

WARD END WARD FORUM MEETING NOTES**Friday 30th September 2022****9.30am – 11.00am****Unity Hubb****St Margaret's Church Centre****St Margaret's Road****Ward End****B8 2BA****Present:****Cllr Bushra Bi****Officers:**

James Carless, East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Team

Beverly Edmead – Community Governance Team

Special Guest Speakers:

Liam Byrne MP – Hodge Hill Constituency

Cllr Liz Clements, Cabinet Member, Transport

Attendees: 15

1. Welcome and Introductions

Following introductions, Cllr Bi welcomed everyone to the meeting

2. Notice of Recording:

Residents were advised that members of the press and/or public may record and/or take photographs of the meeting.

3. Road Safety Special - Issues and Concerns

Residents welcomed Liam Byrne MP, Hodge Hill Constituency and Cllr Liz Clements, Cabinet Member, Transport.

Liam Byrne MP briefly updated residents on the ongoing transformational changes taking place across the district, but particularly so in Ward End Ward, which was right at the heart of the HS2 programme and would also include its headquarters. He also chaired the East Birmingham Strategy Programme, which oversees the regeneration of the East Birmingham Corridor, and included much of the Hodge Hill Constituency.

As part of the HS2 programme, approx. 3,000 jobs were expected to be created, so there would be employment and training opportunities for local people.

Other major projects included investment in new/existing cycle routes and lanes to provide better connectivity to other cycle routes; much needed improvements to Ward End Park, including the renovation of Dolphin Women's Centre.

Mr Byrne added that he would like to see the area around St. Margaret's Church transformed into a village green – a safe space where residents could also gather without the worry of traffic, which would make a difference to that part of the ward.

Cllr Liz Clements, Cabinet Member for Transport gave a brief outline of her role and responsibilities as the Cabinet Member and was aware of many of the traffic issues in the ward, which sadly were common in every ward across the city.

Cllr Clements advised of the following:-

- School parking and obstructive parking were amongst the biggest concerns across the whole city. Efforts to tackle/reduce school parking through a number of initiatives, including Mode Shift Stars, Safer Travel; walking buses and car-free streets – all required the co-operation of the schools and parents. Police support also helped to enforce the car free streets initiatives and obstructive parking issues, however, it was unrealistic to expect their presence at every school during the school run.
- Speeding/dangerous and/or obstructive parking and poor driving practices had significantly increased in all wards.
- Encouraging the increase in use of public transport, cycling and walking (i.e. school run) and generally reducing the need to use cars for short journeys was needed along with changing the mindset that a car was essential for everyday journeys.
- A reduction in air pollution was necessary to help those suffering from severe respiratory health issues as well as improve air quality. Discussions had started regarding installing air quality monitors in schools following an increase in childhood asthma.
- A significant change in driver attitude to parking and speeding was needed as there were far too many cars on the city's roads, insufficient residential parking spaces to accommodate the number of cars per household and many of these roads were simply too narrow to cope with the volume of cars being driven on them daily.

Residents advised of the following concerns:-

- Excessive speeding /dangerous driving was the main concern particularly on Washwood Heath Road. A petition had been submitted calling for action following a number of road traffic accidents – several of which were fatal.
A more proactive approach including the installation of CCTV/Average Speed Cameras was needed – traffic calming measures should not be based on the number of fatalities as it currently was.
- Drews Lane – drivers continuing to ignore the 20mph speed limit – more proactive and robust enforcement action was needed. Clearer signage regarding the road markings and right-hand turns were also needed as the existing ones were being ignored. A petition had also been submitted for this.

- School parking continued to be real problem in the ward; residents living in close proximity to the schools were regularly abused by parents blocking them in, obstructive parking and the general poor behaviour and attitude of drivers. There were six schools in the ward, and all experienced the same issues. Staff also faced abuse from parents when trying to manage the parking issues. Ward End Primary was particularly problematic – residents living in Penley Grove were constantly blocked in and had their cars wilfully damaged by abusive parents when asked not to block the road.

A resident who was reliant on assisted travel advised of the difficulties and abuse faced daily from parents, and that the minibus was not able to access her property due to the obstructive parking. The police were called on a regular basis, but could not always attend, and calls to the Head Teacher for help had fallen on deaf ears.

Nansen Primary School – a school child had narrowly escaped being hit by a speeding car. Physical barriers were now in place, but parents/drivers seemed oblivious to the problems they were creating.

A long-term solution was needed to tackling school parking; many schools were keen to introduce measures and appropriate steps to help reduce the problem but were often faced with obstructive/abusive parents who felt that driving their child/ren to school was the only way to keep them safe.

- Disabled bays and parking permits being abused – action needed to tackle this.
- Shortage of suitable available parking spaces on Washwood Heath Road which was a busy shopping area. Speeding/dangerous driving and obstructive parking along Washwood Heath Road made it difficult to park safely; parking on residential side roads had increased as a result, much to the annoyance and frustration of residents living on these roads.

Responding to the comments made, both Liam Byrne and Cllr Clements explained that Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) was being lobbied for Average Speed Cameras, however cameras alone would not solve the problem – a range of traffic calming measures and change in driver behaviour/practices, along with support from partner agencies like the police and the willingness of local schools to tackle parking issues would also be needed.

Residents could also become more proactive by getting involve/setting up local Speed Watch and Street Watch Groups with the help of the local police team.

Everyone would need to work together to help make a difference.

Cllr Bi advised that she had been in touch with the respective School Heads and suggested that a 'Round Table Summit' with the schools, police, highways, parent governors and other relevant partners was arranged to see how the school parking/safety issues could be properly addressed. The thoughts and concerns of school pupils regarding road safety to and from school must also be part of the discussions.

Bringing the discussion to a close, Cllr Bi and residents thanked Liam Byrne MP and Cllr

Clements for their attendance and participation in the meeting.

4. Other Local News and Updates

Cllr Bi advised of the following:-

- She would be contacting all the relevant partners to set up the 'Round Table Summit/School Safety Committee as discussed.
- Residents interested in getting involved with Street-Watch or Speed-Watch groups invited to contact Cllr Bi to find out more.
- More volunteers/litter picking groups needed to help with keeping areas of the ward tidy – interested residents encouraged to contact Cllr Bi.

Ward End Park House

James Carless, East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Team briefly advised of the refurbishment to the building to bring it back into use as a community hub for local services and community/voluntary groups. Parking around premises remains a problem; discussions were ongoing to see how this could be resolved.

Several residents suggested that the disused garages near the premises should be demolished to create much need parking facilities for building users. Residents also advised of ongoing issues regarding the misuse of storage facilities on the site by the current occupiers.

Mr Carless agreed to raise these issues with the Education Department who owned the premises.

Other Issues

Former DWP Office – Chair of Ward End Neighbourhood Forum had raised concerns regarding the future of the vacant site. It was understood that Council Officers had started proceedings to take ownership of the site, but there was no update or confirmation of the latest position. The matter had also been raised with Liam Byrne's office.

The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWs)

Yasser Khan, Community Outreach Worker, The Active Wellbeing Society briefly advised of their work with residents/communities to help provide and support activities and events on a local neighbourhood/streets basis.

Residents interested in finding out more/getting involved should contact Yasser via email Yasser.khan@theaws.org

There were no other updates

5. Date and Theme of Next Meeting

To be agreed and residents notified.

Cllr Bi thanked residents and officers for their attendance and participation.

Meeting closed at 11:00am