

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

GRAVENEY WARD **LET'S TALK MEETING**

Held at Franciscan Primary School, 221 Franciscan Road, SW17
on Tuesday, 1st March 2016

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 Gibbons and McDonald (Graveney Ward Members).

Council Officers

Martin Byrne – Area Housing Manager (Housing and Community Services Department)
Adama Fregiste – Neighbourhood Officer (Tooting Sector) (Community Safety Section, Administration Department)
Nigel Granger – Area Planning Group Leader (East) (Housing and Community Services Department)
Andy Hough – Head of Education Inclusion (Education and Social Services Department)
Maciej Zielinski – Engineer (Housing and Community Services Department)
Mike Singham – Waste Policy Manager (Housing and Community Services Department)
Gareth Jones – Committee Secretary (Administration Department)
Ozu Okere – Committee Secretary (Administration Department)

Residents

Approximately 15 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 Graveney Ward with which they had been involved, the Chairman invited questions and comments from residents.

ISSUES, RESPONSES AND ACTIONS

1. Location of Crossrail2

Issue – Concern expressed that Tooting Broadway Station, and not Balham Station, is being considered for the location of the new Crossrail station

despite the adverse impact it will have on residents of Tooting. On the other hand it will be more cost effective for it to be sited at Balham Station whilst still benefiting residents of Tooting.

Response – Most Tooting residents are in support of Crossrail2 station coming to Tooting. The Council supports this view as it will help the regeneration and improvements which are much needed in Tooting. Irrespective of where the Crossrail station is sited it would be equally disruptive for residents in the area.

Councillor Govindia added the final decision had not been made as the Crossrail consultation was still ongoing, the results would need to be assessed and a methodology would need further probity. Crossrail needs to come to Wandsworth to relieve pressure on the Northern Line and whether it is Balham or Tooting would depend on cost efficiencies and whether it would deliver wider regeneration of the area. He asked that the lady who had raised concerns should write to him so her comments could be fed back direct to Crossrail2.

2. Fly Posting/ Fly Tipping

Issue – Problem with flyposting over shops which have closed down or under development but calls to the Council to do something about it have not been successful in removing them. This is because the Council's response is that the properties are not theirs so there is nothing they can do about the flyposting.

How successful has the Council been in prosecuting flytippers and what are the figures for prosecutions? Fly tipping seemed to be getting worse particularly in Tooting. Both sides of Valnay Street are flytipped every day which the resident attributed to businesses on the main road, could CCTV be used to catch fly tippers? Why not provide free bulk waste collections as offered in Merton or skips on street as provided by Sutton Council.

Response – The Council does not have a service for removing flyposting materials because most of the flyposting in the Borough is on Transport for London (TfL) managed routes. As such, without insurance, the Council risks leaving itself open to prosecution for any damage to the properties when removing the posters. Councillor Osborn noted that flyposting is against the law and the Council's graffiti removal team should include flyposting in their portfolio of work.

Mike Singham explained that flytipping enforcement came under the Council's Highways Enforcement Team's remit and the Council is keen to prosecute whenever there is sufficient evidence. The figures for the number of prosecutions were not readily available. He added that the Council were quick to remove flytips. The cost of bulk item collections had been reduced. The Council did have one CCTV equipped van however, surveillance was not always welcome.

A resident mentioned that he had witnessed flytipping in Lessingham Avenue and had reported this to the Council and provided the van registration. Two

Council officers arrived while the van was still there and no action was taken. Councillor Govindia said he would look into this and then the resident added that this incident had occurred two years ago.

Mike Singham informed residents that they should report flytips either online via the Council's website or by calling customer services and, if they have evidence such as the vehicle registration, to contact the Highways Enforcement Team. Councillor Macdonald suggested that if residents let the Ward Councillors know the details they would pursue the matter on their behalf. Councillor Osborn also thought the problem had increased and he was in favour of offering a free "Spring clean", he suggested that the reasons could be that the ward was on the periphery of the borough and that the professional flytippers could be using the main routes and the side streets provided convenient dumping grounds..

Totterdown Street and the corner of Longmead Road was a flytip hotspot which tended to be domestic waste such as mattresses and furniture... Councillor Gibbons suggested that part of the problem was the high number of short term lets and cheap furniture, new tenants see items left on street and think that is the acceptable method of disposing of larger items of domestic waste, both landlords and tenants needed to be targeted and educated on the correct means of disposal.

Councillor Govindia added that he did not think providing skips was cost effective or the solution to the problem. Generally a retailer will deliver large household items and remove the old item that it is replacing. He informed residents that the details regarding prosecutions and neighbouring boroughs methods of dealing with bulk waste items would be added to the minutes of the meeting which would be circulated and available on the Council's website :-www.wandsworth.gov.uk/letstalk

(Action – Mike Singham)

(Post Meeting Note – There have been no fly-tip related prosecution results to date during 2015/16. However, the Council was significantly involved in a successful prosecution in relation to a major fly-tip on Tooting Common (see: http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/news/article/13079/tooting_common_flytippers_jailed_for_four_years). This isn't included in the figures because the prosecution was led by Kent Police. The number of fly-tip related prosecution results in the Borough during 2014/15 was 15, during 2013/14 there were 14 prosecution results and in 2012/13 there were 8 prosecution results.

Merton's website confirms that their residents can have up to 4 free bulky waste collections (of up to five items each year) provided that they are up to date with their Council tax. However, there are some (slightly confusing) charges if electrical items are included ("a minimum fee of £15 for any additional domestic fridge and freezer, a minimum of £10 for all other items, covering up to three additional items with £6 charged for the ninth item and each thereafter."). Also, if you have received a free collection and wish to arrange a further collection within a three-month period there will be a minimum fee of £25. Whilst the provision of free collections may help reduce people's inclination to fly-tip, the fact that "You may have to wait up to five

weeks between booking a collection and the collection taking place.” will have the opposite effect (in Wandsworth the maximum wait is 10 days and the average is substantially less).

It's also worth noting that the distinction between littering and fly-tipping offences isn't an entirely clear split- a small dumped item could potentially be regarded as either. This is relevant to the absence of prosecution results this year because, where possible, officers will increasingly issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) in preference to prosecution as that enables them to deal with a much greater number of offences. FPNs are for littering, so if the dumped item is suitably small, this is the action that would normally be taken. The Government has stated that it intends to consult on introducing FPNs for fly-tipping at the earliest opportunity.

There were also references in the meeting to free bulky waste collections and provision of free community skips, with mentions of Merton and Sutton Councils in this context. However neither of their websites indicate that they provide free bulky waste collections or community skips. Sutton's bulky waste collection charges are rather higher than Wandsworth's (£25 for up to 3 items). These may therefore be services that one or both used to provide but no longer do.

Authorities providing free bulky waste services are now in a small minority and Wandsworth's charges are low compared to most other London authorities. Free bulky waste collections and free community skips would both be likely to lead to higher net costs without tackling fly-tipping in a cost-effective manner as most other authorities with free bulky waste services suggest that this has not greatly reduced fly-tipping. People who fly-tip bulky items often do it to get rid of them there and then rather than simply to avoid a collection charge. We would lose significant income from people who would have otherwise paid for a collection. Additionally, free skips would be likely to attract additional waste that would not otherwise have been collected, incl. commercial waste from small businesses seeking free disposal. It can be difficult to balance capacity with demand- If skips fill up more quickly than they are emptied waste is likely to be dumped all around them. Free skips also tend to attract tatters looking for valuables who rummage through and often leave much of what was in the skip on the floor around it. The sites can become an eyesore & dumping at them can continue even after the skips have been removed.

Additionally, free bulky waste collections could attract re-usable bulky items away from Resco's re-use collection service which runs in parallel with our service and matches our collection charge- lowering the charge any further could jeopardise this arrangement. Community skips would also result in everything collected going for incineration with energy recovery.)

3. Hedges

Issue – Hedges obstructing pavements, the Council had previously said it would cut back the hedges and charge the owner, a resident advised that this was not the time of year to cut back hedges because of nesting birds.

Response – Councillor Govindia explained that it was the owner’s responsibility to maintain their hedges and if the problem was reported the Council would contact the owner. Councillor Osborn added that the presence of nesting birds had to be taken into consideration before cutting back hedges. The resident said he would submit photographic evidence of the overgrowing hedges and their locations.

(Post meeting Note – information on locations not yet received)

4. Affordable Housing

Issue – There is not enough affordable housing and rents were too high, public service workers could not afford to live in the area and this would lead to shortages of teachers and nurses. There should be rent controls - Berlin was given as an example where this works and the maximum rent was currently 980 euros per month for a flat in the central area and a resident handed out a map of Berlin with details of rents in various locations within the city. .

A resident spoke about her 24 year old daughter who had been living on her sofa for over six years because the Council had denied her Council accommodation.

Response – Councillor Osborn said the Labour party recognised the problem and that something ought to be done about the private rental market. He added that the Mayor was setting up a London wide lettings agency but there was a big difference of opinion between the political parties on tackling this problem Councillor MacDonald explained that they had tried to save the Tooting Constitutional Club but if it was lost to residential redevelopment it then it should contain more affordable housing, Also there should have been more affordable housing as part of the Broadway development at the junction of Tooting High Street and Trevelyan Road. Councillor Govindia explained that a viability assessment for the percentage of affordable housing was part of the planning process. The overall problem of affordable housing needed to be addressed at Government and Mayoral level.

As regards the personal issue about the daughter sleeping on the mother’s sofa, Councillor Govindia said she should discuss the matter with the Housing Manager at the end of the meeting.

(Post meeting Note; information was provided regarding the Council’s allocation policy and arrangements made for the daughter’s Housing Application to be re-assessed.)

5. Vagrants outside Tooting Library

Issue – What was being done regarding the two homeless persons living on the street outside of Tooting Library?

Response – Councillor Gibbons said everything possible had been tried by multiple agencies to help this couple, housing was available to them but they refused to move. They had been assessed and adjudged of being capable of making decisions for themselves and they wanted to sleep on the street and there was no law on vagrancy. Councillor Govindia added that they had also involved the Somali community and the local mosque to try and resolve this situation.

6. Traffic, Parking and 20 mph zones

Issue – The E2 controlled parking zone around Tooting Broadway was too big, it enabled permit holders in that zone from as far as Furzedown to park around the station to commute or shop. This made parking in Totterdown Street and other streets close to the station so difficult for the residents who lived there. It was suggested that a smaller sub zone be created around the station. There had been two previous petitions from Ashvale and Longmead Road residents asking for a smaller sub zone but they had not been successful.

Response – Councillor Gibbons acknowledged the problem and that the previous petitions had not been successful because of the criteria for determining these matters, basically not enough people had signed the petitions, he didn't think that the zone extended as far as Furzedown.

A resident added that Derinton Road had a 1 hour restriction during the week and from Friday evening over the weekend there was no parking space and asked if there could be "All Day" restrictions instead. Councillor Govindia suggested that the Ward Councillors push for a review of the E2 CPZ and for residents to write in to the Ward Councillors to trigger the review.

Issue – Concerns expressed about speeding traffic in Derinton Road and Lessingham Avenue but the resident had been told that in order for the Council to take action there had to be over 3,000 cars using the road per day. Also in Franciscan Road, where traffic calming measures were in place, vehicles still sped up and down the road. Concerns that it would need a fatality before anything was done.

Response – Councillor Osborn said that he favoured the creation of a 20mph zone. The resident disputed whether this would have any effect without traffic calming or enforcement, Councillor Osborn added that evidence and research had shown that 20mph zones do have an effect; he particularly favoured the speed warning signs that indicate the drivers speed. Councillor Govindia said that if the residents wanted a 20mph zone then they would get one, subject to statutory consultations. Councillor Macdonald said they were working on the petition for the 20 mph zone. Resident expressed concern that the apathy from transient short term let tenants would mean that not enough people would respond to the consultation to reach the required threshold to be able to bring in the 20 mph zone. Councillor Govindia confirmed that only 25% of those consulted will be enough to trigger the implementation of the 20 mph zone.

A resident asked the Council to equip residents with speed guns following the example of Wealdon Council.

Response – Councillor Govindia responded that enforcement was a police matter and he was not familiar with this initiative but would investigate further.

(Post meeting note - The MPS Safer Transport Team (based in Wandsworth) will be undertaking the following initiative:

- **Community Road Watch:** The initiative centres around educating drivers. Two speed cameras have been secured and will be delivered soon. PC & PCSO on the local TfL team have been trained. The intention is that a PC/PSCO will attend a location with community members. The registration number of cars caught speeding will be forwarded to a central unit and warning letters sent out. There will be no enforcement action. It is intended to undertake this activity once every two weeks. Community Road Watch is a London wide initiative and like activity will occur in other London Boroughs.
- Additional to this the Wandsworth Safer Transport Team will undertake traffic speeding enforcement action, when duties permit, in those areas where offending / risk are considered highest.)

In response to a question, Councillor Osborn said that whilst it was difficult to stop people using their cars there was a need to intervene at some stage by encouraging more people to join car clubs. He agreed that there was a 'canyon' effect in Tooting High Street because of the number of cars and tall buildings and asked that this should form part of the Council's planning policy. It was noted that Tooting High Street is a TfL controlled road and the Council deals with planning issues related to it.

Councillor Gibbons confirmed that Graveney is a low car use ward with 60% not owning cars. As such, he thought it would be hard those people who did not to use their cars. However, increasing the number of bus routes and improving the quality of the buses might increase the number of people using public transport.

7. Community Safety

Issue - A resident said his 16 year old daughter felt unsafe walking home from the tube station and asked how many officers currently made up the Safer Neighbourhood Team.

Response – Adama Fregiste explained that the SNT officers were no longer appointed to individual wards but covered a Sector comprising 7 wards and could be deployed wherever they were needed (numbers?). 1 Sergeant covers 2 wards with the assistance of a dedicated PC and PCSO. She added that she could provide a panic alarm for his daughter. Councillor Osborn added that Tooting's increasing night time economy, with increased numbers on the street did in some ways make it safer. He had been told that Tooting

Broadway along Mitcham Road was a problem area and will raise this at the next SNT meeting.

CLOSE OF MEETING

Councillor Govindia 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 9.10 p.m.

Gareth Jones (020 8871 7520)
Ozu Okere (020 8871 6035)