

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE COASTAL AREA FORUM
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER, 2005
AT SEATON HOLME, HALL WALKS, EASINGTON VILLAGE

Present: **Representing District Council**
Councillor P Stradling (Chair)

Councillors D Armstrong, Mrs E M Connor,
R Crute, A J Holmes, G Patterson and M
Routledge

Also Present: W S Day – Clerk to Easington Village Parish
Council
Councillor Mrs E M Hopper – Easington
Village Parish Council
Councillor W B Underwood – Monk Hesledon
Parish Council
Councillor A Barker – Durham County Council
Liz Allen – Easington PCT
Sergeant Dickinson and P C Holland – Durham
Constabulary
Mr K Averre – Blackhall Residents Association

and R Moore, J Moore and M Hoey

1. **OPENING INTRODUCTION**

Councillor P Stradling welcomed everybody to the Coastal Area Forum.

2. **FOLLOW UP FROM LAST MEETING AND CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES**

(i) **Confirmation of the Minutes**

The Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 13 July 2005, a copy of which had been circulated, were confirmed.

(ii) **Update on Anti-Social Behaviour**

(a) **Attlee Avenue/Hart Crescent, Blackhall**

A Bailey explained that there had been persistent complaints regarding youths causing anti-social behaviour. It had been very frustrating as members of the public had not been providing statements. Since the last meeting, the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit had managed to obtain a number of anonymous witness statements and an application for an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) had been made on one individual. The summons had been served on the individual in question and the ASBO would be heard shortly. There were a number of individuals that had been

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highlighted at the Multi-Agency Conference and would also be subject to an ASBO or an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC).

Sergeant Dickinson explained that 'Operation Rubicon' had been running over the last three months which included high visibility policing on the estate. 641 officer hours which equated two 27 officer days per month had been taken on the estate. 83 youths under the age of 18 had alcohol removed from them. 90 anti-social behaviour letters had been given to parents and 8 had been arrested and two dwellings had been searched.

It was explained that the Police worked in partnership with the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit and East Durham Homes. One tenant had been evicted and East Durham Homes had applied to the courts for a demotion of tenancy. The demotion of tenancy meant that if the tenant caused any more problems then East Durham Homes could apply for an eviction order. The Council's legal advisors had explained this was the appropriate course of action to take.

With regard to the ASBO, he explained that he had attended court two weeks ago and the Defendant's solicitor had asked for an adjournment in order for him to read the paperwork more thoroughly.

PC Holland explained that when he had the opportunity to be on the estate he would be there. On occasions, Officers were prevented from being on the estate as they were required elsewhere in the District but he gave an assurance that he would be there whenever he could.

Joan Link-Emery explained that East Durham Homes had been heavily involved on the estate. She was aware that members of the public became despondent because it took such a long time but a case needed to be built and it was very difficult to remove a tenancy through the courts. Work needed to be completed over a number of months and had to still continue even after Officers had applied to the courts. She asked members of the public to be patient as the Police, Anti-Social Behaviour Unit and East Durham Homes were all working together. The Tenancy Enforcement Officer worked closely with the Tenants Association and public from the estate. The case had only been able to be built up because of the evidence gained from members of the public and she asked that this continued.

Sergeant Dickinson explained that 6 new Neighbourhood Watchers had been set up in Blackhall and they had all been provided with radios. The Youth Inclusion Officer worked closely with the Youth Engagement Service and were putting Youth Workers were working in Blackhall. The Blitz Bus had been deployed in Blackhall and was trying diversionary activities for the youngsters.

A member of the public explained that the youths aged 17-21 were causing the trouble. After the last meeting a window had been smashed two doors away from his home. PC Holland

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explained that the Police could not remove people from the streets until the Government gave them powers to do so although if an offence was committed then the police could do something about it. Whilst he sympathised with members of the public, the police could not do anything unless an offence was being committed.

It was felt that once the ASBO was obtained that the trouble would calm down on the estate. If this did not work, then evidence would be gathered and other Anti-Social Behaviour Orders or ABC's would be applied for.

The Chair explained that the Police had outlined action that had been taken and the level of policing that had taken place and asked what the plans were for the future.

Sergeant Dickinson explained that he would be carrying on with policing on the estate. If there were particular problem times then the public needed to advise the Police of this. He had no problem in carrying out some covert surveillance if this was what was required.

Councillor Crute explained that when he had visited the Tenants and Residents Association on Monday they had explained that although the situation had not improved it was no worse and he raised concerns regarding the lack of timescales. He added that he was encouraged by what had been done but the Tenants and Residents Associations needed to be kept informed of action that was being taken.

A Bailey explained that he was attending the Residents Association the following evening and would update them on action taken to date.

J Link-Emery explained that when complaints were received the Tenancy Enforcement Officer liaised with the Residents Association to advise of any action that had been taken.

A Member referred to under 18's drinking alcohol on the streets and asked what the current law was and what response the Police received from parents. Sergeant Dickinson explained that the offence for under 18's was the possession of alcohol and the Police had the power to confiscate it. A Bailey explained that the District Council had 7 Accredited Officers who could remove alcohol and tobacco from underage youngsters. Sergeant Dickinson explained that between 85 – 95% of parents were very positive and supportive.

A member of the public referred to the park and explained that it was littered with cans. Councillor Underwood explained that the park was the responsibility of the Parish Council and it was cleaned every Monday morning after the weekend.

Members of the public explained that many of the residents were frightened of the youngsters and they were on the street night after night. Sergeant Dickinson explained that the ASBO would

be obtained as quick as possible although it was now in the legal system and they could do nothing regarding timescales.

AGREED that a progress report be submitted to the next meeting.

(b) **Gallagher Crescent/Roseby Road, Horden**

A Bailey explained that at the last meeting concern had been expressed regarding the cut between the houses from Horden to Peterlee. This had been causing a lot of problems of anti-social behaviour to residents. He explained that he had checked the police logs and 9 calls had been made in the last four months and the majority of those people did not live in the immediate vicinity of the footpath. The Street Wardens had received 8 calls mainly associated with anti-social behaviour around the garages and people building tree houses but none relating to the footpath.

Councillor Armstrong explained that a public meeting had been held some time ago and there had been a huge vote to keep open the footpath between Horden and Peterlee. He explained that he had spoken to some residents that day and they had advised that the area had now quietened down. He felt it would be appropriate for the Street Wardens to patrol the area on a regular basis.

Councillor Crute explained that the main concerns of residents at the last meeting were that they had believed a decision was going to be made to make the footpath more permanent.

It was suggested that the Street Wardens keep abreast of the situation on the estate.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

3. **CLEAN NEIGHBOURHOODS ENVIRONMENT ACT 2005**

The Chair explained that this item had been dealt with at the last meeting under the Powers of the Street Wardens.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

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

(i) **Craigellachie, Thorpe Road, Easington Village**

Councillor Mrs E Hopper explained that a lot of youngsters were using the empty Nursing Home as a drug den and a lot of the equipment that had been left in the premises was being scattered around the buildings. She queried whether anything could be done legally to make the owners clear premises when they were vacated.

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that Environmental Health could use their powers if it was causing a statutory nuisance. Planning legislation could also be used if

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enforcement was required for run down buildings. Requiring the owners to remove all of the contents was outside the Council's control.

Sergeant Dickinson explained that he would pass this information on to Seaham Police Station and the Easington Beat Officer who were responsible for the Easington area.

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that he would ask Environmental Health and the Planning Department to ascertain whether anything could be done regarding the premises.

AGREED that the Environmental Health and Licensing Manager ascertain if the Council could have the building and area looked at.

(ii) **Big Club, Horden**

Councillor Armstrong explained that on a weekend there was a lot of unruly behaviour outside of the Big Club. The Police had been in attendance and were using the mobile CCTV cameras. Under the recent licensing legislation, they had been granted a licence until 1a.m. and a lot of the residents in the vicinity were not happy. He had been advised that if people did not live in the immediate vicinity they would not take their representations into account when determining the licence.

Sergeant Dickinson explained that on a Friday and Saturday evening after 11p.m., Officers on duty were sent to that area. He added that this had been a problem for a long time.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.