

MELBOURNE AREA MEETING

15th August 2006

PRESENT:-

District Council Representatives

Councillor Carroll (Chair), Councillors Bell, Pabla and Mrs. Wheeler.

F. McArdle (Chief Executive), P. Spencer (Democratic Services), G. Hague (Head of Planning Services) and B. Jones (Helpdesk).

County Council Representatives

Councillor Jones.

G. Duckworth (Democratic Services).

Derbyshire Constabulary

Sergeant Wright.

Parish Council / Meeting Representatives

C. Barker and D. Seed (Barrow-on-Trent Parish Council), H. Coyle and F. Mitchell (Elvaston Parish Council), J. Barnes (Smisby Parish Council) and P. Watson (Ingleby Parish Meeting).

Members of the Public

D. Bayliss, D. Bellis, J. Burden, P. Burden, C. Ford, J. Hinds, R. Knibb, A. Madeley, P. Mitchell, G. Pollard, R. Saxby, P. Waters and K. Whewell.

MA/1. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

It was noted that Councillor Carroll had been appointed Chair of the Melbourne Area Meeting at the Annual Council Meeting.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from District Councillors Atkin and Shepherd, County Councillor Ford, District and County Councillor Harrison, Inspector Fairbrother (Derbyshire Constabulary), N. Hawksworth, C. Peck, J. Rex and M. Wilson.

MA/2. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

It was agreed that Councillor Pabla be appointed Vice-Chair of the Melbourne Area Meeting for the ensuing year.

MA/3. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Melbourne Area Meeting held on 9th May 2006 were noted.

MA/4. REPORT BACK ON ISSUES RAISED AT THE LAST MEETING

Information had been received from Derbyshire County Council to provide an update on issues raised at the previous two Area Meetings. The Chair read this report about footpaths in Ticknall and with regard to leaflets and publications. Mr. Watson of Ingleby Parish Meeting had originally raised the concerns about certain publications. He advised that this issue was now closed as he had disposed of the publication in question.

The reinstatement of Long Horse Bridge, a bridleway crossing the River Trent, was discussed in some detail. There were plans to reposition the bridge, moving it approximately 140 metres. Mr. Mitchell of Shardlow explained the original purpose of this bridge and felt its realignment would cause a health and safety hazard. He also spoke about the costs of this project, which were approaching £1 million. It was noted that the County Council was considering a compulsory purchase order, to acquire land needed for the new bridge crossing and this would increase costs further. The revised alignment would form part of the Midshires Way and would link to a crossing over the Derwent Mouth Lock. However, this was a narrow platform and it was considered an impractical proposal. The Chair noted the obvious concerns and anger of local residents. She suggested that a representative of Derbyshire County Council attend the Shardlow Parish Council Meeting to seek a solution to this problem. Shardlow residents wished to see the reinstatement of the bridge, but not at the point proposed by the County Council. **It was agreed that Derbyshire County Council be asked to meet with Shardlow Parish Council and the public to discuss this issue further.**

A report was provided on the request for additional pavements in the Swarkestone area. The County Council had considered this request, but could not justify additional footways at the locations specified. A resident of Swarkestone restated the problems being experienced, particularly in Woodshop Lane, with speeding traffic and vehicles parking on this “access only” road. He disagreed with the County Council’s findings and spoke of another request for a 30 mph speed limit to be imposed, which had also been rejected. The Chair questioned whether traffic calming measures would assist, but this was not favoured. The County Council’s representative was asked to feedback these views. **Following a suggestion from Mrs. Barker of Barrow-on-Trent Parish Council, it was agreed to invite a representative of Derbyshire County Council’s Highways Department to attend the next Melbourne Area Meeting.**

County Councillor Harrison had also provided a report following the concerns about intrusive estate agent signs in the north eastern parishes. There was a discussion on the legislative powers available to the County Council as highway authority and to the District Council under advertising legislation. The Chair suggested that where there were specific problems, the parish council should write to Derbyshire County Council’s Highways Department, to request the removal of the signs.

MA/5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE LOCAL DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mr. Watson of Ingleby Parish Meeting voiced his concerns, as he had requested information at a previous Area Meeting and had not received it.

This concerned the cost of producing the Council's newspaper "The News" and feedback on the consultation exercise to determine priorities as part of the budget process. He reported that he had only received one copy of "The News" to date. The Chair questioned whether any other residents were not receiving this publication and it appeared that this was the case. Frank McArdle, Chief Executive of the District Council was alarmed as there was a contract to deliver "The News" to 37,000 properties across the District. **He gave an undertaking to provide details of the cost of producing the newspaper to Mr. Watson and to provide a report back to the next Meeting.** With regard to the budget consultation exercise, Mr. Watson spoke about the lack of support for "The News". The Chief Executive explained how the feedback received from the consultation process was used to shape the Council's budget. **He offered to give feedback on this consultation exercise to the next Meeting.** Another resident agreed that there was a lack of support for this Council publication and he questioned whether this was the case throughout the District. Mr. McArdle felt there was the opportunity to debate this at a future Meeting and to discuss the effectiveness of "The News". He spoke of the feedback received to date and the relative cost of this publication, compared to the Council's financial turnover. He felt this publication gave the Council the opportunity to interact with the public.

Mrs. Barker was concerned about the incomplete distribution of "The News" and referred to the format of information publicising the Safer Neighbourhood Meetings, which she felt could be improved.

Mrs. Burden voiced her thanks for action taken by a local authority to clear a footway in Ticknall and she gave an explanation of the works undertaken. Mr. Ford thanked the County Council's Highways Department for the removal of signage to the former Aston Hall Hospital. He explained that there was another sign for the Hospital adjacent to the village pub, which required removal and there was a sign for Weston-on-Trent at this location that needed replacing. There was a further sign for the Hospital located by the village phone box. Another resident suggested that a fingerpost be placed in the centre of the Village, with directions to the surrounding Villages. Concerns were voiced about signs advising of new road layouts, which were left in place for many years after the development had taken place. Similarly, there were concerns that signs advising of tar spraying were left in place too long and examples of this were at Holden and Compton Avenues in Aston-on-Trent. **It was agreed to refer these matters to the Highways Department at Derbyshire County Council.**

Mr. Watson referred to the survey of housing needs for rural areas, undertaken by the Midland Rural Housing Trust. He had advised Miles King of the Trust that it would be pointless undertaking the survey in Ingleby as it was not possible to get planning consent for development in that Village. He had subsequently received a substantial report from the Trust and was concerned that taxpayers' money was being spent on the production of such reports. Another speaker explained that this organisation was a registered charity, but it was subsequently confirmed that the Council had been charged for the surveys undertaken. Mrs. Barker explained that Mr. King had been invited to attend Barrow-on-Trent Parish Council, but had ignored this invitation. The Parish Council had read a copy of the report for Barrow-on-Trent and did not agree with some of its content. She felt that the District

Council should be aware that the housing needs report might not be accurate.

Gill Hague, Head of Planning Services responded to the points raised. Legislation required that a detailed housing needs survey was undertaken for use in both planning and housing functions. She explained the purposes of the Needs Survey. For example planning permission might be granted in exceptional cases, where development would not normally be permitted, for affordable housing, where there was a proven need.

Mr. Watson felt that through local knowledge, this process could have been achieved without substantial cost and he considered there was no need for additional housing in Ingleby. The Officer replied that the District Council needed formal evidence to demonstrate the level of housing need to Planning Inspectors.

Mrs. Coyle of Elvaston Parish Council felt the process had been more positive and Mr. King had given an address to that Parish Council. In response to further comments from Mrs. Barker about the accuracy of the reports, Officers confirmed that the validity of the results would be tested. It was explained that this rolling programme of surveys would be completed over a three year period.

MA/6. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

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

MA/7. **“HOW WE DETERMINE PLANNING APPLICATIONS”**

A copy of the Head of Planning’s presentation was circulated to those present. The Area Meeting was advised of the process undertaken to determine planning applications. The presentation touched on:

- The consultation process, including statutory and other consultees.
- Determination of applications either by an Officer under a delegated power or by the Development Control Committee.
- Planning legislation and reasonableness in the decision making process for applications.
- A trial scheme for public speaking at the Development Control Committee.

A resident gave an example of a specific development adjacent to her property and the problems that had resulted from it. The Head of Planning Services gave an outline of the measures now in place, which would be taken into account in determining applications for development close to existing properties. It was difficult to comment on historic applications, because of changes in the legislation.

Mrs. Coyle of Elvaston Parish Council sought further information about the conditions attached to planning consents. She asked about enforcement action where conditions were initially complied with, but modifications then took place. It was confirmed that there was a time limit on the enforcement of planning conditions and the Council had only limited staffing resources for enforcement. A specific example was used of a known ongoing problem,

which the Head of Planning Services replied to. The Council needed to be informed of breaches of conditions, so that it could take appropriate action. Mrs. Barker sought further clarification regarding the party wall legislation, in relation to proximities of development, which was duly provided. In response to a question from Mr. Mitchell, it was confirmed that there was not an appeal mechanism against the grant of a planning consent. Clarification was also sought about the legal deadlines for enforcement of breaches of condition. Mr. Waters commented on the flooding risks associated with a specific development and gave an explanation of the circumstances. He was concerned that this was a breach of planning policy guidance and felt that the Council was the public's defence against such breaches. The Head of Planning Services explained that the District Council relied on expert advice, in this case from the Environment Agency (EA). The EA was not willing to pursue the case in question, which related to a non-residential property.

Mr. Barnes referred to developments of agricultural buildings in Smisby. The only condition applied to a specific development was for trees to be planted to screen the buildings. For a number of reasons, the trees had been destroyed and he would have thought it better to require leylandi conifers, to provide adequate screening. The Officer explained that such conifers were out of character, but there were requirements for the replacement of any tree that died within the first five years after development. She also commented that there might be permitted development rights in some cases.

Mr. Peck questioned whether letters of support for proposals could be submitted. The Officer confirmed that these were given weight and reported when determining planning applications.

Mr. Watson voiced his thanks for the presentation. He questioned whether there were sometimes conflicting opinions between planning specialists from the building control and design and conservation viewpoint. The Officer hoped that a complimentary approach was taken and sought feedback if there were specific problems. An example quoted was providing a disabled access to an older property. Mr. Waters compared the Development Control Committee process at South Derbyshire to that for Derby City Council. He praised the professional approach at the District Council. It was also questioned when notices of planning applications were taken down.

MA/8. **CONSULTATION – “GETTING YOUR IDEAS INTO ACTION”**

The Chair introduced this item, referring to the launch of the new Corporate Plan. The Council wished to improve consultation with local people and communities. The “ideas into action” campaign had now been launched and details were included on a flyer, which had been circulated. This would also appear in the September issue of the Council's newspaper and on the website, where ideas could be submitted electronically.

The Chief Executive gave further information and he was alarmed by the earlier feedback that “The News” was not being received in some parts of the District. He gave an undertaking to pursue this. The Chair stated it was important for the Council to receive feedback from the public. The Chief Executive explained that through this mechanism, the public had a chance to influence Council spending. This was the most detailed consultation process within the County. The Council was determined to interact with the public and to receive feedback on the services people wanted. This would result in

direct spending in a short space of time. He urged residents to provide feedback and the Chair confirmed that the leaflets could be submitted with additional sheets, if further space was needed.

Mrs. Barker questioned whether a telephone contact number could be provided for those not receiving “The News”. The Chief Executive intended to pursue this issue with the distribution company first. If residents had not received the next issue by the end of September, they should contact the Council. It would be helpful if feedback on “Getting your ideas into action” could be received by 4th October 2006.

J. D. CARROLL

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 8.50 p.m.