

**Mayors Listening Event
Whitley Bay Ward
30th January 2014**

People Present:

Norma Redfearn (Elected Mayor), Cllr Ray Glindon, Cllr Eddie Darke, Cllr John Harrison, Cllr John Stirling, Cllr Frank Lott, Cllr Bruce Pickard, Cllr Lesley Spillard, Cllr Carole Burdis, Cllr Sandra Graham (Chair), Cllr Bill Caithness, Cllr John O'Shea, Jean Griffiths (NTC), Julie Bews (NTC), Cait Foley (NTC), Anne Foreman (NTC), Felicity Shoemsmith (NTC) and 51 residents.

Apologies from Cllr Ian Grayson

The Elected Mayor opened the meeting explaining why it was important to her that she gave residents every opportunity to talk and hear directly from her. There will be a listening event in every ward over the next 20 months but she also wanted residents to know that she has an open door policy and that if anyone had a question or wanted to check something out they were very welcome to contact her directly. She was concerned that information is frequently circulated which is not correct. The council does have to make £64 million of savings over the next 4 years and this does mean very tough choices. These will be made having listened to what residents have to say, however the Council must have a balanced budget.

The following advance questions had been received:

Q:	Why are we wasting money on the Dome?
R:	The council has been asking people what is important and most people state that the Dome is important, when we had a consultation as part of the last bid to the Heritage Lottery we received over 700 responses, overwhelmingly the response was that people wanted the council to do something about the Dome and bring it back to a positive place for families and all residents. This was not just people who live at the coast. We have completed stage one of a Heritage Lottery bid which means that we have secured £3.7 million, however there is more work to do before we receive this funding. I am working with developers and I want to see the regeneration of the Dome.
Q:	Has the role of grounds maintenance changed over the past couple of years as a result of the CEI (Change, Efficiency and Improvement) programme?
R:	The role has not changed.
Q:	Has the ground maintenance team been asked to carry out any work in Marden Quarry?
R:	Over the past 18 months the Park Warden has asked for some help with grass cutting in the quarry, however all other work has been carried out by the Friends of Marden Quarry and the Park Warden.
Q:	Does the current role of Grounds Maintenance also apply to other NTC parks, or does the need for a request from Park Wardens only apply to Marden Park?
R:	Marden Quarry is a Local Nature Reserve and is managed for both recreational access and biodiversity. Therefore there is a requirement to balance formal maintenance against biodiversity considerations. In terms of other parks; we have a diverse range of parks across the borough,

	which are managed in accordance with their individual needs.
Q:	Why is the work on the sea front in front of the Spanish City taking so long, I notice they have built the old people's home in the car park in half the time, are contractors taking a lend?
R:	<p>This scheme is slightly late because of additional work required due to poor ground conditions encountered under the seafront paving. In addition, the nature of the work, all being outdoors, makes it vulnerable to delays from adverse weather conditions throughout the whole contract period, whereas a new building is generally protected once the external shell is in place and work can proceed internally without being affected.</p> <p>The scheme is, however, approaching completion, and subject to any further adverse weather conditions, the contractor will begin reducing the site fencing shortly to allow access by the public. The remaining works should be completed by the end of February.</p>
Q:	What are you going to do to keep our vulnerable young adults safe when Adult Social Care cut the hourly rate paid to providers in ISL from current rate (£12.50) to £11.55?
R:	<p>This was answered by both the Elected Mayor and Cllr Lesley Spillard. Adult Social Care is seeking to put in place a fixed price for supported living services. This a proposal and we are currently consulting on this and we are seeking feedback and comments from providers and other stakeholders on this before a final decision is made.</p> <p>Safety and quality of service provision are fundamental and we would always seek to ensure that services are delivered to meet the required standards and that staff can meet the needs of the people they are caring for. The standard in North Tyneside is very high and we don't want to do anything that will jeopardise this, however the Council has to make savings and this does mean that we need to look at every area and ways of making these savings.</p> <p>The council will always take in to account individual need.</p>

The meeting was then opened to the floor for questions

Q:	There is new building at Wellfield. Currently one lane of the dual carriage way has been blocked off, could this not be opened at weekends or evenings when the work on the road is not taking place?
R:	(Cllr Lott) The road is cordoned off due to road improvements and there will be traffic lights and a reduction in the speed limit. I will find out about whether it would be possible to remove the cones at weekends and in the evenings.
Q:	Does the Council have a policy on consultation?
R:	There is a written policy on planning consultation available on the website (http://www.northynteside.gov.uk/browse.shtml?p_subjectCategory=32). In terms of other areas, consultation forms a key part of our decision making and all cabinet / council reports include information on who has been consulted in the development of proposals.
R:	Cllr Spillard – In terms of Adult Social Care, we work very closely with individuals and families when changes are being planned.
Q:	The council are developing the mini golf course – is the council planning a new home for the fishermen as part of this?

R:	Cllr Eddie Darke – we have been working with the fishermen and think that we have identified a new home. We have also had costs for the work that is needed on the hut, but we still need to do some further work with the contractor on these costs.
Q:	Will the new car park on the old library site remain free?
R:	It will be free for 2 hours, with no return for 4 hours; new signage will be going up shortly.
Q:	As a business in Whitley Bay we already pay parking charges at Park View, but there are plans to make this short term parking – this causes a problem for our staff and our business.
R:	Cllr Lott – Officers have spotted some inconsistencies in the costs etc of car parks in Whitley Bay. We want to use the car parks to attract increased footfall into the town centre, however before any changes we will undertake a consultation to get peoples' views.
Q:	Around Rake Lane Hospital car parking has become a big problem due to a change the in Trust's parking policy. This is causing a real problem for residents – last week a bin lorry could not get through due to double parking.
R:	I will be meeting with the Trust and Parking Control to see if there is a way of addressing this.
Q:	Toilets are really important to attract tourists – where are the public toilets in Whitley Bay?
R:	In the new customer service / library, upstairs in the shops and also at the back of the new cabin next to the water play area in the park– though these are only open over the summer. There will be new signage to let people know where they are.
Q:	The railings along the prom are in need of repainting – will there be funding to do this?
R:	I am working really hard to improve Whitley Bay and get it back to how it used to be and have started to address underinvestment over years, but this will have to happen bit by bit.
S:	In terms of tourism we don't have years, you need to do it now.
R:	Over the next 4 years I have to make £64 million of savings, I can only achieve this by making difficult decisions and this means that we have to do things like this in stages.
Q:	What is happening with the derelict properties at High Point?
R:	We are in discussions about this with the owners.
Q:	We wanted to get a memorial bench for an old friend who recently died. This will cost £1600, this is a lot.
R:	I will look into this.
Q:	Parking is a problem with people parking on the pavements – could the council tarmac areas to increase places for people to park?
R:	Cllr Lott – We do need to be really careful due to increase risks of flooding. However at the North Tyneside business awards there was a company based in North Tyneside that has developed a new hard core surface that allows water to pass through it. We will be looking at this. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also be undertaking an in depth study looking at car parking, residents have more cars and this is becoming an increasing issue.
S:	I wanted to congratulate the Council and the contractor on the new library / customer service centre.

Q:	Whitley Bay needs a coach park.
S:	Cllr Lott – this will be looked at as part of the Overview and Scrutiny study.
Q:	I live in West Allotment and cannot get a bus to Rake Lane.
R:	The council is in constant dialogue with the bus operators, but unfortunately they are only really interested in the routes that make money. The Council has and continues to subsidise some routes, however with the current budget position we are no longer able to go on doing this. We will continue to talk to the bus operators on behalf of residents.
Q:	Some of the pavements on Plessey Crescent , Burnside Road and Chollerford Avenue have been repaired, this is essential due to the lifting of the pavement by tree roots. However this has only been part done, the costs were spread over a couple of years. When will this be finished?
R:	I will find out and get back to you
Q:	The residents of Hartley Ave have submitted a petition asking that the road is resurfaced. This is a conservation area and used by people when using Church Hill playing fields, plus council vehicles going to the depot. Will this happen?
R:	I will find out and get back to you
Q:	People continue to cycle on the pavements – this is dangerous, could you let me have a copy of the council policy on this?
R:	This is a policing issue, but I will bring it up with the Police
S:	If the Police see anyone cycling on the pavements they only give a warning.
Q:	When will the work start on the Dome?
R:	This will be covered in the regeneration update later in the meeting.
	Closing statement by the Elected Mayor – Norma thanked everyone for attending and stated that she wanted to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to talk to her directly, the budget position is very challenging and it is really important that difficult decisions on how the spend the budget include opportunities for people to have their say and ask questions. The listening session are open to everyone, there will be one a month.

Julie Bews, Senior Regeneration Officer for NTC gave an update.

Q:	The beach from St Mary's Island to Whitley Bay needs to be cleaned more regularly – it is full of rubbish.
R:	Cllr John Harrison – There is a beach cleaning programme and I know that this does include this area; I will check what this includes.
Q:	How much has been secured for the Dome, I have a number of different reports and press releases with different figures?
R:	£3.7 million has been put aside by the Heritage Lottery Fund; this includes £182,700 which will be released to assist the Authority in drawing together the much more detailed stage 2 bid. We will need to complete a detailed stage two application to be able to draw down this larger sum of money. This will not cover the full restoration costs and we are working on ways of funding this, including through land sales.
Q:	What about the Sylvester's plot?
R:	The owner has recently been given planning permission for this site
Q:	Why does the council not look at other sea side towns for example Bridlington?
R:	Thanks for your suggestion – we do look at other places.

Q:	On Whitley Road, the Station Pub had been renovated then stopped, what is happening, this is a private property
R:	They had to go back to get further planning permission due to changes. This will have stopped the building until the new planning permission had been granted. Cllr Caithness – I am a member of the Planning Committee, The committee does take into account consultation and the High Point Hotel has had two planning applications refused due to complaints from residents on there proposals.
Q:	Could we have more seating along the coast – this could include memorial benches
R:	Yes – we agreed to look at this earlier
Q:	When you mentioned derelict buildings at a previous meeting you said that you were looking to see if there were ways to get them to have to pay business rates, what has happening with this?
R:	This was raised by Alan Campbell MP with the government minister responsible, however we cannot charge business rates if the building is not habitable – these buildings are not habitable, we have tried and will continue to try.

The Chair thanked Julie for her update.

Sue Miller, the Chair of the Big Local gave an update on this project. This is funded by the Big Lottery. More information is available at <http://www.voda.org.uk/cms/projects/big-local>

Q:	How much of the funding is allocated annually?
R:	It is up to the partnership, in the first year we have allocated just over £100,000 and the same for the second year – this is all set out in the plan.
Q:	What do you mean by Whitley Bay – what is the big local area?
R:	The area covered by Big Local was set out by the Big Lottery. There is a map of the area on the website, you can search for this under “Whitley Bay – Big Local”
Q:	Congratulations to everyone involved, could there be any permanent changes in the fabric of the place as a result of this funding?
R:	The plan focuses on three areas, agreed following extensive consultation with residents. These are People, Environment and Well Being and Resilience. In terms of the environment the subgroup will be working with the council to identify ways that the big local funding can make a difference
	Cllr Sandra Graham thanked Sue and the other volunteers who have given up many hours of their time to develop the Big Local.