

# **Thurncourt Community Meeting**

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**Your Community, Your Voice**

## **Record of Meeting and Actions**

**6:00 pm, Tuesday, 26 March 2013**

**Held at: Ocean Road Community Centre, Thurnby Lodge**

Councillors in Attendance

Councillor Luis Fonseca
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## **INFORMATION SHARING – ‘INFORMATION FAIR’ SESSION**

Information on the following topics was available in the room:-

- City Warden Service
- Police Issues
- Ward Councillors and general enquiries

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**

Councillor Fonseca was elected as Chair for the meeting.

### **35. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Trevor Taylor.

### **36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Fonseca declared an interest in application 9 of agenda item 11, "Ward Community Budget 2012/13", as he was a governor at Willowbrook Primary School.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, this interest was not considered so significant that it was likely to prejudice Councillor Fonseca's judgement of the public interest. He was not, therefore, required to withdraw from the meeting.

### **37. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of Thurncourt Community Meeting held on 28 January 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

### **38. INFORMATION ITEM - UPDATE ON THE RELOCATION OF CURRENT USERS OF THE RAVEN CENTRE**

Steve Goddard, Head of Community Services, gave the following update:-

“As reported at the previous Ward Community Meeting the overwhelming response was that the 55<sup>th</sup> Scout Hut would be leased to the Forgotten Estates Group and the Raven Youth Centre be leased to the As-Salaam Trust. After the completion of the negotiations the Head Terms of the Lease agreements for both buildings have now been signed.

The 55<sup>th</sup> had its Open Day on Saturday and the Council will continue to support the Forgotten Estates Group with advice and guidance as and when required.

The As-Salaam Trust will be leasing the Raven Centre from Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.

The Youth sessions will be unaffected and they will still meet on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday and will move to the community centre. There will be some refurbishment work that has been agreed in consultation with the young people currently attending the youth sessions. This will provide additional facilities for the young people and the community to access including a kitchenette in the annex. The Council will continue to work with the young people to make sure they are involved with the changes to the building.

The Community Book Loan Scheme will be relocated to the Lounge within the Community Centre and will be more easily accessible for local residents to bring and share reading material.

The Bowls Club will continue to use the Raven Centre until the outdoor season begins in May and it is proposed that they will use the Raven from October for the indoor season.

The other two groups currently using the Raven have been relocated within the Community Centre and they will start their new sessions after Easter.

The Council is aware of the feelings of local residents that the Raven Centre would be lost by the local community. The Council has negotiated a clause within the lease agreement with the As-Salaam Trust to ensure that the community can continue to have access to the building and As-Salaam have confirmed that The Raven will continue to be available for hire to the community.

The Council will continue to provide support to the Thurnby Lodge Community Centre and work with the Community Association to develop the facility.”

The following concerns were then raised during debate on this item:-

- Why were the young people moved out of The Raven?
- Information had been circulated locally that the Bowls group would be moved to the Manor. It was understood that this information was given on good authority.

In response, Steve Goddard confirmed that:-

- Agreement had been reached between the Council and the Bowls group about the facilities it would use. The group would continue to use The Raven until 2 May 2013. It would then be outdoors for the bowls season and would return to The Raven in October; and
- Meetings had been held with the three groups that would be relocated from The Raven to discuss this.

In reply, residents stressed the importance of honouring the commitment that the Bowls group would return to The Raven in October.

- The Community Association would be affected by this the most, so why was it not consulted before?
- It was being said that the library would be moved to the 55<sup>th</sup> Scout Hut and it had been stated that a selection of books would be placed in the lounge there. This was not a library and no-one would feel comfortable there. No notice had been taken of the Community Association on this, as a result of which the Council had let down its longest standing tenants.

There would be protests over the proposals for the library, including a petition to the Council, as residents were not prepared to lose their library.

- How was the Council able to justify giving away a facility to a group that was not from the area and which did not integrate?
- Problems were being experienced with parking at The Raven. For example, on 21 March 2013 paths and the bus route had been blocked by parked vehicles and other vehicles were parked on the grass. Photographs of this were available.

Steve Goddard advised the meeting that the Council was aware of these issues. Discussions had been held between the City Mayor and officers and with the Community Association about use of the car park. As a result, Council traffic officers had been asked to look at the parking provision and access to it.

The Community Association would be advised of the outcome of this. In the meantime, work would continue on addressing the situation.

- As As-Salaam was a religious group, it would be holding events at different times of the year, so the Bowls group would have to go elsewhere at those times.
- The Raven was a youth centre and belonged to the community, but the community would not be able to use it.
- Account had not been taken of the views of people who had lived in the area all their lives and had fought over the years to bring facilities in to the area. This included the hard work that had been done to improve youth provision in the area.

- An inventory of the equipment in The Raven was needed, as some of it belonged to the Community Association and needed to be shared with other facilities in the area.

Steve Goddard acknowledged this and advised that:-

- The Council's Youth Services were helping with the removal of equipment. They also would help with moving the Community Association's equipment.
- The bowls mats would be stored in Thurnby Lodge Youth and Community Centre.
- The Council should hold proper discussions and not "rail-road" people in to things.
- As-Salaam wanted to be involved in the community, so should allow the users of The Raven to stay there. A lease had not been signed yet, so why could other arrangements not be made for the time that As-Salaam wanted to use the centre? This would enable the centre to stay in community use.

In response, Steve Goddard confirmed that a lease had been signed and would take effect from 1 April 2013.

- When As-Salaam had used the Ocean Road Community Centre many problems had been experienced, (for example, with cars parking around the Centre, car doors slamming and children running about in the road). This had gone on for a year.

In response, Steve Goddard reminded the meeting that As-Salaam had used the Ocean Road Community Centre for a few weeks, not a year.

During this discussion, concern also was raised that there appeared to be racism in the views being expressed about As-Salaam's use of The Raven, which was detrimental to the debate.

Due to general disorder in the meeting, the Chair declared the debate on this item closed.

### **39. HOW TO PAY RENT AND COUNCIL TAX TO THE COUNCIL**

Mike Watson, Income Collection Manager with the City Council's Housing Services, explained that the Welfare Reform Act would come in to force on 1 April 2013. This was a government initiative over which the Council had no control and would make changes to the way benefits were calculated and paid.

Mike Watson explained that there were various ways in which to pay rent and Council Tax to the Council:-

- Direct Debit.

Rent could be paid on the 1st and 15th of each month.  
Council Tax could be paid on the 1st, 10th, 20th and 28th of each month.  
Direct debits could be cancelled at any time.

- On-line.  
Payments could be made on-line with cards such as Switch, Solo, or Delta. The rent account or Council Tax account numbers were needed to make the payment.  
Computers could be accessed at libraries and housing offices.
- PayPoint.  
Payments could be made in cash at any outlet with a PayPoint sign. These payments could be made whenever wanted at no extra cost to the payee.
- Over the telephone by debit or credit card.
- At any branch of the Post Office in the country.
- By post.  
Payments by post could only be made by cheque.
- By Standing Order.  
The form for this could be obtained from the Council or the Council's website.  
Five days needed to be allowed before the due date of the payment to set up the Standing Order.

People also could open a Credit Union Budget Account (CUBA). These were transactional accounts that credit unions across the East Midlands had come together to create. Benefits would be paid directly in to an account and then rent and Council Tax payments were taken out first. Anyone operating a CUBA had access to all of the services offered by credit unions, such as budgeting advice and low interest loans.

The Council would pay the £10 joining fee for a CUBA and the 75p transaction charge for rent payments.

If a rent payment was missed, a reminder letter would be sent. If applicable, the Council would enter in to an affordable agreement with anyone owing rent and could provide a free "benefits health check". However, if people continued not to pay, the Council would take them to court. As a last resort, a bailiff warrant would be obtained to enforce eviction. Anyone evicted for non-payment of rent would be considered to be intentionally homeless.

Council Tax usually was paid over ten months, but a request could be made to spread the payments over twelve months. If a payment of Council Tax was missed, a reminder letter would be sent, with a further letter being sent if a second payment was missed. After the third missed payment, the Council would take action to recover the money owed, including action through the courts.

The date that the Council received a payment was important. It recommended that payments be made five days before the due date, to avoid any problems arising.

If people could not afford to pay their Council Tax or housing rent, the Council recommended that they consider moving to smaller accommodation. In some cases, it could be cheaper to move in to private accommodation. However, it was recognised that this could be difficult to do.

Some help was available in the form of discretionary payments for both housing rent and Council Tax. These payments could be made in the short-term while alternative accommodation was being sought. However, there were limited funds available for this.

Although the Council did not recommend it, the government was promoting the idea of taking in a lodger to help cover costs, as some of the income from a lodger could be kept before deductions were made from benefits. People considering doing this needed to exercise caution and the Council was producing information and an advice leaflet on this. As an alternative, non-dependents in the household could be asked to increase their contribution to household costs.

In reply to a question from a resident, Mike Watson undertook to find out how much Council Tax owed to the City Council was unpaid.

In reply to further questions, Mike Watson explained that:-

- These reforms only applied to working age adults;
- The regulations contained provision for use of a separate bedroom by the following people:-
  - a severely disabled child, who would disturb the sleep of anyone they shared a room with;
  - foster parents who had had a child placed with them within the last 12 months;
  - an adult serving in the armed forces;

However, households falling in to these categories still could be affected by the “bedroom tax”. For example, if a family had one foster child but three bedrooms, they would be subject to the bedroom tax;

- No allowance was made under the regulations for a spare bedroom for use by a child staying overnight with a parent not living with that child. Changes had been made to the Council’s housing allocations policy to account for this. Under this, people could still apply for a two-bedroom property, but would have to take account of the implications of doing so; and

- Although the Council was generally not building new properties now, some housing associations were. Two bedroom properties were the most sought after, due to the new regulations.

#### 40. HOUSING ISSUES

Chrissie Field, one of Leicester City Council's Area Managers, advised the meeting that the Council was required to consult with tenants about how the Environmental and Communal Improvement Budget was used. All residents were not consulted, as those not living in Council accommodation did not contribute to the fund.

Thurncourt had been allocated an Environmental and Communal Improvement Budget of approximately £45,000 for 2013/14. This was the same as had been awarded in 2012/13.

Schemes from this budget for 2012/13 had been completed, as follows:-

Internal plastering & painting of communal areas	Willowbrook View maisonettes	£5,434.15
Internal plastering & painting of communal areas	St Austell Road flats	£5,980.00
Upgrade of security door	Dudley House	£4,800.00
Fencing, paths and concrete step renewal	Ocean Rd bungalows	£28,709.93
<b><u>Total expenditure 2012/13</u></b>		<b><u>£44,924.08</u></b>

The work at Willowbrook View maisonettes had been slow to start, as issues relating to repairs being made from different budgets had to be resolved. This necessitated visits to the maisonettes by various Council officers.

As a result of consultation with tenants, the following preferences for use of the 2013/14 budget had emerged:-

To continue paths and concrete step renewal at other parts	Ocean Rd bungalows	£10,000 approx
Featherboard fencing and security gate for security to bungalows	Sextant Road	£495



6 x replacement benches	Communal garden at Dudley House	£1,800
Painting of external metal handrails, as current rails splintered and covered in algae	Dudley House	£406
Painting of 3 x external doors	Dudley House	£155
Varnishing of cladding	Dudley House	£4049 (excluding scaffolding costs)
Installation of a 6 piece outdoor multi-gym	Thurncourt Road green space	£28,000
<b><u>Approximate total proposed expenditure 2013/14</u></b>		<b><u>£44,905</u></b>

The meeting noted that outdoor multi-gyms had been popular in other parts of the city. No decision had yet been taken on exactly where the equipment would be located, but anyone interested could see equipment in action at the Open Day at Craven Park on 2 April 2013. (This coincided with the family fun day.)

If savings were made in this budget, additional benches would be provided in the area, although no decisions had been taken on exactly where they would be located. The Council now purchased benches made out of recycled plastic, which were vandal-proof. These cost £300 each. If any groups were interested in having the old benches, this could be discussed.

It was suggested that Willowbrook Park was a suitable location for additional benches, but Chrissie Field explained that permission was needed from the Parks service for this and they had already indicated that there were enough benches in that Park. However, she was willing to raise this with them again.

If funding was approved for environmental and communal improvement work in 2014/15, it was hoped that schemes would be agreed by December 2013, so that work on them could start in April 2014.

A resident asked whether it would be possible to repair the fence around the 55<sup>th</sup> Scout Hut from this budget, as it stood on housing land. Chrissie Field advised that the schemes to be undertaken were those that tenants had voted for this year. On other occasions, fencing in disrepair had been repaired under another budget, but that at the Scout Hut could be considered for inclusion in next year's list of proposals for consideration by the tenants.

Chrissie Field also advised the meeting that a different budget was likely to fund £2,000 worth of bulbs to plant in open spaces in the ward. It was hoped that this could be match-funded from other sources.

#### **41. HIGHWAYS ISSUES**

This item was deferred, as no officers were able to be present.

#### **42. CITY WARDEN UPDATE**

Charlotte Williams-Glover, City Warden, drew attention to the information on the City Warden service in the ward that had been tabled. A copy of this is attached at the end of these minutes for information.

Particular attention was drawn to the following points:-

- It was hoped that monthly litter picks could be held. The first, a joint litter pick with Thurnby Lodge schools, would be held on 10 April 2013;
- The first Fixed Penalty Notice for littering in the ward had been issued for an offence in Thurncourt Road;
- A prosecution for fly tipping was in progress. It was hoped that this would be completed in the next few months;
- One of the vans being monitored for the way it parked on Ocean Road / Thurncourt Road was a Council van. The manager of the driver had been informed and agreement reached on a safer place to park the van;
- All residents were invited to let the City Wardens know if any further parking issues arose; and
- The City Wardens would be having an information stall at Thurnby Lodge Carnival.

A resident advised the City Wardens that she had the agreement of her landlord for her large fence to be used by young people to paint on. She was willing to fundraise to provide the materials for this. The City Wardens undertook to consider this further.

Residents raise concerns that, although dog fouling on the grass verges of Wendy Close and Nursery Road had been reported, the fouling was continuing. The City Wardens advised the meeting that they monitored areas in which dog fouling was reported, but unless they saw the owner of the dog leaving waste, they could not take action. They therefore asked that residents kept reporting all incidents.

#### **43. POLICE ISSUES UPDATE**

This item was deferred, as the Police were absent, dealing with an incident in the ward.

#### **44. WARD COMMUNITY BUDGET 2012/13**

It was noted that approximately £8,305 remained in the Ward Community Budget.

The meeting was reminded that a grant of £1,750 had been approved to the Forgotten Estates Community Association towards establishing LE5 Boxercise, (minute 31, 28 January 2013 referred). As this was half of the grant applied for, it also had been agreed that consideration would be given at this meeting to funding the remainder.

Having considered the application, it was agreed that the remainder of the application should be supported and a further £1,750 awarded to the Forgotten Estates Community Association towards establishing LE5 Boxercise.

Consideration was then given to the remaining applications. It was noted that, as applications for funding totalling £13,372 had been received, (including that from the Forgotten Estates Community Association referred to above), grants would be awarded in the following amounts:-

- Application 1 - 1st Thurnby Lodge Brownies (Assistance with rent) – No grant approved, as the application was for on-going costs
- Application 2 - Tuesday and Friday Evening Bingo Clubs (Running costs and book costs) - £300
- Application 3 - Mr T Taylor (Outing for the Tuesday (Seabroke) Club) - £500
- Application 4 - Rowlatts Hill Allotment Society, Colchester Road site (Provision of a Chemical Toilet) - £760
- Application 5 - Christ Church Parish Church (Family Friendly Seating Area in Church Building) - £450
- Application 6 - Rosemary Goodman and Vinny Cooper (55<sup>th</sup> Community Gardens and Allotment) – no grant approved at this time as a breakdown of costs was required
- Application 7 - Willowbrook Activity Centre (Boyzee Easter Activities for Half Term Break) - £475
- Application 8 - Janice French and Kerry Woods (Easy Learning Music Club) - £300

- Application 9 - Mike Pears, Team Leader Highway Asset Management, Leicester City Council (Installation of bollards outside Willowbrook Primary School at the Roborough Green school entrance) - £2,800
- Application 10 - Nazira Vania, Development Officer, Community Safety Team, Leicester City Council (on behalf of local residents) – Lighting for the Footpath between the bottom of Colthurst Way and Thurncourt Road, crossing over Thurnby Brook - £874.93
- Application 11 - Nazira Vania, Development Officer, Community Safety Team, Leicester City Council (on behalf of local residents) - Willowbrook Park Ball Court Lighting (to resolve anti-social behaviour concerns arising from the loss of the previous lighting, which was stolen approximately 18 months ago) – no grant approved at this time, due to lack of funds, but additional sources of funding to be sought and a further application submitted if needed.

#### **45. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 7.38 pm

# CITY WARDEN SERVICES

THURNYCOURT WARD



These are the main issues that the City Wardens can help with:

- Educating the public and raising awareness of environmental crimes

- Work within schools

Enforcement work on the following issues:

- Littering
- Dog fouling, dogs on leads, dogs exclusion from land
  - Bins on the street (domestic and commercial)
- Free distribution of printed material
  - Fly posting
  - Small scale fly tipping
  - Graffiti
- Vehicles for sale on the road
- Repairing vehicles on the road
- Failure to produce waste transfer documents
  - Street litter control notices



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# CITY WARDEN SERVICES

## PROGRESS SINCE LAST MEETING

- **Community Work:** We are working with Willow brook school council and are doing a litter pick with them on Willow brook park on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April. And hopefully on going work with both willow brook and Thurnby lodge schools working together to do a monthly litter pick.
- **Fixed Penalty Notices Issued:** 1 fixed penalty notice has been issued for littering. We are also currently in the process of prosecution for another fly tip. We have also reported and dealt with some issues of dog fouling on Crosskeys green .
- **Parking issues on ocean road / Thurncourt road,** the van which was mentioned at the last meeting, we have been monitoring and in fact there are 2 vans involved and the van(s) have been parking in a safer place .
- **Promotion & Education Work:** we have been asked to hold an information stall at the next Thurnby carnival which we have accepted. the stall will hold information you may need about our role and environmental services and advice .
- **Service Requests Dealt With:** All service requests have been dealt with on time some of these have been investigated and are still on going.

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