



Forest Hill Assembly

Wednesday 6 February 2013 7.30pm – 9.30pm

**Christian Fellowship Centre
Honor Oak Road, SE23 3SH**

Minutes of the meeting

1. Welcome, introduction and format for the meeting.

Cllr Feakes, Chair of the Forest Hill Assembly welcomed everyone to the meeting. He then introduced Cllr Peake and passed on Cllr Anne Affiku's apologies for not being able to make the meeting.

2. The proposed closure of Sydenham Police Station, the future of Safer Neighbourhood Policing and an update from the Forest Hill Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT)

Ward update - Sergeant Scott Ferguson told the meeting that there has been a slight decrease in burglaries this year, but reminded people to remain vigilant. There has been a significant fall in Robbery with figures a third down on last year. There are still issues with theft from motor vehicles and people should not be leaving valuables inside their vehicles.

Sgt Ferguson stated that there has been a significant improvement regarding Miriam Lodge and there is now a zero tolerance policy towards anti-social behaviour. Police are working closely with the staff and they now have a say on who is housed there.

Q Why has there been a fall in Robbery?

A This is across the Met Police area, there has been good intelligence, good targeting and many operations to catch offenders.

Q Is there any further information relating to the attempt abduction last night?

A We cannot say much at this stage, but a young schoolgirl was involved and it was a genuine allegation. We have told schools to be vigilant and we have increased patrols in the area. CID are investigating.

Sydenham Police Station - Chief Inspector Bell who is Head of Safer Neighbourhood Policing in Lewisham then addressed the assembly meeting. He told the meeting that by 2015 the Metropolitan Police Service must deliver policing to the capital with a budget reduced by £500 million pounds. This represents a 20% cut in the budget, 80% of this budget is on wages, so to find savings without making redundancies is a real challenge. The MPS is therefore looking at other ways to reduce its budget and this includes:

- Buildings owned by the police - some are not properly used or are inefficient

- Front Counter Service – could this be delivered in a different way
- Restructuring staff – Reducing leadership roles

There are 420 police buildings under review and no sites have been agreed for sale yet. Locally we have our own view and our view is that we want to keep Sydenham Police Station as it is in a good location and is operationally sound, the Borough Commander wants to keep it.

However, this is not our choice, we will be able to argue our case, but ultimately there are some hard decisions to take. If the closure does go through we will relocate to Catford Hill. Catford Police Station is on the 2014 list so not affected at present and we are not so worried about Brockley as this is close to both Deptford and Lewisham Police Station's so there is good cover in this area.

Q Why do you want to keep Catford Hill and sell Sydenham and why not consider sharing with the Fire Brigade or the Ambulance Service?

A Yes we are looking at shared space, but there are lots of other costs to factor in ie £60,000 for IT alone. The list is chosen by the Real Estate team and is made up of running costs and age, Sydenham is in need of significant work and this is not the case with Catford Hill

Q Can you give any dates regarding the closure of the front counters?

A No dates as yet, but 131 front counters in London must reduce to 71. Lewisham will be 24 hour, Sydenham will close and Catford and Deptford will be a 40 hour week, but this is just a proposal. Very few people walk into front counters for serious crime and Sydenham only averages 9/10 visitors per day, Lewisham averages 60 or 70.

Safer Neighbourhood Policing – Chief Inspector Bell told the assembly that SNTs have been around since 2005, this will soon change and this is a policing decision. Lewisham area will now be divided into 3 clusters, this will mean an increase in neighbourhood policing numbers from 38 PCs to 104 PCS with only 18 of these to be ring-fenced. Cluster wards will therefore have more resources with officers on duty daily from 6am to midnight. There are many weaknesses with the current Safer Neighbourhood Teams for example New Cross ward which covers Deptford Market and Millwall Football Club has the same number of officers as a quieter ward. Cluster policing means that we can direct resources into areas that need them and areas with particular challenges will have more police.

Q Is this reactive or proactive?

A It is proactive, neighbourhood officers will have the same responsibilities as now, but with additional functions such as investigating neighbourhood crimes.

Q What about officers being dragged away for issues such as the riots, will this happen more often?

A This is a fair point and we are here to serve the Metropolitan Police area, but it is my responsibility to try to ensure that these officers are not picked off

Q What about ward panels?

A There is no plan to change ward panels as they are essential because we need to engage.

3. Update on the Portas Pilot from SEE3

Richard Hibbert provided the assembly with a presentation relating to SEE3's activities since its formation. For a copy of the presentation please email paul.gale@lewisham.gov.uk . The assembly then asked Richard some questions about the pilot.

Q When you say the High Street in Forest Hill, do you just mean Dartmouth Road?

A No, Dartmouth Road, Perry Vale and London Road.

Q Yesterday morning there were lots of closed shops in Dartmouth Road, it just did not look alive, why is this?

A There are lots of sole traders and they have other things to do. Monday and Tuesday mornings are the most quiet, but it is much busier later in the day

4. The campaign to save Lewisham Hospital

Simone Booth from the Campaign to Save Lewisham Hospital told the assembly that the plans to reduce services at the Hospital are worrying and that having an Urgent Care Unit as opposed to an Accident and Emergency is very bad for Lewisham. Lewisham Hospital is a successful hospital and not part of the South East London Healthcare Trust which has had all the problems and was subject to the review by the administrator. So far there has been lots of action to oppose the plans including a 10,000 strong march to Ladywell Fields, a vigil on the night that the consultation closed and a march involving 25,000 people on Saturday 26th January. Simone urged people to get involved and to become more vocal to support the campaign.

Q Is this reduction in services over a 3 year period?

A It is a rollout as they cannot implement it until everything else is in place.

Q What about a legal challenge?

A This has now started

5. The Council's budget savings proposals

Robyn Fairman Head of Strategy at Lewisham Council told the meeting that overall the Council has a turnover of around 1 billion pounds. However, 250 million pounds goes towards schools, 250 million is for Housing Benefit, 100 million is for Housing and 150 million is for other specific projects. This leaves only 250 million pounds that the Council can reduce.

This year the Council must make savings of 21.3 million pounds and next year it must save 32 million pounds from this 250 million. Due to changes from central government this 250 million will be reduced to 200 million by 2015.

From this 250 million 160 million pounds of it is Adult Social Care and Social provision so in reality the Council only has 90 million pounds that it can make cuts on. So far the Council has already made 56 million pounds of savings and tomorrow, the Public Accounts Select Committee Chaired by Cllr Feakes will review the recommendations prior to them going to Mayor and Full Council

Q How much does Lewisham Life cost, does anyone ever read it?

A This is run by our Communications Team which has had a 49% reduction in staff and the amount of magazine editions have gone from 6 to 4. It is of course essential that we get our message across and Lewisham Life is a valuable tool in doing this.

Q What about revenue increases?

A We are looking at fees and charges

Cllr Feakes then told the assembly that tomorrow evening (Thursday 7 February) we will be looking at this, so please email him if you have any points to make. The public can come to the meeting in March and some of the proposals will require statutory consultation.

6. The parking review

Cllr Feakes told the assembly that the Council has been carrying out a review of its Controlled Parking Zones, the results of this review are outside and people can read them or take them away.

7. Community updates

Friends of Albion Millennium Green – Bruno Roubicek told the assembly that the Green is open 24 hours and it has a Green Flag Community award. On the 23rd February they will be holding their AGM at Forest Hill Pools from 11am – 1pm, so please do come along

Forest Hill Society – Bring and Take afternoon on 23rd February from 1.30 – 4pm at Devonshire Road Nature Reserve

Forest Hill Society – The next Food Fair is on the 3rd March outside the station.

There being no other business the meeting was closed at 9.30pm. The next meeting will take place on Thursday 9 May 2013 with the venue to be confirmed. Further details and information will be circulated to all residents nearer the time.

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.