

Queens Park Community Zoom

Wednesday May 6th

Present: Peter Williams – Resident St James Street, Sgt Mark Redbourne Sussex Police, Gaza Westfall Resident, Adrian Hart – Amex Area Forum, Cllr Amanda Evans, BMJ – resident, Karl Boardman resident, Cal Chester TDC, Simon Bannister BHCC, Maribel – Resident Darwell Court Residents Group, Vernon – LGBT Switchboard and resident.

1. Police update

Issues raised at the last meeting include street drinking, drug misuse and begging as well as concern around a squat at the former William Hill site. Issues raised since then include intimidating behaviour around Darwell Court and graffiti and party house lock down breaches. At the last meeting there was a general feeling that the local police activity had all been directed to the seafront at the expense of St James Street.

Sgt Mark Redbourne: Yes – resources have been impacted by the Covid-19 work as police have been directed to focus on the Lockdown legislation, but the police have been working as best they can locally to tackle issues. Re the squats, police action at the William Hill property on a related issue has been undertaken. If anyone has any concerns about any squats in the area, the police are keen to hear and should be contacted. Police are additionally concerned about activities around New Steine Gardens and Lower Rock Gardens and intend to focus some attention in this area.

Some residents felt that the police presence had improved over the last two weeks, however others still felt that it was not adequate given local issues.

Q – there is a hotspot around Dorset Gardens which needs more attention – could CCTV posters be put up to deter problem activities?

A – yes could be helpful. The Police have a mobile CCTV unit – they are looking to deploy this in Dorset or New Steine Gardens and are building a case for this resource. They are also carrying out covert activities in the area to try to address offenders coming into the area to deal drugs or other activities.

Comment – recent Argus coverage has suggested that breaches of lockdown at rental properties is taking place. Whilst this is important, the tone of the reporting in the Argus was possibly divisive as there seemed very poor levels of evidence behind the reports, and there is worry that legitimate activity and businesses may be being demonised by this.

Comment – Darwell Court. The residents group are worried about antisocial activities around the block – people hanging around in an intimidating way and street fouling around the entrance. They would like CCTV and some planters to reduce these issues. They are thinking about the police Proceeds of Crime Fund to help support this.

Q – can we have contact details for the local team?

A – Yes. Mark will send the details to Simon for circulation locally.

Q – Do the police patrol late at night? Can the policing hours be extended?

A. The Prevention Team work up until midnight, and after this time the response team respond to issues. Although some later work is undertaken on Thursdays and at weekends it is not happening at the moment due to the Covid redeployment. Mark will raise this issue of changing hours but feel that

this outcome is unlikely as it would impact on current work contracts and shift patterns across the city and may not be justified in the context of wider poicing.

Q. Can the council do anything to help late night security? Can a private security company be contracted?

- A. (Simon) This is potentially something which be supported by a Business Improvement District project. There is some work ongoing with the Simon will check on the progress of this work.
- Comment: Some level of street security has been provided by the Community Safety Forum Rainbow Hub however insurance was a problem for this.
- This is also something which could be addressed under the Neighbourhood Action Plan as it develops.

Q. How it is that groups of drinkers and beggars are tolerated along St James Street at the same time as Police are taking action against individuals sitting on the beach?

A; People begging is something which the police will deal with, although homelessness in itself is not necessarily a police issue and is a complex joint agency issue.

Simon – to explore this further we need input from Community Safety and street services. Simon will look to inviting them next time.

2. Street changes for social distancing

Should we look at changes to create more space for walking and cycling so that people are better able to social distance whilst out on exercise or shopping?

A suggestion was made that St James street close to traffic in the evenings to allow restaurants to move tables into the street and give space for distance dining to help local businesses safely re-open.

Some concern was expressed around disturbance for residents and antisocial behaviour, however, it was seen as a generally helpful move to help prioritise people and businesses over cars and worth exploring

Requests were made to address street clutter – the amount of bins especially around Morrisons is a problem – buses, beggars, waiting shoppers, passers-by make social distancing impossible at this point and if the bins could be moved, this would ease things a bit.

Suggestions and comments included:

- Could the bus stop be moved?
- Could the bins be moved?
- “a horrendous area that really needs looking at regardless of social distancing”
- Could the area be pedestrianised, re-route buses permanently to further up St James St?

The council have been carrying out some research into options for pedestrianisation following a petition to council earlier in the year. Simon will follow this up and see where this is now.

3. Fibre capacity for businesses

Catherine reported that Openzone don't have enough slots in their cabinets to provide fibre to meet demand. Demand is likely to increase with more home working. The fibre capacity itself isn't a problem, but availability of slots in the cabinets is limiting. We need additional cabinets to meet

current and future capacity. MP Lloyd Russell-Moyle was looking into this but nothing has been heard for a while.

Cllr Evans offered to take this forward and Catherine will email her. She will also include issues around the business rates team and lack of response and support which Cllr Evans will also investigate

4. Councillor update

Most of the activities and issues which Cllr Evans has been looking at– drug dealing especially – have already been covered. Any other questions?

No other questions for councillors at this point.

5. Any other business

Amex Area Forum Healthy Neighbourhoods Fund: Can the Forum spend its HNF grant on [Pulse Oximeters](#). These are small devices which give out a reading of pulse and oxygen level. An aspect of Covid is that people can develop mild symptoms and not realise that their oxygen levels are compromised and don't realise how serious the situation is. It would be helpful to have pulse oximeters in the community as a covid response and also as a general 'life saver'

The Trust for Developing Communities administer the Healthy Neighbourhood Fund and Cal will take this forward with Adrian/Amex Area Forum to see if this would be a suitable use of the current HNF award.

Could future meetings take place outside in socially distanced groups rather than online?

Comments:

This would be a great thing to do in the future, but for now would run counter to the lockdown legislation which restricts social gatherings. This may change on Sunday but for now the 'stay home – save lives' message is key.

Also some residents are on 12 week lockdown and would be excluded from this sort of meeting.

CommunitySupport newsletter/Community Transport – Really good but the delivery service by community transport has a £6 delivery charge which is expensive and not clearly advertised. The service is billed as a covid-19 response and this sum is unexpected and quite steep.

Simon will pass these concerns on to the food cell which is co-ordinating the Covid-19 response on this.

Next meeting: We will have nother meeting in two weeks on Wednesday 20th. Simon will arrange.