

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:30 pm, Friday, 8 July 2011

Held at: St Theodore's Church, Sandfield Close.

Ward Councillors in attendance

Councillor Culdipp Singh Bhatti MBE
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Councillor Piara Singh Clair MBE

Councillor Ross Willmott

Also in attendance

Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Bhatti was appointed as Chair for the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members 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.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Rushey Mead Community Meeting held on 8 March 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

4. LOCAL POLICING

Sergeant Wayne Nimblette gave an update on policing issues in the ward, including crime statistics over the last 90 days.

He explained that there were 14 officers on beat patrol and currently there was a planned operation to harden the area against burglary from dwellings. He urged residents to make their homes and property as secure as possible over the summer months when there was typically a high level of opportunism.

He recommended Neighbourhood Watch schemes, which helped reduce crime, noting that two more had recently started. Advice could be given on the simple process to set one up.

Residents stated that they did not see beat officers very often, raised concerns about areas of antisocial behaviour, problems with footballs being kicked against property next to the park, the increase of lead thefts and nuisance problems from the local school. Sergeant Nimblette responded that officers were out on the beat for a large proportion of the day, often on bicycles. Antisocial behaviour was targeted but this could sometimes displace it elsewhere. Some culprits had been identified and talked to. He asked residents to notify the police of any incidents, as many went unreported. Police made efforts to move people playing football to parks, so it may be appropriate to reinforce or protect the resident's fence. Councillors suggested that planting could protect the fence and agreed to visit to discuss. Sergeant Nimblette stated that the police were aware of the problems with students' behaviour off school premises and said that the school and police needed to work together; the school had a responsibility for their students even when not on the school grounds. He stated that advice could be given on how to tackle lead theft, such as Smart Water systems which were a deterrent.

A resident asked that junction and the timings of traffic lights on Nicklaus Road and Gleneagles Avenue be changed to stop the road being blocked at peak times. Councillors stated that this was a Council issue of which they were aware, and a junction redesign would require funding, which was difficult to obtain at the present time.

5. GE THORN LIGHTING SITE UPDATE

Alison Bowen, Planning Policy & Design, gave an update on progress with the GE site since March. Demolition was underway, but had slowed recently due to contractors' commitments. Some more site clearance was needed. The site was designated employment land and it was hoped that it would remain in that use. No planning application had been received, but it was likely that one would be received by the end of the year.

Residents asked what consultation there had been about the use of the land and whether it could be used for housing. It was reported that there is a covenant on the land had to be designated for employment use due to contamination, which prevents the building of homes for at least 25 years and. Also the Local Plan, which was open to public consultation and examination before its adoption publication, had designated certain sites for prime employment use, of which this was one. Any planning applications would be publicised according to planning regulations and Council policy, the requirements of the law, including site notices and letters to residents in the immediate vicinity. It was also likely that any major application would be presented to the community meeting.

Residents raised concerns about the level and nature of contamination, as they were worried that the chemicals on the site had not been disclosed and they were worried they could be a health hazard.

Concerns about the safety of the junction were voiced and Councillors asked that plans be brought to the next meeting, as residents had been asking for information for some time.

6. DISCUSSION WITH THE RT HON KEITH VAZ MP

The Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP was invited to speak by the Ward Councillors.

He informed the meeting of the good work the Councillors did and reminded residents that being a councillor was not a full time position, so they relied on officers for support. He stated that Councillor Clair had been appointed as Assistant Mayor in the new Cabinet, Councillor Bhatti had been appointed to the Fire Authority and Councillor Willmott was Chair of the new Scrutiny arrangements. He recommended that the Council consider appointing one officer for each ward to deal with local issues.

He gave his thoughts about the GE site, stating that it had always been a concern of his that GE didn't do what they should have with regard to clearing the site. He had

discussed this with the Chairman of the company, but it was difficult to force private companies to do things. He asked the Council to raise it with the Environment Agency. Since the site had been sold to a developer, there had been good dialogue and co-operation. With regard to any potential undesirable planning application, he reminded residents that they had been successful in stopping the inappropriate location of Gateway College, so it proved that people did have the power to get things done.

He discussed Alderton Close and the concerns of residents regarding the proposed siting of a place of worship in the vicinity, with its resulting parking problems. He thanked residents for contacting him about the issue. He said that, if the development were to go ahead, the entrance to the park would have to be changed. Any plans would require people working together and the costs would have to be considered.

He expressed his concern that Leicestershire was one of 13 areas which had been identified as not having done enough to tackle antisocial behaviour. He was pleased to announce that he had invited the Chief Constable to a hearing in London on the landscape of policing. He stated that Sergeant Nimblette had been very active in the area and went beyond his contract to help, but that a 20% budget reduction would lead to fewer police and an increase in crime.

He stated that there was insufficient communication with residents and he wanted to keep people informed. He asked for email addresses so that he could send out his newsletter. He asked the Council to do more on communication, as it was difficult to get hold of officers.

Councillor Willmott stated that the community meetings were a key method of keeping people informed and had been very successful, plus surgeries and the ward had a dedicated City Warden, although there was scope to do more to communicate. A resident suggested that a community notice board could be set up to display information, although the ward was quite large, so more than one would be required.

Residents were concerned that they often did not receive a response from ward councillors, and they were reminded that councillors were not full time and did not have administrative assistants. Keith Vaz asked for responses to be given to outstanding queries by the following Friday.

A resident stated that the budget cutbacks would be detrimental to services, but praised the STAR team who offered advice and support on a range of issues such as housing and domestic problems. It was agreed that they would be invited to the information fair of the next meeting.

A resident said that he was having problems with scrap dealers taking items from outside the front of his house and elsewhere on the street. Barbara Whitcombe, City Warden Manager, asked residents to pass on as much information as possible so that unlicensed traders could be pursued. Sergeant Nimblette advised that residents secure their property and not leave it on display to avoid becoming a victim.

7. SUMMER PLAY PROJECTS IN RUSHEY MEAD

Jerry Connolly, Member Support Officer, stated that a representative was unable to attend, but information about play schemes was available on request.

8. RUSHEY MEAD SCHOOL PROJECT

Mark Leonard gave an update on progress of the redevelopment of Rushey Mead Secondary School. Work had started in April and was ahead of schedule. Traffic flow to the site was restricted to avoid problems at rush hour and the site had been hidden by white boarding on Melton Road. Block A was due to finish in May 2012.

A resident asked what community facilities would be available and Mark reported that future use had not yet been determined. The views of the community would be reported back. There would not be a swimming pool.

9. WATERMEAD CAR PARK UPDATE

Barry Ingram gave an update on the refurbishment of Watermead Car Park. It would be closed on Thursday and Friday for final dressing and markings to be done. 50 spaces would be available and there would be disabled bays and cycle racks. It would be free to use.

In response to residents' questions it was reported that the car park would not be supervised but the markings would make it easier to manage itself. Concerns were raised that cars would park near the entrance when the car park was full and it was suggested that Vinci Parking could be used to enforce appropriate parking.

10. CITY WARDEN

Barbara Whitcombe, City Wardens Manager, reported on the work of the City Wardens and introduced Kerry Wellington, the new City Warden for Rushey Mead. She circulated a leaflet with contact details on.

A resident said that she had been stopped from going on to Alderton Park via Alderton Close by a resident who said the path was private. It was confirmed that the path was not private, but residents had experienced problems with antisocial behaviour. It was recommended by Sergeant Nimblette that the main entrance be used instead. Residents stated that using the path should not be a problem, as most houses had people walking past.

Barry Ingram reported that a new play area would be opening shortly at Watermead, despite damage that had been caused.

A resident asked that the city wardens bring a leaflet to the next meeting about how to tackle unlicensed scrap metal dealers. Kerry asked for as much information to be passed to her as possible.

Residents asked about how flyposting was being tackled and Barbara reported that over 17000 had been removed in the first year and the number had now reduced. Some operators were being prosecuted. Any reports were dealt with. Concern was also raised regarding graffiti on Troon Way. As it was private land it could not be removed without the owner's permission, although there may be opportunity to deal with it as part of the Council's pledge to tackle grot spots. Some smooth surfaces could be cleaned by using free graffiti kits. Anyone wanting a kit could ask Kerry for one.

11. BUDGET

Jerry Connolly. Member Support Officer, introduced applications for funding that had been received and they were considered as follows:

Back To Netball, Leicestershire County Netball

It was reported that as many people as possible would be assisted by the project, estimated at 20 or more.

AGREED: that the request for funding of £745 be supported.

Diwal Get together, Karod Kirn Arts

It was noted that Belgrave and Latimer Community Meeting had referred the bid to the Diwali Working Party as it was a city wide project.

AGREED: that the application be rejected as it was not for the sole benefit of people in the ward.

Leicestershire Police, Target Hardening Project

It was noted that the actual amount requested should be £1000. It would pay for security measures for households to reduce burglary.

AGREED: That the request for £1000 be supported.

Highfields Rangers, Community Family Fun Day

It was noted that this application was to cover losses at the family fun day which suffered from very bad weather. The meeting felt that it was important to allow the group to continue by supporting them with some losses on the understanding that they insure against such eventualities in the future. Some concern was voiced about what else the money could be spent on. It was noted that £2500 was requested, but that the group would accept whatever could be offered.

AGREED: that the community meeting support the provision of £1500.

Friends of Watermead Country Park, family Discovery Day

It was noted that the group were succeeding in obtaining more funds from other sources, so the bid was much reduced from last year.

AGREED: that the request for £773 be supported.

The following applications were reported verbally to the meeting.

Summer activities/soccer sports play scheme

This application would be of benefit for Rushey Mead residents only and would accommodate 15 or more people.

AGREED: that the request for £1970 be supported.

Ganesh's Accessible Trips & Events

This project was to provide trips for older Asian people with a range of issues, including physical and mental health challenges. Members felt that more information was required and that the project would cover Rushey Mead, Belgrave and Latimer.

AGREED: that the community meeting support the funding of £1000 in principle, subject to satisfactory checks and agreement from Latimer and Belgrave to fund £1000 each.

Bhangra Steps

This project was to provide exercise. Although mixed sessions were offered, all attendees were female.

AGREED: that the application for £480 be supported.

A resident complained that some applications were reported verbally and asked for paper copies to be circulated in future.

12. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.54pm.