

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:00 pm, Monday, 3 June 2013

Held at: St Matthews Sports Centre, Malabar Road.

Who was there:

Councillor Dr Chowdhury

Councillor Dawood

INFORMATION SHARING – ‘INFORMATION FAIR’ SESSION

Members of the public 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>Police and Community Safety</p> <p>The Police and Community Safety Officer provided details of their activities</p>
<p>City Warden</p> <p>The City Warden was present to talk about environmental issues</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.

1. WELFARE REFORMS - UPDATE

Councillor Dr. Chowdhury proceeded with the meeting in the absence of an elected Chair.

It was agreed that the agenda would be heard out of order.

Karen Wenlock, Revenue and Benefits Manager, was present to update the meeting on changes to Housing and Council Tax Benefits, which came into force on 1st April 2013.

Karen said the Council Tax Benefit scheme was replaced by a local Council Tax Reduction Scheme which applied to each working age household, but the scheme would look at pensioners in 2014.

Karen said the scheme compared residents income to need and calculated the amount of reduction, if any, residents were entitled to. Karen said it would result in people paying Council Tax for the first time. She said that if people found themselves in debt because of the changes it could result in court action, though the Council had a discretionary fund which had a limited budget to assist people who found themselves in difficulty.

Karen also informed the meeting of changes to the Housing Benefit system, which would see people's benefits reduced to under-occupancy of accommodation (more bedrooms than required by the household or 'Bedroom Tax'). Karen said the bedroom tax applied to working age people who claimed housing benefit and had at least one spare bedroom, and had been brought in to alleviate the shortage of family homes. The figures given were houses with one extra bedroom would receive 14% less in housing benefit (about £12 per week), and those with two or more extra bedrooms would receive 25% less benefit (about £22 per week).

Karen took questions from residents and Councillors. Karen said there were a few categories for exemptions, and residents were advised to speak with their own landlords, who would define the bedroom numbers in a property and not the government. Karen said each landlord would look at each case individually, as there was no definition of a room size. She said that the Council would look at each case on its own merits. Karen said that students living with parents would still receive a bedroom allowance, with a temporary absence with temporary return rule in place, for example, Christmas, Easter. She added that the room allowance would increase after a child reached the age of 16 years anyway.

Karen reported that the amount of weekly benefits (including housing benefit) would be capped, at £500 for a family and £350 for a single person, and would mainly affect larger families of working age with high rents. The Department for Work and Pensions would write to all people affected. Karen said there would be some exemptions and further information on the changes brought to the meetings attention could be found on the internet at www.leicester.gov.uk/housingbenefit

Karen then discussed the new Universal Credit due to be rolled out across the UK between 2013 and 2017. Karen said the changes would be run by the government, and it was not yet known when they would take place in Leicester. She said the Department for Work and Pensions would advise Leicester City Council of the families that would be affected, but government figures said that around 67,000 families in the UK would be affected by the change. She said that larger families could lose up to £500 per week when the changes were brought in. She added the Government would provide local authorities with a discretionary housing pot, though it would not be long-term assistance for residents.

The Chair thanked Karen for the presentation and update on welfare reforms.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Dawood was elected as Chair for the meeting.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Aqbany, Sgt. Chauhan, Nazira Vania (Community Safety Team), Priya Thamotheram and Stuart White.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this time.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the Spinney Hills Ward Community Meeting held on 11th March 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

6. SUMMER YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Linda Holmes, Operations Manager, Leicester City Council, was present to inform the meeting of Summer Youth Activities in the ward for the month of June. Spinney Hills Ward had two active youth centres; St Matthews Youth Centre on Malabar Road, and the Highfields Youth Project on Melbourne Road.

Linda informed the meeting that Youth Workers in the city had been reorganised in March 2013 and were based at four youth work hubs, each of which had two targeted Youth Support Workers. She said full-time Youth Workers were based in neighbourhood hubs with other team workers, and neighbourhood workers. She added that mainscale youth workers were based at Stocking Farm, but there were youth workers still based at St Matthews. Linda said Youth Service cuts were reflected in the management tier, and Angela Thompson and Gerry Burke were the two Area Youth Work Managers for the Spinney Hills side of the city.

Linda said programmes of activity had not altered, and job descriptions had not changed. Linda said services would be far more targeted using youth work resources to target the most vulnerable young people, sometimes working one-to-one with young people. Outreach workers also worked on a regular basis at nights, and Outreach Workers were in St Matthews and Highfields at the Late Lounge till late on Friday evenings. She said the staff at St Matthews was mainstreamed, but there were issues in Highfields with the letting of the centre, though staffing would be mainstreamed there also.

Linda said the team was flexible enough to be moved around to respond quickly to issues in the community, for example, in response to a request from the Police to attend an anti-social behaviour incident. In response to residents' questions, Linda said that anti-social behaviour could not be resolved by youth workers alone, and that it was working in partnership with other agencies that resolved issues.

Linda said there was also a Young Persons Involvement Worker, who worked across the city, encouraging young people to become involved in the political workings of the city. She said Leicester City Youth Council replicated what happened at Leicester City Council, to ensure that young people were involved in the decision making process in the wards.

Linda said there was no data to measure the impact of the reorganisation at present, though data would be gathered for the end of the first quarter since March 2013 and monitored.

A resident said there was a daily requirement for youth workers in the area and asked where they could access the service from. Linda said the Youth Service was still the same, and had commissioned Street Vibe to work in the area. The Chair asked that the Youth Work service contact the resident directly.

Linda said that if people wanted to contact her to talk about anything discussed at the Community Meeting, or raise any issues for Spinney Ward, then she could be emailed on Linda.Holmes2@leicester.gov.uk

The Chair thanked Linda for the information.

7. POLICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE

PC Varney provided residents with an outline of the area that Spinney Hills covered, and gave an update on statistics for the area for the past 90 days:

	Spinney Hills	St Matthews
Burglary – Dwelling	9	0
Street Robbery	14	2
Theft of Motor	11	5

PC Varney reported the two street robberies occurred on Humberstone Road and Belgrave Gate, both were mobile phones. He added two males were due to appear in court for the thefts.

PC Varney said there were 33 vulnerable adults in Spinney Hills, four of whom lived on St Matthews.

A resident informed the police that there was open drug dealing on Berners Street. PC Varney informed residents to call 101, which would create a report which would then go on the system. He added there were designated officers for designated areas, and said he would speak with the resident for details after the meeting.

A resident reported anti-social behaviour, with people playing football on Dale Street. PC Varney said this was a common problem, and the police were aware of it. The police recognised that children needed to play, but there was a park nearby.

Residents reported issues on Vulcan Road, with open drug dealing, prostitution, the congregation of gangs, with residents feeling intimidated and afraid to leave their homes. PC Varney said there were issues on Vulcan Road and the police were doing something about it, but could not say what due to operational reasons. He added that there was an increased presence in the area to deal with issues.

Residents said the crime reporting number 101 was good enough for reporting domestics, but not good enough for other issues, PC Varney said people should complain to the Chief Constable if they were unhappy about using the number, which was used nationally.

Residents raised concerns around people parking on double yellow lines, and obstructing traffic in the area. PC Varney told residents to call the Council on (0116) 2527000 to report issues to Vinchy Parking. He said if traffic was obstructing the pathway, then the issue could be dealt with by the police. He asked that where possible registration numbers of the vehicles should be passed on to the police, to enable them to speak to drivers.

Daxa Pancholi, Head of Community Safety & Safer Leicester Partnership, Leicester City Council, was present to talk about work that had been undertaken in the area, with reference to Vulcan Road.

Daxa informed residents that there was a finite number of CCTV cameras for use around the city, but two had been placed on Vulcan Road following resident's concerns due to anti-social behaviour, and the perception it was an unsafe environment. She added a lot of data sharing occurred between the council and the police, and four-weekly meetings were held, which assisted the investigation of issues.

The Chair said it was important that data sharing occurred, and that people should take ownership of their areas and become actively involved. He asked the interested residents leave their contact details at the end of the meeting for information on Neighbourhood Watch Schemes.

The Chair thanked the police and officers for the update.

8. CITY WARDENS UPDATE

Darren Evans, City Warden for the Ward, informed the meeting of his enforcement activities:

- Action would be taken against the increasing number of cars for sale on East Park Road and St Matthews.
- A leaflet drop about bird feeding had been undertaken in the area.
- Flytipping had increased due to bins being overfilled. Contact would be made with bin owners.
- Section 93 Street Litter Control Notices would continue. Premises had a duty of care to the local environment to clean up their rubbish, and premises on St Matthews and 2 shops on Vulcan Road had been identified.
- A graffiti project would continue. 150 leaflets had been distributed, and suspects had been identified.

An update on the number of bins in use on St Matthews would be provided at a future meeting.

The Chair thanked Darren for the update.

9. WARD COMMUNITY BUDGET

The Member Support Officer provided an update on the latest position with regard to the Ward Community Budget.

The following applications for Ward Community Grant funding had been received:

Application 1 (3035)

Applicant	Arabey Hashi Abdi, Balandal Development Association
Amount	£747
Proposal	Local People, Local Problem – Respect and responsibility amongst Somali young people
Summary	Through education and training, to divert young Somali people from negative and anti-social behaviours, and direct them to making a positive contribution to their society and the City of Leicester

RESOLVED:

that the application be deferred pending further information.

Application 2 (3036)

Applicant Mr Ebrahim Jasat, St Peters & Stoughton Street Tenants & Residents Association

Amount £800

Proposal 2 Grit boxes

Summary To be placed in Apollo Close and Atlas Close area

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in full for £800 subject to viability.

Application 3 (3037)

Applicant Highfields Library

Amount £950

Proposal Children Summer Reading Activities at Highfields Library

Summary Develop/deliver/evaluate a summer programme of activities for children 5/15 years, at Highfields Library linked to the Leicester Libraries Summer Reading Challenge – Creepy House

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in full for £950.

Application 4 (3038)

Applicant Shree Patel Samaj

Amount £835

Proposal Multi-Cultural Celebration

Summary Application also includes rent of hall, publicity and transport costs.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in full for £835.

Application 5 (3032)

Applicant Nazira Vania, Community Safety Team, Leicester City Council

Amount £2,000 (joint bid with Stoneygate Ward, total bid £3,000)

Proposal Highfields Late Lounge – targeted youth engagement project for Summer 2013

Summary The engagement project would be run on Friday and Saturday evenings to provide positive activities for young people engaged in or at risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour (ASB) and/or crime.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported to the value of £1,000.

Application 6 (3044)

Applicant Khalifa Highfields Cricket Club

Amount £950

Proposal Development of Cricket Club and Summer Tournament

Summary Assistance to purchase equipment training support and subsidise their match fees (consisting with umpire and pitch costs).

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in full for £950.

Application 7 (3039)

Applicant Somali Advice and Information Services (SOMINFOS)

Amount £1,424 (joint bid with Beaumont Leys, Charnwood and Stoneygate Wards, total bid £5,696)

Proposal Empowering un-experienced Somali male and female who are unemployed

Summary the application was to hold 26 session of workshops and short courses.

RESOLVED:

that the application not be supported.

Application 8 (3042)

Applicant Gavan Wilmot, Contact Project

Amount £650

Proposal St Matthews Community Parks Day 2013

Summary The application was request funding support for the annual community event, and included stage hire from Billy Bates Ltd, and bouncy castle hire.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in full for £650.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. Shilen Pattni, Operations Manager, Community Services, provided an update on the relocation of the library into the Community Centre. Residents were told that works would commence on the 10th June 2013 to accommodate books from the library. Hoardings would be put up prior to improvement works of the foyer, the moving of the reception space, and door to the front of the building which would make the building more inviting to visitor. The centre would also house the Housing Service, Support for Tenants and Residents (STAR) service, Sure Start and Leicester's Adult Skills and Learning Service (LASALS). Residents was warned to be careful when approaching or using the centre, as there would be construction vehicle in the area.

Residents were also informed that access to the library would be extended from 22 hour to 60 hours per week. The library would be open plan and in clear view from the reception. The library would also be self-service, but a member of staff would be present for longer to deal with any issues. Residents were told there would be no change to the library in Highfields which was fully functional.

2. A resident reported there were garages on St Peters Estate with no double yellow lines and people were parking in front of the garages. He asked that the Council have the yellow lines installed.
3. Residents asked for an update on the recent issue of pork being found in Halal burgers in city schools following DNA testing. The food was supplied by Paragon Quality Foods Limited. Margaret Libreri, Director Learning Services, reported that work was on-going with the Muslim Parents Association. Communications had been sent to parents, and reassurance had been given that other supply chains had been tested and there was no cause for concern.

Margaret said that further information on the testing of the food and other information could not be given at the meeting, as it could compromise possible criminal action. Residents asked that subsequent re-testing results be brought to a future meeting.

At the meeting, Margaret was asked for information securing Halal compliance during the tendering process for new suppliers, and the following information was provided.

- Following recent national and local concerns about food adulteration the city council is committed to regular DNA testing into the future and is working with representatives of the Federation of Muslim Organisations and Muslim Parents Association of Leicester to review:
 - Tender specifications
 - Certification options
 - Operating procedures
 - Menu ingredients

Minutes of the working group would be posted on the City Council website and the chosen websites of the above organisations. Information could be found at

<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council-services/education-lifelong-learning/about-schools/school-catering/>

4. The Chair said that a meeting should be arranged between residents and the police to discuss issues on Vulcan Road. Contact details of residents were given after the meeting.

11. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.07pm.