

Castle and Westcotes Community Meeting

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

7:30 pm, Wednesday, 4 March 2009
Held at: Watershed, Upperton Road

Who was there:

Councillor Andy Connelly
Councillor Matt Follett
Councillor Phil Gordon
Councillor Patrick Kitterick
Councillor Sarah Russell

43. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Russell was elected as Chair for the meeting.

44. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Reverend Canon Barry Naylor from St Andrew's Church, Reverend Jenny Few from Robert Hall Baptist Church and Reverend David Cundill from Church of the Martyrs.

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were given.

46. IMPACT OF THE STUDENT COMMUNITY IN THE AREA

The Chair explained that the meeting was to discuss the impact of the student community in the Westcotes Ward and part of the Castle Ward. She invited attendees to input their queries, concerns or comments. These were then responded to by Ward Councillors for Castle and Westcotes, local police, representatives from De Montfort University (DMU), and Council Officers from Environmental Services.

Waste and Street Cleaning

Residents discussed a number of concerns relating to wheelie bins on pavements, litter, fly tipping, end of term house clear outs and vermin. A member of the public also expressed concern that litter was blown into the estate from the Leicester Royal Infirmary and noted that Councillor Kitterick had already complained to the hospital regarding this.

- In response Adrian Russell, Service Director Environmental Services, reported that:
 - since November City Wardens had been employed to handle a number of environmental issues. The Wardens had the power to enforce fines, which included the removal of wheelie bins on the street. He noted that the Council also now had the powers to have rubbish removed from private land.
 - the removal of rats was a free service. The removal of mice (which mostly lived indoors) incurred a charge. He noted that services in place such as city cleansing and city wardens aimed to stop litter being dropped and therefore discourage vermin.
 - if rubbish was left on the street by refuse collectors, he could trace the crew responsible through Biffa.
 - if a person or vehicle responsible for fly tipping was identified this should be reported and action would be taken.
- The City Wardens and DMU had carried out an initiative to inform students of the procedures with waste when leaving a premises.

Student Houses/ Landlords

Concern was expressed that some student landlords did not keep up maintenance on their properties, building waste was left on the street and 'To Let' signs were in front of the properties.

- Adrian Russell noted that if the location of the building waste, left on the pavement was reported to him it could be removed.
- Jit Pandya, DMU Community Liaison Officer, stated that noise complaints could be directed to the noise team at the City Council. If the people responsible were found to be students it would be reported to the university and the students could be fined.
- Members discussed the problems of 'To Let' signs and suggested that these should be removed. Agencies had previously been contacted but seemed reluctant to remove the boards as they were free advertising. Concern was expressed that the boards advertised the contents of the property and could attract burglaries.
- It was stated that any premises with two or more tenants were classed as a multiple occupancy and premises with three storeys or more than five rooms were subject to a licence. There were problems with overcrowding in houses (not exclusive to students), which could be investigated to try and limit the numbers.

Bede Island/ Castle Park

It was noted that there had been reports of people on Bede Island late at night, creating noise and disturbing the residents. Litter on Bede Island was also a big problem.

- The Chair reported that substantial work was being carried out in regard to Bede Island. This included co-ordinated working with the University, Cleansing Team, Police and the Street Pastors.
- A representative from the Street Pastors explained that they walked around the area in the evening at weekends monitoring problems. They worked with the police and noted the time of any noise problems. She reported that in their records people other than students often caused these problems.
- A Member stated that funding had been authorised and additional bins installed in the park.
- It was noted that there were problems with people being attracted to the play area at night. Possible options were being investigated by the Council to help alleviate the problem, however it was felt these might cause other issues.
- Sgt Steve Hutchings, Riverside Team, reported that they were considering implementing a drinking ban on Bede Park. Drinking on the park had encouraged people to stay late and cause anti-social behaviour. In addition small barbeques on the park in the summer had led to larger ones and fires. These could cause potential hazards, especially to children, when left unattended. It was intended that no barbeques would be allowed on the park in future.
- It was noted that not all the foot traffic through Bede Island was from students.

A Member of the Public queried if Castle Park had similar problems.

- In response it was reported that there were people who drank in Castle park, however there had been no complaints about their behaviour. There was a fixed gardener in attendance at the park and the established drinkers often reported other problems to the police.

Anti-Social Behaviour

- PC Gail Warden, designated officer to DMU, reported that she had not had many reports of anti-social behaviour with students.
- Students that were caught involved in anti-social behaviour would receive up to two warnings before being reported to the disciplinary service at the university. CCTV was in surveillance across the university and could be reported to the police if there were any problems.

Halls of Residence

Residents expressed concerns that students from the halls of residence were throwing rubbish from their windows (and on one occasion glass had been thrown), holding parties until the early hours of the morning and that the old car park on Filbert Street was been illegally used and was full of litter.

- PC Gail Warden reported that each of the halls had a designated police officer. If problems of items being thrown from windows were reported then the flats would be identified and the occupants spoken to by the police and DMU. She had not been notified of glass being thrown from the windows and requested that any incidents be reported.
- A Member stated that there were hoardings around the former Filbert Street car park, which were regularly broken for people to access the car park for free. If these hoardings were not in place it should be reported to the City Warden or police who could action this. Sgt Steve Hutchings noted that the police regularly had the owners of the property in Filbert Street reinstall the hoardings. PC Gail Warden agreed to ask for the hoardings to be fixed and noted that weekend visitors to the students halls exacerbates the parking issues. Problems with illegal parking had arisen, as there were no parking facilities for students in the halls of residence. The streets around the halls were subject to a residents parking scheme and students were informed not to bring cars. It was suggested that information could be provided to the students to try and prevent this problem.

Road Humps

A member of the public queried why there were speed humps on Lineker Road, but not on Filbert Street.

- It was explained that the road humps were constructed at the same time that Lineker Road was installed. Road humps were only installed on existing roads if there were regular problems and a ranking system was given to prioritise roads. If speeding was thought to be a problem on Filbert Street it would need to be investigated.

Summary

The Chair stated that a subsequent meeting should involve landlords, especially from halls of residence. This could focusing on housing repairs, action that could be taken and action that had been taken around the country.

Residents acknowledged that by no means all the problems in the area related to students.

It was agreed that an article in respect of the meeting would be included in the Link magazine together with requests for reader responses.

Action	Officer / Councillor	Deadline
Next meeting focus on Halls of Residents and Landlords	Kate Owen, Members Support Officer.	Date of the next Joint Community Meeting.
Article in the Link about the meeting/ request responses.	Kate Owen, Members Support Officer.	Before the next meeting
Follow-up concerns about Hoardings around Filbert Street Car Park	PC Gail Warden	Not determined
Follow-up concerns over bricks left in Street	Adrian Russell	Not determined

47. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 9.10pm