



Leicester
City Council

(vii)

Minutes of the Meeting of the
SAFFRON AREA FORUM

Held: 21 January 2004 at 1.00.pm
in Southfields Drive Community Centre, Southfields Drive,
Saffron Lane Estate, Leicester

PRESENT

Councillor Mark Farmer	Local Councillor (Chair)
Karen Pickering	Local Resident (Vice-Chair)
Pip Berry	St Christopher's Church
Pat Brewin	SRC/Goldhill
David Budd	Welford Road LPU
Maureen Curley	Leicester City West PCT
Dee Dixon	Saffron Resource Centre/Goldshill
Christine Edwards	Saffron Headstart
E R Fox	Neston Gardens Action Group
Joy Geary	Kingfisher Youth Centre
Debbie Harris	Saffron SRB 5
Anne Henry	Linwood Centre
Christina Herbert	Saffron Young Peoples Project Ltd
Judy Hughes	Local Resident
Mary Jones	Neston Gardens Action Group
Lee Martin	JYIP
Jodie Oldershaw	Neston Gardens Action Group
Lisa Parment	Saffcash
Terry Rogers	Local Resident
Lynda Randall	Saffron Voluntary Project
T A Scott	Saffron Lane Tenants Association
Alan Telford	St Christopher's Church
Valerie Walbrook	Local Network Fund
Marianne Whiting	Saffron Headstart

Officers in Attendance

Roanne Dearing	Resources, Access & Diversity
Phil Duxbury	Linwood Workshops
John Crookes	Education and Lifelong Learning Department
Ken Gibson	Housing Department
Lisa Mutton	Saffron Economic Development Trust
Les Price	Linwood Centre
Lisa Robinson	The Lancaster School
Patricia Roberts-Thomson	Chief Executive's Office

2. INTERESTS

Councillor Farmer, on behalf of the Town Clerk, read the following statement:

“The Town Clerk reminds all Council employees wishing to make representations on the proposed budget that, in accordance with the political conventions, they should not discuss, make personal representations or lobby Councillors on the budget proposals. Employees should therefore not comment on any budget proposals discussed at the meeting today.

The Officer role is to provide an objective and factual briefing and then be in listening mode. Council employees wishing to make representations on the budget should do so through their line managers or trade unions which will then be fed into the budget process”.

5. UPDATE ON EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING BUDGET

John Crookes introduced the budget proposals and explained to the forum that raising educational standards was one of the Council’s key priorities. In order to meet the needs of schools, which were facing significant financial pressures, and to meet corporate wide savings targets it had been necessary to reprioritise spending from lifelong learning and to assess voluntary sector grants against the Council’s core priorities. It was pointed out that current voluntary sector offered a patchwork of provision and new ways of offering services would be considered. In addition to this, management efficiency savings were proposed and a review of premises was being undertaken. The Forum was advised that consultation was taking place on the draft proposals, comments received would be passed to Cabinet, which would make a recommendation to Council after it had considered all proposals submitted. It was emphasised that no decisions had yet been made and the meeting was reminded of the various ways in which people can engage with the consultation process.

Karen Pickering circulated a leaflet outlining which groups in Saffron would be affected by the cuts, and the financial implications of this, and the Forum again expressed their disappointment that Council Officers were unable to participate in any discussions. In light of this, it was not felt that the meeting was part of a proper consultation exercise as a number of members of the Forum were prevented from speaking.

The Forum noted that the deadline for representations from the voluntary sector was 3rd February 2004, with Cabinet considering the budget proposals at its meeting on 16th February 2004 and formulating its recommendations to Council where the budget would be considered on 25th February 2004.

Members of the Forum outlined how they believed the cuts to the voluntary sector, in particular the Saffron Resource Centre and the Goldshill Adventure Playground, would have a negative impact on the Saffron estate. The positive work which had been undertaken by many of the voluntary groups in

partnership with the City Council and other agencies in offering vital services to the community was also stressed. It was felt that many of the services which faced having their funding cuts had built up trust with the community over many years and this would not be easily replaced.

The Forum pointed out the problems associated with the closure of facilities for young people, and the problems that could result for the community as a whole. The Council was urged to think carefully about the cuts which they were proposing, and the effects that this could have on community cohesion in the area and the potential future costs in controlling anti social behaviour as a result of facilities closing. In view of this, it was felt by the Forum that the proposed cuts would not necessarily be cost effective in the long term. The Forum also felt that the proposed cut disproportionately affected Saffron compared to other areas of the City.

The cuts to the Saffron Resource Centre in terms of the advice services which were offered in the community were also discussed, and the problems associated with all advice workers being centrally located were pointed out. It was agreed that this should be discussed at a separate meeting in light of the best value review of advice service rather than in a general budget discussion.

RECOMMENDED:

- (1) That the Forums views on the proposed budget be considered by Cabinet as part of the process,
- (2) that a special meeting of the Forum be held to discuss the best value review of advice services, and
- (3) that it be noted that the Forum were unhappy that Officers of the Council were unable to speak on the budget proposals, and ask that it be reviewed before the next meeting to discuss advice services.