

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
WEST AREA FORUM  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 10 JANUARY, 2007**

**Present:**           **Representing District of Easington**  
Councillor M Nicholls (Chair)  
Councillors B Bates and G Wharrier

**Residents**  
A Bates, J Sproates, E S Wilson,  
P Kirton, B Blair, M Simpson,  
C Unsworth, I Gooch, K Flanagan

**Representing Parish Councils**  
D Carr – Monk Hesleden Parish Council  
N Lee – Monk Hesleden Parish Council

**Apologies:**       Councillors Mrs J Freak, R Taylor, W Jewson  
and L O'Donnell

**1       CHAIR'S COMMENTS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the District Council's West Area Forum and introduced himself 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 4 October, 2006, were confirmed.

**3       MATTERS ARISING**

**(i)       Travellers – Hartlepool Street, Thornley (Minute Number 3(i) refers)**

Councillor G Wharrier advised that fencing had been erected in Thornley by the District of Easington to prevent travellers gaining access to open land. However, this did not fully resolve the problem and residents in Coopers Close had sought permission to erect fencing around their properties to further prevent access to their land.

L Wright, Senior Valuer had advised that in order to erect fencing in Coopers Close all of the residents would need to be in agreement and they would also have to pay for planning permission.

The Chair suggested that a site meeting be convened with representatives from the District of Easington's Estate Section and all interested parties.

**AGREED** that L Wright, Senior Valuer be requested to convene a site meeting with the District Council of Easington and all interested parties.

(ii) **Youll House, Thornley (Minute Number 3(ii) refers)**

Councillor G Wharrier advised that there was still problems related to youths drinking and taking drugs in the area around Youll House and anti-social behaviour around the bungalows at Greenwood Cottages. Councillor Wharrier asked if there was any prospect of the bungalows being let in the near future.

P Cox, Specialist Support Manager, advised that she would speak to Councillor Wharrier following the meeting.

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

(iii) **Coopers Close, Thornley (Minute Number 3(iii) refers)**

At the last meeting Councillor G Wharrier advised that in 2002 Northumbrian Water constructed a new Combined Sewer Overflow and storage tank at Coopers Close to limit the amount and frequency of discharge from the sewer into the Gore Burn.

During these works, Northumbrian Water took possession of 35 metres of land immediately south of the allotments. As part of the reinstatement of the land, the contractor replaced approximately 35 metres of Council owned fence along the ditch. Northumbrian Water remained responsible for any defects on the fence for twelve months following completion of the work. The fence was vandalised during the twelve months and the necessary repairs were undertaken and financed by Northumbrian Water.

On completion of the maintenance period in September 2003 the fence line along the boundary of the site was in good condition.

Councillor G Wharrier requested information in relation to the handover of the land once the work was completed by Northumbrian Water and handed back to the District Council. Councillor Wharrier was concerned that the records did not show if the fence had been replaced or who was responsible for providing the fence. The ditch was open and until a fence was erected access could be gained by small children, which could result in an accident.

Councillor Wharrier advised that since the last meeting he had received a letter from L Wright, Senior Valuer advising that the matter had been referred to the Health and Safety Executive for their comments. Councillor Wharrier pointed out that the Health and Safety Executive had previously been involved and that was not the information he had requested.

**AGREED** that L Wright, Senior Valuer be requested to contact Councillor Wharrier in relation to this matter.

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

(i) **Vandalism - Hesleden**

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Councillor D Carr, representing Hesleden Parish Council advised of problems in the village related to youths drinking, vandalism and anti social behaviour. The Police were called and advised of incidents but no action was ever taken. The Police advised residents to ring and make complaints in order that a file of evidence could be compiled however, the majority of times residents rang the Police they were asked to leave a message on an answering machine. The Police did attend Parish Council meetings and listened to the concerns of people in the village but no action was ever taken.

Councillor B Bates advised that following an incident he rang the Police continually between 8 and 11pm and all he got was an answering machine. It was a similar situation with the Street Wardens.

S Arkley, Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives, asked if the problems had been raised at the Street Safe Board Meetings. D Carr advised that it may have been.

D Carr explained that residents were increasingly frustrated with the problem and the fact that nobody listened to them or was interested. Street Wardens were visible during the day but were nowhere to be seen at night when youths were causing the disturbance.

The Chair suggested that Hesleden hold Police Surgeries similar to those held in neighbouring villages. Councillor B Bates once again explained that the Police did attend Parish Council meetings but there was very little they could do to help the situation. The Police had the names of those responsible for the majority of the problems and knew who they were.

Mrs Simpson, a resident advised that at one time there was 66 garages in Hesleden, and there was now only 12 of which 3 were rented, all of these garages had been lost to vandalism and it was only a matter of time before there was none. Due to the lack of garages cars were parked all over the village. Mrs Simpson would like to see new secure garages built and made reference to a scheme in Hartlepool where garages were enclosed in a secure compound and only those with a garage could gain access to the site. The small boundary walls and railings around the garages in Hesleden were used as a climbing frame by the youths to gain access to the garage roofs.

Councillor B Bates advised that if new garages were built he would prefer to see them located away from their current location as they were situated between aged persons properties, which caused the elderly residents problems.

Mr J Sproates, resident advised that he had witnessed garages been vandalised over and over again. He had also rang the Police and Street Wardens who made a note of the problem but never took any action.

Councillor Bates advised that the garage site in Hesleden was located in such a way that vehicles approaching the site could be seen from all angles and as soon as the Police or Street Wardens approached the site the youths dispersed. When the Police did speak to the youths they waited until the police had left and resumed the disturbance.

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D Carr explained the strength of feeling in the village in relation to what was happening and the fact that nothing was ever done to help the situation.

Councillor B Bates advised that Police Surgeries were held but still nothing was ever done to help the situation. During a recent incident a resident had live chickens thrown into her house. The Police were called and their response to the lady concerned was to put the dead chicken in the fridge until they could respond.

S Arkley explained that the District of Easington had recently purchased and erected re-deployable cameras in Blackhall and Dawdon. The purpose of the cameras was to monitor anti social behaviour. The areas chosen to test the cameras were picked on evidence provided by the Police as they felt they were the worst areas in the district. The District had purchased 10 cameras of which 6 were currently being tested. If there was sufficient evidence to prove that there were problems in Hesleden then they could be erected in the village.

S Arkley asked if the District of Easingtons enforcement teams had been made aware of the problems in Hesleden. Councillor B Bates advised that he did not think so. Mrs A Bates advised that previously there had been problems with reporting arrangements for statistics related to Hesleden.

S Arkley advised that if the relevant bodies were aware of who was responsible for the problems then the enforcement teams would be able to take action. B Bates advised that they might have been involved with one family who had since moved out of the village.

N Lee, Hesleden Parish Council advised that he felt the method of policing was all wrong, he felt that if there was a police presence in the village then the problem would be resolved.

Councillor G Wharrier suggested that the remaining 4 cameras be erected in Hesleden to gain evidence related to the problems that residents were experiencing. S Arkley advised that the equipment was very new technology and the system needed to be thoroughly tested before any more cameras could be erected.

N Lee felt that cameras were not the answer as they were usually located in the wrong place. S Arkley acknowledged that the cameras would not solve all the problems but they were a step in the right direction and were invaluable in gaining evidence of anti social behaviour.

N Lee pointed out that 90% of vandalism in the village was drink related.

**AGREED** that the S Arkley contact D Carr, N Lee and Councillor B Bates direct to discuss the way forward.

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### **(ii) Traffic Calming**

Mr E Wilson, resident advised of problems related to the lack of off street parking which resulted in residents parking around the village on the pavements. He suggested the hard standing be provided at East Terrace and Church Street and as this was also a school route Mr Wilson felt it would also help to slow the traffic.

The Chair advised that County Ward Members had an annual budget for traffic calming measures and often worked in partnership with other organisations to provide schemes within the villages they represented.

**AGREED** that the Chair report the matter to Durham County Council.

JW/MC/COM/WESTAF/070101  
11 January 2007