

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

LATCHMERE WARD “LISTENING TO YOU” MEETING

held at York Gardens Library and Community Centre, 34 Lavender Road, SW11 2UG
on Wednesday, 21st July 2010 at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT

Council Members

Councillor Cousins (Cabinet Member for Health, Community Safety and Partnerships – in the Chair); Councillors Belton, Hogg and Speck (Latchmere Ward Members).

Council Officers

Mr. John Bannerman – Chief Parks Police Officer (Leisure and Amenity Services Department)

Mr. Tim Cronin – Head of Development Control (Technical Services Department)

Mr. Gareth Llywelyn-Roberts – Assistant Director Technical Services – Environmental Services and Community Safety (Technical Services Department)

Mr. Shaun Morley – Head of Waste Management (Leisure and Amenity Services Department)

Mr. Andy Pike – Head of Technical and Programming Services (Housing Department)

Mr. Kevin Power – Assistant Director – Operational Services (Technical Services Department)

Mr. Michael Salt – Parking Policy Manager (Technical Services Department)

Mr. Gareth Jones – Committee Secretary (Administration Department)

Mr. Frankie Belloli - Committee Secretary (Administration Department)

Residents

Approximately 35 members of the public.

INTRODUCTION

The Chairman, Councillor Cousins, introduced the Council Members and the officers.

The Ward Members then gave a brief overview of their role representing local people.

ISSUES, RESPONSES AND ACTION

1 Fly Tipping in Abercrombie Street

A resident complained of fly tipping at the west end of Abercrombie Street. Mr. Morley undertook to investigate this matter.

(Action: Mr. Morley)

(Note - Envelope received from resident of Abercrombie Street passed to Waste Enforcement Officer to follow up. However it should be noted that the evidence contained in the envelope did not provide the names of the perpetrators; the two letters were circulars addressed to the occupier, which is unlikely to be sufficient to secure a conviction.)

2 Digital TV Reception in Council Housing

Residents from Maysoule Road and Kennet Close referred to attempts they had made over an eight-week period to try to secure an explanation from the Council about problems with TV reception in their block, and complained that the response of some staff to their enquiries had been abrupt and unhelpful. Mr Pike apologised for any lack of respect shown by Housing Department staff in dealing with enquiries and he confirmed that this was entirely unacceptable for any Council staff. He acknowledged that there had been problems with the programme of introducing digital TV reception on some estates, particularly in relation to access to properties to carry out works and the difficulties in providing communal aerials given the mix of tenanted, leaseholder and freehold properties. It was not possible to guarantee the installation of an integrated system given this mix of tenure, partly due to technical issues with some systems related to digital reception and partly because the Council would have to secure by-leaves and consents for any necessary works from all the freeholders; the complexity and likely expense made this an unrealistic option. Mr Pike acknowledged that the residents should be informed promptly and clearly about the Council's position. He understood that a letter was due to be sent to the residents of the estate mentioned; he would check the position and ensure that an explanatory letter was sent immediately to all affected residents (Councillor Belton asked that he be copied into this letter).

(Action: Mr. Pike)

Note - Information/apology letter hand delivered to all affected residents on Friday 23rd July (copied to ward Councillors) with solution to problem commencing on site Monday 2nd August.

3. 50 Winstanley Road: Development of Student Accommodation

A resident raised concerns about breaches of planning conditions in the construction of the development of 456 student units at this site. He alleged that the developers had caused the following breaches:

- a) Access gate opens outwards over the pavement when the planning consent requires inward opening.
- b) Construction vehicles and staff blocking pavements.
- c) Construction vehicles entering and leaving the site outside the hours permitted in the planning consent.
- d) Unsafe arrangements for access of large vehicles to the site.
- e) Obstruction and removal of parking restriction signs.

The resident said he had raised these matters with the Council, but to date there had been no apparent response. He was sceptical about the Council's attitude to these problems, given that it had sold the site to the developers and had granted planning permission. He argued that the Council should have secured benefits for the local community through a "Section 106" agreement. The resident suggested that the Council should take action to suspend the construction pending resolution of the issues he had raised. Another resident emphasised the points about construction vehicles taking up parking space in the area to the detriment of local residents.

Councillor Belton advised that he had not supported the planning application, as he had been opposed to the scale of the development, and neither had he supported the disposal of the site.

Mr Cronin reported that another planning application had now been submitted for an additional 114 student units and a children's home on the site. With respect to the Section 106 agreement, he advised that any benefits sought by the Council would have had to relate to the demonstrable impact of the development. He would arrange for the site to be checked to determine whether there had, in fact, been breaches of the conditions of planning permission.

(Action: Mr Cronin)

Mr Power advised that a letter had been sent earlier in the day to the developers addressing the alleged breaches of parking controls; he confirmed that the Council would now monitor compliance and issued penalty fines if controls were infringed. Equally, the developers could be required not to open their gates across the pavement if this caused an obstruction; the Council would have to give them a reasonable period to comply with this, but again, enforcement action would be pursued if there was no cooperation. Mr Salt added that if construction vehicles were parking on the highway where there were no restrictions, then there was little the Council could do formally; but if the controls were being flouted and particularly if pavements were being obstructed, the Council would issue penalty charge notices.

Councillor Belton confirmed that he would be taking up the issue and asked that officers keep him informed of developments.

(Action: Mr Power and Mr Salt)

4. Flooding

A resident spoke about flooding which had occurred in her property some 20 times over the last five years. She suggested that there had not been sufficient planning of the construction of the property (as a "Hidden Home") to avoid the problem. Mr Pike stated that there could be problems with flooding in any property in a "stack", but arrangements should be put in place to ensure that any flood water was channelled away from other properties. Mr Pike said he would brief the officer who was due to visit the premises the following day to carry out an inspection. (Councillor Belton asked that he be kept informed as the lady had raised the problem with him).

(Action: Mr Pike)

(Note - Area team visited as arranged and resolved situation with compensation award. Cause of incident from flat above rectified and repaired.)

5. Fowler Close: Stairwell Lighting and Redecoration

A resident of Fowler Close reported that the stairwell to Flats 25 to 30 needed redecoration and had no lighting installed. Councillor Belton asked the resident to speak to him after the meeting and he would take up the matter with the Housing Department.

(Action: Mr Pike/Councillor Belton)

(Note - Lighting timer faulty. For time being lights will be left on 24/7 pending delivery and fitting of new timer. Redecoration of communal area and externals programmed for 2012/13.)

6. Usk Road: Pavements and Alleyway

A resident reported that the pavements on Usk Road needed repair and that there was regular ponding, perhaps due to blocked drains, in the area outside No.19. He also referred to dog fouling of the alleyway nearby, which he had often reported to the Council without any apparent response.

Mr Power agreed to have the pavements inspected and Mr Bannerman would arrange for some monitoring of the alleyway to deter dog fouling.

(Action: Mr Bannerman and Mr Power)

7. Winstanley Estate: Major Refurbishment Project

A resident of Fowler Close asked for some details of the programme for the £23m refurbishment project for the estate.

Mr Pike reported that the six blocks on the York Road Estate would be refurbished first, with works starting in about 18 months' time. Fowler Close was programmed for external redecoration and repairs in 2012-13, and the overall the York Road project would take up to six years to complete. He confirmed that leaseholders would be consulted at least twice before works began and this consultation would include public meetings; the consultation exercise was likely to start in about a year's time.

Councillor Belton asked that all ward councillors be included in information and consultation on the project.

(Action: Mr. Pike)

8. Latchmere Estate: Loft Insulation

A resident reported that she had not been permitted to pay for and arrange loft insulation of her property on the estate, but had been told the Council would carry out

this work; however, months had now passed without any action. Mr Pike said he was surprised that loft insulation works had not been carried out on the Latchmere Estate; he would obtain further details from the resident after the meeting and make enquiries on the matter.

(Action: Mr. Pike)

(Note - Contact made with insulation company and arrangements to be made to carry out works.)

9. Police Patrols

Residents of the Winstanley Estate expressed concern at the lack of Police patrols in their area and the prevalence of anti-social behaviour, particularly by groups of youths not from the area; there were reports of drug- dealing and drug-taking.

Mr Llywelyn-Roberts reported that there had been no reduction in Police numbers overall and no reduction in the local Policing Teams. The patrol patterns were determined by the local Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) based on the priorities brought forward by local residents and to address current issues and it was possible that they had been targeting other areas and times more recently in response to their intelligence. He suggested that residents contact the SNT direct to enquire about patrols in this area and encouraged residents to attend the SNT Ward meetings as these were used to identify and respond to local residents concerns and Policing priorities. With respect to noise nuisance, the Council's noise team in Environmental Services and Community Safety will respond and investigate noise and nuisance in owner occupied and private sector premises. Residents could contact the Council's Noise Team as soon as they are witness problems who are on duty 7 days per week. However, noise in Council properties were investigated by Housing Services officers through the WEC. Mr Pike added that residents should report any anti-social behaviour by other residents of the estate to the Area Team in the Housing Department, to see if any action could be taken.

Councillor Belton confirmed that the SNT was now having to cover the whole of their ward and this might explain fewer patrols in particular areas than in the past. He would contact the SNT directly about the problems raised at the meeting, but he cautioned that it was notoriously difficult to deal with unruly neighbours as the only firm deterrent was eviction from a tenanted property and the courts were very reluctant to agree to such action in cases involving children, unless there were exceptional circumstances. In this context, it was very important for residents to keep accurate logs of disturbance caused by particular households.

Councillor Cousins suggested that the Housing Department should advise residents about how best to report crime and anti-social behaviour, although it was underlined that the Council was not directly responsible for policing.

(Action: Mr. Pike)

(Note - Information flyers will be distributed by Housing department across both the Winstanley and York Road Estates within the next 2 weeks.)

10. Parking: Fawcett Close and Falcon Grove

A resident of Fawcett Close explained that it was now very difficult for residents to park without having to pay for the new £95 permit. Although she had a garage, she was a midwife working some late hours and did not consider it safe to walk from her garage very late at night, and sometimes access to her garage was blocked. She argued that very few residents had taken up the permits so therefore the controlled parking scheme was not really working as intended. Mr Salt acknowledged that the results of the consultation on introducing the scheme had been very close, but he confirmed that there had been good reasons to go ahead with it. The £95 charge was considered reasonable and certainly not significant in the context of overall motoring costs. He emphasised that the yellow line restrictions in the area were not in force outside the controlled parking bays hours, so for example, someone could park there before 9.30am and after 4.30pm. The resident pointed that this would mean a resident having to move the car in the morning at a time when there were few parking spaces available nearby.

Councillor Belton acknowledged the problems, but suggested that it was now commonplace for motorists living in inner London to have to pay something for reserved parking. Mr Salt added that it was not feasible or fair for the Council to discriminate in favour of residents in the actual enforcement of parking controls.

A resident of Falcon Grove who had purchased a parking permit, reported that she and other residents were often unable to park given the large number of visitors to events at the community centre nearby. She reported that cars were often double-parked or even treble-parked. Councillor Belton said he was aware of the problem which was made worse by taxis waiting in the vicinity for two to three hours

(Action: Mr Salt)

(Note- Discussed with the Falcon Grove resident after the meeting and reassured her that parking enforcement had improved and would continue to do so).

11. Winstanley Estate

A resident argued that the Council had killed community spirit on the estate by disposing of properties and closing community associations. Councillor Cousins did not agree that the decline of community associations could be attributed to the disposal of properties; he cited the community hall in which the meeting was being held as a clear example that there remained facilities which could be used by residents who wished to form associations and arrange community activities for the estate. Councillor Hogg suggested that he and the other local councillors work with local residents on establishing an association.

CLOSE OF MEETING

The ward councillors made closing statements, explaining how they would work to resolve the issues raised at the meeting and address the other concerns of local residents. They underlined their commitment to being involved in consultations on local development to ensure that the interests of Latchmere ward residents were safeguarded and promoted.

Councillor Cousins then thanked the residents for attending the meeting and invited them to stay and speak with councillors and officers about any further queries that they might have.

The meeting ended at 9.04 p.m.

Gareth Jones (020 8871 7520)
Frankie Belloli (020 8871 6005)