

## **WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **BEDFORD WARD 'LET'S TALK' MEETING**

**Held at Southside Scouts Hall, 197 Balham High Road, SW12**  
**on Monday, 22nd June 2015**

#### **PRESENT**

##### **Council Members**

Councillor Govindia (Leader of the Council and East Putney Ward Member – in the chair); Councillor Osborn (Leader of the Opposition and Graveney Ward Member) and Councillors Anderson, Mrs Dunn and Dr. Allin-Khan (Bedford Ward Members).

##### **Council Officers**

Martin Byrne – Area Housing Manager (Housing and Community Services Department)

Graham Collins – Committee Secretary (Administration Department)

Nigel Granger – Area Planning Group Leader (East) (Housing and Community Services Department)

Liz Rayment-Pickard – Head of School Standards and Improvement (Children and Social Services Department)

Ms Ozu Okere – Committee Secretary (Administration Department)

Adama Sulaiman – Neighbourhood Officer (Tooting Sector) (Community Safety Section, Administration Department)

John Scully – Principal Enforcement Officer (Housing and Community Services Department)

Michael Singham – Waste Strategy Manager (Housing and Community Services Department)

##### **Residents**

Approximately 24 members of the public.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Chairman welcomed the residents present to the meeting and introduced the Council Members and officers present.

Following brief statements by the Ward Councillors, setting out the issues affecting Bedford Ward with which they had been involved, the Chairman invited questions and comments from residents.

## **ISSUES, RESPONSES AND ACTIONS**

### **1. Under 5s Crèche Facilities at Balham Leisure Centre**

Residents expressed disappointment at the lack of crèche provision for under-5's at the Leisure Centre, the previous facility having been removed because of on-going building works; they considered that it is important that a suitable place is found within the existing site. They pointed out that there are 40 regular users of the crèche although the number of irregular users exceeds that number. Residents are willing to pay more to use the facility but this has not been taken on board by the developer. They requested that consideration be given to using a spare room at the Bedford Hill Medical Centre, 120 Bedford Hill, SW12.

Response- Mr. Singham explained that there is a crèche facility currently being provided temporarily in a squash court but in the longer term the following alternative provisions are being considered:-

- (a) operate a limited provision at Studio 1;
- (b) continue to operate at the squash court with alterations to ensure it is both child centred and safe. Users have suggested that the staff room could be used instead, with the staff room function being relocated to where the builders are currently operating from;
- (c) extend the crèche facilities at Tooting Leisure Centre but the distance is a problem; and
- (d) provide a prefab nursery provision at the Leisure Centre but this comes with cost issues.

Mr Singham said that, due to increased demand for leisure centre use, the aim of the development was to turn the previous room where the crèche was being held into an exercise room as the crèche users are considered to be a diminishing group. As such the large expenditure on the crèche cannot be justified. However, it is recognised that there is a need for a crèche facility so a way forward might be for the Leisure Centre to work with existing crèche providers to find something that is geographically nearer than Tooting Leisure Centre.

Councillor Dr. Allin-Khan did not think that the option of using another building would work for mothers using the gym and Councillor Anderson added that there seemed to be a need for the Council to work with the Leisure Centre to progress the matter.

**2. Closure of Barclays Bank, Tooting Bec Branch, 29 Upper Tooting Road, SW17**

An elderly resident said that she was concerned at the closure of the Bank and she and Mr Saywell said that they hoped that it would not be replaced by a take-away shop as the high street is already saturated with such shops. Residents added their criticism of the profusion of betting shops and estate agents on the high street.

Another resident expressed concern that Tooting Bec was being “left behind” compared with the shopping experience in Balham.

Response – Councillor Osborn said that the Council, as local Planning Authority, has limited powers to control the future use of the former Barclays Bank premises especially where there is no ‘change of use’ such as a shop replacing another shop.

Councillor Govindia said that he would write to Barclays seeking clarification of their plans to open another branch locally. Also, he said that, as regards betting shops, the Council has some powers to restrict the numbers on the high street. However, there has been no growth in the number of betting shops in Wandsworth although they can be concentrated in certain areas which creates a negative image.

[Post-meeting note: The change of use of a bank (Class A2) to a takeaway fastfood facility (Class A5) would require an application to be made for planning permission.] Use as an estate agent office would not require planning permission.

**3. HSL Head Shop, 733 Garratt Lane - Leafleting of households advertising the sale of legal highs on Garratt Lane**

Some residents reported on recent door-to-door leafleting advertising the sale of legal highs at Garratt Lane and they asked what the Council was doing to get rid of such activity.

Response – Councillor Govindia said that the Council had tried to make the selling of legal highs less commercially attractive but that it does not have the statutory powers to close down such businesses; however, new legislation is anticipated from Parliament soon which is aimed at regulating these types of activities. The Council is keeping a close eye on the market as younger people can be attracted to the shop.

**4. Street Cleansing on Dafforne Road/Elmfield Road**

A resident spoke about Dafforne Road being used as a thoroughfare by people on their way home from nearby take-aways, etc., so resulting in a high volume of litter (discarded packaging) on the road, some of which seemed to remain there for two or three days. They asked for an

increase in the frequency of the street cleansing to help combat the problem.

Response – Mr. Singham was unable to confirm the scheduled frequency or days of street cleansing in Foulser Road but suggested it was likely to be twice weekly, which would be consistent with litter remaining in situ for a maximum of four days. He also suggested that increasing the frequency of cleansing would involve significant additional costs for the Council and outlined the difficulties involved with enforcement against litterers, highlighting that if enforcement officers don't witness an offence directly, an independent witness prepared to give evidence in court is likely to be required.

Councillor Mrs Dunn said that the public need to be informed more forcefully about littering offences and that every effort should be made to encourage takeaway shops play their part in avoiding littering of discarded packaging by their customers such as by displaying suitable information in their shops about penalties for littering offences.

[Post meeting note: Foulser Road is scheduled for litter clearance thrice weekly on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, including a thorough sweep on Fridays.]

## **5. 18 Foulser Road**

Mr Alexander reported that the property at 18 Foulser Road is in a bad state of neglect and that it has been the subject of complaints to the Council by a neighbour for some 10-15 years; he sought clarification as to whether it was a Council-owned property.

Response – Mr. Byrne undertook to check if the Council owns the property and, if so, to review its status within the Council's repairs and maintenance programme.

[Post-meeting note: This is a Council-owned property and will be subject to external decoration and associated repairs as part of the one-off external decorations programme. Arrangements have been made for the property to be surveyed by a surveyor from the Housing and Community Services Department after which the property's position on the programme will be confirmed and the anticipated date when decorations should commence].

## **6. Traffic Light Phasing at Tooting Bec/Trinity Road cross-roads**

Mr. Alexander asked if the pedestrian phasing could be extended to allow sufficient time for elderly persons and those with children to get across the road safely as the current phasing is too short (and significantly shorter than at a similar road junction in Balham).

Response – Mr. Scully said that Transport for London is responsible for the phasing of lights at this junction so he would pass on this resident's concerns to them.

**(Action – Mr. J. Scully)**

**7. Motorcycle Noise**

A resident expressed concern that excessive noise from motorbikes was once again becoming fashionable cycle, as it was a considerable number of several years ago – which seemed mostly to arise from silencer being removed and/or excessive and unnecessary revving of engines, such as when accelerating from traffic lights. He asked if anything can be done to address this serious noise pollution.

Response – Mr. Scully said that this is a matter for the Police and that he would refer the matter to them.

**(Action – Mr. J. Scully)**

**8. Overgrown Hedges**

Some residents complained that overgrown hedges in front gardens of properties, particularly in Elmsfield Road - a very well used road - cover half the pavement and some properties have sharp inappropriate plants, such as a Pampas Grass in Manville Road. They said that this made it difficult to walk pass and they were concerned that it seemed to be taking up to six months to see any action following the reporting of specific cases to the Council. Another resident requested that the Council take into account that it is the nesting season for robins which nest in hedges.

Response – Councillor Govindia advised that it is the responsibility of landlords/property owners to ensure that hedges do not obstruct the highway and therefore the best course is first to raise the matter with the residents of the property concerned, then offer to assist in cutting back and, if these steps are unsuccessful, to report the matter to the Council. The residents' concerns will be relayed to the relevant Department.

**(Action – Mr. J. Scully)**

**9. Tooting Common**

Cycling on Common paths - The resident also called for action to stop the unacceptable behaviour and excessive speed of cyclists on various paths on the Common, especially following the removal of the white line that used to distinguish between pedestrians and cyclists on the path running more or less parallel to the railway from Bedford Hill to the play area at the Triangle. It was suggested that markers need to be put

in place so that cyclists are aware of what side to ride on as the pathway is too narrow, making pedestrians feel at risk due to having to share it with cyclists. A resident pointed out paths were suitably segregated by Lambeth Council on Clapham Common.

A resident also suggested that a bye-law should be made in order to impose a cycling speed limit of 12 m.p.h. and that notices along paths should clearly display the speed restriction and inform all users of the paths that pedestrians have priority at all times. A resident suggested that, pending a suitable byelaw being made, the Council should deploy someone to hand out advisory leaflets to cyclists.

Football pitches at the Triangle. A resident asked for an update concerning what the Council's intentions are for the football pitches site at the Triangle, e.g. floodlighting.

Response – Councillor Anderson said that the issues raised would be passed to the relevant Council officers and that she and the other Ward Members would wish to consider how the Common paths could be best managed in the interests of all. Councillor Mrs. Dunn said that flood lighting was likely to be on a smaller scale than in previous years - and scheduled to stay on up to only 9pm.

**(Action – Mr. J. Scully)**

**10. Lighting in Wandsworth Park**

A resident sought a commitment that the Council would not go ahead with its plan to introduce lighting on the riverside path in Wandsworth Park; the resident said that reports of research into such lighting indicated that there were fears that it can pose a risk to security, create a nuisance and pose a risk to biodiversity.

[Note: This matter is due to be considered at the meeting of the Finance and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 25th June 2015.]

**11. Pest control**

A resident complained that rats were frequently seen in the vicinity of Elmbourne Road/Tooting Bec Road and that this appeared to be primarily a result of inadequate street cleansing.

Response: Mr Scully undertook to refer these concerns to the appropriate officers.

**(Action – Mr. J. Scully)**

**12. Rough Sleepers**

Residents complained about the problem of rough sleepers and drinkers on the Common, several of whom appeared to remain in those areas of the Common that were close to the Rose & Crown pub, Tooting Bec Road; their behaviour was at times intimidating and they tended to leave empty bottles strewn on the ground.. One resident alleged that some of the sleepers were well known as being “trouble” and that they regularly come from a certain area of London. A resident suggested that the Management Advisory Committee should be given sufficient powers to enforce the bye-laws covering this problem.

Response – Councillor Anderson said that the Council certainly does not wish this problem of anti-social behaviour to get worse; officer from the Parks Service and the sector Sergeant would be urged to do all they can to resolve the problem.

**13. Traffic Congestion Outside St Anselm School**

A resident reported that frequently there is a queue of traffic tailing back to the junction of Tooting Bec Road and Balham High Road (at the entrance to Tooting Bec Underground Station) and that this is caused by buses stopped (sometimes for above-average time, especially in the rush hour) at the St. Anselm's School bus stop. He said that the position of the bus stop is such that vehicles are rarely able to pass because the queue of traffic on the south side of the road (i.e. vehicles travelling west) - exacerbated by the Bus Lane on that side of the road - makes the gap too narrow for them to pass. He said that this can all result in a set of hazards - to pedestrians and cyclists in particular - especially when the traffic queue is forced to spill out into Balham High Road/Tooting Bec Road.

To overcome this problem, he suggested that either the bus stop be relocated further away or that the width of the footway at the bus stop (which seems to be bigger than normal) be reduced so as to provide space for buses to be stopped further over, giving greater space for vehicles to pass.

Response – Councillor Govindia said that, as this stretch of road is managed by Transport for London (TfL), he would ensure that the matter is referred to the appropriate office at TfL for attention.

**(Action – Mr. J. Scully)**

**14. Elmbourne Road – 20mph Zone**

Residents said that they welcome the 20mph zone on Elmbourne Road but have concerns about whether can be meaningfully enforced.

Another resident observed that, in contrast to the present interest in introducing 20 m.p.h. zones, there were serious inconsistencies regarding what the Council and/or the Police deemed as being acceptable vehicle speeds; for example he was aware of vehicles being allowed to travel down Franciscan Road, SW17 at 30 m.p.h. – i.e. past a primary school – and that Police vehicles travel along this road at speeds of up to 50 m.p.h despite not having their blue lights on.

Response – Councillor Govindia said that the Police Borough Commander was expecting that his officers would shortly have enhanced enforcement powers to address the problem of excessive vehicle speeds.

Councillor Mrs. Dunn said that various other roads in the Ward were being earmarked for possible future 20 mph zones, including Avoca, Foulser and Streathbourne Roads.

A resident also suggested that Romberg Road be added to the list.

**15. Outsourcing of Social Care**

A resident asked if there was any indication that the Council's provision of social care would be brought back in-house.

Response – Councillor Allin-Khan said that there had been a long discussion about the future of mental and social care at the meeting of the Council's Adult Care and Health OSC on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2015.

[Note: The [Draft minutes](#) of the OSC meeting can be viewed on the Council's website.]

**16. Gardener's Lodge – Grade II Listed building in Tooting Bec Road**

Residents complained that the Lodge has been an eyesore for far too long and that the owner has still not carried out repairs to the building, despite the Council, in September 2014, having served a Notice requiring him to carry out urgent repairs or face the prospect of legal action; all that has happened since seems to be that scaffolding was erected in February 2015; meanwhile it was understood that the back door was being left open. He contended that the Council's failure to secure action after so long was resulting in a perception among local residents that the owner is no longer taking the Council seriously.

Response – Councillor Mrs. Dunn said that the owner has carried out some of the necessary repairs and that pressure will continue to be put on him to complete the repairs; there are still approximately 13 items on the Repair Notice that have not been actioned and he has been threatened with a Compulsory Purchase Order.



Councillor Osborn added that he shared residents' concerns but the Council has to follow due process. He confirmed receipt of the email about the back door to the Lodge being found open and reported that this had been communicated to the relevant officers. He asked that residents report to the Council any information they might have about items being taken out of the property so the Council can deal with the problem.

**17. Impact of impending Benefit cap**

A resident asked what will happen with affordable housing provision and those that will be caught up in what he described as the "bedroom tax" and the realistic possibility of more Council housing being built.

Response – Councillor Mrs. Dunn said that this was not such an issue for Bedford Ward as for some other Wards and it was not yet known how much the Government's approach might actually impact on the Borough; however, she emphasised that the Council does not want people to be in a situation where they can live off benefits.

Councillor Anderson said that she hoped to see more actual social housing in the Borough.

**18. Tennis Courts on Tooting Common**

A resident sought clarification on the owner of the tennis courts on Tooting Common, indicating that they were in a poor state of repair.

Response – Councillor Mrs. Dunn said that the courts are owned by the Council and that she would forward the information about the disrepair to the responsible officers.

**(Action – Councillor Mrs Dunn)**

**19. New Council housing**

A resident asked what progress was being made with securing additional residential units in the Borough and whether funding for new units was able to be transferred from flats in Nine Elms which he understood were not occupied.

Response: Councillor Govindia said that approximately 2,400 new units were expected in due course, following demolition of blocks on the York Road and Winstanley Estates, SW11 plus more units for all types in other areas of the Borough, including the Alton Estate, Roehampton, SW15. Also he said that there was no evidence of un-occupied flats in Nine Elms and that Nine Elms funding was being used to contribute towards the cost of constructing the Northern Line Extension.

**20. Richmond and Wandsworth Shared Services**

A resident asked how Councillor Govindia thought the plans for 'merging' Wandsworth and Richmond Councils' services would work in practice and how this would affect the two Councils' officers.

Response – Councillor Govindia explained that the Council is not 'merging' with Richmond but the two Councils were planning to establish a shared single staff structure. There will be some changes although many things will remain the same. For example, over-managed teams could lose a tier of management-with savings achieved as a result of greater economies of scale. The scope of services offered will either remain the same or could actually improve.

The resident asked if it was intended to sell Wandsworth Town Hall.

Response from Councillor Govindia: No.

**21. Public Toilets**

A resident asked if a map could be put in Brightside indicating shops/libraries that will allow their toilets to be used by the public.

Response – The officers will investigate the inclusion of information on this in Brightside.

**(Action – Mr. J. Evans)**

**CLOSE OF MEETING**

The Chairman thanked residents for attending the meeting and invited them to stay and speak further with Councillors and officers about matters they had raised or any queries that they did not wish to discuss in the open meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.15p.m.

Graham Collins (020 8871 6021)  
Ozu Okere (020 8871 6035)

14th August 2015