

SWADLINCOTE AREA MEETING

5th February 2002

**PRESENT:-**

**District Council Representatives**

Councillor Mrs. Rose (Chair), Councillor Harrington (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Rose, Southerd and Stone.

F. McArdle (Chief Executive), T. Neaves (Chief Finance Officer), P. Spencer (Members' Services) and B. Jones (Helpdesk).

**Derbyshire County Council Representative**

Councillor Southerd.

**Derbyshire Constabulary Representatives**

Inspector R. Hargreaves and PC M. Fearn.

**Members of the Public**

M. Barsby, E. Bird, P. Boam, A. Corner, J. Eaton, Mr. and Mrs. Forbes, W. Hardwick, T. Harvey, L. Holloway, M. Holloway, R. Lane, M. Lunn, A. Sherriff, D. Staley, W. Stretton, J. Stone, and D. Sutton, G. Sutton, D. Williamson, J. Williamson.

SA/23. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Area Meeting held on 28th November 2001 were noted.

SA/24. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair introduced Inspector Dick Hargreaves who had recently joined the Swadlincote Police Station.

SA/25. **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. Councillor Rose provided an update on the Church Gresley War Memorial. A site meeting had been held with a memorial mason and an estimate requested on the costs of cleaning the War Memorial. A further proposal explained was to add the names of civilians that had died in the war to this memorial. There was currently no budget available for these works and it was hoped to submit a development proposal later in this year, with a view to the works taking place in 2003/04.

Councillor Rose referred to a letter from the Facility and Development Manager which was available for inspection and Mr. Barsby requested a copy. Councillor Rose also agreed to report the costs of undertaking these works to a future Area Meeting. Improved maintenance of the Memorial Grounds was sought with reference made to the poor condition of the gardens and seating. One possible solution might be to liaise with a local school to see if it would be willing to "adopt" the Memorial for use in history lessons, to enable maintenance by children and give them a sense of purpose.

Councillor Southerd gave an update on the maintenance works to the Church Gresley Cemetery. The York Road entrance gates were being refurbished and a new wrought iron fence installed. Funding had been identified for the next financial year to refurbish the Charles Street entrance to the Cemetery, which remained closed due to the poor state of repair of the entrance pillars.

Discussions had been held with Officers of Derbyshire County Council about the reported problems in Belmont Street, Swadlincote. A verbal update was given and the Chair read extracts of a letter to County Councillor Southerd. The County Council recognised that there were parking problems at school starting and finishing times and there were a small number of vehicles using this road as a through route in contravention of the 'access only' restriction. The Police had been requested to enforce this restriction. The County Council did not perceive speed to be a problem given the traffic calming measures in place. There was limited 'off street' parking available which was a common problem in areas of predominantly terraced housing. The County Council proposed to replace and relocate the 'access only' signs at the Civic Way end of Belmont Street following the request made at the last Area Meeting.

Residents voiced their concerns at the County Council's response. There was a perceived increase in traffic using the road since the McDonalds Restaurant had opened. There were concerns about the speed of vehicles using this road, it being questioned whether any monitoring had taken place. County Councillor Southerd agreed to liaise with the residents of Belmont Street and to submit a response to the County Council. A further long term solution might be appropriate in conjunction with the Belmont Street Primary School.

SA/26. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE LOCAL DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Mr. Forbes referred to the occupation of the Church Gresley Common by travellers and he sought an explanation of Human Rights issues. Inspector Hargreaves gave an outline of the requirements of the Human Rights Act and the duties it imposed on the police and local authorities. Residents complained about the problems experienced through fly tipping/refuse and on this occasion an abandoned vehicle had been set on fire. It was requested that the costs incurred in removing refuse from the Common be reported to the next Area Meeting. There were allegations made about criminal damage and Inspector Hargreaves reminded residents of the need for evidence to support these allegations before action could be taken. He also outlined the powers available to the police and the roles of other bodies including the Environment Agency.

Frank McArdle, Chief Executive of the District Council gave an outline of the problems experienced over many years through the occupation of land by travellers. He explained some of the measures taken previously to prevent such occupation of land, the former legislation and designation in place which enabled the Council to secure a Court Order for eviction more quickly. The legislative powers available to local authorities had been eroded over recent years and the human rights legislation imposed requirements on authorities to address travellers' welfare, education and medical needs. Mr. McArdle referred to the Gypsy Council which gave travellers legal advice and

funding. He also spoke about the endeavours of the Member of Parliament, Mr. Mark Todd M.P.

A resident referred to the allocation of “Catherine Rise” as a street name for part of Oxford Street, Church Gresley. This was causing confusion and the problem had been recognised by the District Council. Mr. Corner commented that part of Oxford Street was known locally as “Primrose Hill”, but there were contrary views expressed on whether this street name should be used. Councillor Southerd agreed to pursue this matter with Officers at the District Council.

Mr. Harvey displayed a copy of the Derbyshire County Council publication “Greenwatch”. He commented that there were no articles included featuring the Swadlincote area. The Chief Executive thanked Mr. Harvey for this prompt and was sure that articles would be included on the Swadlincote area in a future issue.

Councillor Stone referred to reported burglary problems in Newhall and the Crime and Disorder initiatives being undertaken in that area. Inspector Hargreaves explained that one known offender was now in custody and the victims of crime would be urged to contact the police to seek the recovery of their stolen items.

Mrs. Staley asked about proposals to commemorate the Queen’s Golden Jubilee. It was planned to rename the Festival of Leisure as the Jubilee Festival for this year and the Council would undertake a co-ordination role to assist people organising street parties and other community events.

Mr. Corner voiced his concerns about problems caused by vehicles parking in the vicinity of a shop at the junction of George Street and Oxford Street, Church Gresley. Inspector Hargreaves agreed to investigate these problems and similar concerns reported by the Chair regarding Swadlincote Road. Councillor Southerd explained that the No Parking restrictions in the vicinity of the “One Stop Shop” at the entrance to the Thorpe Downs estate were not being observed and Inspector Hargreaves agreed to pursue this matter also. Councillor Harrington commented on the problems caused by vehicles parking on footways for persons in wheelchairs and parents with pushchairs. Councillor Harrington had recently organised an awareness day and sought residents’ feedback on the problems experienced.

**SA/27. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Swadlincote Area Meeting would be held at 7.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 8th May 2002 at the Town Hall, Swadlincote.

**SA/28. 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.

Information was sought on the Council's overall budget and the powers available to Government to prevent excessive Council Tax increases. A resident asked if there were examples of best practice which the Council could follow and information was provided on the Best Value approach to review service provision. The publication of Members' allowance increases at the same time as the anticipated increases in Council Tax was considered unfortunate. Councillor Stone felt that Government should increase its funding to local authorities to reduce the need for Council Tax rises. Information was sought on the pension scheme and the contributions made by the Council. It was understood that councils had a payment "holiday" some years ago and there was now a deficit on the pension fund. A question was submitted by Mrs. Staley about the borrowing arrangements to fund capital expenditure and Mr. Neaves gave an explanation. A resident referred to the review of collection arrangements for the Council Tax some years ago which was perceived to have increased the cost levied to residents. Mr. Neaves provided clarification on this matter and explained the proposals to consult further during the summer on spending priorities for 2003/04.

MRS. M. ROSE

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 9.00 p.m.