

RURAL NORTH LOCAL FORUM MINUTES



**20 JANUARY 2010 - 7.00PM
ALLINGTON VILLAGE HALL**

PRESENT

Chairman: Councillor Frances Cartwright - SKDC

Forum Members
Cllr Trevor Scott – SKDC
Cllr Paul Wood – SKDC and Long Bennington PC
Cllr Vic Kerr – SKDC and Westborough PC
Cllr Ray Wootten – SKDC and LCC
Cllr Chris Farrar – LCC
Cllr Alan Hubbard – Allington PC Cllr Helen Taylor –
Allington PC
Nigel Vernon – Ancaster PC, Carlton Scroop and
Normanton PC and Foston PC
Cllr Isobell Harvey – Foston PC
Cllr Christina Lees – Foston PC
Cllr Andrew Watson – Marston PC

Officers
Teena Twelves – Corporate Head of Sustainable
Communities,
Richard Wyles – Corporate Head of Finance and
Customer Service,
Jenni Gibson – Democratic and Scrutiny Support Officer

Press and Public 1

1 INTRODUCTION, WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Frances Cartwright welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Councillor Gary Greenhalgh (Fulbeck PC) and Councillor Kaberry-Brown (SKDC).

2 PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

1. Allington PC - Is the budget for winter maintenance large enough in view of the lethal conditions on Sedgebrook Road?

The Corporate Head of Sustainable Communities, Teena Twelves, referred to the handout distributed before the meeting. The handout was a statement from Lincolnshire County Council Highways with regards to gritting. There was no officer from Lincolnshire County Council present to speak on this matter, but

Councillor Wooten (LCC) advised the forum that a container of grit was due to dock on Monday.

A discussion then took place with regards to Sedgebrook Road in Allington. Foston Road and Gonerby Lane, which were both attached to the A1 were gritted, but Foston Road was barely used anymore since the new Gonerby Moor Roundabout made Gonerby Lane more accessible. Therefore the main roads to Allington were Sedgebrook Road and Gonerby Lane, but Sedgebrook Road was not gritted. It was suggested that the height of the railway bridge on Sedgebrook lane meant that gritting vehicles could not travel that route.

Agreed: the Chairman to contact Lincolnshire County Council Highways with regards to the potential gritting of Sedgebrook Road.

2. Allington PC - Why is there no consistency regarding the applications for planning and the amount of views / observations which are (or not) referred to?

A Member of Allington Parish Council said that they were confused by the way in which planning reports were written; there seemed to be more information in some than others. There also seemed to be confusion over the reasons that applications went before the Development Control Committee. Mrs Twelves explained that a lot of applications were dealt with at officer level. The criteria for determination was set out in the Scheme of Delegation. Applications went before the Development Control Committee if they were major applications, if they received a significant amount of objections, or if a district member requested it to go to Committee with a relevant reason.

Agreed: Teena Twelves to send a copy of the Scheme of Delegation to all Parish Councils.

3. Andy Roberts, Caythorpe PC - Can SKDC ensure the bus station pavements / bus stands are gritted? Also on a Saturday morning recently I noticed glass bottles littered the number one bus stop where people were waiting. Whose responsibility is it to clear it up and how do we report this on a Saturday?

Cllr Roberts expressed concern at the state of Grantham Bus Station. He said that the bus stops had been very slippery in the bad weather, but had not been gritted, and that elderly residents had been slipping when getting on and off the buses. He also noted that one bus stop had had broken glass all over the ground. Mrs Twelves said she would check who was responsible for the maintenance of the bus station. The out of hours emergency number for SKDC was 01476 590044 – but this was for emergencies only.

A discussion then took place on the bus services experienced by the residents of rural villages during the snowy period. Cllr Roberts spoke of Stagecoach buses driving straight past bus stops when people were clearly waiting for the bus. This had apparently happened a number of times in various villages

recently.

Agreed:

1. Teena Twelves to check responsibility for maintenance of the bus station.
2. Teena Twelves to talk to colleagues at LCC with regard to the irregular bus services experienced by rural villages in the snowy weather.

4. Andy Roberts, Caythorpe PC - What progress has been made in redeveloping Bartcliffe Square, Caythorpe for more social housing? Is there any progress on grants or incentives to encourage single occupants of council houses to move from 3-bed properties to smaller properties to free up stock for families?

Agreed: Teena Twelves to speak to Cllr Roberts about these issues after the meeting.

5. Andy Roberts, Caythorpe PC - Can you protect the OAP bungalow in Templeway Square and Sherwood Rise from the Right to Buy scheme?

Mrs Twelves stated that supported housing was protected from the Right to Buy Scheme. Concern was raised as to whether houses designated as supported housing could be de-designated.

Agreed: Teena Twelves to check if houses designated as supported housing can be de-designated.

6. Andy Roberts, Caythorpe PC - Is there any progress on establishing a point of partnership area officer at the underused Caythorpe Police Office?

The Corporate Head of Finance and Customer Service, Richard Wyles, advised the forum that a Customer Strategy would soon be asking the community what they would like to see going forward. A point of contact office in Caythorpe could be one of these ideas. However, a team in a remote site would likely be costly, and in order this to go any further, there would need to be proof that the scheme would be cost-effective and would satisfy demand.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING -

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd July 2009 were approved as a correct record.

4 UPDATE FROM THE LAST MEETING

Election results

Cllr Roberts (Caythorpe PC) asked if there had been any decision made as to whether election results would be sent to all parish councils. The Committee Support Officer advised that she had contacted the elections officer with regards to this, but had not received a definite response.

Agreed: Committee Support Officer to chase up a response from the elections team with regard to election results being sent to all parish councils.

Quality Status

The Committee Support Officer advised that she had tried to contact Richard Enderby of LALC, but to no avail. Members of the forum were of the opinion that in any case, they would prefer to hear from the district council. The main concern was as to whether the district council made any distinction between parish councils with quality status, and those without.

Mrs Twelves advised that parish councils were treated equally. There were benefits to quality status councils however, in that they partook in the production of their local plan. The Chairman felt that the benefits of a quality status was not necessarily to the parish council, but should be felt by the residents, knowing that their council is run efficiently with well trained councillors.

It was suggested that parish councils would like to take on responsibility for street lighting and mowing. Mrs Twelves advised that parish councils did not require quality status in order to provide these services; they needed to make a good business case.

Agreed: the Chairman to pass on the forum's wish that SKDC considers the benefits that parish councils with Quality Status could get.

5 BUDGET 2010 / 11

Mr Wyles, Corporate Head of Finance and Customer Services gave a presentation on the SKDC's budget for 2010/11. SKDC collected council tax not just for themselves but for Lincolnshire County Council (LCC), Lincolnshire Police and town and parish councils. The cash flow amounted to about £90m of which SKDC retained just £6m to help fund the services that they provided. SKDC did get grants from central Government for some services but were expected to raise the remainder through council tax and fees and charges.

Two thirds of the services that the Council provided were statutory and each year consultations are undertaken so that the public can have their say on the proposed increases for council tax. Central Government operates a capping regime which prohibits increases of above 5% and Mr Wyles referred to Lincolnshire Police which last year fell foul of the capping regime. The capping regime did not apply to parish councils, although they would have to engage with their residents to justify any significant rise in their precept. This year the

Government is expecting low council tax increases but has not given a figure although 3% has been mentioned.

For 2009/10 a typical council tax bill for a band D property looked like this:

• Lincolnshire County Council	£1039.68	75%
• Lincolnshire Police Authority	£174.06	13%
• South Kesteven DC	£119.79	9%
• Special Expense Area (if applicable)	£16.20	1%
• Town/Parish Council precept	£28.01	2%
• Total Bill	£1377.74	

Compared to other local areas SKDC is the lowest and is considered to be good value for money. The majority of funding comes from central government although the settlement is getting smaller and SKDC are expecting to receive only 1.2% (total grant is £10.1m). The future is uncertain with a parliamentary election and services such as health, education and police not bearing any cuts doubt surrounds local government. Cuts will be made but how much is unsure 5%, 10%, 15% - a 5% cut equals £500K for SKDC. There is a significant challenge ahead for the Council, the global economic downturn has had a negative impact on interest rates and investment income with an expected reduction on £250k and fees and charges are also down. The Council's response is:

- No budget growth in any services
- All staff vacancies held until business case is demonstrated
- Sharing staffing posts and utilising in-house skills
- Services that have seen reductions in income have seen staffing reductions (e.g. Building Control)
- Some services that can support fees and charges (either increases or new charges) will need to be considered
- Review of management and staffing in order to ensure resources are aligned to priorities
- Full service reviews to be undertaken during 2010/11 to ensure they are:
 - Providing value for money
 - supporting delivery of the Council's priorities
- This review will be supported by a series of workshops with our residents

The Council provides over a 100 services which include:

- CCTV
- Council tax benefits and housing benefits
- Environmental Health & Licensing
- Housing advice and homelessness
- Leisure and Arts Centres
- Markets and fairs
- Bus pass travel
- Planning and building control services
- Public Conveniences
- Street Cleaning
- Tackling anti-social behaviour
- Town centre regeneration & economic development
- Waste collection and recycling

When these services are compared with our audit family, councils that have a similar make-up to ourselves most services can be seen as performing averagely or above average such as waste collection. Planning performance was poor due to planning applications were required to be heard within a 13 week period. SKDC took the approach that it was better to take the time to consult properly, which sometimes meant being penalised for going over the specified 13 week period. It was noted that in any case, the performance of the planning department had dramatically improved since the audit commission's report.

Mr Wyles then spoke about the councils priority themes: customer first, quality living, quality organisation and good for business and how a number of actions under these areas underpin the work that the Council does such as promoting SKDC for inward investment and the Council's payment pledge to pay invoices within seven days to maintain good cash flow. Develop cleaner safer streets, improve health, well-being and lifestyle by working with partners such as the PCT.

Mr Wyles then outlined the Councils approach to budget setting and the proposed increases. The options for the proposals were:

1. **No increase** – this would mean service levels need to be reduced.
2. **An increase of 2.5%**. This would mean an increase from £119.79 to

£122.78 per year for a band d property. This equates to 6p per week increase (£2.99 increase for the year). This would generate £198K and enable the Council to maintain services at current level but mean that other proposals such as fees and charges would need to be considered

3. An increase of 3.5%. This would mean an increase from £119.79 to £123.98 per year for a band d property. This equates to 8p per week increase (£4.19 increase for the year). This would generate £254K and enable Council to maintain services at their current level.

Results received so far from the proposals from the article in SK Today and the on-line survey showed that option 1 was currently the most popular option.

- Article in SKToday
 - 46% Option 1
 - 25% Option 2
 - 29% Option 3
- On-line survey
 - 63% Option 1
 - 22% Option 2
 - 15% Option 3
- (as at beginning of January 2010)

Mr Wyles felt it was important that people had an informed discussion and dialogue before deciding on the options available which was why the issue was brought to the forums every year. He then circulated cards upon which people made the choice as to which option they preferred the Council to follow.

Following the collection of the cards the results for the Rural North Local Forum were:

Option 1 - no increase	1
Option 2 - 2.5%	6
Option 3 - 3.5%	2

Total of 9 voted

The Chairman thanked Mr Wyles for his presentation.

6 LOCAL FORUMS - REVIEW

Mrs Twelves read out a brief background to the Local Forums and resident

involvement in them. With the introduction of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act there was a new and far greater “duty to involve” local people in all that the Council did. In order to help achieve this, the district and county were working in partnership through the Lincolnshire Two Tier Pathfinder project together with the University of Lincoln. Half day workshops were being organised in February/March to evaluate how the forums work and look at ways to enhance community engagement.

Mrs Twelves asked that if any Member of the Forum was interested in attending the workshop, they leave their details with him or the Committee Support Officer at the end of the meeting.

7 MATTERS THAT THE FORUM WOULD LIKE TO CONSIDER AT FUTURE MEETINGS

- Quality Status councils
- Lincolnshire County Council – major projects in the area for next 6 months.

8 DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING

The Chairman said that a date and venue would be arranged at a later date. The Committee Support Officer said she would welcome any ideas for future venues.

Cllr Andy Roberts thanked the Chairman and Officers on behalf of the forum.

The Chairman thanked the forum members for their attendance, and the meeting closed at 8.35pm.