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CENTRAL AREA COMMUNITY FORUM

Notes of the Forum held on 12 July 2007 at 7.00pm at South Darley Village Hall

PRESENT

**Derbyshire Dales
District Council**

Councillor Geoff Stevens (in the Chair)

Councillors Shirley Buckingham, Sue Burfoot, John Moseley and Lewis Rose OBE

David Wheatcroft (Chief Executive), Peter Corke (Consultation and Community Planning Officer), Simon Beynon (Housing Strategy Officer), Barry Thacker (Partnership Sergeant) and Ros Hession (Overview and Community Engagement Officer)

**Derbyshire County
Council**

Ian Stephenson (Strategic Director - Environmental Services), Neil Hickman (Area Manager - North Western Area) and Jill Moyes (Democratic Services Officer)

**Derbyshire
Constabulary**

Superintendent Paul Rouse

**Derbyshire Fire and
Rescue**

Group Manager John Green

**Peak District National
Park Authority**

Ruth Marchington (Director of Corporate Resources)

Members of the Public Patricia Leake, Kath Potter (Rowsley Parish Council), Vivian Finch (Resident – Stanton Lees), Ken Armstrong, S Slack, R Slack, S & G Gee, Colin Swindell (Elton), John Lowe, P.A Wragg (Gold Close), John Evans (Darley Dale Town Council), plus 1 other member of the public. (13 in total)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Councillor Geoff Stevens welcomed everyone to the Forum and encouraged their participation.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Peter Corke gave a presentation on feedback from recent Community Consultation Surveys which included two Citizens' Panel Surveys and also the Public Satisfaction Survey.

The February 2007 Citizens' Panel Survey had focused on Community Safety and Quality of Life and the May 2007 included Local Parking.

The 2006 Public Satisfaction Survey had received a 56% response and had been very positive with a 67% satisfaction with overall service provided by the District Council.

The presentation slides are attached at the end of these notes.

Following the presentation, questions and comments were taken from the floor: -

- Kath Potter congratulated the Council on its efforts to provide local affordable housing. Peter Corke stressed the importance of maintaining the viability and vitality of local communities.
- Patricia Leake highlighted dissatisfaction in some areas with some services. Peter advised that a breakdown of statistics by Ward was available to allow closer scrutiny.
- Geoff Green highlighted concerns regarding traffic congestion particularly around the Darley Bridge and South Darley area. This was due to the volume of traffic exacerbated by HGVs and traffic accessing Enthovens. He questioned how could a small community go about dealing with these concerns? Neil Hickman advised that in their latest request for planning permission, Enthovens promised a reduction in traffic activity. Derbyshire County Council had made attempts to prevent and reduce HGVs between Darley Bridge and Enthovens. A traffic survey was to be undertaken, although Neil was unsure as to what this would achieve. Kath Potter offered statistics and findings from at least 6 previous surveys with which she had had an involvement.
- Mr Green went on to point out that the road system was over 200 years old and incapable of coping with the incremental increase in traffic generated over the years, partly due to the expansion of Enthovens. He welcomed the opportunity to comment on the planning application, but was not convinced that a reduction in traffic volume was achievable, but would await the proposals with interest.

- In response to Mr Green's query about a possible by-pass, John Evans was able to advise that discussions were ongoing with Enthovens to construct a by-pass by the cricket ground. A 'round the table' discussion (between Darley Dale Town Council, South Darley Parish Council and the District and County Councils) was now required to progress matters.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING, HOME-OPTIONS AND HOMELESSNESS

In his presentation, Simon Beynon demonstrated the District Council's commitment to providing Affordable Housing which had included attracting £20million between 2002 and 2008 for the provision of such. This had enabled the provision of almost 400 new homes and in addition, since 2004, 90 empty homes had been brought back into use and 325 improved.

Simon went onto talk about Home-Options, the District Council's new choice based letting system that exhibits the following: -

- Property advertising
- Marketing information is published for each property
- Customer applications
- Ranking of applications
- Customer feedback
- Choice
- Information

He highlighted the 5 steps within the procedure which are: -

Step 1 – Membership

Step 2 – Registration

Step 3 – Choosing

Step 4 – Offer

Step 5 – Feedback

Simon advised of the priority bands, the success of the system so far and different housing options available.

Simon concluded his presentation by talking about how homelessness is being tackled and prevented in the Derbyshire Dales area.

A copy of the slide presentation is attached at the end of these notes.

Questions and comments were invited from the floor were as follows: -

- John Evans thanked Simon for his most informative presentation and confessed that this was a subject area that he knew little about, but was impressed by the amount of work being undertaken by the District Council in this area.
- Councillor Stevens re-iterated the Council's success in attracting funding for local affordable housing.

QUESTION TIME

Questions and comments were then invited from the floor on the responsibilities of the participating partners. Issues were raised as follows: -

- Patricia Leake was interested to know what impact Council policies had on services such as education and health. For example, the provision of affordable housing may affect population both in nature and number and would the services be in place to accommodate the needs of the population?
- David Wheatcroft advised that strategic planning documents were developed where all 'ingredients could be put into the pot' to allow adequate long term planning for services. Local Development Frameworks were a new approach which took account of grass root influences for planning for the future and considered the wider picture.
- He went on to talk about government targets, which if not adhered to or achieved will be highlighted, that dictate how many houses must be built within the area in the next 5, 10 and 15 years. As well as providing the set number of houses, he also stressed the importance of having the right mix of houses, for example many in Derbyshire Dales and the surrounding area were executive and not 'affordable'. The District Council had been very successful in attracting Housing Co-Operation funding towards the provision of local affordable housing
- Councillor Rose acknowledged the importance of local affordable housing, particularly for young people who are vital to the sustainability of our rural settlements in contributing towards the continuation of local schools and businesses.
- Kath Potter highlighted that the lack of local affordable housing had contributed to the recent threatened closure of Stoney Middleton School. Less local young families meant a reduction in children attending the village school. She recognised that the District Council and Peak District National Park Authority had been in favour of the affordable housing scheme, but the land had been privately purchased for development.
- In response to a question from a member of the public, Simon Beynon confirmed that restrictions and clauses for local occupancy are placed on properties, which can be due to differing schemes or vary from location to location.
- David Wheatcroft added that the District Council work closely with Registered Social Landlords to offer a variety of options such as part ownership, rent only.
- The Peak District National Park Authority also had its own restrictions, advised Ruth Marchington, wholeheartedly supporting affordable housing for local need and within a protected environment. The Park Authority is currently looking at its definition of 'local'.
- The District Council were not prepared to accept the traditional definition of a key worker (nurses, police, bus drivers etc), but was redefining its own to include workers involved in agriculture and tourism who were vital to the local economy.
- As affordable housing was moving higher up the national agenda, there was a school of thought that questioned whether consideration should be given to the

provision of affordable housing in Rural Areas, this is something that we should be keeping a careful eye on in our mostly rural district. (Councillor Stevens).

- John Evans added that housing ought to be approached with more fluidity. Larger houses occupied by older people could be released for younger families if smaller attractive houses were available for the older generation.
- In response to a question from a member of the public, Mr Wheatcroft advised that the District Council has more or less utilised all available sites now for the provision of affordable housing. The development of the Cawdor Quarry brownfield site had taken some time to get off the ground, but was now well underway and would eventually provide 430 houses. In the southern part of the district, a 100% provision of affordable housing had been fulfilled on one site, at Ashbourne Airfield.
- If house prices kept increasing, Mr Wheatcroft felt that the Council was 'fighting a losing battle' and that small Councils could not tackle the housing problem alone.
- In response to a request from Viv Finch for an update on the recent fire at Enthovens, John Green advised that the Fire & Rescue Service had met with Enthovens once to discuss the incident report. More meetings were planned within the next month and John confirmed that the final report would be a public document.
- Viv highlighted that a large number of people had been affected by the incident. They had raised concerns and wanted to know the outcome of the incident investigations and be assured that risk assessments had been undertaken at a number of levels to ensure that the community is safe in the future, as far as possible.
- The extent of the effects was questioned had the fire been during the week when traffic congestion was worse. All these factors needed to be taken in to account when considering Enthovens planning application.
- A member of the public asked if the new government's plans could be the subject of a future Forum to which David Wheatcroft replied that appropriate means of consultation and feedback would be used including responding via organisations such as the Local Government Association.

CONCLUSION AND THANKS

Councillor Stevens thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution which had been interesting and informative.

Meeting closed 8.20 pm