

## **WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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

held at the Balham Congress Hall, 38 Balham High Road, SW12 9AH on Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2015 at 7.30p.m.

#### **PRESENT**

##### **Council Members**

Councillor Govindia (Leader of the Council – in the Chair); Councillors Usher and Ellis (Balham Ward members); Councillor Osborn (Leader of the Opposition).

##### **Council Officers**

John Scully – Principal Enforcement Officer (Housing & Community Services)  
Rodger Lydden – Neighbourhood Officer (Administration Department)  
Martin Byrne – Area Housing Manager (Housing & Community Services)  
Nigel Granger – Area Planning Group Leader (Housing & Community Services)  
Adam Wells – Head of Pupil Services (Education & Social Services)  
Michael Singham – Waste Strategy Manager (Housing & Community Services)

Jade Hibberd – Committee Services (Administration Department)  
Jacky Bennett – Committee Services (Administration Department)

##### **Residents**

Approximately 24 members of the public.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

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

The Ward Members then gave a brief overview of their role representing ward residents and updates on recent local issues.

#### **ISSUES, RESPONSES AND ACTION**

##### **1. Development**

A resident was concerned that the development of three-bedroom houses in the area into larger properties would limit the option for house buyers.

Another resident highlighted developments in Balham, alleging that the planning process seemed to favour developers rather than local residents. Multiple planning applications

threatened the space and light enjoyed by existing properties. More clarity and reassurance for residents was needed and some of the applications approved should be reconsidered.

Councillor Mrs Usher explained that the planning authority was constrained in its degree of flexibility in responding to applications. Nigel Granger confirmed that the views of specialists who had evaluated the impact of factors such as overshadowing and loss of light, had to be taken on board and standardised approaches were used to do this, often making it difficult to refuse an application without resulting in successful appeals.

Members understood residents' concerns that the planning process could appear to favour developers; the local authority did what it reasonably could in terms of promoting good design. The Leader of the Opposition suggested that neighbourhood forums could be set up to make representations when an application is considered. The Leader of the Council underlined that the planning process was not a public referendum and approved planning policy and guidance had to be followed.

It was agreed that individual applications could be discussed with officers following the meeting.

## **2. Capacity of Doctors surgeries and schools following new developments**

A resident argued that new developments were not appropriately matched by measures to expand doctors' surgeries or schools in the area. Councillor Mrs Usher explained that the Council regularly reviewed school capacity and could add classes where necessary as well as develop new schools. As for GP surgeries, this was dealt with by the health authorities and if residents were experiencing problems with these services, they could inform councillors who could raise it via the Council's scrutiny work.

## **3. Hildreth Mews - Waste Collection, fly-tipping etc.**

A resident was pleased with the Balham Town Centre improvements which had positively transformed the area; however, at the back of Hildreth Street (close to Hildreth Mews), there were problems with anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping and full waste bins; as well as creating an eyesore, the rubbish attracted vermin and gave rise to noise from collections at all hours. There had been a clean up of the area in November, but the problem had returned and was worse than ever.

Councillor Mrs Usher explained that the Council was aware of the problems in this area; it was privately owned, but it was not clear who owned it, which meant the Council's options for action were limited. Councillors Ellis and Mrs Usher agreed to work with officers and the Town Centre Manager on this and try to co-ordinate bin collections more effectively.

Another resident also highlighted that a café on the corner of Bedford hill had fat dripping from its ventilator onto the public footway. It was agreed the resident would provide details to Nigel Granger following the meeting to investigate.

#### **4. Timing of Traffic Lights – Balham High Road**

A fault with the timing of the traffic lights at Balham High Road was reported by a resident, with pedestrians waiting a long time to cross and then not having enough time to cross safely. Councillor Mrs Usher would take this issue to Richard Tracey, the GLA Member, who could take the matter up with TfL and request that the sequencing of these traffic lights be changed.

#### **5. Damaged Pavements**

Residents asked why funds from new developments could not be used to make repairs to pavements, such as in Devonshire Road where the pavement required significant repair. Councillor Ellis explained that there were levies on developments for this purpose and broken pavements should be dealt with. The resident was asked to provide the details to John Scully following the meeting and this would be checked. Residents were also encouraged to give any ideas for future schemes from this funding to Councillors Ellis and Mrs Usher who would feed back.

The pavements on Bedford Hill were also reported as damaged, including drainage issues on the corners. Officers informed the residents that the pavements were due to be re-laid, but the drainage issues would be investigated.

#### **6. Harberson Road – Speed Bumps**

Residents who had lived on Harberson Road for over 45 years reported that speeding vehicles and limited parking had become problematic and requested that speed humps be installed. The Leader of the Council explained that some roads were not suited for speed humps, but this would be considered. Councillor Salier had already been made aware of the issue.

#### **7. Domino's Pizzas: HGVs parked at Bus Stop**

A resident report that Domino's received their deliveries on Devonshire Road and the HGVs would park at the bus stop. John Scully agreed to investigate this.

#### **8. Tree Pruning**

Residents reported that they felt the trees in the area were pruned at the wrong time and should be left during the Spring and Summer months to be enjoyed. Councillor Ellis would speak to the Council arboriculturalists and ask for the specific reasons behind the timing of pruning.

**9. 255 Bus on Narrowed Road – Balham High Road**

There were concerns that the 255 Bus route along Balham High Road could be dangerous due to the useable area of road being narrowed by parking bays. Residents felt that bays needed to be removed before an accident was caused. Councillor Mrs Usher would raise this issue with TfL.

The meeting ended at 8.50pm.