

Summary notes

Ward: Handsworth Wood

Date of meeting: 4 July 2017

Meeting overview

Present: Councillor Gurdial Atwal (in the Chair), Councillor Narinder Kooner and Councillor Paulette Hamilton

Officers: Sergeant Hayley Thompson- Handsworth Police Team

Pat Whyte - Community Support and Development Officer

Neil De Costa, Lead Officer for Perry Barr District

Pete Hobbs, Service Head, Private Rented Services & Tenant Engagement

Kay Thomas, Community Governance Manager

There were 16 residents in attendance.

1. Notice of Recording - Noted

2. Apologies: Councillor Hamilton for lateness

3. Houses In Multiple Occupation

Pete Hobbs acknowledged the issues associated with HMO's and went on to explain the definition of an HMO for licensing purposes as a property housing 5 or more people who were not related sharing facilities in a property of 3 or more storeys. Registered providers (housing associations) were exempt. Planning legislation relating to HMO's was applied differently. The aim was to ensure as many properties were known about as possible so that standards could be maintained. The register of licensed properties could be found on the council's website. Residents were urged to advise of any property that they believed should be licensed via prs@birmingham.gov.uk or pete.hobbs@birmingham.gov.uk

As a result of legislation the council was consulting in target areas, including Handsworth Wood, to determine if selective licensing powers could be used for all landlords with an HMO.

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Councillor Kooner referred to the negative impact that some HMO's could have on neighbours and the community and queried whether issues of anti-social behaviour could be referred to the team. Pete Hobbs explained the licensing conditions related to the property and therefore noisy parties/noise nuisance could be dealt with. Nuisance away from the property was more difficult to deal with but selective licensing did cover anti-social behaviour.

In response to a question regarding the issue of licenses the meeting was advised that currently if a property qualified for a licence it would be issued and there was not an option for objection. New applications were published on the register which could be viewed on the website. The objective was to get as many landlords into the licensing process as possible. The rule relating to 3 storey properties was being reviewed by government as hostel properties were often 2 storeys.

Residents then made the following points;

- Oxhill Road properties were now predominately HMO's and the rubbish generated was a daily issue but landlords took no responsibility for their tenants
- HMO properties often housed more than the 5 tenants registered
- Often where tenants were supposed to receive support from service providers none was offered and vulnerable people were being left to manage alone
- Could a limit on the number of HMO properties in any one area be introduced

Sergeant Thompson highlighted a number of connected properties on Oxhill Road that were run by the same company and operated as one building when they should be 6/7 separate houses. It was requested that this situation be fed into the review.

In response to issues raised Pete Hobbs made the following comments;

- If there was a property with more than 5 tenants residing then residents should report it. The council relied on residents' information.

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- The amount of ‘support’ offered was variable and the exploitation of vulnerable people by some landlords was acknowledged but there was no separate inspection of such properties. If residents had concerns they should raise with Pete Hobbs who would then refer to housing, police and fire. The more information received the better picture could be built.
- Under HMO legislation there was no applicable limit to the number of HMO’s in an area. Under planning legislation an Article 4 Direction could be applied to limit numbers within a defined area but applied to new applications only.

4. Policing and Anti-Social Behaviour

Sergeant Hayley Thompson reported on anti-social behaviour affecting Stockwell, College, Aylesford and Newcombe Roads and that it was the same group of offenders causing the issues but moving around the area. Work was being undertaken with social services and the Troubled Families team.

During the discussion the following points were raised;

- Groups of young people had been congregating in Cornwall Road and while they had been noisy no real trouble had been caused so residents had directed them to Laurel Road Sports Centre and it was queried whether some activity could be put on for them
- Sergeant Thompson explained the activities needed to be specific for the group and a youth worker who understood the group’s culture and language needed to be involved. She was working with a church in the area that had a youth worker available.
- It was difficult for the police to take action if no criminal activity was taking place
- Laurel Road could offer 20 hours per week detached youth work. Some of the group did attend the centre to play football but they needed a place and space so Laurel Road would welcome discussion on how to help.
- Councillor Kooner had been made aware of the nuisance being caused to Cornwall Road residents by a large group of young people, some as young as 13, and some of the residents were very distressed. The group seemed to enjoy frightening older people. Residents had photographic evidence.
- The engagement needed to be sustainable and links made to the group leaders.
- Funding was required to obtain professional assistance as the police uniform was a barrier
- A resident said that some of the group had attempted to break into her neighbour’s house but had been spotted in the process and he had confronted them. The group had not been seen since and it appeared they thrived on frightening people.

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- Concerned expressed regarding the safety of the old Town Hall at College Road and the residents that lived in part of the building.
- Councillor Hamilton said that the community needed to work together to find a solution and ways of engaging as she did not feel the group in question would use Laurel Road.
- The key was accessing funding to pay for some specific outreach work as the community concerned would not apply for help themselves and therefore applications had to be made on their behalf.
- The Chair said that work was also needed with the parents so that they took some responsibility.

Neil De Costa said that partners needed to have a conversation regarding this specific group and the funding available to them so that the most appropriate work could be undertaken. Neil undertook to raise with local officers to work with this community and residents.

5. Local Innovation Fund

Pat Whyte outlined the three projects that had been approved by Cabinet Committee: Local Leadership and following completion of the COGA the funding would be released. Three further proposals had since been submitted and the proposers were present to give an outline of their idea to the meeting as follows;

a) Walk In Outdoor Gym

Joy Scott-Thompson outlined the proposal to use the outside space at Laurel Road Community Sports Centre to provide an outside gym to help residents with health issues. There was also a social aspect of people working together on an outside gym.

b) Uplands Allotments Open Air Classroom & Learning Facility

Rob Smith outlined the proposal to develop community involvement by developing an open air classroom, available to schools, individuals and other organisations. The allotment was an important resource for health, food, community cohesion and it was the intention to use the LIF to enhance this.

c) Together We Can Make a Difference

Rachel Chiu outlined a proposal for Hestia House to engage local people/groups and support their ideas to create their own projects, share skills and fundraise.

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d) Handsworth Diamonds Football Club

Harjinder outlined his proposal to reach out to the community via sport for children by creating projects to improve health, cohesion, skilled and confident leaders, start a cycling club.

Neil De Costa advised each ward had been allocated £48k and Handsworth Wood had already allocated £24,166. There was a need for local capacity building in the ward but it was up to the members to sign off the remaining funds.

The meeting generally welcomed the proposals and the Chair said the councillors would consider the proposals.

6. Residents Issues and Concerns

- a) **Wheelie Bins** – a resident from Oxhill Road reported that her wheelie bin had begun to split and the rubbish escape. A replacement bin was urgently required and she had reported the matter but had no response. Her neighbours were experiencing the same problem.
- b) **Private Rented Sector** – Handsworth Wood was a diverse area and the community worked well together but the threat of badly maintained private rented properties might force people to move out of the area which would threaten the community. People did need support but the situation needed to be brought under control. It was acknowledged that not all landlords were bad and therefore more support should also be provided for landlords. There was a directory on the Handsworth Wood CDT website listing organisations that could assist.
- c) **Somerset Road/College Road triangle** – the traffic problems in the area was getting worse as traffic was unable to negotiate the roads due to parked cars. The traffic was backing up to the island at the Co-op and was blocking traffic onto the ring road. A one way system or dropped kerbs to enable cars to park on frontages was requested. **Neil to speak to District Engineer.**
- d) **Oxhill Road junction** – the Chair referred to the furniture shop by the bus stop and the vans from the shop that persistently blocked the road. In addition an office was operating from the back of one of the vans and action needed to be taken. Councillor Kooner suggested that bollards be installed to prevent parking. **Neil undertook to raise with parking enforcement and liaise with the District Engineer regarding bollard installation and funding.**
- e) **Traffic – Island Road/Oxhill Road/Sandwell Road** – Councillor Kooner advised that that the coroners recommendations had been awaited following 3 fatalities. **District Engineer to update on outcome.**

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7. Future Meeting Topics

- **Standard Items**
- **Emerging Issues**
- **Feedback on anti-social behaviour and in particular update on activities for the young people (Neil)**
- **Wheelie bin update**
- **Highways update on improvements to Oxhill Road (District Engineer)**

8. Date of next meeting

19 September 7pm at Handsworth Fire Station

November -14th Detail TBC

2018

January - 16th Detail TBC

March – 20TH Details TBC

9 Authority to Chair & Officers - Agreed

The meeting concluded at 8.40pm

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| NO. | Resident or Forum or Residents group Details | Concern/issue | Type of action to be taken (if any) | Officer or Member with responsibility |
|-----|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1` | Resident | Dog Fouling – Cherry Orchard road and surrounding locations | To be taken to the next neighbourhood tasking meeting. | Neil De Costa |
| 2 | Residents | Local Innovation Fund – Current applications are still incomplete and the low number of potential new applications was cause for concern. | Pat Whyte to meet with interested parties before the next Ward meeting on 4 th July to provide guidance. | Pat Whyte |
| 3 | Resident | Residents were concerned by the small number of LIF applications that had been received to date , they suggested that a more proactive approach should be taken by the Ward in seeking more applications | To contact groups in the Ward to explain that there is LIF funding available | Neil De Costa |

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| 4 | Residents | Somerset Road/College Road triangle – increased traffic congestion due to parked cars. One way system or dropped kerbs to enable car parking on frontages requested | Discussion with District Engineer | Neil De Costa |
| 5 | Chair | Oxhill Road junction – furniture shop vans causing obstruction/office being operated from van. Bollards suggested to prevent parking | Raise with parking enforcement and liaise with the District Engineer regarding bollard installation and funding. | Neil De Costa |
| 6 | Resident | Traffic on Island Road/Oxhill Road/Sandwell Road – recommendations from the Coroners report requested | | District Engineer |