

AREA FORUM (BIRKENHEAD & TRANMERE AND ROCK FERRY)

Thursday, 18 June 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	J Stapleton (Chair)	
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	C Meaden WJ Davies	M McLaughlin
<u>Community Representatives:</u>		Peter Exley	Len McCormick
<u>Lead Officer:</u>		David Ball	
<u>Area Service Co-ordinator:</u>		Andy Brannan	
<u>NHS Wirral:</u>		Martin McEwan	
<u>Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust:</u>		Amanda Farrell	
<u>Merseyside Police:</u>		Inspector Mick Blease	
<u>Merseyside Fire and Rescue service:</u>		Richie Clark	
<u>Council Officers</u>		Gary Cummings (Area Streetscene Manager)	Ian Lowrie (Community Safety Team)
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	P Davies Hazel Roberts	B Kenny

1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

The Chair, Councillor Jean Stapleton, opened the meeting and welcomed Forum members and 15 members of the public to the Area Forum meeting in Rock Ferry Library. She invited Forum members to introduce themselves.

Apologies were received from Cllr Phil Davies, Cllr Brian Kenny, and Hazel Roberts.

The Criminal Justice System [CJS] is one of the major public services in the country, covering everyone who works to deliver justice. The CJS is looking to work with all

Area Forums in Wirral, to engage with the community and explain their role. The Chair welcomed the representatives from the Service who had attended the meeting this evening to provide information on the Criminal Justice System and to answer questions from members of the public.

2 AREA CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

The minutes of the meeting of the meeting of the Area Forum on 25 February 2009 were included on pages 4/13 of the Area Co-ordinator's report.

Responses to matters arising were given on pages 14/15 of the report.

In 2008, people had filled in the '**You Decide**' survey to have a say on which services they wanted to spend a grant of £20,000 awarded to the area forum for additional Council services. The services that the people from this area had chosen to spend the funding on are currently being installed across the Forum area. A further £20,000 is available in 2009. Members of the community are invited to tell the Council how they would like to spend the money by taking part in the **You Decide Survey 2009**.

In addition, the sum of £18,200 is available for the area forum to spend on Council highway and road safety schemes. Members of the community are invited to indicate which three services listed on page 4 of the **You Decide** survey they would like the allocation to be spent on this year.

Funding is also available to support Community or Voluntary Groups. The deadline for applications is 30 June 2009. Any group or organisation that wishes to apply should contact Andy Brannan using the contact details on the front page of the Area Co-ordinator's report.

3 LOCAL PRESENTATIONS

Personalised Budgets [Adult Social Services]:

At the last meeting, Councillor McLaughlin had been asked to arrange a presentation on the introduction of Personalised Budgets.

The Chair welcomed Paula Neate from the Council's Adult Services Department.

Personalised Budgets is a Government-driven initiative that applies to every local authority in the country. For the past two years, 13 test pilot schemes have been operating across the country. Wirral started a pilot in January that will end in June.

There are two components: Individual Budgets and Personal Budgets. Wirral is focussing on Personal Budgets.

Personalised Budgets is a different way of delivering care on the Wirral. Many people have heard about a Care Package, which was a very prescriptive way of providing a package of care for people in need.

The Personal Budgets process is a very simple process. It involves people filling in a self-assessment form to identify the services they need to meet their individual

needs. A support plan is then drawn up to identify how those needs are to be met. This is followed by the implementation of the support plan, and then a review to ensure that people are safe and that the funds are being spent appropriately.

In response to questions, Paula explained that at present, there is a delay before people receive the money. The hope is that the process will speed up in the future. There will be no panel. The budget will be determined as soon as the assessment is complete, and people will be given their money.

People are being encouraged to find innovative ways of spending the money. The perception is that older people do not want to manage the money on their own. Many people have wide family networks, they don't want to go to traditional day centres, but to do something different. People can still buy traditional services if they choose to, or they can choose to use the money to provide the support they need in a different way that suits them. The maximum amount is £450 a weekly. The money is paid by direct debit and can be monthly or yearly, depending how the needs are met. If the amount is insufficient to meet the needs of a particular person, the matter is referred to a panel for a decision. Anyone who is not sure how to use the funds is fully supported throughout the process. Qualified social workers are employed and all staff are fully CRB checked.

7 Waves Radio:

The Chair welcomed John Martin, Community Development Officer for 7 Waves Community Radio.

7 Waves Community Radio is a state of the art media centre housed in a new building opened in July 2008 in Twickenham Drive, Leasowe, on the site of the old community centre.

7 Waves is a registered charity funded by European funding and is a partnership between Arena Housing, Wirral Council and the Leasowe Youth and Community Association. Any profits are invested in the community. The station has been awarded a 5-year licence by Ofcom and broadcasts live 24 hours a day/7 days a week on 92.1.FM. The target audience is the whole Wirral population. Daytime programming is focused on the 25-55 age groups, and offers a mix of essential local information, local news and music. Specialist evening shows give added value to the offer.

7 Waves non-music features include global, international and local news, traffic and travel, weather, faith interviews, local sports events and interviews, community events, topical debate, health concerns and awareness, business interviews, job and training vacancies, leisure news, school news and events.

The new media-training centre has two radio training suites, two broadcasting suites, a news suite and a live room for use by local bands and artistes. 7 Waves radio runs 12-week radio production courses using industry standard equipment, that enables students to learn all aspects of the radio industry, including editing, writing radio commercials, voice-overs, interviewing, making jingles and presentation skills. Students are given the opportunity to broadcast on air at the end of the course.

RESOLVED: **That –**

- i. **Paula Neate be thanked for the informative presentation on Personalised Budgets.**
- ii. **John Martin be thanked for the interesting presentation on 7 Waves Radio.**

4 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

1. Is it possible to have an out of hours service from 5 pm, on Friday to Monday morning to deal with the anti social behaviour that is going on?

2. [Mr Exley]. I am concerned about the number of signs indicating the number of incidents in an area, which cause distractions when driving, and waste money etc. Who makes the decisions on siting, is there consultation involved? How many of the hundreds of accidents on the A41 occurred on the Wirral? Why is it necessary to have a sign every couple of hundred yards? How much does it cost to produce each one, and what is the total cost?

There is an obsession about placing signs. For example in Kings Lane, where there are grass verges there are new signs every 20 yards or so. People are not allowed to park on the verges. There are 50 in Kings Lane alone. Is anyone accountable for those decisions?

A Ian Lowrie, Community Safety Team offered to speak personally to Mr Exley after the meeting, and to take the questions forward. He would speak to the Anti-Social Behaviour Manager about the anti-social behaviour at weekends.

The Streetscene Manager stated that Streetscene receives repeated complaints about parking on the grass verges in Kings Lane. People complain that parked cars obstruct their sight line when they are leaving their properties. Signs have to be spaced a certain distance apart to be enforceable. Some of the issues raised are the responsibility of the Traffic Department. He would take the questions away and ask an Officer to make contact.

Q What is happening to Byrne Avenue Baths?

A [David Ball]: Byrne Avenue Baths were in the possession of and managed by a Community Trust. When the Trust encountered various difficulties the Council had taken back the building to make sure it is kept in a safe condition. A number of interested parties are looking how they can use the facility in the future. A report was presented to the last Cabinet meeting and to the Council at the end of May. The Council has given time for proposals to be put together and when more information is available, a decision will be made on whether the plans are feasible and can be taken forward. A process of evaluation will follow this.

Q The land in Whitfield Street, where Whitfield Court used to be. The land has been grassed over, but there are many problems with children playing football. Residents are concerned about rumours about a five-a-side pitch on the site. This would create a 'nightmare' for the elderly people from the

bungalows and people in Victoria Road. A resident has approached Councillor Davies on the issue.

A [David Ball]. As far as I am aware, there are no proposals for a five-a-side facility in that area. It is likely that the site will be one of the Housing Development sites through the housing programme that will be developed by Lovells, the preferred contractor. It is unlikely that the development will take place as quickly as might be expected due to the economic downturn. The area will be made secure to prevent illegal access.

Q Rock Ferry Promenade: When will work be completed on the promenade? Nothing has happened for five years and it is rotting and decaying.

A [David Ball]: The esplanade is in a poor condition, it is deteriorating and some areas are in danger of collapse. A number of meetings have taken place with the owners of the esplanade to discuss how it can be improved. To repair would need a considerable amount of money; money the Council does not have at the moment. Talks are taking place with English Heritage, the NW Development Agency and others to secure funding not only for repairs but to open it up again for public access. As it is in private ownership, there would need to be a transfer of land. Meanwhile, the owners have a legal responsibility to maintain the esplanade. The Council has written recently to the owners reminding them of that obligation, but it appears the owners do not have the money to repair and maintain the esplanade.

The member of the public stated that there are situations where the Council has to act in the interests of the public, and if the owners cannot repair it, the Council should do so. There have been five years of discussion. The discussion has to stop and action needs to be taken as soon as possible.

David Ball added that the Council has no legal duty to fund and undertake the repairs. That responsibility rests with the owners. The Council is committed to working hard to try and regenerate that area of Rock Ferry but an added difficulty is that there are funding issues at the moment at Central Government level. The amount of money available for regeneration has reduced and it is a competitive situation. The Council will continue to try to attract funding for the esplanade and other improvements in the Borough.

Councillor McLaughlin stated that the Councillors have to make difficult choices for services and things that are needed. A major scheme like this could cost £4 million. The officers have been looking for money from external sources. The Chair added that each £1 million spent adds 1% to Council Tax bills.

5 PARTNER ORGANISATIONS UPDATE

Community Safety: Ian Lowrie drew attention to the statement on page 21 of the Area Co-ordinator's report: 'Wirral stands as the second best achieving Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in Community Safety out of the 36 Metropolitan Districts, showing significant reductions in crime as a result of effective working with

partners to achieve such results'. The focus of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership at present is on serious acquisitive crime and hate crime.

Police: Mike Blease, local Neighbourhood Inspection reported that nationally burglaries to homes are increasing nationally, but are continuing to fall in Wirral. The profile of burglaries and consequent reduction has been highlighted at Road Shows when people have been reminded to ensure windows are not left open when the home is unoccupied.

The Home Office have distributed Tsar guns to Police Forces on a regional basis. 60 of the 130 patrol officers will be trained in their use, and 60 will be armed with Tsar guns. Birkenhead will be one of the first areas involved. A demonstration will be given at the next Area Forum meeting.

The new Police Station in Birkenhead is expected to be operational at the end of 2011. The existing main Police Station in Birkenhead will close and smaller Police Stations will be relocated.

Fire and Rescue Service: The Service is focussing on anti-social fires started in parks and heather areas where youth groups congregate. Working with the Community Safety partnership, a number of new schemes and campaigns will be running throughout the summer months to deter children from starting fires in parks and open spaces. Children will be educated about the dangers and risks of going into areas where they can smoke and drink and start anti-social fires, for example the beaches in Wirral. Personnel plan to complete assessments on every property on Merseyside by the end of the current financial year. Where it is not possible to gain access after three visits, an external assessment will be made.

NHS Wirral: [Martin McEwan] NHS Wirral has launched WHAT?, an alcohol misuse campaign aimed at providing information about sensible drinking and signposting to services. A campaign logo has been designed.

The outbreak of swine flu on the Wirral is mild at the moment, although more cases are being reported. The public are urged to pay particular attention to hygiene messages. Plans are well advanced for providing information to the public in the event of a pandemic, and advice has been issued to support health and social care services to develop pandemic action plans. Members of the public are recommended to check the relevant web sites for the most recent information. Specific queries should be directed to the Health Protection Agency. Patient advice can be obtained from NHS Direct. The expectation is that the outbreak will be at its worse from late Autumn onwards.

A planning application has been submitted to Wirral Council for the new St Catherine's Health Centre. Consultation meetings will be held with the public during the 12-week statutory period, and throughout the planning period.

Wirral University Teaching Hospital Trust: Information packs and Press Releases were available at the meeting. Major investment has been made in services for women and children at Arrowe Park Hospital.

Peter Exley explained that the Residents' Association in Tranmere are working with the PCT to the extent that the possibility of a community area in the new hospital has been discussed.

6 FUTURE MEETINGS/PRESENTATIONS

14 OCTOBER 2009 at a venue to be announced.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Peter Exley announced:

- **A new Neighbourhood Resources Centre has opened in Church Road. The opening times are 10 am to 4 pm, Monday to Friday.**
- **The Tranmere Show is a week on Sunday.**

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution and closed the meeting of the Area Forum.