

PUBLIC MEETING - ARRANGED BY POTTON TOWN COUNCIL

Friday 7th September 2018 at the Pavilion, Mill Lane, Potton which started at 7.35 pm

To discuss anti-social behaviour issues in the town

Present:

Chairman of the meeting Potton Town Council Chairman Cllr Mr A. Macdonald,
RT Hon Alistair Burt MP,
Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Cllr Adam Zerny,
CBC Cllr Doreen Gurney,
CBC Cllr Steve Dixon Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and
Lead Members for Children's Services,
Tony Keaveney, Assistant Director, Housing Service, CBC,
Chief Superintendent David Boyle, Bedfordshire Police,
Community Sergeant Rachael Welch, Bedfordshire Police,
PCSO Ann Jeeves, Bedfordshire Police,
Stonewater Housing, Regional Director, David Lockerman,

Also Present:

Cllr's Mr R. Harris, Mr J. Lean, Mr J. Price Williams and Mr R. Whitfield.
Approximately thirty-five members were in attendance.
Town Clerk.

Apologies for absence:

Cllrs Mr D. Ellison, Mr G. Emery, Mr A. Gibb, Mr J. Hobbs, Mr L. Ivall, Mr A. Leggatt, Mr J. Lewis and Mr C. Temple.
CBC Cllr Ian Dalgarno Executive Member, Community Services.

1 Welcome, introduction and detail of the format of the evening.

The Chairman welcomed and thanked the public for attending.

The Chairman introduced himself and also RT Hon Alistair Burt MP, representatives from Central Bedfordshire Council Cllrs Adam Zerny, Cllr Doreen Gurney, Cllr Steve Dixon Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and Lead Members for Children's Services, Tony Keaveney, Assistant Director, Housing Service, representatives from Bedfordshire Police Chief Superintendent David Boyle, Community Sergeant Rachel Welch, PCSO Ann Jeeves and a representative Stonewater Housing, Regional Director, David Lockerman.

Apologies were given for CBC Cllr Ian Dalgarno Executive Member, Community Services with Cllr Steve Dixon Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and Lead Members for Children's Services attending as a replacement.

Apologies were also given for Joanna Sparks, Housing Officer Stonewater Housing and Susan Carway, Gypsy & Traveller Manager Central Bedfordshire Council.

2 Open Forum

The Chairman asked for any questions from the public.

Key: **Q** = Question, **A** = Answer, **S** = Statement, (C) = Chairman, (AB) = RT Hon Alistair Burt MP, (AZ) = Cllr Adam Zerny, (DG) = Cllr Doreen Gurney, (SD) = Cllr Steve Dixon, (TK) = Tony Keaveney, (DB) = Chief Superintendent David Boyle, (RW) = Community Sergeant Rachel Welch, (AJ) = PCSO Ann Jeeves and (DL) = David Lockerman.

Q Why is the Gypsy & Traveller Manager not present?

A (TK) Unable to attend and has given apologies.

Q (To TK) You're not hands on?

A (TK) I am here to listen.

Q (To TK) Are you in a position to make a decision?

A (TK) Actions have to work in due process.

Q Nothing might happen?

Q What has been happening is it criminal rather than anti-social.

A (DB) Yes criminal rather than anti-social.

S Police Attendance times of forty minutes for a machete incident. No Police presence in Potton. Police are too busy to take a telephone call. Dialed 101. No contact from the Police.

S Windows smashed in King Street forty minutes before Police attended. Incident with a Police Officer in King Street four Police cars arrive in four minutes. Police can't go into Common Road.

S If you speak to Common Road children you fear reprisals. Don't want to report. Some people from Wingfield Drive aren't present this evening because they are on holiday.

(DB) Will go and speak to residents of (Wingfield Drive) who aren't able to be present this evening.

S Lots of crime have lived in Potton for thirteen years, the last twelve months are the worse. Intimidation, verbal abuse from younger members. Youth Club closes early because of Gypsies. Cannabis selling by the skatepark. Youngsters don't want to use the skatepark because of the gypsies. Gypsies spitting at people at the skatepark. Theft of money at the skatepark by gypsies.

S (C) Anti-social behaviour issues in the town were bad in the 1980's and it is the next generation who are making it bad again.

S I am a resident of Wingfield Drive. Resident asked, can I approach the panel to show them something I have in my bag.

(C) Invited the resident to approach the panel.

Resident placed a large rock as evidence to show what has been thrown into his garden.

S They use catapults and through stones and rocks from Common Road. Windows are smashed garden furniture smashed from stones and rocks. The play area (Wingfield Drive) is a no-go area. Won't go to the skatepark. Ring 101 and have spoken with PCSO Ann Jeeves and also spoken with Sue Pethick Gypsy the Traveller Site Manager for Potton Gypsy site.

Q Is it a no-go area Chief Superintendent?

A (DB) Where is a no-go area.

S Spoke with a Police Constable about going to source. Potton will be a no-go area in five years' time. What strategies are Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and the Police adopting.

S Stones hit and smash windows and patio doors, kids have moved onto other houses in Wingfield Drive. Gypsies wanted the Party on Potton scarecrows removed.

S Well done for getting them moved from your houses, they are now through stones at our houses.

(AJ) Sue Pethick has spoken with parents of Common Road children about catapults and stones.

Q What are your strategies?

Q Is this a great surprise to you? What can you feedback to us?

S Car black Audi, speeding nearly ran over a lady and child. Can we get CCTV. Accident waiting to happen.

(DB) What is the car.

A Black Audi goes so fast unable to get the number plate.

(DB) Give us more details about the car.

(C) Having CCTV would double Potton Town Council's Council Tax.

(DB) Possible to have Hotspot CCTV. I can draw in resources, have a track record of delivering, judge me on results. I will work with yourselves, working together, will have dialogue with people on site. Minority riding over majority.

Q Can we report anonymously?

A (DB) Yes you can.

(DG) Join us together in the Potton Ward, incidents happen in Everton, Tempsford, Wrestlingworth and Sutton.

S Lots of speeding increase parking suggestion. Zero enforcement.

(DB) Don't judge me on the words I speak, judge me on my actions. I will come back in three months' time. Where are the speeding issues?

A (Resident who gave last statement) Speeding issues in Biggleswade Road and Blackbird Street.

(DB) Thank you.

S Various residents advised about speeding isn't just those areas, it is town wide King Street, Gamlingay Road, Sandy Road, Everton Road, Myers Road etc.

Q Do you want to know about minor things?

(DB) Do bother us even with the minor things.

Q Is an online reporting form available?

(DB) Bedfordshire Police do have an online reporting form. If a hotspot area, we will make it a priority where possible. Online reporting allows for Anti-Social Behaviour to be reported. We (Bedfordshire Police) will do follow ups, face to face and telephone calls, group to share information is a good idea.

S I want to thank the Police for stopping the car (King Street).

S Horslow Street vehicle damage, windscreen wipers broken. Police shrug shoulders.

(DB) It is no excuse. Police Officers shouldn't do that (shrug shoulders).

S Traffic Calming in Sandy and Gamlingay why none in Potton.

Q Where does online Police reporting go to?

A (DB) Online reporting goes to Community Policing.

S Why was Potton a suitable place for a Gypsy site.

S Car issue. You (Bedfordshire Police) have the evidence. Need a strategy in place.

(DB) Well versed in anti-social behaviour legislation. We will use a full range of tactics to deal with.

S Gypsies are not the only problem. CCTV doesn't make an arrest. You need Police Officers. CCTV doesn't gain intelligence. No Police presence in Potton.

(DB) Police have been present in the town. I don't accept that the Police aren't working hard. May be not enough of them (Police).

S Potton is a crime centre.

(DB) We are taking you seriously, judge me in three months' time when I come back.

S What happens when I make a citizen's arrest. I will get arrested if I hurt someone.

S Last time we had problems like this in the town the Police visited Common Road every day at 5am. The Common Road Gypsy site is twice the size approved. Cars come down Myers Road at speed and then handbrake turn into Common Road. Youngsters from Common Road know they are below criminal age.

Q Housing Association do you carry out vetting. Four houses in Wingfield Drive causing problems, one house in particular. Why hasn't previous housing association passed on details about tenants. Ex traveller in one house in Wingfield Drive, how was that allowed to happen.

(DL) We (Stonewater Housing) are in court next week with regards to one of the tenants of Wingfield Drive and we must show we have exhausted every avenue. Vetting for potential tenants is carried out.

S Unable to sell houses (Wingfield Drive).

(C) A resident took civil action against the council (Mid Beds District Council) and they reduced Common Road by half.

S Now required to declare when selling a house any issues.

(DL) We (Stonewater Housing) will check if the houses in Wingfield Drive belong to us. We will carry out door knocking if they do belong to us. **Q** Who was the previous Housing Association?

A A member of the public not sure possibly Aragon Housing Association. We fear reprisals.

(DL) We have to carry out a due process with all tenants.

Q The tenancies for Common Road what is protocol, breach of tenancies.

(TK) We (CBC) have a good relationship with other agencies. We evicted one tenant by court. Common Road residents have licenses rather than tenancies. All licenses have to be signed by every adult, previously they used to be only signed by women and the men weren't accountable, now all adults are accountable. Community management, clear expectations and accountability. We do know a lot of detail. Sanctions for breaches of licenses. Slip End was the worst site, though now successful. We need to target what we can achieve. What are the key objectives. We need to build trust with you. Targeted interventions.

S We want a better quality of life. Wingfield Drive looked wonderful and that is why we bought a property. Can't sell the house now. Don't want to invite children and grandchildren. Worried what is going to happen to the house when we go out.

S Anxious of every noise. Travellers and certain housing association houses make it unbearable. Needs sorting.

S Visited the Cemetery a gang of Gypsies. Feel intimidated.

S It is a minority on Common Road.

S Grandparents moved to Potton, I no longer feel safe in this town.

Q How often do you audit the site for residents. Don't want any more pitches.

A (TK) Two old pitches were reinstated. I will gain audit figures for you. Shanti extensions removed because of fire risk.

Q How often does someone visit the site to check lives on the site.

A Continuous weekly site visit. They have to obtain permission to live on the site. Men have to sign the agreement as well as women.

Q What is your mechanism for interacting with residents of Wingfield Drive. Released prisoners moving into the site. How do you work with the residents?

A (TK) Community Cohesion. We need to do more.

Q Don't want just short term want long term.

A (TK) How do we align. Shared commitment, responsibility.

Q How will you communicate with us.

A (DB) Action Group, share information.

Q Is the site double size recommended? It used to be criminal record people weren't allowed on the site. Is it still policy that people with a criminal record aren't allowed on the site.

A (TK) I will check and come back to you. Biggleswade South is the largest site. Other sites are better than Potton, need to make site fit for purpose.

S Dumped bikes all over the town.

(C) Thank you everyone, now the opportunity for the panel to speak.

3 Panel Members

(TK) Make points clear. CBC, Police and Stonewater want to work closely with you.

(SD) I will take this back to cabinet and action is our word. We need to find a solution.

(DL) We take anti-social behaviour seriously, communication needs to be better and work with our partners.

(AJ) Commitment to go on the site. Regular visits. Partnership working.

(RW) Working in Partnership, operation planned in Potton, Neighbourhood Watch and Speed Watch need more members.

Q What about involving the schools.

(AJ) Working in schools works well.

(DB) Thank you, great to understand emotional and physical impact. Confidence in officers. Want to work with you.

(DG) Thank you to officers from agencies for coming along.

(AZ) Thank you to residents for coming along this evening. Points I have picked up;

- Abuse in the skatepark.
- Stonewater Housing 1. Refused to repair fence between gypsy site and housing association. 2. Haven't taken action against a resident in another area.
- Helpful to understand numbers from (TK)
- Check about ex-criminals being allowed on the site.
- Welcome points from the Police.

(AB) You always do a good meeting in Potton.

Strategies in place.

Campaigns to educate Traveller children.

Balance if treated equally.

I have four points;

1. Are current powers adequate?
2. Are resources adequate for the Police, Bedfordshire is classed as a rural Police force, growing crime in Bedfordshire, drugs, gangs coming to areas with no enforcement?
3. Is there a strategy, talking and community engagement?

4. Representation?

(C) Advised that a follow up meeting will take place in December 2018.

(DB) Asked for residents to provide him with contact details for people not present.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

DRAFT