

## NECHELLS WARD MEETING - NOTES

WARD: Nechells	DATE: 17 <sup>th</sup> November 2022
VENUE: Free@Last, Nechells Park Road B7 5PR	START/FINISH TIMES: 6.30pm – 8.10pm
COUNCILLOR Lee Marsham	NOs OF ATTENDEES: 40
OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Sharon Thompson, Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness Rishi Spolia, Head of Housing Management PC David Moss & PCSO Sunita Sunhill, West Midlands Police Pat Whyte, Community Development & Support Officer Kay Thomas, Community Governance Manager	

### MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING:

#### 1. Notice of Recording:

Councillor Marsham advised that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items

#### 2. Welcome and Updates from Councillor Marsham

Councillor Marsham briefly outlined the issues he had been addressing since the last meeting, including

- Securing agreement for bollards at Seven & Medway Towers
- Railings in Montague Street

- Litter picks in Revesby Walk
- Started a new petition in respect of New Haven Close
- Dealing with queries re No 66 bus route
- Walkabout with the Bloomsbury Estate management team
- Arranging air quality monitors at Nechells School
- Arranging a meeting re traffic queues at Costco
- Held a meeting with BCC re traveller's transit camp
- Held a housing meeting at The POD

In response to queries regarding the situation with the Smurfit Kappa recycling site, Councillor Marsham said that he had met with them and they had confirmed that there was an 'odour' from the plant but believed it could be got rid of using new technology and was undertaking a trial before Christmas. He had asked that residents be advised of the details and would also let residents know about the trial when he received more information. Councillor Marsham urged residents to continue to let him know of any issues they were experiencing

Residents expressed their concerns regarding the condition of Hope Park and Councillor Marsham said that the City of Nature programme was addressing improvements to parks across the city and as Nechells had been classed as having the 3<sup>rd</sup> worst parks in Birmingham there would be a consultation in 2023 and an event for residents to see plans and comment.

There was concern expressed regarding street lighting and lack of crossing facilities including school crossing patrols especially on Holborn Hill on Aston Villa match days when cars were double parked and parked on corners of Elliot Street. Buses were unable to turn into the roads and Costco traffic also added to the issues. Councillor Marsham said that there was a local highway budget and he had requested the local engineer to cost local schemes and was focusing around schools. He was also encouraging schools to join Mode Shift Stars to enable them to apply for road

safety funding. With regard to match day parking this had moved from Aston because of residents parking schemes and he was meeting with Aston Villa management in respect of the stadium extension and requesting residents parking schemes for Nechells as part of that development. He had also written to the West Midlands Mayor requesting additional buses and trains to Aston Station on match days.

### **3. Local Police Update**

PC Moss & PCSO Sunhill reported that a new sergeant had been appointed to the team and was due to take up post soon.

The team priorities were violent crime, theft from and of motor vehicles, including number plates and car stripping. Knife crime awareness was being undertaken in schools and other work around violent crime.

In response to concerns about the return of boy racers at weekends and bank holidays, the meeting was advised that this was covered by the Force Traffic Response Team. Councillor Marsham said that a noise detector camera was being installed by Star City to be used by police and he undertook to share more when he received further details.

Residents expressed concern regarding an increase in dangerous parking including in bus stops and near to pedestrian crossings. There was a particular problem around Nechells Well Being Centre. Councillor Marsham said he was starting a 'Park It Don't Plonk It' initiative with the police in the near future. He also undertook to take up issues with the no. 66 bus route. PCSO Sunhil acknowledged the parking issues in the area and said more enforcement was required. However, she was aware of the abuse suffered by officers when ticketing vehicles and therefore said she would be happy to assist, especially around schools.

In response to complaints about fly tipping and its increase in the Ward, Councillor Marsham said the MHRC came

into the ward once per month and mobile CCTV cameras were active in the ward to assist with prosecutions. Love Your Streets would also assist any group wanting to be involved in clearing up the area and Councillor Marsham would help with arranging this. Chattaway Street was highlighted as a particular area where rubbish was reported, cleared and then immediately reappeared. Councillor Marsham asked details be forwarded to him.

#### **4. Housing**

Councillor Thompson outlined her role and responsibilities as Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness. She commented on the housing crisis facing Birmingham due to the reduction in council properties since the Right to Buy scheme had been introduced and other issues facing affordable housing. Fire safety in tower blocks had been a priority since the Grenfell disaster but this had meant other investment had been delayed, that had also been hampered by the increase in building costs as a result of covid. The waiting list for properties had reached 22,000 with most requested being family housing which was the type of property in shortest supply. The West Midlands had also been part of a trial for a Right to Buy scheme for housing association properties and although housing associations had to replace properties it did not have to be in the area they were sold. The council was currently working with Coventry and Wolverhampton councils around a retro-fitting scheme for its own properties.

Councillor Thompson said another of her responsibilities was Exempt Accommodation and HMO's and explained the difference and rules and regulations surrounding those types of properties. The council was lobbying for a change in the law and had run an enquiry including the Exempt Accommodation Forum made up of local people who gave evidence to the Government Select Committee and the Government was currently giving this consideration.

Residents then asked the following questions/ made comments and Councillor Thompson responded –

- a) The increase in student accommodation and lack of family housing was changing the community structure in Nechells. Councillor Thompson said approval for student accommodation was a planning decision but a quota should be applied. The increase in student accommodation also meant students were moving out of houses that

were then being used as HMO's. However there was a council programme to buy back houses from the open market and the pilot was hoping to purchase 200 properties.

- b) The CCTV had been removed from the tower blocks in Duddeston and as a result nuisance had increased. In other blocks in the area the CCTV had been repaired. Councillor Thompson said CCTV had to be decommissioned legally due to GDPR rules but individual blocks had been considered for mobile CCTV. Any ASB should be reported to the housing manager.
- c) Queens Tower – complaints made regarding balconies flooding when it rained following sprinkler system work undertaken to the block. The balconies were covered but rain was getting in and causing the balcony area to flood. When the problems were reported to the contact centre a plumber was sent out, but the problem could not be solved as it related to the balcony roof. Wates had been contacted and would not help and residents were left not knowing how to get a solution. An element of the rent was also supposed to pay for security, but no-one was ever visible and people gained entry into the block causing nuisance and disturbance and residents were left feeling unsafe in their own homes. Councillor Thompson undertook to take the details at the conclusion of the meeting and personally raise an enquiry. She added that Wates were no longer the council contractor and she would arrange a site visit with the new contractor Equans. With regard to security, residents were asked to provide specific times etc so that targeted patrols could be arranged.
- d) Bloomsbury Estate repairs – constant need to report the build -up of reoccurring mould inside properties. Councillor Thompson undertook to speak to Bloomsbury estate management and try to escalate the issue
- e) Car crime and parking around Humber Tower and neighbouring blocks by people parking to go into the city centre. PC Moss acknowledged the issues with car crime in Duddeston, partly due to the numbers of vehicle parking. He said that as a neighbourhood team it was something that was a priority but the numbers of officers available limited what could be done. He undertook to raise with the new sergeant.
- f) Councillor Thompson referred to the cost of living crisis and urged anyone needing support to get in touch regardless of housing tenure. Information would be circulated regarding Warm Spaces. She warned caution about fire safety and said that LEAP (local energy saving agency) was working with the council to assist with queries and

debt/benefit advice was available at Free@Last

## **5. Residents Updates/Issues**

- a) Leaf Collection – residents queried whether the council was clearing leaves and particular reference was made to Crompton Road where there were 5 trees that required pruning as the leaves were covering the pavements and causing a slip hazard, especially around Nechells Park Surgery. Residents said they had cleared and bagged up the leaves but refuse collection would not take them. It was also reported that the roots and branches from one tree were impacting on a property. Councillor Thompson said that Waste Management did have a leaf clearance programme and Councillor Marsham undertook to find out when/where it would be coming to Nechells. In response to tree pruning the meeting was advised that there was an annual tree pruning survey and Kier would be undertaking some work in December. Councillor Marsham said he would take up the issue of the affected property and Crompton Road.
- b) Stuart Street – resident said request for assistance with the 4 trees in the garden had been made as a city council tenant but the response had been that the tenant was responsible however this was not something that could be easily managed. Councillor Marsham undertook to follow up.

**Next Meeting – 19 January 2023 at 6.30pm at The POD, Oliver Street**