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SOUTHERN AREA COMMUNITY FORUM

Notes of the Forum held on 27 July 2009 at 7.00pm at St Oswalds Church Hall, Ashbourne

PRESENT

Derbyshire Dales District Council

Councillor Andrew Lewer (in the Chair)

Councillors Ian Bates, Steve Bull, Albert Catt, Lewis Rose (OBE), Simon Spencer and Carol Valentine.

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

Mid Derbyshire Citizens Advice Bureau

Emma Hagger (Bureau Director)

Peak District National Park Authority

John Lomas (Director of Strategy and Development)

Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service

Gary Platts (Station Manager)

Derbyshire County Council

Kay Riley (Assistant County Secretary), Paul Walton (Traveller Liaison Officer) and Paul Jameson (Local Area Forum Liaison Officer)

Derbyshire County Primary Care Trust

Mark Armstrong-Read (Project Manager)

Derbyshire Constabulary

Superintendent Paul Rouse, Inspector Bryan Hall and Sergeant Steve Edwards

Police Authority

Carole Brister

Ashbourne News Telegraph

Gareth Butterfield

Members of the Public

Kevin Fradley (Ashbourne Community Transport), Richard Stone, Margaret Ford (Walton Crescent, Ashbourne), C Lewer (Snelston), B & B A Caldicott, Christine Price (Ashbourne & District 50 + Forum and resident), A J Mumby, A & D Cooke

(Community & 50 + Forum), Sue Corney (Clifton Road resident), Phil Brooks (Clifton Road resident), F B Potts (Hulland Ward parish), Tim Sadler (Coachmans, LETS), Geof Cole, Stephanie Cole, D G Stoakes, Cllr Denise Brown (Ashbourne Town Council), Cllr Caroline Cooper (Ashbourne Town Council), Guy Hall (Sudbury Parish Council), Cllr G Jackson (Longford P C), Tony Smith (Sudbury P C), A R Wilkes (QEGS), plus six others (29 in total)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Councillor Andrew Lewer introduced Members and officers from the participating authorities and welcomed everyone to the Forum.

INITIATIVES TO COMBAT THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE AND ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

Emma Hagger gave a brief history of the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) which was set up at the outbreak of World War 2 and was consequently celebrating its 70th anniversary this year. There had been a CAB presence in Derbyshire Dales since 1967 with the Mid Derbyshire Bureau being amongst the top 10% of bureaux nationally.

Emma outlined services available which 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.

The CAB welcomed additional resources from the District Council which would enable the debt advice service to be expanded and reduce waiting time. A specialist debt adviser is working within the district focussing on priority cases, concentrating on people facing problems with housing debt.

The CAB is also working with those with lesser priority debts and helping people better manage their finances. An information pack, 'Top Tips for Managing Your Finances' would be available in August, followed by packs on 'Understanding Bank Accounts' and 'Understanding Financial Products' at a later stage.

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

- In response to a question from a member of the public, Emma advised that the telephone helpline was open 9 am – 6.30 pm Monday to Friday – 08447 010101. There was also an office in Ashbourne at Cornerstones and services available at the Clifton Road GP Surgery. Emma also signposted to the Bureau's advice leaflet which provided further information.

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.
- The District Council continues to lobby central government about business rates.
- Funding of £2.2 million from the LEADER project had been secured which would benefit businesses in the area. John Lomas added that he had just left a meeting where 2 projects in Ashbourne had been approved for funding from the LEADER programme.

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.

DERBYSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE

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

- 3 deliberate primary fires
- 7 deliberate secondary fires
- 5 accidental dwelling fires
- 19 Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) involving 29 serious injuries 3 fatalities

Gary Platts 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 1st 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 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, called the Youth Engagement Scheme (YES)
- 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:-

- Gary confirmed to a member of the public that the statistics are based on what is known. It is possible that some incidents go unreported.
- Councillor Lewer had recently attended a presentation at Ashbourne Fire Station which included a simulated exercise of the aftermath of a RTC. Two teenage girls were subjected to what would happen if they had been involved in RTC including being cut out of a car. The exercise was part of their Duke of Edinburgh award and served as an invaluable means of getting the message across as their experiences were shared with their peers.
- Christine Price asked how often the Fire & Rescue Service runs out their programmes to talk to youngsters. Gary advised that talks are given to years 2 and 6 and older youngsters, although he would like to see a regular programme for all ages as it is important to get the message across at an early age.

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

Superintendent Rouse 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:-

- A member of the public highlighted forthcoming local events including Bakewell Show in early August, followed by the Ashbourne Show and believed police presence at the former was being reduced from 33 to 6 and that additional resources would cost in the region of £50 per hour. Superintendent Rouse talked of ways in which 'policing' such events can be approached in a different way, such as the employment of stewards to 'police'. The police had to work in this way to ensure that appropriate resources are available to react to incidents such as burglaries or RTCs. He compared the approach as similar to one adopted for football matches. The member of the public went on to question if 6 officers would be able to control the Bakewell Show event and associated traffic to which Superintendent Rouse responded yes with the support of stewards and PCSOs.
- A member of the public raised concerns about local young people climbing over walls and causing damage to private property and urged for everyone to work together to prevent such behaviour and create positive diversionary activities. The headteacher of the local Queen Elizabeth Grammar School reported that, in the past, if called to deal with specific incidents involving his pupils he had done so. If the youngsters in question were QEGS pupils, the headteacher asked that this please be reported to him to take appropriate action.
- Councillor Bates raised concerns about the new Derby Road becoming a 'race track'. Superintendent Rouse acknowledged a possible enforcement issue, but also highlighted the need to educate and raise awareness about speed limits. Gary Platts urged that concerns about vehicle speeds and anti social driving should be directed to the Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT). Superintendent Rouse concluded, that through partnership working, wider issues needed to be addressed and that key roads are targeted.
- Sergeant Edwards talked about Operation Travolta to target nuisance vehicle behaviour. He had been on duty in Ashbourne on the previous Saturday (25 July) which had resulted in a number of penalties being issued.
- Inspector Hall added that nuisance driving continued to be addressed through initiatives such as mosquito devices which are aimed at younger drivers.

QUESTION TIME

Questions and comments were then put to the various participating authorities and issues raised were:-

- A member of the public expressed concern about travellers in the Doveridge area. Councillor Catt added that there had been two groups of travellers in Doveridge which was in addition to two groups which had been in Sudbury, making a total of four incidents in a three week period. He asked what action was being taken? Kay Riley explained that there was an agreed protocol between the partners involved, who work closely together. She was aware of distress that could be caused. Derbyshire County Council had not been able to take action because the recent settlements had been on private land. The County Council are only able to take action if the travellers settle on public highway or county council land, but will nevertheless provide advice to other landowners. Paul Walton outlined the legal procedure which must be followed and the various factors that had to be taken into

account. Several agencies were involved and, sometimes, there are difficulties in identifying the land owner. The County Council has no power over private land, only their own or public highways. Measures were being taken to look at preventing re-occupation of land in the area.

- In response to concerns raised about fly tipping, Paul advised that a witness statement needs to be given in order to take proceedings.
- Kay concluded that the County Council had been successful in recent years in dealing with travellers. Five years ago there were fifty encampments in the county, compared to just thirteen this year. She emphasised the procedure to be followed to move travellers on. Nine times out of ten, the travellers move on voluntarily. The recent incident in Sudbury where the travellers had to be towed off was the first such incident in five years.
- Phil Brooks spoke on behalf of 85 local residents who were experiencing difficulties due to parked vehicles of people working at or visiting the new St Oswalds hospital site. He felt that there had been a poor response to letters sent to the PCT, Derbyshire County Council, Derbyshire Dales District Council, Ashbourne Town Council and the site contractors. Mr Brooks continued that parked vehicles were causing access and egress difficulties for local residents and had been an issue for several months. He sought assurances that something would be done about the situation and hoped that it would not continue when the new hospital opened. Mark Armstrong-Read had replied to letters sent to him and believed that the County Council and the contractors had also responded. The site was managed by the contractors, Laing O' Rourke, and would not be the responsibility of the PCT until it was handed over in September 2010. In the meantime, works to complete parking provision at the site had been brought forward to allow on site parking for the contractors. Other measures included encouraging the contractors' employees to car share and advising them to park considerately. He appreciated concerns raised, but the areas in question were not subject to parking restrictions.
- Sergeant Edwards added that the police had visited the areas in question and would deal with any obstructions of the pavement or highway. He believed that the contractors were co-operating.
- Other areas for parking were discussed and the possibility of a park and ride scheme.
- A member of the public frequently visited Ashbourne, but always had difficulty parking and questioned if the Council had any plans to increase car parking provision. David Wheatcroft advised that the District Council is always looking to identify suitable land for car parking. A multi storey car park has been considered, but was not viable. The Fishpond Meadow and some smaller parcels of land were possible sites. Difficulties with parking existed across the district, particularly in Bakewell. He also advised that the District Council had made some land temporarily available to the hospital developer to increase on site parking provision.
- A member of the public noted parking provision for 30 cars near the Shrovetide monument.
- Tim Salder raised concerns about the pavements in Ashbourne. Some loose stones had recently been replaced, but were a poor fit and consequently unsafe and their appearance not in keeping with a conservation area. He asked if these temporary replacements would be superseded by something more permanent in

the future. A large number of people in Ashbourne had volunteered to keep the area in front of their own premises litter free. Councillor Lewer explained that in the past, tarmac had been used for repairs and was unacceptable. In the short term, measures had had to be taken to prevent trip hazards, but in the medium and longer term, the environment must be protected and enhanced. Councillor Lewer had been talking to a paving specialist about a scheme for Ashbourne for which £40,000 had been secured. This would enable the roll out of a programme to sensitively reinstate and improve the town's pavements in keeping with its history and conservation status. Paul Jameson added that there was funding in this year's County Council programme for work to be carried out to the pavements on Church Street.

- A member of the public highlighted the quagmire like state of the 'picnic site' in the Henmore / Bancroft area and asked if anything could be done to improve it? David Wheatcroft noted a question of ownership over the land and believed that contractors had re-instated the land which may only be a temporary measure with more permanent work planned, probably in September. Councillor Bates believed that it had not been possible to drain the land for fear of causing a flood.
- Christine Price asked that land near the leisure centre be looked at as it required some attention.
- Kevin Fradley asked if there was any scope to amend / extend the Council's Concessionary Fares Scheme. He cited the example of East Staffordshire's scheme which allowed free travel all day. He also urged the Council to look at the East Riding scheme which includes an early bird pass for £15 which allowed greater flexibility. Because of the rural nature of the district, there was often a need to use public transport before the 9.30 am deadline. David Wheatcroft undertook to look at other councils' schemes, but any further discounts would depend on the cost implications which the Council would have to bear. Councils within Derbyshire operated a countywide scheme and had to collectively fund the £3.5 million shortfall. He hoped that in 2011, Derbyshire County Council would take over the scheme.
- A member of the public who was also a coach driver cited some difficulties he had experienced due to parked vehicles in a bay below Victoria Square. This had resulted in him having to drop off passengers on the road. He had been disappointed by the response of the Civil Parking Enforcement Officers whom he had spoken to. This was noted and the County Council undertook to look into the matter.

CONCLUSION AND THANKS

Councillor Lewer thanked everyone for their participation.

Meeting closed at 9.10pm