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## NORTHERN AREA COMMUNITY FORUM

Notes of the Forum held on 6 July 2009 at 7.00pm at the Agricultural Business Centre, Bakewell

### PRESENT

#### Derbyshire Dales District Council

Councillor Judith Twigg (in the Chair)

Councillors Jacque Bevan, Tracy Critchlow, Peter Duncan, Cate Hunt, Andrew McCloy and Lewis Rose, OBE

David Wheatcroft (Chief Executive) and Ros Hession (Overview and Community Engagement Officer)

#### Derbyshire County Council

Paul Jameson (Local Area Liaison Officer – Highways)

#### Derbyshire Constabulary

Chief Inspector Dick Hargreaves, Chief Inspector Steve Wilson and Inspector Bryan Hall

#### Peak District National Park Authority

John Lomas (Director of Strategy and Development)

#### Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service

Steven Helps (Group Manager) and Garry Platts (Station Manager)

#### Mid Derbyshire Citizens Advice Bureau

Gill Webber (Debt Adviser)

#### Members of the Public

Leonard Twigg (Bakewell resident), Peter Watts (resident), Pat Lunn, Caroline and Peter Hinchliffe, Tom Pilkington (Matlock Hospitals League of Friends/First Matlock Boys Brigade/First Taste/Darley Dale Tennis Club), Dave Teare (Litton Parish Council), Revd Tony Kaunhoven (Bakewell Parish Church), Henry Folkard, Christine Gilmour (Middleton by Wirksworth Parish Council), Neil Moulden (Derbyshire Dales CVS), Alan Cottingham (Bradwell resident), Alistair Sneddon (Bagshaws, Bakewell), Robert Heaney (Calver PC), John Plant (Eyam PC) plus two others (17 in total)

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

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

## INITIATIVES TO COMBAT THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE AND ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

Gill Webber gave a brief history of the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), currently celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and outlined the services and advice it is able to provide.

Services can be accessed at the Bureau's main office in Matlock, at various outreach centres (including GP surgeries) around the Dales, through home visits, the internet and by telephone.

90% of its work force is volunteers, but the CAB is, nevertheless, regarded as experts in debt advice. Last year the mid Derbyshire CAB dealt with debt losses amounting to over £6 million due to a variety of causes including jobs losses, loss of equity and the collapse of the banking system. Gill appreciated how hard it is for people to admit that they are struggling with their finances, but assured of the comprehensive and confidential service provided by the CAB. Clients are firstly seen by a general debt adviser who will assist to deal with any urgent matters, and are then referred on to a specialist. Gill stressed that the CAB work **with** clients, not **for** them, and their aim is to get them back on their feet. She concluded that she was looking forward to working closely with the District Council to provide a comprehensive, efficient and effective Debt Advice Service.

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

- Mr Cottingham asked for an outline of any initiatives and schemes employed and their level of success. Gill advised that she had only been in post one week, but would be drawing on experience from other partners. She had no comparisons to relate to at this moment in time.

David Wheatcroft went on to talk about initiatives that the District Council was supporting and promoting to assist the local economy and individuals, these included:-

- Promotion of 'Source Derbyshire' to local businesses giving information on local contract opportunities.
- Urging small businesses to tender for Council services and advising them whether they qualify for rate relief.
- District Council car parking charges have been frozen for 2009 / 10. The increase in charges would have taken effect from 1 April 2009, but by holding down the prices at this critical stage in the economic climate, it is felt that tourism levels will be sustained and possibly increased. The parking concessions to residents will continue to encourage District Council residents to shop locally without paying car parking charges.
- The District Council continues to promote tourism in partnership with all the Derbyshire authorities as part of the 'Visit Peak District and Derbyshire Partnership'. Tourism in the Dales contributes £243 million and 5,440 jobs to the local economy. There has been a 40% increase in tourism bookings and the Peak District remains the second most visited national park in the world.

- The District Council is making a major investment in its public conveniences as part of its Capital Programme improvements.
- It is hoped that the doors on the Central Area Leisure Centre will be open by Summer 2011. This is not just seen as a leisure centre, but also an exciting all-year all-weather tourist attraction that will encourage visitors to come to the area and spend money in the local economy.
- In conjunction with the CAB, the District Council is providing advice to individuals through the Debt Advice Service and help for businesses was also available eg through Business Link.
- Through its own housekeeping, the District Council is taking a co-ordinated approach, for example in prompter payment of invoices to aid local businesses' cash flow.

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

- Mr Cottingham applauded the assistance the District Council was offering to the local tourism industry and businesses, but was concerned about individuals trying to deal with escalating problems, noting the vulnerability of some, particularly youngsters who may have difficulty accessing jobs. He also noted the knock on effect of the current economic climate on the police and fire services. David Wheatcroft was pleased to report that the District Council was targeting young people through educational establishments. He also cited the introduction of the government's 'Jobs for the Future' scheme which went some way in addressing such issues, but upon examination with other partners, gaps had been identified such as access to jobs. The need to provide permanency was recognised - jobs should ideally be long term and have prospects. There was pressure on the Council's own work force with 10% of jobs having been cut over the last few years.
- Mr Cottingham highlighted that many post offices now have internet access for job seekers.
- Chris Cartledge asked when the community would find out the District Council's plans for its public conveniences and what effect this would have. David Wheatcroft advised that consultation would be taking place very soon – it would be short and sharp to allow works to be progressed. The District Council currently had 34 public conveniences and he believed there to be scope for rationalisation. Various options were being looked at such as maintenance by Town and Parish Councils, employing local people to lock the facilities at night and paying businesses to use their facilities. Different solutions may be applied to different areas.

## **DERBYSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE**

Derbyshire Fire & Rescue started their presentation by giving some statistics for the Northern (Bakewell, Bradwell, Hathersage) Derbyshire Dales area. In the previous 12 months, Derbyshire Fire & Rescue have attended:-

- 7 deliberate primary fires
- 6 deliberate secondary fires
- 6 accidental dwelling fires
- 48 Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) involving serious injuries (no fatalities)

They went on to identify what actions, along with partners, are being taken to address and reduce these statistics including:-

- Home Fire Safety Checks, particularly to those most at risk utilising partners through schemes such as the Handy Van Scheme and 1<sup>st</sup> Contact Scheme
- Holding RTC intervention to address nuisance drivers and educate young (and not so young) drivers in partnership with the Derby and Derbyshire Road Safety Partnership
- 'Clean-Up' – a joint venture to tackle illegal fly-tipping and the subsequent deliberate fires, with local councils, country rangers, street cleansing, Safer Neighbourhood Teams and Anti Social Behaviour officers
- Operating the 'Firesafe' Scheme to intervene with young people who are fire-setting or have been convicted of arson offences, in partnership with the Youth Offending Services and our local communities
- Setting up an efficient and effective communication link to share intelligence with our safety partners and identify and intervene with emerging trends
- Dark Smoke – an operation to reduce anti social fires by both domestic and commercial occupants with environmental health units of local councils
- Schemes for young people on the 'fringe' of anti-social behaviour and teaching them discipline, teamwork and a sense of self-value that many have not experienced before, this is called the Youth Engagement Scheme (YES scheme)
- Opportunity for young people to continue further training with the Fire Service by joining the Cadets which are now forming at a number of fire stations

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

- Councillor Jacque Bevan asked if RTCs often involved visitors to the area because they were unfamiliar with roads and hence more likely to have an accident. Chief Inspector Hargreaves stated that anecdotally many incidents involved motor cycles, but statistics were not collated based on where the driver lived.
- A member of the public asked why the road is closed for so long following an RTC. He appreciated that evidence had to be gathered and the road cleared, but cited a recent example of the road being shut for 5 or 6 hours which he felt might create frustration and a risk of further incidents. Chief Inspector Hargreaves appreciated the point of view being expressed, but highlighted that each RTC that resulted in a fatality has to be treated as manslaughter. Respect must be shown and there is a duty to the victim's family, it is essential that as much evidence as possible is gathered. The member of the public went on to ask if the risk of further accidents was taken into account. There are recognised diversions in place for main routes (eg M1) advised Chief Inspector Hargreaves. He appreciated the points raised and assured that, through partnership working, every effort was made to ensure the smooth operation of the highways.
- In response to a query from Councillor Twigg, Steve Helps advised that fly tipping should still be reported to the District Council, but through a co-ordinated multi agency approach, it was hoped to reduce the risk of further damage eg if rubbish is set on fire.
- Dave Teare commented on the effective partnership working and bridging the generation gap which was clearly demonstrated at the recent Liberation Day.
- Mr Cottingham had been impressed with the presentation and the work being done by the Fire & Rescue Service.

## DERBYSHIRE CONSTABULARY

The presentation 'Policing High Peak and the Derbyshire Dales – Confidence and Satisfaction – a new way of doing business in partnership' highlighted B Division activities in 2008 including:-

- A divisional review reducing six sections to three
- Changes of roles to enable reactive Inspectors
- More Safer Neighbourhood Sergeants aligned to partner and community needs
- Provision of specialist resources for tackling domestic violence / drugs supply
- Changes in performance monitoring with emphasis on customer feedback

With partners, B Division had continued to deliver an effective service and highlighted these statistics:-

- Crime down a further 6.9% in 2008/9
- Crime down 23.1% since 2002/3
- Less than one domestic burglary per day across 517 square miles
- 82.1 % of victims of crime surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied

Chief Inspector Hargreaves emphasised that 'B Division remains a safe place to live'. He went on to talk about how policing is changing through the introduction of a new performance indicator, "% of people who agree that the police and local councils are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in their area". B Division had also signed up to the National Policing Pledge in December 2008. In terms of customer satisfaction, stretching, but achievable standards had been set.

A high quality policing service to everyone in Derbyshire would be delivered, through five force values for all staff (Integrity, Respect, Performance, Responsibility and Innovation) and a divisional plan aimed at increasing public confidence:-

1. In partnership we will deliver neighbourhood policing that is responsive to local needs and priorities
2. With partners we will reduce public perception of crime and ASB
3. We will treat people fairly and with respect
4. We will provide a high quality of service to those who report a crime or who require our service

The presentation concluded with what this would mean in terms of what people would see:-

- By better interaction with all our communities
- By allowing officers more discretion to deal with crime
- Appointments for the reporting of less urgent matters
- Keeping people informed in a way / time that suits them
- Maintain confidence by ensuring low levels of crime
- Make best use of technology to keep officers on visible patrol and by seeking feedback from the community

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

- Revd Tony Kaunhoven commented that when an incident is reported, it sometimes takes a while before an officer visits the victim. Chief Inspector Hargreaves was pleased to advise that the new ways of working would result in a quicker response and alternative ways of taking details were possible, for example over the phone and in future hopefully by text.

## **PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

John Lomas began the presentation by highlighting that the Peak District National Park Authority, along with significant help from external funding, had previously invested in programmes to promote sustainable businesses and communities.

In April, a three year programme (until 31 March 2012) had been launched, 'Live & Work Rural' which has two main complementary strands, business and community development. The programme draws on experience from previous business and community support initiatives, but also reflects the changing regional, local advice & support scenes and provides specialist environmental support for business ideas.

The main activity of the 'Live & Work Rural' programme is to nurture new business and community enterprise ideas, guide them through to mainstream solutions and identify environmental solutions. The programme seeks to complement the work of others such as the Peak District LEADER Programmes and works in partnership with others including District Councils, the University of Derby, Natural England, the Destination Management Partnership and Peak Partners for Rural Action.

John detailed the 'Live & Work Rural' business and community strands and how to find out more about grants and support available.

## **QUESTION TIME**

Paul Jameson briefly introduced Derbyshire County Council's current consultation on minerals and waste planning. He drew attention to the 'Notes and Queries' paper which invited comments about what the minerals and / or waste plans should contain.

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

### **Drains and gullies**

- Peter Watts raised concerns about the apparent reduction in drain and gully cleaning. Many were not taking water and some were even discharging it. Money needed to be invested now or it would cost more in the long term. David Wheatcroft agreed that there appeared to be a reduction in the frequency of drain cleaning. An increase in traffic also exacerbates the situation. Recent floods have been experienced in the Dales in various locations and due to differing causes. Land management is another factor to be taken into account.
- Dave Teare believed that many of the gully cleaning operatives were unaware of where the gullies were situated as no plans were in existence in some cases.
- Mr Watts went on to ask if there were any emergency response plans in place to deal with reservoir collapses to which David Wheatcroft responded that Derbyshire County Council's Emergency Planning Section were preparing a plan which takes account of dam collapse.

- Chris Cartledge asked who was responsible for tributaries to which David Wheatcroft advised that several agencies and / or land owners may have a responsibility hence a collaborative approach is required.

### **Derbyshire County Council Matters**

- Henry Folkard made a plea to the County Council for improvements to rural highways, both classified and unclassified.
- Dave Teare raised the matter of overgrown vegetation around road junctions etc and had reported the extent of the growth to Derbyshire County Council. Councillor Twigg had also been discussing flail mowing with the County Council who advised that it would be carried out in about a month's time to accommodate bird nesting. She was due to look at some of the problem areas with a County Council officer.

### **Forum format**

- Dave Teare commented on the quality of the Forum and questioned how more people could be attracted to attend. Pat Lunn felt that the Forums were well advertised. A member of the public suggested that a very controversial subject matter may attract more people.

### **Police Matters**

- Councillor McCloy acknowledged the high quality service provided by the police. However, police premises had been promised for Youlgrave, but had yet to come to fruition despite suitable premises being found and planning permission obtained. Chief Inspector Hargreaves appreciated that an opportunity had been missed. Inspector Hall added that there had been a lack of communication, but it is hoped to find some other suitable premises in Youlgrave to act as a base for Stanton, Winster and Hartington. Councillor McCloy commented that this sort of incident undermines the good work carried out by the PCSO.
- Councillor Bevan was amazed to see how geographically large B Division's area is and the Division also has to cope with the additional task of dealing with the huge influx of visitors to the area. Inspector Hall advised that things were working extremely well since restructuring of the Division. There were now 53 response staff – 80 staff in total (including PCSOs). Inspector Hall is now based at Matlock and can concentrate his time on the Derbyshire Dales. Weekly tasking team meetings enable quick identification of patterns of crime and allow resources to be targeted where most needed. There had been a 40% decrease in criminal damage. This 'joined up' approach may be leaner, but it is smarter.
- Dave Teare spoke, in his capacity as a PCSO, about the good partnership working between the police, fire and ambulance services.

### **Fire & Rescue Matters**

- Leonard Twigg asked if the Fire & Rescue Service experienced, what he described as, 'yobbish' behaviour, to which Gary Platts responded occasionally, but extreme behaviour, such as stones or bottles being thrown, is rare.

- Henry Folkard asked if fires were caused by irresponsible behaviour of people camping. Gary Platts commented that this could be a seasonal problem, but through the Fire Operations Group (FOG) an effective moorlands response plan was in place. The Fire & Rescue Service continued their endeavours to educate people about this problem. John Lomas added that the good weather does encourage outdoor parties and that the Peak Park Rangers will intervene where necessary to prevent things from getting out of hand.

A DVD of the Fire & Rescue Service's 'Youth Engagement Scheme' (YES) rounded off the evening.

## **CONCLUSION AND THANKS**

Councillor Twigg thanked everyone for their participation.

Meeting closed at 9.05 pm