

Vartry Community Residents Association Public Meeting

7th October 2024

Woodberry Down Baptist Church

Refreshments at 6.30pm, meeting start time 7pm

Attendance Sheet shows 23 local residents attended

Committee members present: Chitra Karve, Claire Cammarata, Deborah Cawkwell, Charles Mugenyi, Beck Dabscheck (Chair), Mark Bartlett, Monica Viola, Carol Gibbons (Treasurer and note-taker).

Apologies: David Bennie Committee member

Guests: Councillors Barbara Blake and Michelle Simmons, PCSOs Ben Agyapong and Matabur Rahman, Glynis Kirkwood-Warren Haringey Parks Zonal Manager, Andrea Holden Chair of Ward Panel, Michael Adesanya St Mungo's.

Agenda

1. **Welcome, introductions and thanks to Pastor Charles for the use of the Church Hall**

2. **Anti-social behaviour in Manchester Gardens.** There was considerable strength of feeling expressed by both residents and Councillors on this issue. There are several issues - fights and violence, burglary in neighbouring properties (up to three times in one flat), drinking, drug-taking, loud noise and other disturbance late at night, fire-setting, littering and public health issues created by careless disposal of syringes, using the bushes as a toilet, leaving uneaten food, empty laughing gas cannisters and broken glass, in particular around the benches.

Residents explained that they had frequently, for many years, contacted both the police via 101 and online which is the recommended course of action and the Council both directly and via both our local Councillors and with our MP David Lammy. There was frustration that the issue remained unresolved as residents have been reporting incidences for 18 years but have seen no sign of any viable steps by the police and the Council to stop the incidents which continue to this day. One resident is planning to move away to escape the disturbance and anti-social behaviour.

PCSOs explained that the Borough Commander decides where to allocate resources and increase visibility of police patrols based on data about hot spots, so it is important to continue reporting these issues via 101 or online.

Locking Manchester Gardens at dusk was discussed – the Council no longer does this, except in specific extra-ordinary circumstances when a park could be locked for a period of time at disrupt problematic patterns of behaviour.

What else has been done so far?

St Mungo's has raised the issue of anti-social behaviour and the impact on the local community at residents' meetings and now also carries out locality checks twice during the day with respect to their residents' use of the gardens. However, most of the anti-social behaviour, in terms of noise etc, seems to occur late at night and in the early hours of the morning.

In her role as VCRA Chair, Beck attended the local Ward Panel and raised this issue and also attended a St Mungo's residents' meeting

Further action: Residents and councillors agreed that Glenys should escalate issues raised about the park as "exceptional circumstances" to the Parks Department and Glynis agreed to do so and to raise the issue of anti-social behaviour and the impact on the community at a multi-disciplinary problem-solving meeting attended by council staff, providers of adult services and the police. The possibility of a "disruption locking" would be discussed.

Haringey Council has funding for 2 Park Enforcement Officer posts and recruitment for these posts will start shortly. These officers will cover all of Haringey's parks.

There are several vacant posts in the Parks Department across the borough and Glynis agreed to send details of these vacancies to VCRA so we can publicise them through our networks

There is also concern about a recent increase in drug-dealing in Paignton Park and Glynis agreed to liaise with Deborah from VCRA re input from a senior member of staff from the Parks Department, Alex Goodyear, Area Supervisor.

3. **Stamford Hill Primary School** which closed in 2018 and has since remained unused. The building, a local landmark, has deteriorated and plans to use it as a pupil referral unit have not come to fruition. Since 2022, residents have raised concerns about the building and any future development of the site. These concerns particularly that the council may now intend to sell the site were reiterated at the meeting. VCRA wrote to both the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive in late September expressing concern and asking for dialogue about the future of the building. No response has been received to date.

Councillor Blake explained that being aware of residents' concerns, she had also contacted the Council about the school building and understood that no decision had been made yet about future except that the site is no longer being earmarked for educational use. Given the Council's financial situation and the costs of repairing and maintaining a Victorian building the Council may decide to sell it. If there were any plans regarding selling the building, a planning application for any proposed future use would be made and Councillor Blake, as Chair of the Planning Committee, would have sight of this.

Further action: Councillor Blake will email the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive requesting that dialogue takes place with residents via VCRA about any future plans for school building/site.

4. **CPZ consultation** residents had been concerned by media coverage – and less than clear Council meeting minutes – of a proposal to change the status and cost of all day parking in CPZs. In brief, it appeared that the Council proposed to discontinue all day parking permits leaving only hourly permits in place. Given the very different hours of CPZ operation across the Borough this would increase cost in areas such as ours compared to areas where

CPZ hours of operation are much shorter and considerably increase the cost of all day parking for friends, family and tradespeople.

Councillor Blake explained that, responding to residents' concerns, she has written to the Council requesting a review of the CPZ and that a consultation would take place later this year on any proposal to change the duration of parking permits.

5. VCRA future plans

Halloween Trail – Monica from VCRA explained that last year's event had been very popular and so she intended to organise a similar event this year on 31st October. It would be co-ordinated via a specific Whats App group -Monica will put a link on the Neighbourhood group On 27th October at the Paignton Park Litter PickNic there would be Halloween related freebies will be available

Winter Fayre – will take place on 7th December at the Triangle Centre and in Paignton Park. VCRA has contacted local makers and bakers about having a stall at the event, there will be activity taster sessions, Dr Bike, Safer Travel information and craft-based activities. More details will be available near the time. This event and the Sunday Funday in July are funded by the Council's People Need Parks programme.

VCRA's support for Paignton Park - VCRA organises monthly litter picks and takes part in Spotlight Visits with Parks Team staff to identify problems (e.g. missing bricks from steps, large divots creating trip hazards, poor state of parts of the playground including the gates which don't close securely). The ping pong table is unstable and needs repairs to make it safe. The table is well-used and will play a part both in the Taster Sessions available during the Winter Fayre and the Spring Programme to be organised by Haringey's Physical Activity Officer.

VCRA also applies for free bulbs and plants from the Council and this year's community bulb planting session will take place on 19th October – more details will be posted on the WhatsApp group.

Disappointment and concern were expressed by both residents and local Councillors over the Council's decision to withdraw from the Green Flag scheme due to lack of resources. Firstly, there was no consultation which felt disenfranchising. Secondly, prior to Green Flag inspection visits a clean-up, some additional planting and outstanding repairs took place. Concern was expressed that if there were no inspection visits there would be less incentive to keep our local green spaces in good condition.

Glynis reassured the meeting that there was a maintenance plan in for all Haringey's parks separate from the Green Flag scheme. VCRA will continue to actively support Paignton Park and to raise any concerns with the Council.

6. Any Other Business – the Chair of the local Ward Panel told the meeting that recent boundary changes had disrupted the Panel's regular meeting schedule. Meetings were now starting again and on 13th October there would be a brief meeting to clarify which community representatives would be involved. VCRA Chair Beck will attend, with Carol attending in her absence to ensure consistent attendance.