

AREA FORUM (BIRKENHEAD & TRANMERE AND ROCK FERRY)

Tuesday, 8 February 2011

Present:

Councillor J Stapleton (Chair)

In attendance:

Councillors: B Kenny
C Meaden
WJ Davies
P Davies

Community Representatives: Peter Exley

Lead Officer: Ian Platt

Area Service Co-ordinator: Andy Brannan

Wirral NHS: Cathy Gritzner

Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust: Christina St Martin

Merseyside Police: Paul Vickers

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service: Dave Watson

Community Safety: Ian Lowrie, Steve Preston

Council Officers: Jim Lester

In attendance: Debbie Morgan (Census)

1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES:

The Chair, Councillor J Stapleton welcomed the Forum members and 12 members of the public to the Birkenhead, Tranmere & Rock Ferry Area Forum meeting held at the Lauries Centre

Jean introduced Paul Vickers as the new Police Inspector for this area forum area. Paul gave background on his experience in the Police and how much he is looking forward to working in this area.

Apologies:

Cllr Moira McLaughlin, David Ball and Garry Cummings.

2 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF LAST MEETING, INCLUDING AREA CO-ORDINATORS REPORT:

2.1. Andy Brannan went through the minutes and matters arising from October's forum. There were written updates except for the issue regarding the bushes around Rock Ferry Library.

The following verbal update was given on this issue. 'The cutting of the bushes is on the programme of work for next financial year. This work will be undertaken around April or May 2011'.

2.2. Every area forum has once again received winter resilience money to fund the installation of grit bins. There are suggestion cards available tonight, anyone who wishes to suggest a location where a bin can be installed should fill a card in and hand it in at the end of the meeting.

3 CENSUS 2011:

3.1. Debbie Morgan gave a presentation on the forthcoming Census, how people can fill in the form and why it is important.

Q. Jim Cadwallader: Will there be support given to people who cannot read or write?

A. Debbie Morgan: Yes, a lot of work has been undertaken with local charities and organisations, identifying who may need support. Census collection officers will also be going out to collect forms from residents who haven't submitted them. This will also highlight anyone who needs assistance.

4 PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE PROCUREMENT EXERCISE:

4.1. Jim Lester gave a presentation on PACSPE, the aims of the programme, which services are to be included, who the council have consulted with and what the next steps are.

Q. Cllr Phil Davies: This tendering programme does not have the support of the Labour Party who feel that the service will not be improved and are objecting to the fact that council employees were refused the opportunity to submit their own tender.

Q. Jim Cadwallader: Will this provide value for money and will residents have the chance to liaise with the company who is awarded the contract?

A. Jim Lester: The council is confident that this procurement exercise has been conducted fairly and user groups have been involved in the process up to this point. Continuing this engagement between the residents, user groups and the contractor is something the council is aiming for.

Q. Philip Barton: There is a Local Authority in another part of the country that only has 17 employees as all the services are outsourced to external contractors. Why were council employees not allowed to submit a tender?

A. Cllr Phil Davies: Council employees asked cabinet if they could submit a tender for the service. Cabinet refused this request and advised that they are only seeking applications from external organisations only.

Q. Hugh Langford: Is the Big Society a scam? One of the Governments aims is to have Employee Co-ops play a role in the Big Society, does this mean Wirral Council is flaunting its own Governments policy by refusing to allow council employees to apply?

Q. Della Ashton: I work for a neighbouring local authority. They signed a tender which in the long run proved to be more expensive for the tax payers. What is in place to stop that happening here?

A. Jim Lester: There are strategies in place to ensure that this doesn't happen.

Q. Peter Exley: When public transport was privatised the aim was to reduce the cost of travelling for people, however it is now more expensive to travel. Why will this be any different?

A. Many other Local Authorities are successfully operating tenders like this across the country so it can be done effectively and the council has learned from these.

Q. Cllr Phil Davies: How much will this procurement exercise save the council. I have been trying to find out this information with no success?

A. Jim Lester: The final calculations are being made at the moment so unfortunately there isn't a figure as yet.

Q. Philip Barton: Will there be opportunity for the public to ask questions on the specific aspects of the tender?

A. Jim Lester: Yes, there is a meeting on the 17th march which is open to all residents.

Q. Cllr Chris Meaden: Will this exercise change anything with the children play areas in the parks?

A. Jim Lester: Not at all, everything will remain the same.

5 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME:

5.1. Pre-raised question: What are the police doing to stop children riding bikes at night without lights or safety equipment?

A. Insp Paul Vickers: The Police are stopping children when they are seen riding without a light. At this stage they are just talking to the children to advise them of the dangers of this.

5.2. Jim Cadwallader: Are there any developments with the parking issues around Tesco's?

A. Cllr Chris Meaden: Yes, Tesco's have agreed to pay for double yellow lines and restrictions to be installed which will hopefully alleviate problems on the road.

5.3. Philip Barton: Gave details of the survey he conducted regarding the accessibility of replacement buses when work is being done on railway services. He also gave information on the law around wheelchair users being transported in taxis.

A. Cllr Jean Stapleton: There is a Independent Disabled Peoples Forum held in the Lauries Centre in which Philip could engage with to raise the issue. Having a collective voice would make more people aware of the problem.

A. Cllr Bill Davies: As far as I am aware there have never been any issues raised around travelling in taxis from wheelchair users. However Philip could contact the council's licensing department to look into this.

5.4. Philip Barton: Thank you to Streetscene for the prompt work on the issue around Hamilton Square as reported in October's forum.

5.5. Peter Exley: Grove Road appears to be lower at the junction with Rockvilla Road after recent repair work. This has caused a camber in the road.

5.6. Peter Exley: The red bus stop road markings cause problems for motorcycle riders as the wheels are sometimes forced to one side when riding over the markings.

6 PARTNER UPDATES:

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service:

6.1. Birkenhead Fire Station has now been given approval to be rebuilt to make it more energy efficient and fit for purpose. Wallasey Fire Station will be launching the ire Cadets Project. Working with young people between the ages of 14-19 they will have to opportunity to experience the fire service first hand.

Q. Hugh Langford: While Birkenhead Fire Station is being re-built does this mean that the area will not be covered by a station directly?

A. Dave Watson: No, there will be a temporary site set up at the Birkenhead site while the new building is being constructed.

Q. Jim Cadwallader: Will the fire service be privatised?

A. Dave Watson: unfortunately theres no way of answering that question.

Wirral NHS:

6.2. Wirral NHS has received the agreement to provide community services as a Foundation Trust.

The National Government has asked GP's to enter into consortia's to take over the services of the existing NHS. Wirral will be split into 3 consortia's.

Q. Cllr Jean Stapleton: Who will the GP consortia's be accountable to?

A. Cathy Gritzner: They will be accountable to the National Commissioning Board and Secretary of State.

Q. Cllr Phil Davies: The Wirral Labour party have concerns that these reforms will have a detrimental effect on services.

Q. Jim Cadwallader: Who policies will be in place to ensure that money these consortia's receive will be spent in the correct manner?

A. Cathy Gritzner: All GP consortia's will have their own accountants.

Q. Philip Barton: Have individual budgets been made legal yet and do you know who I should speak to about them?

A. Cathy Gritzner: No but I will find out.

Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust:

6.3. Infections in the hospital have decreased. However car parking charges have increased. This increase is to cover the increase in the cost of operating the car park.

The Clatterbridge site is not closing. Some services are being transferred to Arrowe Park but this won't see the closure of Clatterbridge.

Q. Jim Cadwallader: There have been reports in the national press of a new type of bug spreading around the hospitals called NSSA. Have there been any reports of this at Arrowe Park?

A. Christina St Martin: Unaware at this moment but will found out and come back to the forum.

Wirral Community Safety:

6.4. Statistics for all crime are at the lowest since 2003.

Q. Jim Cadwallader: Is there an update on the lighting around St Paul's Road?

A. Ian Lowrie: This issue has been passed onto the Council's Technical Services Department and is currently being looked at.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

AOB:

Councillor J Stapleton thanked everyone for attending the Forum.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Date: Tuesday 21st June 2011 - Venue: To be arranged