

LINTON AREA MEETING

24th January 2002

PRESENT:-

District Council Representatives

Councillor Southern (Chair) and Councillors Douglas, Knight and Shaw. S. Whiles (Head of Community Services), K. Stackhouse (Financial Services Manager), P. Spencer (Members' Services) and B. Jones (Helpdesk).

County Council Representative

Councillor Mrs. Lauro (Vice-Chair) and Mr. J. Waite.

Parish Council/Meeting Representatives

J. Blythe (Linton Parish Council), Dr. T. Elson (Walton-on-Trent Parish Council), D. Eaton (Caldwell Parish Meeting) and J. Edwards (Lullington Parish Meeting).

Members of the Public

C. Birch, K. Birch, R. Bull, L. Culpan, S. Elson, G. Kirby, A. Kirkland, P. Seeley, and C. Tagg.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from District Councillor Lauro, B. Laxton (Castle Gresley Parish Council), J. Edwards (Overseal Parish Council), B. Matkin (Rosliston Parish Council), P. Ellis, S. Lee and V. Taylor.

LA/18. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Area Meeting held on 7th November 2001 were noted.

LA/19. **REPORT BACK ON ISSUES RAISED AT THE LAST MEETING**

The Chair reviewed those items raised at the last Meeting and progress reports were provided. County Councillor Mrs. Lauro explained that maintenance works had taken place to the hedgerow on Caldwell Lane and its condition would be monitored in the future. Further to Minute LA/14, an update was given by Mr. John Waite of Derbyshire County Council on the proposed pilot scheme for advisory lining in Elmslea Avenue, Coton-in-the-Elms. It was hoped that this would reduce the problems caused through vehicles obstructing driveways in the vicinity of the Primary School.

At the last Meeting, concerns were voiced about the closure of local amenities and Councillor Shaw explained that it was hoped to provide a post office in the Shoulder of Mutton public house in Coton-in-the-Elms. He also commented on the proposal to provide a footpath between Rosliston and Coton-in-the-Elms, explaining a possible cross-field route. John Waite of Derbyshire County Council explained that the costs of providing a roadside footway between these two villages meant that it was unlikely to be achieved for a number of years. Other options discussed were improving signage and the use of community transport. Mr. Waite offered to pursue the issue raised

at the last Meeting regarding weight limits in the Walton-on-Trent area, given the problems experienced with heavy commercial vehicles travelling through that Parish.

LA/20. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE LOCAL DISCUSSION ITEMS**

A number of highway related problems were reported. District Councillor Knight felt that the weight restriction along Woodville Road, Overseal was not being observed. Advance signage was sought from the A444 together with enforcement by the Derbyshire Constabulary. Several requests were made for road resurfacing and repair works. Particular reference was made to Main Street, Linton, the roads between Drakelow, Walton-on-Trent and Rosliston and Dag Lane, Lullington. There was some criticism over the repair methods used in some instances. Mr. Waite agreed to respond to the issues raised, submitting progress reports to County Councillor Mrs. Lauro for report to the appropriate parish councils. Mr. Waite was thanked for his attendance.

LA/21. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next Area Meeting would be held at Overseal Village Hall on Thursday, 9th May 2002 at 7.00 p.m.

LA/22. **BUDGET CONSULTATION**

The Area Meeting received a presentation from Kevin Stackhouse, Financial Services Manager at the District Council. This was the first year that the Council had consulted on its budget proposals and it was hoped to develop the process further in future years. Mr. Stackhouse explained the financial crisis which the Council had faced in 1999. Since that time, measures had been taken to ensure sound financial management, including a Best Value Review of Financial Management and Control. Details were given of the Council's medium term financial strategy, the service and financial planning process and strengthened budgetary monitoring in place.

The Council's financial position had stabilised and there was an adequate level of Reserves. However, caution was still needed and it was proposed to refocus and reprioritise the services provided. Information was submitted on the financial constraints imposed by Government and the implications of expenditure above Government guidelines. The revenue budget proposals for 2002/03 were reported. These sought to maintain existing services, provide additional resources for service improvement which were in part offset by savings in existing services. There was the potential for a lower Council Tax increase than in previous years. Details of the proposed service developments and budget reductions had been circulated.

The capital spending proposals for 2002/03 were also reported. For this year, there was a single capital allocation which would give authorities greater freedom in allocating resources. Overall, Government allocations were falling and authorities were becoming more reliant on generating their own resources. The presentation concluded with a summary of the Council's financial position, an outline of how the feedback from the consultation meetings would be incorporated into the budget process and proposals to undertake further consultation during the summer on spending priorities for 2003/04.

Information was sought on the service development proposal to appoint an additional Environmental Health Officer. Sandra Whiles, Head of Community Services explained the roles of this Section and the need for an additional officer to enable increased public inspections of Food and Health and Safety at Work premises across the District. Mrs. Whiles stated the increasing duties placed on local authorities through legislation and gave an outline of the refocusing and reprioritising exercise and Best Value Reviews being undertaken to make best use of the resources available.

A comment was made about the period taken to close the Council's accounts. Mr. Stackhouse explained that the statutory deadline for local authorities to publish their accounts was 30th September and that this year the Council hoped to publish its accounts in July. A comparison was provided of the approaches taken to publish final accounts in the public and private sectors. A related question was submitted on the monitoring of budgets and Mrs. Whiles responded as the Head of a Service Department on the budget monitoring processes in place.

It was recognised that this had been the first year the Council had consulted on its budget proposals. It was hoped that in future years the consultation would be more meaningful, enabling comment on services as a whole rather than variations in service levels. A comment was made about consultation on the County Council's budget and Councillor Mrs. Lauro explained the mechanisms that the County Council used.

LA/23. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Councillor Shaw explained that the officers of the District Council would be able to provide assistance to those organising events to commemorate the Queen's Golden Jubilee. The Chair suggested that event organisers contact Chris Mason at the District Council for further information. County Councillor Mrs. Lauro announced the temporary closure of Park Road, Overseal and Linton Heath between 4th and 24th February 2002 for road improvement works.

R.W. SOUTHERN

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 8.10 p.m.