

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE

WEST AREA FORUM

HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 11 JULY, 2007

Present: **Representing the District of Easington**
Councillor M Nicholls (Chair)

Councillors B Bates, R Taylor and
T Unsworth

Representing Parish Councils

D Carr – Monk Hesleden Parish Council
E Carr – Wheatley Hill Parish Council
C Stogdale – Wheatley Hill Parish
Council

Residents

M A Dunn, A Robinson, J Gowland, S
Venables, K Simpson and M Simpson

1 CHAIR'S COMMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the District Council's West Area Forum and introduced himself and the Officers present.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 4 April, 2007 were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) **Travellers - Thornley**
(Minute No. 3(i) refers)

Councillor T. Unsworth advised that it was proposed to place boulders at Hartlepool Street to deter travellers from parking at this location. A site meeting was also scheduled to be held with S. Clasper, Environmental Co-ordinator to discuss the situation.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) **Coopers Close, Thornley**
(Minute Number 3(ii) refers)

Councillor T Unsworth advised that racecourse fencing had been erected around the ditch at Gore Burn and all works had been completed on site.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(iii) **Vandalism – Hesleden
(Minute Number 3 (iii) refers)**

Mrs Simpson, a resident, advised that with regard to vandalism it had been quiet around the garages at Hesleden and the Street Wardens had dealt with any problems that had arisen.

E Coatman, Regeneration and Estates Officer, advised that a stock condition survey had been undertaken on 15 garage sites and a preliminary report prepared. The results of the survey highlighted that the majority of garage sites were empty, there was no demand for the garages and to undertake the necessary repairs would be costly. The recommendation was that the garages were demolished. It was explained that Phase 1 of demolition had been undertaken a number of years ago and unsightly hard standings were left to deteriorate. Phase 2 of the demolitions would involve removing the hard standing and reinstating the land. It was hoped that demolition would relieve some of the problems associated with youths congregating at the sites.

Mrs Simpson advised that at one time there had been 66 garages in Hesleden and now there was only 12 of which 3 were rented. Mrs Simpson explained that she would like to see new secure garages built and made reference to a scheme in Hartlepool where garages were enclosed in a secure compound and only those with a garage could gain access to the site.

E Coatman advised that East Durham Homes did not have the finance available to provide new garages and suggested that the Districts Housing Strategy Unit be asked to investigate.

Mrs Simpson suggested that a meeting be held with all interested parties. E Coatman advised that full consultation would be undertaken with residents regarding timescales and vacation.

Mrs Simpson referred to the problems of youths drinking, vandalism and anti-social behaviour which had been raised at a previous meeting and queried when a site meeting would be arranged.

The Director of Community Services agreed to investigate the situation regarding the meeting to discuss community safety issues and also the timescales related to the demolition of the garages.

Mrs Simpson advised that due to the lack of garages cars were parked all over the village. This had escalated to such an extent that refuse collection vehicles were unable to access the back streets and the Front Street was reduced to single lane traffic due to the number of parked cars.

AGREED that the Director of Community Services investigate the situation regarding the meeting to discuss community safety and the timescales related to the demolition of the garages.

(iv) **Horses – Haswell to Hart Cycleway
(Minute Number 6 (i) refers)**

Councillor R Taylor requested an update on horses using the Haswell to Hart walkway.

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Members were advised that a number of years ago the District Council had granted permission for horses to use the walkway between Castle Eden and Hesleden.

M Smith, Principal Valuer, explained that the District Council were in the process of undertaking extensive consultation in relation to horses using the walkway between Castle Eden and Hesleden.

Following consultation, a report would be considered by the Executive and a decision would be made on the future of horses using the walkway.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(v) **Amenity Bins**
(Minute Number 6 (iv) refers)

At the last meeting Councillor Mrs M Goyns, Wheatley Hill Parish Council, reported that the area around the amenity bins behind the Doctor's Surgery in Wheatley Hill was a mess. The bin lids were constantly broken and there was glass all over the car park.

The Director of Community Services advised that the authority were in the process of reviewing all of the bring sites in the district with a view to updating the more well used sites and reducing the number of sites overall. In the past, sites were removed because of similar problems, however, even after the banks were removed, the problem of broken glass still occurred.

Residents also had to be offered the choice of bringing their glass/paper to the bring site and this was the only one in Wheatley Hill.

Envirocall had received no complaints regarding glass on or around the site since 2002. The authority were looking to reduce the number of bins on the site to 2 instead of 3 as at the moment the bins were separated glass, clear, green and brown and emptied once a month. The new banks to be installed would be for mixed glass only.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(vi) **Gault Street/Garden Terrace/Asquith Road**
(Minute Number 6 (ii) refers)

The Director of Community Services advised that following the last meeting, Street Wardens had patrolled the area and reported that there were no incidents of youths causing a disturbance or anti-social behaviour.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

4 **YOUR QUESTION TIME, YOUR SAY IN SERVICE DELIVERY, YOUR CALL**

(i) **Sweeping of Streets – Hesleden**

Mrs Simpson advised that a road sweeper regularly swept the streets in Hesleden, however, it was unsuccessful in collecting the weeds that grew between the kerbs.

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The Director of Community Services advised that he would request the Clean and Green teams to visit the area. It was explained that the District Council had opened up many footpaths and pathways over the last year and improvements had been made to edging and control of weeds along road channels. Investment was made in new equipment, particularly to tackle the grass verges. Durham County Council also undertook limited weed spraying.

AGREED that the Director of Community Services request the Clean and Green teams to visit the area referred to by Mrs. Simpson.

(ii) **Bus Shelters**

Mr Simpson, advised that there were 5 bus shelters in Hesleden all of which had been vandalised and were in need of repair. He had made numerous complaints to Councillor Bates who had reported this on his behalf. He advised that repairs were undertaken approximately 18 months ago, however, these were a waste of time as the shelters were repeatedly vandalised.

The Director of Community Services advised that significant improvements had been made in the monitoring and repairing of bus shelters.

Councillor B Bates advised that he had made numerous requests to have the shelters repaired or removed. The Director of Community Services agreed that if there was repeated vandalism, then this needed to be investigated. Mr Simpson advised that a request had been made for two of the shelters to be removed. However, he felt that all 5 should be removed. The Director of Community Services advised that there was a process to be followed and the District Council would not remove shelters without full consultation and investigation as residents may still use them.

RESOLVED that the Director of Community Services investigate the situation and report to the next meeting.

(iii) **Watson Close, Wheatley Hill**

Mrs Venables, a resident, advised of problems associated with a neighbour's dog at Watson Close, Wheatley Hill.

E Coatman advised that she would speak to Mrs Venables following the meeting.

AGREED that E Coatman speak to Mrs Venables following the meeting.

(iv) **Watson Close, Wheatley Hill - Request for 'No Ball Games' Sign**

Mrs Dunn, a resident, queried if a 'No Ball Games' sign could be erected at Watson Close as the residents were experiencing problems with kids playing ball games at this location.

The Chair advised that the District Council no longer provided signs of this nature and suggested that flower beds be installed as an alternative to prevent the playing of ball games at this location.

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C Nevens, Neighbourhood Enforcement Officer advised that she would speak to Mrs Dunn following the meeting.

AGREED that C. Nevens, Neighbourhood Enforcement Officer speak to Mrs Dunn following the meeting.

(v) **Traffic Problems - Hesleden**

Councillor B Bates suggested that a site meeting be convened to discuss the problems related to cars parked at the back of Church Street, East Terrace and along the Front Street. In addition, he asked that a representative from Durham County Council be invited to attend.

AGREED that a site meeting be convened to discuss traffic problems in Hesleden and a representative from Durham County Council be invited to attend.

(vi) **Bus Shelters - Wheatley Hill/Thornley**

Councillor T Unsworth advised that two bus shelters one on Henry Street opposite Thornley Workingmen's Club and the other adjacent to Asquith Street had been damaged.

RESOLVED that the damaged shelters be reported.

(vii) **Flooding - Stanley Terrace, Thornley**

Councillor T Unsworth advised that Stanley Terrace, Thornley was prone to flooding and following the recent heavy rainfalls the problem had got increasingly worse.

The Director of Community Services advised that this was a drainage problem and the matter would be referred to Durham County Council.

AGREED that the Chair report this matter to Durham County Council.

(viii) **Bat Survey - Coopers Close**

Councillor T Unsworth requested an update with regard to the Bat Survey being undertaken at Thornley. E Coatman advised that the survey was complete and there was only one tenant remaining in the properties.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.