

Knighton Community Meeting

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:30 pm, Monday, 10 March 2014

Held at: Overdale School, East Court Road, Leicester

Who was there:

Councillor Ross Grant

Councillor Inderjit Gugnani

Councillor Dr Lynn Moore

58. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Ross Grant was elected to Chair the meeting.

59. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

61. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2014 were approved as a correct record.

62. PLANNING POLICIES

Ian Jordan, Senior Planner, and James Simmins, Building Conservation Officer from Leicester City Council were both in attendance to provide information in relation to planning policy, conservation areas, and to discuss any significant planning matters raised by those present.

Ian provided an overview of the Planning Policy team and detailed ways in which members of the public can help to influence planning matters. The three areas of policy which were currently in place to help determine planning applications were as follows:

- (i) The Planning Policy Framework
- (ii) The City of Leicester Local Plan
- (iii) The Core Strategy

It was noted that work was being undertaken to combine (ii) and (iii) into one document to simplify matters of strategic planning policy and to cover all planning matters. In terms of present planning priorities, he spoke of the importance in identifying the current levels of housing need in and around Leicester. Ian also explained that the City Council was to launch an options consultation, thereby seeking the public's views on matters of priority.

James gave greater detail behind his role. He stated that there were two conservation areas within the Knighton Ward; the Stoneygate Conservation Area and the Knighton Village Conservation Area. It was the role of he and colleagues to take conservational and historical factors into consideration when determining planning applications. Planning Applications that fell within conservation areas were

required to be advertised within the Leicester Mercury, and signs informing residents of such applications were to be erected for a period of at least 21 days. It was noted that conservation areas were not exempt from development, but it was noted that the Stoneygate Conservation Area was covered by an Article 4 directive, which generally restricted planning development.

A discussion followed which in part encompassed recent planning applications that had been submitted, as well as a discussion around the general role and powers of developers and applications submitted on or behalf of large companies and organisations.

On this particular point, several residents were of the view that the planning system was predominantly developer-led, and that there a greater degree of honesty and clarity in planning processes was required. Ian maintained that the City Council treated all who engaged in planning processes equally and fairly, and did not share the view that the Planning Authority's role was dwarfed to that played by developers.

Several questions were raised in relation to communicating forthcoming planning applications, and how views were established by officers around the consultative sample sizes. James explained that this predominantly depended on the size and location of a particular planning application, but that many factors that could potentially affect residents by planning applications were taken into consideration when notifying those affected. In answer to a specific point, officers agreed that those who lived on the opposite side of a road to a particular application would ordinarily be directly consulted.

Those present were generally of the view that there was a need an enhancement of community and neighbourhood powers in influencing the outcome of planning applications. Many felt that this would be particularly useful when responding to large scale planning matters such those at College Court and the proposal by Tesco on Queens Road. Ian gave detail of the notion of Neighbourhood Plans, which could be formed by groups of at least twenty nominated people. There were presently no Neighbourhood Plans in Leicester. It was noted however, that following the recent planning application process regarding College Court, a Knighton Society had been established, and that it was within the society's aims to formulate a Neighbourhood Plan. Should residents wish to find out more about the newly established Knighton Society, they were asked to contact Knighton@live.co.uk.

A member of the public requested that a map be provided that detailed the locations of those homes in multiple occupation within Knighton. Concern was raised generally in respect of the perceived loss of family houses in the Ward. Officers stated that efforts were made to ensure that streets generally encompassed a mixed community.

A member of the public asked for an overview of the delegated power function. In response, James explained that many planning matters could be determined by Officers under Delegated Powers, and that of these, any that received no objections could be simply granted, or if colleagues within the Conservation and Highways Sections recommended refusal, planning officers could therefore refuse. Should an application receive six or more objections, then it would be subjected to

consideration by the Planning and Development Control Committee. In response to a general point in relation to taking decisions contrary to officer advice, James explained that if a planning application was refused and the applicant won on appeal, the City Council were likely to incur significant costs.

Councillor Moore stated that she was both a resident of Knighton and a Ward Councillor who was a Member of the Planning and Development Control Committee. She expressed sympathy towards those who requested greater clarity around local planning legislation and equally explained that she was aware of the tensions and pressure on the planning department to adhere to national planning guidance, including looking for solutions to the shortage of housing units.

Several residents along with Councillor Grant stated that the Head of Planning had been specifically invited to attend this meeting, and although the officers present had responded to all questions and queries raised, it was felt that the Head of Planning was required to be present to respond to some of the points raised that could not be fully answered. Many were of the view that the Head of Planning should be invited to attend the subsequent Ward Meeting

RESOLVED:

That the Head of Planning be asked to attend the subsequent Community Meeting to provide direct answers to queries raised by residents, and to outline greater detail of existing planning processes and ways in which the public can influence and participate in planning matters.

63. READY TO SWITCH

Hemali Thakar from the Home Energy Office provided information on the Ready to Switch Scheme.

It was reported that scheme was free to join and registration was available online. The scheme had been ultimately designed to help people save the amount of overall money spent towards gas and electricity in the home.

It was estimated that the scheme would help bill payers save up to approximately £200 a year. It was noted that 76% of users had saved in excess of £100 per annum.

In response to a question from Councillor Grant, Hemali stated that some companies did charge a termination fee should residents choose to leave their scheme.

Should residents wish to obtain further information, they were asked to do so by emailing hemali.thakrar@leicester.gov.uk

64. BUS PINCH POINTS

Councillor Grant reported that the Council was interested in asking members of the public to input into a programme of possible future highway improvement schemes to improve services.

Possible solutions cited included adjusting traffic signals, providing intelligent transport solutions, greater parking enforcement, bus lane enforcement, establishing Traffic Order Amendments and Highway infrastructure alterations.

Should residents wish to participate in the work, they were asked to contact Steve Warwick from the City Council Highways Division on 0116 4546044 or e-mail Steve.Warwick@leicester.gov.uk.

65. POLICE UPDATE

PC Lou Whittle, was in attendance and gave the meeting details of crime figures from 1 January 2014 to the present date in the Knighton Ward.

- 30 burglaries from dwellings/sheds/garage, with many of these in the Kingmead Road area though there was no particular pattern. One suspect had been arrested.
- 6 thefts from motor vehicles
- 3 personal thefts, particularly targeting the mobile phones of younger people
- 1 anti-social behaviour

A resident asked how did the figures compared with previous periods. PC Whittle said that while the overall crime figures had increased, there had been a fall in incidences of burglaries and vehicular theft.

Another resident spoke of incidents of motorists persistently driving through red traffic signals and had recently witnessed several incidents of this. PC Whittle said that the police were more likely to catch such offenders via the use of unmarked police vehicles. The police also relied on the use of traffic cameras.

In terms of encouraging residents to avoid becoming victims of house burglaries, PC Whittle advised residents to take logical measures to protect their possessions such as moving valuable items upstairs and not to leave items such as car keys in viable locations downstairs.

66. CITY WARDEN

Caroline Walsh from the City Warden service was in attendance to provide information on the areas of work being dealt with in the Knighton Ward. She provided a table which detailed the work carried out during recent months.

A resident asked what was meant by sign posting. Caroline explained that this was about being able to direct queries to appropriate teams and individuals and cited an example of this is as identifying broken street lights, and quickly ensuring that the appropriate set of Council officers were tasked to respond.

Another resident asked whether City Wardens dealt with cars parked on the pavement. Caroline said that the City Wardens team did currently not enforce such matters but that they could potentially acquire full powers to do so in the future.

A resident asked whether the overgrown hedges between Shanklin Drive and the Racecourse could be looked at. Caroline agreed that she would investigate.

67. BUDGET

The Members Support Officer introduced the Knighton Ward Budget.

Pene explained that the following budget applications were submitted for consideration:-

Application 1

Applicant: Cleansing Services

Amount: £800

Proposal: Two litter bins for the Knighton Ward.

Summary: Following the discussion at the previous meeting, two locations had been identified for the provision of litter bins in the ward. One would be situated close to the rear entrance of Overdale School on Ashclose Avenue and the other would be alongside the bus shelter on Welford Road near to the junction of Highgate Drive.

Both locations were viewed as having a high pedestrian usage and the bins would be helpful in efforts to enhance the City's cleanliness.

RESOLVED:

The proposal was supported, and that £800 be granted from the Ward Community Budget.

Application 2

Applicant: Manpreet Kaur

Amount: £360

Proposal: Indian Dance Fitness for All

RESOLVED:

The proposal was withdrawn

Application 3

Applicant: Stoneygate Shops Retailer Forum

Amount: £2779.50

Proposal: Allandale Road / Francis Street Community Market (Spring)

Summary: It was noted that a Community Market was to be held on Allandale Road and Francis Street on Sunday 25th May between 11am and 4pm. It would consist of stalls on the street from both local traders and external stall holders.

The purpose of the event was to increase footfall, awareness and sales in and around the Stoneygate shops area, as well as provide a seasonal event for the local community to participate in.

Any funding granted would be used to pay for stalls, event management, licences and notices, publicity and entertainment equipment.

The applicant was in attendance at the meeting and outlined the application and detailed a revised proposal, which effectively amounted to an additional £500, given that Stoneygate Ward had not agreed to support the application in part. The applicant was now requesting:

£600 – immediately to reserve the required stalls

£2679.50 – to be made available from the 2014/15 Ward Budget.

RESOLVED:

That the full requested sum be granted, with £600 provided immediately and the balance of £2,679.50 to be paid from the 2014/15 Ward Budget.

Application 4

Applicant: Residents of Carisbrooke Road, Arreton Close and Knighton Church Road.

Amount: £1500

Proposal: South Knighton Flood Defences

Summary: To acquire sandbags & hydrosacs to have in place in preparation for flood conditions.

Following periods of extended rain flooding becomes more likely and heavy rain can cause flooding which puts houses on Carisbrooke Road, Arreton Close & Knighton Church Road at risk.

Sandbags can be used to cover air bricks and openings at risk of water ingress.

RESOLVED:

That the proposal be supported in principle, and that £1,500 be granted from the Ward Community Meeting budget, subject to not being able to successfully obtain funding via alternative sources.

Application 5

Applicant: Joint application with Aylestone (£1714) and Eyres Monsell (£858)

Preschool Learning Alliance

The PLAcE – multi-purpose venue

Amount requested: £1,714

RESOLVED:

That the application be deferred to obtain further information from the applicant.

68. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8:38pm.