

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**HALL GREEN DISTRICT
COMMITTEE WEDNESDAY
29 MARCH 2017**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HALL GREEN
DISTRICT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29
MARCH 2017 AT 1400 HOURS IN COMMITTEE
ROOMS 3 & 4, THE COUNCIL HOUSE,
BIRMINGHAM**

PRESENT : - Councillor Claire Spencer in the Chair;

Councillors Mohammed Azim, Barry Bowles, Mohammed Fazal,
Shabrana Hussain, Kerry Jenkins, Tony Kennedy, Habib Rehman,
Martin Straker-Welds, Lisa Trickett and Victoria Quinn.

ALSO PRESENT :-

Karen Cheney	- District Head (Hall Green)
Kevin Hicks	- Highways, Birmingham City Council
Paul O'Day	- Highways, Birmingham City Council
Inspector Neil Kirkpatrick	- West Midlands Police
Sarah Stride	- Committee Manager

NOTICE OF RECORDING

369 The Chair advised that the meeting will be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and that members of the press / public may record and take photographs.

The whole of the meeting will be filmed except where there are confidential or exempt items.

APOLOGIES

370 Apologies were submitted on behalf of the representative from West Midlands Fire Service for his inability to attend the meeting.

Councillors Kennedy and Straker-Welds apologised for having to leave the meeting before its conclusion.

MINUTES

371 The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2017, having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING

372

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

DISTRICT NEIGHBOURHOOD CHALLENGE – JOBS AND SKILLS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The following persons were in attendance:

Roger Varley and Sarah Cron – Job Centre Plus and Kings Heath Job Centre (Department of Wages and Pension)
Steve Farr – Economy Directorate
Shehla Ali and Lukman Miah – Prospects
Johnathan Davies – Pioneer Group
Adill Hadi and Iman Thakur – Concorde Youth Centre, Birmingham City Council.

Karen Cheney, District Head (Hall Green and Selly Oak), reported on the discussion that had taken place at the last meeting of the Hall Green District Committee held on 1 February 2017 and stated that the District Challenge would be undertaken in two phases: discussions with young people learning about their experiences with Job Centre Plus (Members to arrange these discussions in their local job centres) and discussions with Job Centre Plus stakeholders which are in attendance at today's meeting.

The Chair stated that Councillors Azim, Hussain and herself had attended Concorde Youth Centre to gather experiences that young people have had with Job Centre Plus and Councillor Straker-Welds stated that he had attended Kings Heath Job Centre which he reported provided excellent facilities to all users and he recommended that all District Members attend their local job centre to enable their own experience of the facilities that are available.

The Chair thanked Members for their involvement and called the first guest speaker to address the Committee.

Steve Farr, Youth Employment Initiative made the following particular points:

- Birmingham City Council is very keen to tackle the problem of youth unemployment throughout the City and with the support of partners and stakeholders statistics show that the number of youth unemployed Citywide is now on a downward trend – officially around 6,500 youth unemployed in receipt of benefits.
- Youth Promise Plus Project – a project involving a vast number of specialist delivery partners such as Birmingham City Council, Job Centres Plus, Department for Works and Pensions, Prince's Trust, Police and Crime Commissioners Trust, University Hospital Birmingham Learning Hub and several other partners, with the aim to benefit 16,600 youth unemployed in the Birmingham and Solihull areas. Working together the partners have commissioned a lot of activity that was not otherwise available to young people to access. Delivery for the project has been divided into five geographical areas: Solihull as one area and Birmingham has been split into four areas: Hall Green in the East of the City and the other three areas being North, South and West Birmingham. The project will support young people and meet their

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specific specialist needs and requirements. Mentoring and coaching is provided to ensure that the young person can fashion the correct decisions for themselves in their future career path. One intervention worker will support 25 young people. The intervention worker will liaise and engage with employers and businesses to ensure that the correct decisions are made.

- The Learning and Practice Hub will bring all parties together to share their experiences and take ideas and structures into the future.

Roger Varley, Job Centre Plus addressed the Committee and made the following particular points:

- Job Centre Plus had a number of facilitators and work coaches to assist young people into the workplace and develop their employment career.
- Job Centre Plus was committed to the youth contract which provided additional help to young people over and above the normal service delivery – extra work experience where required. They also provided sector base work academies which involved the young person undertaking a six week programme with a guaranteed job at the end of the course. Extra apprenticeships and traineeships were also available for customers with certain health conditions.
- Job Centre Plus also assist young trainees by funding travel costs or the cost of clothing for interviews or starting employment.
- Jobs fairs and Birmingham Jobs Fund are arranged for 18 to 24 year olds and advertise jobs that are shown in the job centres.
- Aim to engage with young people early by linking up with a schools programme in order to contact pupils before they leave school and join the workforce. Engaging with 40 schools in Birmingham and within the Hall Green District the schools programme has engaged with Holy Trinity Catholic School, Moseley School, Hall Green School, Swanshurst School, King Edwards High School for Girls, Wheelers Lane Technology College and Queensbridge School.

Sarah Cron, work coach at Kings Heath Job Centre addressed the Committee and made the following particular points:

- The role of colleagues and herself when a customer makes a new claim is to engage with them and listen to what they have to say and to break down barriers as they may come from a homeless situation or have a disability and they may require a basic skills needs. As part of the new claim system a claim commitment is produced which was a living document and an agreement between the job centre and the customer. Advisors will refer customers to Job Centre Plus to engage and enrol on the Youth Promise Plus Project.
- At the moment figures for jobs seekers allowance in the Kings Heath Ward is 180, 18 to 24 year olds. On Universal Credit the figure is 323 active claims which 130 of those claimants were engaged in full time employment. 22 of those claimants needed very little support. 47% of claimants on Universal Credit were engaged in full or part-time work. Promote work experience to all claimants and also a 13 week job club where the job centre will see the customer on a daily basis to promote employability skills including strengthening their curriculum vitae and any other support and guidance issues that they may need.

Members expressed a number of concerns but the general consensus of the meeting was that the application forms were too lengthy for participants to complete particularly for clients within the 18 to 24 year age range, and in

incidences where the client was homeless or vulnerable, and they have had a poor experience with Job Centre Plus they will not 'knock twice if the first answer is no'. Concern was expressed that the young and the vulnerable would then 'drop off the radar' and become forgotten which could lead to a life of crime or worse. It was felt that Job Centre Plus should become a 'one stop shop approach for all' and that advisors should not be referring young people to other agencies or partners to follow up concerns and deal with specific issues that the client is experiencing.

In response to questions asked by Members officers gave the following comments:

Roger Varley – In his verbal statement he quoted that Job Centre Plus will find a better job resulting in a career for young people - he explained that this would become more apparent with job seekers claiming Universal Credit as there would be an ongoing relationship between the two parties as Job Centre Plus would continue to see clients on a regular basis.

The figures mentioned in the verbal statement included NEET's.

The notion of a 'one stop shop' was something that Job Centre Plus and the DWP wanted to achieve and have been engaging with local training providers and community groups and also going out into communities to engage with groups to encourage them to come into the job centres to offer debt advice, citizen's advice etc. across different job centres throughout the City. A lot of work and facilitating resources needed to be completed but work was in progress and progressing well. He stated that if a particular group was unable to facilitate within Job Centre Plus building then advisors would refer customers to them and arrange the appointment.

Sarah Cron – Training that work coaches receive - provide in house training courses to support all work coaches and provide them with the necessary information and support to be able to coach young people. Advisors are not medically trained - if a client has a particular medical need then advisors will refer them to the correct partner, for example Remploy. A lot of training is provided as part of the advisors job.

Universal Credit will be introduced in all Kings Heath job centres in December this year. All advisors will have been previously trained to deal with all enquiries and deliver efficiently.

Enablers are volunteers who will assist in the delivery of Universal Credit and offer support and guidance to customers by helping them to move into the workplace or providing a placement in sector based work academies, or arranging work experience so the client can add further experience and skills on their CV.

The Chair thanked both speakers for their feedback and informed the Committee that she had recently met with a number of young people who were attending a career event organised by Concorde and she listened to their personal views and opinions that they had experienced with Job Centre Plus. During that discussion she identified a number of issues - was the support given built specifically around that individuals needs and aspirations and to what extent did it not meet their requirements, and also she felt that young people had a good grasp on what was

not correct but could they challenge the support and guidance given to them, and were employees offered the correct employers in order to build their future careers.

The Chair welcomed Adill Hadi and Iman Thakur from Concorde Youth Centre to discuss the outcomes gathered from their organised career event:

Adill Hadi, advisor at Concorde Youth Centre – he stated that they were tasked to conduct an exercise and liaise with young people at the event to gather their views, opinions and feedback on the experiences that they had encountered when connecting with Job Centre Plus. A number of mixed views were expressed. Some young people were very positive with the guidance that they were given whilst some were not so supportive of the service provided. He felt that opinions expressed were mainly individual preferences and not based on the processes and practices that Job Centre Plus are required to follow.

Many of the young people expressed a concern at the lack of work experience opportunities available to them and due to this many felt that they were not given the chance to show their enthusiasm.

Iman Thakur stated that many graduates attending Job Centre Plus were offered job opportunities and vacancies that were not suited to their specific requirements, either not in the field that they held their qualification in or the vacancies offered had no career progression.

Many young people stated that their allowance provided by Job Centre Plus was below the minimum wage and if they were living alone they were unable to buy food and necessary basic needs. Many stated that they could not apply for travel allowances because they were not entitled even though they struggled to find the necessary finances to attend work on a daily basis.

Adill Hadi advised that many of the young people were unable to identify an individual that had successfully found a job at Job Centre Plus and they stated that agency work was more accessible and available.

One young individual had stated that he felt that he had no option but to attend the job centre on a daily basis, often from early morning in order to gain access to free training that was available. It was also noted that training providers will only deal with individuals that were benefit claimants.

He concluded by stating that the pilot exercise had proven to show real results and colleagues based in other Constituencies across the City had expressed a desire to conduct a similar exercise in relation to experiences of young people in their job centres.

The Chair thanked all speakers for their individual contributions to the discussion and stated that in summing up she addressed each individual to give brief feedback on the following statement ‘to what extent is it a hindrance or an opportunity that the eligibility for the supporting benefit is tied up with the professional betterment process’.

Johnathan Davies, Pioneer Group. He stated that he was the project manager for the East locality. The Pioneer Group had recently been awarded a contract to

work as part of a consortium working together with 10 community based organisations across Hall Green, Yardley and Sparkhill Job Centre Plus. As they had only just been recently appointed as a provider he was unable to comment on any experiences but upon reflection of comments made in the discussion he stated that it was important to offer young people work experience that reflected their aspirations so that they can achieve a meaningful and successful future career.

Sarah Cron stated that she would relay the comments in today's discussion to her managers and discuss the implications of either tailoring a programme to address individual's needs or whether a 'one stop shop' should be implemented.

The Chair stated that she would be willing to assist and facilitate in any discussions with her manager.

Roger Varley, Job Centre Plus stated that he would be interested in viewing the video that Concorde had recorded on their discussions with young people at their career fair event. He stated that it would be useful to give feedback to job centre employees. He stated that he was disappointed on comments made concerning the lack of work experience because there are a lot of work experiences that are offered to young people. He did accept the point that some work experience opportunities may not be ideally suited for some graduates but job centre plus was limited on employees who were keen to offer work experience placements. He said that the idea of work experience was about building up young people's confidence within a working environment and to add their experiences onto their CV. The comment made with regard to agency work and available work vacancies was an interesting one as Job Centre Plus work alongside agencies to help people find employment. Job Centre Plus will advertise agency work on their vacancy boards, He concluded by stating that all Job Centre Plus outlets, nationally, provide a consistent and reliable service to all users.

Steve Farr, Economy Directorate thanked all in attendance for an interesting discussion and stated that a lot of the comments mentioned had been incorporated into the Youth Promise Trust project, in particular the quality of the service provision. He agreed that language was important and stated that further work would be undertaken to ensure that the correct message is relayed to young people.

Lukman Miah, intervention worker at Prospects, South Birmingham and Shehla Ali, relationship manager at Prospects – as part of the Youth Promise Plus project they service target areas in Selly Oak, Kings Heath and Birmingham South West job centre. The project has been working very well and the young people currently on the programme have provided a positive feedback. In the process of implementing a number of forums for young people and would welcome any support or suggestions on how this can be successfully delivered from professional around the table.

A brief discussion then ensued amongst Members and it was stated that all agencies should have liaised with Concorde many months ago as they were front line service providers and that all partners and organisations should communicate and work together to ensure that young people Citywide are offered the best service provision that is available.

The Chair thanked all participants involved in the discussion and it was -

373

RESOLVED:-

That the discussion on the District Neighbourhood Challenge – Jobs and Skills and Young People be noted.

PETITIONS

A. REQUEST FOR RESURFACING - FERNLEY ROAD

The following petition was submitted by Councillor Shabrana Hussain on behalf of local residents residing in the above-mentioned location:-

(See document No. 1)

The petition requested for the resurfacing of Fernley Road, Sparkhill, as the road continuously suffered with potholes that were filled on a regular basis. There is a high number of vehicles passing through which caused a lot of wear and tear to the road surface. The road required more than continuous temporary patch-ups and would need resurfacing for a long term solution. Local Councillors and local residents request that the petition is actioned and that the first named petitioner and Councillor Hussain be informed of all progress.

It was:-

374

RESOLVED:-

That the petition be forwarded to the District Engineer for consideration and response.

B. ONE-WAY SYSTEM ON GROVE ROAD

The following response to the petition submitted by Councillor Hussain on behalf of local residents living in the above-mentioned location was submitted:-

(See document No. 2)

It was -

375

RESOLVED:-

That the response from the District Engineer to the petition to form a one-way system on Grove Road be noted.

MEMBER CHAMPION – CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE

Councillor Barry Bowles gave a verbal report on his role as the Member Champion for Corporate Parenting and made the following particular points:-

- A report will be submitted by Scrutiny Committee which listed a number of ways in which Members can become involved with young people in care without actually completing visits to the establishments. He stated that the report will be discussed at the next City Council meeting.
- There were six young people's homes within the locality of the Hall Green District and only one of those establishments, in the Sparkbrook area, had not been visited and this was because for the last 12 months no children from the Hall Green District had been admitted. Of the remaining five, 3 in Hall Green Ward, 1 in Springfield Ward and 1 in Mosely and Kings Heath Ward they have all been visited by District Members. All of the homes are managed by different providers. In total there were 19 children in care of which 11 are Birmingham City Council children.
- During the course of the visits it was discovered that one of the homes required improvement, 2 had not been fully inspected because they are fairly new buildings and the other 3 were of a good standard. All in all care homes for young people in the Hall Green District was providing an excellent service provision.

The Chair thanked Councillor Barry Bowles for his feedback report and thanked all District Members for being so pro-active in their Corporate Parenting duties.

376

RESOLVED:-

That the verbal update report on Member Champion – Corporate Parenting be noted.

The Chair altered the order of the agenda and requested that agenda item no. 8 be the next order of business for discussion.

HIGHWAYS ISSUES – HOW CAN LOCAL PEOPLE INFLUENCE STRATEGIC DECISIONS

The Chair thanked Kevin Hicks and Paul O'Day for attending the meeting and opened up the discussion by asking Members if they had any specific questions that required answers from the officers present.

Kevin Hicks and Paul O'Day, responded to questions asked and made the following particular points:

- Civil Enforcement Officers – Highways Division do respond to complaints from members of the public and will send beat patrol officers to specific areas of concern. Civil Enforcement Officers mainly patrol the main routes and arterial roads entering into the City.

Councillor Quinn stated that she was concerned that Stratford Road was not considered a major route into the City and stated that the Police had requested support from Civil Enforcement Officers to help patrol the area.

The officer stated that Stratford Road was one of the most enforced and ticketed Roads in the City. He denied the notion that Stratford Road was not regularly patrolled and enforced by Civil Enforcement Officers.

Residents permit parking schemes – Ladypool Road for example – were the responsibility of the Transportation Department. He stated that he was aware that there was a list of schemes to be developed and that completion of each scheme was very time consuming because full consultation with all residents had to be undertaken. Residents could apply to be added to the schedule through either organising a petition or raising their concern with their local Councillor. All requests received were prioritised and placed in order of urgency. The Department had very limited funds available to them and were unable to undertake all of the schemes requested.

- Amey contract – in relation to all highways works to be completed there was no distinction between the role of Amey and the role of BCC Highways division. No boundaries existed between the two and they worked with each other to provide one complete service – both operational and delivery. Constantly working with Amey to improve the process of customer communication and feedback. Street Scene Management – Amey is contracted to ‘look after’ and monitor the street including lighting and the footway. BCC Highways want Amey to take on a sense of ownership and ensure that the streets are maintained and safe.

It was requested that an email be circulated to all Members of the Hall Green District Committee providing details of officer’s names, contact numbers including their job role and responsibilities to ensure that the correct officer is contacted when required.

It was -

377

RESOLVED:-

That the discussion on Highways Issues and how local people could influence strategic decisions be noted.

WEST MIDLANDS POLICE - UPDATE

Inspector Neil Kirkpatrick, West Midlands Police briefly mentioned recent events that had occurred at Westminster and stated that the impact of grief felt by Police colleagues and the public had been overwhelming and very supportive. The local response to the incident was to deploy more beat officers Citywide to provide a visual reassurance to members of the community. He stressed that the increase in the number of police officers was not an indication that further attacks were imminent.

He reported on the increase of vehicle robberies and car jacking’s in the Hall Green District and across other areas of the City. He stated that cars were being stolen to joy ride in and were often found several miles away. He confirmed that

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the police were taking incidences of this crime very seriously and officers from the Hall Green District had been deployed to investigate and arrest the perpetrators. To date six suspects had been arrested.

378 **RESOLVED:-**

That the verbal report from the representative from West Midlands Police be noted.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP – REPORT BACK FROM CABINET COMMITTEE

379 The Chair deferred this item to a future meeting.

HALL GREEN DISTRICT WORK PROGRAMME

380 The Chair deferred this item to a future meeting.

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS (REPORTS BY OFFICERS)

381 The Chair deferred this item to a future meeting.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

382 The Chair stated that she would contact Members with a proposed future date in due course.

AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS

383 **RESOLVED:-**

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

The meeting ended at 1610 hours.

CHAIR