



Telegraph Hill Local Assembly

Barnes Wallis Community Centre 1 November 2012

1. Welcome and introductions

Cllr Dan Whittle, chair of the assembly, welcomed everyone and introduced his fellow Cllrs, Cllr Joan Millbank and Cllr Paul Bell.

2. Benefit changes - Mick Lear (Lewisham Council)

See presentation

Q1. Do the Council check if the children really belong to the people living in their property?

A1. Yes within the benefits service. We can check if child benefit is received. We don't routinely do visits.

Q1b. Do you check their birth certificates?

A1b. No – Job Centre+ will make checks before they receive benefits.

Q2. Got to be careful not to position ourselves against poorest people. Should stand in solidarity with them. What can we do as a community to try and push back these changes?

Q3. Can Council houses be sub-let?

A3. Not legally. It is a criminal offence. However, leaseholders can sub-let their homes and it is often difficult to tell who is a leaseholder which can make people wrongly think a property is being illegally sub-let.

Francis Fraser, from 170 Community Project, said with the monthly payment budgeting will be difficult. It will be paid to one member of the household. They foresee a lot of family tensions about this and there could be arguments over resources. The changes are a step back for women because they may no longer have direct access to child benefits. 170 provide advice and information. Mick Lear is right, if you can get a job it will protect you but there aren't many around. We have drop-in sessions and people are welcome to come along.

3. Food banks in Lewisham - Yvonne Peart (Living Waters Church)

Yvonne explained that the foodbank was launched on 24 October and is based at Honor Oak Community Centre. They set it up because we realised people would face difficulties with the changes coming in and the resulting financial problems this would cause. Motto is putting surplus to purpose. They get food from Sainsburys and Waitrose which would normally be thrown out. It is primarily being run by three members of the church. On opening day they fed 108 people.

We're monitoring the service to make sure it doesn't get abused and that we get to the right people. However, we should remember that people are having to make a decision to pay their bills or feed their children. Shops and local people have been donating food.

Q1. Are you aware of an organisations called fair shares? Already work with Sainsbury and are doing nationally what you're doing locally.

A1. Can you give us the details afterwards.

Q2. If you are only doing one day a week and collecting perishable food, what is done with the leftovers?

A2. Only collect perishable food on the day. The other donations being collected are non-perishable so can be collected throughout the week.

Q3. Have you got any handouts that we can use to advertise it to people?

A3. Yes, give us contact details and we'll send some to you.

Q4. Can anyone in Lewisham use this service? We should focus on people who need the help not the small minority that abuse it.

A4. Yes. We're not turning anyone away.

Cllr Bell said there are several other foodbanks being set up throughout the borough and London. We need to coordinate this effort to make sure it gets to the right people. There are pride issues and people find it difficult to go to a food bank. Lewisham Council will do whatever we can to coordinate and support this.

Q6. It is very positive that people are being helped but it's also good that food is being saved from being thrown in the bin.

Cllr Millbank thanked Living Waters for taking this action and explained that Telegraph Hill Assembly had funded the food bank's freezer to support their work.

4. Lewisham Council budget update (Cllr Millbank)

Cllr Millbank explained that the Councillors wanted to bring the savings to the attention of the meeting. She said that a few years ago, Lewisham Council went through a consultation programme about savings. We had to do this because of cuts to the funding we receive from central government. The Council is having to make cuts again. Officers have been asked to find £40m of savings.

Everyone is going to be affected by this in some way. Some of the proposals under discussion are reviews about daycare provision, changes to the youth service, reducing community safety teams and road sweeping. There are six play centres in the parks across the borough up for closure and one of them is in Telegraph Hill ward. The green waste collection service is also under threat. The Assembly Fund is likely to be reduced which will limit the support we can give to local groups. We are in very challenging, unprecedented times.

We have no choice but to set a balanced budget. We knew this when we stood for Council. But we didn't know the huge level. We will do all we can to make savings that will have the least impact on services. I want to urge you to read the summary sheet.

Also concerns about Lewisham Hospital and Fire Station. Must let the Government know through contacting your local MP. It is the Government's cuts which are impacting on us.

Q1. What about the lines on Gellatly Road?

A1. That's not part of the cuts. We'll discuss this later in the meeting.

Jill Mountford said she wanted to urge people again that we don't sit back as a community and let this happen. They're not savings, they're cuts. We can't just absorb it. Day centres are so important as give they give mums a chance to socialise and give children a place to play. If we lose them, we won't get them back easily. Shocked at the lack of campaigns around defending the welfare state.

Kath Dunbar said there was a meeting on 21 November at the Library about saving New Cross fire station.

Q2. Is there anything that Labour Councillors nationally are doing?

A2. Almost all local authorities, regardless of their political colour, are up in arms about the level of cuts that local authorities are facing.

Cllr Millbank stated that there was no way we can let park drop in centre close. It is so well used. Even if we can't keep it as it is, we need to find a way to keep in going in a different way.

Q3. I've just met Jean today, we're setting up a campaign about the park centre. People interested should come and see us in the break. We'll be seeking the Councillors support.

Liz Dart said that she had spoken to one of the senior officers about the park centre proposals and he has assured her that there will be a month long consultation about the proposals. This will start at the end of November and there will be some consultation meetings as well. The dates will be advertised in due course but if there are people that particularly want to know dates, let us know after the meeting and we'll make sure we send you the information. There will be meetings about the changes to the youth service as well. There are no proposals to close Honor Oak Adventure Playground and Honor Oak Youth Club but the savings might change how the service is run. The outcome of these consultations will be in Mayor's report so that he has views of residents when making decisions.

Stephen Carrick-Davies said that people who were active in the 1980s need to tell people what it was like. He said that he thinks we need to find a more proactive/evocative way of campaigning. Things like social media should be utilised. The community should be trying to find imaginative ways in this ward of making an impact. Maybe we could get people to put a cross in their window to stop the cuts?

Cllr Bell asked the meeting how many people have a Vodafone phone? How many people have been to Starbucks? There are a number of companies in this country that don't pay tax. Starbucks is one, Amazon is another. Comet is going to administration, this is because of companies like Amazon taking away business and therefore jobs. Happy to be involved with local campaigns but what we need to do is stop using companies that don't pay tax. We need to tweet this, Facebook this, go to our churches and spread this message. Companies don't like their reputations being sullied.

5. Proposals for the 2012/13 Assembly Fund

Cllr Millbank explained the commissioning process which aims to use the funding in a more collaborative way and what could they deliver in relation to what local people want.

See slides for overview of proposals

Q1. How will sessions be advertised?

A1. This will be down to the groups running the projects and they will be supported by other groups in the area/Local Assembly teams.

Q2. Will contact details for the projects be published?

A2. Yes

Q3. £2,500 seems a lot for Come & Look when only £1,000 for ICT training.

A3. This is to fund events at 6-7 venues.

Q4. Can it fund campaign to save park group?

A4. (Liz Dart) Will get back to you on that. We can't fund a political campaign but may be able to support a local group.

The proposals were agreed by the meeting.

6. 2011/12 Project Updates

Common Growth

Darren Flint explained that they are a community garden located on Sandbourne Road. Last year they applied to the Assembly for £270 for a project. Took old boxes from the market and converted them into food planters. The initial idea was to invite local children and families to decorate the boxes and plant them up with seeds and take them home to grow their own food. It was a very successful programme. The project involved ten volunteers, at least fifteen children and at least fifteen adults. We integrated these activities into school holiday activities.

We wanted to make the project intergenerational but it was difficult getting older people involved. Most of the boxes went to local families. We also saved £100 over the course of the project and we will use this surplus to run a similar project next year.

New Cross Learning

Kathy Dunbar said they library had received £5,000 to do baby bounce activities, street dance and acapela. The activities have benefitted lots of local people, both children and adults. We also did arts and crafts and a lantern parade around Milton Court. Thank you to Telegraph Hill for the money and the success.

Come & Look 2012

Cllr Bell introduced the video that was produced of the day and shown to the meeting.

Ward Directory

Cllr Whittle explained the ward directory had been produced and should have been delivered to every household.

Kender Triangle Traffic

Cllr Millbank explained that she had met with TfL but hadn't got too far with them. The scheme has improved the situation for residents living in Kender and a fantastic open public space has been created. However, the roads on the periphery of the Kender triangle have suffered and there have also been a couple of accidents on Queen's Road. The Councillors have managed to get £65,000 allocated to look at the impact on local people.

Q1. Why does it take so long for the crossing to work? People are tempted to cross when it's not safe. Also, traffic is still turning left into Lausanne Road.

A1. We have raised the crossing issue with GLA member Len Duvall. In addition, we are in the process of arranging for several roads to be monitored by traffic officers.

Q2. The issue about modelling on spoke roads was raised with Mike Callaghan in previous years. The fact that scheme went ahead without the modelling being done is bad.

7. Community information

Cllr Whittle gave information about the upcoming Canine Care Day happening at Barnes Wallis on 10 November.

Joan Roach gave update about Spice time credits. She explained that several local organisations were now members of the network and that they were still looking for more organisations to get involved.

Sean Marriott from London Wildlife Trust explained that they have a nature reserve on Vesta Road, linked in with Devonshire Road. It is on Network Rail land. The group want to bring local people in to clean up the land. They also want to make it look like a nature reserve from the outside and to involve as many local people as possible.

Brian Fisher introduced himself as a semi-retired local GP. He wanted to let the meeting know about some changes to Lewisham Hospital. A and E and maternity services are under threat. Logic of this does not stack up and it will lead to worse services in the area. Trying to fight this as best we can. Heidi Alexander MP has put out a petition. Please sign this. In addition, we are holding two public meetings with the local MPs and Mayor. It's a very important meeting to bring people together and explain the risk. On 8th November we will hold a demonstration where we are going to try and link arms around the hospital as a protest against the plans.

Tamsin said there is also an online link to petition on Brockley Central Blog. Please also email to all your contacts.

Oliver Wells said that the Telegraph Hill Festival planning was starting. Anyone interested in getting involved should come to the planning meeting on 8th November, 7.30pm at the Hill Station Cafe.

Gwen Randall said she works as a volunteer at Crofton Park library. She wanted to let people know that the library will be closed for a couple of days in the coming week because they are installing a cafe in the building. They also have ICT training.

8. Close and thanks

Cllr Whittle thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.