

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NORTH AREA FORUM**

HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 22 MARCH, 2006

Present: **Representing the District of Easington**
Councillor C Walker (Chair)
Councillors R Davison, J Goodwin, D Myers,
A Napier, C Patching and R J Todd

Also Present: Councillor J Walker – Seaham Town Council

Residents: P Taylor, B Mitchell, R Blair
M Coulson, D B Glover, W A Place

Apologies: Councillors G Bleasdale, A Naylor, B Burn, W Peardon,
J Haggan, S Mason, E Bell, P J Campbell, F Shaw,
J Maitland, E Mason, R Jordan and R Meir

1 CHAIR'S COMMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the District Council's North Area Forum and introduced himself, the Vice Chair and the Officers present. A representative from the Customer Services Section was also present to take any individual queries or problems at the end of the meeting.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 14 December, 2005, were **AGREED** subject to the following:

(i) **Parking Problems – Seaham (Minute No. 4(v) refers)**

Councillor D Myers pointed out that at the last meeting he had stated that a solution to the parking problems in Seaham would be to meter the car parks and employ traffic wardens, Councillor Myers explained that this had been suggested to him by others and personally he would like to see all the car parks in Seaham remain free of charge.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

3 FOLLOW UP FROM LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

(i) **Excess Water – Mill Inn Bank/Lodge Garage (Minute No. 4(iii) refers)**

P Penman, Environmental Services Operations Manager, advised that following the last meeting Durham County Council, who were responsible for the road gullies in this location, were contacted regarding the excess water that accumulated at the bottom of the Mill Inn Bank and the Lodge Garage following heavy rainfall.

North Area Forum – 22 March, 2006

The District Council was instructed by Durham County Council to jet the gullies at both locations however this had not helped the situation. Members were advised that works were scheduled to be undertaken within the next two months and a full repair of the gullies would be undertaken.

Mr D Glover pointed out that the reason for the flooding at the Mill Inn was due to the gully being located in the wrong position. P Penman advised that he would request the District Council's Highways Engineers to advise the County Council that the gully was in the wrong place.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) **Former Seaham Colliery Site (Minute No. 4(iv) refers)**

The Chair advised that all outstanding works in relation to drainage on the Seaham Colliery site had been completed and no further problems of flooding had been reported to One North East, the owners of the site.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

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

(i) **Windsor Road, Westlea**

Mr D Glover advised that a property at the entrance to Windsor Road, Westlea was in a poor state of repair. The gable end of the property appeared to be falling away and the plasterwork was rotting. Mrs P Taylor advised that this property was identified on the monthly estate walkabout and had been reported to East Durham Homes.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) **Northumbrian Water Limited - Westlea**

Mr W A Place advised that Northumbrian Water Limited (NWL) were undertaking work at Westlea and there had been pipes lying over the highway and pathways for approximately three weeks. The pipes were causing a disturbance to residents and were a danger to the general public. Mr. Place advised that the problem had been reported to NWL however no action had been taken to resolve the situation.

P Penman advised that the County Council were responsible for obstructions on the highway and details of the matter would be passed to the District Council's Highways Department for referral to Durham County Council.

AGREED that P Penman forward the information to the District Council's Highways Department for referral to Durham County Council.

(iii) **East Durham Homes**

Mrs B Mitchell expressed concern at the lack of progress and feedback to residents following estate walkabouts. Mrs. Mitchell advised that

North Area Forum – 22 March, 2006

following the Estate walkabouts the same problems re-occurred and little if any progress was made.

O Sherratt, Director of Community Services suggested that Mrs Mitchell speak to him following the meeting to determine the problem.

Councillor R Davison advised that he would also raise Mrs Mitchell's concerns at the next East Durham Homes' Board meeting.

AGREED that O Sherratt speak to Mrs Mitchell following the meeting and forward her concerns to East Durham Homes.

(iv) **New Telephone System**

Mr R Blair made reference to the District of Easington's new telephone holding message "all our agents are busy an agent will be with you shortly" and stated that this sounded too much like a standard call centre and did not reflect the welcoming nature of Easington District Council.

AGREED that O Sherratt forward Mr. Blair's concerns regarding the Contact Centre's "busy" message to the Contact Centre Manager.

(v) **Junction of North Railway Street/Vine Place**

Mr D Glover advised that a property at the junction of North Railway Street/Vine Place had an old sign erected on its gable end, which was deteriorating. Mr Glover felt that the sign was a part of Seaham's history and unless it was repaired a piece of the town's history would be lost forever.

AGREED that Councillor C Walker refer this matter to Seaham Town Council.

(vi) **Blue Bins**

Mrs B Mitchell explained that she lived in a bungalow and had been advised by the District Council that she was not eligible to have a blue bin for green waste recycling. Mrs Mitchell pointed out that flats in Northlea, that did not have gardens, had been allocated a blue bin for green waste recycling.

O Sherratt gave a detailed explanation of why certain properties had been allocated a blue bin for green waste recycling and advised that the Authority had tried to include households with large gardens however, this was not a perfect system. P Penman advised that he was unaware of any flats in Northlea that would have been allocated a blue bin for green waste recycling when they did not have gardens but he would look into the situation.

It was pointed out that any properties outside the green waste collection service could still have their green waste collected by Envirocall.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

5 CONSULTATION ON STREET CLEANING, REFUSE COLLECTION AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

The Director of Community Services gave a detailed presentation of changes to street cleansing, refuse collection and grounds maintenance.

It was explained that the District Council proposed to go to a four day week refuse collection from Tuesday to Friday which involved financial savings, reduced disruption caused by Bank Holidays and allowed a catch-up day if required.

With regard to street cleansing/horticulture, it was proposed to combine operations, create four new teams, each working in a zone and linked with enforcement and local residents.

The Director of Community Services asked a number of questions to establish a baseline of the public's views, the results of which were as follows:-

Question 1.

How important was it to you that streets were kept clean and tidy?

54% vital
46% important

Question 2.

How satisfied were you with refuse collection?

77% very satisfied
23% satisfied

Question 3.

How satisfied were you with street cleansing?

38% satisfied
23% neither satisfied/dissatisfied
31% dissatisfied
8% very dissatisfied

Question 4.

How satisfied were you with horticulture/grounds maintenance?

25% very satisfied
42% satisfied
33% neither satisfied/dissatisfied

Question 5.

Around your neighbourhood - dog fouling on the streets?

50% is a big problem
33% is a problem
17% is only a minor issue

North Area Forum – 22 March, 2006

Question 6.

Around your neighbourhood - litter and rubbish?

- 50% is a big problem
- 42% is a problem
- 8% is only a minor issue

Question 7.

Around your neighbourhood - fly posting and graffiti?

- 38% is a big problem
- 23% is a problem
- 31% is only a minor issue
- 8% is not a local issue

Question 8.

Around your neighbourhood - forced to choose the biggest problem was?

- 62% litter
- 38% dog fouling

Question 9.

Do you think things would improve if the plans were followed?

- 84% yes
- 8% no
- 8% don't know

Question 10.

Forced to prioritise, what was the most important area that needed attention?

- 58% Enforcement e.g. Fines
- 25% Operations e.g. More Sweepers
- 17% Education e.g. Work with Schools

The Chair thanked the Director of Community Services for his presentation.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.