

# AREA FORUM (BIRKENHEAD & TRANMERE AND ROCK FERRY)

Tuesday, 15 June 2010

Present:

Councillor	J Stapleton (Chair)
Councillors	P Davies B Kenny, C Meaden M McLaughlin
Community Representatives	Peter Exley, Hazel Roberts
Lead Officer	David Ball
Area Service Co-ordinator	Andy Brannan
Wirral NHS	Paul Edwards
Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Lesley Metcalfe
Merseyside Fire and Rescue	Dave Watson
Streetscene	Brain Smith
Community Safety	Ian Lowrie
Council Officers	Carol Sharratt (minute taker)
Apologies	Councillor WJ Davies, Myrtle Lacey

## 1 **WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair, Councillor Jean Stapleton, welcomed forum members and 23 members of the public to the forum meeting. Apologies were received from Myrtle Lacy and Councillor Bill Davies. The Chair informed the forum would comprise of the Area Co-ordinators report; a presentation on You Decide 2010 voting followed by group session, public question time, voting results, and partner updates.

## 2 **AREA CO-ORDINATORS REPORT - INCLUDING: MATTERS ARISING FROM FEBRUARY 2010**

Andy Brannan, the Area Service Co-ordinator, thanked everyone for attending and informed them that copies of the report were available which included minutes from previous meeting starting on page 5 and matters arising from the previous meeting starting on page 8. He added that he would be happy to deal with any queries at the end of the meeting or alternatively his contact details are included on the report.

Minute Decision update: Lead Officer, David Ball reported that the update on disabled access at Hamilton Square and Rock Ferry train station was still being completed, as there were still many issues to be agreed re: the improving of the access to stations within the forum area, and confirmed that a detailed report would be brought to the next forum meeting.

Andy Brannan mentioned an issue, raised in advance of the meeting, re: overhanging bushes at Argyle Street roundabout and Rock Ferry. Brian Smith, Technical Services, confirmed that bushes were to be cut and agreed to contact the person that raised the issue directly. He also informed the forum of the following:

Integrated Transport Block (ITB) Funding – £18,200 of funding was available for road improvements in the forum area, and views on improvements were requested. Forms were available at the meeting and everyone was requested to complete these and hand them in at the end of the meeting.

Winter Resilience Activities – following the severe winter weather the Cabinet passed a resolution to give an additional £5,000 per forum area for winter resilience measures, such as grit bins. Details of the locations of the grit bins were available at the meeting, and suggestions for locations for further bins were requested.

**Minute Decision - Resolved that:**

- (i) **David Ball to bring a detailed report re: the improving of the access to stations within the forum area to the next forum meeting**
- (ii) **Brian Smith, Technical Services, to arrange for the overhanging bushes at Argyle Street roundabout and Rock Ferry to be cut and to contact the person that raised the issue directly on this**

**3 YOU DECIDE 2010 VOTING**

David Ball informed the forum that the scheme gave local people the opportunity to make a difference in how council funding was spent in this area. Each area forum has £20,000 to spend on additional wide-ranging council services that could be delivered in this forum area, from a list handed out at the meeting.

The members of the public at the meeting were invited to work in groups to talk through areas and priorities for investment, then to fill in individual forms with their individual top 5 choices from the list of activities available and preferred locations. 45 minutes was set aside for this. The forms would then be summarised and reported back on after public question time.

The Chair confirmed that there was a lively debate within the groups and David Ball thanked everyone for participating in this. He announced the following results:

**Priorities**

1. Litter Bins
2. Activities for Young People
3. Temporary use of CCTV
4. Adult Learning Courses
5. Three joint choices: Household Security, Foot Patrols, and Community Environment Day

David confirmed that this information, along with the specific locations comments, would be discussed with the relevant departments and the results would be posted on the Council website [www.wirral.gov.uk](http://www.wirral.gov.uk) and can be sent to anyone interested if they pass their details to the Area Co-ordinator, Andy Brannan. Work would take place on this over the next few months and a report on the priorities would be brought to the next forum meeting.

#### 4 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following questions / issues were raised:

1. What was the timescale for the disabled access proposals at the train stations?

David Ball – confirmed that this would be covered within the detailed report to be brought to the next meeting.

2. Clint Agard – would there be any consultation with / feedback to communities around proposed planned local cuts in spending announced by Central Government?

David Ball – confirmed that the new Government had already made announcements on budget reductions for this financial year, and that more cuts were expected to be announced in next week's budget. The Government Review would set out further proposed cuts over the next three years and a comprehensive picture on this would probably be available around November. The following changes to funding have been announced / made:

- No more Future Jobs Funding
- Six month job scheme for the unemployed to be stopped by September 2011
- £1m cut to £30m fund for tackling economic issues
- £3-4m fund for housing schemes suspended
- Budget reduction to Supporting People Project
- £7-8m budget reductions within Housing and Regeneration
- Removal of ring-fencing from a variety of Government Funding sources.

David confirmed that a report was being put together to identify cuts but that he was not sure how this was going to be communicated.

Councillor Phil Davies added that the councillors at this forum were not the best people to ask as they were Labour Councillors, but confirmed that there were to be £9.5 m Council cuts. The biggest being Education (£3m), but was not sure where the cuts would be made, but possibly from positive action for young people, social care, child protection, commissioning for service for young families. The cuts to take place in this financial year were affecting the agreed budget, such as cuts to the working neighbourhoods fund and housing market renewal. The cuts would have serious consequences for a lot of people living in the forum area, but he assured the forum that the councillors would be doing their best to put forward arguments for reducing such proposed cuts. The next cabinet meeting was to be held on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2010 and would cover budget issues and he invited people to come along to the meeting.

3. Jim Cadwallader - - was the HMR Funding Fiveways Project still to be completed?

David Ball – confirmed that the project was being moved forward and would be completed. The national budget was cut and the pro-rata 16% reduction for Wirral amounted to £1.4m from Wirral's £9.5m programme.

4. Jim Cadwallader – has any progress been made re: New Ferry Tip, Bromborough Landfill Site and Rock Ferry Park?

Councillor Moira McLaughlin – confirmed that this was still in the early stages. The Landfill Site scheme was signed up by the North West Development Agency (NWDA) last year. The Mersey Coastal Park project was still being worked on, the budgets were constrained but this was still being driven forward by the ward councillors as they fully support this important scheme.

5. Jim Cadwallader – raised concern that the new government focus seemed to be on funding not people and that cutting budgets would affect people's standards of living / health.

David Ball – confirmed that the cabinet member for housing visited the HMRI area on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2010 and was impressed with the work that had been carried out and felt that it was important that this should be completed.

6. Chair – what was happening with the Church Road / Abakhan site?

David Ball – confirmed that the proposal for new shopping / retail units was close to being signed for go ahead.

7. Jim Cadwallader – asked if the St Catherine's Hospital project was on site yet and if the developer could be invited to attend the next meeting?

David Ball – confirmed that the developer was on site and that the Health partners could give an update on this project.

8. Collette McDonagh – what was happening re: the Strategic Asset Review (SAR) and the selling off of sports / community centres?

David Ball – confirmed that the community asset transfer project started by the previous administration was still being progressed, and that the new administration had asked for a review of the process to be carried out and reported to Cabinet at the end of June 2010. He agreed to feedback on this at the next forum meeting.

9. Graham – what was happening re: business plan for Byrne Avenue centre? He also informed the forum that the opening of the Viking Youth Club as a community centre (not just for young people) and its amalgamation with Lairdside was going ahead at a great pace.

Councillor Phil Davies – confirmed that officers were looking at the business plan and would report back to cabinet who would decide if the transfer would take place. David Ball agreed to look into progress on this and report back to the forum.

10. Roy – what was happening re: installation of pedestrian / pelican crossing at Kings Lane / Old Chester Road and was this the type of request that could be included on the You Decide forms?

Councillor Moira McLaughlin – confirmed that such a request could be included on the You Decide form, but a petition / strong force behind the request would assist with this.

11. Roy – what was happening re: motorists parking illegally outside Tescos and on the double yellow lines at Bebington Road?

Councillor Chris Meaden – confirmed that talks were being held with Tescos, but that the Council could not do anything about this as it was owned by Tescos. Inspector Mick Blease has been contacted re: illegal parking on the main road. Councillor

McLaughlin agreed to ask the enforcement officers to patrol the Bebington Road area, but added that local residents could also get caught for parking in this area.

**12.** Hugh Langford – raised concern re: parking on double yellow lines at Church Road and asked if a representative from Merseytravel be invited to attend the next meeting to talk about access at stations.

David Ball agreed to invite a Merseytravel representative to the next forum meeting.

**13.** Pauline Kirwan – raised concern over proposal to close Rock Ferry / Park High School to become an academy despite opposition from parents, cares and local people who raised concerns over the closure and additional travel. She added that local children deserved the best services and asked if there was any progress to report on this.

Councillor Moira McLaughlin – confirmed that there was concern that the success of the academy being dependent on the new build and informed the forum that Professor Colin Hankinson from the University of Chester was exploring options for this, and that we have to trust that they understand the strength of feeling for this. The fact that a new site would be the best option available has been recognised, but the academy can get up and running before the new build is available, as this has happened at Ellesmere Park.

Councillor Phil Davies added that there has to be some uncertainty re: funding as there have been lots of reports re: capital schemes being put on hold. He agreed to continue to feedback further on this when further information was available.

**Minute decision – resolved that:**

- (i) **David Ball to feedback to the next forum meeting on the review of the community asset transfer project report to be taken to Cabinet at the end of June 2010 and on the progress re: the proposed asset transfer of Byrne Avenue centre.**
- (ii) **David Ball to invite a representative from Merseytravel to the next meeting to discuss access at stations**
- (iii) **Councillor Moira McLaughlin to request that the enforcement officers patrol the Bebington Road area.**

## **5 PARTNER UPDATE**

The Chair invited the partners to give brief updates:

### **NHS Wirral:**

Paul Edwards informed the Forum that a detailed briefing was available in the Area Co-ordinator's report and highlighted the following:

- GP health check / MOT – this was available to everyone aged 40-74 and he urged people to take up this offer.
- Drop-in dementia café – volunteers were being sought for this service available for carers of people with dementia. Café details can be given at the end of the meeting to anyone interested.
- New Health Centre at Laird Street – centre opened last week and can treat minor emergencies, further details included in the briefing

### **Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust:**

Lesley Metcalfe informed the Forum that a detailed briefing was available in the Area Co-ordinator's report and further information available at the meeting, and highlighted the following:

- The Trust was facing a financial challenge as needs to make £14m efficiency savings – further details were included in the information available at the meeting.
- New surgical admissions lounge was opened last month. Developments at Arrowe Park were detailed in the Public Membership Newsletter available at the meeting.
- Retirement of the Trust Chair, Eryl Hoskins and appointment of the new Trust Chair, Michael Carr, on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010 – further information on this and public membership were detailed in the Public Membership Newsletter.

The Chair thanked Paul Edwards and Lesley Metcalfe for their updates and the following questions / issues were raised:

Leonora Brace – raised concern over an embarrassing incident following emergency surgery. Lesley agreed to discuss this in more detail at the end of the meeting.

Jim Cadwallader – asked if the Trust was satisfied with the standard of nursing in the hospital and raised concern over the effects of reduction in standards due to proposed cuts.

Lesley confirmed that the Trust was satisfied with the standard of nursing and that the Trust would be aiming to work smarter so that the high standard of services could be maintained.

Member of the public – raised concern over the difference in the life expectancy of people from Central Birkenhead in comparison to that of people from Heswall (11 years below).

David Ball – agreed that this was an important issue and added that at the Health Summit held early this year one of the key issues raised was the difference in life expectancy between people from the west and east side of the Wirral. Further work was being carried out on this and meetings were taking place with the Director of Public Health to look at this issue.

Hugh Langford added that the disparity in life expectancy was tending to increase rather than decrease. He suggested that the reason could be that people in west Wirral were more likely to follow health messages and that those that needed to most did not take on board suggestions for improving their health. David Ball agreed to discuss this in more detail at the end of the meeting.

Paul Edwards added that Birkenhead was a focus for public health activities, and that the NHS Wirral was proud of its investment and target intervention within the area, such as the new build in Noctorum.

Councillor Phil Davies added that he would like the profile of the Health Action Areas Initiative targeting this area to be raised. Cutting services such as housing and young people into employment will widen the disparity gap, and he confirmed that he would endeavour to try and stop such cuts.

**Fire and Rescue Service:**

Dave Watson informed the Forum that a detailed briefing was available on pages 11-14 of the Area Co-ordinator's report and highlighted the following:

Key Strategy of the Service was to reduce fires within the home, 66% of accidental dwelling fires occur within the kitchen. Home Fire Safety checks are targeted within areas of high accidents, and requested that anyone that had not had, or knew of anyone (particularly vulnerable people) that had not had a home fire safety check to arrange this by calling freephone number on page 14 of the report. The service was successful in this area but was aiming to improve further by reducing the reduction of accidental fires by a further 10%.

The Chair thanked Dave Watson for his update and the following questions / issues were raised:

Member of the public – asked if there was any volunteer work available, such as that run through Bright Sparks initiative?

Dave Watson – confirmed that there were opportunities for volunteering and agreed to provide further details on this at the end of the meeting.

**Community Safety:**

Ian Lowrie informed the Forum that a detailed briefing was available in the Area Co-ordinator's report and highlighted the following:

Home security - doors and windows should be locked when leaving the home during the warmer weather as many burglaries are walk-in / sneak thefts. A recent patrol revealed that 700 out of 900 doors were un-secure. He also encouraged people to set up neighbourhood watch schemes and confirmed that the Community Safety Team would assist in setting up such schemes.

The Chair thanked Ian Lowrie for his update and the following questions / issues were raised:

Member of the public – asked if apologies had been received for non-attendance at the meeting from the Police.

Andy Brannan confirmed that he had not received any apologies for the meeting and agreed to look into this and feedback.

**Streetscene**

Brian Smith informed the Forum that a detailed briefing was available in the Area Co-ordinator's report and added that resurfacing works were being carried out at Argyle Street / Conway Street.

The Chair thanked Brian for his update and the following questions / issues were raised:

Collette McDonagh – asked what was happening at Slatey Road and Park Road South.

Brian Smith confirmed that problems had been identified and remedial works were being carried out by the contractor.

Pat – the signs on the corner of Rodney Street face outward instead of inward.

Brian agreed to look into this and ensure that the signs are placed the correct way.

Member of the public – raised issue of problems with alleygates and need for anti-vandals screws being fitted.

Ian Lowrie – agreed to discuss this in more detail at the end of the meeting.

**Minute Decision - Resolved that:**

- (i) **The Partners be thanked for their updates**
- (ii) **Andy Brannan to contact Police representative re: non-attendance at meeting**
- (iii) **Brian Smith to arrange for the signs on the corner of Rodney Street to be placed the correct way**

**6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 9.00p.m.

**7 FUTURE MEETINGS/PRESENTATIONS**

The Chair confirmed that the next meeting was to be held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2010 at venue to be confirmed.