

SWADLINCOTE AREA MEETING

21st January 2004

PRESENT:-

District Council Representatives

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

M. Alflat (Director of Community Services), S. Batchelor (Community and Leisure Development), K. Stackhouse (Finance Services), P. Spencer (Democratic Services), P. Marriott (Crime and Disorder Partnership) and B. Jones (Helpdesk).

Derbyshire County Council Representative

Councillor Southerd.

Derbyshire Constabulary

PC V. Slack.

Members of the Public

M. Barsby, R. Causer, J. Cournane, J. Grew, K. Hough, S. Jackson, T. Jackson, E. Key, M. Lunn, P. Marriott, N. Parker, A. Sheriff, D. Staley, R. Statham, J. Tilson, J. Williamson and S. Yeomans.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from District Councillor Harrington, R. House (Council for Voluntary Services), M. Brotherhood, Mr. Corner, W. Hardwick, T. Harvey, D. Sutton and G. Sutton.

SA/20. **MINUTES**

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

SA/21. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair advised that the Council's Environmental and Development Services Committee would consider a report on the Swadlincote Town Centre Study and Masterplan at its Meeting on 29th January 2004. Residents were welcome to attend that Meeting.

SA/22. **REPORT BACK ON ISSUES RAISED AT THE LAST MEETING**

The Chair reviewed those items raised at the last Meeting and gave an update. With regard to the provision of litter bins, Councillor Murphy confirmed that a number of additional litter bins had been requested for the Town Centre and these were being considered as a Service Development Bid.

SA/23. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE LOCAL DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mr Hough, a resident of Church Gresley praised the Sharpe's Pottery Centre. He thanked the Council for the initiatives to install bollards around the Church Gresley Common and to provide a skateboard park on the Woodhouses site. He felt that these initiatives would reduce the risk of travellers occupying the sites. He also praised the Christmas lights and fireworks together with the funfair within the Town, prior to Christmas. However, he was concerned about the continued problems caused through vehicles parking outside the "One Stop" shop at the entrance to the Thorpe Downs Estate. He advised of a road traffic accident earlier in the day involving a motorcyclist. He accepted that police monitoring took place but was concerned that a fatal road traffic accident would occur unless action was taken. The Chair reminded residents of the options pursued to resolve these problems, but he agreed to refer the issue back to Derbyshire County Council and requested the Police Officer present to raise the matter with the Derbyshire Constabulary. The Chair offered to respond to Mr. Hough personally. Another resident of the Thorpe Downs Estate questioned whether accident statistics were kept and there was a discussion about the effectiveness of different methods of traffic calming. Mr. Stretton reported a particular problem where a lady in a wheelchair was forced to go onto the road because of parked cars on a pavement. The Chair confirmed that parking a vehicle on a footway was an offence and where it caused an obstruction the police would take action.

Further to the discussion at the last Meeting, a resident repeated concerns about youths congregating near to elderly persons accommodation in Church Gresley. There was criticism of the time taken by the police to respond. The Chair spoke of a potential change in the law regarding anti-social behaviour and as a member of the Police Authority he explained that statistically, Derbyshire was the safest County in England and South Derbyshire was the safest District within the County. He felt there was a perceived fear of crime. The resident commented that Beat Officers failed to respond to residents' complaints or to return telephone calls. Mark Alflat, Director of Community Services spoke of the work undertaken with Youth Services and he advised that a dedicated anti-social behaviour officer had now been appointed. Providing facilities for young people was also discussed. Councillor Isham commented that the congregation of large numbers of young people would be intimidating to any resident. Poor response times caused frustration and in some instances, residents might need to call the "999" emergency telephone number. Another resident disagreed with the reported crime statistics and felt that residents failed to report incidents because of the poor response record.

A complaint was submitted about the condition of William Nadin Way and Coronation Street in Swadlincote, due to developments. There were particular safety concerns for the drivers of vehicles emerging from Coronation Street onto Darklands Road. The Director of Community Services noted the poor condition of these roadways and would pursue the matter.

Mrs. Jackson, a resident of Castle Gresley praised the Clean Team for the responsive service provided. The Chair commented that an additional budget allocation was proposed to introduce an extra refuse collection team and to

expand the compost scheme. It was hoped that this would improve services even further. Litter problems were reported at the Sainsbury's recycling centre and it was suggested that this matter be referred to the Clean Team. It was questioned whether there were facilities for recycling Christmas cards. Mr. Parker, a local shopkeeper complained about the use of motorised scooters and skateboards within the pedestrianised area of Swadlincote Town Centre. He sought guidance on the legal position and enforcement. Mr. Yeomans added his concerns about the volume of traffic in the pedestrianised area. These concerns were noted and residents were reminded of the planned Town Centre Review.

SA/24. **COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICES - VOLUNTEERING**

The Chair advised that unfortunately, Richard House of the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) was unable to attend the Area Meeting. He praised the work of the CVS and anyone able to assist by becoming a volunteer should contact the organisation at its Grove Street offices. It was hoped that Mr. House would be able to make a presentation to the next Area Meeting.

SA/25. **SWADLINCOTE CRIME SURVEY**

The Area Meeting received a presentation from Swadlincote Ward Councillor Stuart Murphy, together with Stuart Batchelor and Phil Marriott of the Community and Leisure Development Division, on the findings of the Swadlincote Crime and Disorder Survey.

Councillor Murphy gave a brief history and confirmed that crime and disorder was a key priority for Swadlincote Ward Members, the District and County Councils. A chart was displayed which showed a range of quality of life issues, comparing those considered as ideal and those that needed improving. Ensuring a low level of crime was highlighted as the primary issue. The next slide showed the importance against success of corporate priorities and residents had highlighted crime and community safety and meeting the needs of young people as key issues.

Phil Marriott spoke of his role as Community Engagement Officer and this post was funded through the Crime and Disorder Partnership. Stuart Batchelor then reported on the survey findings and a summary of the consultation. Statistics were reported for particular categories of crime with comparisons made between the Swadlincote Ward and the averages for South Derbyshire as a whole. A further slide showed residents' views and the levels of concern to a range of issues. Particular comments were highlighted relating to anti-social behaviour, litter/dog fouling and having a uniformed presence within Swadlincote Town Centre. Councillor Murphy concluded the presentation explaining proposals to bridge gaps in provision and the way forward, particularly through the use of crime reduction groups. Any person willing to participate in such a group was asked to contact either a Swadlincote Ward Councillor or Officers at the District Council.

It was clarified that the Crime Survey related to the Swadlincote Ward only and it was hoped that surveys could take place for other District Wards in the future. Stuart Batchelor responded to specific questions about the number of burglaries in the Church Gresley area, traffic wardens and Town Centre parking. There seemed some confusion over whether Officers had re-circulated this consultation document to non-respondents. It was thought

that the document in question might relate to another consultation exercise. A resident of the Walton Park Estate spoke of the number of burglaries that had occurred since Christmas and the cost of installing security equipment to safeguard his property. There was a discussion on the need to educate young people to instil community values at an early age. In particular, Councillor Taylor referred to the “Sure Start” initiative being operated in Woodville. Comments were made about moral issues, religious education, the roles of parents and the school in reinforcing community values.

SA/26. **CONSULTATION ON THE COUNCIL’S BUDGET**

The Area Meeting received a presentation from Kevin Stackhouse, Finance Services Manager at the District Council. He explained the aims of this consultation exercise and gave an overview of the topics covered in the presentation. Feedback from previous consultations had identified residents four key priorities and the other aims that the Council should pursue. The total cost of services was some £8.7 million and a series of charts showed the costs of Environmental Services, Community Services and Finance and Management Services. Details were given of the services provided by Derbyshire County Council and the Police Authority, together with a chart showing the respective proportions of Council Tax income that funded these services.

Mr. Stackhouse explained how the Council managed its finances, focusing on a three-year medium term. The Council’s current financial position was stable with improving levels of reserves. However, there was a need for caution as the Council was spending more than it received in income at present. This was again demonstrated by graphs. Mr. Stackhouse then explained the financial constraints that the Council faced, levels of Government grant and how this affected the level of Council Tax increase. The budget proposals were reported and these sought to maintain existing services, to provide additional resources for service improvements and additional investment in Council buildings and major projects. The Council sought to provide better services for a growing population and to improve local facilities. A summary was provided and feedback from the Area Meetings would be submitted to inform the Council when setting its budget and Council Tax on 26th February 2004.

Mr. Hough of Church Gresley commented on the projected future budget deficit. He asked whether the figures took account of new house building. It was confirmed that the projections included the growth of council tax income and costs of additional service provision. A resident enquired whether there was some form of council tax relief for the elderly. The Finance Services Manager was not aware that either the District or County Councils were considering this issue, but he was aware that the Government was considering regulations to allow such a discretionary scheme.

Waste collection was discussed and it was noted that extra costs were being incurred as the Albion landfill site was not yet available. Derbyshire County Council as Waste Disposal Authority would ultimately pass these additional costs to the landfill operator. A question was submitted about the cost of an extra post at the Direct Services Organisation and Councillor Lane confirmed that it had been necessary to make a temporary position permanent. In response to a question from Mrs. Staley, it was confirmed that the proposed artificial turf pitch on the Pingle School site would be available for

community use in the evenings and at weekends. A question was submitted about the modernisation of play sites. The Finance Services Manager confirmed there was a Service Development proposal to enable the refurbishment of two play sites within the District during the following financial year. He also explained the bid scoring process undertaken. Councillor Taylor confirmed that these funds would be directed to those sites with the greatest need. Councillor Lane added that a survey had been undertaken for all play sites and substantial funding was required. It would take several years to complete the refurbishment of all play facilities.

Mr. Hough spoke of the need for theatrical facilities and he praised the Young People's Orchestra based at the William Allitt School. At present, this group was having to use facilities outside South Derbyshire and there was a need for a concert venue. The Director of Community Services explained a potential project to convert the Methodist Church in West Street, Swadlincote. Financial viability was a key issue. A resident referred to a survey of young people which had identified a desire for a Macdonald's Restaurant and a cinema within the Town. Attracting a cinema to the Town would be dependant on its commercial viability. A survey had been undertaken, but because of the large cinemas in Burton and Derby it had proved difficult to attract a Cinema company to the Town. The resident spoke of a specialist small cinema in Derby that was able to accommodate deaf people and those in wheelchairs. The West Street project might be able to accommodate a cinema and a theatre. Stuart Batchelor spoke of the benefits of sport in engaging young people and to avoid potential youth problems. Surveys were being undertaken to identify the wishes of young people and to enable funding to be targeted appropriately. An explanation was provided of planned expenditure to replace windows at the Rosliston Forestry Centre bungalow.

SA/27. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Swadlincote Area Meeting would be held on 27th April 2004 at the St. George and St. Mary's Parish Rooms in Church Street, Church Gresley.

T. SOUTHERD

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 9.00 p.m.