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NORTHERN AREA COMMUNITY FORUM

Notes of the Forum held on 3 March 2008 at 7.00pm at the Agricultural Business Centre, Bakewell

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PRESENT

Derbyshire Dales District Council

Councillor Judith Twigg (in the Chair)

Councillors Cate Hunt, Mike Longden, Geoff Stevens and Carol Walker

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

Derbyshire County Council

Neil Hickman (Area Network Manager – North West), Dave Wood (Assistant Public Transport Manager), James Adams (Local Area Liaison Officer – Highways), Kay McIntyre (Democratic Services Officer)

Derbyshire Constabulary

Chief Inspector Dick Hargreaves, Sergeant Martin Mullis, Inspector Bryan Hall, Partnership Sergeant Dave Parker, PCSO Dave Teare and PC Sandra Wetton

Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service

Ian Copstick (Area Commander)

Peak District National Park Authority

Richard Campen (Director of Operations) and Andy Farmer (Area Team Manager)

Members of the Public

Martin Beer (Hucklow Parish Council), Diane Hawksworth, Professor Crook, Jenny Crook, Pamela Russell (Bakewell Town Council), Peter Cauldwell (Bakewell Community Interest Group), Tom Pilkington (First Matlock Boys Brigade/Matlock Hospital League of Friends/First Taste/Darley Dale Tennis Club), Frank Mason (Winster), Nancy Lane, David Lane, Ian Daniel (Bradwell), Peter Watts (Bakewell), Kath Potter (Rowsley Parish Council), John Neville-Hart (Rowsley Parish Council), Colin Groves (Baslow Residents Association), David Walker (Bakewell resident), Roger Heaney (Calver Parish Council), Marie Peters, G & M Dobinson (local residents), Pat Lunn, Janet Bailey (Bakewell Show and Birchover) and Leonard Twigg (Bakewell Resident) (23 in total)

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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

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

SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

Chief Inspector Dick Hargreaves and Sergeant Martin Mullis gave a presentation on Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs). They explained that SNTs are comprised of Police Officers, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), residents and partner agencies who work together to identify issues in the local area and form solutions.

Partners include Pub Watch, Shop Watch, Neighbourhood Watches, local Councillors, the Youth Service, Age Concern, Environmental Health and Housing, residents, the Fire Service, the local District Council, community interest groups and, most importantly, local people. They highlighted some of their recent successes and also outlined current priorities.

PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Andy Farmer gave an outline of the newly reorganised area team, emphasising that it was customer focussed and outward looking and that partnership working would be embraced.

NEW NATIONAL TRAVEL SCHEME

Phil Colledge outlined the new National Travel Scheme which would take effect from 1 April 2008 and would entitle residents in England that are aged 60 or over, or eligible disabled, to enjoy free off peak travel (9.30 am until 11.00 pm Monday to Friday and all day weekends and Bank holidays) on local buses anywhere in England. He gave further details of the scheme and advice on how to get a pass.

Additional benefits for local pass holders also included the Gold Card which entitles the holder to discounts (usually around 10%) in local shops, restaurants and services and also acted as a library card.

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

- In response to a question from a member of the public, Phil confirmed that the new scheme would not include half price rail fare. The benefits that had previously been enjoyed were part of the Derbyshire scheme which was now being superseded by the new national scheme.
- David Walker asked how many of the buses were accessible for wheelchair users, to which Dave Wood replied approximately 10 – 15% at the present time, although a review was currently under way with the aim of all buses being accessible for wheelchair users in the future. Mr Walker went on to enquire where people could get discounts in Bakewell using a Gold card. Dave advised that details were available in the publicity on display.

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FEEDBACK ON DISTRICT COUNCIL BUDGET SETTING

Phil Colledge gave an update, following the presentation made to the Forums in November 2007, on how the Council is striving to develop a sustainable financial plan. He advised that for the 2008/09 budget, focus would be placed on top priority services where possible. The District Council's newly identified corporate priorities were:-

- Affordable decent housing
- Safe communities
- Street scene
- Active healthy communities

Council tax was due to rise by 4.9% which equated to an average council tax of £3.41 per week, per household.

Details were also given of the 2008 / 09 proposals for the other precepting authorities (Derbyshire County Council, Derbyshire Police Authority, Derbyshire Fire and Rescue and Town / Parish Council.

Phil concluded by advising that the District Council must still continue to identify savings to the tune of £0.5 million.

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

- In response to a query from a member of the public, Phil confirmed that the District Council is to reduce its contribution to Hathersage Parish Council (towards the running costs of the swimming pool), by £8,000. However, this will be offset by £10,000 funding from Derby County Primary Care Trust, which had been secured through working in partnership with High Peak Borough Council. High Peak Borough Council were also to make an additional £2,000 contribution on the proviso that season tickets were the same price for residents of both districts. Hathersage and Outseats Parish Councils had also agreed to subsidise the cost of season tickets for residents in their parishes.
- Dave Teare commented on the recently secured in-house street-cleansing contract which would commence in a few weeks time and asked whether a difference in service level would be noticeable. Phil replied that the service should be a better one with more mechanical sweeping planned, town centres to be cleaned every day and an increase in the frequency of cleaning in the villages.
- In response to a query from Nancy Lane, Phil confirmed that the £3.41 per householder per week was for ALL District Council services.
- David Walker asked if the £1.2 million proceeds from the sales of the depot and Bath Street offices in Bakewell would be ploughed back into Bakewell. The proceeds had been added to the Council's capital programme, Phil advised, some of which would be used for projects in Bakewell including a new play area and work to the car park and drains at the Agricultural Business Centre.

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QUESTION TIME

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

Drains and gullies

- Peter Watts expressed concerns with the frequency of road cleaning which had contributed to one third to a half of the gullies being blocked. The situation with drains and gullies in Bakewell was becoming progressively worse and debris such as trees in rivers was also a concern. James Adams advised that the drains and gullies were cleaned on a regular basis, but the weather over the last couple of years had been particularly bad. Neil Hickman also stressed that the drains should be regularly cleaned and agreed that gully blockages over the last couple of years had increased, which was partly to do with the weather. Neil advised that better working between street cleansing and gully emptying was being sought and gave his assurance that gullies requiring attention would be looked at.
- Peter Watts also expressed concerns for the local habitat and wildlife.
- David Walker asked if problems caused by trees in rivers would be addressed. David Wheatcroft pointed out that this was neither a County nor District Council responsibility, but that of the Environment Agency. The District Council regularly contacted the Environment Agency about debris in rivers, which causes problems particularly collecting under bridges. Regular unseasonable weather was a problem and the Environment Agency were prioritising in a way that was not advantageous to the District Council. They tended to be reactive rather than proactive and this was focussed mainly where larger problems were.
- Hugh Wright expressed concerns about excess surface water and questioned the need for soakaways.
- Mrs Lunn was aware, through her work in developing a Town Plan for Bakewell, that blocked gullies was a great concern to local residents and at a recent event someone had reported that over 20 drains on one road were blocked.

Police Matters

- Kath Potter presented comments and questions which she wished to be passed to the Chief Constable in connection with the possibility of police officers being trained in different forms of law such as Sharia law.
- Inspector Hargreaves urged people to register with Key Individual Networks (KINs) if they are key community people or involved in groups such as Neighbourhood Watch. People do have to 'sign up' to the list as it is subject to the Data Protection Act. Janet Bailey felt that there was a general lack of awareness about KINs and that more media coverage was necessary.
- It was noted that the government is now starting to collect data on customer

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Potholes

- Ian Daniel asked how quickly potholes should be filled in once they are reported. James Adams advised that remedial work should be carried out within 48 hours and urged members of the public to report problems.

Speed Restrictions

- Peter Cauldwell applauded officers involved in the decision to introduce a 30 mph restriction on Baslow Road on the approach into Bakewell, but would have liked to have seen a 20 mph limit applied through the town. He felt that this would result in slow gradual traffic movement through the town and increase pedestrian safety. James Adams said that a 20 mph limit was not possible through Bakewell as the main roads(A6 and A619) were strategic national roads and national guidance did not allow such reductions.
- Mrs Hawksworth expressed concerns with traffic speed on Balsow Road and reduced visibility for pedestrians due to parked vehicles. Inspector Hall advised that, in the past, the speed safety team had looked at traffic speeds on Buxton Road, but gave assurance that he would give further attention to the matter by sending an officer equipped with a 'speed gun' to work with Mrs Hawksworth to address speeding issues.
- PC Wetton added that she was aware that the school was trying to develop a school travel plan, which included addressing issues such as speed and pedestrian visibility. Their research had included a speed survey, which had revealed that most of the vehicles were travelling well within the speed limit.
- David Walker felt that most drivers are considerate and apply common sense, but he has had cause to report (10 times over the last 3 years) parking on single yellow lines on Mill Street, which reduces visibility.
- James Adams advised that because the road is a strategic 'A' road, speed limits cannot be reduced nor a pedestrian crossing installed as this would reduce the pavement width. James added that the District and County Councils would be taking over car parking enforcement under the De-Criminalisation of Parking regulations and this would result in an increase in parking attendants. Inspector Hargreaves explained that because parking enforcement would be transferring to local authorities from the police, traffic wardens were being re-deployed and hence there were, during this transitional time, fewer enforcement officers.
- James concluded that all parking restrictions were currently being reviewed prior to new regulations being introduced.

Housing

- Kath Potter asked how many Dales Housing properties were currently empty. David Wheatcroft explained that the figure is approximately 40, although this has been recently temporarily inflated due to some of the properties being refurbished.

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Peak District National Park / Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Matters

- In response to a query from Leonard Twigg, it was confirmed that there had been a couple of recent incidents of fires in the Peak District. These were as a result of dry conditions and were quickly brought under control.

Meeting in Bakewell

- Pat Lunn advised of a meeting of the Bakewell Town Plan on 14 March which would focus on 'Is Bakewell Pedestrian friendly?'

CONCLUSION AND THANKS

Councillor Twigg thanked everyone for their participation.

Meeting closed 8.40 pm

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