

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

THAMESFIELD WARD 'LET'S TALK' MEETING

held at Brandlehow Primary School, Brandlehow Road, SW15
on Tuesday, 9th December 2014 at 7.30pm

PRESENT:

Council Members

Councillor Govindia (Leader of the Council in the Chair); Councillors Maddan, Ryder and Mrs Torrington (the Thamesfield Ward Members); and Councillor Osborn (Leader of the Opposition).

Council officers

Mike Bright – Interim Head of Planning and Capital Delivery (Finance
Department, Property Services Division)
Nick Calder – Area Planning Group Leader (Housing and Community
Services Department)
Graham Collins – Committee Secretary (Administration Department)
Danny Edwards - Area Housing Manager (Housing and Community
Services Department)
Jade Hibberd – Committee Secretary (Administration Department)
Andrew Jolly – Neighbourhood Officer (Community Safety Section of Public
Health Division, Administration Department)
Steve Jolley – Assistant On-Street Services Manager (Housing and
Community Services Department)
Michael Singham – Waste Policy Manager (Housing and Community
Services Department)
Mrs. Sue Yoxall – Community Safety Manager (Administration Department)

Residents

Approximately 19 members of the public.

INTRODUCTION

Councillor Govindia welcomed residents to the meeting and the Council Members and officers present each introduced themselves. Each of the Councillors then briefly outlined their roles on the Council and, as necessary, particular areas and issues of concern and interest to them with regard to Thamesfield Ward. Councillor Govindia then invited questions and comments from residents.

ISSUES, RESPONSES AND ACTIONS

1. Neighbourhood Watch

A resident of Chelverton Road enquired about the current position regarding his local Safer Neighbourhood Watch and the role of its Co-ordinator. Sue Yoxall summarized the function of N.W. Co-ordinators (NWC) and their role in facilitating good neighbourliness and communications in the locality, particularly in disseminating weekly crime messages. She indicated that NWCs were able to expand the role which in some cases has involved organizing wider community events such as street parties and arranging for local children to plant bulbs. The resident was introduced to his local NWC (who was also present at the meeting) and it was agreed that they would exchange contact details following the meeting.

A resident from Disraeli Road expressed concern at the prospect of reductions in the support from NWC as result of budget savings. Councillor Maddan explained that the Council was working with the Wandsworth Neighbourhood Watch Association to identify ways of how best to tackle this; they were due to be meeting shortly – hopefully with a representative from each of the Ward NW - and it was anticipated that these representatives might be able to provide appropriate feedback.

Councillor Mrs Torrington mentioned that some localities have introduced “street mails”, costing approximately £5 per annum which was another useful way of maintaining contact with one another as necessary

2. Bus stops

A resident said that London Buses should be made aware that the No. 430 bus stop in Putney High Street (by Putney Station) had exposed wires and the monitor was hanging down.

(Action: Mr. S. Jolley)

A resident reported that the bus stop outside the Oxford and Cambridge premises on the north side of Upper Richmond Road was littered with 1,000 (plus) cigarette butts despite there being two bins nearby. Councillor Maddan said that this would be attended to tomorrow morning.

(Action: Mr M. Singham)

3. Clock

A resident sought clarification as to who is responsible for maintaining the clock in the Disraeli Road vicinity – which was not currently working. He

requested that the Council take steps to ensure that it was functioning once again as he considered that it was an asset to the community.

The Ward Councillors indicated that officers would investigate.

[Post-meeting note: The clock is situated at 150-152 Putney High Street, at the junction of Norroy Road.]

(Action: Nicola Grant – Putney Town Centre Manager)

4. 20 mph. zones

A resident asked when a 20mph speed limit would be introduced in the area.

Councillor Mrs Torrington explained that a consultation was due to be carried out in January 2015 to ascertain the views of local residents. She said that she hoped residents would be encouraged to take part in this and voice their preference to have the limit in place. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, she saw no reason why a 20 mph zone could not be introduced fairly shortly afterwards.

5. Accidents in Putney Bridge Road

A resident expressed concern about the need for measures to minimise the risk of accidents to pedestrians in Putney Bridge Road – suggesting the possibility of installing a speed camera at Wadham Road (near the new school) before anyone is injured. Councillor Mrs Torrington explained that installing safety measures is normally preceded by the necessary research and collation of relevant statistics and she undertook to ensure that these would be made available.

(Action: Councillor Mrs Torrington)

6. Putney Railway Station, Putney High Street

A resident asked about the possibility of a second entrance at Putney Station onto Oxford Road. Councillor Mrs. Torrington explained that funding was required for this and possibilities were being explored; the local MP, Miss Justine Greening, had already made such enquiries to the Mayor of London (Mr. Boris Johnson). Also, there was the possibility of using funds received by the Council from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). She indicated that four options for a second entrance/exit had been identified and that the Oxford Road option seemed likely to be the most appropriate. She undertook to

email details of these options to the resident and any others who wished to give her their contact details after the meeting.

The same resident also expressed dismay at the exceedingly long delay in moving the Station refurbishment works towards completion and asked what action the Council was taking. Councillor Mrs Torrington said that, in her capacity as Chairman of the Wandsworth Passenger Transport Liaison Group, she had been pressing Network Rail “countless times” and she and Councillor Maddan emphasised that the Council had expressed deepening dissatisfaction with the delays; Councillor Maddan had met with those concerned some four weeks ago when they were given a clear message regarding the dissatisfaction of the Council, residents and the travelling public, especially as deadlines had been repeatedly missed. The latest understanding was that the lifts would be working early in the New Year, the void area for shops and the moving of the ticket office would be complete by February 2015. Platform 1 (towards Central London) had the most work needed and this would take the longest to complete – not until Easter 2015. The resident asked if the plans for this could be displayed at the Station, and Councillor Maddan said he would arrange for this.

(Action: Councillor Maddan)

7. School places

A resident whose child was due to start school in September 2016 expressed concern that there was a lack of primary school places in the Borough and asked what plans were in place to increase places available. Mr. Bright explained that a new school was due to be built on the old Putney Hospital site and this would provide considerably more places; there were also other schools in the area that would be creating additional forms and adding further school places as well. In response to a further question from the resident, Mr. Bright confirmed that currently there were enough places to meet demand. He added that an annual review report was due to be published early in the New Year and this would demonstrate that there was sufficient capacity for the area, both currently and forecast for the future.

8. Development of the Putney Hospital site

Mr. John Horrocks asked when the new residential development at the Putney Hospital site would start. Mr. Bright responded that this was due to start early in the New Year. Residents commented that at a recent meeting of the Wimbledon Common and Putney Conservators (WC&PC) they had been informed that prospects for this were not so certain and that works “might” commence in the New Year and that issues concerning planning conditions still needed to be resolved. Mr. Bright said that the Council was aware of the need to take account of the views the WP&PC. A resident (Sheila Boswell) stated that she had been informed that there were five conditions on the new development that required the approval of the Council before work could

commence and there was insufficient time between now and the New Year to achieve this. Mr. Bright responded that these conditions had been taken into account and developers were currently working hard to meet these prior to the start of construction.

9. Pressure on transport services

A resident asked if 'commuter yield', as well as 'child yield', in the Putney area, had been considered in terms of the increased pressure on public transport facilities. Residents reported that train travel, particularly from Putney Station, had become unbearable due to the high volume of commuters packing onto the trains and expressed concern that, whilst new residential developments may be good in many ways, they inevitably brought added pressure to the services in the area. Councillor Mrs. Torrington confirmed that this had been considered by the Council and seeking improvements was an ongoing objective; examples of progress included: River services, Barclay's Cycle Hire bikes ("Boris bikes") and the introduction of railway carriages with more standing capacity, such as on the District Line. Councillor Mrs Torrington emphasised that she, other Councillors and the local London Assembly Member, Mr. Dick Tracey, were constantly pressing TfL to identify further improvements for residents.

The resident asked if the Council took account of the need for predicting 'commuter yield' when considering planning applications for large residential developments. In response the Leader said that all reports to the Planning Applications Committee included comments from the officers on transportation and highways implications, particularly in the context of the Council's approved planning policies. In cases where it is felt that extra pressure would result from a proposed development, the Council could use the new Community Infrastructure Levy to fund appropriate measures to alleviate potential problems.

Councillor Osborn added that the travel situation and indeed other related issues concerning planning for the future – not least schools - needed to be constantly monitored and he encouraged residents to continue to raise their concerns about this with the Council. Councillor Govindia agreed that the Council, along with many other councils – needed to maintain a watchful eye on the situation.

10. East Putney Underground Station

Several residents complained about congestion for passengers entering and leaving East Putney Underground Station, particularly around the times of matches at Fulham Football Club Stadium, and the difficulties experienced by the elderly and those with prams, etc. Councillor Govindia agreed that the problems were mainly because there was only one narrow exit in use and during rush hour and busy periods this caused overcrowding and there were also no lifts in use to aid people. Also he mentioned that he had asked for plans to be drawn up for remodelling the piazza between the Station entrance and Upper Richmond Road. Councillor Mrs Torrington undertook to ensure

that this matter was raised with London Underground at the next meeting of the Passenger Transport Liaison Group.

A resident also complained about the problem of trains switching to different platforms with very little advanced warning – with the result that less agile persons potentially missed their train.

11. Putney Market weekends

A resident expressed disappointment at the prospect of the popular and successful Putney Market Weekend events being discontinued. Councillor Maddan reported that the final event for 2014 took place on the previous weekend and, as a member of the Putney Town Centre Partnership Board, he hoped to see this event continued on a more permanent basis.

12. Open House Weekend

A resident raised the Putney Artist open houses weekends and explained that some of the artists had felt that the Council could help more to advertise the events. Councillor Govindia explained that a Council publication does go out to advertise where the houses are located and the artists themselves also advertise but he would go back to officers to see if there was more that could be done.

13. Social/affordable housing

Several residents asked for clarification of the Council's policies concerning social/affordable housing and what policies were in place to ensure there is a balance of this in the Putney area with new developments, with a view to encouraging local people to stay in the area. Councillor Ryder explained that, for the Planning Applications Committee, there were strict guidelines in place to ensure that an appropriate proportion of social housing was included in new developments. Councillor Govindia indicated that the Council normally sought to maximise the numbers of affordable units, subject to viability assessments and appropriate terms negotiated with the developers. The residents reflected that the availability of social housing gave a sense of community and belonging that was important.

In response to a related question from a resident, Mr. Calder advised that affordable housing was usually delivered via housing associations.

Councillor Osborn said that he recognised that there could be difficult negotiations at times but the community needed to see a larger percentage of social and affordable housing than is currently there. He expressed dissatisfaction that many units were empty in several of the large blocks which had been constructed along the Thames River frontage in recent years, where it seemed that large companies were buying the units as investments and there were reports that a major Football Club had bought units merely for intermittent use as and when visiting footballers needed accommodation for a night or two but were otherwise empty for long periods. He believed this was

specially the case regarding the “blue lighted” block adjacent to St. Mary’s Church.

14. Height of tower blocks

A resident of Disraeli Road raised her concern over the height of the new tower blocks in the area and felt that they were much taller than they used to be; she contended that the light into her property was affected by the buildings and that she had not been alerted to any public consultation about the proposals (see post-meeting note below); she felt that the lack of consultation was unsatisfactory because there was a concern that ever more higher blocks would be built, worsening the situation. Mr. Calder said that that the Council had gone through consultation in accordance with approved practice and there had been a leaflet drop to over 3,000 properties including hers. Each building of that nature would also go through a ‘tall buildings assessment’ which would consider any loss of light and quality of life. There was a Sites Specific Allocation document which set out plans and was available to the public. It was agreed that residents should give their email at the end of meeting to receive this and further information. Councillor Ryder said that he was confident that the professional officers do a great deal of assessment work on planning applications before reporting with their advice and recommendations to the Planning Applications Committee.

Councillor Osborn said that councils should not oppose the development of tall buildings per se but the problem was more to do with their location; he considered that the Council had not got its policies on tall buildings correct but that close attention should be paid to how such buildings might, or might not, conflict with existing local heritage sites close to them. He therefore encouraged residents to continue to ‘nag’ the Council about this issue.

[Post-meeting note: Mr. Calder discussed the consultation issue with the resident after meeting. As a result, she has been set up to receive automatic consultations of planning applications in the Putney area.]

15. Conversion of offices to residential use

A resident asked about the Council’s position on offices being converted to residential use (following the Government’s relaxation of the ‘permitted development’ legislation whereby such changes did not require fresh planning permission). Councillor Govindia said that the Council had opposed this change several times and considered that the relaxed approach was a short-sighted policy that was damaging to the community. Councillor Maddan said the Council had unsuccessfully tried to get Putney exempted from the relaxation and Councillor Osborn said the new situation reflected changes in work patterns whereby increasing numbers of persons were working from home; he felt that the Council needed to monitor the progress of this trend.

16. Recycling

A resident raised the issue of recycling in the area and felt that it was a shame to burn garden waste. Mr Singham responded that levels of recycling as

recorded in the published figures had fallen since 2011/12 and that Wandsworth was now third from the bottom of the recycling league table in London, but also said that this did not reveal the whole picture. He said the fall was mainly due to residents recycling less but the reason for this was not yet clear; it was probably because they have less paper and glass to recycle. A waste composition analysis was recently conducted to cast further light on this. Other factors included revised guidance from the Environment Agency which prevents the composting of organics from street cleansing due to the risk of high pollution levels and deductions for contamination in recycling. Reasons for Wandsworth being low in the London and National league tables include the fact that Wandsworth is one of the most heavily 'flatted' boroughs in the Country. This means residents have less space to store recyclables and they produce relatively little garden waste (the composting of which helps to bump up the figures in rural areas and outer London). Another major factor is that Wandsworth does not provide a separate collection service for composting food waste. The Council ceased providing a collection service for composting garden waste in April 2012 as take-up had been low and the cost of continuing it would have been high for every tonne composted. Any garden waste collected is now burnt for electricity generation along with other residual waste.

[Post-meeting note: The published figures exclude all the recycling of incinerated residual waste that occurs (metals & aggregates). If included, Wandsworth's recycling rate rises from around 20% to over 40%. Furthermore, Wandsworth produces a relatively low quantity of waste per household and waste avoidance produces greater environmental benefits than recycling. The Council remains committed to increasing recycling where this can be achieved at no cost. The Council has no plans to introduce a separate food waste collection service as the cost would be high and the environmental benefit small given that the food waste has already been diverted from landfill for incineration with energy recovery.

CLOSE OF MEETING

The Leader of the Council thanked residents for attending the meeting and invited them to stay and speak further with Councillors and officers about matters they had raised or to approach them with individual queries, etc. He asked residents to make sure they left their contact details with officers where they had raised specific enquiries.

The meeting ended at 9.10 p.m.

Graham Collins/Jade Hibberd (020 8871 6021/6702)
16th December 2014