

Castle Community Meeting

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:00 pm, Wednesday, 26 October 2011

**Held at: Avenue Road Primary School, Avenue Road Extension,
Leicester**

Who was there:

Councillor Neil Clayton

Councillor Patrick Kitterick

Councillor Lynn Senior

FORMAL SESSION

11. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Neil Clayton was Chair for the meeting.

12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies from Councillors.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors were asked to declare any interests that they had in the business on the agenda, and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

Councillor Clayton declared a personal interest in Item 7 on the agenda 'Student Accommodation', whilst not discussing individual applications, the agenda item was pertinent as there was an application on land next door to his home.

Councillor Senior declared a personal interest as her partner was an employee in Highways and Transportation at Leicester City Council.

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Councillor Senior declared an interest in Item 8 on the agenda 'Policing Update', that for the avoidance of doubt she was one of three representatives for Leicester City Council on the Police Authority Board.

Councillor Senior declared an interest in Budget Application 6 'Queen's Road Christmas Lighting', as she was employed by Age UK who had a charity shop on Queen's Road.

14. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the Castle Community Meeting held on 20 July 2011 were confirmed as a correct record.

15. STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Members agreed to hear the agenda items out of order.

Councillor Kitterick and Darryl Watson from Planning & Management Delivery, Leicester City Council presented the item on student accommodation, and the proposed development of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as described in the agenda briefing note. It was stated that the standard of student accommodation within Leicester varied significantly. It was also said that the

increased development of student accommodation released family houses to the wider community, and that purpose-built student accommodation could regenerate an area.

The meeting was informed that at present, Leicester City Council did not have a strong enforceable policy to reject applications. The policy tended to make it relatively easy for appeals to be won by a developer and for rejection of a planning application to be overturned. The Inspector could also award costs against the Council if the Council lost an appeal.

There were a number of planning applications for several thousand student accommodation spaces that had been given permission to build, but had not yet been developed. The Council were working with universities to assess the level of student accommodation which was necessary. Information was also being gathered on the types of locations in the City best suited to accommodate new purpose-built student blocks.

Residents made the following comments and asked questions;

- Land might be lost in areas where housing was needed.
- Residents in Clarendon Park felt that the area had become dominated by students, and that the general nature of the area was changing.
- The density issue could be addressed by having a percentage of different social groups in an area, and by restricting the level of multi-let accommodation.
- A limit needed to be drawn on the number of large blocks that were appearing, and that old Victorian Buildings should be modernised.
- Large blocks overshadowed the houses in an area, for example the proposed development in Jarrom Street.
- With the rise in tuition fees, if the number of students attending university diminished, what would happen to vacant student accommodation?
- It was suggested that the buildings be designed in such a way that if student numbers fell, the buildings could be remodelled, for example, offices. Residents also suggested that a height restriction be put on the buildings so that they did not dominate the skyline and reduce light to neighbouring residential properties.
- Residents also asked if a parking policy could be attached the tenancies restricting the number of vehicles attached to the property, to reduce issues around parking.
- It was felt that vacant multi-let properties would not be let to families by landlords.

It was expected that a draft SPD would be available for a six-week public consultation by the end of 2011. The consultation would be advertised in the Leicester Mercury and on Leicester City Council's website. Residents were urged to take part in the consultation, and debate what they would like to see in the guidance. Formal adoption of the document was due in March 2012, and would be discussed as an agenda item at the next Community Meeting in February.

Members thanked the officer for attending.

16. THE NEW ORANGE BAG RECYCLING SCHEME

An officer from Waste Management, Leicester City Council gave a presentation on the new Orange Bag Recycling Scheme and made the following points:

- Green boxes had been in operation for seven years and had now been replaced by the orange bags. A wider range of goods could now be recycled including cardboard, envelopes, glass, tins and all plastics.
- A trial of the orange bags was undertaken in 2010, and over a nine month period 6,500 tons of waste had been saved from landfill, participation had increased and recycling had doubled.
- During the first week of collection w/c 17th October, there had been an increase of 82% of recycling waste collected.
- Flats and student accommodation would be introduced into the scheme next year.
- After two months of operation, the service would look at areas of low participation and to find out why.
- Green boxes that were left on the street would be collected and taken away, but residents were allowed to keep them if they wished.
- In the rolls of orange bags, towards the end there would be a yellow sticker for people to stick to a bag placed for collection requesting more bags. Bags could also be ordered online.
- Residents were requested to place the bags for collection when full, but if residents found them to be too heavy to do this, then partially filled bags would also be collected.
- A 24-hour response service would be operated by Cleansing Services for cleaning up waste from split bags.

Members thanked the officer for attending.

17. UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

This agenda item was withdrawn prior to the meeting.

18. THE HANDY PERSON SERVICE

Tariq Latif from Housing Strategy Options gave a brief presentation on the Handy Person Services which were offered to residents throughout the City, and made the following points:

- The service was set up 20 years ago to help people by carrying out small maintenance jobs, such as plumbing, electrical, window and door repairs.
- The service also offered advice and assisted with improving security, such as fitting window locks.
- The service did not undertake major works, such as installing a full fence, but could carry out small repairs.
- To qualify for the service people needed to be either registered disabled, over 60 years old, a single parent or a low income family.

- The cost of the service depended on whether the person was on means tested benefits or not:

£12.00 per hour (inc VAT) for people on means tested benefits (excluding Working Tax Credit)

£18.00 per hour (inc VAT) for people in receipt of Working Tax Credit

£25.00 per hour (inc VAT) for people who were not on means tested benefits.

- In addition there was a charge for the materials used.
- Free estimates could be given.

Tariq stated that he was confident that the workmen provided a reliable service. Tariq also explained that there was a small waiting list, and the Handy Person Service was available by calling (0116) 221 1313, 221 1344 or 221 1397.

Residents asked if people in receipt of pensions could qualify for the scheme. The Chair asked for this point to be clarified and brought to the next meeting.

19. POLICING UPDATE

PC Emma Jayne and PCSO Darius Cobb attended the meeting and reported on the following:

- There was an increase in burglaries and theft of cycles from gardens in the Clarendon Park area.
- Houses being burgled were not necessarily occupied by students. The Police believed the houses were being watched prior to being burgled and asked residents to be extra vigilant.
- The Police asked that people have window locks fitted, and if possible, to install an alarm. They were concerned that people did not use alarms that were currently fitted, as people left their homes for short periods of time and did not feel they needed to turn on their alarm.
- Neighbourhood Officers would take part in Operation Consequence as a result of the number of crimes, to raise awareness of the need for people to secure their homes.
- D-Locks for cycles, which were harder to break than normal cable locks, were available at the University Security Office.
- The new 101 number for contacting the Police had gone live. The number is for the reporting of non-emergency incidents, and brought Leicestershire in line with other forces using the same number.

A resident reported seeing a number of cyclists pass him on New Walk and asked if the Police were dealing with the issue. The Police stated they would report the issue back to the City Centre beat team. The meeting was informed that the Police did periodic checks on Queen's Road. The Police were told that cyclists on pavements was an issue of concern, particularly for the elderly and disabled, and that it was often repeat offenders. It was suggested that larger signage be installed at both ends of New Walk, funding permitting, advising cyclists of the need to dismount. Residents also stated there was an inconsistency with cycle paths around the city, and cyclists

often rode on footpaths as they felt it was too dangerous on roads. Councillor Kitterick informed the meeting that a parallel route with London Road could be used by cyclists through the Highfields area. It was agreed that an item be placed on the next meeting agenda on cycling.

A resident informed the meeting that he noticed that graffiti in the area had increased, often with the same 'tags'. He asked if the Police could investigate the issue.

The Members thanked the Police Officers for their attendance.

20. CITY WARDENS UPDATE

City Warden Nik Krneta provided an update on issues dealt with by the City Wardens in Castle Ward:

- Over the past three months, 120 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued:
 - 42 Distribution of Free Printed Matter with no licence
 - 2 Fly posting
 - 76 Leafleting
- Educational work had been undertaken with schools, including litter picks around Rathbone Street and a presentation. A quiz had also been held with the children.
- It was noted that there was a lot of fast food takeaway litter in the area, especially around, Gallowtree Gate and Horsefair Street. The meeting was informed that street litter control notices would be issues if premises did not clear the immediate area near to the premises.
- There were 8 pending court cases for flyposting, with one large premises being taken to court.
- The 29th October 2010 would be 'Graffiti Clean Up Day' on Hazel Street, which would include painting buildings. People were asked to congregate around 9.30am.
- Litter bins had been installed on Grasmere Street, Windermere Street and Thirlmere Street. More bins would be installed in Clarendon Park next year.

Residents requested that more bins be placed in Clarendon Park Road. A request was also made for Howard Road, and the resident was informed to complete a bid for community funding for the bin.

A resident asked that letting signs for the Jamie Lewis company on Lower Hastings Street be attached to houses and not on the wooden posts as at present. Councillor Kitterick informed the meeting that there were some planning powers regarding 'To Let' boards in a conservation area and asked the City Warden to take pictures.

A resident informed the meeting that more motorbike stands were needed near to Clarendon Park Road. The City Warden stated he would contact Craig Howlett at the University to discuss the issue.

21. BUDGET

Councillor Clayton introduced this item of business.

Members considered the following applications:

Storage space for Carib Juniors FC at Victoria Park – request for £1,377 towards the cost of storage space on Victoria Park for sports equipment.

Members were minded to fully support on the condition that the facility be made available to other groups.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported and the sum of £1,377 be allocated from the Ward Community budget.

Leicester Zim Warriors Football Club – request for £360 towards the cost of team participation funding.

A request had been made for information regarding how many participants lived in Castle Ward, but no further information had been received, therefore, Councillors were minded not to support, but could fast-track if sufficient information was provided.

RESOLVED:

that the application be refused.

Homeless Football League – request for £770 towards the cost of football kit purchase, equipment and travel costs.

Members were minded to support the cost of purchasing kit and necessary equipment, but not travel expenses.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported for the sum of £670, not including travel expenses.

Joining Hands – a Silver Jubilee Celebration – request for £1,250 towards the production of a short film.

Members were minded to support £700 for film production costs.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported for the sum of £700.

Youth Comedy Film Project – request for £960 towards the production of a comedy film production by young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Members were minded not to support the application at present as they could see no direct benefit to Castle Ward resident. They requested further information on the bid.

RESOLVED:

that the application be refused.

Queen's Road Christmas Lighting – request for £3,822 towards the cost of the installation of Christmas trees and decorative lighting.

Members stated that £9,495 had been funded over the past three years. As a consequence, they explained that they were minded not to grant the funding given the large amount previously given. It was also suggested that traders may not contribute if it continued to be funded by the Ward Community Fund. Furthermore, it was pointed out that the Christmas Fair on the 4th December had been funded at £3,000.

RESOLVED:

that the application be refused.

22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The following item was raised under any other business:

- It was noted that Knighton Library had a large window where residents and community groups could advertise not-for-profit information.

23. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.