

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:00 pm, Thursday, 7 March 2013

Held at:

Who was there:

Councillor Ted Cassidy MBE

Councillor Susan Waddington

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 Local councillors were available to discuss general queries	Police Issues Local Police officers were present to discuss issues or general queries.
Fit4Business Information was available on the Fit4business health initiative.	City Warden Service The City Warden for the Fosse Ward was present.

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.

29. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Burns and Miss Oakley.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

31. RECORD OF MEETING AND ACTIONS

AGREED:

That the Record of Meeting and Actions arising from the Fosse Community Meeting held on 12 December 2012 be approved as a correct record.

32. MATTERS ARISING

a) Fosse Library

Councillor Waddington reported that the Library had been identified as one area for budget reductions and therefore changes in the service provided. The Ward Councillors had supported a petition from residents, as a result of which concessions had been achieved.

The Library now would continue to operate as at present until August 2013, after which self-service machines would be installed and the opening hours of the Library would increase. Once the review of Community Services staff was complete, work would be undertaken with the Library staff to change the Library opening times to match those of the Neighbourhood Centre.

The Ward Councillors also reported that there were proposals to change the layout of the Library and, potentially change access to the Centre, but whether these changes went ahead was dependent on them being included in the next capital investment plan.

Residents were reminded that it previously had been agreed that a panel of residents would be established to help with the design of the Library.

b) Rally Park

Councillor Waddington reminded the meeting that requests had been received for fencing to be installed around the children's play area in Rally Park when the area was improved. These requests included a 300 signature petition.

The installation of fencing would remove the current problems of dogs using the play area and children being able to run in to the cycle area. However, it no longer was

Council policy to have railings around children's play areas, but because of the particular situation in this Park the Ward Members felt that railings should be erected. It therefore was hoped that the petition would encourage the Council to make an exception to its policy.

The Ward Members suggested that, if any money was left in the ward community grants fund at the end of the financial year, it could be committed towards the provision of railings.

Richard Sutton, from the City Warden Service, confirmed that dogs were a problem in the area and there also had been some aggressive dogs loose on Fosse Road North. It was hoped that a campaign could be run on responsible dog ownership, but in the meantime City Wardens were patrolling the Park to find people who allowed their dogs to foul in the Park. The current lack of signs and fences saying that dogs were excluded could make this difficult to enforce though.

33. WELFARE REFORM CHANGES

Darren Moore, Advice Services Team Manager in Adult Social Care and Safeguarding, explained that the Government was making significant changes to the welfare system, in order to streamline it and save over £20 million. A guide to these changes was available on the Council's website, along with a guide to where advice could be obtained.

Darren Moore then drew particular attention to the following points:-

- The changes being made under these reforms were specifically aimed at working age people, but full details of these changes were not available yet;
- Everyone probably would now have to pay some of their Council Tax bill. For a Band A property, this could be approximately £3 per week, (or £2.75 for a single person);
- Those affected by the changes had been notified, but there were concerns that Housing Benefit would be spent on things other than rent;
- If people receiving benefits had problems paying their rent and Council Tax, it was important that they engaged with their Housing office as soon as possible. To avoid this situation arising, it was recommended that money for rent and Council Tax was ring-fenced;
- A fund would be set up from which discretionary payments could be made to vulnerable people within set categories;
- Approximately 17,000 people currently claimed Disability Living Allowance (DLA), of which approximately 10,000 were of working age. Those currently awarded DLA would be assessed for the new Personal Independence Payments from October 2015 onwards;

- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) had already been introduced. Many people were failing the qualifying test for ESA and there was a large backlog of appeals waiting to be heard. As a result, there could be a long wait for the results of assessments;
- If those receiving ESA did not comply with conditions imposed on the Allowance, open-ended sanctions could be applied, including loss of benefits. However, the sanctions currently were not being applied correctly. Approximately 50 sanctions had been challenged in the last year and the Council had won all of those cases;
- The “Bedroom Tax” could result in some Housing Benefit recipients having to pay quite high additional sums of money. No provision was made within this tax for the shared care of children. It was anticipated that the tax would affect between approximately 3,000 and 6,000 people in the city;
- Many of the people affected by the “Bedroom Tax” did not want to move. For those who did want to move, the Council was approximately 40% short of the number of properties needed to enable everyone to move;
- Under the reforms, all means tested benefits would be paid together in one payment, known as Universal Credit. Contributory benefits and Child Benefit would not be included in Universal Credit;
- There was concern nationally that the IT system being used to administer the new welfare system would not be ready in time;
- Payments would be made monthly under the new system, rather than fortnightly as at present;
- Under the new system, all benefits would go to one person in a couple. This raised concerns for people in abusive relationships;
- The Government wanted everyone to claim their benefits on-line, but other ways of claiming also would have to be available;
- Transitional credit payments would be available, but this would not counter the fact that a lot of claimants were likely to receive a lot less money; and
- Legal aid would be abolished from April 2013, so significantly less advice would be available from national sources. However, the Council was still putting money in to advice services.

34. SQUARE MILE PROJECT

David Hollis, Operations Manager for the Square Mile Project (De Montfort University), reminded the meeting that consultation had been undertaken with residents in 2011. From this it had been determined that there was a need for things

such as more pro-active health services, more ways in which to create a community and more ways in which to develop creative skills.

As a result of the consultation, the following had been initiated under the Square Mile project:-

- Approximately 150 hearing checks had been done in the last 18 months and cardio-vascular screening was being offered;
- Funding had been provided for Threadworks. This was based in the former Thread Works building and taught people how to “make do and mend”;
- Various activities were hosted, such as basketball sessions, dance sessions and IT training;
- There was a wide range of ethnic groups in the area and a lot of people could not speak English, which was contributing to the Ward breaking down in to separate communities. Free English lessons therefore were being offered to people new to the country;
- A lot of work was being done with the City Wardens to clean up the area;
- A deal had been signed with the Workers Education Authority to offer IT training to people on low incomes and benefits;
- European Computer Driving Licence courses had been offered and consideration was being given to extending these in to schools;
- The owners of the Highcross centre had offered the project a shop unit for a week. It was hoped that the community and agencies based in the area could use this unit to showcase their work; and
- When the evenings became lighter, an inflatable cinema would be used on Rally Park. The programme for this was still to be developed, but it was hoped that it could be tied in with the Big Lunch in September.

The project was now looking at the impact it was having. For example:-

- Initially, there had been some criticism about communication. For example, a very vivid newsletter had been produced, but work was now underway with the Western Park Gazette to produce a real community magazine;
- People were now getting to know their neighbours; and
- The new landlord at The Tudor hoped to host a comedy club when the upper floor of the premises was refurbished.

35. POLICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE

PC Andy Goadby gave the following update:-

- There had been a slight increase in some crimes, (for example, assault and theft), but the classifications of some crimes had been changed, which made comparisons with previous statistics difficult;
- There was a force-wide initiative to reduce burglary, which was showing very positive results;
- Anti-social behaviour was being reported in Fosse Road North, especially around the shops. Extensive consultation had been carried out to determine residents' views on whether there were problems and, if so, what these were. This had produced mixed results, with some people considering that there were no issues and some feeling that there were problems when young people gathered at night. The Police were working with the City Warden to seek a solution. In the meantime, residents were asked to report any problems experienced;
- A person had been arrested following night-time anti-social behaviour at the Tesco garage on Fosse Road North. No further problems had been experienced there;
- The Police were hoping to set up regular meetings with the Ward Councillors;
- There was a Police office on the first floor of Fosse Library, but it was not used by members of the public, as it was not visible enough. It therefore was proposed to move the office to next to the reception. A board would be put outside to advertise the office and a system introduced for contacting the Police when no-one was in the office;
- Posters were being designed to say who the local officers were and how to contact them. These would be put up in key locations in the Ward; and
- Residents were reminded to report any issue and/or problems to the Police.

Residents reported that on Fosse Road South (near Fullhurst Community College) the wing mirrors of cars had been broken. The Police undertook to follow this up.

36. CITY WARDEN SERVICE

Caroline Walsh, City Warden, reported that:-

- There had been an increase in reported dog fouling. This was mainly on the Avebury Avenue side of the ward;
- Investigations in to fly-tipping were on-going; and

- A city-wide campaign to stop graffiti was underway. Posters had been put up along Woodgate, as this area had been badly hit by graffiti. Assistance with this had been given by the Square Mile project.

Richard Sutton, City Warden, advised that a lot of work had been done to reduce bird feeding on Rally Park. Large amounts of food were being left, which often was inappropriate for birds, as it was cooked. The food that the birds did not eat attracted vermin and the food that was eaten stopped the birds eating their natural food. In turn, this affected the habitat of the Park. It also was being found that birds sat on nearby roofs waiting for the food, which had led to a significant increase in bird droppings in that vicinity.

Jamie Stubbs, City Warden, reported that funding was now available for approximately 30 alley gates. This included funding from the Police. It was hoped that work on 15 of the gates could start in April. This would link with the work being done to stop bins being left on streets and the promotion of the bulky waste collection service.

37. WARD COMMUNITY BUDGET

a) Previously Approved Grants

The meeting noted that the following grants had been approved under the Council's fast-track procedure:-

- £400 for two grit bins (applicant: Leicester City Council)
One bin would be placed at the Bonchurch Street entrance to Rally Park and one would be placed at the Tudor Road entrance to the Park.
- £475 for equipment for the Empire Indoor Bowls Club (applicant: Empire Indoor Bowls Club)
The meeting noted that the request for funding for refreshments had not been approved.

b) Maya Well-Being Project

Sharda Parmar, the applicant, explained that the Project had been running for over 8 years. It focussed on improving the health and wellbeing of Black and Minority Ethnic elderly women and men. There currently were approximately 27 members.

AGREED:

That a grant of £2,340 to Sharda Parmar for the Maya Well-Being Project be supported.

c) Lame Duck Summer PGL Activity Camp

AGREED:

That a grant of £1,150 to Steven Ashley, Secretary of Leicester Play Fair, towards a Lame Duck Summer PGL Activity Camp be supported.

d) Educational / Cultural Visit to London

A representative of the 13th Leicester Girls Brigade addressed the meeting. She advised that the group was attended by up to 40 girls aged between 4 and 18 from different ethnic and social backgrounds. As many had limited opportunities, it was proposed to make an educational and cultural visit to London. Grant assistance had been requested in order that none of the girls would be excluded.

AGREED:

- 1) That a grant of £500 to the 13th Leicester Girls Brigade towards the cost of an educational / cultural visit to London be supported; and
- 2) That the 13th Leicester Girls Brigade be asked to give a report on the trip referred to under 1) above to the next Fosse Community Meeting.

e) Woodgate Adventure Playgrounds "Art-Attack"

AGREED:

That a grant of £500 to Maxine Hay, Senior Worker at Woodgate Adventure Playground, towards Woodgate Adventure Playgrounds "Art-Attack" be supported.

f) Purchase of Sewing Machines

David Hollis, operations Manager for the Square Mile Project, addressed the meeting. He explained that Threadworks was run by two residents. The group had 10 sewing machines, which could be used free of charge and other skills also were developed, such as knitting and crochet.

The group was very popular and ways were being sought to get more people involved. It therefore was hoped that larger costs could be met now, to enable the group to be sustainable over a long period of time.

In reply to a question, David Hollis confirmed that adequate storage for the sewing machines to be bought with the grant requested was available.

AGREED:

That a grant of £695 to David Hollis, Operations Manager of the Square Mile Project, for the purchase of five sewing machines for use by the Threadworks group be supported.

g) Balance of Ward Community Budget

AGREED:

- 1) That 10% of the 2012/13 Ward Community Budget be carried forward to the 2013/14 financial year;

- 2) That the development a community leaflet for all Fosse ward residents be supported, funding for this to come from the money allocated under resolution 1) above; and
- 3) That any money remaining in the Fosse Ward Community Budget at the end of the financial year be used as a contribution to the cost of providing fencing around the playground area in Rally Park.

38. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair thanked all present for attending and closed the meeting at 7.30 pm.