

## **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

### **OF THE CENTRAL AREA FORUM**

**HELD ON WEDNESDAY 1 OCTOBER 2008**

Present: Councillor A Collinson (Chair)  
Councillors H High, G Johnson, Mrs E Huntington,  
Mrs A E Laing, T Longstaff  
and D Milsom

Also Present: K Parkinson – District of Easington  
G Reed – District of Easington  
J Davidson – East Durham Homes  
K Scott – Street Warden  
A Cooper – Premier Waste  
P Broadhurst – Premier Waste  
I McPherson – Environment Agency  
J Atkinson – Shotton Parish Council  
C Dand – Shotton Parish Council  
T Huntington – Shotton Parish Council  
H Bennett – Peterlee Town Council  
J Arthur – Peterlee Town Council  
A Liversidge – Haswell Parish Council  
Mrs D Liversidge – Haswell Parish Council  
D Mercer – Acre Rigg Residents Association/Citizens Panel  
S Walton – Resident  
J Hughes – Resident  
D Billing - Resident

- 1 **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 18 June 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

#### **MATTER ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

##### **Flooding at the Power Station, Thorntree Gill (Minute No. 3(d)(i) refers)**

It was reported that Council Engineers had confirmed that the culvert had been cleared and inspections showed that the water was now flowing freely.

**AGREED** that the information given, be noted.

- 2 **ODOUR CONTROL AT AEROBIC DIGESTER PLANT, THORNLEY**

Shotton Parish Council had asked for consideration to be given to odour control at Thornley Aerobic Digester Plant. Councillor J Atkinson advised that a number of complaints had been received from residents of Shotton but he was aware that the villages of Wingate and Wheatley Hill were also experiencing problems.

The Chair welcomed Ashley Cooper and Peter Broadhurst from Premier Waste, and Ian McPherson from the Environment Agency.

A Cooper briefly outlined the history of the site stating that it was previously DCC's waste transfer site. In 2000 faced with pressures around reducing landfill

## Central Area Forum – 1 October 2008

local authorities looked towards new technologies to dispose of waste in a different way.

He described the equipment on site stating that DEFRA grant had been awarded for the third tower and there was space for a fourth. Three towers allowed the site to deal with 60k tonnes of waste per year. There was also provision on site for the storage of waste in inclement weather.

A Cooper then proceeded to outline the process involved which was completely natural and organic. The odour problems experienced were from the exhaust system and to attempt to resolve this specialist companies had been employed. The company was also looking at odour suppression on site for the waste waiting to go to landfill. Fans had been installed which released a cherry smell and they were also looking at installing a 'drenching curtain' to suppress odour at the exit points.

To conclude, he asked residents to contact the company direct whenever there were any complaints which would speed up the response to problems. He hoped that the issues with odours would be resolved soon.

I McPherson, Environment Agency advised that the plant's processes were authorised by a permit issued by the Environment Agency and he was responsible for ensuring that the company operated within that.

For the first two years of operation the Agency had received one complaint about the site, with 18 in 2005 and a total of 9 over the next two years. However since July 2008, 62 complaints had been received from the surrounding villages of Wingate, Shotton, Peterlee and Wheatley Hill. He had met with A Cooper and his team to discuss the issue and as well as the employment of an odour specialist, the Environment Agency had arranged for a further specialist to carry out an analysis of the air emitted from the tower. He concluded that he was confident that the cause of the problem would be established and the odours eliminated.

Councillor J Atkinson asked if it would be possible to develop another plant elsewhere in the County, rather than erecting a further tower on the Thornley site, to reduce the amount of waste brought to the site from outside the District. A Cooper responded that there were two other transfer stations in the County situated at Newton Aycliffe and Heighington Lane, adding that other than very small amounts of waste from elsewhere, Thornley station only dealt with local waste from Easington District. However, he stated that Premier Waste was looking at the feasibility of developing another station in the County.

Councillor Mrs Huntington referred to 17 September 2008 when the smells from the plant were obnoxious. She had made complaints on behalf of around 20 residents and was concerned that these odours may be detrimental to people's health. She also asked if the material the towers were made of was potentially a cause of the problem as she had been advised that the third tower was concrete, a different material used to the first two.

A Cooper advised that the fabric of the towers had nothing to do with the odour problem and the cause was in the bio-filtration and scrubbing process. With regard to the threat to health he advised that the company routinely tested for bio – aerosols (spores which could be found in compost heaps) and these were well below standard levels, and could not cause ill-health. Health screening was also routinely carried out on the workforce and there had been no problems experienced.

In terms of meeting quotas, A Cooper advised that there were no pressures on the company to meet specific targets although they were trying to improve production by shortening 'residence time'.

Members of the District of Easington commented that the company needed to keep residents informed about what it was trying to do to eliminate odours. A Cooper acknowledged that it did need to communicate more effectively. To do this he proposed to establish a Liaison Group and asked anyone who was interested in being involved to contact him. He also encouraged anyone who had complaints to contact the company direct – this would allow problems to be dealt with more quickly and help prevent a repeat occurrence.

**AGREED** that the information given, be noted.

**3 UPDATE ON GEORGE STREET/FRONT STREET, HASWELL**

G Reed reminded everyone present of the issues at this area of Haswell. He advised that the area was made up of a number of parcels of land in different ownerships. The Council had tried to contact individual owners to come up with a joint scheme without success. The site had planning permission for housing but because of the current downturn in the market it was unlikely that development would take place in the foreseeable future.

Therefore, it was necessary to try to reach an alternative solution. In the first instance each owner would be contacted seeking their co-operation to tidy the areas within their ownership. If this failed the Council would then consider taking enforcement action, although as has been previously stated, this would be a lengthy process.

With regard to the derelict buildings in Front Street, G Reed explained that as with George Street there needed to be some investment in the area by the owners of the properties but this was unlikely in the current climate. The Council continued to secure individual properties as and when necessary. This was the responsibility of the owners but when they did not co-operate the works were carried out and they were recharged.

In response to a query about land at Durham Lane, he reiterated that similar problems were experienced here in that ownership was fragmented and it was unlikely that development would take place within the life of this Council.

**AGREED** that the information given, be noted.

**4 YOUR QUESTION TIME -YOUR SAY IN SERVICE DELIVERY – YOUR CALL**

**(i) Taxi Licensing**

Mr Walton, resident asked if there was any requirement for taxi drivers to be of smart appearance, and noted that in other areas they were required to wear uniforms.

K Parkinson responded that each driver had to meet a standard condition that they were a 'fit and proper' person. If a complaint was made to the Council this would be investigated by the Taxi Inspectors. The Council did receive regular complaints about issues such as overcharging or 'no-shows' but only one in the last ten years had been received relating to the appearance of a driver.

## Central Area Forum – 1 October 2008

Members of the public were encouraged to ring the Council with any complaints they had.

**AGREED** that the information given, be noted.

### (ii) **ASDA Premises, Peterlee**

Mr Walton asked if ASDA proposed to erect temporary scaffolding/tarpaulin again this winter for the external storage of food.

G Reed advised that to do this ASDA would need to apply for planning permission and a letter would be sent to the company reminding them of this.

**AGREED** that the information given, be noted.

### (iii) **Road Sweeping – Central Reservations**

Mr Walton referred to the untidy condition of central reservations, and referred to the reservation near Peterlee Leisure Centre in particular. He asked if they could be handswept as part of the roadsweepers route.

K Parkinson advised that there was a programme of handsweeping across the District and works were usually carried out on a Sunday when traffic was light. He would ensure that the central reservation at the Leisure Centre had been swept as part of this.

**AGREED** that the information given, be noted.

### (iv) **Front Street, Haswell**

Mrs Liversidge made reference to the anti-social behaviour problems experienced in Front Street, Haswell, which included litter, underage drinking and graffiti. She stated that the area was an alcohol free zone but that the signs erected were placed too high. She also asked how many people had been fined for littering the area.

With regard to the anti-social behaviour problems K Scott, Street Warden advised that he would arrange to have the area monitored, although the alcohol free zone had to be enforced by the Police.

K Parkinson added that the height of the signs was determined by law but he would check that they had been placed at the correct height. With regard to litter, he advised that although he didn't have the figures for Haswell with him, around 100 spot fines had been issued across the District. He added that the purpose of these meetings was to find out the priorities of local residents in order to target specific problems. He would therefore arrange for the Enforcement Teams to increase activity in the area and would provide figures on the number of fines issued at the next meeting.

**AGREED** that the information given, be noted.

### (v) **Speeding Traffic - Haswell**

The Chair referred to the danger to pedestrians caused by the speed of traffic through Haswell, particularly by HGVs. There was only one central reservation to help people cross this road to access amenities.

**Central Area Forum – 1 October 2008**

**AGREED** that this be referred to the Police.

(vi) **Grouse Moor, Haswell**

Mr Billing advised that vehicles were damaging kerbstones and the footpath when using the turning circle between numbers 7 and 8 Grouse Moor, Haswell.

**AGREED** that this be referred to either DCC Highways Section for investigation, or the developers if the road had not been adopted.

JE/MA com/central-AF/081002  
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