

## **WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **FURZEDOWN WARD “LISTENING TO YOU” MEETING**

**Held at St Alban’s Church, Pretoria Road, SW16 6RR on  
Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> September 2015 at 7.30 p.m.**

#### **PRESENT**

##### **Council Members**

Councillor Govindia, Leader of the Council (in the Chair);  
Furzedown Ward Members: Councillor Leonie Cooper, Councillor Candida Jones; and  
Councillor Mark Thomas.  
Councillor Rex Osborn (Graveney Ward Member and Leader of the Opposition)

##### **Council Officers**

Mr. Steve Lane - Parking, Engineering and Highways (Housing and Community Services  
Department)  
Mr. Barry Sellers – Planning (Housing and Community Services Department)  
Mr. Mike Singham – Waste Services (Housing and Community Services Department)  
Mr. Martin Byrne – Area Housing Manager (Housing and Community Services Department)  
Ms Adama Fregiste – Community Safety (Administration Department)  
Mr. Andy Hough – Education Inclusion (Education and Social Services Department)

Mr. Martin Newton – Committee Secretary (Administration Department)  
Ms Rachel Williamson – Committee Secretary (Administration Department)

##### **Residents**

Approximately 35 members of the public.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Chairman, Councillor Govindia welcomed residents to the meeting and explained the format of the meeting.

Councillor Thomas reported that he had served as a local councillor for the Furzedown Ward for the past five years, but he had been a resident of the local area and had been chairman of the Safer Neighbourhood Board for longer. One of the local issues he had taken a particular interest in was the state of Mitcham Lane, which was not currently reaching its full potential, with too many empty shops and issues with traffic and crime. He was pleased to report that funding had been secured from the Mayor’s Outer London Fund to improve the shop fronts and street scene.

Councillor Leonie Cooper reported that she was first elected as a Furzedown councillor in 2010 and was re-elected in 2014. One of the areas she had been working on was to secure the implementation of a 20mph zone across the whole of Furzedown ward (with the exception of Mitcham Lane). She encouraged the public to provide feedback on the zone.

Councillor Jones said that she had been elected in May 2014. One of her main areas of interest had been tackling flytipping. She encouraged residents to report to her flytips and litter problems. She had also secured regular patrol officer time outside Furzedown and Graveney Schools and this has helped to improve safety on these roads.

Councillor Osborn said that he was elected in 2006 and represents Graveney Ward. He had previously sat on overview and scrutiny committees for environmental and adult health matters. As Leader of the Opposition he was now taking a broader overview.

The Chairman then invited questions and comments from the residents.

## **ISSUES, RESPONSES AND ACTION**

### **1. Education**

Question/Comment – Mr. Bhuchar reported that he had attended the meeting two years previously. He said that at that meeting he was advised that there was no problem with secondary school place provision. However, he had been reading in the media that there was a London-wide crisis. He asked whether there was sufficient provision in Wandsworth?

Response – Councillor Govindia said that overall there were sufficient places available, but some schools would continue to be oversubscribed.

Mr. Hough advised that the Council used robust future planning models to ensure the adequate provision of school places.

Question/Comment – A gentleman asked whether there was the ability for a Free School to be established in the area?

Response – Councillor Govindia noted that in Graveney Ward a new primary free school – Tooting Primary had been opened. In relation to secondary school places local residents had available Burntwood, Graveney and Ernest Bevin. There were sufficient places available.

Councillor Leonie Cooper observed that a relatively low proportion of Furzedown residents were able to secure a place at Graveney and that she would like to see a greater allocation of places made available for local children. However, securing a change to the admissions criteria was difficult due to a lack of local authority control over schools. She further added that, in addition to the schools mentioned by Councillor Govindia, some local children attended Chestnut Grove.

Councillor Thomas explained that Members were keen to maintain close relations with the schools in their wards and he was currently a governor of Furzedown Primary. In relation to the provision of school places, there was a need to strike a balance between over and under supply of places.

Question/Comment – A local resident reported that his daughter’s school had been without a headteacher for over a year. He asked whether there were wider problems with headteacher recruitment and, if so, whether there was a common reason? He further observed that the communication with parents regarding the headteacher situation at his daughter’s school had been poor.

Response – Mr. Hough advised that there was a national problem with the recruitment of headteachers. Many teachers were reluctant to step up and take on management responsibilities. The Council was committed also to appointing the right people as headteachers and, in the interim, existing talents within the Borough are used with heads of other schools taking on executive headships. In terms of how many schools were currently without a permanent headteacher, Mr. Hough said that he did not have this information available at the meeting, but could provide this separately to the questioner if required.

Question/Comment – A local parent of a child with special educational needs spoke of her difficulties in securing a nursery placement both in and out of Borough, this was followed by further difficulties at the time of applying for a reception class place, where Smallwood was unable to provide a place, and an offer of a place at Greenmead was made and then withdrawn before an offer was eventually made at Paddock. She was unhappy with the service she had received from the Council and was particularly unhappy with the transportation arrangements. In order to get her son to school she would have to take two buses, or a taxi at a cost of £13. She had been offered a special transport bus, but the journey was very long and resulted in her son having to be woken up early to be got ready. She commented that the transition to school had been poorly handled, with no settling in process and parents were unable to share their child’s first day. She asked what the Council could do to ensure that there was adequate special school place provision within the Borough so that excessive travelling could be avoided?

Response – Councillor Govindia agreed to look into the specific issues raised by the resident. He also commented that the Council has a good provision of special schools and of mainstream schools with attached specialist units. However, it was not possible to provide a special school in every neighbourhood that could deal with every special need.

Councillor Leonie Cooper said that the Opposition had been concerned about the impact of the centralisation of special education services.

## **2. Flytipping/Waste**

Question/Comment – There was persistent dumping of waste near to the Furzedown Project. The Council cleared the waste promptly, but what actions can the Council take to prevent dumping in the first place?

Response – Mr. Singham advised that in relation to enforcement action against people dumping waste, there was a need to obtain the correct level of evidence, usually photographic evidence or a witness was required. The Council had recently encouraged residents to come forward with information through the use of “wanted” posters which contained images of people dumping waste. Other measures taken by the Council include reducing the charges for the removal of bulky waste and raising awareness of the fines which can be imposed.

Question/Comment – Would the removal of public waste bins assist in reducing dumping?

Response – Mr. Singham acknowledged that public waste bins could attract household waste, but said that it was unproven whether removal would or would not assist in resolving the problem.

Question/Comment – Why does the Council not provide larger bins or advertise the daily collection?

Response – Mr. Singham advised that there was no daily collection of waste - waste was collected weekly. If residents are placing bags of domestic waste on the street on a daily basis they are flytipping. It was the responsibility of the residents to store their waste in or on their property until waste collection day. The Council had no plans to use larger bins as these would likely become a flytipping hotspot.

Question/Comment – Ms Ellis said that she had spoken to the Council and been advised that people from flats can put their rubbish out on a daily basis. She then asked whether waste storage was considered as part of the plans for new developments?

Response – Mr. Singham wanted to be clear that waste should not be left out on the street. The Council, as part of the planning process, checked that new developments have proper bin storage. The difficulty with storage tended to relate to older flats above shops.

Councillor Jones asked whether personal testimony against a flytipper would be sufficient evidence. She said that she was aware of who was flytipping outside the Furzedown Project and was prepared to testify to this. She also asked about night-time collections.

Mr. Singham said that the key to successful conviction were photographs and envelopes with the address on from the waste, along with witnesses prepared, if required, to testify in court.

Councillor Govindia confirmed that collections of flytipping/rubbish have always taken place during the day but that commercial premises have their own arrangements for waste removal and this may take place at night.

*(Post-meeting note: Prior to March 2012 a daily over night collection service was provided for flats above shops in town centres – time banding restrictions for commercial waste led to dramatic reductions in waste collected in town centres by the night-time service and these collections ceased in 2012)*

Question/Comment – Why were the waste bins removed from Moyser Road?

Response – Councillor Jones said that she had requested help in tackling the flytipping problem on Moyser Road and had been told that the bins were removed as part of the solution being offered by the Council in response to her request for help.

Councillor Thomas noted that there was a need to improve communication so that residents know where they stand in relation to waste disposal.

Question/Comment – The fox situation in the Borough is problematic and they spread rubbish. What is the Council doing to control the population?

Response – Councillor Cooper noted that there was also an issue with rats. She said that where fox populations were reduced through culling foxes reproduce. The key to reducing the fox population was not to feed them and to keep rubbish in a bin with a lid on.

Question/Comment – Has the Council considered the use of wheelie bins?

Response – Councillor Govindia confirmed that the Council has considered the use of wheelie bins, but refuse vehicles would need re-fitting to take the bins and flats would not have adequate storage room for them.

Question/Comment – Has the Council considered having a separate food waste collection?

Response – Councillor Osborn said that the Council has considered food waste collection but had decided against it, and he would like the option to be re-examined.

Councillor Jones said that with the declining recycling rate, offering food waste collection would help improve recycling levels.

Question/Comment – What are the arrangements for garden waste collection?

Response – Mr. Singham said that up to five bags of garden waste can be left out each week. Anything more than five bags would need to be paid for. Any items in excess of 25kg must also be paid for, along with any items that are too big for the bin.

### **3. Streets and Environment**

Question/Comment – Mr. Irwin asked members' views on piloting changes to streets environment, with regard to recent petitions he had co-ordinated for the Fishponds Road area of Tooting ward and in Kettering Street, which he felt would have improved the environment for residents. He said that the Council had decided to take no further action on each proposal despite support for the proposals and asked what residents were able to do to engage with the Council. He emphasised the need to trial some measures that could benefit the locality.

Response - Councillor Govindia said that petitions submitted to the Council would be investigated by officers and reported to committee for a final decision. Councillor Thomas said that there was a need to look at how the street environment could be transformed and referred to the possibility of funds being available for a cycle lane on Mitcham Lane. He also said that, along with his colleagues, he was interested in the possibility of establishing home zone areas. Councillor Jones told the meeting that a report on home zones was expected to be considered at the next Community Services OSC meeting.

Question/Comment – Mitcham Lane is currently an embarrassment and I would like to see it improved – I am pleased to hear that some funding is on the way – what encouragement can be given to attract new businesses in?

Response - Councillor Leonie Cooper said that a great deal had been done to improve the area and referred to Moyser Road as a good example of this. She confirmed that funding of £250,000 is available through the Mayor's Outer London Fund.

#### **4. 20mph Speed Limits/Traffic/Parking**

Question/Comment – Abbotsleigh Road has benefitted from a 20mph zone but what can be done about enforcing the limit. The potential for an accident in that road and Ullathorne Road is quite high due to inconsiderate parking on junctions. Photographic evidence could be submitted to highlight this.

Response – Mr. Lane confirmed that site visits to Abbotsleigh Road had not indicated that parked vehicles caused a significant problem or sightlines were affected. He stated that photographs taken by Council officers did not show parking issues within 15-20m of the road junction. He confirmed that enforcement of the speed limit is a police matter and that this issue could be reported through the safer neighbourhood team.

Question/Comment – Could officers look again at dangerous parking in Abbotsleigh Road – this is a particular problem between 5 and 7pm.

Response – Mr. Lane said that different residents in Abbotsleigh Road appeared to have different views on this issue but confirmed this could be done.

Question/Comment – Could better signage be provided to show more clearly the banned right turn from Mitcham Lane into Thrale Road.

Response – Mr. Lane undertook to speak with the resident afterwards.

Question/Comment – Mr. Taylor asked whether the proposal to close Dr Johnson Avenue in Bedford ward was part of a land swap deal that would lead to the introduction of charging for use of the car park.

Response – Mr. Lane undertook to confirm the details to the resident.

## **5. Social Services**

Question/Comment – A resident indicated that he had a letter of complaint regarding the Council's treatment of his mother and communications around this.

Response – Councillor Govindia undertook to look into the issues raised.

Question/Comment – A number of agencies are aware of a persistent and aggressive local street beggar – there has been a number of attempts to resolve this issue. My 14 year old daughter was approached recently by this individual. Social Services and the other relevant agencies are failing this individual – what can be done?

Response – Councillor Thomas confirmed that he is aware of this problem and undertook to take the matter up.

## **6. Refugees**

Question/Comment – What number of refugees will the Council accept and what resources will be made available for this.

Response – Councillor Govindia said that the Council is awaiting Government advice and information on the role and expectations of local authorities and that the Council is ready to play its part when these details are confirmed. During some further debate, Councillor Jones noted that some other authorities, including Kingston, had indicated they would receive 50 refugees and said that her view was that the Council should have acted similarly rather than waiting for central Government to issue advice and information.

## **CLOSE OF MEETING**

Councillor Govindia 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. He asked residents to make sure they left their contact details with officers where they had raised specific queries.

The meeting ended at 9.25 p.m.

Martin Newton (020 8871 6488)  
Rachel Williamson (020 8871 7857)