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| MEETING | ACOMB WARD COMMITTEE |
| DATE | 9 FEBRUARY 2010 |
| PRESENT | COUNCILLORS HORTON AND SIMPSON-LAING, 20 RESIDENTS |

APOLOGIES

1. SURGERY FROM 6.30 PM

Councillors David Horton and Tracey Simpson-Laing answered questions from the public.

Sgt Lindsey Robson and Police Community Support Officer Neil Thompson answered questions on crime and anti social behaviour.

Michelle Watling, the Street Environment Officer displayed a DVD presentation concerning an initiative to reduce littering by teenagers.

Adam Bailey, from Waste Services did a display on the York and North Yorkshire Partnership initiative to reduce waste and increase recycling in the Acomb area. A booklet with lots of handy tips was distributed.

Simon Haddock, the Community Leisure Officer displayed the final design of the Playbuilder initiative for the Viking Road Park Area.

Adrian Phipps, Neighbourhood Management Officer answered questions from the public.

2. WELCOME AND MINUTES FROM 7PM

Councillor Tracey Simpson-Laing opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. The minutes were agreed and signed.

3. SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM

Sergeant Lindsey Robson gave feedback on the progress of the police Safer Neighbourhood Team. She stated that PC Graham Cooper was no longer with the team and had been replaced by PC Sarah Lacy.

Sergeant Robson gave feedback on crime statistics comparing 2008 to 2009 figures. Overall crime had dropped from 480 offences to 382. Whilst burglary dwelling had remained stable, there had been drops in auto crime, burglary other (sheds etc), criminal damage, thefts and violent crime.

More recently there had been a spate of burglaries from sheds in the area. A successful operation involving enforcement and target hardening had been launched to tackle this issue.

Sgt Robson highlighted the work done by the Safer Homes Handyman service which provided a free security survey for people and if they met certain criteria work would be carried out for free or for a small charge if criteria not met.

Other successes had included a high visibility campaign in the Beckfield Lane area which had reduced thefts. Operation SPOKE was also promoted where pedal cycles could be marked with a unique reference number to make return easier to the owner and assist with enforcement action against the offender. There were other crime prevention websites and registers where property could be logged. The councillors asked for these to be promoted in the next ward newsletter.

Q – Are we seeing many burglaries where the keys of cars are stolen?
Sgt Robson – Not in the ward, but I would advise keys are never left in sight and extra care should be taken if you own a high performance car.

Q – What is the definition of anti social behaviour as I suffer a lot of trouble in my area and there is nothing done?

A – The definition is wide ranging, I will follow up on the issues raised.

4. PLAYBUILDER PROJECT

Simon Haddock, the Community Leisure Officer Active Play, gave feedback on the Playbuilder initiative. This initiative is aimed at providing challenging and inclusive play areas for children aged between 8 to 13 years of age. The Viking Road play area has been awarded £47,000.

Consultation was undertaken across the ward with people invited to comment online or at an open event held at the school. Work was also completed with local schoolchildren in the area. People had been given the option of picking a final design, which was displayed. Simon stated that work on the project was due to commence in the first week of March with an opening event to follow.

Q – What is an inclusive play area?

Simon – Somewhere accessible to any child for example someone with a physical disability.

Q – How can you stop children wrecking it?

A – We have to be mindful of possible problems. The equipment being used is very robust. But we need to be vigilant and get the Safer Neighbourhoods Team to monitor any issues with local residents helping out by forming a 'friends of the area' group. We have also involved young people in all parts of the project, in the hope they will take some ownership and responsibility for the site.

Councillor Simpson Laing stated a similar approach to a project in Bingley had proved successful.

Q – What about CCTV for the area?

A – (Cllr Simpson Laing) It would be too expensive, more than the equipment itself.

Q – Why can't the fencing go all around?

A – (Cllr Simpson-Laing) We would want to take the fencing down. In Bingley they removed fencing and encouraged wide use of the area. This stopped it being damaged. The more people who use a site increases pride in it and we will give existing play equipment a paint.

5. PROPOSAL TO CLOSE THE SNICKET BETWEEN JUTE ROAD AND BECKFIELD LANE

Emily Tones, the Public Rights of Way Officer and Jim Shanks, the Police Architectural Liaison Officer gave feedback on a proposal to partially close the snicket between Jute Road and Beckfield Lane. Four options had been put forward and responses had been mixed. The option being put forward of the four was to gate the southern section of the snicket which ran from the back of number 54 Jute Road and came out between number 58 and 60 Jute Road. Maps were distributed to the committee.

Q – Why can't it just be closed as it has become unusable due to crime and drug dealing and it is covered in glass.

A – (Councillor Horton) There would be opposition to complete closure from other local residents.

(Councillor Simpson-Laing) We have asked for it to be cleaned on a weekly basis.

Residents stated that regular cleaning had not occurred and hedges were not cut, meaning the area was attracting high levels of anti social behaviour. They stated local people had stopped using the snicket out of fear and that an alternative bus stop was available. They asked that none of it be shut if the only option was to shut part of it, as that would only concentrate problems further.

Jim Shanks stated that part of his remit was to look at levels of crime and anti social behaviour and he stated that recorded levels were low. He also said consideration needed to be given to the elderly and people with disabilities who may use the snicket. He stated a convenient alternative would have to exist and it does not, therefore, closing the snicket would be almost impossible.

Q – Have you measured distance to bus stop?

A (Councillor Horton) The issue is that persons in Dane Avenue and Jute Road need access to that bus stop.

Residents stated that the elderly and disabled were too scared to use the snicket. They also stated that anti climb paint had not been applied after it was promised.

The councillors suggested that due to the number of issues being raised it would be sensible to have a site visit with the residents who live in the immediate vicinity of the snicket. This visit would include the Councillors, Safer Neighbourhood Team and the Public Rights of Way Officer.

6. MAINTENANCE SERVICES AND THE WINTER MAINTENANCE POLICY

Richard White Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services and Andy Binner Acting Head of Infrastructure, gave a presentation on maintenance services as provided by the City of York Council. Richard covered the history of the department and the main components of the service.

The Winter Maintenance Policy was also discussed. Richard stated that it was available online in summary form with full versions available at libraries. He stated during the recent bad weather spell that 44% of the road network was gritted which compares favourably with other councils and puts York in the upper quartile. However only 2% of footpaths were gritted and certain criteria applied as to which ones took priority. He stated that it would be impossible to clear a large percentage of footpaths as the Council does not have the resources to do this in manpower alone.

Richard stated that the Winter Policy, which had been effective for the last fifteen years, was being reviewed in light of the latest extreme weather, to deal with such severe events. He encouraged residents to view the policy and phone in their comments to York 551 551 or leave comments online at on the Council website. He emphasised the need to be realistic when making comments and to consider manpower and financial constraints.

He then went on to cover topics which had been raised so far in the consultation.

- Salt Bins – Two years ago a review of use was undertaken and the number of salt bins was reduced after it was found that 60% were hardly used. There may be a move to bags which cost around £5 as opposed to bins which cost £150.
- Gritting footpaths – Currently reviewing criteria for clearance but logistically impossible to do a large number.
- Secondary Routes – majority not gritted to protect dwindling salt supplies, prioritisation was necessary.
- Cycle paths – Grit has to be trafficked in to allow it to be effective, cycles do not achieve this, therefore gritting would be ineffective.
- Pot holes – Richard emphasised the need to report issues, extra resources had been supplied to deal with emergencies. So far there had been a 50-60% increase in reporting.

Richard praised the work done by the gritting teams who worked continually all through the bad weather including Christmas and New Years Day.

Q – Do you stop at the boundary when gritting?

A – (Andy Binner) We have mutual arrangements with partners on the boundaries but as a general rule yes.

Q – Which bus routes get gritted?

A – Frequent routes, these would be buses which ran at least every 20 minutes.

Q – There is debris such as grit etc, on the side of roads which makes cycling difficult, why has it been left?

A (Richard White) – A road sweeper would usually clear this up but we are holding back as it is useful to have this on the road in case of further snow falls. Once we are sure of no more snowfall then we will clear it off.

How are potholes being prioritised?

A (Andy Binner) – Potholes on high speed roads are being done first.

Councillor Simpson Laing raised an issue around some of the pothole repairs. Andy Binner stated that sometimes the tarmac dries out on the van and if reported they will be looked at. He asked everyone to report issues to York 551551 or email in on the Council website.

Q – Why do we spend council money on traffic humps when they are needed to repair roads?

A (Andy Binner) – Maintenance of roads budget does not cover humps

A (Councillor Simpson–Laing) Central government fund traffic calming measures and the money can only be used for this purpose. Humps are very effective at reducing road accidents and speeding.

Q – Why do we spend money repairing humps then?

A (Richard White) – We are obliged to repairs highways.

Q – Why has Jute Road been taken off the gritting rota as it used to be done?

A (Richard White) Nothing has been taken off, it should be done if it always has.

Q – On Sovereign Park there used to be a road sweeper but it has not been round for ages?

A (Richard White) We will feed that back.

Q – Why are the bollards on Borough bridge road at the junction going into Sovereign Park not lighted?

A (Andy Binner) – Legislation currently being discussed which may affect whether bollards are lighted, once this is clarified we will take the appropriate action.

Q – Why has the anti climb paint on the lamp posts and the cutting of hedges as promised in the snicket off Jute Road not been done?

A – (Richard White) We have noted that and will feedback.

7. LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

Councillor Simpson Laing asked if there were any comments about the schemes for 2010/11. The scheme list in the Your Ward newsletter was approved.

A resident asked if there could be something around football for young children, like soccer tots. The Neighbourhood Management Officer was asked to look into this.

8. HAVE YOUR SAY

A resident asked about future plans for the old Manor School site. The Councillors asked if an update could be given at the next Ward Committee meeting.

Q – Where does the 7 million raised by the Council in parking charges go?
A (Councillor Simpson-Laing) It would go into the revenue account.

Q – Why is there a shortfall in council tax?

A – (Councillor Simpson-Laing) Costs are rising all the time for raw materials etc. Also there has been a dramatic increase for demand in services such as adult social care.

Q – The disabled parking on Front Street near Farm Foods is constantly used illegally. I have reported this but nothing has been done? Can it be expanded and signs put up to reduce this problem.

It was agreed to report this although it was noted that it did not fall in the Acomb Ward boundary.

, Chair Councillor Tracey Simpson-Laing
[The meeting started at 7.00 pm and finished at 9.00 pm].