



**Constituency Committee - Wirral South
Wednesday, 6 March 2019**

REPORT TITLE:	Wirral South Community Representative Report
REPORT OF:	Director for Health and Wellbeing

REPORT SUMMARY

This report details progress to date following the co-opting of five Community Representatives (Com Reps) to the Wirral South Constituency Committee (WSSC) on 15 October 2015 and since the previous committee on 4th October 2018. This report also highlights particular issues being experienced by the communities within the five wards and seeks to bring them formally to the attention of the committee.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that:

- 1) The Chair liaises with the appropriate Council officers to ensure that the resolutions approved in the Com Rep report in November are actioned as a priority.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To enable the work of the Constituency Committee to be focused upon the needs of the local area and to ensure projects commence as expediently as possible.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Alternative options were considered for direct community representation during the initial formation of the Wirral South Constituency Committee.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 COLLABORATIVE NOTE FROM COM REPS

The Com Reps regret the demise of the Constituency Committees, particularly Wirral South Constituency Committee.

Unfortunately, from day one, the Com Reps believe the Constituency Committees did not receive the leadership or support they merited over a number of years by elected members and senior officers within the Council.

We, as Com Reps, are proud of our achievements over the last 5 years and the way we have “worked together” and with elected members in supporting our communities’ needs and aspirations. We also believe that elected members and officers of this committee have strived to make this model work, with some notable successes achieved by putting political differences aside for the good of the wider community.

However, we must reiterate the frustration, disappointment and concerns over the lack of progress in developing a Wirral wide strategic Neighbourhood Development Plan, which was approved by Cabinet in October 2015. This plan clearly embraced the principle of empowering locally by giving power and local responsibility to communities, and tailoring public services to meet the unique needs of local areas and neighbourhoods, but was never progressed further.

Empowering locally can only be done if “working together” is all inclusive with the desire to concentrate more on joint contribution with active participation as equals. We know it will be difficult but in view of this the Com Reps have decided to continue to “work together” going forward on improved community engagement and neighbourhood working.

4.0 BEBINGTON WARD REPORT

No report was submitted

5.0 BROMBOROUGH WARD REPORT

5.1 NEW FERRY

5.1.1 Repercussions from the March 2017 explosion:

Revised figures of the number of people injured have been released. Not only did victims end up in hospital on the night, others attended their GPs in the days afterwards with a variety of injuries which they didn't want to spend hours at A&E waiting to be seen for. The official number of those "physically injured" is now 81 as quoted in the court hearing recently.

The court case against Pascal Blasio was abandoned on Friday 1st February when the jury failed to reach a verdict. It was immediately announced, however, that it would go to a retrial with a new jury starting on Monday 23rd September. This may have repercussions for businesses and residents who had previously reported that their insurance companies have continued to drag their feet with regard to payouts; although the Council has offered to mediate with insurers where this has been an issue.

The Town Team has handed over the remainder of the monies donated to New Ferry (£8,088) to Community Action Wirral to administer. It is to be distributed amongst the traders who continue to be badly affected after the explosion, and application forms are being distributed shortly.

Several residents of the severely damaged properties at Underley Terrace and at the corner of Port Sunlight Village moved back into their homes just prior to Christmas. The last residents able to move back will be doing so in the coming weeks.

5.1.2 Christmas Lights and Market:

The Christmas Lights were repaired (with funding raised at the summer festival in the park) and the lights erected for free by North West Construction. A Christmas tree was also provided by the Council, for which the community was most grateful.

The New Ferry CLT, together with the Residents' Association and Traders' Association, held the first New Ferry Christmas Market on the second Saturday in December - on the same day as the Farmers' Market. Unfortunately, the extremely windy weather wrecked plans to hold the market in the precinct as planned, but the event was successfully relocated on the morning to inside the PHAB Community Hub (former Co-op building). Although half of the traders who promised to come stayed away because of the weather, all but one of the twelve traders who came were happy with the attendance and their takings, and said they would return to another event if it were to be held.

5.1.3 Regeneration Plans:

The Council put the latest plans for regenerating New Ferry on public display on 30th and 31st January. From the feedback I am aware of (mostly comments on Facebook) and from the Traders' Association at its meeting on 5th February, reaction to the plans were mixed. There was almost universal agreement that residential development is much welcomed, but there was alarm from many traders about the scale of proposed reduction in car parking spaces. In the case of Woodhead Street Car Park which currently has 176 spaces, this would be reduced to between 45 spaces or 0 spaces. Many found this alarming, as the provision of parking spaces elsewhere around the district centre was not convincing, and the BDP representatives confessed that this would mostly be taken up by the residents of the 90 or so apartments to be built in the plans.

There was also some concern that the plans indicated no new or replacement retail space, particularly on the site of the former furniture store or the block opposite where many businesses including Lan's House Chinese Restaurant had previously stood. Some of those businesses lost want to move back (Lan's House, the Complete Works Dance School) but there are currently no premises in New Ferry suitable for them; whilst the new plans as presented had taken no account of this and there was no provision for building replacement premises for them. Not all the traders want to see new retail space created as they fear that businesses similar to their own could arrive and threaten their individual viability. However, they subsequently said that if any new space was provided, preventing businesses similar to those already here was imperative.

The existing businesses in New Ferry are still suffering a major downturn in footfall and takings since the explosion. For many this remains as much as 60% of times before the explosion. Although the influx of 90 or so new residential homes will be welcomed, this will not be enough to make the businesses sustainable. Most people will travel to the Croft (Asda, M&S) and only rely on New Ferry's shops for the forgotten loaf of bread, pint of milk, etc.

The district centre needs to attract new customers from further afield who choose to come to New Ferry; and for that, creating space for some new businesses is a necessity. New businesses will not currently come to New Ferry because of the poor quality and small size of the current building stock; owners are reluctant to refurbish their buildings, expecting new tenants to pay for refurbishment themselves. In New Ferry's dilapidated buildings, this means new heating, new electrics, replacing 1950's meagre kitchen facilities, and bringing toilets (currently in the back yards) actually inside the buildings! Nobody wants to rent a shop for their new business in the 21st century that resembles a relic of the late 19th century.

Therefore, the mantra of "it has so many empty shops it should be allowed to shrink" is unfair and irrelevant. One size does not fit all! If New Ferry had bright, newly created shops of varying sizes on the substantial sites created by the explosion on Bebington Road, these would represent the best opportunity New Ferry has had in generations to attract new businesses which it currently needs in order to rebuild its district centre. Without this new

retail investment, the district centre will continue to contract - threatening the jobs of 75 people in the precinct alone.

The community will be presenting its own plan to the Council which accommodates the requirement to bring a minimum of 85 new homes to New Ferry, whilst retaining a car park at Woodhead Street capable of providing 70 spaces, and allowing for some new and replacement retail/commercial space.

5.1.4 New Ferry Community Land Trust:

With the prospect of £500k of money coming to New Ferry through the Town Centre Investment Fund, it is hoped that some of this can be used to tackle the number of empty shops in the district centre, to purchase and refurbish them to make them suitable for either new businesses or relocation of existing businesses who need to be moved to facilitate the Council's regeneration proposals mentioned above. The vehicle to manage this is currently in the process of being set up - the New Ferry Community Land Trust. A board comprising of local residents and business people has been formed, and a bank account is currently opened.

5.2 BROMBOROUGH VILLAGE

The village had another successful Christmas. Bromborough Village Community Association (BVCA) replanted all the flower troughs and beds with winter planting; Christmas lights and trees were installed. With close links to St Barnabas Church, they also arranged lights for the institute, café and the Church and grounds. The Christmas Fair held on the 1st December was a great success again – this was linked in with the Church tree festival with entertainment and the Mayor attended – over 2 thousand visitors on that day at the events.

The Friends of Bromborough library are doing very well and are now covering an express library service on Tuesdays and Fridays when it is normally shut – run by volunteers.

Bromborough Village District Centre had a boost with several new shops having opened: a Mediterranean restaurant, 2 x barber shops with 2 other currently empty shops being refurbished ready for new people to set up.

A group of people are trying to set up a Neighbourhood Watch group. Two meetings have been held at the Bromborough Social Club but as yet not a great success.

One issue which the area has had is getting faulty lampposts and fixtures fixed. Since November, despite help by Councillor Irene Williams and Councillor Chris Carubia, nothing appears to have been fixed. Some of the lights and fixtures have not been working for three years and there is growing resentment in the community that other places get their lighting fixed whilst Bromborough is being ignored.

Parking remains an issue in Bromborough. People know there is no one around to enforce things, so vehicles are parking illegally all the time. Local

police pass by but don't appear to be interested and residents have become increasingly disheartened with the matter.

The BVCA spent a lot of time, money and effort highlighting the car park closure issue with a petition being handed in to the local council to hopefully stop any proposals for development on this much needed local resource that is needed by the business community.

6.0 CLATTERBRIDGE WARD REPORT

The Clatterbridge Com Rep has nothing to report.

7.0 EASTHAM WARD REPORT

7.1 Eastham Connects:

The Eastham Connects project aimed at tackling social isolation has been identified as key to a much wider initiative across the borough as identified. The project is a unique bottom-up led community led approach and it has been recognised that it is essential that reducing social isolation is tackled on a locally led basis with the community being at the heart of developing the strategy and being an equal partner in the delivery of agreed approaches and solutions.

The project to tackle social isolation in Eastham has been beneficial in bringing groups and support organisations closer together through joint working and collaboration.

In November, 2018 a "Craft Fair" event was held in St Davids Church, and was organised through a task and finish group from the local steering group. The event was attended by over 70 local residents, and children, with limited funding made available to support the event. Funding for Showcase Events will continue to be an issue going forward as will be the resource requirements to continue to move the Eastham Connects project forward.

7.2 Christmas Events:

Nearly 30 volunteers from St Marys Church, The Delamere Centre and elected members worked together to ensure that 32 local residents enjoyed a Christmas dinner on Christmas Day at the Delamere Centre. Gifts were donated by the public and local businesses and Home Instead Santa to a senior campaign. Everyone also received a food hamper, organised by Eastham Group Practice.

Other Christmas lunches were held in the local community leading up to Christmas, which were attended by over 100 local residents. There was also an organised Christmas party for over 60 children and parents.

8.0 HESWALL WARD REPORT

The Heswall Com Rep had nothing to report.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Effective engagement will maximise social return on any constituency investment

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The arrangements help the Council to deliver on the Localism Act 2011 and Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

11.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

Increased engagement may result in better use of community assets

12.0 RELEVANT RISKS

Failure to engage at a local level may limit the Committee's ability to effectively tackle its priorities.

13.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

13.1 Elected members, community representatives and members of the public have the opportunity to participate in all Constituency Committees.

13.2 The neighbourhood working model strengthens the Council's relationship with the voluntary, community and faith sector.

14.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-2010-14/chief>

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APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Wirral South Constituency Committee	4 Oct 2018