

SWADLINCOTE AREA MEETING

23rd October 2002

PRESENT:-

District Council Representatives

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

I. Reid (Deputy Chief Executive), S. Batchelor and E. Julian (Community Services), C. Mason (Facilities and Leisure), P. Spencer (Democratic Services) and B. Jones (Helpdesk).

Derbyshire Constabulary

Inspector D. Hargreaves.

Derbyshire Dales and South Derbyshire PCT

S. Elliott.

Members of the Public

R. Abley, M. Barsby, E. Bird, R. Causer, D. Duffey, W. Hardwick, R. Harvey, T. Harvey, K. Hough, E. Key, E.M. Key, R. Lane, M. Lunn, A. Sheriff, M. Spalding and S. Spalding.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Harrington (South Derbyshire District Council), Councillor Southerd (South Derbyshire District Council and Derbyshire County Council), Mr. and Mrs. Forbes and Mrs. Staley.

SA/12. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Area Meeting held on 6th August 2002 were noted.

SA/13. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair provided an update on the provision of a BMX cycle track. A Project Group was to be formed and the Chair would be a member of that Group. On behalf of Councillor Harrington, the Chair gave an update on proposals to install bollards around the Church Gresley Common, to try to prevent future traveller occupation. At Mr. Barsby's request, details were provided of the Church Gresley Remembrance Parade and Service.

SA/14. 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 submitted a report on the traffic problems in Belmont Street, Swadlincote. The proposal to stop-up Belmont Street and create turning heads had been researched, but was not considered feasible. The requests for signage had, with one exception, been actioned.

The Council's Heritage Officer had contacted a local historian to help to identify the locations of all surviving tram standards in South Derbyshire. Once this had been done, liaison would take place with Derbyshire County Council to seek the preservation of the tram standards.

At the last Meeting, there had been a discussion about the removal of Remembrance Wreaths from the Church Gresley War Memorial. It was explained that the District Council had not removed these wreaths and Mr. Barsby questioned who was responsible, feeling it was unlikely that vandals had removed them.

Mr. Barsby provided clarification on the safety concerns reported at the last Meeting, regarding the motor cycle display provided as part of the Festival of Leisure. Rides had been offered to spectators who were not wearing safety helmets and this would not be permitted in the future. Councillor Stone spoke of the need for a specialist motor cycle track. There was a discussion on the difficulties in identifying a suitable site for this noisy sport and the problems caused by people riding motor cycles on unsuitable areas of land. The implications of the Council providing a motor cycle track were also discussed.

SA/15. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE LOCAL DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mr. Barsby repeated an earlier request for restoration of the 1914-18 War Memorial in Church Gresley. He hoped that the District Council could find resources to undertake these works. With regard to the Church Gresley Remembrance Parade, Mr. Barsby advised that part of the route was an unadopted road, which was in need of repair. He requested that the Council provide some stone or other suitable materials in order that he could repair the potholes. Ian Reid suggested that Mr. Barsby be placed in contact with Officers of Derbyshire County Council who should be able to provide suitable materials to enable Mr. Barsby to repair this road.

A resident of the Thorpe Downs estate in Church Gresley questioned when the estate roads would be adopted by Derbyshire County Council. Several street lights on the estate were not working and the resident explained his own efforts and the difficulty in getting the developer, the District or County Council to accept liability for maintenance works. Problems were reported by another resident with regard to the road surface and the lack of winter maintenance provided. The residents were reluctant to pay their Council Tax as they felt they were not receiving adequate service.

Ian Reid recognised the difficulties for residents and regrettably, this was not an uncommon complaint. At another Area Meeting, the County Councillor responsible for Highways had responded to similar complaints from residents of Hilton. Developers seemed reluctant to complete estate roads to an adoptable standard and there was a need for some flexibility on the part of the County Council to adopt estate roads in sections on larger developments.

Residents questioned whether use could be made of the developer's bond to provide funds for repairs or whether the Council could act in default and recharge the developer. Ian Reid clarified that the developer's bond was usually in the form of an insurance policy and it was questionable whether a successful claim could be brought. One possible option might be to involve the Member of Parliament. A Member suggested seeking adverse publicity to put pressure on the developer to remedy these defects. A further suggestion from a resident was to make a formal complaint to the Ombudsman with a view to influencing national policy and preventing similar problems for other people in the future. It was questioned whether there were planning regulations to require the completion of road adoptions within a specified period. There were requirements for highway safety and the developer remained responsible until the road was adopted.

At previous meetings, consideration had been given to the problems caused by vehicles parking outside the “One Stop Shop” at the entrance to the Thorpe Downs estate. Further safety concerns were reported with visibility at the junction impeded by parked vehicles. Reference was again made to delivery vehicles parking in front of the store and the earlier requests for Police enforcement. There were concerns about speeding traffic through the Thorpe Downs estate and the need for traffic calming measures. The need for a traffic warden was also stated and Inspector Hargreaves hoped that revised arrangements in the City of Derby might enable the reallocation of an Officer to the South Derbyshire area. Residents repeated the request for the installation of a “vis rail” to deter motorists from parking near to the entrance to this estate. The Police were asked to enforce the ‘No Waiting’ restrictions and Inspector Hargreaves explained that the area could be patrolled, but because of resource limitations, it would be at the expense of other services. It was questioned whether additional restrictions could be imposed and Mr. Reid explained that planning restrictions could only be applied for new developments and not retrospectively. Other, more appropriate mechanisms might be available, particularly to restrict unloading at the front of the store. It was agreed to write to Derbyshire County Council asking that Authority to consider such a restriction. Reference was then made to the former Seale Garage and the proposals for a Housing Association development on that site. Given the reported highway problems, residents felt that these should be resolved before any further development took place.

SA/16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next Swadlincote Area Meeting would be held on 4th February 2003, at the St. George and St. Mary’s Parish Rooms in Church Street, Church Gresley.

SA/17. DERBYSHIRE DRUGS AND ALCOHOL ACTION TEAM

A presentation was due to be made by Llynn Milburn of the Derbyshire Drugs and Alcohol Action Team. Regrettably, Llynn was unwell and unable to attend the Meeting. She had been asked to make the presentation to the next Area Meeting.

SA/18. UPDATE ON A FORMER AMBULANCE STATION, CIVIC WAY, SWADLINCOTE

A presentation was made by Steve Elliott, Commissioning Manager for the Primary Care Trust (PCT). He reminded those present that the former Ambulance Station site had been unused in recent years and the PCT was considering proposals for its use. The PCT was mindful of the increasing population and the perceived needs for the area. Outline funding approval had been received and the PCT had until December to submit a detailed bid. If successful, the new facilities should be available in 2004/05.

The views of local people were sought. Consultation would take place through the Council for Voluntary Services, with PCT staff, through Notice boards in clinics and a stakeholder event in November. To date, suggestions had included the need for more general practitioners, dentists and community health staff. The PCT worked in partnership with other organisations and it was possible that the new accommodation could include space for the voluntary and statutory sectors. Comments sheets were available so that residents could provide feedback. Alternatively, they could contact the Primary Care Trust by telephone with their suggestions.

A request was submitted for an X-ray department to be provided on this site. Whilst such equipment was expensive and needed specialist staff to be operated, the request would be considered. Clarification was sought on the relationship between the PCT and doctors' surgeries. Mr. Elliott provided an explanation and responded to a further question on the provision of additional surgeries. At present, there were two local surgeries with capacity to accept additional patients, but the PCT was mindful of the increasing population of the area. Partnership meetings took place with the District Council to assist forecasting of future service demands.

Mr. Duffy explained that he had been involved in a serious accident and he praised the Health Service for the care that he had received. He offered to donate a property in his ownership for use as a doctor's surgery and Mr. Elliott agreed to speak to him following the Meeting to discuss this generous offer.

It was questioned whether the proposals for the former Ambulance Station site might include some overnight care. This was unlikely, but Mr. Elliott spoke of the intermediate care proposals being considered at present, in conjunction with the District Council. Mr. Elliott was thanked for the presentation.

SA/19. PARK RESTORATION

The Committee received a presentation from Chris Mason, the Council's Facilities and Development Manager. He outlined proposals to restore the Maurice Lea Memorial Park and the progress made to date. There would be the opportunity for members of the public to become involved in this project.

There had been a realisation that parks were not meeting the aspirations of the community and surveys had identified that parks and open spaces were important to people. A key issue was how to attract funding for redevelopment of the sites. The advent of the National Lottery provided an opportunity and a bid was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for resources to restore all of the Council's urban parks. Unfortunately, only the Maurice Lea Memorial Park met the HLF criteria. Consultants were commissioned in 1998 to undertake historic landscape mapping and the HLF had then agreed to the production of detailed restoration proposals. These were submitted in 2000 and the HLF awarded approximately £30,000 for further development work. Consultants were now in the process of undertaking this development work and as a next stage, a further bid would be submitted in early 2003.

The restoration proposals comprised a variety of projects worth some £600,000 in total. An important element of the HLF award was securing community involvement and the proposals included the formation of a "Friends of" group. Anyone interested in getting involved was asked to contact Chris Mason after the Meeting.

In response to a question, clarification was given on the reasons why only the Maurice Lea Memorial Park was eligible for HLF funding. It was confirmed that the consultant's fees had been met from Lottery funding. Details were provided of the proposals to replace railings, removed many years ago, to enclose this park. Residents felt that the park needed to be secured to prevent potential vandalism problems. Representatives of the Friends of Eureka Park were present at the meeting and spoke of the works undertaken at that Park and the lack of vandalism to date. Councillor Rose commented

on an initiative in Findern where young people had created a wildflower garden. A contrary view was voiced by others present that vandalism and the congregation of youths deterred people from using the Park. There was a perceived lack of respect for public amenities and at times verbal intimidation towards other Park users.

Councillor Stone spoke about new housing development and the provision of open space or additional parkland. Ian Reid confirmed that open space was provided as part of new housing developments and the Swadlincote Woodlands had provided an additional amenity for the Town. Thanks were voiced to Chris Mason for the presentation.

SA/20. CRIME AND DISORDER INITIATIVES

The Area Meeting received a presentation from Stuart Batchelor, the Council's Community and Leisure Development Manager and Emma Julian, the recently appointed Community Drugs Officer. Stuart spoke to a circulated handout "Reducing Crime in our Community". The vision for a safe South Derbyshire would be achieved through partnership working between local authorities, Police, Health, other statutory bodies, voluntary organisations and the business sector. The community would also be encouraged to take action itself to reduce criminal activity and anti-social behaviour.

The Crime and Disorder Act had placed a statutory responsibility on authorities to work in partnership to reduce crime and disorder through the production of a strategy every three years. The 2002 to 2005 Strategy had identified six main priority areas which were outlined, together with their respective three year targets. The literature showed the South Derbyshire Crime and Disorder Partnership structure and a table was submitted outlining current activity being undertaken by each of the action teams.

Clarification was provided on Emma Julian's role as Community Drugs Officer. She spoke of the multi-agency approach to deliver a range of projects and commented particularly on the Communities Against Drugs initiative. This sought to reduce crime through stopping the supply of drugs, identifying and prosecuting criminals and providing support services to drug users.

Mr. Barsby enquired how the Crime and Disorder target figures were determined. Stuart Batchelor responded and explained that if the Partnership achieved its targets, additional Government funding of £1million would be received. Mr. Batchelor spoke of the performance indicators and the efforts of the police to gather accurate crime statistics. He reported on the achievements made to date by the Partnership and the role of the community.

The Chair commented on the link between drug use and crime and the efforts of the Youth Information Shop to provide support services. Emma Julian stressed the need for local feedback where there were known drug use problems, so that action could be taken. Residents questioned the scale of drug use problems in the area. It was explained that the police were trying to map known problem areas. Other issues raised were cross-border working arrangements and the perceived link between certain types of residential development and the problems caused through its occupation by drug users. Emma Julian and Stuart Batchelor were thanked for the presentation.

A general question was submitted about the publicity arrangements for Area Meetings and details were provided.

MRS. M. ROSE

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 9.05 p.m.