

## THE ASSEMBLY

9 APRIL 2003

### REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY FORUMS

REPORT ON RECENT MEETINGS	FOR INFORMATION	
<p>This is the regular report on the work of the Community Forums submitted under article 2, paragraph 9.2 of the Constitution.</p> <p><b><u>Summary</u></b></p> <p>The report summarises the activities of the Community Forums since the last report in February 2003. The main points arising were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Details of attendance figures</li><li>• Presentations from the Council about the Street Warden Service, Parks &amp; Countryside Rangers Service, NHS Scrutiny Panel, Neighbourhood Renewal, Cultural Opportunities in the Borough, the Barking Town Centre Strategy proposals</li><li>• Presentations from other agencies including PCT LIFT Project, London School of Hygiene &amp; Tropical Medicine re: transport and health, Anti Drugs police operations, Futures Careers Service, Groundwork Hackney – Community Action Planning and Domestic Violence</li><li>• Community Feedback on the work of the Barking &amp; Dagenham Local Strategic Partnership</li><li>• Feedback on Ward visits</li><li>• Updates on local issues including Bevan Avenue, A1306 Improvements and Chequers Corner/South Dagenham redevelopment plans and the former Erkenwald site planned for a Pupil Referral Unit</li><li>• A wide range of street scene related items discussed under the public question and answer sessions at each Forum, as well as specific issues such as opportunities to develop voluntary youth facilities in the Parsloes Forum area, building new housing on flood plains, the siting of the new Jo Richardson School, opening hours of the Marks Gate Police Station, the continued nuisance from the use of fireworks all year round and flooding problems in Ashton Gardens/High Road, Chadwell Heath</li><li>• Report back on the outcome of the quarterly meeting of Chairs/Deputy Chairs of Community Forums and other Forums set up to review best practice across all Forums</li></ul>		
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## **1. Attendance**

- 1.1 The attendance figures for the last meetings of each of the Forums are as follows:

Eastbrook, Heath and Alibon - 13 January 2003	(45)
Abbey, Gascoigne and Thames - 20 January 2003	(22)
Parsloes, Becontree and Valence - 27 January 2003	(37)
Eastbury, Mayesbrook and Longbridge - 10 February 2003	(70)
River, Village and Goresbrook - 17 February 2003	(65)
Wellgate - 24 February 2003	(24)

- 1.2 A number of the attendances were down this time, explanations for which include a poor response to the daytime meeting in the Abbey area and the trialling of a new venue at Wellgate.

## **2. Current Position**

- 2.1 A summary of the deliberations of each of the Forums is set out below:

### **Eastbrook, Heath and Alibon**

Forming part of yearly visits to individual wards with Ward Councillors, Graham Farrant, Chief Executive, personally attended the meeting to report on the Alibon Ward visit from 2 September 2002.

This provided an opportunity for the members of the public to raise and get responses to a number of street scene related items.

Presentations were received on the Street Warden and Parks and Countryside Rangers services.

Sue Lees, Director of the Barking and Havering Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT), gave a presentation about the LIFT project, which is committed to improving access to primary healthcare facilities, such as GP surgeries and health centres in the Borough. The project, which is a public/private partnership, has a long term rolling programme of improvements planned for the next 20 years. Although there were no plans to improve facilities within the Community Forum area within the first tranche, the intention is to look at the Five Elms and Oxlow Lane Clinics in line with other projects in the future.

### **Abbey, Gascoigne and Thames**

Forming part of the Neighbourhood Renewal initiative operating within the Forum area a Neighbourhood Management Steering Group has been formed to deliver on an ambitious range of projects within the locality; regular feedback upon which is given to the Community Forum.

The meeting also received information from Chief Inspector Barbara Deacon about ongoing Police operations on the Gascoigne Estate, seeking to combat the problem of drugs.

The NHS LIFT project presentation centred on the plans for the development of the new Thames View Health Centre next to the Sure Start scheme on Bastable Avenue.

Doctor Carolyn Stephens of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, reported on the findings of work involving Borough schoolchildren looking at transport and health related problems within the Borough, principally around the A13.

Officers in Leisure and Environmental Services have been working with Dr Stephens and her team and are pleased there are now independent findings to support some of the traffic concerns on the A13. It is hoped that when the current traffic works are completed the road will be a lot safer.

New information was provided about the work of the Futures Career Service, which has set up a neighbourhood based information/advice and guidance service for adults. It focuses on all aspects of employment and training related matters for adults, and seeks to identify the barriers that people are encountering in accessing services, learning and employment.

The public question and answer session raised previous concerns about building new housing on the flood plains at Barking Reach, as well as seeking clarification as to why the new Jo Richardson School will now be built at Castle Green rather than Barking Reach as originally planned.

### **Parsloes, Becontree and Valence**

As part of a regular feedback from the community on the outcome of the Barking and Dagenham Local Strategic Partnership, Joan Davies, the Forum's representative, summarised the outcome of the meeting held from October 2002. This included details of a bid made to the National Lottery under the "Fairshare: Transforming Our Space" Scheme, for funds to improve Parsloes Park. The format of reporting upon the Partnership is currently being reviewed so as to ensure it is more relevant to the local community.

Jane Hargreaves, Head Literacy and Cultural Services, gave a presentation outlining current cultural opportunities within the Borough and future plans around the use of existing libraries, the leisure centres, parks, including Eastbrookend Country Park, Eastbury Manor House, Barking Abbey and grounds and particularly relevant to the Parsloes area, Valence House Museum. A Member level group has been established to develop the project and public consultation is ongoing. Soundings were taken from the Forum and a number of comments were made, particularly concerning changes to the character of the Museum, fishing in the moat, accessibility and parking.

Groundwork Hackney outlined their proposals for improvements to Martins Corner, made up of funding secured through grant support and the Community Forum's minor environmental improvement budget. So as to address issues raised during public consultation on the project, it has been linked up with other Borough initiatives such as the Alleygator Scheme, which provides gates to private alleyways to prevent fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour.

Under the public question and answer session Mr McNab, a local resident referred to the work he has been undertaking to establish a youth facility within the area to address, as he sees it, a gap in service provision. This followed the review of the Youth Service some years ago, and the subsequent closure of a number of youth clubs in the Borough.

The Forum welcomed the enthusiasm shown to develop new youth facilities and accordingly arrangements have been made for a meeting between Mr McNab and Council officers to consider potential options for suitable premises.

### **Eastbury, Mayesbrook and Longbridge**

Jeremy Grint, Head of Regeneration, provided an update on the Barking Town Centre Strategy in response to questions raised at a previous meeting. Alongside this a report was presented on the ideas around the Town Square redevelopment, which is now subject to a planning application.

The presentations generated considerable feedback, with there being negative responses to the suggestion to partly pedestrianise London Road to expand the market, concerns about bus routes if London Road is downgraded, clarification about the future use of the Broadway Theatre, which is the subject of a major renovation programme for a Performing Arts Centre; questions around the provision of local health services as opposed to a new hospital, and the amount of car parking spaces generally available within the Town Centre.

Sarah Williams, Groundwork Hackney, talked briefly about the role of Groundwork in developing community action plans for a number of the Community Forums. Part of Groundwork's co-ordinating role includes getting an understanding of local issues, engaging the wider community, developing the role of residents, as well as exploring solutions and funding opportunities for individual projects. A newsletter is being produced, which will include a questionnaire prioritising actions for the future within the local areas, broken down into a number of subject headings, namely Environment, Housing, Health, Safety, Education, Employment and Community. Community Forums will receive regular updates on progress with the action plans.

The Forum received updates on developments on the Erkenwald site, which has been earmarked for a Pupil Referral Unit, together with feedback from Roy Reeves, the Deputy Chair and Forum representative on the Barking and Dagenham Local Strategic Partnership.

Public questions and answers dealt with the then recent incident involving the partial collapse of the tunnelling for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link in Newham, works around Barking Station, a request for an update on the Bevan Avenue development for the next meeting, clarification about the future use of the University of East London site, the development of Eastbury School/ potential closure of Hulse Avenue, signage and clamping of vehicles on private roads, work on the Longbridge Road and bus lane changes, as well as the problem of vandalism on the Keir Hardie Estate.

### **River, Village and Goresbrook**

General updates were provided on the A1306 improvements and the Chequers Corner/South Dagenham redevelopment plans, as well as the outcome of the Goresbrook Ward visit undertaken with the Chief Executive.

At the request of the community the Forum agenda was targeted towards health related issues, with presentations from Sue Lees on the NHS LIFT project, Fiona Stokes representing the Project Director on the new Oldchurch hospital development and Annette Rauf - Domestic Violence Co-ordinator,

who provided information about domestic violence and the strategy for addressing the problem. Alongside this DC Phillip Kelly updated the Forum on the work of the Community Safety Unit, which was set up in 1999 and which, in addition to domestic violence, addresses crimes of racial hatred.

From January 2003 the Council has been given a new power to look into and report upon local health services on behalf of residents. A NHS Scrutiny Panel has therefore been set up to carry out the work and the Panel is now in the process of asking local people what the key issues are for them in helping to decide what areas to look at. Part of that work includes presentations at each of the Community Forums. The following areas were put forward for possible consideration by the Panel

- acute shortage of speech and language therapy services
- review of the manner in which training is undertaken for hospital nursing staff
- consideration of local GPs' ability to remove people from patient lists
- the manner in which GPs make repeat prescriptions

### **Wellgate**

In addition to the NHS LIFT project and NHS Scrutiny Panel presentations, the meeting received information about Neighbourhood Renewal and specifically the Neighbourhood Action Plan, which is developing a number of projects within the area; the first being the redevelopment of Tantony Green. At the request of the Forum information was presented about the newly established Community Housing Partnerships.

The public and question and answer session dealt with the usual mix of environment and street scene related issues, as well as addressing a concern about the proposals to close Marks Gate Community Hall to the over 50s.

In accordance with agreed practice at the Forum a schedule of outstanding items was submitted, which led to further debates regarding the traffic management system in Billet Road, the community's desire to see extended open hours of the Marks Gate Police Station, the use of the Sainsbury's car park at Chadwell Heath, CCTV provision in High Road, Chadwell Heath, the continued nuisance from the use of fireworks all year round, flooding problems in Ashton Gardens/High Road and footpath maintenance and parking issues generally.

### **3. Meetings of Chairs/Deputy Chairs of Community Forums and Other Forums**

- 3.1 A quarterly meeting of Chairs/Deputy Chairs of Community Forums last met in March 2003 which included invites to other Forums that operate in the Borough, namely Forum for the Elderly, the Access Group for the Disabled and the B.A.D. Youth Forum. The meeting received information on proposals to develop the Customer First initiative and specifically the forthcoming public consultation exercise, which will involve presentations at future Community Forums.
- 3.2 Bill Coomber explained that short films Celebrating Equalities and Diversity would be presented in the current round of Community Forums.

- 3.3 Darryl Telles, the Neighbourhood Renewal Co-ordinator for the Abbey area gave an update on the outcome of a Faith Community Reception held in February, seen as the first strand of a broader attempt to engage harder to reach groups. The next Reception will seek to encourage young parents to attend Community Forums, because few people with children are attending to date and are not using crèche facilities that are being provided.
- 3.4 One the purposes of the meeting is to consider issues of best practice across all six Forums and to that extent it has been agreed that following complaints from the community, in future there will be a maximum of three presentations on each Community Forum agenda, together with strict time slots for officers/other agencies to work to. It was also agreed that Chairs and Deputy Chairs should be fully briefed on proposed presentations and that, through Democratic Services, a “sifting” process be conducted to ensure that all presentations are relevant to Community Forums rather than “ticking boxes” for other people’s consultation purposes.

**Background papers used in the preparation of this report:**

Community Forum agendas and minutes