

Your Home, Your Forum Meeting Notes

Forum:	Halesowen
Date and time:	29th November 2023 at 6.30pm
Venue:	Fatherless Barn Evangelical Church, 2 Hedgefield Grove, Halesowen B63 2HJ
Attendance:	<p>Councillors D Bevan, H Bills, R Buttery, T Crumpton, P Dobb, A Goddard, S Henley, R Priest, T Russon, P Sahota and A Taylor.</p> <p>Officers:- M Johal (Health and Wellbeing Policy Officer – Liaison Officer) D Tiwana (Community Development Worker) and Sergeant N Chester and PCSO T Jones.</p> <p>Members of the public: 30</p>
Agenda item	Notes
1. Welcome, introductions and apologies.	Councillors J Elliott, I Bevan, N Neale and S Phipps and M Wilcox and N Bangar (Liaison Officers)
2. Notes	The notes of the meeting held on 19 th June, 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.
3. BRSK Internet Poles	<p>The Chair introduced Mr Anil Kumar (AK) (Marketing Manager – BRSK) who was in attendance to inform residents about fibre broadband upgrades across the West Midlands.</p> <p>AK explained that the strategy for faster broadband was mandated by the Government. BRSK had commenced work in the Borough to rollout their network to areas, including Stourbridge, Brierley Hill, Kingswinford and Cradley Heath. A brief explanation was provided on methods to prepare and build the network which included utilising the BT infrastructure, using existing poles on the streets or by using underground ducts.</p>

Arising from the presentation, AK responded to queries from Councillors and members of the public. In doing so, it was stated that Ward Councillors were informed in advance on any proposals to install telegraphic poles to enable consultation to take place with residents. AK explained the communication strategy which entailed a survey being conducted in the area and if feasible, Councillors being informed a couple of weeks in advance of the work taking place. Other communication methods included leaflets being circulated in the area that included a QR code to provide feedback, specific discussion events being arranged as well as Liaison Officers conducting a “knock on door” consultation exercise. It was acknowledged that residents had concerns and proposed plans were shared with them at the earliest opportunity and the organisation did their utmost to work with people to address their concerns.

AK responded to concerns raised in that Homer Hill estate residents had complained about the telegraph pole being erected and that they had not been made aware of this or had any consultation in advance. Also, that residents were being bombarded with hard sells to change their network provider to BRSK. AK apologised where there had been miscommunication errors and indicated that this had been down to the conduct of a previous employee. The matter had been dealt with and subsequently communication had been increased and improved. In terms of changing providers, it was commented that the market was monopolised by larger organisations such as Virgin Media and BT. By changing providers to smaller companies would in time drive down prices. Residents were informed on their options to opt out of marketing.

In response to a query on whether Virgin Media and BT cables and poles were outdated, AK indicated that the infrastructure provided by Virgin Media was privately owned and therefore BRSK were unable to use it. The Government were requesting channels to be opened up to enable faster access to enable quicker rollout.

AK indicated that there was no evidence to suggest that houses devalued following the erection of a telegraph pole, and instead, research suggested that environmental factors such as increased technology and fast broadband speed was a high consideration when seeking a new home.

AK undertook to speak to individual residents and Councillors to note and discuss any further issues and specific concerns.

	<p>In response to a request, the Liaison Officer undertook to share AK's email address with Members.</p>
<p>4. Have your say</p>	<p>Pool Road Car Park – Proposed plans in relation to the car park was queried and reference was made to a recent article which stated proposed plans to demolish the car park and to replace it with a College building.</p> <p>The Chair explained about a successful bid from the Levelling Up Fund for the proposed transformation. The approval of the funds were subject to the development of an educational skills element. Proposed plans for the educational establishment would not be for normal students but would cater for a different learning clientele.</p> <p>Councillor R Buttery provided further information and stated that the initial proposed plans had been submitted over a year ago and plans had been developed in consultation with the MP, however things had changed since then. It was explained that the Pool Road car park had reduced to a 100 space capacity due to the top floor being closed off as it was deemed to be unsafe. It was stated that the car park was generally in an unfit state with concrete starting to degrade. Wilkos had also closed which provided a great opportunity to develop the Centre as the Council owned all the sites and various models for development could be explored. To build a new car park would involve spending a lot of money and the £20 million received from the Government was subject to conditions and the requirement to include an educational facility.</p> <p>In response to a query, it was confirmed that residents would be consulted on proposed plans.</p> <p>Dudley Council Plus – A resident complained that he had not received any response to his query relating to Highways that had been submitted to Dudley Council Plus. The issue would be referred to the Section for a response to be provided.</p> <p>Dudley Leisure Centres – Comments were made that leisure centres were not running as effectively as they should. Specific reference was made to the Halesowen Leisure Centre and it was commented that the facility was making a loss as it was overspent and income was down. It was further stated that factors contributing to the loss was due to there being no proper marketing strategy to promote the facilities, no cover for staff sickness resulting in classes being cancelled,</p>

staff having to double up on jobs and the facility was not considered to be competitive. Reference was also made to a recent email informing members of charges being increased.

Other comments made included the need to use Social Media to include online timetables for classes, issues with the need for parents to be present at the building when teenagers used the facilities and that a particular resident had to use facilities in Tipton as Halesowen did not have adequate disabled facilities.

In responding, Councillor R Buttery acknowledged concerns raised and stated that £35 million had been spent on upgrading leisure facilities across Dudley and owing to equipment and facilities being destroyed, parents were required to supervise their children as well as it being a legal requirement. In relation to the issue of marketing, Councillor R Buttery undertook to discuss the matter with the Head of Leisure Services and the Communications Team. It was also requested that the resident with the disability needs email the Councillor about the specific issue for a response.

Questions in Advance – A comment was made that provision should be made for residents to be able to submit questions in advance to ensure adequate responses can be provided at the meeting.

Wynall Lane South – A resident queried whether the Council had a Strategic Partnership Agreement with various agencies as nobody was taking responsibility to resolve issues regarding Wynall Lane South being unsafe and prone to accidents and near misses. Some of the reasons why accidents were regularly happening were due to overgrown hedges blocking vision, speeding, no lighting and a lack of signage. Some of the accidents were serious and injuries had been sustained. A meeting about the issue had taken place on site with the Highways Authority but no action had been taken. The matter would be referred for a response.

Colley Gate – It was queried when the shops at Colley Gate would be demolished. Reference was also made to the traffic lights on Colley Lane being dangerous and incidents of cars being blocked in the yellow box had been witnessed.

In responding, Councillor T Crumpton explained the difficulties surrounding the issue and indicated that people ignored the yellow box. It was considered that once the shops were demolished the issue could potentially be exacerbated. However, Councillor T Crumpton undertook to speak to the

	<p>relevant Officers to investigate the matter to provide an appropriate resolution. Councillor R Priest stated that although there was no fixed timescale of when the shops would be demolished, it was likely to be sooner than later.</p>
<p>5. Police and communities together</p>	<p>Sergeant N Chester and PCSO T Jones addressed the meeting, provided information relating to the area and responded to queries, to include the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were a team of six Officers covering the Forum area. • The police were out in the community and residents were able to follow police activities on Twitter. • Street Watch was slowly diminishing as previously there were four groups which had now reduced to two. Street Watch was conducted on a voluntary basis and it required two people to go out together. • Residents indicated that a recruitment drive was needed. Sergeant N Chester undertook to speak to the relevant Officer about the matter. • WM Now was a Neighbourhood Alert service providing an advanced community messaging system. Due to the rollout and transition, there were currently some access issues. • Fix My Street app was mentioned which allowed residents to report issues in the area and to upload pictures direct to the Council for actioning. • Speed Watch was conducted once a month in conjunction with Councillors and the busiest roads were chosen. The operation was time consuming as individual warning letters had to be issued but these had to be typed up and sent out directly by relevant Officers. However, Officers were being trained in Prolaser which would enable officers to point the gun at cars to measure speed and guiding contravening vehicles to the side with a view to dealing with the issue there and then. • A recent ANPR and Speed Watch operation had been conducted on Manor Way resulting in five vehicles being seized and eighteen tickets being issued. • A Multi Agency Road Safety Operation campaign had targeted vehicles with no insurance or tax. • The police also undertook work in the community by helping people tidy up and reference was made to the recent clearing up of a Church to help make the congregation feel safer.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Off road bikes was a massive issue and although the Police knew the perpetrators, they did not have the power to pursue. Although a recent bike operation had been conducted, none had been seized. However, alternative methods were used by working with the Council where breaches of tenancy could be considered. • Concerns were raised about issues with untaxed cars on Mogul Lane and the Police asked that intelligence be shared. However, it was pointed out that upon expiry of their tax, owners had a grace period of two months and a day to get their vehicles taxed. • It was stated that overall, Cradley and Wollescote Ward was a low crime area and it was a safe place to live. • Discussions took place on anti-social behaviour issues caused by a small number of unidentified youths at the Londis premises in Cradley. A log of incidents had been created with a view to deploying resources during the affected times. Councillor T Crumpton suggested the Police view CCTV footage and undertook to find out whether the youths were known to anyone in the area. • The largest complaints from residents related to speeding and issues with parents parking inconsiderately near schools. To tackle the issue certain schools were targeted each week and police were tasked to issue fines, as necessary. • Sergeant N Chester mentioned resourcing issues and stated that she currently only had two PCSO's instead of the usual five due to some being recruited and taking up other positions within the Police.
<p>6. Updates from Ward Councillors</p>	<p>Councillor R Buttery – Referred to Dudley Leisure Centres and confirmed that they were on Facebook and residents could sign up to receive alerts through the Council's website.</p> <p>Councillor A Goddard – Reported on a recent visit accompanied by the Chief Executive to the Hayley Green and Cradley South area and consideration was given to changing the materials used on Lutley Road to help slow vehicles down.</p> <p>Councillor P Dobb – Mentioned a recent CCTV operation in Belle Vale and stated that information was awaited.</p>

	Councillor H Bills – Referred to the switching on of Christmas Lights from Long Lane to Kent Road.
7. Forum funding	Funding to the Groups was noted.
8. Date of next meeting	Details can be found by accessing the following link: Halesowen Your Home, Your Forum

Time meeting ended: 8.20 pm