

# AREA FORUM (WEST WIRRAL)

Monday, 4 March 2013

<u>Present:</u> Councillor	JE Green (Chair)
<u>In attendance:</u> Councillors	G Ellis J Hale G Watt E Boulton
Community Representatives	Jackie Hall, Cynthia Bibbington, John Percival
Lead Officer	Kevin Adderley Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment
Area Service Co-ordinator	Tracey Smith
Streetscene Manager	Mark Traynor
Community Safety	Jim Thompson
Merseyside Fire Service	Sarah Patterson
Merseyside Police	Inspector Mick Blease
Council Officers	Julie Barkway ( Library Service) Mary Bagley (Parks and Countryside Service Manager)
<u>Apologies</u>	
Councillors	D Elderton

## 1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

The Chair, Councillor Jeff Green welcomed the Forum members and 35 members of the public to the West Wirral Area Forum meeting held at Melrose Hall, Hoylake.

### Apologies:

Councillor David Elderton

Councillor Jeff Green thanked everyone for attending the West Wirral Forums over the years. If all forums were as successful as this one, then the future of the forums might have been different. He praised the Mayor, Councillor Gerry Ellis for his interest in the agenda over the years as the Chair.

Councillor Jeff Green also passed on his thanks and congratulations to Jackie Hall for hosting the forum this evening and for also receiving an MBE for all her community work. It is well deserved and is good to see her work recognised.

## **2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes having been read were agreed as a true record.

Jackie Hall raised the issue regarding the toilets on North Parade, Hoylake. The plans had been submitted in 2007 and to date no work has commenced.

A. Kevin Adderley reported that discussions are in place with the owner and the Council.

West Kirby Concourse Development – Kevin Adderley reported that there are plans in progress for the development of West Kirby Concourse.

## **3 REPORT ON NEIGHBOURHOOD FUNDING**

Councillor Jeff Green reported that the funding has now been allocated from the Neighbourhood Fund. The funding is just waiting to be signed off and then it will be distributed to the various groups.

A full list of the allocated funds will be detailed on the Council website.

Q. What has been the delay in the funding being allocated?

A. Kevin Adderley was unsure of the cause and apologised for the delay. He will find out and inform the applicants.

Q. How soon will the information be on the website?

A. It will be put on as soon as they have been signed off by the Cabinet Members.

Congratulations were given to the tremendous Gang Show held recently by the local scout groups.

## **4 UPDATE ON SPARTINA GRASS ON HOYLAK BEACH**

Councillor John Hale gave an update from the recent public meeting regarding the spartina grass on Hoylake Beach.

Historically, residents from the community would meet up and dig out the grass each year. Natural England has informed us that we can no longer dig the grass and agreed that it could be sprayed. The Council engaged to get it sprayed by a hired contractor. However, this proved to be unsuccessful.

Last Year, the Council agreed to do the spraying in-house. This will give us more flexibility to get it sprayed when the weather is suitable. This has proved to be a success this year as most of the grass is now dead. The spraying still needs to be regular to stop re-growth and could take up to 2 – 3 years.

Mary Bagley, Service Manager from Parks and Countryside reported on how the Council would be treating the spartina grass. The spraying is permitted by Natural England and it has also been agreed by the Environment Agency to do this.

There is a Hoylake Beach Site Management Agreement 2010/15– copies are available if anyone requires a copy. The Council are following this agreement.

The next 2 sprays are due to take place in June and also in October. Spraying can only be done when the conditions are right.

The agreement will be reviewed in 2015.

If anyone has any questions, then they can contact Joe Hanik, Senior Ranger.

Q. If this spray is effective on the beaches, why don't they use it to kill weeds in the parks?

A. The use of hoes and rakes are best practice in the local parks. Spray is only used a little.

Q. Could you clarify the toxicity of the chemical used?

A. Natural England has said that it is safe to use. Mary Bagley will check and get more information from the H&S executive. The Environment Agency has said it is also safe to use.

Q. Will the use of the spray be used on West Kirby beach too?

A. Mary Bagley will find out and report back.

John Percival gave some information regarding the dredging of the Mersey in the 1960's which defined the water flow. Mersey Docks and Harbour Company have recently agreed to allow larger ships into the docks, but to do this dredging will be required again. So, by creating a deeper channel for these bigger ships there will be an impact on the Wirral Coastline as there will be a faster flow of water.

Q. Why aren't you using sea water to kill the grass?

A. Sea water does not kill the Spartina Grass.

## **5 NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING STATEMENT**

Kevin Adderley gave a statement over the future of the Area Forums.

The plans are to abolish the 11 Areas Forums and have 4 Neighbourhood Teams in Wirral.

The new teams will be involved in allocating resources and budget planning. The plan is to reduce costs and will result in better services working together with partners.

The plan will be going to the next Cabinet meeting for approval.

Councillor Jeff Green expressed his disappointment in the new plans. The West Wirral Area Forum has proved to be a successful forum and since 2003 a great deal of work has been achieved:

- Influenced Road Safety
- Influenced Road Maintenance
- Opening of the Help Shop in Hoylake
- Support and assistance for the local Community Centres
- Save the libraries campaign

- Aldi Development in West Kirby
- Hoylake Market Street development
- Hoylake Lifeboat
- Friends of parks and gardens
- Hoylake Christmas lights
- New allotments
- 2006 Open Golf – supported plans
- Hotel Development
- Amongst much more

All of the above have all gone through the forum and the Area Forum has taken them forward. Councillor Jeff Green has been committed to local issues and the community well being

He expressed his thanks to Tracey Smith for all her hard work and effort with this Forum. He also expressed how much he has enjoyed his time working with everyone involved with this West Wirral Forum

If the plan for the new format of the forums is agreed at the Cabinet Meeting, then this will be the very last West Wirral Forum and the new format will commence in May 2013.

Councillor Jeff Green also thanked Jim Wilkie, Dave Green and Howard Mortimer and he will be writing to thank them for all their hard work over the years as Council Officers who frequently attended the Forums.

Q. Why didn't the members get printed copies of the statement of the proposals?

A. The report outlining the proposals went to Cabinet and is available on the Council website. A copy of the statement read out can be sent out to anyone who requests a copy.

Q. Does this now mean that this group will be unable to meet anymore?

A. You will be able to attend the new meetings when they have been worked out.

It was expressed that the future meetings may be further away; less people may be able to attend from the local communities. There is concern that what we have now will disappear and local issues won't be listened too. There is a fear of losing the community voice and having little opportunity to discuss local community issues.

It was suggested that as West Wirral, the members should make themselves known and that they are a neighbourhood and should work together to influence the future.

Q. Is there a future? Could it be looked at to possibly meet with our local Councillors here in Hoylake and West Kirby to continue the community work?

A. Councillor Jeff Green agreed that this could be an opportunity and will look how it could be worked out.

Q. Jackie Hall expressed her annoyance for the new plans. However, she has spoken to the vicar at St Johns and he has agreed use of the hall for meetings, and Melrose Hall is also available.

## 6 PARTNER ORGANISATIONS UPDATE

### Library Service

Julie Barkway reported on the following:

- With all the budget cuts, the library service has relied on volunteers coming forward to offer support and assistance with IT services for the public.
- There are changes in the Welfare and Benefits system – Help is available at the libraries for people who need assistance filling out on-line forms and help in general.
- The Library Service is working together with partners to help with Anti-social behaviour, particularly at Birkenhead library.
- The library offers various reading groups
- It is the intention to maintain libraries in communities  
Plans for the libraries are to:
- Have more Book Fairs
  - Easter and Summer Activities
  - E-Book loans – this has proved busier than a small branch library
  - Have a good selection of books
  - The opening hours will be staying the same.

Compliments were given to Julie Barkway for her report and also to all the library staff for their hard work.

Q. Is there an electronic copy of this report?

A. Yes, a copy will be sent to anyone who requests one.

### Fire Service

Sarah Patterson reported on the following:

- There has been an increase in Accidental Dwelling Fires; to date there has been 11. It is important not to leave pans and ovens unattended.
- There has been a good reduction in ASB fires since last year – this has been helped by the fire service working with local groups and engaging with the community.
- There will be significant budget cuts over the next few years, but the Fire Service will still deliver their high standards.
- There was an incident in West Kirby last week by the Dee Hotel. It was not a major incident, as it turned out it was an ammonia substance found in an old garage behind the Dee Hotel.

Thanks were given to the Fire Service for their Hearing Aid facility for people with hearing difficulties. The device is placed under the pillow and vibrates/bounces in the event of fire/smoke.

It was suggested that this piece of equipment be written about in the local newspaper to make more people aware of the benefits of this.

### Police

Inspector Mick Blease reported on the following:

- This is a safe area to live in and the crime rates relate to this.
- There has been a 20% reduction in car crime and burglary.

- Please be aware of UPVC door handles – It is important to ensure you lift the handle up and turn the key to lock these doors.
- Last year there was a team of burglars – these have now been charged for over 30 burglaries in the West Kirby and Hoylake area.
- There is a new car crime device which criminals are using. It can stop you locking your car doors remotely. So please check your car is locked when you leave it, or alternatively lock the door with the key.
- Don't leave anything on view in your car.
- Shop theft has increased – Mainly food theft.
- Criminal Damage to shops has also increased.
- The recent incident in Caldy involving false imprisonment. One person has been charged.
- Police Recruitment - Special Police can apply within. The process has started

### **Community Safety**

Jim Thompson reported on the following:

- The Joint Community Safety Team is working very well – It is a multi agency, working together with the Police, Fire Service and the Local Council.
- Wirral is a safe place to live – only approx 900 burglaries per year.
- Plans for next open Golf tournament have commenced. The Park and Ride CCTV cameras are already in place.
- Community Safety has the best response times for local domestic violence incidents.
- Crime has reduced by 66% since 2006
- Plans are already in place for Bonfire night.

Councillor Jeff Green congratulated the Community Safety Team for all their work in reducing crime and anti social behaviour.

## **7 GENERAL PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

- Q. As this is the last Area Forum, what is happening with the sinking road in Banks Road? West Kirby seems to be the forgotten town?
- A. Kevin Adderley explained that West Kirby was not forgotten and will be given what is needed. The issues will be looked into and reported back.  
With regards to the Banks Road, a process is in place with United Utilities to find out who is liable. United Utilities are denying liability. A meeting with UU is taking place and this issue will be raised.
- Q. In the paper there was information for a revival of the Golf Resort Plans, is this correct?
- A. There is no update as yet. There is still a registered interest across the world. Any updates will be reported back.
- Q. West Kirby is a tourist area and there is nowhere for coaches to park. Could an area around Orrysdale Road be used?
- A. That is a good point – this will be discussed.
- Q. Is there any update on the un-manned level crossings?
- A. Unmanned level crossings are in the top 10 of dangerous areas. A suggestion was to create a regular bus service into the area for the school runs. Meetings are taking place to try and get the best option for these crossings.

- Q. In Ashton Park, the Playground Improvement Scheme introduced a 'nest swing'. This has been out of action for a while now. Why is it taking so long to get it fixed?
- A. This will be checked and reported back.
- Q. Open Golf Tournament – The previous plans will be used, however, please could you consult with the local businesses prior to the tournament.
- A. Yes
- Q. In the previous plans for the Open, there were plans to refurbish the centre of West Kirby. This did not happen.
- A. The plans will be looked at and checked. The Council has put expenditure on hold. Councillors will still keep on trying to get the work done.
- Q. Can the Council arrange for something to be done to the derelict building in Hoylake? It is an eyesore and in full view on the television cameras.
- A. This will be looked into. In 2006, Hoylake and West Kirby looked wonderful on the television.

Councillor Jeff Green thanked everyone for attending and also thanked the Councillors and members for all their hard work.