

SOUTH DERBYSHIRE AREA FORUM

LINTON

23rd October 2012

PRESENT:-

District Council Representatives

Councillor Wheeler (Chairman) and Councillor Frost.

M. Alflat (Director of Operations), K. Stackhouse (Head of Corporate Services), P. Spencer (Democratic Services) and M. Guest (Policy and Communications).

Derbyshire County Council Representatives

County Councillor Lacey.

P. Jameson (Forum Liaison Officer)

Parish Council/Meeting Representatives

J. Pallett, O. Pallett and C. Wright (Castle Gresley Parish Council), A. Lees (Coton-in-the-Elms Parish Council), J. Powell (Linton Parish Council), P McGibbon and T. Stone (Netherseal Parish Council), and M. Horne (Walton-on-Trent Parish Council).

Members of the Public

H. Billings, S. Boddice, P. Ellwood, M. Emmerson, L. Fearn, G. Gee, E. Key, E. Key, G. Palmer, R. Palmer, P. Prosser, N. Rose and S Rose.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from District Councillor Mrs. Hall, S. Jackson (Castle Gresley Parish Council) and Dr. Elson (Walton-on-Trent Parish Council).

LA/9. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman referred to the consultation on the Local Plan, which was residents' opportunity to comment on the strategic development plans for South Derbyshire. Whilst the majority of development was planned for the southern fringes of Derby, residents were encouraged to engage in this process and to complete and return questionnaires with their views. The Chairman also reminded that Police Commissioner Elections would take place on 15th November.

LA/10. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Linton Area Forum held on 18th July 2012 were noted.

LA/11. PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON ISSUES RAISED BY RESIDENTS

There was a discussion about broadband services in the area. Derbyshire County Council was leading on an initiative to improve broadband speeds and had appointed a number of broadband champions. Alan Lees was one of the broadband champions for the southern parishes. It was suggested that a local group be formed to gather views, which Mr. Lees could then collate and forward to Derbyshire County Council. Any person wishing to find out more information was asked to contact him after the meeting. It was agreed to circulate his e-mail contact details to parish councils within the area and noted that the next County liaison meeting would take place at Matlock on 27th November 2012. Other points raised were the poor broadband service in the Appleby Glade area and the availability of satellite services, which whilst more expensive were much faster. The Forum Liaison Officer was asked to report back the views submitted to the County Council.

Concerns were again raised about the footpath near to the recreation ground at Coton Park, Linton. The narrow width of this footpath had been exacerbated at one point by the relocation of a bus stop sign into the footpath. A local representative stated the need for this footpath to be widened and the surface finished as a matter of urgency. The Forum Liaison Officer advised that these works had been programmed for completion by March 2013. A related issue was the determination of a planning application, which it was understood had now been concluded. Liaison would take place between the District and County Councils on this aspect. The Forum Liaison Officer was asked to pursue this matter and to liaise with the individual prior to the next meeting.

In Castle Gresley, there was concern about the condition of a public right of way. This had been taken up by the Parish Council with the Rights of Way section at Derbyshire County Council. The Forum Liaison Officer was asked to investigate this matter and to submit a report back to the next meeting.

Concerns were reported about the establishment of a business "Tank Mania" on an area of land at Coton Park. It was understood that this business was being relocated from North West Leicestershire. A District Councillor quoted further details from the company's website, including the ability for people to book and pay on-line to use their services. An update was given that this site would not be used for this purpose. The Forum Liaison Officer was asked to speak to colleagues in the County's Trading Standards Department regarding the services being offered via the company's website, which could not be supplied.

In response to a question, an update was given about the Council's new recycling contract. A complaint was made that an individual was taking recyclable materials from other residents' 'green boxes' placed at the kerbside, to recycle them himself. The resident was asked to speak to the Director of Operations outside the meeting, in order that this could be investigated.

LA/12. DISTRICT COUNCIL ISSUES

A presentation was made by the Head of Corporate Services about changes to Council Tax Benefit. Residents were advised of the current arrangements and the move from a national to a local benefit system from next April. Overall, the funding to councils had been reduced by 10% and for South Derbyshire this equated to £1/2 million each year. There were currently six thousand people in South Derbyshire that received benefits, about half of which were pensioners. A number of options had been considered to date, on which details were provided, together with the Council's initial proposals. The timetable for this review was reported and the new arrangements would operate from 1st April 2013. The Head of Corporate Services added that the Government had recently issued further guidance regarding additional funding, subject to certain conditions and a ceiling on charges for those currently in receipt of full benefit. Residents were urged to read the consultation slides and the further information and then to submit their views via a questionnaire.

The Chairman provided further information, confirming that disabled persons would not be affected by these proposals. He explained some of the initiatives being considered including charging Council Tax on empty properties and for longer-term empty properties a premium rate being charged. A District Councillor praised the Head of Corporate Services and his team for the detailed work being undertaken. Questions were asked about the controls in place on private sector landlords and whether there had been an increase in the number of benefit claimants recently.

LA/13. COUNTY COUNCIL ISSUES

The Forum Liaison Officer had circulated information about Health Watch Derbyshire. This was a new initiative established by the Government, giving individuals the chance to influence and challenge health and social care services in Derbyshire. The public were being invited to get involved to make sure Health Watch Derbyshire worked well and residents were urged to complete a circulated questionnaire and to submit responses by 15th October 2012.

The Forum Liaison Officer also publicised a County Council information sheet on preparing for the winter months.

LA/14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date and venue for the next Linton Area Forum would be confirmed in due course.

R. WHEELER

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 8.20 p.m.