

NEWTOWN WARD MEETING NOTES

WARD: Newtown	DATE: 14 th March 2023
VENUE: Wallace Lawler Centre, Wheeler Street B19 2EL	START/FINISH TIMES: 6.30pm – 8pm
COUNCILLOR Ziaul Islam	NOs OF ATTENDEES: 23
OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Evangeline Cripps, Tenant Participation Officer John Hindley, Local Highway Engineer Sergeant Mark McKay, West Midlands Police Pat Whyte, Community Development & Support Officer Kay Thomas, Community Governance Manager	

MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING:

1. Welcome

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

2. Police Update

Sergeant McKay introduced himself as the new sergeant responsible for the Aston/Newtown area. He gave a brief overview of the crime rates for the area including the lowest youth violence and use of knives figures since 2019 and

the highest crime detection rates for 2 years. However, motor vehicle thefts were the highest for 3 years. Force priorities were – serious youth violence, burglary and car crime. Following the appointment of a new Chief Constable a new operating model would see Birmingham West & East areas merging and closer working with response teams and CID.

The team was currently working overtime in response to robbery crimes, especially around student accommodation and had arranged the refresh of double yellow line markings around schools and organised a pop-up station.

Residents expressed concern regarding the lack of police patrols on local streets and in particular around the Stainsby Avenue area where groups congregated around the bin stores. Sergeant McKay said he would ask patrols to pay attention to that area.

3. Highway update on Guild Croft and speed reduction measures

John Hindley, Local Engineer, reported on the priorities for local highway budget spend which was £10k per annum, as follows –

- Vehicle speed activated sign by Nishkam School
- Farm Street junction parking issues – installation of bollards to protect crossing points
- Crossing facility by school too expensive but use of other funding such as from the Clean Air Zone could be amalgamated with the highway budget

In response to a suggestion from Councillor Islam, John advised that other priorities could be put forward for costing and then a decision made at a future meeting. Councillor Islam undertook to pass the information to community groups and look at alternative sources of funding.

4. Update from Tenant Participation Officer

Evangeline Cripps gave a brief overview of budgets/projects as follows –

- Newtown had an Environmental Capital budget of £57,989
- There was a £16,728 underspend for further projects
- Projects eligible for funding had to create a new asset or enhance existing, last longer than a year and utilise housing land for the benefit of the community not an individual.
- Current projects included fencing in various locations, hard standing at Great Hampton Row, bin area & hard standing in Westhorpe Grove and gates at Scholefield Tower
- All projects had been raised by residents, caretakers or housing officers
- Tenant Participation Officers also undertook walkabouts with HLB members and it was suggested that the Newtown HLB be resurrected.

In response to queries regarding Gerrard Close fencing the meeting was advised that a Love Your Streets Day was planned and the project would be completed when the rubbish had been removed.

A local resident asked that consideration be given to installing a gate in Gerrard Close as part of the fencing project as currently there was an open space and this was encouraging rubbish dumping. Evangeline undertook to investigate this request and to contact the contractors. She stated that the underspend would be carried forward.

5. Councillor Updates (Newtown swimming pool/community centre)

Councillor Islam provided the following updates –

- a) Community Chest - £10k funding to be used in the ward for community spend
- b) Newtown Community Centre – reference made to interest from a local group in taking on the community centre. Meeting arranged to discuss further, and any new information would be reported to a future meeting.
- c) Newtown Swimming Pool – Pat Whyte reported that there were no direct plans regarding the Pool, but Our Future City Plan was due to go before Cabinet for approval and Councillor Islam had ensured that Newtown featured in the Plan. Planners had agreed to attend future ward meetings with updates and ideas around this could feature in the Ward Plan to then be fed into wider plans
- d) MHRC – every household would receive a bulky waste collection once per year, details to be circulated
- e) Former Nacro building – due to be advertised for commercial rent and interest expressed by charity As-Suffa. The charity ran a number of support services including a food bank, soup kitchen, night shelter and work with various partners. Currently located in Burlington Street anyone wishing to access a service could contact Councillor Islam.
- f) Visit to Perry Barr depot arranged to see processes etc and ask questions regarding waste collection & recycling. Community Forums would be invited.
- g) Thanks to the Community Forums for organising a food bank in Newtown

6. Update from Chairs of Burberry & Central Newtown Neighbourhood Forums

- a) Burbury Park Community Forum chair reported that funding had been secured to pay for venue hire and production of information flyers which had now been delivered. Meetings were being held at Pannel Croft and fly tipping remained a priority. The Forum was working with residents but needed enforcement and education to prevent rubbish dumping rather than repeatedly clearing it. Parks also needed a clean-up so were ready for use.

Love Your Streets had already helped but more was needed.

The vision for the Forum was to involve the wider community and bring the diverse cultures of the area together so there were plans to produce information flyers in various languages. The group had now registered as a litter picking group so would be receiving their own equipment and have monthly meetings to cover the 6 streets in the Forum area and encourage residents to come and help.

- b) Central Neighbourhood Forum Chair reported that currently she had no other volunteers and desperately needed more residents to get involved. The main issue was litter in Hospital Street & Guthrie Close which she had arranged to be cleared but then returned. She was arranging a Love Your Street Day and hot spot areas had been sent to the team to include in a Love Your Environment Day. Details of when the MHRC would be in the area needed to be supplied as soon as possible and it was suggested it be sited on Porchester Drive/Wheeler Street.

Councillor Islam thanked the Chairs of the Neighbourhood Forums for their hard work and dedication and said that good progress was being made.

7. Ward Planning (Be Bold Crowd Funding)

Pat Whyte explained the Crowd Funding process and how groups could be helped to match fund allocated funding. She also referred to the ward planning process and that resident's views and ideas were needed at a specific ward planning meeting. Any suggestions could be forwarded to Councillor Islam separately.

8. Resident Updates

Resident made reference to a damaged gate in Ventnor Avenue that was leading to fly tipping. Councillor Islam undertook to take the details at the conclusion of the meeting.