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NORTHERN AREA COMMUNITY FORUM

Notes of the Forum held on 16 November 2009 at 7.00pm at the Agricultural Business Centre, Bakewell

PRESENT

**Derbyshire Dales
District Council**

Councillor Judith Twigg (in the Chair)

Councillors David Burton, Tracy Critchlow, Charles Duncan, Mike Longden and Colin Swindell

David Wheatcroft (Chief Executive), Phil Colledge (Head of Finance), Jim Fearn and Ros Hession (Overview & Community Engagement Officer)

**Derbyshire County
Council**

Louise Swain (Project Manager : Stakeholder Engagement and Coproduction) and Kay McIntyre (Democratic Services Officer)

**Derbyshire
Constabulary**

Chief Inspector Steve Wilson and Inspector Bryan Hall

**Peak District National
Park Authority**

Jim Dixon (Chief Executive)

**Derbyshire Fire &
Rescue Service**

Chris Thornhill and Steve White (Consultation Officers)

Members of the Public

Netta Christie (Police Authority) , Leonard Twigg (Bakewell resident), Peter Watts, Adrienne Bailey (Journalism Department – University of Sheffield), Kath Potter (Rowsley PC), Anne Dudley (resident), Tom Pilkington (Matlock Hospitals League of Friends/Matlock Boys Brigade/First Taste Charity/Darley Dale Tennis Club), Henry Folkard, Erika Green (Derbyshire Constabulary), Marilyn Swannell (member of the public), Chris Crowther, George Challenger (Bakewell & District Civic Society), Janet Bailey (Bakewell Chamber of Trade and Bakewell Show), Chris Cartledge (Hathersage Parish Council), Rosie Ollie (Hathersage Parish Council), John Dalton and Nigel Johns (17 in total).

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Councillor Judith Twigg introduced the Members and officers from the participating authorities and welcomed everyone to the Forum.

DERBYSHIRE DALES DISTRICT COUNCIL'S SPENDING PLANS AND PRIORITIES

Phil Colledge gave a presentation on the District Council's spending plans and priorities.

Priorities 2008 to 2011 – four priorities with six target areas which had been arrived at through extensive consultation with residents

1. Affordable, decent housing	Affordable homes
	Decent homes
2. Safe communities	Environmental crime
	Alcohol related crime
3. Street scene	Public realm
4. Active, healthy communities	Central Area Leisure Centre
	Encouraging healthy lifestyles

The results of the Autumn Citizens Panel had revealed:-

Priority Services that the Council should spend most on

- Tackling crime & anti-social behaviour 33.4%
- Creating & sustaining local employment 26.1%
- Improving the supply of affordable housing 24.6%
- Keeping streets & public areas clean 22.6%

Services that the Councils should spend least on

- Subsidising special events 37.7%
- Encouraging visitors to stay longer 27.1%
- Ensuring the public know what the Council is doing 22.0%
- Providing Tourist Information Centres for visitors 17.6%
- Tackling climate change 17.1%

Services we should spend more on

- Tackling crime & anti-social behaviour 59.0%
- Providing public toilets 56.2%
- Keeping streets & public areas clean 56.0%
- Creating & sustaining local employment 55.8%

Services we should spend less on

- Subsidising special events 42.4%
- Encouraging visitors to stay longer 27.5%
- Tackling climate change 22.5%
- Ensuring the public know what the Council is doing 18.6%

Rank in order of preference for balancing the budget

- Increasing Council Tax 10.3%

- Increasing fees and charges 20.4%
- Reducing service levels 7.9%
- A combination of the above 43.9%

Phil went on to outline how the recession had impacted on the District Council, for example through loss of income in services such as planning and building control and an increased demand for benefits. The District Council had also suffered from a reduction in government grant, 20%, over the last three years and a loss of grant for concessionary bus fares, £150,000. Despite this, the Council is required to achieve a balanced budget whilst maintaining existing service levels and making new investment eg in public conveniences.

He concluded by showing the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan

	Estimate 2009/10	Forecast 2010/11	Forecast 2011/12	Forecast 2012/13	Forecast 2013/14
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Cumulative Deficit – No reduction in Government Grant	28	91	110	316	423
Cumulative Deficit – 10% reduction in Government Grant 2011/12 to 2013/14	28	91	271	633	891

Questions and comments were then invited and issues raised as follows:

- Councillor Burton noted that, in the recent Citizens' Panel survey, 'tackling crime & anti-social behaviour' had been identified as a priority for the District Council to spend most money on, but this was a police function as well as one which other agencies could contribute to. David Wheatcroft recalled that the District Council used to have little involvement in crime and disorder matters, but since the introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act, there had been increased partnership working including significant efforts to tackle anti social behaviour.
- Councillor Burton was disappointed in the decline in attendance and reporting by the local press over recent years at Council meetings. He felt that a lot of good news stories went unreported and that it fell to the District Council to report its own news. David Wheatcroft advised that the District Council issues regular press releases, but not all were published. The Council is also pursuing other avenues such as Peak FM Radio, Ashbourne Radio, the Peak Advertiser and Dales Matters to raise awareness of the Council's activities. Results of the recent PLACE survey showed that the District Council was rated well, by the public, in many areas, although it has not been highly rated on the information it makes available on Council Tax. The public also had a poor perception of the District Council giving 'value for money', although the Audit Commission highly rated the Council in this area.

DERBYSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE

Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service are currently undertaking a consultation exercise on its Service Planning for 2010 to 2013.

Chris Thornhill outlined Derbyshire Fire & Rescue's 9 service priorities, namely:-

- Improvement
- Engagement
- Governance
- Service Delivery
- Equability & Diversity
- Partnerships
- Employees
- Assets
- Environment

She then went on to expand upon each priority and how it would be achieved. Members of the public were invited to express their views through a consultation questionnaire.

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Louise Swain introduced and then showed Derbyshire County Council's DVD 'Making Care Personal: Your Choice, Your Life' which shows the way in which social care services for adults is being transformed.

QUESTION TIME

Questions and comments were then invited from the floor to representatives from the participating authorities and issues were raised as follows:

Relief Road for Bakewell

- George Challenger had attended a very good talk the previous Friday about the Local Development Framework and noted that one of the issues was that the relief road for Bakewell should be deleted from the document. Surely a relief road would divert traffic from the town. Was its deletion due to finances? Jim Dixon explained that, within the new Local Development Framework, there was a requirement to include projects which were realistic. There were two main reasons for the deletion of the relief road: 1) this is a very low priority for Derbyshire County Council and is unlikely to come to fruition in the next 25 years 2) the relief road would only address some of the traffic issues around Bakewell.

Healthy Lifestyles / Leisure facilities

- Mr Cartledge was pleased to see that one of the Council's top priorities was healthy lifestyles and hoped that the Council would continue to support facilities in the Hope Valley such as Hathersage Swimming Pool.

Waste Management

- In response to the Forum invitation in the 'Matlock Mercury', Marie Swannell had come along to the Forum to discuss waste and recycling issues. She had attended a meeting of the Council in September to ask why she is not allowed to have a green compost bin. A green bin could be accommodated near to her property and she wondered why some action had not been taken since her plea 6 weeks ago. She noted the Council encouraging residents to recycle in their Fact Sheet number 7. Despite already shredding and home composting, she had still sent 12 sacks of green waste to landfill in the last 6 weeks. She asked how the Council can ensure that those who want to use this service are able to. David Wheatcroft confirmed that the Council encourages as much recycling and home composting as possible and that the Council does well generally on achieving and exceeding its recycling targets. The Council was due to enter into a new refuse collection contract in 2010, but has extended the current one to allow more thought to be put into how the recycling service can be extended in the new contract. Resources had been secured from Derbyshire County Council to pilot some schemes. Mrs Swannell again asked why she was not allowed to have a green bin – she cited the policy of High Peak Borough Council who offered green bins to households where black bins were not used. David Wheatcroft pointed out that other authorities such as High Peak have fortnightly green and residual collections which enables them to fund an extended green bin scheme. Relevant officers have been made aware of Mrs Swannell's request and how it might be addressed.

Parking

- Janet Bailey felt that the Civil Parking Enforcement Officers were over zealous and cited specific incidents such as shopkeepers not being allowed to load and unload, a fixed penalty notice being issued because a parking ticket was upside down in the windscreen and even when a valid parking ticket was on display. The feeling was that this was affecting business in Bakewell. David Wheatcroft explained that off street parking enforcement is the responsibility of the District Council and on street the County Council (previously the police) and an external contractor provides the service for both. Fixed penalty notices may be cancelled – anyone who feels they have been incorrectly issued with a penalty, can apply for its cancellation. Reasons for the application must be stated. The District Council tries to be sympathetic to local issues. The County Council have the same authority to cancel penalties and their contact officer is James Adams.

Local authority budgets

- Kath Potter was concerned about cuts to the police budget and referred to a discussion on Radio Derby where mention was made of 700 possible staff redundancies. She asked if other organisations such as district and parish councils could offer support in any way. Chief Inspector Wilson believed that there would be a lower budget baseline next year which would bring about constraints and difficulties and a need to look at efficiency and cashable savings. He added that crime had consistently decreased over the last 7 years, but this message needed to be emphasised to the public so that they had confidence in the force. He appreciated any support that could be offered by others. Kath Potter suggested that parish councils could show their support via the Derbyshire Association of Local Councils.

- Mrs Potter went on to ask if budgets would be sufficient to maintain the service that has been provided over the last few years. Inspector Hall advised that the force is looking at cost savings, but hoped that these would be in back office services, although it was unclear at the moment, Chief Inspector Wilson added that the executive team would wish to consistently strive to provide good service to the public.
- Henry Folkard applauded the District Council's budget presentation which was very clear, although he did not share the Council's optimism. He noted that the current secretary of state had supported national park authorities, but wondered if funding would decrease in the future. Phil Colledge was due to attend a Local Government Association meeting in December when it would become clearer what level of government grant the District Council could expect. The outcome of next year's general election may also be an influencing factor. David Wheatcroft added that all public sector organisations were suffering. Money is often targeted at services such as education and not areas such as refuse collection which the District Council provides. The District Council had made a reduction in back office staff some years ago in order to make savings. Jim Dixon stated that the Peak District National Park's budget was secure for the forthcoming year, but beyond (2011 onwards) he was expecting there to be budget cuts and a reduction in government grant.
- Henry Folkard also sought reassurance that Operation Blackbrook would continue despite budget cuts. Inspector Hall assured there was no intention of scaling down the involvement in Operation Blackbrook which had proved successful in tackling problems with off road activities in Derbyshire and particularly in the Hope Valley. The police try to target resources where there is a known a problem.

Markets in Bakewell

- Janet Bailey felt that the Sunday markets in Bakewell were a repeat of the Monday one and local traders would prefer the Sunday market to have more of a Christmas feel and local shopkeepers would also like the opportunity to have a stall. Christmas markets in other towns were successful. David Wheatcroft advised that the Matlock Victorian Market is organised independently of the District Council. He was not aware of any particular issues around the markets in Bakewell, but would be happy to further discuss them.

Peak District Visitor Guide

- Kath Potter asked why the Peak District Visitor Guide had been proof read and printed in Edinburgh. As a local accommodation provider, she was encouraged to source locally. She had raised this point at a previous Forum when David Wheatcroft had indicated that the supplier had probably offered the lowest tender. The publication was produced by the Destination Management Partnership which neither he nor Jim Dixon were directly involved with. He undertook to look into the matter.

Drains and gullies

- Peter Watts had raised concerns for the last two years about blocked road gullies, a number of which were now discharging water onto the roads. According to the

government, the number of properties at risk from flood from surface water has risen to 5 million (previously 2 million). Derbyshire County Council undertook to look into this matter.

Public Rights of Way

- George Challenger recalled that some years ago, Jill Millward, of Derbyshire County Council, had given a presentation on Public Rights of Way which included improvement plans which should have been implemented in 2005. Jim Dixon highlighted the recent improvements to the Monsal Trail, but would like to see more funding from Derbyshire County Council for improvements. However, funding had been secured for works to open the Buxton to Bakewell railway line.
- George Challenger went on to ask who was making decisions at a local level about repairs. Jim Dixon suggested that Mr Challenger speak to the local Rights of Way Officer. Kay McIntyre suggested that this may be a possible topic for a future Forum.

CONCLUSION AND THANKS

Councillor Twigg thanked everyone for their participation.

Meeting closed at 8.55 pm