

Meeting notes – 6.15pm – 9.00pm
13th June 2013
Trinity Methodist Church, Bramley

PRE MEETING 6.15pm – 7.00pm

1.0 Introductions

- 1.1 Cllr Gruen welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the normal forum business would be conducted during the pre meeting (6.15pm -7pm) then the Welfare changes meeting will run from 7pm – 9pm.

Apologies were noted for E & A Rayworth, Roland Cross and Inspector Nathan Frankin

2.0 Minutes and matters arising

- 2.1 The minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

3.0 PACT Update – Sergeant Mark Czternastek

- 3.1 Crime priority figures for between 29th March 2013 to 12th June 2013. (The crimes reported this period are compared with the same period last year).

- House burglary – reduction of two offences, from 23 to 21
- Theft from vehicle – up 22, from 31 to 53
- Theft of vehicle / take without consent – up 4, from 8 to 12
- Robbery – reduction of one offence, from 2 to 1
- Damage – reduction of 8 offences, from 66 to 58

Burglary is when someone enters a property as an unwanted guest. Robbery is when fear and force is used to gain entry.

- 3.2 Operational Optimal continues to be a key focus for the team. As there has been an increase in vehicle crime in the area the NPT are now adopting the Optimal principles to tackle the rise.
- 3.3 Several offenders have recently been recalled to prison in the area for breaching their release license conditions. This is a result of the NPT's checking their conditions, checking up on them and working closely with the probation service. A prolific offender from the area has been charged with house burglary offences and is now remanded in prison awaiting trial.
- 3.4 If residents want to become a Police Support Volunteer, please contact the NPT via www.westyorkshire.police.uk/north-west-leeds, calling 0113 2414999 or speaking to a member of the NPT.
- 3.5 'It only takes a minute' campaign is currently running to remind residents to keep doors and windows locked even when they are at home. For further information regarding a home security assessment please contact a member of the NPT.
- 3.6 PCSO's are working with LCC officers to issues tickets for dog fouling. The resident would like to know how many tickets have been issued. **MC**
- 3.7 A resident asked whether there have been any distraction thefts at cash machines in the area. There have been no reported distraction thefts but the skimming of cards is a problem. Residents were reminded to put their hand over the key pad when entering their details and to make sure nobody is stood right behind them at the machine.
- 3.8 A resident complained about the lack of information released to the community to offer reassurance after the abduction of a child in the area. MC acknowledged the Police do not always report back to the community on incidents that have happened, whether they are good or bad. SM **MC**

will take back the comments to Inspector Franklin.

4.0 Recycling - Rachel Charlton

- 4.1 Forum members completed an evaluation form to see what information they had retained about recycling since RC last visit to the forum in January. RC will provide a report of her findings to the next meeting. **RC**

5.0 Housing forum

- 5.1 Bev from Moorside TARA feed back that she is due to meet with the Community Safety Officers to talk through possible solutions to secure the back of Ganners Mount and Ganners Lane.

- 5.2 Kevin reported overgrown vegetation on St Catherine's Crescents. ZT to forward on to WNW Homes. **ZT**

6.0 Election of Chair and Co-optees

- 6.1 Two nominations for Co-optees were received. K Smales and K Ritchie were elected.

WELFARE CHANGES MEETING – 7.00PM - 9.00PM

7.0 Introductions

- 7.1 John Battle welcomed everyone to the Welfare changes meeting and introduced the Partners who were supporting the meeting. Attending were representatives from West Leeds Debt forum, Leeds and Bramley Credit Unions, Illegal Money Lending Team, WNW Homes, Community Safety, West Yorkshire Trading Standards, BARCA and Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service.

- 7.2 JB gave a brief introduction to why there is a need to hold such an event in Bramley and then introduced the performance - 'It's only a few quid' by Shontal.

- 7.3 Shontel then presented their performance which was well received as a vehicle for getting across the message on money lending scandals very effectively

8.0 Welfare Changes – Diane Gill

- 8.1 Diane Gill talked through the impact of welfare changes. The main points were:

Under Occupation

- In Leeds the under occupancy changes have affected 7,173 ALMO and 1,766 housing associations tenants. Of those, 361 tenants are affected in Bramley & Stanningley.
- Average weekly loss for Council Tenants is £10 if 1 bedroom or £19 if more than 1 bedroom
- Initial indications are that rent arrears are increasing as a result of the new rule.
- ALMO's have undertaken a review of the rent arrears policy and procedures in light of the new rule

Council Tax Support

- New scheme sees a 19% reduction for working age customers. Some groups are protected. 34,000 claimants affected average loss £2.50 pw (£130 annually)
- Additional £4.4 million to be paid in Council Tax
- In Bramley & Stanningley there are 1335 customers to pay the additional 19% to pay

Benefit Cap

Housing benefit will be capped at the level of the average working family income after tax which is £500 a week for families/lone parents and £350 for single people.

- Disability benefit is exempted
- Will go live in Leeds in August 2013
- Approx 450 households will be affected in Leeds with Children. 24 families will be affected in Bramley & Stanningley

Local Welfare Support scheme

Social fund scheme transferred to councils

- Non cash Scheme – provision of goods for basic household needs and food in an emergency situation.
- Access to the scheme via a dedicated LCC number
- Support workers / advice agencies providing assistance to clients in accessing the scheme.
- Does not replace any other initiatives already being undertaken across the city

Universal Credit

Simply the benefits system by bringing together a range of working age benefits in to a single payment.

- Working age only
- IS, JSA, ESA, HB and Tax Credits form a single Universal credit
- Paid monthly in arrears
- Housing costs element paid directly to tenants
- Application to be made online

9.0 Leeds Credit Union – Kielly Harrower

9.1 Kielly explained she was attending as Chris Smyth had pasted on his apologies.

9.2 Leeds City Credit Union is a financial cooperative that provides affordable financial services to anyone who lives or works in Leeds and the Board of directors are volunteers.

9.3 The Leeds Credit Union have done a lot of work around the benefit changes and are offering savings plans and other accounts to help members save and manage their money. They offer pre paid credit cards, a bill paying account, a Christmas club account and loans from £250 - £15,000. Interest on a £500 loan would be approx £45.

9.4 The Cooperative Electrical, part of the The Co-operative Group, are in Partnership with the Credit Unions to offer white goods at the interest rates of the Credit Union.

9.5 Bramley Credit Union operates in Bramley and have collection point on a Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday.

10.0 Questions and Answer Session

10.1 Cllr Gruen introduced the panel - David Tooley - WNW Homes, Diane Gill – Leeds Revenue and Benefits Service and Kielly Harrower – Leeds Credit Union. She explained that partners from the floor would be welcome to contribute to the discussion.

10.2 Q: What help is available to residents who do not have access to a computer who need to apply for Universal Credit?

A: DG – LCC are aware the problem is not just about residents who do not have access to a computer but also the skills needed to use one. This is a huge problem in the Bramley area. LCC are working with libraries and One Stop Centres to help more people access the internet.

Jan Cleverly – Financial Inclusion Officer, WNW Homes – Vic Berry is part of the 'Get IT together Leeds' which offers IT support to communities and train up volunteers in IT skills to then cascade their knowledge. Cow Close Community Centre (Farnley & Wortley ward) provide internet access and run a job club. LCC are looking to roll this model out in other Wards.

10.3 A general discussion took place about the welfare changes. The main points were;

- The benefits cap is based on the rents in London. More work is needed to tackle low paying employers and high charging landlords.
- A digital inclusion report has been produced which stated that 8 million people in the UK are not on line, and half of those are in social housing.
- There is 8% unemployment nationally and 16% in Bramley.
- JB wants to develop a Leeds/Bramley credit union model to open a social enterprise bank in Bramley that will offer lower rates of credit so people do not have to use the payday loan shops.
- WNW Homes rent officers offer free debt advice/support to tenants
- WNW Homes visited all residents who were affected by the bedroom tax. There is still a problem engaging with residents who are facing these problems.
- Scams and frauds are a real problem in the area. Cllr Taggart would like it to be added as a future agenda item.

ZT

11.0 Next Meeting

11.1 Thursday 8th August 2013, 7.00pm – 8.30pm, Eric Atkinson Centre.