

PUBLIC PROTECTION FORUM

6th April, 2006

PRESENT –

Representing the Council – Councillor Harker (in the Chair); Councillors Holmes, Mrs. D.M. Jones and J.C. Vasey.

Representing Outside Organisations –

Darlington Association on Disability –

Mr. G. Pybus.

Darlington Branch of the Alheimers Society –

Mr. J.P. Rodwell.

Darlington Community Safety Partnership –

Inspector B. Maudling.

Darlington and District Townswomen's Guild –

Mrs. A. Turnock.

Durham County Federation of Women's Institute –

Mrs. A. Eynon.

Heighington Village Hall –

Mr. L. Bedocs.

Independent Member –

Mr. K. Fridd.

Middleton St. George Parish Council –

Councillor S. Yorke.

Patients Council –

Mr. M. Smith.

Red Hall Partnership –

Mr. B. Bell.

Officers Attending – Assistant Director - Public Protection, Development and Environment Department and the Parks and Environment Officer, Community Services Department.

Apologies – Councillors B. Jones, Lawton, Lister and Ruck, Parish Councillor Welch and Mrs. M. Springett.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

24. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of the Public Protection Forum held on 13th October, 2005.

IT WAS AGREED – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

25. MATTERS ARISING – The Assistant Director, Public Protection advised the Forum that in relation to Minute 16/Oct/05, the Public Protection Service Plan Update still had several outstanding issues to resolve and that an update report would be submitted to a future meeting of this Forum.

26. STREET SCENE – UPDATE – Pursuant to Minute 15/Oct/05, the Parks and Environment Officer advised members of the progress to date on the Street Scene Project, which was undertaken as a pilot project within the Leading Edge Change Programme, to improve street services for residents, generate efficiencies, adopt good practice and modernise services focusing on customer needs.

He advised the Forum of the objectives of the design project; the key elements of the project, i.e. data capture, data analysis, concept design and detailed design; the main outcomes of the review; and the design proposals for five key changes to service delivery. The proposed changes to service delivery include area based working; changes to organisational structure and culture; strengthening of community engagement; the identification of efficiency predictions of £1.5m cumulatively over the next four years; and outlined four key issues of operational changes which would provide a more efficient and cost effective service. It was envisaged that the area based service delivery model would be launched on 3rd July, 2006.

It was stated that the Borough had been divided into five zonal areas with a team of 25/30 employees for each zone undertaking duties such as ground maintenance, refuse collections, litter picking, recycling and grass cutting. It was anticipated that the team members would become part of the community within their allocated zones and develop an appreciation and knowledge of the people and the area. Work was also continuing with Ward Councillors, Parish Councillors and community groups to ensure that the public were aware of the teams and the duties they undertook.

Discussion ensued on the requirements of the public and community involvement with particular reference being made to the work of the Heighington Litter Pick Group. A member advised the Forum that the Litter Group were holding a meeting in the Village Hall on 10th April and that a member of the Street Scene team were happy to attend. He also requested information/educational packs that could be passed to schools in order to raise awareness of litter and advised that flytipping in Green Lane was common practice due to Heighington residents being excluded from using the tip at Newton Aycliffe.

The Officers jointly advised that, as the timescale was quite tight, an employee of the Council would not be able to attend the meeting at Heighington Village Hall on 10th April but would attend a future meeting and as presentations were done to schools 18/24 months ago any available literature would be forwarded. With regard to problems associated with flytipping in Green Lane these would, if reported, be cleaned up and a surveillance of the area undertaken. It was also stated that residents of the Borough were declined use of the tips for various reasons

including the tip is within Durham County Council boundaries and currently at capacity and as trans-frontier waste has a financial impact on neighbouring authorities Heighington residents were turned away. References were also made to Government set targets on waste minimisation which may not be met if residents out of the County Borough boundary were using the tip which would result in neighbouring authorities being penalised. The permit system currently in operation at Newton Aycliffe tip was to deter trade waste from being deposited.

References were also made to the linkages being established between urban and rural areas, the Street Scene Teams being based within their respective areas, publicising street scene via Town Crier, local radio, Community Groups and general introductions by the Teams to the communities in which are based and finally, staff training being given to ensure all employees are able to undertake a variety of functions.

IT WAS AGREED – That the current position be noted.

27. WASTE MANAGEMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL OPTIONS ASSESSMENT FOR MUNICIPAL WASTE IN DARLINGTON - The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) to seek the views of Members of this Scrutiny Committee in relation to the recently completed Environment Options Assessment for Municipal Waste in Darlington.

The submitted report advised Members that as a Unitary authority, this Council is responsible for all aspects of waste management including the collection and disposal of waste. The disposal contract is with Premier Waste Management Limited and is due to expire in 2008. With this in mind, and the strict targets imposed by EU and UK government this Council is under pressure to plan an appropriate waste management solution and put in place as soon as possible.

Specialist Environmental Consultants recently conducted a Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO) assessment in October 2005 and their final report was published in January, 2006 (copies available at the meeting and on the Council's website).

Particular reference was made to the seven scenarios considered for the assessment, developed in consultation with officers of this Council, and the assessment methodology. Members also paid particular attention to the weighting factors, listed in the submitted report, used as part of the assessment of the BPEO.

The conclusions in the report indicated that diversion of waste away from landfill is the best option and that thermal treatment with energy recovery is favourable.

Discussion ensued upon the success of recycling within Darlington, shredding of trees on Red Hall creating piles of woodchips and bark which residents have used for their gardens, advantages of recycling collection one week and household collection the following, problems encountered by disabled people from wheelie bins on collection days, success of an incinerator based in Lewisham, problems encountered by residents of flats to access wheelie bins and store recycling products, possible wholesale change to the way refuse collections are made following the expiration of the current waste management contract in 2008 and replacement green recycling containers and blue paper bags being readily available for residents

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That the thanks of this Forum be extended to Mr. Westland for his informative presentation.

(b) That the current situation and possible options be noted.

28. HEALTHY EATING AND CLEAN AIR AWARDS – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) detailing awards available to businesses, which are administered by the Public Protection Division of the Council.

The submitted report outlined the three types of annual Hygiene and Healthy Eating Awards that were available, all of which had been developed by Darlington Borough Council with support from NHS Darlington Primary Care Trust. Details of the three types of award were highlighted in the report together with the current holders. It was also stated that awards are withdrawn from any caterers failing to maintain standards.

It was stated that the National Clean Air Award was established in 2004 by the Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation as part of a campaign to stop smoking in the workplace and also operated a franchise scheme that allowed those whose role it was to drive forward the smoke-free places agenda or to meet smoking cessation targets to promote the award at local level. The companies that had received the award in Darlington 2005 were highlighted in the report.

Reference was made to the relevance of the awards with the public places smoking ban planned to take effect in Summer 2007 and it was advised that Officers were currently exploring the use of a scoring or rating system, with scores being published on the Council's website, that was currently being piloted elsewhere in the country.

IT WAS AGREED –That the report be received.

29. DATE AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS – The Director of Corporate Services submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting consideration of the date and time of meetings of this Forum for the Municipal Year 2006/07.

IT WAS AGREED – That meetings of this Forum for the Municipal Year 2006/07 be held at 7.00 p.m. on the following dates :-

13th July, 2006;
12th October, 2006;
11th January, 2007; and
29th March, 2007.

30. QUESTIONS – There were no questions.