

ETWALL AREA MEETING

29th January 2003

PRESENT:-

District Council Representatives

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

T. Neaves (Chief Finance Officer), P. Spencer (Democratic Services) and B. Jones (Helpdesk).

Derbyshire County Council Representative

Councillor Mrs. M. Littlejohn.

Parish Council Representatives

H. Thornton (Burnaston Parish Council), N. Ireland, D. Parkinson and I. Smith (Etwall Parish Council), S. Bell (Findern Parish Council), T. Beresford (Foston and Scropton Parish Council) and C. Buckston (Sutton-on-the-Hill Parish Meeting).

East Midlands Airport

N. Robinson.

Members of the Public

R. Alton, S. Alton, G. Banton, P. Black, M. Bowes, B. Cowley, M. Cramp, C. Green, Mr. and Mrs. G. Green, K. Green, H. Hague, G. Jolly, S. Jolly, N. Lee, A. Mitchell, C. Simpson, B. Smedley, J. Walton, G. Wale and D. Woolliscroft.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from R. Littlejohn (Egginton Parish Council), L. Nash and J. Chisnall (Findern Parish Council), P. Higginbotham (Hilton Parish Council), S. Avery and A. Crossley.

EA/16. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Area Meeting held on 9th October 2002 were noted. Further to Minute No. EA/13, Councillor Mrs. Walton advised that responses had still not been received to a number of reported highway problems. County Councillor Mrs. Littlejohn requested copies of the correspondence and would pursue these matters. Further problems were reported by the Hilton Parish Clerk. It was agreed that he provide a copy of the correspondence to the District Council, in order that Officers could write to Derbyshire County Council to seek the resolution of these matters. Under Minute No. EA/11, Mrs. Cowley advised that some verge maintenance works had been undertaken to improve visibility at the junction of the A5132 with the Etwall/Egginton crossroads. With regard to Minute No. EA/14(c) there was nothing further to report on the idea to arrange joint District and County Council Area Meetings.

EA/17. NIGHT TIME NOISE FROM EAST MIDLANDS AIRPORT

The Chair introduced this item and spoke of his role as Chair of the Airport's Independent Consultative Forum. He explained the composition of this Group and its wide consultative remit. The Forum received details of all complaints submitted to the Airport and until recently, there had been no complaints from this part of South Derbyshire. He questioned whether the problems had arisen due to the adoption of noise preferential routes.

The Chair introduced Neil Robinson, the Airport's Divisional Standards Manager for the Environment. At residents request, Mr. Robinson provided details of the Airport's complaint line (telephone 01332 852852) and his direct telephone line (01332 852971). He spoke of the Airport's efforts to minimise noise problems. It had introduced noise preferential routes for departing aircraft, which directed them away from surrounding villages. Some £150,000 had been invested in a radar monitoring system and noise sensors had been installed at a number of locations surrounding the Airport. Where aircraft noise was above the permitted levels, fines were charged. Over the last six months this had generated some £44,000, which had been placed in a community fund for local projects. The Airport worked with pilots in a unique liaison group to address, amongst other things, noise problems. A sound insulation grant scheme was operated with funding of £1 million over a five year period.

Many noise complaints related to a specific type of aircraft, the Boeing 727. DHL in particular, operated a fleet of these aircraft from the Airport. It had agreed to replace these aircraft during the current year with the quieter Boeing 757, which represented an investment of £1.1 billion.

A resident of Sutton-on-the-Hill felt there had been an increase in aircraft noise in recent months. County Councillor Mrs. Littlejohn shared this view, but Mr. Robinson explained that the noise preferential routes had been introduced in March 2001. Residents felt that noise nuisance was worse from aircraft approaching the Airport, rather than those departing from it. Pilots had a degree of freedom on approaching the Airport, mainly on safety grounds. They were encouraged to adopt a 'continuous descent' on approaching the Airport as this created less noise disturbance.

The Airport was currently consulting on plans to expand its controllable air space. A question was submitted on the enforcement measures available and fines could be levied against aircraft operators for deviation from approved flight paths. At present, there was 95% compliance with the agreed routes and the imposition of more stringent controls was being considered. Councillor Mrs. Walton asked whether propeller driven aircraft were still in use and it was confirmed that the Royal Mail still used such aircraft.

Statistics were provided on the number of permitted aircraft movements at night and these were compared to the average daily aircraft movements. Mr. Robinson responded to questions about likely increases in air traffic movements. The number of training flights was also likely to increase as DHL introduced the replacement Boeing 757 aircraft. Comparisons were made with other airports where the number of night flights were restricted through designation or planning restrictions. The Chair spoke of the robust efforts of North West Leicestershire District Council to secure designation for the East Midlands Airport. The Government Minister at the time, Steven Byers MP, had appointed an Independent Panel to investigate the proposed designation.

Councillor Whyman had Chaired that Panel and the Minister had ultimately decided not to designate the Airport. The Chair commented that even if designation had been granted, it would not necessarily have led to a reduction in the number of night flights.

The Chair thanked Neil Robinson for his attendance. He advised that small parties could visit the Airport's Control Tower and reminded them of the availability of the community fund. Mr. Robinson added that DHL was also willing to arrange visits to its premises. He referred to the new employment created by this Company and the proportion of employees that were South Derbyshire residents. Clarification was provided on eligibility for the community fund and the Chair asked that any applications be copied to him, so that he could lend his support to them.

EA/18. **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. An update was given on the provision of two grit bins for Hilton and following the request at the last Meeting, legal advice was provided on liability issues. It was agreed to circulate this advice to parish councils.

A progress report had been received from John Waite, the Area Highways Manager at Derbyshire County Council, to update on the highway issues raised at the last Meeting. The Chair read the progress report and advised that he had met with County Councillor Burrows to pursue a number of the reported problems, including the blocked ditch along the A516 near Hilton. The Vice-Chair provided a further update on the request to reduce speed limits along a section of Doles Lane, Findern. County Councillor Mrs. Littlejohn added to the progress report on the planned new bus shelter adjacent to the doctors' surgery at Hilton. She advised that Derbyshire County Council would not be able to fund its contribution until April as the current budget had been exhausted. This had been met with disappointment and it was hoped that the scheme would be given priority in the new financial year.

Councillor Bale referred to the discussion at the last Meeting about ragwort and the subsequent correspondence with the Member of Parliament in relation to an Early Day Motion. From a recent press article it seemed that if the Motion was successful, clearer responsibilities would be placed on highway authorities to treat notifiable weeds. County Councillor Mrs. Littlejohn spoke of the joint efforts of the Parochial Church Council and Derbyshire County Council to eradicate Japanese knotweed from St. Wilfred's Church yard in Egginton.

EA/19. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE LOCAL DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Two questions had been submitted by Etwall Parish Council prior to the Meeting. These concerned the consultation arrangements for use of monies from planning gain agreements and responsibility for providing advance warning signs on roads which had become flooded.

With regard to the use of Section 106 monies, the Parish Council was particularly interested in plans to set aside monies for the new Etwall Leisure Centre project. The Chair reminded that the discussion of specific planning matters was outside the remit of Area Meetings. As Leader of the Council he

felt that developers should not profit at the expense of local communities and they should be required to provide community facilities in exchange for the right to develop in South Derbyshire. He was unsure of the consultation arrangements on the use of planning gain monies, but offered to investigate this matter and provide a further report to the next Meeting. The Vice-Chair understood that Planning Officers intended to visit Etwall Parish Council to discuss the planning process in the near future.

In response to a question from Mr. Green, the Chair gave an update on the completion of traffic calming measures for Hatton. A meeting had been held with County Councillor Burrows and the sum of £36,000 remained from planning gain monies for this purpose. The Chair felt that this should be spent wisely to address the concerns raised by local residents.

Residents voiced concerns over the planned route of the Hilton West link road, which would also be provided through Section 106 monies. There were concerns that the route might block the flood plain, increasing the risk of flooding and that it would generate further traffic through Hilton. Surface water from the road would drain into the existing watercourse and residents were worried that it might not be sufficient. The Chair explained that this was a further issue raised with County Councillor Burrows at a meeting held earlier in the day. In response to further questions, he explained the extensive consultation arrangements which the District Council undertook as a planning authority when considering applications such as the proposed link road. He was sure that the local District and County Councillors would pursue residents concerns with the Highways Authority, the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water Company, as appropriate.

Councillor Bale offered to pursue a further enquiry raised by a resident of Scropton, relating to a planning consent in the Village. There was some confusion over whether a Section 106 Agreement had been completed for the application. It was understood that community benefits had not been received as expected, because the condition had been time limited and had expired.

Mr. Ireland of Etwall Parish Council asked which organisation was responsible for providing advanced warning signs when roads had become flooded. It was thought that Derbyshire County Council was the responsible authority. The Chair asked for this matter to be investigated and information would be provided to parish clerks.

A number of other flooding relating problems were raised. Councillor Bale commented on the flooding problems experienced in Scropton. Residents of Hilton pursued the earlier discussion about the new link road and the likelihood that this would increase flooding problems. Councillor Mrs. Walton understood that a meeting would be held involving appropriate agencies to discuss this issue. She spoke of the historic flooding problems in parts of Hilton and the devastating affects of the 2000 floods, which everyone was anxious to ensure were not repeated. Comment was made about the improvements to the Hatton flood bank and it was understood that this had increased the flow rate of the River Dove, which might have implications downstream at Egginton.

Insufficient maintenance of drainage ditches increased the risk of flooding problems. A resident questioned who was responsible for such maintenance. The Chair advised that Derbyshire County Council was the responsible

authority for any ditch that took surface water from an adjacent road. In the majority of cases, drainage ditches adjacent to fields were the responsibility of the riparian landowner. The District Council was the land drainage authority and it had a responsibility to make sure that riparian landowners kept ditches clear. Where problems were identified, residents could report these to their local Ward Councillor or to the District Council. The District Council had powers to act in default and recharge landowners if they did not carry out required works. The resident spoke of his own efforts and the problems experienced. He was urged to speak to his local Councillor to pursue this issue. Councillor Mrs. Walton commented on the difficulties in identifying landowners for certain ditches. In such circumstances, the Chair felt that the District Council should act in default and seek to identify the landowner afterwards. Comment was also made on the Flood Liaison Forum which met periodically to discuss flooding problems. There was an apparent lack of progress with several matters referred to the Severn Trent Water Company and the Chair offered to attend the next Forum meeting to raise these issues.

At the last Meeting, a request had been submitted about re-siting a 30 mph speed limit sign on Doles Lane, Findern. The County Council had decided to replace this sign and surrounding bushes had been pruned to expose the sign. However, it was illegible and required cleaning as an interim measure. The Vice-Chair offered to pursue this matter. County Councillor Mrs. Littlejohn was also asked to refer the request to appropriate Officers at Derbyshire County Council.

Mrs. Cowley sought confirmation of the venue for the next County Council Local Area Committee, which would be held on 13th March 2003. It was agreed to research this matter and to circulate details.

EA/20. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next Etwall Area Meeting would be delayed due to District and Parish Council elections. Details of the date and venue would be confirmed in due course.

EA/21. **BUDGET CONSULTATION**

The Area Meeting received a presentation from Terry Neaves, Chief Finance Officer 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' key priorities and the other aims that the Council should pursue. The total cost of General Fund Revenue Services was some £9.61million and a series of charts showed the cost of Environmental Services, Community Services and Finance and Management Services. A further chart showed the respective proportions of Council Tax income that funded services provided by the District Council, the Police Authority and the County Council.

Mr. Neaves explained how the Council managed its finances through close monitoring of its expenditure, a more open budget process and by improving efficiency. 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 slightly more than it received in income at present. Mr. Neaves explained the financial constraints that the Council faced and how this affected the level of Council Tax increase. The Revenue Budget proposals were reported

and these sought to maintain existing services and provide additional resources for service improvements. There was the potential for a low Council Tax increase for the second successive year.

Details were then provided of current capital spending, the constraints in place and capital spending proposals. Feedback from the Area Meetings would be submitted to inform the Council when it set its budget and Council Tax on 27th February 2003.

The Chair provided supplementary information on the budget review process. The Council had adopted a prudent approach and was planning over a three year period. Balances were being maintained at a sensible level and capital receipts from land sales were being used wisely over a four to five year period. The Council wanted to meet those requirements highlighted by residents during previous budget consultations. He spoke of the resources allocated to fund community partnership schemes and the efforts to improve grass maintenance. Improving street cleansing and recycling arrangements were further targets. The Council had levied a low rate of Council Tax increase last year and it was hoped to set a similarly low level of Council Tax rise for 2003/04.

Questions were invited and the first concerned problems with litter, particularly along the A50 trunk road. Fly tipping had been highlighted as a problem in the Best Value Review of Cleansing the Environment. The Highways Agency was responsible for the A50, but it did not provide litter bins at laybys along this trunk road. The Council had introduced the “Clean Team” as a result of the Best Value Review and this provided a responsive service to reported problems.

Mrs. Cowley asked whether the Council’s recycling efforts had reduced the amount of waste going to landfill. Whilst the recycling tonnages were increasing, growth in population meant that the amount of waste generated was also increasing. A question was submitted about the use of Section 106 monies to provide a new skateboard park at Woodville. The resident understood that similar facilities elsewhere were being closed because of legal actions and liability issues. The Chair spoke of the use of planning gain monies to provide new education and leisure facilities. There had been particular demand for a skateboard park, to which the Council had responded.

A question was asked about the scale of private sector housing grant funding. The Chief Finance Officer gave an outline of the Government grant funding provided and the duties placed on local authorities with regard to private sector housing grants. Mr. Ireland commented on the successful service development bid to clean and renovate a war memorial. He noted that the bid had attracted a relatively low score and commented that Etwall Parish Council had been advised not to undertake such works for fear of damaging a memorial within the Parish. An explanation was given of the objective scoring process undertaken for each of the 72 service development bids received. Regrettably, available resources meant that only 28 projects would be undertaken.

A resident spoke about the arrangements for gully emptying within South Derbyshire. The District Council used a contractor to fulfil the Agency Agreement with Derbyshire County Council. It was alleged that certain gullies had been missed by the contractor and the Chair agreed to investigate this matter.

Mr. Ireland asked how parish councils could become more involved in the budget process. In the summer of 2002, the Council undertook consultation on its budget proposals, but parish council representatives felt there had been insufficient time at the end of a busy Area Meeting to give detailed feedback. The Chair spoke of the extensive efforts to gather feedback from a wide range of sources to inform the budget process. It might be possible to establish a parish council forum in the future to receive their views on budget proposals. Comment was also made about the precepting arrangements where parishes wished to introduce specific projects within their local area.

EA/22. **INCREASING THE NUMBER OF AFFORDABLE PROPERTIES IN SOUTH DERBYSHIRE**

Following a request at the last Meeting, the Committee received a presentation on affordable housing from the Council's Chief Finance Officer. Initially, he explained the term 'affordable housing'. It included both low cost and subsidised housing that would be available to people who could not afford to rent or buy properties that were generally available on the open market. There was no national definition of 'affordable housing'. Indications were given of how social rent levels were set and how affordability was linked to employment, wage levels, welfare benefits and general social policy. Affordability of owner occupation was a particular issue, because of rising house prices. The sale of Council houses continued to reduce the number of affordable homes available for rent.

Affordability in South Derbyshire was considered. Recently, the average property price in South Derbyshire stood at some £87,082. Compared to many areas, house prices in South Derbyshire had risen less quickly. The 2002 housing market and needs study had shown that the average household income was £22,000 and incomes in the range of £10-15,000 were the most common in South Derbyshire. An outline was given of the Council's role as a Housing Authority and its role as a Planning Authority. The presentation concluded by examining how the Council could influence developers to provide affordable housing.

Questions were invited and a resident commented on the Local Plan allocations for affordable homes. A comparison was made between the recent housing developments at Hilton and the planned development of the Willington Power Station site, which would include some affordable homes. There was a need to provide appropriate levels of affordable accommodation throughout the District.

The Chair spoke of the difficulties for those on low incomes and he explained that the Council's housing stock had been depleted through the Right to Buy Scheme. Councillor Mrs. Walton referred to the Housing Needs Survey, the results of which would identify the need for affordable accommodation. Planning hierarchy restrictions might also encourage the development of affordable homes in some locations. Within South Derbyshire, some parishes were not considered sustainable for additional development, other than in specified circumstances. The provision of affordable housing was one such exception. A further issue discussed was ensuring the retention of affordable housing. This was achieved through the density of development and planning restrictions, which prohibited expansion of properties classified as affordable homes.

EA/23. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair was congratulated on his recognition in the Queen's New Year's Honours as Member of the British Empire. Councillor Whyman felt genuinely overwhelmed at this award and voiced his thanks for the kind sentiments expressed.

B. WHYMAN

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 9.45 p.m.