

## WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

### NIGHTINGALE WARD 'LET'S TALK' MEETING

held at St Mark's United Reformed Church, 53 Rowfant Road, SW17  
on Thursday 10th March 2016 at 7.30pm

#### **PRESENT:**

##### Council Members

Councillor Cook (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community Services) in the Chair; Councillors Field, Hart and Mrs McDermott (the Nightingale Ward Members); and Councillor Osborn (Leader of the Opposition).

##### Council officers

Frankie Belloli	Head of Executive and Committee Services (Administration Department)
Mike Bright	Head of Planning and Capital Development (Finance Department)
Martin Byrne	Area Housing Manager (Housing and Community Services Department)
Laura Campbell	Committee Secretary (Administration Department)
Nigel Granger	Planning East Area Team Manager (Housing and Community Services Department)
Steve Lane	Senior Parking Policy Officer (Housing and Community Services Department)
Joe O'Sullivan	Head of Inspection and Enforcement (Housing and Community Services Department)
Michael Singham	Waste Strategy Manager (Housing and Community Services Department)

##### Residents

Approximately 25 members of the public.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Councillor Cook was in the Chair as apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Govindia (Leader of the Council). He welcomed residents to the meeting, and the other Council Members and the officers present introduced themselves. The Chairman then invited questions and comments from residents present.

## **ISSUES, RESPONSES AND ACTIONS**

### **1. Parking on Pavements**

A resident complained about cars parking on the pavement which makes it difficult for pedestrians to pass, especially for disabled pedestrians. She referred to the parking bays on St. James's Drive towards Upper Tooting Park where the cars parked outside of the bay were making the pavement very narrow. She asked if the lines around the bays could be re-drawn, to make the bays clear.

Response – Mr Lane responded that the partial footway parking bays in St. James's Drive would be looked at and officers would arrange for the bays to be re-marked where required.

(Action: Mr Lane)

Another resident asked for clarification on what parking was permitted on the pavements. Due to damage to her vehicle when parking in Ravenslea Road, the resident had been parking her vehicle partially on the pavement for the past 28 years with no problems. However she had received a parking ticket the previous week and was not aware that she had committed an offence; she had previously received advice that had not implied this was an offence.

Response – Mr Lane reported that in some streets where the road was particularly narrow and the footway wide, parking bays would be marked partly on the footway. In most streets the bays would be fully contained on the road. It was noted that the pavement was for pedestrians and where the bay was on the carriageway, then residents must park fully on the carriageway. Officers undertook to look into this particular issue.

(Action: Mr Lane)

It was reported that a number of cars in Balham Park Road were parking outside properties but were projecting out onto the pavement. It was asked why the residents were not receiving a fine for this.

Response – Mr O'Sullivan referred to the difficulty on entering private property to put fines on the cars' windscreen. Highway enforcement officers would send letters when this type of parking was noted and then if it occurred again, then a fine would be sent. Officers would look into this situation reported on Balham Park Road.

(Action: Mr O'Sullivan)

### **2. Motorcycle Parking Bay**

The parking of motorcycles on pavements was referred to as they caused obstruction, and it was asked how residents could get a parking bay allocated for motorcycles.

Response – It was reported that motorcycles should not park on the pavement. In some areas, this might not cause a problem for pedestrians, so

unless officers received a complaint about motorcycles being parked on pavements, then they may not take enforcement action. Officers were prepared to look into the suggestion of providing a parking bay for motorcycles but this may be at a loss of a car parking bay which some people might not be happy with. It was suggested that if there were a number of motorcycle users living in the same street, they should organise a mini petition to send to the Council asking for a bay to be allocated for motorcycles, and this could then be looked at.

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs McDermott, Mr Lane reported that a motorcycle parking bay could normally accommodate up to six motorcycles.

### **3. 20 MPH Limits**

A resident asked what could be done to enforce motorists to keep to the 20 MPH limit. In particular he referred to Ramsden Road where some motorists were speeding at 50 MPH which was dangerous.

Response: Councillor Field responded that Ward Councillors had pressed the police in respect of this matter and the police needed man power in order to stop motorists speeding. Councillor Cook reported on a new TfL funded scheme called Community Road Watch, where police officers would work with safer neighbourhood teams and residents to monitor speeding. Those taking part in the scheme would not have enforcement powers but would take the registration details of anyone speeding and a letter would then be sent to say that they have been noticed speeding. This would also help identify if there was a particular area that needed focusing on in respect of speeding issues.

Councillor Field also commented that there was a borough policy to roll out 20 MPH where it could be implemented, following consultation, and residents had until mid May to register comments and concerns on the website as part of the consultation.

It was suggested that if one or two motorists were caught speeding then this should be publicised to help prevent others from speeding. Councillor Field noted that speeding was a topic discussed at safer neighbourhood meetings. Councillor Osborn noted that a cultural change was needed, as once one driver changed their speed then this would have a knock on effect on other drivers. This could start once there was a good programme of 20 MPH across the borough.

One resident commented that the 20 MPH limit was a good idea but it would not work unless drivers knew it existed. He referred to the small signs indicating the 20 MPH limit and noted that signs should be put up to notify drivers they were entering a 20 MPH zone. Another resident referred to signs outside a primary school that indicated there was a 30 MPH limit which could cause problems. Councillor Field noted that the particular area in question

already had 20 MPH limit and would come up for a review in November where all of these comments would be taken into account.

#### **4. Crossrail 2**

One resident referred to Crossrail 2, noting that the Council had said it was important for TfL to take socio and environmental issues into account when looking at the station's location. She asked about the timetable of when the decision would be made about the location.

Response: Councillor Cook noted that the location of the station was a huge decision and a lot of work was involved in this. Due to the upcoming Mayoral elections, it was probable that a decision would not be made until after the elections. Councillor Cook noted that the view was mainly across the borough that the station should be located in Tooting. He commented that the reason the Council preferred Tooting was due to the regeneration opportunities in that area. TfL were actively looking at Tooting as well as Balham in respect of the station's location.

As a representation of the Save Our Balham group, which was set up by a group of local residents, the resident asked how she could be involved in the community liaison groups set up by TfL. Councillor Field responded that the resident should liaise directly with TfL in respect of that and to give her views to TfL.

Concerns were expressed over the consultation, as it was reported that some people had been unaware of the plans. Councillor Cook noted that he would make sure Council officers were aware of the residents' views and would give the contact details for the relevant TfL representative, Gary Webb, for residents to send their views to. (Email contact [crossrail2@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:crossrail2@tfl.gov.uk))

Councillor Hart noted that the Councillors were here to listen to the residents' views and asked those present whether they preferred the Crossrail 2 station to be at Balham or Tooting. After a show of hands, the response was mixed (9 expressed Balham and 8 for Tooting). Councillor Osborn noted that a similar poll was taken at the previous Let's Talk meeting in Graveney and the majority of those residents present at that meeting expressed a wish for Tooting.

In response to a question on the cost to Balham residents through an increase to the Council Tax if the Crossrail 2 station was situated at Balham, Councillor Cook commented that detailed discussions have not yet been had and had not been decided; various funding mechanisms were being considered.

#### **5. Crowding at Balham Tube Station**

Concerns were expressed over crowding at Balham Tube Station, and residents were unable to get onto the platform in the morning due to the amount of people.

Response: Councillor Mrs McDermott noted that this was another reason why Crossrail 2 station should be situated at Tooting, because a Balham interchange would aggravate this problem, creating a three way junction at Balham with the Tube and rail stations. Councillor Cook noted that the Council and Crossrail 2 team were aware of the problem, and the Council was doing everything it could about this situation. The busiest sections on the tube network were on the northern line and during the morning peak northbound the busiest section was between Clapham North and Stockwell.

## **6. Flooding/Blocked Gullies**

A resident referred to the number of places where there was flooding due to blocked gullies and asked if they were cleared.

Response: Councillor Field responded that the Council was working on this issue. He noted that if residents noticed any issues they should notify the Ward Councillors to look into. Councillor Mrs McDermott also noted that some of the roads in question were the responsibility of TfL. The roads under the responsibility of the Council were cleaned each day by a gulley machine. It was noted that some gullies were blocked by cement from building works, which caused problems and cost money to repair and unblock.

Councillor Osborn commented that he shared the residents' views in respect of the environmental issues, as surface flooding occurred due to paving over ground and this needed to be looked at to see how to regulate paving over of areas in the future to prevent surface flooding.

## **7. Litter**

Concerns were expressed over the amount of litter on Chestnut Grove.

Response: Officers noted that there was a search facility on the Council's website to let residents know when streets were scheduled to be cleaned. The pavements and roads should be litter free following the cleaning; if they were not, residents were encouraged to report this using the form available online. The Council's contractor should then address the problem by the end of the next day.

Councillor Hart questioned whether an analysis had been done to see if the litter was a result from children attending nearby schools or from people travelling to and from the tube station.

In response to a question whether bins could be provided, it was reported that bins were provided in the busy Town Centre areas. Councillor Cook noted that the provision of litter bins was not always the solution. There was also the problem of bins sometimes being used for fly tipping.

## **8. Children's Services**

A resident referred to press coverage of the Ofsted Inspection of children's services at the Council which had concluded that the services were "inadequate". She summarised the deficiencies highlighted in the report, including the risks to children as a result of placements in bed and breakfast accommodation and inadequate visits and monitoring. She asked whether staff had left the Council as a result of the inspectors' findings and queried the purpose of the £0.5m additional resources identified by the Council to secure the necessary improvements. The resident challenged the Council to be "open and transparent" about the position as they had promised, and she also asked Councillor Osborn about the response of the Tooting MP, Sadiq Khan.

Response: Councillor Cook confirmed that Members and staff at the Council had been shocked and humbled by the inspectors' findings which were fully accepted; the Council was determined to focus immediately on the shortcomings and put them right. He underlined that there had been no evidence of any child having suffered harm as a result of the Council deficiencies, but he acknowledged that the problems highlighted by the report were serious. Councillor Cook confirmed his understanding that 8 staff in the relevant services had left the Council voluntarily following publication of the inspection report. He explained that the report had not identified any issue with the level of resources allocated by the Council, but rather a number of management and operational failings; the Council had invested a £0.5m to restructure the management arrangements immediately so as to provide improved oversight and a firm framework for delivering the improvement plan effectively. He knew that the Council's lead Member for children's services, Councillor Kathy Tracey, its Director of Children's Services, Dawn Warwick, and the Chief Executive, Paul Martin, were all committed to achieving the required improvements and he was convinced they were the right people to lead the authority's response.

Councillor Osborn reported that Sadiq Khan MP had commented on the inspection findings, but he was, of course, not responsible for the services; the Labour Opposition Members at the Council were dealing with the political response. Councillor Osborn confirmed that the report had not found any general problem with the staff working in children's services, but rather had criticised the management culture, for which the Labour Group held the political leadership of the Council accountable. The Opposition were being robust about this, but were also conscious that services for vulnerable children should not become a "political football". Councillor Osborn was therefore determined to assist in finding positive solutions to the issues raised by the inspectors and ensure that the vulnerable children relying on the Council's services, faced no further risks to their welfare.

While confirming full acceptance of the inspection findings, Councillor Mrs McDermott pointed to the fact that the inspection result was, to some extent, due to Ofsted's new inspection regime and thresholds. She supported

Ofsted's decision to introduce more rigorous checks and set a higher bar for children's services, but this was leading to a downturn in many inspection scores and ratings across the country.

## **9. Planning**

A resident referred to a recent letter from the Wandsworth Society to the Prime Minister concerning an allegation that the Council was not following its own planning policies. He referred to a recent planning application for a private nursery on Wandsworth Common which had been opposed by 70 residents and amenity groups, yet had been approved. He alleged a senior planner had given incorrect advice to the Planning Applications Committee in respect of this application. He asked whether there was an equivalent of Ofsted in the planning field so that residents could seek a review of planning decisions.

Response: Councillor Mrs McDermott (Chairman of the Planning Applications Committee) reported that the Council had received a preliminary notice of judicial review of its handling of the application cited, so there would be limits to what could be discussed in this public meeting. She advised that the Council's planning decisions were subject to review by the Planning Inspectorate, the Local Government Ombudsman and the courts. Nigel Granger, Planning East Area Team Manager, explained that the Council assessed all planning applications against a framework of adopted planning policies and plans; there were always judgements to be made about the merits and context of individual applications.

Councillor Mrs McDermott underlined that the Planning Applications Committee always considered representations made about planning applications, including those submitted even in the hours before a meeting of the Committee. She underlined that Members would take objections into account, but a decision on a planning application was not a plebiscite of local residents' opinions; rather the councillors were under a duty to determine an application by reference to material planning considerations, an exercise which was not a science but often involved balancing different arguments and factors carefully.

## **10. RMOs**

A question was raised about the rules relating to the membership of Resident Management Organisation committees, in particular whether this was limited to Council tenants and leaseholders.

Response: Councillor Cook suggested that this be taken up after the meeting.  
(Action: Mr Byrne)

## **11. Affordable Housing**

A resident asked about the Council's efforts to secure more affordable housing and achieve mixed communities through its planning and development policies and decisions.

Response: Councillor Mrs McDermott advised that this often depended on the particular context of individual developments and the practicalities of what could be achieved on those sites; she could provide details of the relevant policies and percentages of affordable housing sought by the Council. Councillor Cook underlined that this was a particular challenge in London given housing shortages and prices. He noted that Wandsworth's record of building affordable housing was amongst the best of any London borough. Councillor Osborn acknowledged the challenges, but also underlined that the Labour Group on the Council was keen to increase the proportion of affordable housing secured via development sites.

## **12. Footbridge over Railway**

Councillor Mrs McDermott responded to a query about the footbridge by confirming that the matter was due to be discussed with the transport operators at the Passenger Transport Liaison Group on the following Monday. 527 people had signed a petition and the Council was keeping up the pressure to find a solution.

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## **CLOSE OF MEETING**

Councillor Cook thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.00pm

Frankie Belloli/Laura Campbell (020 8871 6005/7032)