

Wimbledon Community Forum 26 September 2013 Chair's Report

The meeting was held at Wimbledon Methodist Church and was chaired by Councillor Henry Nelles. Approximately 22 residents attended, as well as Merton Councillors, Stephen Hamond MP (part of the meeting), Police Sergeant Danny Smith, Dave Curtis the manager of Merton's Healthwatch and officers from the council and its partners.

Welcome/Introductions

Councillor Nelles welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked local councillors at the meeting to introduce themselves. Attending were: Councillor Peter Walker; Councillor John Bowcott; Councillor Suzanne Evans; Councillor David Simpson; and Councillor James Holmes (part of the meeting).

Apologies were received from Councillor David Williams, Councillor Oonagh Moulton and Councillor Krystal Miller.

Minutes of last meeting/updates

Mario Lecordier (ML), Traffic and Highways Services Manager at Merton Council provided an update on a number of traffic management issues that had arisen at the last forum meeting:

There is a conflict in signage at the right turn from Haydon's Road to Gap Road. The right turn is only permissible on weekdays and an illuminated no right turn sign from Monday to Friday indicated this; however, the road markings indicate that a right turn is permitted. The council is talking to Transport for London (TfL) about this conflict.

In relation to protecting trees against vandalism, the council has spoken to its contractor and tree guards will be put up.

The council is liaising with TfL regarding red route parking bays in Colliers Wood that cause bottlenecks, especially outside the tube station.

Due to a conflict in speed limit signs in Wimbledon, all signage in the town centre is being reviewed to ensure it is consistent with traffic management orders. The council is aiming for this to be complete by Christmas.

Regarding trams on Kingston Road and subsequent congestion at the junction of Dorset Road and Kingston Road, the council has spoken to TfL who are not able to give a timescale on when they might be able to look at the situation.

Concrete lamp columns are being replaced across the borough because they are too old. Many have already been replaced in Wimbledon wards. In some roads brighter, white LED lights are being introduced instead of the yellow lights

in order to improve the quality of the lighting. There have been some problems with the contractor, who the council has spoken to.

General questions/Comments:

- Councillor Simpson asked if ML was satisfied that Cartilages' sub-contractors are doing a reasonable job. ML said that reassurance has been received from Cartilages that they are supervising their sub-contractor but they also do not plan to use that sub-contractor again.
- ML to respond to a resident's request for a map of 20mph speed limit zones in Wimbledon.
- In response to a question about how lamp column replacement is prioritised, ML said that priority is given to those that are corroding. Electrical and non-destructive testing is carried out, during which the columns are RAG rated (Red, Amber, Green): reds are replaced immediately, then high ambers and so on. TfL carries out its own testing and replacement of lamp posts that it is responsible for.
- ML has reported the visibility issues with the traffic lights outside Staples to TfL and will do so again.

Police update

Sergeant Smith explained that a new local policing model has been implemented since July. The Emergency Response Team has been separated from all other work that the local police do. All non-emergency calls are now dealt with by the local policing team, which means more responsibility for them. There will be new officers on all of the wards because work is now divided by geographical sector (Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden) rather than by ward, although each ward does still retain one PC and one PCSO. Officers from one sector will help those in another sector if assistance is required.

Some satellite bases have been closed, although others are open as contact points on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at designated times. There is also a new appointment system for non-urgent matters. Appointments can be held across the borough between 8am and 9pm; a car will visit at the appointed time.

Hillside and Trinity wards have seen a drop in theft from individual people. Shoplifting figures are about the same. Street drinkers have been given a final warning by the Council and one of them has been sectioned.

The town centre dispersal zone was renewed to April 2014, although it isn't used much.

Dundonald ward is fairly quiet. There has been the occasional daytime burglary and some people have suffered from cold-calling scams from people pretending to be the police and asking for individual's cards and PIN numbers.

Village ward has had some issues with burglaries, especially on building sites, where tools are being stolen. There has also been a spate of golf clubs being taken from vehicles so Sgt Smith added that extra care should be taken not to leave valuables in vehicles.

In Wimbledon Park the Reynolds Gate development suffered from vandalism by youths. Pictures were subsequently put in the press of the suspects, leading to round 10 arrests and putting a stop to the problems.

A big police operation was undertaken on the High Path Estate in Abby ward. 26 arrests (including not just local people) were made with relation to drugs and antisocial behaviour.

Overall there has been a year-on-year decrease in crime in the borough with 179 fewer offences in August 2013 compared to the same time last year.

General questions/Comments:

- A resident expressed concerns that the names and addresses of those arrested in the High Path operation were published in the local paper, leading to possible gang-related threats for the families of those arrested. Sgt Smith responded that the decision to publish such details is taken at a high level and is done as a deterrent; however concerns will be fed back.
- Sgt Smith did not know the average arrest rate per officer per month and explained that such targets are not set (although response teams may have targets). The Merton police force is doing well but continues to aim to do better.
- Asked if there has been a headcount reduction as a result of the new policing model, Sgt Smith said that there is currently a new recruits drive in Merton for 8-10 new officers, plus more officers are to be recruited up to 2015, at which point the team will be up to full strength. There are also more police on the street.
- A resident asked if police officers on bicycles could be used to catch cyclists who are breaking laws. Sgt Smith explained that he has used his bike a lot over the years and officers can choose whether to go out on a bike, by foot or in a vehicle. Many on foot are better placed to deal with cyclists riding on pavements.

Stephen Hammond MP

There were a number of significant issues to update residents on.

The week prior to the forum meeting, Mr Hammond visited the High Path Estate with Councillor Nelless, the Borough Commander and some others. He congratulated the police on their successful operation on the estate, commenting that it had made the area safer on the whole. He added that there had been an open day at the police station; many officers had given up their Sunday to attend and talk to residents, therefore thanks were due to said officers.

Mr Hammond is in talks with the council about increasing primary and secondary school education provision. He acknowledged that a shortage of places will be a problem that needs to be addressed. It has already been agreed that places at Pelham, Poplar and Merton Abbey will be increased but

consideration needs to be given to how the necessary number of secondary education places will be provided in the future.

Transport remains a top issue. It was acknowledged that South West Trains and the District Line have not been performing well and need to improve, and that Wimbledon needs Tramlink and Crossrail to expand.

Mr Hammond attended Merton Council's Business Awards, which highlighted that there are a number of successful businesses based in Wimbledon, for example, Zip Cars. He also attended the Future Wimbledon event, where there was a focus on developing quality buildings, quality transport and a strong community. The event had also highlighted that the issue of licensing needs to be dealt with. Mr Hammond noted that, given the already high number of technological businesses in the area, Wimbledon has the potential to be the technological suburb of the future.

General questions/Comments:

- In response to concerns about parking restrictions on Church Road being lifted and the traffic/potential accidents that this will generate, Mr Hammond said that the restrictions had been lifted after many representations from Wimbledon Village businesses and because surveys and demand analysis have shown that parking spaces are needed. He added that early morning and late afternoon restrictions seemed unnecessary as the matter concerns only four parking bays but a solution to the traffic problem is being sought.
- Asked why there is no link between the south west or south east of London to Heathrow as part of Crossrail 2, Mr Hammond said that Crossrail 2 will link to Crossrail 1 in the middle of London, from where people will be able to get to Heathrow.
- A resident asked if South West trains would be able to provide more level access facilities to accommodate the ageing population. Mr Hammond replied that he has discussed this matter with Raynes Park station and is urging them to put in better accessibility in the 2014-19 period. He added that the station is also due to be repainted.

Soapbox

A resident asked, now the Wimbledon Community Centre has been demolished, what the plan for that space is. John Hill (JH), Head of Public Protection and Development at the council responded that in the short term, the plan is to use it for parking. In the long-term a mix of residential and commercial development is desirable but as yet the council has not received any plans from developers. Community use is very much part of the council's policy for the site. The YMCA may include a community centre but this is not guaranteed, so options for a new replacement centre are being considered.

A resident expressed concern about possible plans for a 24-storey building as part of the YMCA and another resident commented that the YMCA plans would be a prototype for the whole town centre; therefore the community should be involved in developing the plans. JH said that no planning application has been received yet, only a screening opinion from the developers asking if an

Environmental Impact Assessment was needed. Councillor Nelles said that the details at the moment are unclear but there is a consultation planned for October; when information about the consultation is known, the council will circulate it to everyone on the forum mailing list and will place it on the forum Facebook page. The Chief Executive of the South West London YMCA may attend the next Wimbledon forum meeting.

Councillor Evans asked about plans to change the Greyhound Stadium to a football stadium and residential development. JH said there were no details yet on the application, but he would circulate them once received. Further clarification confirmed that no planning application had, as yet, actually been submitted.

A resident asked what happened to the development of the old football stadium site and plans for community improvement there. JH said that the development was primarily for housing and community facilities (a hall was provided). Rev. Andrew Wakefield noted that there is empty retail space on the site. Mr Hammond said that there was provision for a GP surgery too. Councillor Nelles commented that the rental terms for the site are high.

A resident asked if speed cameras act better as a traffic calming measure than speed bumps and chicanes. JH said the appropriateness depends on the area and one is not necessarily better than the other. Councillor Nelles added such measures are a policy decision and residents are consulted before traffic calming is implemented.

A resident commented that traffic at the junction of Alexander Road and Wimbledon Hill Road needs to be monitored.

The question was raised of where traffic would go if the Broadway were to be pedestrianised. JH said that there have been no concrete proposals for pedestrianisation therefore it is not at all a consolidated plan. Councillor Nelles added that there is talk of pedestrianisation as part of the Mini-Holland scheme but there are no details yet. Consultation on the Mini-Holland proposals is planned for the end of October.

In response to a resident asking for a summary of the Future Wimbledon meeting, Helen Clark-Bell from Love Wimbledon (co-sponsors of the event with Merton Council) gave a synopsis. She explained that the meeting had been an opportunity for the business community, investors, developers, planners etc to look at what Wimbledon needs to consider for its future and the future of the town centre. Crossrail 2, pedestrianisation and other such topics were discussed but no schemes or plans were put forward. The meeting was very much about 'Blue-Sky' thinking. Councillor Peter Walker commented that Love Wimbledon has done fantastic things for Wimbledon residents and for the town centre.

Healthwatch Merton

Dave Curtis (DC), the manager of Healthwatch Merton introduced himself and the service, which launched on 17 July.

The focus of Healthwatch will be on partnership working. Currently the service is looking at, amongst other matters, commissioning and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, but it would like the community to direct its longer-term priorities.

As the service is in its early stages, staff are looking at how to develop it. A lot of engagement is taking place to inform this. Volunteers will also be needed, for example Healthwatch Merton wants residents involved in issues relating to Health and Social Care, such as mental health.

General questions/Comments:

- DC agreed that Healthwatch would attend the forums regularly to keep residents up to date, including attending the next Wimbledon Forum meeting.
- Asked if the service has a mission statement, DC said that Healthwatch's mission statement is that it is: "the independent consumer champion for health and social care in England; it ensures that the voices of consumers and those who use services reach the ears of the decision makers." This means working in partnership to co-ordinate the community's voice and influence decisions the decisions of the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Asked how Healthwatch would ensure impartiality from the Clinical Commissioning Group, DC explained that the service is accountable to Merton Council and to residents, so if people feel that it is not representing the community, they should voice their concerns.
- A resident expressed concerns over the lack of Mental Health support for children and young people and the fact there is no Mental Health Forum.
- Councillor Evans asked where Healthwatch's remit lies if it does not lobby and whether it could get involved in matters such as hospital closures. DC said that it can get involved in such matters by passing on the community's views to decision-makers.

Planning and parking update

John Hill provided an update on planning applications:

- An application has not been submitted for the YMCA but a pre-application meeting has taken place to discuss initial outline proposals. Need for a public meeting at the appropriate time was acknowledged.
- A hotel application for 153-165 The Broadway was refused and has now gone to appeal. A decision is expected in early autumn. JH will report back at the December forum meeting.
- An application for a new office and residential development at 247 The Broadway will go to planning committee in October or November. The council is still taking representations on the application.
- Following a change in permitted development rights (reported at the last forum meeting), the council is under pressure from developers to convert offices to residential; however, some of these conversions are for buildings on industrial estates, which is concerning.

Parking control:

- In the run up to Christmas the Council will again be operating free parking at weekends in all Council car parks (with exception of Coombe Lane). This initiative will run from Saturday 30th November through to Sunday 22nd December as well as including Monday and Tuesday the 23 and 24 December. The council is also considering free evening parking on Thursday evenings in December but this is yet to be agreed

Environmental Health and Trading Standards

- The council is investigating concerns about cafes and restaurants placing tables and chairs on highways. Businesses are permitted to put street furniture out on their part of the pavement but not beyond on the public footway, so residents should report it if tables and chairs are encroaching beyond the allowed area.

General questions/Comments:

- Asked if there are any CPZ roads in Wimbledon that do not have residential parking bays, JH said there weren't any that he knew of.
- A resident asked about the status of the building at 1a Leopold Road. JH said that it is subject to a demolition and enforcement notice and that the applicant is looking to submit a new planning application that is in line with the council's requirements which, if granted permission, may take away the need for further enforcement action.
- Asked for an update on the Coral Bookmakers gambling licence, JH said that the bookmakers had won its appeal. An agreement had been reached on operating hours and numbers of staff.

AOB

- The Detailed Sites and Policy Document is due to go for review to the Secretary of State imminently; an update on the review will be given at the next forum meeting.
- **The next Wimbledon Community Forum will be on Wednesday 11 December** at Drake House, 44 St. George's Road, Wimbledon, SW19 4ED.
- Agenda items for the next meeting include: Q&A with the Leader of the council, Stephen Alambritis; Future Wimbledon conference; Healthwatch update; and possibly an update on the Detailed Sites and Policy Document and a discussion on the plans for the YMCA.

Actions

- ML to respond to a resident's request for a map of 20mph speed limit zones in Wimbledon.
- ML to report the visibility issues with the traffic lights outside Staples to TfL again.
- Council to circulate information on the YMCA consultation – once known - to everyone on the forum mailing list and place it on the forum Facebook page
- Once received, JH to circulate details on plans to change the Greyhound Stadium to a football stadium and residential development.

This page is intentionally left blank