

AREA FORUM (HESWALL AND PENSBY & THINGWALL)

Wednesday, 21 October 2009

Present:

Councillor	R Wilkins (Chair)
Councillors	L Rowlands, P Johnson
Community Representatives	Tony Garrett, Mark Johnston
Lead Officer	David Armstrong (Head of Finance and Resources, Children and Young People's Department)
Area Service Co-ordinator	Christina Bebbington
Streetscene Manager	Mark Traynor
NHS Wirral	Russell Favager
Wirral University Teaching hospital NHS Trust	Alistair Fargley
Merseyside Police	Sergeant Parker
Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service	Tony Mooney
Council Officers	Ian Lowrie (Community Safety), Bill Norman (Director of Law, HR and Asset Management)
Apologies	Sandy Cameron (Older Peoples Parliament), Phil Miner (Streetscene Manager), Tracey Smith (Area Service Co-ordinator)

1 **WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

Cllr. Wilkins welcomed everyone to the meeting and congratulated the young people on the amount of work that had been done on the building to make it look

so good. He also said that Cllr. Sarah Quinn was hoping to get to the meeting, but might be a little late.

Tony Garrett also gave apologies from Sandy Cameron, who represents the Older Peoples' Parliament, but was not able to attend this evening. Tracey Smith area co-ordinator gave her apologies. Mark Traynor also gave apologies for Phil Miner.

2 AREA CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

Minutes of the previous meeting – David Steel said that the report on Page 11 was completely the opposite of what he said. He had reported that the people in Pensby were NOT happy to have to go to Heswall to visit their GP. He would like this corrected, and Christina Bebbington agreed that it would be.

Mary Johnson apologized for her error. With this correction, the Minutes were accepted.

Christina Bebbington reported that Tracey Smith had prepared her Report, and copies were available for anyone who wished to have one. She wished to draw attention to Page 14 – Diversity Day, which is to be held at Wallasey Town Hall on Wednesday, November 4th between 2pm. and 9pm. It is hoped that as many members of the public will go along, as there are some very interesting things to see and learn – try new foods, learn about different cultures and there will be dancers, a sing along, tai chi and many other items.

Cllr. Wilkins raised the issue of parking problems in Boundary Lane, and reported that the Police have come up with some ways of trying to alleviate this. He asked that those interested would please come and look at these rather complicated proposals after the meeting.

Area Plans. Christina Bebbington said that there are ideas about the way these are established, and these are what the public wish to see in an Area Plan, and what the priorities for the local area might be. This would mean ideas could come back at the next meeting for discussion.

3 YOU DECIDE RESULTS

A meeting was held of the Forum members to look at the requests received in the 'You Decide' consultation, and the money has been allocated to the things that people have asked for. We would like your views on some of the ideas.

One of the ideas was for more benches, and we would welcome ideas for good locations for siting them. There is also a sum of money for tree planting, and we would like suggestions for sites, either Heswall, Pensby or anywhere locally. The final one is the painting of SLOW signs on the road where there is a problem with speeding, and we would welcome your suggestions. Please see one of us at the end, or if you wish to go away and talk about the position and then contact Tracey Smith on 691 8026 or email traceysmith@wirral.gov.uk

Tony Garrett said that he has submitted a list for this, and fairly recently had visited Wrexham Town Centre where there are many benches along the main road, and these were being used. There are two outside Greasby Library, and I think we should do something about the looks of Heswall, which is pretty depressed. Maybe,

one outside Lingham's, one outside Tatler Estate Agents in Pensby Road, one out the church by the sandstone wall, and if there are any left over, I should like to see one under trees near the shore, which would replace the broken picnic table and the seats which have been taken away by the Council. There is a picnic seat looking a bit dodgy, and there are two seats outside Heswall Library which need attention – they need repainting and repair. This would be an improvement which is noted.

Cllr. Rowlands said that there are 5 trees per ward for replacement around the Borough, and 4 benches per ward. 5 Go Slow signs, and we need to find the most appropriate places to put them. Please let us know where they are really needed.

Lady suggested Ridgewood Road, which is hazardous when you want to go into the Centre with children. A Go Slow sign would be of assistance there, but you do need to look after the trees you already have. Some of the trees are in poor condition, there is one particularly in Kentmere Drive, which might well blow down in a bad wind.

Gentleman suggested another sign at the junction of Whaley Lane and Pensby Road as there is already a traffic problem there. Many trees are being cut down because of disease – are they going to be replaced as well as the five additional trees? Cllr. Wilkins agreed that quite a few trees have been removed because of a disease, some to stop the spread of the disease, and some for safety reasons.

Mr. Garrett said that some trees have been cut down, or the branches lopped off a little, which is to safeguard the new Arriva buses. If a double decker hits them, they can cause an accident. It is not wise to have them on a main road, such as Thingwall Road East as they require cutting every year. Generally, they should all be maintained and pruned regularly.

Lady said she lives on Pensby Road, and they have a very large tree nearby, and in the winter they get very large branches in their garden. When they telephone to request the trees are pruned, they are told that it will be eighteen months. It is not worth planting if they are not going to be maintained.

Gentleman has noted, on Thingwall Road and Thingwall Road East, a number of the flowering cherry trees have been removed, and they have been spectacular, and we would like them to be replaced with the same species.

Lady said she is not quite so keen on the duck-apple trees, as the children like throwing them, which can be a nuisance.

Gentleman referred to a tree that is at the Grange Road/Pensby Road corner which obscures your vision. The amount of traffic also coming from Whitfield Lane has increased, and there should be traffic lights, as it is extremely dangerous. The combination of these two is very dangerous indeed.

Cllr. Wilkins said that all these would be considered.

Lady suggested that some of the road name signs which have faded over the years could be repainted. Ideally, there should be a sign on each side of the road, if a stranger comes along, you can miss it one way if there is only one sign. Some are

faded or obscured by the hedges and trees which have overgrown. Boathouse Lane is a good example of this.

Mark Traynor said that they are replacing the road signs, and the new plastic road signs have been well received.

Mr. Garrett asked whether they intend to repaint or replace them with the Metropolitan Borough signs.

Mark Traynor replied that the cast signs are very popular, but if there are any old ones, they are usually replaced with the plastic ones.

John Pyke asked on the appearance of Heswall, has any further thought been given to the improvement of the rose beds outside Castle Buildings, because some of them are in an appalling state.

Cllr. Rowlands replied that this did not come up on the list, but it will be looked into. Lady stated that people use it as a short cut, and people walk all over them and trample them down.

Lady said they have been planting roses in those beds for many years, and it does not work.

A request was made for a bench at the Thingwall Road/Whaley Lane bus stop.

4 **GOVERNANCE REVIEW CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS**

Bill Norman said that the purpose of this consultation is to draw peoples' attention to the Government's decision for Councils to review their governance arrangements. The change can only be made by a resolution within the 'permitted resolution period'. For all Metropolitan Districts, including Wirral, that must be before 31st December 2009. There is a Council meeting currently scheduled for 14th December 2009 which would be the final Ordinary Council meeting at which the formal resolution must be passed. This must be in place after the May elections in 2010, and the consultation is to ask you and all the residents which of the two suggestions is preferred. They are: -

- A. New style Leader and Cabinet model of governance.
- B. Directly elected Mayor and Cabinet.

The present system is that we have a Leader and Cabinet model, but the Council Leader and the councillors and the cabinet and the leader can be removed by majority vote at the Council. The whole of the 66 members set the Budget for the year and also the policies and the direction the Council will take overall. They also have regulatory Finances, Town and Country Planning and Licensing. The Cabinet probably deal with 80/90% of the day-to-day business, albeit they have to act within the policies set by 66 members of Council.

Under the new proposals all that will change.

Leader and Cabinet model. The 66 elected councillors will appoint the leader, and his, or her; term would start on the day of their election and end when the Council

holds its first annual meeting after the leader's normal day of retirement as a Councillor. In addition, the Leader and the Cabinet are elected every year, but with the new model, it will be for a four year period. It is not clear what will happen if the Council want to change before the end of the period.

Mayor and Cabinet model. This is the alternative model, and this is a directly elected Mayor. You would still have 66 councillors who set the policy framework, and the Mayor would not be elected by the councillors. He would be elected by all of you, the people of the Borough, and he would be able to select nine members of the Cabinet from the 66 elected members. In addition, there will be no possibility of the elected members being able to remove the Mayor in that four year term.

We have to decide by the end of this year. We cannot stay as we are, and we cannot go back to the old system. The new style Leader and Cabinet and the Elected Mayor and Cabinet, and we are seeking your views over the next few weeks. This will come to the Council on the 14th December. There are details on the website and all your views will be directed to the Councillors.

Tony Garrett asked whether details were available to take away. There were not many there, but if anyone wished to receive one, please contact Marianne Duncan who will provide copies.

Ken Gethin asked "which is the most economical?"

Bill Norman replied that an elected Mayor will bring an additional flair into the scheme, and they tend to have allowances in the region of £30,000. across the country.

Gentleman asked whether this is going out to the general public? What about a circular going to every household?

Bill Norman replied that it had not been sent out to every household in the Borough because of the cost implications.

Gentleman said that instead of people on the Council making a decision, the people of the Borough, or the area, need to make that decision, but many do not have computer facilities.

Bill Norman said that notices will be in the local papers, and there should be hard copy information in the libraries and the one stop shops and civic buildings for those without access to the Council's website. The Council have been instructed to be cost effective for this purpose, and guidelines have been laid down.

Gentleman said that a councillor knocking on the door had told him about it. Another gentleman asked why do we need 66 councillors?

Bill Norman replied that is the number we currently have. Periodically, they are reviewed, and sometimes changes proposed.

Cllr. Bob Wilkins said that Wirral has one of the largest Metropolitan Boroughs in the country, and the number of councillors is relative to the population.

Gentleman said that probably, in the old days, it made more sense to have one councillor per ward. Now, will it be 66 councillors and the Mayor, i.e.67? With the Mayor choosing his own number for the Cabinet, what will the others do if the Mayoral system is chosen?

Bill Norman said that the Council could instigate, if it wished, the number of councillors per ward.

Gentleman said that the public are being asked which one they wish to go for, but given that the Mayor will have all that power, it will be a very different form of government.

Heather Jones said you are not advertising these Forums, and then when I telephoned, I was told it was at the Pensby Recreational Centre.

Christina Bebbington replied that it is her team who are responsible for advertising, and she will report back at the next Forum.

It was pointed out that it is a good job we still have the libraries where we can go to read the papers.

Gentleman asked whether there is any prospect of looking at this cycle, because Merseyside Council has not been with us since 1986

Bill Norman replied that this is a matter that the Council could review. It is possible to move from local elections to all-out elections over three years.

Gentleman asked what the councillors' views were on these proposals?

Cllr. Rowlands answered that he was trying desperately not to make this a political meeting. It is very funny to me that we are only being given two preferences by this Government, I would have preferred to go out to the people of the Borough to say "we are here to serve you". I am in favour of the Council, with the committees, with 66 members who represent you and be kept to account by you if they do not get the work done. This is not democratic.

Cllr. Wilkins said he is not happy with this choice, but I am not keen on the elected Mayor system. When this was first suggested, the main numbers did not like the elected Mayor.

Mark Traynor asked whether this would have an adverse effect on the work of the committees if the Cabinet had been chosen by a Mayor who chose his party rather than choosing those who were knowledgeable on certain Council matters.

Bill Norman replied that, unlike old committees the Planning and Licensing Committees are made up of members of each party The Cabinet is not like that – it has always had a policy to be a one-party cabinet. With this system, either the Leader or the Mayor could choose who they wanted, irrespective of parties.

Cllr. Johnson said he did not know enough about the proposals to comment.

Gentleman said he did not want to bring in politics, but in Heswall there are rights and wrongs in every political party.

John Pyke asked is there a real problem with the four year term, because we have a Local Authority which has a large number of councillors from all three parties. We could get to the stage where someone is Mayor, but could cling on to the power. Is it sacrosanct?

Bill Norman replied that, critically, if the councillors retain for themselves the right to remove a Leader during the four year cycle, it would be important for the Council to retain the power to reflect the leadership.

John Pyke – but even if they voted to keep it for the four years, could they change it by saying they wanted a different Mayor from the original one?

Bill Norman replied - it is possible that unless Council reserve the right to remove a Leader they had appointed, it is not possible, but I am not sure.

Cllr. Wilkins asked that anyone wanting a copy of this Review should please come and ask at the end of the meeting.

Tony Garrett said that regarding the notification of these meetings, we used to be informed of every meeting. I used to do six copies and put them round the Post Offices and the shops who would take them, but the problem on the Wirral recently is that people do not get copies of the Globe or the Wirral News. Where I live, we have not seen one for two or three years. We have to go and buy one, or go to the Library. The deliverers do not like going round in the dark, and I have spoken to Steve Maddox, the Chief Executive about this, particularly if the Council are paying for an advert, and then not many are being delivered.

Christina Bebbington said this will also be investigated further.

5 SHORELINE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Cllr. Wilkins said that the consultation period has just started, and the consultation finishes on 18th January 2010.

There is in place a Management of the Shoreline Plan of the whole country, which was agreed in 1999. Ten years later, it is necessary to review this, and in view of the changes of the level of the sea causing erosion of the coastline etc. In the North-west region the Great Orme's head to Southport is of particular interest to us, as is the Dee estuary and the Mersey estuary. If you are interested in this topic, if you have particular experience, the literature will be in libraries or on the website.

If you are interested in coastal erosion, particularly in the Dee, please investigate at the libraries also.

6 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

In the back of the Hope Centre booklet there is a section to stop young people gathering. In relation to this Centre, we do have a problem here. Could this be applied around this building?

Sergeant Graham Parker said that this is an unusual area – incidents are not getting directly reported. It is a simple thing to apply for and get. We are not getting enough genuine reported incidents, and if we do receive them, we can apply for this power, and we will use it, but we would like to be sure that the incidents are being correctly reported as detailed in Section 30.

Cllr. Rowlands said in the You Decide cctv will be placed here, which will monitored, money has been provided for that, and this may help as over the next six weeks there will be a photo-record.

Mark Traynor said that he thinks one of the problems is how you report to the Police. If you dial 999, the report will not be transferred, if you speak to a policeman it does not always get back to the Police.

Sergeant Graham Parker said that we may need a Section 30 here, but there is also the Community Patrol number, which is 0151 666 5265 which can be used, and which should record any problems which occur.

Lady asked when you say gathering evidence, how do you measure it?

Sergeant Parker said that from the point of view of the Police, they have to be very careful. Here, there is a designated play area for children. It is very difficult to send away, and we do not want to do this, but there is a balance, and I am mindful if we send them out on to the streets, they might cause more problems.

Lady replied that it is possibly a collection of boys and girls, and I wonder at what point you would have to intercede.

Ian Lowrie, Community Safety said that every month they have a meeting, chaired by Chief Inspector Gittens, and the information that comes through the 606 2020 number is fed to our Community Patrol Officers. The whole of the Wirral is looked at for 'hot spots', and if it is necessary a Section 30 will be issued. We have to be very careful because it is a very heavy item and we try to encourage young people into a better form of behaviour rather than a Section 30. But, if it is given, we have to have the Police resources. The anti-social behaviour team is always available to assist.

Gentleman said that 'our desire is not to have a Section 30, but not to be terrorised by a group of young people, boys and girls. It seems they do anything they like in school and on the streets, and how can we, as a community, change that?

Sergeant Parker said that they were not aware that the community is being terrorised, but Inspector Cunningham is not away, and until we are told of the problems, it is difficult to do anything, but I shall be speaking to her as soon as possible.

Mark Trayner said that some of these things had been reported, and some have fallen through the net.

Sergeant Parker said if it is particularly violent, dial 999, and this is a priority area at the moment, and someone will be out within sixty minutes.

If the Police are not available, the Community Patrol can be contacted on 666 265* (need to check this number).

Tony Garrett said that he lives down by the shore. At nighttime we get 17 year old youngsters drinking, screaming wheels in the car park. During the summer months, some people come down onto the shore, and at one stage there were six cars using the road. I went out and told them that I was going to ring the Police and, in fairness, they did move away. Litter is also left.

I have told Inspector Cunningham also that at Heswall Railway Station there are bottles and cans etc. thrown on the track, and residents in that area get very fed up about it. There are three places you need to look at.

Sergeant Parker said he was not aware of the problems at the railway station at all, but in the other two areas, they are very often there and they are well policed.

Tony Garrett said do not say you cannot go because the Railway Police are there, because they are not. There has been no visit for a long time.

Gentleman said that he would hate to be a young person these days. Where does the Youth Service do their Out Reach work?

David Armstrong, Children and Young People's Department. There has been no reduced service. The main service area is West Kirby, and there are four main centres around Wirral.

Mark Trayner said we are not prepared to work with the tiny number of children who trash buildings and spoil what we are trying to do here.

Gentleman asked how does someone say "how can I get the Youth Team out here to help out?"

David Armstrong said that he was very impressed with what has been done here, and a Borough thanks to the Police and the schools working together, we have the best record for schools' safety.

Lady reported that Joanne Harland, Community Sports Development Officer, has been working with the children to target other partnerships, the Police etc., where we can get money and put them on projects. It has only been going about three months, and we are working with the Police. I shall give details how we can help the community.

Cllr. Rowlands said money has been put aside for extra youth workers – part of the You Decide money.

Mark Johnston said they are giving away some substantial sums, and next year they will be starting new projects.

Heather Jones wished to report flooding in the area of Kings Drive/Cornelius Drive. We have been advised by the Environmental Agency that the stream belongs to either Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council or the Barratt Group. It has not been ditched since the farmers left it. There is an open stretch between two culverts, and we are being flooded almost weekly. When we ring the Council, nothing is done. The Council's Emergency Team came out, and were horrified by what they saw, and said they should have been out ages ago, but nothing was done, and they said that the owner should be responsible.

Cllr. Wilkins said that he had written a letter about the ditch.

Mark Trayner said he would take that back and investigate.

Mr. Arden said you have made Grange Road a Bye Way, and this has meant you have put more traffic through it, cutting through from Quarry Road East to Pensby Road. There are so many potholes it is dangerous, and they have been reported for over two months.

Mark Trayner said that it is open at both ends, and it is a public highway.

Gentleman said that if it is a highway, the Council must maintain it. Also the pavements from Telegraph Road, through to Pensby Road and the Harvest Mouse are a disgrace.

Cllr. Rowlands said that this has been highlighted, and they are looking at all the areas within Wirral.

Lady reported that the pavements at Oldwood Road and Kentmere Road, near the childrens' school, are dreadful. She is damaging the wheels of her car. They are doing some work on Fishers Lane, but she hopes they will do something to make it safer to cross the road, and we cannot actually see what is coming.

Lady said there is a 90 minute parking restriction in the lay-bye at Rosemead Avenue, and she wondered if there could also be one further along in front of the shops near the traffic lights.

Cllr. Wilkins said that he had noted people park their cars, and often leave them all day, which is not fair to the shopkeepers or local residents.

Gentleman reported that, in fact, someone is coming out on Friday to have a meeting with the shopkeepers about this.

7 PARTNER ORGANISATIONS UPDATE

Streetscene - Mark Trayner said that everything is in the Minutes that has been done over the past few months.

NHS Wirral – Russell Favager said all is written on Page 29 of the Minutes. Tony Garrett asked are you saying anything about car parks. The answer was no. Mr. Garrett reported that at the Car Park User/Transport User Group meeting 16 extra spaces have been allocated for the blue badge users, making 86 on the site. Also a 20 minute drop off space for each of the other entrances. The new park and ride vehicle has been ordered (16 seats and 1 wheelchair). It has not arrived (should have been September 2009). It has been calculated that there are 1200 taken per week from Sainsburys to the Hospital.

Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

Jonathan Cunningham reported that there is a fair amount of work going on at Arrowe Park creating ensuite rooms for women and children, and a new MRI scanner. They have also secured some money from the Department of Health to ensure single sex wards and improvements to wards so that there are more single bedrooms.

The question was asked "if you are putting more buildings up, and you need more car parking spaces, should you now be planning for the future when you take the hospital out of Arrowe Park?"

Jonathan Cunningham replied that it is re-furbishment of the existing buildings, and we are trying to permit the use of buses.

Lady asked about the big car park built on the large area with the trees surrounding it. Many people now come up on to the pavement and park in the trees, and the hospital seems to be oblivious.

Gentleman said that the land actually belongs to the people, and there is creeping destruction of Arrowe Park.

Jonathan Cunningham stated that they do have an arrangement where staff are bussed in from Clatterbridge to Arrowe Park as well as the Sainsbury bus. Gentleman said that the land belongs to the rate payers' land, and they have constantly taken more land for use as car parks.

Merseyside Police/Community Safety. Sergeant Graham Parker reported that crime still remains low in the Heswall area, reported crime down by 21%. We regret that we have to report six more burglaries of houses. With regard to property being burgled, it is a good idea to have your valuable items marked, and we will do it for you if you contact the Police Station.

Anti-social behaviour is showing an 8% increase. Most of this has been identified to a teenage disco, which started in Heswall six weeks ago, but it is generating some trouble. Children are coming from Liverpool. Staff from Heswall have been involved with this.

Community Safety – Ian Lowrie said their report is on Page 31. They work right across Wirral, and do not just look after Council buildings, but work with the Police and feed information to them. I look after the serious crime. Part of our role is working with the Crime Reduction Council, working with Steve Maddox and the Chief of Police, also the hospital PCTs and other agencies, such as the Fire Service to try and reduce crime disorder. As part of this process, I want to invite you all to take part and let us have your views on 10th February 2010 – 10a.m. to 1p.m. at West Kirby Concourse. There will be some food available.

I normally sit at the Birkenhead and Tranmere Forum, and theirs will be in November this year, and we will be hearing what the public perceive to be the issues for Wirral there also.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. The Officer had to leave the meeting early for an emergency call. He returned, but then had to leave again, and could not give his report.

Older Peoples' Parliament. Sandy Cameron had sent his apologies, but had given his report to Tony Garrett, as follows:

Membership has nearly reached 800, but we need more members then our work carries more weight. Share with us any problems related to growing older. There are four meetings a year at the Wallasey Town Hall, and everybody is invited. Housing Group, Education Group, Crime and keeping safe still remains the major focus, as does transport and parking, health and social works.

We also need members with knowledge of work in this area, and we are producing a response to the Government's Green Paper. There is another group talking about grandparents and looking after their grandchildren. Please if you are 50 or more, do consider joining us, and we shall hopefully benefit you, or others, in the future. We work with Age Concern, which is in Market Street.

8 **DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Thursday, 25th February 2010.

Councillor Les Rowlands will be in the Chair.