

13.03.13



North East Lincolnshire - Freshney Community Plan



Freshney Community First Panel

Context:

The people who live in the Freshney Ward today live in what was the medieval Parish of Great Coates. Even a hundred years ago, a traveller riding north-west would leave the Borough of Grimsby as he crossed an old creek which ran from about Barry Avenue to Pyewipe. He would then be travelling across the Parish of Little Coates until he used one of the small bridges over the Freshney to enter the Parish of Great Coates. Now he would be crossing fields in the Parish of Great Coates (where the Willows, Wybers Wood and Aylesby Park were to be built) before passing through Great Coates village itself. He would then again be crossing Great Coates fields (where the feeder roads for the A180 and Europarc were to be built) until he went over Oldfleet Drain to enter the parish of Healing.

It was only in the 1970s that the Borough of Grimsby (whose boundary had been extended in the 1920s to take in the Civil Parish of Little Coates) was extended to include the Civil Parish of Great Coates. A generation later, most of this is North East Lincolnshire's Freshney Ward today.

In pre-history, the earliest known settlement in North East Lincolnshire was in the Freshney Ward, at a Mesolithic camp on the Humber bank. Later, Celtic tribes and Roman farmers would have crossed the marsh where Great Coates was later to grow. Then early English settlers used their word 'Coates' to indicate some tiny settlement or sheepfolds in the area long before Danish settlers would name a nearby port as 'Grim's by'.

In medieval times, the only land on which it was really safe to build was where Great Coates' church and village are today. The rest of what is now the Ward was boggy and suffered the periodic invasion of the Humber.

Along the estuary, the whole area as far as the present railway line only became useable farm land when it was crisscrossed with dykes and drains. Along the Freshney, those who live closest to the river were flooded again as recently as 2007.

Remarkably, between them only two families owned the land for over six hundred years. Parts of the moat of the Barnardistons' medieval Manor House can be traced around the Grange and the churchyard today. They kept it until they ended up on the wrong side in the Civil War in the seventeenth century when the Sutton family acquired it in their place. Sutton Estates still owns parts of the Ward today.

But almost everything in the fields and village has changed in less than fifty years. In the 1960s Grimsby Borough needed to clear the terraced housing on its West Marsh which

was in danger of deteriorating into a slum. It developed the Willows estate (then just outside the Borough boundary) and many of the first residents came from the West Marsh. Houses, churches, pub, schools and shop were built in late 1960s and through the 1970s.

Very quickly private developers built on the other side of Great Coates Road. Wybers Wood (named after a nearby Wood and Farm in the neighbouring Parish of Aylesby) was also given a Primary School and shops, but the Community Centre which helped form the local community has since closed. The later Aylesby Park development completed the housing without adding any new facilities.

Even in Great Coates village itself a significant proportion of the population live in houses built in the last few years. Here, the ancient Parish Church (serving a wider area) and the Victorian School (now a Nursery and Infant School) remain open, but other facilities (including a biscuit factory, hall, Reading Room, Methodist Church and Post Office) have closed. Recently a new Civil Parish has been established for the village (thus covering a much smaller area than the original Civil Parish), and a new Village Hall is under construction.

Meanwhile, along the Humber Bank there has been continuous growth of chemical plants and industry since the Second World War.

Issues

Following on from a number of consultation exercises the Panel have been able to identify five main community priorities. These priorities have been ranked in importance according to the results of the household questionnaire. The following section looks at each in turn

1. Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

This Community Plan aims to promote the ward positively and to encourage residents and others who work and or visit here to have pride in their area. Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour is an important element within this issue, especially as local residents identified this as their most important concern in the household questionnaire.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

According to the breakdown of recorded incidences by Humberside Police the statistics of ASB incidents has remained static when comparing 2011/12 (230 incidents) to 2012/13 (231 incidents). The main types of ASB that are reported are:

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1. Neighbour disputes
 2. Youths causing annoyance.
 3. Youths on mini motorbikes

The main locations that receive the highest calls for service are the two shopping areas i.e. St Nicholas Drive and Wingate Parade; the Library and the Willows Primary School.

The crime rate is relatively low, compared to some of the other wards in the borough. Criminal damage and Violence Against The Person are the highest categories but there are no specific locations that stand out as having particular issues

Community Response:

1. There are projects carried out in the ward in various community buildings which provide positive activity for young people e.g. diversionary evening football sessions at Whitgift School
2. Ward councillors have helped to provide other activities e.g. community swimming sessions. It should also be noted that the Wards community forum, Freshney Forward works alongside the Police and the Councils Community Pride Team to set priorities in targeting the outbreaks of anti-social behaviour when they occur.
3. More recently Community First Funding has been awarded to a number of community initiatives which will impact on this issue, especially at the Willows Community Church. There will be updates on these in future versions of this Plan
4. Officers from the local Neighbourhood Policing Team support and attend the Freshney Forward, and provide monthly updates on crime trends and figures etc. The policing related priorities that are raised at the Forward and outcomes are included on the Police community website
5. Wybers Wood was the first area for Neighbourhood Watch, but as they included all the estate as one it was too large to manage and through lack of support (not initially) it was not successful. It has not been restarted so this may be an issue for future debate.

2. Housing and Environment

There are 5 distinct residential areas within the ward each with their own individual characteristics and issues for ease of reading these are presented in alphabetical order:

- Aylesby Park – these are a mix of modern properties, mainly consisting of semi/detached houses
- Great Coates - the majority of these properties are new build centered around a few older traditional ones, including a now disused Reading Room. Manor Garth is a small settlement of properties on the very edge of the ward which includes a privately run residential home.
- Willows – private ownership has increased over the years but previously about 80% of the properties here were initially built and managed by the local council. Now they are managed by Shoreline Housing Partnership and consist of a mix of houses and flats (some specifically for older people) .
- Wybers Wood – here the properties are generally a mix of semi/detached houses centered around a small shopping center which includes a pub and post office

Housing Issues

Again as explained above the nature of the different areas of the Ward means that there are different issues existing in each:

- Aylesby Park/Wybers Wood – despite the concentration of residential properties in both of these areas there are no play facilities
- Great Coates – here a new village hall is close to completion and there is an existing play area

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- Willows – the open plan nature of the housing leads to a range of issues including a lack of parking and garaging, however the area does have the only play area in the ward
 - Wybers Wood– as the estate was developed the only community building the old Rehab Centre from Grimsby Hospital was installed (albeit incorrectly) and was heavily used by residents. Unfortunately it fell into disrepair and eventually had to be demolished leaving the estate with no communal meeting rooms. In addition there are no play facilities

Community Response:

- On the Willows estate there is an active Tenants and Residents Association which is well attended and receives support from Shoreline staff
- On Wybers Wood the local pub the Jubilee plays an important role by providing its back room for community use i.e. the alternate meetings of the Freshney Forward. In addition ward councillors are working with council officers and others to explore the possibility of identifying a suitable location and funding sources to lead to the provision of some sort of community recreational facilities for local young people
- In Great Coates a new community group of residents called GRASS has been established and is currently challenging the role and activities of the Parish Council

Parks and Open Spaces

The ward can generally be described as an area of several green spaces which includes areas of trees and a network of cycle paths, and extensive public footpaths. There are the recreational facilities of some play equipment on the Willows. The River Freshney provides a focal point as it flows through the ward, unfortunately this brings with it the unwanted problem of flooding, however there is a programme of works currently on-going to try to reduce the likelihood of this happening again which has been enhanced by some extensive tree planting funded by the Government

Community Response:

The community has several groups and individuals who contribute to the upkeep and positive use of the amenity space in the area listed below including:

1. Ward Councillors have provided funding for benches along the banks of the River Freshney
2. Local residents have established and maintained the community garden at the side of the Bishop Edward King Centre
3. The Freshney Forward and ward councillors successfully secured the clearing and planting of Cromwell Rd roundabout
4. The Ward Councillors have also helped with extensive bulb planting in the area and they also support a school gardening club
5. The new Great Coates Village Hall is being built on the area of land known as Pear Tree Paddock

Street Scene

There are a number of issues around the general street scene in the ward which residents have raised at various community meetings, these are:

1. Dog Fouling.
2. Parking and Traffic problems.
3. Public Transport
4. Litter/Fly tipping

Community Response:

The issues around the street scene are seen locally as the responsibility of the local authority through their agents to sort out as the necessary permissions for taking community action are very difficult to get.

- Active community members from the Freshney Forward and other community groups, along with their ward councillors have been vocal about the need to resolve these issues

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- The Freshney Forward has spoken to the local community group Engage about its concerns over inadequate bus provision in the evenings and weekends. This area of work is seen very much as a partnership process for the community groups and local residents who are looking forward to working with service providers to look at new and innovative approaches to dealing with the issues.

3. Health, Well Being, Social and Financial Inclusion

These are all issues that help to contribute to the fact that there is a level of general deprivation within the ward, with the significant increase in benefit claimants highlighting this. The Panel has only just started to collate information and evidence on this theme, and is currently considering facts included in reports from the Health Data Observatory.see below

Issues:

- The average life expectancy for males is 75 years; and 79.7 years for females
- The 2001 census data identified 747 (7.4%) of people in “not good health”
- There are 1556 (15.5%) people with limiting lifelong illnesses
- In 2009-2012 Obesity rates at reception were 10.1% and in Year 6 19.2%
- There is limited provision of health related advice/support especially since the closure of the Community Shop where the health trainers used to be based. There is no medical centre within the ward, the nearest being on Cromwell Road

Community Response:

- For a long time some of the Community buildings within the ward have been able to act as a host/location for social/support services for the residents especially those that may be classed as the more vulnerable, this is especially the case in various churches. Examples include: Chatterbox Club; TARA; Freshney Forward; Community Bingo Club; Community Church. Visits and information stands have been available by various bodies i.e. Health Collaboratives. In addition there is a well- supported Walkwell scheme

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- Recently the Community First Panel has approved several bids that will help to address some of these health and social issues. These will be reported on in future versions of this document.
 - The ward provides a range of supported services and/or accommodation i.e. sheltered dwellings at Chatteris House and Stratford House. These are specialist facilities for looked after children and people needing mental health support provided by the Council and an NHS provider NAVIGO.
 - As well as the organised groups there is also a great deal of informal support through friends and neighbours which is difficult to measure.

4. Education

For years, national and local policy has been based on parental choice. In spite of an increasing tendency for parents to 'look around' for the deal they want for their children, and for schools to become autonomous the Freshney community still takes a lot of interest in what is happening inside and outside the gates of its schools.

Ofsted and performance dominate heads and principals lives, with achievement, teaching quality, behaviour and attitude to learning, and leadership and management their current priorities. Falling rolls, exacerbated when schools are seen as unsuccessful, have been a problem in the ward and there have been recent campaigns to save both secondary and primary schools from closure or merger.

Existing provision

- Early Years - there is a Sure Start Children's Centre (Queensway), now jointly managed with its partner centre (Riverside) in Yarborough Ward. It has a valuable emphasis on parental and family development and a high contact rate. In relation to Playgroups, mother and toddler groups and registered childminding there is minimal provision in both the private and voluntary sectors
- Great Coates Nursery School is one of two in the borough offering separate provision for 'rising fives' on the small site of the historic village school.
- There are three primary schools: Wybers Wood, Willows, a smaller than average school, and Great Coates (actually located on the Willows). Wybers Wood

Primary became an academy under the sponsorship of School Partnership Trust (SPT) from Dec.2012. Willows Primary is becoming an academy with the same sponsor, SPT.

- There is one secondary school, John Whitgift Academy, sponsored by SPT. The school occupies part of a site built in the early 1970s with dedicated community provision for sport (sports hall and swimming pool) and the arts (theatre with film projection facilities). The proximity and success of Healing School have made it increasingly popular with Freshney parents.
- A dedicated Youth Centre which is part of the John Whitgift complex still offers some evening activities run by the Councils Youth Services team.
- The local authority adult learning team no longer uses the purpose built facility on the John Whitgift site and Grimsby Institute's IT provision at the Bishop King Centre has just closed.

Issues

- The Children's Centre was rated as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in 2012,
- In Great Coates the nursery was rated as 'Good' by Ofsted 2010; and Great Coates Primary is continuing to recover from an 'Unsatisfactory' Ofsted rating in 2010 under a new head teacher with a bid being submitted to the government for a major re-build
- Wybers Wood Academy following an 'Inadequate' Ofsted rating in 2012 now has a new head teacher and academy status, with the playing field off Gedney Close declared surplus to school requirements and continuing in Council ownership
- Willows Primary had an 'Inadequate' Ofsted rating in 2012

Community Response:

1. The Youth Service, Church and the YMCA have all introduced initiatives that have been supported by ward funding
2. The Olympics project was an excellent example of joint working and use of external funding to enhance the curriculum
3. Both the Forward group and the ward councillors work closely with the local schools and attend various events

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4. The ward councillors have strong and varied links with John Whitgift Academy i.e. the Saturday swimming club and representation on the Film Theatre future planning group
 5. The schools in the ward had a good record of providing extended school activities prior to becoming academies and they aim to continue this by buying in the services of freelance fundraisers to support the extended curriculum.

5. Employment

The current economic position has hit the ward hard and there are people facing reduced hours and redundancy. Indeed one of the assessment criteria for the Community First Funding Programme was an increase in benefit take up thus highlighting the issue within the ward. Large parts of an industrial estate are in the ward and Europarc is also close by

Issues

- Recently due to cost cutting exercises NELCs adult learning team no longer uses the purpose built facility on the John Whitgift site;
- In addition Grimsby Institute's IT provision at the Bishop King Centre has just closed.
- Despite the close location of industrial premises the skills mix has changed in recent decades and businesses are less labour intensive, so many people in the ward are either retired or work further afield. Recently there have been closures in the chemical plants.

Community Response:

1. Sporting, arts and social activities help to develop a range of skills that employers look for in trainees and apprentices, and it is important to look to see how these can be developed locally, a recent example was the Community Games supported by the YMCA and held at Whitgift School
2. Increasing the number of any volunteer opportunities help to support the work experience process and increase people's sense of being a stakeholder in their community. The ward is fortunate in that there is already a strong existing ethos of community members who volunteer

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3. The ward benefits from having an advisor from the Destination Employment Scheme who already works in the community
 4. A newly funded work experience scheme Pairing has recently been launched and it is vital that the ward look to support it
 5. The E Factor has a base within the ward and it is hoped that the existing good working relationship can be further developed
 6. In addition there are businesses etc within the ward that need to be included in the community engagement activities in order to ensure that they are aware of what is going on in their local communities and to identify how they can be involved and contribute to this agenda

Current Plans for the Community

What is a Community Plan?

This document is the first draft of a Community Plan for the Freshney ward. It is part of a requirement of the Community First Funding Programme from which the Freshney Ward benefits. This is a new national 4 year Government Funded initiative which ends in 2015. It has evolved from the government's Big Society agenda which aims to help communities come together in a strategic way to find out about the strengths and assets within their neighborhoods. They then identify their local priorities which will be used to inform this initial plan and future versions of it

Adopting a new way of community thinking like this leading to a successful vision for a neighborhood will require time to both develop capacity and generate local interest. The purpose of the Community Plan is to encapsulate all this information and to ensure that Community First funding is directed towards the identified community priorities.

It is important to note that this is a live document that currently attempts to outline and discuss what have been initially identified as the main issues for the ward. Residents and other interested parties are encouraged to read through the document and offer comments, thoughts etc which can then be used to inform its future development. (This can be done by visiting our website: <http://freshney.inandaround.org.uk/communityfirst>)

Consultation activities

The initial community priorities used in this document are those that have been identified at various community meetings. The Community First Panel are committed to being as inclusive as possible and as such started off the year by hand delivering a questionnaire to every single household (4300 approx). These questionnaires gave residents the opportunity to rank the existing identified priorities in order of importance and also asked about any new priorities, local concerns etc as well as raising awareness of the Community First initiative and the existence of the main community groups i.e. Freshney Forward and the TARA. Although the response rate was only about 1%, there have already been some valuable issues identified and lessons learnt about local consultation exercises, some of which have already been included in this initial version of the Plan. As information is gathered and local services and assets are mapped out it is expected that there will be some gaps identified and the Panel will then be able to actively promote the need for these to be supplied or to be commissioned.

As the weeks and months go by the Panel will look at relevant ways of more consultation exercises, they are particularly interested in the Planning For Real method and have already identified local people who have recently undergone relevant training who would help.

Future Direction

The Panel acknowledges that this project is a journey of experiences and learning. They are keen to be open minded and to embrace and consider all ideas and suggestions that are presented them, especially as this is a living document owned and created by local people for local people. In addition they are keen to widen the consultation exercise to include external bodies such as Humberside Police, Shoreline Housing Partnership etc to ensure that the issues and priorities that they have for the area within their own internal planning processes etc are reflected within the Community Plan.