

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:30 pm, Tuesday, 29 November 2011

**Scheduled venue: Main Hall, East West Community Project, 10
Wilberforce Road**

Relocated to: The Western, 70 Western Road

Who was there:

Councillor Andy Connelly

Councillor Sarah Russell

21. RELOCATION OF MEETING AND DELAY TO START TIME

As the intended venue for the meeting was unexpectedly unavailable, it relocated to The Western, 70 Western Road, LE3 0GA.

In order to allow people time to arrive at the new venue, the start of the meeting was delayed until 7.00 pm and no Information Fair was held.

22. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Russell was elected as Chair for the meeting.

23. 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.

Councillor Connelly declared a personal interest in the application for grant funding from King Richard III Infant and Nursery School, under agenda item 10(b), "Ward Community Meeting Budget 2010/11", as his daughter was a pupil at that school.

Councillor Russell declared a personal interest in the application for grant funding from King Richard III Infant and Nursery School, under agenda item 10(b), "Ward Community Meeting Budget 2010/11", as her daughter was a pupil at that 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 Health and Community Involvement to be decided.

24. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The meeting noted that:-

- The street referred to in minute 19(c)(iii), "Ward Community Budget 2011/12 – Grant Applications: Ward Members – Cycle Racks on Bede Street", was Briton Street, (not Bede Street);
- The cycle racks proposed for Briton Street had not been installed yet, but this should be done by the next meeting. The Co-op store would be asked to contribute to the cost of these;
- The Council's Community Safety team was considering how an alcohol-free zone could be introduced in to Bede Park. (Minute 15, "Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Last Meeting: c) Minute 5, 'Bede Park' ", referred); and

- Although residents were grateful that a sign had been put up on the slide in Bede Park in an effort to reduce anti-social behaviour there, it could not be seen in the dark and was being ignored by many people. In addition, anti-social drinkers were still congregating in the Park. (Minute 18, "Police Issues Update", referred).

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2011 be agreed as a correct record, subject to minute 19(c)(iii), "Ward Community Budget 2011/12 – Grant Applications: Ward Members – Cycle Racks on Bede Street", being amended to read as follows (new text shown in italics):-

"iii) Ward Members – Cycle Racks on Bede Briton Street

Councillor Connelly presented a verbal report of a request from members of the public for cycle racks to be provided on *Bede Briton Street*, outside the new Co-op store, so that cyclists 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:

- i) that a grant of up to £500 be supported for the installation of two cycle racks on *Bede Briton Street*; *and*
- ii) *that the Co-op store on Briton Street be asked to contribute towards the cost of installing the cycle racks agreed above."*

25. ORANGE BAG RECYCLING SCHEME

Cristina Calleja, (Waste Minimisation Officer), advised the meeting that the new recycling scheme had started 6 weeks previously. At this time last year, approximately 150-160 tonnes of materials were being recycled, but by week 5 of the new scheme this had increased to approximately 300 tonnes of recycling being collected from the kerbside. This showed an increase in the kerbside recycling rate from 9% to 18%. It was hoped that the new scheme also would encourage people to use recycling centres more.

The meeting expressed its appreciation of the new scheme and was advised that:-

- The orange recycling bags should not ladder or tear all the way down if pulled. However, a faulty batch had been received from the manufacturer, in which the bags had torn more easily than they should have done. If households received a roll of faulty bags they could contact the Council's Customer Services to have them replaced;
- Refuse would be collected as usual over Christmas apart from households that have a Tuesday collection. These residents will not receive a collection on

Tuesday 27th December and extra waste can be placed for collection the following Tuesday;

- The Council did not want to change to fortnightly waste collections, especially in areas such as Westcotes, which had dense concentrations of housing. However, consideration was being given to whether smaller bins could be provided, to further encourage people to recycle more;
- Consideration was being given to whether it would be effective to give households in some areas orange refuse bins for their recycling materials, or to increase green waste collections in some areas; and

If problems were experienced with orange bags blowing around, they could be weighted down with items such as jars or bottles, as there had been no reported problems with including glass in the bags.

26. CITY WARDEN SERVICE

Jamie Stubbs, (City Warden for the Westcotes Ward), invited the meeting to raise any issues of concern.

Some concern was raised that Jamie Lewis Residential appeared to be burning rubbish on land that it owned. In reply, Jamie Stubbs advised that it was not possible to stop people leaving rubbish on their own land, or burning it there. Residents were concerned that the situation could get worse when the development of new student accommodation started.

27. POLICE ISSUES UPDATE

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

- The Police had written a strong letter to the City Council about the way in which planning policies regarding student accommodation currently were framed and operated;
- The Ward had gained a PC and a PCSO. Although this was welcome, it was recognised that they had been relocated from elsewhere in the Local Policing Unit;
- Although the country's population had increased to 75 million, the number of police officers employed nationally was the same as it had been when the country's population was 40 million. This situation was unlikely to change. Locally, the City Centre population was likely to increase by 40,000 due to developments for which planning permission had been given;
- A new Neighbourhood Link initiative had started. Regardless of where someone lived, they could log on to neighbourhoodlink.co.uk and sign up to receive

information on issues of interest for their area. They would then receive e-mails periodically about these issues, which would contain links to items of interest;

- Locally, robberies had been targeted, as a result of which they had only increased by 6 over the same period last year, rising from 36 to 42. The majority of these involved students leaving windows and doors open, so the police were working with De Montfort University to educate students about this;
- Crime statistics were as follows:-
 - 9 burglaries other than dwellings, a reduction from 25 over the same period last year;
 - 7 robberies, a reduction from 11 over the same period last year;
 - 7 thefts from persons, a reduction from 21 over the same period last year;
 - 38 thefts from motor vehicles. Most of these were due to people leaving items on display in their vehicles. Work to educate people not to do this was on-going; and
 - 11 anti-social behaviour incidents, which was an increase from 9 over the same period last year. Positive outcomes had been seen in 5 of these cases;
- A sign had been put up on the slide in Bede Park to deter people from misusing it. Initially, there had been a problem with fixing the sign, as it was made to go on a lamppost, but the Council had successfully adapted it. Some concern was expressed that it could not be seen at night, but Sergeant Barnes confirmed that it could be seen by people using the park during the day and the Police were satisfied that the sign was robust and would stay fixed to the slide;
- Big Johns on Narborough Road had received a late licence for food only until 2.00 am. Comments on this could be made on the City Council's website; and
- An application to use 2 Equity Road as a bar/food location had been received. The deadline for comments on this was 10 December 2011.

With regard to applications for bar/food locations, the Ward Members advised that they were commenting that the area was at saturation point for these. To date, this had been successful. Sergeant Barnes suggested that it could help such applications to be refused if local people also made similar comments.

A resident advised that they had been told that they could call the police any time if they witnessed anti-social behaviour in Bede Park. However, when they did so, the Police did not respond. Sergeant Barnes explained that the Police would only be able to respond to such calls if they were not busy elsewhere. If they were unable to respond, incident records would still be prepared and used to analyse anti-social behaviour in the area. Anyone reporting incidents could ask for an incident number.

It also was queried why the CCTV camera did not look in to Bede Park. In reply, it was noted that the camera was owned by De Montfort University and was directed towards businesses, rather than the street. The Police did not have any control over where it was directed.

A resident asked what could be done to resolve the problems being caused by taxis double-parking late at night on Braunstone Gate. In reply, it was noted that various operations had been carried out between the Police and the Council's Licensing officers, where taxis were moved on. However, as soon as the Police and Licensing officers left the area, the vehicles returned.

Various ways of trying to resolve this were being considered. These included making this a one-way street with a taxi rank, making it a fully pedestrianised area, or introducing different night time traffic controls to those operating during the day. At present, the option that appeared to be most feasible was to introduce one-way traffic, but it was felt that the lack of unified business options made it difficult to encourage such investment in to the area, despite the existence of organisations such as the West End Traders. Work to find a long-term solution would continue though.

28. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

a) Student Accommodation

Councillor Russell advised the meeting that the development of a large block of student flats at the side of the Equity Shoes development had been approved at the Council's Planning and Development Control Committee meeting on 22 November 2011. This would have 5 storeys on the Western Road side and 8 overlooking Bede Park.

An artist's impression of the new development, (provided by the developer), was circulated at the meeting.

It was noted that Councillor Connelly had spoken against this development at the Committee meeting, due to the proposed size of the development and the way it would overshadow Bede Park.

After the elections in May 2011, the possibility of holding a student accommodation summit had been discussed with the City Mayor, along with how current planning policy could be changed to address these situations. The summit had been held and planning guidance on student housing was being written, to try and find a balance between the need for student housing and the needs of the local community.

In the meantime, a moratorium on creating more student accommodation had been announced, although this only applied to new applications, not those already in the planning system. Residents questioned whether developers would be able to fill all of the student housing being provided, as student numbers were likely to decrease.

Steve Brown, (Team Leader – Planning Management and Delivery), confirmed that the planning application referred to above had been received in July 2011, so did not fall within the moratorium on creating more student accommodation. Officers had recommended approval of the application, after a long application process that had included substantial redesigns and reductions in the size of the building.

It was acknowledged that this would be a very large building, that would change the look of the area, but the view had been that, under current planning policy, the scheme was acceptable. If refusal had been recommended, this could have been challenged at appeal, which could have incurred substantial financial consequences for the Council.

Residents expressed concern that their properties would be devalued and they would not be able to sell them once the new accommodation had been built. In addition, many students had cars, so current parking problems would be made worse.

Steve Brown explained that potential parking problems had been considered throughout the planning process, including the impact that existing student accommodation had had on the area. Consequently, the approval for the development contained a condition that strictly enforced a management plan that stated that students could not bring cars to this accommodation. This would be enforced through not allowing students to buy in to the existing residents' parking scheme. Any breaches would be investigated and appropriate action taken, (for example, issuing a breach of condition notice or prosecution through the courts).

Councillor Connelly explained that his general concerns were:-

- Pre-application discussions between planning officers and developers in 2007 had suggested that there could be 5 storeys on one side of the development and 8 on the other. This was exactly the application that was approved, even though he had no recollection of any consultation having been done in 2007. However, the meeting noted that all applicants were entitled to confidential pre-application discussions with the Council's planning officers;
- The Council's planning policy stated that a need for development on this scale had to be identified, but he did not feel this had been done;
- The report on the planning application had stated that, if too much student accommodation was being provided, that of a lower quality or further away from the university would not be used, but this would blight an area;
- Those attending the student accommodation summit had been told that student accommodation was being filled as quickly as it was built. However, people recently had been seen handing out flyers, (for which they had a licence), advertising student accommodation owned by this developer that was vacant;
- This development was detrimental to residential amenity, particularly along Western Boulevard;
- Students were being channelled to the area around Bede Park. The Park acted as a "pinch point" and the number of users was already beyond its capacity. Anti-social behaviour already was occurring in the Park;
- This development was detrimental to the visual amenity of the area, although it was recognised that this was subjective. The developer had stated that, as the

ground sloped down from Western Road, the 8 storey side would not be seen from Western Road. It appeared though that the development would create a solid block of buildings and the 8 storey section would overshadow Bede Park; and

- The proposal for the management of the accommodation was welcome, but it could be difficult to regulate how the students travelled to and from the accommodation. It could be naive to say that students would not bring cars to the area, so pressure could be put on parking on the other side of Narborough Road. However, the Council had a traffic management plan, which could be useful in controlling this.

Steve Brown explained that the site would have on site management 24 hours per day, seven days per week. The management plan was for the whole site and much of it related to how vehicles arriving and leaving the site would be controlled. (Barriers would be used for this.) The only parking on site would be for students with disabilities.

The following points were then made in discussion:-

- The current building was not a historic building, but was of local historical interest;
- Planning officers should not have based their argument for recommending approval for the scheme on the possibility that the developer could lodge an appeal;
- It was very unfair that residents would have to pay for parking permits because of the number of students with cars coming in to the area. They already had to pay to park in the area on football match days and this would make the situation worse;
- The Upperton Road Residents' Association was taking advice from a voluntary organisation that helped residents in situations similar to this. Those present were invited to leave their contact details, so that information on how to contact this organisation could be provided;
- Any decision to extend the existing residents' parking scheme would depend on the support of residents for doing so. It would not be proposed by the Council;
- The developer had a right to appeal. If he did so, the Council would have to be present at the hearing to make representations;
- Some Councillors had supported this application, as they wanted to create more student accommodation of a higher quality;
- If the Council lost any appeal against a planning decision it could be faced with having to pay costs;

- If a planning application was amended by a developer at the request of the Council and that version was approved, any appeal could only be made on the version that the Council last made a decision on. However, the original submission would be looked at by the Planning Inspector to see if the Council had entered in to a proper negotiation with the applicant. In this case, the original application had been for 11 storeys on the Park side of the building;
- Current planning guidance encouraged all developers to engage with the local community over their applications, but they were not obliged to do so; and
- It was recognised that the planning system was imperfect, but planning officers were there to guide development within the system.

Steve Brown advised that all of the issues raised at this meeting had been considered during the application process and discussed with the developer. Public consultation had been undertaken but, in general, letters of support had not been received.

The meeting noted that:-

- The Council's Planning and Development Control Committee had refused an application from Jamie Lewis Residential for illuminated signs at student accommodation on Uppingham Road, but this had been resubmitted;
- Councillor Connelly had asked that the planning application to convert accommodation above the Co-op store to student accommodation be considered at the Council's Planning and Development Control Committee;
- Clarification had been sought on whether the moratorium on creating student accommodation just applied to new builds, or whether it also included the conversion of existing premises; and
- If permission had been given for the development of living accommodation, there was nothing in the planning regulations to prevent it from being used to house students. However, purpose-built student accommodation had lower space standards than applied to other living accommodation, so revised permission would need to be obtained to use it to accommodate non-students.

b) 20 Westcotes Drive

Councillor Russell reported that an application for lawful use of this property as a hostel had been considered by the Council's Planning and Development Control Committee. In light of evidence and objections presented by residents and others, confirming that the premises had been used as a hostel for less than 10 years, the application had been refused.

However, the hostel did not have to close down immediately. The owners had until 5 December to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against the decision, so no enforcement action was possible until then. If an appeal was made, no action could be taken until the appeal was resolved, which could take several weeks or months.

However, evidence had been obtained since the Committee decision that it was felt could assist the Council's case in an appeal hearing.

c) Changes to Housing Benefit

It was noted that housing benefit regulations were changing, so that from January 2012 single people under the age of 35 would only be able to claim housing benefit for a room in a shared property. Due to the amount of shared property in Westcotes, this could have a significant impact in the Ward.

29. NEW COMMUNITY FUNDING STREAMS

Councillor Russell advised that the government was making funding for community development available through the Community Development Foundation. Money had been allocated for certain parts of the country, based on increases in the number of jobseekers and deprivation. As a result, Westcotes qualified for just over £33,000.

To get this money, a panel of residents had to be established in the local area that comprised residents, businesses and voluntary organisations. The panel had to be a voluntary body and had to have its own unique website. It had to put together a 5 year plan of how it would improve its community and could consider applications for grants from £250 - £2,500, all of which had to be match-funded. (If problems were experienced in finding match funding, consideration could be given to using some of the Ward Community Budget.) A panel partner also had to be appointed.

All present were invited to supply contact details if they were interested in joining the panel for Westcotes. It was noted that the Ward Councillors did not have to be on the panel.

The funding would be available for approximately 2½ years, but it was not known yet how the funding would be spread across that period.

30. WARD COMMUNITY BUDGET 2011/12

i) King Richard III Infant and Nursery School

The meeting was reminded that both Ward Councillors had declared interests in this application, (see minute 23 above).

Councillor Russell introduced this item in her capacity as Chair of the Governors of the school, explaining that the school wanted to take all 60 of its Year 2 pupils to Beaumanor Hall for a residential outdoor pursuits visit.

However, some children would not have suitable clothing and/or accessories and the school did not want this to be a barrier to them taking up the opportunity. The school therefore proposed to buy something for each child. It had raised a significant amount of money towards this, as well as finding other sources of funding, but there was a shortfall of approximately £1,200. Applications therefore had been made to

Westcotes Community Meeting and Fosse Community Meeting for grants of £500 from each one.

The Meeting agreed that trips of this sort were always worthwhile and very useful for the children involved. On taking a vote, in which the Ward Councillors did not participate, it was unanimously supported.

AGREED:

That a grant of £500 to King Richard III Infant and Junior School towards the provision of items for Year 2 pupils attending a residential trip to Beaumanor Hall for an outdoor pursuits break be supported.

ii) PS1011 Simon Barnes, Neighbourhood Police Team

The meeting noted that a grant of £88.92 had been agreed under the Council's fast-track procedure for a permanent sign to be fixed to the large slide in the centre of Bede Park.

This would deter adult park users from climbing the slide out of hours, or in hours of darkness, and assist in being a tool for the Police to remove persons from the slide if no offences were committed but their removal was required to reduce noise and anti-social behaviour.

iii) Manor House Community Association

Since the agenda had been circulated, an application had been received from the Manor House Community Association for a grant towards Christmas decorations. This was tabled at the meeting.

The Association thanked the Community Meeting for its previous support and explained that this application had been submitted to enable the Manor House to be decorated for Christmas Fairs on 3 and 10 December. Everyone was welcome to attend these.

Val Smalley offered to arrange for posters for these events to be displayed on the noticeboard in Bede Park.

AGREED:

That a grant of £500 to the Manor House Community Association for the provision of Christmas decorations be supported.

iv) West End Association

Since the agenda had been circulated, an application had been received from the West End Association for a grant towards the installation of Christmas trees on properties on Braunstone Gate. This was tabled at the meeting.

The Chair reminded the meeting that a similar application had been approved last year, when it was agreed that these decorations would not be funded by the Community Meeting every year. It therefore was suggested that funding towards

capital costs, such as the new wall brackets and lights, be agreed, but that on-going costs, (such as installation or trees), should be met by the Association.

Owners of other businesses in the area stated that the decorations looked very good last year, but felt that if the Association was to use this name it should associate with businesses outside Braunstone Gate.

Marnie Ahmed from the West End Association explained that most of the decorations to be used had been bought last year. Most of the 10 businesses interested in participating had agreed to contribute £50 each towards the decorations. One new wall bracket would be needed and an electrical business had offered to help with the fitting and electrical work. She also stated that the Association would be very pleased to work with other businesses and welcomed the chance to start discussions.

AGREED:

- 1) That a grant of £110 to the West End Association for the provision of a new wall bracket for holding a Christmas tree be supported on the condition that the opportunity to have similar decorations be extended to businesses on Narborough Road and Hinckley Road;
- 2) That any applications for funding towards decorations on Narborough Road or Hinckley Road arising from resolution 1) above be considered under the fast track procedure;
- 3) That the possibility of having decorations on lamp posts in Bede Park in future years be investigated;
- 4) That, in view of the impact the development of student accommodation will have on the area, Jamie Lewis Residential be asked to provide Christmas decorations on Narborough Road and Braunstone Gate in future years.

Action	Officer Identified	Deadline
Any applications for funding towards decorations on Narborough Road or Hinckley Road arising from resolution 1) above be considered under the fast track procedure	Nichola Pell	As appropriate
The possibility of having decorations on lamp posts in Bede Park in future years be investigated	Nichola Pell	Christmas 2012
Jamie Lewis Residential to be asked to provide Christmas decorations on Narborough Road and Braunstone Gate in future years	Nichola Pell	Christmas 2012

31. FORUM FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The meeting noted details of the Forum for older People and its forthcoming meetings.

32. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm