

# AREA FORUM (BIRKENHEAD & TRANMERE AND ROCK FERRY)

Wednesday, 25 February 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	J Stapleton (Chair)	
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	P Davies B Kenny	C Meaden M McLaughlin
<u>Community Representatives:</u>		Peter Exley	Myrtle Lacey
<u>Lead Officer:</u>		David Ball	
<u>Area Service Co-ordinator:</u>		Michelle Gray	
<u>NHS Wirral (formerly PCT):</u>		Tina Long	
<u>Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust</u>		Pat Higgins	
<u>Merseyside Police:</u>		Acting Inspector Chris Lucan	
<u>Merseyside Fire and Rescue service:</u>		John Davies	
<u>Council Officers</u>		John Entwistle (Corporate Services)	Carol Sharratt (minute taker)
		Ian Lowrie (Community Safety Team)	Mark Smith (Technical Services) Fay Williams (Corporate Services)
<u>Apologies</u>		Gary Cummings	Mike Parkinson
		Mark Hesketh	Hazel Roberts
		Lenny McCormick	Stephanie Reid

The Chair, Councillor Jean Stapleton, opened the meeting and welcomed the forum members and 15 members of the public to the Area Forum meeting at the Birkenhead Town Hall. She invited the forum members to introduce themselves and to give a brief update. She informed the forum that Mike Parkinson had resigned as a community representative, due to personal commitments, and requested that the forum be thanked as he had enjoyed his time as a forum representative. She accepted his resignation and thanked Mike for his input on the forum.

Apologies were received from Stephanie Reid, Hazel Roberts, Lenny McCormick, Mark Hesketh, Gary Cummings and Mike Parkinson.

**Resolved that: Mike Parkinson's resignation from the forum be noted.**

## 2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS FORUM

Michelle Gray informed the forum that the matters arising from the last meeting, dealt with by Andy Brannan, were detailed on pages 12-14 of the community engagement report (copies of the report were available at the meeting).

You Decide Results – the reports on the £20,000 allocation had been forwarded to the relevant departments (Technical Services and Regeneration). Information on where the projects will take place was being co-ordinated and further feedback on this will be given at the June forum meeting.

The community engagement report also included the minutes from the last meeting, held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2008, which were accepted as a true record.

**Resolved that: The community engagement officer be thanked for the report, and the minutes of the last meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2008 be agreed.**

## 3 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

John Entwistle (Corporate Services) gave a presentation on the Local Development Framework (LDF) – copies of which were available at the meeting.

The LDF is a new style development plan that will replace Wirral's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and be used alongside the Regional Spatial Strategy, covering the North West of England, issued by the Secretary of State. The LDF will be a key legal document covering 15-20 years and will consist of a Core Strategy and a spatial plan, and there are opportunities to consult on this at each stage of a long process until its submission to the Secretary of State. The proposed adoption date for the LDF is 2011.

Forum members had already received a copy of the Issues, Vision and Objectives consultation document, covering issues, vision (to 2025 with 15 main elements linked to the Sustainable Community Strategy) and 29 objectives. Anyone wishing to get involved can request a copy of the consultation document by adding their details to the list available at the meeting or by contacting Hazel Edwards (0151 691 8225 / [hazeledwards@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:hazeledwards@wirral.gov.uk)). The deadline for comments is **5pm on 27 March**

**2009.** Anyone wishing to be kept involved in the LDF process can request to be added to our contact database again by contacting Hazel Edwards.

The Chair thanked John Entwistle for his presentation and the following questions / issues were raised:

1. What is land use?
  - A. Land use covers all aspects of the use of all land within the borough – such as development, protection, and infrastructure.
  
2. Is the framework concentrating on a particular area?
  - A. The framework covers the whole of Wirral, documents dealing with particular areas / topics will be looked at later in the process.
  
3. Would someone be available to attend a resident's group meeting to discuss the framework?
  - A. Yes, please see me at the end of the meeting to arrange this.
  
4. Philip Barton – anyone with an interest in land use should get in touch now, as by the time it is submitted to the Inspector it will be too late to make significant changes. Most people do not understand the old system, therefore it is essential that the consultation is done properly - more workshops are needed to increase involvement from different sections of society throughout the process, improve people's knowledge and generate more interest in this. Up until recently Inspectors have been bowing to public pressure, but the government is tackling this.
  - A. This is a new and complex system that has been brought in across the country; the comments raised will be taken on board. There will be more consultation as we go through the later stages of the process.
  
5. Peter Exley – is this seen as a strategic special review and are some types of land statutorily protected, therefore safe (e.g. parks)?
  - A. David Ball – It is a land use planning document, covering all of the Wirral, identifying large scale areas of land and our vision for this (e.g. how do we want Birkenhead to be in 15 years time – should it still be a retail centre / should it be expanded?). Conservation areas, parks and open spaces are important to areas. The later stages of the process will look at areas in more detail and people will be encouraged to get involved. Once the options are set up proposals can be shown in a more graphic way, enabling the key issues for Wirral (and this forum area) to be highlighted.

David suggested that sessions could be set up to look at this in more detail before or after the forum meetings.

Councillor McLaughlin added that the framework addresses all land within the borough and is concerned with the use, not the disposal of, land.

Philip Barton supported David's suggestion and felt that it would be useful if the area forum had a sub-group to look at this; he added that the Wirral Globe is not received by everyone therefore the consultation needs to be advertised in other ways.

The Chair agreed that this would be looked into.

David Ball added that other ways of communication include area forums, Tranmere Together, e-mails and word of mouth (people can help by spreading the message).

**Resolved that:**

- (i) **John Entwistle be thanked for his presentation**
- (ii) **John Entwistle to look into the forum setting up a sub group to look at the framework proposals and comment on these**

#### **4 INTEGRATED TRANSPORT BLOCK FUNDING**

Mark Smith gave an update on the Integrated Transport Block (ITB) Funding (detailed on pages 22-25 of the Community Engagement report).

In Autumn 2006 the forums were consulted on how this funding would be allocated. Nine of the forums requested that the funding remain in a central pot for funding larger schemes. Two of the forums (Heswall/Pensby/Thingwall and Bromborough/Eastham) requested that the funding be allocated by the forums. The success of this initiative piloted in 2007/08 in these two Area Forums, has led to continued de-centralisation of funds for 2008/09 for the two forums and officers being requested to consult with the remaining nine Forums to determine if they wish to receive de-centralised funding (this will be approximately £18,000 per area forum) for allocation on traffic schemes. If the forums decide to opt for this the funding they will be supported by an officer from Technical Services, who will offer guidance, advice, ideas and information on costs, risks, pitfalls etc. The funding would have to be spent within the financial year it is allocated. A report on the forums' recommendations will be taken to Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2009, so the decision needs to be made by within the next few days. The main advantage would be that the forum would be able to decide how the money is spent. The main disadvantage – it is a small pot of money and would only fund small scale schemes, whereas if it remained in a central pot there would be a good chance that the area would receive a large scale traffic calming scheme every 2-3 years.

The Chair thanked Mark Smith for his update, the Forum debated this proposal and the following questions / issues were raised:

1. Peter Exley – is this in addition to the amount that the Council would normally spend in the area?
  - A. The £200,000 (approx £18,000 per forum) comes from the central LTP pot and there is discretion on how it can be allocated, as no criteria has to be applied or satisfied, enabling the option of decisions being determined locally.
2. Councillor McLaughlin – Rock Ferry has had some big schemes put in place, which may not have been carried out if the funding was decentralised, what are the costs of some of the significant sized projects?
  - A. There has been a good deal of expenditure in this area, and smaller projects usually have less of an impact. Examples of approximate costs included:
    - typical puffin crossing - £25,000 - £30,000
    - small residential traffic calming scheme - £35,000 - £40,000
    - large residential traffic calming scheme - £60,000 - £70,000

- pedestrian refuge - £5,000 - £7,000
- road markings - £3,000 - £4,000

Councillor Meaden added that two puffin crossings and six central walkways had been installed in the Rock Ferry ward within the last 18 months.

3. Councillor Kenny – how would it be guaranteed that a forum would receive the funding in the second year if it pooled its resources with another forum in the first year for a project within that area?

A. The £18,000 is provided on a recurring basis, once the decision has been delegated it would be up to the forum to decide how it is spent.

4. Member of the public – could three forums pool the funding?

A. Yes, it would be up to the forums to decide how it is spent.

5. Michelle Gray – if an area forum decided to accept the fund, but not have enough for a project would this never be carried out?

A. The funding comes from the Department of Transport, and there is no other funding for this type of scheme, however sometimes external funding is available.

6. Michelle Gray – would a dedicated officer be available to assist and advise the forum on the process?

A. Yes, the department are committed to assisting / giving technical advice to the forums.

The Chair confirmed that last time the forum agreed it would benefit from keeping the funding centralised and recommended that this continues. The forum voted and agreed this recommendation.

**Resolved that:**

- (i) **Mark Smith be thanked for his update**
- (ii) **Mark Smith to report the forum recommendation, to leave the funding in the central pot, to Cabinet**

**5 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The following questions / issues were raised:

The Community Engagement Co-ordinator gave details of a question raised prior to forum.

1. What is the situation re: car parking at Arrowe Park Hospital (we have been there three times recently, the first time we collected a ticket on entering the car park and paid £2 only to find this wasn't necessary; we did the same the second time, thinking it was a one-off; however we were wiser the third time. The pay machines are not blocked off; in fact one had an apology notice on it stating that it was out of order. I asked the question at the Help Desk, only to be met with a giggle and 'Oh, I didn't know.')?

A. The charge to park for patients and visitors is £2.00 per visit. Due to equipment failure there are occasions when the fee cannot be taken and we raise the barrier and allow free exit from the relevant car park. The Trust is upgrading the car park

equipment and work should be completed by March 2009. The new pay stations will be located at Arrowe Park and Clatterbridge Hospitals.

2. Philip Barton - what has happened at Byrne Avenue Baths (though it was run by the Trust the Council objective was to work with communities to keep facilities open)? The closure means residents and groups (such as the Birkenhead Swimming Club having to travel further to facilities).
- A. David Ball – Byrne Avenue Baths was run by the Trust and was supported by the Council. The Trust made the decision to go into voluntary liquidation, over cash flow issue, and called in the receivers. This should have been run as a business, but over the years the cost of maintenance has increased and the Trust were unable to keep up with this. The Council does work with Trusts, but it is not always possible to keep things going if they are not sustainable.

Peter Exley added that despite the grants and dealing with the health and safety issues, the running costs for the baths were too high (particularly the cost of fuel to maintain the pool temperature).

3. Hugh Langford – closures such as this end up depriving the community twice, but we need to look to the future. Other council facilities that are closing may be able to be taken over, and the Council should ensure that thrust get support to run the business in an effective way.
- A. David Ball – Community asset transfers won't take place until the Council has looked at issues such as business plans / viability / sustainability / external support. We are working with various organisations to support local groups looking to do asset transfer.

Councillor Davies added that advice needs to be provided on large scale asset transfers, and that an extra £50,000 has been allocated in the Council's budget next year. This could be used for consultancy / support staff to help communities.

Myrtle Lacey added that community groups wanting to take on a building can work with the Local Authority and the Voluntary and Community Sector Network to ensure that any transfer is done in a safe way and the right thinking is done to avoid the re-occurrence of situations such as the closure of Byrne Avenue Baths.

4. Peter Exley – how many people attended the special area forums re: the strategic asset review and what percentage was in favour of the proposals? If the feedback was 99% against the proposals what were the point of the special area forums?
- A. Councillor McLaughlin – the overall attendance was about 3,000, and several hundred forms were completed. A large number of people were very vocal, but not everyone spoke at the meetings.

David Ball added that many people attended to protest about specific proposals, and the attendance level was not high in proportion to the number of residents.

Councillor Kenny added that he had received from someone who had wanted to put forward a constructive idea but had felt intimidated. The Chair confirmed that the atmosphere of the meetings made people reluctant to offer constructive ideas.

Councillor Davies added that changes were made to the proposals, following the meeting, including Woodchurch, Upton and Pensby libraries being saved.

5. Philip Barton – the suddenness of the process was disturbing, and it was difficult for disabled users to make comments. Nothing was said at the Lauries about Social Services, even though the Director was there. The proposals do not seem to be evidence based. The management at Highcroft are already taking about taking over the facility and managing the building themselves. This should not be excluded from public debate.
  - A. Councillor McLaughlin – there is a huge piece of work in Social Services, and I will ask someone from Social Services to give a presentation on how the delivery will change with the introduction of personalised budgets. We are not that far along the process to compare this with the strategic asset review, and can't anticipate changes to clinics at this stage. The handing over of facilities, such as Highcroft, can't be ruled out, but we are nowhere near that stage and lots of investigation would need to take place before any decisions are made.
6. Hugh Langford – there are problems re: parking for development opposite Green Lane station and a residents parking scheme was requested, but the Council said that this was too expensive.
  - A. Mark Smith – a report was taken to Cabinet about 18 months ago and the proposal was considered against a clear council policy on residents parking schemes, which includes that if the Council receives no direct funding for the scheme it will need to be self-funded by the residents or a local developer.
7. Philip Barton - why wasn't a section 106 agreement set up with the developer?
  - A. Mark Smith - a section 106 agreement can only be set where a clear link with traffic problems are proven under highway traffic grounds. Mark agreed to discuss this in more detail at the end of the meeting.
8. Hugh Langford – the development site was formerly a car park, so there was bound to be residual parking problems. The site was needed as a park and ride facility and this was a short sighted move, he expressed regret at not objecting to the proposal.
  - A. Councillor Meaden – the site was formerly shops (Bills cafe – triangle), Green Lane still has two car parks.

The Chair agreed to look into this issue.

**Resolved that:**

- (i) **Councillor McLaughlin to arrange for a presentation by Social Services on the introduction of personalised budgets**
- (ii) **Streetscene Manager / Technical Services to look into parking issue at Green Lane**

## 6 PARTNER ORGANISATIONS UPDATE

### Community Safety

Ian Lowrie informed the forum that there was a detailed update on pages 17 - 19 of the Community Engagement Report, and highlighted the following:

- There has been a 75% drop in the annual number of thefts from vehicles
- The domestic burglary performance has remained consistent
- The LAA targets for domestic violence have been met through the dedication of / working with partner agencies
- Anti Social Behaviour Advice Surgeries have been set up, involving taking the Respect Bus into communities giving advice and taking complaints directly from the public

He added that the Respect Bus was at the meeting, and encouraged everyone to visit this at the end of the meeting.

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

1. Philip Barton – when will the schedule 1 vehicle be purchased?
  - A. There is no date for this at the moment, but will take this issue on board.
2. Peter Exley – what lighting is used in the Respect Bus?
  - A. The lights are run from a small generator, but more details on this can be given by Alf Mullen, who is on the Respect Bus this evening.

### **Police**

Acting Inspector Chris Lucan gave the following update:

- Gary Finlay is now in custody, for murder
- Alleygate success – James Elwin Norman is to be sentenced on 24<sup>th</sup> March for superglueing alleygate locks
- Bogus official burglary warning – this forum area has been targeted by people posing as water board / council officials to carry out burglaries, so please check credentials carefully.

Crime levels in the area, in comparison to the previous year, are as follows:

- All crime has fallen from 3974 to 3536
- Violent crime has increased from 882 to 884, but we have gained an extra beat
- Robbery has fallen from 43 to 34
- Burglary of dwellings has fallen from 147 to 127
- Theft of motor vehicles has fallen from 122 to 89
- Theft from motor vehicles has fallen from 157 to 104
- Woundings have fallen from 443 to 398
- Common Assault has increased from 182 to 204, but account needs to be taken of addition of an extra beat and more reporting of assaults due to volume of police officers in Birkenhead

Position, in comparison with other police authorities:

- All Crime – First
- Violence – First
- Robbery – Second
- Burglary – First



The Chair thanked Acting Inspector Chris Lucan and the following questions / issues were raised by members of the public:

3. Where was Gary Finlay picked up?

A. He was picked up locally, after considerable investigation.

4. What is happening at Well Lane Police Station?

A. The roof is being replaced, but the station is still fully operational.

### **Fire Service**

John Davies informed the forum that pages 15/17 of the Community Engagement Co-ordinator's report contained a comprehensive update on the Service in Wirral, and highlighted the following:

- We are one of the two excellent fire services in the country
- Fires in dwellings - we are achieving / exceeding our targets
- Deliberate small fires – we are working well on reducing these
- Home Fire Safety Checks – the target for Birkenhead is 440 private dwellings per month. If your home has not been checked please take up this offer by calling us on 0800 731 5958

The Chair added that the fire service was working well on Merseyside and thanked John Davies for his update, no questions / issues were raised.

### **Voluntary and Community Sectors Network**

Myrtle Lacey, on behalf of the Network, informed the forum that a network conference will be held in May covering the economic downturn, its affects and what can be done. This will be an important event for voluntary and community organisations.

The structure of the Network will need to be looked at to ensure that it is appropriate, following changes to the Local Area Agreement.

The Network is working with the Local Authority around the strategic asset review, to ensure that the Network are kept fully informed, and to provide a voice for the community, raise their concerns and ensure opportunities are realised.

### **Wirral University Hospital Trust**

Tina Long informed the forum that a briefing note was available at the meeting.

Tunnels at St Catherine's Hospital – at the last meeting an enquiry was raised about the possibility of opening the tunnels as a tourist attraction prior to the redevelopment. The head of estates at the hospital, Doug Barber, cannot find any records or evidence of the tunnels, but would be happy to meet with anyone who has knowledge of these – please see me at the end of the meeting if you would like to discuss this further.

The PCT has changed its name to NHS Wirral, as the name is more familiar to the public, but is still a legal entity as a PCT. There will be new signage / letterheads to reflect the name change.

NHS Wirral was assessed and received the highest score in three areas:

- Strategic planning
- Financial planning
- Governance

There was pressure on the hospitals and GP practices over the winter period, dealing with people with flu and with the vomiting sickness. The Choose Well campaign was initiated to encourage people to use these services correctly.

The Chair thanked Tina long for her update and the following questions / issues were raised by members of the public:

5. Two surgeons from Clatterbridge hospital came to the Fir Trees restaurant in their theatre clothing, masks around their necks and their plastic aprons still on. There was no PALS representative available at the hospital so I raised my concern with another PALS representative. Why were two senior members of the hospital dressed like this in a public area, especially with MRSA?
  - A. There is no MRSA at Clatterbridge, but Pat Higgins will look into this. Pat added that new scrubs would be put on if the surgeons went back into theatre, but agreed that she would follow this up with PALS and report back on this.

### **NHS Wirral**

Pat Higgins informed the forum that pages 26/27 of the Community Engagement Co-ordinator's report contained a comprehensive update, and highlighted the following:

Clatterbridge and the Women's Services Unit are both MRSA infection free

The Trust was awarded best district hospital in England in the Dr Foster Good Hospital Guide last year, which compares services and treatment outcomes at all hospitals across the country.

The Foundation Trust is always seeking public members, so if anyone was interested in becoming a member please let me know. She added that she was pleased to see three members of the Trust who had given up their time to attend this meeting (Myrtle Lacey, Evelyn Hurren and Hugh Langford)

£10m has been allocated to upgrade the women's and children's services

A diabetes workshop will be held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2009 to look at issues and allow service users to help shape the services in this area. Further details of this were included in the newsletter available at the meeting or could be obtained by telephoning 0800 012 1356

The Chair thanked Pat Higgins for her update and the following questions / issues were raised:

6. Peter Exley – has there been a definite increase in diabetes?
  - A. There is a definite link to obesity and there are more instances at a younger age

Philip Barton – For the last three successive Saturdays I have been unable to get access to the EMISS to book appointments and repeat prescriptions from the Whetstone Lane surgery. It looks like the surgery switches the pc's off at the weekends.

A. Tina Long agreed to look into this and report back.

**Resolved that:**

- (i) **The partners be thanked for their updates**
- (ii) **Pat Higgins to follow up issue re: scrubs being worn outside theatre at Clatterbridge and report back on this**
- (iii) **Tina Long to look into problem of on-line access to Whetstone Lane surgery at the weekends and report back on this**

**7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2009 at a venue to be confirmed.

**8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Peter Exley – it would have been helpful to have had a contents page in the community engagement report. Michelle Gray informed the forum that she would report this back to Andy Brannan.

There was no further business and the Chair thanked everyone for attending and urged them to visit the exhibition stand on Wirral Special Educational Needs Partnership and the RESPECT Bus.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.

**Resolved that: Michelle Gray to pass request re: contents page for the community engagement report to Andy Brannan**