

SADBERGE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at 6 p.m. on Monday 14th January 2008 in Sadberge Village Hall

Present: Councillor Scaife [Chair]
Councillors Glew, Schott and Vickers

In attendance: Councillor Brian Jones Alastair Mackenzie – Clerk
Excluding representatives from Darlington Borough Council, there were 86 names on the attendance sheet.

1. Apologies

Apologies were accepted from Councillor Heywood.

2. Declarations of interest in items on the agenda

The Clerk declared an interest in item 10 – Parish Plan.

3. Bus services to Sadberge

Richard Alty, Assistant Chief Executive of Darlington Borough Council, was present for this item.

3.1 Richard Alty described the consultation process that Darlington Borough Council is going through regarding its budget for 2008-09.

- This is very much the beginning of the consultation process. Darlington Borough Council's Cabinet will officially start the consultation process at its meeting on Wednesday 16-Jan-2008.
- Decisions on the final budget will start to be made at the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday 19-Feb-2008. Cabinet meetings are open to the public.
- Darlington Borough Council is keen to hear representations about the proposals in the draft budget.
- Setting the budget for 2008-09 is challenging. There is a need to come up with an appropriate balance and to seek good value for money.
- Increased costs of adult social care and other services are having a very significant impact on Darlington Borough Council's budget. The Borough Council needs to save £2.6M just to stand still.
- The Borough Council is considering proposals to increase income and improve efficiency as well as unpalatable options such as making staff redundancy and reducing some services.
- One of the proposals in the draft budget is to stop the subsidies for the #17 and #97 bus services, and to help to set up a community transport scheme for the area including Sadberge.
- Darlington Borough Council supports 31 bus services. The subsidies for the #17 and #97 services amount to £132,000 per year, which is 23% of the budget for supporting bus services. The #17 and the #97 services are the only two services that are completely subsidised.
- On the sections not covered by other services, there are only about 3 - 4 people on each bus on average.
- There are good examples of community transport schemes around North Yorkshire. These schemes are run by not-for-profit organisations, using volunteer drivers. Community transport schemes can be much more flexible than normal bus services. A suitable vehicle might cost around £30,000.
- Sadberge on its own might not be big enough for a community transport scheme. It might be sensible to combine with other villages in the area north-east of Darlington.

- Council staff from the Transport Policy Unit will be happy to explore the options.

3.2 Sadberge Parish Council agreed to open up the meeting to contributions from the public.

The following points were made during the discussion:-

- Who would pay for the running costs?
- What is happening to the "section 106" contribution made by Reiver Homes in connection with the development of the former Sadberge School site?
In response, Richard Alty said that the Reiver Homes contribution would be the £30,000 that could be used to buy the community transport vehicle.
- The Parish Plan questionnaires showed that 11% of Sadberge residents do not have access to a car. However, there are other people who do not have access to a car during the day; e.g. households with one car which one person uses to get to work.
- Sadberge residents pay Council Tax for services that they do not use. It is reasonable to expect other people in the Borough of Darlington to do the same.
- People reach a stage of life when they need a bus service.
- How many of the other bus services subsidies are being stopped?
In response, Richard Alty pointed out that the #17 and #97 are the only services that are wholly supported. These two subsidies are the most difficult to justify from a value for money point of view.
- One of the options considered – but not recommended – in the draft Borough Council budget is the withdrawal of a subsidy of £168,000 for evening and Sunday services in unspecified parts of Darlington. This option is not recommended because the "One Darlington" theme of the Sustainable Community Strategy puts priority on neighbourhood renewal.
Richard Alty pointed out that there is a question of relative value for money and the numbers of people served.
- The Borough Council's draft budget also includes a proposal to withdraw the annual grants from parish councils. Sadberge Parish Council would need to raise its precept by 92% in order to make up the lost income. This is grossly unfair.
In response, Richard Alty said that Darlington Borough Council is unusual in making direct grants to parish councils. It is normal for parish councils to use the precept to raise money to spend in their own areas. The increase in Sadberge Parish Council's precept would amount to only an additional £4.84 per year for a band D property.
- Plenty of buses go past Sadberge on the A66. Arriva will not drop people off near Sadberge on the way past.
In response, Richard Alty said that Arriva make the decisions about how to run their services.
- Would it be possible to give Arriva a financial incentive to pick up and drop off near Sadberge?
Richard Alty said that it would be possible to discuss this with Arriva.
- There is a boarding and alighting restriction that means that the #17 bus is not allowed to pick up or drop off passengers along North Road. It has been suggested that this is because subsidised services are not allowed to compete with commercial services. However, there are no restrictions in County Durham and the #97 bus picks up passengers all the way into Darlington. Arriva should be challenged about this.
Richard Alty said that he will investigate this.
- The Skylink service between Darlington railway station and Durham Tees Valley Airport runs empty most of the time.
In response, Richard Alty said that he believes that the airport service is subsidised by the airport. He will check.
- Darlington Borough Council is acting more like a Town Council than a Borough Council.

- If you do not have a car, the bus is the only way to get to Darlington. There are no alternatives by foot or by bike. Walking to Great Burdon is not a safe option because of the poor path along the side of the A66.
- Residents of Beacon Hill need to walk up into the centre of Sadberge village to catch the #17 bus. The path is badly lit.
- Cutting both Sadberge bus services seems grossly unfair.
- Sadberge is likely to lose its shop and Post Office. There are rumours that Felix House Surgery may withdraw its prescription delivery service to Sadberge. How are people going to cope?
- The current bus service does not serve Sadberge well. It might be possible to get into Darlington, but getting back can be a problem.

3.3 Sadberge Parish Council strongly objects to any suggestion of stopping the bus services.

3.4 If the bus services are stopped, then an effective alternative public transport system must be put into place. A representative from Darlington Borough Council will be invited to the next Parish Council meeting to discuss the proposals for such a system.

The Clerk will work with Darlington Borough Council's Transport Policy people to prepare a structure for the meeting and, if possible, prepare a briefing note for Councillors.

ACTION: A Mackenzie

3.5 Councillor Scaife thanked Richard Alty for coming to the meeting and taking part in the discussion.

4. Darlington's Sustainable Community Strategy

Andy Robinson and Peter Roberts of Darlington Borough Council's Corporate Policy Unit were present for this item.

4.1 Andy Robinson and Peter Roberts gave a presentation on Darlington's Sustainable Community Strategy.

- The Sustainable Community Strategy is being produced by Darlington Partnership. It will provide a framework for all the agencies working in Darlington, not just the Borough Council. It will replace the 2002 Community Strategy, and will provide a vision for Darlington over the next 15 years.
- There are five key themes:
 - Prosperous Darlington – creating a vibrant economy and prosperity for all
 - Aspiring Darlington – enabling people to develop and achieve their aspirations, and to maximise their potential
 - Healthy Darlington – building health and well-being for everybody irrespective of social, economic and environmental constraints
 - Greener Darlington – ensuring an attractive and 'liveable' local environment, and contributing to global environmental protection
 - Safer Darlington – creating a safer and more cohesive Darlington
- There is not yet a clear statement of the vision.
- The Local Agreement is the delivery plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- The Sustainable Community Strategy will start to be finalised from about the end of January 2008.

4.2 The following points were made during the discussion:-

- The draft Sustainable Community Strategy appears to refer to Darlington as a town rather than a borough. Darlington is a borough that contains a market town, not a market town.
- "One Darlington" is an initiative aimed at narrowing the gaps between different groups of residents in Darlington. It was started by the realisation that the residents of different areas within Darlington currently have significantly different life expectancies.

5. Darlington Local Development Framework

Graham Farr, Principal Planning Officer in Darlington Borough Council, was present for this item.

5.1 Graham Farr gave an overview of the Local Development Framework.

- The Local Development Framework will replace the Local Plan. It will set the planning framework for development of land and buildings, and will cover the period up to 2021 - 2026.
- The Local Development Framework will act as one of the mechanisms for delivering the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- This is the second go at consultation on the Local Development Framework. Changes in the national planning context – climate change, housing shortage, etc. – meant that other Local Authorities' Local Development Frameworks were failing the "sustainability" test. Darlington Borough Council therefore decided to go back and re-do the Core Strategy document.
- Darlington Borough Council is currently seeking views on the Core Strategy: Issues and Options document. Comments need to be received by mid-February 2008.

5.2 The Clerk will read through the Core Strategy document and will prepare a briefing for Councillors at the next meeting of the Parish Council. **ACTION:** A Mackenzie

6. Minutes of the last meeting

In the minutes of the meeting on 4th December 2007 were agreed to be a true record of the meeting.

7. Matters arising

- 7.1 There has been no further news about the ownership of the land between 1 Hillside Terrace and Stockton Road. Darlington Borough Council's title deeds will not be returned from the Land Registry until the end of March.
- 7.2 The Planning Authority has refused permission to site a dwelling on the land north of Lea Close. Mr. Walker-Coates has agreed to vacate the land by the end of June. Darlington Borough Council will prepare enforcement action in case Mr. Walker-Coates does not leave by the agreed time.
- 7.3 The Planning Officer is still waiting for the independent report on whether the proposed agricultural operation justifies the siting of a temporary dwelling on the land near Beacon Hill.
- 7.4 Arrangements had been made to feed the feral cats in the in the garden behind 10 Dale Road so that they could be trapped and neutered. However, it was discovered that some cats were already being fed at another property in Dale Road, so it was decided to deal with those cats first. Unfortunately, the residents of that property became upset at the way that the plan was being communicated to other residents, and there has been a delay.
The Clerk will continue to try to arrange for the feral cats to be trapped and neutered.
ACTION: A Mackenzie
- 7.5 Ian Reynolds has agreed to refurbish the plaque on the village green at no charge. The plaque will need to be taken down and brought indoors for the work to be done. Alastair Mackenzie will ask the Sadberge Village Hall Association Management Committee for permission to do the work in the village hall.
ACTION: A Mackenzie
- 7.6 The Christmas tree is in place on the village green, and looks good.
- 7.7 Map of the footpaths around Sadberge. The Clerk has contacted the company that can supply a suitable base map, and is awaiting a reply.
ACTION: A Mackenzie
- 7.8 The Clerk will invite Yvonne Ramage to the next meeting to discuss the proposed bridleway from Sadberge to Middleton St. George and Darlington.

8. Planning

- 8.1 The Council noted the outcomes of the following planning applications:-
- Planning application 07/00822/FUL was refused.

- Planning application 07/00939/FUL was granted.
- Planning application 07/00940/FUL was granted.
- Planning application 07/00941/FUL was granted.
- Planning application 07/01054/FUL was granted.
- Notification 07/01107/TFC was accepted.

8.2 Planning application 07/01151/FUL, to allow conversion of redundant agricultural buildings into 9 dwelling houses at West Newbiggin Farm, falls outside the remit of Sadberge Parish Council.

9. Allotments

9.1 A Sadberge resident had enquired about the availability of allotments. The Clerk will give the resident the contact information for the people who administer the allotments.

ACTION: A Mackenzie

10. Parish Plan

- 10.1 The Clerk gave bound copies of the Parish Plan to those Councillors present who had not already received a copy.
- 10.2 The Parish Plan Steering Group has agreed to continue to meet to steer the implementation of the Sadberge Parish Plan.
- 10.3 A Parish Plan flyer will be issued during the third week of January. As well as announcing that the Parish Plan has been adopted by the Parish Council, the flyer will invite Sadberge residents to join working groups addressing specific actions.
- 10.4 Given the current threat to the bus services, the Parish Plan Steering Group has decided to defer the social event for the volunteers who helped to put together the Parish Plan.

11. Darlington Association of Parish Councils meeting with Darlington Borough Council

- 11.1 Councillor Scaife and the Clerk reported on the meeting that took place on 6-Dec-2007.
- 11.2 As requested by Sadberge Parish Council, the agenda included an item on Darlington Borough Council support for the implementation of Parish Plans. During the discussion of this item:-
- Richard Alty, the Assistant Chief Executive of Darlington Borough Council, described the Sadberge Parish Plan as an impressive piece of work and said that it would be a substantial and powerful input into the Local Development Framework.
 - Richard Alty also said that it was hard to see why there should be any recommendation to extend the Sadberge development limits.
 - Cliff Brown, Director of Community Services in Darlington Borough Council, said that we can count on co-operation and support from the Highways Department.
 - Cliff Brown also said that he would ensure that the Parish Council gets a proper response to the request for a weight restriction covering the whole of Sadberge village.
- 11.3 There will be an extra meeting of the Darlington Association of Parish Councils at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday 24-Jan-2008 to discuss the proposal to withdraw the Borough Council's grant to Parish Councils.

12. Correspondence

- 12.1 The Council agreed that the Clerk should continue his membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks for another year. The position will be reviewed at the end of 2008.
- 12.2 The Council noted the following correspondence:-
- Letter from CE Electric UK about distributing leaflets giving advice on preparing for power cuts.
 - Letter from Darlington Borough Council about a Holocaust Memorial Day on Monday 25-Jan-2008.
 - Letter from the British Wireless for the Blind Fund seeking volunteers in the Darlington area.

- Letter from Darlington Borough Council about E-learning libraries and a free Risk Management training session.
- County Durham And Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority's draft Integrated Risk Management Planning Improvement Plan (2008/09).

13. Next meeting

The next meeting of Sadberge Parish Council will be held in Sadberge Village Hall at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday 5th February 2008.

Alastair Mackenzie
Clerk

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 14th JANUARY 2008

I hereby certify that these minutes are a true record of the meeting.

Signed: Councillor M Scaife _____ Date _____