

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

Tuesday 19 February 2013

6:00 pm

Held at:

St. Patrick's Centre, 100 Beaumont Leys Lane, Leicester.

Who was there:

Councillor Harshad Bhavsar
Councillor Annette Byrne
Councillor Colin Marriott

INFORMATION SHARING – ‘INFORMATION FAIR’ SESSION

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 service representatives.

<p>Ward Councillors and General Information</p> <p>Members of the community raised issues with Council Officers and their Ward Councillors</p>	<p>Gypsy and Traveller Education (GATE)</p> <p>Educational information was displayed concerning the lives of the gypsy and traveller community</p>
<p>City Warden</p> <p>The City Warden provided details of his enforcement and educational activities in the Ward</p>	<p>Welfare Reform</p> <p>Information was provided on changes to the Welfare and Benefits system</p>

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.

35. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Bhavsar was elected Chair for the meeting.

36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Marriott declared an interest as a member of the Mowmacre Events Planning Partnership, which was the subject of a grant application under the Ward Community Budget item.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the interest declared was not considered to be a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest but was an Other Disclosable Interest and was not considered significant as to prejudice Councillor Marriott's judgement of the public interest.

Councillor Marriott was, therefore, not precluded from considering and determining the grant application.

38. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the Minutes of the previous Abbey Ward Community meeting held on 20 November 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

39. CHANGES TO WELFARE REFORM

Darren Moore, Team Leader, Welfare Rights, gave a presentation on the proposed changes to the benefits system which were to be implemented from April 2013.

During the presentation Darren made particular reference to the following key points:

- Council Tax Benefit would be replaced by Council Tax Support from April 2013 and local authorities would receive 10% less government grant for the scheme leading to recipients paying more towards Council Tax. It was estimated that this could impact upon 40,000 people in the City.
- There would be a Benefit cap of £500 per week for families and lone parents (£350 for singles) which would particularly affect families with 4 or more children.

- Housing Benefit paid to people of working age would be changed to reduce the level of eligible rent by 14% for 1 extra bedroom that was unoccupied and by 25% if two or more bedrooms were unoccupied. The level of benefit would then be calculated on the lower amount of eligible rent.
- The Disability Living Allowance would be abolished in April 2013 and replaced with a new scheme that would cut out the lowest level of allowances. Current recipients would be gradually re-assessed from the old system to the new points based system.
- A new system of Universal Credits would come into operation from April 2013. Universal Credits were designed to simplify the current large number of means tested benefits into one payment. New claimants and existing claimants with changed circumstances would transfer to Universal Credits in October 2013. Existing claimants, who could benefit from Universal Credits, would be transferred from April 2014 and remaining claimants would be transferred from the end of 2015 to the end of 2017.
- Some of the existing premiums, including disability and carers allowances were to be abolished. It was envisaged that claimants would not be worse off at the point of change over; but there would be a gradual reduction in the level of benefits over a period of years.
- The qualification criteria affecting Pension Credits were also changing. In future, Pension Credits would only be available when the youngest person in the partnership reached pensionable age.
- Future Payments would be made monthly and be paid direct to the claimant and only one claimant per partnership. It would then be the claimant's responsibility to pay their rent and Council Tax.

In response to questions Darren referred to the appeals process and to the high levels of appeals which had already been received. It was reported that Incapacity Benefit appeals had caused significant pressures as medical evidence was required to process each case.

It was also reported that the process being undertaken to assess whether people were fit for work had received a large amount of criticism.

In closing the report it was noted that further help and assistance could be obtained by contacting the Welfare Rights Helpline - 0116 2568211 or the Revenues and Benefits Service - 0116 2527006. The Community Legal Advice Service also provided advice.

Darren was thanked for his attendance and report.

40. YOUTH SERVICE PROVISION

Linda Holmes, Youth Service Officer, reported on the work of the department in the Abbey Ward

She referred in particular to the City mayors pledge to make the service a Gold Standard Youth Service.

Sue reported on the framework which had been introduced to ensure that the pledge was met and circulated the report which had been submitted to and approved by the Councils Executive.

The themes of the report and pledge involved a greater engagement with young people through better understanding their needs. A conference vent had been launched at the YMCA in November 2012 which had proven to be a success. Arising from the information received from young people, a Delivery Group had been formed which met on regular occasions and which involved young people in its membership.

In respect of the Abbey Ward in particular, Linda commented on the formation of the Youth Club where around 35 young people regularly attended (between the ages of 13-19). In reporting on other organised activities it was confirmed that trips had been arranged for young people that acted as carers for family members.

The meeting noted the report and congratulated the Service on its achievements.

41. LOCAL POLICING UPDATE

Sergeant Michelle Zakoscielny provided an overview of current Police activities and priorities within the Ward.

The crime statistics for the period were submitted and it was noted that although overall crime had reduced, the figures for assaults, including domestic violence, had not decreased. The ongoing educational work was explained.

Michelle made particular reference to the recent operation to close a 'crack house' in the ward for which there had been a significant amount of press interest following the convictions of perpetrators. The details of the case and judgement were noted and the Police were congratulated on the operation.

In conclusion, Michelle referred to the joint bid for Ward funding submitted with the Council's Housing Office and elaborated on the details of the application, as she was required to leave the meeting on operational grounds and could not therefore support the bid during Members' deliberation.

Michelle was thanked for her report.

42. CITY WARDEN UPDATE

Matt Davidson, City Warden, commented on the current environmental and enforcement work being undertaken in the Ward.

He reported on the main problems of dog fouling and referred to the use of 'stencils' which it was hoped would draw attention to the problem and reduce offences.

Other environmental issues that were receiving attention included cars for sale on the street, fly-posting and fly-tipping. In respect of fly-posting it was reported that a large advertisement hoarding had been reported to planning officers to ensure compliance with advertisement regulations.

Matt was thanked for his work and update.

43. WARD COMMUNITY BUDGET

The Member Support Officer presented the latest position with regard to the Ward Community Budget.

The following applications had been supported under the fast track procedure:

Applicant: Avebury Meadows Parent Carer Forum
Amount: £343.05
Proposal: Garden Project

Applicant: Mowmacre YP Play and Development Association
Amount: £500
Proposal: Cooker

Applicant: Stocking Farm Healthy Living Centre
Amount: £300
Proposal: 'Animal Parties' at Stocking Farm and The Tudor Centre.

The following application had not been supported (submitted as a retrospective bid as the event has already taken place):

Applicant: Bharti Acharya (Treasurer)
Amount: £490
Proposal: Swami Vivekanad: 150 Years Commemoration Reverence Day

The following applications were submitted for consideration and were determined as follows:

Application 1

Applicant: STAR
Amount: £250
Proposal: To join the Fare Share Partnership to help people on low incomes with food and essentials.

This application was approved.

Application 2

Applicant: Unity Boxing
Amount: £1245
Proposal: To maintain the Club's ABA status, increase ABA membership and to renew equipment.

This application was approved.

The applicant to be informed that future funding from the Ward Community Budget may not receive favourable consideration and that alternative sources of club funding should be sought.

Application 3

Applicant: Action for Children Bewcastle Children's centre
Amount: £560
Proposal: For the purchase of musical instruments and soft play equipment for children to enhance their development and prepare them for preschool education.

This application was approved.

Application 4

Applicant: Belgrave Playgroup
Amount: £2500 (joint bid to Belgrave and Latimer Wards)
Proposal: To construct a shelter / physical cover to allow children to continue to safely use the new outdoor play area.

This application was approved in the sum of £250.

Application 5

Applicant: Leicester City Council
Amount: £818.62
Proposal: To improve and enhance the biodiversity of Belgrave Cemetery by installing habitat boxes for birds and bats.

This application was approved.

Application 6

Applicant: Leicestershire Constabulary and Leicester City Council - Housing
Amount: £4596 plus VAT
Proposal: A remote mobile CCTV camera to assist in solving issues of anti-social behaviour. Amount bid includes estimated cost of the annual GPS contract in addition to the portable CCTV camera.

This application was approved in the sum of £2,500 and that the application be reconsidered in the next financial year with a view to further funding being approved.

Application 7

Applicant: Healthy Living Centre
Amount: £1000
Proposal: An emergency food parcel scheme to help people bridge the gap between the claim for benefits being processed and for when they actually receive those benefits.

This application was not supported.

Application 8

Applicant: Mr G Singh (CHAND Project)
Amount: £1,449.88
Proposal: Computer equipment

This application was approved.

Application 9

Applicant: Friends of Mowmacre
Amount: £500
Proposal: Senior citizens project.

This application was approved.

Application 10

Applicant: Mrs K Shorten
Amount: £40
Proposal: To provide taxi journeys for community and consultative meetings.

This application was approved.

Budget Summary:

The Member Support Officer advised that following consideration of the above bids and the funds already committed, an amount of £2,053.45 remained in the Ward Community Budget for the financial year.

44. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

COUNCILLOR COLIN MARRIOTT

Councillor Marriott confirmed that this was the final Council Meeting that he would attend as he would be resigning his position as Councillor. A by-election would be held to fill the vacancy.

Community members congratulated and thanked Councillor Marriott on the work he had undertaken for the City and the Abbey Ward particularly and wished him well for his retirement from Local Government.

45. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm.