

Notes of Stirchley Neighbourhood Forum meeting held 7.30pm October 13th with Simon Foster (West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner).

Present 52 people including;

Simon Foster (SF) – WM Police & Crime Commissioner

3 members of West Midlands Police local unit

Cllr Mary Locke

Members of the Forum Committee

Members of the General Public

The meeting was chaired by the Forum Vice-Chair Robert Morris (RM)

SF gave an overview of the role of WM Police & Crime Commissioner and his background.

He emphasised that he was elected by the population of the West Midlands in 2021 and again in 2024.

His 3 main tasks are to ensure;

Access to the law

The rule of law

Equality before the law.

His role is to give oversight, governance and security of the WM Police. He has no responsibility for day-to-day policing.

He drew the meeting's attention to the Police & Crime Plan which was adopted after public consultation.

<https://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/your-commissioner/police-crime-plan/>

Funding is raised through the Police Precept, collected with Council Tax.

He holds the Chief Constable to account and holds weekly one-to-one meetings.

Other responsibilities include;

Community Safety Partnership

Victim Support

Oversight and review of complaint systems

He also owns the police estate.

Police & Crime Plan

1. Rebuilding Community Policing

Policing by consent. There is now an extra £12.2 million funding for extra officers

2. Preventing & Tackling Violence

Violence Reduction Partnership

3. Preventing & Tackling Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour, including reducing road accidents

Key Principles;

- Prevention
- Partnerships
- Building trust & confidence – police
- Bringing criminals to justice
- Rights & welfare of victims
- Rehabilitation

He highlighted that WM Police is under-resourced & under-funded compared with other forces.

There is a need for a fairer allocation of current resources

SF highlighted the improvement to 999 and 101 services

Response times have improved

Arrests increased

Crime reduced (6.4% over previous years)

Stirchley has shown a 8.5% reduction in burglary, vehicle crime and knife crime.

He said that he is working towards a relationship such that communities and WM Police are Working Together.

RM then invited questions from those attending.

This section of the meeting was dominated by the recent issue of people coming in from outside the area and attaching Union & England flags to lampposts along Pershore Road through the Ward and beyond. It was noted that these had all been

removed and subsequently 'Help for Heroes' flags had been attached high up on lampposts.

Points were made that;

The community doesn't feel safe for residents and businesses. The perception is that members of the far right are trying to provoke trouble. Stirchley has featured on social media and GB News.

Businesses have been damaged

People are feeling intimidated

There is a fear of further issues and offences arising.

RM said that Stirchley Neighbourhood Forum is a forum for discussion on such issues.

Councillor Locke said that the issue had been raised at the recent Police Tasking Meeting at which a representative of the Forum was also present.

The issue of policing of incidents was raised. The impression given was that WM Police were providing a police escort to those raising flags.

RF invited WM Police Sergeant Cottrell to respond.

He highlighted that Stirchley is one of 4 Wards the unit covers.

In relation to the flag incidents he suggested that the main aim was obtain clicks on social media which earns them money.

The police's role is to prevent a breach of the peace and intervene if public order offences are committed.

From the floor a comment was raised that the issue is people coming in from outside the area bullying and intimidating the community.

What is WM Police doing to protect the community?

Sgt Cottrell stressed the importance of making the police aware of what is happening, including by sharing recordings.

There was confirmation from the audience that WM Police had been contacted.

There was general agreement that pro-active policing is needed.

RM again offered the Neighbourhood Forum as a place for discussion and raising issues.

SF then addressed some of the issues raised;

He has discussed the issue with the Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable also the organised crime and counter-terrorism teams

It is a relatively new phenomena. This was the first opportunity he had had to meet with a residents group.

He is keen to work with the community going forward.

He said that it needs a collective approach – Birmingham City Council, WM Police and residents.

The issue was the motives of those putting up the flags. This is part of a wider political agenda. Flags are a symptom.

If a criminal offence has been committed the WM Police should enforce the law but he stressed that his role was NOT operational.

He said that he had not previously been aware of the issues and the strength of feeling. He offered his personal email to the Forum and community representatives to maintain contact.

There was a suggestion from the floor that the Neighbourhood Forum should stress their commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

RM said that the Forum Committee will look into this.

There was a suggestion that engagement with the MP could also be desirable.

Cllr Locke drew attention to her Council Ward Forum Meeting to be held at Stirchley Baths on 19th November when Cabinet members are expected to attend.

RM said that other issues had previously been raised but the meeting had run out of time.

It was agreed that there was a need to work together on the issue of flags.

Led by Cllr Locke there was then a brief discussion about whether funding should be allocated for Christmas lights along Pershore Road in Stirchley.

It was agreed that these should be put in place as soon as possible.

RM thanked everyone for attending and asked people to make a note of the Forum AGM on 10th November.

The meeting concluded at 9.15pm.

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1. The Management Committee does not normally have prior knowledge of items which will be raised as Any Other Business, but the Management Committee will help facilitate such items where it does have prior knowledge, and which are in the interests of Stirchley.
2. The Forum is not aligned to any political party or one group and hence will hold a neutral stance in all political items which are raised at the meetings; the Forum may take a stance (positive/negative) on planning applications discussed at the meeting or on changes to community/neighbourhood services which affect the Forum area
3. The Forum's Management Committee will not allow a person or organisation to use the Forum's meeting as a means to any political end.
4. All residents and businesses within the Forum's area have the right to attend and speak at the meeting. Business owners, not resident within the forum area, have a right to attend and speak at SNF meetings, but they cannot make up quorum.
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