

NORTHFIELD ON-LINE WARD FORUM MEETING
30 JUNE 2020 AT 7pm – 8.15pm
WITH COUNCILLOR OLLY ARMSTRONG

1. Welcome & Councillor Updates

Councillor Armstrong welcomed all to the meeting & explained how the on-line meeting would work

Updates

- **Covid 19** – Councillor Armstrong had been working alongside NCP, BID and community organisations offering support to residents and with WMFS through the Safe & Well visits. He had also circulated a newsletter to Northfield households with information/contacts. Councillor Armstrong thanked all of the community groups and individuals who had helped throughout the pandemic.
- **Facebook groups and local letters** – anyone interested in joining to contact Cllr Armstrong
- **Online reading group to help bring about social change to Northfield**
- **Northfield Climate Café (online currently)** – proper café planned for when safe
- **Improvements to Northfield Town Centre**

2. Councillor Paulette Hamilton, Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care, Update on Covid 19

Councillor Hamilton provided a latest update on Covid 19 in Birmingham as follows –

- There had been 4,400 cases in Birmingham and to date 1,500 deaths
- Positive tests were still being recorded
- Average age of person testing positive for the virus was under 40
- Rules to minimise the spread of infection were emphasised as further spikes were expected
- Difficulties with accessing PPE had been rectified and there were currently no problems with access
- All care home residents (BCC & privately owned) had been tested for Corona Virus

Residents then asked the following questions;

- The DWP Minister is stopping sanctions – what help would be available to residents affected?
- Was there any additional funding available for people with mental health issues in the community finding the situation difficult? What was being done for patient's welfare in hospitals?
- What was the general level of the virus in the South of Birmingham?
- Had the take up of inoculations for children fallen since lockdown?
- Would Birmingham City Council consider distributing free face masks through distribution points?

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- Suggestion to put posters with relevant information in high profile places eg shopping centres

Councillor Hamilton in response to the questions advised that the information regarding the virus for certain parts of Birmingham was not available and undertook to let Councillor Armstrong have answers to the other questions asked. With regard to information being placed in shopping centres, this was felt to be a good idea and Councillor Armstrong undertook to investigate and ask the BID about posting some on the High Street. He also undertook to look into the provision of free face masks but urged anyone struggling to get hold of one to contact him.

3. G5 Mast Update

Councillor Armstrong explained that a planning application had been submitted for a mast opposite The Meadows Primary School and there had been strong local opposition to the proposal and to the lack of consultation with the school, local residents and businesses. An online petition had been submitted. He undertook to distribute further information and urged residents to consult his Facebook page/social media.

Question regarding abstentions from the Planning Committee vote, Councillor Armstrong to discuss with resident.

4. Business Improvement District Update

Councillor Armstrong advised the meeting that he had been working closely with the BID and the BID had been working hard to ensure that the High Street operated safely eg social distancing measures, shop opening etc and called on local residents to be supportive of the local shopping centre. Ways of making the surrounding area safer for walking and cycling were being examined and he thanked the BID manager, Marcia Greenward for her hard work during the pandemic.

5. Northfield Community Partnership

Unfortunately, members of the NCP had been unable to join the meeting but Councillor Armstrong thanked them for the way they had lead the local response to Covid 19.

6. Black Lives Matter

Councillor Hamilton spoke regarding the Black Lives Matter campaign and the affect in Birmingham. She suggested that the truth behind history needed to be understood to prevent the same mistakes being made. Councillor Armstrong referred to 2 local, young black artists who had been working with St Modwens to help local people during lockdown

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and had set up safe spaces where views could be aired. He undertook to invite them to the next meeting to report in more detail.

Councillor Hamilton reported that she had commissioned an enquiry into Covid 19 and deaths in the BAME community.

7. Questions

- a) **Tuition Fees** – request for information on what the Government was doing to assist students through the pandemic and whether tuition fees would be lowered.
Councillor Armstrong undertook to provide information on his social media pages, with appropriate links
- b) **Orthopaedic Hospital Parking** – request for information on consultation with residents and where Hole Farm estate was in the process.
Councillor Armstrong said he had requested but not received any information but undertook to ask again
- c) **North Worcestershire Golf Course** – in response to a query regarding the commencement of the work, Councillor Armstrong said he had written to Bloor Homes/Planning dept requested that work on the land be delayed until after the Covid 19 restrictions had been lifted but had not received a response. He felt that in light of the current climate change crisis green spaces should be untouched and he would pursue further.
- d) **Church Street Speeding** – to deter speeding it was suggested that a zebra crossing be installed near the Adult Education Centre. Councillor Armstrong said he had been advised that the funding was not available but would pursue.
- e) **Outreach Addiction Team** – query regarding activity. Meeting advised that the BID manager was working with the Team that was very active.
- f) **Road Space Re-Allocation** – it was queried whether as part of the road space re-allocation on the High Street there would be any consultation with disability groups to help shape the proposals.
Councillor Armstrong referred to the on-line Climate Café and urged groups with an interest to join or to contact him directly.
- g) **Funding** – Councillor Armstrong said that the NCP had been applying for funding as a conduit for other groups to access resources. Anyone needing funding information should email him direct.
- h) **Corona Virus 19 Help Line – 0333 772 1931**