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NORTHERN AREA COMMUNITY FORUM

Notes of the Forum held on 4 July 2007 at 7.00pm at the Ashford War Memorial Institute

PRESENT

Derbyshire Dales District Council

Councillor Judith Twigg (in the Chair)

Councillors James Bentley, David Chapman, Tracy Critchlow, Janet Goodison, Cate Hunt, Andrew Lewer, Simon Spencer and Carol Walker

Dave Brooks (Head of Planning and Development Services), Peter Corke (Consultation and Community Planning Officer), Simon Beynon (Housing Strategy Officer) 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 Margaret Calladine (Democratic Services Officer)

Derbyshire Constabulary

Chief Superintendent Roger Flint, Inspector Bryan Hall and Sergeant Stephen Hughes

Peak District National Park Authority

Richard Campen (Director of Operations)

Members of the Public

N Moulden (DDCVS), L Twigg (Bakewell Resident), D Windle (Ashford Parish Council), Amy Gibbs (Gender Twist Within), Roger Lownsbrough (Bakewell Chamber of Trade), Roger Taylor (Bakwell Chamber of Trade), Barbara Taylor (Eyam Parish Council), Mr & Mrs Bisgrove, Sarah Brocklehurst, Sheila Bettney, Peter Couldwell, Henry Folkard, David Goodlad (Bakewell Chamber of Trade), Carolyn Fisher (Bakewell Chamber of Trade), Richard Young (Bakewell Chamber of Trade), Martin Beer (Parish Councillor The Hucklows), Di Hawksworth (Pitstop), Jane Holland (Janes) and Marian Wright.
Total - 20

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Councillor Judith Twigg welcomed everyone to the Forum and encouraged their participation.

HOME OPTIONS – THE COUNCILS CHOICE BASED LETTING SYSTEM

Simon Beynon gave a presentation on Home Options, the District Councils new choice based lettings system. He emphasised the need for affordable local homes for local people and defined it as a letting service that exhibits the following : -

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

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

Step 1 – Membership

Step 2 – Registrations

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.

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

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

Home Options

- In response to a question from Amy Gibbs, Simon advised that an individual's housing priority band is allocated from within the system and then checked by an officer from the nominating authority. The system is based on an allocations policy that was widely consulted upon prior to its implementation. Amy felt that there was some discrimination within the system particularly in respect of minority groups, but Councillor Spencer gave his assurance that this was not the case and re-iterated that applications were processed through the system, based on the allocations policy. Councillor Twigg urged Amy to speak with a relevant officer if she had a particular issue and Simon gave his assurance that procedures are adhered to, but Amy could pursue the Council's complaints procedure if she felt this was not the case.
- Roger Taylor cited the case of two of his employees who lived in a one bedroom flat in Bakewell with their young daughter and, despite being on the housing

waiting list for nine years, had been unable to secure suitable accommodation. He questioned where were Bakewell's work force supposed to live?

- Simon acknowledged that there was a shortfall in housing across the Dales' area and Cllr Spencer added that the Council were dedicated to providing more affordable housing.
- Councillor Goodison, in her capacity as Chair of Dales Housing, applauded the Council's Home Options choice based letting system, which allowed local people to look at what local properties are available and consider their options. In terms of providing more affordable housing in the Dales, restrictions and clauses are being placed on new houses to ensure that they are retained for local people and with the help of the Housing Co-operation, it is hoped to build more affordable housing in the area.
- Dave Brooks added the District Council's Local Plan policies in relation to affordable housing were assisting in its provision. For example, if a development had more than 15 units, the Council had set the target that at least 45% of those units should be affordable housing or alternatively a financial contribution would be expected to the Council for use in the provision of affordable housing elsewhere.
- Dave Brooks also referred to a recent Housing Needs Survey, commissioned jointly by Derbyshire Dales D C, High Peak B C and Staffordshire Moorlands D C. The Survey had confirmed the need for the provision of more affordable housing and had also considered key workers in relation to the local economy, in addition to those normally identified by Central Government. The results of the survey were very useful and would be employed by all the Local Authorities involved as part of the evidence base for their new Local Development Frameworks that would replace their present Local Plans. Roger Taylor was keen to know who had been consulted and hoped that local traders had been included. Dave Brooks confirmed that the Survey had included stakeholder workshops and other means of consultation that ensured that local views were taken account of.

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 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:-

- Despite figures demonstrating general satisfaction with parking across the district, Roger Lownsborough felt that these sentiments were not echoed in Bakewell where

parking was a problem. Peter noted Roger's views and undertook to provide him with the individual survey figures for Bakewell.

- In response to a further question from Roger regarding circulation of the Citizens Panel surveys, Peter replied that they were not sent to businesses, but some panel members may be from the business community.
- Amy Gibbs, commented, that whilst recent consultation had shown that a high percentage of people felt safe, in reality this was not always the case and some sectors of the trans community felt unsafe and vulnerable. Amy had arranged to meet with the police who were more than happy to discuss this matter.
- Mrs Wright commented that a Citizens Panel of 1,000 from a population of over 69,000 was hardly representative. Mr Windle asked about the view of the other 68,000 residents. Peter gave his assurance that the Panel was representative, membership was regularly refreshed and there was a reserve bank of panel members. All Councils now had such a panel, based on a similar formula. Information presented was based on statistical analysis.
- Dave Brooks added that the Panel was not the only means of consultation employed by the Council, with specific and targeted consultation being followed when a particular project was pursued, he gave the on-going consultation on the Matlock Town Centre Masterplan as an example

HOMLESSNESS

Simon gave a presentation on Homelessness and how it was being tackled and prevented in the Derbyshire Dales area. He also advised what the District Council were committed to providing affordable housing which had included attracting £20 million towards housing between 2002 and 2008. This had enabled the provision of almost 400 new homes. In addition since 2004, 90 empty homes had been brought back into use and 325 homes improved. The presentation is attached to these notes.

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

- In response to a comment from Amy Gibbs about government legislation being 'all well and good' provided that it is followed, Simon highlighted the Council's excellent track record. He added that procedures were in place, which were open to review and challenge. The Council has legal obligations and has only once ever had a County Court case.

QUESTION TIME

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

- Roger Lownsborough asked why there was a limit of 2000 parking spaces in Bakewell to which Dave Brooks replied that this was the amount agreed with the planning authority (the Peak District National Park Authority) at the time of the Bakewell Project development. The parking comprised of both on and off street parking and included approximately 603 District Council spaces and the rest were

on street or private (Smith's Island). The number of available spaces may vary as some are overflow and only used at certain times.

- Roger highlighted that for about 80 days of the year, there is no hard standing parking spaces due to them being used for markets or Bakewell Show. He emphasised the importance of signage.
- Dave advised of works underway to try and reinforce some of the grass parking at the Agricultural Business Centre and possibly extend the parking areas. Roger Lownsbrough asked if these would be accessible via Coombes Road to which Dave Brooks replied only in severe weather. Appropriate signage would be put in place.
- Sarah Brocklehurst had spent over 25 years working in Critchlows butchers in Bakewell and had seen the demise of local people coming into the town because they were unable to park. She suggested that visitors may be more inclined to park at the Agricultural Business Centre if it was clearly signed to indicate its proximity to the town centre (5 minutes walk) because the perception was that it was a fair distance from the town centre. Dave Brooks would look into some such signs in consultation with Derbyshire County Council. If placing signs on the highway was not acceptable to DCC, then consideration could possibly be given to placing them within the site.
- In response to query from Roger Taylor about yellow lines being placed in Water Street and Water Lane one day and then being removed the next, Neil Hickman admitted that regrettably this had been a mistake due to a breakdown in communication. He apologised that the re-instatement of the road was taking a while which was due to the weakening of the surface, but gave his assurance that it was not dangerous. In response to concerns raised, Neil gave his assurance that he would give a higher priority to the work and liaise with the Town Council and Peak District National Park Authority on alternative surfaces.
- The Bakewell Chamber of Trade had recently re-established because local traders were concerned about the lack of footfall in the town. Roger Young asked if there was anyone from the authorities that the Chamber could discuss their concerns with. Councillor Spencer noted the Chamber's concerns, acknowledging that reduced footfall could sometimes be associated with transport and parking issues. Parking was an issue of concern right across the district, but in Bakewell, there was the added impact of Peak Park policies. The District Council took on board the Chamber's comments and valued their contribution. Officers would be willing to meet with the Chamber and Dave Brooks and Neil Hickman undertook to follow this up.
- Sarah Brocklehurst highlighted problems caused by the bus drop off / pick up point on Bridge Street, opposite Critchlows butchers. Coach engines were running for up to twenty minutes at a time whilst dropping off / picking up. The road was very narrow and disabled vehicles parked in the lay by often exacerbated the situation and made it very narrow for lorries to pass. A member of the public cited an incident the previous Monday where the road had been blocked for 20 minutes due to a parked disabled vehicle and coach. Sarah asked why had the point been moved from by the Royal Bank of Scotland. Neil advised that the area by the

Royal Bank of Scotland is for service buses and there is no spare space for coaches. Dave Brooks suggested that this could be one of the issues discussed when the meeting took place with the Bakewell Chamber of Trade as coach parking was also an issue at the ABC.

- Another issue to be taken up at the meeting with the relevant parties would be excessive vehicle speed on Buxton Road and its use by HGVs, a concern expressed by Di Hawksworth.
- Mr Windle asked why Peak District National Park Authority had an involvement with parking issues and are the police still the enforcement authority? Dave Brooks advised that the Peak District National Park Authority were the planning authority and as such must consider Planning Applications for any new car parks or new car parks associated with new development, as had been the case at the ABC. In addressing Mr Windle's point about enforcement, Chief Superintendent Flint advised that enforcement was soon to be passed over to the local authorities and consequently, the police were not recruiting any more traffic wardens. Only one now remained in the section, but specific issues or hotspots would still be addressed.
- Marion Wright asked how the new system would work, would companies tender for the work and then have to work on the basis of issuing a certain number of tickets in order to make the scheme viable as appeared to be happening in some pilot areas in the south of the country. Dave Brooks said he was aware of such problems in some London Boroughs, but efforts were being made not to repeat these. He believed it to be a fine balance, enforcement must be carried out, but without appearing over zealous. Councillor Spencer added that this was another example of legislation being dropped on local authorities by the government with little notice.
- In response to a question from Jane Holland about the dirty and unpleasant state of the public toilets in Bakewell, Councillor Lewer advised that toilets were a concern across the district. The Council was looking at the wider picture and detailed reports on the Council's 34 toilet blocks were being prepared with recommendations to tackle issues, but at the same time having to take account of the Council's current severe financial constraints. Specific operational issues would be addressed when brought to the Council's attention.
- Councillor Walker supported the views expressed regarding coach drop off points, congestion and speed and offered her assistance to the Chamber of Trade in her capacity as a District Councillor and Mayor of Bakewell.
- In response to a question from Jane Holland, Councillor Spencer was not sure whether market traders would be reimbursed for rent for the cancellation of the market due to bad weather on 25 June, but he undertook to find out.
- Dave Brooks would provide a fuller answer to Roger Taylor regarding future funding for the extension of the CCTV camera scheme for when he met with the Chamber of Trade.
- Di Hawksworth commented on what a good system she found Ringmaster to be.

- Roger Lownsborough advised that the next meeting of the Bakewell Chamber of Trade would be held on 10 July at 6 pm in the meeting room at the Co-Op store. In response to a question from Amy Gibbs, he replied that anyone was welcome to attend, but the primary focus was on trade and business in Bakewell.

CONCLUSION AND THANKS

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

Meeting closed 9.15 pm