

Castle Community Meeting

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

**6:30 pm, Thursday, 20 January 2011
Held at: New Walk Museum, New Walk**

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	Police Issues
Community Safety	City Centre Car Parking Proposals
City Warden	Home Energy Saving

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

21. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Neil Clayton was Chair for the meeting.

22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor Senior declared a general personal interest that her partner worked for the Council in the Highways and Transport department.

24. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Castle Community Meeting held on 9 September and the joint meeting with Westcotes Community Meeting on 27 October were confirmed as a correct record.

25. PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENTS AT NELSON MANDELA PARK

Ade Edge, Play and Youth Development Officer from the Parks Service outlined for the meeting details of proposals to improve the play equipment at Nelson Mandela Park, as follows:-

- The existing play equipment needed replacing.
- This was an opportunity to consider the best location for the playground.
- Improvements would be made to the footpath.
- There would be additional trees and seating.
- Moving the playground would free up a tarmac area to allow for a ball court in a position which wouldn't affect any residents.
- Holy Trinity residents had expressed support for the proposals at a residents meeting.
- It was expected that the improvements would be funded by contributions from developers who have received planning approvals in the local area.
- If the meeting expressed support, the project would be taken forward.

Residents raised comments / asked questions as follows:-

The plans were very much welcomed. It was suggested that residents of Holy Trinity have a street fair to raise funds to support the improvements.

Ade commented that any additional funding would be welcomed. He expected the bulk of the funding to come from developer contributions though. This would be likely to mean that the improvements would be phased as and when the funding became available.

It was queried whether young people had been involved in the development of the plans.

Ade said that he had consulted with young people in local schools and had worked with detached youth workers right from the beginning. He said that the community would be fully involved whenever funding became available.

It was queried what would happen to the old equipment.

Ade commented that once it was removed, it could not be re-used due to safety regulations set down by Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

It was queried whether the hospital and the prison had been consulted in drawing up the plans.

Ade noted that he did have contacts at the prison and had spoken to regular visitors. He also had contacts at the hospital that he had been in touch with.

Ade was thanked for his presentation.

26. DRAFT CITY CENTRE CAR PARKING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Paul Statham from the Council's Planning Policy and Design team and Neil Edwards from Highways and Transport outlined for the meeting, the work they had been undertaking, looking at provision of commuter parking in the city centre.

- A survey of all publicly available parking in the city centre had been undertaken.
- Further study was undertaken to see when the peaks and troughs were of car park usage and whether there was sufficient parking available.
- It was noted that there was more parking capacity in the north of the city and it was cheaper.
- There was likely to be a greater need for more parking in the south of the city should more development take place.
- The purpose of the study was to determine if there was an undersupply or over supply of parking. It was felt that there was currently an oversupply.

Residents raised comments / asked questions as follows:-

Would companies be forced to have no parking as a result of these proposals?

Neil commented that this study was purely to develop an evidence base to determine where future parking need was likely to emerge. It was found that there was no need

for additional parking at the current time. This evidence would be used in any planning application appeal cases where it was relevant.

A number of residents raised points about on street parking, particularly around the Phoenix Square, Regent Road on match days and the residents parking scheme in Lancaster Road.

It was noted that this study was purely looking at commuter parking in the city centre. The Traffic Regulation Orders around Phoenix Square were being reviewed at the current time. Wider on-street parking matters would be considered in a further study. There were currently proposals to provide people over 60 with free visitor's passes in residents parking areas.

Councillor Kitterick informed the meeting that the main issue that the study was looking to deal with, related to surface car parks which were put in when buildings were knocked down. Examples of this were on Belgrave Gate and on Filbert Street.

A resident commented that it seemed unfair that private surface car parks were locked up at night.

It was queried why underground car parks weren't required in the city more when new developments were built?

Councillor Kitterick commented that the costs of excavation would be huge and that there was large amounts of archaeology in the city.

A resident asked if there were plans for a car sharing scheme and public bicycle hire like that available in London?

These weren't being looked at in the short term, because when they had been researched before, it wasn't felt that the city was ready for them.

Councillor Kitterick pointed out however that a scheme, funded by the East Midlands Development Agency for businesses was being trialled. Cars for hire would be located on Bishop Street in the city.

The Chair thanked Paul and Neil for attending.

27. COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

Lee Storer from the City Council's Operational Transport team informed the meeting about the services which were available for the public to use.

- 6 large minibuses were available for public hire by fully constituted community groups, 365 days a year.
- The buses had been adapted to fit wheelchairs and other access requirements.
- Training was available for drivers, but a D1 driving license is required.
- It may be possible to use a volunteer driver.
- The hire cost was £16 per day, plus fuel, insurance was paid, but there is a £500 excess.

- The vehicles could be taken anywhere in the country.

A resident asked; what efforts were made to promote this service to community groups?

Lee commented that this was the first year that the service was being promoted, which was generating interest. People who used the service already were involved in community groups and they would often spread the word.

It was further queried whether users of the service were monitored for racial representation and whether promotional material was available electronically.

Lee commented that there was a basic online service available at the moment about which he could provide details. No specific study had been undertaken of who used the service, but a wide range of groups from all over the city used it.

28. FEEDBACK ON CLARENDON PARK CHRISTMAS FAIR

Councillor Kitterick gave the meeting feedback on Clarendon Park Christmas Fair. He covered the following points:-

- The Fair came about as a result of discussions at these meetings where a resident suggested it was a good idea to talk to your neighbours.
- It was originally planned to be an autumn fair, but became a Christmas fair.
- It was thought that 2000 people attended the fair, which was much higher than expected.
- It was reported that the day was a financial success for stallholders and shopowners.
- There were some comments about the lack of hot food, which could be considered for a future fair, but it would mean a range of new regulations would have to be considered.
- It required £3000 from this meeting's budget to fund the day, but this was £250 under budget. £1800 of this was for road closures.

A number of issues were considered as part of the discussion

General Feedback

There was a strong general feeling that the fair was an excellent local event which was widely appreciated.

Holding two fairs a year, an additional one in the spring

Some were opposed to the idea of holding another fair in the year, feeling it would dilute the special nature of the Christmas fair, the success of which should be consolidated.

Others however felt that another fair in the spring would be welcomed and that it could have a completely different character.

It was noted that holding an additional fair would increase costs, therefore the charge for a stall could be increased.

There was general support for holding a spring fair. It was suggested that it take place on the Sunday prior to spring bank holiday.

Extending the size of the fair / holding it on Victoria Park

It was generally felt that a big part of the atmosphere was created by holding the fair on the street and this would be lost if the fair was held on Victoria Park.

There were differing viewpoints on whether to extend the size of the fair, some felt that keep it the same size would help retain it's special character. There were also opinions that businesses and residents on Clarendon Park Road felt excluded and to extend the fair would benefit them as well. There would also be further issues with resident's access to their homes if it was extended. The costs of the fair would also increase if it was extended.

It was felt that this issue would need further discussion.

The character of the fair

There was a pretty much unanimous view that efforts should be made to ensure that the fair was focussed around local people and local businesses running the stalls.

There was some discussion about restricting the types of stalls, ie arts / crafts and types of food.

Other comments / suggestions

It was suggested that holding the Christmas fair earlier in the year could avoid bad weather.

There was a need to consider resident's access requirements at future fairs.

Dawson Smith from the City Council's Festivals and Events Team agreed to let residents have his photos for the Facebook page set up for the fair.

This issue would be discussed again at the March meeting of the Community Meeting.

29. NEW EXECUTIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor Clayton outlined for the meeting, the key elements of the new elected Mayor system which was due to come into place in Leicester in May.

- Currently there were 54 Councillors. The Political Group with the most Councillors chooses the leader of the Council.
- The government required the Council to make a choice of leadership models between a 'strong leader' or an 'elected Mayor'.

- A strong leader would still be chosen by Councillors, but they would be in position for 4 years.
- An elected Mayor would be in position for 4 years, but would be directly elected by the citizens of the city.
- The Mayor would be elected under the Additional Vote electoral system.

A resident commented that an elected Mayor would be more expensive. Councillor Clayton, in response stated that the Mayor was replacing the Leader of the Council, there was no reason why costs should rise.

It was queried how the Cabinet would be selected under the Mayoral system. Councillor Clayton said that the Mayor would appoint his Cabinet.

A resident expressed the view that as the new system appointed the mayor for four years and they were able to choose their own Cabinet, the new system was no better than the existing one. Councillor Kitterick noted that at the moment, Labour Councillors decided who the Leader would be, in future, citizens would get decide who would be Mayor.

It was queried whether the powers of full Council would be changing? There would be consideration by the Council on matters of 'local choice'; where the Council can decide which matters are for consideration by the full Council and by the Mayor. This needed to be determined by the end of March.

The meeting was informed that there would be three separate votes on May 5 this year. One was for the Mayor, one for Councillors and one for the national referendum on the Additional Vote electoral system.

30. COMMUNITY MEETING BUDGET

Francis Connolly, Member Support Officer introduced this item of business. He noted that there was £4332 left in the budget prior to the meeting.

Members considered the following applications:-

Addict Dance Studios – request for £1000 to assist with the setting up of dance studios in the city centre, to cover the cost of marketing and IT equipment.

All Councillors felt that this application was inappropriate for approval as it was a project which covered the whole of the city, not just Castle residents.

RESOLVED:

that the application not be supported.

Friends of Welford Road Cemetery – request for £500 to pay for a laptop to enable members of the public to access records about the cemetery.

Councillors felt that they could support this application as it was for a small amount comparative to the amount raised by volunteers and that the cemetery was local green space well used by local residents.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported and a sum of £500 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.

There was some general discussion between Councillors and residents about the purpose of the budget and how it was allocated. Councillors noted that they had great difficulties in this ward due to the fact that it contained the city centre where there were hundreds of projects and businesses, most of which had service users from city-wide and the budget could not fund them all. Also, these projects often supported people who came from outside of the ward. Councillors indicated that they would be looking to develop a system of priorities of things they would support from future community meeting budgets.

A resident suggested that if there was any of the budget left over at the end of the financial year that it be put towards supporting the playground development at Nelson Mandela Park.

31. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.