

Castle Community Meeting

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:30 pm, Thursday, 9 September 2010

Held at: Town Hall, Town Hall Square, City Centre

Who was there:

Councillor Neil Clayton

Councillor Patrick Kitterick

Councillor Lynn Senior

INFORMATION SHARING – ‘INFORMATION FAIR’ 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 service representatives.

Ward Councillors and General Information	Licensing Policy Consultation
City Wardens	Residents Parking Consultation

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.

FORMAL SESSION

13. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Kitterick was Chair for the meeting.

Councillor Neil Clayton was introduced to the meeting as it was his first Community Meeting as a Councillor for the Castle Ward.

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Senior declared a general personal interest because her partner worked in the Highways and Transport Division at the Council, this was in case any highways matters arose in the meeting.

Councillor Senior also declared a personal interest in budget application B1, Queens Road Traders Association, as her employer had a shop premises on Queens Road.

16. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the Castle Community Meeting held on Thursday 22 July were agreed as a correct record.

17. REVIEW OF THE STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY CONSULTATION

Rachel Hall, Licensing Team Manager gave the meeting a presentation about the Council's current review of licensing policy. Her presentation covered the following areas:-

- What the licensing Policy covers – alcohol, entertainment, late night refreshment.
- Details of the Council's powers in relation to the 2003 Act.
- An outline of the four licensing objectives, (prevention of crime, public safety, prevention of nuisance and protecting children from harm) which were the basis of all policy rules and decisions taken in relation to the policy.
- Responsible authorities, who they were, (ie Police, Planning Authority) and their role.
- Interested Parties, who they were, (ie local residents & business owners) and their role.
- Some details about the licensing policy, how it could be altered and it's limits.
- The methods of consultation and what was being asked.

Residents could get further involved in the consultation in the following ways:-

- Filling in the consultation form at www.leicester.gov.uk/consultations

- Contacting the licensing team on 0116 252 8555 or by email licensing@leicester.gov.uk
- Writing to Licensing
New Walk Centre
Welford Place
LE1 6ZG

Councillor Senior asked Rachel to explain the difference between the Licensing regime and the Planning regime.

Rachel explained that whilst they both dealt with the same issues, ie opening hours for a pub, they did it in different ways. Licensing focussed purely on the licensing objectives and Planning could look at wider issues ie the number of pubs in a street. There were separate enforcement procedures for both regimes. Rachel explained that it was a bit like driving a car, ie you need a driving license and road tax.

A resident enquired about enforcement powers in relation to opening hours.

Rachel explained that it wasn't possible to zone an area so that all establishments closed at a specific time, each application would need to be considered separately on its merits. Once an establishment had its license in place, enforcement action could be taken if it broke the terms of its license, but clear evidence would be needed.

Councillor Kitterick asked Rachel to explain the 'review' process.

Rachel said that this was where one of the responsible authorities or interested parties could ask that the Council review the licenses of a premises. It was then advertised for 28 days, that this would be taking place, and after about 6 weeks a Licensing Hearing would take place. At this meeting, Councillors could decide to either: do nothing; modify the license, suspend the license, remove the designated premises supervisor or licensable activities, or revoke the license.

A resident enquired whether licensing powers could be used to encourage different types of establishments in different areas, ie some areas becoming more 'café society', perhaps this could be through the Best Bar None scheme.

Rachel said that this was being looked at as part of the policy review, but it wasn't quite clear at the moment how it could be achieved. It was only possible to make suggestions or encouragement in the policy, there could be no specifying of what types of establishments opened in certain places. Each application would need to be considered on its own merits.

Queries were raised about the advertising of license applications. It was felt that they weren't often displayed or visible, therefore people didn't get an opportunity to comment on the application.

Rachel commented that a check was done to see that all applications were advertised in the Leicester Mercury, but it wouldn't be possible, due to resources, to check that every application was properly advertised on site. Rachel further

commented that she could look into the possibility of providing the public with email copies / or posting the weekly list of licensing applications on the internet. Rachel further commented that she would have some concerns about the Council putting the signs up themselves as it was done in Westminster. They faced legal difficulties when it wasn't done correctly on one occasion. A resident commented that the public were legally allowed to take photos of where they felt that signs were not being displayed or any other transgression was taking place.

Councillor Kitterick asked those present if they had any views on 'cumulative impact'; where the number of establishments in a given area had reached it's natural limit.

Rachel explained that where an area was considered to have reached 'saturation' point, it was still possible for a new premises to open, but the applicant would have to demonstrate that the premises would cause no further detrimental impacts.

The following areas were proposed as having reached saturation point:-

- Queens Road
- Clarendon Park Road (for off licenses)
- Belvoir Street – (this area, it was felt was suffering a public nuisance from a loss of retail units and crime problems in the evening)
- Granby Street / London Road (for off licenses) – The number of off licenses, it was felt was adding to problems with regard to street drinking.
- No objections were raised to Churchgate retaining it's current saturation status.

Rachel said that proper evidence would need to be provided to enable these areas to become saturation zones. She encouraged residents to provide clear evidence prior to the end of September to support the proposed areas. In response to a further question from Councillor Clayton, Rachel explained that a natural boundary containing all relevant premises would be considered where saturation zones were implemented.

Local resident, John Coster said that, as part of his journalist role, he had been out in the city with the Street Pastors until 3am one weekend. He was hoping to arrange another similar event with the Police coming along. Residents were welcome to come along to help develop some evidence. He was contactable at editor@citizenseye.org.

There were a number of comments about the debate between noise and vibrancy in the city centre.

One resident felt that Leicester was a quiet city and it would be detrimental to the city if people didn't come in to the city centre, there needed to be vibrancy about the place. Councillor Kitterick commented that in some areas such as the Cultural Quarter, there needed to be more bars / restaurants to give the place more life. Another resident however said that living on New Walk meant that he was regularly awoken by younger people screaming, shouting and fighting late at night. He felt that bars were breaking the terms of the Best Bar None scheme by still serving people who were drunk. Another resident felt that the city had structurally changed; retail

was now heavily focussed on the Highcross. Lots of professional companies were leaving the city, meaning that bars were filling the void or lower quality retail was moving in.

The meeting was also informed that the Police currently had an operation in place until the end of September, called Operation Lea, where people could report aggressive begging in the city centre. Incidents could be reported on 07979 045 4581. Some residents had commented that this had proved successful.

A resident commented further that case studies could be undertaken on other cities where people were encouraged to visit the city and a vibrant and family atmosphere had been achieved, including on Sundays.

Summing up

Rachel Hall encouraged people to make further comments either by sending them in, via email or the Council's website.

A resident noted that everybody in the room seemed to be in agreement on what the issues were.

Councillor Kitterick, in summary noted that there were issues to be taken forward with regard to saturation zones, putting the best practices of bars into the policy and issues with regard to the display of license application notices.

Action	Officer Identified	Deadline
Take forward the comments of the meeting and respond as part of the Licensing Policy Consultation.	Rachel Hall	October 2010

18. CITY WARDENS

Craig Bodsworth, City Warden for the Castle Ward gave the meeting a brief presentation on the activities he and his colleagues were getting involved in.

- He was now getting more assistance from his colleagues in Knighton as well as two city centre wardens.
- The Bins on Streets project had now started, focussing on a couple of streets and it would be rolled out after fresher's week.
- He was getting involved in numerous events such as a tidy up on 23 September on Guildhall Lane with staff from HSBC bank, a community event for students at the Christchurch Rooms on Clarendon Park Road on Friday 1st October, the launch of a county wide dog fouling campaign on 20 September and various fresher's week events.
- In the last 2 years in the Ward, the following fines or fixed penalty notices had been handed out – 1 for dog issues, 35 for bins on streets, 31 for flyers, 1 for duty of care, 5 for flyposting and 522 for litter.

Francis Connolly updated the meeting about the issue of barbecues on Victoria Park. Using them on the park was contrary to local bylaws and officers were aware of the problems. A proposal to set aside an area where they would be allowed was raised with the friends of the park and was generally not favoured. This was currently done at Watermead Park, a report was being prepared on the results of this initiative. Extra patrols and other measures had been undertaken to tackle the issue at Victoria Park.

A resident commented that she couldn't see the problem with bins on streets. It was often difficult to manoeuvre bins down narrow alleys between houses and it restricted the use of back yards. Craig explained that generally, public opinion was opposed to bins on streets, also that bins were a hazard to blind people. Further he commented that where bins were set alight, as often happened, they could be dangerously close to gas pipes. Senior City Warden Andrew Moyse said that City Warden's did try to help solve difficult issues wherever possible. Councillor Kitterick asked the resident to speak to Craig and Andrew to see if there were any workable solutions.

In response to a question Craig confirmed that commercial premises were also looked into where bins were left on streets.

Action	Officer Identified	Deadline
Liaise with resident with regard to difficulties with getting bin in and out of her garden.	Craig Bodsworth / Andrew Moyse	October 2010

19. BUDGET

Councillor Kitterick, referred to an application for an autumn fair which was approved at the last meeting. He informed the meeting that this would now be a Christmas fair, being held on 5 December.

Francis Connolly, Member Support Officer updated the meeting on the current position with regard to the budget. There was £17,000 at the beginning of the year, there was now £11,000 left. The following applications had previously been approved:-

- £2168 – Lighting in St. Georges
- £3000 – Queens Road Autumn Fair (now Christmas Fair)
- £1000 – towards the Highfields area plan

The following applications were considered at this meeting:-

Queens Road Traders Association – request for £3800 for the installation of Christmas trees and decorative lighting.

A resident commented that a similar request was received last year and she felt that the decorations should be retained from one year to the next.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported and a sum of £3800 be allocated from the Ward Action Plan budget, subject to final approval from the Cabinet Lead for Front Line Service Improvement and Neighbourhoods and the Leader of the Council.

Leicester Sikh Centre Lunch Club – request for £2000 to support the provision of lunches.

It was noted that the club was open to all sections of the community, but it would be South Asian food that was served.

A resident commented that other lunch clubs had been refused funding from the Council and as this lunch club had received funding, it was suggested that they receive £1000. Councillors considered this suggestion.

RESOLVED:

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

The Centre Project – request for £3000 for building repairs, redecoration and improved facilities.

Eric Waneru from the project was at the meeting. He explained that the Centre project was a place where people who were isolated could get support, counselling and a hot meal.

Councillor Senior explained that the Councillors welcomed the work that the project did and felt that it was very worthwhile. They did however note that it was one of many worthwhile projects which were based in the ward, some of which had been turned down for funding. With projects such as this, it was often difficult to quantify how many residents from the ward were being supported by the project.

Councillors originally proposed to support the project at £400, but increased this to £500 and with a promise to consider a further application at the end of the financial year if there were remaining funds.

John Coster suggested that CitizensEye, the community news reporting website could put a message out to seek further funding for the project.

RESOLVED:

(1) that the application be supported and a sum of £500 be allocated from the Ward Community Fund budget, subject to final approval from the Cabinet Lead for Front Line Service Improvement and Neighbourhoods and the Leader of the Council; and

(2) that consideration will be given to a further application if there is funding available at the end of the financial year.

Holy Trinity Area

Some residents expressed a concern that plans for alley gates and guttering in the Holy Trinity area hadn't come forward. Councillor Kitterick commented that he had been speaking to an officer from the planning department about this, but she had now left the Council. He said that it wasn't possible for him to put in the application and that it would need someone to lead on the application. He said that Councillors were supportive of an application for alley gates. Francis Connolly, Member Support Officer agreed to speak to the residents to look into how the application could be taken forward.

Action	Officer Identified	Deadline
Speak to residents about progressing an application for alley gates in the Holy Trinity area.	Francis Connolly	September 2010

20. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.