

## NORTH EDGBASTON WARD MEETING NOTES

<b>WARD:</b> North Edgbaston	<b>DATE:</b> 13 <sup>th</sup> February 2024
<b>VENUE:</b> City Road Methodist Church, City Road B16 0NL	<b>START/FINISH TIMES:</b> 6.30pm – 8.25pm
<b>COUNCILLORS</b> Marcus Bernasconi & Sharon Thompson	<b>NOs OF ATTENDEES:</b> 18
<b>OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:</b> Mark Wolstencroft, Environmental Services Wiqas Maqsood & Laksmi Kerrison, Private Rented Sector Team Pat Whyte, Community Development & Support Officer Kay Thomas, Community Governance Manager	<b>APOLOGIES</b> – apology received from Police sergeants

<b>CURRENT WARD ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cleaner North Edgbaston</li> <li>2. Greener North Edgbaston</li> <li>3. Safer North Edgbaston</li> <li>4. Inclusive North Edgbaston</li> </ol>

<b>MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING INCLUDING LOCAL CONCERNS:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>1. Welcome &amp; Notice of Recording</b>  Councillor Bernasconi welcomed all to the meeting and advised that members of the public/press could record the meeting and take photographs except where there were exempt or confidential items. </li> <li> <b>2. Traveller Encampments</b>  Mark Wolstencroft gave an overview of traveller encampments in the ward over the past 12 months, 2 on Summerfield Park and 2 at the Reservoir. He outlined the process for removing encampments from city council owned land, working with the police via issue of notice. Travellers were given 2 day's notice to leave park/housing land and up to 7 days from industrial sites. The meeting was reminded that the council had a duty of care and had to </li> </ol>

complete a welfare assessment so could not move the encampments immediately. Once a notice had been issued the council could move the travellers from the land but it did not stop a return visit. This could only be done by a police notice and application to the court. The more reports received from the community, more data could be collected, and better action could be taken.

In response to questions regarding transit camps, meeting was advised that the site in Nechells would be available end of February and police could then serve a notice to send travellers to the site if spaces available or if they refused they would have to leave the city. Other sites were being considered to provide further transit camps.

Councillor Thompson asked about police involvement and the meeting was advised that police became involved if there was crime associated with the encampment but this was a discretionary power and involvement was dependant on resources, other crimes at the time etc. Thresholds for the police for issues around eg ASB were different and therefore complaints about quad bikes might not meet their threshold for action. Mark undertook, however, to take this up with the police and to obtain clarity on thresholds.

Residents stated that security at the parks was an issue and in particular the gates at the Tower Ballroom site were not locked and therefore travellers had easy access. The dangerous use of quad bikes was a serious safety concern to residents using the parks and reservoir, especially for children. Mark and Councillor Bernasconi undertook to raise the issue of quad bikes with the local police team and park security with the parks team.

### **3. Update on Selective Licensing Scheme & Work in the Edgbaston Ward**

Laksmi & Wiqas provided an overview of the Selective Licensing Scheme across 25 wards, including North Edgbaston, implemented as a way to ensure properties met certain conditions and to assist in dealing with issues associated with multiple occupied housing. The licensing schemes for other properties not covered in the selective licensing scheme - HMO's mandatory licence & additional licensing for smaller properties – were also explained. It was noted that exempt accommodation was not covered by the licensing schemes. From June 2023 it had become an offence to rent a property without a valid licence.

In North Edgbaston 1473 licence applications had been submitted and 691 issued for additional licensing and 481 selective licences. Reactive and proactive inspections were taking place, and it was the expectation that 95% of properties would be visited and 100% of all complained about properties. In response to questions the meeting was advised that as part of the licensing conditions a landlord must provide sufficient provision for tenants to dispose of waste. Larger bins could be provided, and assistance given to waste on property/gardens and removal by the landlord.

With regard to the issue of Airbnb properties, these were exempt from licensing provided the tenancy agreement was less than 90 days. However, the problems associated with properties in residential roads in the ward advertised as Airbnb properties was noted and Laksmi undertook to raise with planning officers.

Residents expressed concern regarding exempt properties as it was felt these caused many problems associated with rented properties in the ward and North Edgbaston appeared to have a disproportionate number of those properties causing ASB, parking problems and a transient population. The meeting was advised that large HMOs had to have planning approval and the decision could take into account numbers of existing properties in an area. ASB was part of the tenancy agreements that tenants had with their RSL and could be dealt with via that. Councillor Bernasconi asked residents to report any specific issues/properties to the councillors. Laksmi undertook to take specific addresses at the conclusion of the meeting.

The private rented sector team email box could also be used for reporting – [prs@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:prs@birmingham.gov.uk)

#### **4. Councillors Updates/AOB**

##### **Edgbaston Reservoir and Tower Ballroom Site**

Residents raised their considerable concern that the Tower Ballroom site had appeared for sale on Right Move without any communication with the LNR Management Committee or local community and given past undertakings it had been surprising that the community had not featured in the council's plans. Had there been some communication with the Management Committee, that had spent many voluntary hours and much effort discussing with officers and making plans, positive assistance would have been offered. The volunteers working via the Management Committee and others had provided lines of communication to city council officers but despite this had been repeatedly left out of the loop, information had not been shared and therefore the community had again not been involved in discussions regarding the future.

Reference was made to the many groups using the reservoir and its mental health benefits but the lack of communication with those groups was totally unsatisfactory. Also, it was noted that although fencing had been erected around the reservoir the rowing club gate was left open allowing access.

Councillor Bernasconi shared the frustrations of the LNR Management Committee and other volunteers regarding the lack of committee meetings and the handling of the marketing of the sale of the Tower Ballroom site. As soon as he had been advised on 30 January, he had immediately asked the information be shared with the community. He acknowledged that the Development Brief had also not been shared. He added that details of short-listed bidders would be shared with the LNR Management Committee. BCC would maintain the freehold for the Lodge included in the sale as there was

an expectation that the successful bidder would have the resources to renovate but not for commercial use.

Councillor Thompson undertook to take concerns back to officers as promises had not been fulfilled and considering the Chief Executives commitment, when she attended a previous ward meeting, that communications in respect of the Reservoir would improve, suggested the LNR Management Committee email her with their concerns. In response to questions and suggestions, Councillor Thompson said she would advocate for full consultation prior to the plans being submitted to planning committee and suggested an event be arranged for the developers to speak to the community. She undertook to look into this.

ACTIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS MADE	WHO	BY WHEN
1. Traveller encampments - Quad bikes in parks & park security  2. Edgbaston Reservoir	1. Cllr Bernasconi & Mark Wolstencroft to raise with Police team & parks team & arrange mtg for cllrs/police. 2. Cllrs to look into holding event for developers to speak to community.	1. asap