

SPARKHILL WARD MEETING NOTES

WARD: Sparkhill	DATE: 3 November 2022
VENUE: St Johns Church, St Johns Road B11 4RG	START/FINISH TIMES: 6.30pm – 8.30pm
COUNCILLORS Nicky Brennan & Rashid Mahmood	NOs OF ATTENDEES: 20
OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Sergeant Louise Garner, West Midlands Police PCSO Khan, West Midlands Police Amer Khan, Neighbourhood Action Co-ordinator Kay Thomas, Community Governance Manager	VISITING SPEAKER Simon Foster, West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner

MATTERS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING:

1. Welcome & Notice of Recording

Councillor Brennan welcomed all to the meeting and advised the meeting to note that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

Amer Khan introduced himself as the Neighbourhood Action Co-ordinator covering Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East and Sparkhill wards and explained his role. He advised of some of the issues that he had been tackling including working with enforcement officers in response to dumped rubbish, clearing alleyway between Stratford Road and Formans Road and working with businesses. He had also helped to set up Friends of Farm Park and wanted to work with residents to set up more groups to look after public open spaces. In response to comments the meeting was advised that enforcement officers were undertaking work along the Stratford Road with businesses and issuing fines.

2. Flood Update

Councillor Brennan reported that the FLAG was active and working hard to keep flooding on Percy Road/Formans Road at bay and the weir had been removed to give more capacity on the river. Surveys had been undertaken which would hopefully lead to access to funding for the group.

3. Forming Friends of Percy Road Park

Councillor Brennan said that residents had expressed an interest in setting up a group and had requested assistance. A local resident said that Shakespeare Park also needed some attention. Amer advised that once residents had formed a group to contact him and he would assist. A member of Friends of Reddings Lane Park offered to help any residents wanting to set up a Friends of group and said that there was training and funding available.

4. Welcome to the Police & Crime Commissioner

Simon Foster, Police & Crime Commissioner introduced his role and responsibilities covering the West Midlands. His role was to represent citizens and not the police and ensure an effective and efficient police force. He outlined his priorities, including rebuilding community policing, domestic abuse, violent crime, prevention and improving trust and confidence in the police force.

In response to the reduction in the numbers of police officers especially in community policing, the PCC said he had pledged to rebuild community policing and was working with the Chief Constable to recruit 450 new community police officers across the West Midlands. He had also appointed the first Victims Commissioner, invested in Safer

Streets, launched the Upstanders Not Bystanders campaign to change boys/men's attitude to women, launched the Faith Alliance and secured funding over the next 3 years to continue work on violent crime.

Despite the recruitment campaign the West Midlands still had 1000 fewer police officers than 10 years ago and therefore the PCC had lobbied with a cross party group of M.P's for fairer funding for the region and the government had committed to a review.

Local residents referred to parking issues and the increase in the number of disabled bay markings that people were misusing, consequently causing arguments and abuse between neighbours on the streets. Enforcement was the key, but residents did not feel it right to contact the police about such issues and the council could not issue parking permits or enforce the markings. Councillor Brennan said that there needed to be a policy change in relation to disabled bays as there was no mechanism to deal with marking removal when someone moved house and some markings were not official. Parking permits could only be issued after extensive consultation and agreement by all residents in the road, then only 2 permits per household were issued which did not ease the situation where families had more than 2 cars. Amer added that there was a steering group looking into this problem, as well as encroachment issues.

In response to concerns around the Police Cadets group, the meeting was advised that the scheme was re-opening at Moseley School but was short of 3 volunteers. Details have been shared on social media to encourage more volunteers and young people from other schools were also welcome to join.

5. Local Police Update

Sergeant Garner introduced herself as the new sergeant covering the area and advised that funding had been made available to enable the team to patrol on foot from 11pm until the early hours. In response to comments the Sergeant acknowledged the issues surrounding parking and speeding and confirmed that an arrest had been made in respect of a recent car accident in Oakwood Road. With regard to littering of and use of gas cannisters the law around the sale was unclear but due to the impact there was a national conversation about the way forward. Residents reported a local shop selling large CS gas cannisters. The meeting was advised that knowingly/recklessly selling the cannisters for recreational purposes was illegal but that intention had to be proved. Use was not illegal however due to the number of people being seen in A&E as a result of CS gas use, consultants were engaging with the Chief Constable. Residents reported that some of the cannisters seen in Percy Road Park had markings to show they were the property of the NHS (Heartlands & QE hospitals) and queried how this was happening and suggested a campaign to highlight the dangers of using CS gas. Sergeant Garner said she would link with teams covering the hospital areas and advised that the PCSO's went into schools, mosques etc offering preventative advice.

Concerns were raised regarding the increase in aggressive begging, especially around Springfield/College Roads and Sergeant Garner advised that an officer had been tasked with this as a priority and it was also a priority for the Impact Team. Work was ongoing with housing associations and landlords regarding issues emanating from HMO's/exempt accommodation. Community Protection Orders had been issued to beggars and community education in respect of alternatives to giving money was being undertaken. The exempt accommodation in the area had been mapped and residents were encouraged to speak to the councillors and police team about specific properties – springfield@westmidlandspolice.uk

Councillor Brennan said that an exempt accommodation policy had been recently adopted by the council and it was continuing to lobby the government for regulation.

Sergeant Garner undertook to attend future meetings with further updates.