

Minutes

Meeting of : Northern Area Committee
Meeting held in : Antrobus House, Amesbury
Date : Thursday 3 July 2008
Commencing at : 4.30 pm

Present:

Councillor M A Hewitt – Chairman
Councillor D W Brown – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: Mrs J Broom, M Lee, C G Mills, I M Mitchell, J C Noeken, J F Smale, F Westmoreland, G Wright

Parish Councillors: G Burt (Bulford), R Fisher (Amesbury), D Ridgley (Wishford), S Stubbs (Newton Toney)

Apologies: Councillors Mrs S L Dennis, J R G Spencer, I C West and K C Wren

Inspector Martyn Sweett, Wiltshire Constabulary

Officers: A Madge (Development Control), G Newell (Legal and Property Services) and P Trenell and J Hibberd (Democratic Services), Steve Milton & Marianna Dodd (Wiltshire County Council)

172. Public Questions/Statement Time:

There were none.

173. Councillor Questions/Statement Time:

Councillor Wright raised the issue of the Avonmead Estate in Durrington where the grass had not been cut for some months. He requested that the council cut the grass as soon as possible. The council's Legal Officer advised upon the possibility of serving an Untidy Site Notice requiring the owner to cut the grass. If the owner failed to comply then the council would be legally entitled to cut the grass and charge the owner. The committee requested that this course of action be enacted as soon as possible.

NB – Since the meeting further developments relating to the above issues have occurred. Please see Appendix 1 for details.

174. Minutes:

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 5th June 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Awarded in:
Housing Services
Waste and Recycling Services



175. Declarations of Interest:

There were none.

176. Chairman's Announcements:

- Members were informed that representatives of English Heritage would attend the committee's next meeting on 31st July 2008 to discuss the Stonehenge Management Plan and options for the Visitors Centre.
- Councillor Hewitt announced that he would seek further information regarding NHS proposals affecting doctors' surgeries in the area in advance of the next meeting.
- It was announced that the Northern Area Committee Christmas dinner was due to be held at the Holiday Inn at Solstice Park on 18th December ahead of the final Northern Area Committee meeting of the year.

177. Community Police Update:

Inspector Martyn Sweett of Wiltshire Constabulary updated members on local crime statistics and community policing issues. He undertook to look into a specific incident raised by Councillor Hewitt regarding the 0845 contact number.

178. Community Area Boards Development Phase:

Steve Milton, Wiltshire County Council's Community Area Boards Manager, gave a presentation on the development phase of the forthcoming Community Area Boards. Councillor Hewitt asked for volunteers to sit on a steering group which would shape the Amesbury area Community Board pilot scheme.

Resolved: that Councillors Broom, Mitchell, Westmoreland and Wright along with Parish Councillors Stubbs and Fisher serve on the Amesbury Area Community Board Steering Group.

179. Unitary Update:

Councillor Noeken informed the committee that the Boundary Committee for England had published its draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements in Wiltshire. The report proposed that the new unitary authority should consist of 98 councillors.

Councillor Westmoreland informed members that the final report of the Development Control Task Group would be presented to the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Transition Board on Friday 4 July and the Implementation Executive on Wednesday 9 July.

180. Community Update:

Parish Councillor Stubbs informed the committee that Newton Toney Post Office had been forced to close on Thursday 3 July because the provider of the reduced hours outreach service had withdrawn as a result of mismanagement by Post Office Ltd. Members agreed that a letter be written on behalf of the committee to reflect their concern over the Post Office closure (attached as Appendix 2).

181. Planning application S/2008/0717 - Construction of 22 flats (affordable housing) for Raglan Housing Association at former Texaco garage site, Amesbury, Salisbury, SP4 7DY for John Coleman:

Resolved: that this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Northern Area Committee due to a technical fault at the meeting.

*The meeting closed at: 6.16 pm
Members of the public present: 20*

Update on the Avondown Estate, Durrington
Issued by Reg Williams (Salisbury District Council Parks Manager) on 17 July 2008:

"It was discovered at the end of summer 2007 that the majority of the grass areas on the Avondown estate area, Durrington were in fact still owned by the family of the original land owners and developers. This situation came about after an area was sold by the family for a considerable sum of money. Once the situation was known, the local authority had no choice but to cease maintaining what was a private person's land. The family were informed immediately and asked to make arrangements to maintain their own land thereafter. As is known, the family have subsequently refused to make any arrangements resulting in the situation at the estate now of having terribly overgrown and untidy spaces. Despite a considerable amount of pressure by SDC by way of letters, threats of legal action etc this year, it took until early July to get the family to finally agree to a transfer of the land to the local authority. In light of the wholly unacceptable condition of the site, SDC are pursuing the formal transfer of the pockets of land as a matter of urgency. Quotations are being sought from a contractor to cut the overgrown areas, rake off and immediately re-cut in order to bring the area back to reasonable condition - this will happen in about 2-3 weeks time. Immediately the formal transfer has been completed, SDC will commence the routine maintenance of the areas."

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Tim Nickolls
Network Development Manager
Post Office Ltd
C/O National Consultation Team
FREEPOST CONSULTATION TEAM

8th July 2008

Dear Mr Nickolls

Regarding: Newton Toney Post Office

I write on behalf of Salisbury District Council's Northern Area Committee. We wish to express our dissatisfaction with Post Office Ltd's mismanagement of the introduction of a reduced hours 'outreach' service in Newton Toney. The failure to secure a provider for the outreach service *before* issuing a formal closure notice to the existing SubPostmistress was a colossal oversight which resulted in the Post Office being forced to close last Thursday, 3rd July 2008.

Post Office Ltd has a statutory obligation to continue the provision of postal services in Newton Toney. We therefore request that you restore the pre-existing twenty hours a week service in Newton Toney until an outreach provider can be found. This needs to be done as soon as possible in order to limit damage to the viability of the Post Office by the temporary closure caused by Post Office Ltd. We also expect that the expense and efforts of finding an outreach provider should fall on your organisation.

Through this matter it has also emerged that certain terms in the contract offered to outreach providers are unsatisfactory. The fact that outreach providers would be responsible for finding a replacement provider should they withdraw from a contract, and the fact that this may affect their core activities, are unlikely to encourage volunteers. Having already forced local residents to accept a significant reduction in Post Office hours and services it is disconcerting to find that Post Office Ltd are not doing all within their power to ensure that the alternative outreach service succeeds.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Mike Hewitt
Chairman
Northern Area Committee

CC: Tracy Marshall