

AREA FORUM (HESWALL AND PENSBY & THINGWALL)

Thursday, 12 February 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	R Wilkins (Chairman)	
!	Councillors	A Hodson P Johnson S Quinn	P Reisdorf L Rowlands
	<u>Member of Parliament</u>	Stephen Hesford	
	<u>Community Representatives</u>	Tony Garrett	Mark Johnston
	<u>Older People's Parliament</u>	Sandy Cameron	
	<u>Faith Representative</u>	Toni Gibbs	
	<u>Lead Officer</u>	David Armstrong, Head of Finance and Resources, Children and Young People's Department	
	<u>Area Service Co-ordinator</u>	Tracey Smith	
	<u>Streetscene Manager</u>	Phil Miner	
	<u>Wirral NHS</u>	Russell Favager	
	<u>Wirral University Teaching hospital NHS Trust</u>	Pippa Roberts	
	<u>Merseyside Police</u>	Inspector Kate Cunningham	
	<u>Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service</u>	John Davies	
	<u>Council Officers</u>	Hazel Edwards (Corporate Services) Andrew Fraser (Corporate Services)	Cathy Newman (Community Safety)

1 **WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

Cllr. Wilkins welcomed everyone to the meeting, and reported that he had, sadly, to report the death of Graham Ashdown. Graham Ashdown was a regular attendant at the Forum, and participated in community matters regularly. He has done a great deal of work in the area, and will be sadly missed. Cllr. Wilkins asked that, as a mark of respect and remembrance, the audience stand for a minute in silence.

2 **AREA CO-ORDINATORS REPORT**

Tracey Smith asked whether there were any amendments to the Minutes, and reported there were no matters arising. It was agreed that the Minutes were a true record. Tracey asked that, as there were many items to get through, anyone who had any queries regarding any of the headings, please get in touch with her.

3 **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

Andrew Fraser from Corporate Services Department gave a presentation on how to become involved in the new Framework Development Plan for Wirral. A slide presentation was shown as he spoke. The plan will tell people where development will be allowed to take place, and for what purpose. The latest regional strategy had been issued in September 2008, which covers the whole of the Borough and is part of the Spatial Plan. Decisions on Planning applications will be announced, and the public will be told where the development will take place. It will tell you 'who is to do what, when, where' and there will be targets and indicators to let you know whether they are reaching the targets. At the end of the process there will be a Public Enquiry (which is now called An Examination) and an Inspector will look at it to test it and see if it is correct.

They are looking at the vision for a stronger economy, and it is hoped that this Vision will take us to 2025, and there are four documents which are available at the moment relating to this. One of the first (with the three other documents) is an Electricity Sustainability Appraisal Report on previous consultations.

The next stage will be policy and options once the vision and publications are set, they will then be looking at the alternatives and another set period of consultation. The public will be asked what their views are, and then the Council will look at the results and publish the Preferred Options Stage. Another period of consultation, and after this the public will see the full plan, which will be submitted to the Secretary of State. Date possibly 2011. Forum members will already have copies of the documents, but if you do not have one, please ask and it will be sent to you free of charge. You can also be connected to the contact data-base, and it will keep you up to date over the next couple of years. If you have comments, they must be made in writing, by e-mail or fax, but ALL WILL BE PUBLISHED at some point. They will begin on-line on the 27th March at 5 p.m.

Questions.

Ken Gethin asked whether this was going to be cheaper than the old way of consultation because we are supposed to be trying to save money.

Andrew Fraser could not answer that, but stated that it was unlikely to be cheaper.

Ken reported after the meeting the name of the system that might be worth contacting, as he understands it is completely free. **LINUX SYSTEM.**

Tony Garrett stated that he is very pleased with this document which is including the very comprehensive proposal for the electrification of the Bidston/Wrexham line, and he hopes that this will happen. He does see that there is a necessity for land to be set aside near stations to provide for 'Park and Ride'

4 **PARTNER ORGANISATIONS UPDATE**

Streetscene. Phil Miner reported that funding has been made available to the Local Authority by the Government, and the decision has been made to spend it on a Pedestrian Refuge at Telegraph Road/Lightfoot Lane also the provision of dropped kerbs as Old Wood Road and other roads in Pensby.

NHS Wirral. Russell Favager reported that there has been a national recommendation in Lord Darzi's review that, as the public did not always know what the PCT did or where the boundaries were between organisations, they are now to be called Wirral NHS. He reported that there has been an unprecedented 12.5% increase in the call-out for ambulances, and there was very high levels of usage of A&E. Up to 50% of the patients in A&E could have been treated by more appropriate NHS services such Walk-In Centres, GP's Pharmacist and NHS Direct. A comment was made that the Walk-In Centre was closed, what should people do? Russell Favager commented that he was not aware the WIC was closed, there had been some re-furbishment going on but he didn't think it had closed.

Sandy Cameron asked if the change of title will be a further cost, and is it the end of the need for Town Planning for the Health Centre, as he understood it had been withdrawn. Kathy Doran had said that the cost of the Health Centre so far was in the region of £75,000., but a month later a letter had been received asking for a breakdown of the cost and it had jumped to £117,000. How much more has it gone up since November? A letter had been received from the Architects including their fees for planning, drawings for buildings etc. with the figure of £117,000. Russell Favager said that he did not have a detailed breakdown of the costs but he doubted if the increase had occurred just in the last few months. It was more likely the original figure quoted by Kathy Doran was direct costs on the scheme and the written figure now included all associated costs such as legal fees. A comment was made that they are applying for the glasshouse site, and that the area has been drawn with an access road from Woodchurch Road. This is felt by some people to be an extremely dangerous junction, and there will be a serious accident (or many) if this does go ahead. Many people were very unhappy about the proposal for The Warrens, particularly with the entrance at the road junction.

Mrs. Ite Rafferty had a letter stating that the purchase has gone ahead, the Cabinet have taken all into account, and have agreed, but she understands that there is a second letter out. David Armstrong replied that the position is that the Council will enter into the sale of the land, subject to the Planning Permission being granted. Russell Favager commented that it was actually a lease of the land.

Sandy Cameron asked, in view of the proposed changes of the Local Development framework, are these relevant. Andrew Fraser said that the document will not come

into force until 2011, and until then, nothing will change. A remark was made that it is to be hoped that the Councillors will take this on board, and there was a great deal of opposition to the proposal, particularly because of the entrance to the site.

Frank Kinlan stated that he has said for the last four years that there has been land in Heswall for the proposed larger surgeries. Russell Favager said that they had looked at many sites over the last 8 years some of which had been mentioned, but none of them were suitable, and that 85% of the patients and 78% of local residents were in favour of the change of sites. Further uproar, with many suggestion various sites, but none had met the criteria required. A site at the corner of Pensby Road and Irby Road was mentioned, but it was pointed out that this was, again, a very busy junction, and it had been a garage, so there might be pollution, even though petrol had not been sold there. Townsend Avenue was a larger site than was required, and they would not consider this site because it is Council property.

Clare, who is a patient of the Practice in Heswall, is in favour of it. She had a DVT and could not get treatment needed because there was, literally, nowhere to go, and these new Practice Surgeries are needed. The work has to be done fairly soon, because they cannot go upstairs at Thingwall. The new scheme should also provide for the Citizen Advice Bureau to go into surgeries so that people can see them more easily, and avoid having to go to Heswall Library. (Another nail in the libraries?)

Sandy Cameron asked Stephen Hesford whether he still supports the need for the new Health Centre. He replied that this has been going on for ten years, and he still supports it. Sandra Tripp said there is 100% need for the Green Belt, but there is 100% need for the new Health Centre. She had met a Doctor and asked him "have you had any luck?" He replied "We are going for the Warrens, and we are not looking anywhere else".

Someone else pointed out that the Doctor's surgery at Thingwall had a house for sale next door, which could have been demolished, and this could have been purchased, and might have been suitable for the Health Centre.

Mrs. Sutton asked "have Mr. Hesford and the other members of the Council any comments to make on the Irby Road site, because there is adequate room and car parking space?"

Mr. Hesford responded that there must be an end to this. "Arrowe Park has been built on since 1930, it is not part of the Park, it is a secluded site and it does not interfere with anyone's enjoyment. In terms of finance, it is on a main bus route, but if it is such a dangerous corner, there will have to be traffic lights and crossings. Mr. Hesford said that those who oppose are a small minority, but they are entitled to their view, but he does think that they are wrong.

Townsend is in Green Belt, it is a private site. The petrol station site – any re-development of a petrol site has to be a de-contamination site, which is very costly. A member of the public stated that it has never been a petrol station.

Merseyside Police have admitted that Thingwall Road is one of the most dangerous places on Wirral.

Sandy Cameron said that the original application was not in the Green Belt, and the buildings now are shown on the area that has buildings on it. The previous support was wrong. Mr. Hesford "I was right then and still am. The reason that the Council turned it down was because the site was Green Belt".

It was pointed out that 85% of people are in favour – could we see a show of hands from the people here. Russell Favager said that the straw poll in the community centre was not representative of the general view

Cllr. Rowlands said that he was a member of the Planning Committee, and resented the remarks from Mr. Hesford that the Committee behaved disgracefully. He said “your Government had given guide lines for the Green Belt. It was an ‘all party’ decision (with the exception of a couple of councillors), and it was decided that it was not appropriate. The Council was not disgraceful in its duty”. Mr. Hesford responded “it is not helpful to try and obscure the issue by bringing in a policy which has been there for many years, possibly brought in by the Attlee Government after the Second World War. I think the Planning decision was very wrong, and I still remain of that view. It was looked at very carefully, and the PCT looked at many sites, and everything was checked many times, and the Planning Officers applied the law, and they said it should go ahead. It is very rare that the Council Officers were right and the Planning Committee was wrong”.

Mr. Hesford was asked whether he had ever stood on Thingwall Road at 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. The lady asking said that her daughter cannot park outside her house when leaving her daughter with her on her way to work.

Another lady wished to ask the Police whether they are happy with the traffic arrangements, and how are they going to resolve the situation. “Mrs. Tripp raises a very important point, and the reason it was turned down last time was on the sole criteria of Green Belt. You are right to demand that if there is a Planning application, the local people should be asked about the problems they have, and that is a proper consideration for the Planning Committee to take. When this becomes a Planning application (it already has – it is a foregone conclusion) there is no point in telling this meeting if you do not want this. There is a problem now, what will it be like when the Centre is built? The Arrowe Park roundabout was the worst thing that the Traffic Department installed.

Russell Favager repeated there has been a consultation of all patients of these surgeries, and 85% were in favour. When the Planning application goes in, all the information will be in there including road access to the surgery and everyone is entitled to put in an objection if they disagree with the proposal and due process will take place.

Lady asked Mr. Hesford “why do you need such a huge area of land for this Centre?” Mr. Hesford replied “I understand the point you are making. At the moment there was an application which was refused and the Appeal that was due withdrawn, so at the moment there is no application”.

Mr. Garrett asked about the dental practice at 44 Ridgeway Drive. A letter came out stating that they were going private, but the PCT stopped that. Many people in this area have no dentist to go to now. Mr. Garrett had approached the PCT, and was informed that they were writing to all the dentists in the area to see how many were still NHS dentists. Russell Favager replied that when the practice went private which they are entitled to do, they commissioned work immediately for the NHS but it takes time to set up a new dentists but in the meantime the PCT had commissioned additional work from local dentists.

Mr. Hesford said that Dr. Chan put out some mis-information about the change to private practice. He is pleased to say that there is another Practice setting up opposite the Post Office – the intention is that at the end of this month they will be writing to everybody asking if they wish to join.

Mrs. Sutton, 336 Pensby Road asked whether the parking problem had been looked into for the new dental surgery proposed near Belmont Drive. Mr.Hesford said it will be dealt with.

Mrs. Sutton replied that there is a bus stop at the end of the Road, and there are only two parking spaces for the dentists' cars. David Armstrong replied that Highways Engineer will be asked to comment on it, and to check that the site will be in order. He said that he regretted he did not know the details, but he was told that the plans show two rooms for two surgeries.

A further comment was made that not only is there a bus stop there, but they will have to lower the pavement. There is limited parking outside the shops opposite, and further up the road there are double yellow lines. No provision has been made for the surgery, and people will park in Belmont Drive. Objections must be in very soon, and it is impossible to read the notice details, which are tied to lamp posts in plastic bags. Russell Favager commented parking was an issue for the Council through its planning department.

Mr. Kinlan also reported that the surgery further up Pensby Road, near Tower Road South, is having work done, and it is like a building site. People cannot park there, and it is in a dangerous situation, being right opposite the British Legion. The British Legion had been asked whether their parking space could be used sometimes by patients, but they had refused.

Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

Pippa Roberts reported that there is literature about the new Teaching Hospital and the new services being provided, and there are many positive stories in it.

Sandy Cameron asked whether the proposed development will include disabled access at the new entrance.

Clare said that she sometimes sends them an e-mail, and always receives a reply.

A question was asked about whether there was any information about the transfer of the Oncology Department over to Liverpool.

Russell Favager replied that there have been some initial discussions about the Centres for Cancer services across Merseyside. Sites have been discussed, both in Wirral and Merseyside. They are looking for one large site, but this will be discussed over the next three years and if agreement reached a business case will be produced for consultation, however nothing is likely to happen for (probably) five years.

Merseyside Police/Community Safety.

Inspector Kate Cunningham was very pleased to report that they have had a really good period, and the list of January figures was the lowest since 1999 in terms of crime across the board. They have not received any complaints about the time taken by Police to arrive at an incident, or not arriving. This compares well with other similar areas all over the country. Out of eleven areas, Heswall has the lowest crime rate, and is performing the best. Whilst the crimes are going down, in the last twelve months 8% more were caught.

Inspector Cunningham introduced some of her team, and said that she wished us to meet them, and how proud she is of all her team. They were given a great welcome, and many wished to express their thanks to the various members. They had also brought some sheets giving the times and venues for the various surgeries for people to take away.

One lady asked what the duties of the Community Police Officers are.

Inspector Cunningham replied that they can hold someone for thirty minutes if they have been misbehaving, and they can issue Fixed Penalty Notices.

Inspector Cunningham also said that she is in the process of setting up a meeting with the Local Authority regarding the parking on grass verges. People must actually be seen by a Policeman when they are driving up onto the verge.

Mrs. Pauline Sutton said that she has had many dealings with the Merseyside Police and Wirral MBC, and she has found the Police in Heswall are splendid and wished to thank them all. Concern was expressed about the loss of Irby Library and the Police e Surgery held there. Inspector Cunningham said that, if possible, an alternative venue would be found.

PCSO Sue Fowles will be giving a talk at Pensby Library about her work in the force.

A question was asked about the cars crossing from Heswall car park into Aldi. Extra signage has been put up (it has still been ignored by some) and the PCSOs have been giving the tickets out – 20 in half an hour. In the long term, Inspector Cunningham is hoping that the entrance will be moved so that it is more difficult to cross over.

Ken Gethin said that he was concerned about the number of signs being erected. He felt that if he read every one, he would have, or cause, an accident. Inspector Cunningham said the Police are doomed if they put them up, but they are doomed if they do not – they simply cannot win. Sadly, Wirral has an excessively high level of death on the roads, and the targets must be met to try and reduce this. Inspector Cunningham wants people to **THINK** about their driving, not listening to the radio etc. They are constantly reviewing what can be done to make people concentrate on their driving.

Mr. Garrett asked out of the 47 incidents, how many were burglaries, and the answer was three, and fourteen were people driving away without playing for the petrol and eight were vehicle crime – theft from cars.

Clare said when her Mother comes through Barnston Dale, the traffic sign shows more than 30, and her Mum never does that. Inspector Cunningham said that perhaps the signals need re-calibrating.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.

John Davies was happy to report that, as in the notes of the previous Heswall, Pensby, Thingwall and Barnston Forum, this is a very safe area in which to live. The Service has a target to visit 200 homes in the area to carry out checks for fire alarms etc. and fit them where necessary.

Ken Gethin said that the Fire and Rescue Service form a very valuable part of our community and we would all like to thank them.

Older Peoples' Parliament.

Sandy Cameron reported that articles in the Newsletters are a source of valuable information. Cllr. Rowlands thanked Sandy for all the work he does on behalf of the elderly of Wirral.

Mrs. Swinnerton asked whether the railings at the junction of Barnston Road and Brimstage Road around the coppice there could be replaced, as they are in a very bad state. Roger Calvert has stated that they are beyond repair, but subject to funding, they will renew a short section at that junction. The Heswall Society has intimated that they will help financially.

Heswall Hill shops. Heswall Hills station has a free car park, and there are shops opposite where there are always a great many cars parked. This road is now being used more since the Lower Village Post Office was closed. This road is narrow, and if you are driving past the shops, and a car comes in the other direction, it is very difficult. It would make it safer if this road could be made one way. -Tracey Smith reported that she is awaiting a response.

Douglas George representing members of Probus Club. Now that the Alexander Hall future has been published when are we going to get some information, and when are the Community groups going to be made aware that Heswall Hall is going to be closed?

Cllr. Hodson replied that the three Heswall Councillors had attended the meeting at Hulme Hall, and Probus are looking at the possibility of taking over the running of Alexander Hall. Mr. George stated that he had requested the accounts from the Director of Regeneration, but had not yet received them. David Armstrong said that he understood that this information could not be given out before a decision is made. 24 premises had been identified and these premises were to be transferred to the Community, and this had been agreed on Monday, and the Director of Regeneration will attend a meeting to explain about this.

Mrs. Ite Rafferty went to the West Kirby meeting, and all they said was that Heswall Library was safe.

Mr. Kinlan attended the meeting at Hulme Hall, and what was not told was how many assets have been lost. Are the Council proud of what they have done to Wirral? Why don't they spend some money on Arrowe Park? He had to visit there recently, and was kept in the corridor. The comment was passed that the only company doing well on Wirral is Peel Holdings.

Irby is losing everything, and with the closure of the Library, some of the shops will suffer.

Mark Johnston – Fishers Lane Community Group was massively under-used, and they would like to take it over, and they have bent over backwards to help them start. One lady said her husband was part of the beginning and worked very hard there, and the Council never put one penny into the building, and it ran very successfully until they got tired. The roof is damaged and the Pioneer People came in and members came to help out. All the money being made was helping keep the doors open. The Community Association gave up their charitable status, and she is delighted that the Pioneer People have taken over, and would like it recorded that this is the case.

f) Is there any change of Heswall getting a public toilet again? Tony Garrett reported that the library has a public toilet, and Heswall Hall have a male and female toilet.

g) A question was asked as to why every library is closed on a Wednesday afternoon. It would appear there is nothing that can be done. Sue Powell asked this question, and also whether it might be possible to have a rota.

Clare said that some of them are going to be open for longer hours to compensate for the closures. The mobile library has been dropped because the Council did a feasibility study, and it was not viable.

h) David Hall stated that this week has seen the climax to the worst week of turmoil on Wirral. No less than 11 of the libraries are due to close. If the three Lib-Dems had voted (there was a free vote) this would not have happened. On the night of the Cabinet meeting the three Pensby councillors had told their Leader that they were not in favour, but you changed your minds. Cllr. Pat Williams should not be included in the destruction that you three have now helped to make, and he no longer considers you to be his representatives.

Please do not expect people like me to run the library, where paid professionals are required, and to take on the management, paying of bills etc. of all these buildings, and the responsibility for security, insurance etc.

i) Cllr. Sarah Quinn stated that the Forum should not be political, and that had been agreed.

Cllr. Hodson said that was correct, but that all that was being stated were the facts.

j) Sue Powell said that the dropped kerbs in Fishers Lane do not have the correct gradients, and there are pools of water everywhere. There was, unfortunately, no-one representing Arriva. It was agreed that most of the single decker buses are quite acceptable to the older people, but not the double deckers, as they are difficult to get into.

Phil Miner said that they are identifying areas where buses cannot get through, but this will only cover roads that Arriva have been given.

k) Cllr. Sarah Quinn stated that the Cabinet have actually saved £40,000,000. over the past four years. The question was asked what has happened to all these millions that have been saved, and the reply was that the savings have been out of Technical Services. They have moved from numerous offices to one block. They have also taken on a new Director who will be making savings for us.

l) The question was asked whether there will still be an opportunity for the public to discuss the new proposed plans for the proposed Supermarket in Pensby Road. The plans are now on the Internet. The closing date for objections is 20th February. It is proposed to knock down the three end shops, the flats are not in the new proposal, there will be parking spaces for 10 and two for the staff. The line of the buildings will be as it is now, and the supermarket will be underneath, with a new façade, and roller shutters to close up.

The question was asked "where are the containers delivering going to reverse?" Will the opening times still be the same – opening at 7 a.m. and closing at 10 p.m.?"

They will be selling alcohol, and there will be litter and noise, especially for the people in Marks Way and those living opposite.

It was stated that another supermarket is not needed here, and we are going to be affected – you are not. There are youngsters who throw cans and litter all over the place, and there will be a great many problems for the district. There are already enough out of work, and we know that the Landlord wants out, but he thinks he can create more full-time jobs when everyone is becoming more short of money, and the Post Office will probably go as well.

There must be a planning reason for the Committee to turn it down.

6 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

June 18th 2009 - venue to be agreed.

