

AREA FORUM (LEASOWE, MORETON AND SAUGHALL MASSIE)

Tuesday, 2 March 2010

Present:

Councillor	C Blakeley (Chair)
Councillors	I Lewis, S Williams
Lead Officer	Carolyn Curr (Head of Corporate Policy)
Community representative	Rob Seddon (Community Representative)
Streetscene Manager	Chris Jones
Area Service Co-ordinator	Tracey Smith
Merseyside Police	Sergeant Mike Roberts
Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service	Sarah Patterson
Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Amanda Farrell
NHS Wirral	Paul Edwards
Council Officers	Mike Collins (Community Safety), Sai Ming (Community Safety), Carol Sharratt (minute taker)

Apologies

Councillors	S Mountney RL Abbey, IO Coates
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1 **WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

Councillor Chris Blakely informed the forum that he would be chairing the meeting, as Councillor Simon Mountney was unable to attend the forum, and welcomed 10 members of the public to the meeting.

He introduced and welcomed Councillor Steve Williams and Carolyn Curr to their first forum meeting.

2 **AREA CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT**

Tracey Smith informed the forum that the area co-ordinators report included the minutes of the last meeting and partner updates. She asked if there were any proposed amendments or matters arising – None were raised and the minutes were agreed as a true record.

Minute decision: Resolved that the Area Co-ordinator be thanked for her report and the minutes be accepted as a true record.

3 SPECIALIST SEXUAL VIOLENCE SERVICES IN WIRRAL - JO WOOD FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT CO-ORDINATOR RAPE AND SEXUAL ABUSE (RASA) CENTRE

The Chair welcomed Jo Wood to the forum, to give a talk on the work of RASA.

Jo informed the forum that leaflets about the group were available at the meeting and informed the forum of the following:

- The group was started in 1986 following the rape and murder of a young woman in Borough Road, Birkenhead.
- Statistics show that one in four will be affected by some form of sexual violence.
- Contact is made by women of all age ranges (an 87 year old lady called the centre to talk about abuse from her father when aged 8-10 years, as she wished to talk to someone about this before she died).
- Rape / sexual abuse were a horrible hidden crime that mainly affects young girls/women and we are often the first people they confide in.
- The Group has a secret safe house in Birkenhead and has 607 live cases, 277 of which are within Wirral.
- Cases are dealt with depending on when they occurred and how the person wishes contact to be made (some people prefer to make contact just via phone / e-mail).
- We work closely with Merseyside Police on current cases, and the Police has a unity team (police officers, solicitors etc.) working together on such cases.
- Statistics across the country show that 6% of rapists, from the 50% that are reported, are convicted.
- The Group also offers help and support for male survivors of rape and sexual abuse.
- The annual income of the Group is £80,000.
- The estimated cost to the economy of the 629 new clients last year taking two days off sick was £518,000+. Many abused children / rape victims end up in prison and the estimated cost to the economy of trial and six month prison sentence was £26 Billion+

The aim of the Group was to relieve the emotional and physical distress by listening; helping people to live with what has happened to them and giving them back the power taken from them and empowering them to do what is right for them.

The Chair thanked Jo Wood for her presentation and the following questions / issues were raised:

Mike Collins – does the group go into schools?

A. Not at the moment as we do not have the resources for this, but we are working towards this with NHS Wirral.

Barbara Epstein – are training courses available for people that work with young people and if so how do we find out about these?

A. there can be arranged by contacting the Group, details were included in leaflets available at the meeting.

The Chair added that funding was a major issue for the group and much time and work was being put into trying to secure small pots of funding. We should all do what we can to support the group, and confirmed that he had tried to get £40,000.00 of funding from the surplus available from Wirral CDRP but had not yet been successful. Jo Wood confirmed that she had managed to secure half of the funding required for the next financial year.

Minute decision: Resolved that: Jo Wood be thanked for her presentation.

4

WIRRAL WARM HOMES INCLUDING HEALTH THROUGH WARMTH

The Chair welcomed John Vinson, from to give a presentation on Wirral Warm Homes.

John informed the forum that he worked for Energy Projects Plus, an environmental charity based in Wallasey, whose aim was to reduce the environmental and social impact of energy use within Merseyside and Cheshire. The charity worked with Cheshire and Merseyside Authorities and had more projects within the Wirral area than in any other local authority, aiming to offer advice, raise awareness and locate available grants to deliver / tackle the following:

- Reduction in household energy use
- Reduction of fuel poverty, with special focus in identified areas of high fuel poverty in the following areas:
 - Liscard
 - New Brighton
 - Leasowe/Moreton
 - Bidston
 - Woodchurch
 - New Ferry
- Carrying out visits to 9,000 - 12,000 homes, including:
 - 2,100 face to face contacts
 - 105 referrals for benefits advice
 - 210 energy saving advice
 - 2,350 affordable warmth measures installed
 - 210 referrals for fire safety checks
- Events and Talks - 20 talks and 20 community events
- Training to front line staff - 100 staff trained from POPIN, One Stop Shops, Citizens Advice Bureau etc.
- Affordable warmth measures
 - Insulation – CERT, Warm Front and Cosy Homes
 - Heating - Warm Front, Health through Warmth and Cosy Homes
- National Grants

- Utility Companies CERT - Carbon Emissions Reduction Target offering discounted insulation (currently as low as £99), Free for over 70s and for those on qualifying benefits
- Warm Front - up to £3,500 to install insulation or new central heating or to replace or repair broken boilers for home owners or tenants receiving qualifying benefits, allowances or tax credits
- Warm Front 60+ - £300 discount for the repair or replacement of broken boilers (Approved contractors must be used)
- Local Area Grants
 - Health through Warmth - at least 50% discount to install new central heating or replace or repair broken boilers or install supplementary heaters where someone in the household has a cold or damp aggravated long term illness

The initiative started in Liscard and we have exceeded our targets for contacts and referrals, and will be visiting New Brighton next. Visits within the Leasowe & Moreton area were due to start in June 2010 and will be carried out over three months. The area to be visited is Leasowe estate and around Pasture Meadow, but the roads had not yet be allocated. This will begin with a letter being sent to every household in the roads to be visited, giving details of the charity and the reason for the visits (stressing that we are not selling anything). The Police have been informed that the visits are being carried out. The visits will be done by a group of four people, who will:

- Issue a voucher to claim a free energy meter (from British Gas) and a power down device
- Offer energy saving advice
- Refer people to benefits advice that may result in increased income
- Look at entitlement to insulation schemes and heating grants

The Chair thanked John Vinson for his presentation and the following questions / issue were raised:

Q. How are the roads to be visited chosen?

A. This is based on the information provided by Wirral Council

Barbara Epstein – are you a private organisation; how can you ensure that vulnerable people are aware of who is calling on them, as they are often targets of bogus callers (there are concerns that badges may be copied and elderly people targeted); and can we have a list of the roads to be visited?

A. We are a registered charity; our representatives have id and will not enter any home unless invited. If people wish we can leave a card so that they can call us and we will be running at least one community event in the area (but such events are not always successful – we held one a few weeks ago and only 6 people attended). If you give me your contact details at the end of the meeting I will let you know the names of the roads we will be visiting.

Carolyn Curr – confirmed that she was pleased to hear that the charity was joining up with other agencies and asked if the measures were free for most people.

A. Many of the measures are free for those on certain qualifying benefits; the over 70s; people with the state pension as their main source of income; and people with long-term health problems. They are discounted for others. John confirmed that there were leaflets available at the meeting.

Minute Decision: Resolved that John Vinson be thanked for his presentation.

5 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following questions / issues were raised:

Why is the Council allowing planning permission for more fast food outlets within Moreton?

Chair – agreed that there were too many take-aways within the Moreton Cross area, and added that Planning Officers look at applications against set criteria and recommend the approval of applications if the proposed applications meet these. The Planning Committee approve applications where they have recommendations by the Council Officers, as 99% of appeals are approved where an application was refused against an officer's recommendation and the Council is charged for this.

Posters notifying the intention to convert a property are not displayed on the premises prior to permission being granted.

Chair – confirmed that posters are displayed prior to granting of planning permission, as this was a condition of planning legislation.

Barbara Epstein – Sunningdale flats has been targeted by the Fire Brigade re: security that has led to measures that are taking the soul out of the block (e.g. the removal of plastic flowers). The Fire Brigade refused to attend our meetings to talk about this issue and what can be used to replace items such as the flowers, as they said that it was the Housing Association's responsibility as the landlords.

Sarah Patterson – the visit will have been made by the Fire Safety Litigation Team and confirmed that would arrange for a visit by the Fire Safety Community Safety Team.

6 PARTNER UPDATES

Streetscene – Chris Jones informed the forum that there was an update in the Area Co-ordinators report and that there was a recovery plan in place for dealing with potholes and repairs following the severe weather conditions, and that were on schedule to carry out the repairs within the next few weeks. He requested that people report any areas of concern via the Streetscene call centre on 0151 606 2004.

Q. Barbara Epstein – asked if the Council had a list of vulnerable spots as part of its ice-clearing programme, and explained that the elderly residents from Sunningdale has to walk on a solid piece of ice to get to the shops.

A. The Council does have a winter maintenance policy covering strategic routes. The winter gritting policy sets out 10 primary and 10 secondary routes and gritters / officers were on call for 20 weeks and monitoring weather warnings. The main aim of the policy was to clear strategic routes and keep Wirral moving. Biffa cleansing teams and Colas were clearing areas along with Community Payback during the severe weather. He requested that areas of concern be reported via the call centre and that we will endeavour to get someone to attend to these.

Q. Member of the Public – added that the area outside Birkenhead Town Hall was bad, causing many slips – but that the Council response was that they did not clear pavements.

A. The Council has a priority to keep strategic routes clear, but that resources are diverted to deal with ice when possible, however, grit levels were rationed and controlled by Government this year, but that areas of concern should still be reported.

Q. Member of the Public – felt that the Council had coped admirably during the severe weather, but that there was still a problem with glass, syringes and burnt debris at Witley Lyons Estate field, and that this was not fair on the tenants that look after the area.

A. Councillor Ian Lewis – confirmed that Wirral Partnership Homes were running a clean up day and agreed to pass on date for this.

Mike Collins added that discarded syringes should be reported to via the Streetscene call centre or Community Safety (0151 606 2004 –day and 0151 666 5265 -evening and weekends), as they should be removed using appropriate equipment.

Q. Margaret Testo – reported that there was still a lot of rubbish and pigeon droppings on the pavement outside Fosters in Upton Road, leading up to Sayers, and that this had not been cleared despite it being reporting to Streetscene.

A. Chris Jones agreed to raise this with the Environmental Health Section.

Q. Member of the Public – mentioned a meeting with umbrella groups in Moreton and Wirral Partnership Homes where there was a request for grit buckets to be placed outside centres, and were informed that the Council were unable to provide these.

A. Tracey Smith – advised that the Area Forums had been allocated £5,000 for grit bins (costing £300 each full, to be refilled again). The placing of the bins needs to be confirmed and this would be decided following consultation with the local community, further information on this will be passed to the forums.

Q. Bob Seddon mentioned that he raised an issue re: the proposed health village in Moreton at the last meeting, which NHS Wirral agreed to report back on, but this was not mentioned in the minutes. He confirmed that his concern was that this had been proposed four years ago, planning permission had been granted two years ago and there was still now sign of when this would be developed.

A. The Chair confirmed that planning permission had been granted by the Council some time ago, but the application was now with the Government Office for the North West to make the final decision on this. Paul Edwards agreed to discuss this at the end of the meeting.

Carolyn Curr agreed to look into this and report back to the forum.

NHS Wirral – Paul Edwards informed the forum that there was an update in the Area Co-ordinators report and a newsletter available at the meeting; that included a list of activities taking place during 2010 - the Year of Health and Wellbeing – to improve general health and wellbeing, including a focus on mental health.

Q. Barbara Epstein – what age groups would be targeted for the activities?

A. Various groups are promoting a wide range of activities for all age ranges, and we can put people in touch with these groups.

Q. Chair – mentioned letter that has been sent to all Wirral residents on the new care records service, and asked for more information on this and asked why this was set up so that people have to opt-out rather than opt-in?

A. This was a national initiative (that was set up as an opt-in process) that would allow access, limited to certain health professionals, to information to enable them to treat patients safely e.g. details of allergies.

Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust – Amanda Farrell informed the forum that there was an update in the Area Co-ordinators report and a briefing pack available at the meeting; and mentioned the large development taking place at Arrowe Park Hospital on the new Women's and Children's facility due to open later in the year, and the high capital investment over the next two years on hospital and ward facility improvements – including single rooms to improve dignity and reduce infection rates. She added that there had been a 27% drop in cases of *Clostridium difficile*, as well as a reduction in the number of cases of MRSA.

Q. Member of the Public – what was being done about patients smoking outside the hospital entrances?

A. This was an ongoing problem and that, as managers of the Trust, we do have responsibility to undertake smoking patrols. Security staff carry out regular patrols, but there was no law in place at present to prevent people from smoking outside entrances, which would need to be introduced by Central Government.

Q. Councillor Ian Lewis – raised the issue of parking and the affect new investment would have on this, as it could bring in more people. He also asked about working towards free car parking.

A. The investment was aimed at improving existing facilities, and that there were no plans to extend the car park. At present there are 300 free parking spaces, and income from parking charges was used to maintain the car parks / repair barriers.

Q. Barbara Epstein – added that 300 spaces were not enough, and added that the park-and-ride scheme at Sainsbury's did not operate at the same time as the hospital opening hours, and asked why the service was not available on Fridays and if the proposal to put in a second tier for car parking was still an option?

A. Sainsbury's supports the park-and-ride scheme, but that it will curtail this at peak times as wants the parking spaces for its customers – which was why the service was not available over Christmas. She agreed to look into issue of the service not being available on Fridays and report back on this, and confirmed that the proposal to put in a second tier for car parking was ruled out many years ago as there was a need to encourage green transport.

Police – Sergeant Mike Roberts informed the forum of the following:

- The alcoholics using the bus shelter on Pasture Road was no longer an issue as one of the alcoholics had died and the other had moved away, however he confirmed that the area would continue to be monitored.
- All crime on Wirral was down compared to last year, with only a slight rise in robberies.
- In January a multi-agency day of action took place in the forum area, involving Police, Benefits Agency, DVLA and County Enforcement. This was a very successful day that led to three people being arrested on drug offences, penalties being issued for motor offences and a public house being closed down. A similar operation took place with British Gas revenue officers to tackle illegal use of meters, leading to the arrest of a number of people.

- Underage drinking / alcohol purchase is a main issue and we rely on the community to report incidences. The training measures for off-licence staff seem to be taking affect, as all premises visited in last operation did not sell alcohol to young people sent to try and purchase alcohol.
- Areas had been targeted resulting in fixed penalty notices for motoring offences.
- Get Out Days – an initiative where all police staff target area and spend the day issuing leaflets / questionnaires asking what needs addressing as well as issuing notices etc.

Q. Pat Gannon – parking problems in Kingsley Road / Kingsmead Road / Kingsway Road area are getting worse, she also asked why there was a police car in the station car park. A member of the Public added that cars were parking all the way up to the station

A. We have been issuing tickets in this area over the last week, but will continue to monitor this. The car belongs to the British Transport Police.

Community Safety – Sai Ming informed the forum that there was an update in the Area Co-ordinators report and that a race hate task group has been set up to develop systems to monitor, prevent and tackle hate incidents across all six equality strands (disability, gender, age, race, sexual orientation, religion and belief).

Fire and Rescue Service – Sarah Patterson informed the forum that there was an update in the Area Co-ordinators report and highlighted the following:

- Bonfire Strategy – this initiative, involving Community Safety, Probation Service and other partners, led to a marked reduction of secondary fires and incidents of anti-social behaviour.
- Small Fires Strategy – Wirral Community Patrol and Park Rangers have been issued with / trained to use portable fire fighting to equipment to enable them to be able to extinguish small fires on discovery.
- Trailblazers Mountain Bike Club – this has been set up at Bromborough Fire Station to encourage healthy diversionary activity, and this initiative could be spread out to other fire stations if successful.

Older People's Parliament – the Chair informed the forum that Mrs Testo had to leave the meeting early, but that there was an update on page 38 of the Area Co-ordinators report, and that any questions / issues on this could be sent to Tracey Smith.

Minute Decision – Resolved that:

- (i) **The partners be thanked for their updates**
- (ii) **Councillor Lewis to inform forum of date of planned clean up day for Witley Lyons Estate field**
- (iii) **Chris Jones to pass on request for clean up on pavement outside Fosters to Sayers in Upton Road**
- (iv) **Tracey Smith to keep the forum informed of consultation re: placing of grit bins in the area**
- (v) **Carolyn Curr to report back on latest situation re: proposed health village at Moreton**

- (vi) **Amanda Farrell to report back situation re; availability of the park-and-ride service on Fridays**
- (vii) **Sergeant Mike Roberts to arrange for parking problems within the Kingsley Road / Kingsmead Road / Kingsway Road area to continue to be monitored**

7 DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chair thanked everyone for attending, informed the forum that the next meeting would be held on 8th June 2010 and closed the meeting at 8.25pm