

ETWALL AREA MEETING

24th July 2002

PRESENT:-

District Council Representatives

Councillor Whyman (Chair) and Councillor Mrs. Walton.

F. McArdle (Chief Executive), P. Spencer (Democratic Services) and B. Jones (Helpdesk).

Derbyshire County Council Representative

Councillor Mrs. Littlejohn.

Derbyshire Constabulary

Inspector R. Hargreaves.

Parish Council Representatives

N. Ireland (Etwall Parish Council), J. Chisnall and Mrs. L Nash (Findern Parish Council), C. Woodward (Foston and Scropton Parish Council) and P. Hickinbotham (Hilton Parish Council).

Members of the Public

S. Avery, B. Cowley, M. Cramp, J. Cumpstone, R. Grimmett, A. Mitchell, D. Parkinson, B. Smedley, I. Smith and G. Wale.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Bale, Hood and Lemmon (South Derbyshire District Council), J. Littlejohn (Egginton Parish Council), A. Crossley and J. Dove.

EA/1. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Area Meeting held on 30th April 2002 were noted. Further to Minute No. EA/28, Mrs Avery of Age Concern gave an update on the fundraising for provision of a new bus shelter in the vicinity of the Hilton Doctors' Surgery. Thanks were voiced for the contributions from County Councillor Mrs. Littlejohn and Etwall and Hilton Parish Councils. The sum of £1,000 had now been raised. Mr. McArdle gave a further update on the provision of the bus shelter, but it was noted that securing bus route alterations was a vital aspect, which would be reported later in the Meeting.

EA/2. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

It was agreed that Councillor F. Hood be appointed Vice-Chair of the Etwall Area Meeting for the ensuing year.

EA/3. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

At the request of David Rider of the South Derbyshire Council for Voluntary Services (CVS), the Chair gave an update on the outreach work being undertaken to assist people who had suffered as a result of the Foot and Mouth outbreak last year. It was reported that two information point sessions were

being held during the next week in Hilton and Egginton. Details were provided of the dates, times and venues for each of these sessions.

EA/4. **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. Hilton Parish Council and County Councillor Mrs. Littlejohn had been pursuing the County Environmental Services Department about unsatisfactory repair works in Back Lane, Hilton. Councillor Mrs. Littlejohn gave an update, explaining that further resurfacing works had recently been undertaken, but these were still not to a satisfactory standard. Several people expressed their dismay at the quality of the work undertaken. It was suggested that County Councillor Burrows, the Cabinet Member responsible for highways meet with representatives of the Parish Council, the local District and County Councillors to discuss this problem further. Councillor Mrs. Walton spoke of the volume of traffic using this route and particularly bus services. She felt that the quality of the road surface was inadequate for such traffic volumes.

Similar problems were reported following maintenance works undertaken in other parts of the District. It was noted that resurfacing of footways and carriageways in Etwall were imminent and the Local County Councillor intended to monitor the quality of the work undertaken. It was agreed to write to County Councillor Burrows seeking his attendance at the next Meeting, together with appropriate Officers, to respond to the highway concerns raised.

Norman Ireland of Etwall Parish Council enquired whether the public meetings organised by the District and County Councils could be combined. He spoke about the format of County Council public meetings, feeling they were more formal with limited opportunity for public participation. These comments were noted and Councillor Mrs. Littlejohn agreed to refer them back to the County Council.

At the last Meeting, it had been agreed to write to Derbyshire County Council seeking priority for winter maintenance in Bloomfield Close and Percy Wood Close, Hilton. The Chair read a response received from the County Environmental Services Department. This stated that priority could not be given to the winter maintenance requested and suggested that the District Council's Housing Section could undertake a service if it so wished. Alternatively, the District or Parish Council could provide and service grit bins to enable 'self help'. The response was met with concern, particularly with regard to possible public liability and health and safety issues. The Chair questioned how this matter could be progressed and several possible options were discussed. It was agreed that Officers of the District Council research the implications of providing a service and that a report be submitted to an appropriate District Council Committee. A report would then be made to a future Area Meeting.

Further to Minute No. EA/1 above, it was reported that efforts had been made to secure bus route amendments to serve the proposed new shelter adjacent to the Hilton Doctors Surgery. Regrettably, no response had been received to the correspondence or telephone enquiries made. The Chair suggested writing to the Managing Director of Trent Buses to seek the required route amendments. A further report would be made to the next Meeting.

At the last Meeting, there had been a discussion about problems with traveller encampments, particularly on privately owned land. The Chair outlined the actions taken to publicise details of an Environment Agency hotline and to report the concerns raised to Derbyshire Constabulary. Inspector Hargreaves commented on force policy, its application in the case referred to and the current review of its policy on dealing with traveller encampments. He spoke about the joint protocol being prepared by the District Council, the Environment Agency and the Constabulary. Questions were submitted about the powers available to the Chief Constable to enforce the eviction of travellers and why these were not always exercised. Mr. Woodward of Foston and Scropton Parish Council explained the approach adopted by the Constabulary previously to enforce the eviction of travellers. He felt that this had provided an effective deterrent. The Chair summarised the comments made, spoke of the site provision made within South Derbyshire and hoped that the views would be taken on board by the Constabulary.

EA/5. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE LOCAL DISCUSSION ITEMS**

At the last Meeting there had been a discussion about amendments to the composting scheme and particularly including paper and cardboard in the compostible materials collected. It had been agreed to write to all residents to clarify the position, but to date it appeared that some areas had not received the information. The Chief Executive agreed to pursue this matter and a report back would be made to the next Meeting.

A resident of Hilton sought an update on improvements to the path from Peacroft Lane to the new development in Hilton. It was explained that this would form part of a comprehensive package of benefits being renegotiated with developers for improvements in the Hilton area. Mr. McArdle was invited to attend the next Hilton Parish Council Meeting to discuss these matters further.

Councillor Mrs. Walton reported problems being experienced in Hilton through poor verge maintenance. On some approaches to the Village, inadequate verge maintenance was impeding visibility splays and causing a potential traffic hazard. Overhanging hedges were obstructing footways and causing difficulties for pedestrians. Identifying who was responsible for maintenance was proving difficult and the District Council's assistance was sought in undertaking a co-ordinating role. The Chair was reluctant to pursue this request, commenting that the County Council would ultimately assume maintenance responsibilities. He spoke about the former agency arrangements and the funding allocations provided by the County Council, which determined maintenance frequencies. Meetings took place between senior Members and Officers of the District and County Councils to pursue problem issues such as those reported. However, there appeared no possible assistance that the District Council could provide at this time, other than seeking to use its enforcement powers in relation to any untidy sites.

At a number of previous Area Meetings consideration had been given to the problems caused by the notifiable weed, ragwort. The County Council's policy was to provide a complementary service, removing this weed in conjunction with adjoining landowners. In the main, it was felt that the weed was more prevalent in hedgerows and grass verges rather than adjoining fields. It was agreed to write to the County Council restating the concerns raised. In view of the number of County Council issues raised, it was suggested that appropriate

Members and Officers be invited to attend the next Meeting to discuss these issues further. It was also agreed to seek details of forthcoming County Council Area Meetings in order that residents could attend those meetings to air their concerns.

A further reported problem in Hilton was speeding traffic. Recently, it was felt there had been no speed monitoring by the Police in this area. Inspector Hargreaves agreed to pursue this issue and similar reported concerns of speeding traffic in Etwall. Problems were reported with speeding traffic in Station Road, Hatton and there had been three road traffic accidents in recent months at the mini-roundabout junction with Scropton Road. The installation of speed cameras and advance warning signs for the roundabout were sought. The complainant felt it was unlikely that the accidents would have been reported to the Constabulary, so would not have been included within accident statistics. Inspector Hargreaves advised that third parties could report road traffic accidents to overcome this. New road signage had been erected marking the entrance to Hatton and including an instruction for motorists to reduce their speed. The sign, located at the Tutbury end of the village, was partly obscured by an overgrown highway verge and this matter would be investigated and a report back made to the next Meeting.

Mr. Woodward enquired about a proposed traffic improvement scheme for Woodyard Lane, Foston. He spoke of the nature of this narrow lane which was used by heavy commercial vehicles. He felt the installation of roadside kerbs would be insufficient and hoped that appropriate highway improvements would be made. The Chair recounted the change to the environment in this area from a tranquil countryside lane to a industrial area. Mr. Woodward was asked to contact the Council's Planning Officers to discuss his concerns so that these views could be transmitted to the Highways Department at Derbyshire County Council.

EA/6. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next Etwall Area Meeting would be held on Wednesday 9th October 2002. It was hoped to use the Egginton Memorial Hall as the venue for this Meeting and details would be confirmed in due course.

EA/7. **DIVISIONAL POLICING CHANGES – A TWELVE MONTH UPDATE**

Inspector Hargreaves gave a presentation and reminded that Divisional Commander Hurrell had addressed this Meeting in April 2001. 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. A local crime team was also being piloted in Willington and Melbourne and this group would try and address local problems within those villages.

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.

Inspector Hargreaves 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.

Mr. Ireland of Etwall Parish Council referred to a recent incident involving an alleged arson attack, at which there had been no police attendance. Inspector Hargreaves could not comment on the specific case but would pursue the matter. Inspector Hargreaves was thanked for the presentation.

EA/8. **CONSULTATION ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET**

The Area Meeting received a presentation from Frank McArdle, Chief Executive 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.

The Chair stressed the importance of residents' feedback to shape the budget process. He explained that additional services could be provided with further resources, but that for each half percent Council Tax increase, only £16,000 would be generated.

Mr. Ireland of Etwall Parish Council sought a further breakdown of the statistics to identify the proportion of expenditure for parished areas as compared to the urban core of the District. Mr. McArdle explained that some £200,000 of funding was specifically allocated for the parish areas. Comments were made about the consultation process. Mr. McArdle explained that the process being undertaken was earlier, more open and detailed than arrangements made by many other local authorities. Mr. Smith of Etwall Parish Council expressed support for the consultation arrangements. He felt however, that the questionnaire on aims and priorities had been difficult to rank. For future years, he suggested that a small group could consider the available options. Mr. Smith also suggested that a relatively small increase in Council Tax levels could provide significant additional resources for expenditure on agreed priorities.

The Chair reiterated the Council's desire to hold meaningful consultation and to establish a clear and transparent process in compiling its budgets. A final question was submitted on the former profit share scheme provided to employees of the Council's Direct Services Organisation. This scheme had now been removed.

B. WHYMAN

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 9.15 p.m.