

Melton Community Forum

Monday 17 October 2016 : 6 p.m.

Council Chamber, Parkside

Present :-

Councillors

Pam Posnett (PP) (Chair)

Pru Chandler (PC), Jeanne Douglas (JD), Elaine Holmes (EH), Simon Lumley (SL), Joe Orson (JO), Alan Pearson (AP),

MBC Officers

Strategic Director (KA),

Senior Democracy Officer

Administration Assistant Communications & Member Support

MINUTES

No.	Item
1.	<p>Apologies for Absence There were no apologies received.</p>
2.	<p>Minutes of last Meeting and Matters Arising The minutes of the last meeting held on the 20 October 2015 were accepted as a true record of the meeting.</p>
3.	<p>Public Questions The following questions were received from members of the public in advance of the meeting and responses were made as shown below.</p> <p>1. <u>Dog Litter</u> 'Trying to get this dog poo stopped and getting dog owners to clean your dog mess up or get dog taken off them and banned from owning a dog for life?'</p> <p>Councillor Orson, Chair of Rural, Economic and Environmental Affairs Committee thanked the questioner for his work in the community around this issue and responded:-</p> <p>'The problem of dog fouling, although greatly improved since the introduction of the 'Dog Fouling of Land Act in 1996' was still an issue that continued to blight public open spaces, paths and pavements.</p> <p>Publicity and promotion in regard to the serious health issues, together with the obvious anti-social nature of the offence had added further weight to the shift of behaviour away from leaving dog fouling to the street cleaner or the weather and towards acting with a social conscience and 'picking up' after</p>

your dog.

This was a nation of dog lovers and all and any actions that affected this large group of citizens would always be controversial and infrequently contentious.

Intermittently raising the profile of irresponsible behaviour did ease the problem for a while then most commonly dog fouling again went on the increase. This was a problem that was very hard to curtail completely, after all people still risked and incurred fines for not wearing seat belts, even after years. Most difficult to stop was late night, early morning and 'out of the way' dog fouling, with many of the offenders likely to claim to be responsible animal lovers. People had dogs for a wide range of reasons and the degree of responsible dog ownership amongst them seemed to vary just as much.

Confiscations or life bans for dog fouling offences could act as a deterrent for some but for others it could be seen as no more than a challenge to overcome or as a sledgehammer to crack a nut. Equitable treatment and consistent enforcement could best tackle and reduce the problem. Current fiscal limitations and on-going reductions in Council resources greatly limited what actions might have been available to deal with the problem. What was most likely to occur was that such issues would be treated on a case by case basis, with a view to prevent the worst offences in the highest profile areas, maximising limited resources to have most effect. This problem was not easy to solve but balanced enforcement of almost any kind should have a positive effect if it considered the problem as unacceptable whilst recognising changes to personal behaviour were the most difficult to effect.'

JO added that at this time of year, he usually let a field on his land for the purpose of grazing sheep but was unable to this year, due to dog fouling on the land, which could cause blindness in sheep that graze there.

The questioner commented that he was a community dog controller and was actively educating dog owners about the issue of dog fouling and in particular the seriousness of this in areas where children go to school or play. He advised that he liaised with Borough Councillors and had met with the Council's Environmental Protection and Safety Manager but felt badly let down by the Council, due to what he saw as a lack of support. He stated that this issue had been an on-going problem and felt that he had received no meaningful feedback. He would like to see the Council taking action now.

JO confirmed that a meeting had been arranged between Councillors and the questioner on Thursday, 20 October 2016. Councillors will listen to the questioner's concerns and report back.

An attendee who was a dog walker stated she was extremely angry about this issue. They queried whether it was possible for Melton Borough Council (MBC) to do a targeted publicity campaign to raise awareness and deal with the problem and reported that Charnwood Borough Council used a video awareness programme for dog owners.

PP advised that MBC had met with local pet food producer Mars with a view to Melton becoming a pet/dog friendly town. This initiative would involve educating and training dog owners.

AP confirmed that he had been working with the questioner on an initiative involving placing posters targeting dog owners at local schools.

An attendee asked whether it was possible to monitor dog owners, particularly those who own a lot of dogs. A contributor advised that it was illegal for dog walkers to be without 'poop scoops'.

PC added that a farmer had lost a supermarket contract due to dog fouling on feeding fields.

KA advised that he was in favour of video publicity and innovative work that was low cost to promote awareness of this issue. He suggested liaising with Charnwood Borough Council to discuss what they had in place and consider whether this approach would be suitable for Melton.

2. **By-pass Road**

'Because it would take about 100 years for us to obtain funds from developers to build a by-pass, when was the council going to tell the government that no more houses can be built in Melton Mowbray until the government provides the bulk of the money for the by-pass?'

Councillor Posnett, Leader of the Council, responded:-

Government policy was that Melton must have growth. This meant not just building houses but having the infrastructure and developing the skills agenda that this country needed to succeed economically. It was not possible to provide a date that a distributor road would be built and completed. The Council's plan was until 2036 and the Council was working with the LEP and MP Sir Alan Duncan to place a bid to the Government, requesting funding to enable the process to commence. Some developers were actually either building part of the road or were giving financial contributions.'

The questioner commented that this response had been given for the past thirty years and Melton was as far away from building the by-pass road as it had ever been. He reiterated that he felt funds would never be raised from developers and that the Government was the only source. Something serious was needed in order for Melton to get the Government's attention.

PP confirmed that the Council had requested funds from the Government and had worked on a number of fundraising initiatives but she reiterated that it was the Government who provide finances for these schemes. She advised that Melton was closer to obtaining a relief road than it had ever been and gave a brief overview of an information brochure on the prospective bypass road. She highlighted that Sir Alan Duncan MP was working to get funds for the bypass road from the Government and suggested that those who wished to express their concerns over this matter should contact the MP directly.

An attendee raised the issue of Section 106 Agreements and stated that he felt that due to a lack of implementation, Asfordby residents were paying costs that should be met by the developers. He added that more was needed in relation to schools, highways, safety on roads and to deal with difficulties getting surgery appointments.

PP advised that Leicestershire County Council, the Police, Education and Health Service were responsible for these matters.

EH stated that she felt there should be a developer contribution towards the relief road for every new house built. She added Melton had to act within limits set by the Government and encouraged those present to write to the Government on the matter.

PC updated that the Council was at the submission stage for the Local Plan. Once in place, a community levy would be operated and Parish Councils would benefit most from the funds. It was vital more money was raised for things such as play equipment etc. The Local Plan meant great improvements for Melton. Section 106 Agreements could take up to three years to finalise and developers were not given permission until the relevant Section 106 Agreement was in place. This was a planning control.

An attendee stated that Councillor Rhodes had liaised with Sir Alan Duncan, suggesting that a 'plan' was required before the Government was approached for funds. He queried where the 'plan' was.

PP confirmed that this was the 'plan' the Council was submitting as its bid for funds.

AP contributed that the relief road was economically good for the town. The western road was more difficult to implement, so work would begin on the eastern road first once funds were in place.

1. **Open Question Session**

(1) 'Are there any further updates on what MBC is doing to encourage employers to implement the living wage?'

AP confirmed that the living wage was being phased in by the Government and figures showed there was an increase in employer implementation in Melton. He warned that there were cases of employers paying the living wage but decreasing hours and limiting overtime, in order to fund the increase. He advised the questioner that he would discuss his circumstances in detail with him privately.

(2) 'What was happening on the Jeldwen site and who owned the land?'

PP advised that this would be looked into, in order to provide a full response on the status of the site. She was not aware of who the owner of the land was but advised the questioner that she could apply to the Land Registry for the information.

(3) 'Who was responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the pathway between Lidl and the Co-op en route to Snow Hill as this was becoming increasingly unkempt?'

PP advised that the Council's Environmental Protection and Safety Manager would be notified of this concern.

- (4) 'The condition of paving stones in the town was getting worse and when would this be dealt with?'**

PP confirmed that the County Council was aware of the repair work needed and advised that work was currently being carried out to improve roads in the town and these type of outstanding issues would be addressed at the same time.

- (5) 'What is the current status concerning repairs to street lighting around the Church and Burton Street car park?'**

PP highlighted that ascertaining responsibility for the lights was key. Some were the responsibility of the Council, others Leicestershire County Council and others Town Estate. Those that fell under the responsibility of Leicestershire County Council and Town Estate had been reported to them as requiring repair.

- (6) 'Are you able to provide an update on the status of the Country Park Pavilion?'**

PP updated that further to previous meetings with the community, a final meeting was to be arranged to ascertain definite public opinion. If the majority were against funding its repair and maintenance, the Pavilion would be demolished.

- (7) 'Businesses were sweeping waste into drains at Sherrard Street, causing clogging. Could anything be done about this?'**

PP, AP and SL confirmed that these drains were cleared every eighteen months by Leicestershire County Council. They were due to be cleared again shortly and a definite date would be sought and provided to the questioner. From next year on, a new navigation system would be in place, which would show which drains needed clearing the most often. They advised that residents should email Leicestershire County Council with any such concerns to ensure they were added to the work programme.

- (8) 'Development had increased by ten percent. Would the Asfordby Neighbourhood Plan make it easier for more development in the area?'**

PC advised that Neighbourhood Plans were introduced by the Government in 2011, as part of the Localism Act. Once ratified by a referendum of local voters it sat within the Local Plan and could not overrule it. It would not make it easier for development to take place within the area of Asfordby, as it would identify where building should take place.

- (9) 'At the last Community Forum a question was asked concerning whether bus drivers had a key and access to the disabled toilets at St. Mary's Way and this was "taken back for further investigation". Was the Council able to provide an answer at this meeting?'**

PP advised that feedback had been provided directly to the questioner but she would provide a response at the next Community Forum. Also it was reported that new semi-automatic toilets were to be built and this may help with the issue.

(10) 'Could the car park at the Visitor Centre be looked at? As well as other issues, there was already a large hole in the car park.'

PP confirmed that the Council would arrange a site visit to the car park.

In closing the meeting, JO reminded attendees of the consultative role of the Town Area Committee and encouraged the public to attend the meetings.

2. **Next Melton Community Forum**

There was no date set for the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 19:20