

## **Area Community Forums - Annual Report, May 2017**

### **Introduction by Councillor Lewis Rose, OBE, Leader of the Council**

The Forums continue to be important to us in reaching out to local people and listening to what they have to say. It's a great opportunity for local people to get involved and we would urge anyone who hasn't attended a Forum before to come along.

During 2016/17, Forums were held right across the district with host venues at Ashford in the Water, Bakewell, Darley Dale, Eyam, Hognaston, Hulland Ward, Parwich, South Darley and Wirksworth.

So far as the Forums themselves are concerned, we're always open to new ideas that could improve the format and style of what we do, which is why we factored in a brainstorm session in the Summer 2016 Forums to hear suggestions of how we can increase participation, as well as feedback on the subjects our residents really want to talk about. These sessions helped shape future Forum content and format such as workshop sessions and for the first time, Councillors delivered presentations on local issues and to give updates & feedback from previous Forums.

We were pleased to welcome colleagues from Derbyshire County Council and the Peak District National Park Authority as well as from partner organisations Rural Action Derbyshire and Derbyshire Dales Council for Voluntary Services.

We are always keen to get out and about to meet with local residents and hear what they have to say. We look forward to widening our audience for the 2017/18 Forums and particularly hope to attract some younger members of our communities.

Councillor Lewis Rose, OBE – Leader of the Council, May 2017

### **2016/2017 Summary**

Three rounds of Forums took place again, starting in July / August 2016.

Chairs and Vices of the Forums aided by other Councillors talked about the impact of the District Council's Local Projects Fund, showcasing some of the projects benefitted. Neil Moulden of Derbyshire Dales Council for Voluntary Services also gave information on other funding sources and advice on how to apply.

This session was particularly useful to Hognaston Parish Council who contacted us a few months later to let us know that 'As a consequence of information given at the last forum we were able as a village to access some grants to support our planned Christmas Tree Festival, including funding for an electric piano for the Village, and for electrical equipment. These will be used not just for the Festival but in future years. So for us, a very useful session!' Julia Jackson, Vice-Chair, Hognaston Parish Council.

Chief Executive, Dorcas Bunton gave a 'Good News' presentation highlighting some of the District Council's recent successes such as 92% satisfaction with our waste collection service, the District Council's support for events such as the Aviva Women's Tour of Britain and Eroica Britannia plus a record turnout for the EU Referendum of almost 82%, the highest turnout in Derbyshire.

To help improve the Forums and increase attendance, a workshop session, facilitated by Members and Officers, asked:-

1. In terms of the current format, style and location of the Forums, what's good and how would you improve it?
2. How can we increase attendance?
3. What issues do you want to hear more about?

At the Central Forum, Matlock Hospital League of Friends urged people to participate in the public consultation document 'Better Care Closer to Home – Have Your Say'.

The ever popular 'Question Time' session attracted questions on the Local Plan, housing development & infrastructure, partnership working, public conveniences, event management, Broadband provision, public & community transport and traffic management.

One attendee remarked on an 'excellent evening', whilst other comments included:-

- 'Welcome the informal format and approach'
- Will attend again, especially in the new form'.

At the October / November 2016 Forums, the District Council welcomed Emma Simpson of Rural Action Derbyshire who talked about her work and also the Community Oil Buying scheme.

'You Said, We Did' and 'Good News' sessions were introduced as requested from the previous Forums, Dorcas talked about how the District Council responded to requests from the public and also current good news stories including plaudits for achieving 'Value for Money', a successful fly tipping prosecution and the Hurst Farm Holiday Hunger initiative.

A budget game formed part of the 'Efficiency Plan and Savings' session, where attendees were invited to identify areas for savings plus a presentation on Waste & Recycling gave handy hints for managing waste over the festive season.

Issues for Question Time were around street cleansing, leisure facilities & sports development, provision for refugees and post office closures.

Again well received, feedback included:-

- My first time at one of these, very informative.
- Will attend again if reasonably local.
- I welcome the opportunity to have these discussions.

In February 2017, Dorcas repeated her successful 'Good News' presentation and Councillor Colin Swindell, Community Engagement Hub member representative, took up the baton to deliver 'You Said, We Did'.

The February round also featured an update on Council Tax & savings, revealing what the District Council's share of local Council Tax was likely to be from April 2017.

The busy agenda also included an update on the process to outsource the running of the District Council's four leisure centres as a package to a management operator. As a result of requests at previous Forums, Derbyshire County Council were invited to give a bus service update on public and community transport.

As well as questions and comments on the headline topics, other items for discussion were the waste collection service and the Great British Spring Clean litter pick initiative.

Attendees commented 'One of the best selection of topics' and 'Overall an enlightening evening with good presentations'.

Others told us:-

- I always try to attend and grateful that such an opportunity is available to me
- Forums are a really good idea and enable the public to engage with the roles and responsibilities of the Councils

### **The year ahead**

The Forums continue to be important to the District Council to enable engagement with local residents, businesses and community & voluntary groups in the Dales.

We will aim to create varied agendas on issues that matter to our residents and look forward to welcoming some new faces, as well as our regulars in 2017/2018. The Forums will be reduced to 2 rounds per year and be timely to coincide with key points in the District Council's year.

We are making particular efforts to attract younger people and work is ongoing with schools and colleagues at Derbyshire County Council to achieve this.

For more information email [communityforum@derbyshiredales.gov.uk](mailto:communityforum@derbyshiredales.gov.uk), phone 01629 761302.

Ros Hession, Community Engagement Officer – May 2017