

AREA FORUM (WEST WIRRAL)

Thursday, 23 February 2012

Present:

Councillor

G Ellis (Chair)

In attendance:

Councillors

D Elderton

J Hale

G Watt

E Boulton

Leader of the Council

Jeff Green

Lead Officer

Kevin Adderley

Consultation Manager

Tracey Smith

Merseyside Fire Service

Paul Murphy

Merseyside Police

Inspector Mick Blease

Director Technical Services

Dave Green

Wirral Partnership Homes

Steve Eaves

In Attendance

Jayne Robinson (Minute Taker)

1 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair, Councillor Gerry Ellis welcomed the Forum members and 90 members of the public to the West Wirral Area Forum held at Black Horse Hill Junior School, West Kirby.

2 **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATE**

Tracey Smith gave an update and feedback on the Neighbourhood Plans.

The areas in the consultation process included:

Your Economy

Your Health

Your Family

Your Neighbourhood

Tracey's update focused on 'Your Neighbourhood'. An information handout was available for people to read.

Some of the points raised were:

Road Maintenance & Road Safety

Road Safety measures were needed, including better crossings on Hoylake Road and at the bottom of Bridge Road.

Officers and members will undertake a study of these roads and report back to the next Area Forum.

Through the Road Safety Funding, in the Hoylake and Meols area, dropped kerbs are being installed in parts of Trinity Road, Guffitts Rake and Westbourne Road, Church Road and Hilbre Road. In West Kirby and Thurstaston area they are to be fitted in part of Village Road, Sandy Lane and at the entrances of the Moby Dick.

Safety around Schools – The parking enforcement team have been asked to visit the areas of concern. The School Travel Team will also be notified to identify and address issues surrounding traffic outside schools. All investigations will be reported back at future Area Forums.

Speeding – The suggestion of 20mph speed signs outside schools will be put to the Road Safety Team and will feedback at future Area Forums. In addition, through Forum funding, a vehicle activated sign is to be installed in Frankby Road.

Irresponsible Parking – The Parking Enforcement Team have been asked to visit the areas of concern on a regular basis.

Road & Pavement Maintenance – This was seen as a problem particularly at Hoylake Promenade – The Council has just approved a comprehensive programme of priority road and pavement maintenance schemes. This is scheduled for this year. Information regarding this is on the Council Website.

Cycling – The feedback received will be passed on to the Road Safety Team. Years 5 and 6 in schools will be offered free level 2 cycling training, provided by Bike Right. The road safety team also ensures cycle routes are safe.

Community Safety

Visible Police Presence – John Martin, Area Commander for Wirral BCU has received all the comments and will attempt to organise his resources as much as possible to deal with all the concerns.

Anti-social behaviour – This is not a big problem, but under age drinking in parks and in the town centre is. The Council is undergoing a process of completely re-designing the Parks & Countryside Service. Council Officers are carrying out a detailed consultation with park user groups and will take all the findings into account when they publish the proposals on the design of the new service.

The Anti-social Behaviour Team and the Youth and Play Service have had your comments passed onto them.

Public Transport – All comments have been passed onto Mersey Travel and they will provide a response at a future Area Forum this year.

Parks and Leisure

All comments will be taken into account when the Council publish the proposals after the detailed consultation process for re-designing the Parks & Countryside Service.

Q. Where do allotments fit in with this – Are they part of Parks or Asset Management?

A. They are now in Asset Management Department. In the budget proposals it allocates an additional £50k for allotments in this area.

Q. There is a Council owned field off Devonshire Road, West Kirby, this would make a good space for allotments or even a communal garden.

A. This area of land is quite narrow and long which may not be suitable for allotments, however it may be suitable for a communal garden. Kevin Adderley will look into this.

The local Councillors have also sent requests to the Council for this area of land. No response received as yet. Councillor Elderton will follow this up.

Q. There is a problem with irresponsible parking outside the United Reform Church in West Kirby. Cars are parked by the bus stop which is causing a traffic problem and it makes it difficult to get onto the bus.

Also is it illegal to park on pavements, as per newspaper article involving a police van?

A. The police disagree with the report in the local paper. It is an offence to drive on a pavement, but not to park on the pavement.

With regards to the bus stop outside the United Reform Church in West Kirby, Aldi will be paying to enhance the road in that area. There will be 2 new pelican crossings and the bus stop will be moved back slightly towards Hoylake. Aldi have paid £250k for road improvements in this area.

Q. Is it wrong to park at a Bus Stop?

A. Dave Green is responsible for the traffic regulations. This area will be checked. If a member of public has an issue with parking, then contact Street Scene with information and an Officer will be sent out to investigate.

Street Scene telephone number is 0151 606 2004

Q. Is there still a 5 year waiting list for an allotment?

A. Dave Green is not responsible for allotments. Allotments have been transferred to Asset Management Department. He is unsure of the waiting list, but will look into this and report back.

Q. The tree felling programme on the Wirral Way has caused concern with some local residents. The screening has been taken away without the residents being informed. This area should remain a wildlife corridor and not to encourage mountain bikes. It does need some tree management, but not too much.

A. The trees which are being cut down are Sycamore Trees, these do not rot down. The rangers are trying to achieve a clear area so as to let the light in.

Dave Green explained that there are different views from the public, any further plans for the Wirral Way the residents will be consulted. The felling of the Sycamore Trees was done for a reason and they will be replaced with

new trees. He will arrange a meeting with residents and rangers before any more trees are felled.

Councillor Jeff Green explained that the Council is getting better in supporting allotments; a new area has been created in Gilroy Road, West Kirby. An additional £50k has been put into the allotment budget. This will prove useful for improvements.

Appropriate land is also being identified for allotments. Councillors will help and will push through Council. They will also check names on the waiting list.

Q. What is happening regarding Spartina Grass on Hoylake Beach?

A. Councillor John Hale explained that there have been public meetings with approx 200 people attending who want the grass off the beach. A dig has been arranged for 15th April at Hoylake Beach. Volunteers can turn up and help dig out the grass. Unfortunately, the grass will grow back.

Q. What about the grass at West Kirby beach?

A. Councillor Gerry Ellis suggested that some diggers go to West Kirby on the same day to help remove the grass.

Dave Green explained that there is a Beach Management Plan which includes Hoylake – There are plans to spray and rake it out regularly and also use the public to help dig it out. Last year it cost £30k.

3 **UPDATES**

Hoose Court Development
Carr Lane Development
Bridge Court, Health Centre Plans

David Ball, Acting Director for Strategic Development of Wirral Council Planning Service gave an update on the above developments:

Hoose Court – Discussions are taking place with Councillor John Hale, looking at proposals. There are more meetings planned with Wirral Partnership Homes over the proposals.

Carr Lane – The application for residential development is close to completion, this will then be submitted to the planning committee.

Bridge Court – Discussions have taken place with Councillor Jeff Green and Wirral Partnership Homes which has led to the proposals being withdrawn. New plans have now been submitted.

The proposals for Hoose Court are not going to Committee on 6th March.

Q. What were the Officer's recommendations for Carr Lane?

A. They are still in the final stages.

Q. The plans for Bridge Court look like they are going to build in the urban green space.

- A. The original plans were not acceptable, so WPH have been asked to amend their plans to maintain the green space on the road. Councillor David Elderton explained that he can't comment as yet on the plans as they haven't been formally submitted.
- Q. The Older Peoples Parliament has met with WPH to view the plans for Bridge Court. WPH have increased the green space and the proposals look good and there is a definite need to move the Health Centre.
- Q. With regards to social housing, is it true that you cannot discriminate over elderly and disabled housing?
- A. Unsure over Hoose Court as that originally was for elderly housing. Steve Eaves, Wirral Partnership Homes explained that there is a new law coming into effect on 1st April 2012 which means that houses can't be built for schemes just for over 55's or disabled. Everyone is welcome to apply for housing.

Councillor Jeff Green stated that Wirral Partnership Homes have worked closely with the public and also the local councillors over the Bridge Court development for social housing and the health centre. They have acted as a 'Good Neighbour' and would like to express his thanks to them.

- Q. With the new law that is coming in, does that mean we can't have retirement flats?
- A. Steve Eaves, WPH, explained that houses can have specialist facilities.

4 **PARTNER UPDATES**

Police

Inspector Mike Blease reported on the following:

- There have been some staffing changes, Marilyn Haynes and Annie Hynde have retired and they are not being replaced. Resources can be used from other areas for West Kirby and Hoylake.
- It has been a fantastic year, this is a safe neighbourhood.
 - 10% reduction in crime
 - 25% reduction in ASB crime
 - 50% reduction in criminal damage.
- There has been an increase in dwelling burglary. This is due to patio doors not being locked. Please ensure that doors are locked. Criminals are checking door handles; if they are open then they will enter.
- Have Your Say Meetings – There are regular meetings for the public to attend. Please attend if you have any issues.

Fire Service

Paul Murphy reported on the following:

- There have been cuts in the Fire Service, but there are lobbying strategies in place. As yet we are unsure of the closures, but will find out on 12th December 2012.
- This is a safe area to live. In the last 10 months there have been 9 accidental dwelling fires.
- There are Home Fire Safety checks available, and to date 1500 have been delivered to households.
- Secondary Fires – There has been a 30% reduction across Wirral for ASB fires.
- Only 8 fires in this neighbourhood.
- Road Traffic Collisions – Only 7 have been attended in this area over the past 10 months
- Community Dig – This is arranged for 15th April to dig the Spartina Grass at Hoylake Beach. A fire engine will be in attendance, some quad bikes and trailers. Fire cadets will be helping out. The more volunteers that attend the better.

Q. What will happen if Heswall and West Kirby Fire Stations close?

A. No news of closures until the 12th December 2012. There are lobbying strategies in place to try to stop the closures.

Q. Deaf Fire Alarms – Have been waiting for 9 months to receive an alarm for deaf people. When will they become available?

A. The alarms are now available, give the address at the end of the meeting to arrange for it to be fitted.

5 **KLONOWSKI REPORT**

Councillor Jeff Green, new Council Leader gave a brief explanation of the Klonowski report.

- An independent Consultant was asked to look into the allegations Martin Morton claimed to be happening in Wirral Council within Adult Social Services Department.
- Parts of the report have been in the local papers.
- The investigation is still unfinished. Jeff Green has asked for a full report. Council Officers involved have left the council with a large Early Voluntary Retirement payment.
- The Council is looking to compensate the families for the stress caused.
- The Chief Internal Auditor has been asked to report back on what his auditors knew and who did they report to.
- Councillor Jeff Green explained that there has been a loss of respect for the Council from the public. The Council needs to work together to regain this trust.

Councillor Jeff Green also gave a brief update on the new Budget.

- The Council has identified some savings, this is from good management from staff.

- There will be a 3% Council Tax reduction
- The Council Tax direct debit can now be taken over a 12 month period.
- £500k has been put into the Area Forums - £30k for each Forum.
- £10k to the Forum to spend as the forum wishes, e.g.: pavements, drop kerbs
- £4k to clean up children's' play areas.
- An extra £5k has been added to help sort out any fly tipping issues.
- The Dog Fouling Enforcement Team is to be doubled. Please contact the team if you have a problem with dog fouling issues. An Officer will be sent into the area to investigate.
- £1million for Town Hall improvements.
- £1.2million to Hoylake, to re-vitalise the area around the train station.
- £1.2million to New Brighton to improve the area.
- Wirral Council are putting £0.5 million into local shopping areas. This is based on the Mary Portus plans. Hoylake have submitted a bid to this.

Q. Not everyone is happy about the reduction of the Council Tax. Could this money be spent elsewhere?

A. Money is being spent in deprived areas. £220k is for youngsters not in employment for work placements. £50k is for Community Sport for young people. £1.5million is for the hard to reach areas.

Q. Will the reduction affect front line services.

A. They will not be affected. Additional money is available in the budget.

Q. With the Open coming up, the area coming out of the tunnel is very untidy, with rubbish everywhere. Could this be improved?

A. Dave Green has plans to improve the quality of the environment around Wirral. We will be working with Mersey Travel and the Highway Agency to improve and tidy up the whole of Wirral.

6 FUTURE FORMAT OF FORUM MEETINGS

It has been arranged for Councillors and Officers to meet with the Community Network Group to discuss the future plans for Forum meetings.
There are proposals to change to times to 6.30 – 7.30pm.

Tracey Smith, Area Co-ordinator arranges 3 of the Forums around Wirral, and does a very good job.

West Wirral is the largest attended Forum on Wirral. An average of 70 attending.

Leasowe has an average of 10 attending.

Liscard has an average of 7 attending.

No changes will be made until it has been discussed with local Councillors.

It was also reported that this forum would be the last one Councillor Gerry Ellis will chair as he is to be the next Mayor of Wirral. Congratulations and good wishes were given to him.

7 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- Q. Do you have any representing NHS regarding the removal of the Vascular Service moving to the Countess of Chester.
- A. This forum is based on 'Your Neighbourhood' so unfortunately no representation. Pass on the details to Tracey Smith who will find out the information.
- Q. An idea to base the forum spending on the attendance levels of the forum!
- A. This idea cannot be taken up. Just because people don't turn up doesn't mean they are not interested in their community.

Congratulations were passed onto Jackie Hall for being awarded an MBE. Jackie has opened a shop in Hoylake for local people to visit. They can go there and discuss any issues they may have, they can look at plans and find out information about the area. Opening hours are 10am – 4pm, Monday – Saturday. There is also a website – www.hoylakehelp.com.

8 CLOSE

The West Wirral Area Forum closed at 9pm