

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE HELD ON 8TH SEPTEMBER, 2015

Present: Councillor Mrs B E Allen (Chair) and Councillors B Allen, Mrs M R Baird, E Bell, Mrs J A Bell, B Burn Jnr, Mrs H J Cahill, S Cudlip, Mrs S Forster, Miss S Morrison, N R Page, I Paul, K Shaw, C Snowball, B Taylor, K Younger

Apologies: B Burn Snr

Observers: Councillors R Arthur and Mrs G Bleasdale

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair advised members of this Committee and members of the public that in line with the amendment to 'the public bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960', which came into force in August, 2014, parts of this meeting may be recorded by photographic, video and audio means.

1. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests, prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

2. CRIME IN SEAHAM

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Inspector Darren Walton of Seaham Police who was in attendance to update Members on the measures being taken by the Police to combat crime in the town. A pupil of Seaham School of Technology had also indicated she would be present to hear Inspector Walton's address, however she was not in attendance. Members were reminded that four pupils from the Seaham School of Technology had completed a project in relation to crime in Seaham and had subsequently been invited to attend to hear Inspector Walton's address.

Inspector Walton began by saying that he had been provided with a copy of the letter from the school pupils and he felt that they may have based their project on published crime figures which had, in fact, related not only to Seaham but also to Easington, Easington Colliery and Murton. In this respect the figures quoted were in respect of the four areas collectively. Those figures collectively showed an 8% rise in crime with a 44% detection rate from April to now. He went on to say that actually Seaham itself showed a 13% reduction in crime from April onwards and a 4% reduction year to date with a 51% detection rate. He also provided the statistics for individual areas of the town: Seaham town, Dawdon and Parkside have a 100% detection rate month to date, 54% detection rate year to date with a 5% reduction in crime year to date and 18% reduction month to date. Deneside, Eastlea and Westlea has a 19% reduction month to date; however a 10% rise year to date due to garden ornament theft from 27 gardens within the area by two females who were subsequently apprehended and the goods returned to their rightful owners. In this area there was a 49% detection rate year to date. Burglary showed a 38% reduction month to date and 33% year to date. The figures overall for Seaham he considered to be excellent in comparison with other areas of the Force.

A member queried why in Church Street and on the sea front there was no longer a policeman patrolling and Inspector Walton accepted this had recently been the case due to lack of resources, however he would take measures to rectify this with immediate effect.

Another Member asked how the school pupils had identified the various levels of crime such as criminal damage, burglary and anti-social behaviour and Inspector Walton stated he was also somewhat confused and had subsequently written to the Head Teacher for clarification, but as yet had not received a response.

Asked whether there were any changes in the way statistical information was acquired and measured, i.e. were there any issues removed from previous recording techniques, Inspector Walton stated that the HM Inspector of Constabularies had actually introduced more stringent recording rules for crime. Members agreed that the figures stated for Seaham were excellent and that the Police should be congratulated.

At this stage the Chair thanked Inspector Walton for his attendance and his informative address and he then left the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30TH JUNE, 2015

RECOMMENDED the Minutes of these meetings, copies of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman

4. TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS ISSUES

a) Neighbourhood Services - Highways

RECOMMENDED the Neighbourhood Services Highways reports for the weeks commencing 6th and 20th July, 17th August, and 7th September, 2015, produced by Durham County Council, copies of which had been previously circulated, be noted.

b) Temporary Road Closure: B1287 coast road and Lord Byron's Walk

RECOMMENDED the Council note the Order made under Section 14(2) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act, 1984 to temporarily close the above road for a period of between 2 to 6 hours on Friday, 31st July, 2015 to enable a police operation to take place.

c) Temporary Footpath Closure: Webb Avenue/Wycliffe Road link

RECOMMENDED the Council note the Order made under Section 14(2) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act, 1984 to temporarily close a 6 metre length of the above footpath link from Monday, 27th July, 2015 for a period of up to 5 days to allow electricity sub-station replacement and cable jointing works to be undertaken.

d) **Total Road Closure – Lord Byron’s Walk**

RECOMMENDED the Council note the communication from Durham County Council which advised of a change of date in respect of a road closure at Lord Byron’s Walk which would now take place on Thursday, 3rd September, 2015 between the hours of 9.30 am and 4.00 pm to enable essential tree works to take place.

e) **Car Boot Sale Traffic Congestion**

The Committee considered correspondence received from a resident of the Manor Park Estate, Seaton who expressed concerns with regard to the increased traffic congestion when the car boot sale was in operation. In discussion Members recognised that this situation had increased in severity and drivers could be delayed for an extensive period of time as a result of this congestion. It was also commented that such a situation could be detrimental to the Town Council’s aim for Seaham to be a tourist destination as people may not wish to return as a result of this.

RECOMMENDED a letter to convey the Town Council’s concerns in relation to this issue be sent to Durham County Council with a request that they review the problem and provide a resolution.

5. **PLANNING ISSUES**

5.1 **Monthly List**

RECOMMENDED that the list of planning applications referred to all Councillors since the last meeting, namely 5353 to 5367 as circulated be noted.

6. **RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RECOMMENDED in view of the confidential nature of the following item, the formal resolution be hereby passed to exclude the press and public from the meeting pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act, 1961.

7. **LAND AT MALVERN CRESCENT**

Prior to the consideration of this item, Councillors R Arthur and Mrs G Bleasdale left the room and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

The Committee considered details of a recent enquiry in relation to surplus land at the above location, a copy of which had been previously circulated. The Town Clerk elaborated on the issue and Members submitted their views.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) The Council note the information now reported and the Town Clerk make the appropriate enquiries as instructed.
- (ii) In respect of planning issues and observer attendance the Town Clerk review the Standing Orders and report back to Members.

8. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED the Council note that no press opportunities existed from this meeting.