

Village meeting- Wymington Memorial Hall 15th February 2018

Present: Paul Salsbury- Chairman Wymington Parish Council
Borough Councillor Alison Field Foster
Chief Superintendent David Boyle- Bedfordshire Police
Inspector Nick Masters- Bedfordshire Police
PCSO Laura Hoggard- Bedfordshire Police
PCSO Jamie Goldrum- Bedfordshire Police
Linda Jennings- Operations Manager Benjamin UK
Samantha Cooke- Manager St Lawrence House Benjamin UK

Approximately 100 residents

Paul Salsbury opened the meeting advising this was to facilitate discussion amongst all parties about issues seen in the village recently, some of which could be attributed to a few residents of the Benjamin homes. Parties introduced themselves.

Some residents then spoke about their experiences on vandalism seen, including slashed tyres, sheds smashed, wing mirrors broken, houses being broken into, dogs being wound up by the children and whilst not all could be linked back to the home some could. Residents were concerned that they had to have CCTV now to protect their property. One resident had been to the home to speak to the manager, but had then been contacted by the police to say don't go there. In the meantime he had reported his slashed tyres to the police but had heard nothing since. Resident had given details of the crimes to the care home who said leave it with them, again had heard nothing. Samantha Cooke advised that they had been told by the police not to contact the resident and let them follow the line of enquiry. Linda Jennings advised that they would not be responsible for the cost of any damage caused by the children in their care

Resident commented that they were concerned over how the children were looked after by the carers, that there seemed little control by the carers, and that the children seemed to be allowed to roam. There was concern that St Lawrence house had windows at the back/side that children could use, and want them to have CCTV at front and back doors as well as alarms. Linda Jennings advised they are not a secure unit, therefore can't fence in the homes etc, however they do have CCTV at the doors and St Lawrence house has restrictors on the windows and alarms on the doors of the children's rooms.

Chief Superintendent David Boyle spoke and thanked residents for inviting him, the number of people at the meeting showed the strength of feeling. He advised that the crime stats for January for Wymington show 15 crimes, which when analysed against number of dwellings is higher than national average and is too high. Resident advised that crimes are rising year on year at the moment. CS Boyle advised the Chief Constable is now taking a personal interest as well. They can look to provide more resource and work towards a preventative strategy working with multi agencies to address the problems.

The police stated that all crimes need to be reported to the police to give a true picture. CS Boyle advised they are looking to provide the village with one dedicated investigator to review crimes, and admitted they had not picked up links between the crimes and apologised. They would also look at

using anti-social behaviour orders now as well. Inspector Masters advised that Wymington also has organised crimes coming in from the North looking at drug selling and he will now be ensuring they link in with Northants police to work together to stop this. Residents raised concerns that they report but then don't hear anything

Resident asked why they were allowed to set up two homes in such a small village. The police advised they can't stop a private business from setting up anywhere, but could support working together to resolve issues.

Linda Jennings advised that as far as they were aware there had only been two complaints- residents feel there were more. Alison Field Foster confirmed that the children were being placed by local authorities from outside Bedfordshire. Linda advised that they had to have planning consent from Bedford Borough to open, and residents advised that neither they, or the Parish Council had been consulted. One home had been open about seven years and one three years. Alison Field Foster and the Clerk will look at the planning consent issue and see what happened.

Linda also confirmed that the home goes through Ofsted inspections twice a year. Alison Field Foster advised that a licence is not required as they have four children or less. Resident asked if surveys from Ofsted had been sent to residents or the Parish Council for completion and Linda advised she did not know if this would be possible. Resident asked about staffing and Samantha confirmed that at night there were two staff on duty. If a child left at night they would be aware and one member of staff will follow them. Linda advised most of the children are traumatised in some way, and that therapy is provided, but they are not a secure unit which has its own set of regulations to follow. Residents were concerned that a village is the wrong place as there is nothing for them to do, and also they are as far away from the police as they could be in Bedfordshire. Linda did agree that some children would appear to have been inappropriately placed, and that two had now been moved on. They are very conscious about the children placed in the homes in the country rather than urban areas. Linda did confirm there are no plans to open a third home in Wymington

Residents asked Linda what process is in place to understand any criminal background the children may have. Linda confirmed that they should receive information about their background, and the police would be aware if necessary. Inspector Masters advised the police are keen to work with the home and are looking to build profiles of the residents, working with them. CS Boyle confirmed that the public protection team and youth offending service are advised.

Linda Jennings advised that the home had also been subject to eggs being thrown at it, and some of the children had been subjected to racism, and a resident did say its not all down to the children at the home.

Linda advised that misbehaviour needed to be reported to the home as well as the police, and particularly if its for behaviour where police action is not warranted, e.g. asking for cigarettes or swearing at children. Contact details will be published in The Bridge and on the Parish Council Facebook page. She also confirmed she would be updating the owners of the company.

Representative in the meeting who is on the Boroughs Children's Services committee feels the care home is not run as it should be and would be looking at asking them to come in front of the Children's services Committee.

CS Boyle suggested that the way forward would be a Joint Action Group (JAG) with representatives from the Police, Benjamin UK, Residents, and the Borough Council to work towards solutions to resolve the issues. The police will co-ordinate this. He suggested a further meeting in about three months to review progress.

Actions from Meeting

1. Alison Field Foster and the Clerk will look at the planning consent issue and see what happened
2. Residents need to report all crimes via 101, or there is the ability to report on line now, to allow a proper picture to develop
3. Police will ensure that the process is communicated to the resident reporting so they are aware of a response will be forthcoming or not
4. Joint Action Group to be set up. Clerk will liaise with Inspector Masters and CS Boyle to provide names.
5. Clerk will arrange a further village meeting in three to four months to see if the situation has improved
6. Contact phone numbers for Benjamin Homes to be placed in Bridge Magazine