

SWADLINCOTE AREA MEETING

23rd January 2006

PRESENT:-

District Council Representatives

Councillor Southerd (Vice-Chair in the Chair) and Councillor Lane.

M. Alflat (Director of Community Services), M. Greenway (Principal Policy Officer), D. Townsend (Democratic Services Assistant) and B. Jones (Helpdesk).

Derbyshire County Council Representatives

Councillors Southerd and Mrs. Lauro. D. Tysoe (County Secretary) and A. Bond (Democratic Services).

Derbyshire Constabulary

Sergeant Thandi.

Members of the Public

R. Causer, A.M. Forbes, N.J. Forbes, T. Harvey, E. Hill, C. Horridge, K. Hough, M. Hudson, T.R. Jackson, A. Lager, M. Lager, M. Lunn, D. Pitcher, C. Rose, A.C. Sherriff, J. Tomlinson, J.G. Tomlinson and B. Wright.

Member of Parliament

M. Todd.

Prior to the commencement of the Meeting, Councillor Southerd paid tribute and requested a minute's silence in memory of the late Councillor John Stone, who passed away shortly before Christmas.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from District Councillors Harrington, Isham, Murphy and Taylor.

SA/15. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Area Meeting held on 31st October 2005 were noted.

SA/16. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair advised the Meeting that although there had been some discussions regarding possible changes to Area Meeting boundaries, the current boundaries would remain unchanged at the present time.

SA/17. **REPORT BACK ON ISSUES RAISED AT THE LAST MEETING**

The Meeting reviewed those items raised at the last Meeting and noted the progress made. Reports were given on the zebra crossing at Church Street, the obstruction due to parked cars on New Street, Church Gresley and the walkway adjacent to In-Store.

In respect of the zebra crossing at Church Street, the Chair explained that a programme existed within Derbyshire County Council to replace old Belicia Beacon crossings.

This would continue to be monitored by both himself and County Councillor Mrs. Lauro.

A discussion then took place with regard to the improvements outside the Tesco Express Store in Church Street, Church Gresley. Mr. Causer commented that generally the improvements were good, but he felt that the kerbs should also have been lifted. However he had received a letter from Derbyshire County Council confirming that there were no further funds to complete this work. Mr. Forbes considered that the bollards were ineffective and even though the majority of Tesco vehicles parked at the back of the premises, delivery vehicles carrying bread and milk still parked at the front, causing an obstruction. A major problem related to private cars being parked indiscriminately, causing difficulties in accessing private drives. **Sergeant Thandi agreed to pursue this issue and advised the Meeting that she would forward concerns to the local Police Officer suggesting liaison with the Management of Tesco.**

With regard to the bus route between Swadlincote and Derby, a resident expressed concern at the response from Arriva, particularly with regard to the viability of this service. She added that local residents now had to catch four buses to the Derby Royal Infirmary. The Director of Community Services stated that the CVS operated a community car service, that would arrange to take people for hospital and doctors appointments etc. However, he recognised that this was no substitute for a regular bus service.

SA/18. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND SUGGESTIONS FOR LOCAL DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Residents felt that many white lines on roads within the district had become worn or faded and provided an example of Alexandra Road where there were no markings, which made the junction dangerous. The Chair responded by reporting that a survey had been completed by Derbyshire County Council within the last 12 months which agreed with this observation.

Councillor Mrs. Lauro agreed to pursue this issue and report back to the next Meeting.

A resident of Regents Court reported that they were suffering repeated problems of stone throwing at properties.

Sergeant Thandi took further details and agreed to pursue this.

It was also reported that a large bush on Common Side Roundabout heading towards Albert Village was obstructing the view of traffic in this vicinity. It was requested that the bush be cut back to provide a clearer view.

Derbyshire County Council agreed to look at this issue.

A resident reported that he had seen, earlier in the day, a very unflattering report on Swadlincote on BBC East Midlands Today. He felt that the Clean Team within the Council should be congratulated on their work and response times and that contact details should be publicised more to raise awareness. It was confirmed that the telephone number for the Clean Team was 0800 587 2349. C. Rose also confirmed that he had seen the same programme and added that congratulations should be passed to the District Council for encouraging inward investment such as Morrisons, which should encourage further investment and development within the town.

A discussion then ensued with regard to the cleaning of alleyways within the town centre. The Director of Community Services confirmed that litter dropping enforcement was an item for consideration on the Corporate Plan. He added that the Council currently employed two full-time cleaners who worked within Swadlincote on five days per week. Councillor Lane added that the Direct Services Manager was also in discussions with local business owners to reach agreements with regard to cleaning responsibilities in order to minimise Untidy Site Notices being served.

The Director of Community Services agreed to consider the operational differences of refuse collection teams, both within the Recreation and Highways Departments.

The current situation regarding the provision of a crossing outside St. George and St. Mary's Parish Rooms at Church Gresley was discussed. It was reported that a survey had been completed, indicating that proof of the need was not conclusive.

It was suggested that at the next Meeting, the relationship between South Derbyshire and neighbouring Authorities be discussed with regard to any progress on the proposed third river crossing.

SA/19. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was reported that the next Swadlincote Area Meeting would be held during April/May 2006 and residents would be advised of the date and venue in due course.

SA/20. **BUDGET OVERVIEW**

The Chair introduced this item, explaining that the community's feedback was sought on priorities to determine where the Council's resources were to be spent. M. Alflat, Director of Community Services at the District Council then gave a presentation on the budget overview and financial position forecast for 2006 - 2009. In terms of revenue, the overall position was forecast to remain relatively healthy for the period to 2009. The Government had provided information on the financial settlement for South Derbyshire for the next two years. For 2006/07, the settlement was 7% or £400,000 in cash terms. For 2007/08, a 6% settlement had been awarded, which was a further £375,000 in cash terms. Additionally, money would be provided to introduce a free travel scheme for the over 60s within the District. With this revenue funding, it should be possible to maintain a sufficient level of general reserves as a contingency. There would be £1.4m of additional revenue resources available over the next three-year period.

The position on capital was much tighter. There may be a need to review the current five-year planned programme and there was a shortfall forecast in resources of approximately £350,000. There was a need to identify resources to finance any new proposals. With regard to the Council Tax levels, the current financial plans had been based on increases of 4.5% for the next three years. This was under review and would be determined by the Council at its meeting on 2nd March 2006, together with the final budget for 2006/07.

The Chair added that the Council Tax figures were indicative, not yet fixed and would be set at a realistic level.

A discussion followed and it was queried who advised the Council on budget requirements. The Director of Community Services advised the Meeting that the Corporate Management Team and Officers advised Councillors, and it was their responsibility to consider the benefits of a good settlement from the Government and whether or not an increase or decrease in Council Tax was required. The Chair also added that Councillors were influenced by the electorate, gauging the public's views and via consultation exercises such as Area Meetings.

It was confirmed that South Derbyshire District Council had a Council Tax collection rate of 97-98%, which was very high. With regard to the amount of new development which had taken place in the area, it was queried if additional new houses increased the amount of money to the Council in Council Tax. It was confirmed that if more properties were built in a particular area, more revenue would be generated but this had to be balanced against the requirements of services, i.e. refuse collection etc. that was required. M. Todd, M.P. added that as new revenue was generated through additional property and development, the Government would consider this and equalise it throughout other areas.

SA/21. **CORPORATE PLAN**

M. Alflat continued with a presentation on the Draft Corporate Plan for the period 2006 to 2009. An outline was given of the consultation undertaken as part of this process. The Council's top three priorities were reported as being reducing crime and the fear of crime, tackling the causes and effects of anti-social behaviour and providing efficient and effective customer services. There were a number of action areas, ranked under various themes. Additional action areas were reported as developing the capacity of the community and voluntary sector and preventing floods and other emergencies. Providing opportunities to take part in physical activity and working in partnership to promote healthy lifestyles were further action areas, together with addressing environmental issues within rural communities and promoting citizenship. A further presentation slide showed the proposed way forward in developing the Plan.

Residents' views were sought by participating in an exercise to highlight priorities on a series of charts displayed around the venue.

T. SOUTHERD

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 7.55 p.m.

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