

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

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**THE GATEWAY AREA FORUM MEETING**  
**HELD ON THURSDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2011**

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**1. Introduction**

The Chairman of the Area Forum and Community Representative, Mr Philip Dunne welcomed members of the community to the meeting. He introduced his co-Panel Members, Councillor Coleman (Brunswick Ward), Councillors Taylor and Mrs Taylor (Claremont Ward), Councillors Smith and Riding (Talbot Ward) and Council officers in attendance at the meeting.

He asked members of the community to be co-operative and courteous when addressing the Forum and promised to give everyone an opportunity to speak. He advised that it was the Area Panel's priority to ensure that any issues that were not answered this evening, or in the interim period, a response would be available at the next Forum meeting.

Mr Dunne advised the Forum that the evening would consist of a presentation from Carmel McKeogh, Assistant Chief Executive – Human Resources and Transformation and Ms Leanne Burnett, Head of Policy and Transformation, Blackpool Council regarding the Fairness Debate.

**2. Context**

The Area Panel at its meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011 had agreed that the theme of the October Forum meeting would consist of a short presentation on all the main Fairness issues in The Gateway Area Forum area, followed by an open discussion and comments from the floor.

**3. Theme**

Ms Leanne Burnett, Head of Policy and Transformation explained that any feedback that was provided at the meeting would be taken into consideration when establishing the Fairness Commission. She explained that the vision of Fairness was to ensure that Blackpool was a fair and equal place and that individuals were able to achieve the same outcomes regardless of their location, background or economic circumstances.

She explained that research had proven that where there was unfair or unequal circumstances there tended to be more social problems. She highlighted that children from low-income backgrounds had lower educational attainment, adults in areas of deprivation had poorer health outcomes and there was a link between deprivation, crime and participation.

Ms Burnett referred to a number of statistics, reporting that in 2010, Blackpool had been ranked the sixth most deprived Local Authority and was the only Authority with areas where more than 27% of households were living in poverty. The Forum was advised that the gap between the highest and lowest earners in Blackpool was one of the smallest in any Local Authority area, but the actual amount of earnings received by residents in Blackpool was amongst the lowest of any Authority. She explained that the high level of pupil movement between schools had strong influences on educational outcomes. Whilst a survey last year reported that 71.7% of Blackpool residents had been satisfied with their local area as a place to live, this was significantly lower than the comparative England figure of 79%. Ms Burnett informed the Forum that Blackpool had the highest number of alcohol related deaths in England.

Facilitated by Carmel McKeogh, the Forum was asked what Fairness meant to them and reported the following:

- The opportunity to live in peace, without experiencing anti social behaviour including nuisance caused by playing football in the streets, vehicle and property damage.
- The lack of policing of licensing laws, which promoted the sale of cheap alcohol and encouraged 'happy hours' and was possibly responsible for the high number of alcohol related deaths.
- Not having to remove other people's litter primarily associated with takeaways, which had been discarded in gardens after a night in the town centre.
- Not having to remove dog excrement that had been left on the streets.
- The right to a good quality of life.
- Disabled accessibility.
- Addressing the low income of some working people and pensioners.

The Forum was asked what improvements were needed to engage more people in the community, particularly those groups that were not already represented and those people who did not attend meetings like the Area Forums. The Forum reported the following:

- Need to change the selfish society that currently exists.
- Address the apathy, if people see changes they were more likely to become involved.
- Enforce laws more proactively e.g. street drinking.
- Support local businesses to grow particularly in St John's Square by organising regular events in the evenings and at weekends.
- Encourage people to visit the town centre by providing accessible means of public transport and provide free parking in the town centre in the evening as currently excluding people from participation.
- Engage young people in their own environment, schools and youth centres as they were the citizens of the future and if engaged were less likely to resort to crime.
- Engage 'hard to reach groups' in their own environment as often fear of authority and judgement prevent them from participating.

The Forum was advised that the Council was not required to develop a Fairness Commission, but had chosen to and were aware that the Forums were not necessarily representative of the population, but this type of meeting was just one mechanism for engagement.

In response to the provision of free car parking in the town centre, Mr Wignall, Head of Neighbourhood Services Central, Blackpool Council, reported that a review of car parking and charges to encourage better use of the town centre facilities was ongoing.

The Chairman asked the Forum, in its opinion, which section of society was most affected. The Forum considered the elderly, who were often socially isolated and those on low income were most affected.

Ms Burnett thanked everyone for their input and sought the Forums involvement in the development of the Fairness Commission and its continued support. She invited Forum members to use the feedback form and the prepaid envelope to provide any further comments/ suggestions.

The Chairman thanked Carmel McKeogh and Leanne Burnett for their presentation.

Mr Blacker, Blackpool Boys and Girls Club invited Carmel and Leanne to attend a club meeting to talk to local young people about the Commission.

#### **4. Question Time**

The Chairman proposed that following floor issues, the meeting would break providing residents with the opportunity to talk on a one to one basis with Councillors and Officers. The Forum agreed.

A local resident of London Road asked why the Council had not cleaned the back alleys of rubbish and weeds. Mr Wignall apologised that the removal of weeds had not been as effective this year and explained that the best solution of removal was for them to be pulled out manually. He added that it was proposed to utilise the Community Payback Scheme, whereby offenders on probation undertook work within the community as part of their punishment and a new regime had commenced this week and would be highly visible in the community. A Claremont resident reported that worked had already started in the area and had been extremely successful.

A Forum member asked why the gullies had not cleaned, which following recent heavy rainfall had left some streets resembling rivers. Mr Wignall advised the Forum that he was aware of the issue of blocked gullies and reported that a 12-month programme had been implemented to clean all gullies across the Borough. He asked local residents to report any particular problem areas.

A resident of Palatine Road reported a number of alley gates had been forcibly opened and vehicles parked in front of alley gates causing an obstruction to emergency services. Mr Wignall and a Lancashire Constabulary representative asked residents to report such incidents and where possible individuals would be prosecuted for causing criminal damage and vehicles would be removed.

Other incidents of alley gates being left open and keys being in the possession of non-residents were reported. Mr Wignall explained that it was difficult to monitor the ownership of alley gate keys, but advised that where possible keys were retrieved. He and a local Councillor encouraged residents to report incidents of abuse of the alley gates and encouraged local residents to take ownership and close the gates themselves.

A Forum member informed the meeting that there had been an increase in the number of vehicle accidents on Bank Street, where large bells had been installed to slow traffic movement. Mr Donnellon, Service Director – Built Environment, Blackpool Council offered to review the accident records and investigate whether alternative traffic calming measures were required.

The Chairman asked for an update on the incidents of shoplifting that had featured prominently on the agenda of a recent Police and Community Together (PACT) meeting. A Lancashire Constabulary representative reported that work was ongoing

and had led to a recent arrest. Mr Wignall advised the Forum that Council Officers, ward Councillors and the Lancashire Constabulary were working in partnership with the Whitegate Drive Business community to create a more welcoming environment.

A Forum member observed that the average age of Forum attendees was over the age of 25 and commented that it was important to encourage more young people to attend the meetings.

It was reported that following the Government cuts there had been a reduction in the quality and quantity of the monitoring of street cameras, which in his opinion was an invaluable tool in crime prevention. Mr Wignall reported that the cameras were operational and continued to be used as evidence in criminal prosecutions. However, due to the cuts the cameras were predominately monitored between Thursdays and Sundays when there were higher levels of incidents. A Forum member suggested a more flexible approach should be adopted. Mr Wignall advised that operating times could be changed if there was sufficient evidence to support this, but he added that street cameras were not the only mechanism for gathering intelligence.

The Chairman thanked residents for their participation in the meeting and invited residents to take the opportunity to talk to Councillors and Officers on a one to one basis.

## **5. Conclusion**

The purpose of the meeting was to provide residents with an overview of the Fairness Debate and an opportunity to get involved and share their views on what they consider would make Blackpool a fairer and more equal place to live and work.