

Beaumont Leys Community Meeting

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:00 pm, Wednesday, 13 March 2013

Held at: Christ the King Church, Beaumont Leys

Who was there:

Councillor Vi Dempster

Councillor Sundip Meghani

Councillor Paul Westley



INFORMATION SHARING – ‘INFORMATION FAIR’ SESSION

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 Talk to your local councillors or raise general queries	Police Issues Talk to your Local Police about issues or raise general queries.
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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.

34. ELECTION OF CHAIR

AGREED:

that Councillor Westley be elected as Chair for the meeting.

35. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

There were no declarations made.

37. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous Beaumont Leys Community Meeting held on 5th December 2012 be approved as a correct record.

38. HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY AS AFFECTED BY GOVERNMENT BENEFITS CHANGES

Caroline Carpendale and Kanwaljit Basra, Housing Options Service, Leicester City Council, delivered a presentation on changes to the Housing Allocation Policy, and is attached to the minutes for information.

Caroline reported that due to the Welfare Reform Act 2012, changes to the Housing Allocations Policy would come into effect in March 2013, and would affect around 2,500 tenants across the city. Caroline said that the new Housing Allocations Policy would be stricter in terms of allocating the number of bedrooms that would be

covered by Housing Benefit rules to avoid placing people in financial hardship. She said that people would be made aware that if they did take on an extra bedroom, they would have to make up the shortfall in rent. She said people would be looking to downsize their accommodation if they were under-occupying their homes.

Caroline said under the new policy, people would be given a higher priority to move if in under-occupied accommodation, therefore some people's priority banding may have changed. She added letters would be written to all on the housing register to inform them of possible changes to their priority banding.

The Chair asked if the Council had plans to re-classify the number of bedrooms in a property as had happened elsewhere in the country, whereby property had been altered from two-bedroom to one-bedroom properties. Caroline said the issue had been raised, but the Council had no plans to reclassify any properties.

Kanwaljit said there would be a greater demand on two-bedroom house and people would have to wait longer for a property, though it was expected there would be some new Council Housing built during 2013/14.

Residents raised concerns that it would force tenants to vacate their homes as they could not afford to pay the increase in rent, and homelessness would be rise. The Chair responded the Council had been forced to amend the policy due to changes imposed by Government, but the policy would allocate property to residents in the fairest way possible.

Caroline responded to a residents question, the exchanges between properties could still continue. Residents were also informed that fathers access to children would remain the same, but if there were any benefit changes, tenants would be informed.

The Chair thanked officers for the update.

39. POLICING UPDATE

PC Adam Woolman, Leicestershire Constabulary, introduced himself and provided the meeting with the latest crime statistics for Beaumont Leys Ward for the previous three months up to the present date:

- Assaults had increased by 2 to 105
- Burglary dwelling were down by 3 to 8. PC Woolman said burglaries had peaked at the start of the period when the burglars were out of prison.
- Burglary other than dwelling (including sheds) was at 16, up by 5, and five sheds were burgled on one night.
- Theft from motor vehicles had increased two-fold. Police advised people not to leave things on show in their vehicles.
- Theft of a motor vehicle had reduced from 11 to 8
- Drug crime had reduced from 27 to 20, and was mainly people on the street who were found to have drugs on them, though there had been several thousand pounds worth of Class A drugs found in Council properties, from which two people were arrested.

- Motorbikes were not causing many problems and two incidents were recorded. The Police would be undertaking visual and plain clothes patrols. PC Woolman said that anyone causing a problem would be issued with a Section 59 warning, and bikes could be taken from offenders.
- Problems in Halley Close, for example, anti-social behaviour, seemed to be diminishing.
- There had been 1-2 incidents of indecent exposure on the estate, but there was not enough evidence to prosecute.

The Chair thanked PC Woolman for the update.

40. CITY WARDEN UPDATE

Matthew Davinson, city Warden, was present at the meeting, and reported the following:

- There was a decrease in nuisance parking. Cars for sale were stickered by City Wardens.
- Fly tipping of domestic waste was on the increase, and was reported on Anstey Lane and Paterson Close. A letter-drop was carried out in the area informing residents it was an offence to fly-tip.
- The procedure for removing bins on streets was underway on Billson Close, Blackthorne Drive and Balisfire Grove, where the situation would be monitored over the next 4-5 weeks.
- New complaints regarding dog fouling were received from the Housing Office and were on the increase. A hotspot seemed to be on and around Glovers Walk, and would be incorporated into the City Wardens normal patrols and monitored accordingly.
- A Community Clean-Up operation would take place on 14th March 2013 on Beaumont Walk and the Dales. The Chair asked that Ward Councillors informed of future dates of Community Clean-Ups.

The Chair thanked Matthew for the update.

41. PATCH-WALKS UPDATE

The Chair informed the meeting that no community patchwalks had taken place due to the inclement weather. He added he would report back on patchwalks undertaken by the Housing Office in the area.

42. BUDGET

The Chair introduced the budget requests that had been submitted. There was then a short recess whilst the Ward Councillors reached their decision on each application. Successful funding applications were agreed in principle, subject to further funding being allocated in April 2013.

Application 2 – Bennion Pools Nature Area – Replacement Bins

The application was for £1,395 for five replacement bins.

The Members made the decision to ask Parks to fund the replacement bins. They added that if Parks did not have the resources to replace the bins, then funding should be sought from other agencies.

RESOLVED:

that the application NOT be supported.

Application 3 – Somali Advice and Information Services (SOMINFOS) – Monday Advice Sessions

The application was for £950 (joint bid with Spinney Hill and Stoneygate, total bid £2846.00), to provide 26 weeks advice sessions for the Somali community in Leicester.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported for the amount of £950, subject to a third of the advice sessions to be held in Home Farm / locally.

Application 4 – Adel Al-Salloum, The Spark - Shiny

The application was for £150 (joint bid with Braunstone Park & Rowley Fields, Freeman, Eyres Monsell, Charnwood, Spinney Hills – total bid £900), for an interactive performance event for early year's children (6 months – 4 years) and their families.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported and £150 be allocated.

Late Application

Application 5 – Checkpoint Advice & Support – Financial Healthcheck Service

The application was for £1,538.20, to deliver a weekly advice session at the Home Farm Neighbourhood Centre to address the lack of local face-to-face welfare benefits advice.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported and £1,538.20 be allocated.

Applications Deferred

- (i) Mr Ajmal Butt and Mr Shaun Tate – Unity Boxing / Maintain ABA Status / Replacement Equipment

43. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Barleycroft Youth Service reported they had moved into a shop on Home Farm Square, and had received funding from the Joint Action Group (JAG).

44. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.35pm.

Changes to the Housing Allocations Policy

Kanwaljit Basra
Caroline Carpendale

Housing Register Information

- 9499 Households on the Housing Register as at 31/01/2013 (up 6% from previous year)
- 1709 Lettings from the Housing Register in 2012 (down 26% from previous 12 months)
 - LCC 1327
 - RSL 353
 - HC 29

Background to the Changes

- The Welfare Reform Act 2012 has introduced new benefit changes which will affect social tenants (existing and prospective, council & housing association tenants) from 1 April 2013
- Housing Benefit (HB) will no longer be paid to working age social tenants who under-occupy their homes (Bedroom Tax)
- The Department of Communities & Local Government has issued new guidance on social housing allocations following the implementation of the Welfare Reform 2012 & Localism Act 2011

Why Change?

- Many social tenants will be directly affected by the housing benefit changes, living in homes that may not be affordable and at risk losing their homes
- The Council's current Housing Allocations Policy is more generous in the allocation of bedrooms than the bedroom criteria used for housing benefit purposes
- The changes will mean people on the Housing Register will only be allocated the number of bedrooms which would be covered under housing benefit rules
- This will reduce the risk of financial hardship to prospective tenants due to shortfalls in housing benefit

Impact on Under-occupying Tenants

- Tenants of a working age (i.e. under 62 years as at 1 April 2013) in receipt of housing benefit and under-occupying by 1 bedroom will have their housing benefit cut by 14% of their current rent (25% if under-occupying by 2 or more bedrooms)

- Example

Tenant living in a 3 bedroom house and current weekly rent is £75.00 and they only need 2 bedrooms according to HB rules, the HB will be reduced by 14% of the £75.00 rent – a reduction of £10.50 per week (£42.00 per month)

If tenant only needs 1 bedroom HB will be reduced by £18.75 per week (£75.00 per month)

Bedroom Eligibility

- A separate bedroom is allocated to:
 - Each married or cohabiting couple or single parent
 - Any other person aged 16 years or more
 - Each pair of children of either sex under 10 years
 - Each pair of people of the same sex under 16 years
 - Any person who cannot be paired

Expectant Families

- Unborn children will only be considered as part of the household for bedroom eligibility purposes after the baby is born and their birth is registered

Under-occupation

- All social under-occupiers of 4(+) bedrooms, those under-occupying by 2 bedrooms or those under-occupying 2 bedroom accommodation given Band 1 priority
- Social tenants under-occupying 3 bedroom accommodation who require 2 bedrooms will be given Band 2 priority

Armed Forces Personnel

- Persons who have previously served in the armed forces will meet the Leicester City Requirement where the housing register application is made within 5 years of discharge
- Where it is identified they are in housing need they will be given Band 2 priority

Policy We Are Not Changing

- Access, Care, Health & Support
 - Additional bedrooms for:
 - Carers (eligible for HB)
 - Medical equipment
 - Health reasons
 - Behavioural reasons
- Part week overnight access to children

What Happens Next?

- New policy will be implemented in March 2013
- Housing Allocations Policy can be viewed on the Council's website www.leicester.gov.uk/allocations
- Changes will mean some households will see a change in their bedroom and banding entitlement
- Letter will be sent to everyone registered on the Housing Register informing them of the changes

Thank You

Any Questions or Comments?

