be completed and returned either at the end of the Meeting or using the free-post reply service. Details were also provided of those revenue and capital spending proposals put forward by Members and Officers. This included details of those schemes submitted for approval to the Finance and Management Committee and those other schemes considered but excluded due to insufficient resources.

Residents discussed the consultation arrangements and felt these could be expanded in future years by circulating questionnaires with the Council Tax literature. A Best Value "newspaper" was already circulated with this literature to give information on Council services. There was a discussion on the proportion of Council Tax collected which was used to fund the services of the County Council and Derbyshire Constabulary. In recent years, funding for the Police Authority had increased to its current level of nine percent. The District Council had no influence over the Police Authority's budget or the amount of monies it precepted. With regard to District Council services, information was sought on the proportion of mandatory or statutory services and the scope for variation of discretionary services. The Council was able to generate additional resources of £30,000 for every £1 it increased Council Tax above the base level. Contrary views were expressed on whether this should be pursued. Information was also sought about the Service Development proposal to install closed circuit television for the Green Bank Leisure Centre car park.

SA/10. **BMX CYCLING TRACK – UPDATE**

The Chair advised that the Council's Community Scrutiny Committee had looked at the provision of a BMX Cycling Track. It had made recommendations to the appropriate policy committee, Community Services on how it might be possible to progress this idea. Further reports would be submitted to keep residents informed of progress.

SA/11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Under Minute No. SA/32 of 8th May 2002, there was a discussion on proposals to extend the Swadlincote Clinic in Civic Way. An update was sought and Councillor Southerd explained that the funding bid submitted by the Primary Care Trust had regrettably failed. The bid was being reconfigured and a further application would be made to seek the required funding.

K HARRINGTON

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 8.55 p.m.