

Item 3

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA 2 FORUM

Community Centre,
West Cornforth

Tuesday,
8 April 2008

Time: 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Mrs. C. Potts (Chairman)	– Sedgefield Borough Council and
Councillor B.F. Avery J.P	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. P. Crathorne	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor D. Farry	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor T.F. Forrest	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor A. Hodgson	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor B. Lamb	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor J. Robinson, JP	– Durham County Council
Inspector B. Bentham	– Durham Constabulary
Sergeant A. Sampson	– Durham Constabulary
N. Smith	– Police Authority
Councillor Mrs. G. Attwood	– Chilton Town Council
Councillor Mrs. E.A. Martin	– Ferryhill Town Council
Councillor G. Muncaster	– Bishop Middleham Parish Council
Councillor N. Wiffen	- Bishop Middleham Parish Council
Councillor S. C. Drew	– Cornforth Parish Council
Councillor W.R. Wilson	– Cornforth Parish Council
D. Bradley	- Dean Bank Residents Association
J. Weston	- Dean Bank Residents Association
G.F. Hall	- Ferryhill Station and Chilton Lane Residents Association
B. Sheppard	- Ferryhill and Dean Bank Literary Institute
T.W. Garrett	- Ferryhill Partnership
B. Gibson	- Individual

In

Attendance: A. Megginson, A. Stephenson, J. Thompson and E. A. North (Sedgefield Borough Council)

Apologies:

Councillor T. D. Brimm	- Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. K. Conroy	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor J.E. Higgin	– Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor D.A. Newell	– Sedgefield Borough Council
P. Bamford	– Individual
M. Taylor	– Chilton West Residents Association
C. Heal	– Chilton Community Partnership
A. Rutherford	– Chilton Community Partnership
M. Chappell	– Chilton Community Partnership
M. Errington	– Chilton Town Council
K. Lynn	– Cornforth Partnership

AF(2)33/07

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

AF(2)34/07 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26th February, 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

AF(2)35/07 POLICE REPORT

Community Inspector Bill Bentham and Sergeant A. Sampson were present at the meeting to give a report on crime statistics, initiatives and road safety in the area.

The reported crime figures for February, 2008 and March 2008 were as follows :-

February 2008

	Dean Bank	Ferryhill	West Cornforth	Chilton	Total
Reported Incidents	195	108	78	157	538
Burglary Dwelling	3	1	1	6	11
Burglary Other	0	0	0	1	2
Theft from Motor Vehicle	1	1	2	1	5
Theft of Motor Vehicle	1	1	2	1	5
Rowdy Nuisance	52	30	10	30	122

March 2008

	Dean Bank	Ferryhill	West Cornforth	Chilton	Total
Reported Incidents	171	109	77	185	542
Burglary Dwelling	3	3	0	2	8
Burglary Other	3	1	0	2	6
Theft from Motor Vehicle	0	2	0	4	6
Theft of Motor Vehicle	1	1	2	1	5
Rowdy Nuisance	42	31	10	48	131

Traffic related incidents throughout the whole of the area during the two month period were as follows :-

Damage only accidents	29
Minor Injury Accidents	7
Serious Injury	1

It was reported that in February burglaries continued to be relatively low. Of the 3 at Ferryhill, 2 were entered via insecure doors. The West Cornforth burglary was an unoccupied house where the boiler was stolen, the burglaries at Chilton were broken down to 5 unoccupied houses, 1 shed and 1 genuine burglary. 6 people were arrested for those offences.

In March the figure for burglaries improved with 2 unoccupied premises, Chilton Chippy and a garage in Chilton. Dean Bank area had 3 dwelling burglaries, 2 sheds and a garage, Ferryhill had 3 dwelling burglaries and a garage. The majority of the dwellings broken into were attributed to one man who was a prison release into Ferryhill who had now been caught with stolen property and was back on remand in prison.

Rowdy nuisance was down again on Dean Bank but for some reason slightly up at Chilton. Police would therefore be paying a lot of attention to this issue.

The one serious road traffic accident involved a motor cycle and pedestrian on the A167.

“Bottle Watch” reports of street drinking in February went down by 43% when compared to the previous month. What was remarkable about this was that there were half term school holidays and traditionally there would always be an increase during the month. March saw another reduction although more modest this time of 13%. This put the area in a position where such complaints were now significantly less than other areas of the country. Already officers had identified and dealt with several adults supplying alcohol to minors and shops had been identified when alcohol had been seized on the streets.

An update was given in relation to Neighbourhood Priorities. In respect of Parking on Darlington Road, it was reported that recorded accident data for Merrington Road and Darlington Road from 1.1.2005 to 29.2.2008 had revealed the following

2005	-	8 damage only accidents
2006	-	8 accidents (3 slight and 5 damage only)
2007	-	7 accidents (3 slight and 4 damage only)
2008	-	1 damage only (to 29.2.08)

This gave a total of 24 accidents split as follows :-

13	-	Merrington Road
11	(including 4 at the junction of the 2 roads)	- Darlington Road

14 of them were hit and run with a further 4 involving child pedestrians, 2 of these were where vehicles had mounted the pavement and collided with the pedestrian.

Also collision with parked/temporarily stationary vehicle features prominently, with 13 accidents.

A seven day speed check had been requested on Darlington Road and also another on the B6287 Merrington Road in the vicinity of Rennie Street.

It was noted that in the area:-

Fixed Penalty Notices issued	-	4
Vehicles moved on	-	7

The Highways Authority at Durham had been contacted re : possible double yellow lines at junctions. Studies carried out in the area at varying time of day and different days showed that even with vehicles parked at the junction there has been enough visibility through car windows to enable motorists to have adequate visibility.

Leaflets were to be designed and distributed showing examples of poor driving, giving advice regarding parking manners and legislation.

During discussion reference was made also to the problems which were occurring along Dean Road, leading to Ferryhill Station in relation to speeding. Problems were also occurring in Ferryhill Station with cars parking in the vicinity of the chicanes and causing a traffic hazard.

It was explained that a letter had been sent to the traffic controller in relation to people parking on pavements along Dean Bank going along Merrington Lane. This was causing obstruction for disabled scooters, pushchairs, etc. A reply had been received stating that it was a Police matter.

Discussion was also held regarding accidents which were reported and clarification was sought on which accidents needed to be reported and whether accident figure were a true reflection of the situation. It was considered that the only way true accident figures would be reflected was if people were encouraged to report accident without fear of conviction.

With regard to off-road motorbikes in The Poplars, Chilton it was explained that diary sheets had been distributed. However, nothing had been reported at the moment.

PC Nixon, the Force Road Casualty Reduction Officer, was willing to assist with talks in local schools covering general road safety topics and to provide display material for areas such as Chilton Town Hall.

It was reported that in respect of lewd/indecent behaviour at Bishop Middleham Nature Reserve, initial mobile and foot patrols had been

carried out in the area by uniformed officers. Specific evidence and intelligence was being sought. Posters had been displayed by Neighbourhood Wardens stating that Police were aware of illegal activity in the area.

It was explained that along with other Neighbourhood priorities an article had been placed in The Northern Echo and would be appearing in The Chapter.

AF(2)36/07 LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - UPDATE ON PROJECT ACTIVITY

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (for copy see file of Minutes) updating the Area Forum on project activity as part of Sedgfield Borough Council's Local Improvement Programme.

The purpose of the Local Improvement Programme was to improve community assets and support community engagement in the regeneration of local areas. As part of this local communities could propose projects against set criteria agreed by the Council. Through this Programme, resources would be released to improve sites and improve the usability of community facilities and buildings across the Borough.

Area 2 Forum had been allocated £836,000 of LIP capital resources between 2006 and 2009.

An update was given on the projects funded to date within the Area 2 Forum locality, projects which were under development , withdrawn projects and additional project activity.

Specific reference was made to the Ferryhill Town Youth Football Club Dean Park facility development and steps which needed to be taken to resolve issues. It was explained that considerable progress had been made as to the development of the project since the technical study had been undertaken to look at planning design issues of an enhanced football facility adjoining Dean Park.

Layout plans showing a new 6 team changing facility and social area and an additional number of pitches had been subject to local consultation through displays. The key to the project would be improved drainage to existing pitches to meet FA standards. Following feedback from Durham FA the proposed synthetic floodlit pitch had been removed the scheme and replaced by a similar sized grass pitch. Consultants had been appointed to undertake a study and were in the process of establishing a robust project budget for the works. A key part of the consultancy work was to take the project through a football foundation grant application submission. To do this a Business Plan was needed outlining detailed information on the aims of the project, future management/maintenance of the facilities etc.

A draft Business Plan had been put forward by the consultants and feedback was awaited from Ferryhill Town Youth Football Club before further progress could be made. The Football Club had also been asked

by Ferryhill Town Council to produce their Annual Accounts which needed to be included in the Football Foundation Bid.

Following receipt of information the consultants would be able to finalise the Business Plan which would then need to be agreed by Ferryhill Town Council. A detailed planning application would then need to be submitted. A LIP application would be submitted following the finalisation of the Business Plan. This would be brought to the Area Forum when it was received.

AGREED : That the information be received.

AF(2)37/07

SELECTIVE LICENSING IN DEAN BANK AND CHILTON WEST

It was explained that Angela Stephenson, Neighbourhood Private Sector Renewals Manager and Joanne Thompson, Selective Licensing Officer, were present at the meeting to give an update on selective licensing in Dean Bank and Chilton West.

A background was given in relation to the issues with housing in Dean Bank and Chilton West.

It was explained that in relation to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007, Dean Bank was among the top 10% most deprived areas in the UK. Many of the houses had been built pre-1919. Over 30% of the properties were privately rented and 12% were rented by Registered Social Landlords. 40% of the properties were owner occupied and 10% were Council owned.

With regard to Chilton West, this area was also in the top 10% in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007. 40% of the properties in that area were privately rented, 40% were owner occupied and 15% Council housing.

It was explained that there was a spiral of decline in those areas relating to poor quality pre-1919 terraced properties resulting in low demand. With housing market booms those properties had provided investment opportunities for private landlords. Problem tenants had moved into those properties and the standards had declined resulting in more empty properties.

A toolbox of interventions had been introduced to recreate sustainable communities including a Master Plan for priority areas Group Repair Schemes, acquisition and selective demolition, environmental improvements, education and enforcement, new build mixed type and tenure to suit present aspirations.

The Housing Act 2004 introduced selective licensing which gave local authorities a discretionary power to introduce a selective licensing scheme in areas of deprivation and where there was anti-social behaviour or low housing demand. The scheme required approval of the Secretary of State.

Private Sector landlords would be required to pay a fee of £450 for 5 years (i.e. £90 per annum). Certain criteria would need to be met. Landlords would have to prove that they were a “fit and proper” person and that there were suitable management arrangements in place. There were also a number of mandatory conditions attached to the licence including, :

- Gas safety checks
- Safe electrical appliances
- Smoke alarms
- The provision of tenancy agreements, and
- References from prospective tenants

Sanctions in relation to the scheme included a £20,000 fine for failure to obtain a licence and a £5000 fine for failure to comply with conditions.

Benefits to the community of the scheme included :-

- Secure, good reliable tenants
- Reduced anti-social behaviour
- Improved neighbourhoods/environment
- Improved housing.
- Safer fit for purpose accommodation.

The benefits to landlords included :

- Support to deal with anti-social tenants
- Reduced number of empty properties
- Increased management standards
- Increased capital value
- Increased rental income

It was reported that to date 1,200 packs had been delivered to landlords and residents: 2 public consultation events had been held. An application had been submitted to the Secretary of State which had been confirmed and the scheme was implemented from February, 2008. Since February, 2008 over 500 application packs had been delivered to landlords.

Applications forms were to be returned by 2nd April. On receipt of the application form the Licensing Team would ensure all relevant documentation was included in determining whether a Temporary Exemption Notice would be required. If a Temporary Exemption Notice was to be issued that could be undertaken straight away and would last for a period of three months. If a Temporary Exemption Notice was to be refused then the local authority must serve Notice of its decision not to issue a Temporary Exemption Order giving their reasons and the date on which it was made.

If a licence was required and all necessary documents received then an appointment would be made to carry out the relevant inspections. If a licence was to be issued then the local authority must serve a Notice and a copy of the proposed licence to the applicant and any person having an interest in the property etc.

There was to be a 14 day consultation period from the service of Notice for any representations to be made. When the process was completed a licence would be issued.

It was noted that the Landlords Accreditation Scheme would be launched around May 2008.

During discussion of this item reference was made to the need for the Selective Licensing to be across the Board including Housing Associations.

A query was also raised regarding whether the scheme would continue under the new unitary authority.

AGREED : That the information be received.

AF(2)38/07

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Next meeting to be agreed at Annual Meeting of Council on 16th May.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Mrs. G. Garrigan, Tel 01388 816166 Ext 4240, ggarrigan@sedgefield.gov.uk