

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

BALHAM WARD LET'S TALK MEETING

**Held at Balham Baptist Church Hall, 21 Ramsden Road, London, SW12 8QX on
Tuesday, 25th April 2017 at 7.30p.m.**

PRESENT

Council Members

Councillor Guy Senior – Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Resources (in the Chair);
Balham Ward Members: Councillor Paul Ellis, Councillor Clare Salier and Councillor Mrs. Caroline Usher
Councillor Fleur Anderson (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)

Council Officers

Mr. Martin Byrne – Area Housing Manager, Housing and Regeneration Department
Mr. Henry Cheung – Head of Inspection and Enforcement, Environment and Community Services Department
Mrs. Rayment-Pickard – Assistant Director, Children's Services Department
Mr. Steve Lane – Parking, Environment and Community Services Department
Ms Lorinda Freint – Business and Enterprise Manager, Chief Executive's Group
Mr. Mike Singham – Waste Strategy Manager, Environment and Community Services Department
Mr. Nigel Granger – Area Planning Manager, Environment and Community Services
Mr. Camillus Donnelly – Head of Network Management, Environment and Community Services
Mr. Tony Ioannou – Police Community Support Officer, Metropolitan Police

Mr. Graham Collins – Democratic Services Officer, Chief Executive's Group
Ms Rachel Williamson – Democratic Services Officer, Chief Executive's Group

Residents

Approximately 20 members of the public.

INTRODUCTION

The Chairman, Councillor Senior, welcomed residents to the meeting and explained the format of the meeting.

The Ward Members and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition then gave a brief overview of their roles on the Council.

Councillor Ellis explained that during his time on the Council he has filled a wide-range of roles, most recently as Cabinet Member for Housing. He was also a trustee of the Battersea Arts Centre.

Councillor Salier said that, since her election to the Council in 2014, she had served as Deputy Chairman of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Co-Chairman of Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC). She had a number of other roles, including as a governor of Oak Lodge School.

Councillor Mrs. Usher said that she was first elected to the Council in 2006. She was currently the Chairman of the Licensing Committee, and explained that the role was not solely to issue licences, but also to ensure responsible Licensing. Additionally Councillor Mrs. Usher is a member of the Council's Community Services OSC and a representative of the Council on external bodies, including the London Councils Transport and Environment Committee and as a governor at Holy Ghost RC Primary School.

Councillor Anderson introduced herself as Deputy Leader of the Council's Labour Group and Opposition Speaker on the Community Services OSC.

The Chairman then invited questions and comments from the residents.

ISSUES, RESPONSES AND ACTION

Parking

1. A resident raised the issue of the parking restrictions in the C4 sub-zone. These restrictions operate from 9.30a.m. to 10.30a.m. on weekdays. He reported that due to the limited restrictions, many people from outside the area were parking in the zone after 10.30a.m. and staying for the remainder of the day, which meant that residents were unable to find a parking space.

Response - Councillor Mrs. Usher indicated that she was aware of these concerns and advised that a group of local residents were preparing a petition to the Council requesting further restrictions.

2. A resident indicated that he was co-ordinating the petition referred to by Councillor Mrs. Usher. He noted that there was a 25% threshold for such petitions to advance to more formal consultation, and he was concerned that this was a difficult threshold to overcome. He noted that the problems were greatest in the western area of the zone, but there was a wider problem of people who were not residents being able to park vehicles from 10.30a.m. on Friday until Monday morning. Additionally there were issues around taxi drivers, etc. using the zone as a rest area over lunchtime.

Response - Councillor Mrs. Usher agreed to take the matter up with officers, whilst Councillor Ellis added that the 25% threshold was to ensure that there was sufficient local support to warrant the Council conducting a full consultation.

(Action: Councillor Mrs. Usher)

3. A resident reported that on Kyrle Road cars of Thomas' School parents and builders vans are frequently parked on yellow lines, and vehicles are driven at excessive speed. She expressed concern about the safety implications, particularly for children who are pedestrians.

Response - Councillor Senior explained that the original purpose of the one hour zone was to prevent commuters parking there and using the nearby tube station. The Council would work with local residents and bring in further parking restrictions if there is support for it.

4. Another resident suggested that the Council should target all vehicles from outside the area who park in the zone. He also raised the issue of the cost of parking and sought a rebate.

Response – The resident was advised that a rebate was not possible and that outside the hours of operation anyone could park in the sub-zone. Mr. Lane added that at the time of implementation residents were consulted on the nature of the controls, and residents voted for one-hour controls. Until now there had not been particular requests to extend controls.

5. A resident asked whether part of a road could have parking restrictions increased, as this might help residents in the area most affected to secure the change they wanted.

Response - Mr. Lane commented that this could have a knock on effect, pushing commuter parking into the parts of the zone with fewer restrictions. Councillor Senior commented that it can be confusing to split a road into two separate zones. The original purpose of one-hour parking was to restrict commuters, but also to allow residents to continue to receive visitors during the day. However, he acknowledged that, with changes in working patterns, the restrictions might no longer achieve what was originally intended.

6. A resident of Marmion House raised an issue of parking on the Lochinvar Estate, which he indicated he had brought up at a previous Let's Talk meeting. He believed that a number of local businesses were parking without permits and that failure to enforce the controls was leading to a unnecessary loss of income to the Council. He also raised his own parking situation, advising that he was unable to park near his property.

Response - Mr. Byrne advised the resident that Marmion House including the access road to the rear was not part of the Council-owned Lochinvar Estate and not included within the Parking Regulation Scheme (PRS). Consequently he was not entitled to park on the Estate and no enforcement action would be taken against vehicles parked in the access road under the terms of the PRS.

20 MPH Zones and Quietways

7. A resident asked about actions being taken to enforce the 20mph zones which had been introduced.

Response - Councillor Ellis noted that most drivers were law-abiding, but acknowledged that some continued to break the speed limit. The police were undertaking some enforcement in the area.

Councillor Salier added that recent speed checks in the ward had resulted in 57 drivers being caught, two of which were clearly well above the 20mph limit. As a consequence, a strong letter was sent to a number of drivers. Councillor Mrs. Usher added that more powers across London to take enforcement action in respect of 20 mph zones were being discussed at London-wide level. Finally, residents were asked to let the Council know of any roads which were of particular concern so that they could be targeted for speed checks.

Councillor Anderson concurred with the comments of the Ward councillors; however, she was of the view that, in addition to enforcement action, actions to, for example, educate parents around speeding near schools, etc., also needed to be considered.

8. A resident asked about the costs of implementing 20mph zones and questioned the need for so many speed limit signs.

Response - Mr. Lane undertook to provide this information to the resident following the meeting. Also, he drew attention to Regulations governing the requirements for larger speed limit roundels at the entrance to a zone, as well as repeater signs within the zone. On enforcement, only the police were empowered to take action.

(Action: Mr. Steve Lane)

9. A resident of Liberty Mews welcomed the 20mph zones but noted it was difficult to remember the limit, so he appreciated the repeater signage. He then expressed concern about Alderbrook Road which was used as a rat run, with the intersection with Malwood Road being particularly dangerous. He also asked if there was any possibility of Balham High Street being made a 20mph zone, as this would help improve the shopping experience.

Response - Councillor Salier noted that Balham High Road was a Transport for London (TfL) road; consequently it was them take any decisions on speed restrictions. Councillor Mrs. Usher added that a quietways scheme for cyclists was soon to be introduced in the area, and it was anticipated that this would help with dampening traffic speeds.

Councillor Salier noted that, as part of this quietways scheme, there would be a left-hand turn restriction on Alderbrook Road which would limit traffic flow. Letters setting out the scheme have been sent out to residents, and the works were expected to be completed by the end of June.

10. A resident of Yukon Road welcomed the 20pmh limit and asked whether any traffic restrictions were proposed for Cathles Road.

Response - Councillor Salier reported that there would be a left-hand turn restriction towards Balham High Road as part of the scheme.

11. One resident felt that the scheme would push more traffic onto Alderbrook Road.

Response - Councillors Salier and Ellis observed that all such schemes can take a while to bed-down, but the impact of the scheme would need to be monitored. Councillor Mrs. Usher added that this was a TfL scheme and she had requested a review after a year of implementation.

12. A resident sought prioritisation for quietways works on Cathles Road, near the centre for people with impaired sight.

13. A resident felt that the scheme was pandering to cyclists and asked whether there would be any monitoring to ensure cycling increased as a result of the scheme.

14. Another resident expressed concern about the health and safety implications and lack of accountability when cyclists ignore red lights.

Crossrail 2

15. A resident sought an update on Crossrail 2.

Response - Councillor Mrs. Usher reported that the scheme was now with the Treasury who were looking at maximising development opportunities along the route in order to reduce costs. In terms of the options to locate a Crossrail station in either Balham or Tooting, it remained the firm view of the Council that the station would be better placed in Tooting.

Councillor Salier noted that the ventilation shafts would be better placed on the Tooting route, avoiding public open space; further, a station at Tooting would improve transport links to St. George's Hospital and intersect with the Northern Line, enabling commuters to change to Crossrail for a faster journey into central London, thus relieving pressure on platform/carriage capacity for stations further up the Northern Line.

Balham Town Centre

16. A resident welcomed the recent initiative to remove estate agent boards from above shops in the town centre, and enquired whether the Council intended to continue with and expand this scheme to other areas.

Response - It was confirmed that the Council intended to continue with this scheme, and possibly expand it to other town centre areas. There were currently no plans to target residential roads. As part of discussions on this issue, it was noted that the estate agent boards used to advertise school fairs, etc., were subject to different restrictions, and had the benefit of generating funds for local schools and charities.

Policing And Crime

17. A resident asked about the policing situation locally. She noted that a neighbour had recently been assaulted having challenged some motorcycle thieves.

Response – Councillor Ellis indicated that he was aware of this particular case. Councillor Salier then noted that there is a specialist moped team who undertake plain clothes patrols targeting Northcote and Balham Wards, as these areas were known to have high rates of theft.

18. A resident asked about CCTV coverage between Clapham and Wandsworth Commons. She expressed particular concern about safety at night given that her daughter had recently been subjected to an incident of indecent exposure.

Response – PCSO Ioannou noted that CCTV was costly to implement, but if there was an area residents felt would benefit from further CCTV he could take down details. Councillor Senior then noted that there were around 600 CCTV cameras across the Borough.

19. Another resident reported that there had recently been a number of incidents locally of school girls being followed. It was her view that CCTV would act as a deterrent.

20. A resident enquired whether the police had been successful in capturing the individuals responsible for the recent spate of cars having their windows smashed.

Response – PCSO Ioannou reported that no arrests had been made, but the investigation was ongoing and leads were being followed up. In connection with this case, CCTV imaging had been used to try and trace a car of interest.

St. Francis Xavier College

21. A local resident reported that at the end of the college day, there was frequently a lot of trouble on Malwood Road and Balham Hill (Westbury Parade). The presence of police and college staff had a positive impact, but they were not always present. The resident asked whether anything could be done to pressurise the police and the college to provide a consistent presence in the area at the end of the college day, as he believed that there was clear evidence of drug dealing and gang activity in the area, with mopeds being the transport of choice for those involved.

Response - Councillor Salier advised that there is a dedicated schools police officer, PC Hawker, who works with the college. In conjunction with the college, the police have put plans in place for a different approach to next year's intake, with the police speaking to the students early in the autumn term. She added that issues with drug dealing from mopeds had also played into some of the new thinking on traffic flow connected to the new quietways designs. Additionally, TfL have provided more buses to take the students away from the area at the end of the college day.

22. The resident noted that the small motorcycle park near the Majestic wine store appears to be a magnet for problems - he asked whether it could be removed.

Response - Councillor Salier agreed that this suggestion was worthy of investigation as she could see no reason why the motorcycle bays could not be removed.

(Action: Mr. Steve Lane)

23. A resident reported that she had been verbally abused by another driver for observing the speed limit. She asked whether anything could be done in such circumstances.

Response - Councillor Senior suggested that the resident should inform the officers of the street names where there are problems with speeding so that a speed watch initiative can be established.

Basement Works

24. A resident commented that basement conversion works were impacting on the parking available in residential streets, with some projects taking up several parking bays, with skips, builders materials, etc.

Response - Councillor Mrs. Usher urged residents to photograph builders' materials, skips, and skip licences, etc., to enable evidence to be gathered for enforcement action where appropriate.

Dominos Pizza

25. A resident reported that the Dominos Pizza restaurant cluttered the pavement with their delivery mopeds and used the bus stop for their delivery lorry. She asked whether action could be taken to prevent this.

Response – It was noted that as this was a TfL road it would be for TfL to take enforcement action.

(Action – Mr. Lane – to contact TfL)

Clapham South Shopping Area

26. A resident asked if there were any plans to improve the shopping area around Clapham South Station and Westbury Parade.

Response - Councillor Salier noted that TfL owned the station and a pension fund owned some of the local shops; consequently they would mainly be responsible for improvements. However, some works were being undertaken by the Council, including tree removal and replacement.

Noise Pollution

27. A resident expressed concerns about noisy parties which continue well into the night, particularly during the summer at weekends. She contended that very little, if any, action was taken when such incidents, such as the annual party at 4-6 Balham Hill, are reported.

Response - Councillors advised that if the date of the party could be identified [to the Environmental Services Section], the Council's noise team would be placed on standby.

Parking On The Kerb

28. A resident enquired whether it was permitted to park on the kerb.

Response – The meeting was informed that parking on the kerb is only allowed in designated areas which are clearly marked. Outside of these areas parking on the kerb is not permitted.

29. It was noted by some residents that in many areas vehicles were parked on the kerb where it was not permitted, and this caused the kerbs to be damaged. They requested that action be taken in such cases.

30. A resident expressed concern that on Broomwood Road parking on the kerb was permitted and that frequently made it difficult to walk down the pavement, especially with children and push-chairs, because of overhanging bushes.

31. A resident asked whether it was possible to reduce the pavement width in areas where parking on the kerb was permitted; this would create safer parking, as vehicles would not then be forced to mount the pavement in close proximity to pedestrians.

Response - Mr. Lane reported that narrowing of the pavement was not normally feasible as it would be necessary to re-route the utilities.

Dog Fouling

32. A resident raised the issue of dog fouling which he said was an increasing problem.

Response - Mr. Singham reported that all roads should be swept once a week and that if the street sweeping was not taking place as planned, or was not to a satisfactory standard, this should be reported to the Council so that remedial action can be taken.

CLOSE OF MEETING

Councillor Senior thanked residents for attending the meeting and invited them to stay and speak further with councillors and officers about matters they had raised or approach them with individual queries. He asked residents to make sure they left their contact details with officers where they had raised specific queries.

The meeting ended at 9.06p.m.

Graham Collins (020 8871 6021)
Rachel Williamson (020 8871 7857)