

CASTLE COMMUNITY MEETING

TUESDAY, 15 MARCH 2016

Meeting Room G.01, Ground Floor, City Hall,
115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

NO	<u>ITEM</u>	<u>ACTION REQUESTED AT MEETING</u>
22.	INTRODUCTIONS	<p>Councillor Sangster took the Chair and welcomed everyone present.</p> <p>In respect of the Councillors Code of Conduct:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Councillor Senior declared an interest that a relative of hers owned a flat in the Cultural Quarter.• Ward Councillors also declared interests concerning the arrangements for the Summer Fair, confirming that their involvement was voluntary and without personal gain.
23.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	There were no apologies for absence.
24.	ACTION LOG	The Action Log of the Castle Community Meeting held on 24 November 2015 was agreed and noted.
25.	GUIDE TO UNIVERSAL CREDIT	<p>Mike Watson, Income Collection Manager (Housing) circulated presentation slides, which provided an update on Universal Credit (UC).</p> <p>The principal changes to benefit payments were explained as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UC was a new benefit that would replace JSA, Income Support, Child Tax Credits, Housing Benefits and Employment Support Allowance.• UC could only be claimed online• UC will be paid only to the claimants, once per calendar month• UC could only be paid to bank accounts• There could be no updates, unless in exceptional circumstances• Some alternative payment arrangements were in place for vulnerable people

It was clarified that working age claimants would be affected but not pensioners, unless the youngest of a couple was working age.

In respect of timescales, it was reported that the new system was being introduced gradually, rolling out to new claimants who were singles without children, then to everyone by 2018. Details of other changes, such as the benefits income cap, a freeze on working age benefits, the switch from DLA to PIP for all existing claimants, housing benefits backdating, and other associated restrictions were also reported.

In terms of the possible impacts the following points were noted:

- Tenants would receive all their housing costs themselves
- Tenants would then have to pay all of their rent and any other bills from the payment they received
- Anyone who did not pay their rent would be at risk of eviction
- Personal budgeting support was available through the Council's Universal Support website.

In regard to the final point, a list of agencies that offered help and advice, with contact details were circulated.

Mike was thanked for his presentation.

Concern was expressed at the likely impact of the changes and specifically to the replacement of housing benefit payments. It was suggested that an increase in homelessness could arise and that monitoring be undertaken, particularly given the reduction in hostel provision in the city.

It was confirmed that every effort was being made to properly inform those affected and to ensure the correct information was being provided, as it was considered that Government departments had not ensured that such advice was available.

In conclusion, the impact on resources was estimated to be to be high as the roll-out of UC would affect a large number of people in the city, particularly in the Castle Ward.

<p>26.</p>	<p>CULTURAL QUARTER - ST GEORGES CHURCHYARD</p>	<p>Claire Peters and Louise Seymour (Development Team, Planning & Economic Development) provided an update in respect of the St George's Churchyard development within the Cultural Quarter.</p> <p>It was reported that the Council were developing plans for a high quality public realm area, with improved lighting, pathways and landscaping.</p> <p>Architectural feature lighting was also being proposed to improve the area, together with a suggestion to relocate the ceramic mermaid arches from West Bridge.</p> <p>A wider Cultural Quarter Action Plan was also to be consulted upon involving an exhibition, to which local residents and businesses would be invited, the final details were to be determined and Ward members input concerning the method of consultation was encouraged.</p> <p>Claire and Louise were thanked for their update.</p> <p>In response to questions it was reported that the ceramic mermaid arches were originally located at the former market, and therefore their relocation was suitable. Some residents queried whether this was necessary, as the artwork was considered to have a significant amenity value in its current location. It was also confirmed that the plans were being discussed with the church organisation but that no changes to the church building itself were proposed.</p> <p>In respect of the overall objectives, it was reported that the proposals would open up the site, offer greater connectivity and provide a more useable space.</p> <p>Insp Simon Preston confirmed the Police involvement in the consultation process and expressed support to the initial proposals. It was suggested that improvements to access, lighting, and relocated pathways would assist in removing anti-social activity in the area.</p> <p>In conclusion it was suggested that the contact list used for the Ward meeting be used to disseminate further information as plans developed for the area, and to provide further information on the consultation.</p>
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<p>27.</p>	<p>POLICE UPDATE</p>	<p>Police Insp Simon Preston reported on Police activities in the ward.</p> <p>He updated on previous reports concerning an increase in burglaries in the Clarendon Park area where a number of student properties had been affected. Arrests had recently been made and the offenders had received prison sentences. A long term plan involving discussions with the Council to increase security and develop of a programme to provide alley gates was ongoing.</p> <p>There had been an increase in the city centre of ‘theft from people’ offences including thefts of mobile phones and purses taken from bags. This offence often involved distraction tactics by groups of offenders and the public were reminded to be vigilant and aware of their surroundings.</p> <p>Cycle crime continued to increase despite an education and advertisement campaign. A need for more secure cycle parking facilities was raised.</p> <p>In respect of street drinking, and begging on streets, Insp Preston reminded the public not to give to those begging on the street and to support homelessness charities instead. It was clarified that it was not an offence to sleep on the pavement.</p> <p>An operation was being undertaken to target kerb-crawlers, as prostitution in the city centre was increasing.</p> <p>In conclusion Insp Preston promoted the 101 phone number as the correct number to report incidents of anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>In reply to questions and comments, it was confirmed that large numbers of people congregating in areas, such as DeMontfort Square and Museum Square could not be acted upon by the Police, unless offences were being committed. Ward Councillors referred to the earlier discussions concerning the St George’s Churchyard improvements and advised that although that area had been currently identified for works, they were keenly aware of the need to upgrade other areas of public open space in the city centre to prevent anti-social behaviour.</p>
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<p>28.</p>	<p>CITY WARDEN UPDATE</p>	<p>Chris Bramley-Brown (City Warden) updated the meeting with environmental and enforcement activities in the Ward.</p> <p>He commented on ongoing work to enforce the removal of commercial bins on streets, where an improvement in the situation had been realised.</p> <p>A case involving the erection of unlawful scaffolding had proceeded to Court and was currently adjourned.</p> <p>A business owner had been approached following the 'dumping' of ice from premises after closing.</p> <p>It was reported that a recent success involved the interception of a large amount of meat, which was intended for the retail market, following and alert and liaison with the Food team.</p> <p>Chris reminded the public to report any issues and where possible to use the LoveLeicester app.</p> <p>In response to questions and comments, Chris agreed to look into the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obstruction caused by trees over footpath in Clarendon Park Road, adjacent to rented flats. • Removal of rubbish at the vacant Queens Rd/Bulwer Road site, the owners had been contacted and further stages towards a legal process were noted.
<p>29.</p>	<p>COMMUNITY MEETING BUDGET</p>	<p>Councillors referred to the purpose of the ward Community Budget and the criteria for applications were explained. It was noted that this was the final meeting of the financial year.</p> <p>Eight applications were submitted and supported, or part supported.</p> <p>Members of organisations submitting bids were invited to address the meeting to explain their proposals.</p> <p>Feedback was received from the Centre Project, and friends of Queens Road Allotments, as organisations that had received ward community funding for previous projects.</p>

30.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	<p>a) Victoria Park – Centenary Walk</p> <p>The recent commencement of works at Victoria Park to remove tress, as part of the above project was raised.</p> <p>It was confirmed that the proposals to clear the route from the gates to the war memorial had been agreed following consultation with the Park Users Group and Friends of the Park. In terms of a formal consultation process, it was confirmed that the planning application had been advertised together with the legal notices.</p> <p>It was suggested by some residents that the issue could have also been reported to the ward meeting, similar to the report on St Georges Churchyard above. This view was accepted.</p> <p>b) Central Fire Station</p> <p>Following consultation, including reports to previous ward meetings, it was reported that the Fire Authority had withdrawn the proposal to close the Central Fire Station.</p> <p>c) LCFC – Premier League Leaders</p> <p>In response to a question from a resident, it was confirmed that the City Mayor was aware of the likely impact to the city, should LCFC win the Premier League. Initial discussions with the Police and partner organisations were underway.</p>
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