

## LOCAL AREA FORUM MEETINGS – JANUARY 2005

### AGENDA ITEMS PRESENTED TO MOST OR ALL OF THE LOCAL AREA FORUMS

#### Emergency Planning

Philip Wilson, Emergency Planning Manager, explained the role of the Emergency Planning Team (EPT). The EP Team is fully integrated with all other appropriate Government Agencies and, in the event of a disaster, would provide support for the Emergency Services and co-ordinate the response of all other Government Agencies. Additionally they would also take the lead in rehabilitating the community and restoring the environment after any disaster or local emergency.

The main points arising from the question and answer session were:

- Members of the Emergency Response team come together to exercise the plan and train the team regularly.
- There is already a Plan in place for Foot and Mouth; the Rabies Plan is in addition to that.
- In response to concern over the SAS being based in Hereford. Members were advised that their presence did not pose any particular threat. There are many military bases elsewhere in the Country with a higher profile.
- In the event of an earthquake in Herefordshire, the EPT would implement its Major Emergency Response Plan.
- On planning matters, any proposal to build on floodplains or fault lines would be dealt with by the Environment Agency.
- The team provided a 24 hour response service, with the aim of having a full response team in place within one hour.
- Funding for services in a major incident would come partly from Council Tax and partly from Central Government. Extra money had come from Central Government in April to fund additional statutory responsibilities.
- Events on September 11 had increased awareness of the need to deal with major emergencies. The old Civil Defence plans have been brought up to date to increase the emphasis on emergency planning.

#### Youth Service

Jon Ralph / Jenny Lockwood, Community Youth Services, explained that the Herefordshire Youth Service was a statutory part of the Council that operated on a small budget, employing just 19.5 youth workers throughout the County. The Youth Service was responsible for running the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and also produced a publication, 'Way 2 Go', which was distributed to all year 9 pupils throughout Herefordshire.

**At the Hereford City Forum** - Councillor Mrs Lloyd-Hayes described the successful youth provision provided by Close House in Hereford City centre. She also highlighted the work of a group of young people wishing to establish a skate park in Hereford City.

**At the Golden Valley Forum** - Sgt Phil Edwards also explained how he and others had started a Youth Club in Clehonger, linked with the DfES Extended Schools initiative, and using money donated by the Parish Council. Members were informed that there had been little support from the community and he thought that the community should take some responsibility, and pointed out that the youth of today were the parents of tomorrow. He added that the Youth Club had £60,000 to fund a 3 year period. Costs associated with the Club included mandatory police checks, training and weekly running costs.

The Forum was advised that the South Wye and the Golden Valley areas had one full-time youth worker and three part-timers working 6 hours each. The Council would shortly be advertising for a replacement secondment.

The main points arising from the question and answer session were:

- Members were advised that the Youth Service did not have the staff to open all Youth Clubs every night. There was a need for local people to get involved for the benefit of the young people.
- It was acknowledge that the Bodenham Lakes location was not ideal for sailing. A site at Wellington might be more appropriate.
- The Bodenham site should be RYA accredited by the end of the year.
- Jon Ralph acknowledged the lack of youth facilities north of the river Wye, and highlighted the problems of staff shortages even where facilities were available.
- Specialist disability facilities were only available at Herefordshire's outdoor activity centre.
- It was acknowledged that the skate park located on Westfaling Street had fallen into disrepair. Jon Ralph advised that proposals had been put forward to redevelop the site.
- A Youth Worker had recently been employed in the Whitecross and Aylestone area to help reduce the number of young people currently engaging in anti-social behaviour.

<p><b>North Herefordshire Forum</b></p> <p><b>Agenda Items:</b>          Update on the Swimming Pool for North Herefordshire          Air Quality Assessment of Traffic at Bargates          North West HGV Study          Grange House as a Hostel for Homeless Families</p>	<p><b>Tuesday 18 January 2005</b>  <b>Bridge St Sports Centre, Leominster</b></p>
<p><b>Ward Councillors:</b> J Stone (Chairman), S Bowen, R Burke, Mrs J French, R Phillips, JP Thomas.</p>	
<p><b>Speakers:</b> R Ball, Transportation Manager, C Boot, Marches Housing Association, R Gabb, Head of Strategic Housing, T Featherstone, Leisure Services Manager, M Willimont, Principal Environmental Health Officer</p>	
<p><b>In Attendance:</b> Mrs J Jones, Senior Management Team Representative, R Stockton Cabinet Member (Community and Social Development)</p>	
<p><b>Members of the Public:</b> 75</p>	

**Chairman's introduction**

The Chairman referred to a press article concerning proposals for a new link road and housing development south of Leominster. He said that all objections made relating to these plans would be considered by the public enquiry into the Unitary Development Plan, which was to be held between February and July 2005.

**Swimming Pool for North Herefordshire**

Tony Featherstone, Leisure Services Manager, reminded the Forum that construction had started on 5 April 2004. He showed the Forum recent progress photographs and explained the energy-saving features incorporated into the design. Completion was planned for

November 2005, followed by commissioning and formal opening in January 2006. He praised the "We Want Our Pool" campaign and the local community for helping to initiate this project. He advised that regular progress reports would be available in the press.

### **Air Quality Assessment of Traffic At Bargates**

Marc Willimont, Principal Environmental Health Officer, reported that investigations that had been carried out stemmed from a Herefordshire Council report to DEFRA in March 2004, that confirmed Bargates as possibly exceeding the objectives for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels, which could cause respiratory difficulty. He explained how air quality was monitored and measured, and how the results were used to predict levels of nitrogen dioxide. The levels were likely to exceed 40 ug/m<sup>3</sup>, so would warrant public consultation for declaration of an "Air Quality Management Area" at Bargates and the drafting of an "Air Quality Action Plan".

The main points arising from the question and answer session were:

- The comparison of air quality at Bargates with that in Victoria Street in Hereford;
- The advantages of installing a mini-roundabout to help improve traffic-flow;
- Acknowledging that cars as well as HGVs contribute to the problem of poor air quality.
- Any proposed development would be considered in the normal planning process.
- Noting that local people had already been consulted on the Environmental Action Plan, and that they would also be consulted at the Action Planning stage.
- A further presentation on air quality is planned for later in the year in conjunction with the Transportation Department.

### **North West HGV Study**

Richard Ball, Transportation Manager, presented the findings of the North West HGV Study. He explained the aims, the process used, the area being studied and the key results. Additionally he explained the study's draft recommendations and the actions required to support a bypass scheme, which would require funding. As the study was not yet complete, the views of the public were invited for inclusion in the final report.

The main points arising from the question and answer session were:

- Most HGVs using the route appear to be owned by the Tarmac Company, vehicles accessing the Shobdon Industrial Estate and the mill in Eardisley.
- The Tarmac Company's plans for the life of the quarry will inform decisions about road construction in the area.
- Investment in by-pass roads must balance where it is technically most appropriate and where the Council sees the biggest priority and the availability of funding.
- Little can be done about traffic volume/calming in Eardisley as traffic movements are split between the various routes across the area.
- The issue of maintenance and pollution could be raised with the operators through the Freight Partnership process or directly with the Tarmac Company.
- Analysis of accidents shows very few caused by lorries.

### **Grange House – Responding to Homelessness**

Richard Gabb, Head of Strategic Housing and Chris Boot, Marches Housing Association, jointly explained the problems encountered accessing affordable housing in Herefordshire, the relationship with the level of earnings and the Council's statutory duties under the

Housing and Homelessness Acts. They explained the reasons for homelessness and how they are dealt with, how Grange House could be adapted and the service that could be provided.

The main points arising from the question and answer session were:

- The Forum was informed that the Grange House proposal was not a project for junkies. The selection process would be carefully managed between the Marches Housing Association and Shelter.
- Marches Housing Association is a not-for-profit organisation providing affordable housing for communities. Over 95% of lettings are allocated to people previously living in the County, or who have a local connection.
- Noise and disturbance at the Old Library – It was stated that this involved a different client group (16-25 year olds), and disruption was associated with the Youth Centre. Any issues around the Old Library would be taken up with the Landlord
- It was emphasised that homeless families need to be in an area with access to facilities, as they might not have access to a car. Proposals for Grange House are in response to a local need.
- The Marches Housing Association will engage with the Police to make the building as secure as possible. Grange House is a sensitive location and it is acknowledged that there might be some impact on neighbours.
- The project is for single people or couples with one child.
- Advised that temporary accommodation is needed because there is not enough property for long-term rental.
- It was pointed out that there was no other building or land available. An options appraisal was continuing, on the detailed work to be carried out on the conversion of the building.
- Consultants have submitted a planning application through the normal process.
- It was a false assumption that people in temporary accommodation caused problems in the community.
- The Grange House project was not just for young people.
- Members were advised that there was a high level of staff provision planned for Grange House. It was important that staff were well trained and supported. Shelter is a national organisation with a good reputation and excellent staff training.

Richard Gabb undertook to report back to the Forum the number of families in Leominster in bed and breakfast accommodation in an average year.

**Central Herefordshire - Wednesday 12 January 2005 at Credenhill Village Hall**

**Agenda Items**

Hope-under-Dinmore Primary School and update on proposed new school at Credenhill  
Youth Services  
Emergency Planning

**Ward Councillors:** R Matthews (Chairman), J Guthrie, Mrs S Robertson, M Wilson

**Speakers:** J Ralph, Youth Services Manager, G Salmon, Head of Policy and Resources (Education), P Wilson, Emergency Planning Manager

**In Attendance:** Ms M Rosenthal, Senior Management Team Representative, C Mayson, Cabinet Member (Rural Regeneration and Smallholdings)

**Members of the Public:** 70

**Primary Schools**

George Salmon, Head of Resources (Education) advised the Forum of the proposed closure of St Mary's of Hope-Under-Dinmore Primary School. He stated that the proposals were with the agreement of the Governors and that all the children had been allocated places at the next nearest Primary School Bodenham or at another preferred primary school.

With regards to Credenhill Primary School he explained the concerns regarding the condition of the existing school, with maintenance costs of £200,000 envisaged for the next 5 years. The school had major weaknesses in classroom size and layout, and was not compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act, which would require a further £400,000 investment. The existing Primary School is located on prime residential development land, and one option would be to sell the current school site and build a new school in the village. The Forum was advised that there was a suitable plot of land in the Council's ownership (Trenchard Avenue site), but the Council would need to purchase an adjoining piece of land.

The main points arising from the question and answer session were:

- There is no precise figure on the value of the existing school land for redevelopment, but it was expected to cover the cost of building a new school.
- It was acknowledged that the proposed Trenchard site for a new school was a little smaller than the current school site, but it was still within the Government guidelines for Primary School sites.
- Schools in the area are suffering from falling numbers of children on the roll. At present there are currently 1,000 fewer children in the County in education than in 2001, with the decline expected to continue until 2015.
- Central Government funding for schools is reducing due to falling roll numbers. Government does allocate specific grants for school refurbishment, but Credenhill School would not be a priority for refurbishment.
- The sum of £600,000 is a considerable amount for school maintenance. A large sum would be needed for the replacement of the roof of Credenhill School, as it has a flat roof, which is nearing the end of its 30 year lifespan.

**Golden Valley - Wednesday 26 January 2005 at, Kingstone Village Hall**

**Agenda Items**

Community Policing

Youth Services

Emergency Planning

**Ward Councillors:** D Taylor (Chairman), P Turpin.

**Speakers:** Sgt P Edwards (in his capacity working with the local Youth Group), Sgt D Gwynne, Herefordshire Police, Ms Jenny Lockwood, Youth Services, P Wilson, Emergency Planning Manager.

In attendance: G Dunhill, Senior Management Team Representative, B Wilcox Cabinet Member (Audit and Performance)

**Members of the Public:** 22

**Chairman's introduction**

The Chairman outlined developments concerning the road from Madley to Bridge Sollars.

A member of the public mentioned a serious accident at the bottom of Bage pitch, causing the road to be blocked and queried whether anything was being done to improve the road.

**Community Policing**

Crime figures in Golden Valley for 2004/05 showed an increase this year. Some of the increase was attributed to a request by the Police for people in Clehonger to report crime, rather than an actual increase in crime. A similar request was made in Kingstone and a similar increase in the figures was reported. The police plan to develop public drop-in centres and surgeries. The detection rate for all crime in the Golden Valley was 39%

The main points arising from the question and answer session were:

- Much crime is committed by people under the age of 20, raising the question of whether the crime was intentional or the result of reckless behaviour.
- Property is recovered in approximately 25% of cases. The Police wish to improve this rate.
- Crime in the 16-24 age group is largely drugs-related. The over 24 age group tends to be career criminals, and includes a rogue element from outside the County
- The public are advised to be vigilant and ensure security is adequate. If there is a break-in, they should make as much noise as possible, and Chief Inspectors advise them to make a citizen's arrest if possible.

**East Herefordshire - Tuesday 11 January 2005 at the Bromyard Centre**

**Agenda Items**

Youth Services

Polytunnels

**Ward Councillors:** T Hunt (Chairman), B Ashton, P Harling, B Hunt, R Mills, D Rule, R Stockton.

**Speakers:** J Barrett, Head of Planning Services, J Ralph, Community Youth Service Manager.

**In Attendance:** P Edwards Cabinet Member (Environment),

**Members of the Public: 4**

Members briefly discussed the issues raised regarding the Youth Service. After the item had concluded the Chairman, after consulting those in attendance at the meeting, declared the meeting closed due to the high level of disturbance occurring around the meeting room. Members were advised that the item on polytunnels would be discussed at a future meeting of the Forum.

**Hereford City - Wednesday 19 January 2005 at the Shirehall, Hereford**

**Agenda Items**

Community Policing

Emergency Planning

Youth Services

Update on proposals for refurbishment of Eign Gate

Proposals for pedestrianisation of Widemarsh Street

**Ward Councillors:** D Fleet (Chairman), Mrs U Atfield, Mrs M Bew, Mrs M Lloyd-Hayes, Ms G Powell, Ms A Toon.

**Speakers:** J Ralph, Community Youth Service Manager, P Wilson, Emergency Planning Manager, S Oates, Head of Highways and Transportation, PC T Powell, West Mercia Police, A Rimmer, Owen Williams Consultants.

**In Attendance:** Ms S Fiennes, Senior Management Representative, Cllr P Edwards, Mrs J French Cabinet Member (Human Resources and Corporate Support Services), Cllr M Wilson.

**Members of the Public: 28**

**Community Policing**

PC Tim Powell, West Mercia Police, is part of the police team with responsibility for the City centre area dealing with retail crime and night time anti-social behaviour. PC Powell highlighted the success of the Herefordshire Against Night-time Disorder group (HAND) and the amount of time saved in the issuing of fixed penalty tickets for those guilty of night time disorder, with only 20% of cases now requiring a court case. He also highlighted the improvements in police detection methods, which had seen burglary rates fall by 23% and overall crime down 17% compared to last years figures.

The main points arising from the question and answer session were:

- Problems had been experienced getting through to local police officers via the Worcester based call centre, but the Forum was advised things were improving.
- Licensing Act - Extended opening hours. The police would consider each application under the new Licensing Act on its merits and work with the Council to limit the number of additional premises with extended opening hours.
- Poor response times. PC Powell sympathised with a member of the public but advised that on the date in question, all police had been involved in policing a football match, leaving only a skeleton staff to deal with any other policing issues.

### **Update on Proposals for Eign Gate Redevelopment**

Alan Rimmer of Owen Williams Consultants, detailed the planned redevelopment of Eign Gate, scheduled to take place during the summer of 2005. He updated the meeting on the conclusions of the recent public consultation and described the minor changes that were now to take place.

The main points arising from the question and answer session were:

- Litter bins would be incorporated into the redevelopment to prevent build up of litter.
- A proposal for a pedestrian crossing outside the store Boots The Chemist was not possible as people crossed the road all along the high street area.
- The stone used for paving slabs would not be smooth to prevent slippery surfaces. Additionally larger paving slabs would be used than those used in High Town at present, to prevent them loosening and becoming a health and safety problem
- The paving slabs used could be sprayed with a resistive agent to aid the removal of chewing gum.
- It was proposed to make the High Street end of Eign Gate a more pedestrian friendly environment.
- Accessible underground water pipes are to be laid for easy access to retailers.
- Emergency Services vehicles would still be able to access the pedestrianised area.
- Consideration had been given to preventing the blocking of CCTV camera views from the trees to be planted.

### **Proposals for the Pedestrianisation of Widemarsh Street**

Stephen Oates, Head of Highways and Transportation, outlined the Council's plans to consider pedestrianising Widemarsh Street, as a result of the large number of comments received following last summers enforced closure due to essential works by Transco. The options include full pedestrianisation, partial pedestrianisation or not changing anything. The Council proposes to experiment with pedestrianisation during the Eign Gate redevelopment. Consultation on the form of the experiment was currently underway and evaluation of the experiment would take place during the autumn of 2005 before a final decision was taken.

The main points arising from the question and answer session were:

- If partial pedestrianisation was introduced all deliveries would be required to take place during non-restricted hours.
- Additional taxi rank places were being considered.
- Traders in Widemarsh Street supported pedestrianisation of some sort.



- A straw poll conducted at the forum showed that nearly everyone present supported pedestrianisation.

### Other Business

In response to a question Councillor Mike Wilson (Cabinet Member – Highways and Transportation) said that Councillors were entitled to free parking only when on official Council business. Additionally he explained that the bus service recently withdrawn from Westfaling Street had been partially restored.

### Proposed Future Agenda Items

- Plans for the long-term future development of Hereford.
- Discussion on the development of Herefordshire Learning Village.
- Presentation from Environment Agency Officials on maintenance and plans for the River Wye.
- Written statement on provision of a children’s play areas.
- Information on the Museum Service including future investment plans.

<p><b>Ross-on-Wye - Tuesday 25 January 2005 at, John Kyrle High School, Ross-on-Wye</b></p>
---

<p><b>Agenda Items</b></p>
----------------------------

<p>Emergency Planning</p>
---------------------------

<p>Youth Services</p>
-----------------------

<p>School Transport</p>
-------------------------

<p><b>Ward Councillors:</b> G Davis (Chairman), H Bramer, Mrs A Gray, G Lucas, Mrs R Lincoln,</p>
---

<p><b>Speakers:</b> Philip Wilson, Emergency Planning Manager, Andrew Blackman, Admissions and Transport Officer.</p>
---

<p><b>In Attendance:</b> D Johnson, Senior Management Team Representative, D Rule, Cabinet Member (Children’s Services).</p>
--

<p><b>Members of the Public:</b> 12</p>
---

### School transport

The main points arising from the question and answer session were:

- The Council try to give as much notice as possible of withdrawal of free transport to a family outside the catchment area. Responsibility for transporting a child remains with the parents. Parents have a year to plan when considering applying to secondary schools. 9% of schools’ budget is allocated to transport, and needed for children with special needs.
- Parents currently pay £80 a term towards transport. This is a standard rate across the County, and represents a contribution towards the total cost of around £800.
- Parliament is considering a school transport bill designed to discourage the use of cars for transporting children to school. Free school transport may disappear altogether.

### Main points arising from general questions

- Highways Agency responsible for clearing road verges on A roads, not the Council;
- The problems with cars parking in Smallbrook Road would be discussed at the next Council meeting, and the issue was being addressed;

- The firing range was licensed and governed by statutory controls, and farmers were restricted to shooting for only 28 days per year. Any grievances should be reported to the council, supported by dates and times of incidents.
- Proposals to discontinue the two hours free parking for elderly people have been dropped.
- There was no funding available for a footbridge over the dual carriageway to enable people to walk to the retail area.