

MILLOM NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

**Notes from the meeting of the Millom Neighbourhood Forum held at
Millom Network Centre on Monday 22 November 2010 at 7pm.**

Forum Chair: Cllr Ray Cole

Councillors Present: Cllr Heathcote, Cllr Gleaves,

Apologies: Cllr Jack Park, Robert & Wendy Bracegirdle, Joan Hobbs, Cllr Doug Wilson

Declarations of Interest:

Cllr Cole – South Copeland Tourism CIC, Millom Network Centre

Topic 1: HMP Haverigg

Speakers: Martin Farquhar, Governor of HMP Haverigg

Martin began by thanking for the Forum for the invitation. The presentation covered: history of HMP Haverigg; Haverigg today in 2010, the prison service as a whole & the Ministry of Justice; how this fits with the community.

Martin joined the prison service in 1988 in London and has worked in 10 posts in 8 prisons. He came into post at Haverigg in February 2009 and also sits on the Criminal Justice Board. This allows a view across the whole criminal justice world, not just prisons.

Some long term residents may remember the prison throughout its history and maybe even before it was a prison. When Martin took up the post, a report was found from 1968 by the first governor and many of the problems then are the same as the problems now, i.e. remote location, quality of buildings etc.

Haverigg was originally a Ministry of Defence camp, built in 1941 as an RAF base. It was vacated and between 1946-55 housed the army. Between 1962-68 the building was rented out to local farmers, and in 1968 was converted to a category C prison with 400 beds. On opening prisoners were brought in from all over the country, but mainly came from Milnthorpe. There have been 10 governors to date.

The prison has experienced disturbances; there were two in the late 80's and mid 90's, and one on New Years Eve 2006. The prison is prone to disturbances due to its location and the type of prisoners it contains.

Haverigg is 1 of 135 prisons across the country, and is part of the national offender management service. Haverigg is 1 of 16 prisons in the north west of England and is the most remotely located service. Their closest neighbour is HMP Lancaster which is 50 minutes drive away. Haverigg mostly deals with medium security category C prisoners; there is capacity for 644 men over the age of 21 on site. On the morning of 22 November there were 618 prisoners but that number can fluctuate. The catchment area for prisoners is the north west down to Merseyside and Manchester.

Population profile: there are roughly 130 foreign nationals, 70 low security category D, 60 serving a life sentence, and the remainder are category C prisoners. 100 prisoners are from Cumbria. Cumbrians are mainly law abiding people, there are usually around 500 cumbrians country wide in prison. Category D prisoners are a compliant group, and with appropriate risk assessments can be let out to work in the community.

Foreign nationals – this 'type' of prisoner was brought into the prison in an attempt to change the population profile and settle the prison. They are a compliant group of prisoners, so Haverigg submitted a successful bid to take on foreign nationals. There was concern from staff and the community who thought that they were illegal immigrants who would want to

break out of prison. A foreign national is someone who may work here legitimately, have a business etc, but doesn't have a British passport. Government can decide to deport those offenders or keep them here.

There are 400 staff employed at Haverigg; 140 are uniformed staff, the rest vary. The Education Department is staffed by Manchester College and healthcare is provided by Cumbria PCT and mental health teams.

The location of HMP Haverigg is a strength, weakness, opportunity and a threat. It's not in the best light with the prison service because of being so far away and having had disturbances. Martin has aimed to rid the prison of its reputation. There are much fewer incidents now and incidences of drugs have been significantly reduced. Unfortunately the location of the prison touches everything it does, for example, it is hard to recruit specialists.

There are challenges – prisons are busy and complex places to manage and are politically very sensitive. Unfortunately the press also like to publish stories about prisons. While not wanting to hide, it is a difficult struggle between being accountable and watching/minding what the media want to print.

There are poor buildings at the prison – when they were built no one thought they would become a prison. Some buildings are not used anymore. The whole site comprises around 240 acres.

Finance - HMP Haverigg will soon know more about how Government cuts will affect them. Their maintenance bill is the biggest expenditure.

Image – feel that their image to the rest of Cumbria is pretty good.

Drugs – cannot stop drugs entering the prison; all officers can do is try to control the problem. It is partly due to the location of the prison that there is a problem with drugs. When Martin joined the prison the positive drug test target was twice the figure it should be. Staff are working hard on the drug sub-culture. One problem has been that people have been going undetected throwing packages over the fence into the exercise yard.

HMP Haverigg has worked with the Police, residents at Bankhead, staff and prisoners to find out what would make their lives better. Staff were realistic in acknowledging that drugs would not be rid from the prison, but the aim was to reduce the amount of positive tests. As a result HMP Haverigg has exceeded its own expectations. The original target was 16% and the prison was returning 33%; the figure now is only 2% and some months 0%. Cumbria Police have been a great support in stopping people bringing in drugs at Kendal and Lancaster, which prevented them reaching Haverigg. The prison is a different place now with less violence and assaults, although there will always be people trying to infiltrate the system.

The taxpayer employs Martin and his staff so they are keen to retain public confidence. The current prison population is 86,000 and the Government want to reduce that number. There are no category A prisoners at Haverigg; the nearest Category A prison is Manchester. Between 1985-1995 there were 27 escapes throughout the country. There has been an 87% decrease in escapes. In 2009 5 people were lost out of 86,000 prisoners, including prison transfers. These usually happen through prisoners absconding, for example, going to an appointment and not coming back.

Although the prison will be going through changes, their priorities will remain the same.

HMP Haverigg provides a good opportunity to work with the community as category C prisoners can be allowed out. They are currently working up a scheme with the probation service. Residents might have seen prisoners working in the community but the prison want to formalise that process.

Overall, HMP Haverigg is a big employer and brings around £10 million into the local economy. They are keen to engage and receive a lot of letters from the community showing there is a genuine interest in the prison. They are keen to dispel myths about the prison as they often receive bad press. The priority this year is on decency – staff are good role models and work to the principle of ‘would you treat your son/daughter in the same way you’ve treated that prisoner’. There can be debates about the purpose of prison, but it’s to deprive people of their liberty.

Questions & Discussion

Q. What is the status of the football pitch used by Black Combe Football Club? Do you hold the lease?

A. Yes, the prison does hold the lease. What was the prison officers club; the building isn’t in good condition. I understand that for a number of years there has been ongoing business with the gentleman who has the lease, and there have been disagreements with the terms of the lease. The Ministry of Justice has advised it will be best to vacate. It is up for sale or it will be demolished.

Q. What about the pitch?

A. I understand that will be put up for sale too.

Q. Is there a timescale for this process?

A. By 31st January the area will have to close and we’ll have to vacate by that time. After that an estate agent will cost the land and put it on the market.

Q. Is that settled?

A. Yes, it’s being dealt with from London.

Q. You’ve missed an opportunity to take initiative for the community. Black Combe has over 100 children on the books. There is a need for a large pitch and a small pitch – it’s the perfect site and is where the club was looking to for the future. You could have consulted us.

A. It’s been ongoing for a number of years since the mid 90’s. The last thing we want to do is buy in to an idea and then the land is sold. Our hands are tied. We looked at constructing a block but its public money.

Comment: Talking about Community Payback – you have category D prisoners. In the mid 80’s I set up an ecumenical Church Club. After a few years of running we were approached by Belmarsh Prison regarding Community Payback. The problem was that existing staff can be put under immense pressure. Initially the staff didn’t mind working alongside prisoners, but they started leaving, they felt under pressure. The important thing is we must not lose sight when we do things in the community. There needs to be training to formalise arrangements, don’t forget existing people or lose sight of what community is.

Response: You’re right, we have to train people. I attended a residents meeting and one question was whether a siren would ring if a prisoner escaped. The next question was about when prisoners were going to be working in the community! We must not lose sight of understanding the risk. There is a need for training before offenders are put into shops and CAB’s etc.

Q. When are Prisoners coming out to do community work?

A. The community party was suspended when I started at Haverigg. The challenge was that if the work was predictable and we were, for example, sending a party out to the same footpath every day for a week, friends were leaving drugs for the prisoners to pick up and take back to Haverigg. We realise that risks aren't managed by stopping arrangements, but we need to manage the risks. Work has to be unpredictable, and community payback teams aren't the most reliable for that reason.

Q. Can you allow teams out in spring?

A. They can be allowed out at any time!

Comment: We get requests from as far away as Kendal. One placement that offenders have is at Bendrigg Lodge which is a residential home for children with disabilities. Prisoners go there on placement and get a lot of fulfilment from it.

Q. As far as Millom is concerned Haverigg HMP is an important employer. Any threat of losing the prison would have dire consequences. A question on behalf of Cllr Park - regarding community work around the church footpath – prisoners did an excellent job there in the past and I wondered whether there is any chance of a working party going out and doing that work soon?

A. We are inundated with requests. As Millom is closer to the prison there is more chance of getting the work done. We're happy to look at almost anything.

Community Updates, News and Feedback

Trudy Harrison, Locality Officer, Copeland Borough Council – is currently embarking on a community plan for Millom to highlight any crucial problems and find solutions. If anyone would like to get involved please get in touch with Trudy. She would like feedback from the community and realises that Millom feels over consulted and under acted on. There will be a stall at the Christmas market and the plan is hoped to be ready for the new financial year. Contact Trudy on trudy.harrison@copeland.gov.uk or call 01229 719 657.

Millom & Haverigg Economic Development Group – AGM will be on 13 December at Millom Network Centre. New directors are needed for the group – two people have expressed an interest so far and send in a CV. Roland Woodward will be resigning at the meeting.

Grant Applications

Organisation	Purpose of Grant	Amount Awarded
Life Education Caravan (Millom)	Towards the cost of delivering the Life Education programme in local schools.	£700
South Copeland Disability Group	To purchase measuring equipment to carry out audit assessments.	£225
Bootle & District Swimming Club	To purchase a thermal blanket to cover the swimming pool.	£400

<p>South Copeland Tourism Community Interest Company</p>	<p>Towards the cost of running the first annual land based Kite Festival in May 2011</p>	<p>£500</p>
<p>Millom Network Centre</p>	<p>Towards the cost of producing a Community Plan for Millom.</p>	<p>£1,000</p>

Topics for future meetings:

- Millom Folk Museum
- Cumbria Choice
- Chief Executive of Copeland Borough Council

Next meeting: Monday 7 February 2011