

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:00 pm, Monday, 28 September 2009

Held at: Coleman Primary School, Gwendolen Road

Who was there:

Councillor Aqbany
Councillor Dr Chowdhury
Councillor Dawood

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 public were able to talk to their local Councillors.</p>	<p>Police Issues</p> <p>Local Police Officers were present to talk to residents about general policing issues..</p>
<p>Clockwise Credit Union</p> <p>Representatives from the local credit union were present to provide information on their services to residents.</p>	<p>Traffic and Highways</p> <p>Officers were available to talk about traffic and highways issues in Spinney Hills.</p>
<p>City Wardens</p> <p>The City Wardens team was present to discuss residents’ concerns</p>	<p>Leicester Community Projects Trust</p> <p>Representatives from the Trust talked with Members of the public about drug and alcohol abuse projects.</p>
<p>Drug Treatment Services Consultation</p> <p>Members of the public were consulted on future service delivery.</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.

46. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Dawood was elected as Chair for the meeting.

47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Sidyat

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

49. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 15 June were agreed as a correct record.

50. TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAYS ISSUES

Andy Thomas, Head of City Development, was present to lead a discussion on traffic and highways issues in the area.

In connection with the proposed residents parking scheme for South Highfields, Andy stated that there was clear community need for a scheme, following consultation with local residents. Officers were currently looking at an appropriate design for the scheme that would meet the parking needs of residents. An Elected Member raised concerns that many local residents that he had met had indicated that they did not support the introduction of a resident's parking scheme. In response, Andy explained that the views of the wider community were respected, but that a decision to progress with a scheme is taken according to the majority of views of local people, and that in this area, the majority of people had pledged support to the scheme. He re-iterated that officers were designing a scheme that would hopefully work for all residents, but that the process for doing so was yet to be finalised. Andy also reminded the meeting that once the design of the scheme had been finalised, it would be subject to a six-week consultation period, which could potentially allow objectors to alter the outcome.

In respect of traffic issues on Gwendolen Road, Andy explained that his team of officers would be looking at the best use of the road for all road users. He acknowledged that commuters who worked at the General Hospital often parked on pavements, and that this was a disruption for pedestrians. He stated that he would ask the local constabulary to look at enforcing such offences under the Highways Act. Andy reported that Gwendolen Road also experienced the problem of residents parking at bus stops, and stated that the zig-zagged lines situated around bus stops would be removed as they often encouraged people to park in them.

A Member of the Public reported that they had witnessed several incidents of dangerous driving in recent weeks, particularly on Evington Valley Road. Andy stated that the introduction of one-way systems can often lead to roads becoming 'rat-runs', and that it was vital that all one-way systems were appropriately managed. He added that the City Council had launched several initiatives that encouraged safer driving. Both officers and members of the public agreed that the design of roads was the key to ensuring safer driving, and that it was far more difficult to alter the behaviour of drivers.

A Member of the Public was of the view that the lay-out of St Saviours Road was dangerous as it presented no deterrence to drivers in terms of driving dangerously. Andy agreed to take a look at St Saviours Road to see assess whether any measures could be implemented to help to alleviate this problem.

Another Member of the Public stated that there had been several accidents on the junction of Bradbourne Road and East Park Road, and believed that Councillors had previously investigated the possibility of installing a speed ramp close to the junction. Andy agreed to provide a written update on the matter to the Member of the Public concerned.

A discussion took place around the possibility of converting Gwendolen Road to a one-way system. Several Members of the Public were of the view that the introduction of a one-way system would be beneficial. An Elected Member asked what alternative methods to a one-way system could be implemented to make the road safer. Andy replied by stating that he could commission a highways engineer to look at such alternative methods. He also stated that any change to the road design would need to allow emergency service vehicles to continue to use the road quickly and safely.

A resident expressed concern in relation to difficulties in crossing Stavely Road, particularly for elderly pedestrians, and that a significant number of vehicles park on the pavements which cause additional difficulties to those crossing the road. Andy shared the concerns of the resident, particularly in terms of the vehicles that had parked on the pavements. He reported that one method to help to alleviate the problem could be a greater police presence in the area, but also agreed to investigate the situation.

Another concern raised was in connection with difficulties parking on busy residential streets after 6pm. It was also suggested that some areas with parking restrictions were not being enforced. Andy agreed to ensure that all parking restriction areas were enforced.

51. DRUG TREATMENT SERVICES CONSULTATION

Mark Aspey from the Drug and Alcohol Delivery Team was present to consult with local people around the way services would be delivered in the future.

Mark explained that the numbers of those who regularly used drugs were low, but those that did imposed significant problems for themselves, their families and for wider society.

Mark informed the meeting that the team was currently taking stock of it's current services and was consulting on public views of the current level of services for drug users. It was stated that consultation would take place until November, and that a further period of consultation would take place between January and April 2010 around the model that was being proposed. Mark explained that it was important to consider delivering services in different ways.

Sergeant Johal from Spinney Hills LPU asked those present to inform him of any drug related incidents that they suspected within the Spinney Hills Ward.

A Member of the Public stated that the suspected incidents of drug use and supply on Thringstone Road, and that this was very unsettling for those who lived on the road. Councillor Dawood agreed to speak to the Member of the Public who raised this concern to obtain additional information.

Coucnillor Dawood thanked Mark for raising awareness of the consultation and stated that it was vital that consultation took place with all communities and as many local groups as possible. Mark also agreed to return to the Community Meeting once the initial consultation had been completed.

52. COMMUNITY LEGAL ADVICE CENTRE

The Chair stated that no representative from the Community Legal Advice Centre was able to attend the meeting, and that the item would be deferred to the next meeting.

53. BUDGET

Steve Letten, Member Support Officer introduced applications for funding from the Community Meeting budgets.

Steve reminded Members which applications had been funded from the previous years' budget. In terms of this years' budget, it was reported that the total amount available was £13,754, with £10,500 of this allocated towards the ward action plan and sums of £2,253 and £1,001 allocated to the Ward Community Fund and Community Cohesion budgets respectively.

It was explained that four meetings had been scheduled for the 2009/10 municipal year, and that the current budget had to last until March 2010.

Steve noted that an urgent application had been received in respect of the Build Community Development event which had been submitted after the last meeting. Members had considered the application and £500 had been granted.

Steve stated that two applications had been received. The applications were dealt with as follows:

- B1) St Matthews Tenants Association (TARA) – request for £2,299*
To pay for new computer, colour printer and Broadband Internet connection for the Association office to enhance communication, reduce postage costs through greater use of email and increase the quality of the documents prepared.

AGREED: that £1,500 be recommended for approval from the Ward Community Fund subject to the applicants putting in place arrangements to maintain the equipment.

- B2) The Balanbal Development Association – request for £1,200*
To organise an event for around 120 people to celebrate the Festival of Eid to take place on 15 December 2009.

AGREED: that the application be not recommended for approval from the Ward Community Fund as the Association have recently received funding.

Steve also reported that the following three football applications, which were considered at the last meeting, have been referred to the Councils Sports Development Unit:

1. Inner City Club Football
2. Community Football Academy
3. Leicester United Sports and Culture

54. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on Monday 14 December 2009 at 6pm at the Highfields Community Centre, Melbourne Road.

55. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair agreed to accept two items of urgent business:

1. Clockwise Credit Union

Veena James, Clockwise Credit Union, was in attendance to explain the services that the organisation provided. The primary aim of her role was to reduce the operating levels of door-step lenders, by speaking to tenants and residents to encourage them not to borrow from such lenders and to promote awareness of alternative means of borrowing money.

Veena warned those present against the extremely high rates of interest that were imposed by many door-step lenders, and pointed out that in many cases, the rates of interest were not made clear to borrowers.

The meeting was informed that Clockwise Credit Union imposed a rate of interest of 26.8% apr, which was significantly less than the rates of all door-sep lenders. In addition the Union offered saving schemes of up to £14,500 in addition to the borrowing services.

In terms of the amounts available for borrowing, Veena reported that any sum of money between £50 and £7,500 could be applied for, and that all loans had to be repaid within five years.

Further services offered by Clockwise included current accounts, cash ISAs, the option of setting up a standing order as a payment method and the offer of free life insurance. If a tenant proved to manage their money efficiently, then the Credit Union would consider offering a debit card to them. It was pointed out that all services are open to anyone who lived in Leicester, Leicestershire or Rutland.

An Elected Member queried whether services were available at a zero rate of interest, especially for those whose religious beliefs did not conform to the payment of interest. Veena confirmed that a zero interest rate was not available but that the rates offered were significantly lower than those offered by high-street banks. Veena did state that if additional funding was secured, then such a provision could be considered.

In response to a question from an Elected Member, Veena confirmed that Clockwise carried out a full credit check for all applicants. She pointed out that many applicants carried debts, but that the union assessed whether such debts were being managed effectively before deciding whether to offer services to applicants.

2. Introduction of the new City Warden

The Chair introduced Richard Harold, who had recently been appointed as the new City Warden for the Spinney Hills and Stoneygate Wards.

Richard explained that his role encompassed tackling problems such as graffiti and litter, issuing fixed penalty notices and dealing with nuisance parking complaints. As part of his role, Richard reported that he would be holding a number of patch-walks within the area which would allow him to gain feedback from residents in respect of the main problems that he could tackle.

56. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8:07pm.

