

ETWALL AREA MEETING

21st November 2001

PRESENT:-

District Council Representatives

Councillor Whyman (Chair), Councillor Hood (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Bale, Lemmon and Mrs. Walton.

S. Whiles (Head of Community Services), P. Spencer (Members' Services) and B. Jones (Helpdesk).

Derbyshire Constabulary

PC R. Frost.

Parish Council Representatives

H. Thornton (Burnaston Parish Council), N. Ireland (Etwall Parish Council), J. Chisnall (Findern Parish Council) and J. Walton and J. Cumpstone (Hilton Parish Council).

Members of the Public

B. Cowley, J. Dove, H. Hague and G. Wale.

EA/11. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair welcomed those present but voiced his disappointment over the level of attendance. He sought feedback on how publicity could be improved for future area meetings and suggestions included the use of email and providing further notices to Parish Clerks and to other residents to seek their display in villages. The Chair welcomed WPC Rachel Frost who had recently started as the "Beat Bobby" for parts of the Etwall and Repton County Divisions.

EA/12. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Mr. M. Todd M.P., County Councillor Mrs. Littlejohn, Mr. Wells (Egginton Parish Council), I. Smith and J. Newton (Etwall Parish Council), L. Nash (Findern Parish Council) and S. Avery.

EA/13. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Area Meeting held on 22nd August 2001 were noted. Comments were submitted under Minute No. EA/6 – Public Question Time. With regard to the modernisation of the local government structure in South Derbyshire, Mrs. Dove clarified that she had expressed disappointment not at the publicity arrangements for the Review, but the mechanism used to enable residents to vote for their preferred choice of structure. She felt the inclusion of a "slip" in the local free newspapers was not appropriate, as it was not received by all households in the District.

Mrs. Cowley reminded those present of her concerns about the Etwall/Egginton crossroads and she reported that hedges at this junction had still not been cut. It was agreed to write to the appropriate Member at Derbyshire County Council explaining the previous endeavours to address this matter and seeking its resolution. It was also agreed that any correspondence be circulated to Mrs.

Cowley. Under the same item, problems with fly-tipping had been reported at Sutton-on-the Hill. The local Ward Member explained that these problems had been resolved quickly and demonstrated the effectiveness of the Area Meeting. The Chair explained proposals to establish a cleansing “Hit Squad” for such things as fly-tipping.

EA/14. **REPORT BACK ON ISSUES RAISED AT THE LAST MEETING**

The Chair reviewed those items raised at the last Meeting and explained the progress made in each case. With regard to noise from the A50 trunk road, it was reported that a letter had been sent to David Nock at the Highways Agency. This was to follow up the offer made to provide information to Etwall Parish Council about the noise measurements available. No response had been received by the District or Parish Councils. Correspondence had been received from Deborah Smith explaining the restructuring that had taken place within the Highways Agency. Subsequently, she had written giving details of the Government’s criteria to be used in prioritising the resurfacing of concrete roads. Following a separate enquiry, information had been received from the Agency regarding the removal of litter from trunk roads. Extracts of each letter received were reported and contact details were provided for those wishing to pursue the issues raised.

With regard to the recycling bins on the King George V playing fields in Etwall, Mr. Ireland had been in discussion with the Council’s Technical Services Manager. Mr. Ireland was not aware if the timing and frequency of emptying recycling bins had been reviewed and it was agreed that the Technical Services Manager liaise with him on this matter directly.

Following the request made at the last Meeting, information had been provided about the compensation payments received by the Council for its properties affected by noise from the A50. Further detail was sought and the Chair understood that the compensation was for loss of value to its properties. It was agreed to provide summary level information to the next Meeting provided this did not breach data protection legislation.

A number of highway related issues had been raised at the last Meeting. The Chair read extracts of a letter received from Derbyshire County Council in response to the concerns raised about the control of ragwort. Further concerns were voiced in relation to this notifiable weed, it being felt that the County Council’s policies could lead to the weed spreading in some cases. There were concerns over the current maintenance arrangements for highway verges where ragwort was present, cut but not collected. An explanation was given of the current Agency arrangements and there would be a funding issue if the service included the collection of waste materials. It was agreed to liaise with Derbyshire County Council on this issue particularly regarding the need to collect cut ragwort given the views expressed by the farming community. It was also agreed to refer the matter to the appropriate Policy Committee at the District Council for further consideration.

Information had been requested on the programme of litter picking and the gully weed treatment schedule. Details were reported and would be provided to Etwall Parish Council following the Meeting.

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

A representative of Hilton Parish Council explained that problems were being experienced in Percy Wood Close with tree roots lifting the pavement surface. For some months discussions had taken place between the District, County and Parish Councils to determine responsibility for addressing this problem. Councillor Mrs. Walton provided an update advising of recent discussions with the Council's Buildings Maintenance Manager. It was agreed that copies of the correspondence be circulated to the Chair and to Sandra Whiles, the Head of Community Services. The Chair pledged that if the District Council proved to be responsible for these works, efforts would be made to resolve this problem before the next Meeting. Alternatively, the County Council would be lobbied to undertake the work if it was the responsible authority.

Mrs Cowley, a resident of Egginton reported a problem where a hawker had visited the village late in the evening, acting in an aggressive manner, causing damage to properties and frightening local residents. She explained the particular nuisance problem and the action taken through Derbyshire Constabulary. Councillor Mrs. Walton provided further information and understood that this individual had targeted mainly rural areas. The Chair explained a particular problem experienced in Hatton and the views of WPC Frost were sought. She felt that hawkers should not generally operate during the evening and residents who were concerned should contact the Constabulary or their Beat Officer. Arising from this discussion, there was a perceived role for Neighbourhood Watch Schemes in exchanging information. Reference was made to the information line provided by Derbyshire Constabulary for Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators. However, the information provided at this time only related to the specific Neighbourhood Watch area. There would be a benefit in this service being expanded to provide information of problems in adjacent areas.

EA/16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Etwall Area Meeting would be held on Wednesday, 30th January 2002 at the Findern Village Hall, Castle Hill, Findern.

EA/17. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SHELTERED HOUSING

Following the request submitted at the last Meeting, a presentation was made on the recent Best Value Review of Sheltered Housing by Sandra Whiles, the District Council's Head of Community Services. She explained the background to this Review, the inspection undertaken by the Best Value Inspectorate and the problems identified with the current arrangements. Consultation had been undertaken with tenants, staff and partner agencies and a thorough review of the Service undertaken. The revised arrangements had been agreed by the Council's Community Services Committee at its Meeting on 4th October 2001.

The new Service was designed to provide a quality and equal service to all residents whilst creating an environment that was safe and secure but promoted independent living. It was explained that the Central Control Team provided 24 hour per day cover each day of the year. It was run by staff trained fully and able to deal with all types of emergencies, quickly and appropriately. This team would make contact calls to each resident at least twice weekly but

this would be based on each tenant's needs. The Sheltered Housing Team would be made up of a Team Leader and a Community Wardens. The District would be split into ten areas and each Community Warden would be responsible for delivering services based on the needs of all tenants in their area. Relief staff would be available to support and cover the work of the Community Wardens and the Central Control Unit. Social activities would be co-ordinated across all schemes and safety and security issues were highlighted. Building improvements were proposed and details of partnership working with other agencies were also provided.

Questions were invited and the first concerned the loss of the resident wardens and the services they provided. Further details were provided of the Community Warden arrangements and it was noted that at present there was a wide variation in the level of warden service provided. Responding to emergency situations was also discussed and details were provided of the on-call officers which would provide out-of-hours cover. The Community Rooms had been used for a wide range of functions previously and it was questioned how these would be managed under the new arrangements. Community Wardens would be charged with making best use of the community facilities and details were given of other possible uses on which feedback was sought. It was questioned how many homes would be covered by each Community Warden. Whilst details were to be finalised the number of properties would be influenced by the geographic area covered and relief wardens would assist those with the greater responsibilities. Tribute was paid to the loyal staff retiring from the service, many of whom were staying on to ensure a smooth transition to the Community Warden Scheme.

The Chair explained that Members had identified the current scheme was inequitable, were mindful of the importance of independent living for these tenants whilst recognising their support needs. He felt there was no service more important for the Council than sheltered housing which justified the considerable subsidy provided. High quality support was essential, but it must be equal throughout South Derbyshire. He recognised the role of other agencies, explained the extra funding proposed for the new service and for the improvements to premises. He praised Sandra Whiles for leading the team through this Review and hoped people would be supportive whilst the new service was being introduced. The Head of Community Services stressed the role of other agencies in fulfilling those duties sometimes undertaken by Wardens. There was a role for the Health Authority and the need for an audit of tenant's needs to ensure a smooth transition to the new service.

Questions were submitted on the staffing arrangements. Details were given of the current establishment and that proposed, those voluntary redundancies and early retirement applications received. It was expected that these steps would minimise any compulsory redundancies. The Chair introduced Barry Jones who was staffing the Helpdesk. Mr. Jones was Chair of the Council's Unison branch and he was invited to voice his opinions on this review. Mr. Jones concurred with the sentiments expressed that the review would provide the best benefit for the whole of sheltered housing tenants. The Council had taken on board representations received in increasing the number of Community Wardens. A further question was submitted on the cleaning of communal areas in sheltered housing schemes.

EA/18. **PRESENTATION ON CRIME AND DISORDER INITIATIVES**

The Area Meeting received a presentation from Sandra Whiles. The second Crime and Disorder Audit had recently been completed and an outline was given of the Audit to Strategy process and the crime statistics with Ward profiles. The Government had established a number of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships which were “families” grouped together by such factors as demographics and crime rates. Comparative information was given on the profile for South Derbyshire and that of a neighbouring authority. Details were also provided of the suggested priorities for the Crime and Disorder Partnership and feedback was sought. A copy of the full audit was available for parish councils and contact details were provided.

The Chair felt that each person had a responsibility to reduce crime and disorder in their area. He spoke about the role of various agencies including the District Council, the Health Authority and the Derbyshire Constabulary. The Vice-Chair explained endeavours by the Member of Parliament to lobby for a reduction in the size of the Beat Officer’s area. Additional resources were being sought by the Constabulary and there was recognition that it was under-funded at present.

Reference was again made to the role of Neighbourhood Watch organisations and the sharing of information between different groups. The circulation of crime statistics was discussed, but it was felt that more timely information was needed rather than subsequent statistics. A request was submitted that the Audit’s crime statistics be further refined. At present those statistics relating to Findern Ward were included as part of the Etwall Ward and officers agreed to investigate whether this could be undertaken.

B. WHYMAN

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 9.00 p.m.