

AREA FORUM (OXTON AND PRENTON)

Tuesday, 16 June 2009

Present:

Councillor P Williams (Chair)

In attendance:

Councillors A Bridson
F Doyle, S Holbrook

Community Representatives Alan Dollery, S Goulding, Mal Neish (on behalf of Robbie Bell), Patrick Toosey

Lead Officer Alan Stennard, Director of Regeneration

Area Service Co-ordinator Louise Harland-Davies

Street Scene Manager Garry Cummings

NHS Wirral Abhi Mantgani

Wirral University Teaching
Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Gary Doherty

Merseyside Police Graham Bell

Merseyside Fire and Rescue
Service Richie Clarke

Council Officers Steve Maddox, Chief Executive

Apologies

Councillors S Kelly, P Southwood
J Cuffe (Older People's Parliament),
J Kenny

1 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Cllr Williams welcomed 22 members of the public to the meeting and introduced the evening's two presentations.

2 **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM FEBRUARY 2009**

There were no matters arising and the minutes were agreed.

3 **AREA CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT / YOU DECIDE UPDATE**

Louise Harland-Davies introduced herself and outlined the following initiatives

i. Older People's Parliament pg 34 of the co-ordinator's report

ii. You Decide: Oxton and Prenton area forum have an extra £20,000 to spend on additional services in the local community. Questionnaires for 2009/10 are available now

Feedback from You Decide 2008/09

£5,000 has been allocated towards new bins

£10,000 has been allocated for Community Sports Development worker and youth sports night. Andrew Wild introduced himself outlining his intentions to work with the police and local councillors to engage with young people in the community. He invited any suggestions or ideas from the public for setting up projects with the aim of targeting hotspot problem areas.

£5,000 for environmental works including £3,600 trees and £1,400 on 2 benches.

iii. Funds for You: funding open to local voluntary and community groups, closing date for applications is 30 June 2009

4 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE (STEVE MADDUX)**

Steve Maddox gave a presentation on Local Government Structure, an overview of how the Council functions and how day-to-day decisions are made. He explained how the Council sets its priorities and outlined the five strategic objectives of the Corporate Plan which are evidence-based to address critical and significant issues in the borough. He highlighted the example of inequalities of health and wellbeing and how the Local Authority is working with other partnerships to reduce this. He emphasized the Authority's objective to create more jobs, improve the local economy, generate investment opportunities and attract new businesses and explained the importance of working in partnership with other agencies and the voluntary sectors.

He outlined the difficulties the Authority faces with increased expectations for services with limited budget. A key issue is to get people to accept more responsibility for things that traditionally they have expected the Local Authority to do and this is the approach that the Authority is hoping to take.

Some points raised by audience

1. Preference to return to previous Executive Committee structure for decision making.

2. What is the Authority's policies on employing local firms?: - The Council does try to use local businesses, especially smaller ones, by giving them information on the tendering process; however, Councils can experience legal and practical problems in only employing local firms. Recent initiatives include the apprenticeship scheme

where companies working for the Authority must include trainees in their workforce and Business Forum, where over 600 businesses have registered.

Cllr Holbrook highlighted the Construction Integrator Scheme which provides greater employment opportunities for young people.

Richard Neale: Thanked Steve Maddox for his excellent presentation and raised points which gave rise to a debate on the political pressures by Central Government. Mr Maddox explained the effectiveness of working in partnership with other local authorities to solve problems which are common in all areas such as unemployment.

Minute decision

Steve Maddox be thanked for his informative presentation

5 SEVEN WAVES COMMUNITY RADIO

Glyn and John were introduced from local radio station Seven Waves Community Radio based in Leasowe, where all the presenters are volunteers.

Facilities available to the community including soundproof studio where local bands can rehearse, I.T. suite housing 16 P.C.s, training studios. Live interviews with local politicians and community leaders can be conducted on air and they are proposing to set up a forum of approximately twenty local people whose purpose would be to give feedback on performance. More than 200 local people have been trained in radio production and some students have subsequently progressed on to media production courses. It has given many people increased confidence and has been a useful community tool by giving community groups a good platform to get their message across.

Points raised by the public

1. The building is within proximity to the local leisure centre is this a separate enterprise?:- Yes, completely separate
2. Where does funding come from? Funding was a £2.2m match funding bid from Europe and has a five year licence which may or may not be renewed. Advertising is allowed however this is capped and other funding comes through training.

Graham Bell, Merseyside Police: Is funding available for directing youths and possibly new recruits for community projects towards their facilities? - John Martin to have further discussion after the meeting.

Minute decision;

John and Glyn be thanked for attending meeting

6 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Issues raised:

1. Mr Holt, Holm Lane, Oxtun: Concerned about the serious road traffic problems, namely inconsiderate parking, access to properties, blocking off closes, noise levels,

speeding and parking on pavements. Unable to back out of his drive because of cars parked on pavements and stated that he has been in communication with the Council for approximately twenty years regarding these problems. He expressed concern that, although pavement parking is illegal, no-one enforces it and people are not being prosecuted. All the residents are affected and annoyed by the problems and are asking for yellow lines and fines, particularly around the school area.

Cllr Williams agreed that she also experiences the same problems but that it is at least two years since she has received a letter from him. She believes that there are plans for double yellow lines but does not know at this stage how far they will be extended, although it should be at least down to Holm View Close; however, this will not stop people dropping off children. She confirmed that he will receive a response to his complaint.

Mr Holt stated that he feels the Police should be more involved. Graham Bell, Merseyside Police agreed that yellow lines are a deterrent, however, there are four other schools in the same area which also have parking problems

Cllr Williams stated that the school is trying to work with local residents to improve the situation. Cllr Doyle said that parking problems are common to every school in Wirral but are made worse in Holm Lane due to it being used as a short cut to Woodchurch Road.

2. Alan Dollery: Problems around the recycling bins which were located near the flats in Prenton and have had to be removed due to local youths playing football and lighting fires and asked how this problem will be solved - Cllr Bridson confirmed the flats belong to Wirral Partnership Homes and agreed it is a difficult situation which is currently on hold while it is being reconsidered. She offered to contact them again to try to resolve the problem.

3. June Foster: Concerned about non-enforcement of the laws regarding illegal parking, litter and dog fouling- Steve Maddox confirmed that fixed penalty notices are in fact issued to people who drop litter and that people are prosecuted for dog fouling. The key is to educate people to stop doing these things in the first place.

Alan Stennard commented that there was a policy to issue a press release relating to people who had been prosecuted for dropping litter and dog fouling however these go unnoticed as media decide that local people prefer to read about ASBOs. More educational work is being done and a new scheme is in place where people are being rewarded for being socially responsible. Other council officers including the Park Service and Community Patrols can become involved in the enforcement process, consequently people are cleaning up after their dogs. Society's attitudes need to change young people need to be educated as to what is acceptable. There is also a need to encourage fast food and take-away businesses to support this and sponsor more bins.

4. Richard Neale: The parking situation at West Knowe, raised at the previous area forum meeting, possibly involving members of the congregation of St Saviour's Church - the Police confirmed that parking around West Knowe has decreased.

5. Richard Neale: Local people being unable to park near local shops which appears to be at odds with the Council's policy of supporting local businesses, as stated in

Steve Maddox' presentation, citing the example of a local newsagent on Woodchurch Road where people were unable to park outside. Mr Maddox suggested that this newsagent could join the Business Forum and if he communicated with him, he would receive a response. Cllr Bridson confirmed that this area of Prenton has seen a problem with confusion over parking for many years and that several businesses have closed down. Mr Maddox felt that many of these problems are as a direct result of the large number of cars on the roads.

Louise referred back to the February papers which included a report from Technical Services explaining parking restrictions on Woodchurch Road at the request of Cllr Kelly.

6. Alan Chape, Oxton Society: Problems around dog fouling and informed the meeting they are trying to set up a scheme in Oxton where people can help themselves from a receptacle containing bags for dog dirt which has been successful in other areas; however, they have been told that this requires planning permission. Alan Stennard stated that he would like to support this scheme and will have further discussions with Technical Services and report back to him.

7. A member of the public referred to the minutes of the last meeting when it was agreed to hold a further meeting regarding car parking in Osmaston Road. He felt that there has been no improvement and that the issue has "gone quiet": Cllr Holbrook stated he was very supportive to the suggestions made at that meeting but that there is a minority of residents who are opposed to parking restrictions, making it difficult to impose a solution. There is currently no solution which all residents are in agreement with.

Andrew Taylor: Access protection markings, would residents have to pay for this themselves? Also suggested that the Council is continuing to give planning permission for businesses with no thought for subsequent parking problems.- Cllr Holbrook commented that the problems in Osmaston Road are largely due to Sainsbury's enforcing parking restrictions in their car park for commuters.

8. A member of the public: request for the PCT to include a separate report regarding mental health issues and dementia which is an increasing issue. Abhi Mantgani: the PCT report only touched on current issues, given the size and nature of their organisation, however the PCT have invested heavily in mental health services and offered to obtain details of these services.

Cllr Bridson mentioned that the Select Committee which she chairs for Social Services is currently undertaking a review into dementia and will be liaising with Wirral Health and Mr Mantgani agreed that mental health services is an area where more needs to be done.

Louise had received a report from Cheshire and Wirral Partnership Trust for previous meetings however apologised for not requesting one for this meeting

Cllr Williams stated that the Authority's partners should be congratulated for their initiatives in the reports and for the work that goes into them.

9. Mr Dowling: Although he had enjoyed the presentation by Steve Maddox felt there should have been a bigger audience at the Forum and that the public should be

given more information on what the Council are doing. Mr Maddox confirmed that they will explore ways for more people to engage in decision making.

A member of the public requested the Forum Agenda be advertised in the local press- this already takes place however not all communities receive these papers.

10. A member of the public: Why has the Council given the contract to repair West Kirby Marine Lake wall to a firm from Anglesey which had gone out of business?: - Mr Maddox confirmed that the business concerned had fully met all the stringent financial checks put in place by the Council and, in fact, this is the first time this situation has occurred.

Minute decision:

i. Area co-ordinator to contact Technical Services regarding parking and traffic congestion in Holm Lane.

ii. Cllr Bridson to contact Wirral Partnership Homes regarding recycling bins for flats in Prenton area

iii. Alan Stennard to liaise with Oxton Society regarding dog fouling bag dispenser scheme.

iv. Area co-ordinator to contact Mark Smith, Technical Services for a final update on Osmaston Road.

Cllr Williams thanked the public and forum members for attending and closed the meeting at 9.15 p.m.

7 FUTURE MEETINGS: TUESDAY 6TH OCTOBER VENUE TO BE CONFIRMED

Tuesday 6 October 2009, venue to be confirmed.