

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING

OF THE NORTH AREA FORUM

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2008

Present: **Representing the District of Easington**
Councillor C Walker (Chair)
Councillors Mrs E Bell, Mrs M Baird, Mrs G Bleasdale,
R Davison, Mrs S Forster, J Haggan, Mrs J Maitland,
Mrs S Mason, A Napier, Mrs A Naylor and C Patching

Representing Town/Parish/County Councils

B Allen – Seaham Town Council
E Mason – Durham County Council

Also Present

Mr W A Place – Resident
D B Glover – Resident
Mr Dobson – Resident
Mr Shaw – Resident
Mr Howe – Resident
J Ashett – Resident
V Ashett - Resident
W Kennedy – Dalton-le-Dale Community Association
M Hepplewhite – Dalton-le-Dale Community Association

Apologies: Councillors R J Todd, D Myers, P Campbell,
R Jordan, Mrs B Ramshaw and R Ramshaw

1. **CHAIR'S COMMENTS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the District Council's North Area Forum and introduced himself and the Officers present. A representative from the Customer Services Section was also present to take any individual queries at the end of the meeting.

2. **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 14 November 2007 were **AGREED**.

3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

(i) **Mine Water (Minute No. 3(ii) refers)**

At the last meeting, Mr Glover expressed concern that each year Northumbrian Water discharged 2 million tonnes of sewerage, the Port of Tyne discharged 65,000 tonnes of toxic waste and the Coal Authority discharged 2 million tonnes of mine water off the North East coast. Mr Glover was aware that Northumbrian Water carried out some testing, however, the Port of Tyne and the Coal Authority did not carry out any testing. Mr Glover was concerned that the type of waste being discharged would destroy the coastline.

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The Chair advised that meetings had been held with various organisations to discuss what was being discharged into the North Sea. With regard to the discharge pipe the Coal Authority had originally given an assurance that it would be approximately 1.4km in length, however, the pipe subsequently installed was only 75m long. Pressure had been applied by the District and Seaham Town Council to have the pipe lengthened and representation had also been made to the Prime Minister, however, the District Council had very little control over the situation.

The Chair pointed out that the District Council had been assured by the Coal Authority and DEFRA that the relevant checks were carried out and the levels of waste being discharged were within the law. A survey was also being carried out on the marine life off the North East coast.

Mr Glover pointed out that local divers off the North East coast had reported a significant reduction in marine life and stated that the North East coast was one of the most polluted in the world.

Mr Glover queried how many other pits in the country were pumping waste direct into the sea and suggested that a representative from the Coal Authority be invited to attend a future meeting of the North Area Forum to discuss this further.

Councillor A Napier advised that the District Council had no other option but to rely on information provided from organisations such as the Coal Authority, Environment Agency and Northumbrian Water and if this was to be disputed then hard evidence was needed to refute it. These organisations may only carry out basic testing but it was within the law.

Councillor E Mason advised that exact figures in relation to what was being discharged into the North Sea were unknown. It was reported that Seaham Town Council had previously looked into the possibility of undertaking private testing of the coastline, however, this had proved to be too expensive. It was explained that deterioration of samples occurred from the time they were taken to the time they were tested.

Mr Glover advised that the Campaign Against Sewerage (CAS) carried out testing at Sunderland.

AGREED that the information given, be noted and a representative from the Coal Authority, be invited to attend a future meeting of the North Area Forum.

(ii) **Excess Water - Former Seaham Colliery Site/Mill Inn Bank (Minute No. 3(iii) refers)**

Mr. Glover once again referred to the problem of excess flooding at the Mill Inn during heavy rainfall. Flooding occurred at this location due to the road gully being in the wrong location.

The Chair advised that the District Council's Highway Engineers had reported this on numerous occasions to Durham County Council who were the responsible authority.

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- (iii) **AGREED** that the matter be referred to Durham County Council.
Seaham Promenade - (Minute No. 5(vi) refers)

The Chair advised that a large boulder, which had fallen onto Seaham promenade, had been removed.

Mr Place advised that since the last meeting he had taken further photographs, which suggested that more rocks were unstable and could fall onto the Promenade and injure someone.

AGREED that the District Councils Engineers be requested to inspect the Promenade.

- (iv) **Speeding Traffic - Edith Street (Minute No. 5(vii) refers)**

The Chair advised that Durham County Council had reported that the majority of Edith Street was a private road and not adopted by the County Council, therefore, they would be unable to provide any form of traffic calming measures at this location.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

4. **Recycling**

T. Perrins, Environmental Services Manager was in attendance at the meeting to discuss the District Council's new recycling service.

It was explained that from 1 April 2008, the Council would be introducing a new kerbside collection scheme with its new partners Greencycle, which would include the recycling of plastics and cardboard.

Residents would be provided with a reusable green recycling bag, deliveries of the bag would be made during March together with a leaflet explaining what could be recycled. The bag would be in addition to the black recycling box which was already used for the collection of glass and cans.

Collections of both the Kerb it box and bag would be made on a fortnightly basis.

It was explained that publicity was currently being undertaken and road shows would be held at Asda in Peterlee and Seaham.

It was explained that the bag had a weighted bottom which would prevent it blowing around. Following collections the bag would be placed in the black box which should be sufficient in normal weather conditions.

The recycling bag was suitable for plastics and cardboard as this type of product tended to be bulky but had little weight.

Councillor Mrs. G. Bleasdale advised that lack of education with regard to recycling meant that many residents did not use the black recycling box. T Perrins advised that Greencycle would be undertaking the necessary publicity, which would include working closely with the Council, and school visits.

Councillor C. Patching advised that education was the key to recycling. However, he pointed out that the black box was actually well used. Since the introduction

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of the no sidewaste policy, recycling had increased by 18% in the last three months. This was a positive and upward trend and initiatives such as the recycling of cardboard and plastic would build on what had already been achieved.

Councillor Mrs. S. Forster queried if elderly residents would be offered assistance with the new bag. T. Perrins advised that the assisted refuse collection service was still available to the elderly, disabled and infirm who had no one to assist them with their bin, bag or box.

Councillor E Mason pointed out that plastic and cardboard packaging was bulky and questioned if the recycling bags would be large enough.

Mr. Glover referred to long life low energy bulbs, which contained mercury, and queried where they could be disposed. T. Perrins advised that Durham County Council would accept this type of bulb at household waste recycling centres, however, there was currently no recycling receptacle for this type of waste.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

5. **YOUR QUESTION TIME - YOUR SAY IN SERVICE DELIVERY - YOUR CALL**

(i) **Traffic Calming - Church Lane**

Mr. Dobson, a resident, advised of the problems currently being caused by the pinch points on Church Lane, Murton. Mr Dobson explained that his daughter lived adjacent to one of the pinch points and the noise was so bad that the family were unable to use their sitting room and the children had trouble sleeping at night. Durham County Council had claimed that the introduction of pinch points would reduce noise and speed of traffic however residents felt this was not the case.

Mr Howe a resident suffering similar problems made particular reference to the following issues related to the pinch points: -

- Increased traffic noise
- Height of the pinch points
- Traffic priority wrong way round
- Parking outside properties restricted
- Access to driveways restricted

The Chair advised that similar problems had been experienced at Princess Road, Seaham which eventually led to the chicanes being removed and replaced with cushions.

Councillor E. Mason advised that the removal of the chicanes had taken approximately one year but there had been no further complaints since their removal and vehicle speeds had reduced.

Mr. Dobson explained that Durham County Council had advised that cushions were eliminated for use on Church Lane following consultation with the emergency services. Letters of complaint had been forwarded to Durham County Council who had subsequently replied stating there was no problems with the chicanes.

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It was explained that the issues had also been raised with Murton Parish Council who had contacted Durham County Council expressing residents concerns.

It was suggested that residents concerns in relation to the chicans together with any suggestions/ideas on how the situation could be improved be collated and forwarded to Durham County Council.

RESOLVED that the concerns of residents in relation to the traffic calming measures on Church Lane be forwarded to Durham County Council.

JT/CB/COM/NAF/080200
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