

Thurncourt Community Meeting

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:00 pm, Monday, 22 October 2012

**Held at: Thurnby Lodge Youth & Community Centre,
Thurncourt Road, LE5 2NG**

Councillors in Attendance

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| Councillor Luis Fonseca |
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INFORMATION SHARING – ‘INFORMATION FAIR’ SESSION

Information on the following topics was available in the room:-

- Welfare Reform
- “Hot Lofts” Energy Scheme
- City Warden Service
- Police Issues in the Ward
- Ward Councillors and general enquiries
- Feedback on Previous Grants

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.

8. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Fonseca was elected as Chair for the meeting.

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Wann.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

11. SCOUT HUT ON NURSERY ROAD

The Chair advised the meeting that this issue was not on the agenda for tonight’s meeting and would not be discussed. He then asked the Head of Community Services to read out a prepared statement, as follows:-

“Many of those attending tonight’s meeting may be hoping for the future of the Scout Hut on Nursery Road to be raised.

As Sir Peter Soulsby, relevant Councillors and residents are not here tonight, it will not be discussed.

As residents are aware, the matter is being discussed separately by the Thurnby Lodge Community Representatives, including the Forgotten Estates Committee and the As Salaam organisation with Sir Peter Soulsby, the City Mayor.

The on-going dialogue between the different parties is progressing and the details of a resolution are still to be agreed.

It is hoped however to provide a full report to the next Ward Community meeting.”

12. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 19 March 2012 and the special meeting held on 24 September 2012 were agreed as correct records of their respective meetings.

13. "HOT LOFTS" HOME ENERGY PROGRAMME

Milo Cereghino, from the Council's Home Energy Team, explained that changes were being made to grants available for home energy schemes:-

- The Warmfront scheme was very popular, but would be ending in approximately March 2013. Referrals were still being taken for grants of up to £3,500;
- The City-wide Hot Lofts scheme would end in mid-December. It provided grants to owner-occupiers and tenants, but currently was over-subscribed. However, officers could still take referrals to add to a list of people wishing for the work to be carried out, as it was hoped that these people could be referred in January for the work to be done; and
- Through Energy Sense people currently could receive energy advice in their homes and interest free loans of up to £3,000, which were repaid over a period of up to five years, but it was possible that this scheme would end in early 2013.

The Health through Warmth scheme was still running, but this was only available to property owners, (not tenants).

A new scheme scheduled to start in 2013 was Green Deal. Under this, loans were available to anyone to make energy improvements to a property, (including businesses). The installation of solar panels was included in this, as was insulation for properties with solid walls. Anyone borrowing money under this scheme paid back as much as they saved on their energy bills.

Post-meeting note:

Since the meeting it has been confirmed that the Energy Sense scheme will continue in 2013.

14. WELFARE REFORM

Darren Moore, Team Manager (Advice Services), advised the meeting that a major change would be made to Council Tax benefit, would not exist in its current form after April 2013. Instead, funding for assistance with Council Tax would be given to local authorities to administer, but it would be 10% less than its current level. As a result, the Council had to adopt a new scheme of assistance. A consultation currently was being held on the proposals for this.

Changes to the scheme being considered by the Council included:-

- Everyone could have to pay a minimum of approximately 10 – 20% of their Council Tax, even if they currently did not pay any;
- Removing the rebate for a second adult; and
- Reducing the level of savings that could be held by someone before assistance could be received from £16,000 to £6,000.

It was estimated that these changes would affect approximately 20,000 people in the City.

Changes to Housing Benefit also were expected. For example, from April 2013 a national “bedroom tax” would be introduced for those in social housing. Under this proposal, working age people with a larger property than that required for their family size would have to pay a proportion of their rent.

For example, if they had one bedroom more than it was calculated they required, they would not receive Housing Benefit for 14% of their rent and if they had two more than needed they would not receive it for 25% of their rent. However, there were exemptions, such as for a bedroom needed for people providing 24 hour care. Each case would be considered individually, as the outcome would depend on the benefits being received.

The meeting noted that, although these changes would lead to many people paying more rent, the Council would have more money available with which to make discretionary payments, (for example, if foster carers needed an extra room).

Darren Moore advised that other changes to benefits included:-

- Everyone receiving incapacity benefit would be assessed for their eligibility for Employment Support Allowance. Unfortunately, many current recipients of incapacity benefit would not receive assisted living support;
- There would be increased sanctions for those not meeting the requirements of their Job Seekers Agreement, (such as not looking for work). Sanctions included the loss of benefits for up to 3 years;

- Disabled Living Allowance (DLA) was being abolished and would be replaced by Personal Independence Payments (PIP). Those currently receiving the lowest level of DLA were likely to not be eligible for PIPs;
- Universal credit would replace all means tested benefits, except Council Tax benefit, for those in and out of work, (ie, this would be one benefit with a lot of different components). Recipients would be expected to claim it on-line and receive monthly payments;
- Couples could only receive Pension Credit when the youngest person in the partnership reached the qualifying age. This had to be claimed, as it would not be paid automatically and the government did not have an obligation to provide individuals with information;
- The premium paid to severely disabled people would be abolished and the amount paid as the disabled children's premium would be halved; and
- All of the changes were to benefits received by working age people.

Darren Moore confirmed that officers could visit community groups to provide advice, although there could be a delay in this, as there currently was a big demand for such meetings. In addition, a guide to the forthcoming changes and advice on their implications was available on the Council's website: <http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council-services/housing/housing-and-council-tax-benefits/big-benefit-changes/>

15. YOUTH SERVICES IN THURNCOURT WARD

Alison Hadley, Senior Youth Worker in Charge at the Raven Youth Centre, explained that young people met at the Raven Centre on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The Monday and Thursday sessions were mixed, with about 20 young people attending, and the Tuesday session was a girls only performing arts group.

The Centre previously had received a grant from of £150 towards establishing a café. The grant had been used to buy stock, but it was anticipated that the café would become self-funding in the long run. It was hoped that the project would receive a Youth Initiative award.

The Centre would be participating in National Youth Week. This would be held from 5 to 10 November 2012 and have the theme of the Commonwealth. Work had already been done on preparing displays and it was hoped that e-mail correspondence could be established with a youth centre in Kenya.

In addition, the Raven Youth Centre would be twinned with Braunstone Grove Youth Centre on 8 November. Representatives from Braunstone Grove would visit the Raven Centre, where there would be a sports evening and others would be invited to participate in a cookery session. Everyone would then come together to eat the food made and have a quiz about Leicester.

As part of National Youth Week, an event would be held at the Watershed Youth Centre on 9 November. Nine young people from the Raven Youth Centre would perform three musical numbers as part of this.

16. HOUSING ISSUES

Tracey McAllister, from the City Council's Housing services, advised the meeting that approximately £50,000 was available from the Council's Housing Revenue Account for works on this side of the City. Tenants had been consulted and ideas for improvements requested.

As a result, the following projects had been identified for the current year:-

- Fencing and paths at the back of the bungalows on Ocean Road would be improved. Work had started on this, but a problem had been encountered with the drainage there. Severn Trent was working to resolve this, so the improvements works should restart in a few months' time;
- Plastering had been completed on internal walls at the maisonettes at Willowbrook View and painting would start soon;
- The flats in St Austell Road had been painted; and
- New doors, to improve security, would be installed at Dudley House. Although there had been a delay in this work, it would be completed by April 2013.

Residents expressed some concern that on one occasion seven officers had visited Willowbrook View at the same time and asked why this number had been needed. This information was not available at the meeting, so it was suggested that an answer could be brought to the next meeting.

Residents also asked if there was a proposal to increase the amount of parking available in Ocean Road, to improve access for emergency vehicles. In reply, Tracey McAllister advised that measurements had been taken and there was already sufficient access. As such, this had not been included in the proposals for the current year. However, it was recognised that there were problems with parking in that area, so she offered to raise this with the appropriate Housing Officer.

AGREED:

- 1) That Housing Officers be asked to explain at the next meeting why seven officers had visited Willowbrook View together on one occasion;
- 2) That Tracey McAllister be asked to pass on residents' concerns about parking in Ocean Road to the appropriate Housing Officer, along with a request that consideration be given to what, if any, improvements can be made to parking in that area.

17. CITY WARDEN

Charlotte Glover, City Warden, explained that the Ward's usual Warden was unable to attend the meeting, so she would be presenting an update on activities in the Ward:-

- The Warden had spoken to the people running shops along Thurncourt Road to see if it would be possible to tidy the area;
- Anti-dog fouling signs had been sprayed on pavements, using stencils;
- Residents were requested not to leave garden waste at the recycling centre in the Ward, as this was fly tipping. Instead, large amounts should be tied together and the Council asked to come and remove it; and
- A prosecution for fly tipping was progressing. This had resulted from the depositing of a large amount of building materials around the Thurnby Lodge estate.

18. POLICE ISSUES UPDATE

Sergeant Stuart Wood and PC Ben Orton of Leicestershire Police introduced themselves to the meeting.

Sergeant Wood advised that:-

- There were 45 less crimes between April and September 2012 than there had been during the same period in 2011;
- There had been 19 burglaries to dwellings, which was a reduction of 14 from the same period in 2011. This was felt to be due to target hardening, public information and the work of the beat team;
- More target hardening would be carried out, (for example, distributing door alarms and timer switches);
- 51 incidents of criminal damage had been reported, which was a reduction of more than twenty from the same period in 2011;
- A survey would be carried out over the next few months to find out residents' priorities for policing in the Ward; and
- The Police had now a twitter account called @LPThurncourt.

Residents advised the Police that a group of young people regularly met behind local shops and that there were concerns about what some of the shopkeepers were selling to these young people. Sergeant Wood advised that several complaints had

been received about this and it was possible that test purchasing could be carried out.

There also was concern that fireworks were being thrown in the vicinity of the shops on Thurncourt Road. Sergeant Wood advised that an operation was being carried out across the whole county to stop this as Bonfire Night approached. The area could be visited and the shopkeeper(s) advised on selling fireworks to young people.

19. FEEDBACK ON WARD PATCH-WALKS

Councillor Fonseca reminded the meeting that a series of Patch-Walks had been held in May 2012. A number of issues had been identified, including dog fouling in various areas, problems with grass verges and tree pruning.

Some issues had been addressed, but some work was still outstanding, including:-

- Consideration of the suggestion that bollards be installed at the entrance to Willowbrook Primary School;
- Consideration of the possibility of installing lighting in Willowbrook Park; and
- The creation of a pedestrian crossing in Dakin Road, (near Thurnby Lodge Primary School). Councillor Fonseca advised that he had spoken to the Deputy City Mayor about this, but due to budget cuts it could not be done at this time. However, it remained on the list of possible schemes.

Residents welcomed the work that had been done as a result of the previous Patch-Walks, but asked that in the future at least one be done in the evening, so that people who worked during the day could attend. The Chair undertook to investigate whether this would be possible, in view of the number of officers and agencies involved in the Walks.

20. WARD COMMUNITY BUDGET 2012/13

Francis Connolly, Members Support Officer, introduced this item, explaining that £15,235 remained in the Ward community budget for 2012/13. This included £5,485 that had been committed from the 2011/12 financial year for improvements identified through Ward patch walks.

The meeting noted that the Chair supported the grant application submitted by 1st Thurnby Lodge Brownies for £494.95 towards Brownie activities, including a break away from home. However, approval for this application also needed to be sought from Councillor Wann, the other Ward Member, who was not able to be at this meeting.

It also was noted that a grant application had been received at the meeting from the Thurnby Lodge Tenants and Residents Association for £500 towards an evening show in January 2013. This event would be publicised widely, in order that as many

people as possible from the community could attend. As there had not been time to consider the application before the meeting, it was suggested that it could be processed under the Council's fast track procedure.

Francis Connolly reminded the meeting that a grant of £3,000 previously had been approved for the Thurnby Lodge carnival. However, the event had been cancelled due to bad weather. The Council now was working with Thurnby Lodge Community Forum to redirect the grant to two other community events, one possibly to be held at Christmas and one possibly to be held at Easter. Once discussions were complete, an application would be made to formally transfer the funds.

AGREED:-

- 1) That a grant of £494.95 to 1st Thurnby Lodge Brownies for Brownie activities be supported;
- 2) That the application from the Thurnby Lodge Tenants and Residents Association for a grant of £500 towards an evening show in January 2013 be processed under the Council's fast track procedure; and
- 3) That the Members Services Officer be asked to continue to work with the Thurnby Lodge Community Forum to redirect the grant originally approved for Thurnby Lodge carnival to other community events.

21. DATES OF FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

NOTED:-

That further Community Meetings will be held on Monday 28 January 2013 and Monday 25 March 2013.

22. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair wished everyone a merry Christmas and happy new year and closed the meeting at 7.29 pm.