

Area Forum (Oxton and Prenton)

Wednesday, 29 February 2012

Present:

Councillor S Kelly (Chair)

In attendance:

Councillors P Williams
A Bridson
A Brighthouse

D Realey
P Doughty

Community Representatives Alan Dollery, Sarah Goulding, Patrick Toosey

Lead Officer Mark Camborne, Head of Regulation

Area Service Co-ordinator Andrew Brannan for Louise Harland-Davies

Street Scene Manager Garry Cummings

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Paul Murphy Andy Groome

Community Safety Steve Preston

1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

The Chair, Councillor Stuart Kelly, welcomed Area Forum members and 30 members of the public to the meeting in Prenton.

The Chair introduced Andy Brannan, Area Co-ordinator, substitute for Louise Harland-Davies, who was unwell. On behalf of the Area Forum he expressed best wishes to Louise for an early recovery.

2 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATE

The Community Engagement Officer, Andy Brannan, referred to the consultation launched last year when local residents were invited to express their views about where they live and the things they would wish to change to enhance their local environment. The feedback received has been used to inform the priorities for the Neighbourhood Plan for this Area Forum.

The priorities identified by the community will help each Area Forum determine how it spends the money which is allocated each year by the Council.

The Chair thanked Andy for the presentation and invited questions on the Neighbourhood Plan.

Q [Paul Haywood]. I raised the issue of the implementation of byelaws and funding issues, with the area co-ordinator, and was directed to Government Office. The Government Office advised that the Government will be holding a consultation on how byelaws are implemented and commented on.

My question is: *'Can you ask the area co-ordinator to look into this?'*

A [Andy Brannan] I will pass the request on to Louise to see if the panel can discuss the issue as a future agenda item.

Q [Alan Dollery]: I have a letter from a councillor dated 2006, about a request for 20 mph signs in Prenton Dell Road. Speeding is a concern with vehicles travelling at 40 mph in early mornings and evenings. I appreciate that they are not compulsory, but they would be a deterrent.

A [Cllr Bridson]: From discussions with officers I understand consideration may be given to illuminated traffic signs. I will progress that.

Comment [Cllr Williams]: I've been wanting 20mph signs in the Holmlands, and I agree they are a reminder to act responsibly. Other authorities are introducing them much more quickly.

Q [Tranmere Hall Estate Residents' Association]. We asked a number of questions from David Green, but as you are no longer producing agenda papers, the answers were not given in writing. A few years ago, the Council allocated funding for 20mph signs in all areas of Wirral. In February, the Labour group directed the money to speed bumps. The current controlling group reinstated the funding for compulsory 20 mph signs on all residential streets. Speed bumps are fine and provide a quick fix to avoid accidents.

Default 20mph signs are only there for a few months and then they are moved on. They are not a solution. The solution is compulsory 20mph signs like you have in some areas of the country. We also put forward a number of suggestions for enforcement.

- Q The outward side of the illuminated sign in Woodchurch Road is illuminated permanently, therefore people are speeding.
- Comment [Richard Neale]: The Neighbourhood Plan is extremely well presented. We welcome the attempts to clean up Woodchurch Road shopping area, but there are one or two characters who are adding graffiti to the walls, particularly at the side of Aldi, and the restaurant being developed next to Sainsbury's. Hopefully something will be done about it.
- A [Public] The Council have provided graffiti- removal material, and the Friends of the Arno turned out after finding the area covered in graffiti on Sunday morning.
- Comment [Richard Neale]. There has been a considerable increase in cigarette ends, particularly outside the restaurant in Woodchurch Road, and Cambridge Road seems to act as a receptacle for cigarette ends thrown from cars etc. The issue is about street cleaning. The sweeping arrangements need to be reviewed because the mechanical sweepers cannot keep it under control. I congratulate you on this paper tonight.
- A [Chair]: Streetscene are dealing with the issues as detailed in that paper. It strikes me that those who do the graffiti leave a signature or a tag- and they can probably be identified from school books.
- A [Inspector Griffiths]: We take photographs and circulate the tags, and we work with schools. There have been instances on the restorative justice front, where the lad has cleaned them himself
- Q The Shrewsbury Arms uses blowers to blow the cigarette ends all over the place. These places should have receptacles.
- Comment [Sarah Goulding]: At Sainsbury's, they don't remove the graffiti as soon as it happens, it starts on the wall, then on a door, and it could impact on people shopping there. Do we have any leverage to advise Sainsbury's and tell them to keep on top of it? It's on the wall by the ATM machine and it seems no-one is dealing with it.
- Comment [Community Safety]: We had that in Wallasey and the answer was if it is not racist or homophobic, they would not clean it up. They don't have to clean it up if it's not racist or homophobic.
- Comment Each organisation like Sainsbury's should have more respect for its own property.
- A [Police]: We will visit Sainsbury's to speak to them amount removing the graffiti.
- Comment: [Matthew Patrick] I run a Young Wirral Labour Group and Action Saturday when we go out into the community and clean up. We would like to work in any areas that need clearing up.

Question: [Matthew Patrick] A resident spoke to one of our team and expressed concern about the quality and the depth of the consultation around Calveley Avenue? How wide was it and what happened? Will there be further consultation?

[Cllr Brighthouse]: The situation at the bottom of Calveley Avenue/- Townfield has existed for a long time. A number of residents are keen to have yellow lines near Townfield Primary School. It's difficult for residents to get in and out and there's a significant accident record in that area. After some considerable consultation with the road safety officers a proposal did go forward for the area. There were about 8/9 objectors, further consultation followed, the plan was modified and because there were still two objectors, the plan will be submitted to the March meeting of the highways panel for a final decision.

Cllr Brighthouse responded to a question from Matthew Patrick about monitoring the restrictions in the area.

Comment: [Cllr Williams]: In 2007, I started the Friends of the Arno and Oxton Fields. We have people of all ages who regular litter pick and clear up the Arno and Oxton Fields.

The Chair thanked the Area Forum for the feedback on the Neighbourhood Plans.

Minute Decision:

- i) The area forum to consider "the implementation of bye-laws" as an agenda item at a future forum meeting
- ii: Merseyside Police: Neighbourhood Inspector to arrange to speak to Sainsburys regarding the graffiti problem

3 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

PRESENTATION ON CANNABIS CULTIVATION -

Merseyside Police

Cannabis cultivation is a 'growing' trend, and more and more of this type of organised crime is being seen across Wirral. Individual/gangs rent private properties, knock holes in walls and ceilings, extend the electricity cables, by-passing fuse boxes, and install high-powered electric lamps to provide the correct growing conditions for cannabis plants.

The signs to look out for are curtains drawn all day, heavy condensation, or the property is boarded up from the inside, there is soil dumped in the garden, and there is a 'funny' smell. The pungent smell is the reason that cannabis is called 'skunk'. Another name is 'weed' because plants grow like weeds and reach mature plants from cuttings in 10/12 weeks.

The Officer urged anyone who notices anything suspicious in their neighbourhood to contact their local Police or Crimestoppers.

The Chair thanked the Police Officer for the presentation.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- Comment: The vehicle that goes round clearing the cutters. I live in a one way street, and it's very dangerous if someone is going the wrong way down a one way street. It needs attention.
- Comment: Bebington Road outside Victoria Park, why have they have lost two car spaces?
- A [Cllr. Realey]: I asked them to look at that because it was dangerous on the corner.
- A [Cllr.Bridson]: I am discussing the issue with Officers after several residents contacted me unhappy about this. All the people were notified of the work but they didn't see the difficulties until it after it happened. . People are now objecting and we need to resolve the problem.
- Q The state of the roads in Oxton particularly, and in the Borough generally, I asked the general question, '*Do we pay for 'cheap' jobs on the roads, or pay for first class jobs?*' and the answer was not forthcoming. Cloughton Firs, and Willan Street, and lots of roads in the Borough are full of pot holes.
- A [Cllr Brighthouse]: We have experimented with different types of road surfaces and some have not been a success. A good example is Shrewsbury Road and in that particular case the contractor has not been paid. Where jobs are not done to the standards we required, then Colas are not paid for it. Hopefully we will have a successful outcome.
- Q [Mr Dowling]: A supplementary question. The painted line markings. The approach to Morrison's in New Brighton, they are not marked and it is dangerous. There are no indications on the road where you should halt.
- A [Cllr Doughty]: There will be a report shortly about the performance of that contractor. There are issues of great dissatisfaction with the standards of workmanship.
- Comment: [Chair]: Specific locations will be looked at and checked.
- Q I'm working with a couple of charities, and firstly would like to make an appeal for donations of old wellies for use as planters in Oxton Village. Also I have only just heard about plans for the TA to be taken over by the fire station [response in partner updates].
- Q [Matthew Patrick]: On behalf of local residents, is it possible to introduce disabled parking in Oxton Village, as in Upton Village?
- A [Cllr Brighthouse]: We are trying to provide more parking spaces in Oxton Village. Parked cars calm the traffic down. The Oxton Society may like to consider the lack of a disabled bay in Oxton Village.
- A [Patrick Toosey]: We have a meeting coming up and will do that.
- Comment: Alan Dollery gave a detailed account of a personal experience at a meeting of the recently newly formed Friends of Walker Park. He made a formal request to the Chair and his colleagues from the

Council to assist in trying to comply with a bequest by Sir Ian Walker concerning the use of the park.

- A [Chair]: I take on board what Alan Dollery has said and will use my position to try to facilitate a way forward.
- Comment: Two members of the public disputed the accuracy of the account of the meeting.
- Comment: I want to see how money is spent in the Area Forum. I moved to the area in January and I received leaflets on the fire station. Further comments were made on 20 mph, community issues; fire station, information sharing, disabled parking, the meeting tonight is really good, Townfield health centre [faced by youths and not safe for children to play], the play space behind Sainsbury's is brilliant, Townfield, derelict garage, and nowhere for the children to play. Play facilities in that area.
- A [Chair]: The Townfield shops are all privately-owned. An application from TESCO was refused by the Council and the refusal was upheld on appeal.
- [Cllr Williams]: It took years to get the playground in Duck Pond Lane. The housing development beyond Townfield School and Ridgeway High school, and when that application was approved there was a section 106 put in place to develop a linear park which was supposed to have items of children's play equipment. That section 106 was overturned because people didn't want it to happen, and that opportunity was lost.
- A [Community Safety Officer]: I met yesterday with the anti-social behaviour team and the issue around Townfield shops and the health centre is something we are all aware of and are in the process of looking at. During half term, the Police engaged the children on many activities away from the area. CCTV is being looked at to help with the problems of youths in the area.
- Comment I would like to draw attention to and ask for support for a Wirral Council Disabled Persons Forum, similar to the Older People's Parliament, to provide a forum for collective expressions of opinion of disabled people on strategies in Wirral. The issue has been raised with Council officials and initial steps are in progress to see if it is possible. Council officials are very positive but it very much depends how much disabled people get behind this approach; it needs their backing.
- A [Chair]: I agree the analogy with the Older People's Parliament is appropriate, and there needs to be a view of interest from disabled groups, eg. WIRED It is on our agenda and we will find out how it progresses, and will find out if other area forums are interested.

4 PARTNER UPDATES

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

PROPOSED USE OF TA BARRACKS AT CHETWYND: [Andy Groome]. We are building seven new fire stations on Merseyside – the one in Birkenhead will be starting this year.

The original proposal was to operate from a temporary fire station on site. Instead there was a major publicity exercise and consultation with local residents in Wexford Road and a distance beyond, and with local ward councillors, on a proposal to temporarily relocate the fire station to the TA Barracks in Wexford Road.

The proposal is to locate the operational appliances and nine staff to Chetwynd House for 13 months whilst the Exmouth Street building is demolished and replaced with a smaller building.

An analysis of response times indicated that all the areas covered can be reached within a response time of five minutes; the only noticeable impact was in parts of the Rock Ferry area. After extensive consideration, it was decided that the best access point would be to Bidston Road. The plans are on the website.

Cllr Doughty stated that he lives in Village Road in Oxton, a short distance away from the TA barracks, and he was not aware of the fire station. He suggested that a wider consultation would have been more useful; people in Oxton are affected.

Mr Dowling stated that from the presentation and discussion, he wouldn't be able to say exactly where things are on the matter of the fire station at Chetwynd. He asked, *'Has it been decided in principle that it will go ahead, or is it still under discussion?'* He also commented on the volume of traffic on Bidston Road, and if appliances exit from Chetwynd on to Bidston Road, the parking going towards St Saviour's Church and on both sides of Berisford Road would make access impossible for emergency vehicles.

The Chair replied that the planning application is still in the consultation stage and has not yet been determined. All the issues were raised at the public meetings and there will be a further meeting.

MERSEYSIDE POLICE

PUBLIC ENQUIRY OFFICES AT POLICE STATIONS: Following publicity in the local press, only two Police Stations – Birkenhead and Wallasey – are now open to the public. Birkenhead Police Station is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Wallasey Police Station is open on Monday to Saturday from 8 am to 10 pm. The public can contact the Police for emergency purposes using the national number – 101. Although the remaining stations are closed to the public, Police Officers will continue to work out of those stations.

CANNABIS CULTIVATION: Plant pots and gardening equipment recovered from cannabis cultivation have been donated to Woodchurch High School for use in the school's garden area. Donations of unwanted garden equipment would be welcome and can be put to use.

There have been a series of armed robberies in Wirral, mainly at off-licences premises during the evening. Stills from CCTV tapes will be circulated this week in an effort to track down the offenders.

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE [Paul Murphy]: There have been eleven **ACCIDENTAL DWELLING FIRES** in ten months. The programme of providing free smoke alarms has continued with 1100 inspections in ten months. There were five

DELIBERATE SECONDARY FIRES in Oxton and Prenton. Successful partnership work with agencies resulted in a quieter bonfire night in 2011. The fire service attended six **SERIOUS ROAD TRAFFIC INCIDENTS** in Oxton and Prenton.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

DOG FOULING. Last year, the Council funded five designated dog fouling officers. Since January, 70 people have been issued with fixed penalty fine notices of £50, and all have paid the fine without recourse to the Court. Dog fouling should be reported to the Community Safety Team or the Area Co-ordinator.

Frequent requests are made at area forum meetings for more CCTV in parks and open spaces, but there is a need to respect people's privacy. Patrols are issued with body-worn video recording equipment which can be used to make a DVD which is given to the Police and can be used as evidence for a prosecution.

Now the weather is improving people are leaving windows open and not using lift and lock mechanisms to secure doors; and this allows opportunist crime. Jim Thompson can be contacted by email at jimthompson@wirral.gov.uk and he will provide free shed alarms and home safety advice.

OTHER BUSINESS

A member of the public asked when the Anna Klonowski report would be available to the public.

The Chair replied that an appendix has recently been issued that identifies councillors, officers, staff and service providers mentioned in the report. The only names that remain redacted are those who gave evidence on the understanding that their names would not be released.

Councillor Williams stated that the only recourse is to have a public inquiry and discussions are on going with the Government on whether that can be done.

A member of the public asked a question in relation to the fire station relocation on whether the Birkenhead School have been consulted, given heavy parking and children coming and going from cars at certain times.

The Fire Officer advised that there is a meeting with Birkenhead School on Friday to discuss issues raised at the consultation. It's about having a protocol and procedure in place that would mitigate the impact of the issues raised.

An objection was raised to information shared by Matthew Patrick about a forthcoming consultative meeting with a local MP because it had a political bias.

5 FUTURE MEETINGS

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 20 JUNE 2012 at a venue to be advised.

The Chair thanked everyone for their patience and participation and closed the meeting of the Area Forum at 9.05 pm.

