

FREEMEN COMMUNITY MEETING

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:00 pm, Wednesday, 10 June 2009

Held at: Aylestone Leisure Centre, Saffron Lane

Who was there:

Councillor Dale Keeling

Councillor Bill Shelton



INFORMATION SHARING – ‘CAROUSEL’ SESSION

The following information stands were sited in the room. Members of the public visited the stands and were given an opportunity to meet Councillors, Council staff and the local Police and to bring enquiries and raise and issues.

Ward Councillors

Regeneration and Transport

Advice and information about highways issues.

City Wardens

The local city warden talked to residents about their concerns and work being done in the area.

Britain in Bloom

Information about Leicester’s plans for this competition this year.

Police

Residents could discuss issues with members of the neighbourhood policing team.

Housing

John Thomson, Neighbourhood Housing Manager was present to discuss issues with tenants.

Fit & Active Families

A chance to find out more about their work and the Ministry of Food project.

At the conclusion of this informal session members of the public were invited to take their seats and take part in the formal session of the meeting.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Shelton was appointed as Chair for the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Keeling sent apologies for the first part of the meeting due to a Special Olympics event.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors were asked to declare any interests they may have in the business on the agenda and/or if Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

Both Councillors Shelton and Keeling declared that they had a personal interest in the budget item relating to the Saffron Fete, as they held positions on the Fete Committee. As the matter was of no personal financial benefit to them, and was for the benefit of the community as a whole, they remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion.

4. RECORD OF PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

that the record of the Freemen Community Meeting, held on 4 March 2009, is correct.

5. SPECIAL OLYMPICS

(This item was taken out of agenda order.)

Lou Holland, from the Special Olympics Organising Team, gave a presentation regarding the upcoming Special Olympics in Leicester, which was a tremendous opportunity for Leicester, as host, to make it a memorable occasion for the athletes and families, and also to promote itself as a tourist location.

Lou said that several local venues were being used, including Aylestone Pool, Grace Road Cricket Ground, and Sir Jonathan North and Lancaster Schools. A programme of events was available on the Council's website and would be publicised in the local press. It was to be televised by ITV.

She outlined the volunteering opportunities, explaining that training would be given, plus a ticket to the opening ceremony, cheap bus travel and free food. People could also buy tickets for the opening ceremony or spectate for free at the sporting events.

Lou stated that a schools' education programme had been devised and a lot of work was being done to use the Special Olympics as a way of breaking down preconceived ideas about people with learning difficulties. A souvenir book had also been produced and an online shop was selling branded merchandise.

Residents discussed the recently-publicised shortfall in fundraising, asking why the National Lottery or other relevant organisations could not support it, rather than the Council. Lou said that all money received would be used for the games and focused on the athletes and families, so it would not be wasted.

Councillor Shelton said that he had noticed lots of enthusiasm for the Games and encouraged people to get groups involved, as it would create a lasting memory.

6. HIGHWAYS

Jeff Miller, Service Director, Regeneration, Highways and Transportation, gave a presentation on highways issues in the City and the Freeman Ward.

He had identified what had been highlighted as main issues at previous community meetings. These included parking provision and obstruction, speeding and road safety, public transport, and condition of roads and footways. He explained how the work of the team fitted into main Council strategies and gave an indication of the extent of the work they were responsible for, including roads, footways, lights, traffic lights, highway trees and car parks.

Jeff explained how the team could help with the priorities identified. Parking could be dealt with by a possible parking scheme, verge hardening, laybys, enforcement and highway design. Ways of tackling speeding and safety included speed surveys, vehicle activated signs, safety cameras, traffic calming, pedestrian crossings and lower speed limits. It was noted that Leicester was the first city to roll out 20mph speed limits on residential roads. Making public transport more appealing and accessible was a priority; options included a new bus terminal, and looking into a tram service. Other measures were linking traffic signals, junction improvements, partnerships with bus companies, concessionary fares, Star Trak and park and ride.

Jeff stated that roads and footways in the city had been assessed as in fair condition. Work was ongoing to improve them. Highway inspections were being done, and the Council had introduced a rapid response team to deal with any dangers that were reported. There was also the Council's winter service which gritted the roads. He reported that the frosts this winter had led to an increase in pot holes across the country. The Council would deal with any that were classed as a danger.

It was noted that a petition was received from residents in Rutland Avenue. Jeff said that he would take this back to the Council and put it through the appropriate channels.

The meeting discussed a potential parking scheme, asking when residents would be balloted and for details about the cost, issues about visitors and multiple car ownership. Jeff replied that a detailed plan would be drawn up and shown in a public meeting before balloting. The scheme would have to be approved by a majority vote to go ahead. The scheme could be tailored to the needs of the area, as every scheme was different. A permit would cost £25 a year. This covered the running cost only, and was not profit-making. Councillor Shelton said that the proposed scheme

centred on the Aylestone side, rather than Saffron. He asked that once letters were sent out, that a public meeting be held at Aylestone Leisure Centre.

The following questions were raised by residents and answered by Jeff or Councillor Shelton:

1) *Can we have a crossing at the top of Wigston Lane by the school?*

Jeff replied that if residents present a petition it would be assessed and the Traffic Impact Team would look at whether it was suitable. The Council had a legal obligation to reduce traffic accidents, although they had the second safest roads in the country.

2) *Why is the gate always locked on the footpath by the Linwood Centre on to Meadow Gardens? The vandalism only happens at night.*

Councillor Shelton said they were aware of the situation and were looking into it.

3) *How are traffic wardens deployed? We've not seen one in this area?*

Jeff replied that Vinci Parking were contracted to this. They were asked to enforce mainly on main radial routes, such as Saffron Lane. He asked residents to let him know of any specific problem areas so that they could be blitzed.

7. LOCAL POLICING UPDATE

Jackie Berry, PCSO at Welford Road Local Policing Unit (LPU), gave an update on local policing issues. She introduced the Policing Pledge, a leaflet which outlined what could be expected of the LPU. She also gave details of local public meetings where residents could talk directly to officers.

Jackie stated that crime had reduced dramatically, although there were still issues with damage and graffiti. Graffiti was difficult to address, as it reappeared quickly. Work was being done with schools, and in identifying tags. An initiative had recently taken place to tackle underage drinking, which involved Police, Saffron Youth Project and City Wardens. It was possible that this could be extended to every Friday night. Councillor Shelton said that incidents of underage sales were often dealt with by the Licensing Committee. Some such cases in the city had been addressed by requiring all sold alcohol to have a sticker on showing where it was purchased, however, there were limitations with this.

Donna Stewart, PCSO for Aylestone, outlined the Aylestone LPU's priorities, which were building relationships with local shops and off licences, promoting "Challenge 21" and monitoring antisocial behaviour. Action was being taken regarding antisocial behaviour and underage drinking in the Saffron Road area and the Spinney on Montrose Road. Damage to vehicles had recently abated, and efforts were being made to raise awareness on keeping vehicles empty and locked in the summer. The LPU had recently launched Church Watch to reduce lead thefts. Donna also gave details of upcoming community consultation meetings.

Discussion took place regarding whether lighting bonfires was antisocial behaviour. Barbara Whithcombe, City Wardens Manager, said that incidents could be reported to the Pollution Team on 252 7000 who could investigate. It would only be enforceable if they were burning prohibited materials.

8. UPDATE ON WARD PRIORITIES AND WARD ACTION PLAN

Jerry Connolly, Member Support Officer, introduced the Ward Action Plan that had been devised at previous Freemen Community Meetings. He stated that this could now be updated to include investigation into a residents' parking scheme and to take into account issues that had arisen from a recent residents' MORI status survey.

John Thomson, Neighbourhood Housing Manager, gave a presentation on the status survey, highlighting Saffron's position as compared with other areas. The poll covered how people felt about a range of issues, including council housing, locality, perception of crime, problems with neighbours, litter, and experience of dealing with Council staff. (The survey can be viewed in detail on the Freemen Community Meeting page of the Council's website, www.leicester.gov.uk.)

It was agreed that the Ward Action Plan could be updated using this information.

9. COMMUNITY MEETING BUDGETS

Jerry Connolly, Member Support Officer, introduced applications for funding that had been received and they were discussed as follows:

Applications 1 and 2 – Act Up Young People's Theatre Company

Jenny Hoole from the Speakeasy Theatre Company gave a brief explanation of the aims and work of the group, stating that it offered performance opportunities for local young people. Among their activities, they were scheduled to perform at the Special Olympics opening ceremony.

It was noted that the Eyres Monsell Community Meeting had agreed to support half of the requested funding.

AGREED: that the Community Meeting recommends the approval of £1500 from the Ward Community Fund and £915 from the Community Cohesion Fund.

Application 3 – Ministry of Food Project 2

Ali Clements, Co-Ordinator of Fit and Active Families, gave a brief explanation of the Ministry of Food project, which aimed to educate parents how to cook healthily and cheaply, and then pass this knowledge on to two friends.

It was noted that the Eyres Monsell Community Meeting had agreed to support half of the requested funding.

AGREED: that the Community Meeting recommends the approval of £405 from the Community Cohesion Fund.

Application 4 – Mobility Scooter Scheme – Saffron Resource Centre

A brief explanation was given on the scheme and who it aimed to benefit. The scooters would be hired out to people who needed them temporarily or wanted to try them before buying one. Members of the public stated that if the meeting agreed to support the proposal, it should be available for all parts of the ward. This was confirmed.

It was noted that the proposal was also to be considered at a future Eyres Monsell Community Meeting.

AGREED: that the Community Meeting recommends the approval of £2,000 from the Ward Action Plan budget.

Application 5 – Saffron Fete Community Procession

Councillors Shelton and Keeling pointed out that they had an interest in this application, as members of the committee, but that, as there was no personal financial gain, they remained in the meeting.

It was noted that the procession got larger every year and was the main part of the Saffron Fete.

AGREED: that the Community Meeting recommends approval of £1,500 from the Ward Community Fund.

Application 6 – Lancaster Boys Choir Outfits

Councillor Keeling stated that he would not vote on the matter, as he had submitted the application on the choir's behalf.

It was noted that the cost was to be split between the Freeman and Knighton Wards.

AGREED: that the Community Meeting recommends approval of £400 from the Community Cohesion Fund.

Application 7 – Move and Groove music, dance and vocal project

Anand Bhatt from the Fairytale 18, 72 group gave a brief explanation of the project, stating that a performance was due to take place at the Curve Theatre. The meeting asked that, if funding was allocated, the project should be open to all parts of the ward. This was confirmed. For clarification it was noted that the funding would not be used for salaries, but would be used to buy in services.

AGREED; that the Community Meeting recommends the approval of £2,950 from the Ward Action Plan.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was to be held on 7 October 2009, venue to be confirmed.

11. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.