

Parish Council Liaison Forum

A meeting of Parish Council Liaison Forum was held on Monday, 16th March, 2009.

Present: Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Jackie Earl (vice Cllr Mrs Beaumont); Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Miss Barbara Inman, Cllr Terry Laing, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Barry Woodhouse.

Officers: Ms T.Connor, Ms Sh.Daniels, R.McGuckin (DNS); N.Hart (LD).

Also in attendance: H.Atkinson (Billingham Town Council); J.Walker (Egglescliffe & Eaglescliffe Parish Council); G.Rees (Grindon Parish Council); T.Bowman, W.Feldon (Ingleby Barwick Town Council); T.Hampton (Kirklevington Parish Council); J.Rosser, N.Rosser (Long Newton Parish Council); J.Turnbull (Redmarshall Parish Council); M.Tinkler, J.Wills (Stillington & Whitton Parish Council); B.Wren (Wolviston Parish Council).

Apologies: Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont.

PCL 28/08 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

PCL 29/08 **Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th December 2008**

Members considered the minutes of the meeting held on 15th December 2008, together with minor typing amendments suggested.

It was noted that most of the proposed Highway improvement works had now been carried out; with just the weed spraying works to be undertaken during April/May.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15th December 2008, as amended, be confirmed as a correct record.

PCL 30/08 **Plastic & Cardboard Recycling Scheme-Presentation**

Consideration was given to an update provided by Tara Connor (DNS Business Unit Manager) and Sheree Daniels (DNS Service Development Manager) regarding the roll-out in the Borough of the plastics and cardboard recycling scheme and changes to waste services.

Residents had requested the extended recycling initiative and had received a Communication Plan in August 2008 advising them of how the plastics and cardboard recycling scheme was to be introduced throughout the Borough. Over 100 consultation events were also held for residents and community groups. Information was contained on the Council's website 'Recycle for Stockton' advising residents of the scheme, and to date, over 500 new recycling kits had been issued as phase 1 of the roll-out, with stage 2 commencing in April followed by stage 3 in October.

With the introduction of such a facility, it had been determined that a 'no side waste' policy would now be adopted whereby the Council would no longer collect waste left at the side of a wheeled bin. Phase 1 of the introduction of this policy had been successful; and it was noted that the policy would operate a '3 strikes and out' rule and to date only a minority of warning letters had been necessary.

With the introduction of the above measures, recycling rates within the Borough had shown signs of increasing.

Reference was made to the plastic and cardboard containers to be used; and the accompanying advice regarding which items were acceptable. Despite an economic downturn in demand for recyclable materials, the Council was still currently able to source people that wished to recycle the material collected.

CONCLUDED that the update on the roll-out of the plastics and cardboard recycling scheme and changes to waste services, be noted.

**PCL
31/08**

Local Transport Act - Overview of Public Transport Powers

The Built and Natural Environment Manager advised the Forum of the key points arising from the Local Transport Bill, which gained Royal Assent in late 2008.

Despite much misrepresentation implying, wrongly, that Councils could run their own bus companies, the Act was designed to ensure that local authorities and bus operators were able to work more closely together to improve bus services by the following mechanisms:-

-Voluntary agreements and partnerships; whereby the local authority agrees to provide facilities or improvements, and operators agree to a service standard when using those facilities. This Council currently had such an agreement in place;

-Quality Partnership Scheme; statutory scheme for a minimum of 5 years prescribed by the Act allowing the local authority to define standards to be provided by any bus operator such as timing of buses, frequency of services and maximum fares; subject to no admissible objections from operators. The Council had in 2005 developed a Tees Valley Authority and Bus Operator Partnership to deliver quality and efficient bus services and had submitted a bid for funding (£60M) and had developed draft Quality Partnership standards. A decision on funding was now expected in April 2009 ;

-Quality Contract Schemes; with the local authority setting specifications of the routes, timetables, fares etc for bus services, effectively suspending the deregulated market. The benefits to the public must be proportionate to the adverse impact of the proposal on operators, in order to go ahead. This option was likely to be cost prohibitive for this authority and contained many legal 'loopholes';

-The Act provided for the transfer of powers to Passenger Transport Authorities (to be known as Integrated Transport Authorities) for issues such as road charging. Such a body was not constituted within the Tees Valley and the Multi Area Agreement and Tees Valley Unlimited offered a local solution with far wider influence.

In conclusion therefore, whilst the Act provided options for local authorities to influence bus services, the criteria was still subject to funding and the operators commercial position remained protected. For this reason, the Tees Valley approach was to work closely with operators under voluntary agreements and

partnerships; and to proceed with the Connect Tees Valley Major Bus scheme which was awaiting funding approval.

Parish/Town Council representatives expressed concerns at the actions of operators in ignoring concessionary pass holders in favour of fare paying customers on particular services, and the imbalance of frequency of some routes. The Quality Partnership Scheme would try to develop the required standards for routes in the future.

It was questioned whether or not there were any plans to integrate rail and bus services; with the lack of buses to Eaglescliffe Rail Station cited. It was noted that there were no powers over the commercial network to make such provision, and accessibility to that particular station was questioned. In the long term, it was hoped that the proposed Tees Valley Metro would achieve such integration of metro trains and bus services.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

**PCL
32/08** **Boroughbus-presentation**

The Built and Natural Environment Manager advised the Forum that the views of Parish/Town Councils were invited with regard to the proposed services to be provided as part of the Boroughbus contract for 2009-2011.

The present contract for Council supported bus services was due to expire on the 31st March 2009 and tenders for replacement contracts had been obtained from bus operators which indicated that the total costs for all services tendered for considerably exceeded the available Council budget.

Therefore, after evaluation of all of the services, Cabinet had authorised new contracts for all the present subsidised services for schools, early morning, daytime and De Minimis contracts (for diversion to commercial routes paid for by the Council). It was agreed to defer issuing any contracts on the revised 20 daytime service until it was clear that there would be continuing support for the service from Middlesbrough Borough Council and Durham Tees Valley Airport who contributed towards the cost. The retention of such services best preserved access to employment, healthcare, shopping and other services that were available during the day by public transport.

Consideration of evening and Sunday services, with the exception of the 556, had been deferred pending a further assessment based on cost, available budget and the potential for alternative provision using the Council's own bus fleet (e.g. demand responsive services like Community Lynx), especially where demand was too low to justify conventional subsidised services. It was also agreed not to issue a contract for the proposed X6 evening and Sunday service because insufficient funding was available to support more services. To enable the Council to meet legal requirements for notification of service changes, the existing contracts for evening and Sunday services were being extended pending the outcome of the assessment.

The evening and Sunday services that were under review were as follows:-

7A Stockton- Eaglescliffe-Yarm Willey Flatts
505/506 Stockton-Bishopton Road-Elton Park-Oxbridge
520 Long Newton-Hartburn-Stockton-Teesdale-Teesside Park
568 North Tees Hospital-Norton-Billingham-Wolviston
584/585 Stockton-Grangefield-North Tees Hospital-Thorpe Thewles
Carlton, Redmarshall, Stillington, Bishopton
593 Stockton-Portrack Lane-Billingham

The Forum was advised that the review of service provision had been difficult to make and had followed analysis of each service against affordability and priority. The Council was able to provide a demand based Community Transport service to supplement this provision. This service was available at a flat rate of £1.50 throughout the Borough following an established best route and frequency.

Reference was made to the effects of a reduction in the frequency of the Preston Park/Museum service, which would potentially lead to significant disruption to the public on a Sunday tea time. It was noted that the service would be focused on established trends and according to demand. It would also be necessary to review how access to such facilities were marketed in the future.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted and any further views of Parish/Town Councils be submitted to the Public Transport Manager.

**PCL
33/08 Youth Cafes-Update**

Further to an update requested by Ingleby Barwick Town Council, consideration was given to progress regarding the delivery of Youth Cafe provision in Ingleby Barwick.

It was noted that progression of the matter had been affected greatly by identifying an appropriate site suitable for the site of the cafe, and the accommodation in which the service would be based, and the affordability of such provision.

Representatives of Ingleby Barwick Town Council advised that relevant officers were to attend their next Council meeting to discuss further possible venues; and possible funding opportunities would be considered by the Town Council.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

**PCL
34/08 Issues Raised by Parish/Town Councils**

The responses to the questions raised by Parish/Town Councils were discussed.

With regard to the concern expressed by Ingleby Barwick Town Council regards the need to widen a pedestrian footpath adjacent to Ingleby Way, it was suggested that use of the Ward Councillors Small Environmental Improvements budget; or the Area Transport Meeting budget, may be an option for consideration.

In response to the update provided regarding the possible reinstatement of the phlebotomy service in Ingleby Barwick, reference was made as to whether consultation on this proposal had been carried out; and it was requested that this be clarified.

Representatives of Kirklevington Parish Council expressed concerns, initially raised at the Western Area Transport meeting, regarding what action the consultants (Arup) intended to take over vehicles, particularly motorbikes, exceeding the speed limit on an 'S' bend approach to the village, which was particularly dangerous for cyclists and walkers. The Built and Natural Environment Manager advised that he would investigate the matter and was happy to attend a future meeting of the Parish Council to advise on his conclusions.

Reference was also made to the criteria applied for the issue of salt bins and it was agreed that officers would look into a particular query with regard to consideration of an additional location for siting of a salt bin in North Close, Grindon and would advise the Parish Council.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

PCL **Local Assessment of Code of Conduct Complaints**
35/08

The Forum noted the procedure set out for the Local Assessment of Code of Conduct Complaints about members ethical conduct.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.