

MELBOURNE AREA MEETING

20th January 2004

PRESENT:-

District Council Representatives

Councillor Carroll (Chair), Councillor Harrison (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Atkin, Jones, Mrs. Renwick, Shepherd and Mrs. Wheeler. T. Neaves (Chief Finance Officer), P. Spencer (Democratic Services), T. Sylvester (Planning) and B. Jones (Helpdesk).

Derbyshire County Council Representative

Councillor Harrison.

Parish Council Representatives

C. Barker (Barrow-on-Trent Parish Council), F. Mitchell (Elvaston Parish Council), M. Sharpe (Melbourne Parish Council), A. Mitchell (Shardlow Parish Council), V. Shaw (Weston-on-Trent Parish Council) and P. Watson (Ingleby Parish Meeting).

Derbyshire Constabulary

P.C. C. Staley.

Members of the Public

L. Brooks, C. Ford, E. Hardy, R. Heelis, A. Jefferies, J. Jefferies, A. Madeley, R. Knibb, G. Pollard, C. Sturges, P. Sturges, J. Thompson, P. Waters, A. Wood, K. Whewell,

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Bell and Pabla (South Derbyshire District Council), Sergeant A. Wright (Derbyshire Constabulary), representatives of Aston and Melbourne Parish Councils, N. Hawksworth, M. Evans (Derbyshire Youth Service) and R. House (Council for Voluntary Services).

MA/16. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Melbourne Area Meeting held on 22nd October 2003 were noted.

MA/17. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair advised that the presentation by the Derbyshire Youth Service would be postponed as Mrs. Evans had unfortunately had a serious accident. It was agreed to send a letter to Mrs. Evans wishing her a speedy recovery.

MA/18. **REPORT BACK ON ISSUES RAISED AT THE LAST MEETING**

The Chair reviewed those items raised at the last Meeting and provided an update on the progress made to date. She reported on the review of the Compost Scheme, giving an outline of the issues considered by a Working Panel. Visits had been undertaken to Lichfield District Council and East Staffordshire Borough Council, to see how their composting schemes were

undertaken. She compared the proportion of waste recycled by each Authority and the costs incurred, to current figures for South Derbyshire. A further meeting of the Working Panel would be held the following day and a further report would be provided to a future Area Meeting once this review had been completed. The Chair also commented on the issues raised at the last meeting regarding plastic recycling banks in Melbourne and the recycling of Yellow Page directories. Councillor Shepherd commented on the visits to other authorities and in particular he praised the approach adopted by Lichfield District Council.

Questions were invited and a resident asked whether there were statistics available to compare the cost of the twin-bin composting scheme with those for traditional refuse collection and providing village-based recycling centres. Councillor Shepherd spoke of the merits of both schemes and felt they were complementary. Another resident spoke of his own recycling efforts and asked whether it was compulsory to have the second wheeled bin for composting. The Chair explained the Government's recycling targets and the benefits of the Council's scheme to encourage recycling. However, it was not compulsory for residents to have a second wheeled bin. Mr. Ford of Aston-on-Trent referred to the increase in costs of recycling and he questioned what incentives there were for residents. The Chair spoke of the environmental benefits and the difficulties in finding suitable sites for the landfill of waste. Councillor Harrison reminded the Chair that at the last Meeting, residents had voiced concerns about the fortnightly collection of refuse. Councillor Shepherd confirmed the refuse collection arrangements provided by Lichfield and East Staffordshire Councils. Currently, East Staffordshire Borough Council provided a weekly collection of refuse, but it was considering an alternate weekly collection scheme similar to that provided in South Derbyshire and Lichfield.

A comment was made about home composting and it was confirmed that through a District Council Scheme, some 2,500 home compost bins had been provided. Mr. Watson questioned how the Council would respond where residents could not contain all of their refuse within the wheeled bin. He spoke of particular problems in Ingleby over the Christmas period and due to the change in landfill site, resulting in the collection of waste earlier in the day. In response, Councillor Shepherd confirmed the Council's policy to provide bigger capacity wheeled bins for large families and that side refuse could be collected from properties participating in the composting scheme. Mr. Watson explained that recently, such side refuse had not been collected. If it proved necessary to use the Clean Team, this would be an additional cost to the ratepayer.

The Chair reported the action taken to seek the removal of litter from land owned by British Waterways. A complaint was made about horse manure on a section of the Canal towpath and it was suggested that this matter be referred to the Clean Team. With regard to the flooding problem at Elvaston, this matter had been referred to Derbyshire County Council. Mr. Madeley was critical that this problem had still not been addressed. County Councillor Harrison was asked to pursue this issue and it was agreed that the Clerk would provide background information to him.

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

A complaint was submitted about people using motor cycles on a bridle path in Elvaston. Police Constable Staley advised that the Constabulary was pursuing a similar problem in Robins Wood, Melbourne at present, but would also undertake periodic patrols of the bridle path in Elvaston. There was a discussion about problems caused by itinerants occupying land in Shardlow. There seemed some uncertainty over whether action was being taken to secure the eviction of the travellers. Several residents commented on the nuisance and annoyance caused and sought information on the action that the Council could take to secure their removal. It was agreed to research this matter and to submit a report back to the next meeting.

Mr. Whewell, a resident of Elvaston submitted a number of issues that related to services provided by Derbyshire County Council. He explained that a small footbridge crossing a stream within the Elvaston Castle grounds needed repair and this prevented the use of footpaths on the site. He was critical of the condition of pavements outside his property and complained about the lack of access to a local nature reserve. County Councillor Harrison agreed to pursue the issues raised and the Chair requested that the Clerk write to Derbyshire County Council also.

Safety concerns were reported regarding speeding traffic along the A6, particularly from Shardlow towards Elvaston. The Chair explained that problems of speeding traffic were a matter for the Derbyshire Constabulary. Mr. Mitchell of Elvaston Parish Council clarified that discussions had taken place with the Highways Agency and there were some road design issues. It had been agreed that the Agency would attend a further site visit to re-inspect the completed road and to reconsider layout/signing. The Parish Council had recently reminded the Highways Agency about this and a site meeting was being sought.

Mr. Madeley made further reference to the flooding problem in Elvaston. He considered that the District Council had responsibilities as a land drainage authority, referred to previous serious flooding problems and correspondence from Derbyshire County Council, promising to undertake works. Some recent works had been undertaken, but Mr. Madeley felt that this matter was far from resolved.

A question was submitted about an extension to the speed limit along Robinson's Hill in Melbourne. It was noted that this was a further matter for Derbyshire County Council. Councillor Harrison referred to traffic calming on Station Road in Melbourne. He confirmed that a scheme would be undertaken before the end of the financial year. He then intended to pursue the extension of the speed limit along Robinson's Hill and was presently seeking accident statistics for this road, Cockshut Lane and Ashby Road in Melbourne. Regrettably, road safety action tended to be linked to accident statistics. There was also a discussion about the speed of traffic along these roads.

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

It was noted that the next Melbourne Area Meeting would be held on Wednesday, 5th May 2004 at the Shardlow Village Hall.

MA/21. CONSULTATION ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET

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 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. Neaves 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. Neaves 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.

A question was submitted about responsibility for highways. It was confirmed that Derbyshire County Council was responsible for all adopted roads other than motorways and trunk roads. A resident referred to the Council's financial difficulties some years ago and the need to generate additional resources. It was questioned whether the additional charge levied had recurred in subsequent years. The Chief Finance Officer provided clarification, explaining the action taken to reduce expenditure and the need to raise Council Tax above the normal level. For the following financial year, the Council Tax increase was 3.5%, but there was still an accumulated effect due to the previous higher increase. Mr. Neaves offered to supply further information to the resident.

Mrs. Shaw referred to the cuts in services resulting from the financial difficulties and some parish councils had become responsible for these services. She spoke of the prevailing budget position and questioned the recent increases in Members' Allowances. An explanation was given of the process undertaken to review Members' Allowances. Advertisements were placed in the local press to seek people interested in participating in an Independent Remuneration Panel. This Panel had reviewed Members' Allowances and made a recommendation, which was subsequently accepted by the Council. It was noted that the increase in allowances was being phased over a four year period. The Chair reminded of the duties fulfilled by District Councillors.

Questions were submitted about the Government's funding formula and the Chief Finance Officer provided information, particularly about the recent review of the funding formula. Mr. Ford noted that Council expenditure was

more than income and by 2006/07, the Council would have a cumulative deficit of some £1.9 million. Mr. Neaves spoke about balance levels, the prevailing financial position and proposals to address the projected deficit. At present, the Council used a scoring system for new service development bids and it might be possible to look at the whole of Council expenditure in this way and to review current services. A particular area which could be considered was expenditure of investment monies to offset debt.

Mr. Neaves responded to a question from the Chair about the replacement of windows at the Rosliston Forestry Centre bungalow. Further questions were submitted and information provided on the “Liberation Day”, Youth Engagement Through Sport and the provision of an artificial turf pitch. The Chair requested that for future budget presentations some detail be provided of each of the proposed service developments. Councillor Harrison sought the public’s feedback about the budget proposals. The Chair reminded that the views expressed by residents in the summer of 2003 had been used when determining priorities for the current budget process. A further consultation would be undertaken later in the year.

MA/22. **DRAFT REVISION OF SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE**

At the October Area Meeting, a report was provided on proposed Supplementary Planning Guidance, relating to housing and design. A number of comments were submitted at that time and it was agreed to invite a Planning Officer to attend the Meeting to discuss the implications of the revised guidance in more detail. Tony Sylvester, Development Control Manager at the District Council gave a brief presentation about Supplementary Planning Guidance and particularly the revision of supplementary guidance relating to housing and design. The Council was seeking written responses to this consultation, to enable the guidance to be finalised.

A resident commented that the revised guidance promoted denser development and felt this contradicted the clearance of such developments from inner city areas. Mr. Sylvester confirmed the Government’s view that nationally, there was a need for an additional 4 million houses. Lower numbers of people were occupying each unit of accommodation. The Council had targets for the re-use of previously developed land to reduce the need to develop “greenfield” sites.

Comment was made about the reduced number of parking spaces required under the revised guidance. Mr. Sylvester confirmed that the Government was trying to reduce reliance on the private motor car. Some residents felt that these proposals were not realistic or achievable in a rural district like South Derbyshire, particularly because of the perceived inadequate public transport. Comments were made about the sustainability of developments in certain villages and the degree of flexibility within the document to accommodate local issues. Further comments were made about the change in requirements for parking provision. It was questioned whether the Council would acknowledge written responses to this consultation document and the Chair questioned whether this would make the best use of Officers’ time. For future consultations, it might be useful to explain where a response would not be provided. Councillor Mrs. Wheeler sought clarification on the timescale for this review. It was planned to submit a report to the March meeting of the Council’s Environmental and

Development Services Committee. Further comments were submitted about sustainability and the provision of low cost affordable housing within villages.

J. CARROLL

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 9.20 p.m.