



Kingshurst Parish Council

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Clerk to the Council: David Hinsley

31st October 2020

Open letter to the Chief executive, Mr Nick Page, and the Leader, Councillor Ian Courts, of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council from Kingshurst Parish Council

Re: Food poverty in the borough.

Councillors of KPC have been discussing food poverty within Kingshurst and the wider North Solihull communities continually of late, and sadly feel compelled to have to write to SMBC out of desperation to try and seek a resolution to hunger and food poverty, of which we feel SMBC has been severely lacking. Principally we are asking for Free School Meals or equivalent for all those in need during school closures, for now, and the foreseeable future:

We scarcely need to mention statistics regarding the levels of deprivation in the North of the Borough, and the disparity in health and well-being between those in the North and the South of the Borough. Within the North, Kingshurst is disproportionately affected due to high density of young people, with three Primary schools and two Academy schools. These youths are recognised as largely coming from lower income families, or those dependent upon state support.

Even prior to the current pandemic, Kingshurst was abundantly aware of food poverty in the Parish, with a massive need to provide free food in the form of hot food vans, food boxes, lunch clubs and over 100 food parcel deliveries per week to our most desperate. Of course this has now been compounded, by Covid causing many of our families to suffer from Furlough, need to shield, redundancy etc. – Much of this fantastic care provision was provided, not by SMBC, but by voluntary organisations and volunteers, and even local businesses.

Since the enforced closure of “The Space”, we have even had to reduce our provision due to lack of facilities, and are currently reduced to sending packages out in a solitary van (thanks to volunteers again).

Our community seems at breaking point and we are currently seeing an astonishingly large number of people literally “crying out” for assistance. THIS CAN NOT BE SOLVED BY THE GOODWILL OF VOLUNTEERS AND SMALL SCALE LOCAL SUPPORT!

We DO appreciate that SMBC is not the cause or even SOLE responsibility for finding a solution, but we do believe SMBC is in a great position to deliver a real, positive solution; working with KPC, voluntary agencies and our wonderful community volunteers to greatly ease, or even eradicate this totally avoidable social tragedy.

In essence we plead:

- SMBC Lobby central government to provide Free School Meals throughout school closures.
- Until such time that central government provide this, SMBC provide local support to ensure Free School Meals to ALL WHO NEED
- Expedite the opening of The Space, even just for the resumption and upscale of Food Deliveries/Sorting and Dispatching
- Examine other ways of working with KPC and our communities, in order to stamp out hunger (food banks, food donations, referrals etc.)

Of course we realise that Local Government are struggling financially during these exceptional times, but we do believe that the cost involved are a price worth paying, not just morally, but would be a wise investment to offset the increased costs of antisocial behaviour caused by potentially desperate, employment disadvantaged and disaffected future generations.

We assure you that we; Kingshurst Parish Council, will sit down and work closely with SMBC to discuss and deliver ANY POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS to this crisis.

Yours faithfully



Alvin Follows
Chairman of Kingshurst Parish Council



David Hinsley
Clerk to Kingshurst Parish Council

Copies to:

- Mr Andy Street West Midlands Metro Mayor
- The Rt Hon Saqib Bhatti M.P for Meriden
- Cllr. Steve Cauldwell leader of the Green group SMBC
- Cllr. Ade Adeyemo leader of the Liberal Democrat group SMBC
- Cllr. Flo Nash leader of the Labour group SMBC
- The Solihull Observer