

## **PUBLIC PROTECTION FORUM**

13th October, 2005

### **PRESENT -**

**Representing the Council** – Councillor Harker (in the Chair); Councillors Hartley, Holmes, Lawton and Ruck.

### **Representing Outside Organisations –**

**Darlington Association on Disability** –  
Mr. G. Pybus/

**Darlington Branch of the Alzheimers Society** –  
Mr. J.P. Rodwell.

**Darlington Community Safety Partnership** –  
Inspector B. Maudling.

**Independent Member** –  
Mr. K. Frid.

**Patients and Carers Council** –  
Mrs. M. Springett.

**Patients Council** –  
Mr. M. Smith.

**Red Hall Partnership** –  
Mr. B. Bell.

**Officers Attending** – Assistant Director - Public Protection, The Licensing and Parking Manager and the Trading Standards Manger, within the Development and Environment Department and a Policy Advisor, within the Chief Executive's Department.

**Apologies** – Councillors B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Lister and Welch, Parish Councillors N. Welch and S. York, Mrs. A. Turnock, Mr. L. Bedocs and Ms. S. Stahl.

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

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

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

**15. STREET SCENE** – The Head of Policy submitted a report (circulated at the meeting) on the review of Street Scene which was being undertaken as part of the Council's 'Leading Edge' agenda. 'Leading Edge' is the next stage of this Council's organisational development and consists of a substantial change management programme.

Details were supplied of the main focus of the review which was to identify and improve the process or processes within each service that contribute towards the management of the external environment. The four key outcomes, which identified the scope of the Street Scene Review, were clean external environment; well-maintained external environment; well-designed external environment and safe external environment.

The project team, consisting of a selection of officers from Community Services, Development and Environment and Policy Unit have been tasked to deliver key objectives which were highlighted in the submitted report and have been working to an approved project plan. The early part of the review has been to scope the services to be included and collating and analysing data.

It was also reported that there was a need to educate people and direct resources to where they were needed and use them to the best advantage, the vision was to have a zonal approach whereby a group of operatives had the power to deal with all problems i.e. broken fences, litter, graffiti, grass-cutting and dog fouling, however, privately-owned land would have to follow a different process.

Following a question by a member it was reported that for some circumstances i.e. overhanging foliage from private-owned land, there was a reliance on external agencies and that statutory processes must be adhered to however it was hoped to provide a proactive and not reactive service. A member stated that he had noticed a real difference on the Red Hall Estate which was now clean and well kempt

Employees who had done the same work for 20 years or more has also been consulted and it was found that given the opportunity they would be willing to be re-trained as they felt constrained by the current processes. Community involvement was another key issue and it was felt that the involvement of children could play a large part in certain areas i.e. litter picking.

The question of Zonal Cleansers having enforcement powers was also discussed and members were advised that this was currently being looked at however it would be difficult to combine the two roles.

**IT WAS AGREED** – (a) That the position be noted.

(b) That this Forum be kept updated on progress with Street Scene and the implementation plan.

**16. PUBLIC PROTECTION SERVICE PLAN UPDATE** – Pursuant to Minute 26/Apr/05, the Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) on the progress made on the implementation of the 2005/06 service plan for Development and Environment's Public Protection Division. The submitted report highlighted the service objectives and performance indicators used to measure each objective based on the conventions used in the Performance Plus System which was now being implemented and made available to Members and staff involved in service planning and performance management. Performance Plus uses symbols to give an 'at a glance' summary of progress on performance indicators, objectives and the plan as a whole and was detailed at Appendix 1.

Also provided was a summary of progress (Appendix 2) on the Improvement Action Plans which were included in the Service Plan, the majority of which were on target with the actions and timescales.

The mid-year position on the implementation of the Public Protection Division Service Plan is positive, and it is considered that ongoing work during the remainder of the year will ensure that the plan is achieved with attention being given to those few areas of performance not currently on target.

**IT WAS AGREED** – (a) That the report be received.

(b) That a further report be submitted to the meeting of this Forum in April 2006.

**17. LICENSING ACT 2003** – Pursuant to Minute 8/Jul/05, the Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) on progress made in terms of the Licensing Act 2003 which transferred responsibility for the licensing of sale and supply of alcohol from the Magistrates Courts to Local Authorities. It was also highlighted that the new Act replaced the need for licensing of public entertainment, cinemas, theatres and late night refreshment houses with one lifetime Premises Licence together with the requirement of a Personal Licence (ten years' duration) to authorise the sale or supply of alcohol.

It was reported that during the last four weeks of the transitional period of 6th February, 2005 to 6th August, 2005 in excess of 70 percent of applications were received with twelve Licensing Sub-Committee hearings being held. A full breakdown of the applications was detailed in the submitted report.

Discussion ensued on how many Personal Licence Holders were required on premises during trading hours and if more than one Licence Holder would be appropriate for premises open long hours, 24th November being the date new legislation comes in and Personal Licences being valid for ten years and Premises Licences being valid for the life of the building.

**IT WAS AGREED** – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That the congratulations of this Forum in the processing of new licences be conveyed to all staff involved.

**18. TRADING STANDARDS – CONSUMER ADVICE** – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) on the Consumer Advice Service provided by Trading Standards for residents and traders of Darlington.

It was also stated that if clients enforced their consumer rights there was an economic benefit to the community, consumer advice played an essential part in the provision of intelligence and evidence for the enforcement of legislation and that by promoting consumer education consumers were empowered and did not suffer economic disadvantage and were fully aware of the problems encountered with scams, prize draws and junk mail.

Discussion ensued on electric blanket testing, the dangers of buying goods and services from 'cold sell' representatives and the amount and type of assistance given to members of the public who had fallen victim to these people.

**IT WAS AGREED** – That the consumer advice service provided by Trading Standards be noted.

**19. FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY AWARD** – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) which stated that the five Unitary Authorities in the Tees Valley, working in partnership with the Food Technology Centre at Teesside University, had obtained a grant of £445,000 from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to promote the safer Food Better Business initiative to catering businesses in the Tees Valley.

The submitted report stated that the award provided Darlington and the other Tees Valley authorities with an opportunity to enhance the ability of local catering establishments to ensure that they produce safe food and meet legal requirements. The initiative will allow the authorities to effectively engage with businesses through an advisory and educational role, co-ordinated across the Tees Valley region.

Following a question by a member, the Assistant Director – Public Protection stated that he thought mobile vans were covered as they are classed as catering businesses but that he would investigate and advise the member accordingly.

**IT WAS AGREED** – That the report be received.

**20. DARLINGTON HEALTHY EATING AWARDS** – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated)

The submitted report outlined the background to the Awards, which were developed in 2001 with the support of the NHS Primary Care Trust, together with the three main aims of the wards which were a good balanced diet, no smoking and high standards of hygiene. Details were also supplied of the three types of annual award and how the scheme was managed and operated.

The Chair stated that it was pleasing to see an increase in school participation in the scheme.

**IT WAS AGREED** – That the report be received.

**21. HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES REVIEW OF CONDITIONS** - The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) which advised members of a review of the conditions and policies pertaining to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers and vehicles and to Private Hire Operators.

The submitted report outlined the proposed changes, the outcomes of consultation with the taxi trade and Public Protection and Community Partnerships Scrutiny Committee and detailed the changes that had been agreed by Full Council in September 2005.

Discussion ensued on privacy to ensure that radio contact with the taxi control rooms was not overhead by passengers, the need to ensure that wheelchairs were locked down during journeys and the licensing of limousines.

**IT WAS AGREED** – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That the review of policies and conditions be noted.

**22. QUESTIONS** – There were no questions.

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