

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SEAHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

HELD ON TUESDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2008

Present: **Representing the District Council:**
Chair - Councillor F Shaw

Also Present: R Blair – Seaham Health Forum
R Arthur – Durham County Council
W Kennedy – Dalton Le Dale Community Association
Mrs. M. Hepplewhite – Dalton Le Dale Community Association

Residents: E R Armbrister, A Seed, G Fearon, M Dickinson
G Robinson, C Shayshutt, S Cowe, K Lawrence
C Rhodes, J Howard and D. Consitt

Officers: P Irwin – District of Easington
K Parkinson – District of Easington
S Janes – District of Easington
C Gardiner – District of Easington
V Addison – Durham Constabulary
R Smith – Durham Constabulary
J Murphy – East Durham LSP

Apologies: C Walker and Mrs S Forster

PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING THE CHAIR REQUESTED A MINUTES SILENCE AS A MARK OF RESPECT FOR THE LATE COUNCILLOR P J CAMPBELL.

1. CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the third meeting of the District Council's Seaham Neighbourhood Forum and introduced himself and the Officers present.

The Chair advised that this Forum had been established to provide the community of Seaham with an opportunity to comment on and shape services provided by public authorities including the Police and the District Council.

The meeting would focus on the "Agenda for Action" document for Seaham which had previously been circulated.

2. THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING held on 9 July 2008, a copy of which had been circulated, were agreed.

3. SEAHAM AGENDA FOR ACTION

(i) Visible Police Presence

The Chair welcomed Inspector V. Addison and Sgt. R. Smith from Durham Constabulary to the meeting.

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V Addison reported that a meeting was recently held to discuss various issues in the Dawdon area, particularly anti social behaviour. The meeting involved the Police, partner agencies and local residents and had been well attended.

The following specific issues were raised and areas of action were agreed with all those present at the meeting;

- Neighbourhood Watch Scheme - Sgt Smith was liaising with the Neighbourhood Co-ordinator in an attempt to expand the scheme. Six new schemes had been introduced which was an encouraging start and it was felt that the neighbourhood watch scheme was a vital part of security for communities.
- Problems associated with youths congregating at the “Yellow Brick Road” particularly on a weekend.
- High visibility of Police – Sgt Smith was leading on this with the PCSO’s. It was hoped to undertake a walk through with partner organisations and residents along the “Yellow Brick Road”. Anyone who wished to be involved could contact Sgt Smith.
- CCTV – whilst not a cure for everything it was a good tool to deal with crime and anti social behaviour. The district council had redeployable CCTV which could be installed in any area where there were problems. Cost was an issue and the Community Safety Partnership and district council had submitted a bid for funding for CCTV.

V Addison made reference to an incident which had involved two dogs attacking a woman and her dog at Roseberry Park, Dawdon. He explained that this was an ongoing investigation and the Police were working to resolve the situation.

M Dickinson, a resident advised that in the small cul de sac where the incident happened there were 15 adults, 14 children and 15 dogs. Residents were concerned and feared that a child could be attacked next. This was not the first time these two dogs had escaped and they had been returned to their owner. Residents did not feel safe and were seeking an assurance that the Police would deal with this matter quickly. Residents needed an assurance that these dogs were secure and would not be allowed to escape again.

V Addison shared the concerns of residents and reiterated that the incident would be fully investigated. M Dickinson advised that as a result of the attack residents had changed their daily routines due to fear of these dogs. V Addison hoped to make progress quickly but there was a legal process that had to be followed and it would take time.

R Blair made reference to the high visible Police presence at the fireworks display and the lack of trouble at the event. He did however appreciate that it was not practical to have such a high Police presence at all times.

R Blair made reference to a scheme in Cornwall where Police were authorised to distribute sweeping brushes to youths who discarded rubbish in the streets and made them sweep it up immediately. V Addison advised that he was unaware of the legal position related to making youths sweep up litter they

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had discarded. However the Police could link in with the probation service to carry out this type of work.

K Parkinson reported that there was a good joint working relationship between the district council and the probation service. Areas were identified throughout the district where litter picking, graffiti removal etc could be undertaken.

D Consitt referred to the number of shops in the Dawdon area that were able to sell alcohol. V Addison advised that the licensing of premises came under the remit of the district council. Alcohol abuse was a problem which the Police dealt with on a regular basis and the availability of alcohol in Seaham was no different to elsewhere in the district.

D Consitt advised that underage kids bought alcohol from their local shop and drank it at the "Yellow Brick Road". He was also aware of a taxi firm that delivered alcohol.

V Addison advised that Sgt Smith's team undertook work to prevent youths purchasing alcohol but it was very difficult to stop it completely, and it was often parents who bought alcohol for their children. Police regularly checked CCTV footage to see which shops sold alcohol to underage children.

D Consitt reported that he had worked with people suffering from alcohol related problems and stated that all partners needed to work together in Seaham to try and deliver positive outcomes. Too many shops were able to sell alcohol and were willing to sell it to anyone.

V Addison agreed and stated that the Police had to deal with the aftermath of alcohol abuse on a day to day basis. However it would require legislation to stem the sale of alcohol, in the meantime the Police would continue to enforce the law where possible. Supermarkets were able to sell alcohol at very low prices and the Police were willing to try anything to keep youths off alcohol.

R Blair advised that people were concerned at the number of off licenses in the Seaham area. However, when residents had complaints they should make these known to the Police who would pass the information to the licensing authority, these would then be relayed to the Licensing Panel when determining applications for licences.

V Addison advised that the Police had a Licensing Team and a Licensing Officer both of which could be contacted regarding the sale of alcohol. These officers would also speak to the local authority at the appropriate time. It was once again pointed out that each can of alcohol had a unique batch number which could be traced back to where it was purchased.

At the last meeting V Addison provided details of an operation which had resulted in the seizure of £100,000 worth of drugs and a number of arrests were made. These operations were possible through good intelligence and it was essential that residents continued to provide the Police with information. All information supplied by residents was acted upon and confidential.

V Addison pointed out that crime levels in Seaham were low and were down 10% from the previous year. Seaham was a success story and whilst there

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were problems it was not all negative. There were problems associated with anti social behaviour but this was a problem for the whole community and everyone had to work to improve the situation.

K Parkinson suggested that C Ridley, Principal Environmental Health Officer – Licensing could attend a future meeting to discuss licensing issues.

AGREED that the information given, be noted and C Ridley be invited to attend a future meeting to discuss licensing issues.

(ii) **Dog Fouling/Litter/Re-cycling/Refuse**

K. Parkinson, Environmental Health Manager reported details of the Council's re-cycling policy and the targets that were imposed on the Council by central government. It was explained that District of Easington residents produced nearly 42,000 tonnes of household waste which was approximately 1 tonne of waste per household per year. It was explained that it cost £100 to landfill 1 tonne of waste. However, it cost £50 per tonne to recycle waste and the more people that used the scheme the cheaper it became.

Garden waste collections had been successfully introduced and the Council were on track to hit its 30% recycling target.

Reference was made to the situation in the recycling market. K Parkinson explained the position and pointed out that recycled material was being stock piled until the market picked up. However it would not be sent to land fill sites.

The Council continued to tackle the problems associated with litter and fly tipping. Fifty spot fines had been issued throughout the district 8 of which were in Seaham. The Council also had powers to stop and search vehicles if they were suspected of carrying waste that was going to be fly tipped. Vehicles without the appropriate paperwork would be fined.

K. Parkinson outlined the Council's strategy for tackling dog fouling and other dog related problems. There had been a consistent approach to the issue across the district since 2001.

A wide range of educational campaigns were held during the year which included free dog chipping and poop scoop give aways. The Pride in Easington campaign had also given presentations to local schools to raise awareness regarding dog fouling.

It was explained that stray dogs found roaming free were caught and taken to kennels where owners could reclaim them at a cost of £25 plus kennelling charges. In Seaham 26 stray dogs had been picked up, 8 were known and returned to their owners and 18 were taken to the kennels. There had been 50 complaints regarding dog fouling 32 of which had warranted the area to be cleaned up.

Residents were able to request heavily fouled areas to be cleaned and report any problems related to stray dogs to Envirocall.

R Arthur referred to litter problems created by people smoking on the street outside pubs and felt Landlords should be responsible for cleaning the area

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outside their properties. K Parkinson acknowledged the problem and advised that any specific areas of concern should be reported to Envirocall.

R Armbrister made reference to the amount of dog fouling on playing fields and felt appropriate signage was needed to prevent dogs being exercised on playing fields.

F Thompson queried if the Council had targets for how quickly complaints were dealt with. K Parkinson advised that the Council responded as quickly as possible to all complaints.

R Blair queried if the distribution of free poop scoops had reduced the amount of dog fouling. K Parkinson advised that there was a wide range of tools that were used to tackle dog fouling, however there was still a small minority who would not clean up after their dogs. It was a slow process of trying to change people's habits.

R Armbrister referred to the probation service not being allowed to remove black plastic bags of rubbish following a clean up. K Parkinson advised that various laws meant their vehicles were not allowed to carry waste.

D Consitt reported the amount of plastic caught up in the trees at Cold Hesleden Industrial Estate. K Parkinson advised that the Council had been in touch with tenants on the Industrial Estate as well as the Highways Agency. It was a problem along the whole of the A19.

A resident reported the lack of bins at Roseberry Park. K Parkinson advised that he would request an officer to visit the estate and carry out an evaluation.

M Hepplewhite made reference to the field adjacent Graham Way and explained that youths congregated at this location and left cans and plastic carrier bags. The Council collected the cans but the plastic bags were left. There were also a lot of Mc Donald's papers throughout Dalton Le Dale.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(iii) **Swimming Pool Feasibility**

P Irwin, Senior Cultural Development Officer advised that PMP Leisure Consultants had been appointed to carry out a detailed feasibility study and site option appraisal in relation to the need for a swimming pool in the north of the district. This work would include developing a robust business case, business plans, detailed demographic appraisals and supply and demand analysis.

It was explained that a strategic working group had been established which consisted of Seaham Town Council, the PCT, the District Council and County Durham Sport. All of the partner organisations had agreed to contribute financially to the costs involved in commissioning the consultants.

P Irwin advised that in terms of potential locations for the development of a pool in the north of the district there were currently three potential sites that were being considered;

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- Linking into the Building Schools for the Future programme for the rebuilding of Seaham School and develop a “dual use” facility
- Existing Leisure Centre site in Seaham
- Dalton Park Retail Park

It was hoped that the work would be completed by January 2009 and then the case would be made for the development of a pool. The consultants were looking at need but they also had to provide the evidence to funders in order to secure the funding. Sport England was also assisting in pulling together the evidence base. It was essential that it could be proved that the project was viable. However, the ultimate decision would now be taken by the new authority.

In addition P Irwin advised that the Council was involved in a project called “everyday swim” which was working with Seaham School to allow the swimming pool to be made available to the community. The project would be coordinated through the Leisure Centre and hopefully would be up and running by January 2009. It would be well publicised in schools in the area and there would also be a mail shot to local residents. Duncan Goodhew would also be involved in the project and would be taking some of the sessions.

R Arthur pointed out that Sport England had stated that they would be heavily involved in the 2012 Olympics and there would be very little finance left to fund other projects. P Irwin acknowledged this to be the case.

The Chair pointed out that it took a large population to sustain a swimming pool.

R Blair queried if local residents could help in anyway. P Irwin advised that all of the relevant stakeholders had been consulted and it was a case of waiting for the decision on where the pool would be located.

Following discussion it was **AGREED** that the information given, be noted.

JT/CB/SNF/081102
19.11.08