

Area Community Forums - Annual Report, May 2018

Introduction by Councillor Lewis Rose, OBE, Leader of the Council

Following on from a review in 2016/2017, the Forums adopted differing formats and styles to suit the subject matters on the agenda. The Chief Executive's 'Good News' slot has proved popular and showcases success stories and achievements made despite the challenges that face us at Derbyshire Dales District Council.

Forums were reduced to twice a year and it was hoped that a Youth Forum could be established. Whilst inroads have been made with schools and Derbyshire County Council's Youth Service, a Youth Forum has not yet been held, but work will continue to engage our younger residents.

The Area Community Forums continue to be invaluable for the District Council to meet with Dales' residents and stakeholders, providing an opportunity for local people to get involved with issues that affect them and have their say.

We were pleased to welcome colleagues from Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service, Derbyshire Constabulary and appreciate regular attendance from colleagues at the Peak District National Park Authority.

These Forums continue to be an opportunity for us to listen and for local people to tell us what they think about the services we operate on their behalf. I would encourage anyone who hasn't attended a Forum before to come along - we look forward to seeing you.

Councillor Lewis Rose, OBE – Leader of the Council, May 2018

2017/2018 Summary

Forums took place in October/November 2017 with a busy agenda which began with Good News, including the successful Great British Spring Clean where the District Council assisted more than 25 groups to participate. The presentation highlighted the Walking for Health programme which now hosts Nordic Walking tester sessions and also that 26 new businesses had started in the Derbyshire Dales with direct assistance from the District Council's business support schemes and a further 101 existing firms received business advice. One attendee commented that the Good News was a 'very useful overview of council activities'.

The Head of Resources updated on Council Tax & savings and invited attendees to comment on the District Council's Efficiency Plan.

Other important service areas were also presented at the Forums: Review of Public Conveniences and Provision of Management Services for Derbyshire Dales Leisure Centres.

The ever popular 'Question Time' session attracted questions on play areas, parking for the disabled, ongoing efficiency savings, affordable housing and highways issues. At the Central Forum, Matlock Hall Leys Park was praised as a 'wonderful facility' and small suggestions made for improvements. Comments made on public conveniences formed part of the consultation process and helped shape the review recommendations.

One attendee remarked that the Public Conveniences presentation was 'helpful in explaining changes to parishioners' whilst another commented on Question Time 'I think the principle of being able to ask officers and councillors questions in public is a very good one'.

At the January/February 2018 Forums, Good News items included the successful negotiation of the new 25 year lease for Bakewell's Agricultural Business Centre, shortlisting for the UK Housing Awards and community engagement on and subsequent adoption of the Built Sports Facilities, Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy.

The Central Forum featured a presentation on the Hurst Farm Regeneration Project and progress made with various partners since the award of Government funding (September 2017).

Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service consulted on their Review of Duty Systems at Day Staffing Stations, explaining how the proposals might affect Matlock Fire Station.

The District Council's Spending Proposals featured also on the agenda as part of the consultation for 2018/19 spending.

District Council and police personnel from the Safer Derbyshire Dales Community Safety Partnership gave a presentation on recent crime prevention initiatives and the introduction of a new CCTV system which had resulted in better enforcement and crime detection.

The Central Forum was pleased to welcome the Police Crime Commissioner who was aware of ongoing issues on Matlock's Dale Road and undertook to work in partnership with relevant agencies to address and find a way forward.

Issues for Question Time were around recycling, public conveniences, street cleansing & grass cutting, Community Speedwatch and included a thank you to the District Council for the recent works to Bakewell Recreation Ground making the area even better for the enjoyment of all.

One attendee described the Forum as 'very informative'.

The Forums also attract a number of 'remote' followers who engage via email, Facebook, Twitter or via our You Tube live screenings.

The year ahead

The Forums continue to be an important part of the District Council's engagement with public and a useful tool for consultation and hearing the view of residents, businesses and community & voluntary groups in the Dales.

For 2018/2019, the popular regular agenda items will continue as well as issues of local relevance which will be decided as we plan our Forums. Subject matters will be varied and hopefully attract wide audiences to attend.

We always enjoy seeing our regular attendees and look forward to welcoming new ones also in the coming year.

For more information email communityforum@derbyshiredales.gov.uk, phone 01629 761302.

Ros Hession, Community Engagement Officer – May 2018