

AREA FORUM (OXTON AND PRENTON)

Tuesday, 19 October 2010

Present:

Councillor P Williams (Chair)

In attendance:

Councillors A Bridson
S Holbrook

S Kelly
D Realey

Community Representatives Alan Dollery, Sarah Goulding, Patrick Toosey

Older Peoples Parliament Apologies

Lead Officer Rob Beresford

Area Service Co-ordinator Louise Harland-Davies

Street Scene Manager Garry Cummings

Community Safety Karl Cunningham

NHS Wirral Martin McEwan

Wirral University Teaching Hospital Pippa Roberts
NHS Foundation Trust

Merseyside Police Inspector Roy McGregor

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Myles Platt

Council Officers Sarah Risnes (minute taker) Mark Smith (Head of Streetscene) Will Redfearn (DASS)

Apologies

Councillors A Brighthouse

The Chair Cllr Pat Williams welcomed forum members and 17 members of the public to the meeting. Apologies were received from Cllr Alan Brighthouse.

The Chair gave the forum's condolences for a member of the public Mr Garrett who recently passed away. Mr Garrett was a keen and enthusiastic supporter of the area forums and was particularly in favour of the petition to electrify the railway connection between Bidston and Wrexham.

2 MINUTES & AREA CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

The Area co-ordinator presented her report to the forum, members were asked to specifically note the updates from partners in the report and also advised the forum that Energy Project Plus were attending the meeting if anyone would like to enquire about free insulation.

She introduced Will Redfern, Community Development Worker, Adult Social Services whose job is to help and support vulnerable adults to access community facilities in order to prevent isolation.

Detailed results had also been circulated at the meeting for You Decide and Integrated Transport Block funding schemes.

Oxton and Prenton residents have chosen the following 4 activities from You Decide:

Activities for children and Young people

Household security

Foot patrol – enforcement officers

Deployment of Youth Respect Team workers

Integrated Transport Block schemes:

Dropped Kerbs: Garrick Road

Vehicle Activated Signs: Bidston Road, Woodchurch Lane, Shrewsbury Road, Waterpark Road

Winter resilience funding: Grit Bins

Dickens Avenue

Burrell Road

Woodchurch Lane

Alton Road

Jct Arno Rd and Belfield Drive

Pine Walks

Stuart Road

North Road

Jct Birch Rd and Storeton Rd

Corner of Davenham Avenue & Holm Lane

All of these selections are subject to surveys by Technical Services.

Minute Decision:

That the area coordinator be thanked for her report and the minutes of the last meeting are accepted as a true record of the meeting

3 **WOODCHURCH ROAD UPDATE:**

The Chair welcomed Mark Smith, Head of Streetscene to the meeting. Mark explained that he was attending due to some outstanding issues which had been raised by this forum which he would provide an explanation of.

1. Calls to the call centre – Reference numbers

Mark explained that the issues regarding Mr Lennon ringing the call centre and not being given reference numbers had now been rectified. This issue had been followed up with Andrea Bruffell who is the call centre manager. Mark read the response from Andrea at the meeting “The process for handling CRM hasn’t changed and calls should always be logged and reference numbers given, I have listened to Mr Lennon’s calls he is completely correct he was not given a reference number and this should not have happened”. Mark advised that to ensure this does not continue to happen the call centre will be monitoring random calls and also conducting an evaluation of all call centre staff.

2. Woodchurch Road

Mark explained that Woodchurch Road is the main connecting road to the A552 which is the main distributor road on the Wirral. Wirral has recently agreed with the Department of Transport to conduct some congestion monitoring work and have secured a grant of £190,000 to do this work between now and March 2011. This will help to measure, monitor and reduce hot spots and to make other necessary improvements to the area. Some of the funding will also cover the review of parking restrictions on this road.

There will be a report on this congestion monitoring work in June 2011, a copy of this will be shared with the forum.

3. 20pmh zones

Mark explained as part of the Accident to Zero initiative there has been some budget set aside to create some 20pmh zones in a 4 year programme. The department will also be looking at zones around schools and Technical Services is awaiting some final guidance from the Department for Transport on the new Road Safety Strategy which will be released in the new year.

4. Parking on pavements

Mark explained that parking wardens can fine people who park on the pavement where they are obstructing footways or yellow lines.

Alan Dollery: Parking on pavements around Prenton has been a nuisance for years. Councillors should visit the area and go to the shops talking to businesses and see what the problems are and how they can be resolved.

Cllr Holbrook: Does the review of Woodchurch Road include the bus lanes by Sainsburys? People park in this area, and also the lanes go from 2 to 1 then back to 2 in a very short distance.

Mark Smith – Yes it will be included

Member of the Public: Can you explain about the new road works that have been done on the motorway off Durley Drive?

Mark Smith: This has been a major scheme as there have been serious accidents here in the past. The new traffic lights will improve safety for people exiting via Durley Drive and enable the traffic to be controlled and a steady flow to be created. The new cycle lane will be finished next week and the new scheme will be much safer for cyclists and motorists.

Member of the public: I am happy there will be a review of the Sainsbury's area on Woodchurch Rd, however will people go and speak to the shop owners and residents as the signage in the area is confusing, as is the parking on pavements.

Mark Smith: There are two options, either an experiment with short term changes or there could be a permanent change. The existing traffic policy on this road is from 1968 so this will be reviewed; all of these comments and suggestions will also be taken on board and fed into the process.

Member of the public: I agree that the main road through to Birkenhead needs a bus/ cycle lane but this must be extended the full way along not just part way along the road.

Mark Smith: A key part of the Merseyside Local Transport Plan is to promote the use of buses, and these comments will also be taken away and fed into the review process.

4 **CONSERVATION IN WIRRAL:**

The Chair introduced Matthew Crook, Senior Conservation Officer to the forum to give a presentation.

Matthew's presentation gave an update on conservation areas in Wirral specifically Oxton conservation area. Key headlines of the presentation included:

There has been an experiment by the council to work with the Oxton Society to see how residents can become more involved with their area and how Oxton can be preserved particularly in preventing the demolition of properties.

There needs to be more planning regulations on minor planning textures for example boundary and sandstone walls as part of the design guide to ensure modern fittings are in keeping with the area.

A conservation area management plan will be drafted by the Local Authority and will be updated to include modern technology; this will be updated every 5 years.

The public had the following questions:

Member of the public: I am very confused at the council's reasons for the partnership with the Oxtton Society as they seem to change. Why has Oxtton been singled out? The members of the Oxtton Society have had to pay £2,500 where no other area has!

Matthew Crook: Oxtton is just the first of several local resources to be used; this is due to the fact that Oxtton has previous reports and research conducted in the area to help this process.

Cllr Holbrook: Conservation areas should be real places where people live rather than boundary areas so that people feel a connection to the area and can sustain and support their areas.

Member of public (2 questions)

1. If this conservation area is subject to regulation how have workmen installed new street lamps in Fairview Road which are extremely modern and not in keeping with the Victorian style of the road. Who decided that these were for this area and how is it done?

2. At the Oxtton Society AGM the extension of the conservation area was discussed in this document (document held up), this document was supposed to be available but no residents got a copy of them. The library also didn't have a copy of it. How easy is it to put copies in local community centres? Consult the people, not the people in Oxtton Society!

Cllr Williams: Consultation will be done

Mark Smith: The process for the installation of street lamps is based on a number of things. Wirral has a large lighting stock and it uses the latest state of the art equipment, which are efficient in terms of energy usage and maintenance costs. I am happy to look at the Fairview Rd decision but we have to bear in mind that the types of street lamps that are put in now must be available in the future or maintenance issues can be created.

Member of the public: If we expect residents to take responsibility for their properties the council should invest in the right materials for the area.

Cllr Kelly: Oxtton residents continually bring up traffic issues to me and this forum, how does the traffic management study relate to the conservation appraisal?

Matthew Crook: This is something which is being looked into, an initial meeting has been held but an update can be brought back to the forum once progress has been made.

Minute decision:

- i. Matthew Crook be thanked for his presentation
- ii. Mark Smith to update and report back to the forum regarding Council's position statement for conservation areas.

Rob Beresford gave a presentation to the forum on Wirral Council's new consultation process Wirral's Future: Be a part of it! Copies of the questionnaire were available to forum members on their chairs and they were also invited to take part by filling them out and returning them by post, to any one stop shop or that the questionnaire could also be filled in online. The closing date is 31st October 2010.

Rob explained that this consultation is seeking the views of all Wirral residents, businesses and community groups regarding the council's future budget priorities. Wirral council are actively engaging with the community by visiting shopping areas, community centres and community groups.

The main headlines included:

- The front part of the questionnaire is a general section and then it splits into 4 key themes: Living in Wirral, Children and Young People, Adult Social Services and Economy & Regeneration.
- Questionnaires were formed on the recommendations of independent task forces for each of the key themes.
- All views and suggestions will be presented to Cabinet for consideration in December and will sit alongside the budget process.

The public had the following questions:

Member of public: The problem with the deficit is that the council needs to generate wealth. Cllr Holbrook and Cllr Green should take a visit to Edinburgh where a scheme has been rolled out to charge motorists who wish to park on town centre roads between the hours of 9am-5pm. Also, lots of people are still not aware of this consultation.

Rob Beresford: The consultation has been promoted through the local press, staff have been taking roadshows around Wirral and online using every method so far 30,000 copies have been distributed. If there are any suggestions of how else we could engage please let us know and we will take them back to the team.

Member of public: I concur with the previous question; however I think that a copy should have been provided inside the Wirral News for people to send back.

Member of the public: Is it correct that some of the members of the task force will benefit from some of the decisions made in the questionnaire.

Rob Beresford: No. The people on the task forces are independent and there is a process of accountability and set principles which the council must follow for any decisions it makes. This is a genuine attempt to seek the public views.

Alan Dollery: The questionnaire is a bit too long to fill in – could have been shorter this might help get a higher number of responses. Also, a pre-paid envelope would be a good idea for elderly people who cannot get out to return it.

Cllr Holbrook stated that previous budgets have not been consulted on so this is a change in approach. The scale of the budget challenge means that we can implement small efficiency savings but ultimately it won't be enough. This method means we are involving public right from the start instead of at the end. The council is still accountable and this is why the task forces were set up to ensure that people do not assume decisions have already been made and this process will get better over time.

If a recommendation is for a service to be outsourced there are legal obligations the council must fulfill for commissioning etc which are very strict so the public can be assured that the services will still be delivered to a high quality standard.

Sarah Goulding: The questionnaire is too long, half of the population have been missed, the 'joe blogg' demographic not been engaged, young people not engaged, and it is not available in different formats.

Rob Beresford: The Youth Forum will be consulted with to engage young people and the positioning of roadshows in supermarkets and shopping areas will mean we can reach residents of all demographics, with different formats of the report available on request.

Member of the public: I would have liked an invite to the task forces. Paper at all meetings, why? There are 22,000 stakeholders to this consultation and only 10 are here tonight where was the promotion about this meeting.

Chair: We try to advertise the meeting as much as we can but we welcome any ideas you may have to raise awareness of the meetings

Member of public: Will the consultation process inform capital budget?

Cllr Holbrook: Yes, because even though the consultation focuses on service delivery now ultimately this will have an impact on how much money/resources is allocated in future years.

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6 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME:

Member of the public: There is a notice in the Daily Post stating that major road works are due to start on the 1st November in Grange Road. Can this not be postponed till January after the Christmas shopping period?

Mark Smith: Yes it is correct that road works are due to start on 1st November. These works have been planned for a long time and due to the scale of the improvements it could have potentially stretched over 2 Christmas periods, we have managed to reduce time to 50 weeks, so starting the work in November 2010 means that the work will be completed by Christmas 2011. Alternative car parking will be made available and signage put up to advise shoppers.

Member of the public: There have been large gangs of youths gathering in the Home Bargains area which can be intimidating to walk past, and sometimes they have been causing problems for the staff in the shop.

Police: This time of year youth activity does increase especially around bonfire night / Halloween, Operation Banger should help to reduce any anti-social behaviour in the area as they will be visiting shops and schools to try and deter offenders. Unfortunately, a lot of the youths that do hang around can only be moved on as they are not doing anything wrong, it is the sheer number of them which makes it a problem. Targeted hotspots can help us so thank you for reporting this as we can now monitor the area as there is a CCTV camera which can view this spot and if any incidents do happen the youths will be dealt with accordingly.

Member of the public: The kids have got nothing to do; a good idea is to have the football cages like they do in Wallasey.

Alan Dollery: Have Wirral Partnership Homes withdrawn the money they had allocated for anti-social behaviour?

Cllr Holbrook: Although I cannot speak on behalf of Wirral Partnership Homes they have decided they did not get value for money for the project and this money will be spent in another way.

Member of the public: The Dickens Avenue playground is disgraceful; the sheer disregard for the area is awful. However, Barbara the Community Support Officer for the area is great at trying to chat with the kids and move them on, they just have nothing to do!

Community Patrol: This needs to be looked at it is the same for a number of play areas and activities for the over 16's need to be explored.

The chair would like to give the thanks of the forum to the two off duty police officers who came and gave their time; effort and support at the Friends of the Arno litter pick on Saturday.

7 PARTNER UPDATES:

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service

Please see pages 23/24 of the area forum pack, with particular note to the Bonfire Strategy which will be implemented over the coming weeks. This involves vans collecting waste materials which kids may use to start bonfires. If you see anything which gets missed please ring the non-emergency number 0800 731 5958.

Police

There has been a recent increase in car crime around the Townfield Lane area, this is nothing to worry about as the Area Commander has put more resources into this area and the offender has been arrested.

Cllr Kelly: There has been some unease in residents in the Oxton area around the Queens Hotel regarding general crime after these incidents, what steps are being taken?

Police: Oxton generally has lower crime rates than the rest of the Wirral and therefore when some of these isolated incidents happen it can really increase the figures dramatically. Residents should feel at ease now the offenders of these crimes have been arrested.

Member of public: They should put these results in the local paper.

Police: They do regularly inform the Wirral Globe but the results are not always published unfortunately.

Mark Smith: Anyone with particular interest in transport should look at the LTP document on the Merseytravel website and comments can be fed back.

8 **FUTURE MEETINGS:**

The chair closed the meeting and informed the forum that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 22nd February 2011.