

Rushey Mead Community Meeting

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:30 pm, Thursday, 14 March 2013

**Held at: Edgehill Road Methodist Church, Edgehill Road, Leicester
LE4 9EA**

Who was there:

Councillor Culdipp Singh Bhatti MBE
Councillor Piara Singh Clair MBE
Councillor Ross Willmott

INFORMATION SHARING – ‘INFORMATION FAIR’ SESSION

Members of the public were able to talk to their ward councillors, the Police, City Wardens and service representatives prior to the meeting..

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.

74. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

76. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous Rushey Mead Community Meeting held on 10 January 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

77. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sainsbury's Development

At the previous community meeting on 10 January 2013, a query was raised relating to a 'stopping up order'. Members of the public were given a written update on this issue and the general progress of the development, as follows:

A closure under section 247 of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 was advertised on 14th January 2013 the closing date for representations was 11th February. Closures under section 247 were undertaken by the National Casework Team at the Department for Transport, the procedure which they have to follow is shown in section 252 of the 1990 Act.

With regards to advertising, the DfT had to publish a notice in the Leicester Mercury (this was carried in the edition dated 14th January) and the London Evening Gazette. There were also a number of statutory consultees who the Dft had to serve notice upon. Notices also had to be displayed at prominent positions near the highway to be stopped up. In addition notices were also displayed in the Customer Service Centre at New Walk Centre.

A further update on the current position of the development was received prior to the meeting. This explained that the council had received a discharge of condition application for two of the conditions attached to the planning consent for the Melton Road site. When planning permission was granted, it was subject to certain conditions which required further details to be submitted and approved by the

council, either before the commencement of the development or before it was occupied. The conditions in question related to tree protection and vegetation clearance. The details of these were being agreed with our Trees and Woodlands Section. Further discharge of condition applications were expected this month.

First Leicester

The Chair explained that at the previous community meeting there had been some discussion relating to the First Leicester bus service to Rushey Mead. An email had been sent to First Leicester informing them of the concerns that had been raised and to also ask them to amend the route. First Leicester had not responded to the email but had attended a recent Belgrave and Latimer Community Meeting to discuss similar issues. The Chair added that he did not feel that there was much hope of First Leicester being able to make the changes as requested by the residents.

78. CHANGES TO THE WELFARE AND BENEFIT SYSTEM

Mike Watson, Income Collection Manager and Suzanne Collins, Property Lettings Manager were present to provide an update on the changes to the welfare and benefit system. Information relating to the forthcoming changes was distributed at the meeting and a copy of this leaflet is attached at the back of these minutes.

The meeting heard that the changes were brought in by the Government and the council had no choice but to implement the new changes. The reforms affected those people predominately of working age.

The forthcoming changes included the following:

Council tax benefit changes

Council tax benefit would be abolished from 1 April 2013 and would be replaced by a new council tax reduction scheme. From April 2013 each working age household would have to pay towards their own council tax. People who had not paid in the past because they had received maximum council tax benefit, would now be required to pay something.

Benefit Capping

The weekly amount of benefits (including housing benefit) would be capped at a maximum of £500 for a family and £350 for a single person, although there were exceptions to this. It was estimated that nearly 600 households in Leicester may face a reduction in their benefit as a result of the government's reforms.

Bedroom tax

From April 2013, people who lived in council housing or a housing association property and were classed as under occupying would get a reduction in housing benefit. Houses with one extra bedroom would result in 14% less housing benefit (about £12) per week.

A question was raised as to the situation for people of pensionable age where they had a spare bedroom and Mike explained that generally people aged over 62 years of age would not be affected by bedroom tax.

Universal Credit

This benefit would replace income support, job seeker's allowance, employment and support allowance, housing benefit and tax credits. Recipients would no longer receive fortnightly payments, but would receive all the money in the form of one payment, which would be paid once a month in arrears. People would also be required to set their own budget and pay their rent themselves. Universal Credit had already been introduced in 6 pilot sites around the country and the scheme was due to be rolled from October 2013 onwards.

The meeting then received an overview of the position in Leicester and how many people would be affected. Members of the public were assured that staff at the council were making every effort to offer support to people affected by the changes. Staff had carried out approximately 700 home visits, to raise awareness of the changes and more visits were planned. There had also been letter drops and advice surgeries. The council were also working with financial institutions such as credit unions. Work was also taking place on the development of Credit Union Budgeting Accounts (CUBAs) as a way to help people manage their own budgets.

Help was also available through the council and a variety of agencies as detailed in the leaflet attached to the minutes. People who were affected by the changes were urged to act straightaway and talk to their landlord if appropriate.

Mike and Suzanne were thanked for attending the meeting.

79. CITY WARDEN SERVICE

Jethro Swift and Mo Patel, City Wardens for Rushey Mead, Belgrave and Latimer Wards were present at the meeting and provided an update on the issues they had been dealing with recently. These included the following:

- Increased patrols on Gypsy Lane, Nicklaus Road and Lockerbie Avenue due to littering problems there. One fixed penalty notice had been issued for littering on Nicklaus Road.
- The shrubbery in the planters on Nicklaus Road had been examined and there were plans to have the shrubbery removed and replaced with flowers. However the planters were damaged and in need of repair before any further work could be carried out. To this effect, the Handy Person service had been contacted.
- The abandoned car on Rosedale Avenue had been removed.

- Patrols in Watermead Park were on-going to educate and take enforcement action against people who were feeding the birds inappropriately.
- There was a major dog fouling issue within the ward, and work was being carried out in an attempt to resolve the problem. The Wardens would be grateful for any further information regarding this issue.

There was some discussion concerning untaxed vehicles on Barkby Road and Dunbar Road. The Police reported that they had contacted the DVLA, but other than that, they did not have the powers to take any action. There were concerns that the cars parked on the road were for sale. The City Wardens responded that they could take action where cars for sale were parked on the highway and the Chair asked that the Police to talk to the Jethro and Mo to explain where precisely the problem was

80. POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY ISSUES

Police Sergeant Danny Paddock provided an update on policing issues in the Rushey Mead area. Ps Paddock made the following points:

- Over the last 3 months there had been 140 crimes (compared to 150 last year).
- The detection rate target has been exceeded.
- At the previous meeting in January, there had been concern over anti-social behaviour at the shops on Lockerbie Avenue. There had been increased police patrols there and this strategy appeared to be effective.
- In respect of the parking problems at the local schools, there were four primary schools and two secondary schools in relatively close proximity. It was unfortunately inevitable that this would create parking difficulties. However, the police no longer had the powers to enforce parking as this was now the responsibility of the council.

There was some discussion relating to young people and anti-social behaviour. A member of the public commented that there had been a problem with young people playing football around Barkby Road and Dunbar Road, but the Police had helped with the issue and their efforts had alleviated the situation.

A comment was made that children and young people played out more when the weather was better, and there was likely to be increased activity in the area around Fairfax Road and the shops on Gipsy Lane in the summer. Ps Paddock responded that there was an anti-social behaviour police car which patrolled hot spots in the area. They were aware of the problem, but tried to resolve it by engaging with young people rather than by adopting a zero tolerance approach.

Members of the public were reminded that the councillors held monthly surgeries at the Rushey Mead Recreation Centre on Gleneagles Avenue, and people would also

be able to talk to the Police there as a member of the local policing team would also be present.

81. BUDGET

The Chair presented the community meeting budget and explained that the following applications had been received. The Councillors would make the final decision on whether or not to support the funding applications, although they welcomed comments on the bids from members of the public. The Chair explained that there was a balance of £6966 remaining in the community meeting budget, and the total sum of the bids to be considered at the meeting exceeded this amount.

Ref 2869 Easter play scheme / activities session

Applicant: Mr Vijay Patel, Activities co-ordinator and founder of Live Sport
Amount requested: £1064

The meeting was advised that the original bid was for £1000, but a subsequent bid had been submitted for £1064.

Mr Patel explained that the scheme would provide sports activity sessions for young people in Rushey Mead. Soar Valley College were very supportive of the scheme and offered the use of the sports hall and their equipment. The aim was to promote an active lifestyle and to keep the children and young people off the streets during the Easter holiday.

Councillors indicated that they were in support of the funding application and the Chair added that it was good to hear that the school was benefiting the community in this way.

RESOLVED:

that the funding application be supported in full to the value of £1064.

Ref 2871 Cleaning the river of litter and flotsam

Applicant: Leicester City Council, Parks Services, Riverside Team
Amount requested: £800 (from Rushey Mead Ward – bid also submitted to other wards.

Councillors indicated that they were in support of this funding application.

RESOLVED:

that the funding application be supported in full to the value of
£800

Ref 2872 Dance Workout (this funding application was submitted too late for inclusion on the agenda)

Applicant: Lucy Bailey

Amount requested: £1000

The project was to offer two free dance workout sessions per week for a year at the Rushey Mead Recreation Centre. Funding was requested to pay for the hire of the centre. The meeting heard that the sessions were proving to be very popular.

Councillors indicated that they were in support of the funding application.

RESOLVED:

that the funding application be supported in full to the value of £1000.

Ref: Highfields Rangers Community Family Fun Day (this application was submitted to late to be included on the agenda)

Applicant: Highfields Rangers
Amount requested: £1052.98

Samira and Tony from the Highfields Rangers were present and explained that there had been a bit of a 'shake up' of the committee and old ideas. They intended was to become more of a presence both to the local and wider community. They added that their venue was generally under used by the community.

They would be holding a community family fun day on 27 May from 12.00 noon to 5.00pm at the Highfield Rangers on 443 Gleneagles Avenue to which everyone was welcome. Samira explained that the fun day would be similar to a school fete but bigger and with an international flavour. There would also be a dance competition and mini tournaments.

Councillors indicated that they were in support of the funding application.

RESOLVED:

that the funding application be supported in full to the value of £1053.

Ref 2870: Painting of Rushey Mead Recreation Centre

Applicant: Kirit Vaja
Amount requested £4200

Councillors indicated that they were in support of the funding application. However only one estimate had been received and a further estimate was required. They agreed that as there was insufficient money left in the budget to meet this funding request in full, the balance of the budget could be committed towards this funding application subject to the submission of a second estimate. A further funding application could be submitted in the new financial year if necessary.

RESOLVED:

that the funding application be supported to the value of £3049, subject to the submission of a second estimate.

Action to be taken	Officer identified	Deadline
For the funding applications that the councillors had agreed to support be submitted to the Assistant City Mayor for Community Involvement, Partnerships and Equalities for approval.	Anita Patel, Member Support Officer to the Rushey Mead Community Meeting.	By 22 March 2013

82. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm.

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Welfare Reform in Leicester

Suzanne Collins
Mike Watson

Background

- A Government change – no choice – royal assent 8.3.12 now law.
- Affects those predominately of working age (ie up to pension credit age – roughly 62yrs)
- Government aim to get people back into work and change culture of dependency.
- Work and pensions budget largest, more than entire NHS and twice that of education. (18 billion savings by 2015)

Background (cont.)

- Simplify the benefits system
- Make work pay – better incentives
- Streamline in / out of work benefits
- Develop 'claimant commitment'
- Increase conditionality and sanctions
- Aimed at 'working age' claimants
- Better use of technology to reduce error

Overview - Main Changes

- Council Tax
- Benefit Capping
- Social Sector Size Criteria '**Bedroom Tax**'
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Welfare Assistance
- Universal Credit
- Position in Leicester
- What are we doing?

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

April 2013

- Replaces Council Tax Benefit from April 2013
- Each LA to achieve 10% savings on current spend
- Fixed budget for 2 Years
- Local Scheme agreed by Exec January 2013
- LCC prioritises where support goes
- Pensioners to be protected
- Working Age customers most affected
- All affected will have some Council Tax to pay – about £ 200 per year for most

Benefit Capping

(Summer-September 2013)

- Income limited to £ 500 per week for families
- £ 350 per week for singles
- Working Age claimants only
- Exemptions for: WTC; DLA; PIP; ESA (support element); industrial injuries; attendance allowance; war widows/widowers
- Lose between 50p-£50 (53%)
- Lose above £50 – 50p HB awarded (passported benefit)
- Only affects Housing related benefits (at present)

Under-occupation (SSSC) 'Bedroom Tax' (April 2013)

- 1 bedroom surplus to needs – lose 14% HB (about £12 per week)
- 2+ bedrooms surplus – lose 25% HB (about £22 per week)
- Working Age tenants only
- Exemptions for: mooring charges; mobile homes/caravan sites; some temporary accommodation.
- 39 weeks 'grace,' if worked >12 months then lose job through no fault of their own.

Example of what it will cost tenants who under occupy

Weekly Rent	1 Spare Bedroom	2 + spare bedrooms
£65	£9.20	£16.25
£70	£9.80	£17.50
£75	£10.50	£18.75
£80	£11.20	£20.00
£85	£11.90	£21.25
£90	£12.60	£22.50
£100	£13.30	£23.75
£110	£15.40	£27.50
£120	£16.80	£30.00

'Bedroom Tax'

14% less for 1 bed (about £12 per week)
25% less for 2 bed plus (About £22 per week)

- Based on LHA - One bedroom each allowed for:**
 - Claimant (& partner)
 - Any 2 children <10 years regardless of gender
 - Any 2 children of same sex <16 years
 - Any child >16 years
 - Any other child (accept foster children who are NOT considered)
 - Non-dependants
 - A carer (or group of carers) providing over night support.

Discretionary Housing Payments

(Additional Housing Benefit)

- Increased allocation across the country
- Leicester's policy aims to support families and disabled to remain in their homes while they seek alternative cheaper accommodation
- Cannot support everyone affected by the Welfare reform changes
 - eg.. Shared Acc Rate would cost £41K a week
 - Benefit capping would cost £72K a week
- Reviewing DHP Policy.
- Foster Carers – provision between placements
- Use it or lose it fund.

Welfare Assistance

April 2013

- Will be in the form of a grant to LAs
- Nationally £178m to distribute
- Administered at the discretion of the LA
- Community Care grants and other Crisis loans will be abolished.
- 1.7m (estimated grant) for Leicester.
- New claim route to be developed
 - Food Parcels, furniture packs etc. not necessarily a cash payment.
- New policy to be written

Universal Credit

October 2013

- Affects working age only initially
- Pensioners from April 2015
- Replaces:**
 - Income Support
 - Job seekers Allowance
 - ESA
 - Housing Benefit
 - Tax Credits

Universal Credit continued...

- No front facing service
- On line claims
- Telephony based support
- Direct monthly payments in arrears

Universal Credit & HB

- Majority of HB payments will go to the claimant and **not the landlord**
- Only 20% of payments in the social sector housing claimants will be paid direct to landlord through the 'default exception scheme'
- One single monthly payment in arrears.
- Households could get £2000+ to cover, food, living expenses, rent, child care etc.
- Third party payment will be catered for (Power of Attorney etc.)
- To evaluate the effect there are 6 pilot sites around the country trialling direct payments

Universal Credit Timetable

- Main UC regulations still to be published.
- **April 2013** - Pathfinder area used to test UC.
- **October 2013 and April 2014** - New Claims and Change of circumstances. If applying for - jobseekers allowance, employment support allowance, housing benefit, working tax credit or child tax credit.
- **April 2014** - You may be moved onto UC if it is considered that you will benefit from this - e.g. if you are on working tax credit and work a small number of hours a week but could work more hours with support from UC.
- **The end of 2015 - the end of 2017** - If you have not been moved onto UC already you will be moved during this time.

Position in Leicester

- **Approximately:**
- 68% of LCC tenants in receipt of benefits
- 39% of LCC tenants in receipt of full HB
- 9478 LCC tenants will be affected in some way.
 - 2718 LCC tenants will have less of both council tax benefit and HB
- 7482 RSL tenants in receipt of benefits
- 6422 RSL tenants in receipt of full HB

Position in Leicester

Benefit Cap - Total Affected = 411

(Data as at September 2012)

● LCC	-	151	(as far as we know none of these are also affected by the bedroom tax).
● HomeCome	-	17	
● RSL	-	3	
● Private Sector	-	240	

Position in Leicester

Bedroom Tax - Total Affected = 4117

(Data as at January 2013)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Approximately ● LCC - 2,803 affected ● 2124 with 1 bed surplus, ● 654 with 2 bed surplus, ● 20 with 3 bed surplus, ● 4 with 4 bed surplus, ● 1 with 5 bed surplus. ● 15 are adapted (11 by 1 bed 4 by 2 bed from a stock of 623 known adapted properties - 588 partial and 35 full). ● 294 currently on register. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Approximately ● RSLs - 1314 affected ● 1069 with 1 bed surplus, ● 219 with 2 bed surplus, ● 21 with 3 bed surplus, ● 4 with 4 bed surplus, ● 1 with 5 bed surplus.
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Bed Tax - Ward Breakdown

(Data as at Sept 2012)

WARDS	1	2	3	4	5	Grand Total
Abbey	187	37				224
Aylestone	43	10				53
Beaumont Leys	150	45	1	1		197
Belgrave	10	3				13
Blaystone Park & Rowley Fields	244	128	4			376
Castle	9	3				12
Charnwood	119	53	1			173
Coleman	47	13				60
Exington	17	11	2			30
Eyes Mansell	188	42				230
Fosse	15	4				19
Freemen	180	71	1	1	1	254
Humberstone & Hamilton	83	13				96
Knighton	1	1				2
Lattimer	24	6				30
New Parks	332	112	4			448
Ruthey Mead	7	3				10
Spinney Hills	149	18	1			168
Stoneygate	22	7				29
Thurcroft	44	18				62
Westcoates	16	1				17
Western Park	3	1				4
Grand Total	1950	600	14	2	1	2567

Comparison of those LCC Under Occupied V those Overcrowded

No. Rooms Bedroom Shortfall	Excess & Under Occupying (Jan 2013 Data)	Overcrowded (October 2012 Data)
1	2124	2046
2	654	700
3	20	163
4	4	66
5	1	8
6	-	1
	2803	2984

In an ideal world match the two, if all moved regardless of area, there would still be 181 households who will remain overcrowded.

Allocations Policy Changes

- The following changes have been agreed to the allocations policy to bring in line with the welfare reform act:
 - Bedroom eligibility (adopting the 10yr and 16yr LHA)
 - Access to children (TBC)
 - Families with 2 children (as per eligibility)
 - Expectant families (1 bed until baby born)
 - Access & Health Assessment for Additional Bedrooms
 - Under occupation (priority on housing register)
 - 4 bed plus u/o - band 1
 - 2 bed u/o - band 1
 - 3 bed u/o by 2 bed - band 1
 - 3 bed u/c by 1 bed - band 2
- Implementation 5th March 2013.

Potential Options for those Affected.

- Stay and make up the shortfall in their rent**
 - Pay more rent to credit rent account
 - Try to find work or increase their hours
 - Ask other adults living with you to contribute to housing costs
 - Take in a lodger or another family member
 - Discretionary Housing Payment
- Assistance with a move to a smaller property**
 - Mutual exchange (& HomeSwapper)
 - Move through the housing register via Leicester HomeChoice (EasyMove)
 - Private Sector

Challenges

- Affordability – issues for tenants / applicants (rent arrears/increased collection costs)
- Pressure on existing services
 - Increase in voids & associated costs
 - Higher demand for Advice/budgeting
 - Increase in applications to housing register/presentations to homelessness
- Scarce resources need to be managed ie. lack of property types required.

What are we doing? Housing Project team set up in September 2012

- Communication Strategy and Action plan
 - Initial Staff Awareness Overview Training Completed Oct/Nov 2012 (294 housing staff trained)
 - Customer Targeted letter drops – w/c 5/11/12 & w/c 3.12.12
 - Advice Surgeries held– w/c 19/11/12
 - Home Visits commenced w/c 7.1.13
 - E Learning Module launched corporately – overview of changes for staff
 - More training for staff and advice surgeries to come working with our partners in Revenue and Benefits

What are we doing?

- Data collection and Mapping Completed
- Work with our partners ie. RSLs.
- Work with financial institutions such as credit unions – development of Credit Union Budgeting Accounts (CUBAs)
- Identify policies and procedures that need reviewing.
 - Allocations Policy
 - Property re-classification
 - Rent Arrears
 - Recharge Policy application
 - Mutual Exchanges
 - EasyMove
- RSLs carrying out their own impact analysis and customer contact.

HELP!

● Welfare Rights Service	256 8211
● Community Legal Advice Centre	242 7620
● Revenues & Benefits	252 7006
● Income Mgt. Team	252 7007
● Mosaic (disabled people)	231 8720
● SAFFA (ex-Forces & Families)	261 6590
● Age UK (over 50's)	299 2233
● Highfields Community Centre	253 1053
● Community Advice & Law Service	242 1120
● Race Equality Centre (Refugees/Asylum)	299 9807
● Shelter Housing Aid & Research	254 6064
● Housing Options	252 7008

Important Messages

- This is a Government change of policy which is now law.
- Act now – do not ignore what this may mean to you.
- Talk to your landlord.

Questions and Answers

Thank You

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