

## CLEATOR MOOR NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

**Notes from the meeting of the Cleator Moor Neighbourhood Forum held at Cleator Moor Civic Hall & Masonic Centre, 6.30pm on Thursday 9 December 2010.**

**Forum Chair:** Cllr Frank Morgan

**Councillors Present:** Town Councillor's: David Hully & Gary Carruthers. Copeland Borough Councillor: Bill Southward

**Apologies:** Councillor Joan Hully

**Councillors Code of Conduct: Declarations of Interest –**

Mary Kipling – Cumbria-Rungwe Tanzania Link

**Topic 1: Cleator Moor Neighbourhood Management Initiative Pilot**

**Speaker: John Cass, Strategic Neighbourhood Co-ordinator, Home Group**

Home are working with new and existing partners to deliver a Neighbourhood Management Initiative in Cleator Moor. The aim is to provide resources to trigger activity in the town, attract other funding for projects and provide additional staff to develop resident participation. If the pilot is successful the Initiative could be around for five years.

At the moment Home works re-actively in a variety of neighbourhoods. Those areas will still be on the radar but they won't be supported as much.

The long term approach in Cleator Moor: long term plans and goals; sustained grass roots engagement; engage residents in political processes; improve residents linkages with, and input to, service providers.

Neighbourhood Management will work with residents to improve:

**Health** – support for projects that contribute to healthy living and support for residents to engage in the health development process. Examples are the allotment project, working with the new health centre, anti-smoking campaigns and sport for health.

**Crime** – support residents to engage with Police Forums and the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership, also positive activities for young people.

**Unemployment** – will adopt an innovative approach and be open to new ideas, adopt an enterprise approach, support for Copeland apprenticeships programme and work with the voluntary sector, help people to fill in job applications, supporting Future Jobs Fund.

**Income** – provide opportunities for residents e.g. Utilita, work with the voluntary sector, work with the Credit Union and Citizens Advice Bureau.

**Housing** – not just working with Home properties, want to find out 'what do you as residents feel are the housing issues locally'? Are there any private sector improvements we can make? Will work towards a multi-agency approach.

**Education** – how do residents feel about education changing in Cleator Moor? What can be improved?

### **Questions & Discussion**

Q. The Wardens that have been working in South Whitehaven are funded 100% by Home – do you envisage that they'll start working in other places too? Maybe Egremont and Cleator Moor?

A. They were part of Neighbourhood Management in South Whitehaven, the Wardens walked around the estates and looked at gardens, crime etc. They've been a great success and for one year Home will be employing them. I would love to think that Wardens

will be in Cleator Moor – Home has Neighbourhood Assistants and there's the Parish Lengthsman here too, so that's almost a mini Warden scheme.

Q. The funding streams that will come online – will there be money for setting up residents groups, neighbourhood watch, things like that?

A. Yes, the first bit of money will be for getting people involved with the process. There will be around £10,000 for those types of things; anything that makes life better for tenants. Home have been around with money for a while but there is a difference with Neighbourhood Management – I'll be here as of next week with a colleague. It's about changing services and what can make things better.

Comment: These are all valid points but we need information to come from Cleator Moor people. Partnership working will become essential as other sources of funding dry up. We need to work together for the benefit of the community and I hope people will give it support.

**Topic 2: Utilita: pre-payment smart gas meter and electricity technology**  
**Speaker: Steve Parker, Utilita Business Development Manager**

Utilita have teamed up with Home to provide an offer to their customers – they have a unique pre-payment SMART gas meter which is the cheapest pre-payment tariff in the UK. This offers a saving of between 5% and 10% on pre-payment tariffs from the big six suppliers. The initial launch will be in Cleator Moor.

The benefits of the SMART meter is emergency and friendly credit, remote top-ups, energy consumption data and competitive tariffs. The SMART meters are installed free of charge, provide automated meter readings and tariff updates. £10 of emergency credit is on the meter – if the emergency credit runs out between 5pm and 10am the supply will NOT be disconnected until 10am the following morning, allowing customers plenty of time to top up their meters. This also applies to weekends and bank holidays.

Customers can top up their meters via paypoint, online, by phone or set up a direct debit. All top ups are sent direct to the meter using SMS technology.

The 'freedom unit' displays lots of useful information, for example, amount of credit, how long the credit is expected to last, energy consumption in real time, usage/cost over the past 7 days. This is designed to encourage energy saving behaviour.

The scheme was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> November – Utilita wrote to all 800 Home Group customers at Cleator Moor – there are approximately 400 pre-payment customers at the moment. There has been a 2% take up to date. There will be advertising at paypoint outlets and community centres. Sign up can be done online, freephone 0800 883 0146 or text Utilita to 84433 and a member of the registration team will contact you within 24 hours.

Registration takes 4-6 weeks, customers will receive a Welcome Pack, and the contract will be for 12 months. A meter will be installed within 14 days of the supply start date. Installation is booked directly with the customer for am or pm, power supply will be disconnected for one hour. Customers will be sent a customer satisfaction survey 6-8 weeks after installation.

Each new meter will receive £5 of free credit – the first installations in Cleator Moor will take place after Christmas.

For more information go to [www.utilita.co.uk](http://www.utilita.co.uk) email Steve Parker at [SteveParker@utilita.co.uk](mailto:SteveParker@utilita.co.uk) or phone 01962 891180.

### **Questions & Discussion**

Q. It's about time somebody came up with something to benefit the most vulnerable in our society – congratulations. One problem is you can pay using the internet or on the phone, but you need a bank account to do that.

A. People can still pay at paypoint machines.

Q. A lot of people still have to use the pre-payment cards. It's surprising how many people don't have debit cards.

A. A lot of customers like the security of paying at the paypoint, the difference is they won't need to put in a key or card when they get home.

Q. Do you know any statistics for how much energy can be bought with £1?

A. It depends on the tariff the customer is on. A lot of big suppliers charge more, and it depends on what you're using. For example a Play Station costs more to use.

Q. The presentation stated there is a 12 month contract. What are the clauses?

A. Customers can move if we increase our prices, and that will only happen if there's a shift in the market. If they do go up customers are free to leave and need to give 28 days notice. If we haven't met our terms they are free to leave or if a customer moves home. So its only under extreme circumstances and there would be an admin charge of £50.

### **Topic 3: Cumbria Choice**

**Speakers: Cllr George Clements & Laurie Priebe, Strategic Housing Services Manager**

Choice based lettings is a system of letting social rented housing that is being introduced across the county. Instead of each district council and housing association introducing a scheme individually, the 6 district councils and 7 housing associations in Cumbria have agreed to work in partnership to introduce a scheme that covers the whole of Cumbria.

The main principle of choice based lettings is that properties are advertised so that customers can see what properties are available for letting. Customers are then asked to express an interest (bid) for any properties they would like to be considered for. Lettings policies are used to prioritise the customers who bid for the properties.

Properties will be advertised on the Cumbria Choice website, there will be printed newsletters at housing offices and council offices and potentially other agencies and voluntary organisations. A list of places will be published once the scheme is ready to begin.

Those currently on the housing list have been transferred over to the new register system. To make a bid a form needs to be completed, which can be done in a housing office, by phone, through an automated phone number, by text or on the Cumbria Choice website. The successful bidder will be notified by letter – any unsuccessful bidders will not be notified.

There are four bands of housing:  
Band A – Urgent Need for Housing

Band B – High Need for Housing  
Band C – Medium Need for Housing  
Band D – Low Need for Housing

Many properties let through the scheme will also be subject to a local connection condition.

For more information please go to [www.homegroup.org.uk/cumbriachoice](http://www.homegroup.org.uk/cumbriachoice)

### **Questions & Discussion**

Q. You mentioned people with applications in at the moment will receive information; will they get that paperwork before April?

A. Everyone on the list will get a letter from the associations they had forms with prior to this, to explain what is happening. Lots of information will be going out to a lot of people. There will be a launch date across the whole of Cumbria, may be 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2011.

A. In general terms I'm not an IT expert but my view of transferring is that before we engage people we need to make sure the system is right. We need to test it once, test it twice, then test it again. I wouldn't want to launch the system too soon.

Comment: Copeland Borough Council is the only Local Authority who has agreed to go around all the Forums to flag this up with the community. Laurie, George and Debbie have covered them all and Home is planning something too.

Q. Who is funding it?

A. There has been a £100k grant from Government about a year ago, that's where a large part is from. Each Local Authority makes an £11k one off payment to join the scheme; the rest is from the housing associations that will run the scheme. They get the income from the lettings.

Q. With the banding system, who sits where?

A. We do have copies of the bands but not with us tonight. A new aspect is that a person might be in band B but if they fulfil two of the reasonable preference criteria they could go into band A, for example the person might have a doctors note or be living in overcrowded conditions.

A. There are four bands in the new system, band A is the highest; the first two bands are the same as before. They apply to people who have the legal right to be housed. The old system operated by Home had three bands, there's now an extra one. Who is excluded? The only people who can't apply are those who are excluded by law, which is mainly to do with nationality issues, people who don't have a right of residence.

Q. On a practical note, the properties that are being advertised as available – what's the timescale for applications?

A. There is a one week window; bidding opens on Tuesday and closes on the following Monday night. If applicants are successful they will be notified the following week.

Q. Will efforts to help the vulnerable come into play during that timescale?

A. Yes, if someone is unable to go out, may not have the internet etc, they might have been at the top of the list but because they didn't know about the property they miss out. We'll make sure it will work equally.

A. Providers do have knowledge of vulnerable people and can make proxy bids. We have been assured that all the changes Government are making won't have an effect on choice based lettings.

Comment: People in the community will know those who are vulnerable, and can help by advising if you think people are in need.

Comment: One of the County Council's priorities is to support the vulnerable. We don't know the magnitude of the cuts yet, we'll have some indication by Monday 13<sup>th</sup>.

Comment: I've heard now that 2 million children are living in fuel poverty, and that number will rise. It's something to progress.

### **AOB: Issues of community concern/community updates**

#### **Public consultation on council priorities and budget options**

There will be a community event for Copeland on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> January at Egremont Market Hall 7pm-9pm where you can hear about the council's proposals first hand, ask questions and provide feedback. The consultation document was available to take away, which includes details on the options for savings.

**Joint Churches of Cleator Moor Dedication of the Crib Service** will be on Tuesday 14 December, 5.30pm on Cleator Moor Square. Mince pies and refreshments will be provided after the service at the Methodist Church Hall.

**Festival of Christmas Trees** is taking place at the Methodist Church 10-12 December. The Festival opens at 6.30pm tomorrow night at 6.30pm with a concert at 7pm. The Church will be open to view the trees on Saturday 10am-4pm. On Sunday there will be a prize for the most voted for tree, and the festival ends with a carol service at 6pm, followed by non-alcoholic mulled wine and mince pies.

#### **Copeland Borough Council – Customer Relations**

If you have any comments, compliments or complaints about Copeland Borough Council services, please contact Marissa Joyce on 01946 598 525 or email [customer.relations@copeland.gov.uk](mailto:customer.relations@copeland.gov.uk)

### **Grant Applications**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Purpose of Grant</b>	<b>Amount Awarded</b>
<b>Lowca ARLFC – Youth Section</b>	Towards the cost of strips and safety equipment for 3 new youth teams	£500
<b>West Cumbria Combat Veterans Evening</b>	Towards the cost of the Veterans Evening held at The Celtic Club	£350

<p><b>Cumbria-Rungwe Tanzania Link</b></p>	<p>Towards the cost of training and teambuilding, including 2 residentials and a multicultural programme for Copeland young people to host a group of Tanzanians in 2011</p>	<p>£500</p>
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**Update on grant: Exchange Corner NW** – due to the weather they have been unable to plant the bulbs, and have been advised by Copeland Borough Council to wait until next Spring. They would like permission from the Forum to distribute half the bulbs to schools, youth groups and nurseries to encourage participation and town pride. The other half will be planted on Jacktrees Road play area in the Spring. The Forum agreed that this will be fine.

**Topics for future meetings:**

- Enterprise Partnerships
- Changes to services after budget cuts, e.g. Police, Fire & Rescue

**Date of next meeting:  
Thursday 3 February 2011**