

AREA FORUM (GREASBY/FRANKBY/IRBY, UPTON, WOODCHURCH)

Wednesday, 11 February 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Chair	J Quinn (Chair)	
	Councillors	T Anderson G Gardiner	T Smith (part of meeting)
	Community Representatives	Jean Robinson (Overchurch Residents Association) John Smith (Greasby Community Association)	Mark Stevenson (Woodchurch Neighbourhood Board Member)
	Lead Officer	David Smith (Deputy Director of Finance)	
	Area Service Co-ordinator	Andy Brannan	
	Street Scene Manager	Mark Traynor	
	Wirral University Teaching Hospital Trust	Pippa Roberts	
	NHS Wirral (formerly PCT)	Martin McKeown	
	Merseyside Police	Inspector Brian Griffiths	
	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service	Sarah Patterson	
	Council Officers	Jo Burrell (Woodchurch Neighbourhood Management Board Co-ordinator) Maureen Cain (Woodchurch Neighbourhood Management Board)	Andrew Fraser (Corporate Services Department – item 4 only) David Green (Director of Technical Services) Jim Thompson (Community Safety)

Eddie Fleming
(Corporate Services
Department – item 4
only)

Apologies

Councillors

J George

P Reisdorf

Bert Grunnill

Mark Traynor

1 **WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair, Councillor Jean Quinn, opened the meeting and welcomed forum members and 33 members of the public to the Area Forum meeting in Greasby. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John George, Councillor Peter Reisdorf, Bert Grunnill and Mark Traynor. The Chair invited Forum members to introduce themselves.

2 **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS FORUM**

The minutes of the Area Forum meeting of 11 June 2008 were incorporated into the Area Forum Co-ordinator's report.

Matters arising.

The Area Forum Co-ordinator's report contained updates under the headings

- Dog fouling in Woodlands Park
- Repainting of double yellow lines outside Overchurch School
- Health information - Irby
- Lights in the MUGA in Woodchurch
- The locations of adventure and nature play areas
- Property targeted by someone with a high powered air rifle
- Streetscene
- Pathways Programme
- Former St Benedict's site

St Benedicts:

David Green advised that demolition work on the former school building began two weeks ago as part of a 16-week programme. The timescale allows for the safe removal of the considerable levels of asbestos found in the building. The owners of the site will be re-charged for the cost of the demolition work.

A member of the public stated that the building has never been sealed for asbestos. He asked what action is being taken about the risk to the public from asbestos that has already been released into the atmosphere.

David Green replied that representations should be made to the Environmental Agency. He offered to continue the discussion with the member of the public at the

end of meeting and to include the gist of the conversation in the minutes of this meeting.

Dog Fouling in Ford Road:

The Area Co-ordinator gave a verbal update on complaints about dog fouling in Ford Road, Upton. The areas around the shops in Ford Road are cleaned on a daily basis and as a result, the pavements are relatively clean. Specific incidents of dog fouling should be reported to the Environmental Health Department, who will investigate. People who persistently allow their dogs to foul a public area can be prosecuted.

Minute Decision: A member of the public stated that the building has never been sealed for asbestos. He asked what action is being taken about the risk to the public from asbestos that has already been released into the atmosphere

Minute decision: Resolved: That the minutes of the Area Forum meeting of 13 October 2008 be received.

3 **AREA CO-ORDINATORS UPDATE**

The Area Co-ordinator's report contained information on Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, Merseyside Police, Wirral Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Community Safety Update, Wirral University Hospital Trust and Equality and Diversity. A report from the Director of Technical Services on the Allocation of Integrated Transport Funding to Area Forums was included on pages 21/24 of the report.

Minute decision: Resolved: To thank the Area Forum Co-ordinator for his report.

4 **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

Andrew Fraser, Corporate Services Department, gave a presentation on the Local Development Framework. The new style Development Plan is a single document that replaces the Unitary Development Plan for Wirral dated February 2000, and will operate alongside the Regional Spatial Strategy. The framework provides guidance for assessing planning applications and allocating land for new developments for the next 15-20 years.

The consultation on the core strategy has just begun and Wirral Council will be pleased to receive comments on the various parts of the document.

The next stage will be to translate the objectives into spatial policy options and identify the preferred options. The draft core strategy will be compiled and submitted to the Secretary of State for approval. The proposals will be subject to public examination by an independent inspector. The aim is to adopt the Core Strategy in 2011.

Members of the public can become involved in the consultation by asking for a copy of the Plan, by adding their names to the contact database, or by submitting

comments by letter, email or fax. The deadline for comments is 5 pm, on 27 March 2009. The contact details are: Strategic Development, Corporate Services, Town Hall, Wallasey. CH44 8ED. Email hazeledwards@wirral.gov.uk, phone: 691 8225 or fax 691 8188.

A report will be presented to Cabinet that summaries all the comments received and will explain how those comments have been taken into account for the next stage. At the end of the process, the document will go to full Council for final approval and adoption.

-Mr Garrett (Wirral Transport Users' Association), stated that he had received a copy of the document, but he had been charged for the further copies obtained from the Corporate Services Department.

It was pleasing to see mention of the electrification of Bidston/Wrexham railway line in the document. The association is looking for a couple of new railway stations on the line at Beechwood and Woodchurch Road, and for a park and ride scheme behind Upton railway station. The park and ride sites on Wirral are now reaching the saturation point. This should be looked at as well as the state of the land used for park and ride schemes.

-A member of the public commented that the closing date of 27 March does not allow sufficient time for people to comment on such an important issue.

Andrew Fraser replied that the consultation period is slightly longer than the standard consultation period of six weeks. The main document consists of 40 pages, but it is hoped that it is reasonably straightforward and people can understand it. Every effort will be made to accommodate people if there is a problem.

The Chair thanked Andrew Fraser for the presentation.

5 INTEGRATED TRANSPORT BLOCK

David Green, Director of Technical Services, explained that in the 2007/08 financial year, two of the eleven Area Forums had opted to have a share of the Integrated Transport Block at their disposal to fund local schemes. The improvements for Heswall/Pensby/Thingwall included the construction of a pedestrian refuge, and for Bromborough/Eastham, a contribution to a traffic calming scheme, direction signing and a lowered kerb crossing.

The Council's Cabinet had received very positive feedback on the success of the scheme in the two areas and is now inviting each area forum to consider whether it wishes to receive de-centralised funding in 2009/10. The money can be used to provide lowered kerb crossings, modest local signposting and road lining schemes. Officer input will be available to all area forums to guide them in the decision-making process. The total budget for the Integrated Transport block is £180,000 which, apportioned across the eleven Area Forums, would equate to around £16,300 per Area Forum. The alternative would be to administer the funding centrally.

The Council's Cabinet wishes to receive feedback on the consultation at its meeting on 19 March.

The 20's Plenty Initiative is related matter and the views of area forums are being sought on areas for inclusion in next year's programme. The pilot has operated successfully in other areas, and suggestions are invited for roads in this locality that would be suitable for the scheme.

Mark Stevenson, Woodchurch Neighbourhood Board, commented that £16,000 is a very minimal sum and is insufficient to meet the needs of the areas covered by this very large area forum. In addition, the timescale for a reply is too short and does not allow sufficient time for the priorities to be identified.

David Green explained that about £6.5 million is available to Wirral in the structural maintenance programme. Within that there is some local discretion to devolve £180,000 through the Integrated Transport block, and give local people, through area forms, the opportunity to use the money creatively. The purpose of the consultation this evening is to ask the area form if it wishes to receive an equal proportion of the money to use at its discretion to improve the local area, or whether it would prefer the money to be managed centrally and allocated to schemes on a Wirral-wide basis.

Councillor Gardiner added that the money can be used to fund schemes that may not be included in the Council's list of priorities. Area Forums that opt to receive an allocation have the opportunity to say, *'These schemes are important for this area, and this is the way in which we wish to spend the money'*.

Mark Stevenson persisted in his view that an equal division of the funding was unfair to this area forum, because it covers such a large geographical area. David Green accepted that the argument was a valid point. He gave a commitment that he would convey the comments back to the Cabinet as part of the consultation.

The Chair explained that only Councillors and community representatives on the area forum are eligible to vote. She suggested that there is a general consensus that this area forum would wish to receive a decentralised share of the Integrated Block Allocation. The Chair asked if any members of the area forum disagreed with that view. No response was received.

Minute decision: Resolved – To

- (i) note the type of traffic management traffic management schemes that can be funded through the Local Transport Plan Integrated Transport Block allocation.**
- (ii) confirm that this area forum wishes to receive a decentralised one-eleventh share of the Local Transport Plan Integrated Transport Block equating to approximately £16,300 carry out scheme(s) of a traffic management/road safety nature in the local area.**

6 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Q I live in Sunnybank Close, a small cul-de-sac off Doncaster Drive, and there are many parking issues, particularly at the junction with the main road. I have reported the problems to the Police and to the Technical Services

Department. The Police and the Council have sent letters to people and a few people had received parking tickets.

There are problems with parking on pavements and access difficulties for bin lorries. The area needs some parking restrictions so that people can get in and out of the cul-de-sac safely.

Inspector Griffiths outlined the measures taken to date to deal with the problem, and gave an undertaking to reaffirm the message with his staff.

David Green offered to personally visit the area on Friday afternoon to consider what measures can be taken to alleviate the problems.

Mark Stevenson referred to parking problems in New Hey Road and Houghton Road on the Woodchurch Estate. Motorists avoid using the Arrowe Park roundabout, and instead use Houghton Road as a 'rat-run' to access the Asda superstore. Cars stream along the road, sometimes at 100 mph. Houghton Road is blocked constantly from early morning until night, and prevents local residents getting their cars out.

David Green stated that it is not possible to tell people which roads to use. The Arrowe Park roundabout has been an impressive success. Accidents have reduced since the traffic lights have been installed, and traffic movement has also improved. Discussion continued on rat-running in general, speeding, and yellow lines.

David Green promised to visit Houghton Road on Friday afternoon to assess the situation.

Q David Hall, Irby, reported on the Council meeting to consider recommendations arising from the Asset Management Review. Mr Hall made certain references to individual Councillors that were not recorded for the purpose of the minutes. David Hall read out a prepared statement.

A The Chair responded to the statement, adding that there were many people in the room who would disagree with some of the views expressed by Mr Hall. No one could fail to recognise the strength of feeling that people in this area have about Irby library, and people in Woodchurch and the Woodchurch Management Board have about the facilities in Woodchurch - everyone is upset about what has happened. Councillors had taken the decisions they had after much soul-searching and many meetings over a long period of time. The library building in Irby can be part of a community asset transfer, and have access to other sources of funding – funding that is not available to the Council -I and to have professional support with that.

The Chair of Woodchurch Residents Forum stated that a more significant point is that elected councillors represent the residents and tenants of the borough. The public owns the particular buildings that are being closed and not once has any member of the public had a say on what is going on. An enormous amount of money has been invested in a library in Ridgeway, and it is to be closed. Noctorum has fewer facilities any other area in the Borough and Ridgeway library is the only Council-run facility that the community has. The Council's decisions are illegal because the Council is taking control of public assets and dealing with them as Councillors see fit, and not as the owners, ie the public, want them to be.

Councillor Gardner stated that she agreed elected councillors are answerable to the public. The buildings that house the facilities had been inherited from five district councils at the time of local government reorganisation in 1974. Many of the buildings were run-down at the time and the escalating costs of maintaining these assets across Wirral are beyond the Council's means. The Council will be capped if the Council Tax is increased by more than 5%.

Councillor Gardner continued that first of all the Council will offer local communities the opportunity to run the libraries when they close, and help will be given to the community in terms of management skills. Irby could be used as a community library, and perhaps for youth outreach work. The Council wants to see the community running buildings and meeting the needs of the community.

Councillor Tony Smith pointed out that the residents of Wirral had been listened to during the consultation and that in fact as a result both Upton Library and the Woodchurch Leisure Centre were being kept open

Jim Lester, Principal Officer, Leisure Services, stated that following the Council's decision on Monday night, his Department is now working with local Councillors to see what possible solutions can be put forward, but no guarantees can be given. In discussion with local groups, ways will be looked at of providing alternative Internet access to local people as well as other services.

Members of the reacted angrily and loudly interrupted speakers at various stages of the subsequent discussion.

A complaint was made that an area forum is non-political and local politics should not be discussed.

The Chair intervened stating that an area forum meeting was not an appropriate place for a political debate.

After further discussion, the Chair brought the debate to an end and invited members of the public to put forward questions on other topics.

- Q. Montgomery Hill. Hazards for cyclists. The new 'give way' sign at the bottom of Montgomery Hill is obscured by the old one. Can an illuminated sign be provided?
- A [David Green]. Consideration is given to cyclists, as well as pedestrians, in every new highway scheme. Photographs of the issued raised would be useful. The Council works with the Cyclists' Forum in determining priorities for local schemes. Manweb will disconnect the old sign on Montgomery Hill when they connect the new one, but there is likely to be a six-month delay.
- Q. Greasby is one of the first areas in Wirral to have the new Arriva cross-river bus service to Liverpool, and it hoped that the service will be well-used.
- Q Have any traffic surveys been done on Greasby Road to assess the amount of traffic?
- A [David Green] We do traffic counts on a regular, ongoing basis. I will check tomorrow on the situation on traffic counts on Greasby Road.

- Q Residents have been told that traffic calming measures will be introduced as part of the planning permission for building new homes on St Benedict's site
- A. [David Green]:The ownership of the land has changed. The latest information is that the new owners will continue with the planning permission granted on that land. If the development goes ahead as planned, traffic lights will be a part of that.
- Q. What is the situation on social housing on that site?
- A [David Green]:The Council has an Affordable Housing Policy. Each development has to have an element of social housing. There is an issue around that within the planning permission for the St Benedict's site. All future planning applications must have 40% affordable housing, That is the starting point.
- Q The Arrowe Park roundabout. Due to its design, motorists can drive round and round.
- A [David Green] Since the new design there has been a reduction of around 100+ accidents in three years. Previously, there were no facilities for people and school children to cross the roads safely. The traffic lights provide those facilities. The roundabout has been a notable success.

Minute decision – Resolved that:

- (i) **David Green to personally visit the Sunnybank Close and Houghton Road areas on Friday afternoon to consider what measures can be taken to alleviate the problems.**
- (ii) **David Green to look into the issue of asbestos at the St Benedict site and liaise with the member of public who raised the issue.**
- (iii) **David Green to provide an update on the situation on traffic counts on Greasby Road.**

7 PARTNER ORGANISATIONS UPDATE

Due to time constraints, the Chair invited partners to give brief updates on their activities.

Jim Thompson reported on Wirral Anti-Social Behaviour Team and Community Safety; Inspector Brian Griffiths drew attention to the monthly Neighbourhood Newsletter;

Maureen Cain described the involvement of local residents in a Mum's Group and the involvement of young people in the Youth Club;

Mark Stevenson and Joanne Burrell gave an account of the community's involvement in recent seasonal events and activities;

Martin McKeown referred to the publication of information on how the PCT will govern commissioning services, and explained the pressures currently placed on the

A&E Department at Arrowe Park Hospital due to emergencies caused by the bad weather, and winter illnesses;

Pippa Roberts highlighted key aspects of the written report prepared for the Area Forum by the Wirral University Hospital Trust,
Sarah Patterson referred to the continuing success of the Home Fire Safety Checks,

John Smith gave an update on developments in Coronation Park, and the opportunity for groups to advertise their events in the Greasby Messenger.

Minute decision: Resolved: That partners and their representatives be thanked for their written reports and updates.

8 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Minute decision: Resolved: That the next meeting of the Area Forum be held in 8 June 2009 at a venue to be confirmed.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.20 pm.