

SWADLINCOTE AREA MEETING

7th February 2005

PRESENT:-

District Council Representatives

Councillor Stone (Chair) and Councillors Isham, Murphy and Taylor.

I. Reid (Deputy Chief Executive), K. Stackhouse (Head of Finance and Property Services), J. Bellm (Democratic Services Assistant) and B. Jones (Helpdesk).

Derbyshire County Council Representatives

Councillor Southerd and P. Leigh (Highways)

Derbyshire Constabulary

Inspector S. Fairbrother.

Members of the Public

M. Causer, R. Causer, J. Fairall, J. Grew, T. Harvey, K. Hough, M. Hudson, T. Jackson, P. Laughlin, M. Lunn, P. Marston, N. Parker, C. Rose, A. Sherriff, J. Tomlinson, J. Williamson, D. Williamson and P. Yates.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from District Councillors Harrington and Lane, M. Bulmer, M. Rose, D. Staley, R. Yeomans and S. Yeomans.

SA/18. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 30th November 2004 were received.

SA/19. **MATTERS ARISING**

M. Rose commented on the information provided at the last Meeting with regard to the multi-agency meetings in Swadlincote, as detailed in Minute No. SA/13. He commented that the issues as discussed, highlighted a cultural problem with today's society. He felt that youths needed educating at an early age to try to instil moral values. Inspector Fairbrother agreed with these comments. He recognised that education was important and reported that there was an effort to teach morals and ethics in schools. He confirmed that the Constabulary would be meeting with Head Teachers in the near future to organise the delivery of relevant education within schools. Inspector Fairbrother explained that a Youth Involvement Officer had targeted some schools and spoken with the children, prior to bonfire night, with regard to the dangers of fireworks. He was pleased to report that as a result there were fewer reported problems, this year, with dangerous use of fireworks. County Councillor Southerd pointed out that it was only a minority of children causing these problems in this area. He also commented that within the whole of the county, South Derbyshire's Crime and Disorder Partnership was considered to be one of the most effective.

SA/20. **REPORT BACK ON ISSUES RAISED AT THE LAST MEETING**

County Councillor Southerd provided an update on highways issues raised at the last Meeting. He reported that a central reservation was to be installed outside the “One Stop Shop”, which would assist pedestrians crossing the road and would also deter parking. R. Causer asked whether kerbs were to be raised in this area in order to deter illegal parking. County Councillor Southerd confirmed that dropped kerbs had already been lifted. County Councillor Southerd also reported that the bus layby opposite the shop was to be made permanent, which would also deter parking. A discussion then took place with regard to the problem of deposits of mud on Hearthcote Road, an issue which had also been raised at the last Meeting. It was confirmed that it was in fact an offence to deposit mud onto the road. Residents queried whether it would be possible to enforce wheel washing before vehicles left a site. The Deputy Chief Executive agreed to pass comments to the County to see whether they could find a solution to this problem.

It was reported that the road closure within Swadlincote, for the switch-on of the Christmas lights was valid until 12 noon on the Sunday of that particular weekend. Sergeant Abbott confirmed that the only vehicle problems reported were with lorries trying to deliver to shops within the closed area. He stated that the Constabulary had assisted with these incidents and he advised that for forthcoming closures it would be advisable to notify these shops that no vehicles would be allowed to enter the closed zone and that they should arrange their deliveries accordingly.

The Meeting was provided with details of the proposed restoration works at Maurice Lea Memorial Park, which will take place this summer. It was reported that a grant had been received from the Heritage Lottery Fund which would provide for capital works such as the replacement of the Park’s railings and refurbishment of the Park’s gates, restoration of the band stand, replanting of the shrub bed area, relocation to a more appropriate setting of the memorial to Maurice Lea, refurbishment of footpaths and the creation of an interpretation of the original water feature. It was also reported that funding of £25,000 had been secured from the Barclay’s Spaces for Sport initiative, to build a multi-use games area within the sports terrace area of the Park. Officers were also exploring further areas of funding that could be secured to deliver sporting elements of the project and possibly a new pavilion.

Inspector Fairbrother addressed the Meeting and explained that a special operation had taken place during the weekend prior to Christmas, which had targeted youths in the Swadlincote and Church Gresley area. He explained that youths had been stopped and alcohol had been confiscated. The youths had then been moved on in an attempt to discourage loitering. The police had then tried to ensure that parents were aware that some children had been taking wine and spirits from stocks which their parents had at their homes. He did point out that some youths were just ‘hanging around’ with their friends and were not causing any trouble. Inspector Fairbrother reported that Swadlincote had a regular PC, operating as a “Beat Bobby” and that Church Gresley would receive the same service very shortly. The residents thanked Inspector Fairbrother for his efforts and commented that they had noticed an improvement in the behaviour of youths in these areas.

In response to the query raised at the last Meeting with regard to recycling machinery, it was reported that the equipment had been removed as a matter of urgency as it had started to cause health and safety concerns. It had no scrap value and it was reported that there had been no tender process prior to the sale.

SA/21. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE LOCAL DISCUSSION ITEMS**

A resident reported that the recycling centre at Sainsbury's was currently very untidy as customers were trying to dispose of materials into inappropriate recycling bins. It was also pointed out that there was still no facility at the centre, for the recycling of plastic bags used to convey items to the recycling centre.

C. Rose asked the Deputy Chief Executive which area would receive the next allocation of brown bins. The Officer reported that the Sinfin/Stenson Fields area would be the next to join the composting scheme. He explained that the District Council had entered into a partnership with Derby City Council for composting and that the transfer station for this operation was in the City centre. Sinfin/Stenson Fields were therefore in close proximity to the transfer station. C. Rose then asked the Officer when Swadlincote would be included in the composting scheme. The Officer reported that this would be at some point in the future, but no firm date had yet been agreed.

Residents reported that the number of vessels located at the Newhall Tip needed to be increased, as often at weekends the whole site was full. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the site was operated by a contractor on behalf of Derbyshire County Council and not the District Council. He did however agree to report the situation to Derbyshire County Council. Residents agreed that the staff at the site were very helpful and requested that the Officer pass on these comments.

R. Causer commented that a large, green area on Thorpe Downs Road, opposite Silkstone Close, had attracted itinerants during the summer months. He queried whether there was any way of enclosing this area in order to alleviate this problem. Officers agreed to investigate this matter.

A resident reported that a road accident had recently occurred on Thorpe Downs Road. He commented that the road was quite steep and that cars travelled down too quickly. He considered that there was a requirement for speed humps. County Councillor Southerd responded by stating that this was the first report he had received of such a nature, and agreed to investigate this matter.

Some residents commented that land at the rear of flats on Church Street constituted an untidy site which was attracting children and was potentially a safety hazard. It was reported that this was building land which was available for the provision of affordable homes, but was not currently under development.

Inspector Fairbrother was asked when a full-time traffic warden would be located in the Swadlincote area. The Officer reported that currently, there were only three full-time traffic wardens in the whole of Derby South Area. He did, however, report that there was a new Community Scheme due to

start in March which would allow for two full-time traffic wardens to be based in the area.

A resident commented that he had recently read in a local newspaper that extra police were now deployed in the Swadlincote area. Inspector Fairbrother confirmed that there were more police currently employed, working in new units which had been developed to deal with specific incidents. It was reported that as a result of this more PCs were available to patrol the streets, as the increase in support staff meant that PCs did not need to be pulled off their normal duties. Inspector Fairbrother was then asked whether he felt that the introduction of the 24 hour licensing laws would mean more work for the local police, again at the expense of normal duties. The Officer responded by stating that it would take time to assess the full implication of the situation. He advised the Meeting that a scheme called “Pub Watch” had been introduced in certain areas. This scheme meant that if one landlord banned a customer for drunken behaviour, that customer would be banned from all pubs within the scheme. He was confident that this would assist in policing the problems that 24 hour licensing would bring.

Councillor Taylor addressed the Meeting with regard to the issue of speed cameras on Swadlincote Road. Residents in this area felt that cameras should be positioned in order to protect residents, and not placed where they would make the most money. P. Leigh (Derbyshire County Council Highways Department) explained the difficulties involved with the deployment of a mobile camera unit. He reported that these mobile units needed to be placed where they would not cause any obstruction to pedestrians i.e. in a layby. He also confirmed that mobile cameras were sited at the request of the Constabulary and he agreed to query whether or not this particular unit needed to be re-sited. Councillor Taylor was of the opinion that a mobile camera unit sited on a wide pavement would be tolerated by residents. Inspector Fairbrother agreed that a mobile unit was required outside the Ski Centre and not at the bottom of Swadlincote Road. He suggested that local beat officers be approached for their opinion as they would have knowledge of problem areas.

SA/22. **TRAFFIC SIGNS - SWADLINCOTE TOWN CENTRE**

P. Leigh (Derbyshire County Council Highways Department) gave a presentation to the Meeting. He reported that during the mid-1980’s traffic restrictions had been introduced to Swadlincote Town Centre. At this time the restrictions were “No Entry” to restricted areas between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. and “No Parking” at any time. These restrictions were amended in 1994 as it was felt that “No Parking” at any time made Swadlincote Town Centre unattractive to visit in the evening. The Officer pointed out that the main restrictions were for Swadlincote High Street but that the same restrictions also applied on Market Street and West Street, however, disabled vehicles were allowed this particular area between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. The Officer confirmed that the County had not been asked to amend these restrictions since 1994.

Residents complained that between the hours of 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. too many vehicles were parking in the restricted areas and causing an obstruction. Residents felt that motorists were parking in this area in order to go shopping. Councillor Taylor agreed with these comments

and considered that it was time to investigate this matter. Mr. Causer questioned whether the restricted hours could be extended to 6 p.m., with deliveries being made to shops prior to 10 a.m.

Councillor Murphy asked the Highways Officer what the procedure was in order to achieve any changes to the restrictions. He also asked how long the changes would take to put in place. The Highways Officer confirmed that if general opinion was to increase the restriction until 6 p.m. in the evening, the County would need to receive a formal request, a consultation exercise would need to be performed and if at this time there were no objections an amendment could possibly be achieved within six months. Councillor Murphy advised that he had canvassed shopkeepers and that they were happy to assist in the consultation. He also suggested that the Town Centre Consultation Group be invited to contribute their views to this issue. The Deputy Chief Executive pointed out that it had been quite difficult to achieve the original restrictions as small shopkeepers were tied to national carriers, who could not always be relied upon to deliver outside of the hours 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. He felt that it was important not to prejudice these shopkeepers.

A resident stated that in his opinion some of the signs within Swadlincote Town Centre were ambiguous. It was also pointed out by C. Rose that there was a lot of street furniture within the Town Centre and he questioned whether some signage could be changed in order to improve this situation. The Highways Officer reported that a review would take place in April which would endeavour to improve this situation.

A final point was made by a resident with regard to parking outside of a small club, within the restricted area. This resident was of the opinion that there was no parking allowed. The Highways Officer responded by stating that in his opinion parking was allowed in this area between the hours of 6 p.m. and 8 a.m.

SA/23. **CONSULTATIONS ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET**

The Area Meeting received a presentation from Kevin Stackhouse, the Council's Finance and Property Services Manager. The aims of the presentation were to raise awareness of the Council's finances and to seek views on the Council's budget proposals. An outline was given of the topics to be covered and initially slides showed the total cost of revenue services. This comprised Environmental Services, Community Services and Corporate/Management Services. Capital spending was also explained. The slides showed the services provided by the County Council, the Police Authority and the Fire Authority.

In terms of managing the Council's finances, there was a focus on the longer term, with revenue estimates based over a three year period and capital estimates over a five year period. Government grant funding met around 55% of Council spending and another 10% of funding came in the form of specific grants. The general Government grant for 2005/06 for South Derbyshire had increased by 8%, when compared to the previous year. This recognised the growing population of the area and new spending pressures to be faced. Reference was made to the Government's grant funding formula and the Council received just under £400,000 less than that identified in the formula. However, this position had improved from the previous year.

A chart showed the breakdown of the Council Tax bill in terms of the funding required by the County Council, the Police Authority, the Fire Authority and the District Council. Future Council Tax projections allowed for an increase of 4.5% each year for District Council services. The level of Council Tax increase for 2005/06 was still to be determined, but the Government guideline was for increases of less than 5%. The Government had warned councils about excessive increases and it had powers to “cap” increases if necessary.

The Council’s projected financial position was explained. It had a good financial base, with improving levels of reserves. An outline was given of financial issues, comprising new spending pressures and the Council’s plans to meet these pressures. The financial position was summarised and a further slide explained the Council’s budget process. Money was available for service improvements, for both revenue and capital schemes. The presentations concluded with an outline of proposed areas for new spending and feedback was sought from the Area Meeting.

Questions were invited. Mr. Causer asked about the Government incentive to reassess the Council Tax Bands in line with increasing property prices. K. Stackhouse responded by stating that when the proposed revaluation takes place, in 2007/08, the Council Tax Bands will be increased accordingly. Therefore, a property currently in Band D, for example, should remain in Band D. Mr. Stackhouse confirmed that he did not know how the revaluation would be done.

SA/24. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date and venue of the next Swadlincote Area Meeting would be confirmed in due course.

R. J. STONE

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 8.45 p.m.