

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

THE GATEWAY AREA FORUM MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY 12TH JULY 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 Coleman (Brunswick), Councillor Mrs Taylor (Claremont Ward), Councillors Smith and Riding (Talbot Ward), Mrs Butterworth, Mr Dagnall, Mr Holland MBE, Mrs King, Mrs Thomas, Mr Roberts and Miss Wolstencroft. He offered apologies on behalf of Councillor Blackburn (Brunswick) who was engaged elsewhere on Council business.

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

Mr Hugh Wignall, Head of Neighbourhood Services (Central) presented the Forum with an update of activities within The Gateway area since April 2012. The Neighbourhood Team had dealt with 1,392 activities during that period and the prominent areas of concern were fly tipping (615), highway defects (449), cleansing requests (134) and noise nuisances (101). He explained that since April 189 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 19 not so responsible owners. In response to this, twenty fixed penalty notices had been issued for both dog fouling and littering. Mr Wignall explained that a wide variety of Police and Council Officers, not just those working within the Neighbourhood Services Teams had been trained to issue either a record of intended action (RIA) or a fixed penalty notice.

The Forum was shown visual examples of where the Community Payback team, a probation service initiative, had been utilised to clean up alleyways, streets and grassed areas where incidents of fly tipping or irresponsible management of waste had occurred. He stressed the importance of highlighting that it was not the Council’s responsibility to remove waste, but that of the resident and was not an effective use of Council resources. He added that whilst the Council removed rubbish to prevent deliberate fires, the main aim was to identify and prosecute the offenders.

Mr Wignall explained that during a recent enforcement day in Claremont Park, twenty-two officers had patrolled the streets around Claremont Primary School talking to residents about responsible dog ownership and littering. Of the 40 people approached, only three people were issued with a record of intended action, one for littering, one for dog fouling and one for cigarette litter.

Mr Wignall briefly mentioned that the Council would shortly be publishing the draft proposals on Dog Control Order. He explained that a market stall had been provided prior to the Forum to provide more information and welcomed residents suggestions, after the meeting, of

potential locations. The Police Community Support Officer for Talbot ward advised the Forum that he had recently issued two fixed penalty notices for dog fouling, but was also trying to pass on a positive message by providing responsible dog owners with a postcard entering them into a free prize draw.

At the Forum meeting on 25th April a number of issues had been raised and Mr Wignall provided an update including:

You Said....	We did....
Police presence at Forums.	Commitment by the Partnerships Chief Inspector for a representative to attend all future meetings.
Increased number of Houses of Multiple Occupation.	Selective Licensing in the future, which would provide more powers to deal with rogue landlords. Subject to Government approval, it had been proposed that the scheme be introduced into the Claremont ward area. Pilot scheme currently in operation in the South Beach area.

In response to a question regarding the external maintenance of private dwellings, Mr Wignall advised that efforts would be made to identify the owner and remind them of their responsibility. However, in extreme circumstances the Council could undertake any necessary work (works in default) and then reclaim costs when the property once sold.

The Forum were informed of two forthcoming local events and welcomed other groups, organisations etc to advertise their events at the next Area Forum meeting by informing a member of the Panel.

- Layton Allotments Open Day -29th July – 10am to 4pm, purchase fresh produce, crafts and see what was involved.
- 'Where to go for Advice' Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde, 2012 publication, now available from the Advice Link team.

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

A local resident asked if the additional Council Officers trained to issue fixed penalty notices included traffic wardens. Mr Wignall confirmed that a variety of staff from across the Council, including traffic wardens, street cleansing teams, office based staff had all been trained and he added that if the initiative was successful the training would be extended. Another resident asked if a support mechanism was in place for those officers. Mr Wignall confirmed that officers were trained, given advice and provided with mentors. He added that officers were taught techniques to handle situations without endangering their own safety.

A Brunswick resident suggested that fly tippers were becoming cleverer and smarter prevention methods and the cause of the problems needed to be identify e.g. possible restrictions at the Bristol Avenue waste disposal centre. Mr Wignall suggested the matter be referred to the Panel for consideration.

A resident reported an increase in the number of bicycles on the pavements and without lights and the danger, this posed. Police Community Support Officer Dennis Nelson explained that in partnership with Blackpool Council cyclists on Whitegate Drive had been targeted and two tickets had been issued for inappropriate behaviour. He added that the initiative was to encourage adults in particular to use the highway and information regarding Council run

courses was being circulated. It was noted that the Talbot ward community had seen a positive improvement.

A Forum member commented that the Fire Service advisor were less visible in the community. Mr Wignall reported that along with other public services the Fire Service had seen a reduction in its budget and had to change the way it delivered services. Nevertheless, he added that the Fire Service was still involved in the Neighbourhood Services tasking meetings and undertaking Home Fire Safety visits and providing support to the community.

A local resident referred to previous amnesties on fly tipping and suggested installing a skip in problem areas. Mr Wignall agreed there were advantages and disadvantages with the amnesties, but agreed to discuss the possibilities with the Panel.

A resident of High Street commented on the number of dog fouling incidents in the area where bags had been dumped on the floor. Mr Wignall advised 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.

The same resident also reported that approximately 30 cars had been damaged a few weeks ago. Police Community Support Officer Nelson offered to follow the matter up with the Claremont Neighbourhood Policing team.

Several residents raised concerns regarding the Revised Local Plan (Core Strategy) and the lack of notification and consultation. It was suggested that the consultation did not allow suggestions to be made, but simply to agree or disagree with the proposals. Mrs Jane Saleh, Head of Development Plans and Projects explained that comments were welcomed and that the Core Strategy questionnaire asked for ideas and suggestions. She added that the questionnaire was available from the Council's website, libraries and Customer First and explained that the consultation had been ongoing since 2008 and due to changes in Local and Central Government this stage was being repeated and had recently been advertised through press releases in the local media. Residents were concerned that a free paper had been used to advertise the consultation and enquired why the publication 'Your Blackpool' had not been used.

A resident reported that the increasing number of Houses of Multiple Occupation needed to be addressed by the Core Strategy, as there was a link between those types of properties and incidents of anti social behaviour. It was acknowledged that Houses of Multiple Occupation were an on going national problem and not just restricted to Blackpool, but it was part of the process and planning was not the only available tool to tackle the problem.

A resident asked if the former Local Plan had been scrapped. Mrs Saleh explained that the revised preferred option scheme would replace some of the old plan, but those policies not being replaced, were listed at the rear of the Core Strategy document. She added that the next stage would be to review the saved policies and undertaken consultation on those.

The Chairman reported that Mr John Donnellon, Assistant Chief Executive – Built Environment had extended the consultation deadline, to deal with community issues, for a further two weeks (initially 20th July). He added that he would like the Forum to receive feedback on how the Core Strategy had changed following the consultation period.

A resident reported a number of cars for sale being parked on the public highway in the Dickson Road/ Derby Road area. Mr Wignall offered to investigate the matter further.

A Forum member reported that the holiday area had been clearly defined, but there continued to be an increase in Houses of Multiple Occupation and asked when the area would be protected. She added that whilst the public were consulted, they were not listened to.

A local businessman asked if the principle adopted in clearing and maintaining domestic properties that were in disrepair could be applied to commercial premises, as some shopping areas looked shabby. Mr Wignall reported that the Council had the ability to utilise Planning Legislation to issue Section 215 notices, to ensure shop frontage were maintained to a certain standard. However, it was acknowledged that shopping areas were in decline.

It was suggested that housing benefit should be withheld from landlords that allowed properties to fall into disrepair. Mr Wignall explained that this would be a Central Government decision, however he encouraged residents to report properties that did not meet the minimum standards as enforcement action could be taken against the landlord, with the possibility of the tenant reclaiming rent.

A proprietor of a House of Multiple Occupation reported that not all of those types of properties were associated with anti social behaviour and the increase in those properties was the inability or reluctance of property owners to rent properties to 16-18 year olds who were in receipt of the minimum level of housing benefit (£53 per week).

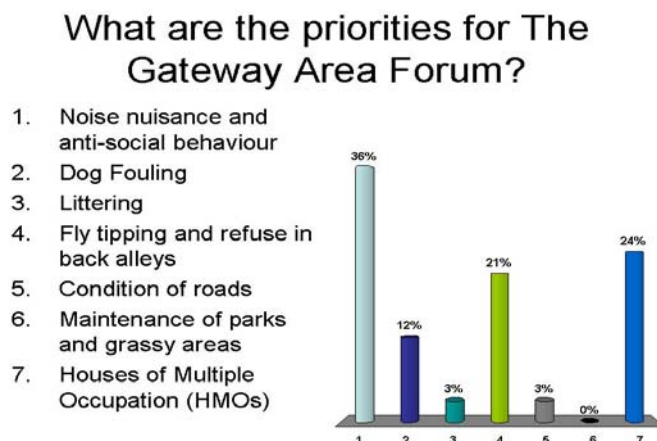
The manager of the Queens Park Estate café asked if it was possible for them to receive a key to the lockable refuse storage area. Mrs King, Community Representative and Community Development Worker at the Queens Park Community Centre agreed to resolve this matter.

The same resident also reported that during their weekend street patrols, between 9.30pm and 2am the bins particularly in the Birley Street area were full to capacity. Mr Wignall explained that he was aware of the matter, but due to the need to prioritise resources, it was agreed that the town centre was not cleaned on Saturday/ Sunday nights, but would be cleaned for Monday mornings.

A Forum member referred to the recent Neighbourhood Services initiative in Claremont Park and enquired what time the initiative had commenced and suggested that a 6am start would catch more irresponsible dog owners. Mr Wignall confirmed that the initiative had started at 8.40am with the aim of targeting young people with their parents. He added that following recommendations, the dog wardens now operated between 7am and 7pm, but agreed to discuss the matter further with the Panel.

A resident advised the Forum that her friend and owner of a local dog-grooming salon had instrumented a “name and shame” campaign of irresponsible dog owners on her website. It was suggested that this could be linked into the website for The Gateway Area Forum being developed by Mrs King, Community Representative.

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:



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. It was explained that Blackpool Council agreed on 18th January that fully completed applications would be considered by the Area Forum and be subject to a vote. (The Area Panel could consider applications of a time sensitive nature).

It was reported that the Area Panel at its meeting on 31st May 2012 had recommended that the Forum be asked whether the available budget (£30,000) should be split equally between the four wards (£7,500 each) or not? The Forum was 82% in favour of each ward having its own budget of £7,500.

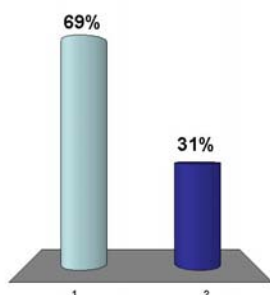
The Forum was then asked to vote on two funding applications:

Applicant	Amount (£)	Purpose	Beneficiaries/ Ward	Other funding sources	Timescales
Parish of St John Vianney	450.00	Retrospective funding for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Fun Day.	Families, Senior Citizens to promote community development and cohesion. (Tyldesley ward)	Parish Community	4th June 2012
Claremont Park Community Centre	169.99	Outdoor Shed to increase storage facilities for centre users.	User of the Community Centre and Claremont residents (Claremont ward)	None	On going project

The results of the votes were:

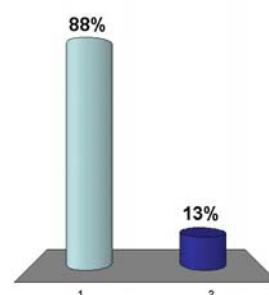
Do you wish to support the funding application from St John Vianney

1. Yes
2. No



Do you wish to support the funding application from Claremont Community Centre?

1. Yes
2. No



Members of the Forum were reminded that fully completed applications forms needed to be submitted by no later than 5pm on Friday 12th October 2012 to be considered at the Forum on Wednesday 17th October.

The meeting ended at 8.25pm.