

SPARKBROOK & BALSALL HEATH EAST WARD MEETING NOTES

WARD: Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East Ward Meeting	DATE: 17 th January 2024
VENUE: Sparkbrook Health & Community Centre, Grantham Rd B11 1LU	START/FINISH TIMES: 7pm – 9pm
COUNCILLOR Shabrana Hussain Apology from Councillor Saima Ahmed	NOs OF ATTENDEES: 11
OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Sergeant Nathan Hamilton, West Midlands Police PCSO Giovanni Esposito, West Midlands Police Mike Hinton, District Parks Manager Amer Khan, Neighbourhood Action Co-ordinator Kay Thomas, Community Governance Manager	VISITING SPEAKER – Councillor Majid Mahmood, Cabinet Member for Environment

MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING INCLUDING LOCAL CONCERNS:

1. Welcome & Notice of Recording

Councillor Hussain welcomed all to the meeting and advised that members of the public/press could record/take photographs of the meeting except where there were exempt or confidential items.

2. Police Update from Local Police Team

Sergeant Hamilton explained he was the acting sergeant for Sparkbrook following the retirement of Sergeant Sharma.

The following update and responses to concerns raised were provided –

- Year on year crime data showed a reduction in overall crime including burglary, robbery and theft from person. Vehicle crime had increased.
- Serious youth violence did not only include stabbing offences but included eg weapon found on a person
- The crimes listed were those the Home Office used to measure Force performance and it was acknowledged that not all crimes relevant to the local area were listed. The figures related to Sparkbrook but also included Balsall Heath (part) and Springfield.
- Figures relating to the Sparkbrook area only and specific crimes such as prostitution, crime around HMO's etc were recorded but were not

readily available. Sergeant Hamilton undertook to look for Sparkbrook figures, including crimes other than the Home Office KPI's.

- Next week was Neighbourhood Tasking Week and Sergeant Hamilton undertook to take forward priorities and hot spots raised at this meeting, including prostitution hotspots at Long Street, Braithwaite Road, Sparkhill Park and Kyrwicks Lane.
- PCSO's were currently actively engaged with local schools, weekly parking enforcement exercises (Stratford & Ladypool Rds), out-reach work on Stratford Road, fortnightly Cuppa with a Copper (next one 24 Jan 10-12pm at Christ Church)
- 3 students were going to be working in Sparkbrook on individual projects relevant to the area and Sergeant Hamilton would be putting them in touch with partners. He undertook to send information to the Friends of Farm Park and Sampson Road Residents Group.

3. Parks & Open Spaces – Discussion with Councillor Majid Mahmood, Cabinet Member for the Environment

Mike Hinton explained his role and responsibilities. In response to residents' comments and questions he made the following points –

- Much investment in parks was dependant on funding from S106 agreements following local development. Unfortunately, there was no current S106 funding available in Sparkbrook. Councillor Hussain confirmed there had been no S106 monies in the ward for some time, properties had been built by BMHT but as this was an 'arm' of the council, it did not have S106 attached.
- Friends of Farm Park advised that the Group had funding in place and plans drawn up to enhance the park, with a contractor ready to undertake the work. The group was also able to pay for insurance. However, when BCC had been contacted with this information the Group had been advised by the council that all work had to be undertaken through BCC. The work proposed by BCC, however, was more modest and more expensive than that offered by Friends of Farm Park and there was concern that given the council's financial situation, no work could be afforded. The meeting was advised that the Landscape Practice Group was responsible for work to parks but Mike Hinton asked that the plans be forwarded to him for him to consult with Landscape Practice and progress improvements to Farm Park. Working with the community was the way forward.
- Rats, Farm Park, Dearman Road entrance & bushes, Sampson Road – pest control had been out to the park but if problem persisted a repeat visit could be arranged.
- Signage requesting people not feed the birds in Farm Park to be investigated.
- Tree officer had been contacted re damage to bushes by felled tree. Further contact to be made to get issue resolved. Trees for Birmingham were currently planting new trees for the city council.
- Goal posts – these had been removed to assist the ground to level but were not fit to be returned to the park. Equipment could be replaced by working with Birmingham Open Spaces Forum to raise funds and the Friends of Farm Park Group was encouraged to contact Mike Hinton so that

they could work together on improving the park.

- Dog fouling – in response to reports of a particular issue in Farm Park, Mike Hinton undertook to contact the dog warden.

Councillor Majid Mahmood, Cabinet Member for Environment explained his role and responsibilities including parks and open spaces and made the following points –

- Funding for parks was limited. S106 monies were relied on but unfortunately none was available in Sparkbrook. Maintenance budget across the city was £90k and therefore repairs were only undertaken where that was an imminent safety risk. A sum of money had been given to BOSF so assistance could be provided to Friends of Parks Groups to bid for grants etc.
- In response to concerns around waste collection and recycling, meeting advised the MHRC would be in the ward on 1 March at Long Street and 13/3 at Albion Street. There was some discussion around locations, and it was agreed to change a location to the Anderton Road Islamic Centre & Mosque car park. Mosque offered facilities to MRHC staff and to assist publicising the location.
- Love Your Environment teams were in the ward twice per month to clear rubbish/fly tipping but this could not be maintained and the community, faith groups, housing associations needed to work with the council to help educate residents and work with litter picking groups whose work was invaluable.
- In line with government legislation for all Local Authorities, a food waste collection service would be delivered from 2026, subsidised by government for 2 years. This would assist with reductions in rubbish but more needed to be done to educate residents in some areas to increase recycling rates.
- Additional recycling bins could be provided on request.
- Information packs for each ward were being created and would be circulated via councillors.
- Christmas collection services had been altered as overtime payments had been refused by the Commissioners. The Tyseley incinerator was closed Christmas/Boxing day and therefore collections had to be moved to accommodate this. It was acknowledged that collections had been missed in the ward and waste was collected in some instances over recycling. Residents said that more communication should have been provided about the changes as not all residents had access to the website. This was acknowledged by Councillor Mahmood who added that lessons had been learnt. Councillor Hussain said that some residents had experienced a month of missed recycling collections.
- In response to a query regarding what action could be taken to learn from wards where recycling rates were high the meeting was advised that education was key, especially in areas with a high transient population. Community groups, faith groups and schools were important in reaching large numbers of people, as well as more residents engaging with litter picking groups to keep their area clean.

- Councillor Hussain asked if a form of letter could be provided by the council to litter picking groups to validate their authenticity when trying to recruit volunteers/educate. Councillor Mahmood undertook to investigate. Litter picking groups could be provided with equipment, jackets, blue sacks and a contact for collection.

4. Green Square Accord – discussion about services on offer – apology from Thieba Bibi

5. AOB

- Request for update on notes from previous meeting on future agenda
- Kier walkabout – Sergeant Hamilton undertook to take part in a walk about with councillors and Kier representative.
- Friends of Spark Green Park was now constituted and working on the park.
- National Trust project in ward aiming to plant 2000 blossom & fruit trees and were looking for schools, groups etc to take part
- Community litter pick – Anderton Road Mosque, 28th January
- Next MHRC 25th January Sampson Road
- Project Turn Around West Midlands – Amer Khan advised the project that worked with sex workers was aiming to do out-reach work on the Stratford Road, but other locations could also be included. Farm Park had been noted but exact hot spots details were needed and residents were asked to contact Amer with information. Sergeant Hamilton also undertook to speak to Amer. Residents suggested the project look at Long Street, Braithwaite Road, Sparkhill Park, Kyrwicks Lane.

ACTIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS MADE	WHO	BY WHEN
1. Crime data relevant to Sparkbrook and local crime figures	1. Sgt Hamilton	1. Next meeting
2. Student projects details to Friends of Farm Park group and Sampson Road Residents Group	2. Sgt Hamilton	2. asap

3. Plans for Farm Park	3. Friends of Farm Park to send their plans to Mike Hinton to check & forward to Landscape Practice Grp to progress	3. asap
4. Signs requesting people not feed birds to be investigated and if available displayed in Farm Park	4. Mike Hinton	4. asap
5. Damaged bushes in Farm Park, caused by felled tree	5. Mike Hinton to contact tree officer	5. asap
6. Dog Fouling, Farm Park	6. Mike Hinton to contact dog warden	6. asap