

## ACOCKS GREEN WARD FORUM MEETING NOTES

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023

7pm – 8.00pm

Fox Hollies Forum

Greenwood Avenue

B27 7RA

**COUNCILLORS:** Roger Harmer and Penny Wagg

**NOs OF ATTENDEES:** 11 including 2 online

### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Beverly Edmead – Community Governance Team

Debbie White – Neighbourhood Action Coordinator, Acocks Green  
and Glebe Farm & Tile Cross Wards

Humera Sultan – Consultant, Birmingham Public Health

### **APOLOGIES**

Acocks Green Local Police Team

### **MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING:**

#### **Cllr Roger Harmer in the Chair**

#### **1. Notice of Recording**

Residents were advised that they were able to record and/or take photographs of the meeting.

#### **2. Creative An Active City**

Following introductions, Humera Sultan, Consultant, Birmingham Public Health briefly advised of the Creating An Active Birmingham Strategy which was due to be launched for consultation with the public from 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023 – 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024, and the benefits a more active population could bring to everyone living and working in Birmingham.

Copies of the Presentation were circulated to residents at the meeting.

Humera Sultan explained that the Strategy had been developed following engagement and conversations with many different groups, partner agencies and stakeholders between April and September 2023, and that the views, comments, and suggestions from all sections of the community were being sought on the following key areas:-

**The Vision** for the Creating an Active Birmingham Strategy

**The Principles** of how partners will work collaboratively to deliver ambitions for the city.

**The Priorities** for the Strategy

What should go into an **Implementation Plan for Change**

In addition, it had long been recognised and recommended that at least 30 minutes of activity each week was beneficial to physical and mental health and wellbeing; this did not have to be competitive or high-intensity exercise or activity. Public Health had also carried out a Health Needs Assessment – greater effort was needed to encourage everyone to be a little bit more active in their own way, including reducing their car use where possible and walking/cycling instead.

Whilst welcoming the thinking and reasons behind the strategy, several residents felt that many people were reluctant to walk or cycle more due to safety concerns – these included dangers from speeding cars/dangerous driving; poor lighting; overgrown trees, bushes and hedges, tripping hazards like broken/raised paving slabs and flagstones or genuine fears and concerns of becoming a victim of crime. Residents added that more should be done to reduce parking around schools and to encourage parents/carers to walk their child/ren to school instead.

Several residents gave details of activities they were participating in – including Tai Chi for the over 50's on Millennium Green, which had previously been facilitated by The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS) and very much welcomed locally; however, with all activities and services, the issue of ongoing funding remained a concern. Residents further added that a 'joined-up approach' by all partnership agencies to address this issue, including poor road safety awareness for young and old was very much needed. The reintroduction and reinforcement of the 'Stop, Look and Listen' road safety campaign should be considered and encouraged – particularly so when road users and pedestrians appeared to be permanently preoccupied/distracted by their mobile phones.

Concerns were also raised about the increase in fast food/takeaway outlets locally and across the city- all of which railed against the healthy eating/living lifestyle choices and was another example of how these were becoming normalised and accepted as a part of

modern-day culture and living.

Acknowledging residents' comments and concerns, Humera further advised of elements in the Birmingham Transport Plan, spearheaded by Cllr Liz Clements, Cabinet Member for Transport, which aimed to create more safe cycling spaces/lanes in the city. Schools were also actively encouraged to sign up to the Modeshift Stars/Car Free Streets initiatives and persuade parents/carers to leave their cars at home and walk their child/ren to school instead and to recognise the benefits of daily exercise/physical activity.

A 'Next Space System' was also being pioneered by West Midlands Police to encourage residents to submit dash-cam/ring-door bell footage which could be used as evidence where appropriate.

Bringing the presentation and discussion to a close, Humera encouraged residents present to share details of the Strategy with their contacts/networks and to contribute to the consultation once it goes live.

Councillors and residents thanked Humera Sultan for her attendance and presentation.

### **3. Councillors News and Updates**

Residents were advised of the following:-

- Regular weekly meetings with the Commissioners regarding the City Council's financial situation
- All Council Departments had been required to look at financial savings within their services and to put forward viable budget savings proposals for the individual services. Approx £300M was required to be achieved over the next two years - details of the proposed savings would be made available in due course.
- Asset Sales – approx. £500M in assets was required to be found within the next 12 or so month. A number of buildings, sites and holdings had been identified.
- Council Tax – an increase was expected, however central Government approval was needed if the increase was above the threshold of 3% - robust financial plans were also required to be in place and submitted prior to approval.
- Council Annual Budget was required to be submitted to City Council for approval in late February – details of changes to services and reduction in funding/staffing and resources should also be available then.
- A Public Enquiry into the City Council's financial collapse had been promised by Rt Hon MP Michael Gove. Unfortunately, the ongoing turnover of senior council officers at corporate level did little to help the situation as there was no continuity or handover/sharing of information. A significant effort was needed to get the City Council back on a sound financial footing, hence the

appointment of the Commissioners by Central Government – however this came at a cost as all council services would be scrutinised and reviewed, which would inevitably result in a reduction of non-statutory services as well as changes to some statutory ones. The sale/disposal of council owned assets would also have to be considered to help reduce the financial deficit.

### **Other News**

- Acocks Green Police Station – a decision had been made by the Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner for the closure of the station once an alternative location/facilities had been found. A meeting with the Estates Team was due to take place on 30 November to discuss/agree the criteria and how to move forward. It had been acknowledged that a local base would be preferably to everyone so it would make sense to keep the existing station open.
- Mobile Household Recycling Unit (MHRC) would be returning to the ward on the following dates:-  
24 November – Cedars Avenue, 7am – 12pm  
7<sup>th</sup> December – Merstowe Close, 7am – 12pm

### **Residents Issues/News/Concerns**

- Leaf clearance activities – residents had continued to bag-up leaves which were left in the locations previously agreed with the street cleansing team; however, they had not been collected. Other bags had since been added which had contaminated the green waste. Fly-tipping had also increased on Millennium Green, which was very disappointing. Cllr Harmer advised of the reduction to the service due to staffing shortages along with the withdrawal of overtime for missed waste collections.
- Greenwood Ave – anti-social behaviour and other ongoing issues linked to an HMO property – resident to provide Cllrs with details following the meeting.
- Street Begging around the Village remained an ongoing problem – some were quite aggressive in their manner. Morrisons and Greggs were common hot- spots for street begging. Debbie White, Neighbourhood Action Coordinator advised the issues had been discussed at the Local Partnerships Delivery Groups meetings and that officers had agreed to carry out a site visit. Debbie agreed to provide an update following the visit.
- David Treadwell, Chair, Acocks Green Neighbourhood Forum reiterated his concerns and fears regarding the ongoing closures of much needed community and public sector facilities, and the gradual withdrawal of staff working locally with the community. In addition, the lack of consultation and engagement with the local community regarding changes to local services showed a blatant disregard for the needs and concerns of residents.

Consideration should be given by public sector agencies to pooling their resources together to provide a 'One-Stop Shop' or Community Hub, with all the necessary services housed together in one venue which would suit the needs of the community, as well as being financially beneficial to the respective services. Mr Treadwell added that residents/local community should not have to bear the brunt of the public services failings in managing their respective budgets and resources effectively.

**4. Date of Next Meeting**

To be confirmed.

Cllrs Harmer and Wagg thanked residents for their attendance and participation.

Meeting closed at 8.10pm