

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

BEDFORD WARD “LET’S TALK” MEETING

**Held at Balham Seventh Day Adventist Church, 16A The Boulevard, Balham
High Road, SW17 8AD
on Tuesday 23rd January 2018 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT

Council Members

Bedford Ward Members: Councillor Dr Rosena Allin-Khan, Councillor Fleur Anderson and Councillor Mrs Antonia Dunn

Councillor Ravi Govindia, Leader of the Council (in the chair)

Councillor Simon Hogg, Leader of the Opposition

Council Officers

Environment and Community Services Department

Mr Tim Addlesee – Principal Engineer

Mr Nigel Granger – Planning - Area Team Manager East Team (Development Manager)

Mr Mick Potter – Parking Policy Manager

Mr Mike Singham – Waste Strategy Manager

Mr John Scully – Inspection and Enforcement Manager

Housing and Regeneration Department

Mr Andy Booth – Housing and Estates Services

Chief Executive’s Group

Ms Laura Campbell – Democratic Services

Mr Gareth Jones - Democratic Services

Ms Lorinda Freint – Business and Enterprise Manager

Mr Andrew Jolly – Community Safety Officer

Children’s Services Department (Wandsworth)

Mr Adam Wells – Head of Pupil Services

Residents

Approximately over 50 members of the public in attendance.

INTRODUCTION

The Chairman, Councillor Govindia, welcomed residents to the meeting and explained the format of the meeting. The Chairman, Ward Members, Leader of the Opposition and officers then introduced themselves. The Ward Councillors noted there were a number of issues that residents were concerned about which would be discussed at the meeting. Councillor Dr Allin-Khan and Councillor Mrs Dunn also informed the residents that they would not be standing as a Ward Councillor in the local elections in May.

The Chairman then invited questions and comments from the residents.

ISSUES, RESPONSES AND ACTION

1. Traffic Issues

Community Speed Watch/Speeding

It was questioned what was done with the data from the community speed watch and whether there was evidence that it had a positive impact. Councillor Mrs Dunn responded that evidence was not yet available and the data was held with the traffic police who shared the information with the Council. This information was also shared with the neighbourhood watch. Drivers identified travelling over 20MPH were sent a letter, and further action was taken with those driving much over the 20MPH. In time, there would be further information on the results of the scheme. Councillor Anderson noted that the aim was to build a map across London in respect of hotspots of speeding areas, and hoped that residents would contact the Council to inform them of locations where they considered there to be a problem with speeding. She referred to a petition that was submitted a few years ago in respect of Elmbourne Road which would be going to the Community Services OSC meeting soon, and commented that any resident who wanted to put together a petition in respect of their road should contact the Ward Councillors about it.

Mr Addlesee reported that temporary signs were put up when the community speed watch was taking place. A traffic survey was due to start the following week to monitor the speed across the borough. This was a rolling programme and data would be obtained through the survey. There was information on previous speeds across the borough which could be compared.

A resident questioned if work was done with businesses to make sure their drivers did not exceed the speed limit.

Traffic Calming

A resident expressed concern over the use of roads humps, commenting that he had seen accidents caused by drivers going over the roads humps too quickly and losing control. Councillor Anderson noted that in some roads they had a positive outcome and in some areas some residents did not want them, different roads needed different approaches. She thanked the resident for his comments and would take

them away. Councillor Dr Allin-Khan asked residents to let the Ward Councillors know if they knew of any particular problem areas. Councillor Mrs Dunn also suggested residents to take the details of any delivery vehicles that caused a problem so they can be reported back to the company.

Mr Addlesee commented that traffic calming measures used to mean installing roads humps but there were now different measures available such as road cushions and other modern schemes; the new schemes were more expensive and needed funding but there were now alternative options available.

A junction at Bedford Hill was referred to as concerns were raised about safety at the junction and a resident had reported this to the Town Hall but had not seen any changes.

Cycle Lanes

It was questioned why a cycle lane had been removed in November and not reinstated when the road had been resurfaced.

Action: Mr Addlesee was not aware of any cycle lanes being taken out and would look into this. The resident was asked to give further details to Mr Addlesee after the meeting.

Another resident referred to cycle lanes being used as race tracks in the evening and asked if the Council could consider ways to prevent this. The Leader noted that this was a continuous challenge. Councillor Anderson again made reference to the report on Elmbourne Road that was going to the Community Services OSC meeting on 20th February, which would be available a week before the meeting, and she would send the information to the resident as soon as it was published.

2. Chestnut Trees on Tooting Common

A resident referred to previous discussions held in respect of the Chestnut Trees on Tooting Common that had been cut down, and reported that Councillor Cook had promised a report on the health of each tree, which she felt was important and she was eager to see this report. Another resident commented that he felt that the cutting of the trees was not based on the age of trees, and value was placed on native trees whereas there were other beautiful and healthy trees that needed protection.

Action: The Leader would speak to Councillor Cook about the report. He also reported that in respect of new species of trees, they became more prone to disease.

Councillor Dr Allin-Khan reported that she was aware of the promise made and aware that a barrier had been erected when the trees were cut down which made the community feel it could not go there. She would follow this up with Councillor Cook, to ask where the trees went when felled, as she noted the trees should not be used if diseased, and asked the residents to see her after the meeting and she would take this forward. Councillor Dr Allin-Khan questioned if any other areas in the borough

had similar number of trees chopped down. Councillor Anderson reported that she had been told at the Community Services OSC meeting that the trees were a danger to children, and it was important to hear if the trees were dangerous. She noted that there were questions in respect of what trees had been healthy and could be saved.

Councillor Mrs Dunn reported that when the decision was taken it was considered the replacement trees be robust. She referred to the chestnut trees on Garratt Lane which were diseased and the Council was monitoring them. The information on the trees that were cut down on Chestnut Avenue was in the public domain. Councillor Mrs Dunn reported that 51 trees had been cut down and it was more complicated than first seemed, with trees diseased with root rot and bleeding canker. She was not sure that the report was a description of every tree but she could email this information.

The costs of the additional funds spent on security was questioned and another resident referred to the petition of 6k signatures that requested the option to only fell the dangerous trees but was not heard. The Leader responded that the funds spent on security and the erection of fencing was based on advice given, and the need to fell the trees in a secure area. Other trees were regularly monitored and the Leader said he would share the information that was available. In response to a question on cutting down other trees, the Leader reported that there would be a measured approach before action was taken. In respect of the consultation, the comments were taken on board and a balanced consideration and judgement made. The consultation exercise involved questions put to residents but was not a referendum.

One resident felt that when the trees on the common had been replaced, that it had made an improvement as it had opened up the appearance of the common and made it look brighter.

Councillor Dr Allin-Khan commented that there were issues in respect of a lot of people had made their views clear and did not feel that they had been listened to and also felt a lot of money had been wasted on security measures, and the Council should adapt a number of ways where the public could put their views forward.

3. Health Issues

Sexual Health Services

A resident referred to the sexual health clinics, noting that the clinic based at St George's Hospital had closed and temporary clinics had opened in Roehampton and Balham, and he understood that the Balham site was unsatisfactory because of the reception area. He asked why there had been a reduction in staff in the sexual health clinics and why the site St George's Hospital had closed before a satisfactory replacement had been found. The resident noted that in a 2010 report, Wandsworth was seventh in the league table in respect of sexually transmitted infections and asked what happened next as he understood the clinics were a temporary situation. Councillor Mrs Dunn referred to a report that went to the Adult Care and Health OSC which contained information about this, and would contact the resident about this. Councillor Dr Allin-Khan reported that the Courtyard centre (the site at St George's)

was not just a sexual health centre and was disappointed that it had closed. St George's Hospital had made the decision not to retender for the services due to deficits. Councillor Dr Allin-Khan noted that St George's had not stopped treating HIV patients. The sexual health services had gone out for tender and CLCH had been awarded the tender. She noted that a lot of dissatisfaction had been expressed about the services, and that the Council and OSC took this issue seriously. The resident felt that the service was better delivered before this contract and there was a lack of continuity. Councillor Dr Allin-Khan thanked the resident for raising this issue and could talk to him about this after the meeting.

St George's Hospital

One resident expressed concern over the deficit at St George's Trust, and commented that the Trust had not met its performance such as in respect of its target of bed occupancy. The resident referred to staffing at the Trust, noting that there was a vacancy rate of 13%, referring also to the sickness rate and the number of staff working over and above their contracted hours. He commented that he would like the Council through the Adult Care and Health OSC to take a proper look at St Georges' and to use its power to get better services. Councillor Dr Allin-Khan referred to her work done at the hospital and its issues. She noted that the OSC did look at the powers it had and reported that the Chief Executive of the Trust attended meetings of the OSC, and the OSC had an understanding of the situation. Councillor Dr Allin-Khan also commented that there was a need to be realistic as a Council in what St George's could deliver. Councillor Mrs Dunn also attended the OSC meetings and reported that the OSC looked at the issues. She noted that it was disappointing in respect of the deficit, as in the past few years the Trust has managed to reduce it, and noted that the Council continued to put pressure on and worked with the Trust.

Aqua Class at Balham Leisure Centre

A member of the Aqua Class held at Balham Leisure Centre expressed concern that the class had been stopped; she had attended the class for 15 years and noted its importance as most of the attendees had injuries and the class helped people to recover and get back to work. She noted that following communications the centre had reinstated the class but for only 8 weeks and the tutor was unable to attend. The member of the class had been told that the class was not commercially viable. Councillor Dr Allin-Khan noted that this was an example of residents looking at what they could do to make themselves better, and she would continue to support the class. Councillor Anderson thanked the member of the class for raising the issue and encouraged people to spread the word to support the class and attend (held on a Tuesday evening at 7.45pm, which would be changing to 6.05pm).

4. Children's Services Issues

Ofsted Inspection

A resident was concerned about children's services and the inadequate Ofsted inspection result, and asked what progress had been made and what monitoring of services was done in respect of the shared staffing arrangement (SSA). The Leader

responded that the Children's Services department in Wandsworth had not merged with another service. The Council had an Improvement Board which involved members from all parties of the Council, the police and the health authority. Safeguarding of children was a responsibility for all. The Leader referred to the interim inspection by Ofsted where its report was heartening; much progress had been achieved and the Council was committed.

In respect of staffing, the Leader was not aware of any staff leaving as a result of the SSA; there were a lot of staff who had made their own choice to leave, such as due to retirement. In respect of how the service was monitored, the Leader was happy to share information with the resident, noting there were regular reports to the Education and Children's Services OSC, and the Improvement Board looked at and reported on the performance indicators. It was asked whether once Ofsted gave a satisfactory result whether Children's Services would merge with Richmond Council, and the Leader noted that this could not be assumed and the goal for the Children's Services was to get a clean bill of health. Councillor Hogg later on commented that as Councillor, they had a corporate responsibility in respect of safeguarding.

In response to a question on whether there were any warning signs about the Ofsted Inspection results, the Leader noted the mock inspection regime in place did not indicate that the Ofsted report would be so different. One of the failures identified was the lack of consistency. The Leader again referred to the recent Interim Ofsted inspection letter, that was available on the website, where progress had been made.

5. Waste Management Issues

Litter and Recycling Bins

The owner of a café on Ritherdon Road referred to the bins being removed outside of the premises and was told by Mr Singham that if all three bins had gone he saw no barrier to replacing one, as this stretch of the road was swept daily; two or three bins would not be put back unless one bin overflowed regularly despite daily emptying.

The café owner had also asked the Council to provide on-street recycling bin facilities for the compostable coffee cups that she now stocked. Mr Singham suggested that these recycling facilities tended to suffer from heavy contamination and this might not be viable; it would be expensive to provide a service that did not work. It was the responsibility of businesses to make their own arrangements in respect of contracting waste services. The café owner noted that the recycling facilities would be for the general community. Mr Singham understood that the Council would be reviewing its policies in respect of plastics and that, without being able to pre-empt outcomes, this might lead to improved policies in relation to coffee cup waste. The Leader suggested that residents write to him with any recycling proposals and he would consider the suggestions.

Waste Collection, Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Collection

A resident reported that bags of waste in her area had been left for a few days before being collected. She also expressed concern that despite signs, fly tipping was still taking place. Mr Singham noted that the commercial waste left to pile up was a potential enforcement issue and asked the resident to give details to be followed up.

(Post meeting note – Mr Scully had arranged for a letter drop for the flats over the businesses on Foulser Road to be carried out and the area would be monitored. The resident would be updated on the action taken in respect of her concerns.)

The resident also expressed her concern over her experience of ordering a bulky waste collection, where the website was not clear and she had been charged twice. Mr Singham was sorry to hear about this experience and noted it was not the intention to make the service difficult. He referred to issues with an older database management system working with a more modern system, and officers tried to improve the system as much as possible. The Leader apologised for her experience and her frustration with the service and would make sure she would be refunded.

6. Other Issues

Council Tax/Finance/SSA

In response to a question on the Council Tax increase had the Council not joined up with Richmond Council in respect of staffing, the Leader reported that the basic rule was that for every 1% increase it generated a yield revenue of £0.5m, and noted that £10m had been saved by joint staffing with Richmond Council.

Town Hall

In response to a question, the Leader confirmed that he had no intention of selling the Town Hall.

Neighbourhood Forum

A resident referred to the Tooting Neighbourhood Forum that he had recently become a member of, noting that its purpose was to create a neighbourhood plan in a joined-up way. He encouraged other people to get involved, and asked what the Council could do to encourage residents and enable them to get support. Councillor Anderson responded that it was great to publicise the forum and noted that the neighbourhood plan would influence Council decisions, she encouraged residents to get involved and find out more. Councillor Mrs Dunn reported that the neighbourhood forum was a great way for residents to get together and also encouraged residents to get involved in the Neighbourhood Watch. She referred to other forums, and asked residents if they wanted further details to let the Ward Councillors know.

Anti-Social Behaviour Measures

A resident referred to a request submitted to the Council for a gate to be installed by the garages in the Newland Estate to prevent anti-social behaviour that was taking place, but had not received a response.

Action: Mr Booth asked the resident to speak to him after the meeting and would follow this issue up with housing officers. Councillor Mrs Dunn highlighted the importance for residents to compile evidence of any incidents.

Communications between Council Departments

A resident referred to the experience of her elderly neighbour who she had helped to attend appointments, and expressed concern over the way different council services and officers worked together and wanted them to work in a seamless way together. She was satisfied with the eventual outcome and that her neighbour had been placed in an excellent sheltered housing property. The Leader thanked her for her comments and noted that the Council strived to get it right in respect of the support given.

Wood burners

A resident expressed concern over the increasing use of wood burners in the area. It was noted that there was no authority to use them and they were not environmentally friendly, and a resident asked that any help the Councillors could give would be welcome. The Leader confirmed that the wood burning fuel would continue to be banned and noted the comments made. Smoke Control Area (SCA) is a way to control emissions from domestic chimneys caused by the burning of coal and wood.

CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chairman, Ward Councillors and the Leader of the Opposition thanked residents for attending the meeting. The Ward Councillors and Leader of the Opposition gave closing statements, and residents invited to stay and speak further with Councillors and officers about matters they had raised or to ask any questions that they had not been able to during the open part of the meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.25pm

Laura Campbell
Gareth Jones (020 8871 7520)