

NEWHALL AREA MEETING

7th August 2002

PRESENT:-

District Council Representatives

Councillor Mrs. Mead (Chair) and Councillors Bambrick, Dunn, Richards, Routledge and Wilkins.
T. Neaves (Chief Finance Officer), N. Betteridge (Democratic Services) and B. Jones (Helpdesk).

County Council Representatives

Councillor Routledge.

Derbyshire Constabulary

Inspector R. Hargreaves and WPC Fearn.

Members of the Public

P. Bambrick, K. Basford, S. Basford, A. Blyth, D. Coulson, M. Coulson, M. Dunn, S. Garland, A. Hoey, R. Holden, R. House, R. Hughes, C. Maddock, D. Mansfield, B. Marsden, W. Parker, M. Perry, M. Richards, H. Roobottom, I. Smith, P. Smith, D. Tagg, R. Tagg, V. Thornley, E. Tunnicliff and A. Williamson-Yates.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from G. Hall and B. Woods.

NA/1. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

It was agreed that Councillor Richards be appointed Vice-Chair of the Meeting for the ensuing year.

NA/2. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Area Meeting held on 2nd May 2002 were noted.

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

The Chair read a letter to the Meeting received from Mr. B. Woods, the Chairperson of the Friends of Newhall Park which thanked the partnership of funders and the District Council for sponsoring leisure equipment recently installed on the Park. County Councillor Routledge presented Mr. D. Mansfield, the Secretary of the Friends of Newhall Park with a cheque in the sum of £250 from his fund provided by the County Council towards local community projects. This would be contributed towards the cost of hanging baskets and flowers on the Park. It was also reported that funding had now been obtained for the provision of lighting on a pathway through the park, which should be installed by September 2002.

The Chair explained that later in the Meeting, a presentation would be made 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 return it to the Helpdesk at the end of the Meeting.

NA/4. **REPORT BACK ON ISSUES PROGRESSED SINCE THE LAST MEETING**

The Meeting reviewed those items raised at the last Meeting. With regard to motorcycles encroaching onto walk areas at the bottom of Oversetts Road, Newhall, it was reported that further work to the existing barriers to prevent access by motorcycles had not yet been undertaken. The District Council had placed orders for this work several weeks previously but the contractor had experienced problems completing the works. However, assurances had now been provided that the work would be completed within the next three weeks. WPC Fearn reported that a gate had recently been installed and Inspector Hargreaves confirmed that three arrests had recently been made in relation to nuisance motorcyclists following filming by the police.

NA/5. **DIVISIONAL POLICING CHANGES – 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.

Inspector Hargreaves referred to the twenty-one arrests recently made in Newhall in relation to the alleged supply of drugs and advised that this

operation had been funded through Crime and Disorder initiatives. A Community Drugs Worker had also been appointed to offer support and work with families with a view to ceasing any supply of drugs. Funding had also been obtained for the supply of a video camera, which could provide valuable evidence in any legal proceedings.

The police had been working with Trading Standards in connection with local off-licences serving alcohol to persons under the age of eighteen years. Two premises in the area had been identified to be causing an offence in this regard and action was currently being pursued.

With regard to communication, a resident acknowledged that telephone calls were now answered fairly quickly, whereas prior to January 2002, frustration was caused by the lack of response to telephone calls. However, she expressed concern at all calls now being answered at the call centre at Ripley and in most cases, the operators had no local knowledge. Inspector Hargreaves accepted this point but advised that it was important to deal with calls more quickly, which were then transferred to the relevant department to be dealt with by local Officers. It was noted that if the main Swadlincote Police Station number (01283 550101) was dialled, the caller would still be charged at the local rate.

The Chair thanked Inspector Hargreaves for his attendance and the presentation made.

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

It was reported that Mr. B. Woods had raised several matters in writing which he wished to be reported to this Meeting in his absence. The first matter concerned the unsightly appearance of Council-owned land adjacent to Alma Road, Newhall. In this regard, it was reported that the Council was to tidy the land very shortly and the land would then be included in next year's programme for long-term maintenance. The second point raised by Mr. Woods concerned litter deposited by customers of the food businesses on Oversetts Road, Newhall. Inspector Hargreaves advised that litter was not the responsibility of the food outlet and was a matter covered by the Environmental Protection Act. To pursue any legal proceedings, witnesses would be necessary and Inspector Hargreaves confirmed that dropping litter did constitute an offence. He suggested that the District Council should write to the premises requesting the owner to give consideration to an appropriate level of litter bins. Mr. Woods had also raised the issue of Bretby landfill site and County Councillor Routledge confirmed that the landfill site would cease to operate on 31st March 2003, although restoration works would then be necessary. The operation of the Civic Amenity site would continue until 2005. Finally, Mr. Woods had complained at the unsightly appearance of derelict vehicles on the Council-owned car park at St. Johns Drive, Newhall. In this regard, the site had recently been inspected by the Tenant Liaison Officer who had identified four vehicles/structures apparently abandoned. These had now been reported to the Council's Enforcement Officer who had requisitioned information on the ownership from the DVLA. Notices would be placed on the vehicles during the next week requiring their removal within seven days.

A resident referred to a recent incident at William Allitt School concerning trespassing and WPC Fearn advised that legal proceedings were currently being pursued in respect of two persons for trespassing at the school. She also advised that Beat Officers had keys to the premises and did try to visit the site regularly, particularly during the school holidays.

Following the earlier discussion on off-licences serving alcohol to under-age persons, a Member expressed concern at the possibility of under-age persons being supplied with alcohol which had been purchased legitimately. In this regard, Inspector Hargreaves advised that legislation now enabled alcohol to be seized in these circumstances. He also reported that the Crime and Disorder Partnership may wish to consider Byelaws to prevent drinking in public places in the area. However, it was noted that such a restriction would apply to all persons, which may be inappropriate in certain circumstances, particularly during community events.

A resident expressed concern at the speed of vehicles in High Street Newhall, which had been raised at a recent local Members' Surgery. Inspector Hargreaves advised that it was necessary to prioritise locations for speed monitoring, which was considered by the Road Traffic Department on a regular basis. Residents had organised a petition on the issue and 220 signatures had been obtained to date. County Councillor Routledge advised that further consideration would be given to this matter when the petition was eventually presented to the County Highways Authority.

Residents reported that the presence of lorries through Newhall was still a problem, despite the Weight Restriction Order. Inspector Hargreaves advised that if particular details were provided to the Police, the matter would be pursued and County Councillor Routledge reported that it was hoped to increase the prominence of the weight restriction signs following a recent site visit by the County Highways Authority. Residents also raised concern at the speeding of lorries and, following the previous discussion on speeding, it was suggested that a representative from the County Highways Authority should be requested to address residents on the matter at the next Meeting. Inspector Hargreaves advised that the police would consider monitoring speeding through Newhall but it was likely that this would also raise issues in connection with the road layout, in which case the County Highways Authority would need to be involved.

A resident advised of a burnt-out vehicle on the boundary of the proposed new golf course. Following a query on progress on the provision of a noisy sports area, it was advised that little progress had been made but the matter was still under consideration. However, some progress had been made on the provision of a BMX/skateboarding facility.

A resident raised the untidy condition of an area in the grounds of the school on Sunnyside between two fences and County Councillor Routledge advised that he was currently pursuing this matter.

County Councillor Routledge reported on several amendments to the speed limit on the A511 and also reported the forthcoming introduction of traffic calming measures in Elmsleigh Drive, Midway.

Following the various new major housing developments ongoing in the area, a resident expressed concern at the current level of health provision and in

particular, the lack of a hospital in the area. In this regard, it was agreed that a representative from the local Primary Care Trust be invited to a future Meeting to discuss this issue.

District Councillor Wilkins advised that the official opening of the Old Post Centre would take place on 7th September 2002. An Open Day had been held in June and various literature on courses was now available. Councillor Wilkins encouraged people to attend the opening and assess the courses available. It was considered that this would be an excellent facility and funding had been obtained for a Manager, a Caretaker and support staff.

A resident queried the content of the County Council publication "Insight" and it was noted that the District Council did not contribute towards this publication.

A resident queried the frequency that litter bins were emptied in Swadlincote Town Centre.

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

It was noted that the next Area Meeting would be held at the Rowland Memorial Methodist Church Community Hall, James Street, Midway on Wednesday, 6th November 2002 at 7.00 p.m.

NA/8. **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 criteria for grants towards private housing improvements together with annual increases in the level of Council Tax. In this regard, it was noted that the overall increase on the Council Tax was heavily influenced by the levies of the County Council and the Police Authority. District Councillor Wilkins advised that for the current financial

year, the District Council had approved an increase of only 3.9% and it was hoped that any increase for next year would again be minimal.

MRS. J. MEAD

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 8.45 p.m.