

Walsall

Personal Details:

Name: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]
Postcode: [REDACTED]
Organisation Name: (Member of the public)

Comment text:

Related subject: Chuckery, which straddles Paddock and St Matthews Ward

I live in a distinct area of Walsall called The Chuckery. This can be seen on Google maps, see attachment. The area is defined and contained within the following boundaries; Broadway North, Lower Rushall Street, Sutton Road, Ablewell Street/Springhill Road. Currently the Chuckery lies in two wards; Paddock Ward and St Matthews. The two main areas that make up Paddock Ward are Park Hall/Gillity and The Chuckery. Park Hall/Gillity is a distinct area. This estate was built in the 1950's/60's. In contrast, The Chuckery is a combination of Victorian terraced and semi detached housing and social housing. The Chuckery also contains a significant number of either working or redundant factory units. The two areas are very different from each other.

The boundary dividing Paddock from St Matthews Ward runs down the middle of Charlotte Street, where I live. Odd numbers in Charlotte Street are in St Matthews Ward, Even numbers are in Paddock Ward. There are additional differences between the two wards.

(Crime): Park Hall/Gillity has an active Street Watch group, supported by the Ward councillors.

<https://www.expressandstar.com/news/crime/2021/11/23/were-not-replacing-the-police-we-are-the-eyes-and-ears-for-our-community-says-walsall-app-group/>

The group has been credited with helping to reduce crime through resident patrols which focus on "unfamiliar vehicles" coming into the community and following them to deter them. The crime in this area tends to be theft of vehicles and burglary, perpetuated by persons from outside the community.

In contrast, crime in Chuckery is to do with drug dealing, littering and fly tipping, speeding, pavement parking. The perpetrators live within the community. Agencies often see this as low level crime. However this impacts on quality of life and degrades the area. Attempting to deter perpetrators via a Street Watch patrol is problematic as it puts the participant at risk of being targeted.

(Political issues with a small p): Car parking and available space is a major issue in Chuckery. Issues that effect one side of Charlotte Street invariably effect both sides. In 2018 Charlotte street applied for Resident Permit Parking. This is an arduous process, for example the initial survey conducted by residents had to meet the 80% in favour threshold which is the same as the Council's own consultation exercise. See attachment. We gave our survey to an elected member in St Matthews Ward who said he would take this forward to an Officer in Highways who deals with such applications. However, our application was derailed when the elected member included neighbouring Rowley Street as a "combined" application. Residents of Rowley Street, at that time hadn't conducted a survey. We feel that the elected member understood that should Charlotte Street be successful there would be a detrimental impact on Rowley Street, through displacement of vehicles. The Highways Officer looked at Rowley Street which did not meet the strict criteria due to the high number of dropped kerbs. A few months later, having not heard from Highways about our application we discovered the truth and then had to start our application from the beginning. The point here is there was a conflict of interest for this elected member, who represents St Matthews.

We experienced similar conflicts of interest when a small parcel of land on the junction of Charlotte Street/Walhouse Road was earmarked for development by Walsall Council. The land is on the St Matthews Ward boundary. The impact of the development would be on Paddock Ward and St Matthews Ward residents. Due to the action of residents this land is now protected with Village Green Status and is now called Chuckery Pocket Park. I note that this park is not identified on your interactive map although the green space in Chuckery Road is. You can see the Pocket Park on Google Maps, street view.

(Anti-Social Behaviour): A significant number of Chuckery residents are motivated to tackle problems and have attended community meetings to address concerns. The fact that our area is divided weakens our voice and creates obstacles. Which elected representatives should attend? `Which elected representative should take the lead? Within which Ward should the meeting be held? This shouldn't be a problem should it? But it is!

(Politics with a big P): Paddock Ward is always and has always been represented by Conservative Councillors. It is highly unlikely that this will change. It is an unfair arrangement for any Political Party to have a guaranteed electoral outcome. As a Chuckery resident I do not feel represented and do not feel that elected members are truly accountable. Having said that I know that many Wards overwhelmingly favour one political party or another. If this was evened up so there was fair competition the people of this borough may get a better quality representative than they do presently. Candidates would have to earn every vote.

As someone who wants to be involved in my community I feel disenfranchised and frustrated because of the situations that occur in my area. Whilst having The Chuckery in one Ward will not immediately solve its problems it would mean that we could have one voice and try and resolve our unique issues.

Finally, looking at the Ward map I can see that other Wards have similar problems. For example, why is part of Birchills included in Pleck? The Wolverhampton Road, a dual carriage way and main artery convincingly divides the two areas. With a little bit of research and work I'm sure Ward boundaries can be adjusted to give the people of the borough a better deal.

Attached Documents:

- Chuckery.doc
- E&S article about Park Hall Street Watch.doc

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