

Castle Community Meeting

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:00 pm, Thursday, 7 March 2013

Held at:

Who was there:

Councillor Neil Clayton

Councillor Patrick Kitterick

Councillor Lynn Senior



FORMAL SESSION

85. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Clayton was elected as Chair for the meeting.

86. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received.

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Senior declared an Other Disclosable Interest in agenda item 9, 'Policing Update', as she was a member of the Leicester City, Leicestershire and Rutland Police Police and Crime Panel.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the interest was not considered so significant that it was likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgement of public interest. She was not, therefore, required to withdraw from the meeting during the discussion of the items.

Councillor Senior declared an Other Disclosable Interest in agenda item 8, 'Traffic Management Update' as her partner was an employee in the Highways and Transportation Service at Leicester City Council. In view of this interest, Councillor Senior chose to leave the room when the agenda item was discussed.

88. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The meeting received the minutes of the Castle Community Meeting held on 5th December 2012.

AGREED:

- 1) That the minutes of the Castle Community Meeting held on 5th December 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

89. CONSULTANCY ON HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPANCY

It was agreed that the order of the agenda be changed.

Anne Provan, Planning, Leicester City Council, gave a presentation on 'Houses in Multiple Occupation' (HMOs).

Anne described HMOs as properties with 3-6 people not of the same family, and covered all properties, including student occupied properties. Anne said the Council adopted a Student Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in June 2012, which recognised there were issues with student housing. She said the proposal was to introduce an Article 4 Direction in some areas with a high concentration of shared housing which would remove planning rights, and owners of properties would have to apply to the Council for change of use to an HMO. She added Clarendon Park had

a lot of shared housing, but the ruling did not apply to existing HMOs, or properties with 1-2 people.

An Article 4 areas draft was included in the presentation. Outlined in black on the plan was the Ward boundary. Areas outlined in pink showed where the Council was seeking to place the proposed Article 4 Direction.

Anne said there would be a statutory consultation exercise, which would include the two universities along with properties affected, and responses would be collated. She said a decision would then be to as to whether to place the Article 4 Direction, after which notice would be served around July/August 2013, and would come into force 12 months later in 2014.

In answer to a resident's query, Anne said that over-populated houses were an environmental issue, and problems should be reported to the Council. She added that HMOs were licensed to ensure safety standards were adhered to. Councillor Kitterick said that if an Article 4 Direction was imposed, proof that a property was an HMO would become an enforcement case, but would stop the situation from worsening. Councillor Kitterick gave Walnut Street as an example of an area where the situation was out of control.

Councillor Kitterick responded to a resident's question, that a HMO that was sold would retain grandfather rights, and could be kept as a student / unrelated persons house.

The Chair thanked Anne for the presentation.

90. RESTRICTION ON 'TO LET' BOARDS

Anne Provan, Planning, Leicester City Council, informed the meeting the Student Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) referred to the long-term use of lettings boards ('To Let') on rented properties.

Residents raised concerns about the number of 'To Let' boards placed on New Walk, and residents believed there was a restrictive covenant to prevent the use of the boards. Anne said she would look into the issue and feedback to Councillors.

Chris Bramley-Brown, City Warden said the boards could be up as early as one year before letting. Anne said there was no specific time period for a company to put up 'To Let' boards, but the Council were aware it was an issue it was planning to tackle. She said at present, enforcement was difficult. Councillor Kitterick said the two universities had their own letting approve landlord schemes.

Anne said there would be a period of consultation, after which it was hoped a voluntary code could be put in place.

The Chair thanked Anne for the information.

AGREED:

that information on covenants in New Walk be brought to a future meeting.

91. AIR POLLUTION

Adrian Russell, Director Environmental Services, was present to discuss the recent television documentary that listed Leicester as 8th worst for air pollution in the country. Adrian said he believed the programme had misled people, as the figures used were for one year only.

Adrian reported that monitoring had been undertaken since 1994, and there were various monitoring sites around the city, and referred to the sites at Glenhills Way and New Walk Centre Plaza. Adrian said levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) dropped off dramatically when away from main roads.

Adrian reported that the maximum annual mean of 40 microgrammes per cubic metre of NO₂ was acceptable, and read the following readings taken from the monitoring site at the New Walk Centre Plaza for the years 1994 to 2011:

Year	Annual Mean ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)
1994	44
1995	44
1996	42
1997	40
1998	40
1999	41
2000	34
2001	34
2002	34

Year	Annual Mean ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)
2003	38
2004	37
2005	31
2006	30
2007	32
2008	28
2009	33
2010	42
2011	30

Adrian said the reporter for the television programme had unfairly selected the figure for 2010 only, which had seen an increase in the reading for NO₂. Adrian said the higher level could be attributed to the severe weather in 2009/10, when still, frosty winter weather suppressed the dispersion of pollution and allowed levels to build up during long periods of slow moving or stationary traffic, when the road network was affected by snow and ice. He added that there were higher readings at junctions also.

Adrian said the air quality in Leicester was no different to any other city, but the City Council was committed to improving air quality and were moving in the right direction.

Adrian then took questions from the meeting, and gave the following responses:

- Buses sitting idle with engines running were a problem, and the Council were taking part in a study of bus emissions. Data gathered from the exercise would be taken back to the bus companies. Councillor Kitterick commented that City Wardens in Manchester fined idling buses.

- A resident mentioned that in 2012 there were 250 premature deaths in the city due to pollution, and asked what the City Council was doing to improve air quality. Adrian responded the Council did need to take action, but the majority of areas in the city were of an acceptable level.
- Drivers should be encouraged to use cars with less emissions, and problems were exacerbated by the narrow gateways into the city, for example, Narborough Road. Adrian said 80% of NO₂ came from vehicles, and there was a concern for people living near to traffic junctions. He added that catalytic converters were ineffective until hot (usually 10 miles of driving).
- A resident said the traffic should be kept moving, and not idling. They believed the removal of the Belgrave Road flyover would create traffic problems for the city. Adrian responded that a plan would be developed to optimise traffic management systems, and included a plan to divert traffic to Abbey Lane during demolition of the flyover.

A resident said public transport should be made viable, and cycling routes developed and repaired. It was also asked if the Council had plans for a tram system in the city. Residents were informed there were no plans for a tram system. It was acknowledged there were various bus issues in the city, in cost, non-regulation and the service on some routes tailed off early evening and Sundays.

Adrian said the Aylestone Road bus corridor would increase the speed of traffic in that area, as it had along the Oadby bus corridor, though more work was required. Adrian also mentioned the Haymarket bus station project, which would be a pleasant, safer place for people to catch a bus.

Adrian was thanked for the update.

92. TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Councillor Senior left the meeting for the agenda item, having left during the previous item when transport strategy issues were mentioned.

Jayesh Parmer, and Chris Mason, Traffic Management, Leicester City Council, were present at the meeting. Jayesh informed the meeting he and Chris had recently taken over the section to look at solutions to traffic issues as a whole in the ward around the Leicester Royal Infirmary (LRI), football and rugby grounds, and surrounding streets. He said stakeholders would be brought together, and solutions would be developed. He added information would be brought to the next community meeting of Castle Ward.

Jayesh informed the meeting that Interserve Estates Management were responsible for the operation of LRI's car park on Havelock Street, and the Manager for the organisation was keen to work with the City Council to work out solutions to issues. Jayesh said Traffic Management would be working closely with planners to resolve issues in the area, and several surveys had already been completed. He said blue badge holders were causing obstructions when trying to gain access to the Havelock Street car park, and they would be working with LRI to create more disabled spaces in the car park. Jayesh added it was planned to demolish the Victory Pub to create more parking for the hospital.

In response to residents comments, Jayesh said some Park & Ride buses did not go to the LRI, and one solution would be to increase bus services to the hospital. A resident suggested buses drop off at various parts of the hospital, and not just Aylestone Road.

Councillor Kitterick said the City Council was looking to have the unofficial car park on Filbert Street closed, and houses built on the site. He added this would assist in the reduction of traffic in the area.

The Chair thanked the officers for the update and asked that they be invited to the next Castle Ward Meeting to provide an update.

AGREED:

- 1) That the points raised above be noted.
- 2) That the Traffic Management Offices be invited to attend the next Castle Ward Community Meeting to provide an update on traffic issues.

93. POLICE UPDATE

Sergeant Andy Cox of Leicestershire Police gave the following update:

- The Police Service had worked hard through difficult times and had achieved targets, though there was room for improvement.
- At the end of the financial year, there was a 17% reduction in crime across the board, which equated to 1,437 less victims than the previous financial year. This was attributed to better targeting, and identifying trends when they appeared, and crime was reduced year on year. The Police were also working with offenders / potential offenders as prevention was better than cure, and showed in the results.
- Other agencies' budgets had been reduced, and they were leaning on police services which were being strained, but resources would be used in the right way, and would be targeted at what the public wanted. He added civilian staff were important as without them, front line policing would not be as successful.
- It has been a positive year in the City Centre and in other areas. The Police had made a significant impact in prostitution areas, through targeting users, and working with other agencies to work with the girls.
- Phone snatches were a problem, and the police were offering crime prevention advice.

Residents congratulated the police officers from Mansfield Street Police Station through their positive engagement with youths at the Gower Street youth centre. Sgt. Cox responded it was difficult to engage with a group, who needed to feel part of the community.

A resident said it had been predicted the economy recession would increase crime, but figures were reduced. Sgt. Cox said the Police were better at what they did, in targeting individuals and working with agencies.

A resident asked if the Police believed they had had a greater impact on anti-social behaviour. Sgt. Cox said the Police worked with Leicester City Council Licensing and door staff to ensure premises did not serve excessively drunk people. He said premises could be brought to a Licensing Hearing for a review if necessary. He added radical improvements had been made for the night-time economy over that past 20-years, which used to be concentrated on Churchgate, and now continued to 6.00am in the morning across the city. Sgt. Cox said the Police continued to work with colleagues at Accident & Emergency at LRI, though the majority of people who went out in the city were responsible people. He added that CCTV operators in the city were outstanding at identifying troublesome people, who are ticketed to leave the city centre, or are arrested.

Sgt. Cox said the Police were in early stages of discussion with Councils regarding the late-night levy and the restriction of opening hours following recent consultation, though guidance had not yet been received from Government. He said it was difficult politically, for example, if Nottingham and Derby chose not to introduce a levy but Leicester did, it could see businesses move out of the city.

Sgt. Cox said following the closure of Churchgate to traffic, there was a better harmony, and the dynamics of the area had improved. He said the same principle had been applied to Belvoir Street, and had impacted on businesses in a positive way, and feedback from Police was there had been a positive improvement in the atmosphere and behaviour. He added the Hotel still had access to their car park.

PC Emma Jayne Cox responded to the statement that residents in Clarendon Park had said burglary was on the increase, and provided the following figures for burglaries:

January – 3

February – 8

March – 2 up to present date.

She said two people were arrested directly on the scene and reductions in burglaries had occurred immediately. She added the burglaries had occurred in the daytime when people were at work, and burglars had accessed the properties by smashing in rear windows. She said the properties had alleygates, but not all were used properly. Sgt. Cox informed the meeting that a neighbourhood watch could be set up, and police would offer advice to residents who wished to do so, and could be contacted on the 101 telephone number.

The Chair thanked the Police for their update.

94. CITY WARDEN UPDATE

Nik Krneta and Chris Bramley Brown, City Wardens with Leicester City Council gave the following update:

- Between January and March 2013, 77 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) had been issued.

- One business in the city centre that had provided fraudulent document was given a £300 FPN.
- A lot of work was undertaken in Clarendon Park alongside the Police and fire Authority to reduce bins on streets. Around 900 doors had been knocked to provide residents with fire safety advice. 136 legal notices had been issued compelling residents to remove bins. The meeting was informed there would soon be a change in legislation that would halt the actions of City Wardens until new legislation was brought in.
- There was an on-going case for fly tipping in Victoria Park.

A resident asked who was responsible for informing new students about waste collection. Chris said the waste management team could target student accommodate and inform them of waste collection arrangements, but it was agreed landlords should be responsible for informing their tenants. It was noted that City Wardens did their best to tackle the problem, but the situation had improved since the orange bag scheme was introduced. Chris said legal notices were served on occupiers of a premises. He added that rubbish on private land was the responsibility of environmental health, but City Wardens may be given powers.

The Chair asked residents to pass on issues or concerns they may have to Nik or Chris.

The Chair thanked the City Wardens for the update.

95. BUDGET

Application 1 – Highfields Community Centre – Highfields Festival

The application was for £2,000 (joint application with Spinney Hills and Stoneygate wards - £6,000 in total). The application was for funding towards indoor/outdoor activities, stalls, music, poetry, and film taster workshops. In response to a residents query, Councillors said the City Council's festivals budget was reduced, and that Members would still support festivals around Castle Ward. Members noted the joint application with other wards, and agreed to fund the application in part for £750.

RECOMMENDED:

that the application be supported and £750 be allocated.

Application 2 – Sue Ryan – Art House – Provision of Buses and Promotional Flyers for an Event

The application was for £250 (joint application with Knighton and Stoneygate wards - £750 in total). The proposal was for two hopper buses between venues, promotional flyers was supported in full at the meeting.

RECOMMENDED:

that the application be supported in full and £250 be allocated.

Application 3 – Parks Services – Prebend Gardens

The application was for £2,025 and was a revised application for four corporate-style notice boards and a sundial interpretation panel. Members said they were not supportive of the notice boards which they believed should be delivered by Parks Services. They did support funding for the sundial interpretation panel.

RECOMMENDED:

that the application be supported in part and £265 be allocated.

Application 4 – Leicester Play Fair – Lame Duck Summer PGL Activity Camp

The application was for £1,150 (joint application with Braunstone Park & Rowley Fields, Charnwood, Fosse and New Parks wards - £5,750 in total). The proposal was to take 50 children 10-12 years old (10 from each ward) from LSOA's areas to summer camp.

RECOMMENDED:

that the application be supported in full and £1,150 be allocated.

Application 5 – St Andrews Play Association – Memorial Tree

The application was for £405.16. The proposal was to plant a memorial tree in Thirlmere Gardens in memory of a former colleague.

RECOMMENDED:

that the application be supported in full and £405.16 be allocated.

Application 6 – Parks Services – Bulwer Road perimeter fencing

The application was for £4,065.70. The proposal was install a 2-metre high fence and access gate to allow the community to use the site as a grow-your-own site.

RECOMMENDED:

that the application be supported in full and £4,065.70 be allocated.

Budget Application Approved Under the Fast Track Procedure

The following budget request was included on the agenda for formally noting as it had been agreed by Councillors in between meetings to enable the project to take place.

Adderley Road Street Party – £60

RESOLVED:

that the previously agreed funding be noted.

Budget Applications Not Supported

The meeting noted that the following grant applications had not been supported:

- i) Request for £870 – Nimesh Patel, Leicestershire & Rutland County Football Association – Community Football Inclusive Project
- ii) Request for £3,503 – Parks Services – Nelson Mandela Park
This item was deferred for discussion at a future meeting pending further information.
- iii) Request for £6,050 – Pedestrian Limited – Look Up!
The application was for £6,050. Councillors were not supportive of the application which they believed was a large amount to be funded from the Community Meeting budget. They asked the applicant to submit a revised bid.

Late Budget Applications Not Considered at the Meeting

Parks Services, Riverside Team – Cleaning the River
Eric Waweru – The Centre Project
Gandal Media – Using Drugs and Alcohol Awareness Week

96. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- i) Residents enquired what would happen to the Barclay Bank building on Clarendon Park Road, and asked if Tesco would be moving into the building. Councillor Kitterick responded no application had been put to planning from Tesco, though the classing of the property meant it could be converted to a shop.
- ii) A resident asked when trees would be arriving in Humberstone Gate East after the recent improvement scheme. The Chair asked for information to be brought to the next meeting.
- iii) Adrian Russell said the Safety Advisory Group had advised fixtures be arranged for different days at the Tigers Ground / King Power Stadium. He said on occasion when there had been a kick-off at 12.00pm and then one at 5.00pm, there had been no reported problems.
- iv) The meeting was informed that Voluntary Action Leicester held a small amount of grant money available for community groups to match up voluntary activity in the city. Information could be gained from Amarjit at the centre on Newarke Street.
- v) Councillor Senior informed the meeting that applications up to £500 could be approved under the 'Fast Tract' procedure.

97. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)

- Student Housing SPD (adopted June 2012)
- Issues due to over concentration of shared housing in existing residential areas
- Proposal to introduce Article 4 Direction

Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)

Article 4 Directions

- Under TCPA - All properties have certain planning rights
- Article 4 – Removes planning rights
- to enable the planning authority influence changes to shared housing in the future

Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)

Article 4 Direction – What will it mean ?

- All properties occupied by 3-6 people (Over 7 require pp for change of use)
- Require planning application for Change of use to HMO
- Council could refuse permission for the change of use
- Would apply to all HMOs not just students

Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)

Article 4 Direction : What isn't covered ?

- Properties in multiple occupation now (or at the time the order is issued)
- Properties occupied by 2 people

Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)

Castle Ward

27% Total student properties

22% Properties wholly occupied by students

5% Properties partly occupied

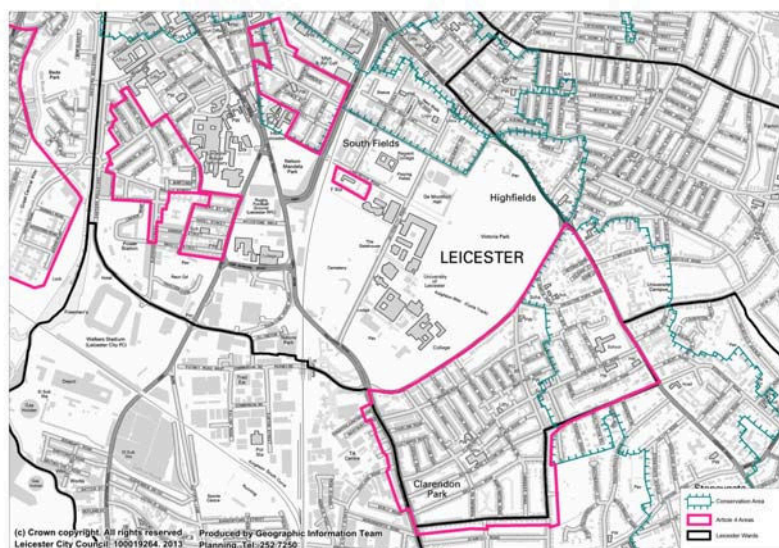
Clarendon Park

22.8% Total student properties

17.6% Properties wholly occupied by students

5.2% Properties partly occupied

Castle Ward - Article 4 Areas Draft



What's Next – How will it work ?

Prepare evidence base	December 2012 - March 2013
Compile collected evidence and prepare a report for members highlighting streets which have a high student population which an article 4 notice could be served upon.	March – April 2013
Consult all properties that will be affected by the article 4 direction, also consult student letting agencies. Put up site notices as well as an advert in the mercury. Give 6 weeks for consultation.	April – May 2013
Collate responses and make determination whether to proceed regarding the article 4 direction. Get approval from legal regarding the final wording. Get final approval from members to serve the Article 4 direction.	June – July 2013
Seek approval from the Secretary of State to serve the notice.	August 2013
Serve article 4 direction dating it to come into force July 2014 to avoid compensation problems. Notify all affected homes by letter with a copy of the served notice. Put up site notices and take out a press notice in the Mercury.	August 2013
Notice comes into force	August 2014

To Let Boards

- Student Housing SPD (adopted June 2012)
- Issue of over concentration of estate agents boards for shared housing in existing residential areas
- Consider options to control To Let Boards
- Consider introduction of a Regulation 7

To Let Boards

What would it do ?

- Require all estate agents to apply for consent to put up To Let Boards
- Reduce number of To Let Boards
- Restrict the amount of time boards could be left up for
- Huge amount of work
- Needs an evidence base

To Let Boards

Voluntary Code for estate agents

- Specify size, design, location on property
- Time period, number per street
- Length of time left up
- Specify text – Let by/Gone/To let

Also

- Consider prosecution in specific case

To Let Boards

- Self regulation
- Message to all estate agents
- Evidence base

If that doesn't work :

- Regulation 7