

SPARKBROOK & BALSALL HEATH EAST WARD MEETING NOTES

WARD: Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East	DATE: 22 nd November 2023
VENUE: Sparkbrook Health & Community Centre, Grantham Rd B11 1LU	START/FINISH TIMES: 7pm – 8.55pm
COUNCILLORS Shabrana Hussain & Saima Ahmed	NOs OF ATTENDEES: 9
OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Kalvinder Kohli, Assistant Director Early Intervention & Prevention Sergeant Chris Gallon, West Midlands Police Amer Khan, Neighbourhood Action Co-ordinator Kay Thomas, Community Governance Manager	Apology from Simon Foster, Police & Crime Commissioner

MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING INCLUDING LOCAL CONCERNS:
<p>1. Welcome & Notice of Recording</p> <p>Councillor Hussain welcomed all to the meeting and advised that members of the press/public could record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.</p> <p>2. Update from Police & Crime Commissioner & Local Police Team</p> <p>Apologies were submitted on behalf of Simon Foster, Police & Crime Commissioner.</p> <p>Councillor Hussain informed the meeting that Sergeant Sharma had retired, and Sergeant Gallon was acting as the interim sergeant until the acting sergeant, Sergeant Hamilton, took up his post.</p> <p>Sergeant Gallon provided the following local police update for the Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East ward –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Across the board all crime types had reduced year on year - Due to staff shortages the local team were currently dealing with demand work and 999 call outs. The current team consisted of an acting sergeant, 2 PC's and 2 PCSO's. The new Chief Constable was keen to improve community policing and when more news was available on the progress of this an update would be provided to the meeting.

- 999 calls response times had improved and time taken to answer 101 call was also shorter.
- Due to demand PCSO's were the only officers available for events and visibility patrols.
- Every burglary victim now received a visit from a police officer within 48 hours of the crime.
- PCSO Evans was out in the community all week – notably, every Monday at The Bahau Trust & every Friday at the Muath Trust; Tuesday patrols in hard-to-reach communities; Wednesday Moseley Ukrainian Refugee Centre; Thursday parking operations across Sparkbrook.

Residents raised issues around prostitution in Farm Park (Sampson Road side) that was occurring at all times of the day and night and there was particular concern as the Park was well used by families with children. When police had patrolled the park, the prostitutes had moved on but since the patrols had stopped, activity had started again.

Reference also made to a recent stabbing in Cartland Road, but no update had been received.

It was noted that illegal parking along the Stratford Road had improved, and the meeting was advised that this was due to the efforts of PCSO Evans.

Sergeant Gallon undertook to attend the next meeting with acting Sergeant Hamilton to provide updates on the above issues and to share any new information on restructuring and local policing. He also added that a group of university students was being engaged to work on a project to design out crime. Should the group come to Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East the details of their work would be shared with residents & community groups. There was some discussion regarding a study undertaken by university students to redesign/repurpose Farm Park in connection with child safety that had been submitted to the Community Strategic Partnership. Members of the Friends of Farm Park expressed concern that they had not been consulted on the study and had undertaken similar work. Sergeant Gallon advised that the study had been undertaken prior to the establishment of the Friends Group in response to issues raised at that time and residents had been consulted. He undertook to forward the report to the Chair of Friends of Farm Park group.

Residents commented on the frequent turnover of police officers in the ward and that the key to change was for the police and community to work together. The lack of confidence in the police due to the demise of community policing meant crimes went unreported although it was acknowledged that this was not criticism of local officers. The community needed to be involved with key decision makers to enable change in priority areas including community safety. Joint working in this way should feature in the ward plan. Sergeant Gallon concurred with the views expressed and in response to a question said that officer numbers were based on demand and reporting crimes created the data on which resources

were allocated. He added that serious crime would receive an emergency response but lesser crimes would take longer for the police to respond to and it was around those issues that public confidence needed to be restored.

3. Update on Adult Social Care – Early Intervention & Prevention

Kalvinder Kohli outlined her role & responsibilities and explained about working with BVSC around funding for community groups and educating older people to seek assistance through schemes such as NNS and help maintain independence. Via the NNS programme consultation had been undertaken to find out what types of activities/services people wanted and then venues such as libraries and community centres where there was already a substantial footfall had been considered for use. Arrangements had been made with Barclays Bank to offer money hub and digital services through which £100,000 worth of income had been generated for residents and other problems solved. The intention was to have a hub in each constituency, potentially in library buildings.

During the conversations around this, Councillor Hussain had suggested the use of the Sparkbrook Health & Community Centre as a hub building and inspection had under covered the under use but potential of the building so the process had started, initially moving a social work team into the building in January to boost occupation. The ground floor could be used by Barclays, NNS as a communal space offering services to the community, however due to some complex conditions attached to the building and lease details (the building was part owned by the NHS) the legal arrangements had to be worked out to progress the centre as an Early Prevention Intervention Hub but there was partner interest in the building. Kalvinder added that discussions were underway with the Housing Lettings Service with a view to staff to work from the building 3 days per week as a pilot.

Residents commented that when the building opened it had come with plans for community and office use, but use had stopped over the years rendering the building virtually empty which was frustrating for the local community when its potential was considerable. The plans as reported were welcomed but residents had reserved feelings due to previous promised plans that had not come to fruition. Health & social care was not just a city council issue and over the years there had been work with groups and organisations in the area, consultations, data collected etc but no actions realised. The community had worked with the council but were not made aware of outcomes and were not getting basic local care services. The good work that Amer, Neighbourhood Action Co-ordinator was doing was noted and residents urged that the council work with him, other community partners and local residents to help make a change in Sparkbrook. Kalvinder recognised resident's frustrations and referred to and explained the S114 Notice and S151 powers currently affecting the council's finances. A commissioning officer had, however, been tasked to look at Sparkbrook Health & Community Centre and how it could be used. A timetable of drop-in's was being drawn up and local organisations were being approached. Kalvinder undertook to take away the comments made at this meeting and arrange for updates to be sent to the councillors and report back to a future ward meeting.

Sergeant Gallon said that as an offer from the local police team, the PCSO's could hold drop-in sessions every Friday morning at the SH&CC. He added that the Concord Youth Service received limited support and suggested they also be contacted.

4. AOB

Councillor Hussain reported the following –

- Next MHRC 12 December Brunswick Road
- Kier walkabout undertaken as discussed at last meeting but councillors had not been involved, therefore another walkabout with residents/councillors had been requested
- Details of site visit with GRS had been circulated, any resident wishing to attend to contact Councillor Hussain
- In response to suggestions from the meeting, discussion on parks & open spaces with Cabinet Member/Parks Manager to be next meeting main item

Residents raised the following –

- Friends of Farm Park requested to fund & insure equipment in the park and had plans drawn up but had now been advised that the work had to be undertaken via BCC, but this was more expensive and provided less equipment. Other issues included rat infestation in the park, tress felled that had damaged bushes, replanting, reinstatement of the goal posts. Councillor Hussain suggested this be discussed at the next meeting.

5. Date of Next Meeting – 17th January 2024

ACTIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS MADE	WHO	BY WHEN
1. Police update on issues raised.	1. Sergeant Gallon	1. Next Meeting
2. Farm Park Study re redesign to Chair, Friends of Farm Park	2. Sergeant Gallon	2. asap
3. Sparkbrook Health & Community Centre – potential use as community hub - update	3. Kalvinder Kohli	3. Future ward meeting