

DRUIDS HEATH & MONHULL WARD MEETING NOTES

WARD: Druids Heath & Monyhull	DATE: 26 th April 2024
VENUE: Bells Farm Community Centre, Bells Farm Close B14 5QP	START/FINISH TIMES: 7.30pm – 9pm
COUNCILLOR Julien Pritchard	NOs OF ATTENDEES: 11
OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Kay Thomas, Community Governance Manager	

CURRENT WARD ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Bold Prosperous Druids Heath & Monyhull 2. A Bold Inclusive Druids Heath & Monyhull 3. A Bold Safe Druids Heath & Monyhull 4. A Bold Healthy Druids Heath & Monyhull 5. A Bold Green Druids Heath & Monyhull 6. A Bold Local Druids Heath & Monyhull

MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING INCLUDING LOCAL CONCERNS:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome & Notice of Recording Councillor Pritchard welcomed all to the meeting and advised that members of the press/public could take photographs and record the meeting, except where there were exempt or confidential items. 2. Future of Druids Heath Library Councillor Pritchard explained the current situation with libraries across the city and the proposal to keep 11 libraries as staffed hubs and possibly manage the others through volunteers, Friends Groups etc. The consultation on the library service was now open and residents were urged to respond. The Library of Birmingham was not mentioned in the consultation. Councillor Pritchard stressed the importance of Druids Heath Library and stated he would be fighting to retain it in its present form. There was an equity around volunteer lead service provision across different wards given residents in some areas struggled with daily living more than others. There was also a proposal to move other services such as advice, into library buildings.

Martin Sullivan, Friends of Birmingham Library, expressed concern regarding the way budget cuts were being managed and the future of the library service. It was noted that volunteer groups would have responsibility for finances and buildings, not just acting as a volunteer in the library. The number of people willing to take this on was limited. The proposal for one library as a hub in each constituency, meant others could end up being co-located into buildings that were not conducive to a library setting and the service being taken out of the public sector. Reductions in library buildings would result in further travel for library users. Comments were also made that when the council's budget was improved it would be difficult to re-instate the service as was.

The meeting was advised that following complaints about the consultation, the document had been changed to allow more space for comments but the ability to return to the document once started was unavailable, meaning the consultation had to be completed in one go. On 11 May there was an in-person meeting at the Council House 11.45am – 2.30pm and residents could drop into the sessions without booking. Friends of Birmingham Library was willing to help/support any group wanting to act to protect their library and residents could contact the group on –

Friendsofbirminghamlibrary@gmail.com

Discussion followed on the way forward and the following main points were made –

- Volunteers would not be able to provide the advice/support offered by librarians.
- Libraries relocated to other buildings would not provide the environment suitable for study etc
- Residents could join the walk from Stirchley Library to Druids Heath Library to raise awareness.
- Residents stressed the need to protect the library as it was the only asset left in the area and they wanted to maintain the current, staffed service.
- The library offered a free, safe space for the local community to drop-in, meet others, get help with job applications etc, use the computers and get advice.
- The library also housed the advice service and if the library closed this would be lost. Given the distance that Druids Heath was from a similar service this would have a detrimental impact on residents.
- Following the previous cut to library services, Druids Heath Library opening hours had been reduced to 3 days a week. Residents then went to other libraries on the days it was closed. The collection of data accuracy on footfall was therefore questioned and residents suggested collecting their own data and counting Druids Heath Library footfall daily. It was also noted that not all visitors, especially children logged into the library when visiting.
- It was queried whether a volunteer run library would be part of the city council's library service and whether funding would be made available

for new books etc. Text/academic books etc needed to be kept up to date. There was concern that there would be insufficient volunteers/funding to run Druids Heath library.

- The library was vital for families with children in education who did not have access to computers at home or for assistance with benefit claims.
- The Druids Heath Master Plan was due out for consultation, and it was queried whether the library was included within those plans.

The meeting discussed campaigning to retain the library as a city council service, which was preferred and possible options in the event of this not happening and the following actions were agreed –

- Join the Awareness Walk on 11th May from Stirchley Library to Druids Heath Library and encourage as many residents as possible to join. Create banners etc at Stirchley Hub, tap into activities being organised.
- Arrange a protest at Druids Heath Library to coincide with the end of the Awareness Walk.
- Arrange series of protests eg an organised ‘Read In’
- Campaign for retention of the library as a council service.
- Set up a Friends of Druids Heath Library Group. Friends of Stirchley Library could support.
- Register the Library as an Asset of Community Value.
- Set up stand at the library/Kath’s Café with paper copies of consultation document and a petition to sign to draw attention to the proposals for libraries. Library staff could return the forms.
- Set up a WhatsApp group.
- Organise future meetings/social events to put plans into operation, raise awareness and encourage community involvement.

3. AOB/Other Events/Issues

Community Garden, Shrewton Avenue – Peni Whelan informed the meeting that new raised beds had been installed at the community garden and it was hoped to fill them with strawberries so that a mini-strawberry festival could be held in June. Donations of strawberry plants would be welcomed.

ACTIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS MADE	WHO	BY WHEN
1. Join the Awareness Walk on 11 th May from Stirchley Library to Druids Heath Library and encourage as many residents as possible to join. Create banners etc at Stirchley Hub, tap into	1. Residents/Cllr Pritchard	1. 11 th May 2024

activities being organised.		
2. Arrange a protest at Druids Heath Library to coincide with the end of the Awareness Walk.	2. Residents/Cllr Pritchard	2. 11 th May 2024
3. Arrange series of protests eg an organised 'Read In'	3. Cllr Pritchard/residents	3. asap
4. Campaign for retention of the library as a council service.	4. Cllr Pritchard/residents	4. asap
5. Set up a Friends of Druids Heath Library Group. Friends of Stirchley Library could support. Copy of constitution to be forwarded.	5. Cllr Pritchard/Residents/ Friends of Bham Library	5. asap
6. Register the Library as an Asset of Community Value. Forms to be shared by Cllr Pritchard.	6. Residents	6. asap
7. Set up stand at the library/Kath's Café with paper copies of consultation document and a petition to sign to draw attention to the proposals for libraries. Library staff requested to return the forms.	7. Residents/Cllr P	7. asap
8. Set up a WhatsApp group.	8. Cllr Pritchard	8. asap
9. Organise future meetings/social events to put plans into operation, put plans into action, encourage community involvement.	9. Cllr Pritchard	9. asap