

Wembley Central & Alperton Residents' Association

Minutes of the first public meeting Monday 19 March 2018

Held 7-9pm in the School Hall, Barham Primary School, Danethorpe Road, HA0 4RQ

Present:

WCARA: Chirag Gir (Chair), Sonia Shah, Nainesh Patel, Paul Bambridge, Kay Carroll, Stephan Helbig

Other members of the WCARA Steering Group: Akber Butt, Akram Butt, Trevor Gaskin, Amolak Hunjan, Dilip Shah, Gita Shah, Mahendra Tailor.

Brent Council: Chris Whyte, Operational Director for Environmental Services, and his team: Tony Martin, Gary Rimmer, Dennis Lewis, Simon Egbor, Spencer Randolph.

Veolia: Thomas Blecharczyk and Darren Harding

Police: PC Jake Bhanji & PC Terry de Mayer, Wembley Central Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT).

Councillors: Cllr Muhammed Butt, Leader of Brent Council
Wilhelmina Mitchell-Murray, Krupa Sheth, (Wembley Central Ward Councillors), Cllr Shama Tatler (Fryent)

Guests:

Luke Paterson & Trupti Sangani (Labour)

Paul Lorber (Liberal Democrat), Scott Bartle (Green Party), Kanta Mistry & George Appiah (Conservative)

Renu Kaur, Sudbury Town Residents Association (STRA)

Grace Brown & Elizabeth Bratlie, North Brent Neighbourhood Watch.

Apologies: were received from Alperton Cllrs Millie Patel, & Bhagwanji Chohan; Dorothy Gonsalves, WCARA Secretary; and Barbara Stryjak, Osterley & Wyke Green Residents' Association (OWGRA).

The meeting was attended by over 140 residents.

1. Welcome & Introductions

Chirag Gir welcomed those attending the meeting. It was good to see so many local residents present and to have the Leader of the Council and ward councillors in attendance together with officials from Brent Council and the local police.

He explained he was Acting Chair of the Wembley Central & Alperton Residents' Association (WCARA). This had been set up by local residents concerned about issues in their local community. He had led the Keep Wembley Tidy Action Group (KWT) for the last three years. This had had some success but there was more to do and a need for a more formal association to represent residents' interests.

This was the first public meeting to be held. Its purpose was to launch the Association - encouraging the involvement of local residents and formally electing the Committee and adopting the Association's Constitution.

In November, a Steering Group of local residents had identified the following **goals** for the Association:

* To represent the views of residents in the Wembley Central and Alperton wards on issues relating to their local environment.

In particular,

a) *Crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB)*

b) *Littering and fly-tipping*

c) *Paan spitting*

d) *Parking and road safety*

e) *Major planning developments.*

f) *One Tree Hill Open Space (OTH) and other parks and public spaces*

g) *Protection of street trees and funding for planting new ones.*

Chirag emphasised that the Association needed residents' involvement to be successful. He called upon volunteers to give whatever time they could.

Steering Group members had contributed **donations** to hire the hall at a cost of £138, so donations would be welcome. It had been decided at this stage not to introduce a membership fee but this would be kept under review. For now, the Association would work with community organisations and local businesses to raise funds to support such meetings.

Going forward, the Association would be holding public meetings and sending out regular communications through newsletters, emails, facebook, twitter and the website.

Chirag then showed a short **video** which the Steering Group had put together highlighting Wembley and Alperton then and now.

2. Brent Council officials led by Chris Whyte

The Chair said it had been important to bring in the full team from the Council as many issues were interconnected.

Chris Whyte was responsible for: waste, cleansing, waste collection, parking, street lighting, street trees, road structure, parks and open spaces, community safety (ASB and criminal behaviour). He commented that over the last 10 years, resources had been hit and demand had become more intense. It was a daily battle to keep litter off the streets. The Council could not tackle the issues on its own. He welcomed working with residents. He introduced his team:

Tony Martin (Neighbourhood Manager) – His role was to work on local issues and with councillors. He had worked in the area for a number of years, but had only been in this new post, which was a new role, for a few weeks. There were five Neighbourhood Managers across Brent.

Gary Rimmer – Responsible for parking and lighting service, tree expert - managing quality and condition for trees.

Dennis Lewis (Waste Enforcement Manager) – Responsible for finding out who was dumping rubbish, holding people accountable, searching evidence and waste, and issuing FPNs and going to court.

Simon Egbor (ASB Manager) - Coordinates the Council's work alongside the police to combat ASB (e.g. in One Tree Hill space).

Spencer Randolph (Private Housing Service) – In charge of the landlord licensing scheme, particularly in this area where there were many houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).

Colleagues from Veolia – Thomas Blecharczyk and Darren Harding
Thomas (Local Veolia Manager) - Responsible for streets and emptying bins.
Darren – working with members of the community, including particular addresses, to ensure they know the rules and regulations regarding e.g. recycling.

Audience questions which followed showed that many residents were concerned about littering, dumping of waste by traders in Ealing Road, fly tipping, paan spitting and drunken behaviour in public spaces, in particular in One Tree Hill. It was felt strongly that there was a lack of support from the Council and a need for a more proactive approach and action out of hours.

Chris Whyte and his team said that the Council had recognised that they needed to put more people on the ground and talk to people in the community. This was the reason Tony Martin had been appointed as neighbourhood manager with a dedicated team to act on local concerns. Before, universal services applied across Brent. The focus had now been changed to individual neighbourhoods and to working later into evenings and weekends. He asked for time to allow the new neighbourhood teams to be up and running.

He urged residents to report problems. They needed specific information eg the time, date and registration number of cars suspected of being involved in drug dealing or throwing litter. Tony Martin would be coordinating the response to issues and aiming to provide a speedier response. Reports could be made by email, via the website, using online reporting forms and twitter feeds.

Street drinking was a big problem, especially in One Tree Hill. A more targeted, intensive approach would take place over the summer, especially in the park. The Council had introduced a Public Space Protection Order (PCSO) across Brent which would be in place from October 2017 to 2020. This gave the police more powers to tackle drinking in public places and for support to be given to problem drinkers. Brent had a Licensing Team enforcing regulations covering licensed premises selling alcohol.

Paan spitting. The Council had four dedicated officers, with hopefully a fifth coming on board shortly, to patrol and issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs). As well as issuing FPNs for paan spitting and littering, they would be looking out for people dumping rubbish etc eg on Ealing Road, there were four CCTV cameras. They acknowledged there should be more enforcement.

The **landlord licensing scheme** was raised by residents. More should be expected of landlords. Spencer Randolph said that there were 36,000 properties in Brent within the private rented sector, an increase of about 75% over the last 15 years. Since January 2015 when the scheme was introduced, the Council had prosecuted 140+ landlords and agents, and courts had fined landlords £750,000. Fines imposed by the courts did not come back to the Council. But new legislation in October 2017 now allowed the Council to impose Civil Penalty Notices for breaches of the regulations and those fines would be retained by the Council for enforcement. This was being rolled out in April. The Council was taking a proactive approach, with officers out early in the morning and late at night, inspecting HMOs where tenants were being exploited. It would be useful to put links to their work on WCARA's social media feeds to raise awareness.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB). (Simon Egbor). The Council had invested £400,000 a year into the police team. There would be more joined up operations to ensure coverage seven days a week and wireless CCTV with better images, and better coverage. They had 20 deployable mobile cameras.

3. Safer Neighbourhood Team – PC Jake Bhanji

There followed a session on the work of the Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) led by PC Jake Bhanji. PC Bhanji said it was a great pleasure to see residents of the local community taking matters into their own hands. Collectively, more could be achieved.

He explained the role of the SNT. He and his colleague, PC Terry de Mayer, were dedicated ward officers for Wembley Central ward. They also had a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) who worked part time, Thursdays & Fridays.

The SNT dealt with anti-social behaviour and crime locally. They were the liaison between the community, the Council, other agencies, and other parts of the police.

However, they were also expected to do normal police duties e.g. being available to be deployed in central London if there was a major incident.

The SNT held a ward panel meeting every 3 months at Ark Elvin Academy school with local councillors and residents to discuss priorities. WCARA were now represented at these meetings and local residents were welcome to attend. Action against drug dealing, burglaries and ASB were priorities set by the panel.

The Metropolitan Police were going through some big structural changes. By the end of the year, Brent would come under a Borough Command Unit (BCU) merging with Harrow and Barnet.

There was crime prevention advice on the SNT's Facebook page and Twitter. It was important to have reports of suspicious activity from the community.

Particular concern was expressed by residents about drinking near off licences and burglaries. PC Bhanji acknowledged the recent spate of **burglaries** and he shared residents' concerns. The police were actively working on a number of leads. He assured residents this was one of the top priorities for the police in the area. He gave specific crime prevention advice about burglaries which was also available on the police website.

The Chair thanked PC Bhanji and his team for their dedication in challenging circumstances.

The Chair asked the Leader of the Council whether revenue from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) could be used to fund more police officers and reduce crime. Cllr Butt said that there was an overall shortfall in funding because of cutbacks by central government. The Council had invested £400,000 for the next three years working in a partnership with the police to use resources more effectively.

A question was asked about funding of the developers, Quintain. The Council were tied into decisions made by the previous administration. The issue was to ensure the infrastructure around Brent was improved.

Councillor Tatler, Lead Member for Regeneration, Growth, Employment and Skills offered to work with WCARA to publish and share details of CIL Funding.

4. Election & Adoption of Constitution

Nominations for the Committee had been advertised on the WCARA website and in social media. The following **Committee** was nominated and elected unopposed.

Chair: Chirag Gir; Vice-Chair: Sonia Shah; Secretary: Dorothy Gonsalves; Membership Secretary: Nainesh Patel; Treasurer: Paul Bambridge; Policy: Kay Carroll; Planning: Stephan Helbig.

A draft **Constitution** had been available on the website for comments. None had been received and the Constitution was adopted as drafted.

The Chair said the Association was looking for active members, especially someone to join the Committee to help with communications and promoting the Association through social media.

Also, for the Association to function effectively, he called upon volunteers to be the Association representative on their street. **Street reps** could play a number of roles - from delivering leaflets, to organising a WhatsApp group to share important information about safety and crime on their road, effectively creating a modern day Neighbourhood Watch.

5. Close

Minutes of the meeting would be posted on the WCARA website together with contact details for Brent Council officers and the police. Residents were urged to send any further questions to info@wcara.org.uk and they would be channelled to the right individuals.

Note taker: Sonia Shah. Notes prepared 2 April 2018.