

QUINTON WARD FORUM MEETING – ACTION NOTES RECORDING

WARD: Quinton	DATE: Tuesday 12 th December 2023
VENUE: Room 7, Quinborne Centre, Ridgacre Road, Quinton, B32 2TW	START/FINISH TIMES: 6.30pm – 8.00pm
COUNCILLORS: Sam Forsyth and Lauren Rainbow	NOs OF ATTENDEES: 9
OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Beverly Edmead – Community Governance Manager Apologies for Absence Stuart Cross, Highway Steward, Kier Community Representatives from Pitts Wood and Quinton Meadows Consultative Committee (QMCC)	VISITING SPEAKER: Mr Simon Foster, Police & Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands

CURRENT WARD ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES:
1. Young People In Quinton 2. A Safe Quinton 3. Cleaner, Greener Quinton

MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING INCLUDING LOCAL CONCERNS:
1. Welcome & Notice of Recording Following introductions, Councillors Sam Forsyth and Lauren Rainbow welcomed everyone to the meeting, and a special welcome was given to Mr Simon Foster, Police & Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands.

2. Notice of Recording

Residents were advised that members of the press/public could record and/or take photographs of the meeting.

3. Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands

Mr Simon Foster, Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands briefly advised that his role as an Elected Individual to the post was to ensure that West Midlands Police Force was run effectively and focussed on reducing crime.

Mr Foster advised that:-

- Police and Crime Commissioners were elected for the first time in 2012.
- The PCC acted as a voice for all local residents/communities across the West Midlands and to hold West Midlands Police Force to account and to ensure that they were answerable to the communities they served. The role was a very complex one and democratic accountability was essential.
- The PCC did not run the police force at an operational level; however, they had a responsibility to ensure that those in charge were held accountable. The PCC also had the power to hire and fire the Chief Constable as appropriate.
- The PCC decided what the Force should be focussing on and the crimes it should prioritise – details of which could be found in the Police and Crime Plan. The PCC also sets the budget – a portion of the local Council Tax goes towards West Midlands Police.
- The PCC must also bring together Community Safety and Criminal Justice Partners to make sure organisations worked together to fight crime and help victims.

Mr Foster further advised of the statutory duty of the role of the PCC to prepare a Police and Crime Plan – the key priorities within this Plan were:-

- Rebuilding community policing
- Combating violence against women and girls
- Tackling and reducing knife crime

Full details of the Plan could be found on the PCC website and that partnership working across the board was key to delivering the plan, along with rebuilding the trust and confidence in the police service within local communities and victims of crime.

Referring to proposals for Quinton Police Station which had been earmarked for closure, Mr Foster explained that following a review of the

Estates Strategy with the Chief Constable in October, a decision had been made to retain the station, which was what local residents had been asking for. The premises would continue to be base for the local police team; discussions were also ongoing for some of the Response Teams to be based at the station.

Mr Foster further advised that the station would not be open to the public or offer a front desk service as previously provided in the past – the station would be a Hub for police teams/personnel. Refurbishment of the premises was due to be carried out in 2024 to enable the respective police teams/staff to move in.

Whilst welcoming the retention of the police station within the ward, residents made the following points:-

- Reconsideration should be given to offering/providing a front desk service for emergency crime related issues and concerns
- If a front desk service wasn't possible, an emergency telephone facility outside the building should be provided - many residents wanting to report a crime would find it quicker to do so in person and not via webchat or 101. This facility was previously provided when the station was operational.
- The nearest station for reporting incidents face to face/in person was simply too far away for residents to travel to.
- A significant number of crime/incidents in the ward went unreported as residents/victims were frustrated at the lengthy waiting times via the contact centre or the reluctance/lack of confidence reporting non urgent concerns via the webchat.
- Not everyone had access to the internet or felt confident reporting incidents online
- Trust between the local police team officers and residents/wider community had significantly deteriorated and must rebuild if the relationship was to improve. Providing a local base and some access to the facilities for residents to report crime would go some way to help rebuilding trust.
- It would be useful to know what the full and correct staffing levels should be for the local police team, rather than the current staffing level, which was clearly insufficient for the size of the ward.
- Excessive speeding and poor/dangerous driving remained an ongoing issue. Car thefts/crime had also increased. A more proactive and robust approach was needed to tackle these issues.

Cllrs felt that retaining the station as a community hub would act as a deterrent against some acts of criminality and provide reassurance to the local community, including the rebuilding of trust and confidence in the service. Once the hub was operational, the ability to respond to local incidents should improve. However, residents' expectations also had to be managed regarding providing an emergency telephone /front desk facility and officers being visible in the community. Cllrs suggested a regular 'Pop -up' station/drop-in facility within the ward

would be a good way of regaining/rebuilding trust and confidence as well as providing practical advice and information to residents. Cllr Rainbow agreed to raise this with the Sgt at the next PACT meeting.

Responding to Cllrs and residents' comments, Mr Foster explained that ways of reporting crime had significantly changed over the years; the footfall/visits of public facing stations had diminished as communication methods developed and changed.

An increase in social media usage, Live Webchat and West Midlands Now (WMNow) all provided different ways to report incidents/receive information as well as traditional telephone use - 999 for emergencies and 101 for non-emergency incidents. Call handling and response times to telephone calls for both numbers had also improved in line with the requirements of the Service Level Agreements, however there was still room for improvement, and this would continue to be worked on.

Addressing the concerns regarding excessive speeding/dangerous driving, Mr Foster acknowledged this was a real problem across the city and road safety remained one of the main priorities for West Midlands Police and its partner agencies, including West Midland Combined Authority. A wide range of key initiatives and actions under Operation Trident to address road traffic offences included an increase in Average Speed Enforcement Cameras; funding from the Safer Streets Initiative for road safety measures; 16 additional speed guns; 3 additional speed vans; road safety campaigns/activities and an increase of officers in the Road Harm Prevention Team.

Road Crime Teams would also be set up, and a 3-year injunction banning street racing and car cruising in Birmingham and the Black Country was currently in place until 2027.

Community Speedwatch activities also remained an active way for residents to work with the local police teams to monitor vehicle speeds on roads in the ward.

Concluding the updates, Mr Foster added that currently, there were approx. 10,000 operational police officers -including PCSOs in West Midlands Police,

Bringing the discussion to a close, Cllrs and residents welcomed the retention of the police station in the ward as a base for the local police team, and thanked Mr Simon Foster for his attendance and presentation.

4. Councillors Updates

Cllrs briefly advised of the City Council's current financial situation which had a significant impact on budgets and the delivery of local council services. Since the S114 Notice was issued, all budget savings proposals had to be submitted to the Government appointed

Commissioners for approval. The budget proposals for 2024 – 2025 would be presented at City Council in February 2024.

In the meantime, Officers and Councillors remained fully committed to ensuring that essential Statutory Services were protected and delivered, and that vulnerable residents/communities were supported through these very difficult and challenging times.

Cllrs added that Cllr Bridget Jones, Cabinet Member for Finance had agreed in principle to attend a future Ward Forum Meeting.

Responding to residents' questions, Cllrs refuted rumours that consideration was being given to selling council owned housing to Housing Associations in order to raise money, and that rumours and headlines being widely circulated in the media were often baseless and speculative. Tenants living in council housing would still have the 'Right to Buy' their rented property as long as they met the criteria. Council owned assets and properties/buildings deemed surplus to requirements would be earmarked for disposal/ sale at auction as they always have done and would be handled by the Property Services Team.

Councillors added that the retention of local council assets like Quinton Library was essential, and residents should continue to actively support and use these facilities.

Kier Highways Update

The following information had been provided by Stuart Cross, Kier Highway Steward who had been unable to attend the meeting:-

- 6 trees had been removed over the past 6 months and were to be replanted in the coming months.
- Kier have started winter maintenance programme. Gritting routes and location of grit bins can be found at www.birmingham.gov.uk
- No current large resurfacing schemes planned however Kier had recently resurfaced Ingram Way and were continuing programme of inspection and maintenance repair unaffected by section 114.
- Court Oak Road carriageway by Court Oak Pub (where we visited to look at timings of pedestrian crossing). Large repair of 200sqm was planned for January

Residents should continue to let Councillors know of specific issues and concerns to be raised with Kier, and responding to questions regarding gritting of pavements, Cllr Forsyth advised that only pavements outside Queen Alexander College and some schools were gritted by Kier.

5. Other Local News and Updates from Residents/Community Groups

- (i) Pitts Wood – an information briefing update was circulated to residents at the meeting
- (ii) Quinton Meadows Consultative Committee – an information briefing update was circulated to residents at the meeting

Councillors commended the ongoing work and commitment of both community groups and encouraged residents to visit the spaces mentioned in the updates to see and support the excellent work being carried out.

Better Streets

Residents views/comments were being sought for a consultation being carried out by local resident Alistair regarding road safety/safer streets in Quinton and neighbouring Harborne Ward. Residents interested in getting involved/finding out more should contact Cllr Rainbow.

The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS)

It was suggested the investigation and audit report regarding how the Local Innovation Fund (LIF) was used by TAWS would be an ideal case study for the Commissioners.

6. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed.

Councillors Forsyth and Rainbow thanked residents for their attendance.