

BLACKPOOL COUNCIL
REPORT
of the
HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
to
THE GATEWAY AREA PANEL

THE GATEWAY AREA FORUM MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17TH OCTOBER 2012

1. Introduction

Mr David Blacker MBE, Chairman of The Gateway Area Forum welcomed members of the community to the meeting. After providing housekeeping information regarding fire alarms, toilet facilities and mobile telephones he introduced members of the Panel Councillor Smith (Talbot ward), Councillor Matthews (Tyldesley ward), Mrs Butterworth, Mr Dagnall, Mrs Thomas. He offered apologies on behalf of Councillors Blackburn, Coleman (Brunswick ward), Taylor and Mrs Taylor (Claremont ward), Riding (Talbot ward), Collett (Tyldesley ward), Mr Holland MBE, Mr Williams and Miss Wolstencroft

2. Community Report – “You said.....we did”.

Mr Hugh Wignall, Head of Neighbourhood Services (Central) reminded the Forum that Neighbourhood Services in partnership with the Police and Fire Services worked in dedicated teams to address the safer, cleaner and greener aspects within the North, South, Central and Town Centre and Promenade areas of Blackpool. The Service provided a single point of contact and services were based on community-identified priorities. He explained that this was achieved through open and honest dialogue with the community and an increased involvement of the community in the planning and decision making process.

He reported that at the July Area Forum the community had identified Noise nuisance, anti social behaviour, house of multiple occupation, fly tipping and refuse in back alleys as the three key priorities. He added that the Forum would be asked to set the priorities for the next three months later in the meeting, but provided the Forum with an update of activities within The Gateway area since the last meeting.

The Neighbourhood Team had dealt with in excess of 2,000 incidents of fly tipping in the Blackpool area in the last three months, with nearly 800 incidents within The Gateway Area Forum boundary and the majority within the Claremont ward. Mr Wignall reported an increase in the number of fly tipping incidents, but believed this to be due to a combination of improved reporting of incidents by the community, improved sightings by Council officers and regrettably more fly tipping.

It was reported that incident of noise nuisance and anti social behaviour had also increased in the Claremont ward, again this was believed to be due to improved reporting, but also the reporting period was during the summer months.

The Forum was provided with a breakdown of activities per ward, but overall there had been 826 incidents of fly tipping, 153 street cleansing requests, 94 incidents relating to noise nuisance and anti social behaviour and 48 incidents of dog fouling.

Mr Wignall explained that since July, 218 dog owners had been “challenged” and were found to be responsible e.g. had dog bags and picked up after their pets, which compared to just 17 not so responsible owners. In response to this, eleven fixed penalty notices had been issued for both dog fouling and littering. It was anticipated that with an increase in enforcements and a partnership with the community, dog owners would continue to take positive action.

The Forum was shown visual examples of where the Community Payback team, a probation service initiative, had been utilised to clean up alleyways, weed clearance and grassed areas. Mr Wignall explained that the number of people provided by the probation service had decreased and were no longer visible on a daily/ weekly basis. However, six people would be provided to work within the town for five days on a four-week rotational basis.

The Forum was also shown a visual example of young people, who were members of the Kickz project supported by the Council, Blackpool Football Club, the Police and ward Councillors painting the Talbot and Brunswick Sports Barn to remove graffiti. Mr Wignall explained that the project had 75 registered members, with 25 young people attending regularly.

At the Forum meeting on 12th July, a number of issues had been raised and Mr Wignall provided an update including:

You Said....

A resident suggested that fly tippers were becoming cleverer. It was suggested that smarter prevention methods and the cause of the problems needed to be identify e.g. possible restrictions at the Bristol Avenue waste disposal centre.

A resident referred to previous amnesties on fly tipping and suggested installing a skip in problem areas.

Could the Council look at providing resources at the times when dogs were allowed to foul i.e. early morning?

A resident commented on the number of dog fouling incidents in the area where bags had been dumped on the floor.

The Panel

Although understanding the sentiments expressed the Panel believed that an intensive three-month project should be undertaken in a number of problem areas. This would focus on the following approach in two specific alleyways:

- Inspect daily, installation of CCTV.
- Educate new tenants/ residents.
- Enforcement with Fixed penalty notices.
- Prosecute through Courts.
- Publicise in community by naming and shaming offenders.

Did not believe that this was the best use of limited resources and agreed that a number of high profile enforcement actions against individuals and subsequent publicity, would be a better solution.

Confirmation that it was not necessary to dispose of dog excrement in a specific bin and the purpose of the ‘Bag it, Bin it’ campaign was to highlight this point.

Mr Wignall reported that a further seven personal issues had been raised at the end of the meeting had those had also been answered. He reminded residents that personal issues could be raised with officers at the end of the meeting or alternatively comments slips were available.

Chief Inspector Laura Lawler was invited to provide a brief overview of the forthcoming Police and Crime Commissioners Election on Thursday 15th November. She reported that on 22nd November the governance of the Police would transfer to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire representing all the residents in the Lancashire Police force area, Lancashire County Council, Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen. The Commissioner would hold the Chief Constable to account and set the priorities for the Constabulary, set the Budget for the police and be responsible for setting the Council Tax Precept (how much residents pay for policing).

The ethos of the Police Crime Commissioner would be “Bringing the voice of the people into policing and bring the community together to tackle crime” and the Commissioner would be expected to represent the interests of the local community.

The Commissioner would provide a lead for crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour issues, produce a Police and Crime Plan (available by the end of March 2013) that would contain the priorities, the budget and how the Chief Constable would be held to account and would include details of funding for community safety projects and initiatives

In addition, the Police and Crime Commissioner would be held to account by a politically balanced Lancashire Police and Crime Panel comprising of 18 local Councillors and two independent members.

Chief Inspector Lawler reminded residents that polling Day was on Thursday 15th November and further details were available on the Lancashire Police and Crime Commissioners website www.lancspcc.co.uk.

The Chairman thanked Chief Inspector Lawler for her presentation.

Mr Tim Cogan, Service Manager - Enforcement and Quality Standards, Blackpool Council was invited to provide an update on Houses of Multiple Occupation and associated enforcement activities. He advised the Forum that he would deal with specific queries after the meeting so as not to jeopardise on going prosecutions.

The Forum was advised that there were two main areas of enforcement when dealing with Houses of Multiple Occupation, Planning and Housing. Planning Enforcement involved two tactics the issue of Section 215 Notices in relation to the poor appearance/ condition of a property that informs the owner they must improve the appearance/ condition or face prosecution. In extreme circumstances, the Council could undertake any necessary work (works in default) and then reclaim costs when the property once sold. The other tactic was the Change of Use, where properties converted from residential to business use, mainly Houses of Multiple Occupation, could be prevented using the legal system. Mr Cogan explained that the physical environment adversely affected the perception of crime and disorder. He added that it was currently legal to convert residential houses to Houses of Multiple Occupation without planning permission. However, the Article 4 Direction reversed this requirement and the Council intended to seek an Article 4 Direction, but this could take up to 12 months before it could be implemented.

Mr Cogan provided the Forum with details of a number of streets in which enforcement work was on going, through the issue of Section 215 Notices including Abingdon Street, Reads Avenue, Albert Road, Coronation Street and Durham Road and the Change of Use including Palatine Road, Hornby Road Banks Street, Springfield, Lord Street and Lune Grove.

He explained that a number of properties on Talbot Road, Raikes Parade, Reads Avenue had previously been issued with Section 215 Notices, but those had been resolved and were now in an acceptable condition. A number of non-compliant owners in Cocker Street and Palatine Road were currently being prosecuted.

The Housing Enforcement legislation sought to improve the internal condition of properties, which adversely affects anti social behaviour and enforcement work was on going in a number of streets including Adelaide Street, Clevedon Road, Regent Road, Dickson Road, Eaves Street, Charles Street and Hornby Road.

Mr Coglan reported that Selective Licensing was a relatively new tool where landlords were compulsory licensed with the Local Authority, had to meet certain criteria, and were responsible for the monitoring of tenants, the condition of the premises and addressing any anti social behaviour by their tenants. He added that it was a criminal offence not to be licensed. The scheme was being piloted in the South Beach area and would then be rolled out in a descending order of anti social behaviour levels. The Forum was advised that in excess of 200 properties remained unlicensed in the South Beach area and the owners would be prosecuted and made to comply with the regulations. In addition, if landlords were deemed 'not a fit and proper person' they would be unable to run a property anywhere within the Borough.

It was reported that Claremont ward would be the second phase of the project and the consultation process was about to start.

The Chairman thanked Mr Coglan for his presentation and invited questions from the floor.

A resident asked if the 200 unlicensed premises were individuals or multi owners. Mr Coglan reported that they were a mixture, but multiple landlords would be prosecuted for each property.

It was asked whether the Article 4 Direction could be applied retrospectively. Mr Coglan's initial thoughts were that it could not, but would investigate the matter and advise the resident after the meeting.

A Forum member asked for confirmation of the legislation for the issue of Section 215 Notices and the Change of Use. Mr Coglan explained that the Notices were issues under the Town and Country Planning Act, but would need to confirm the section for the Change of Use as this was different legislation.

A local resident asked if because of Selective Licensing rogue landlords were moving to different areas of the town. Mr Coglan acknowledged this fact, but reiterated that if a landlord was deemed 'not a fit and proper person' they would be unable to run a property anywhere within the Borough.

A resident referred to the reduction of housing benefit rates and reported that one bed-roomed properties were being occupied by three/ four people. Mr Coglan asked to be provided with the details of those property, as this was a criminal offence against housing space standards.

Residents were invited to raise any issues/ concerns relating to their community.

The Chairman reported that he had met with the Police to discuss issues in the Town Centre and explained that a report was to be compiled. He introduced Mr Les Ball, Business Support Manager and Mrs Eileen Ormand, Town Centre and BID Manager. Mrs Ormand explained that the BID team operated as supplementary service to the Council and funding from businesses via a levy additional to the non-domestic rates to clean alleyways, provide Town Centre wardens. She added that the BID had been in operation for seven years and provided a direct link to the Council to negotiate on behalf of businesses. Another key role was the co-ordination of new and existing daytime and early evening events to stimulate economy including the forthcoming six-week light show event in St John's Square starting on 22nd October.

A resident of Palatine Road reported that fly tipping in the back alleyways continued to be a

problem.

A resident of High Street thanked the Council for providing bins previously requested at the Area Forum meeting in July, but commented that the number of dog fouling incidents in the area where bags had been dumped on the floor continued and there was no evidence of fixed penalty notices being issued. Mr Wignall reported that he had already requested some enforcement action to be undertaken in the area.

A resident asked if street cleaners were allowed to remove incidents of dog fouling, as there was an issue in Leamington Road. She suggested that the cleansing team should record incidents and then areas could be targeted. Mr Wignall confirmed that the street cleansing teams could remove dog fouling and welcomed the residents' suggestion.

It was reported that a number of heavy goods vehicles were using roads surrounding the Gateway Project development site that were unsuitable for their weight and signage restricting access had either been removed or covered. Additionally, the one-way traffic flow system was causing confusion and was a potential hazard to road users. Mr Wignall agreed to investigate the matter.

It was reported that issues raised at the last Forum regarding the former Regent Cinema, Church Street were being addressed in respect of the pigeon infestation, the issues of a Section 215 Notice and the condition of the surface outside the premises.

A resident of Leamington Road reported that a number of cars were regularly parking at the junction of Leamington Road and Whitegate Drive to access businesses on Whitegate Drive and were causing traffic congestion. The matter had previously been reported at the Police and Community Together (PACT) meeting. Mr Wignall agreed to investigate the matter.

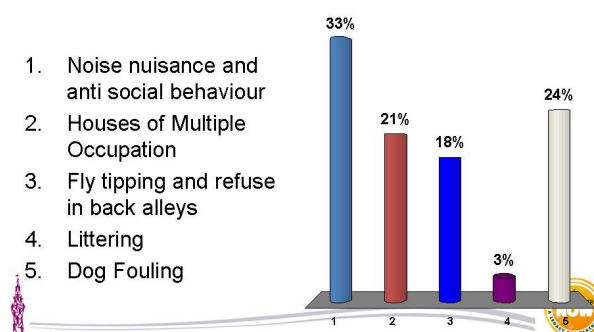
A High Street resident reported that a number of residents, despite purchasing residents only parking permits were unable to park on the street due to an increase in vehicles displaying permits, which appear not to belong to local residents or visitors to the area. It was suggested, that the parking permits should be colour coded and changed annually. Mr Wignall agreed to investigate the matter.

A Forum member enquired why the former Regent Cinema, Church Street could not be used as a community centre. Mr Wignall explained that the property was not owned by the Council and whilst it could ensure the building was of an acceptable condition/ appearance it could not influence the purpose of the building. Councillor Matthews asked if the building was listed. Mr Wignall offered to investigate the matter.

A number of residents expressed their concerns regarding the negative impression given of Blackpool following the recent broadcast of a television programme featuring the Emergency Services and were not supportive of the programme. Chief Inspector Lawler explained that the ethos of the programme was to highlight the difficulties the emergency service faced on a daily basis. She acknowledged that a reduction in services for vulnerable people added pressure to the services, but they had a duty of care to minimise the potential harm to the individual and the community. She added that the Emergency Services had no influence on the editing of the programme, which had been edited to sensationalise matters. Chief Inspector Lawler congratulated the residents on its positive community and social network and engaging with the Police and she believed this had prevented the riots seen during the summer in other towns.

Following questions from the floor, Mr Wignall invited Forum members to identify, using the hand held voting devices, to identify the priorities for The Gateway Area Forum for the next three months. The results were as follows:

What are the priorities for The Gateway Area Forum for the next three months?



3. Area Forum Funding

The Forum was advised that following contributions from Blackpool Council, NHS Blackpool and Blackpool Coastal Housing Limited there was a total of £30,000 to be spent on projects such as alley gates, community events (Gala, Fete) and environmental improvements. The Forum was reminded that at its meeting on 12th July it agreed to split the available budget equally between the four wards and after agreeing to support two projects the remaining balances were:

Ward	Budget (£)	Expenditure (£)	Remaining Balance (£)
Brunswick	7,500	0.00	7,500
Claremont	7,500	169.99	7,330.01
Talbot	7,500	0.00	7,500
Tyldesley	7,500	450.00	7,050

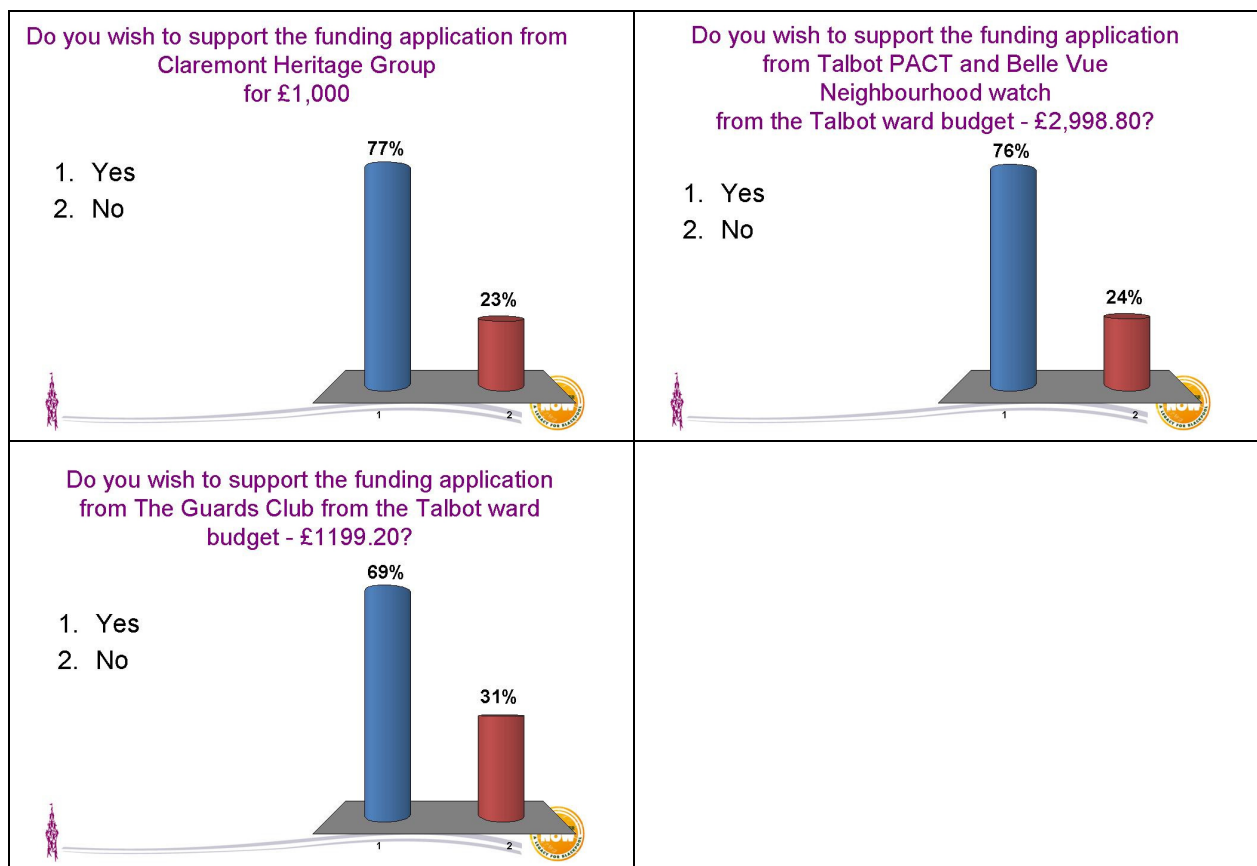
The Forum was then asked to vote on three funding applications:

Applicant	Amount (£)	Purpose	Beneficiaries/ Ward	Other funding sources	Timescales
Claremont Heritage Group	1,000	Retrospective funding for the Claremont Gala.	Claremont school, local community and local charity groups. (Claremont ward)	£1,000 + community events/ donations and raffles	15th June 2012
Talbot PACT and Belle Vue Neighbourhood watch	2998.80	Purchase of a mobile Speed Indicator Display board to monitor speed of vehicles in residential streets.	Residents and motorists of Talbot ward (Talbot ward) Cost could be shared by four wards and used across the Forum area	None	No timescales

Applicant	Amount (£)	Purpose	Beneficiaries/ Ward	Other funding sources	Timescales
The Guards Club	1199.20	Community Notice Board (8 x A4 post mounted)	Residents of Talbot ward (Talbot ward)	The excavation/ reinstatement of highway and the advertisement consent costs to be met by Ward Councillors	No timescales

Mrs Thomas spoken on the Claremont Heritage Group's funding application. Mr Fewings spoke on the Talbot PACT and Belle Vue Neighbourhood Watch Scheme funding application. He explained that the equipment would be maintained by the Talbot ward Community Policing Team, but could be used to benefit all four wards. In response to a question regarding insurance implications it as reported that the equipment would be manned. The Forum was advised that this was effective deterrent in slowing vehicles and recorded various data, which could be used to address speeding issues and would be reported to the Talbot Police and Community Together (PACT) meeting for the results to be monitored. It was confirmed that any proposed siting of the equipment would be agreed by the Police and officers from the Council's Transportation Department. In the absence of the applicant from The Guards Club, Mrs Ablett clerk to the Forum provided details of the application.

The results of the votes were:



Members of the Forum were reminded that fully completed applications forms needed to be submitted by no later than 5pm on Monday 28th January 2013 to be considered at the Forum on Thursday 31st January 2013.

The Chairman thanked the community for their attendance and whilst a little early wished them all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The meeting ended at 8.20pm.