

Castle Community Meeting

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:30 pm, Tuesday, 9 September 2008

Held at: Leicester Football Club (Tiger's Stadium), Welford Road

Who was there:

Councillor Matt Follett

Councillor Phil Gordon

Councillor Patrick Kitterick

FORMAL SESSION

22. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Follett was elected as Chair for the meeting. However it was also agreed to hold the meeting in an informal style to allow all people to engage fully in the proceedings.

23. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Councillor Kitterick welcomed all those in attendance and outlined how the agenda would proceed.

He asked if people had any questions.

A query was raised about the Adult Education College, in particular the loss of the art room in the basement, which had been moved to New Walk Museum. This had led to the loss of associated businesses, which were also based in the basement. An employment unit had been set up in the basement in place of the art room. Councillor Kitterick stated that Chris Minter, the Interim Service Director, Safer and Stronger Communities would be invited to attend the next meeting to discuss the matter.

Further queries were raised about the way in which Community Meetings could address issues which arose in a community, were the meetings often enough? Was there enough opportunity for people to raise issues and for them to be informed of things which the Council needed to announce? Councillor Kitterick stated that whilst it wasn't perfect that the meetings were quarterly, Councillors held surgeries regularly and they could be contacted at any time where issues could be raised.

The issues of bins being left on the street was raised, it was noted that this was still a problem in the Grasmere and surrounding streets area. However other residents felt that planning issues were more of a problem. Councillor Follett commented that the ward was large and there would be different issues in different areas.

Action	Officer Identified	Deadline
Invite Chris Minter, Interim Service Director, Safer and Stronger Communities to the next meeting	Kate Owen, Member Support Officer	Next meeting, 8 December 2008

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

No such declarations were made at this time.

26. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Castle Community Meeting dated 22 July 2008 were circulated and members were asked to approve them as a correct record.

Councillor Kitterick gave people the opportunity to consider the minutes further and make comments if they wished.

27. WARD PRIORITIES

Councillor Follett gave the meeting a briefing presentation about the Community Meetings. In it, he outlined the following:-

- Who would be involved? - Councillors, Local People, local organisations, key agencies, Council Officers etc.
- How they would work? – eg. be open and accessible, focus on local needs and interests, take place four times a year with a formal and informal part of the meeting etc.
- What they would do? – eg. develop a ward action plan of priorities identified by residents.
- What would be achieved by them? – eg. give local people a chance to identify environmental improvements, bring service providers together to improve the service.

Then he detailed the process of developing a ward action plan. This was about identifying priorities, mainly from suggestions by residents. The meeting would then hold informal discussions identifying issues which they felt needed addressing and these could be included in the plan and action would be taken on them. (This exercise had already been undertaken in the Clarendon Park side of the ward, but it was being undertaken at this meeting to give this side of the ward the opportunity to contribute.)

Following the discussions held in groups the following priority issues reported to the meeting:-

- Planning enforcement relating to signs.
- Lack of variety of Adult Learning courses.
- Absentee landlords, rubbish left in gardens / communal areas, population balance / lack of family housing, issues with 'studentification'.

- Planning application for housing at the cricket ground / general lack of youth facilities.
- St Andrews Estate – people parking in assigned parking bays – lack of enforcement – request for residents parking.
- Street cleaning and bin collection not being undertaken in the logical order – suggestion that street cleaning should take place 24hours after bin collection.
- Further work required on ensuring that bins were not left on the street – City Wardens to consider.

There was some detailed discussion regarding the issue of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's). Mike Richardson, Head of Planning Management and Delivery commented that the laws surrounding HMOs were based on national government guidance and were complex and difficult to enforce. For example a 6 person house of unrelated people, legally could still be considered a 'family' house and not a HMO. To separate a house into individual flats would however require a planning application. He also noted that the new planning framework was currently being consulted on. He urged people to look on the Council's website and take part in this consultation. Both Councillors, Follett and Kitterick commented that the only real way in which the Council could refuse undesirable planning applications was for the Council to develop a policy in that area, which needed public support and evidence of a problem.

Action	Officer Identified	Deadline
Develop a list of priorities for action	Kate Owen, Member Support Officer	December 8 2008

28. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

The meeting received a presentation from Malcolm Grange, Head of Street Scene Enforcement about the Environmental Services which were provided in the Castle Ward.

He gave details on the following areas of work undertaken in the ward:-

- Waste and Recycling – There was still a weekly collection of waste in Leicester, also free collection of 5 bulky items and the city achieved a 33% recycling rate.
- Street Cleaning – the Council undertook area based street cleaning. As part of this matters such as fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, discarded needles and graffiti were also dealt with. The Castle ward had higher than average incidents of flytipping, discarded needles and graffiti, however this was due to the inclusion of the city centre in the ward. The ward did however perform well when it was inspected for cleanliness.

- Other Street Scene Matters – these included cleaning of chewing gum in the city centre, graffiti removal from Virgin Media equipment boxes and the bins on streets pilot initiative, where efforts were made to get residents to remove their bins from the street outside their houses.
- City Wardens - Malcolm informed the meeting that the Castle Ward would be having three City Wardens working in the ward from October, looking to tackle a range of environmental crime issues and improve the local environment.
- Pest Control Services - it was noted that there were high levels of call outs to deal with mice problems in the ward, which it was felt were probably due to the high levels of fast food outlets and the nature of the housing.
- Dog Control Orders – A range of new powers were being introduced. For example, dogs would be restricted from certain areas such as children’s play areas and fixed penalty notices could be levied against irresponsible owners for not cleaning up mess.
- Noisy Neighbours – information was provided on the services provided by the Noise Control Team, who provided a call-out service until 2.00am seven days a week. This team had been dealing particularly with loud music being played in domestic settings.
- SmileSafe Scheme – this was where businesses selling food and drink were inspected and given a rating for their food hygiene. He outlined businesses which were rated good eg, Greggs on Market Street, McIndians and Jack’s Potato Bar and those that were rated bad, Temptations on Churchgate, Olive Tree on Belgrave Gate and Shanghai Moon on High Street. He also noted that some businesses had been closed as a result of mice infestations such as Flame on Granby Street.
- Licensing – the Licensing Team was responsible for granting of alcohol licenses. They had taken action at three premises where it was felt that they had contravened their license. One of these venues had their license suspended for three months. They also oversaw the ‘Best Bar None’ scheme which promoted good practice amongst the city’s licensees.
- Building Control – Officers had been responsible for checking the safety of major recent building projects in the city such as the Curve theatre and the Highcross centre. Officers had also undertaken a great deal of work checking buildings in the aftermath of the earth tremor in February.
- 10,000 Trees Project – Malcolm provided details of this project which intended to plant 10,000 trees in the city over the next three years. There was a stall as part of the Carousel and people were welcome to give suggestions as to where they should be planted.

The Chair thanked Malcolm for the presentation, he then invited the meeting to put forward any points or ask questions.

Trees - A resident suggested that mature trees around the city be felled, so they could be replaced and a profit could be generated.

Chewing Gum – whilst cleaning was welcomed, it was recommended that preventive action was better, for example were there going to be signs at the Highcross Centre. Malcolm commented that businesses were being consulted on enhanced cleaning services. Councillor Kitterick also commented that a form of 'City Centre Management' was being looked at where retailers were brought together to make improvements.

Aggressive Begging – A resident felt that this was a problem in the city centre. The Police Community Support Officer and Councillor Kitterick both strongly recommended that this should be reported as it couldn't be addressed if it wasn't.

Recycling – Councillor Follett felt that there should be more recycling points.

Ward Monitoring of Environmental Incidents – Councillor Follett commented that the city centre skewed the figures for the castle ward. It was queried whether the city centre could be monitored separately? Malcolm undertook to look into whether this was possible.

Graffiti Monitoring – Councillor Follett queried how this was undertaken as he felt 100% satisfaction as mentioned in the presentation was unrealistic. Malcolm commented that levels of cleanliness were monitored in line with national guidelines.

Overpainting of Virgin Media Equipment Boxes – Councillor Follett felt that this should be paid entirely by Virgin Media and queried whether it was. Malcolm responded by saying that this was being monitored but it was expected that the funding wouldn't cover the costs of painting.

Dog Exclusion Zone – Councillor Follett expressed concern that these rules would be enforced too harshly. Malcolm explained that it was intended to be pragmatic, parks officers would be doing the enforcement but would apply common sense.

Adverts on lampposts and fly posting – A resident queried what could be done about this. Malcolm explained that officers could remove this and prosecute where appropriate. Another view was however expressed, claiming that there was nowhere for up and coming bands to advertise themselves without flyposting.

29. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Special Olympics

The Chair welcomed Angela Sansome to the meeting to give a brief presentation on volunteering opportunities at the Special Olympics being held in Leicester in July 2009.

Angela noted that the Special Olympics would be held from 25 July to 31 July in 2009. Volunteers would be required for a range of areas, ie first aid or tea makers. This would be the second time the Special Olympics has been held in Leicester.

The events would be held in a range of venues across the city such as Braunstone Leisure Centre and Aylestone Leisure Centre.

There would be opportunities to volunteer for specific events. There would also be more management level opportunities as well.

There were however some requirements for volunteers, they need to be over 16 and be willing to go through an enhanced criminal records bureau check. Certain, more serious offences would bar people from taking part.

Angela noted that the current Lord Mayor's appeal was fundraising for the Special Olympics, therefore this was another good reason to get involved.

Angela urged as many people as possible to get involved.

Road Signs

A resident noted that a letter had been sent to the Council about out of date road signs in Clarendon Park. She was pleased to note that five had been replaced.

INFORMATION FAIR

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 the local Police to bring enquiries and raise issues.

TABLE 1 - Ward Councillors and General Enquiries

Members of the public were given an opportunity to talk to Ward Councillors or raise any general enquiries.

TABLE 2 Special Olympics

Angela Sansome from Voluntary Action Leicester was in attendance to provide details about the Special Olympics which will be held in Leicester in 2009, including opportunities to get involved in volunteering.

TABLE 3 Environmental Services

Malcolm Grange, Head of Street Scene Enforcement was available at the meeting to discuss local environmental issues, ie litter, graffiti. He also provided information about the Council's 10,000 trees programme.

TABLE 4 Planning Management and Delivery

Mike Richardson, Head of Planning Management and Delivery was able to provide information about planning matters which affected the local area and planning applications which had been submitted in the locality.

TABLE 5
Highways and Transportation

Adrian Friend, Traffic Engineer, was present to discuss matters relating to Highways and Transport such as parking.

30. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 9pm.

