

Minutes of Meeting 26th September 2013
Eric Atkinson Centre, Wellington Gardens

Chair: Cllr Caroline Gruen

1 Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 Cllr Gruen welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from P Rayworth, Roger Cliff, Marion Housman, Jeffery Houseman, Barbara Miller, Terence Knapton and Helen Garrand.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 Minutes were approved with one amendment - 6.8 - change MM to MW

3 Police Update

- 3.1 Acting Sergeant Mark Turner attended on behalf of Inspector Williamson.
Crime figures 1st July - 31 August:
Burglary -down 7.7% compared with last year
Theft from motor vehicle - down 31%
Theft of motor vehicle - up from 1 to 2
Robbery - same as last year at 1
Criminal damage - down 3.4% at 28 incidents
- 3.2 Cllr Gruen congratulated the police on the continued reduction in burglaries. As reported in the Yorkshire Evening Post, the Area Committee has complained to Channel 4 about a documentary they aired on the work of the Leeds burglary squad. The programme repeated the false claim that Bramley has the highest burglary rates in the country. Ward Members have received a lot of calls from concerned residents and are keen to put the record straight.
- 3.3 Acting Sergeant Turner told the forum to be extra vigilant now the nights are drawing in. Historically, this time of year sees a peak in burglaries, particularly 'sneak ins' through unlocked doors and windows. Please follow this advice:
Light up - put on a light if you're going out, timer switches are very useful
Lock up - lock doors and windows even if you're in. 30-40% burglaries could be prevented
Be secure - don't leave valuables on show, don't put keys or bags near the door.
- 3.3 Questions from the floor:
Q - Why has the police desk at Pudsey station closed?
A - Due to funding cuts, the force has had to make savings. Following a consultation, it was decided that Pudsey and some other front desks would close. There are many ways to contact the police; always 999 in an emergency or if you see a crime in progress, 101 for non-emergencies, email via the West Yorkshire Police website or surgeries across the city.
- 4 Leeds Let's Get Active**
- 4.1 Sam Coupland from the council's Sport and Active Lifestyle Team attended to advertise 'Leeds Let's Get Active', a new initiative offering free access to leisure centres at certain times. It is aimed at encouraging those who don't currently exercise to give it a go, but is open to all.
- 4.2 Bramley Baths is opening its gym for a free hour 3-4pm Monday to Friday. Armley Leisure Centre has a free hour of swimming and free hour at the gym seven days a week, times vary. Pudsey is offering a free hours swim three days a week and free access to the gym four days a week. Call 3950001 or visit www.leedsletsgetactive.co.uk.
- 4.3 The best way to sign up is online, and you can go to your local library for help with this. Bramley Baths have application forms you can post off but aren't able to sign people up instantly. To access the gym you need to book an induction which will also be free of charge.

- 4.4 Free walking clubs, beginners running clubs and family activities are offered under the Leeds Let's Get Active programme. These will be delivered in ten week blocks and locations change throughout the year, call the number above or visit the website for more details.
- 4.5 Cllr Gruen thanked Sam for attending and reassured forum members that Bramley Baths were being paid for participating in the scheme.

5 **Narinder Matharu- Environment Locality Team**

- 5.1 Narinder is the senior Environmental Enforcement Officer for the Bramley area. The main calls for service are overgrown vegetation, dog fouling, fly tipping and waste in gardens. Referrals come through the call centre, via councillors or during routine patrols. There are currently 33 open cases in this area.
- 5.2 Action can be taken in various ways. If the complaint is about a council property, West North West Homes will be asked to deal with their tenant directly. If not, the Environmental Enforcement Officer will contact the property owner and give them 14 days to resolve the issue before taking formal action which could result in a fine. On the spot fines can be issued for dog fouling and littering.
- 5.3 Questions from the floor:
Q: The former petrol station on Broad Lane and the old Cardigan Pub site need cleaning up.
A: These sites cause ongoing problems, Cllr Gruen to ask officers to write to the owners. CG

6 **Forestry**

- 6.1 Glen Gerner, Parks & Countryside's Natural Environment Manager attended at the request of the Chair to outline the Forestry Service and its response to common complaints made to Ward Members.
- 6.2 The service carries out work on trees across council owned land. There are 3500 acres of woodland plus thousands of trees on roads and greenspace. The service has a strict policy on how it maintains trees and responds to calls for service. The policy is applied evenly to avoid any possible negligence claims. Any tree reported via Highways or the call centre is inspected. The council has an obligation to maintain trees so they don't offer an unreasonable risk to the public. Highways inspectors routinely check trees that influence the highway.
- 6.3 The assessment categorises the tree according to risk:
1: Emergency - Presenting imminent danger to people or property. It is given immediate attention to mitigate the risk
2: Urgent - If the tree is at risk of failure within a month, work is carried out within 7 days
3: a) Developing hazard - Failure is not imminent, work usually completed within 3 months
b) Slowly developing risk - Work carried out within twelve months
4: No unreasonable risk - No action taken
- 6.4 Complaints about shade, lack of TV or satellite reception, sap or animals fall under category 4 and no action is taken.
- 6.5 Cllr Gruen explained that many of her constituents have complaints about category four trees and are frustrated when no action is taken. Often the issue is so serious that it affects their day to day life, for example, shade that makes the house cold and dark or biting insects.
- 6.6 Glenn responded that there are hundreds of category four complaints, and the council does not have the budget to take action. The policy must be applied evenly, so category 1-3 are programmed in. There is no flexibility within the budget or policy to address category 4 complaints, although there is a modest budget to undertake this works for Housing Leeds tenants who are deemed vulnerable.
- 6.7 Questions from the floor:
Q: Can I report a tree in a private garden that looks likely to fall onto houses.
A: Yes, we will inspect it.
- 6.8 Q: What is the minimum distance a tree should be planted next to a property?
A: There is no minimum, risk of subsidence depends on the soil. Any tree damaging drains or property would be dealt with under the policy.

- 6.9 Q: If a tree is blocking a street light or sight line at a junction would action be taken? A tree by the Globe Pub in Bramley is causing a problem.
A: Yes if it is impacting public safety. SEC manage all streetlights in Leeds and have a contract with the Forestry department to cut back trees blocking street lights.
- 6.10 Q: A tree planted on council land without permission is blocking light to a property, can it be felled?
A: Even if it was planted without permission, the council is still responsible and the tree would be assessed according to the policy. If shade were the only problem no action would be taken.
- 6.11 Cllr Hanley commented on the Planning requirement to plant more trees, and felt that funds should be used elsewhere. Glenn Gerner explained the multiple benefits trees bring, and added Leeds has less than the recommended tree cover.
- 6.12 Cllr Gruen expressed frustration on behalf of constituents that there is no flexibility over category 4 trees and Glenn to feed this back to Parks & Countryside senior management. Further discussions with Ward Members will be held and reported back to the forum. GG

7 **Parks Service Update**

- 7.1 Paul Robinson, Technical Officer with Parks & Countryside attended to update the forum on recent improvements to local parks.
- 7.2 There has been £275,000 capital investment in the four Bramley and Stanningley parks over the last two years. Large scale improvements to Bramley Park were completed last year, and the playgrounds at Bramley Falls Park and Stanningley Park had items of new equipment. Work to improve Rodley Park starts this autumn. Ward Members have also invested funding to employ an additional gardener who covers 3 parks in the ward (Rodley, Bramley Falls & Stanningley Park) to improve the maintenance and visitor experience.
- 7.3 The Parks and Countryside's budget covers general management and maintenance of Council owned parks, greenspaces, woodlands, cemeteries, sports pitches etc... across the city .

External funding is sourced for capital improvements, predominately from S106 developer contributions and matched wherever possible from sources such as Landfill tax grants, Lottery awards, Sport England, Football Foundation, Area Committee etc...

- 7.4 Questions from the floor:
Q: Young people would like a skate park in the area.
A: Generally Skate parks cost between £100,000 - £200,000. As you can appreciate this facility would have used the majority of the recent capital investment. However if there evidence of community desire for such a facility this can be investigated as and when funding becomes available.
- 7.5 Q: A track on Bramley Falls Park used by dog walkers is very muddy, could it be surfaced?
A: Will look into it but there is not a lot of revenue funding for new paths. There is a rolling programme for looking at desire lines across parks.
- 7.6 Q: There needs to be more seats on Stanningley Park.
A: Will inspect and speak to local Councillors. PR
- 7.7 John Preston from TCV at Hollybush explained how community groups in other areas had applied for Community First funding for small improvements to parks that the TCV supported.
- 7.8 Cllr Gruen announced the new War Memorial will be located in Bramley Park, and Parks & Countryside have agreed to maintain it.

8 **Area Committee Update**

- 8.1 Kevin Ritchie presented a short report on the last Inner West Area Committee meeting:
2011 Census - The census information is available, and officers are reviewing local changes.
Welfare Reform - The Area Committee were updated on current initiatives to mitigate the effect of the welfare reform changes. Ward Members have prioritised youth unemployment.

Children's Services - There is pressure on school places across Leeds, including Bramley and officers are investigating where additional capacity could be found. It was noted that the Government requires all new build schools to be academies or free schools.

Youth Activities Fund - The Committee funded summer holiday activities including nature trails and free swim sessions at Bramley Baths. Funding is still available for out of school activities to be spent in consultation with young people.

9 **Any other business**

- 9.1 A forum member queried recent consultation about installing gates around Ganners Mount. Ward Members will look at the feedback carefully before making a decision whether to fund it.
- 9.2 John Preston advised that the cafe at Hollybush on Broad Lane is open 10.30 - 2.30, do visit although parking is restricted to those with mobility problems. New woodland skills courses are running for people claiming out of work benefits, please refer anyone who might be interested.
- 9.3 Bradford Police ran a summer camp for young people, is anything similar happening here? KS
- 9.4 St Vincent de Paul offer second hand furniture to people in need. Members of the forum are asked to refer anyone who needs help. The group also offers disadvantaged young people and their families holidays in a static caravan, or summer camps for the older age group. This summer there were no referrals from Bramley. KS to publicise to schools and family support workers. KS
- 10 **Date and time of next meeting**
Thursday 28th November, 7pm Eric Atkinson Centre, Wellington Gardens, Bramley.