

# AREA FORUM (HESWALL AND PENSBY & THINGWALL)

Wednesday, 23 February 2011

## Present:

Councillor	D McCubbin (Chair)
Councillors	P Johnson R Wilkins M Johnston L Rowlands
Area Service Co-ordinator	Tracey Smith
Streetscene Manager	Phil Miner
Community Safety	Jim Thompson
NHS Wirral	Kathy Doran
Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Russell Favager
Merseyside Police	Inspector Steve Hall
Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service	Myles Platt

- 1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES:**  
Councillor Don McCubbin welcomed 31 members of the public to the area forum meeting. Apologies were received from Cllr Andrew Hodson.
- 2 AREA CO-ORDINATORS REPORT, INCLUDING MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING:**  
The minutes of the meeting held on 7th October 2010 were tabled and agreed as a true record, there were no amendments and no matters arising.  
  
Grit Bins - Tracey Smith, Senior Community Engagement Officer advised the meeting that the forum had been given £5,000 to spend on grit bins for the Heswall Pensby Thingwall & Barnston area, there were cards available for people to suggest where they would like grit bins. The cards can be handed in at the end of the meeting and the suggestions will be put forward to Technical Services.
- 3 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME:**  
Q. Greg Vogiatzis Pensby Resident - How are the cuts going to affect the area.

A. Cllr McCubbin advised it was a balanced budget that was agreed at Cabinet and will be going to full Council the following Tuesday. Early Voluntary Severance has been taken by staff however front line services will be maintained. Sure Start, Libraries not affected by cuts, school investment is still going ahead. Area Forums have been given extra funding.

Q. How are the cuts going to impact on our vulnerable and disabled people?

A. Cllr Bob Wilkins - Respite care services will continue to be offered but may be provided differently. There is a statutory duty to provide services.

Mark Johnston - There has been a positive political idea called Localism - there is a budget decision for next years funding for area forums to be increased.

Q. Mike Sullivan - Pensall Residents Association - 5 respite homes are getting closed - 380 police officers losing jobs - 170 fire officers losing jobs how can Councillors sit there and say there are not cuts when homes are closing. Cuts have been made with no discussion in the Town Hall with other Councillors

A. Cllr Bob Wilkins - Task force looked over provision in Wirral, its cost two and a half times more for Council to run homes than the private sector. Value for money should be followed; care and services will be provided. The opposition have not been gagged; they have been given every opportunity to voice their point of view. Budget proposals have been scrutinised and all Officers answered questions on the proposals.

Cllr Les Rowlands added that the Borough Solicitor signs off the Council budget and he can only do that when all figures have been checked so it is legal

Q. Pauline Sutton - will the budget be in the public domain.

A. Cllr Rowlands advised that it would.

Steve Hall - Merseyside Police. The Police haven't escaped the cuts. There has been natural wastage with Officers leaving and posts being deleted. There are cut backs financially however resources are available for other excellent policing projects. The Police Force has had a restructure and centralising non frontline services has resulted in a reduction of staff. Police who serve in this area have been put on permanent contracts so no direct cuts to this area.

Myles Platt - Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service. Over the next 2 years the Fire Service will need to save 9 million. For Wirral there will be no reduction in fire cover for any resident. There will be no changes to staff at Heswall and Upton Fire Stations. There are no compulsory redundancies and we are looking at back office functions to streamline them. There are extra resources for Wirral. We work in partnership with colleagues to tackle arson, antisocial behaviour and hate crime. There has been some creative thinking on how we can address challenges, and we will be looking at scrutinising services in future years

Rita Waters Lower Heswall resident - Would like to thank Streetscene and Cllr Andrew Hodson for getting a steep hill in Lower Heswall gritted.

Q, Member of public, bottom of Station Road there are 4 signs on a lamp post, blue signs, for the Wirral Way and a green sign with a picture of a horse, why are there so many?

A. Phil Miner - Streetscene Manager - There needs to be right of way signs, but he will look into why there are so many on one lamp post. There is also coastal town signage as part of the coastal trail around Wirral.

Q. Ken Roberts - Will the new electricity cable affect our area? Why isnt it running along the Wirral Way.

A. Cllr Bob Wilkins - It is the preferred route of the national grid, no planning permission is needed for Wirral only at Connahs Quay. At the presentation in Moreton one of the alternatives was the Wirral Way e. Thingwall corner will be affected but as it's a public utility we have no choice. He also reported that Presentations had been held – one in Moreton and there was also one in Neston.

Several people commented that, locally, we never find out about these meetings. Apparently, this is only put in the paper the day they are delivered.

Q. Why was the suggestion of the Wirral Way turned down?

A. There were a number of reasons but its not a Council decision.

Q. How much notice do Council give of these meetings? The National Grid should be giving information to the papers. It was reported that they have been held in Moreton and Neston.

A. They were not arranged by the Council, they were arranged by the National Grid.

Gentleman reported that the signage recently erected in Lower Heswall had already been vandalised, and some pulled out of the ground.

Q. John Terry – Heswall resident expressed concern over St. Peter's School. The footpath from the Black Horse up to the school is very narrow. Mothers pushing prams cannot always stay on the pavement, especially when they have a young infant walking with them. The land where the school is tapers from where the Narrow footpath is to the privet hedge and then the barrier for the school.

It was pointed out that the hedge is part of the Conservation Area, and should not be moved.

A. Cllr. Johnson said that it would create a greater bottle-neck from the wall which goes down to the Black Horse. The Council have carried out work at the top of Herberts Lane. It has to be said if the parents were not so idle, and walked their children to school, life would be easier.

Q. Whether there could be a one-way system put in.

A. Cllr. Johnson said that this had been looked at by the Council, but the Traders do not favour this, as if the residents can only turn one way, they will lose trade.

It was stated that childrens' lives are at stake, and are more important than a hedge.

Cllr. Johnson said that the bend cannot be removed due to the lie of the land, and the possibility of endangering several properties, and this is only repeating what The Council Officers have said.

Q. there is now difficulty in getting into Heswall Hall car park and the shopping area. It is a very narrow road to avoid the Telegraph Road traffic lights and because everyone now uses the Post Office in Milner Road. It is especially dangerous when the children are on holiday and coming round the corner on bicycles. Thought could

be given to a one-way system, such as they have in Pensby near the shops. There is also now a problem near the Post Office in Brimstage Road.

A. Cllr. Rowlands totally agreed, and said it is a blind corner for people coming out. If the Highways could have a look at this point, and see if there are any improvements which could be made.

Cllr. Johnson said that this problem has been there for years. The Borough Engineer, to alleviate the problem, wondered if perhaps the grassed area be made into parking spaces, but they were talking about £20,000. cost, and the money was not available.

It was reported that a lady who lives on the far side of Brimstage Road from the Post Office actually managed to get a crossing put in near the Railway Station.

Q. Sue Proudlove said that with regard to the discussion over car parks by schools, Oldwood Road and Kentmere Road – what is going to happen when they are combined? It is already congested without the school as it is now. Children should be encouraged to walk to school and their parents. A drop-kerb has been put on the corner of Oldwood Road and Kentmere, but people keep parking over the space where you get on to the pavement, especially in bad weather.

Greg Vogiatzis contributed that he has been talking with the Head Teacher at Pensby Primary. Currently, Sue, the PTSO, is extremely good and tries to discourage this selfish parking. The school do encourage children to walk to school. I would encourage any resident who sees people parking selfishly on the pavement to challenge them. The pavement is for pedestrians and the road for cars.

Someone commented. The idea is to enter into Greenwood Drive, and one of the other eases is that most of the children from Stanley School are bussed in, and that will reduce the parking.

A. Cllr. McCubbin said that yes, the Council are in the process of including this in the Programme of Works.

Q. who is responsible for the cost of these works, and what is the point of repairing the actual pavements if the cars are still going to park on them, and crush all the flags again?

A. Steve Hall Neighbourhood Inspector – it is enforceable by the Police, and I will take this back to look at. It is an unnecessary obstruction. We should all work in partnership with the schools and educate the parents.

Member of public commented– it is right across the boards, and if the pavements are only narrow, you can still hit mirrors all the way along, and also the height of the little children means they can be easily injured.

Steve Hall Neighbourhood Inspector – please let me know wherever it is happening, and we can come and issue parking tickets.

Q. Is it possible to list all the regular offenders, as very often the tickets are simply thrown away?

Q. Who is responsible for putting up the signs about parking on the grass verges, because no-one seems to take any notice?

Would it be a problem if I were to stick on something that looked like a Parking ticket ? At Shell Refinery they stick notices on the window which take half an hour each to remove as they are so well stuck on.

A. Phil Miner – roads have to be a certain size where people must not park on the pavements. There have been some in Bebington, and it has worked quite well. Eventually, people will get the message NOT TO PARK there.

Joan Chadwick commented it is a national issue. What happened to the Walking Bus? The Wirral Pedestrian Forum discussed all these issues and Livingstone Street Farm also.

Q. Ray Squire – I represent about 300 people in Lower Heswall, and we are effective and quite active. We had a meeting with Steve Hall over the single issue of the Milner Road pub. I feel that the scrapping of these meetings is a g great shame, especially as people were able to speak quite freely. Meetings being open are more informal. The local Crime and Police Website does include news and statistics – the decrease of 6%, and then fast forward to December, the number per 1000 is 25. In December, the reduction was 33%. Burglaries in our area have increased by 90% and this is massive. I have been told to-day by about six people (and they were in the house) with guests, and they had a break-in. On the same night I am informed there was another instance in The Lydiate.

All the people in this area are worried, but I understand the items stolen were regained in Skelmersdale.

A. Steve Hall, Neighbourhood Inspector – there is a Police website, but do be cautious of statistics, because it will only give you those within certain radius. I have been looking at that, when I can and I also like to put them into figures – 9 burglaries for each month. With the recession this has added to the usual

Christmas increase. So far, we have only had three burglaries this month. Several males were arrested in Bebington where there have been nine burglaries. Some of these are still awaiting their trial. The Park West and The Lydiate have been covered.

#### 4 **PARKS & COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES PROCUREMENT EXERCISE - JIM LESTER HEAD OF CULTURAL SERVICES:**

**The Chairman said that in view of the time, he would introduce Jim Lester, Head of Cultural Services to explain about the Parks & Countryside Procurement Exercise:**

Jim Lester said that he wished to give a run-down on a Major Procurement Exercise of those services within the Parks and Countryside Area – this means the playing fields, cemeteries etc., with a gross value of £14,000,000 per annum.

The exercise started in 2008, and we have reported to Cabinet in July 2010 when we asked them to agree the report by Capita Symonds, and Cabinet agreed that we should go forward with one single contract to one single Contractor, and included

with that should be the roads and the verges etc., which is already delivered by external contractor. Since July we have decided that some of the works could not be included in the Contract - The Crematorium at Landican and the management of our buildings, such as those in Birkenhead Park. The contract will still be of substantial value of between six and eight million pounds. In April we shall be putting that contract out to tender, it should be back in by September, and by next January we should have a Contractor. Over 200 staff are involved in this service.

There are, in fact, thirty six Friends of Parks Groups and Open Spaces Groups.

Another range of the public meetings is coming up, and if you are interested, there are meetings on 3rd March, 8th March, 15th March and 23rd March at Wallasey Town Hall. These are all open meetings, and everyone is welcome to come to them.

People sometimes ask who should they telephone - we are setting up a Call Line so that we understand better what the problems are. We are interested in what people want to see and what they want to improve. This will be at the heart of this new Contract – the Council at the centre as still being the owners of all the Parks, the Contractors who will be delivering the services, and the Users.

West Cheshire, Sefton and Liverpool are doing similar things, and we wish to improve our service and deliver the same sort of service, to generate savings and deliver value for money. The Contractors will be big Contractors, and we know that there are twelve contractors who are interested. We shall probably come down to about six, and this contract will be for ten years. Technical Services are working on the tender documents.

Man – does this tie in to the Ranger Services? I am talking particularly about the Ranger from Hilbre Island, who is extremely good.

Jim Lester - it will be tied up with this. I would like the Council to make it part of the Contract that any Staff who transfer must have the same salary and contract. With reference to terms of sub-contracting, we have already built into this contract that we will not accept sub-contract. The Contractors have met earlier in the year, and stated there will be no sub-contractors. There has not been a Ranger on Hilbre for more than a year, because it is difficult to have someone working and living on Hilbre. We must get the Rangers better integrated as they develop. We are talking with the RSPB, the Conservation Groups etc.

Man – ten years is a long time – is that wise?

Jim Lester – we want to see Contractors bringing in good staff who are trained, and it has, therefore, to be a long time. We need the long-term contracts, and this is typical in the Industry. We are expecting these invoices to be expensive, because there are thousands of pounds worth of equipment involved.

Ray Squires – does this include the Farm?

Jim Lester – no it does not. This is run by a Trust, and we are meeting them to discuss the future arrangements.

Neville Tilley – why do we have grass cut in the rural areas, and yet other parts are left neglected?

Jim Lester – this is actually one of the points that has been drawn to our attention. There will be two specifications – a rural specification and a non-rural specification. Areas in the rural specification will be cut two or three times a year, and other areas such as the Lever Causeway and the Motorway intersections, as and when necessary.

Neville Tilley – why the Lever Causeway and the intersection on the Motorway?

Jim Lester – none of these are our responsibility.

Cllr. Rowlands – can we, as a Council, make a decision about the skips on verges? They do damage the verges, and we have to pay for the restoration.

Stuart Marsden – who is going to draw up the specification to which the Contractors will have to work to? It is critical that this is made correct.

Jim Lester – the specification we are using will show that you have to manage it like this. The Contractors will have to prepare a Management Plan and Staff will be transferred to them, who have the experience and know what is required. We shall also arrange for local groups' representatives to be involved.

Cllr. Mark Johnston – Natural England have to right to report on some sites, and as site owners you must maintain them, and see they are retained (for example Heswall Dales). We require that to be managed to that standard, which is not an easy thing to do, and they will have to look at the methods used to manage these sites. It is due to a long-term partnership, and we are not maintaining them, but we are to become responsible.

John Bennington – the cycle track along the road to Thurstaston had a beautiful display of poppies, but the contractors came along and the whole lot were cut.

Jim Lester – this will not be easy, but we shall try our best.

## 5 **CENSUS 2011 - DEBORAH MORGAN CENSUS MANAGER:**

He apologised that Deborah Morgan, Census Manager was not able to attend, but that he would give a very brief report. The Census was first taken in 1801, and then held every ten years, except for 1941. The population of residents has remained about 94% compared to the 2001 Census national average. It could be completed before the 27<sup>th</sup> March, but it should be figures that will relate to that date. All the information gathered in the Census is not shared with any other Government department, and if kept confidential for one hundred years. It will be posted out in early March, and you have the option of returning it by post, or on-line. ([www.census.uk](http://www.census.uk)) There will be a help line, and there will be a facility for anyone who wants an individual appointment with someone who will come to the house and help you complete the form. Local charities are helping out, and local Drop-in sessions to help and answer questions. The website should be live from 4<sup>th</sup> March. It is estimated that a single person could complete the form in ten minutes.

Q. Bob Williams – they will be mailed out to each house. What is going to happen with large blocks of flats etc?

A. Keith Caulder – they will be sent to everyone who has an individual address. If anyone does not receive one, they can call the Helpline, and there will be people in the area to try and help out and deliver the forms.

Q. Cllr. Rowlands – obviously, all this is reported to the Government? What kind of percentage is given to – say travellers or people who move around the country?

A. Keith Caulder – those who move around, I am not sure, simply because they move around. As I said last time it was 94%, and there will always be an element missed.

Q. is it true that this will be the last Census?

A. Keith Caulder – that is so.

Q. Ray Squires – are there any contentious questions? Seriously, are there fines if you do not fill everything in?

A. Keith Caulder – the only non-compulsory question is what religion you follow.

Q. will it be cost effective? Is it first or second class? Is it confidential if I do it on-line?

A. Keith Caulder – you will have a special paper to enable you to do it on-line, and we will be using second class. There will be people chasing, politely, to ask if you have filled in the form.

## 6 PARTNER UPDATES:

### **NHS Wirral:**

Kathy Doran said that a Report was available in the area co-ordinators report and that she would answer any questions. No questions were asked.

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

Russell Favager reported that he would like to highlight some of the information in the area co-ordinators report, which include the money being invested, in a dedicated Women and Children's Hospital at Arrowe Park, the installation of a second MRI Scanner and the news that the Renal Dialysis Unit has become the first unit of its kind in the country to become an accredited Practice Development Unit for delivering clinical excellence. He reported that, over the winter months, there has been extra work for the people who staff the hospitals, due to flu etc. He apologized that David Steel could not be present, but that he could be contacted if there are any queries.

Q. Ray Squires – can you say Arrowe Park is clear of Novo Virus?

A. Russell Favager – I cannot say it is clear, because there are people walking round with it, but we are trying to get anyone with it into isolation. Last night, there were no closed wards.

Q. Sue Proudlove – why have the car parking charges gone to £2.50?

A. Russell Favager – half and free and half you have to pay for. There has been no increase since 2006, and the cost of maintaining the lighting and the running of this, the repairs, the money to pay for the security etc. has to be found, otherwise direct



patient expenditure would be reduced to pay for these services. As I said, there are 50% of spaces which are free.

Q. where are they?

A. Russell Favager – drive up towards A and E, and I apologize if a barrier has been put there, but I do not know if they have now installed one.

Q. the parking is a nightmare. The barrier is there to control a congestion problem and stop people driving round and round.

Cllr. Wilkins – there is an exemption scheme if you have to visit regularly over a long period of time, and a serious illness.

### **Merseyside Police:**

Steve Hall reported that Merseyside have made a marked reduction in the crime and anti-social behaviour. It is always more about behaviour over Christmas.

Without being alarmist, we are aware there has been an increase of burglaries, and thefts from motor vehicles. I should like to send out a questionnaire, and ask people “Are you leaving your house not very well protected?” as we have reason to believe that these who walk round try doors of houses and cars, and they tell us that the amount they find open is alarming. DO NOT leave keys in the porch or the hallway.

Q. Is a visible alarm a deterrent?

A. Steve Hall – one is – exterior lighting, particularly if it has a sensor.

Q. to locate information on Police statistics in Wirral seems very difficult to find.

A. Steve Hall –you can information on-line on [www.merseyside.police.uk](http://www.merseyside.police.uk) It will also give you a report of work that the Police have done,

Q. Ray Squire – Are you able to tell us whether they were local people who were arrested?

A. Steve Hall – mostly, they live in the Bromborough area, and you can circulate that.

Jim Thompson commented Steve Hall is claiming the Police have done all this, but we have been of assistance. The basic message is – the Police and the Council colleagues work as a team. Wirral was, is and will continue to be a very safe place to live. Heswall, Irby, Pensby, West Kirby, Caldy and Barnston have always been a safe place to live. The number of instances of crime has decreased.

Cllr. Rowlands – I agree with everything Jim said. We are in a very safe place to live. One thing I should like to pass on to you is in the Council Budget that will be agreed next week, there is provision for CCTV to be manned at night, as it has only been manned in the daytime previously.

Steve Hall – as residents of each Ward, you can have your say at meetings, and anyone can come along. At one time, they were held quarterly, but the Chief Constable has made this new arrangement, and this will be out in a monthly Newsletter.

### **Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service:**

Myles Platt reported that their Report is one Page 12, but he would answer any questions the audience might wish to ask. He said the Service had one fatality, since

the middle of 2009, and that was a gentleman, aged 89, who lived with his wife in a protected environment.

Despite the financial challenges, the Service is planning to carry out 20,000 domestic fire checks, and you are all entitled to have free smoke detectors. It is proposed to build seven new Fire Stations. One will be in Birkenhead, and we are working with the Council on that, on the site of the existing Fire Station.

A lady, who said that she wears a deaf aid, said that she cannot hear any smoke alarms, and the Fire Service have been marvellous, and they have put in a loud smoke alarm. She said that she wished to compliment the Service for all their work and kindness. Myles Platt replied, thanking her, but said that it is not just the Fire and Rescue Service – it is also the Council.

Cllr. McCubbin thanked everyone for attending, and said that the next Area Forum will be held in Heswall (venue to be agreed), and the date is 22nd June 2011.

7

**DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS:**

Next meeting will take place on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2011 – venue to be confirmed.