

Your Home, Your Forum Meeting Notes

Forum:	Stourbridge
Date and time:	22nd June 2023 6.30pm – 8.30pm
Venue:	Withymoor Primary School, Gayfield Avenue, Brierley Hill, West Midlands, DY5
Attendance:	<p>Councillors: D Borley, P Lee, K Razzaq, M Hanif, C Eccles, I Kettle, T Creed, A Tromans and P Bradley</p> <p>Officers: Jayne Pilkington (JP), Caz Tromans, Davinder Tiwana, Alexandra Stan and Vicki Popplewell</p> <p>Police Officers: Sergeant John Norgrove, Sergeant Imran Mohammed, PC 1633 Dunn</p> <p>Members of the public: 12</p> <p>BRSK representatives: 2</p>
Agenda item	Notes
1. Welcome, introductions and apologies	<p>JP welcomed everyone to the forum and introductions were made by all Councillors present and to the attending Police Officers and Council Officers</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillors P Lowe, S Clark, A Lees, J Clinton, L Taylor-Childs and Council Officer/Forum Liaison Officer, James Skeldon</p>
2. Election of Chair and Appointment of Vice Chair	<p>Councillor D Borley was appointed as Chair of the forum after being nominated by Councillor K Razzaq (seconded by Councillor I Kettle). Councillor C Eccles was elected as Vice-Chair after being nominated by Councillor M Hanif (seconded by Councillor A Tromans) for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year.</p> <p>Councillor D Borley provided a warm welcome to Councillor C Eccles as the Vice Chair of the Forum and took the opportunity to thank the Chair and Vice Chair for the previous municipal year (2022/23), Councillors P Lee and J Clinton. It was explained that at the recent Grant Panel meeting held on the 8th June 2023, Councillor D Borley was elected as Chair and Councillor T Creed as the Vice Chair.</p>

<p>3. BRSK Internet Poles</p>	<p>The Chair explained that at the last Forum meeting in February, members of the public raised concern about the installation of the BRSK internet poles. It was therefore suggested that representatives of BRSK be invited to attend so that they can explain more about the proposed full fibre upgrade proposals.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Anil Kumar (Marketing Manager) and Barry Walker (Build Manager) who were attending on behalf of BRSK. An apology was provided on behalf of their manager as she was unable to attend due to an incident.</p> <p>BRSK representatives explained how the company was established. It started in South Africa, fastest speeds in the world. Britain ranks lowest for speed in the World. Founded in Bradford, piloted in Burnley, Manchester and now the West Midlands. Stourbridge was the 1st area followed by Brierley Hill, Cradley Heath and Kingswinford. Copper cables at the moment – locked in by major companies (e.g. Virgin, BT). Explained fibre optics and that copper cables will be phased out by 2025 following Government legislation.</p> <p>Barry builds the networks for the areas, utilising the BT infrastructure, using existing underground and poles on the streets minimising the disruption (PIA – we can use fibre cables from these). Don't go around installing poles unnecessarily (Councillor C Eccles interjected and indicated that there had been a number of issues raised with her about the poles by members of the public). Anil and Barry continued to explain that houses built since 1980 would have underground connections, prior to this they would be poles.</p> <p>In terms of consultation, BRSK explained that they had consultation managers that talked with residents and a development team who discussed what they will be building in the area.</p> <p>Councillor I Kettle disagreed and said that poles are put in place without any notice and had received complaints from the community that the person going round on behalf of BRSK was very rude and was stating that she could put up poles anywhere she wanted.</p> <p>Anil said that they had resolved the issues in Broughton Road by ending the service at the end of the road. A member of the public said that he had learnt that the service is provided direct to the door, but you are saying that you have to stick a pole on a driveway. He continued to state his concern that the company will put up poles and sign everyone up with what will be cheap prices at first and then once people have signed up the company will increase the prices.</p>
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Councillor M Hanif – agreed with Councillor C Eccles as he too has received many letters of concern, the manner in which it is being done is instilling fear in people.

Councillor C Eccles – stated she had received loads of complaints from members of the public about poles outside their properties and reiterated the request that had been made by her to BRSK that they formalise notices and make people aware – the door to door method doesn't work.

Councillor P Lee – asked if they had the authority to put up poles anywhere and also raised the cost issue again.

Barry replied that they can put them anywhere, but they don't, they are respectful to the concerns of the public and with regards to cost he said that they use Open Reach and people pay a proportion of their monthly cost to them and the rest of the cost is to BRSK and will remain constant; BRSK are very transparent about the costs.

Councillor P Bradley – Explained that there are a lot of permitted development rights for telecommunications which means that the Council has little or no power to intervene. He thanked Anil and Barry from BRSK for coming to the meeting and for addressing the public face to face, it was very much appreciated especially as the discussion had got rather heated. JP suggested to BRSK that they establish contact with the Council's planning department as they could help with coordinating the proposals and sharing them with the Ward Councillors as they know their areas and can ensure that people in their wards are aware.

Anil – when he joined BRSK he reached out to local Councillors and they are trying to put more effort in now, instead of employing people to knock on doors they have realised that they should have come to them. He said that you could call us straightaway and that we should look at the trust pilot reviews, people are happy with the service.

Councillor P Bradley – indicated our communities should not be bombarded.

A member of the public suggested BRSK make more use of the Tenant Resident Associations (TRA), as people are afraid when you knock on the doors, they are afraid to answer – this way people have more time to digest the information and consider the options.

Councillor P Lee asked how they would get on with a street of 50 when say 30 wanted it but 20 didn't, what would BRSK do? - Would they put it up? Barry said that they would look at the costings and formalise a business case.

Anil – said that they had carried out a survey on Broughton Road, was going underground but people didn't want it, so they took the decision not to go with it.

Councillor T Creed – referred to the siting of two poles and queried why there was one in the middle of the pavement. Barry said that it was possibly due to foundations of the adjacent wall dictating this (1.5mtrs). Osmaston Road had two poles now and can't get a double buggy around them. Also suggested that someone's deeds state that they can't have something that high built to so how do we get on with that – have withdrawn from this now.

Councillor I Kettle stated that all the Mucklow estates in the area have covenants on them and you can't build on these areas

Anil said that if they could have plans of the area this would help them.

A member of the public - lives in a cul-de-sac, would you put a pole up or use underground cables if they already have them - said that they would do a case and if there was a pole there already, they would use it.

Resident – stated that copper cables will be retired after 2015, other providers won't be without fibre optics – my concern is that you are presenting that the internet will stop in 2025 and it won't. Anil said that the infrastructure is so old and needs replacing

Councillor A Tromans – thanked BRSK for coming and hoped they had learned a lot from the discussion this evening.

Anil – outlined the process; Business Development Team – will get 25 people to knock on doors and give information (take email, address and phone details) and will let them know that construction is in the area, two to three months (sales) then contacts (Tele sales) installation guys will give them a call. Suggested that it would be good to have some literature – is there training provided for vulnerabilities – yes we have the facility to do this and we also do leaflet dropping.

	<p>Anil said that BRSK are a good company and that they seem to want to help communities; have sponsored BC Radio etc and other events and others like Lye Town Football Club and our two main initiatives are to give broadband to all schools and community centres.</p> <p>JP – suggested that they write to local authority and planning and advise on areas that they are considering so basic constraint mapping information can be provided.</p>
<p>4. Lye and Stour Valley Design Code</p>	<p>The Chair explained that there was a slight adjustment to the agenda and that an additional item had been inserted about the Lye and Stour Valley Design Code. The Chair introduced Vicki Popplewell, Planning Policy Manager who was in attendance to explain the proposals and had a display erected at the back of the meeting hall.</p> <p>Vicki explained that each local authority will eventually use design codes for their areas (building types, public realm – materials/treescaping etc). This will be happening nationally, but we have been asked to do a pilot in Dudley and we have received a small amount of money from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Dudley Council is one of 25 local authorities taking part in the pathfinder programme. Two consultation events on the draft masterplan and design code had taken place. The public consultation survey finishes the following day and consultation finishes on 22nd. After that, the comments would be looked at and a further consultation event would take place to update on any proposals as part of the draft Supplementary planning document (SPD). To read more about the project visit the Council website: https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-policy/lye-and-stour-valley-design-code/</p> <p>A member of the public – cited it won't happen – nothing will be done or come of it.</p> <p>JP said that we will be using this masterplan document to inform potential improvements in the area and to help lever in external funding.</p> <p>Councillor I Kettle – more cars on the highway in the future, how will we cope with another 50% on the roads, can't cope with single lane now. He also raised concerns about private landlords and HMO's.</p> <p>Resident – totally ignoring the Lye issues, no good in putting tables and chairs on the pavements, climbing over the war memorial and playing football on it and rogue landlords.</p> <p>Councillor C Eccles – can't do anything about HMO's, change is due next week.</p>

	<p>Resident – my friend travelled through Lye last week and traffic stopped due to the lights and she said that loads of men appeared in the square with baseball bats.</p> <p>Councillor M Hanif said that they are working positively with the local community in the area to help improve relations.</p> <p>A member of the public – what we need are single storey buildings.</p>
<p>5. Have your say</p>	<p>The following questions were raised by members of the public:-</p> <p>Reference to speeding along Ham Lane, unable to read the school speed limit signage partially due to it being concealed by trees but also due to speeding – limit changes part way down the road. Suggestion of cameras such as Walsall where the speed is detected along with the vehicle registration. Also raised issue around speeding by Huntingtree Primary School (falls within the Halesowen Forum area) Action: Questions to be submitted via email to Jayne Pilkington & Caz Tromans</p> <p>Issue with regards to the public consultation undertaken on parks in the Borough, no-one appears to have seen this although it has been suggested it was well advertised and only 700 comments were received. The TRA canvassed 400 mothers and none had heard about the consultation. Has tried for a number of years to regenerate Old Kent area (Wollaston Farm). Action: Issued to be raised about the parks (Scrutiny Committee) Question Sheet completed</p> <p>Issue with regards to hiring venues for the TRA meetings, has approached St James Church of England School (run by the Diocese of Worcester) as they previously used this at a cost of £8.00 per hour meaning they paid £24.00 in total. However, the new headteacher who was unwilling to even consult with him to start with, has now said she will allow its use at a cost of £205.00. He asked that as a Community Council what would Dudley do about this. Councillor C Eccles said that the teacher had also refused free school meal vouchers at Easter – a meeting is due to take place next week. Action: Question to be raised by Jayne Pilkington directly with the Diocese of Worcester</p> <p>Requested the attendees at the forum help to get people off the roads and out of their cars by influencing Councillor P Bradley (in his role as Cabinet Member and Deputy Leader) towards reinstating the two main line railways in the borough, all of the bridges, tunnels etc are already in-place. Black Country Main Railway</p>

	<p>Line, getting the train from Dudley to connect with Stourbridge. The infrastructure is already there and built but nothing has appeared as the push is for trams instead by the WMCA and DMBC. Doesn't want the only public space at Merry Hill to be destroyed for this project and other land must be used for housing (High Plateau). Councillor P Bradley said that they had been having conversations for the last ten years on this subject. Councillor P Lee said that it was a lovely idea, but money was the problem – the resident responded by saying that it would save money.</p> <p>Referred to the Stourbridge Carnival on the 2nd July and queried whether there will be free parking provision for the event to encourage more people into the town to spend money. Councillor C Eccles said she had been pursuing this matter also.</p> <p>Action: Question to be taken back and raised for consideration by Jayne Pilkington with Steve Cooksey (Highways)</p> <p>There was not enough promotion of the forums; room was large and difficult to hear as people spoke so quietly, needed the chairs moved forward. Have your say has moved to the top of the agenda and people tend to leave after this and don't stay to hear other things. It was suggested that there should be more flyers and advertising about the Forums and that all TRA Officers should be emailed about the Forum meetings.</p>
<p>6. Police and communities together</p>	<p>Sergeant Norgrove addressed the audience, introduced Sergeant Mohammed and PC Dunn and stated that the Sergeants covered for each other.</p> <p>Stated that they had finally started to hand out fines under Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) but indicated that they had not covered the area for the last 10 days due to assisting with emergencies and it was considered that this would last until after the summer period.</p> <p>It was explained that work in relation to PSPO's was having an impact as people were running away when they saw the police coming and tipped their drinks away. There are too many people located in this small area. The church in Lye encourages people to sit outside. Residents cleaned up litter on the High Street and then it's back again.</p> <p>Sergeant Norgrove promoted the importance of working together, explained about Streetwatch operating in other areas such as Amblecote where it works very well. The Police can provide training and were happy to go out and support communities who wished to set them up. One is being set up on Claycroft.</p>

Stourbridge move – could be another 12 weeks.

A resident suggested ways to show presence – double parked cars; Sergeant Norgrove said that many of these are delivery drivers. Said that he is losing staff every day and that when they are there, they can take the cars and crush them.

Sergeant Mohammed had had problems with homeless people in Stourbridge and had dealt with this.

A resident asked who covered Wollaston and referred to a road on the Kingsway “drug dealing” car – officers came and didn’t block them in, leaving enough room for them to speed off after reversing into the police car. Sergeant Norgrove said that they don’t have ANPR on their vehicles. The member of the public pointed out that there were five officers and not one got the registration number. Sergeant Norgrove said that no-one is pursuit trained anymore and that the police finish at 11pm, only working till midnight on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and requested that details be passed on to be dealt with.

Councillor P Lee - said that drugs are a massive problem in the borough and commended Sergeant on his excellent work and stated that we are lucky to have him.

Councillor M Hanif raised the issue of loud music and a member of the public said that music/loud noises are issues the Council can enforce.

Sergeant Norgrove said that double yellow lines were the biggest issue.

Councillor T Creed asked if there was a speed camera unit – Sergeant Norgrove said that it was West Mercia that had it but it has been used on Thorns Road and in Stourbridge.

Councillor I Kettle congratulated the police on their work in dealing with “beggars” in Stourbridge and mentioned the speeding on Ham Lane at midnight and at two and three in the morning on most nights.

<p>7. Updates from Ward Councillors</p>	<p>Councillor P Bradley provided an update on the Amblecote Ward – grass cutting, potholes, trees, overgrowth – we have been as efficient as we can and by the end of the summer all of the green spaces will have been cut. There has however been a lot of rain so a lot of re-growth, and the underlying ground is clay which keeps the ground wet and cutters won't work on it. All of the alley ways have been weeded and sprayed, trees are to be trimmed and the sidewalks. Saturday 8th July is the Fun Day in the park and P Bradley thanked all the volunteers who made this event happen.</p> <p>Councillor P Lee added that they have more green spaces than anywhere in the borough, we have lost the Green Care person that we used to have, he has retired, so the replacement will take a little longer to learn the patch.</p> <p>Councillor M Hanif provided an update on the Lye & Stourbridge North Ward – housing issues continue to be a problem in the High Street. There is some good community work going on, there is a listening event on Saturday, 1 to 3pm at the Church.</p> <p>Councillor T Creed provided an update on the Norton Ward – potholes, speeding, trying to get speed on Racecourse Lane reduced – if it was reduced it was not certain it could be enforced. Anti-social behaviour in Parks (Swan Pool). Residents raised concerns about Racecourse Lane by the Greyhound – the signage is covered in by the golf course, Green Care went to see it, Councillor went to see it and followed it up it up. Caslon Crescent, bushes not been cut back for two years, Councillor has managed to get them cut down – concerned resident said she can now see the bus coming.</p> <p>Councillor I Kettle provided an update on the Pedmore & Stourbridge East Ward – grass issues, Fieldfare Garage – staff not allowed to park at the garage so are parking on the roads around it. Threadbare road surfaces on the roads and numerous potholes, has raised this with the Council.</p> <p>Councillor C Eccles provided an update on the Wollaston & Stourbridge Town Ward – It was explained that they are experiencing the same issues as the other areas (too many pot holes and lack of grass cutting). Road safety also an issue, there is a petition for a 20 mph zone to be created around the Old Quarter. Councillors C Eccles and A Tromans were working with the Police around the bus station. There has been some aggressive begging in Stourbridge Town centre, the prime suspects are being tackled, one woman was in custody and waiting to go to court. There are also some rough sleeping issues – they are being offered help.</p>
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	<p>Councillor A Tromans also updated for the Wollaston & Stourbridge Town Ward – that there is a petition for Dudley Libraries, it has passed over 4,000 signatures, please support.</p> <p>Councillor M Hanif raised an issue around the large puddle at the Mary Stevens Park gates on Stanley Road, very big for children. JP to contact Daniel Fildes.</p>
8. Forum funding	<p>The Chair summarised the recommendations of the Grant Panel meeting on the 8th June.</p> <p>Amblecote Allotments Guild – to purchase materials and supplies to enable improvements and tidying up of the plots for cultivator and health and safety reasons - Amount requested £396.34 - Application Approved</p> <p>Stambermill St Marks Scouts Group – to install acoustic panels to reduce noise levels due to concern about noise being higher than it should be especially for children that may be on the autistic spectrum - Amount requested £4,500.00 - Application Approved</p> <p>Stourbridge Carnival – To hold Stourbridge Carnival on 2nd July 2023 - Amount requested £5,000 - Application Approved</p> <p>Rotary Club Stourbridge – to hold a major lunch event with entertainment for Ukrainians and other people to meet and offer support - Amount requested £300.00 - Application Approved</p>
9. Date of next meeting	<p>9th November 2023 6.30pm – 8.30pm</p> <p>Further details available on the following link Your Home, Your Forum Stourbridge</p>

Time meeting ended: 8.40 pm