

Castle Community Meeting

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:30 pm, Wednesday, 24 March 2010

Held at: Hazel Primary School, Hazel Street

Who was there:

Councillor Phil Gordon
Councillor Patrick Kitterick
Councillor Lynn Senior



11. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Patrick Kitterick was Chair for the meeting.

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12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence. Councillor Gordon arrived after the start of the meeting.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors were asked to declare any interests that they may have in the business on the agenda.

Councillor Senior declared a personal interest in budget applications B5) Cultural Quarter Business Association – Music and Arts Festival – request for £6,900 to co-ordinate the event; and B6) Cultural Quarter Business Association – Cultural Quarter website and social networking – request for £3,500; as used to live in the area and still owns a property in the area.

Councillor Senior declared a personal interest in budget application B8) 25 years Celebration of a Sheltered Housing Scheme Being Open – request for £250 for catering costs; as she lived in the same square in which the scheme was located.

Councillor Senior declared a personal and prejudicial interest in budget application B12) Up-grading of street lighting in the St. George's area, as she owned a property in the area which would be affected by the lighting. She undertook to leave the room whilst this item was discussed.

14. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the Castle Community Meeting held on Tuesday 2 February 2010 were agreed as a correct record.

15. LOCAL POLICE SERVICES

PC Charles Edwards gave the meeting a brief presentation outlining recent changes to Police boundaries and current Policing priorities. He commented as follows:-

- Police staffing arrangements would now be set up to be aligned with the Castle Ward boundary.

- This would enable a better connection with other agencies such as the Council.
- Residents views on priorities for Policing in the ward were actively sought.
- There would be 16 beat officers on shift at any time in the ward – they should be actively visible on the streets.
- There would also be 22 (soon to be 23) Police Community Support Officers.
- There would be even more of a Police presence in the ward on Friday and Saturday evenings.
- Current priorities for the Castle ward were:-
 - Reducing street drinking and antisocial behaviour in the London Road / Conduit Street area.
 - Working with partner agencies to reduce cycle theft from the Universities.
 - Working with partner agencies to reduce littering and other waste issues around the Universities.
- There were monthly consultation meetings which people could attend to give their views on priorities, they could also do this at Community Meetings.
- There had been recent successes with arrests of burglars in the Riverside area and arrests for cycle theft, which had reduced as a result.

The Chair thanked Charles for his presentation.

16. LEICESTER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY WARDEN

Edmund Hockley, Community Warden at Leicester University gave the meeting an update on issues raised at the last meeting relating to noise / antisocial behaviour and bins / waste issues. Edmund was joined by his colleague, Craig Howard, Welfare Officer.

- All of the specific issues raised with Edmund had been dealt with mostly, completely successfully, following letters and visits.
- One particular problem led to an arrest and a fine.
- There had been meetings with the local City Warden to discuss issues relating to bins on streets – Edmund was now being contacted where these were student houses.
- Residents were welcomed to contact Edmund if they had any concerns with student houses regarding noise or bins / waste.
- Residents were also encouraged to contact Edmund if they had any suggestions for community projects / campaigns which students could become involved in.
- There was a ‘shush’ campaign with posters and events which would encourage students to think of their neighbours, and there was going to be a campaign to encourage students to keep their gardens tidy.
- Edmund also noted that efforts were still being made to encourage landlords to become accredited and registered with the University.

A resident queried about a student neighbour of hers who didn’t have access to the entry at the side of her house because the landlord hadn’t provided a key. Their bin was therefore kept on the street. Edmund commented that this was exactly the sort of issue he could help with and encouraged the resident to get in touch with him about the issue.

Another resident felt that there should be an opportunity to pass on compliments about students as well as complaints. She said that she had lived next to students for 10 years and never had any problems. She also felt that they enlivened an area and it would be worse off without them. Edmund thanked the resident for her comments and said that he would happily pass any compliments on.

The Chair thanked Edmund for coming along and noted that if people weren't sure which university any problem students attended, they were in regular contact with each other and could deal with any problem.

17. BUDGET

Francis Connolly, Member Support Officer gave the meeting a brief update on the current position with regard to the budget. He noted that before the meeting there was approximately £10,000 left in the budget.

Councillors noted that even if applications were not successful at this meeting, further applications for next year's budget could be made within two weeks in the new financial year.

A resident queried whether there had been any bids picked up from the Holy Trinity area with regard to Alleygates. The Chair commented that bids had not been received at this meeting but this was the sort of thing that the budget could fund. He also commented that a bid for play equipment could also be considered. Councillors noted that they would be attending a residents' meeting on the 12 April where this could be discussed further.

The following applications were considered and decided upon at the meeting:-

B1) Community Basketball Sessions – Publicity, equipment and coaching fees. The bid was for £1,345.

Councillors proposed that as the sessions would be taking place in the summer, this application would be considered in the new financial year after April. This was supported.

RESOLVED:

that the application be deferred until the new financial year.

B2) Children and Parent Alliance - Community Cultural Events. This was a bid for £1065.

Councillors proposed to part fund this application at £1000.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported and £1000 be allocated from the Community Cohesion Fund subject to final approval from the Cabinet

Lead for Front Line Service Improvement and Neighbourhoods and the Leader of the Council.

B3) Shama Women's Centre - for the balance towards a new burglar alarm system. This was a bid for £1,525.

Sudha Vemuri from the Centre spoke in support of the bid, noting that the organisation had been previously been burgled, therefore they needed to improve their burglar alarm system.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported and £1,525 be allocated from the Ward Action Plan Fund subject to final approval from the Cabinet Lead for Front Line Service Improvement and Neighbourhoods and the Leader of the Council.

B4) Leicester St George's Festival – Street Bunting. This was a bid for £1000.

Residents expressed their support for this application.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported and a sum £1,000 with £428 of this allocated from the Ward Community Fund and £572 from the Ward Action Plan Fund subject to final approval from the Cabinet Lead for Front Line Service Improvement and Neighbourhoods and the Leader of the Council.

B5) Cultural Quarter Business Association – Music and Arts Events. This was a bid for £6,900.

B6) Cultural Quarter Business Association – Cultural Quarter Website and Social Networking. This was a bid for £3,500.

Councillors explained that they didn't feel that they could support these bids. Partly this was because they were too big and partly because it wasn't clear how this would support the ward as a whole. Councillors wished to give greater support to the St. George's Festival in the first instance. They did however want to hold further discussions with the Business Association to see how any support could be given in future.

RESOLVED:

that the applications be rejected, but further discussions take place with the applicants to see if any future support can be given.

B7) SPARKS project playground – Playground Equipment. This was a bid for £2,199.

As this project was based at Sparkenhoe Primary School, it was felt that there would be more children using the playground from other wards. Therefore Councillors proposed to support the project to £1000.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported and £1,000 be allocated from the Ward Action Plan Fund subject to final approval from the Cabinet Lead for Front Line Service Improvement and Neighbourhoods and the Leader of the Council.

B8) Sheltered Housing Scheme, Bob Trewick House – 25 Year Celebration, Catering Costs. This was a bid for £250.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported and £250 be allocated from the Community Cohesion Fund subject to final approval from the Cabinet Lead for Front Line Service Improvement and Neighbourhoods and the Leader of the Council.

B9) Friends of Queens Road Allotments – Further Allotment Improvements. This was a bid for £815.

Heather... was present and spoke in support of the bid. These were privately owned allotments which didn't receive Council support. There had been problems with vandalism and work had been done to improve security. This application was made for further improvements. A 150 year old hedgerow was being reinstated, skips were being used to remove rubbish and wildlife measures were being installed.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported and £815 be allocated from the Ward Action Plan Fund subject to final approval from the Cabinet Lead for Front Line Service Improvement and Neighbourhoods and the Leader of the Council.

B10) Lunch Club for Elderly– Provision of lunches / ingredients. This was a bid for £2,250.

Mrs Saroj Seth from the Geeta Bhavan lunch club was present and spoke in support of the bid. She noted that the club was the only opportunity for old and frail people to get out of the house and associate with other people. It was open to anyone who lived in the ward from all communities. It wasn't just a lunch club, people from statutory agencies were invited to give talks.

Councillors proposed that they were minded to support the application, as long as the Club advertised its services to all elderly people in the ward, this would partly be done through by being included on the leaflets sent out to advertise the Community Meeting. Mrs Seth agreed to promote the lunch club across the ward.

RESOLVED:

(1) that the application be supported and a sum of £2,250 be allocated, with £1,901 of this from the Ward Action Plan Fund and £349 from the Community Cohesion Fund subject to final approval from the Cabinet Lead for Front Line Service

Improvement and Neighbourhoods and the Leader of the Council; and

- (2) that the application be supported on the basis that efforts are made to promote the Lunch Club to elderly people across the ward.

B11) Leicester Secular Society – ‘Castle Together’ – the development of Secular Hall to become a community centre. This was a bid of £700.

Councillors proposed to reject this application at the current time as it was felt that it wasn't clear how the proposals would benefit the Castle Ward residents. It was felt that further discussions were needed to ensure that the benefits of any funding could be targeted at the Ward.

Allan Hayes from the Secular Society informed the meeting that it was intended hold more meetings like a recent event where people from lots of different backgrounds brought food from their culture. The rooms would be available cheaply for people from all different backgrounds. The Chair commented that it was no reflection on the good work that was being done, but the fact that it was being made available for the whole city, not just the Castle Ward.

RESOLVED:

that the application be rejected at this time to allow for further discussions to take place to see how the ward can fully benefit from any funding.

B12) St. Andrews Play Association – Installation of Fire Alarm System. This was a bid for £1000.

Stephen Ashley from the Play Association was present and spoke in support of the application. He noted that the Association had never had a fire alarm system. They would normally spend money on maintenance on the ball court, but they had it replaced this year with external funding so were able to match fund any funding from Community Meeting for a burglar alarm.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported and £1000 be allocated from the Ward Action Plan Fund subject to final approval from the Cabinet Lead for Front Line Service Improvement and Neighbourhoods and the Leader of the Council.

Councillor Senior left the room for consideration of the following item.

B13) Upgrading of Lighting in the St. George's Area – Installation of improved 'white' lighting rather than existing yellow sodium lighting. This bid was for £3,450.

The Chair commented that this white lighting was brighter, therefore people felt safer as a result. PC Charles Edwards supported this new lighting.

Councillors proposed to part fund this application from the remainder of the funding available in the current financial year and the rest from the next financial year.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported and £1,282 be allocated from the current financial year and £2,168 be allocated from the 2010/11 financial year; this to be funded from the Ward Action Plan Fund subject to final approval from the Cabinet Lead for Front Line Service Improvement and Neighbourhoods and the Leader of the Council.

A resident queried about a condition being included on all successful bids to show that the money had been successfully spent. The Member Support Officer explained that there were verification procedures, including the recent introduction of a form which needed completion on completion of the project and receipts were required as proof. People who receive money were also encouraged to attend meetings and report back.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A number of issues were discussed as other business.

Disabled Persons Day Centre

A resident enquired about facilities for disabled people now that the Fosse Day Centre no longer existed next to the Tigers' ground. The Chair was unaware of the details of current disabled adult day provision and recommended that the resident leave her details with officers and a response would be provided.

Unauthorised Car Park - Former Leicester City Football Club Site

A resident expressed concern about the unauthorised car park which had opened on the site of the former Leicester City Football Club. This was causing a range of problems for residents, particularly with traffic on match days.

The Chair explained that the car park was set up illegally, but Planning Officers were not taking action immediately because the proprietor had indicated that they would be submitting a retrospective planning application to legitimise the car park. The Chair recognised residents' concerns and undertook to follow the matter up if a planning application was not submitted and ensure that officers enforced a stop notice on the proprietor. Further if a planning application was submitted, all the Councillors undertook to oppose it on behalf of residents.

Residents raised further concern about flyposters advertising the car park in the local area. The Chair commented that this would be raised with the local City Warden to look into the problem.

Skatepark in Victoria Park

A resident enquired whether work had commenced on the skatepark planned for Victoria Park, as it was thought that work was due to commence in March. Francis

Connolly had sought an update on this and was told that it would start in the spring. The Chair asked that the resident be provided with a detailed update.

Eastern Boulevard

A resident noted that there was demolition of a factory building taking place on Eastern Boulevard. It was queried what would be built in its place. The Chair reported that a planning application had been submitted for student accommodation.

Residents expressed a number of concerns that the area was becoming too heavily focussed on students and that this led to a poorer quality of life for long-term residents. The Chair commented that the Council had been overruled by the planning inspector where it had previously turned down student accommodation planning applications. There were rules set down by the government which allowed these applications to go ahead. DeMontfort University had also objected to a number of the developments by private developers near to their buildings.

The Chair asked that there be an item at the next meeting on Use Class Orders, which is legislation that was being brought in. This put further requirements on landlords to seek approval for rented houses of more than three people who were unrelated.

Allotment land between Aylestone Road / Saffron Lane

A resident expressed disappointment that a previous allotment site which was located between Aylestone Road and Saffron Lane had remained derelict for a number of years. It was thought that this land was previously allocated for a road that was never built. Previous tenants had been told to leave and there was no alternative sites in the local area.

The Chair agreed that there were no sites in the immediate area, but when the allotments were closed down originally, they weren't as popular as they are now. He also commented that he could provide details, if requested, of a scheme run by St. Andrews Tenants Association which provided allotments on a site off Narborough Road.

Grass Verge next to Tiger's Way

A resident expressed concern about a patch of land adjacent to Tiger's Way, which the Council had planted with bulbs, but these had been ruined by rugby fans parking on it.

Another resident informed the meeting that the Council had changed the status of the piece of land and were now able to ticket cars which parked on it. This had pretty much solved the problem.

Lettings Signs

Comments were raised about the problem of lettings signs blighting local streets because they were very common and were kept up outside houses for an unnecessary long time. The Chair agreed that this was a problem as it advertised student houses for potential burglars. He requested that this issue be included on the discussion on 'Use Class Orders' at the next meeting.

19. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.00pm.