

PERRY BARR WARD MEETING NOTES

WARD: Perry Barr	DATE: 26 th July 2023
VENUE Perry Hall Methodist Church, Rocky Lane B42 1QF	START/FINISH TIMES: 6.30pm – 8.50pm
COUNCILLORS Morriam Jan & Jon Hunt	NOs OF ATTENDEES: 30
OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Dave Wagg, Head of Sport & Physical Activity Gloria Ighadaro, Regeneration Programme Director Kay Thomas, Community Governance Manager	

MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING INCLUDING LOCAL CONCERNS:
<p>1. Welcome from the Chair of the meeting & Notice of Recording</p> <p>Councillor Jan welcomed all to the meeting and advised that members of the press/public could record and take photographs except where there were confidential/exempt items.</p> <p>2. Perry Park Consultation</p> <p>Dave Wagg explained that the proposed improvements/enhancements to Perry Park were part of the Commonwealth Games legacy and made the following main points –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public consultation commenced 17th July ending on 14th August - View being sought on the <i>proposals</i> for the stadium & the park. Proposals bourn from consultation/discussions with stakeholders/public and were subject to the budget already allocated and approved. Nothing was ‘set in stone’. - It was hoped to increase usage, accessibility and interaction, with a view to improving health & well-being. - Plans of the proposals were displayed but could also be seen at the stadium, Tower Hill Library, Library of Birmingham or on the Council’s website. 2 drop-in events, stakeholders meeting and a public meeting had been held. - Proposals included - Main build would be a 2-storey extension to gymnastics/martial arts centre to create a hub with public accessible facilities; Throws field to be utilised to be accessible to the public at all times except when there was an event; beach volleyball site (subject to funding);

café, replacement children's play area with enhanced/improved equipment; accessible walking routes/tracks to link all areas of the park.

- Focus on accessibility also improved lighting & signage.
- Timescales – 14th August end of consultation – feedback outcomes of consultation – early autumn planning application submitted – further consultation period – decision on planning early 2024 – appointment of construction company – work to commence early 2024 – completion end 2024

Residents then asked questions and answers were provided as (Q/A) –

- Q - Given the councils current financial crisis, was the plan for the park essential spending and the best use of legacy funding? A – funding was via the CWG underspend and was ring-fenced. Taking consultation into account the improvements would have to be delivered within that budget.
- Q - query re the closure of the throws field and how many events there would be per year? A – there had been only 2 events on the throws field last year but events were determined by bookings received which would determine the annual number.
- Q – wisdom of a beach volleyball site? A – point of the consultation was to collect people's views so it was therefore important that views on specific proposals were registered
- Q – closure of the gym had left local people without facilities, query opening of new gym A- temporary gym would be opened soon in the GMAC but in meantime free membership available to the Doug Ellis Centre until construction secured next year
- Q – best use of café space queried with suggestion of space for interactive use/events etc. A – design of the café could be examined when views from the consultation had considered. It was hoped that people would take ownership of the park and use it to encourage healthy lifestyles and the café could be the hub to do that. It was acknowledged that the stadium had been seen as a facility for the 'elite' and there had to be an element of professional use but the enhancement of the park was to help get people moving, exercising & interacting.
- Q – Serious concern raised regarding the Aldridge Road entrance to the park, which was not seen as a priority by officers, was not wheelchair accessible but was the main entrance for users from the east of the park. No consultation had been undertaken with that community. A – if the consensus from the consultation was that Aldridge Road entrance needed improvement there would be a balance between that and the Church Road entrance improvements.
- Q – what was the budget? Cost of the GMAC extension & did the budget include the children's playground? A - £21.4m budget total, £5m for the reinstatement of the stadium including money for the play park but more would be spent on equipment. Details in report to Cabinet. All elements in the Master Plan were part of the package and had to work together.

The importance of the consultation was stressed and residents were asked to send in their views and solutions. Feedback forms were available at the

meeting and could be returned to Tower Hill Library, Library of Birmingham or the Stadium. Councillor Hunt said that a ward forum response would also be submitted as a key stakeholder in the consultation.

Comment made that the park was not only a resource for the people of Perry Barr but also those in neighbouring Lozells and was a major project that also affected them. Neighbouring wards were not aware of the consultation, and it was queried whether the consultation could be extended. The meeting was advised that the consultation had been advertised and was open to anyone inside or outside Birmingham. Councillor Jan said any concerns could be forwarded to the councillors and suggested residents attend the consultation day if they wanted to examine the plans in detail, before responding to the consultation.

The following views were then expressed by residents in response to the consultation –

- Aldridge Road entrance was important and query above /not satisfactorily answered.
- Concern regarding use of the throws area, planning condition regarding public use required.
- Children's play area – residents in Perry Villas not had access for 3 years and new proposals did not appear to solve that.
- The budget agreed for the work should be fixed and any overspend met by the contractor. Issues that were being put right/restored as part of the original plans should not be paid for from this budget.
- Measures needed to be put in place to prevent cars using the road off Church Road adjacent to the play area to safeguard the safety of the children using the play area.
- Cynicism around the whole process. Residents had been without access for the past 12 months and it was feared that funding would run out for the park enhancements that would benefit local residents. Residents should be given more consideration, but it was felt that their voices would not be heard.
- More green space was needed rather than more buildings. The park was a green open space and should be treated as such – there was no need for a further running track .
- The wetland area and wild meadow was welcomed but the woodland should also be enhanced for woodland walks and to educate about wildlife, together with the other areas across the park.
- Detailed consideration to be given to disability access and use of the park
- The reservoir had lost its character.
- More than one play area was needed and the Church Road car park and play area should be retained for ease of access.
- Funding should be spent on the park/park equipment and not on a beach volleyball pitch or additional running tracks.

- Feeling that Park and stadium were now being developed for commercial reasons rather than a community park. The proposals showed more building, erosion of green space and less accessibility to residents.
- Allotments not being classed as part of the park was not acceptable. The allotments & its members were founding members of the community. Legacy for the allotments not mentioned in the plans therefore a plea for officers to meet with the allotment members.
- It was not possible to walk from the stadium to Church Road as there was no pavement.
- No real consultation or thought in the proposals to people who used wheelchairs. Disability access needed more consideration.
- Trust of the community had been lost, rebuilding meaningful dialogue around solutions was considered the way forward, to make the proposals better for the community and ensure voices were heard. Communication was key to rebuilding community confidence.
- *Friends of Perry Park comments –*
- Solutions needed to fence on northwest of park and floodlights which were not needed
- Original plans had a path from the northwest of the park to the lake, proposals had removed this and there was no guarantee of a disabled access from canal to lower footpath
- The canal towpath was not a substitute for a footpath through the park as it was used by cyclists, joggers etc and the locks presented a safety issue.
- Aldridge Road entrance was vital for the community on that side of the park
- Beach volleyball site not wanted, especially when finances were limited, also the area earmarked should have been returned to its previous use as it was pre-CWG
- Central destination playground not needed – playground should be returned to its previous site – this was the what local people wanted to see.
- Park should be for the community, not a destination and therefore equipment/playgrounds etc should be on the edge of the park.

3. Ward Action Planning

The ward plan was circulated to the meeting. Councillor Hunt explained the ward planning process and that a ward plan was necessary to access certain local funding. The priorities had been identified from discussions at ward meetings and with community groups and stakeholders. The plan would be regularly reviewed and updated as necessary.

Meeting advised that a Community Choir had started at St Johns Church that was very well attended through a wide age range, benefiting members who

felt isolated. The group had received funding from the church charitable trust but was in need of further funding to keep the group going. Councillor Jan said this activity could be included in the ward plan under the Inclusive priorities as a further activity targeting social isolation. Details of a group working across Birmingham to provide youth services, filling gaps in social provision etc were reported to the meeting and that it aligned with the priorities in the ward plan. Offer made to work with the community.

Ward Action Plan was agreed.

4. Local Ward Funding

Councillor Hunt outlined the local funding streams available to the ward including, Beyond Birmingham 2022, Community Chest, Brum Breathes and local highway budget and the criteria for spend. With regard to the Beyond Communities Fund, the councillors declared a conflict of interest and therefore the NDSU would be making recommendations on approval which would be reported to the ward meeting in due course.

5. AOB

a) Sprint Bus Consultation – Councillor Hunt reported on a suggestion that a number of bus stops for the 51 bus might be removed and that the bus stop near Perry Avenue was to be changed to accommodate the X51. At the request of residents, councillors undertook to look into the upgrading of the bus stop at Perry Park Crescent.

b) Greyhound Track – Councillor Hunt referred to a news article regarding a pre-planning application for demolition of the greyhound stadium for housing development. During the regeneration consultation this site had not been available for housing due to its designation as a local sporting facility. The meeting was advised that no planning application had been submitted and officers had not been approached therefore the basis of the news report was unknown. Residents commented that there was a covenant on the land that it could be used for sport only and that additional housing was not needed.

c) Former Bus Depot – Councillor Jan advised of a recent site meeting to look at the feasibility of the site for various uses. The safety of the site was currently being checked with a view to opening a transport museum in the first instance, with café and then opening up to community groups. Planning application to be submitted January 2024. In response to a suggestion to have the local police team based at the bus depot, Councillor Jan said she had been pursuing this and would arrange a meeting with the Police & Crime Commissioner.

ACTION	WHO	BY WHEN
1. Potential site visit to Aldridge Road entrance to park	1. Cllr Jan	1. asap
2. Meeting to be arranged between allotment members/officers	2. Cllr Jan	2. asap
3. Ward Action Plan – inclusion of St Johns Community Choir as further example of Inclusive priority targeting social isolation	3. Councillors	3.
4. Perry Park Crescent bus stop upgrade	4. Cllrs to take up	4.
5. Relocation of local police team to former bus depot building – meeting with PCC to discuss	5. Cllr Jan	