

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING

OF THE COASTAL AREA FORUM

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14 MARCH 2007

AT BLACKHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL, MIDDLE STREET, BLACKHALL

Present: **Representing the District Council**
Councillor P Stradling (Chair)
Councillors Mrs E M Connor, R Crute,
A J Holmes, G Patterson and
M Routledge

Representing Parish Councils
Councillors Mrs T Phillips and Mrs M Robinson
- Horden Parish Council
Mr W S Day – Easington Village Parish Council
Mr and Mrs Barnett and Mrs P Chicken
- Seventh Street Residents' Association
Sergeant S Hawkes and PC A Holland
- Durham Constabulary
Mr Hoey

PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF BUSINESS, A ONE MINUTE SILENCE WAS OBSERVED IN MEMORY OF COUNCILLOR DEREK ARMSTRONG

1 OPENING INTRODUCTION

Councillor P Stradling welcomed everybody to the Coastal Area Forum.

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

(i) Confirmation of the Minutes

The Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 6 December 2006, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were **AGREED**.

(ii) Update on Anti-Social Behaviour in Attlee Avenue/Hart Crescent and Pattison Gardens, Blackhall

PC Holland explained that from 6 December 2006, there had been a total of 140 incidents reported for rowdy and nuisance behaviour in Blackhall. Three incidents were reported in Attlee Avenue, two in Hart Crescent.

D Riseley, Enforcement Officer explained that there had been a slight increase in calls to the Street Wardens but the majority of problems had been in Middle Street and the pit wheel area.

Councillor Crute explained that he had received no reports from residents. Pattison Gardens had now been demolished and was being dealt with by Barratts.

Councillor Holmes explained that he had received one report from a resident regarding a young lady in Attlee Avenue. Things were now quiet in the area and he had seen very little anti-social behaviour.

Mr Hoey explained that the anti-social behaviour had quietened down and the police and Street Wardens had done a good job in the area.

Councillor Patterson explained that the Street Wardens had recently received two awards for the work they had done in the district and the District Council was very proud of them.

J Link-Emery explained that East Durham Homes was continuing legal action against a tenant in Blackhall Rocks. Unfortunately this was taking longer than expected.

The Chair commented that there was now some control in the area and was sure that the Police and Street Wardens would be continuing their patrols.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(iii) **Thorpe Road, Easington Village**

Responses from Durham County Council and Easington Community School regarding residents' concerns to the access for Easington Community School were circulated.

Mr Day explained that the responses from Durham County Council and Easington Community School displayed the naivety about the current situation in Thorpe Road. Durham County Council's response referred to a meeting that was to be arranged with representatives of residents to explain the monitoring and disciplinary measures that were in place but no such meeting had taken place. He felt that when the Travel Plan was formulated, residents and the Parish Council should have been consulted. The only consultation the Parish Council had was at the planning application stage at Durham County Council.

The Chair suggested that the Coastal Area Forum contact Durham County Council to enquire when the meeting would take place.

Mr Day explained that the Environmental Services Manager had met with residents following the last meeting. A lot of the litter had accumulated inside the school grounds and prevailing westerly winds was blowing it along Thorpe Road.

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that the fly tipping sign had been erected and the area around Craig Terrace cleaned up. The Pride in Easington Team were going into Easington Community School to do some work with the children to educate them on litter and the environment.

Mr Day commented that the District Council had done a good job keeping the litter clean on Thorpe Road.

AGREED that a letter be sent to Durham County Council enquiring when the meeting with residents would take place.

3 HERITAGE COAST

The Coastal Ranger had been unavailable to attend and it was **AGREED** that the item be placed on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting.

4 REVIEW OF DISTRICT COUNCILS CORPORATE ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that the Council's Corporate Enforcement Policy set out a publicly available policy as to how the Council would encourage people to keep within the law. It showed how the Council would deal with any cases within its control where the law was broken or breached. Standards of service the community should expect from the Council's regulatory functions were set out and provide details of how these would be achieved in the delivery of different and individual services. Details of how the policies and standards would be monitored and reviewed were also provided.

The policy applied to:-

- Town and Country Planning
- Building Control
- Private Sector Housing
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Commercial Enforcement

The aim of the policy was to ensure that clear standards were set out for enforcement. There should be openness and information should be provided clearly. The District Council wanted to be helpful in providing advice and be consistent in how the law was used and must always be used in a proportionate way.

To obtain a copy of the policy, members of the public could contact:-

- Envirocall on 0191 527 5040
- by e-mail – environment@easington.gov.uk
- the Customer Services representative
- write to Envirocall at the Council Offices
- the District Council's web site – www.easington.gov.uk

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

5 DOG CONTROL ORDER FOR THE DISTRICT OF EASINGTON

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act came into force in 2005 and gave local authorities new powers. The Dog Control Order would replace existing controls that the Council had under the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996. It was an

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offence to foul in a designed area and there was a £50 fixed penalty notice and up to £1000 on prosecution in court.

At present, approximately 100 spot fines were issued each year and 400/500 stray dogs were seized. Approximately 900 complaints from residents were received and investigated.

Preventative measures included dog waste bins, warning signs, publicity and education, warning letters, area clean ups and free dog chipping. If an area needed cleaning up anyone could call Envirocall on 0191 527 5040 and request that this be done. Last year, a free dog chipping scheme was introduced and 1000 dogs had been chipped the previous year.

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that there were problems with the existing law and new estates could not be added to designated areas as well as the level of spot fine could not be increased above £50 and could only be limited to controlling fouling.

The benefits of a Dog Control Order included:-

- brought in additional controls
- extended the designed areas where dog owners were required to clean up their dog faeces
- designated areas where owners must keep their dogs on a lead
- designated areas where dogs were prohibited
- designated areas where a person could only take a specified maximum number of dogs

Restrictions must be realistic and enforceable and be easy for the public to understand. Restrictions must also take account of dog owners needs and would require good signage and publicity.

In designing a Dog Control Area, the Council proposed to apply no fouling to all built up areas. A decision needed to be made on which areas would be "dogs on lead only", which areas the dog prohibition would apply and if the Council wanted to apply a maximum limit on the number of dogs a person could walk.

There were a number of options available:-

Option 1 – a simple approach which would designate no fouling controls only:-

- targeted fouling as priority concern
- easier to enforce
- easier for residents to understand
- easier to publicise
- cheaper

Option 2 – applying no fouling control as Option 1 and have limited amount of dog on lead controls and dog prohibitions where problems justify:-

- more complex to enforce
- more complex to understand
- more signage required
- may be more costly

Option 3 – the complete mix of these controls applying across the district with specific controls to suit Town/Parish Council land:-

- required joint enforcement approach
- harder to understand and required extensive signage
- more costly and would take longer to implement

Mr Barnett referred to the 100 successful prosecutions and explained that one of the weaknesses of the Council was not advertising their successes. The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that articles explaining the Council's successes were often in the local press and always in Infopoint. If a spot fine was issued then the Council could not publicise the names and addresses, only if they were then taken to court.

The Chair requested that the Residents Association be made aware of what was happening in relation to dog fouling.

Councillor Mrs. Connor referred to areas where dogs would be prohibited and felt it would be a good idea for Prohibition Orders to include parks and cemeteries but felt that not allowing dog owners to walk their dogs on a beach should not be implemented.

Mrs Chicken referred to a lady in a mobility scooter who had three dogs and did not clean up after them. The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager explained that the lady's name and address needed to be passed to the Dog Warden for them to investigate. Some people with disabilities could not be prosecuted as it would be unfair to do so but if details were given to the Dog Wardens then they could explore all options to obtain a solution.

AGREED that Option 2 be preferred.

6 **LACK OF ACTION IMPLEMENTING PLANNING CONDITIONS IN STAYPLTON DRIVE, HORDEN**

Mrs Phillips explained that Horden Parish Council were taking action in response to enquiries and complaints from residents of Stayplton Drive regarding the lack of action taken in implementing planning conditions. The estate was incomplete and the builders had now been off site for a number of months. She had a petition from residents as they were very concerned. The estate was dangerous with uneven footpaths and there was a large hole near the vicarage. There was a lot of young children living on the estate and parents were very concerned about their safety.

The developers had committed to provide a lay by for the extra traffic. There were 42 houses and all occupants had two cars. There was also two huge containers in the middle of the site and the play area and sports area had not been completed. She added that Horden Parish Council had approached the Planning Department on several occasions but up until last week had received no response whatsoever.

The Head of Planning and Building Control Services explained that he had become aware of the problem at the beginning of November 2006 when a number of residents had contacted the Council. He had contacted the developers regarding the completion of the multi use games area, play area and the car parking area. One of the problems he had encountered had been obtaining a response. A meeting in January with them had been cancelled at the last minute and the Council had been left with a decision on how to pursue the planning conditions.

The District Council had a long and positive history with the developers and this was the first occasion a problem had been encountered. If enforcement action was taken this would take a number of years. He had spoken to a representative of the developers and had a verbal assurance that they would be on site the following month to complete all the outstanding works. All materials for the multi use games area had been purchased although there had been a problem in obtaining a suitable contractor. He added that he would continue to keep the Parish Council informed.

The Chair commented that Sport England and the Parish Council would have objected to the application if the play area and the multi use sports area had been omitted from the application.

The Chair referred to a development at Dene Villas where the developer had gone bankrupt before the roads had been finished. Durham County Council could not claim anything back and he feared that this may happen again. The Head of Planning and Building Control Services explained that the developers were a large organisation and had completed numerous estates throughout the district.

AGREED that the Head of Planning and Building Control Services report back to the next meeting on progress.

7

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

(i) **Indiscriminate Parking**

Mr Day explained that a resident of Easington Village had contacted him as the Clerk to the Parish Council as well as Durham County Council, the District Council and the local Councillor for the area to complain about indiscriminate parking and obstruction of footpaths. The resident's wife was disabled and he was finding it increasingly difficult to pass parked cars on the footpath.

Mr Barnett explained that there was also a severe problem in Horden with illegal parking and residents not taking any notice of general standards of the highway code.

T Phillips referred to the nursery at Langthorne Avenue and explained that it was grid locked on a morning and afternoon with people dropping their children off.

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Sergeant Hawkes explained that he would pass the complaints onto the local PCSO's to patrol.

T Phillips explained that if yellow lines were on the bottom of Langthorne Avenue/Alder Road then this could help to alleviate the problem.

The Chair suggested that the Coastal Area Forum write to the Police to request that an item be placed on their Neighbourhood Forum for discussion.

AGREED that a request be forwarded to the police for an item relating to indiscriminate parking on their Neighbourhood Forum agenda.

(ii) **Limekiln Gill, Horden**

Councillor Connor explained that the pond at Limekiln Gill was building up, becoming very hazardous and dangerous.

The Chair explained that samples had been taken the previous week to ascertain if the pond was toxic. No works had yet commenced but he believed it was being dealt with by the Countryside Team at Durham County Council. He suggested that the Coastal Area Forum write to Durham County Council to ascertain the current position.

AGREED that the Coastal Area Forum write to the Countryside Team at Durham County Council to ascertain the position of the pond at Limekiln Gill.