

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:00 pm, Monday, 4 October 2010

Held at: Highfields Community Centre, Melbourne Road

Who was there:

Councillor Aqbany

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.

Ward Councillors and General Information Members of the public were able to talk to their local Councillors.	Police Issues Local Police Officers were present to talk to residents about general policing issues..
Curve Information about upcoming events	City Warden 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.

12. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Dawood was elected as Chair for the meeting.

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Dr Chowdhury.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors were asked to declare any interests they may have in the business on the agenda and/or declare if Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them. No such declarations were made.

15. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Spinney Hills Community Meeting, held on 28 June 2010, were agreed as a correct record.

Members asked that Andy Thomas report back to the next meeting on the request for increased parking enforcement patrols on roads surrounding Gwendolen Road.

Action	Officer identified	Deadline
Report back regarding request for increase in parking enforcement patrols in the vicinity of Gwendolen Road	Andy Thomas	Next meeting

16. REDUCING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Fatema Burani, Antisocial Behaviour Investigator, explained the work the Leicester Antisocial Behaviour Unit was doing to tackle the issue. This included dealing with complaints of antisocial behaviour, intervention, use of legal powers and sanctions and working with housing officers and police. She urged people not to suffer in silence and to report problems. She drew residents' attention to a leaflet that explained the service and how to contact them.

17. DRUG PREVENTION

Sergeant Chauhan gave an update on drug issues in the ward. He reported that there had been a drop in drug usage on the St Peter's Estate and a particular problem in Clipstone House had been dealt with. Issues of drug dealing on Hydra

Walk had been addressed, but the problem had moved elsewhere, which was being dealt with.

He reported that some offenders previously convicted for conspiracy to supply Class A drugs were soon to be released from prison, and police and partner agencies would work closely to help them to avoid reoffending.

The meeting discussed problems on the ball court on Melbourne Street and Sergeant Chauhan stated that this was being looked into, along with another site. Councillor Dawood asked that he be kept informed of updates.

Sergeant Shane O'Neill reported that overall crime had halved since last year and thanked Councillors, the Housing Office and residents for their work.

18. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

Councillor Dawood noted that residents' individual issues had been dealt with privately by Andy Thomas outside the meeting.

A resident reported that he had been given several parking tickets when parking near his home. He felt that he was not causing an obstruction and had no other option. He asked that Councillors look into the issue. Councillor Aqbany stated that double yellow lines restrictions had to be enforced as they were there for safety reasons. There were issues on both sides of the argument, as roads also had to be kept clear. He felt that there was an additional problem of people parking on the estate and walking to town to work and this was a common problem across the city.

An issue previously raised at a meeting regarding parking problems in the vicinity of the hospital was to be considered at a meeting on 3 November for Gewndolen Road residents.

19. BUDGET

Steve Letten, Member Support Officer, reported on budget applications that had been received. Applicants who were in attendance were invited to explain their bids and applications were discussed as follows:

Application 1

Highfields Area Forum – Highfields Area Plan - £2,666

Priya Thamootheram stated that it would be a relaunch of the updated Area Plan, as a previous version in 2003 had been abandoned due to severe cuts to services in the area.

RESOLVED:

That the application be supported for the full amount of £2,666 and it be noted that although this is in excess of the preferred general bid amount of £1,500, it would have strategic benefit for the whole area.

Application 2

Leicester Inter-faith Gardening Work Project – Kim Gordon - £440

RESOLVED:

That the application be rejected.

Application 3

DANSOM – Youth and adult basketball - £2,700

Mr Abda stated that the project aimed to bring together young and older people once a week in the Highfields Centre. The funding would cover one year's running costs. Staff had been trained and people in the Spinney Hills Ward would be the beneficiaries.

RESOLVED:

That the application be supported to the sum of £1,500 on the expectation that every attempt be made to open the project up to the broad community.

Application 4

Essensual Rejuvenation Dance and Fitness – Community Pod Village - £1,843

RESOLVED:

That the application be rejected.

Application 5

Muslim Burial Council

It was reported that this application sought to expand an educational and awareness programme and would cover Coleman, Stoneygate and Spinney Hills wards initially, but would eventually be rolled out across the city. A multi-faith guide would be produced explaining how to access service wide provision.

RESOLVED:

That the application be supported to the sum of £657, which is a one-third share of the application.

20. CITY WARDEN

Barbara Whitcombe, City Warden Team Leader, explained the new campaign that was being run in conjunction with Keep Britain Tidy and all Leicestershire Councils to raise awareness that dog waste could be put in any bin if bagged. The campaign centred around “Stinkabell the dog poo fairy” and wardens and parks officers would be taking details of anyone seen disposing of waste correctly for a chance to enter a prize draw or issuing fixed penalty notices to those who did not.

Barbara also reported on the campaign to get bins taken in and not left on streets. Following extensive work, only five fixed penalty notices had to be issued, out of an initial 2,025 bins left out. Wardens would monitor to ensure the problem did not come back. For those who were not physically able to bring their bins in there was an assisted bin service.

Yagnesh Antunes, Spinney Hills City Warden reported that there were to be clean up days on Spinney Hill Park and the play area on Stoughton Street South, where local groups and volunteers would be able to help out. Work would also be done to educate people about the risk of rodents from leaving food out.

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ENGLISH DEFENCE LEAGUE PROTEST 9 OCTOBER

The meeting discussed in detail issues regarding the proposed demonstrations by the English Defence League (EDL) and Unite Against Fascism (UAF) to be held on 9 October in the city. It was noted that the Home Secretary had granted a ban on all marches for the Friday to Sunday, but there were no powers to stop peaceful static protest.

Councillor Dawood stated that the protests were not welcome in Leicester, but there was a duty to uphold democratic process. He stated that, upon receipt of a letter from the police, Cabinet had agreed to ask the Home Secretary for a ban.

Chief Inspector Richard Keenan and Sergeant Steve O'Neill reported on the work that the police had been doing and the plans in place. He stated that work on forming an opinion on the march could not take place until the formal letter had been received from EDL. All available evidence had been weighed up in deciding to recommend a ban, as this was not taken lightly. Much consultation of residents and stakeholders had taken place. Lessons had been learned from other areas where such protests had been held and a full policing plan had been established. This included bringing in support from other police authorities. They would manage the event itself, ensure protesters were escorted to the site without marching, provide cover for vulnerable locations and protect residents. Local police would be clearly visible in communities on the day. He stated that it was likely that the protesters would not stay any longer than for the duration of the protest. Detailed liaison had taken place with communities, religious buildings, businesses and schools. Extensive work had been done to try to discourage young people from getting involved such as additional activities. All protesters would be dealt with fairly but firmly if there were problems. External officers had been briefed on the way Leicestershire police expected things to be done.

Adrian Russell, Director of Environmental Services, assured residents that the council was working closely with the police and shared concerns about the impact. Significant work had been done on issues other than just the demonstrations such as practicalities, bus routes and offering advice and support. An element of disruption, however, could not be avoided. People were being discouraged from counter-protest on the day and instead asked to support two events on Friday and Sunday which had been organised in conjunction with Hope Not Hate.

A representative from the Federation of Muslim Organisations started that they recommended that people should stay away from the demonstrations, including those from other authorities who had offered support. They asked for media balance in reporting the day and stated that mosques would be kept open, in particular so young people could attend. He stated that a joint press release with representatives of the Sikh Community had been published to state that the Sikh community were not in support of the EDL protest.

Concern was raised that Humberstone Gate East was a controversial site to allow the protests, but Chief Inspector Keenan stated that several sites had been assessed and this was the most suitable location for managing the protests and minimising impact.

In response to further questions and concerns, the following responses were given:

- The change in the Highfields bus route was not related to the demonstration.
- It would be made clear that the increased police presence at mosques and other sites would be to reassure, not because they were targets.
- Announcements and guidance could not be made earlier, as a decision could not be made on how to address the issue until the formal request from EDL.
- Efforts were being made to keep up with rumours circulating on the internet.
- There would be a network of officers making regular contact with relevant people with updates on activity on the day.
- A Navratri event would continue to go ahead on Saturday evening near Humberstone Gate East.
- From experience elsewhere, licensed premises would not be made to close, as this could push attendees further out into estates and cause more disruption.
- Even though EDL had stated that they may defy the ban, residents were assured that if they did, they would be breaking the law and would be treated accordingly. They would be escorted to the site by officers in a manner that did not allow them to “march”. The law would be applied with professional judgement, taking circumstances into account.
- It was not possible to charge EDL for costs of the demonstration. A political approach to the government may be made by Councillors after the meeting with regard to this legislation.
- Assurance that police would not be taken away from sites they were assigned to. There were plenty of police to cover contingencies.
- Police would stay on full duty until after the protestors had gone home.

A representative from Hope Not Hate explained the events that were being held on Friday and Monday as an alternative to protesting on Saturday. He reassured that the police and council response was much more robust than elsewhere and praised them for this. He stated that Hope Not Hate had published a newsletter with an expose of the EDL’s motives. The alternative events would celebrate Leicester’s diversity and offer a united stance. The events would be:

- Friday, 4.30pm – Clock Tower vigil; community ribbons distributed and collective prayers
- Sunday – event to celebrate diversity with acts, bands and faith leaders. A ribbon to be given to each Leicester Marathon runner.

A representative of Unite Against Fascism stated that the group would be protesting on the day, but that they were a peaceful organisation. They aimed to offer a peaceful, properly stewarded opposition on the day. A resident stated that they would be stewarding on the day and that there would be an intelligence team to ensure protection of civil liberties.

It was felt that, although this was being imposed on Leicester, its communities would come out of it stronger and more united. Councillor Dawood urged people not to counter-demonstrate on the day, due to the potential for matters to get out of hand, and not to make this an event in Leicester's history for the wrong reasons.

22. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.16pm.

