

# AREA FORUM (BIRKENHEAD & TRANMERE AND ROCK FERRY)

Tuesday, 28 October 2008

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	P Davies (Chair)	
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	B Kenny	C Meaden
<u>Community Representatives:</u>		Peter Exley Lenny McCormick	Mike Parkinson Hazel Roberts (Together)
<u>Lead Officer:</u>		Alan Stennard	
<u>Area Service Co-ordinator:</u>		Andy Brannan	
<u>Primary Care Trust:</u>		Dr Katie Kidd	
<u>Merseyside Police:</u>		Inspector Mick Blease	
<u>Merseyside Fire and Rescue service:</u>		Simon Ashton	
<u>Council Officers</u>		Ian Lowrie (Community Safety Team)	Carol Sharratt (minute taker)
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	WJ Davies M McLaughlin	J Stapleton
		David Ball Myrtle Lacey Len Richards	Gary Cummings Sarah Paterson

## 1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Councillor Phil Davis informed the forum that he would be chairing the meeting, as Councillor Jean Stapleton was in London on business and sent her apologies. The Chair opened the meeting, wished Councillor Brian Kenny happy birthday, and welcomed the forum members and 17 members of the public to the Area Forum meeting at the Rock Ferry Community Centre. He invited the forum members to introduce themselves and to give a brief update.

Apologies were also received from Councillors Moira McLaughlin and Bill Davies, Myrtle Lacey, David Ball, Gary Cummings, Sarah Paterson and Len Richards.

## 2 AREA CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

The Area Co-ordinator, Andy Brannan, informed the forum that the minutes of the last meeting held on 3 June 2008 had been incorporated on page 3 of the Area Co-ordinator's report (copies of which were available for members of the public at the meeting). The matters arising were included on page 9 of the report, including responses to questions raised at the last meeting but not answered on the night. He highlighted the following:

- Highway Maintenance Programme – forms were available at the meeting for nominating roads for repair for consideration as part of the 2009/10 maintenance programme.
- Area Forum Funding - application packs were available at the meeting and further copies could be obtained from the Community Engagement Team (0151 691 8210 / [engage@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:engage@wirral.gov.uk)).

The following questions / issues were raised:

- Jim Cadwallader – find the forms difficult to complete.
- Chair – telephone Andy Brannan (0151 691 8391) who will help with filling out the form
  
- Roy Dennett – why has no funding been allocated for this forum area?
- Area Co0ordinator – each area forum is allocated £20,000.00, and this forum spent the funding in the first round held in June 2008. The other forums still have funding unallocated and are holding a second round of funding.
  
- Chair – there was good feedback from the event held at the Lauries Centre from residents and community groups, and agreed to write to the Fire Service, on behalf of the area forum, to congratulate them on the success of this initiative.
- Mick Blease agreed to pass on this feedback and informed the forum that this is to be a yearly event.

**Resolved that:**

- (i) The Area Co-ordinator be thanked for his report**
- (ii) The Chair to write to the Fire Service, on behalf of the area forum, to congratulate them on the success of the event held at the Lauries**

## 3 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following questions / issues were raised:

- Mrs Moss (Southwick Road) – the proposed flats to be built on the site of the old cinema are to be higher than the surrounding houses and will block out the light. Do not want three-storey flats like those built in Grove Road.
- Councillor Meaden – the application was approved several weeks ago, there was a petition but it did not have enough names on it. I did not see the application before it went to the planning committee, but had asked for bungalows originally but ended up as flats.

- Alan Stennard requested that Mrs Moss pass on her details at the end of the meeting and agreed to get someone from the planning team to contact her directly to discuss this matter.
- Roy Dennett added that the proposal was published in the press.
- Gaynor Hilliard– when is the plot of land at Duke Street / St Anne Street / Price Street (by Birkenhead Park railway station) due to be built on?
- Chair – agreed to look into this and requested that contact details be passed on at the end of the meeting.
- Hugh Langford – has there been any progress on Byrne Avenue Baths and will the Council do all it can to help the Trust to obtain additional monies required, as there are a lack of youth services in the area?
- Alan Stennard – immediate works were carried out to resolve the health and safety matters re: structure and asbestos, costing £10's of £1000's, but £100's of £1,000's of work still required. The Council stopped proceedings, but the Trust still needs to raise the money for the additional work. The Council handed the building over to the Trust as trusts can often get funding where a council can't. The council is continuing to work with and help the Trust and is looking at facilities. The Oval is due to be opened next month.
- Member of the public – could off-road parking be set up, by removing pavement at Old Chester Road, to ease congestion and provide more parking at Devon Gardens?
- Councillor Meaden – have tried to resolve this problem, which will be made worse by additional traffic resulting from additional flats being built. The problems are particularly bad from 5pm onwards when leisure facilities are being used, the Police and Wardens patrol the area and the Council's Engineers have been contacted, but say that this is not a problem. She agreed to go back to the Engineer's to see if there are any more solutions available for this area and will report back on this at the next meeting. Peter Exley added that the Engineer's may just put in double-yellow lines in which will make matters worse.
- Jack Wilson – requested progress report on what is happening with field at St Peters Mews. The field is overgrown and used by people drinking and taking drugs, and have tried to contact the owners to solve this. A lottery grant was obtained earlier this year and the field was cleared and a meeting was held with Ian Jones from Tranmere Together on 27<sup>th</sup> February where it was suggested that the shrubbery be removed and seating and play equipment be installed for the young people. I have written to several Councillors and contacted Neil Collins from the Council but have received no replies on this.
- Councillor Meaden – confirmed that she had spoken to Mr Wilson about this and been in contact with Ian Jones. The problem was keeping up the maintenance, but Dave Green's department agreed that this would be maintained and had been informed that the work had been done and the community were pleased with this.
- Chair added that Ian Jones agreed to have the shrubbery removed to make it safer and more open. A gravel path has been put in, which is not suitable for play area, and the field is overgrown and being used by dogs.

- Jack Wilson added that if a rubberised path was put in it could be used by young people on bikes etc. If benches were installed they could be used by carers. Progress on this is slow.
- Councillor Meaden agreed to follow this up and respond directly to Mr Wilson. The Chair thanked Mr Wilson for his contribution on this.
- Jim Cadwallader – what is happening with Rock Ferry High School.
- Chair – confirmed that this was part of the Secondary School's Review to be reported to the Council's Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> November, a public meeting, at 6.15pm in Wallasey Town Hall. The report was still being completed and details of this would be on the Council's website next week.
- Andrew Wilson (Whitfield Street, Tranmere) – what is happening with Whitfield Court, Whitfield Street. It is empty and youths congregate there, and at the garages that are up for sale over the road, in the evenings drinking?
- Alan Stennard – Whitfield Court is owned by Wirral Partnership Homes, and the proposal is that this will be demolished once all of the residents have been re-housed and be redeveloped in the longer term.
- Chair – is there anything that can be done to alleviate the problems in the meantime?
- Inspector Blease – the Police are aware of the issues and are giving this area extra attention and trying to find out, via Neil Collins, who owns the garages.
- Alan Stennard – the garages are privately owned so there is not much the Council can do about them.
- Chair – requested that the Area Co-ordinator contact Neil Collins re: progress on contacting the owners of the garages and finding out their plans for them.
- Roy Dennett – what is the latest re: Church Road Development ?
- Alan Stennard – financial pressures have slowed down the development, and it will probably be re-phased until the market picks up. If the project has to be extended then will try and improve the look of the site.
- What is happening about the retail development?
- Chair – this is due to go ahead and should start next Summer.
- Fred Jones - When will the crash barrier at Downham Road / Old Chester Road / Union Street be replaced / what is happening with the Southend Social Club site / what is happening with the Fairfield PH?
- Councillor Meaden – agreed to contact Streetscene re: repair of the crash barrier. An insurance investigation is taking place into the South End Social Club (as it may have been arson. The Fairfield PH was closed due to problems with the foundations, will find out what is happening and report back directly on these. There are many derelict public houses in the area, causing an eyesore.

Roy Dennett added that an application had been submitted to convert the Queens PH into six flats. The Chair thanked Roy for this information.

- Jim Cadwallader – the scrap yard at ?????? is an eyesore and should be re-located to a more suitable site, such as near to McCoys (New Chester Road / By-pass / Ebenezer Street).

- Alan Stannard – it is a trading business and the Council does not have the resources to move such businesses. Chair added that nobody wants these type of businesses near their premises.

**Resolved that:**

- (i) **Alan Stennard to arrange for a member of the planning team to contact Mrs Moss re: flat development on former cinema site**
- (ii) **Chair to look into development proposals for land at Duke Street / St Anne Street / Price Street and contact Gaynor Hilliard**
- (iii) **Councillor Meaden to report back on possible solutions to parking problems at Devonshire Road flats / Old Chester Road**
- (iv) **Councillor Meaden to follow up issue re: field at St Peters Mews and contact Mr Wilson directly re: this issue**
- (v) **The Area Co-ordinator to contact Neil Collins re: ownership / future plans for garages opposite Whitfield Court.**
- (vi) **Councillor Meaden to contact Streetscene re: repair of crash barrier at Downham Road and report back to Fred Jones directly on issues raised re: Southend Social Club and the Fairfield PH.**

**4 BIRKENHEAD, TRANMERE AND ROCK FERRY AREA FORUM 'YOU DECIDE' RESULTS**

The Chair informed the forum that this was a participatory budgeting pilot exercise under which each area forum was allocated £20,000 for spending on additional council services. A survey was held to find out what services local people felt that the additional funding should be spent on. 184 questionnaires were completed and the funding was allocated as follows:

£5,000 – to improve cleanliness (10 litter bins and litter picks in each of two wards)  
 £4,500 – to purchase security packs  
 £6,500 – for sports / youth activities / youth sports nights  
 £4,000 – for youth engagement (including £2,000 worth of additional RESPECT bus hours)

The Area Co-ordinator will provide a detailed report on how the funding is to be targeted / where the bins will be placed etc. This exercise will be re-evaluated to measure its success and whether it should be repeated in the future.

**Resolved that the Area Co-ordinator to produce a detailed report on how the You Decide funding was allocated**

**5 AREA FORUM PARTNER UPDATES**

**Merseyside Police**

Inspector Blease informed the forum that this was his fourth year as the Neighbourhood Inspector, and has now taken over a larger area so has been allocated an extra officer and PCSO. There were 428 less victims of crime compared with last year, the biggest reduction being vehicle crime which was down by 50%. A

team working in Wirral and North Wales that were taking older cars to the scrap yards (due to an increase in the price of metal) were traced. The legislation for scrap metal dealers has been tightened. There were 19 offences of robbery (compared to 32 last year), burglaries were down by 17% and violent crime was reduced by 4%.

The operation to catch the offender responsible for gluing up Alleygates was successful. We worked with the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and caught a male offender who is due to go to court in December. Further information will be provided on this after the trial.

Crackhouse closures have taken place in Southall Road thanks to the co-operation from the public.

Extra resources have been put on for the Bonfire Night period (35 PCSOs and Police staff). Please look after your bins and try to place these out of site during this period.

The Birkenhead, Tranmere and Rock Ferry division won Team of the Year.

The chair thanked Inspector Blease for his update and the following questions / issues were raised:

- Jim Cadwallader – dealers bringing drugs into the country should be treated as terrorists, as money used to buy arms that may be used against English forces abroad.
- Inspector Blease – there is legislation in place, if drug dealers are caught they are given long sentences.
- Roy Dennett – cars parking illegally (on double-yellow lines) at Tesco's Danger Hill makes it dangerous for traffic leaving the store.
- Inspector Blease – parking on double-yellow lines has been de-regulized.
- Chair – the Area Co-ordinator will bring this to the attention of Streetscene and request that the area is given extra attention.
- Member of public – what is to happen with property in St Anne Street that has been boarded since January (it was a crackhouse)?
- Inspector Blease – such properties can only be closed for three months then are the responsibility of the owner. This falls under Laird Street so will ask Inspector Paul Harrison to look into this.
- Fred Jones – can anything be done about cars speeding in the built up area at Grove Road / Old Chester Road, there are no signs in the area? Cars travel along at 50 / 50 mph, usually by young drivers, recently an 80 year lady old was nearly knocked over at the puffin crossing by the post office.
- Inspector Blease – will look into this and get an officer to monitor the area and set up a portable speed camera.

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

Simon Ashton, from Bromborough Fire Station, informed the forum that a copy of the Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2008/9 is available on the website, at libraries and One Stop Shops.

Community Engagement – home fire safety checks with free smoke alarms are still available, if know of anyone requiring this service please urge them to get in touch. We target over 6,000 properties in Wirral per quarter for fire safety checks.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) – we have a dedicated ASB Team working with the Police and the Probation Service to look into problems / reduce incidents re: bonfire night, please call 0800 731 5958 to report these. We have targeted all secondary schools on Wirral, giving a presentation and highlighting the consequences of using fireworks. Bangers have been outlawed for four years and can no longer be bought in this country. Fireworks can only be sold from 15 October to 10<sup>th</sup> November and then again for the Christmas and New Year period. Bins should be put out of the way, if possible, and should not be placed right against the property as they can cause damage to the property.

Fire Fighter Games – took place in August with over 3,000 fire fighters attending from across the World. Thanks to all the volunteers and volunteer partner agencies for their part in this.

Page 21 of the Area Co-ordinators report has a list of the Community Fire Stations with new numbers and contact details. The Headquarters (0151 296 4000) can put you through to the local stations.

Smoke Free Homes Campaign - we are working with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to educate people re; smoking in homes / passive smoking. He thanked the PCT for their assistance.

The Chair thanked Simon for his update and the following questions / issues were raised:

- Member of the public – some people stockpile fireworks and set them off anytime.
- Simon Ashton – we have no control over this.
- Peter Exley – raised concern over use of fire engine to deliver home fire safety checks, and asked if it would not be more cost effective to use smaller vehicles.
- Simon Ashton – fire engines as we are using existing resources and this helps with community contact. We try to target one particular area and park up in the area. We do have advocate officers in cars, who work specifically with special groups such as the elderly / people with drug problems / people with language difficulties. We have to send two people, to protect both the fire officer and the public. Smoke alarms give early warning and the carbon footprint is much higher from a fully developed fire than from using a fire appliance.
- Jim Cadwallader – fuel costs for fire engines must be high, in America engines are being fuelled from cooking fat. Should this be used for Police, Fire and Ambulance vehicles to save money?

- Simon Ashton – the fire appliances in Britain do about 8mpg compared to the American appliances which do about 1-2mpg. This would need to be raised with the manufacturers of the appliances.

Chair added that we cannot come up with instant solutions but we are aware of the carbon footprint.

### **Wirral Primary Care Trust**

Dr Katie Kidd informed the forum that an update was available on pages 22 -23 of the Area Co-ordinators report but that some of the information included is now a bit out-of-date and added the following:

Some very constructive comments had been received from the consultation events held during the summer re: the redevelopment of St Catherine's Hospital site. The main problem was parking spaces taken up by administrative staff. A further report on this will be made at a later date.

The Chair thanked Dr Kidd for her update and the following questions / issues were raised:

- Peter Exley – Is the block to be knocked down going to go ahead regardless of the redevelopment?
- Dr Kidd – the demolition of the admin block will be a pre-cursor to the redevelopment, please pass me your contact details at the end of the meeting and will report back directly on this in more detail.
- Tony Hurren (Resident of Rock Ferry) – could some of the land (such as the Abakan site) be used as a car park until building work is being undertaken?
- Chair – requested that Dr Kidd take this suggestion back to the Trust.
- Jim Cadwallader – is there any possibility that the tunnels be opened as a tourist attraction prior to the redevelopment?
- Dr Kidd – not sure, but managers are to be given a talk on the history of the hospital, which will include the tunnels.
- Member of the public - one of the tunnel entrances is in Queen Street as were used as air raid shelters and many items are still within the tunnels.
- Dr Kidd – please pass on any information on the history of the tunnels and the hospital.

### **Older Peoples Parliament**

The Chair informed the forum that there was no representative available at the meeting, but that newsletters from the Parliament were available at the meeting.

### **Community Safety**

Ian Lowrie informed the forum that the removal of bonfire material has been successful for the last three years leading to Wirral having the lowest level of bonfire



nuisance on Merseyside. There was a mayoral reception for community patrol for the amount of good works they had done.

St Anne Street has been looked at, with regard to placing CCTV cameras there, to reduce crime levels in the area.

You Decide - target hardening work through this initiative is a good project leading to reduction of risks to people's houses.

We are continuing to try and reduce the overall levels of crime. The only crime reduction partnership to better Wirral's performance on the reduction of volume crime was in Mid-Devon.

RESPECT Bus – you decide funding to be used on taking the bus into communities.

3G CCTV – laptops are used for checking images to ensure people's safety and well being.

The Chair thanked Ian Lowrie for his update and the following questions / issues were raised:

- Jim Cadwallader – believe that the air shaft for the Mersey Tunnel is being used as a TV screen.
- Chair – this is part of the 08 celebration.

### **Together Partnership**

Hazel Roberts informed the forum that the volunteers had been working very hard and the Partnership had been involved in the new development at St Catherine's hospital site; new health clubs in the area; green spaces – St Peter's Mews; and Bag a Bargain – which is in its second year.

The Chair thanked Hazel Roberts for her update and the following questions / issues were raised:

- Lenny McCormick – the wardens received funding to help children during the summer holidays, but some of the children from the area were turned away.
- Hazel Roberts – it was advertised at Kids Together, but was put on by children from the hot spot areas by the Wirral Wardens.
- Chair – the Area Co-ordinator will contact the Together Wardens for more information on this and report back to Lenny directly.

### **Resolved that:**

- (i) the Partners be thanked for their updates**
- (ii) the Area Co-ordinator to request Streetscene to target illegal parking at Tesco's Danger Hill**
- (iii) Inspector Blease to ask Inspector Harrison to look into boarded up property in St Anne Street**

- (iv) **Inspector Blease to arrange for an officer to set up a portable speed camera and monitor speeding traffic at Grove Road / Old Chester Road**
- (v) **Dr Kidd to take back proposals to use vacant building land as a car park and possibility of opening of the tunnels as a tourist attraction prior to the redevelopment**
- (vi) **The Area Co-ordinator to contact the Together Wardens for more information on Kids Together project and report back to Lenny McCormick directly**

## 6 **FUTURE MEETINGS / PRESENTATIONS**

The Chair informed the forum that the next meeting will be held on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2009 at a venue, to be confirmed, within the Birkenhead and Tranmere ward. He asked if there were any suggestions for presentations at the meeting.

Councillor Meaden suggested an excellent presentation on the Energy Saving Strategy, which is being rolled out after Christmas.

- Peter Exley - how long does the presentation last?
- Councillor Meaden – it lasts about one hour, but could be condensed.
  
- Jim Cadwallader – the Community Action for Energy (CAFÉ) could be invited to give a presentation.
- Councillor Meaden – the Council has its own energy efficiency team.

Mike Parkinson – could the meetings be more informal, like a social event?

Chair – would not be opposed to this, but would need to consider the practicalities of this.

## 7 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Hugh Langford – there are not many members of the public in attendance at the meeting and they sign in, so could their names be included within the minutes?

Peter Exley – some people may not want their names to be listed.

Councillor Meaden / Chair – the sign in register is required for health and safety and to enable us to send out information, but feel that individuals names should not be included in the minutes.

Hugh Langford – could the number of members of the public attending the meeting be included in the minutes?

Chair – the numbers in attendance are included, under welcome and introductions.

There was no further business and the official meeting closed at 8.50pm. The Chair informed the forum that the RESPECT bus was unable to be at the meeting, requested that everyone take time to visit the HMRI exhibition stand before leaving the meeting and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.