

Your Community Forums

In July **Mickle Trafford Community Forum** held an outdoor BBQ event at Barrow which attracted families, keen walkers and local Parish Councillors. Over 50 people, including children, joined together for a walk down a local bridleway and to hear about issues affecting pathways and public rights of way. Residents were joined by officers from the Council's Green Space Team. Police reported on the key issues in the area and there was also an opportunity to discuss the current consultation on the future of recycling and waste collections. Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service gave a presentation on BBQ safety.



In August **Broxton Community Forum** held a meeting to discuss the future of Age Concern's day centre services. A presentation was made about the work being undertaken to engage with communities and service users. Residents had an opportunity to consider how older people will continue to receive services that meet their needs.



Residents at Broxton Community Forum discussing rural service provision



At **Gow Community Forum** held at Christleton High School residents discussed issues with representatives from the, Police, Fire, Housing Services and Welfare Benefits

As the forum was held in Christleton, time was given for residents to raise matters that affected their village. One subject of interest was the findings of a recent speed review.

Further work will now be undertaken by the Council, Christleton Parish Council and residents groups to identify possible solutions to this village concern. It was suggested that the review could help inform actions for the Christleton Parish Plan which is currently being produced.



The **Neston, Parkgate, Ledsham & Willaston Community Forum** held at Neston Cricket Club attracted many residents. The new store manager from Sainsbury's was on hand to talk about the opening of the new supermarket and local job opportunities. Other information was available including local housing issues, footpaths and cycle ways and benefits advice.

Supporting Young People in Neston



Neston “youth zone” has received a boost from the Council’s Rural West Area Team. Due to budget cuts the Connexions Service was unable to continue to fund the rooms for the weekly youth club at Neston Youth and Community Centre. Funding will now ensure that the club will continue until December. Discussions are ongoing with partners to identify longer term funding options for the club.



Equality Impact Assessment and Rural Communities

It is the Council’s duty to ensure that policies, functions, procedures and management decisions do not have an adverse impact on the communities of Cheshire West and Chester. “*Impact Assessment*” is a way of finding out whether a change that is being introduced affects groups of people equally, or whether it potentially may have a disproportionate negative impact on one or more particular groups. This applies equally to changes involving customers, staff or other stakeholders.

Equality Impact Assessments traditionally take account of race, disability and gender equality; in addition age, sexual orientation and religion or belief is also considered.

Cheshire West and Chester Council is also giving a priority to the impact on **Rural Communities** when it considers its services and policies.

A review of the way it undertakes assessments has identified the need to ask additional questions about the impacts policies may have on rural communities. The Council’s new approach will now consider issues such as access to services and impact on the natural rural landscape.

By considering these issues it is hoped that the needs of rural communities are not ignored when key policies and services are being developed.

One of the roles of Rural West APB is to share best practice. Partners such as police, fire service, and health services will be asked to consider rural issues in their equality impact assessments if they are not already taken into account.

For further information about Cheshire West and Chester Council’s Equality Impact Assessments contact:

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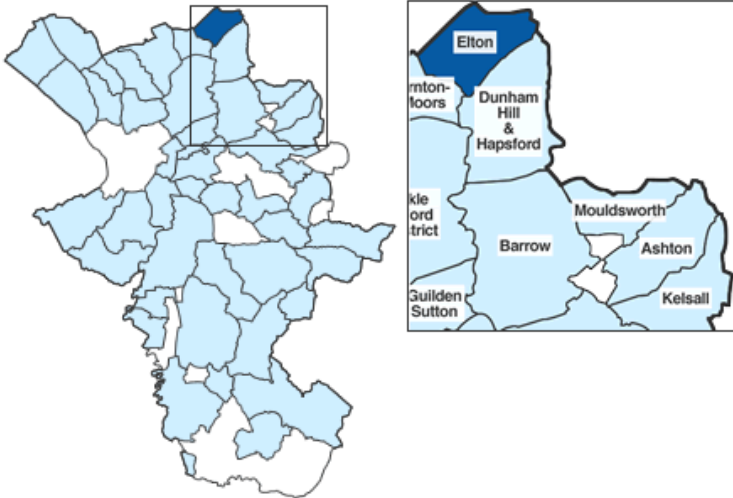
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Spotlight on Elton

As part of our quarterly update report we intend to look at some of the neighbourhoods and villages located within Rural West. This month we are focusing on the neighbourhood of Elton.



Elton is situated approximately 13 km (8 miles) to the northeast of Chester between Helsby and Ellesmere Port, near to the River Mersey. Its proximity to the River Mersey and the Manchester Ship Canal have contributed to its industrial character. The village is on the north-western edge of the Cheshire plain, approximately 1.5 miles from Stanlow Refinery, a Shell facility and the seventh largest oil refinery in Europe. The refinery produces one-sixth of the United Kingdom's petrol.

At the time of the 2001 Census the village of Elton had a population of 3,528. By 2007, 65 hectares of the former Ince Power Station site near the Mersey had been redeveloped as part of a large bottle production factory owned by Quinn Glass, containing two glass melting furnaces and 13 bottle production lines. It was estimated that £250 million was invested into this project and the factory outputs 1.2 billion bottles per year.

It has recently been proposed that a 95 kilowatt power station and various recycling plants be sited on a water meadow near Elton. This has been a controversial project. The land is owned by Peel Holdings and the proposal is in its embryonic stage.

Elton Children's Centre

A new Children's Centre will soon be operating in Elton. This will help support the community by offering a facility at the heart of the village.

The children's centre will be based at Elton Primary School but will also use facilities at the community centre situated opposite. Additional funding will be spent on the community centre enabling it to remain open and broaden service delivery to children and families. The renovations will upgrade three areas within the existing community centre, providing a multi use room for the Children's Centre, updating the entrance hall, replacing the existing heating system and enhancing the library facility through the introduction of broad band and access to the people's network.



The project objectives include:

- Providing a multi purpose room for adult learning, parenting support, basic skills and multi agency working opportunities
- Engaging excluded members of the community including travellers, and people with disabilities
- Offering an information point with access to information such as housing and benefits, health and welfare, financial advice, child care and learning opportunities
- Improving overall efficiency and reduce annual running costs of the community centre
- Reducing barriers to services for all people within the Elton community



Health Promotion in Elton

Rural West Area Team and Western Cheshire PCT held another of its Health and Wellbeing events at Elton Community Centre in September. The event offered residents information on a range of health and wellbeing services including taster head and shoulder massage, free fruit and veg bags and the chance to win a smoothie maker. Residents were encouraged to call in to see what was on offer with the help of our human apple and banana who patrolled the area and promoted the event.



Strengthening Partnerships with Parish Councils

Helping improve services and supporting communities in Rural West is important to the APB. Due to the geography and diversity of the area however public sector organisations face many challenges:

The Rural West area covers 46,700 hectares. It is the biggest area of all the APBs in Cheshire West and Chester and incorporates the market towns of Neston and Malpas and a large of villages and settlements.

Although often viewed as affluent many communities have varying levels of deprivation, particularly in terms of access to services. Residents experience disproportionate barriers to public transport, services and facilities compared to urban communities.



There are however many positive characteristics of rural communities that can be utilised to help reduce some of these inequalities. Rural communities are very resilient and have a history of self help and community volunteering. There are many examples of communities coming together to identify a local issue and put in place a response, e.g. community shops, volunteer transport projects or organising youth activities

Another advantage of living in Rural West is that it consists of mostly parished areas and has well established parish or town councils. Parish councils play an important role in identifying local priorities and often provide additional local services.

By supporting our parish councils and community groups, will enable residents to raise priorities and shape service provision in their community.

This approach reflects national thinking in terms of the governments "Big Society" agenda. A recent report from the Rural Coalition entitled The Rural Challenge. argues:



"Every healthy community needs its services: including transport, education, social support and financial access. But it's extremely unlikely – as experience proves – that the form of such services demanded by large, urban communities will be equally satisfactory for those in the countryside. That's why

it's essential that in future rural services are far better tailored to local needs – and that is best done when they are determined not by remote legislators but by the communities they are there to serve."

The report emphasises that this can be achieved through community led planning and action plans overseen by parish councils. The report states:

"Parish and Town Councils should become the 'guardian' of the community-led plan, monitoring progress and regularly refreshing priorities in the light of changing circumstances, as part of their Power of Competence. Many of the actions may affect property owned by them, or services delivered by them. Many will involve the financial support that parishes can offer to local groups who also own property and provide services."

Parish Planning

Parish and town councils play a crucial role in identifying local priorities and needs.

An inclusive and effective way to both identify and agree solutions in response to community issues is through parish or community plans.

Providing support to make this happen however is essential and so a number of practical workshops have been arranged to help parish councils do this. An event at the Barbour Institute in Tattenhall was held giving advice and discussing the benefits of producing a parish planning and village design statements. A further workshop is being run in November looking at best practice in managing play areas.

Along side this Cheshire West and Chester Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee is undertaking a review of the Council's relationship with parish councils with the aim of delivering better outcomes for residents.

A series of events involving parish councillors, elected members and council officers have been held to consider the support needed to help parish councils. It is expected that a final report with recommendations for the Council's Executive to consider will be completed by the end of the year.



New Funding Opportunity

Rural West Area Team and Western Cheshire PCT are creating a **"5 ways to empower communities"** grant.

A £20,000 funding pot provided by Western Cheshire PCTs Chairman's Initiative and the Rural West Area Team will offer parish councils or community groups, where no parish council exists, an opportunity to apply for a small grant of up to £2000 to deliver interventions identified through parish plans or other local consultation.

Criteria for grants will include providing new community activities or services, education or learning programmes and supporting community volunteering. However the main criteria will be to demonstrate the community has been involved in the development of the parish initiative.

Further information about the grant will be made available over the coming weeks.

Helping Parish Councils Prepare For The Winter



Many parish councils provide additional salt bins and rock salt to help ensure their pavements and roads are safe in icy and snowy conditions. To reduce the financial burden on parish councils Cheshire West and Chester Council has offered to sell and supply rock salt at preferential rates to those parish councils requiring it. Details of the scheme was recently presented at the **Broxton Community Forum** in September. Any parish council wishing to find out more or take up the offer should contact:

engch@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Neston library to offer improved services

In an effort to improve library facilities Cheshire West and Chester Council is piloting some additional services in a selected number of libraries across the borough.

Neston Library has been included in the trial and will now offer residents the opportunity to apply for bus passes, renew blue badges and report environmental problems such as potholes.

An evaluation of resident uptake of these new services will be undertaken to help inform the Council on the feasibility of rolling the scheme out to other libraries.



Community Forum Dates

Mickle Trafford – 20th October 2010, Shell Uk Excel Centre

Neston, Parkgate, Ledsham & Willaston - 4th November 2010,
Willaston British Legion Services Club

Goway - 14th December 2010, (Venue to be arranged)

Please check our website or contact us for start times

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