

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
COASTAL AREA FORUM  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 3 OCTOBER 2007 AT HORDEN SOCIAL CENTRE  
SEVENTH STREET HORDEN**

Present:-           **Representing the District Council:**  
Councillor P. Stradling (Chair)  
Councillors R. Crute, A.J. Holmes,  
D. Maddison, G. Patterson, D. Raine  
and Mrs. V.M. Williams.

**Representing Parish Councils:**  
Councillor Mrs. M. Robinson - Horden Parish Council  
Councillor D. Raine - Easington Colliery Parish Council

P. Chicken, J. Barnett, J. Roberts,  
and J. Ward - Horden Residents Association  
Sgt. Dickinson and PC Carr - Durham Constabulary

and Mr. Hoey, Mr. Archbold, Mr. Williams

1.   **OPENING INTRODUCTION**

Councillor P. Stradling welcomed everyone 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 20 June 2007, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were agreed.

(ii)   **Ongoing Highway Related Concerns**

A response from Durham County Council had been circulated.

Councillor Raine explained that Durham County Council had repaired some holes but felt the workmanship was not up to standard. The Chair suggested that he contact the County Councillor for the area in order for it to be included in the highway maintenance programme.

**AGREED** the information given be noted.

(iii)   **A1086 Horden to Blackhall**

A response from Durham County Council had been circulated.

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Councillor Mrs. Williams explained that she had met with the Highway Engineer on site and had pointed out the areas of concern. The Officer had been very supportive and had arranged for works to be carried out.

**AGREED** the information given be noted.

(iv) **Trade and Skill Centre, Horden**

A response from Mrs. Jones had been circulated.

Mr. Barnett explained that the area adjacent to the workshop was an horrendous eyesight and he had been assured by the owner in January that it would be fenced off so visibility would be limited. He had asked the Environmental Services Manager to investigate the Health and Safety aspects.

The Chair suggested that the Environmental Services Manager be contacted and a progress report be given at the next meeting.

**AGREED** that the Environmental Services Manager be requested for an update on progress.

(v) **Stayplton Drive, Horden**

The Head of Housing explained that the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) had now been installed and there were one or two minor outstanding issues.

The Clerk to Horden Parish Council had advised that the MUGA had been installed by the developers but they had not applied for an electricity meter for the lighting. In view of this, the Parish Council would not take on responsibility for the games area until the works had been completed and a full certification of the electrics had been undertaken. It was felt that the MUGA would not be operational until January 2008 at the earliest.

**AGREED** that the information given be noted.

(vi) **Update on Anti-Social Behaviour in Blackhall Rocks**

D. Riseley, Enforcement Officer, explained that there had been 8 reports in August of anti-social behaviour. If there was still a problem in the area, then members of the public were not reporting incidents. The Street Wardens were still patrolling the area with the PCSO's and the Police and taking names of anyone perceived to be causing anti social behaviour. 104 calls had been received in Blackhall but only 8 for the Blackhall Rocks area.

Sgt. Dickinson explained that he had made a comparison from the previous year and in the three months from July to October 2006 there had been 18 calls. In the same period this year, there had been 7. He felt that this was due to the amount of work the PCSO's, Police, Street Wardens and the effect the eviction by East Durham Homes had had. An off-licence had

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been recently closed in Blackhall on 27th September 2007 for selling alcohol to under age youths.

Mr. Hoey explained that the area had quietened down but there were still members of the public who would not come forward and report incidents.

D. Riseley explained that a leaflet drop could be carried out to encourage members of the public to ring in anonymously to report incidents of anti social behaviour.

Sgt. Dickinson explained that a mobile police station could be located on the estate.

Councillor Crute explained that a mobile police station was a good idea but needed to be underpinned by a leaflet drop. He felt that the problem had been alleviated but would like to see an update at the next meeting for further progress reports.

D. Riseley explained that the number of drink related calls had reduced significantly and reports were often about young children running through gardens rather than serious types of anti social behaviour.

**AGREED** that a progress report be given at the next meeting.

### (vii) **Indiscriminate Parking**

Councillor Mrs. Robinson explained that the problem with indiscriminate parking was becoming worse in Horden. She had not seen any traffic wardens patrolling the area and on many occasions had to go on the road with the pushchair.

Mrs. Roberts explained that the Police were handing out leaflets for indiscriminate parking.

The Chair queried if the problem still existed in Middle Street in Blackhall. Sgt. Dickinson explained that the double yellow lines in Middle Street in Blackhall were unenforceable because they needed to be re-done. Until Durham County Council had the double yellow lines reinstated, then the Police could not enforce them. The Chair suggested that the County Councillor for the area be contacted and request that the double yellow lines in Middle Street be reinstated.

Mrs. Roberts referred to the car park at the rear of the Comrades in Horden. A member of the public was using the car park for storing vehicles that were for sale. The Police had informed her that as long as the car had a visible tax disc, then they couldn't take any action.

The Chair commented that if it was being used for business use then the Planning Department at the District Council and the Estates Department at Durham County Council should be contacted.

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**AGREED** that:-

- (i) Councillor Cox be contacted regarding the reinstatement of the double yellow lines in Middle Street;
- (ii) the issue of the car park to the rear of the Comrades be referred to the Planning Department at the District Council.

(viii) **Heritage Coast**

D. Gomes explained that Niall Benson could not attend and Louise Harrington, his deputy, who had been in post for two weeks, was in attendance. Niall Benson had assured him that the Management Plan had been circulated to every Parish Council at its launch in 2005. It was also widely available on the internet.

The Chair referred to the grass at Limekiln Gill, Horden which had been cut and rolled and removed immediately but the gates that had been removed to gain access had not been replaced. D. Gomes explained that he would investigate the following day.

Councillor Raine referred to the steps to the beach at Easington Colliery and explained that there was still no handrail. D. Gomes explained that he was aware of the situation and the costs to install a handrail would be very expensive. He would investigate what the current situation was and report back to the Member direct.

**AGREED** that

- (i) D. Gomes investigate the gates at Limekiln Gill;
- (ii) D. Gomes ascertain the current position with the steps at Easington Colliery.

### 3. **DISTRICT OF EASINGTON BENEFITS SERVICE**

C. Thompson, Benefits Manager was in attendance to discuss residents feedback on the Benefits Service. He briefed Members and residents on his role as Benefits Manager with the Council and the Benefits Take Up Campaign.

He explained that there were a large number of residents in the district who were entitled to benefits but did not currently claim them. The campaign aimed to encourage more people to seek advice on what benefits they may be eligible for. As part of this, a number of roadshows had been held across the district and he and Benefits Officers, had talked to a number of local organisations and groups. The purpose of attending the forum was to find out if there were other groups the Council could meet to promote benefits take up and seek ideas from residents on how to get the message across.

Leaflet drops had been carried out in areas where it was felt that the benefit take up was low. The Council were trying to make it easier to apply for benefits and had a Visiting Officer who visited claimants

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homes, filled in the forms and took all the necessary details. War pensions were now disregarded for benefit purposes but a lot of the public were not aware.

Councillor Raine queried that when there was a change in Council, what would all arrangements be under the new Authority for the treatment of War Pensions. C. Thompson explained that the benefits scheme was a national scheme and all District Councils in Durham County disregarded War Pensions so there should not be any difference whatsoever.

The Chair thanked C. Thompson for his attendance.

**AGREED** the information given be noted.

### 4. **YOUR QUESTION TIME - YOUR SAY IN SERVICE DELIVERY - YOUR CALL**

#### (i) **Theft of Lead**

Mrs. Roberts referred to the theft of lead from churches, schools and houses in the area. She had attended a community forum in Murton and explained that residents reporting incidents did not receive any feedback from the Police. Easington Colliery and Blackhall had CCTV and she felt that Horden should have it installed.

Mrs. Chicken explained that on Sunday evening, she had caught someone on her roof trying to remove the lead. She had reported this to the Police and was still waiting for a Police Officer to visit to take details.

Sgt. Dickinson explained that the removal of lead from buildings was a huge problem across the whole of the District. An operation had been running with the British Transport Police and all scrapyards had been under observation. Scrapyards had been visited and a number of enquiries had resulted. When catching people with the lead, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) would not take them to court because they could not identify where the lead had been stolen from. In the last four weeks, 5 or 6 people had been arrested and the CPS had not brought any charges against them. A meeting was being held with the head of the CPS and a Senior Police Officer the following week to try to come to some solution as to how charges could be brought. The Crime Prevention Officer had looked at different buildings and had some ideas on how to alleviate the problem. There were substitute materials which did the same job as lead at a similar cost.

With regard to the mobile CCTV cameras, he had been working with the Community Safety Partnership to identify lamp-posts in the Horden area that were suitable for the re-deployable CCTV cameras. He was waiting for them to be checked by Durham County Council and CCTV would be installed as soon as possible. Every scrap merchant in the district had received a letter advising them of the consequences of accepting lead.

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The Chair referred to the Community Consultation meeting held at Murton and members of the public had offered themselves as witnesses. He queried if the CPS would prosecute if a witness came forward. Sgt. Dickinson advised that he thought the CPS would prosecute if there were witnesses.

The Chair commented that there were members of public at the meeting who said they would keep the Police informed but there did not seem to be any feedback to them. He queried if there was any way to get a bulletin from the Police into doctors surgeries, libraries etc. Sgt. Dickinson explained that he would look at this further.

Councillor Maddison referred to the substitutes for lead and explained that they could not be installed in listed buildings.

Councillor Mrs. Williams explained that the reaction and response times from Police was unacceptable. The Chair explained that this had been raised at the Community Consultation at Murton with Chief Superintendent Suddes.

**AGREED** that the information given be noted.

### (ii) **Evictions**

Mrs. Roberts explained that evictions did not solve the problem, it just moved the troubled family to another village. The Chair commented that without legislation from Government, there was not a great deal that local authorities or the Police could do. The prime objective when a family was being persecuted was to have the family moved.

E. Coatman explained that eviction was the very last resort. With rent arrears there were a lot of steps put in place to help the tenant. With anti social behaviour, there was even more red tape. They tried to work and mediate with the tenant before an eviction notice was served.

Councillor Mrs. Robinson explained that the law would not be changed until Government had been lobbied and felt a letter should be forwarded to the MP. The Chair explained that he felt that a letter should come from the Parish Councils and the local Labour Party.

The Head of Housing explained that the 2004 Housing Act had introduced Selective Licensing. The Council were currently bringing proposals forward to pilot an area in Easington Colliery and if this was successful, could be rolled out to the rest of the District. The Council had to show that there was a need for it and apply to the Secretary of State for the Order.

J. Barnett explained that he had attended a meeting where the Head of Housing had promised that Selective Licensing would be adopted by the Local Authority in the early part of the year and very little progress had been made. He referred to the pilot scheme in

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Wembley area and that the Council had no intention of spreading it out to the rest of the District.

The Head of Housing explained that the power was only enacted in April 2007. A bid had to be compiled and an application made to the Secretary of State for the Order. The District Council did not have the resources to cover the whole of the District. The bid for Easington Colliery was very close to being submitted and there were very few Councils in the North East that had done this.

The Head of Housing explained that, as well as Selective Licensing, there was an Accredited Landlord Scheme in operation and every year there was an increase in the number of landlords who joined the scheme. The scheme was voluntary and properties were inspected to make sure they were up to standard. This was a very successful scheme and he could provide an update at the next meeting on the Accredited Landlord Scheme. He added that he would also give a presentation on the bid to the Secretary of State for the Selective Licensing in Easington Colliery.

**AGREED** that the Head of Housing provide an update on the Accredited Landlord Scheme and a presentation on the bid to the Secretary of State on Selective Licensing in the Wembley area.

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