

SWADLINCOTE AREA MEETING

13th August 2003

PRESENT:-

District Council Representatives

Councillor Southerd (Chair) and Councillors Lane, Murphy, Stone and Taylor.

F. McArdle (Chief Executive), E. Julian (Community and Leisure Development), P. Spencer (Democratic Services) and B. Jones (Helpdesk).

Derbyshire County Council Representative

Councillor Southerd.

Member of Parliament

M. Todd M.P.

Sharpes Pottery Centre

J. Oake.

Derbyshire Dales and South Derbyshire Primary Care Trust

S. Elliott.

Members of the Public

M. Barsby, E. Bird, M. Brotherhood, R. Causer, M. Forbes, N. Forbes, J. Grew, W. Hardwick, R. Harvey, T. Harvey, M. Hudson, S. Jackson, W. Jackson, M. Lunn, D. Mayo, J. Mayo, D. Staley, D. Sutton, G. Sutton, L. Webster and J. Williamson.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from District Councillors Harrington and Isham, R. Jameson and representatives of the Derbyshire Constabulary.

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

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

SA/2. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Area Meeting held on 4th February 2003 were noted.

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

The Chair advised that construction of the BMX track was now well underway and he paid tribute to those involved in the scheme. A local Member asked about measures to prevent the site being occupied by travellers. It was felt that the more frequent use of this site, coupled with improved lighting should act as a deterrent. Ultimately, it was hoped to provide CCTV.

The Chair gave an update on the adoption of the Thorpe Downs Estate in Church Gresley. He understood that the roadway was now completed to an adoptable standard, but there were some problems with street lighting. This matter was being pursued by Derbyshire County Council and the Deputy Chief Executive of the District Council. A resident informed that a section of road outside his property was in need of repair and the Member of Parliament sought an update about construction of the emergency access to the estate.

SA/4. **REPORT BACK ON ISSUES RAISED AT THE LAST MEETING**

The Chair reviewed those items raised at the last Meeting and gave an update. Derbyshire County Council had considered the request for a central reservation near to the entrance to the Thorpe Downs Estate in Church Gresley. The proposal might deter on-street parking in this area, but it could cause further road safety problems and so the request had been declined. There was a need to enforce the current traffic orders and it was understood that the presence of a traffic warden was helping the situation. The problems caused by vehicles unloading at the front of the “One-Stop Shop” at the estate entrance had also been investigated. There was no planning requirement for vehicles to deliver goods to the rear of the store. It was felt that the main reason goods were delivered to the front of the store was the difficulties posed by the rear car park and its slope.

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

The Chair referred to the problems experienced following alterations to the Swadlincote Bus Station. He read a prepared statement and commented on the seating “perches”, which had been provided elsewhere in the County. Derbyshire County Council was considering installing some additional seating. The Chair gave an update on those unfinished works and felt it regrettable that a South Derbyshire resident had suffered an accident.

Residents questioned where responsibility lay for these problems and it was noted that two contractors had been used by the County Council. Mr. Harvey felt that the “perches” were inferior to the former seating provided. The Chair explained that the “perches”, coupled with improved lighting tended to deter improper use of bus shelters. Another resident questioned whether the old shelters could have been improved rather than being replaced. The litter bins were now placed outside the shelters, which was likely to cause litter problems. The Chair explained that the money provided for the new bus shelters was “ring-fenced”, which meant that if it had not been spent in South Derbyshire it would have been reallocated elsewhere. Swadlincote was a gateway site for the District and its residents deserved the improvements made.

The Member of Parliament had received a number of complaints at a recent surgery. The main problem reported was that the “perches” were at the wrong height. This was probably due to the Bus Station being situated on a slope and with the perches being kept level, they were either too low or too high for some users of the Bus Station. Mrs. Staley felt that the replacement shelters were inferior and Councillor Taylor added that complaints had been

made by young people as well as the elderly. The Chair agreed to refer these views back to Derbyshire County Council.

Mrs. Mayo complained about litter problems in the Town Centre. She referred to a recent television programme and was aware that in some areas anyone caught dropping litter received a fine. She asked whether a scheme could be introduced in Swadlincote and also felt there were insufficient litter bins within the Town Centre.

Frank McArdle, Chief Executive of the District Council advised of the “Clean Team”, which provided a responsive service to such problems. Other residents referred to litter problems in Church Gresley and criticised the methods used to collect litter. It was questioned when the cleansing contract was due for renewal and requested that the mechanical sweeper be used in some additional areas. Councillor Taylor thought there was a need to review service levels. Following the boundary changes, parts of the Woodville Ward, were now unparished and did not receive the lengthsman service. It was agreed to include an item on the agenda for the next Area Meeting to enable further discussion of litter problems.

A resident referred to the pedestrian crossing on Market Street in Church Gresley. Improved street lighting was sought to make pedestrians on the crossing more visible. The resident suggested specific lighting types and the Chair agreed to refer this request to Derbyshire County Council.

A complaint was submitted that cyclists were using the pedestrianised area of Swadlincote Town Centre. This problem had been raised at a number of previous Area Meetings and it was unfortunate that no police officers were present, as they were responsible for enforcing the traffic orders. Residents felt that the removable bollards should be kept locked in place to prevent certain vehicles accessing the Town Centre. However, it was explained that there were exceptions to the traffic orders, with some vehicles being permitted access throughout the day. Residents complained that the police were not seen patrolling the Town Centre and referred to recent vandalism problems. There was a discussion about the Beat Officers for the Swadlincote area and it was understood that these Officers were employed on a part-time basis. Mark Todd M.P. stated that policing levels were at their highest for many years and he gave an outline of the roles of the responsive Officers, Beat Officers and the CID. It was agreed to invite Inspector Hargreaves to attend the next Area Meeting to discuss policing matters.

Councillor Taylor voiced his concerns over highway problems in Swadlincote Road, Woodville. The Chair agreed to speak to Councillor Taylor on these problems after the Meeting. Residents of Brook Street, Swadlincote reported problems with fireworks being discharged and were urged to report this to the police. The Chair confirmed that reports would be provided to the next Meeting on litter problems, tidying areas of waste land and policing issues.

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

The date of the next Swadlincote Area Meeting would be confirmed in due course. The suggested venue was the St. George and St. Mary’s Parish Rooms in Church Street, Church Gresley.

SA/7. **PROVISION OF LOCAL HEALTH SERVICES**

The Chair introduced Steve Elliott, Commissioning Manager for the Derbyshire Dales and South Derbyshire Primary Care Trust (PCT). Mr. Elliott reminded those present of the proposals discussed at an Area Meeting in the Autumn of 2002. The PCT was mindful of the growing population of the area and the current shortage of general practitioners and dentists. He explained the objectives for the former Ambulance Station Site in Civic Way to provide a range of community services. The PCT had targets to prevent certain health problems such as heart disease. It wished to work in partnership and over the last nine months had undertaken consultation on the services required locally. Mr. Elliott praised the Council for Voluntary Services for its assistance in providing contact with various local groups. Feedback had been sought through a variety of mechanisms including focus groups and stakeholder events.

Mr. Elliott spoke of the opportunity for further service developments in the future, on other sites. The PCT would shortly commence formal consultation on its proposals for the clinic site and these would supplement existing services. The draft proposals included extra general practitioners, expanding the number of dental clinics, providing more district nurses and health visitors. There might be capacity within the new building to accommodate other organisations like social services and the voluntary sector. The District Council had identified this site for one of its information points. The consultation to date had identified the wish for an X-ray service on site. Mr. Elliott spoke of the likely timetable for the construction of the new facility and it was hoped to be completed by 2005.

It was questioned whether as part of the plans the existing clinic would be demolished. Residents felt that the building was in a poor condition and it seemed almost certain that a new building would be provided. Use of the facility by Social Services was questioned, as there were existing Social Services offices further along Civic Way. The PCT wished to avoid any duplication in service provision, but recognised the benefits of joint working. In response to a question from Mr. Barsby, an explanation was given of the acronym "LIFT". Councillor Murphy welcomed the extra services and he asked whether the capacity of the new Centre would be sufficient to meet the needs of the increasing population of the District. He explained that the South Derbyshire Mental Health Association (SDMHA) was a voluntary organisation and currently occupied a Council property on Midland Road, Swadlincote. He understood that the organisation was overstretched and asked whether this Group could be accommodated within the plans for the new Centre. It was confirmed that there had been an ongoing dialogue with the SDMHA. Mr. McArdle added that a range of organisations had been involved in the LIFT project. Relocation of the SDMHA might provide the opportunity to redevelop the premises it currently occupied generating a capital receipt and helping to safeguard the Group's future. Councillor Murphy felt there was some urgency as the SDMHA's lease expired shortly. Councillor Taylor referred to the shortage in dental services, but understood that NHS treatment could be provided in Burton or Derby. Mr. Elliott confirmed that temporary arrangements could be made and advertised for residents of South Derbyshire. The PCT had worked with the District Council to forecast the growth in population, so that service need could be planned for the longer term. The Chair thanked Mr. Elliott for the presentation.

SA/8. **BUDGET CONSULTATION**

A verbal report was made by Frank McArdle, the Council's Chief Executive who reminded that for the last two years the Council had tried to seek the views of local people on spending priorities. Whilst resources were limited, the Council sought to allocate some new monies each year to deliver service improvements. It wanted to ensure that these resources were used to reflect the priorities of local people. Last year, the consultation had identified four main priorities, being economic development, caring for the environment, providing Best Value services and "managing our business". These were supported secondary priorities of providing decent homes, community and leisure development, leading the community and supporting the National Forest. This year, the Council was trying to gather further information and residents were asked to complete a short questionnaire to provide feedback.

SA/9. **COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT**

A presentation was made by Frank McArdle, the Council's Chief Executive. He advised that the Comprehensive Performance Assessment was effectively a successor to Best Value. It was a Government initiative to help councils find out what the public wanted, to focus on the community's priorities and to improve services. The Council had produced a self assessment and was now asking people what they thought. It had identified some issues that the Council thought should be its priorities, called "key challenges". An external group had been asked to challenge the self assessment and this was known as a "Peer Challenge". The key corporate challenges were to agree with the community a shared vision and then deliver that vision through high quality, customer focused services. The Council needed to manage its resources effectively, to listen and respond to its customers and improve service quality. It would be required to produce plans that delivered the improvements. The Peer Challengers felt that the Council was soundly managed and pragmatic. It was improving in many areas with a "can do" culture and making a difference to the people of South Derbyshire. However, the Council needed a more strategic focus and to act with greater confidence. A questionnaire had been circulated prior to the Meeting and residents were asked to complete and return it at the end of the Meeting.

SA/10. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

It was reported that, as part of a local government review, the Scrutiny process had been introduced to District Councils. The arrangements in South Derbyshire had been praised and were considered an exemplar for other authorities in the East Midlands. A leaflet had been circulated to provide further information about the Scrutiny process. In South Derbyshire, it was delivered by an Overview Committee, supported by two Scrutiny Committees for Corporate and Community Services. The Chief Executive expanded on the functions performed by the Scrutiny Committees and he urged residents to attend them. He also spoke about the value of the Area Meetings, referring to the BMX/skateboard track currently being provided at Woodville. This issue had first been raised at a Swadlincote Area Meeting, where young people had identified a need for a facility. He explained that Members and others had pursued this project and once a suitable site and funding had been identified it had been provided.

SA/11. **CRIME AND DISORDER PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

The Area Meeting received a presentation by Emma Julian of the Council's Community and Leisure Development Division. By way of background, Miss. Julian outlined the duties introduced by the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, including the establishment of local partnerships and the production of a crime audit and strategy every three years. The strategy for 2002-05 contained a mixture of priorities from Government, public service agreement and local targets. Specific elements were discussed. Emma Julian spoke of the staffing and financial resources available to the Partnership and gave examples of the initiatives undertaken from covert police operations to partnership working, crime reduction projects to sports and arts development. Statistics were provided which showed the success of the Partnership, particularly in relation to house burglary and auto crime. In Newhall, a 60% reduction had been achieved in house burglary rates. The partnership's future proposals included the establishment of a community police office in Newhall, making use of CCTV and establishing mediation services. Other target areas were reducing domestic abuse, a home security project and establishing local crime reduction groups, through Neighbourhood Watch. The disposal of abandoned vehicles, providing a BMX/ skateboard park and environmental improvements were further objectives.

The Chair explained that for the partnership to be effective, it needed public participation. A resident sought further information about the home security project and those eligible to receive assistance. This project was based on a model used in Derby City where all victims of burglary and others referred by Social Services were entitled to receive a burglar alarm. In South Derbyshire there had been no repeat victims of crime following the installation of burglar alarms. Residents discussed the success of Operation Night which had achieved a 60% reduction in burglary rates in Newhall. Crime Reduction Groups were discussed and Councillor Murphy explained that there were two for the Swadlincote Area. To be successful, each would need the public's participation. There was a discussion about abandoned vehicles and it was noted that revised guidance had been issued, which enabled local authorities to deal with such vehicles more speedily. Emma Julian was thanked for the presentation.

SA/12. **SHARPES POTTERY CENTRE**

A presentation was made by John Oake on the restoration of the Sharpes Pottery Centre. Originally, as part of the Single Regeneration Budget Scheme it had been intended to provide a heritage facility on the Swadlincote Woodlands Forest Park. Ultimately, such a scheme was not considered sustainable and the Sharpes Pottery buildings in West Street were identified as a possible alternate location. Some works were undertaken to safeguard these listed buildings and bids were made to the Single Regeneration Budget and the District Council. A feasibility study was undertaken and a £950,000 scheme was devised for a modest Visitor Centre. This included an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for £600,000. The application was not approved, but the HLF felt that a more ambitious scheme should be submitted. A revised scheme costing £1.75 million was submitted and subsequently approved. Mr. Oake spoke of the requirement to achieve museum status and the premises were now open six days each week. He referred to the day to day funding for the Centre and it cost approximately

£60,000 per annum to run. The Sharpes Pottery Scheme had received two County Council Green Watch Awards and was projected to attract over 15,000 visitors in its first year. There was confidence that the Centre could meet its running costs without further District Council support.

The Chair congratulated Mr. Oake and others involved in the delivery of the Sharpes Pottery Scheme. Mr. Oake thanked the Council for its assistance and praised its approach to partnership working. The Chief Executive referred to potential future benefits for the Swadlincote area which should arise from the Morrisons retail development.

T. SOUTHERD

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 9.20 p.m.