

AREA FORUM (BIRKENHEAD & TRANMERE AND ROCK FERRY)

Tuesday, 5 October 2010

Present:/In attendance:

Councillors	WJ Davies J Stapleton (Chair) B Kenny C Meaden
Community Representatives:	Peter Exley Hazel Roberts
Lead Officer:	David Ball
Area Service Co-ordinator:	Andy Brannan
Wirral NHS:	Cathy Gritzner
Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Sandra Shannon
Merseyside Fire and Rescue service:	Ian Maxwell
Streetscene Manager:	Garry Cummings
Community Safety:	Ian Lowrie Stephen Preston
Council Officers:	Jayne Elliott (minute taker)
Mersey Travel:	Steve Cook, David Jones
Apologies:	Councillor Phil Davies Councillor Moira McLaughlin

1 **WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair, Councillor J Stapleton welcomed the Forum members and 19 members of the public to the Birkenhead, Tranmere & Rock Ferry Area Forum meeting held at Rock Ferry Community Centre

Apologies: Councillor Phil Davies and Councillor Moira McLaughlin.

2 **MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (JUNE 2010)**

2.1

Andy Brannan reported that he had received written and verbal updates.
See page 11 & 12 of Forum Papers for written updates

The verbal updates are as follows:

- Rodney Street signs have been sited correctly.
- David Ball reported that 2 bids have been submitted for Byrne Avenue Baths. The 2nd stage business plan has been reviewed and evaluated.
- Further information for the Business Plan has been received. The review is going on and will be reporting to Cabinet on the outcome on 4th November 2010.

Q. Outside Byrne Avenue Baths there are litter bags dumped in the grounds.

A. Street scene will arrange for someone to look at the situation and remove rubbish and maintain the area.

2.2

Andy Brannan reported that there is funding available for Community Voluntary Groups. If there are any groups that require funding, application forms are available.

2.3

A Brannan introduced the Energy Project Plus Information Stand. This is "working towards a sustainable future" The Officer from Energy Project Plus will answer any questions at the end of the meeting.

3 MERSEYTRAVEL - QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

David Ball introduced the two representatives from Mersey Travel to give a presentation on 'How Disabled Access Works in Stations'.

David Jones, from Integrated travel has had 20 years experience in policies and creating disabled access in stations. Network Rail own all the stations, but Mersey Travel and Network Rail are working together to improve the stations. The main two stations that have an access problem are Green Lane and Rock Ferry.

There has been £3.3 million spent to put in two lifts at Hamilton Square Station.

If passengers have an access problem at a station, then they can contact the station to arrange help at the station and/or the staff will arrange a taxi to an appropriate station. 1 hour notice would be preferable.

In the future it is hoped that there will be more accessible stations.

Q. Hamilton Square has brilliant staff, but the lifts break down frequently. It is important that Green Lane and Rock Ferry Stations be sorted out. Why should disabled people have to phone in advance for help and assistance?

A. David Jones gave his thanks for the positive comments regarding Hamilton Square Station. He stated that it was customary to give notice to staff, but said that the stations are all staffed and will offer help and assistance at any time.

Q. In Liverpool, the rail replacement buses are all wheelchair accessible, why is this not the case in Wirral.

A. There should be no difference in areas; taxis can be arranged if the bus is not accessible. Liverpool has planned engineering, so they can arrange vehicles in advance.

Q. Taxi's can't provide the safety requirements for wheelchair users.

A. The comments are accepted and feedback is welcome.

Q. Is there a review of Mersey Link service? It allows a pick up by Mersey Link from a Station to where the passenger wishes to go – e.g. Train to Southport and then Mersey Link to final destination.

A. There is a review of the Mersey Link service.

Q. Councillor Stapleton asked why there is a huge step and gap between the train and the platform at Hamilton Square Station?

A. Hamilton Square station was a Victorian built station and has been built on a slight bend. It is not possible to solve this as the train would hit the platform.

Q. The signs at the stations for destinations are confusing.

A. This comment will be taken away and looked into further to try and improve this.

Q. There was a problem on the Liverpool to Birkenhead line not so long ago. The train broke down just before Hamilton Square station, another train was sent for assistance and that also broke down. Staff kept on saying it would be fixed in 10 minutes. The problem was not fixed in 10 minutes. Hamilton Square station was in chaos and no manager was available to speak to regarding this problem.

A. All comments will be taken back to Mersey Travel. Normally the 2nd train would solve the problem and move the broken down train. Apologies were given to all passengers on behalf of the staff. David Jones was disappointed that a Manager could not be found at the station and this will be taken up with Mersey rail.

Q. Is there an old steam train in the unused tunnels at Lime Street Station?

A. Unfortunately there is no steam train, just cobweb old tunnels.

Steve Cook and Dave Jones thanked everyone and they apologised for not coming to the Forums more often.

4 WIRRAL'S FUTURE - BE A PART OF IT

David Ball explained to the Forum Members the Council's Consultation Process which is taking place across the borough. The idea of the process is to ask Wirral residents "How to spend future resources". The Council has estimated to find savings of £108 million over the next 4 years.

4 Task Groups have been set up:

- Children's Services
- Adult Services
- Economy
- Living Environment

A questionnaire has been set up and they will be available at various locations around the borough for Wirral residents to complete. All forms are to be completed by 31st October 2010. They will be analysed and sent back to the Task groups to prepare a final paper ready for the Council's Cabinet Meeting at the end of November. This meeting will also have the Budget proposals for the next financial year.

4.1

Q. How much will this cost for the 4 task groups and are they present employees?

A. The resources are already there – they have been drawn from private, public and voluntary sectors. They are giving their time freely. The costs are approx £3 – 4 K and this is mainly the printing.

4.2

Q. Has any decision been made with the Housing Market Renewal funding?

A. The Council are waiting for the Government decision of the amount of funding available for the next 4 years. This decision will be available at the end of November. When the amount has been received the implications will be looked at.

4.3

Q. What if the Public want to spend the money on other things?

A. It is not practical to re-assign finances half way through a financial year.

4.4

Q. They are asking to complete the questionnaire before knowing how much money is available?

A. You could argue when the consultation takes place, but it would take too long if you waited for the budgets to be set. The idea is to just get Wirral Residents ideas and priorities ready for the budget decisions.

4.5

Q. An idea to save money would be to get rid of Howard Coopers Department, Children's and Young People. The department does not serve the local schools and the money could be put to better use.

A. Stephen Preston, who is a Chair of Governors, explained that he takes great exception to these comments. The department does a lot of work and without this department it would put a lot of children on Wirral at risk. The department is OFSTED checked and the special needs section on Wirral is excellent.

A. Councillor Brian Kenny explained that Mersey Park Primary could not exist without the help of Howard Coopers Department. They have just appointed a new Head Teacher with the help of this Department.

A. The comments made against the Children's and Young People's Department and the Schools are offensive – all teachers are OFSTED checked and it has been clearly proven that there is an excellent quality of teachers on Wirral.

5 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was noted that there was no attendance by the Police again. Andy Brannan to contact the police and will arrange for them to attend future Forums. Any police issues can be discussed with Andy Brannan at the end of the meeting.

5.1

Q. There is not much lighting in the around the Adult Learning Centre.

A. A Lighting Engineer will look at this problem and report back to A Brannan.

5.2

Q. The Bushes on the roundabout at Argyle Street have not been cut back.

A. The answer to this is in the written update of the Forum pack. The reason for the bushes not being cut back is to stop the sight of motorists across the roundabout so that they have to slow down.

5.3

Q. The bushes at Rock Ferry library need to be cut back.

A. This area will be looked at and will be reported back.

5.4

Q. It is acceptable to slow the traffic down on the roundabout by not trimming the bushes back. This may be dangerous for the pedestrians?

A. This will be looked at again.

5.5

Q. There are no brown bins for the houses on and around Hollybank Road.

A. Gary Cummings from Street Scene will take up this issue as this area must have been overlooked.

5.6

Q. Would it be possible to have the gap in between the curb and the road by number 1 Hamilton Square fixed as the gap caused a wheelchair to fall into this.

A. This area will be checked.

5.7

Q. The empty flats in Thorsway would be an ideal place to house the 50 – 60 thousand homeless soldiers.

A. The flats are in a state of disrepair and are planned to be knocked down.

6 **AREA FORUM PARTNER UPDATES**

Wirral PCT

There is a new service available for Lifestyle Services. It is on a Saturday morning at 30 Argyle Street, Birkenhead. For a comprehensive report, see page 28 of the Forum report.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service

Ian Maxwell reported that in addition to the update on page 23 of the report the following updates:

The Home Fire Safety strategy is conducting safety checks in local homes.

The fire service is actively collecting materials prior to Bon Fire night. If anyone is aware of any bon fires being set up, please ring the fire service (Leaflets available).

Q. In the Manning Street and Lord Street area bon fires are being lit and it smells like burning tyres.

A. If this happens again, please contact the fire brigade and they will inspect the area.

Q. The smoke alarms which have been fitted by the fire service have started to beep as the battery needs replacing.

A. The fire service realised that the company employed to supply the smoke alarms used old stock. This company has now been replaced. Please ring the fire service and a fire officer will go and fix the problem.

Q. Is it right that motorbikes have been spotted in Liverpool fitted with fire hoses?

A. This is a new trial for small rubbish fires. The idea is for the motorbike to get through busy traffic. We are awaiting the outcome of the trial. We are the first in the country to trial this.

The Street scene telephone number can be used to inform the fire service of bonfire locations.

Wirral Community Patrol

See pages 14 & 15 for a more comprehensive report.

The Community Patrol Officers have now been trained with the use of defibrillators. They are now working together with the ambulance service. Community Patrol can receive calls through a Blackberry Phone and they can attend if they are in the vicinity.

The Community Patrol is also working together with the Fire Service. The vans are to be fitted with 40 litre water containers and pump so they patrol can deal with small fires.

Q. A girl recently has been fined after she dropped a lolly ice stick. When the bin men won't take additional bags from the wheelie bin – who is fined then? The bin bags are a problem for the residents around this area.

A. The crew will report the issue of extra bin bags. If this continues an officer from street scene will visit the household. This issue is to be discussed at the end of the meeting.

Q. There is still a problem of dog fouling, but to catch the culprits the timing of the community patrol officers needs to right.

A. There are 6 officers on patrol from 7am – 8pm. Speak to the Community Patrol at the end of the meeting.

Q. There have been numerous phone calls regarding the dogs on Mersey Park play area.

A. Patrols have attended Mersey Park and a man has been fined.

Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Sandra Shannon explained to the meeting about the Financial Challenges of the Wirral Hospital. It is positive and in a better position than some trusts. Arrowe Park Hospital has just opened the new women & children's department and a new maternity ward with a birthing pool.

Ronald MacDonald house has also opened at Arrowe Park.

A new Gynaecology and Diagnostic department will be opening this year.

Q. What is happening to Clatterbridge Hospital? It seems to be getting quieter.

A. There have been no changes to the hospital. There will be a review of all services and will be looking at the best way to deliver services. There are options to move services around the hospitals.

It was commented that Clatterbridge Hospital seems to be a much quieter and civilised hospital. It is cleaner and parking is so much easier. It has the best Oncology and Dermatology departments.

Q. If you wish to keep informed of the services the hospitals offer, then you could become a member of the Trust. You will receive regular newsletters and keep up to date with what is going on. Tranmere has the lowest % of membership

A. Application Forms are available at the meeting.

7 ENERGY PROJECT PLUS

Energy Projects Plus (EPP) – “working towards a sustainable future”, officers attended forum to promote the Warmer Wirral project and where there for advice at the end of the meeting.