

MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING BETWEEN SOUTH DERBYSHIRE DISTRICT
COUNCIL AND PARISH COUNCILS/MEETINGS

7th March 2012

PRESENT:

Representatives of South Derbyshire District Council

Councillor Wheeler (Chairman) and Councillors Atkin, Harrison, Mrs. Plenderleith, Richards, Shepherd, Smith and Taylor.

Officers

M. Alflat (Director of Operations), S. Batchelor (Head of Community and Planning Services), N. Betteridge (Democratic Services Manager), I. Hey (Community Partnership Officer), J. Widdowson (School Sport Partnership Manager) and B. Wood (Derbyshire Association of Local Councils).

Parish Council Representatives

D. Martin (Aston-on-Trent Parish Council), A. Hicklin and K. Slater (Barrow-on-Trent Parish Council), K. Fairbrother (Castle Gresley Parish Council), M. Johnson (Findern Parish Council), A. Holgate (Foston and Scropton Parish Council), M. Mycock, P. Smith and R. Smith (Hartshorne Parish Council), J. Powell (Linton Parish Council), N. Collyer and N. Hill (Melbourne Parish Council), N. Eaton (Netherseal Parish Council), F. Hill (Newton Solney Parish Council), J. White (Overseal Parish Council), J. Shortt (Repton Parish Council), R. Parker and D. Shepherd (Ticknall Parish Council), C. Fellows (Stenson Fields Parish Council), F. Crocker (Willington Parish Council) and S. Taylor (Woodville Parish Council).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from F. McArdle (Chief Executive, South Derbyshire District Council), District Councillors Lemmon and Watson, S. Jackson (Castle Gresley Parish Council), T. Beresford (Foston and Scropton Parish Council), A. Mitchell (Shardlow and Great Wilne Parish Council), C. Bunston (Ticknall Parish Council), K. Overton (Willington Parish Council) and R. Statham (Woodville Parish Council).

PC/1. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman advised attendees of the recent deaths of Brendan Freeman (Melbourne Parish Councillor), Margaret Tomlinson (Clerk to Aston-on-Trent Parish Council) and Ivor Smith (Etwall Parish Councillor). Attendees stood in silence as a mark of respect.

PC/2. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23rd February 2011 were received.

PC/3. **PARISH PLANS**

Ian Hey (Community Partnership Officer) addressed the Meeting on community planning and advised that he had been working with several parishes, producing real benefits. Projects at Barrow-on-Trent and Melbourne were highlighted and a small sum of money had been lodged with Rural Action Derbyshire to establish communities. Mr. Hey offered his assistance in talking to any parish council which may be interested in this initiative.

PC/4. **OLYMPICS / DIAMOND JUBILEE EVENTS**

Stuart Batchelor (Head of Community and Planning Services) and John Widdowson (School Sport Partnership Manager) made a presentation on the South Derbyshire Sport Olympic and Paralympic Programme. This included details of events which had already taken place, a South Derbyshire Torch competition and various community events, including Olym-picnics. The Canadian and Australian badminton squads would be training at the new Etwall Leisure Centre, which would also host an exhibition match. Attendees viewed a DVD on Derbyshire Olympic events.

Various Diamond Jubilee events were outlined and parish councils were encouraged to advise the District Council of any events proposed in their areas for publicity purposes. Traffic islands would be planted and the Chairman of the Council would be lighting a beacon at Rosliston Forestry Centre. Unfortunately, no grants were available from the District Council towards street parties and details of public liability insurance for such events would be forwarded to parish councils.

PC/5. **PLANNING PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES**

Stuart Batchelor (Head of Community and Planning Services) made a short presentation on planning principles and guidelines and advised that various regional events were to be arranged. Details would be forwarded to parish councils when these were confirmed.

PC/6. **SUMMER PLAY SCHEME**

John Widdowson (School Sport Partnership Manager) made a presentation on the Summer Play Scheme 2011, which had been supported by 22 parish councils. Over 150 different sessions were held with six provisions. During the period of six weeks, there had been over 6,000 participants and several sessions had attracted over 100 children in both parishes and areas within the urban core. Three larger events had been organised and 15 temporary sports staff had been employed.

Built on the success in 2011, there had already been more buy in from parishes for 2012 and the importance of local promotion for the initiative was emphasised.

PC/7. **NEW STANDARDS REGIME – LOCALISM ACT 2011**

Mark Alflat (Director of Operations and Monitoring Officer) advised that the Localism Act 2011 had brought about fundamental changes to the Standards regime in Local Government. It had abolished the Standards Board regime and the national model code of conduct for local authority councillors. Despite the Act now being in force, further Regulations were still awaited to clarify the position on the Code and the replacement Standards regime. The effects of the changes in the law would not take effect until July 2012. Until then, all Councillors must comply with the current Code.

It was open to town and parish councils to adopt the Code of Conduct of the District Council. The Code must be consistent with the seven Nolan principles, which replaced the Ten General Principles of Public Life.

The Monitoring Officer must make the register of members' interests for parish councils available for inspection and publish it on the District Council's website. Parish councils were also required to publish the register on their own website, if they had one.

Personal and Prejudicial interests would be replaced by Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (including those of spouses and civil partners living in the same house). These Disclosable Pecuniary Interests were to be defined by regulations that were expected to be made in March.

Under the Act, the Council must have in place "arrangements" under which allegations that a Member (including a Parish/Town Council Member) may have breached the Code of Conduct could be investigated and under which decisions on allegations could be made.

The Act gave the District Council power to do no more in respect of a Parish Council member than make a recommendation to the Parish Council on action to be taken. Parish Councils would be under no obligation to accept the recommendation.

It seemed that there was no regulatory sanction for Town and Parish Councils which did not adopt a Code or which failed to act on the recommendations of any "Hearing Panel" following a complaint. However, there was always the chance that the council concerned could be judicially reviewed in respect of the duty to promote high standards of conduct. The Monitoring Officer was working with local authorities across Derbyshire with a view to agreeing a common code of conduct and complaints procedure.

A plain English guide to the Localism Act 2011 was available at the Department for Communities and Local Government website and the Monitoring Officer would provide further information to Parish Council Clerks as the arrangements for the new standards regime developed.

Brian Wood (Derbyshire Association of Local Councils) advised that there may be a countywide Code from the Association which parish councils could adopt and, if so, this would be circulated in due course.

PC/8. **SCRUTINY PROJECTS**

District Councillor Mrs. Plenderleith (Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee) referred to a recent letter sent to parish councils, requesting suggestions on potential review areas for the Committee to consider as part of its work programme and encouraged parish councils to respond to the request.

PC/9. **BRIAN WOOD (DERBYSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS)**

The Chairman advised that Brian Wood (Derbyshire Association of Local Councils) would be retiring shortly and this would therefore be his last meeting. Thanks and best wishes were expressed to Mr. Wood, who responded in turn by thanking the authority and its officers for maintaining a mechanism for parish councils to become involved in the District Council's affairs.

The Chairman advised that the Boundary Commission for England had now publicised revised proposals relating to the review of Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England.

R. WHEELER

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 7.50 p.m.