

Item 9k

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

AREA 1 FORUM

Memorial Room,
Town Hall,
Spennymoor

Monday,
9 March 2009

Time: 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor A. Smith (Chairman)	–	Sedgefield Borough Council and
Councillor Mrs. A.M. Armstrong	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs. E. Maddison	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Mrs E. M. Wood	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Inspector W. Bentham	–	Durham Constabulary
Councillor N. Foster	–	Durham County Council
C. Darkes	–	Greenways Residents Association
G. Darkes	–	Greenways Residents Association
J. Brown	–	Middlestone Moor Community Centre
S. Brown	–	Middlestone Moor Community Centre
Councillor C. Maddison	–	Spennymoor Town Council – Member for Tudhoe Grange Ward
D. Gordon	–	Local Resident

In

Attendance: C. Walton, G. Wood and Mrs. G. Garrigan

Apologies:

Councillor Mrs. B. Graham	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor A. Gray	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor J.M. Khan	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor C. Nelson	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor B.M. Ord	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor K. Thompson	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor W. Waters	–	Sedgefield Borough Council
Councillor Miss. S. Armstrong	–	Spennymoor Town Council

AF(1)25/08 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
No declarations of interest were received.

AF(1)26/08 **MINUTES**
The Minutes of the meeting held on 19th January 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (For copy see file of Minutes).

With regard to Minute AF(1)22/08 Library, Cheapside, Spennymoor – it was reported that the concerns regarding the amount of litter found on the steps and paths outside the library at Spennymoor had been reported to the Library Manager and the area was now cleaned on a regular basis.

AF(1)27/08 POLICE REPORT

Inspector W. Bentham, Community Inspector for Spennymoor and Ferryhill, was present at the meeting to give a report on crime statistics and initiatives in the area.

The reported crime figures and road traffic accidents for the period 1st January to 28th February 2009 were as follows:

	<u>January :</u>	<u>February :</u>
Vehicle Crime	11	14
Violent Crime	9	12
Burglary	7	3
Burglary (Other)	4	10
Rowdy Nuisance Behaviour	71	97
Criminal Damage	23	23
Drugs Offence	7	3
Damaged Accidents	9	19
Minor Injuries	5	3
Serious Injury/Deaths	0	0

It was reported that total crime for the period had reduced by 9%. Anti-social behaviour showed a reduction of 3.3%, with youth related anti-social behaviour down by 21.3%. It was noted that two people were currently in prison awaiting sentencing with regard to burglary offences.

With regard to the problem of drug dealing in the Spennymoor area, it was noted that the Police would be making use of the powers introduced by the Government to close houses/flats taken over by drug dealers and users and would be exercising a crack house closure within the next week or two. The Order could last up to three months and can be extended for a further three months. During which time the property would be sealed and it was an offence to enter or remain in the property.

With regard to recent publicity regarding Durham Police Authority budget for 2009/010, Members questioned whether the manpower for the Spennymoor area would reduce. The Inspector reported that Spennymoor Police Station would continue to be manned 24 hours. The proposed staffing reductions would relate to backroom staff.

Members expressed concern regarding the problem of youths congregating underneath the Festival Walk shopping centre and consuming alcohol. The Inspector agreed to investigate the problem.

AGREED : That the information be received.

SPENNYMOOR TOWN CENTRE

C. Walton, Head of Planning Services and G. Wood, Corporate Policy and Regeneration Manager, were present at the meeting to give an update on Spennymoor Town Centre.

Members were reminded that the Council had commissioned consultants to assist in the preparation of an Area Action Plan for Spennymoor Town Centre. The aim of the plan was to create a robust planning policy framework which would facilitate the creation of a vibrant and progressive town centre that was well positioned to provide the facilities and services demanded by Spennymoor's growing population

It was reported that a public participation issues and options document had been produced which had been subject to consultation at the end of 2008. The following points had been raised by local residents, property owners and key consultees:

- There was recognition that the boundaries of the town centre needed to expand to allow the town to grow and attract the facilities required by residents.
- The expansion could be controlled through the introduction of a policy which recognised core and secondary areas of the town
- Many respondents expressed concerns about the volume of grocery retail and the lack of choice/product range beyond the various supermarkets.
- Festival Walk should be a retail-led solution rather than grocery retail or mixed use which would reflect the above concerns.
- The former Gas Works site should also come forward as a retail led scheme although a number of people had expressed opinions and support for a leisure/retail mixed use scheme consisting of shops, hotel and family type pub.
- Cheapside was also felt to be best dealt with by retaining a mixed use focus rather than investigating opportunities for some form of public sector administrative use.
- A slight preference was expressed for re-opening the town to car access.

It was explained that it was the original intention to review the Area Action Plan proposals in the light of the above comments and produce a document which would be submitted to the Government Office and then subject to a public inquiry before hopefully becoming planning policy for the town.

As well as working on the Spennymoor Area Action Plan, officers of the Council were also developing a Masterplan for Merrington Lane and looking at the Blacker and Decker site – Durham Gate.

With regard to the Black and Decker site, the Council's Development Control Committee at its meeting on 6th March 2009 had approved an outline planning application for business accommodation, ancillary facilities including retail units, public house, hotel, day nursery and health centre with associated car parking.

The above two schemes formed part of the Growth Point Programme which stretched across the Borough and included sites in Wear Valley and Easington. In addressing these schemes, the County Council had resolved that its new Planning Framework – the Local Development Scheme would include the Area Action Plans for the whole settlements of Spennymoor, Bishop Auckland and Peterlee.

With regard to Spennymoor, the consultants were now working in the detailed implications of development on the other surrounding sites and how all would become fully integrated.

It was pointed out that the new Area Action Partnerships would be used as a main route for consultation. The Spennymoor Area Action Partnership would be launched on Wednesday 6th May 2009 at Spennymoor Leisure Centre.

Concern was expressed regarding the condition of the bandstand in Spennymoor Town Centre which had a number of tiles missing or broken. Officers agreed to request the necessary repairs.

Concern was also expressed regarding the plot of land to the rear of the 'Martin Currington' premises which was strewn with rubbish. It was requested that officers work with the owners to try and improve the area.

Specific reference was made to the issue of fixed penalty fines for littering and dog fouling. It was noted that the Council's Neighbourhood Wardens had been invited to the Town Council meetings to report on their actions. Members of the Forum reported that dog fouling was a problem in Dene Valley area of the town and requested that more enforcement action be taken.

Reference was also made to use of Section 106 monies to support the development of play areas. It was reported that £159,000 had been spent within the past few weeks and a new protocol would be developed by the new unitary authority.

AGREED: That the information be received.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Mrs. Gillian Garrigan Spennymoor 816166 Ext 4240