

Area Community Planning Forum 5- Rural South West.

Monday 17th September in Balfron High School

Those attending were welcomed with Home baking accompanied with tea or coffee.

As well as representatives from Community Councils, present were Councillor Colin O'Briem, Pam Campbell, Margaret McKechnie, Susan Carragher and Sheila McLean from Stirling. Morag Mason was there to talk about Community Health Partnerships; Anne Michelle Ketteridge was there to talk about "Leader" a new source of funding for community "Innovative Rural Development" schemes. And Ch Insp Kevin Findlater was there to talk about police matters.

At previous meetings, areas of concerns to community councils had been regularized and Pam had prepared a document detailing the progress that had been made in these areas. All present agreed that the format she had chosen was informative, and would be used for future reports.

A survey was being conducted among CCs to prioritize areas of concern. Not all CCs had responded, one being Strathblane. Survey forms would again be sent out to the "errant" (my word) CCs in a hope of getting a proper picture, but so far the areas of concern would seem to be;

- 1 Roads,
- 2 Health Service
- 3 Community.

Anne Michelle Ketteridge gave a presentation on "Leader" a European funded scheme for "Innovative Rural Development." It is a mechanism where local projects, not funded by central government, and could be assisted.

Our area is described as Forth Valley, but this demarcation is more geographic than political. Its western edge, for instance is the Eastern bank of Loch Lomond, They can fund up to 50% of projects, and their funding assistance can range between £700 and £30,000. Projects that have been funded by the previous similar schemes have been the Balamaha Environmental Playscape, the Balfron Gathering Place and a scheme to help disabled anglers. This year they had £973,000 to disperse, and next year they hope to have £2,000,000.

Morag Mason talked about changes in the local provision of health services, the Community Health partnership and Public Partnership Forums. She told us of the progress being made with community hospitals, and the new hospital at Larbert. As an aside, we were told that the A&E unit at Falkirk does not deal with serious problems, Stirling does. If you have something deemed to be not too serious, Stirling will deal with it, but you would have a low priority and you could wait for hours. Better go to Falkirk. However, being realistic, in our area, we would more likely to take someone injured etc into Glasgow. If you call an Ambulance, and it comes from Balfron, it will probably take you to Stirling/Falkirk.

It is acknowledged that communications between the NHS and the public is poor. Public Partnership Forums (PPFs) are there to discuss local health concerns, and to inform the public about local health policy. PPF are being consulted about the facilities being offered in the new hospitals, and on the physical layout of the buildings etc. Membership of PPFs is open to members of the public.

Members of the PPF sit on the Community Health Partnership. This is a forum bringing together all the different organizations involved in providing health care. The NHS itself, local authorities, voluntary organizations etc. The PPF is there to try and ensure that health providers are working together and not in isolation.

Both bodies are independent of the local health board and are subservient to it!

Ch Insp Kevin Findlater, talked about the new Community Wardens, and their success in some areas, e.g., in keeping down youth rowdies. As there are very few of them, and spread over a large area, it might be more beneficial if a representative from the Community Wardens came and gave a talk to local CCs or other local groups.

There had been a wish from some CCs to become more aware, in detail, of how local police operated. The police are quite happy for individual CC members to join them for an evening, but it must be understood that they are observers and not participants.

Kevin is very keen to recruit Special Constables. He has none recruited locally. They serve a valuable function, and he is quite happy for individuals to use it to gain an insight into police working with a view to joining on a full time basis. He suggested that it was a means where individuals considering a career in the Police Force could gain a real insight, before finally committing themselves. Membership is open to adults up to the age of 55.