

SHARD END FORUM MEETING – ACTION NOTES	
WARD: Shard End	DATE: Monday 15 th January 2024
VENUE: Shard End Wellbeing Centre, Packington Avenue	START/FINISH TIMES: 6.30pm – 8.00pm
COUNCILLOR: Ian Ward	NOs OF ATTENDEES: 7
OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Nadeem Aziz – Neighbourhood Action Coordinator, Shard End and Bromford & Hodge Hill Wards Sgt Benjamin – Bordesley Green Police Team on behalf of Shard End Police Team Helen Creppy – Housing Officer, Shard End and Bromford & Hodge Hill Wards Beverly Edmead – Community Governance Team Apologies for Absence Debbie Coulson – Project Manager, Early Years Intervention Pilot Lead Shard End Police Team	VISITING SPEAKER(S): None
CURRENT WARD ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES:	
1. Cost of Living Crisis 2. Inclusive/Healthy Living 3. Road Safety – including speeding/obstructive parking 4. Protecting and Maintaining the Green Open Spaces 5. Cleaner Streets – rubbish/fly-tipping/litter	

MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING INCLUDING LOCAL CONCERNS:

1. Notice of Recording

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

2. Shard End Police Team Update

Cllr Ward and residents welcomed Sgt Benjamin, Bordesley Green Neighbourhood Police Team, who was attending the meeting on behalf of officers from Shard End Neighbourhood Police Team. Sgt Benjamin advised of the following:-

- A reduction in total crime by 15% compared to this time last year – crime in the ward reported to date was 2,910. Youth violence was down by 16%; vehicle crime up by 16% - this included theft of and theft from vehicles; a reduction in robbery by 8%, however theft from person had increased by 33%.
- Increased patrols had been planned/would continue to be carried out in hotspot areas following concerns raised; several special operations had also been organised/taken place following these concerns raised with the Senior Leadership Team.

A Special Operation had taken place in November – 4 stolen vehicles were successfully recovered during the operation, and in response to residents' questions regarding the frequency of these operations, Sgt Benjamin explained that discussions were ongoing to ensure that at least one was carried out monthly – increasing to two if there was a specific need. However, the dates and frequency remained the responsibility of the Senior Leadership Team led by Inspector Beach, and the budgets available to bring the necessary specialist teams like Traffic Officers as well as local officers together as paying overtime was no longer a viable option given the financial constraints and challenges facing all public services.

Giving details of Operation Hercules which took place in November, Sgt Benjamin explained that local intelligence/knowledge of offenders helped to provide useful information to specialist teams/officers which helped to bring successful outcomes.

A number of offenders living locally had been identified along with several from outside the ward who had coming in to commit acts of criminality.

- Staffing levels for the local team remained low, however every effort continued to be made to provide an effective and reassuring service to residents.
- SpeedWatch Activities – the local team would continue to support these with interested residents/community and voluntary groups

Responding to residents' issues and concerns regarding the recent road traffic fatality in Mackadown Lane which involved a quad bike, Sgt Benjamin acknowledged these continued to be a concern, especially as the rider had little or no regard for other road users and

pedestrians. Residents should continue to report the nuisance, giving as much details as possible.

- Other Issues and Concerns

Shard End Police Station Closure – residents sought clarity on the timetable for closure of this and other stations earmarked for possible closure. Sgt Benjamin explained closure had been proposed for June/July; however, this was dependent on the suitability of other buildings and locations – ‘stress-testing’ of alternative sites had to be carried out to ensure it met the needs of officers, accommodating patrol cars and other equipment, as well as being in close proximity to the patch covered by the respective neighbourhood teams. There was no firm or set date agreed unless a suitable alternative was found and the decision for closure of police stations remained the responsibility of the Police & Crime Commissioner.

Cllr Ward advised that he understood the annual running costs of the station to be approx. £60,000 and that he had received an email from WMP Chief Finance Officer advising of the backlog of outstanding repairs and maintenance to Shard End Police Station which was approx. £500m.

Residents felt that a full breakdown of the repair/maintenance costs would be useful, and a shared space/community hub in the ward with local partner agencies should be considered – The Shard Library would be ideal as it was a central location in the ward.

Sgt Benjamin explained that other issues like the provision of interview rooms, custody suite and cyber security facilities also had to be considered. Residents would continue to be kept informed.

Further concerns were also expressed by residents regarding the premises being purchased and converted to a HMO/Exempt/Supported accommodation by an unscrupulous buyer should it be sold on the open market without restrictions/conditions being placed on the property.

Residents advised of the following:-

- Speeding continued to be a problem across the ward – more proactive action was needed to tackle the issue. Longmeadow Crescent, Shard End Crescent and Packington Avenue were regularly subjected to excessive speeding. The grass verges on these roads were also damaged/destroyed due to constant pavement parking.
- Heath Way Shops – ongoing concerns with fly tipping, overt drug use/dealing being carried out and shoplifting – poor lighting and a lack of CCTV cameras contributed to the problems and increased residents fear of becoming a victim of crime.

Sgt Benjamin advised that the local team would continue to support Speedwatch activities with interested residents/community and voluntary groups as well as carrying out proactive patrols with traffic colleagues where appropriate. A Proactive Management Plan had been developed for the parade of shops at Heath Way and other problem areas of the ward so that resources could be deployed where it was most needed during the shifts; Sgt Benjamin agreed to raise residents further concerns with Sgt Choudhury.

Residents felt that Speedwatch activities did little or nothing to change driver behaviour as poor driving and excessive speeding continued. Greater efforts must be given to fines, prosecutions and robust enforcement action, and regular updates shared with the community if trust and confidence in the police was to be regained and residents knew that their concerns were taken seriously, and information acted upon. Several residents added that law abiding drivers making an error tended to be the ones caught and prosecuted by the system, yet serial offenders seemed to go unpunished time after time.

Further frustrations were expressed that there appeared to be a lack of effort and commitment from the local police team to engage with residents/community and voluntary groups in a meaningful way, including attending their meetings and joint site walkabouts rather than Street Watch and Speedwatch activities; and that there seemed to be more focussed on working/meeting with partner agencies instead of local people.

Acknowledging the comments made, Sgt Benjamin advised that the new Hodge Hill Constituency Inspector Jonathan Beach was fully committed to doing things differently at a local level – a more proactive approach to enforcement; sharing information with the community as well as rebuilding the relationship, confidence and trust were all essential to successful neighbourhood policing.

Cllr Ward and residents thanked Sgt Benjamin for his attendance on behalf of the local police team.

3. Local Ward Updates and Outstanding Actions

Residents were advised of the following:-

- Mobile Household Recycling Centre would be back in the ward on Tuesday 23 Jan, 7am - 12pm – Longmeadow Crescent and Monday 12th Feb, 7am – 12pm at The Shardway
- Heath Way – pedestrian crossing suggestion/request raised with Alan Porter, Local Engineering Manager, who had agreed to look into the request and advise accordingly.

- Faulty Driver Feedback Sign – concerns had been raised with Alan Porter for further investigation.
- MMR Immunisation – a significant increase in the number of infections/cases across the city; parents/carers must be encouraged to take have their child/children immunised to halt the spread of the disease, which was highly contagious as well as dangerous to those with underlying health conditions. The conspiracy theories being circulated regarding the vaccinations were without scientific or supporting evidence, however, this had resulted in a reduction in immunisation and a detrimental effect on public health in communities. Residents with concerns should contact their GP, Pharmacy or local public services for advice and information. Cllr Ward added that local Ward Councillors were also happy to offer guidance and support to residents regarding the issue.
- **Neighbourhood Action Coordinator Update**
Nadeem Aziz advised of the following:-
 - Ongoing work with local groups and residents interested in setting up groups or getting involved on an individual basis
 - Regular Steering Group meetings with partner agencies, community and voluntary groups – all keen to make a difference to their respective local neighbourhoods, however the lack of resident volunteers remained a concern.
 - Concerns had been raised with the relevant officers regarding the withdrawal of the annual grant for Neighbourhood Forums; public liability insurance for the annual Remembrance Day Parade and a lack of HLB (Housing Liaison Board) meetings.
- **Early Years Intervention Pilot Programme**
Copies of the first survey analysis carried out since the pilot had commenced were circulated to residents at the meeting as Officers had been unable to attend.
Several concerns were raised regarding the findings – these included:-
 - how many people took part in the survey
 - was the survey/questionnaire carried out solely with service users or was it open to a wider audience/community
 - did service users choose not to participate with the survey – if so, how many
 - the cost of carrying out the survey and was it cost effective, given that the findings appeared to be based on the views of approx. 120 participants, and what was the cost provided by each partner agency/service provider
 - how were the services provided determined – they were adult focussed with little or no focus on young people and their needs
 - would later opening hours/weekend opening be considered to accommodate those residents who were unable to access the services during the current operational hours, but would benefit from help/advice/support etc

Cllr Ward briefly explained that aim of the Early Intervention and Prevention pilot was to provide a 'one-stop shop/community hub' of essential services, advice and information for the local community to access without having to travel outside the ward. A timetable of

services and the days/times they were on-site at The Shard was freely available. Currently the service was only provided during the working week Monday – Friday, however weekend working and later opening hours were requests that were currently being considered.

Following further discussion, it was suggested that officers from the Early Intervention and Prevention team should be invited to the next Ward Forum meeting give an update/ respond to concerns raised.

Housing Issues

Helen Creppy, Housing Officer advised of ongoing partnership work with Shard End police team and officers in neighbouring Solihull to tackle ongoing anti-social behaviour and acts of criminality from young people local to both areas.

The Housing Liaison Board (HLB) had not met for a while due to staffing issues, however, it was hoped this would be resolved in the near future.

Residents also reminded to contact the local Housing Team regarding any housing related issues or concerns.

4. Other Local Updates

Harlequin Surgery – residents advised of the recent move by the practice to move to an online system for making appointments from 29th January. Not every resident had access to the internet or felt confident/able to do so and felt the move was discriminatory.

Action: Cllr Ward agreed to contact the Surgery/CCG to find out what support arrangements were in place for residents unable to access the service.

Longmeadow Crescent – ongoing problems with the bins at the block of flats owned by Citizen Housing Association – had been reported directly to organisation a few weeks ago.

Shard End Communities Neighbourhood Forum – Carl Saunders, Chair briefly advised that more volunteers/members were needed to help support the work and aims of the Forum. A meeting would be arranged to seek residents/members views on moving the Forum forward – the time, date, and location to be circulated in due course.

5. Any Other Business

Birmingham Airport Community Trust Fund

Local resident Keith Hulin briefly advised of his interest in the administration of the Fund and had been in the Airport website to find out more. Details of the annual funds were available up to March 2022, however the details for March 2023 were not yet available.

Proposed Council Tax Increase from 2024

Cllr Ward explained that the annual increase to Council Tax was capped by central government to 4.99%. Local Authorities had to apply to central government for a special dispensation to increase the rate above the capped figure and in doing so, had to demonstrate they done everything possible to save money and reduce unnecessary spending/costs.

There were no other issues raised.

Cllr Ward thanked residents for their attendance and participation.

Meeting closed at 7.55pm