

# AREA FORUM (WEST WIRRAL)

Wednesday, 17 June 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	G Ellis (Chair)
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	JE Green J Hale, G Watt
	Community Representatives	Gary Evans, Cynthia Radford
	Lead Officer	David Green (Director of Technical Services)
	Area Service Co-ordinator	Tracey Smith
	Area Street Scene Manager	Mark Traynor
	Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Lynn Benstead
	NHS Wirral	Cathy Doran, Chief Executive
	Merseyside Police	Inspector Paul Vickers
	Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service	John Davies
	Council Officers	Roger Calvert, Head of Parks and Open Spaces, Caroline Laing, Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Jim Lester, Head of Cultural Services
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillor	D Elderton

## 1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

The Chair, Councillor Gerry Ellis, opened the meeting and welcomed approximately 70 members of the public to the meeting in West Kirby. He invited members of the forum to introduce themselves.

## 2 AREA CO-ORDINATORS REPORT/YOU DECIDE

The Area Co-ordinator presented her report containing the minutes of the meeting on 16 February 2009, and local updates on Community Safety Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, Equality and Diversity, Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Wirral Primary Care Trust, Wired, Youth, Transport and Wirral's Older People's Parliament.

Gary Evans pointed out that during the discussion on the proposed hotel and the Sail, people had made reference to 'the sailing club'. The minutes should be amended to make it clear that at all times people are referring to the 'sailing school'.

The Area Co-ordinator gave a brief update on 'You Decide'. In 2008, people filled in the 'You Decide' survey to say on which services they wanted to spend the grant of £20,000 awarded to the area forum for additional services. The people in this area had chosen to spend the funding on additional litter bins and sports facilities for young people. The Area Co-ordinator introduced Joanne Harland, who has been appointed Community sports development worker to develop sporting activities in the community. Four additional litter bins will be placed in West Kirby.

A further £20,000 is available in 2009. Members of the community are invited to take part in the You Decide Survey 2009, by indicating which five of the Council services listed they would most like the £20,000 to be spent on.

In addition, there is an additional sum of £18,200 for each 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. The You Decide survey is available online on the Council's website.

In response to a query, Caroline Laing explained that the Respect Bus referred to on page 2 of the You Decide survey is a resource which is used by the Anti-Social Behaviour team. The bus is taken into the community and used by the Police and youth workers to work with young people. The service offered in You Decide is in relation to Enforcement Officers using the bus in areas of anti-social behaviour.

The closing date for the receipt of completed You Decide surveys is 28 August 2009. Members of the area forum will then meet to assess the responses and draw up a priority list, based on the feedback received.

The questions under About You on pages 5/6 of the survey are to ensure that the questionnaire has reached all sections of Wirral's communities, that they have the opportunity to become involved in the decision making process and can access council services. Completion of this section is not compulsory, but it does help with quality and diversity and compliance with the Council's quality mark. The Area Co-ordinator gave an assurance that the information given in this section will be treated in total confidence.

**Resolved:**                      **That –**  
**i            the minutes of the February meeting of the Area Forum be confirmed;**  
**ii          the Area Co-ordinator be thanked for her report.**

### 3 **SEVEN 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 made 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 John Martin be thanked for a most interesting presentation.**

### 4 **COMMUNITY HALLS AND LIBRARIES UPDATE**

The Chair invited Jim Lester, Head of Cultural Services, to update the meeting on the Strategy Asset Review.

Jim Lester reported that a public inquiry on the libraries conducted by Sue Charteris at the Floral Pavilion has just been concluded. The report is expected by the end of July when the Council will consider what further action, if any, they will take. The Council had suspended the closures when the public inquiry was announced and the libraries will remain open pending the outcome of the inquiry.

Councillor Hale reported that he had attended the public inquiry on the Tuesday and Wednesday and had given evidence in favour of keeping the libraries open. He had been impressed with every speaker from every community from Wirral who spoke at that inquiry. An amazing case had been put forward to keep the libraries open

particularly on the Wednesday morning when people had been questioned most closely. Their responses had been outstanding.

Councillor Green reported that he had also attended the inquiry, and he agreed with Councillor Hale's comments about the input by a range of people who were in favour of retaining the libraries. Councillor Green had asked whether an Equality and Impact Assessment had been carried out prior to the closure, and what the current status of that is. Sue Charteris had asked the same question, but it appeared that a full Equality and Impact Assessment has not been undertaken for any of the centres.

Jim Lester continued that the process of looking at transferring the community halls and community centres has started as outlined in the SAR. Discussions have been held with centre management committees locally and a joint meeting has been held with three community centres. The commissioning of structural surveys on the building has begun and the process will continue, on a two-year timescale.

Councillor Hale reported on discussions at the joint meeting about the repairs needed to the buildings, and concerns about whether the surveys will be extensive enough to cover all the problems identified so that the management committees know exactly what they are taking on.

Jim Lester explained that Social Funding is a Community Fund which is topped up annually and has about £2.5 to £3 million this year. An undertaking has been given to try and transfer assets in a good condition. The intention is to do full surveys, to find out any issues within the buildings and put them right. The Council does not want to transfer assets and then see the community fail. To help avoid this, the communities will be helped with business planning etc. It is a complex operation, but there are already three pilots that are quite advanced in other areas. The intention is that all buildings will be put in good order and there is money in the community fund to do that.

A member of the public asked the questions: *'How much money will the Council save by selling off the halls, and where will that money go?' 'How much money will the Council Tax payer save?'*

Jim Lester replied that on the Community side, the target is £150, 000, but the Authority has a reducing budget and it has to reduce this budget each year.

Councillor Green asked the question: *'If we don't have community centres, what do we pay our Council Tax for?'* He added that there is an issue about the way local government is being targeted. The National Audit Office is there to come up with a series of priorities and point all the resources of the Council towards those priorities. The issue is about the whole approach. There is a need for new localism in which people have a much greater say in what services will be provided, instead of being given instructions by the Government and the Council on what those services should be

The Chair commented that it would be impossible for Westbourne Hall to survive on its own. The management committees for Hoylake Community and for Greasby Community Centre have been talking about a proposal to get together and run the three Centres as a joint business venture.

The Chair invited Mr Vaughan Williams, Chairman of the Hoylake Community Centre, to describe the talks.

Mr Williams stated that although some movement has been made towards the withdrawal of funding in 2011, only 18 months of the two-year programme remain, and very little has happened so far. At a meeting at the Hoylake Centre, David Ball had made it clear that things would happen at a greater rate of progress in future.

There had been talk about a condition survey of the buildings. No one will take on something they are not sure about, because the money will not be there. The survey turned out to be a walk about by people, who said OK. The roof, heating, drains etc., had not been part of the survey. The inspector had conceded that these will be checked, but to what extent had not been explained.

The reason for getting together is for each centre to give support to each other. There is a strong desire for Westbourne Hall, Greasby and Hoylake centres to survive, but to do this you need a strong joint management committee, and this is very difficult to achieve. People are working and they have limited time to give. One solution would be to employ a manager centrally who would deal with the lettings for the three centres, and to procure someone who would do a single accountancy job. By doing this it should be possible to preserve this great hall and run the other two centres. Mr Williams added that he was reasonably confident that it would be possible to move forward in that way. He was concerned about the speed of progress with the Local Authority, and the only reassurance that had been given had been that money is available in a dowry to put the buildings in good order. He would like to say with some confidence that all the centres will survive, but there are serious doubts about some of the smaller ones. For the three centres to survive with a joint management committee, they will have to become a really serious commercial organisation.

Mr Williams continued that Hoylake Community Centre is celebrating its centenary with a week-long series of events from 22 to 28 June. There will be a free exhibition of the 100 years of the Parade School building and old Hoylake. This will give an opportunity for people to see how their ancestors lived and a visit to the refurbished Victorian/-Edward classroom will show how they went to school. A visit is expected from Heather Chapman, a local historian.

A member of the public explained that she has been researching the history of the Parade School using records that were left behind when the school closed. Members of the community have come forward with information and photographs, and that is what next week is all about – sharing what has been learned and celebrating 100 years in the old school.

In summarising the discussion, the Chair stated that local Councillors are totally opposed to the closure of the libraries and a report on the inquiry is awaited. On the matter of the halls, people are trying to do their best to make sure the halls do survive, and local councillors will support people in this in every way possible.

The Chair explained that, in his absence, Howard Mortimer has submitted a Position Statement on Hoylake & West Kirby Regeneration. He drew attention to the section of the report that referred to The Sail and the hotel, and the resolution of Wirral Council's Cabinet on 23 April, that -

**Officers be instructed to undertake further discussions with Carpenter Investments and the Council's appointed independent financial consultants with a further report to be submitted to Cabinet in the next 6 months to enable it to take a final view on the future of the project.'**

Councillor Hale reported that between the last meeting of this area forum and the Cabinet meeting on 23 April, a new factor had been introduced which was intended to make up for the loss of the car park. The plateau would become the new car parking area, managed by Carpenters. This would mean that people towing trailers and with boats would have to manoeuvre between the car spaces.

A member of the public asked why a new hotel was needed in West Kirby at all, given that the number of hotels that have closed in West Kirby.

The Chair replied that local councillors had been asking the question for three years. The Cabinet members are aware that councillors and the public are totally opposed to the proposal. It will be interesting to see what is decided in six months' time, and it will be timely to re-open the discussion at the next area forum meeting.

David Green was pleased to report that work on the repairs to the wall is due to finish towards the end of July. Work started in the winter but stopped due to the financial collapse of the original contractor. Another contractor was appointed and this caused a few weeks' delay. The work, which cost around £1.5 million, has been funded from a grant from the Environmental Agency.

The contractor will be asked to remove the debris and metal objects which have been dumped in the lake over the years, before the lake is refilled and brought back into use.

The Dee Lane project is still on the drawing board and efforts are continuing to secure funding for it to go ahead. The development of Dee Lane is not dependent on the Concourse or the Sail projects.

A member of the public proposed that –

**A vote of thanks be passed to David Green for his actions in ensuring that another contractor was appointed without delay following the collapse of the first one, and that this prompt action has meant that minimum delay has been caused in completing the work on the wall.**

Following a petition from traders, a decision has been made to postpone plans to pilot test the pedestrianisation of The Crescent for the time being.

John Davies responded to a query concerning access to The Crescent by emergency vehicles. He reassured people that, notwithstanding carelessly parked vehicles,

emergency crews are able to access all the properties in the Crescent by approaching from one end or the other.

A member of the public commented on the poof facilities for patients and doctors. Cathy Doran replied that she totally agreed with the sentiments expressed. She has been personally working with the GPs in the West Kirby Health Centre since 1998 to re-provide the Centre. There is nowhere in West Kirby that are available for redevelopment, therefore the Trust is committed to working with the redevelopment of the Concourse. The funding has been in place for a long time, but the redevelopment of the Health Centre cannot go ahead until the rest of the Concourse redevelopment is ready.

Cathy Doran dispelled rumours that the Oncology Centre at Clatterbridge Hospital is to close and the facility transferred to other hospitals in the North West.

She explained that the Clatterbridge Centre of Oncology is a separate entity to the NHS Trust for Clatterbridge and Arrowe Park Hospitals. The Clatterbridge Centre is a regional centre for Oncology Services. There are three main types of treatment for cancer – surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy. The Centre at Clatterbridge offers radiotherapy and chemotherapy, but it does not provide surgery for cancer. The surgery for Cheshire and Merseyside is provided regionally in most big hospitals.

The Trust is trying to ensure that people can access services as near as possible to where they live. People from Wirral, Merseyside, Cheshire and the Isle of Man have to travel to Clatterbridge for radiotherapy. The Trust is currently looking at other sites for people to go to for radiotherapy, which are nearer to where they live.

Another report had been produced which concluded that the Clatterbridge site might not be the best place for the small number of patients who need to be admitted to an inpatient bed, and that beds should be provided more centrally. It will take about 18 months to analyse the report and to consult on any proposal for change.

One in every three people will suffer from cancer in their lifetime. Statistically, for every 1,000 people, there are 80 more deaths from cancer of people who live in Wirral than in the average district in England. In Liverpool there are 350 more deaths. The number of people with cancer is increasing all the time, and this trend is expected to continue over the next ten years. The aim of the Trust s to provide services that are excellent for the people of Cheshire and Merseyside, but are nearer to where people live. The guidelines say that no one should travel for more than 45 minutes to access a service.

Councillor Green added that the Hospital Trust has just been recognised as the joint best large acute trust outside London. As a Governor of the hospital he is aware of the need for as many people to become Public Members.

#### **QUESTIONS SUBMITTED IN ADVANCE**

Q [Brigitta Muller]: Are there plans for a new Youth Hub in West Kirby, and if so, are there any plans for extra policing, given there will be more young people coming to West Kirby?

A [David Green]: Youth provision was looked at the time the Council was setting its budget. The Director of Children's and Young People's Services has confirmed

that although consideration had been given to closing a number of youth clubs and creating a Hub in West Kirby, the proposal is not being proceeded with.

Q [Margaret Campbell]: Several people have asked me to raise questions about allotments at previous meetings of the area forum, but for various reasons this has not been done. Please ask the following questions next week, even though there may not be enough time to allow an individual response from Councillors.

- 1, In 2007, Wirral Council received four petitions asking that they fulfil their statutory duty to provide sufficient allotments.
2. Can Councillors please tell me how many people are now awaiting for an allotment in West Kirby, and how many new plots have been created since 2007?

In responding to the question 2, Roger Calvert stated that there are 97 residents on the waiting list in the CH48 postcode area. There are three allotment sites in West Kirby with a total of 62 plots. There are 135 people on the waiting list for an allotment. No new plots have been created in West Kirby or in any other area of Wirral. A number of allotments are neglected and in poor condition, and this aspect will be included in the report that will be going to the Committee in the Autumn.

On the issue of petitions, Councillor Green explained that the role of the Council's Scrutiny Committee is to challenge the Executive and ask them to account for the decisions they make. The Council has a duty to respond to every petition it receives. The whole idea would be that when a report goes to the Scrutiny Committee that the meeting is publicised so that everyone has the opportunity to go along and challenge the Council on why they are not doing more to respond on a whole range of things. He proposed that Jim Lester takes the issue away, and he would take it away and speak to his party's spokesperson on that committee. It should not be just a report, it should be an opportunity for people involved in campaigns to have their say and bring anomalies to the attention of the right people, and to hold them to account for resolving them.

David Green raised the issue of allotment holders taking waste to the Waste Reception Centre in West Kirby. The site is run by the Waste Disposal Authority, not Wirral Council, and is a facility that is provided for use exclusively by residents to dispose of household waste; not by businesses and individuals to dump commercial waste. Chris Pearce, who uses his trailer to collect waste for other allotment holders, has been banned from using the site.

David Green undertook to speak to the Waste Disposal Authority and try to persuade them to relax the rules and allow Chris to continue to use the facility.

Q [John Hutchinson] Since having to take to the roads in my electric mobility scooter, I have noticed the bumpy nature of West Kirby's pavements. Since my condition is especially sensitive to vibration, I am asking if greater attention can be given to the smoothness of the West Kirby pavements? Also, as there are not enough dropped kerbs for safe and secure navigation by wheelchair users, can more be done?

A [Mark Traynor]: Wirral has a duty to maintain its road and footways in a safe condition. Whenever we reconstruct a road, we keep disabled persons and wheelchair users in mind and we now use bituminous materials, which give a smoother ride quality.

If Mr Hutchinson has any specific locations he would like to bring to my attention, I will happily meet with him on site to discuss the issues.

A dropped kerb user programme has been developed and undertaken in consultation with Wirral Information Resources for Equality and Disability [WIRED]. Locations identified for treatment are those with high pedestrian movement, links between residential areas and services such as shopping centres, health centres, libraries etc. The opportunity is also taken to introduce dropped kerbs within the footway reconstruction programme and the planning application process.

Q [Rosemary Chandler, Secretary, Hoylake Allotments Association]: In its allotment strategy, Wirral Council claims that it is committed to increase the allotment provision in Wirral. If this is the case, why is the unused land in Sandringham Avenue not being used for allotments?

Roger Calvert explained that the issue of allotment sites has been considered by the Council on a number of occasions. A report will be presented later this year looking at the issue and whether there is a possibility of additional land etc. He is currently working with Rosemary Chandler, who has made a request for a self-managed site. He is working to try and assist Rose with that, but it is not straightforward. The area of land is part of a playing field, which as a publicly owned space requires planning permission and permission for change of use. There are a few things to progress, but he is working to see if approval can be given. Funding will still be an issue. One of the Development Officers will be discussing the issue with Rose.

Due to the lateness of the hour, the Chair suggested that the discussion is continued outside the meeting.

## 6 PARTNER ORGANISATIONS UPDATE

The Chair drew attention to the written reports included in the Area Co-ordinator's Report from Streetscene, NHS Wirral, Wirral University NHS Trust, Merseyside Police/Community Safety, the Fire Service, and the Older peoples parliament.

The Older People's Parliament would like everyone over the age of 50 to become Associates so that as many people as possible are working towards the facilities and services for older people in Wirral. Application forms and further information was available at the meeting.

Lyn Benstead read out a Press Statement regarding Swine Flu issued by the Health Protection Agency. The Health Protection Agency had reported that a spokesman for Arrowe Park Hospital had stated:

*'We can confirm that a man from Wirral with confirmed H1N1v [swine flu] infection was initially given a negative test result in error. This was an administrative mistake for which we apologise. He was given the correct test result the following day, Monday June 15. The decision to allow him to return to work yesterday was*

*made on clinical grounds because he had recovered from the illness and is not infectious. He does not pose a risk to people who work with him and the decision to allow him to return to work was correct.'*

David Green advised that, from 1 April 2009, a new partner has delivered many services provided by Streetscene. Roads in Wirral continue to be safe places to drive on and the Council's performance in reducing accidents on the road has improved.

Waste recycling facilities have been rolled out to most multi-occupancy dwellings. Consideration is being given to facilities for recycling food waste in the future.

Land has been secured for the Thurstaston cross road scheme to go ahead. The contract is out to tender with a start on site in the spring 2010.

## **7 DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS - WEDNESDAY 14TH OCTOBER 2009**

**The next meeting will be held on 14 OCTOBER 2009 at a venue to be confirmed.**

The Chair thanked everyone and closed the meeting.