

**Minutes of a Public meeting to Discuss Anti-Social Behaviour in Wheaton Aston
14th April 2009, Wheaton Aston Village Hall**

Parish Council Chairman, Mrs. B. Cox opened the meeting, welcoming all those present and introduced the panel as follows:

Richard Coggins (Divisional Manager – Staffordshire Youth Service)
Lucy Holland (Assistant Manager, Tenancy Services – Sanctuary Housing)
Maggie Quinn (Chief Executive – South Staffordshire Community Safety Partnership)
Sergeant Tim Heap (Staffordshire Police)
PC Andrew Smith (Staffordshire Police)
Cllr. Rex Roberts (County Councillor)
Cllr. Eric Drinkwater (County Councillor)
Cllr. Roy Wright (District Councillor)

The following information was given by members of the public:

Churchyard

On Maundy Thursday youths in the church yard broke branches off the yew tree which is a listed tree.

On Good Friday evening a youth entered during the service began shouting. There was also shouting in the churchyard from youths. It was reported to the police as anti-social behaviour

The Parish Council Chairman commented that the church building is being abused and that the fact Christians are being attacked whilst trying to worship is an aggravating factor.

Village Square

Large groups of youths (up to 30 at a time) are congregating in the village square.

Damage to a residential property (broken window) has been reported.

Stones are thrown at windows of properties surrounding the village square.

Over the last few months life has been hell for some residents and some are suffering health problems due to the stress.

There is a great deal of noise (caused by music and skateboards) for up to 5 hours at a time, meaning that residents are having difficulty sleeping, hearing the TV and having conversations. Those residents that have tackled the youths have suffered verbal attacks and vandalism to cars and property. Over the last 3 weeks it has got quieter, but a few days ago there was noise again (loud music etc...)

An older youth has been seen picking up the boulder and dropping it on the pavement at 1.30am.

The tubs in summer were vandalised and bedding plants damaged. The tubs have been vandalised again this spring, the bulbs have disappeared and peat has been scattered all over the square.

General

One isolated property has been attacked repeatedly. The owner now suffers uninsured losses on the property. All people in the village are affected, property prices are dropping, houses are not selling, and businesses are not investing in the area because of the problems.

**Minutes of a Public meeting to Discuss Anti-Social Behaviour in Wheaton Aston
14th April 2009, Wheaton Aston Village Hall**

Milk is stolen from doorsteps.

Some of the individuals appear aggressive and many elderly people feel intimidated by large groups of youths.

One resident was verbally abused by 2 male youths for sitting in his car.

There is a small group causing a lot of problems. It's not the vast majority of youths that cause problems but a small minority that need dealing with.

Some young people feel that they are unfairly moved away from outside the Spar shop when they are not doing anything wrong.

Resolving the problems is not just moving it from one area to another. There needs to be a broad, considered approach. It's important not to tar good young people with the same brush as the minority who cause trouble.

The problems have been happening for 25 years, it's cyclical.

New initiatives are not going to stop the troublemakers, police action is needed alongside projects.

Village Hall

A notice board on the village hall wall has been smashed 4 times and posters torn out. On the evening of the meeting both the WI notice board and the Parish Council notice board were vandalised.

Phone Box

There is no litter bin near the phone box on the High Street. It was removed a couple of years ago and has not been replaced. There is a lot of litter near the phone box. A police presence has been requested at weekends. The phone box has been repeatedly damaged and is now causing damage to the wall of a domestic property. It's a constant target for vandalism.

Bike Track

A bike track was proposed about 12/18 months ago. Some preliminary work started and then it seemed to stop. Young people have made the effort to research and fundraise and then there's nothing happening. The main problem is boredom. Young people need a place to go.

Several young people spoke about the possibility of a bike track. They have been waiting 18 months for a bike track and not seen any progress. A wide age range would use the track approximately 40+ youths would use it. BMXers and younger bikers as well.

Broadholes Lane could be used with limits on times for it to be used?

**Minutes of a Public meeting to Discuss Anti-Social Behaviour in Wheaton Aston
14th April 2009, Wheaton Aston Village Hall**

Marston Road Playing Field would be ok for a bike track as young people with bikes wouldn't feel that it is too far away to go to and bikes have got lights so lighting wouldn't be a problem.

Chairman stated that boredom is no excuse for bad behaviour. There are youth clubs, a football pitch, guides, rainbows, sea scouts and a youth shelter available.

Skateboard Park

Skate board parks are popular in other parishes. The minimum cost would be c. £17k. Temporary ramps could be used and put near on the school car park or Marston Road field. Young people would be happy to fundraise to finance one.

Youth Shelter

Young people applied for a grant for the youth shelter and the Parish Council provided the land for it.

The youth shelter is good but it is half a mile in the middle of a field. Young people don't want to go down a dark lane and some aren't permitted to by their parents. If it was lit it would be used more.

It is used more in the summer months.

Primrose Bank Play Area

Problems oscillate between the village square and primrose bank. The conflict exists between BMX use and the parents of young children on the play area. A small group is causing the problems.

Primrose Bank Play Area is there for younger children but there are no facilities for older children.

Police Cover

Members of the public felt that they had been misled about the cover the village would get from PCSOs. They haven't got a permanent base in the village. The PCSOs should be high profile, but seem to be at Brewood to start shift and have lunch etc... The PCSO is not high profile enough. He has too many areas to cover.

Space is available for the police to use in the parish council office. This is not a new problem. In 2000 there was a meeting talking about the same problems that occurred then, Inspector Gains, stated that he had a plan but nothing materialised.

The Chairman invited members of the panel to respond to the public.

Richard Coggins (Staffordshire Youth Service)

Youth Shelter – Young people applied for money from the Youth Capital fund.

At the beginning it was used a lot but the dark nights and distance involved means that few will use it in the winter. Over the summer, the outreach workers go out there to the shelter for bbq's, meetings and activities. When the youth worker is present the activity is positive.

**Minutes of a Public meeting to Discuss Anti-Social Behaviour in Wheaton Aston
14th April 2009, Wheaton Aston Village Hall**

There is a youth forum in Wheaton Aston. Julie Jones is a full time worker and organises the youth forum. They conducted survey around the village which identified the bmx track and a skateboard park. There is funding available (youth capital and district youth small grants) but the young people need to apply for it.

There is no simple answer. It is a minority causing problems. They don't attend structured groups and are difficult to reach. Out reach workers hit the streets on a weekly basis to try and reach out to them.

The Youth Centre is a well used centre, open 5 nights a week and on weekends. For youth club, rainbows, guides etc...

Nationally and in Staffordshire there are integrated Youth Support services. All agencies working with young people are coming together under one umbrella to work to meet the needs of young people, particularly the more difficult to reach youngsters. A youth offer: a statement by the IYSS is a promise to young people that this is what they can expect in terms of provision and facilities in their locality.

There are Issues about resourcing (transport is a major issue). Need to enable young people to access provision and resources.

Lucy Holland (Sanctuary Housing)

The Chairman stated that the village knows that not all problems come from Sowdley Green but some do and asked the representative from Sanctuary Housing what the housing association will do with tenants that cause problems.

There is a clause in their tenancy contracts regarding anti social behaviour. Offenders need to be identified (names and addresses). They try preventive measures first, working with the police, using mediation etc... If there is serious anti social behaviour then immediate action would have to be taken. They are working with police, walkabouts etc...

A Sanctuary Housing representative is on the WAPSWG and is working with young people on Sowdley Green to find out what they want. They need to consider the whole Sowdley Green community so have to consider their needs/wants. They have no other areas with a green on but might consider putting additional equipment on the open space at Sowdley Green. At the moment all they have is goalposts. They will they commit to full consultation to move it forward.

Maggie Quinn (Community Safety Partnership)

SSCSP ensures that agencies don't work in isolation. 35 agencies meet to discuss problems in South Staffs. Several initiatives are underway:

1. Agreement with government (local area agreement) called safer, stronger communities. (Communities come together and looking at their local area. On 5th May a problem solving meeting will take place in village hall with a professional facilitator).
2. Local Action Groups (Where residents, councillors come together sit around a table and look at problems in a local area.

**Minutes of a Public meeting to Discuss Anti-Social Behaviour in Wheaton Aston
14th April 2009, Wheaton Aston Village Hall**

3. Political speed networking parish, district and county councillors sit with young people on a speed dating system. They have 8 minutes to talk about what young people want in their village.
4. Intergenerational work. There are a lot of good young people and we want those to mingle with the elderly to mix the generations to see other view points.
5. Anti-social behaviour action group that talks about specific individuals who are causing problems and can refer individuals to agencies for intervention.
6. Family intervention programme (Barnardos) offers interventions.
7. No single agency can tackle a problem like this. It has to be a multi-agency approach.

Sgt. Heap

Introduced PC Andy Smith & PC Lou Browning

The vast majority of young people are good decent kids. There are one or two bad apples that spoil it for the rest. The troublemakers are split 50/50 between Sowdley Green and rest of village. You will never solve anti-social behaviour but we do need to reduce it. The police cannot reduce anti-social behaviour on their own but with other agencies they can help. All organisations that they've worked with in Wheaton Aston have been excellent. (Housing association, parish council, youth service etc...)

A police officer will not deter bad youths. Some youths have no respect for the police. Parental responsibility is key. (Behaviour and education) Do the parents know where their children are, who they're with and what are they up to? If it's wrong, stop it. The police will help but parents need to do the majority.

Anti-social behaviour officers were removed a few years ago but have been brought back again. ASBOs take a long time to create. At the moment 10 children are on stage 1 (word with parents), 7 are on stage 2 (letter sent to parents), 2 are on stage three (other agencies involved). 4 Harassment notices have been issued to older youths causing problems.

PC Smith has been here since the beginning of year. PCSO Cannot be here 24/7 but other officers will attend if PC and PCSO are not on duty. They have Brewood, Lapley, Stretton, and Coven to cover as well.

With regard to a possible skatepark / BMX track, he will help as much as he can. When it's dark, they congregate by the spar/church because it's lit and there are facilities there. In the summer will start to move away from the village centre. All crime and anti-social behaviour needs to be reported.

Cllr. Drinkwater

Has responsibility for Youth Service in the county and sympathises with residents who are experiencing problems. Is amazed by how much the good youths cram into their lives. There is an element of adults that want to positively attack the problem. That is key. Don't promise and not deliver. Project "Burntwood innit" worked where housing, district council, LSPs, high schools etc... worked together to deliver things for young people. There is the new initiative coming on stream which should help. The Burntwood project has curbed anti-social behaviour by 66%.

**Minutes of a Public meeting to Discuss Anti-Social Behaviour in Wheaton Aston
14th April 2009, Wheaton Aston Village Hall**

Organisations must work together. The Skateboard Park in Burntwood cost £70k. But if people want to work to put bids together there is funding there.

He does not condone bad behaviour but a lot of youngsters don't get the same support or opportunity as others.

With regard to the youth shelter, 15/20 years of research shows that young people want to be safe. They won't go where it is dark.

The area might benefit from a Community Reassurance Team.

Cllr. Roberts

Didn't want to repeat what everyone else had said. Children in village are same as elsewhere. 95% are good, with supportive parents and schools. The minority need to be targeted. Perception is a problem. They don't want supervision, they want freedom and to be able to choose what facilities they want.

Need to look at what works elsewhere and tap into funding.

At a recent meeting, it became clear that it isn't a county wide problem it is only in this area.

Fire service do good work with young people and could be involved. Cllr. Roberts will do what he can.

Cllr. Roy Wright

There is too much talk and not enough action. It took three years to get equipment on primrose bank play area. Three years ago, the Parish Council asked whether Sowdley green could be used as an additional play area but they have not had an answer.

A design is needed for a skateboard park/BMX track and funding is available.

Kath Doyle – Wheaton Aston Play Strategy Working Group

WAPSWG are working very hard behind the scenes to get things for you. We need to apply for grants. Need evidence to support claims for projects. Need to survey the whole village. Young people have done work to identify young people's needs at the youth forum. Organised groups are to be consulted next and residents need consulting on the possible location of facilities. A questionnaire will be sent out in the next few weeks. Lots of ideas were created: natural play, intergenerational activities. BMX track and another play area. Young people want somewhere for the dark nights. Youth cafe, youth centre need to be open more often or somewhere else in the village.

The church would like to be amended to open a cafe but needs to raise £300k to make changes. Need to work together.

WAPSWG is made up of all of the key agencies and they are doing a lot of work in the background and residents shouldn't feel that nothing is being done but the work does take time. An expression of interest has been made to the Playbuilder grant scheme and they are working on a full application.

The Chairman commented that a lot of people give up a great deal of time to help the young people in the village and encouraged those present to join the WAPSWG if they

**Minutes of a Public meeting to Discuss Anti-Social Behaviour in Wheaton Aston
14th April 2009, Wheaton Aston Village Hall**

want to help. The next PCC consultative meeting is on 22nd June and members of the public are welcome to attend parish council meetings.

Steve Howarth – retired police inspector, now selling Flashcam said that some new technology might be of interest to the forum. He offered to demonstrate it after the meeting.

It was felt that one agency needs to step forward to coordinate the agencies. Knowledgeable, paid people are needed to help residents.

The Chairman said that the Parish Council will ask organisations to come to parish council meetings to move forward work and ensure that action is taken. The Chairman also requested that a youth worker attends Parish Council meetings to report back on what work they are doing.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and contributing to the meeting.