

Castle Community Meeting

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:00 pm, Wednesday, 5 December 2012

**Held at: Leicester Adult Education College, 2 Wellington Street,
Leicester LE1 6HL**

Who was there:

Councillor Neil Clayton

Councillor Patrick Kitterick

Councillor Lynn Senior

INFORMATION SHARING – ‘INFORMATION FAIR’ SESSION

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

- City Wardens Services
- Policing Matters
- Home Energy Team
- Bike Locks for Sale
- Ward Councillors and general enquiries

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.

FORMAL SESSION

74. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Kitterick was elected as Chair for the meeting.

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Senior declared an Other Disclosable Interest in agenda item 7, “Policing Update”, as she was a member of the Police and Crime Panel. She also declared a general Other Disclosable Interest in that her partner was an employee in the Highways and Transportation service at Leicester City Council.

Councillor Clayton declared an Other Disclosable Interest in agenda item 6, “Licensing and Noise Control”, in that he worked for Shakespeare Legal LLP, which undertook work on licensing matters.

In accordance with the Council’s Code of Conduct, these interests were not considered so significant that they were likely to prejudice the respective Councillors’ judgement of the public interest. They were not therefore required to withdraw from the meeting during discussion of the items.

Councillor Senior also declared an Other Disclosable Interest in agenda item 6, “Licensing and Noise Control”, as a relative had a property near the Dielectric Night Club, which was discussed under this item. In view of the nature of this interest, Councillor Senior left the room while this venue was discussed.

76. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The meeting received the minutes of the Castle Community Meeting held on 9 October 2012.

Further to minute 66, "De Montfort University – Community Engagement", David Carrott, Director of Estates at De Montfort University, introduced himself to the meeting. As agreed, he had copies of the student charter available at the meeting for residents.

Following the concerns raised under the same minute about the impact of the closure of Mill Lane, the Ward Members reported that a site visit had been made to the Jarrom Street / Havelock Street / Grasmere Street area. From this, it appeared that many of the problems there were due to the parking situation at the Leicester Royal Infirmary. One possible solution could be to make traffic flows in part of Jarrom Street one-way (from the Western Boulevard end).

Residents questioned whether the closure of Mill Lane was permanent or experimental, as many believed that the closure had been done under a temporary road closure order. It was noted that bollards could be put in a road under a temporary road closure order, but Ward Members undertook to let residents know on what basis this closure had been done.

Concern also was raised that, even though Mill Lane was closed to vehicular traffic, students were still riding bikes on the pavement.

David Carrott advised the meeting that a design for landscaping Mill Lane would be drawn up. Residents would be consulted on this and public meetings would be held to discuss the proposals. Mr Carrott reminded the meeting that full consultation had been undertaken on the closure of Mill Lane and that some residents had supported the closure, as the landscaping that was part of the scheme would make the area more green.

Residents asked whether Mill Lane could be re-opened, but it was noted that, although a road traffic order could be changed, this was unlikely to happen within the first few weeks of it coming in to force.

In this case, the emergency services had been consulted and had raised no objections. However, the City Council's Transport Development Officer had met the emergency services and was in the process of designing a solution to the problems being caused in the Jarrom Street / Havelock Street / Grasmere Street area. Details of this were not available yet.

In response to a question, David Carrott advised that, as part of the long term redevelopment of the area, plans were being drawn up for the Fletcher complex. Most of the low-rise building would be demolished and replaced. The rest of the complex would be refurbished. The buildings at the front would be demolished and the area green landscaped. It was not known at present how high the new buildings would be, but it was possible that those at the back of the site could be 4 – 6 stories.

Residents advised that they would appreciate being advised and / or consulted by De Montfort University at the start of any such schemes. Jit Pandya of De Montfort University reminded residents that the possibility of having twice yearly events at which residents could meet representatives of the University previously had been discussed with David Hollis, the University's Operations Manager. A paper on this had been prepared for the University's Executive Board and the outcome was awaited. In the meantime, residents were welcome to raise issues direct with David Hollis or with the Ward Councillors.

Concern was raised that, at a recent open day for De Montfort University, people at the top of Grassmere Street had been directing traffic down that road to the car park. However, residents had been told that this would not happen and that traffic would be directed along Western Boulevard. (When residents spoke to the people directing traffic, they stopped directing it down Grassmere Street.)

It was noted that traffic could be redirected as part of an event management plan, but it appeared that a mistake had been made on this occasion. David Carrott offered to speak to the University's security officers to find out why this had happened.

AGREED:

- 1) That the minute of the Castle Community Meeting held on 9 October 2012 be confirmed as a correct record;
- 2) That the Ward Members let residents know:-
 - a) whether the road closure in Mill Lane has been made on a temporary or permanent basis; and
 - b) details of the proposals for landscaping the area around the road closure in Mill Lane, including the timescales for consultation; and
- 3) That the City Council's Transport Development Officer be asked to attend the next meeting to discuss:-
 - a) possible solutions to the traffic problems in the Jarrom Street / Havelock Street / Grasmere Street area, if sufficient progress has been made in developing them; and
 - b) traffic management issues arising from the recent open day at De Montfort University.

77. HOME ENERGY TEAM

Milo Cereghino from Leicester City Council's Home Energy Office advised that some grants were still available to help improve home energy use, although they were mainly for privately owned properties. For example:-

- Health through Warmth provided funding to install central heating or insulation in homes where residents had long term health problems, or were living in cold

and/or damp properties. It was hoped that this scheme could continue for another year or two;

- The Hot Lofts scheme provided grants to enable vulnerable buyers to buy loft insulation. This was due to end in December 2012, but was over-subscribed, so it was hoped it would continue until January 2013; and
- Warm Front was a means tested heat insulation scheme.

Officers from the Home Energy team could provide free energy surveys of properties, to help identify savings that could be made.

From late January / early February 2013 there would be a new initiative called Green Deal. Under this scheme everyone, including landlords, could apply to have energy improvements carried out. It was likely that participants would have to pay something towards the cost involved, but instead of paying the full cost when the work was done, people could be asked to continue making the same payments to energy companies as before and the cost of the work done could be taken from the savings made.

Various leaflets were available outlining this scheme. At present, they were only available in English, but if they were needed in another language, the Energy Services officers would try to get them translated.

Green Deal also provided grants for “hard to treat” properties, such as those without cavity walls. Work to be funded could include insulating a property on the outside. This could have a pebble dash or brick finish, to help maintain the appearance of the property.

Problems could be encountered if a property did not have a garden, as the work done could not go on to the pavement. It also could be difficult to help listed properties, but if double glazing could be installed in them approximately 8 – 10% could be saved on energy bills. It also was possible to insulate listed properties from the inside by using plasterboard to create a cavity that could be filled.

Some concern was expressed that it was not always possible to know if companies contacting householders direct provided good service. In reply, Milo Cereghino advised that the Mark Group was the only company that the City Council worked with. Energy providers were required to invest to reduce carbon emissions, so were contacting residents to promote schemes. It therefore was advisable to get impartial advice before committing to a scheme.

AGREED:

That the Energy Services officers be asked to consider developing bespoke schemes, for example to help those living in listed properties.

78. LICENSING AND NOISE CONTROL

Annette Bryan, (Environmental Health Team Manager with Leicester City Council), and Rachel Hall, (Licensing Team Manager with Leicester City Council), introduced themselves to the meeting.

They then made a presentation on their work, a copy of which is attached at the end of these minutes for information. During the presentation, particular attention was drawn to the following points:-

- Another type of noise dealt with was dogs barking, (slide 4). This was done in conjunction with the Dog Warden. When dealing with commercial noise, the Noise Team officers also worked with other services, such as licensing and planning officers;
- The main experience of noise was at weekends, or after 6.00 pm. As the noise team worked Tuesday – Friday during office hours, plus evenings and Saturday nights, people already having noise monitored had to be prioritised;
- There was one Noise Team officer on duty during the day, but at night there was a lead officer and an assistant. The office also was staffed during office hours. On average, there were approximately 12 – 15 calls over a night, but there could be as many as 20 – 30 in the summer;
- Under current legislation, noise had to be heard from within premises. Digital audio tape recording equipment was available for use by people experiencing noise problems outside of office hours or for a very short duration. However, there was a waiting list of about 4 – 5 weeks for this;
- When taking action over noise nuisance, officers first sent an informal letter and asked those accused of making the noise to come to an interview. If the noise continued, formal action could be taken in the form of legal notices, seizure of noise equipment or for pubs and clubs, a premises' licence could be reviewed;
- Council officers always contacted the police when advised of disturbance by noise from alarms. These reports were monitored by police control and officers could visit the premises if there were signs of a break in. The police also passed relevant noise complaints to the Council;
- Under the Licensing Act, the Licensing Team could license premises for the sale and supply of alcohol. Taxi vehicles and drivers also were licensed, (slide 13);
- There was no set time for when alcohol could be served in the morning, so if there were no objections premises licences were for the times requested;
- If a licence was reviewed, any of the outcomes of the review were subject to appeal. If a premises licence was revoked and an appeal was made, those premises could stay open until the appeal period had expired; and

- The correct e-mail address for the Noise Team was noiseteam@leicester.gov.uk (not as shown in the attached presentation).

Concern was expressed that granting licences to premises to serve alcohol in the morning could be a problem if it was abused by groups such as street drinkers. The Chair reminded the meeting that the Council had tried a scheme under which alcohol over 5% proof could not be sold in London Road or Granby Street in the morning. This had been quite successful.

Concern also was raised that putting recording equipment in a bedroom at night was intrusive. Annette Bryan advised that to be able to deal with noise problems properly, the noise had to be witnessed in the right room.

Councillor Senior left the room for the discussion on Dielectric night club, as a relative had a property near the club. (See minute 75, "Declarations of Interest", above.)

The Chair confirmed that complaints had been received about the Dielectric night club, but the applicant had stated that the Noise Team had confirmed that noise levels were not excessive. Annette Bryan advised that the venue had been visited before the application for a licence had been made and the applicant had been told what conditions the Noise Team would want on the licence to ensure that its operation was in keeping with other premises in the area. For this reason, the Noise Team had made no representation when the licence was applied for, so had not been able to make any representation at the hearing to consider objections.

In reply to a question, the meeting noted that, if there were concerns outside of office hours about the way premises were operating, (for example, if it was believed that a club was trading beyond its permitted hours), the Police should be contacted. The Police had licensing officers who worked closely with the Council, but the way in which the Police dealt with an incident would depend on the nature of that incident.

Councillor Senior returned to the meeting.

It was noted that, even when licensed premises were operating correctly, large groups of people smoking could gather outside and they could generate a lot of noise. This situation had arisen because the legislation regarding smoking had been introduced after the licensing legislation.

Conditions on licences had to cover things that were in the control of licence holders, such as directing smokers to a certain area or part of the premises, but this could not happen at every location, (for example, if a pub had no outside area).

There were no specific restrictions on opening hours for premises in residential areas. If no objections were made to the licence applied for, it would be granted on the terms set out in the application. If objections were received, the Council would hold a hearing to determine if the licence should be granted.

A Notice that an application had been made for a licence had to be put in a local newspaper and posted somewhere people were able to reasonably read it at the

premises. It also was posted on the Council's website. Letters were not sent to people living in the vicinity.

Residents were invited to contact the Ward Members if problems were being experienced with a venue. If needed, the Ward Members could initiate a review of that premises licence on residents' behalf.

It was noted that it was an offence for someone working in a pub to serve a person who was already intoxicated. Enforcement officers visited premises to check that this was not happening. If they were advised of concerns about particular premises then visits could be made to these.

AGREED:

- 1) That the points raised above be noted; and
- 2) That the Team Manger (Noise) be asked to confirm that it is a legal requirement to record noise from bedrooms at night, or whether the recording can be taken from less intrusive locations.

79. POLICING UPDATE

Sergeant Jim Smallman of Leicestershire Police gave the following update:-

- Nuisance vehicles fell within the Police remit;
- Police patrols could be targeted at begging in the city centre in the run up to Christmas;
- More officers were on the street to deal with theft from persons in the run up to Christmas. Free bells to attach to personal property were being given away. These would alert people when someone tried to take that property, (for example, taking a purse from a bag). Details of where the bells could be obtained from were on the Police website;
- Extra Police patrols also were tackling burglaries in the run up to Christmas; and
- Crime in the Ward had reduced by 18%. In particular, burglaries had reduced significantly and all serious crime had reduced. The Police continued to work with other agencies and the community on reducing it further.

Residents expressed concern that graffiti appeared to be increasing. Sergeant Smallman reported that the Police were aware of this and work was ongoing to trace the people doing it. If residents witnessed graffiti being done, they were asked to preserve the can if possible, but not to put it in a bag or handle it too much, as there could be finger prints on it.

In reply to a question, Sergeant Smallman also reported that some initiatives had been done to stop people cycling along New Walk. Some people had been fined as a result of these. Sergeant Smallman confirmed that no-one should be cycling on the pavement, but it was noted that a lot of young people were doing this and on

occasions people on motorbikes had been seen using the pavement. It was recognised that it could be hard to say if a cyclist was causing an obstruction if they were on a wide pavement.

AGREED:

That the Police be asked to report at the next meeting the number of fines given to people for cycling along New Walk.

80. CITY WARDENS UPDATE

Nik Krneta, City Warden with Leicester City Council, gave the following update:-

- A graffiti clean-up was taking place on Saffron Lane on 6 December 2012. Authorisation had now been obtained to install surveillance equipment to try and stop the graffiti;
- 367 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued in the period 1 March 2012 to 30 November 2012. Of these, 238 had been paid, of which 176 were for littering. This meant that 129 currently were unpaid and would be pursued through the courts if necessary; and
- A “Bins on Streets” initiative was being undertaken in the Clarendon Park area. Nearly 1,000 properties already had been visited and safety advice given.

It was noted that Nik Krneta had undertaken a small project in Tower Street to ensure that the correct refuse collection bins were available to residents. When houses were converted to flats there could be problems with the contractor not replacing bins outside the property correctly, but this had now been resolved. There also had been a lot of loose litter in gardens in the street.

Residents noted that there appeared to be a lot of black bin bags left in King Street. In reply, Nik Krneta advised that the flats next door to the hairdresser’s premises received an assisted collection. However, a collection had been missed, which had resulted in the accumulation of black bags. The contractor would be asked to rectify the situation.

Residents congratulated all concerned on how clean and tidy Grassmere Street was and the helpfulness of refuse collection staff when telephoned.

81. BUDGET

a) Applications for Consideration

i) Shama Women’s Centre

The meeting noted the application detailed in the agenda papers, requesting a grant of £1,750 to install a lift to give access to the second floor of the Centre.

In addition, the Chair advised that a further application had been received from the Centre since the agenda had been circulated. This application was for a grant of £1,585 to repair a leaking roof and ceiling.

AGREED:

That the following grants to the Shama Women's Centre be supported:-

- a) £1,750 for the provision of a lift for use by disabled users of the Centre;
and
- b) £1,585 to repair the roof and a ceiling at the Centre.

ii) Nigel Ward

AGREED:

That a grant of £1,197 to Nigel Ward for the supply and installation of three cast iron bollards, (including painting), on the extended pavement outside Avenue Primary School be supported.

iii) Avenue Primary School Parent Teachers Association

The meeting noted that this application was not for assistance with the installation of solar panels, as stated in the agenda, but was for funding towards a community event to raise awareness of energy issues and raise money for solar panels.

AGREED:

That a grant of £500 to the Avenue Primary School Parent Teachers Association towards a Green Awareness Day on Saturday 2 March 2013 be supported.

b) Budget Application Approved under Fast Track Procedures

The meeting noted that a grant of £100 had been approved under the Council's fast track procedure to Robert Perrin to replace plants in hanging baskets at student houses in the Clarendon Park area.

c) Budget Applications Not Supported

The meeting noted that the following grant applications had not been supported, as they were City-wide events that did not work specifically with people in the Ward:-

- i) A request for £737 from Transition Leicester for the Green Light Festival; and
- ii) A request for £500 from the Leicester and Leicestershire Photographic Society towards its Annual Photographic Exhibition 2013.

d) General

The Chair encouraged local organisations to apply for grants for projects that contributed to the local community in Castle Ward.

Advice on applying for grants was available from Surinder Singh, (tel: 0116 229 8808, e-mail: SurinderS.Singh@leicester.gov.uk).

82. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Scheduling of Football and Rugby Matches

Residents raised concerns that, on occasions, Leicester City Football Club and Leicester Tigers Rugby Club had both played at home on the same day. It had been understood that a condition of approving the new ground and stands had been that the two clubs would not do this. The Ward Members confirmed that there was an event management advisory group that tried to avoid this happening, but it was possible that if a match was being televised it was unavoidable.

AGREED:

That the Ward Members make enquiries in to why Leicester City Football Club and Leicester Tigers Rugby Club both played at home on the same day.

b) “To Let” Signs on Student Houses

The Chair advised that a meeting between the Councillors for this Ward and Westcotes Ward was scheduled for 12 December 2012. This was being held to consider whether it would be feasible to introduce new planning rules governing “To Let” signs on student houses and to prevent more houses being taken in to multiple occupation in general.

The Ward Members undertook to keep the Community Meeting informed of progress in these matters.

c) Closure of Mill Lane

Residents were reminded that a request had been made at the last meeting for a road traffic survey to be undertaken to observe the change in traffic flows in the area of Mill Lane following its closure, (minute 71(ii), “Any Other Business”, referred).

It was noted that a meeting had been held with City Council’s Transport Development Officer to survey the traffic using Jarrom Street. Information on how the problems with traffic in that road could be resolved would be brought to the next meeting.

Jit Pandya of De Montfort University explained that it was hoped that the University’s proposals for improving the situation would be received before Christmas 2012. These would be reported to the next meeting.

AGREED:

- 1) That representatives of De Montfort University be asked to present proposals for improving the traffic situation in the area around Mill Lane at the next Community Meeting;

- 2) That proposals from the City Council for improving traffic flows in Jarrom Street be presented to the next Community Meeting; and
- 3) That the City Council's Transport Development Officer be asked to come to the next Community Meeting to explain how the traffic survey in Jarrom Street was conducted.

d) Leaves on Streets

In response to a request from residents, Nik Krneta, City Warden with Leicester City Council, undertook to:-

- arrange for the leaves accumulating in Jarrom Street to be cleared; and
- investigate whether blockages to drains on the Ring Road were being caused by leaves not being removed and to arrange for any necessary remedial action to be taken.

e) Permitted Areas for Cycling

A resident asked if the regulations governing where people were permitted to cycle could be displayed in the city.

It was noted that a balance needed to be achieved between enforcement and having large signs around the city, but information on permitted areas could be requested from City Council transport officers.

It was noted that De Montfort University had a transport co-ordinator who could be asked to make the information available for students.

AGREED:

- 1) That City Council transport officers be asked to provide information on cycle routes and areas where it is permitted for people to cycle in the city; and
- 2) That the De Montfort University transport co-ordinator be asked to make information available for students on cycle routes and areas where it is permitted for people to cycle in the city.

f) Arrangements for Future Meetings

Residents were invited to give their views on arrangements for future Community Meetings, (for example, venues, the time of meetings, or any other suggestions to improve arrangements).

83. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

6.00 pm on Thursday 7 March 2013