

DANDENONG WEST COMMUNITY SAFETY FORUM

21 July 2015. 7.30pm - 9.00pm
Dandenong West Primary School



MINUTES

Attendees:

Councillors:

Cr Sean O'Reilly (Mayor), Cr Matthew Kirwan (Chair – Ward Councillor) and Cr Roz Blades

Council Officers:

Lisa Roberts (Manager Governance), Peter Shelton (Manager Regulatory Services), Sharon Sykes (Senior Coordinator Community Planning), Russel Tait (Project Planner, Revitalising Central Dandenong), Jo Thorn (Mayor & Councillors Executive Assistant), Oliver Vido (Manager Infrastructure Services), Lynette While (Manager Community Development, Facilities & Recreation)

Victoria Police Members:

Inspector Bruce Kitchen, Senior Sergeant Phil Hulley, Senior Sergeant Scott Roberts

Community Members:

25 attended

Business:

Formal business started at 7.38pm

Speaker	Comments
Mayor Sean O'Reilly	Welcome to all. Safety contributes to liveability and we aim tonight to have some two way conversations about safety in this area. Chairing this forum is Cr Kirwan, Red Gum Ward Councillor. Discussion should not be limited, we want people to be able to share and contribute in the way they feel comfortable.
Cr Matthew Kirwan	<p>Thank you very much for attending. Feedback sheets are available for completion. I am particularly interested in how you found out about the event. I have had varying reports about how people found out about the event, including how effective the letter drops were, and it would really help to find out how you did actually find out about the event. This is the first forum held under the new guidelines so any feedback would be very useful and interesting. I'm one of three Red Gum ward councillors along with Cr Memeti and Cr Long, who both could not be here tonight but Cr Blades is here as well as the Mayor O'Reilly. Cr Blades represents Paperbark Ward which starts nearby just over the other side of Eastlink and covers much of Noble Park and Keysborough. Business cards for councillors attending are available tonight.</p> <p>The reason the forum was organised for this area was that some issues have been brought to my attention repeatedly as a councillor. We will discuss those and then open up the floor to you.</p>

Speaker	Statement/Question	Response By	Response
Cr Matthew Kirwan	In relation to Hemmings Street near Scott Street, I am aware that there are issues of drugs, prostitution, delinquent behaviour and alcohol abuse. I will hand over to Victoria Police for some comment on these issues.	Inspector Bruce Kitchen	Police are aware of these issues, especially prostitution and have requested assistance for more operational resources to be available in that space. Undercover operations reveal that some of the sex workers are older but there are younger ones also and we hope to educate them and hopefully divert them into other programs. In relation to drugs, Hemmings Park has been identified as a high risk location but over the last 18 months activity has reduced but we still have eye on it. We have a good relationship with the Needle Syringe Program to encourage appropriate needle disposal. If you have any immediate or urgent needs or issues, you should always call 000.
Resident	Are people buying and using mainly ICE at Hemmings Park?	Inspector Bruce Kitchen	The use of ICE is spasmodic but there are those that try and sell it there and they are targeted by police.
Resident	Can CCTV be installed at Hemmings Park?	Peter Shelton	Council has had three rounds of grant funding for CCTV installations – Menzies Avenue, Dandenong Station precinct and in Noble Park. Council could always spend more on CCTV if there was a strong call from the community and Council resolved to do so, but there are many competing needs.
		Cr Matthew Kirwan	Most of the residents' calls I have received have been in relation to the Hemmings Street shops and CCTV installation is being investigated there at the moment.
		Inspector Bruce Kitchen	Authorities could also look at portable CCTV installations for a limited time as a trial. These could be moved around hot spots. VicPol are always going to be limited in resources. I also encourage parents to be involved in their children's activities and keep their children engaged and motivated. It helps to keep them out of trouble.
Resident	Do you think Hemmings Park is a safe park for children?	Inspector Bruce Kitchen	Generally speaking, yes. But if you see anyone hanging around you should always ring the Police. If anyone frightens you, you must ring the Police. If they are using drugs, ring the police, always on 000.
Resident	What if kids are bullied? My son had his scooter taken off him at Hemmings Park, by some other kids and thrown away.	Inspector Bruce Kitchen	You have to be aware that not everyone has the same values as you. Police don't have the resources to deal with those types of personal issues. You need to apply common sense.
Resident	What about lighting at the park?	Cr Matthew Kirwan	There is a new shade sail that has been installed there and what I realised when I inspected it at night was that the playground area is quite dark and could do with lighting. I will look into that.
		Inspector Bruce Kitchen	New lights with sensors could be considered in some areas of the park and people should always use common sense at night time. When lighting is designed for any public place, consideration is also given to how that affects the local amenity, residences, traffic and road users.

Speaker	Statement/Question	Response By	Response
Resident	If we feel we are being followed at any time of the day, but particularly at night, can we ring Police?	Inspector Bruce Kitchen	It doesn't hurt to ring the Police on 000 at any time you believe there is anti-social behaviour or a crime is about to be committed. It is always better to be over cautious and always better to call and have that call logged even if we cannot get someone down there immediately.
Resident	There is a problem with people waiting outside the IGA in Hemmings St to buy alcohol at 9am	Inspector Bruce Kitchen	Police issue many fines in regard to this behaviour and they have a diversion program which targets people like this and this work is continuing. However I wasn't aware of this particular problem at this time at that location and I will follow up.
Cr Matthew Kirwan	We will move onto issues reported at Fotheringham Reserve. I have been informed of drug use, loitering, prostitution and illicit sexual behaviours at the reserve. Can any residents here talk about the issues that they have experienced at the reserve?		
Resident	I have seen people smoking bongs and using other drugs. There are syringes and bongs lying around all the time. I now refuse to go anywhere near there at any time – this includes the Dallimore Court end and near the billabong area.	Inspector Bruce Kitchen	This is noted. We will look at this area. What we would hope to do is police the area and catch a couple of people, then activity would likely drop off and if it starts back again, then let us know and we will police it again. That is the usual cycle and activity generally decreases more and more over time.
Resident	There has been prostitution there and illicit sex activity mainly at night but also in derelict factories in another part of Dandenong West where Sutherland Road meets the Princes Highway, it is a filthy tip and dumping ground.	Cr Matthew Kirwan	There is currently a town planning application that has recently been approved that will bring new business there very soon which will bring activity to that area as opposed to unused buildings.
	The factory there is currently in use. I don't know what is in there, some kind of storage but the state of it just brings in crime and scum.	Cr Matthew Kirwan	Thanks for bringing that to our attention, I wasn't aware of the current use. The application includes a café, which will hopefully help change the area. I will follow up.

Speaker	Statement/Question	Response By	Response
Resident	<p>Prostitution at Fotheringham Reserve is worse in the summer months even though it occurs year round, particularly in Dallimore Court after work hours when workmen seem to congregate there.</p> <p>Residents have contacted Council who have chopped some bushes down and made the area more visible which has helped.</p>	Inspector Bruce Kitchen	Currently police staff are not allocated to parole that area. Please leave your name and number with police tonight. It is important to get registration numbers of cars. Let's start afresh with a plan and see if we can work together to clean the area up and move these people on.
Resident	<p>People are also sleeping or camping in Fotheringham Reserve under the 2nd overpass where it crosses over to Joffre St, Noble Park. One man has been there for about 12 months and uses the park as a toilet.</p> <p>I know of 10-12 people who have regularly rang Council and are never contacted back so they feel like there is no one following up on these matters.</p>	Cr Matthew Kirwan	<p>Thank you for letting us know about this as I for one had not heard that issue before.</p> <p>Victoria Police's role is an enforcement agency. Council is an authority that works to enhance community safety and related environmental design.</p> <p>Council is not a crime enforcement agency in relation to the types of crimes and anti-social behaviour issues we have discussed tonight, but it does work closely with police to address community concerns in these areas.</p> <p>However police need to be informed of these issues directly by residents, but also informing Council then helps the two authorities to work together.</p> <p>Sharon, could you add more about Council's role with community safety, the upcoming plan and the situation with the rock throwing game?</p>
		Sharon Sykes	<p>When concerns and incidents such as these are brought to Council's attention, they are then brought to the attention of Victoria Police through regular meetings.</p> <p>Council does a range of work across many different issues. In relation to the conservation park, we are aware that the rock-throwing game is being played and is causing damage to the park. This game would best be played on a bocce-type court. As the weather gets warmer, Council will be having conversations with the groups concerned about better places to play those sorts of games and through both members of the community and family services there are ways to engage people in activities and find the best places to play. Council also has a draft Community Safety Plan, which was recently on public exhibition and is just in the process of being finalised for Council to approve. Its key theme is a 'safe and harmonious' Greater Dandenong, which acknowledges Greater Dandenong's diversity and all community members living in harmony.</p>

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			Council is also involved in issues of family violence and plays an important role in raising awareness. Road safety is also high on Council's safety priority list. Social media is also a safety issue as it is becoming more concerning as it engages more young people. Council works in a number of ways with the community to enhance community safety.
Resident	When there are a number of men playing that throwing game there is no other problem with safety issues because the Afghan men are there and it deters the prostitutes. But the real and important problem is keeping that area as a conservation area, for instance the billabong area needs attention.	Sharon Sykes	That issue is important to Council as well.
Resident	Why are the toilets closed at Fotheringham Oval?	Oliver Vido	I will follow that up for you.
Resident	I have spoken to Council about this previously. If you wish to use the facilities there you can contact Council beforehand and they will open them for set times.	Inspector Bruce Kitchen	You need to be cautious about leaving toilets open all the time because they can attract bad behaviours.
Resident	People could also use the toilets at Yarraman railway station.		
Cr Matthew Kirwan	I will ask Russel Tait to give us a brief summary of what has occurred at Council in relation to Hemmings Street shopping strip post the community co-design exercise in that area	Russell Tait/Cr Matthew Kirwan	<p>We undertook a consultation in that area and received back in excess of 100 submissions from which we ranked the suggested improvements that people felt should occur along the strip and some have already been actioned. Eg, new bins including a recycling bin, renewed line markings and improved lighting. The improved lighting has a new colour, which was changed over to bright white halo lighting.</p> <p>A number of other larger items were proposed such as CCTV. This was then considered by Council but installation was deferred pending further investigation/review of all small shopping centres as well as other sites that are asking for CCTV. However since then there has been a 2015-16 budget item approved to investigate and cost out the possibility of putting CCTV in this street.</p> <p>Also, in regards to the seating we are waiting for the finalisation of the Medical Centre because putting seating outside it may be better than putting seating outside IGA.</p>
Resident	What about the Exeloo there? It always needs cleaning and some form of maintenance. The state of it is disgusting.	Cr Matthew Kirwan	We will report that but we also need you to ring in to our customer service officers at any time and report any items that need attention.

Speaker	Comments
Cr Matthew Kirwan	We will wrap up the formal aspect of the Forum but I invite you to stay for a light supper and informal discussion and question time with those that are here and remind you to complete a feedback form.
Mayor Sean O'Reilly	Thankyou to Victoria Police, the panel and staff and thank you to the community for your interest and giving your time. Council does get a constant flow of resident feedback and when you give us feedback you should get a response. If you do not get a response, Councillors should know about that so do not hesitate to contact us, your representatives.
Vikki Home, Resident and employee of Dandenong West Primary School (as Community Hub Leader)	Thank you to everyone who came tonight. I am so glad I live in Dandenong and people are willing to listen to our concerns.

Formal meeting closed at 8.36pm. (Informal discussion closed at 9.25pm)

Addendum to Minutes - Actions Taken Since Forum:

- **Sutherland Road dumped rubbish** – Council officers inspected the area after the forum and found a microwave in Sutherland Road and a broken cabinet outside of the old Mazda site in Princes Hwy. Both have been collected and disposed of.
- **Dallimore Street, Noble Park** – Upon inspection Council officers found the site relatively clean with only a couple of bottles and a McDonalds drink container. Council's contractor does clean this site on a Monday and Friday. We have requested the contractor to attend the site early in the morning as they are currently attending the site later in the day, and Council's Cleansing Team will monitor the site with a view to increasing the frequency of cleaning if needed.
- **Hemmings Street Exeloo** – Council officers attended the site to find it fairly clean and attended again the following day and it was not as clean, We have discussed the issue with Council's contractor who will monitor the site more closely. It is currently cleaned between 6.30am and 7.00am and then between midday and 1.00pm each day. It will be monitored in the afternoon with a view to adding an afternoon clean.