

MELBOURNE AREA MEETING

23rd January 2002

PRESENT:-

District Council Representatives

Councillor Brooks (Vice-Chair in the Chair) and Councillors Harrison, Pabla, Mrs. Robbins and Shepherd.

T. Neaves (Chief Finance Officer), D. Cook (Members' Services) and B. Jones (Helpdesk).

County Council Representative

Councillor Harrison.

Parish Council Representatives

V. Shaw (Weston-on-Trent Parish Council), F. Mitchell (Elvaston Parish Council), D. Smith (Melbourne Parish Council), A. Jackson (Melbourne Parish Council), I. Baker (Stenson Fields Parish Council).

Members of the Public

M. Briggs, F. Briggs, M. Holt, A. Wood, S.H. Robbins, A.S. Madeley, K.R. Whewell, N. Lager, S.J. Rose, L. Rose, P. Gates, F.W. Hinds, N.J. Hinds, C. Ford, D. Bellis, S. Robinson, J. Pottie, D. Desborough.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Carroll (Chair), Christine Barker and Nancy Hawksworth (Shardlow Parish Council). It was noted that Shardlow Parish Council met on a Wednesday evening and therefore it was asked that this be considered when organising future meetings.

MA/17. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Area Meeting held on 13th November 2001 were noted.

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

The Meeting reviewed those items raised at the last Meeting and noted the progress made in each case.

With regard to the site at Shardlow operated by Biffa Waste, Councillor Harrison referred to the recent problems experienced with Cell 9 at the site and advised that he had raised the matter with officers of Derbyshire County Council. A public meeting had been held where all parties involved (Biffa, Area Health Authority, Derbyshire County Council, Environment Agency) were represented. The problems experienced at the landfill Cell 9 were due to the piping system controlling bad smells ceasing to operate and vegetation activating methane and toxins not being pumped away. This had created a real problem for the villagers of Elvaston and Shardlow. At the public meeting Biffa had explained that £1million had been spent to remove the problem but this had proved highly complex. Neither the Environment Agency or the District Council had prosecuted because they were satisfied

that Biffa were doing everything to rectify the matter. Councillor Harrison advised that assurances had been given that a clay cap was to be put on Cell 9 which would immediately rectify the problem together with a final capping incorporating a special membrane. All reports to date from Officers involved had been encouraging. This process was taking place against adverse weather conditions and it was envisaged that the problem would be resolved by not later than the end of February 2002 and there had already been a marked improvement.

With regard to Cell 10, Councillor Harrison advised that there was a need to remove the water occupying this Cell and that a resolution was being progressed. Biffa were currently considering what materials to use to fill Cell 10 and Councillor Harrison had asked for a guarantee that if Cell 10 was to be filled with rubbish that measures would be taken to prevent further flooding.

Mr. C. Fordham of Aston advised that he hoped that the problems experienced at the Shardlow site would be considered when any plans for gravel extraction at Aston/Weston were submitted.

A resident asked whether there had been any further developments regarding the freight hub possibly to be accommodated at Castle Donington particularly in light of the recent announcements regarding the development of the East Midlands Airport. Reference was made to the road infrastructure surrounding the airport and whether it was sufficient to cope with increased usage of the airport. It was noted that any planning considerations would be a matter for North-West Leicestershire District Council and it was agreed that enquiries would be made to ascertain how this measure would affect the residents of South Derbyshire.

A resident queried the speed restrictions on Station Road, Melbourne and Councillor Harrison advised that the need for traffic calming in this area was greater than before. A petition against the proposed traffic calming measures had been submitted and Derbyshire County Council had decided not to proceed with the original scheme. Councillor Harrison had assurances that Derbyshire County Council would develop a new scheme. A resident reported that an accident had happened last week on that particular road and concern was expressed that traffic calming measures had been implemented elsewhere in Melbourne (Packhorse Road/Queensway). Councillor Harrison explained that this was because these roads were in the immediate vicinity of schools and this was why the project had “jumped the finance queue”. A public consultation exercise had taken place regarding proposed traffic calming for Melbourne whereon 80% of respondents had agreed with the proposed measures. Councillor Harrison advised that he was continuing to press for traffic calming at Station Road, Melbourne.

The Chair asked Councillor Harrison to update the Meeting regarding a re-surfacing scheme proposed for Weston Road, Aston and Councillor Harrison advised that £30,000 had been scheduled for this scheme as a priority for the next financial year. £20,000 had also been set aside for a local footpath scheme in that area. A resident asked that the provision of proper drainage be considered when the works to Weston Road, Aston were being carried out.

(At 7.35 p.m. Councillor Harrison left the Meeting).

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

A resident requested an update on the current situation with regard to fly-tipping and the Chief Finance Officer advised that the 'Clean Team' was established in December 2001 to respond to fly-tipping, dog fouling and litter problems within the District. The Council's response to fly-tipping had reduced from 6.4 to 1.2 days. A resident also queried the proliferation of abandoned vehicles in the District and was advised that the Council's Community Scrutiny Committee was to consider a report on this matter at its next Meeting.

A resident expressed concern about the deterioration of the general condition of roads and footpaths in the area and it was agreed to advise Derbyshire County Council in this regard. Concern was also expressed that a traffic warden had been absent from the Melbourne area for some time and accordingly it was agreed to investigate this matter and report back.

MA/20. BUDGET CONSULTATION

The Area Meeting received a presentation from Terry Neaves, Chief Finance Officer at the District Council. This was the first year that the Council had consulted on its budget proposals and it was hoped to develop the process further in future years. Mr. Neaves explained the financial crisis which the Council had faced in 1999. Since that time, measures had been taken to ensure sound financial management, including a Best Value Review of Financial Management and Control. Details were given of the Council's medium term financial strategy, the service and financial planning process and strengthened budgetary monitoring in place.

The Council's financial position had stabilised and there was an adequate level of Reserves. However, caution was still needed and it was proposed to refocus and reprioritise the services provided. Information was submitted on the financial constraints imposed by Government and the implications of expenditure above Government guidelines. The revenue budget proposals for 2002/03 were reported. These sought to maintain existing services, provide additional resources for service improvement which were in part offset by savings in existing services. There was the potential for a lower Council Tax increase than in previous years. Details of the proposed service developments and budget reductions had been circulated.

The capital spending proposals for 2002/03 were also reported. For this year, there was a single capital allocation which would give authorities greater freedom in allocating resources. Overall, Government allocations were falling and authorities were becoming more reliant on generating their own resources. The presentation concluded with a summary of the Council's financial position, an outline of how the feedback from the consultation meetings would be incorporated into the budget process and proposals to undertake further consultation during the summer on spending priorities for 2003/04.

A resident queried the operation of the Council's pension scheme and Mr. Neaves advised that the Council was part of a Local Government Pension Scheme where the rules were set nationally. Each authority had a pension fund and South Derbyshire District Council was part of the pension fund

administered/managed by Derbyshire County Council. Every three years the fund was assessed and following a recent assessment, a steep rise in contributions was required. The reasons for the current shortfall in the pension fund were explained. These were largely due to poor stock market returns and longevity.

A resident referred to a statement made by Mr. Neaves that the Council was “spending more than its income” and Mr. Neaves confirmed that what was meant by this statement was that the Council was setting aside money for known future commitments. The Council was also looking on a more long-term basis and projecting balances to 2005.

A resident queried what financial amounts the Council’s budgets involved and the Mr. Neaves advised that the Capital Fund was approximately £1 million (plus a special grant from the Government of £2 million), the revenue budget was approximately £20 million but a large amount was re-administered by the Council in the form of Housing Benefits leaving approximately £14 million to spend.

A resident queried the Council’s fixed assets and Mr. Neaves advised that the Council had prepared an Asset Management Plan and was looking at generating capital from the disposal of land assets. The Council was not particularly well off in relation to the number of assets it held. It was looking at how assets were managed in order to generate income. The Chair advised that the Council had recently undertaken a Best Value review into asset management.

L. BROOKS

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 8.25 p.m.