

JOINT SPARKBROOK & BALSALL HEATH EAST & BALSALL HEATH WEST WARD MEETING NOTES

WARDS: Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East & Balsall Heath West	DATE: 11 September 2019
VENUE: Sparkbrook Health & Community Centre, Grantham Road	START/FINISH TIMES: 7pm – 9.10pm
COUNCILLORS Shabrana Hussain, Mohammed Azim & Zhor Malik	NOs OF ATTENDEES: 28
OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Dr Justin Varney, Director of Public Health Mark Croxford, Head of Environmental Health Michael Chipman, Assistant Service Manager, Street Scene Sergeant Rigby, West Midlands Police PCSO Poppy Merrick, West Midlands Police Kay Thomas, Community Governance Manager	Apology from Roger Godsiff M.P.

MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING:

1. Public Health Update

Dr Varney referred to the public health consultation that had been discussed at a previous meeting and a request from this meeting for an update. A number of health priorities had been considered and responses to the consultation had agreed with the majority. The least supported was the Commonwealth Games legacy and a strong concern that not enough was being done on mental health. From this meeting there had been concern regarding the lack of engagement and he had asked those services that he commissioned – drug/alcohol/sexual health services – to come to future meetings to have a conversation about their services, how they engaged and involved local people.

With regard to some of the highlighted priorities for the wards - infant mortality, child obesity & respiratory illnesses - work was being done around maternity services take-up, changes to the high street economy in terms of fast food outlets and healthy eating generally.

Research was needed into the reasons for high numbers of people suffering respiratory disease when levels of smoking were lower than average in the community.

The council was working to deliver neighbourhood networks which were intervention/innovative projects for people 50+ commissioned in this area by Accord Housing and Dr Varney undertook to ask the appropriate officers to make contact with the councillors.

In response to questions regarding lessons learned from the consultation, Dr Varney said that the service needed to be better at articulating what it was doing, address the gap in mental health support that had been identified, work around the influence on the community by activities in other parts of the world and generally that the consultation needed to be better and include input from all sections of the community. He stressed that actions needed to be more extreme to make a meaningful change as the issues facing the city had remained the same for a considerable number of years. In view of this there was no 'quick fix' but in the meantime healthy living needed to be encouraged and use of other public health funded services. Emphasis needed to be on bigger projects to effect long term change and the consultation had highlighted that the service was not as good as it should be. Dr Varney said he was attending ward meetings and meeting with community groups to engage with the community and had secured funding to commission focus groups. However people were not engaging and therefore a different approach was required. It was suggested that better sharing of data would assist as the city council only worked with data it already had. To this end it was proposed to organise a data hack so a public health data analyst could come to share data. Dr Varney welcomed the idea and said he would commit to that and attend if possible. With regard to questions on infant mortality rates Dr Varney spoke about a video being rolled out to GP practices regarding family tree/family history factors to consider before having a baby.

Residents referred to childhood obesity levels and that whilst the area had good parks they were not well equipped or maintained.

Residents said that this was something that had been raised previously and sought Dr Varney's help to bring about improvements. The meeting was advised that Public Health had recently appointed an officer to advise on parks from a public health point of view and said he would ensure that she attended a future meeting.

Residents referred to the numbers of volunteers in the area willing to work to make a difference but a little officer time and support was required. Residents also needed to be 'listened to' and where in the past officers had come to meetings but there had been no follow up or further discussions. Dr Varney said he was committed to engagement with the community and would ensure officers attended meetings and he would also come back to a future meeting.

In response to questions regard rubbish on the streets the meeting was advised the evidence was weak in relation to the impact on health and that Public Health priorities were in relation to issues that impacted health and reduced life expectancy.

2. Police Update

Sergeant Rigby provided a year on year crime update for both wards which saw a rise overall. This was not a situation limited to this area but a nationwide trend.

Sergeant Rigby then provided the following updates;

- Number of arrests made in connection with burglaries, drug offences, stolen vehicles, ASB and public order offences
- In relation to ASB on Hayden Walk police were working with Business Watch
- Cannabis factory uncovered
- Parking patrols with enforcement officers continuing, tickets issues and vehicles recovered. While patrolling using Fix My Street to report and have rubbish removed.

In response to questions regarding reported increases in police numbers Sergeant Rigby said he hoped that this area would be a priority area but a collaborative approach was needed to tackle crime and the community's input was vital. There was no plan to close the Edward Road police station in the near future although it was on the disposal list.

Residents raised the following;

- Traffic still travelling wrong way along the Ladypool Road one –way system
- Knife crime was a particular issue and the use of Bleed Control Kits and other non-traditional measures was queried.
- What could residents do to help? Thanks extended to the local police team for the work undertaken.

Sergeant Rigby said that a behaviour change was required and there was a need to identify young people at risk. Early intervention was key and working with groups on mentoring schemes etc helped but a better way of identifying those young people at risk was crucial.

A local resident referred to the summer project run by the Ackers Trust but that people had been unaware of it and therefore community engagement needed to improve. Sergeant Rigby welcomed suggestions for circulating information.

To assist the police residents were urged to start up Street Watch groups, Neighbourhood Watch groups and sign up to WMNow.

3. Waste Management Update

Michael Chipman gave an over view of the service, explaining a new way of working had been introduced although it would take some time to catch up. A recruitment process was ongoing and new vehicles had been ordered. The priority was to collect domestic waste. Residents said that the service was currently not good enough as there was a great deal of rubbish not being collected which was encouraging more rats into the area. Crews were not collecting from the Stratford Road despite collecting from roads off the main road and other roads were not collected from in their entirety. The rota system was not working as many as 10 houses were being missed from the round. Residents queried why the area had such an accumulation of rubbish when neighbouring wards did not.

Councillor Malik commented that residents were frustrated with the situation and that following the strike and the introduction of a 5 day week matters were supposed to have improved when in reality the service had been better when the crews worked 4 days per week. Part of Hallam Street had not received a collection for 6 weeks but as other houses on the same street had collections the error could not be computer generated. Councillor Malik said he believed a member of the crew was supposed to report missed collections, fly tipping, black bags etc but this was obviously not working and therefore the system needed reconsidering.

Residents commented that black bags were not being collected but were tagged but due to the high proportion of rented properties and high turn-over of tenants the bags were not dealt with and then they split and rubbish spread over pavements which was not collected by street sweepers so it remained, rotting on the pavements.

Residents acknowledged that there had been cuts to budgets but residents had no recourse to the poor service they were receiving and the environment that was being created by the non-collection of rubbish was having a detrimental impact on the community.

Michael Chipman advised that there were not the resources to send out additional crews to collect missed rubbish and therefore it took time to catch up. He had cleared the Stratford Road personally and then within an hour the black bags had accumulated again. Staff levels were being cut year on year and there were insufficient crews to cover the 5th day of working. He undertook to take up the specific issues raised and to see residents at the conclusion of the meeting. Michael advised residents to email him with any issues at Michael.chipman@birmingham.gov.uk

In response to questions from Councillor Hussain the meeting was advised that litter bins on the highway had been removed to prevent businesses using them for trade waste. Councillor Hussain referred to two clean up groups that undertook regular litter picks in the area

and asked how they could be supported.

Reference made to 2 sheltered housing schemes with 31 flats that had not had a refuse collection for 3 weeks. Michael undertook to take the details at the conclusion of the meeting. It was noted that there were a number of bags dumped in Medlicott Road with addresses visible and that prosecution should be possible. A progress report to a future meeting was requested. Prosecution figures were also requested for a future meeting.

In response to further issues raised Councillor Malik suggested that Michel undertake a walk about with residents to hotspot areas. Michael confirmed he would be happy to do this.

4. Pioneer Ward – Councillor Malik explained the concept and said a further discussion would be arranged for the next meeting

5. AOB

Travellers Encampment Calthorpe Park – Mark Croxford Head of Environmental Health explained the council's responsibilities in respect of travellers and that the council had a duty to look after everyone.

There had been 4 traveller encampments on Calthorpe Park this year and when they moved from the park they had taken up on the public open space opposite so it was acknowledged there had been no relief for residents. Welfare checks had to be carried out and a serious medical emergency had transpired and therefore the travellers had been given seven days to leave on that occasion but on the other 2 occasions they had been given 3 days to move.

An injunction had been requested for Calthorpe Park. Where injunctions had been put in place this had been in response to ASB, fly tipping, threats by dogs and with weapons, shop lifting etc. BCC had to go to the High Court to argue its case. As part of the case the judge considered whether it was reasonable and proportionate to ban people from that park and whether the council had an alternative offer. There had not been evidence of that level of ASB on Calthorpe Park so residents were asked to report to the council or police any issues that they witnessed.

A transit camp was being developed and was due to open in October with another smaller site also earmarked. The transit camp that the council had in Castle Vale was occupied by one family but legal proceedings were ongoing to ensure they only had the pitches they paid for and the others could then be made available. When the camps were available if travellers were asked to leave a space and go to

a transit camp and did not comply it became a criminal offence. The council was also considering applying for an injunction to cover all parks in Birmingham.

In response to questions the meeting was advised that using common law powers it took 2 – 7 days to remove the travellers or through the court 7-10 days. In 2 of the cases on Calthorpe Park the group had moved 2 days after service of the notice. If they did not move when required the bailiffs and the police are called.

Councillors (s) Signed:

Councillor(s) Name(s) (please print):