

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WEST AREA FORUM

HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 12 NOVEMBER, 2008

Present: Representing the District of Easington

Councillor M Nicholls (Chair)
Councillors B Bates, K McGonnell,

Representing the Parish Councils

B Nutter – Castle Eden Parish Council
D Carr – Monk Hesleden Parish Council

Representing Durham County Council

Councillors R Crute and A Cox

Also Present: K Stevens and P Taylor

Apologies: Councillors Mrs J Freak, R Taylor and T Unsworth

1 CHAIR'S COMMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the District Councils West Area Forum and introduced himself and the Officers present.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 30 July, 2008, were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) Horses – Haswell to Hart Walkway (Minute Number 3(i) refers)

K Parkinson, Environmental Health and Control Manager advised that since the last meeting the situation regarding usage of the walkway had not changed and the Council were still looking at the problem. The problem was trying to accommodate all the various different users, i.e. horses, cyclists and pedestrians.

Councillor B Nutter pointed out that it was a cycle way and there was no problem with cyclists using the walkway. It was the horses that caused the damage and should therefore be banned.

K Parkinson advised that Durham County Council had established a county wide group to look at this issue throughout the county. This included looking at access to the countryside and pathways and would hopefully be investigated further by the new unitary Council.

Councillor Nutter pointed out that this group should be advised to investigate the network of bridleways throughout the county. He explained that all of the barriers on the walkway had been removed and this problem had been ongoing for over 5 years. Councillor Nutter feared that cars would shortly be accessing the walkway.

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K Parkinson advised that it was illegal to take a car off road and onto the walkway. However, whilst it was possible to ban horses from the walkway there was the issue of where would they go. There were currently problems in South Hetton with residents complaining about the amount of horse muck in the streets and horse owners were being encouraged to use the countryside paths and walkways.

Councillor Nutter explained that when the six month trial period for horses using the walkway was initially introduced the horse owners had agreed to clean up after their animals but this never happened.

Councillor R Crute pointed out that there was always the potential for problems on the walkway when there were so many different users. Whilst he understood Councillor Nutter's frustration there was the problem of where the horses would go if they were banned from using the walkway. It was suggested that the remit of the county wide group looking at this issue should be investigated and the issue of horses using the network of bridleways pointed out. There was no reason why the walkway could not be respected and enjoyed by many different users. Banning horses from the walkway would be relatively easy, the difficulty would be in enforcing it as the Council did not have sufficient manpower or resources. Banning horses from the walkway would force them into urban areas which could result in further complaints from residents.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(ii) **Kerb It Collections, Wingate (Minute Number 3(ii) refers)**

K Parkinson advised that there had been some initial "teething problems" with the Kerb it collections but these had been rectified.

It was explained that there were currently problems in the recycling market and the Council were having to stock pile recycled waste. Waste was now being sorted at the kerb side which did take longer than previously. Any problems with the service could be reported to Envirocall.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(iii) **Victoria House, Wingate (Minute Number 3(iv) refers)**

K Parkinson advised that Victoria House would be advertised on the open market in the next couple of months and would hopefully be brought back into use as soon as possible.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(iv) **Blue Bins – Castle Eden (Minute No 4(i) refers)**

Councillor B Nutter advised that blue bins had now been distributed throughout Castle Eden. There were still some minor problems associated with the bin motors accessing certain streets, however this had been rectified by the use of smaller bin motors.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

(iv) **Mobile Skate Park (Minute No 4(ii) refers)**

At the last meeting Councillor B Nutter had queried the situation regarding the Council's mobile skate park and the fact that the Council did not have staff qualified to erect the equipment. At the meeting O Sherratt had advised that training was scheduled to take place at the end of August.

Councillor B Nutter advised that volunteers from Wingate Family Centre had expressed an interest in attending the training to enable them to erect the mobile skate park equipment but they were not advised of when it was to take place.

P Walker, Social Inclusion Officer advised that training was provided by the Council during the summer. Whilst interest in the training had initially been high, and 12 people had originally volunteered, only two attended the training which had already been paid for by the Council. The two people trained were from Peterlee Town Council. Unfortunately the volunteers from Wingate Family Centre may not have been made aware of the training.

The equipment was currently being held by the Community Transport Group who had agreed to store it for six months. P Walker advised that the equipment was in need of some minor repairs which would cost in the region of £700.

P Walker was uncertain if further training was planned but would investigate and advise Councillor Nutter of any further training sessions.

AGREED that the information given, be noted.

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

(i) **Overgrown Hedges**

Councillor D Carr, Monk Hesleden Parish Council reported that cars were experiencing problems regarding ingress and egress into Hesleden due to overgrown hedges. It was pointed out that the hedges could go for months before they were cut back and it caused visibility problems for motorists.

Councillor Carr advised that the hedges had recently been cut back but that was the first time in months. He had previously contacted both the County and District Councils regarding the issue but no action had been taken. It was felt that the hedges should be cut back on a more regular basis for safety reasons.

There were similar problems related to overgrown grass.

Councillor B Nutter advised that in the past Castle Eden Parish Council had also contacted the District Council regarding overgrown hedges.

AGREED that Councillor A Cox report the issue to Durham County Council.

(ii) **Castle Eden Conservation Area**

Mr K Stevens, a resident queried why Castle Eden had been designated a conservation area by the Council if they did not intend to spend any money

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in the village. Particular reference was made to planting and trees in the village and street lighting.

Councillor B Nutter explained that the majority of land in Castle Eden was owned by Castle Eden Estates. In the past Easington District Council, Durham County Council and Castle Eden Parish Council had all contacted Castle Eden Estates regarding tree planting in the village. Unfortunately they did not respond and no action was ever taken. Castle Eden Parish Council had previously held meetings with Castle Eden Estates and they had assured the Parish Council that there was a maintenance plan in place but once again no action was taken. They owned the land and therefore the District and County Councils were unable to carry out any work on it.

Councillor B Nutter advised that the Planning Department at the District Council could be contacted regarding the maintenance agreement for the whole of the estate.

It was suggested that Castle Eden Parish Council invite a representative from the Planning Department to attend a meeting of the Parish Council to provide an update on the situation.

Reference was also made to street lighting in Castle Eden and it suggested that the Parish Council contact Durham County Council in this regard.

AGREED that D Hannon, Principal Planning Services Officer be requested to contact Mr Stevens following the meeting to discuss this issue further.