

Your Home, Your Forum Meeting Notes

Forum:	Dudley North
Date and time:	Wednesday 7th February 2024 6.30 pm
Venue:	Sedgley Community Centre, Ladies Walk, Sedgley
Attendance:	<p>Councillors: P Drake; S Ridney; M Dudley; M Evans; S Keasey; A Aston; M Westwood; B Challenor; D Stanley; C Sullivan</p> <p>Officers: L Watson and H Jeavons – Liaison Officers; J Austin – Community Development Worker;</p> <p>West Midlands Police: PC Luke Tandy</p> <p>Members of the public: 45</p>

Item	Notes
1. Welcome, introductions and apologies	<p>Apologies: Councillors M Howard and A Hughes and West Midlands Fire Service.</p> <p>Noted: Councillor S Ridney welcomed residents to the meeting</p>
2. Notes – To confirm the notes of the meeting held on 9th November 2023 as a correct record	Noted: Page 2 – 3 rd paragraph incorrect – For clarification, Councillor Corfield was in attendance as a resident and should be referred to as “resident Councillor D Corfield”.
3. Updates from Ward Councillors	M Evans - Sedgley update – things were going quite well. Issues with trees that had Tree Preservation Orders in getting them pruned. Repairs were being undertaken to potholes, but these were not long lasting.

	<p>M Dudley – trying to find out why Christmas lights and bunting are still up. Work had started on the new Aldi and Gould's is being demolished. Every Tuesday 10-12 surgery held at the old Age Concern building at the side of the Clifton; and all welcome.</p> <p>S Keasey – biggest issue is lack of response from Dudley Council. Lots of his enquiries are chasing responses from Dudley Council on behalf of residents.</p> <p>M Westwood - Oak Street – Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) issues – CCTV removed – meeting with Council officials to raise profile of this, as once CCTV is removed, the issues with ASB and drug mis-use would start again. It has also been requested that this become a one-way street. Trees overgrown in Oak Street. Problems with parking and parents of the school in Chad Road were parking on the grass verges. This has been raised. Police have confirmed if parked on grass verges, not double yellow lines, there is no action they can take. Enforcement can be taken if parking on double yellow lines, but the enforcement of this issue is poor.</p> <p>Empty properties- they are looking at as they are prime housing for local communities and have been empty for years and attracting ASB. When raised, Councillors are advised there is no money for repairs.</p> <p>P Drake – new pedestrian crossing in Harding Street to make it safer. Car park at Whitegates Road is being redeveloped into a 20-space car park. Potholes, road resurfacing being worked on, but lack of response from Council. Have issues with fly tipping which is cleared regularly; a tip nearby would help.</p> <p>A Aston – increase in off road bikes causing a nuisance off Dawley Road, Shenley Avenue towards Mons Hill. Happens sporadically. The development off Bourne Street and Cedar Avenue is taking shape – controversial development. Issues raised around flooding near this site.</p> <p>Dudley and West Midlands is in the midst of a measles outbreak – high number of cases in West Midlands compared to London. Pop up vaccination clinics have been set up to increase the uptake of the vaccine. If between ages of 1-25 and haven't had MMR vaccine, people can turn up to Dudley marketplace on 10.2.24. Encourage people to get vaccine.</p> <p>B Challenor – Potholes an issue. Have a pop-up tip in Sedgley with dates advertised.</p>
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	<p>W Sullivan – Park Active event on Saturdays.</p> <p>D Stanley – gave thanks to light switch on event organiser, remembrance service organiser and activities put on in Gornal library. Working with housing and a street has been cleared of litter and some blocked drains. Regular contact with Community Housing Officer for Gornal, Lorenzo. Mentioned empty properties. Has had tenants and leaseholders approach him for assistance, but these are specific cases which he can't mention; but enjoys working with the Council staff to resolve issues.</p> <p>Work around bus station is going well. Large pothole filled on a bus route.</p> <p>S Ridney – repairs to some roads but sewer covers need some work. Lots of road works in Coseley.</p>
4. Have your say – An opportunity for residents to raise issues in their area	<p>Resident – made following comments and raised queries, as follows:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Back of Ranscome Drive – filth and litter 2) According to parliamentary papers 776K empty properties. Lots of these in Gornal. One particular property is large home and would suit a family. She has requested a FOI to establish how many properties are not being used in the whole of the borough. 3) Potholes – Summer Lane not finished; bottom of Summer Lane is poor. New Street has also been in disrepair for 2 years, despite constant reports. 4) Library – friends of Gornal library are fantastic. Encouraged all not to vote for closure of libraries. 5) On Saturday she attended the Gornal park on behalf of the mayor's office, to view the park activities. She encourages all to come along to the activities. 6) Levelling up Housing and Communities – gave Dudley 47 million but then made cuts – Dudley at bottom of the pile. <p>Resident – represents friends of Cotwall End – small group of around 30 members – only 6- 8 active members. Walked around the Valley in last couple of days but paths are impassible. Green belt area falling into disrepair. Approached Critters Farm for some help to clean up this area. She wants to know where the Dudley money is being spent as there are no improvements that can be seen by residents.</p> <p>Junction of Stickley Lane – whole area crumbling again, the roads are repaired poorly and need repairing again a couple of years later. Calls on residents to do more to protect this area. Walked</p>

around Tenesca this day and there are piles of dog excrement and bins overflowing. The Inhedge, Dudley was very poorly kept, but in last couple of months has been cleared and looks much better.

Response – Councillor D Stanley addressed comments on Cotwall End – he has had senior officers go to this area to see what can be done as this is an important site. He will continue with the complaint to get something done. He said he will lobby for money to be spent on this area.

Response - Resident Councillor D Corfield - wanted to answer some queries. Promoted a new proactive service of resurfacing programme. Launched a new highways repair programme last April. Since 2016, we had a reactive service, but this has now changed to a proactive repair and maintenance programme. Part of this was to look at potholes. New way of repairing potholes and repair a larger area. 740 miles of road in Dudley borough and 2 million budget to repair them. 5-year programme in place. Roads that need full renovation are being resurfaced, others are being patched. Also has two reactive teams.

Trees overgrown. Introduced Claire Green from Street Scene. This is a new service which began at the end of September and combines Greencare and old street cleaning service. Claire manages the Dudley North team.

CCTV not under his remit this is Housing, but he has been trying to push for this to move to his department.

One way road which is being looked at, consultation underway.

Fly tipping which is a national issue.

Household waste and recycling provision has suffered in North of borough. Pop up tips being rolled out all over the borough. New trial on the Northway – starts 17.2.24.

Lots of resurface work has been completed in Gornal and the roads mentioned by a resident will be done after 1st April.

Parking enforcement is a service that hasn't worked well before.

	<p>Response – Councillor S Ridney advised that Housing Officers were present at the meeting and asked whether there were any arborists in the local authority. Councillor D Corfield advised there is a new manager in place.</p> <p>Resident – article in Express and Star. Different areas around borough will receive a budget for heathland extensions. £1900 for Cotwall End – major part of budget going to Halesowen and Stourbridge.</p> <p>Resident – has sent email regarding community forum funding. She believes it's a harsh decision that the bids that have been submitted will not receive funding. The bids will be considered, and some may still be put forward and she wants the organisations to be able to present this. Concerns about budget for Christmas lights which should never have come out of the community forum funds. What will happen this year?</p> <p>Response – Councillor S Ridney said there are financial difficulties in the authority we must appreciate. If you make cutbacks, you then look to the voluntary sector to pick up the slack. Now the forum funding is cut, these little pots of money that made a difference have gone and there isn't the fund available for them.</p> <p>Some of the groups and facilities in Sedgley will not be able to continue to provide what they do without community forum grants.</p> <p>No longer much money available for community groups – no funding streams available for groups.</p> <p>Resident – Wants a permanent Christmas tree in Gornal. Will be looked into, but need to ensure the roots of the tree don't cause a problem with utilities. Nothing to attract people into Dudley on a Sunday. The toilets are not open. What's the situation with bus station?</p> <p>Response – Councillor D Stanley said there is a lot of inconvenience with bus station but if we want to have the good facilities it will provide, we have to deal with issues and inconvenience whilst its being done.</p>
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	<p>Resident - wants to thank members of the forum for the help Sedgley community association have received in previous years. He has applied for a grant recently for solar panels which has been declined but he wants to thank officers for their support. The good news is they have secured this funding from elsewhere. In particular, thanks go to Councillor M Evans.</p> <p>Resident - asked how the pop-up tip will be funded if other funds haven't been cut?</p> <p>Response – Resident Councillor D Corfield - This has not cost money; the service has moved from Lister Road to Northway. Pop up tip is a statutory requirement.</p> <p>Resident – if spending restriction, why announce £40000 spending on Green spaces?</p> <p>Response – Resident Councillor D Corfield advised that the budget was already available.</p> <p>Resident - asked if any efficiency savings have been considered at Council? Councillors have had pay rise of 6%. Himley bonfire paid for and Councillors attended a VIP event there.</p> <p>Resident – why in Upper Gornal are we paying a Councillors wage to reside in Preston?</p> <p>Resident – lots of money spent with EDRF money – what budget will the Council put in what area, to maintain these areas?</p> <p>Resident – Dudley may have similar problems to Birmingham – as Councillors what are you doing to take this forward?</p> <p>Response - Adult Social Care and Children's Services having a very large impact on the spending and their costs have increased considerably over the last 12 months. Discussion on funding of Councils followed.</p> <p>Resident - complained about the bickering in the meeting and the lack of respect as this will not encourage youngsters to join a forum.</p> <p>Resident - has anything been resolved about the green bin charges?</p>
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	<p>Response -They are part of budget proposals which haven't been approved as yet. This will be debated in Council. Resident Councillor D Corfield stated the service costs 3.3 million.</p> <p>Resident – provided information that the Conservative Club Sedgley have raised money for a defibrillator. This should be installed by next meeting.</p>
5. Police and communities together – Discussion on local policing and related issues, including input from the fire service	<p>Police update</p> <p>PC Luke Tandy introduced himself. For the Dudley North there is 1 Police Sergeant and there should be 4 PCSOs for area – however they are currently running on a skeleton crew.</p> <p>Complaint of off-road bikes on Silver Jubilee park using the childrens skate park – request for patrols. Sunday afternoon a popular time this is happening. This is also happening on Roseville.</p> <p>Policy in place that if they don't have a helmet, they can't stop them in case they fall off. They are trying to put up some preventative strategies to assist. PC Tandy's Sergeant had emailed the Council. If they aren't on the bike, they can seize it.</p> <p>Abbey Park has been suffering from off road bikes entering the park and they are trying to action this.</p> <p>Bikes are seized and destroyed where able.</p> <p>Police encourage residents to keep dialling 999 re off road parking.</p> <p>Response team based at Brierley Hill. By the time they get to Coseley, the off-road bike is usually gone.</p> <p>Resident asked how many PCSOs in Sedgley and Upper Gornal - at the moment, for the entire Dudley North area, there are 2. They are trying to set up some crime surgeries which Luke will also attend if he can. Resident stated he has been waiting for a meeting with the Sergeant. The Sergeant promised to come tonight and isn't here. Luke explained he was dealing with a response job, and he is covering for him tonight.</p>

	<p>Reasons you don't see people walking around – short staffed. Also having to help out other departments so being pulled from neighbourhood team to help in other Policing areas. The demand is very high at present. Their Sergeant is trying to keep them within their local neighbourhood areas. Resident said – 2 years ago he made the same comment, and someone promised more PCSOs on the beat and this hasn't happened. No increase at all. Luke confirmed PCSOs have reduced from 6 to 2.</p> <p>Resident – given discussion about police shortages residents would find it helpful if they can have a written response to how many officers there should be for this area and how many we actually have? Councillor S Ridney confirmed we should have 4.</p> <p>Resident – you have said you seize and crush bikes. All the children do is steal another one – what are the consequences for these children? The only victim is the victim of crime who has had their bike stolen. Luke explained the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) determine the outcome of each case. They actively monitor offenders moving forward.</p> <p>Councillor D Stanley said we will do no good with a Police and Crime Commissioner and we should go back to the previous way of doing things. The current way it's being run, doesn't work.</p> <p>Councillor M Westwood- isn't the above what the mayor is trying to do.</p> <p>Councillor S Keasey said if police or funds is not available and positions not filled, it doesn't matter who is in charge. Need to lobby for more funds.</p> <p>Resident – read a comment that said we had 1386 new Police in the West Midlands – are any allocated to Dudley? Is this a promotion by Andy Street. Luke advised there are quite a few student officers who have joined but it will depend on if they choose to stay in Dudley.</p> <p>Resident – situation with drivers with only one head light working at night. What is being done? If they see the vehicle they are pulled over and given a ticket and receive a fine.</p> <p>Double yellow lines around Russells Hall hospital – why are people being permitted to park on double yellow lines without disabled badges. PCSOs were given power to deal with parking on double yellow</p>
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	<p>lines, but this was taken away. If the police, see it and it causes an obstruction and in a dangerous spot they can action. Residents encouraged to photograph and send to local neighbourhood team.</p> <p>Councillor A Aston – in 2010 approx 8700 officers - reduced to approx. 6000 now. Less than 14 years ago.</p> <p>Resident said traffic wardens should be employed on commission only basis to focus them on dealing with offences.</p> <p>Resident – 7 years ago Plymouth council made 4 million in traffic enforcement. Dudley have made a loss – our neighbouring authorities make money.</p> <p>Councillor M Evans – at last meeting asked the Sergeant 2 questions. 1 incident and Sedgley conservative club issue of ASB – police recognised the child and he wanted update from police. Monument Lane tyres slashed by children – names given to Police – was promised an update which he hasn't received.</p> <p>Crime has dropped in Dudley area over the past year. Things may seem in a poor state with shortage of officers. They are out and about and will attend logs even if not immediately.</p> <p>Councillor S Ridney attended police surgery in Coseley and people were attending these.</p>
6. Date of next meeting	To be confirmed in new municipal year.

Time meeting ended: 8:40 pm