

# Westcotes Community Meeting

**Your Community, Your Voice**

**Record of Meeting and Actions**

**6:30 pm, Tuesday, 30 November 2010**

**Held at: Main Hall, East West Community Project, 10 Wilberforce Road, Leicester LE3 0BG**

Who was there:

Councillor Andy Connelly
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Councillor Sarah Russell
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## **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:-

### **De Montfort University**

Members of the public were able to talk to representatives of De Montfort University

### **Community Meeting Budgets & Enquiries**

Members of the public were able to make general enquiries and talk to their local Councillors

### **Police Issues**

Members of the public were able to talk to the local Neighbourhood Team

### **City Warden Service**

The City Wardens team was present to discuss residents' concerns

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.

### 23. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Connelly was elected as Chair for the meeting and introduced himself.

### 24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors were asked to declare any interest they had in the business on the agenda, and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

Councillor Connelly declared a personal interest in Application 1, under agenda item 9, "Ward Community Meeting Budget 2010/11", as his daughter was a pupil at King Richard III Infant and Nursery School.

Councillor Russell declared a personal interest in Application 1, under agenda item 9, "Ward Community Meeting Budget 2010/11", as her daughter was a pupil at King Richard III Infant and Nursery School and she was the Chair of the Governors for the school.

The meeting noted that, In view of the interests declared by the Ward Members, the views of the meeting would be passed to the Cabinet Member for Front Line Service Improvements and Neighbourhoods and the Leader of the Council to be decided.

Action	Officer Identified	Deadline
The application for funding from King Richard III Infant and Nursery School to be decided by the Cabinet Member for Front Line Service Improvements and Neighbourhoods and the Leader of the Council, taking account of any views expressed by the Community Meeting	Peter Cozens	As soon as possible

### 25. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Further to minute 14, "Issues Relating to Bede Park", it was noted that village notice boards had been installed in Bede Park and at the bottom of Hinckley Road. They had been bought without legs, so some were being made.

It was noted that the Oxjam event had been very successful, despite poor weather later in the day, (minute 15, "Oxjam", referred). Early feedback indicated that the organisers were very happy with the way the event had gone. The views of local businesses on the event also were being sought. One complaint had been received from a resident about access to Bede Street during the road closure, but this had been resolved.

The closure of Braunstone Gate until 2.00 am for the Oxjam event had been a useful experiment and consideration was being given to whether this could be done again, either for similar events in the future, or on a regular basis. If this happened, drivers displaying a residents parking scheme ticket for Bede Street would be allowed access during the periods of closure. However, discussions could not be completed until the current planning application relating to the MFI site had been determined.

A suggestion was made that, rather than waiting on the road, taxi cabs could wait in the car park on the MFI site. However, it was known that the taxi drivers wanted a formal taxi rank in Braunstone Gate, where they could easily be seen, so were unlikely to agree to this request.

The possibility of holding Oxjam and the Riverside Festival on the same day also was suggested, as a way of getting some economies of scale, (for example in the preparation of road traffic orders). Although the Riverside Festival was City-wide, some local events would be staged. However, it was felt that it would be preferable to continue with two separate events, as this would be better for local businesses, who could have stalls at both festivals.

## **26. DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY AND WESTCOTES WARD**

Councillor Connolly introduced the following people to the meeting, who were in attendance to discuss student accommodation and associated green space:-

- Rick Moore – Jamie Lewis Residential Lettings;
- Dominic Shellard – Vice Chancellor, De Montfort University;
- David Carrott – Director of Estates, de Montfort University;
- Steve Brown – Team Leader (Planning Management and Delivery), Leicester City Council; and
- Neal Moore – Team Leader (Planning Policy and Design), Leicester City Council.

Dominic Shellard explained that he was aware of previous concerns raised by residents about student accommodation and associated green space, and student behaviour. The University currently had 22,000 students and it was likely that it was only a small proportion of these who caused problems, but any problems were nevertheless taken very seriously. The University had a policy of trying to deal with all reported problems occurring outside the University, so residents encountering problems were encouraged to report incidents, in order that they could be investigated fully.

There was a perception that the University was building all over the City, but approximately £150 million had been invested in the campus. All of the work done had been approved through formal planning processes. However, it was recognised that, as an institution, the University could do more to provide green space, and plans were being considered through which this could be achieved. For example, it was hoped to open up the centre as a green lung, which could be used by the public, as well as the University, and to provide a green walk way at the side of the canal.

It also was hoped to redevelop the Fletcher Building, to create a green square to the side of it. This also would involve the demolition of another building. It was hoped that work on this could start in approximately 18 – 24 months, but no firm commitment could be given to the project at present, due to the current economic situation.

In conclusion, Dominic Shellard stated that he was happy to take individuals' contact details, so that engagement with them could continue.

The following points were then made during discussion on this item:-

- The viaduct at the site of the former bowstring bridge was being demolished and a planning application for a new sports centre would be considered in January 2011. If this was approved, it was hoped to start building work in April 2011. so that it would be ready for use in July 2012, just before the Olympic Games in London. This would be a high quality centre, with a wide range of facilities;
- It was very important to the University that this sports centre was seen as a community facility. Commitments regarding this had been given to the City Council and local residents. For example, university users would not have priority use of the centre most of the time, and charges for using the centre would remain comparable to those at local authority facilities;
- Lessons had been learned from the way in which decisions had been made over the site of the proposed sports centre;
- The University had adopted a development Master Plan ten years ago. This was a rolling programme, that changed as needed. It would never be completed, as it always was looking at potential developments ten years ahead;
- In response to concerns that there appeared to be a lot of accommodation being developed, but very little green space provided, it was noted that De Montfort University only owned two blocks of accommodation, (at Bede Hall and New Wharf Hall). The rest was privately owned and managed. However, if problems arose in privately operated accommodation, there was an agreement that University security personnel could go in to the accommodation to address the situation;
- There was a perception that there was no control over the number of large scale blocks of student accommodation that were being created and that there was no plan for how many more were to be developed. It had been heard that some of this was empty and, if student numbers dropped in future years, following government changes to the amount to be charged for tuition fees, this situation could get worse;
- Although the provision of purpose built student accommodation took pressure off accommodation in Westcotes Ward, it also could lead to a lot of students being located in just a few parts of the City. If this happened, the students living there would not become part of the community;

- A lot of housing in Westcotes Ward was used by students and other transitory populations, so a lot of properties were in multiple occupation. There was nowhere else for these people to go, but it also meant that the area was very crowded. It therefore would be useful if students could be encouraged to also use other parts of the City;
- It would be useful if someone from De Montfort University could respond to “bad press”, so that it could redress the balance by explaining what it did for the community;
- Students only seemed to be aware of the open space at Bede Park. No-one wanted to stop students using any parks or other open spaces, but it would help ease the pressure there if the University could help promote other areas of open space. The University undertook to do this each term;
- The holding of barbeques in parks was a problem. This was against the City’s bye-laws, but it could be difficult for the Parks Officers to move people who were holding barbeques. The University suggested that signs could be put up advising that barbeques were prohibited, as it then could help enforce this;
- It was hoped that the City Council could acquire an area of land next to Tesco. This could then be used as a barbeque area. Alternatively, a barbeque area could be created along Great Central Way, (next to Upperton Road);
- There had been reports that some people found Bede Park intimidating when other park users had been drinking. It was recognised that gathering together to drink could be a cultural issue, but it was something that needed to be addressed; and
- Many local businesses relied on the University for trade, so were not against it.

Rick Moore then explained that Jamie Lewis had hoped to be at the meeting, but was unable to attend. He tabled some brochures showing the type of accommodation provided by the Jamie Lewis Residential Lettings company.

It was noted that every room they had was let and they had already had 500 enquiries about accommodation for September 2011. In view of this demand, the company was looking for more sites. The latest one to be investigated was a 480 space development on Upperton Road. (Discussions had been held with the Council’s Planning officers about this site.) The site would have 24 hour security, CCTV and a 24 hour hot-line for residents to report anti-social behaviour. Anything reported on the hot-line would be responded to within one hour.

Sometimes Section 106 contributions were made as part of the conditions on which planning permission was granted for developments. With regard to the Equity Shoes site, the Section 106 payment had been for the creation of a ball court on Bede Park. (This project had been selected by Council officers, not Jamie Lewis.) In addition, a £100,000 Section 106 contribution had been suggested for the creation of a green space opposite the site being considered on Upperton Road. It was noted that there

was a formula for determining the size of a Section 106 Agreement and the developer did not decide how this money would be spent.

Details of Section 106 funding currently available were tabled at the meeting for information, a copy of which is attached at the end of these minutes for information. As this highlighted, one problem with Section 106 payments was that they tended to be received in small amounts. Steve Brown reminded the meeting that Section 106 funding had to be for a specific project, the need for which could be related to that particular development.

Rick Moore invited anyone with views on how future Section 106 contributions could be spent to contact Jamie Lewis, as he would be grateful to receive these.

The Ward Members advised the meeting that it was hoped that future Section 106 Agreements relating to this Ward could be discussed with the community, to ensure that the funding was going to the most appropriate projects.

Residents expressed some concern that having a ball court on Bede Park would make the Park smaller. The Ward Members advised that they had not been consulted on this proposal and did not support its proposed location. They reminded the Meeting that, when this had previously been considered, people also were against having an enclosed area in the Park. As an alternative, they suggested that the provision of outdoor gym facilities in that location could be considered.

The view also was expressed that a ball court could be better located, as parts of Bede Park were underused. For example, the land leading down to the river could easily be made accessible and was an attractive site. Putting a path to the river by the Briton Street bridge also would make the area accessible to canoeists and other water users.

It was suggested that the provision of on-site green space could be included in planning permissions granted. Steve Brown advised that there was not room on the Upperton Road development to provide green space on site, but in principle it would be possible to negotiate the provision of amenity space on such developments. If a large green-field site was being developed, (for example, with 200 – 300 houses), green space would be required as part of the development. However, student accommodation tended to be provided on small, infill sites, which had limited land available.

Jess Phillips, Senior City Warden with Leicester City Council, asked that consideration be given to making proper provision for bin storage at developments. This enabled the area to be kept clean, by reducing the amount of fly tipping that happened, and reduced the need for skips when students all moved out of their accommodation at the same time.

Action	Officer Identified	Deadline
A list be compiled of Section 106 contributions in the Westcotes Ward, the projects to which these	Steve Brown	Next meeting

have been allocated and the amounts spent so far.		
The list referred to above to be reported to the next Westcotes Community Meeting	Steve Brown / Elaine Baker	Next meeting

## **27. IMPLICATIONS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW FOR LEICESTER**

Councillor Russell advised the meeting that the City Council had had to make significant financial cuts in June 2010 of £1.2 million. The Council now needed to make additional savings of £400 million over the next four years. £19 million of this would need to be saved during the 2011/12 financial year.

The City Council had no choice about whether these cuts should be made. Funding from central government was to be reduced, but the City Council was more reliant than a lot of Councils on government funding, approximately 70% of its income coming from central government grants and only 30% being raised locally, (for example, through Council Tax). However, the Council was still required to balance its budget and was not allowed to borrow to meet any shortfall.

All options for how the savings could be achieved were being considered, including human resources, but these reductions came on top of the recently announced increases in student fees and a reduction of approximately 80% in higher education funding. People were welcome to contact the Ward Members if they wanted to discuss the budget proposals in more detail.

Councillor Connolly confirmed that the anticipated cuts in expenditure would be the most severe he had encountered during his time as a councillor. The gap in funding that these cuts would create could not be met by increasing Council Tax. It had been announced that, if Councils made no increase in Council Tax for 2011/12, they would receive the equivalent of a 2.5% increase in grant from the government, but this would not be enough to cover all of the money lost through other cuts.

Further information on this is attached at the end of these minutes for information.

## **28. ELECTED MAYOR CONSULTATION**

Councillor Russell advised that a consultation on whether the City should have either an elected Mayor or strong Leader form of governance was underway and would close on 6 December 2010. Information on the consultation was available on the City Council's website and had been distributed to City libraries.

The Ward Members then explained the proposals and answered questions about the new system, as follows:-



- This consultation was being undertaken as the Council was required to make a decision by the end of the current Council year on the way that the Council would be managed in the future;
- Two options were available:-
  - A Leader elected by Councillors from the majority group for a period of four years; or
  - A Mayor elected by the electorate of the City for a period of four years.
- An elected Mayor would have the same powers those currently held by the Leader of the Council;
- An elected Mayor would select a Cabinet from the pool of Councillors. They did not all have to be from the same group;
- An elected Leader could be required by the other Councillors to stand for re-election before the four year term of office was finished;
- An elected Mayor could be required to stand for re-election if requisitioned by a percentage of the electorate. (In the case of Leicester, this would be several thousand people);
- The Government soon would publish its Localism Bill, which it was thought could give the elected Mayor greater powers, (for example, over the police and fire authorities); and
- At present, it was not known how much the cost of the changes to the governance arrangements would be.

In response to a further question, the Ward Councillors explained that the government had placed a limit on the amount that candidates could spend on their election campaign. This equated to either the amount that could be spent for a local election multiplied by the number of Wards in the City (22), or three times the amount that could be spent for a parliamentary election.

Some concern was expressed that ordinary people would not be able to afford these amounts, so could not afford to stand for election for Mayor. This in turn could give local businesses an opportunity to promote their own candidates. In reply, it was noted that, although anyone could put themselves forward for election, it was likely that each of the political groups currently represented on the Council would be putting forward a candidate.

The Ward Members advised the meeting that there would be two Special Meetings of Council to consider this matter further, on 9 and 22 December 2010, and urged everyone to make their views known to the Council during the consultation period.

## **29. POLICE ISSUES IN THE WESTCOTES WARD**

Sergeant Dave Shields, Leicestershire Constabulary, advised that the Police recently had undertaken a lot of plain clothes work in the Ward, which had been very successful. Overall, crime numbers in the Ward had reduced significantly, including a large drop in anti-social behaviour.

Sergeant Shields then advised the meeting that, as he was leaving his current post, from 12 December 2010 the Neighbourhood Sergeant would be Sergeant Simon Barnes. Sergeant Barnes then introduced himself to the meeting.

The meeting recorded its thanks to Sergeant Shields for the excellent work he had done as Neighbourhood Sergeant. He had got to know the community and its issues well and had provided much support for the community.

## **30. WARD COMMUNITY MEETING BUDGET 2010/11**

### **a) Street Pastors**

Peter Cozens, (Members Support Officer with Leicester City Council), reported that an application for funding from the Street Pastors for £447.48 for an extra rubbish bin outside Mario's Chippy, Braunstone Gate had been approved under the Council's urgency procedures from the Ward Action Plan budget. This bin had been installed.

### **b) King Richard III Infant and Nursery School**

The meeting was reminded that both Ward Councillors had declared interests in this application, (see minute 24 above). In view of this, Peter Cozens, (Members Support Officer with Leicester City Council), introduced the application.

AGREED:

that funding of £1,500 be supported from the Ward Community Fund to King Richard III Infant and nursery School towards the installation of cycle racks.

### **c) Churches Together**

Some concern was expressed at the proposal that, if approved, the grant towards the Churches Together Youth Club should come from the Community Cohesion Fund, as there could be some communities that would not want their young people meeting at church facilities. However, it was noted that, although facilities at the mosque were well used by young people, in general facilities for teenagers in the area were limited.

AGREED:

that funding of £1,256.43 be supported from the Community Cohesion Fund to Churches Together towards establishing a Churches Together Youth Club.

#### **d) Braunstone Gate Traders**

The meeting noted that, since the agenda had been circulated, an application had been received from the traders on Braunstone Gate for a grant of £2,520 towards having 18 lit Christmas trees above premises on Braunstone Gate.

The grant requested would cover the one-off costs of the project, (such as the brackets for fixing the trees to the premises, lights and cabling) and, as this was the first year, the trees. Participating traders would contribute £50 per tree this year, (the total cost of each tree being £190), but would buy their own trees in future years.

Although not all traders in the road were participating in the project, there would be a fairly even spread of trees along Braunstone Gate. They would be held in brackets, at an angle to the walls of the premises, just above first floor height. Each trader would pay their own electricity costs.

The meeting welcomed the work being done to improve the area, but expressed some concern that a significant part of this funding was for the trees, which could not be used next year. It therefore was suggested that the traders should be asked to fund 50% of the costs, with a grant covering the other 50%. However, as it was felt that this project would help traders in Braunstone Gate to build on work already done to encourage businesses to work together and would improve the festive feel, and thereby the profile, of the area, it was

**AGREED:**

that funding of £2,520 be supported from the Ward Community Fund to the Braunstone Gate traders for the purchase of Christmas trees and associated equipment for use on premises on Braunstone Gate.

### **31. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The Chair thanked everyone for an informative and useful meeting and passed on season's greetings.

He then closed the meeting at 9.20 pm.

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# Minute Item 26

## Planning Contributions: List By Service By Dec Date and Ward

15 November 2010

1/1/2009 - 1/1/2010		Ward: WC		Amount	Received
20081786	52 BRAUNSTONE GATE	A	8	£732.30	£0.00
To pay a monitoring fee of £732.30 prior to execution of the deed					
20081786	52 BRAUNSTONE GATE	A	8	£732.30	£732.30
To pay a monitoring fee of £732.30 prior to execution of the deed					
20090485	14-16 BRITON STREET			£129.60	£129.60
Monitoring Fee of £129.60					
<b>TOTAL FOR: R&amp;C Development Control</b>				<b>£1,594.20</b>	<b>£861.90</b>
20081786	52 BRAUNSTONE GATE	A	2	£4,646.00	£4,646.00
To pay £4,646.00 towards adult/youth playing facilities at Bede Park					
20090485	14-16 BRITON STREET	A	2.1.1	£1,316.00	£1,316.00
£1,316.00 for childrens play at Bede Park					
20090485	14-16 BRITON STREET	A	3.1.1	£1,276.00	£1,276.00
£1,276.00 for adult and youth play at Bede Park					
<b>TOTAL FOR: R&amp;C Parks and Green Spaces</b>				<b>£7,238.00</b>	<b>£7,238.00</b>
20081786	52 BRAUNSTONE GATE	A	3	£2,000.00	£2,000.00
To pay £2,000 towards TRO's to improve parking in the area of the development					
20081786	52 BRAUNSTONE GATE	A	4	£8,000.00	£8,000.00
To pay £8,000 towards the improvement of the pedestrian environment on commencement of development					
<b>TOTAL FOR: R&amp;C Transport and Highways</b>				<b>£10,000.00</b>	<b>£10,000.00</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL:</b>				<b>£18,832.20</b>	<b>£18,099.90</b>

Planning Contributions: List By Service By Dec Date and Ward

15 November 2010

1/1/2010 - 1/1/2011		Ward: WC		Amount	Received
20090877	1 DANVERS ROAD Monitoring Fee of £127.90	A	8.1	£127.90	£127.90
20090886	BRITON STREET, LAND AT REAR OF WEST Monitoring Fee of £403.95	A	8	£403.95	£403.95
20090933	4 SHAFTESBURY ROAD Monitoring Fee of £97.60	A	8	£97.60	£97.60
<b>TOTAL FOR: R&amp;C Development Control</b>				<b>£629.45</b>	<b>£629.45</b>
20090933	4 SHAFTESBURY ROAD £810.00 on Commencement of Development for enhancement of childrens play at Bede Park	A	2.1.1	£810.00	£810.00
20090933	4 SHAFTESBURY ROAD £1142.00 for provision or enhancement of adult and youth playing facilities at Bede Park	A	3.1.1	£1,142.00	£1,142.00
20100377	40-42 WESTERN ROAD £13,860 on execution of this Deed for adult and youth recreation at Bede Park	A	2.2	£13,860.00	£13,860.00
<b>TOTAL FOR: R&amp;C Parks and Green Spaces</b>				<b>£15,812.00</b>	<b>£15,812.00</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL:</b>				<b>£16,441.45</b>	<b>£16,441.45</b>

2009 —	Parks + Green Space	7238
	Transport + Highways	10,000
2010	Parks + Green Space	15,812
	<u>Total</u>	<u>33,040</u>



## Challenges ahead...

What the national public sector cuts mean for Leicester



## Background

- New coalition government elected in May 2010
- Clear intention to tackle public sector deficit quickly by cutting £81bn over four years
- Initial in-year cuts of £6bn – almost unprecedented
- Announcement in June forewarned of serious cutbacks across most government departments in autumn
- Looking for 25% savings across most departments
- Biggest reductions in public expenditure in decades



## Background

- Formal announcement of CSR cuts on October 20<sup>th</sup>
- Some 'protected' areas – NHS, overseas aid, schools
- Impact on other areas varies
- Education has done reasonably well but local government has fared worse than others
- Incentive for council tax freeze offered to councils setting 0% tax rise
- Local government finance settlement late  
November/early December will confirm position



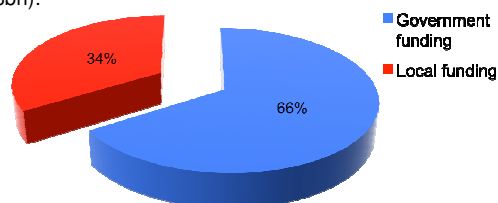
## What this means for Leicester City Council

- City development plans already hit – lost approx £17m for regeneration schemes in first cuts
- Facing real terms cuts of £100m over next four years
- = £300 for every person in the city
- = 1,000 jobs (or more)
- Front-loaded to next year (2011/12)
- Need to make cuts of at least £18m from council's day-to-day budgets next year
- More will follow when future of other grants is clarified



## Putting this in context

- Where the council's money comes from (net budget £0.3bn):



**So – impact of government-imposed reductions is substantial**



## What the council spends in total

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| • General services   | £0.5bn |
| – Libraries, social care, museums, roads, street cleaning, parks, refuse collection, etc |        |
| • Housing and council tax benefit payments   | £0.1bn |
| • Schools  | £0.2bn |
| • Council housing  | £0.1bn |
| • Major building/improvement projects  | £0.1bn |

**= £1 billion a year**



### What can we run for £1 million a year?

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- Six libraries
- One primary school with 300 children
- Leicester Leys and Aylestone leisure centres
- 100,000 hours of home care for 260 clients
- Residential care for 78 people
- 5 multi-access centres
- One children's residential home
- Day-to-day highway repairs across the city



### What is the council doing about this?

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- Carried out full review of spending
- Examining options for making substantial cuts in each area
- Looking at impact those cuts would have on communities and individuals across the city
- Also now assessing the wider impact of Government cuts in other (non-council) areas
- Working with partners to examine further options for joint working



### What is the timetable for this?

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- |  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| • Local government finance settlement        | Early December? |
| • Launch of council's draft budget proposals | Early January   |
| • Cabinet meeting to approve final proposals | 7 February      |
| • Council meeting to approve final proposals | 16 February     |



### In summary...

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- These are cuts which have been forced on us
- Local government is being hit harder than most
- Savings targets are higher next year than in subsequent years
- Council will do what it can to protect the most vulnerable people
- The cuts will have a major impact on services across the city – this is unavoidable
- We have no choice

