

# BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**NORTHFIELD DISTRICT  
COMMITTEE  
FRIDAY, 18 MARCH 2016**

## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NORTHFIELD DISTRICT COMMITTEE HELD ON FRIDAY 18 MARCH 2016 AT 1400 HOURS, IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 3 & 4, COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM**

**PRESENT:** - Councillor Peter Griffiths in the Chair; Councillors Steve Booton, Randal Brew, Andy Cartwright, Debbie Clancy, Peter Douglas Osborn, Eddie Freeman, Simon Jevon, Brett O'Reilly and Valerie Seabright

### **ALSO PRESENT:** -

Jamie Bryant, Partnership Manager, Birmingham Community Leisure Trust  
Richard Burden, Member of Parliament, Northfield Constituency  
Richard Davies, Northfield District Lead  
Ron Webb, Place Manager  
Councillor Samuel Goodwin, Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council  
Paul Walls, Leisure Project and Client Manager  
Paul Holden, Committee Manager

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### **NOTICE OF RECORDING**

241 It was noted that the meeting was being webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site ([www.birminghamnewsroom.com](http://www.birminghamnewsroom.com)) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

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### **APOLOGIES**

242 The Chair advised the meeting that he was not aware of any apologies but that highlighted that they may have been submitted to Northfield District Committee Manager who was unwell and therefore unable to clerk this meeting. Members wished the Committee Manager a speedy recovery.

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**MINUTES**

It was:-

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**RESOLVED: -**

That, subject to the addition of "MP" after Jess Phillips's name on page 201 of the earlier meeting, the minutes of the meetings held on the 20 November 2015 and 22 January 2016, having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

In relation to matters arising from the Minutes, the following were amongst the matters raised:-

- a) In referring to the Kings Norton Ward, Councillor Seabright voiced deep concern that no progress had been made on the speed visor issue (Minute No. 225 refers) and asked that this be addressed as a matter of urgency. Richard Davies, Northfield District Lead undertook to pursue the issue and Councillor Brew highlighted that through Engineers working together across the Districts there should be sufficient resources available to put speed visors in place.
- b) Councillor Brew requested an update on the North Worcestershire Golf Club (Minute No. 225 refers) at the June 2016 meeting.
- c) Further to comments made by Councillors Cartwright and Brew, the Chair asked that the Northfield District Lead contact the Police with a view to an awards ceremony being arranged (Minute No. 229 refers).
- d) In responding to concerns and comments made by Councillor Seabright relating to properties in Bentmead Grove (Minute No. 230 refers), Ron Webb, Place Manager reported that they were now scheduled for earlier demolition. The Chair underlined the need for Members to be notified of the demolition date.
- e) Councillor Douglas Osborn reported that the Square Club at Weoley Castle (Minute No. 233 refers) had been declared surplus to requirements though it was also highlighted that the surplus properties list amongst which the premises was included had still to be considered by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Member voiced deep concern that eighty years of youth provision at the location was scheduled to come to an end. Councillor Booton indicated that he understood that there would still be youth provision at the Community Church though Councillor Douglas Osborn referred to facilities promised at a meeting he'd attended which had not yet been actioned.

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**BIRMINGHAM CYCLE REVOLUTION PHASES 2 AND 3 CONSULTATION**

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The following PowerPoint presentation slides were received:-

(See Document No. 1)

In the course of the discussion the following were amongst the issues raised and responses further to questions:-

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- a) Councillor Samuel Goodwin, Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council highlighted that despite promises, work had not even started on the Balaam's Wood Cycle path. The Chair advised the meeting that efforts would be made to pursue this issue.
- b) Reference was made by Councillor Douglas Osborn to the need for cycle ways along the Bristol Road corridor to be off the main road. Furthermore, he drew attention to the risks to cyclists near the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital where due to parked cars they had to use the carriageway. Councillor O'Reilly reported that he had submitted a petition asking for a review of the whole area around the hospital and understood that a response would be received in June 2016.
- c) Councillor Booton referred to the very considerable amount of work that needed to take place in terms of improving safety along cycle ways, removing rubbish etc. He highlighted that in some parts of the City the routes along canal towpaths were effectively 'no-go' areas.
- d) Richard Burden MP stressed the need for details of what actual schemes / works were scheduled for the District when information on the Birmingham Cycle Revolution next came to Committee. He also suggested that Cycle South Birmingham be invited to attend at the same time so that they could input into the debate.
- e) Councillor Clancy in responding to comments made by Councillor Cartwright indicated that she had seen people's cycles secured at the Hub outside Longbridge Railway Station. The Member also enquired how the 937 bikes had been allocated as part of the Big Birmingham Bikes initiative and the Chair also referred to possibly asking for a District breakdown in this regard.
- f) The Chair highlighted that people round the table did wish to contribute and put forward their thoughts on what types of measures might work but had not been given any indication of what was proposed for the District.
- g) In referring to the timescales outlined on the eighth presentation slide, Councillor Brew indicated that he hoped that information would be made available at an early stage so that Members could meaningfully contribute and have an influence on what schemes / works were undertaken in the District.

The Chair advised the meeting that the Birmingham Cycle Revolution initiative would be included on the next or a future agenda but stressed the need for Members to be consulted prior to the matter coming back to Committee.

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## **NORTHFIELD POOL AND FITNESS CENTRE - UPDATE**

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Paul Walls, Leisure Project and Client Manager and Jamie Bryant, Partnership Manager, Birmingham Community Leisure Trust were in attendance.

In the course of introducing the item, Paul Walls advised the meeting that the new leisure centre would be constructed on the existing site; that while the work was taking place employees at the centre would temporarily be relocated to other sites; that all schools had been offered an alternative venue for swimming, with the Tiverton Pool and Fitness Centre in Selly Oak being kept open until the Northfield Pool was completed; and that opportunities for non-swimming activities had been

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bolstered by significant refurbishments at other centres including Billesley Tennis Centre and Cocks Moors Woods Leisure Centre.

Jamie Bryant provided more specific details regarding the Northfield Pool and Fitness Centre during which he reported that the facilities would include a 25 metre six lane swimming pool; a 12 metre / 7 metre swimming pool; family / group changing area; and an 80 station fitness suite, dance studio and community room. Access to the centre would continue to be from Great Stone Road. The existing building was scheduled to be closed in September 2016 and demolished over about a 2-3 month period. The new centre currently had a 75 week build time and was scheduled to open in April 2018. Options were being explored in relation to retaining some of the landmark features (e.g. the clock and plaque) and it was being looked to include these as part of a design feature in the grounds to the front of the building. An event to present the plans would be held at the existing Northfield Pool and Fitness Centre on 13 April from 2pm-7pm.

In the course of the discussion the following were amongst the issues raised and responses further to questions:-

- a) Members raised the issue of the longstanding problems at the Great Stone Road / Bristol Road South junction. Richard Burden MP stressed the need for discussions to take place at a high level with planning and highways officers to address the wider traffic issues at the location. He highlighted that it would be better for any works at the junction to be carried out while the Northfield Pool and Fitness Centre was closed.
- b) Councillor O'Reilly asked that Members be notified of the projected capital cost of the new Northfield Pool and Fitness Centre and the Leisure Project and Client Manager confirmed that this information could be provided.
- c) Reference was made by Councillor Brew to a Northfield Ward Committee meeting to be held on Monday 21 March 2016 and he asked that some form of draft plan / artists impression of the Northfield Pool and Fitness Centre proposals be brought to that meeting and circulated to Members of the District Committee.
- d) Further to comments made by Councillors O'Reilly and Brew, the Leisure Project and Client Manager confirmed that he could provide the Committee with an update on Colmers Farm Leisure Centre at a future meeting. He indicated that it was expected that the centre would continue to operate under a different operating model.
- e) Councillors Seabright and Brew voiced concern regarding the increased costs that would be incurred by many schools as a result of having to take their pupils to Tiverton Pool and Fitness Centre in Selly Oak. It was considered that financial compensation for the schools should be explored. Councillor Seabright also queried whether a school in Longbridge had been informed of the changes and the Leisure Project and Client Manager invited the Member to speak to him further outside the meeting if there were any specific issues of concern that she wished him to address.
- f) Members were advised by the representatives that if there were any cost overruns in building the new Northfield Pool and Fitness Centre these would fall on the contractor. Furthermore, it was highlighted that preliminary site survey reports had been produced.

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- g) Councillor Freeman enquired what was proposed in terms of providing coach parking facilities. The Partnership Manager reported that a Transport Consultant had been appointed and indicated that this was work in progress along with issues such as the safety of children and access to/egress from the site. However, he underlined that the Northfield Pool and Fitness Centre site was very small.
- h) Further to concerns expressed by Richard Burden MP, the Leisure Project and Client Manager reported that due to the small size of the site and the need to bring the front elevation forward in order to accommodate all the facilities it would not be possible to retain the existing façade. However, he highlighted that he and colleagues would welcome comments in respect of the design of a feature to be provided at the front of new centre. In relation to car parking and traffic, he reported that during the demolition and construction phase every effort would be made to ensure that the contractors worked within the site boundary and did not impact on neighbouring roads and that once the new Northfield Pool and Fitness Centre was open it would be his role to ensure that there was a traffic management strategy for the centre that accorded with Council policy. He also acknowledged that there were also wider issues concerning the junction at the location and undertook to take these on board.
- i) The Leisure Project and Client Manager confirmed that Be-Active services for adults at Tiverton Pool and Fitness Centre would continue and that they would look to utilise any Be-Active hours from Northfield. Furthermore, he encouraged Members to attend the event to be held on 13 April when there would be an opportunity to feed into the proposals relating to the new centre at Northfield.
- j) In response to a question from Councillor Cartwright, Members were informed by the Partnership Manager that they had to comply with very specific planning requirements and Sport England guidelines in respect of new buildings which were super-efficient; furthermore, he highlighted that if the Birmingham Community Leisure Trust did not meet the very challenging energy targets that had been set it was the Trust that would have to meet the cost.
- k) Further to comments made by Councillor Clancy, it was confirmed that the new site and facilities would be fully accessible to people with disabilities and the Leisure Project and Client Manager highlighted that the need for more space was one of the reasons why the new centre would require a larger footprint. He also reported that there would be locations for people to secure cycles and that work would take place with Council colleagues to see if the new centre could be used as a cycle hub.
- l) Councillor Seabright indicated that she hoped that the sauna and steam room at the existing Northfield Pool and Fitness Centre could be re-used and stressed the need for it to be continued to be used within the Northfield District.

The Chairman thanked the representatives for reporting to the meeting and everyone for their questions and contributions. He also highlighted that the Committee looked forward to receiving an update on Colmers Farm Leisure Centre at a future meeting.

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## **HOUSING TRANSFORMATION BOARD PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 3 2015/16**

(See Document No. 2)

Ron Webb, Place Manager introduced the information contained in the report.

In the course of the discussion the following were amongst the issues raised and responses further to questions:-

- a) Councillor Freeman advised the meeting of residents' concerns regarding the need for them to complete numerous diary sheets over a long period of time in order to deal with anti-social behaviour only for the same problem to recur and then have to go through the same process again; voiced concern regarding the amount of furniture, beds, etc. in the front and back gardens of properties and a great many needles and large amounts of rubbish that he and others had removed from an area of housing land near Kennedy House; and referred to the need for action to be taken in respect of properties where cladding was turning green and the appearance of the doors were being effected by the sun.
- b) Councillor Seabright in voicing concern for the health and wellbeing of vulnerable elderly people asked that information be provided on the latest position regarding consultation taking place in respect of sheltered housing; enquired why on page 13 of the report it showed the percentage of rent collected in Northfield as being higher than 100% (i.e. 100.68%); and in referring to page 33 of the report enquired whether a score of 28.3 equated to good or excellent. In relation to the flats in Bentmead Grove, she made reference to the poor standard (e.g. there were loose wires visible) of the accommodation and expressed concern regarding the placement of vulnerable families with young children at the location especially when they were allocated top floor flats. Furthermore, the Member considered that local Councillors were not being provided with regular updates in respect of the regeneration of the housing stock in Kings Norton.
- c) Councillor Clancy considered that an open day at Hobbs Croft relating to anti-social behaviour had been a success and that the initiative should be replicated at other locations. However, in referring to the Red RAG ratings in respect of the Homeless Service / Allocations (pages 15 and 16 refer) she pointed out that at a meeting held by Jim Crawshaw, People Directorate it had been reported that the Council's homeless services in Northfield were coming to an end as the services around Birmingham were all being brought together at one more central location. In highlighting that local people who became homeless would not be in a position to travel far to access services and given that the RAG ratings were already red she asked that the matter be further looked into and suggested including the issue as an item of business at a future meeting of this Committee.
- d) Councillor O'Reilly in supporting the tenor of the comments made by the Member in c) above proposed that Jim Crawshaw and John Cotton, Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods be invited to attend a future meeting of the District Committee. He considered that if for example non-Council provision could be put in place that might be an option but that he would like to see more detail on this issue.
- e) Further to the above comments, Ron Webb, Place Manager acknowledged that unfortunately dealing with anti-social behaviour did often take a long time to address and underlined that if this necessitated going to court then evidence had to be provided - pursuing injunctions / eviction orders being steps that could be

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taken in respect of repeat offenders; highlighted that the dumping of rubbish in gardens was a breach of tenancy conditions and that Environmental Health had control over private landlords; undertook to pursue issues raised concerning the dropping of needles and the poor appearance of properties; indicated that he understood that in respect of consultation on the sheltered housing accommodation this was being done on a scheme by scheme basis but undertook to see what information he could find and report back to Councillor Seabright direct; reported that where the figure for the percentage of rent collected was over 100% percent this reflected that arrears were being paid-off; highlighted that the ratings used to assess estates enabled comparisons to be made and was a standard that was used nationally; acknowledged that the communal areas inside the premises at Bentmead Grove were in poor condition but reported that the properties had been placed as their top priority in Kings Norton for clearance and demolition - he undertook to contact the Development Officer to see what stage had been reached in terms of seeking approval to proceed; highlighted that properties were allocated according to housing need and the bidding process; indicated that he could not comment on an issue of promises having been made to residents in the past that properties they'd moved into would be demolished in two years' time but pointed out that until the necessary approvals had been obtained there were no guarantees; highlighted that there was a housing stock improvement programme the size of which was dependent on the finance available; and further to c) and d) above undertook to contact Jim Crawshaw to let the officer know of the concerns over the Council's homeless services in Northfield with a view to him responding direct to Members or reporting back to the Committee, as determined by the Chair.

- f) Councillor Cartwright advised the officer that he strongly believed that dealing with anti-social behaviour should be prioritised where young children were involved. In referring to Councillor Clancy's comments, he also drew attention to the very good work of the South Birmingham Homelessness Project and suggested that the Council consider working with that organisation which this year was celebrating its 25 years anniversary - the longevity being a testimony to its effectiveness.
- g) Councillor Jevon voiced concern that Northfield had the highest number of new anti-social behaviour cases and that it had the highest number of new hate crime cases. He enquired whether the necessary support was being received from the local police and that the Council was pursuing a zero tolerance approach.
- h) Councillor Booton queried why domestic violence cases were classified as homeless and in indicating that he would like to see domestic violence cases looked at further by the District Committee asked that the domestic violence cases be separated from the homeless cases for the next meeting. In particular, he asked that figures be provided for January and February when he understood there was a higher incidence of domestic violence.
- i) Councillor Douglas Osborn commended the officers regarding the reduction in the number of days to let a void property (page 39 refers). However, he advised the meeting that he had been assured by some new tenants that rubbish in their back gardens had been left by a previous tenant and therefore highlighted the need for this to be addressed. Furthermore, Councillor Freeman asked whether photographs of properties vacated were still being taken so that there was evidence of how they had been left and in order that the previous tenants could be charged.

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- j) The Chair referred to a meeting he'd attended where it has been suggested that assessments of what work needed to be carried out to properties could be undertaken before tenants who were leaving moved out and he enquired whether this was happening in the District.
- k) Ron Webb, Place Manager confirmed that photographs were taken of properties so that there was a record of their condition at the time they were let and that these were stored electronically; that photographs were also taken of current tenancies / abandoned properties; reported that pre-vacation visits had been undertaken in the past and that it was hoped that this could again become more of a priority; underlined that reducing the length of time that properties remained void resulted in very considerable cost savings; highlighted that officers when looking at anti-social behaviour cases went through a vulnerability matrix and also referred to their safeguarding duties if children were deemed to be at risk; confirmed that the housing officers worked closely with the police who provided very good support; reported that there was a separate process for dealing with hate crime and a zero tolerance approach - he highlighted that earlier in the day notification had been received of racist posters in Northfield High Street and he understood that these had already been removed; undertook to ask if it would be possible to separate domestic violence from the homeless cases; and reported that Wilmott Dixon had regularly been performing really well across the south of the City in respect of the average number of days being taken to let void properties.

The Chair thanked the officer for attending the meeting and responding to questions.

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At this juncture, Councillor Brew suggested setting a cut-off time for the consideration of business at the Committee and a time of 1615 hours was agreed.

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### **NORTHFIELD DISTRICT ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: NEIGHBOURHOOD CHALLENGE**

The following report was submitted:-

(See Document No. 3)

Councillor Steve Booton introduced the information contained in the report and thanked everyone including Housing Associations, the West Midlands Police and volunteers who had taken part in the challenge. He also proposed an additional recommendation that a full review of the process be carried out by September 2016.

Councillor Brew in commenting on the report congratulated Councillor Booton on driving the process forward with colleagues and officers. In supporting Councillor Booton's additional recommendation he considered that the Members should go further and hold the agencies and individuals to account in respect of the completion dates set out in the report and have them report back to the Committee thereon.

The Chair proposed that the recommendations outlined in the report be accepted together with the additional recommendation proposed by Councillor Booton and this was agreed.

**RESOLVED:-**



That, subject to the inclusion of the additional recommendation proposed by Councillor Booton, the recommendations outlined in the report be accepted.

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**DISTRICT YOUTH CHAMPION UPDATE**

The report was submitted:-

(See Document No.4)

Councillor Brett O'Reilly commended the quick actions of Council officers in removing some extreme far right recruitment flyposting Northfield High Street and then introduced the information contained in the following paper that was circulated at the meeting:-

(See Document No.5)

In the course of the discussion the following were amongst the issues raised and responses further to questions:-

- a) Councillor Seabright underlined the need to also thank the volunteer youth workers and groups across the District and stressed the difference that they had made.
- b) In welcoming the receipt of the paper, Councillor Brew nevertheless highlighted that both Councillors O'Reilly and Freeman had been appointed as the District's Youth Champions and that he would therefore have liked to have seen a joint report. He considered that thanks should also be conveyed to the uniformed organisations (e.g. Boys Brigade, Girl Guides, Scouts); highlighted that in 2004 a Youth Forum had been created and in referring to how successful it had been indicated that he would like to see such an initiative going forward with a representative attending District Committee meetings; and advised the meeting that at the budget debate earlier in the month he had voted for there to be an increase in youth funding.
- c) Councillor Freeman informed the meeting that he had not been contacted by Councillor O'Reilly in respect the production of the paper and voiced deep concerns regarding the situation at West Heath Library and the loss of the Square Club at Weoley Castle.
- d) Further to c) above, Councillor O'Reilly commented that he had not received any correspondence from Councillor Freeman and indicated that he had assumed that the Member was working independently on the issue.
- e) The Chair suggested that the District Youth Champions work together with young people on processes that could be received at the next meeting and which people could sign-up to.
- f) Richard Burden MP highlighted that the first chair of the Youth Forum referred to in b) above now worked on Newsnight.

The Chair proposed that a joint report from the District Youth Champions be submitted to the next meeting following discussions with young people on the

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processes that people would like to pursue during the next Municipal Year. He also thanked Councillor O'Reilly for producing his report.

248 **RESOLVED:-**

That a joint report be submitted to the next meeting as outlined above.

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### **OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

#### **Petition – Bodenham Road**

In highlighting that he considered that an item for the receipt of petitions should be added to the agenda, Councillor Cartwright presented a petition from the residents of Bodenham Road concerning anti-social behaviour, damage to grass verges etc. during school starting and leaving times.

Councillor Freeman considered that the Council should take steps so that any vehicle that was illegally parked was ticketed straightaway.

249 **RESOLVED:-**

That the petition be referred to the Northfield District Lead and District Engineer for consideration and report.

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#### **Thanks to Members and Officers**

250 Councillor O'Reilly referred to the forthcoming local elections and in highlighting that this was the last meeting in the current Municipal Year thanked Members past and present together with the officers for all their work and support while he had been Chair of the District Committee.

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#### **Kings Norton Library – Renovation Works**

251 Further to comments made by Councillor Seabright, the Chair advised the meeting that he understood that the children's library renovation works should be completed on 11 April 2016. In highlighting that the works had been due for completion on 11 March 2016, Councillor Seabright voiced deep concern that another deadline in Kings Norton had been missed.

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#### **Work of the District Committee**

252 The Chair thanked all the Members for helping to make Northfield a well-run District and Councillors Cartwright and Clancy for their help in respect of the presentation of awards at Cofton Park the previous Saturday.

Councillor Brew indicated that he was pleased with the way that cross-party working operated in the District and looked forward to this continuing in the future.

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**DATE OF NEXT NORTHFIELD DISTRICT COMMITTEE**

- 253 It was noted that the next Northfield District Committee meeting would be held in Committee Rooms 3 and 4, Council House, Birmingham on Friday 24 June 2016 commencing at 1400 hours.
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**AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS**

- 254 **RESOLVED: -**

That in an urgent situation between meetings, the Chair jointly with the relevant Chief Officer has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

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The meeting ended at 1614 hours.

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CHAIRMAN