

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

7:00 pm, Thursday, 11 September 2008

Held at: Robert Hall Memorial Baptist Church

Who was there:

Councillor Andy Connelly

Councillor Sarah Russell

INFORMATION FAIR

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 the local Police and to bring enquiries and raise and issues.

Table 1 Ward Councillors and General Enquiries

Table 2 Neighbourhood Policing

Local Police Officers were present to discuss matters of local concern.

Table 3 10,000 Trees

Details were provided regarding the Council's plans to plant 10,000 trees in the city and residents had the opportunity to suggest places they would like to see them.

Table 4 Street Cleaning

Details were provided of the street cleaning services that were available.

Table 5 Planning and Licensing Enforcement

Officers were present to discuss issues relating to Planning and Licensing.

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.

FORMAL SESSION

10. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Andy Connelly took the Chair for the meeting.

11. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed all those present and thanked them for their attendance.

12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors were asked to declare any interest they may have in the business on the agenda, and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

Both Councillor Connelly and Russell declared an interest in the Residents Parking Scheme item as they were residents of Harrow Road which was affected by the proposed residents parking scheme.

14. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Councillors on the Committee were asked to confirm the minutes of the last meeting. These were confirmed.

15. WARD PRIORITY UPDATE

Councillor Russell gave the meeting a brief presentation on Ward Priorities.

- Firstly, Councillor Russell reminded the meeting of who was involved in Community Meetings – Councillors (decision makers), Local People, Local Organisations and staff, Partners and Key agencies, People who work in the ward, Council departments and other agencies.

- She then outlined how Community Meetings would work – meetings four times a year; meetings in two parts, information stands and formal session.

- Further, she gave details about the development of a Ward Action Plan. This would be developed by the views of residents. Work would then take place with Council departments and other local agencies to agree what action should take place. The Meeting would then monitor and evaluate progress of the action plan.

- Key themes arising from the first meeting were as follows:-

- Cleaner streets – especially litter and cars
- Parking
- Graffiti
- Planning / Licensing / noise
- Police Patrols – especially in relation to drug prevention
- Upkeep of rented accommodation

The Chair commented that it was not intended to hold the group discussions on the ward priorities at this meeting, but he asked that people put any comments they had on the yellow forms, which were available at the meeting.

16. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

The meeting received a presentation from Malcolm Grange, Head of Street Scene Enforcement about the Environmental Services which were provided in the Westcotes Ward.

He gave details on the following areas of work undertaken in the ward:-

- Waste and Recycling – There was still a weekly collection of waste in Leicester, also free collection of 5 bulky items and the city achieved a 33% recycling rate.
- Street Cleaning – the Council undertook area based street cleaning. As part of this matters such as fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, discarded needles and graffiti were also dealt with. The Westcotes ward had much higher than average incidents of flytipping and higher than average incidents of abandoned vehicles.
- Other Street Scene Matters – these included cleaning of chewing gum in the city centre, graffiti removal from Virgin Media equipment boxes and the bins on streets pilot initiative, where efforts were made to get residents bins removed from the street outside their houses.
- City Wardens - Malcolm informed the meeting that the Westcotes Ward would be having a City Warden working in the ward from October, looking tackle a range of enviro crime issues and improve the local environment.
- Pest Control Services - it was noted that there were lower levels, than average, of call outs to deal with all types of pest problems (rats, mice, cockroaches, fleas) in the Westcotes Ward.
- Dog Control Orders – A range of new powers were being introduced. For example, dogs would be restricted from certain areas such as children’s play areas and fines could be levied against irresponsible owners for not cleaning up mess.
- Noisy Neighbours – information was provided on the services provided by the Noise Control Team, who provided a call-out service until 2.00am seven days a week. This team had been particularly busy in the ward. This was largely due to the playing of loud music in the domestic setting and the number of bars on Braunstone Gate and Narborough Road. One of these bars, Sutra, had caused particular problems.
- Smile Safe Scheme – this was where businesses selling food and drink were inspected and given a rating of their hygiene. He outlined businesses which were good eg, Natwest Staff Restaurant and King Richard III Infant and Nursery School. Some which were bad, eg. Oasis on Narborough Road and Sizzler on Saxon Street.

- Licensing – the Licensing Team was responsible for granting of alcohol and other licenses. New rules had recently been brought in to restrict food vans outside schools to prevent bad eating habits from developing. They also oversaw the ‘Best Bar None’ scheme which promoted good practices amongst the city’s licensees.
- Building Control – Officers had been responsible for checking the safety of building projects, in Westcotes this mainly related to house and retail premises extensions. Officers had also undertaken a great deal of work checking buildings in the aftermath of the earth tremor in February.
- 10,000 Trees Project – Malcolm provided details of this project which intended to plant 10,000 trees in the city over the next three years. Residents were welcomed to put their suggestions forward for locations for the Trees.

The Chair thanked Malcolm for his presentation.

17. COMMUNITY MEETING BUDGET

Gordon Armstrong, Member Support Officer, gave the meeting a brief presentation on the budget available for the Community Meeting to spend in the local area.

There were three types of budget available:-

Ward Priority Fund £6700 in 2008/09 (£10,000 in 2009/10) – to fund projects to support the Ward Action Plan being developed by the meeting.

Community Fund £3300 in 2008/09 (£5000 in 2009/10) – to fund projects to help the community at large or individual groups.

Community Cohesion Fund £2000 in 2008/09 – to fund projects to; support or reinforce community integration; build links involving young people; and build confidence and a sense of belonging.

Gordon also gave a context for the budget, noting that Environmental Services had £23 million to spend, an average of £1m per ward and that the whole Council budget was £261m – almost 1000 times the ward budget.

Gordon offered to answer any questions on budgets at the end of the meeting and said that detailed guidelines were available – Gordon.Armstrong@leicester.gov.uk.

18. LICENSING AND PLANNING PRIORITY DISCUSSION

The Chair welcomed the following Council officers to the meeting.

Mike Richardson – Head of Planning Management and Delivery
 Rachael Hall – Licensing Team Manager

Robin Marston – Environmental Health Officer – Noise Team

The Chair gave those present the opportunity to ask questions relating to the Officers area of knowledge.

Nisa Store, Briton Street – A resident expressed concern that they had seen a notice advertising the fact that the planned Nisa Store had been given an alcohol license. It was felt that there was enough establishments of this kind in the area. Rachel Hall commented that the License hadn't been granted as yet, there would be a hearing in the week following the meeting. There would be a chance for objectors to put their case. Councillor Connelly expressed disappointment that the planning approval for this shop was only approved following the intervention of a Councillor who wasn't from the local area.

Western Road – A resident felt that there was more stringent planning rules in place in the West side of the Ward (Westcotes Drive, Harrow Road) in comparison to the East side (Western Road). Mike Richardson explained that different rules applied to different areas, if there was a conservation area status in place for example. He also noted that each planning application was considered on its own merits.

Fly-posting – A resident noted that this was a problem at traffic lights and on Virgin Media equipment boxes. It was queried whether examples of evidence could be collected and these could be presented to the Licensing Committee when an establishment's license was up for renewal. Rachael Hall explained that there was no such thing as an annual renewal. However people who lived near an establishment or 'responsible authorities' ie the Police could call for a license to be reviewed if they had particular complaints relating to the four licensing objectives. A responsible authority could ask for a review on the basis of fly-posting problems, but this hadn't happened yet. Councillor Connelly further explained that a no-flyer policy had recently been implemented in the city centre and around DeMontfort University and Bede Park. He felt that it would be a good idea to consider including fly-posting in this policy somehow.

Enforcement Action – A resident queried the timescale for the Council taking enforcement action once a notice had been served in relation to a planning matter. Mike Richardson explained that firstly the situation would have to be analysed to see if a breach had taken place, then a letter would be sent to the owner with a recommendation to submit a planning application. If a breach was still found after this, then an enforcement notice would be submitted outlining (reasonable) steps to be taken giving a suitable length of time in which they had to be carried out.

Business permits for residential parking – A resident raised a query with regard to the number of essential business permits that would be allowed under the proposed residents parking scheme. Transport Officer, Chris Middleton explained that this would be based on the parking standards approved by the Council's Cabinet in 2003 on the basis of what was allowed in local planning policy guidance. This equated to approximately 1 permit per 60 square metres of business space.

Noise Control Powers – a resident welcomed new powers that noise control officers now had, but queried whether on the spot fines could be introduced to tackle

to problem further. Robin Marston commented that there was now a noise service until 2am, which stronger powers under the new licensing act. However it was felt impractical for a noise control officer working on his/her own to serve fines in potentially dangerous circumstances.

19. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting would be held on Monday 24 November at the usual time of 7.00pm at the Robert Hall Memorial Baptist Church.

20. RESIDENTS PARKING SCHEME

Councillor Connelly gave an overview - of the current situation with regard to proposals for residents parking in part of the Westcotes Ward.

- Residents had been lobbying the Council since 1999 for some sort of parking restrictions – there were particular problems with commuter and football parking.

- Residents were consulted in 2003, a scheme proposed by the Council costing £48 was rejected.

- Further consultation took place in 2006 on a scheme costing £25. There were a majority in favour in the streets bounded by Hinckley Road, Fosse Road, Western Road and Upperton Road. Local Councillors, businesses, places of worship, Shaftesbury Road school opposed this scheme.

- The then Area Committee funded consultants to do further consultation on the problems with the scheme and possible solutions.

- Councillor Connelly agreed that there were problems with the standard Council scheme. He confirmed that no scheme would be imposed and that residents would determine whether any scheme is implemented.

- He proposed that the current scheme be amended, further consultation take place and it would or wouldn't be implemented on the basis of the views of residents.

A resident enquired whether it would only be residents that got a vote on the new scheme. Councillor Connelly said that this issue could be considered, but any scheme would not be weighted in favour of businesses. He also said that people outside of the area proposed for the scheme would not get a vote.

Gill Hutchinson from MAC Associates gave the meeting details on the consultation that was undertaken.

- Gill outlined the methods that were used for the consultation – it wasn't intended to carry out a full consultation with every resident.

- The overall result of the consultation was that 50% wanted a scheme, 33% didn't want a scheme, 10% were concerned and 7% were very concerned.

- Reasons given for wanting a scheme were; parking problems – these were worst near Narborough Road, a lack of parking when carrying shopping, dealing with children and for meals on wheels. There was a worry that if you went out, you would not be able to park on your return.

- Reasons given for not wanting a scheme were; already pay tax – don't see why should pay more, cost of visitors permits, stealth tax – money making, there wasn't a parking problem, it wouldn't resolve the problem, concern that it wouldn't be enforced, the effect on local shops, cars not from the UK being exempt and the effect on people just outside the area.

- Of the businesses that were consulted 97% were opposed to any scheme. Reasons for this were; concern on the effects on the business, no place to park for customers; £100 for a permit when rates were already paid, it would make it difficult to sell a business, there would be no staff parking, there was no clarity over who would get a permit and businesses would be likely to leave the area.

- Places of worship – these were concerned at the effect on their worship services, where worshippers would park.

- Shaftesbury Road School – teachers had to carry a large amount of papers / books etc, cars to the school therefore public transport would not be an option.

- Gill outlined details of a scheme in London which she felt could be copied. The main feature of which was that residents parking existed only until 11am to prevent commuters from parking and there was a three hour limit to those who did not have a permit.

- Moving the matter forward, it was intended to hold workshops with residents, businesses, Councillors and Officers to develop solutions.

Questions / comments from Residents

A resident commented that he felt that it would be a moneymaking scheme as £2000 would be generated from his own street. Councillor Russell stated that the £25 cost would be to cover the administration for the scheme. The cost of wardens to enforce the scheme was funded by the fine income. She reiterated the point that nothing would be imposed on residents and the way forward was to develop solutions to the problems.

A number of residents complained about the consultation which had taken place, commenting that it was of low quality and there wasn't sufficient time to respond. Others claimed that they hadn't seen any of the details. Councillor Connelly said that the recent consultation wasn't intended to cover everyone. He also noted that he and Councillor Russell had delivered a leaflet to every house in

the affected area giving details of it. He said that the consultation had identified a wide range of problems associated with the proposed scheme.

A resident commented that there were more reasons given in the presentation, which were of a more important nature in opposition to the scheme than those in favour of it. Jill Hutchinson commented that this was what arose from the consultation, there could be further comments arising from any statutory consultation which needed to take place.

A comment was made suggesting that the Council had made the parking problems worse by allowing too many bars to open.

Leicester City Football Club should have provided a park and ride facility, but weren't forced to do so. Councillor Connelly commented that this should have been provided, but two former Liberal Democrat Councillors objected to the proposed site. The football club then went into administration and following this they have not found it possible to identify a suitable site

A comment was made suggesting that £25 a year was a reasonable cost. A resident had experience of living elsewhere where the costs were significantly higher.

A comment was made querying whether it would be possible to guarantee a parking space for those who paid for their permit.

Further comments were made about any proposed further consultation – it should include businesses, the whole of the ward and be available in community languages.

Councillor Connelly stressed again the fact that there would be no scheme imposed on residents by the Council. Any request for residents parking scheme would be put to a vote of all residents in the area.

Councillor Russell commented that efforts had been made to work with residents on this issue. She asked that people put their views on sheets available at the meeting suggesting ways to improve the situation. She asked to be provided if possible with details of the numbers of business permits that would be required. Further she highly recommended that people get involved in the workshops that were planned to develop different ways of introducing the scheme. She also thanked people for taking part in the meeting.

21. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 9.40pm.

