

PUBLIC PROTECTION FORUM

12th October, 2006

PRESENT -

Representing the Council – Councillor Harker (in the Chair); Councillors Hartley, Holmes and J.C. Vasey.

Representing Outside Organisations –

Darlington Association on Disability –
Mr. G. Pybus.

Darlington and District Townswomen’s Guilds –
Mrs. A. Turnock.

Darlington Federation of Womens’ Institutes –
Mrs. A. Eynon.

Heighington Village Hall –
Mr. L. Bedocs.

Independent Member –
Mr. K. Fridd.

Red Hall Partnership –
Mr. B. Bell.

Also in Attendance – Ms. H. Leighton, Civil Contingencies Officer, and Ian Clelland, a Community Warden.

Officers Attending – The Assistant Director Public Protection and the Environmental Health Manager, within the Development and Environment Department.

Apologies – Councillors B. Jones, Mrs. D. Jones, Lawton and Ruck, Parish Councillors N. Welch and S. York, Mr. M. Smith, Patients Council, Mrs. M. Springett, Patients and Carers Council, Mr. J.P. Rodwell, Darlington Branch of Alzheimers and Inspector Brian Maudling.

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

11. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of the Public Protection Forum held on 13th July, 2006.

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

12. MATTERS ARISING – There were no matters arising.

13. CIVIL CONTINGENCIES ACT – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) on the implementation of the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 the provisions of which came into effect in 2005 and 2006.

The submitted report stated that the Act had introduced new requirements on Local Authorities and other agencies which require new arrangements, new plans and revision/replacement of existing plans. Civil contingencies work was delivered in Darlington by the Durham and Darlington Civil Contingencies Unit which provided specialist support including writing and revising plans and managing training and arranging exercises. The Act also gave the Council new duties and regional strategic arrangements were currently being revised to develop those duties. Working Groups have been established to develop and deliver the requirements of the Act, with Darlington progressing the Business Continuity Group. The key areas of progress within Darlington were outlined in the submitted report. A summary of the Act and flow chart showing the development of regional strategic duties were also circulated to Members.

The Assistant Director Public Protection and the Civil Contingencies Officer also gave a joint presentation on the Civil Contingencies Act.

Discussion ensued on evacuation procedures in place during a bomb scare within the town centre, recovery and restoration following an emergency, which was the responsibility of the local authority, community risk register highlighting that natural disasters were more of a risk than airport or rail disasters as these risks were well managed and the involvement of the Police and emergency services during an incident.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That the thanks of this Forum be extended to the Assistant Director Public Protection and the Civil Contingencies Officer for their informative presentation.

(b) That the report be received.

(c) That a further report be submitted to a future meeting of this Forum.

14. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UNIT – The Anti-Social Behaviour Unit Manager gave a presentation to Members outlining the progress made by the Unit in addressing anti-social behaviour within the Borough.

It was highlighted that the Anti-Social Behaviour team consisted of 17 members of staff, dealt with gang nuisance, individual problem families and individuals, location hotspots and environmental crime including litter, fly-tipping, graffiti, fly-posting, dog fouling, abandoned vehicles and waste. The Team dealt with issues which came under the remit of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 for Anti-social Behaviour Orders and the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003/04 and Housing Act 1996 for issuing injunctions together with various Acts for Environmental Crime comprising Refuse Disposal Act 1978, Environmental Protection Act and Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996.

The Unit Manager highlighted the successes of the Team which included serving of an ASBO, Crack House Closure Order, Dispersal Orders and crackdown on nuisance motorbikes and in relation to Environmental Crime Fixed Penalty Notices that had been issued and investigations being undertaken to deter fly tipping. Also highlighted was the fear of witnesses to come

forward due to reprisals however certain crimes could be investigated on ‘hear say’ evidence and the evidence of Wardens.

Discussion ensued on the availability of Wardens and the need to leave a message on the answerphone as all messages were responded to, the process involved leading up to the final stage of issuing an ASBO to an individual, groups of Officers, Police and Agency workers having regular meetings to consider various methods to remedy problems associated with anti-social behaviour, hours of working of Wardens and problems encountered in rural areas.

References were also made to an Environment Agency and Environmental Health joint publicity campaign to deter fly tipping and to Fly Capture, a National Network to which any incidents of fly tipping could be reported. In relation to Dispersal Order it was reported that offenders did not generally move away from the area and therefore the hard core element of offenders could be targeted and that if registration numbers of nuisance motorbikes were taken the information could be relayed to both Wardens and Police and the appropriate action taken.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That the thanks of this Forum be extended to the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit Manager for her informative presentation.

(b) That a further report be submitted to a future meeting of this Forum.

15. SMOKING CONSULTATION – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) outlining the responses to two recent national consultations by the Department of Health on changes to legislation relating to the sale and use of tobacco.

The submitted report outlined the Government’s objectives through delivering smoke-free legislation and outlined the eight questions posed in the consultation document together with the Council’s response as determined by a joint meeting of Social Affairs and Health and Public Protection and Community Partnerships Scrutiny Committees. Details were also supplied of changes to legislation regulating the age of sale of tobacco which focused on the policy objective of reducing smoking prevalence among older children and young teenagers.

It was highlighted that the introduction of the Regulations could achieve the Government’s objective of protecting people from the effects of second hand smoke, however the issue of funding for the services to carry out the enforcement of the Regulations had yet to be resolved and the Local Government Association were currently in discussion with Government.

Discussion ensued on enforcement of the legislation in Village Halls and the need for a Scheme of Delegation to ensure the Regulations were adhered to and to the signage to be used in public areas in order to deter smoking.

IT WAS AGREED – That the report be received.

16. QUESTIONS – There were no questions.