

17<sup>th</sup> July 2020



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**Philip Seccombe TD**  
Police and Crime Commissioner

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you with a further set of updates with regards to the multiagency action plan created at the end of May 2020 to tackle issues concerning Earlswood Lakes.

My role as Police and Crime Commissioner is not one that involves operational policing which means that I am not in a position to directly act on the issues that have been brought to my attention. However, I have endeavoured throughout this process to fulfil my role as a representative of the residents of Warwickshire by engaging with Warwickshire Police and key partner organisations.

As the issues raised are diverse and solutions to them required action by different agencies with relevant jurisdictions in each case, I facilitated a multi-agency case conference on the 29<sup>th</sup> May. Present at this meeting were representatives of Warwickshire Police, West Midlands Police, Mr Nadhim Zahawi MP, Stratford District Council, Warwickshire County Council, the Parish Council, and the Canal and Riverside Trust. I wrote to correspondents on the 6<sup>th</sup> June to outline the action plan that had been agreed by this group.

To recap, concerns relating to Earlswood Lakes can be broadly categorised as follows:

- Speeding, street racing and bad road user behaviour on Malthouse Lane, Valley Road, the Causeway and surrounding areas;
- Anti-social behaviour, in particular noise levels, public drinking, verbal abuse towards residents, late-night gatherings on the artificial “beaches”;
- Drugs activities including taking, dealing and littering of paraphernalia;
- Illegal parking;
- Failure to adhere to social distancing rules during lockdown.

Many different agencies have been working hard since the meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> May to tackle the above issues. Please see a summary of key updates from these partners as follows

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### **The Parish Council:**

The Parish Council and Earlswood and Forshaw Heath Residents' Association formed a joint working party on June 16th. The working party agreed that it was important to identify what local people wanted and so have consulted residents via a survey on various proposals on how to alleviate their concerns. This survey has been sent to residents living on the roads affected i.e. Malthouse Lane, Cloweswood Lane, Small Lane, Springbrook Lane and Valley Road, including Earlsmere and Wood Lane.

Stratford District Council conducted this survey independently and the Parish Council has provided funds for them to do so. The deadline for submitting completed surveys was the 13<sup>th</sup> July, and full results will be made available to the working party once they have been processed by Stratford District Council in due course.

The working party will then recommend options for consideration based upon the results of the survey.

For further information on the content of the survey and its results when available, please contact the Parish Council directly.

### **Warwickshire County Council Road Safety Team:**

The WCC Road Safety Team have suggested a variety of possible measures to address parking and road concerns including (but not limited to) extension of double yellow lines, temporary closure of the causeway, and a possible reduction in speed limit.

The WCC Road Safety Team's actions going forwards will depend on the survey results and what they indicate about residents' preferences for engineering and parking measures.

WCC have also carried out site visits to explore the level of and enforce against illegal parking.

For further information on the possible parking and road engineering measures being considered for Earlswood Lakes, please contact the Warwickshire County Council Road Safety Team directly.

### **Stratford District Council:**

Stratford District Council have been liaising with Warwickshire Police about the possibility of introducing a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for Earlswood to address certain specified behaviours. A PSPO allows Stratford-on-Avon District Council to prohibit specified activities, and/or require certain things to be done by people engaged in particular activities, within a defined public area. Those that breach the order without reasonable excuse commit an offence.

A PSPO is one of a range of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) tools that can be used under the ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Before introducing a PSPO a number of considerations must be made which relate to the evidence of the behaviours taking place and the impact, the necessity tests for a PSPO, consulting relevant stakeholders and meeting legal thresholds.

An initial meeting was arranged between Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwickshire Police to conduct an initial exploration of the above considerations at the end of June this year. A number of actions will be progressed to establish the evidence base for the order. This is an ongoing piece of work.

With regards to CCTV of the area, a number of site visits have taken place by Stratford-on-Avon District Council staff around Earlswood to consider the installation of temporary CCTV cameras. Unfortunately the necessary technical and feasibility considerations are not present for a mobile CCTV camera. Work is underway to address the technical issues with Warwickshire County Council. However, other temporary CCTV options are being considered. Permanent CCTV is an option which has been looked at already for some time. There are technical challenges in meeting the requirements for such a camera but several options have been identified which may be workable and will now be subject to consideration before a public proposal is made.

Concerning general littering and the presence of drug paraphernalia, Stratford District Council is actively considering options on how to address this going forwards.

Please contact Stratford District Council directly if you require further information on the above.

#### **Warwickshire Police:**

The Safer Neighbourhood Team have liaised on a regular basis with various internal police resources, including the roads policing with regards to speed enforcement, and there is an operational response according to anticipated demand. The SNT coordinate the deployment of resources on a continual basis and the area is still benefitting from daily patrols and public engagement / reassurance, particularly at peak times. The issue continues to be a force priority and receives regular scrutiny from senior officers and Chief Officers.

Warwickshire Police remain in communication with Fire around the continuation of ASBIT (Anti-Social Bike Intervention Teams) patrols and to share information when we perceive an increased risk of unauthorised fires.

They have continued to engage with Warwickshire County Council around issues of illegal parking and corroborated anecdotal evidence with analysis of the firm data held around demand times to ensure an accurate report.

There has also been significant collaboration between Warwickshire Police and West Midlands Police due to the geographic location of Earlswood Lakes crossing into both force areas. Intelligence and information is appropriately shared on a regular basis and patrols coordinated to maximise high-visibility police presence. This joined up strategy will continue long term. Regular police presence is also helpful in encouraging adherence to lockdown guidance and social distancing rules as even though much remains guidance rather than law, police presence can discourage breaches.

With regards to the possibility of a High Court Injunction against car cruising, this remains an option going forwards however it is anticipated that provision for anti-social use of vehicles will be made if the PSPO manifests. Extensive work is taking place with Stratford District Council to explore this.

Drug and alcohol misuse has been a concern voiced by residents living around Earlswood Lakes and Warwickshire Police are cognisant of this. Though alcohol possession and use is not in itself illegal and many reports of drug use have not been substantiated it is important that the community feel safe and that visitors do not misuse these substances. In the immediate term, officers and PCSOs have been briefed to make robust use of their powers of seizure, confiscation, and/or arrest where applicable. They are aware that the area has been used for antisocial drinking and drugs activity and they are vigilant and pro-active in their use of powers. Section 34 ASB&C Act dispersal powers have also been used effectively during a particularly large gathering at the lakes where attendees were intoxicated.

In the long term, if a PSPO is successfully implemented it would provide extra enforcement and dispersal powers and would be a significant tool for Warwickshire Police and partners to use against many of the issues at Earlswood Lakes, including drugs and alcohol misuse. Warwickshire Police continue to work with Stratford District Council to progress this option.

### **Canal and Riverside Trust**

The Canal and River Trust (CRT) has engaged the services of a private security firm for the car park and surrounding area of the lakes between the hours of 18:00 to 23:59 each day. This is to help support the local SNT and residents by discouraging ASB by visitors to the area. They have been effective so far. Their services are engaged until the end of July when this is due to be reviewed.

The CRT have also engaged two agency workers enabling them to have an active member of staff seven days a week. They will be there to carry out maintenance tasks, resolve safety issues, advise the public, support the residents and discourage anti-social behaviour.

Residents will hopefully have noticed that the water levels at the lakes have increased and subsequently the artificial beaches, and the anti-social crowds they were drawing, have reduced.

Please contact the Canal and Riverside Trust for further information on the above actions, if required.

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I am very pleased with the level of engagement we have received from these partners, and I hope you can see that all are taking your concerns seriously and working hard to resolve them. Clearly there is no silver bullet to the problems being experienced by residents around Earlswood Lakes. It is a popular beauty spot to which visitors from across the region are free to travel and spend their time, and often do. The problems caused by the volume of visitors, compounded by poor or illegal behaviour by some, and further enhanced by lockdown restrictions since March are not easily solved. It is very encouraging to see such a high level of engagement from partners doing their part to address them.

I hope this update addresses the queries and concerns you have raised with my office. Solutions will take time to enact but I hope in the meantime that this update is reassuring, and that you feel listened to and duly represented. If you have further concerns or issues

you wish to raise then I would encourage you to get in touch with the relevant agencies and organisations directly.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip Secombe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and a long, sweeping underline.

**Philip Secombe TD**

Police and Crime Commissioner