

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:30 pm, Tuesday, 13 September 2011

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

Who was there:

Councillor Andy Connelly

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 style="text-align: center;">Recycling</p> <p>Officers were at the meeting to explain the City Council’s new recycling scheme</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Police Issues</p> <p>Local Police Officers were available to discuss issues or general enquiries</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">City Warden Service</p> <p>The City Warden was available to discuss issues in the New Parks Ward</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ward Councillors and General Information</p> <p>Members of the public were able to make general enquiries and talk to their local Councillors</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.

12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Russell and Miss B Hewitt.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

No such interests were declared.

14. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

15. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

a) Minute 3, "Ward Community Budget 2011/12"

To date, alley gates had been fitted in five streets and keys had been given to residents. As a result, bins had been removed from the streets.

b) Minute 4a, "Minutes of Previous Meeting: Minute 35 – Planning Applications"

Councillor Connelly reminded the Meeting that he was a member of the City Council's Planning and Development Control Committee. He therefore could not give opinions on planning matters that could be seen as a predetermined view, as this would prevent him from being involved in discussions and/or votes at Committee meetings on the applications.

Councillor Connelly advised the Meeting that:-

- he would be making representations at the Planning and Development Control Committee against applications for the development of student accommodation in Western Road (the Equity Shoe site) and Upperton Road;
- two variations to the plans for the block of student accommodation in Upperton Road were being requested. One of these was an application to have a telecommunications mast on the roof of the building and the other was for advertising on the side of the building. It was not known what sort of advertising this would be; and
- the application to use 10 Westcotes Drive as a hostel had been refused and the hostel there was no longer operating.

Councillor Connelly advised that he had already made representations at the Planning and Development Control Committee about the use of the premises at 20 Westcotes Drive as a hostel. The owner of the premises had claimed that it had operated as a hostel for over ten years and had produced a letter from the previous owner to substantiate this claim. The Ward Councillors and local residents contested this claim, so Councillor Connelly had asked for the application for a certificate of lawful use to be referred to the Committee. A public meeting would be held to discuss this further when it was known when the application would be considered by the Planning and Development Control Committee.

A member of the community confirmed that, at one time, the premises had been used as a lodge for ex-servicemen. Investigations were being made in to whether referrals to this had been made by the Council or other agencies. If this had been done, it could be classed as having been a hostel. However, local residents felt that to change from a lodge for elderly, frail people to a hostel for young people was inappropriate.

Councillor Connelly reported that a student accommodation summit had been held on 9 September. At this, it had been noted that a speculative application for the development of the old CPH Thurmaston building in Upperton Road for student accommodation had been submitted. It was understood that the developer would buy the land if the application was successful.

An Article of Direction had been applied for in relation to this application. The application submitted included the demolition of the existing building, so under the Article a decision on the demolition would have to be taken in the context that a full planning application was needed to show what would replace it.

Councillor Connelly further advised that he had been contacted by a doctor, who also wanted to demolish the building, but proposed to replace it with a new health centre. Although this would be preferable to more student accommodation, further discussions were needed to see if the original building could be kept.

The Meeting noted that a suggestion had been made that no further applications for student accommodation should be approved until Supplementary Planning Guidance on student accommodation had been produced by the City Council. The Chair noted that whether this was possible would need to be investigated.

Some concerns remained about the development of the Equity Shoes site. Although the original building had been saved, it was proposed to accommodate over 700 students on that site in an eight-storey building. This was felt to be an over-development of the site, which would generate a lot of foot traffic in a primarily residential area. Representations on this application could be made up until it was considered by the Planning and Development Control Committee. It was not yet known when this would be.

Members of the community expressed concerns that amenity space was not being provided by developers, its provision being made under Section 106 Agreements. In

reply, it was noted that planning officers were encouraged to hold discussions with developers before their applications were considered by a Committee so that this type of issue could be discussed. It was not always possible to include green space in developments, but developers could be required to make a substantial financial contribution towards its provision. However, these contributions would not always be sufficient to buy an area of green space and so did not resolve the problem of insufficient green space in an area.

Bede Park was not big enough for the number of people now wanting to use it. This had been the first new park that had been created for a number of years and it had not been realised how well it would be used. The problems now were to identify and obtain more green space and to encourage people to use other green space.

c) Minute 5, "Bede Park"

Councillor Connelly thanked those who had attended the recent residents' meeting about issues relating to Bede Park. Following on from this, the Ward Members had met with Council officers and it had been agreed that the benches at the Coriander Road end of the Park would be removed, as they encouraged people to gather there. In turn, this led to anti-social behaviour. There had been some concern about removing the benches, as they were used by families and the disabled.

Parks officers had contacted the slide manufacturer, to see if security could be improved to avoid it being misused, but this was not possible. Consideration also had been given to putting a fence around the play area, but this also created more problems than it solved. It therefore was proposed to put an acoustic barrier along the edge of Tarragon Road, up to The Project. This would cost approximately £175,000.

Concerns were raised that, if noise was being made at the top of the slide, this barrier would not work. It also could reduce surveillance from the houses opposite and could encourage graffiti. A further residents' meeting could be needed to address these issues.

It also was suggested that the slide could be removed and used in another park. However, it was well used by children, so a more suitable alternative could be to relocate it within Bede Park. Alternatively, the Park could be locked at night, to make it more manageable. Residents also noted that people sat in the Park drinking, which was a particular concern when children were there.

The Meeting was reminded that the possibility of introducing an alcohol-free zone in the Park had been discussed under this item at the last meeting. However, one problem with introducing such a zone could be that the activity could be moved to another location.

The Chair confirmed that possible options would be considered and approximate costs calculated. A further residents' meeting would be held to review progress with resolving the issues identified.

d) Minute 7, "The Manor House Neighbourhood Centre"

The Chair advised that the Centre was increasingly busy and reminded the Meeting that funding from the Ward Community Budget had been used towards some community events there. The response to these events had been very pleasing.

16. NEW RECYCLING SCHEME

Cristina Calleja, Waste Minimisation Officer with Leicester City Council, explained that, feedback from residents had shown that they wanted to be able to recycle a greater variety of materials. A new recycling scheme therefore had been trialled over the previous six months.

This had been very successful, with participation rates doubling and recycling rates increasing from 40% of waste collected to 60% in the trial areas. As a result, it had been decided to extend the new scheme across the City and letters from the City Mayor were being sent to residents advising them of this.

During the first two weeks of October, all households would receive a roll of 50 orange recycling bags, in to which a range of recyclable materials could be placed. The first collections would be made on 17 October 2011.

It was noted that, if residents wanted to keep their green recycling box for their own use they could do so, but if they wished to return it, this could be done using a sticker that would be provided in the information pack being sent to residents.

The move away from using green boxes was welcomed, as information on what could be put in them could be confusing. In addition, some people had used their green recycling box as an overflow for general waste and the boxes had become an eyesore.

The following points were noted during discussion on this item:-

- If a bag was heavily contaminated, a sticker would be put on it explaining the problem and asking the resident to put the rubbish in with their general waste;
- The Bins on Streets campaign would be extended to orange bags left on streets; and
- If bags had split, but could still be picked up safely, they would be taken. If the contents of the bag had spread across the street, they would be cleared up by the Council's cleansing services. However, no problems of this nature had been experienced during the scheme trial.

17. CITY WARDEN SERVICE

Jamie Stubbs, City Warden for the Westcotes Ward, updated the Community Meeting as follows:-

- The campaign to reduce the number of rubbish bins left on streets had been continuing. The areas already covered were being monitored and it was hoped to continue to extend the scheme. Approximately 30 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued in relation to bins left on streets;
- Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued for graffiti left in the area. The City Warden service was working with the Police to reduce incidences of this;
- Leaflets that had been flyposted were removed and, the companies concerned prosecuted; and
- Litter picking campaigns would be restarting, so any suggestions of where this could be done would be welcome.

On behalf of the Meeting, the Chair thanked Jamie Stubbs for resolving problems that had been experienced with a restaurant in Hinckley Road leaving its bins out, with rubbish spilling out of them on to the road. It was noted that the City Mayor did not have a financial interest in this business. His daughter previously had owned the restaurant, but no longer did so.

18. POLICE ISSUES UPDATE

Sergeant Simon Barnes of Leicestershire Constabulary updated the Meeting as follows:-

- He thanked Jamie Stubbs, City Warden for the Westcotes Ward, for her work getting graffiti removed in the Ward;
- The Westcotes Neighbourhood Police could be found on the Twitter and Facebook social network sites as Westcotes Cops. It was hoped that information could be provided through these sources, along with things such as positive news stories and reminders about events;
- There was little the police could do to influence planning applications, although where appropriate they provided comments on their concerns and possible issues arising from the applications. For example, a large development could lead to a large increase in population, which in turn could lead to an increase in drink and drug related activities and vulnerable people;
- The Police felt that there should be no more massage parlours on Narborough Road. However, there were concerns about the safety of the women working there, because if there were no parlours the women could work out of sight, making them more vulnerable, but consideration had to be given to the whole area;
- Progress had been made in getting an arm added to the CCTV camera on Wilberforce Road, so that the range of the camera could be improved;

- The Police would continue to work with the housing association to improve the situation for residents on the “herbs estate” in relation to anti-social behaviour in Bede Park;
- No particular problems had been reported since the last meeting. It was known from anecdotal evidence that problems had been experienced, but they could not be dealt with by the Police unless they were reported. However, the street pastors had been very helpful in reporting incidents they had seen;
- Crime statistics were as follows:-
 - 26 burglaries of dwellings, which was an increase of 6 over the same period last year;
 - 15 burglaries other than dwellings, an increase of 4 over the same period last year;
 - 10 robberies, a reduction from 13 over the same period last year;
 - 12 thefts from persons. This was an increase from 7 over the same period last year and was being looked at closely, but some appeared to be due to carelessness by the victims;
 - 32 thefts from motor vehicles, a decrease from 34 over the same period last year. Arrests had been made after various vehicles had been damaged. The advice to keep the vehicle locked and valuables out of site was reiterated; and
 - 21 anti-social behaviour incidents, which was a decrease from 23 over the same period last year. This was seen as a static position. Work was needed to encourage people to report these incidents, as many reports were generated by the Police through work on other issues; and
- On Saturday, 1 October, from 2.00 – 4.00 pm the Police would be at the Iceland car park on Narborough Road with a “How many valuables are in the car?” event. This would be publicised widely.

Residents reported that there appeared to be broken glass in the windows of shops on Narborough Road. In addition, cyclists were cycling on the pavements there and ringing their bells to get people to move out of their way. Sergeant Barnes advised that he was aware that some windows in Narborough Road had not been repaired, but was unaware of any recent problems with cyclists on pavements.

PC Matt Green of Leicestershire Constabulary advised the meeting that cyclists were challenged when seen riding on pavements and that the Police tried to educate them that it was against the law to do so, as road users from other countries could be unaware of this. He undertook to pass on the concerns raised at this meeting to the Neighbourhood Policing Team. The Chair advised that the Ward Councillors regularly received complaints about people cycling on pavements. It was recognised that it was difficult to take action against people who did this, especially as Police resources were very stretched.

The Chair reported that, when the recent application for a massage parlour on Narborough Road had been considered by the Council’s Planning and Development Control Committee, assurances had been given by the applicant and their solicitor that it was a genuine parlour. The Committee could only act on the information it was given and could not guess at activities that could take place at a venue. The

possibility of giving temporary permission was considered, but this could only be approved on planning grounds.

It was noted that, once planning permission had been given to use premises for a particular purpose, it could not be withdrawn. The Police also advised that they could only take action against premises on the basis of evidence. However, they made enforcement visits and checked that no-one was working in the establishments against their wishes, or had been smuggled in. If people needed rescuing from the establishment, this was arranged.

19. WARD COMMUNITY BUDGET 2011/12

a) Fullhurst College

The Meeting noted that representatives of Fullhurst College had sent their sincere apologies that they could not be the meeting to give feedback on how the previously approved grant to the College's Hardship Fund had been used. However, they had advised that:-

- Approximately 10 uniforms had been provided to date, mostly to new starters;
- Recipients were not means tested, but their background was checked with their former primary school;
- A uniform swap shop had been started at the end of the summer term; and
- Second hand uniform would be sold at the College's Christmas and summer fetes. The proceeds from this would be reinvested in the Fund.

b) 2011/12 Community Meeting Budget

Elaine Baker, Democratic Services Officer with Leicester City Council, reported that grants totalling £2,830 had been approved up to the date of this meeting. Consequently, £12,170 remained in the Ward Community Budget for 2011/12.

c) Grant Applications

The following applications for grants were then considered:-

i) Stonham Project Leicester – Life Skills Training

AGREED:

that a grant of £154 to Stonham Project Leicester be supported for the provision of life skills training for residents at the Project's Glazebrok Road property.

ii) David Kayemba – Leicester Zim Warriors Football Club

The Meeting noted that applications for assistance towards the purchase of nets, corner flags, kits, balls and other equipment, and towards costs associated with running the Club had been made to several Wards, as players came from various parts of the City.

David Kayemba addressed the meeting, explaining that, at present, the Club did not have any children's teams, but it was hoped that it could in the future. Matches currently were played in Victoria Park. Bede Park was used for training. However, the Club hoped to find facilities further away from residential properties.

AGREED:

that a grant of £360 to Leicester Zim Warriors Football Club be supported towards the purchase of nets, corner flags, kits, balls and other equipment, and towards costs associated with running the Club.

iii) Ward Members – Cycle Racks on Bede Street

Councillor Connelly presented a verbal report of a request from members of the public for cycle racks to be provided on Bede Street, outside the new Co-op store, so that cyclist could secure their bikes while they went shopping. It was proposed that two racks should be installed, at a cost of approximately £250 each. The bollards currently there would not be removed.

AGREED:

that a grant of up to £500 be supported for the installation of two cycle racks on Bede Street.

iv) Ward Members – Cycle Racks on Hinckley Road

Councillor Connelly presented a verbal report of a request from parents of pupils at King Richard School III School for cycle racks to be installed on Hinckley Road, near its junction with Andrewes Street. At present, vehicles often parked on the pavement at this location, which obstructed the view of people using the junction or pedestrian crossing. It was felt that putting cycle racks there would keep the junction clear, as well as encouraging people to cycle to the shops.

In reply to concerns raised at the meeting, the Police confirmed that there was sufficient parking in the vicinity, so there was no need for vehicles to park on the pavement at that location.

AGREED:

that a grant of up to £500 be supported for the installation of two cycle racks at the above location.

20. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair thanked all present for attending and closed the meeting at 8.32 pm