

Fosse Community Meeting

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:00 pm, Thursday 5th July 2012

Held at: Newfoundpool Neighbourhood Centre, Pool Road

Who was there:

Councillor Ted Cassidy MBE

Councillor Susan Waddington

INFORMATION SHARING

Ward Councillors and Officers

Members of the public were given the opportunity to talk to
Councillors and Officers

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.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Waddington was elected as Chair for the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the Square Mile Team and Susan Holmes, a local resident.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the meeting of the Fosse Community Meeting held on 21st March 2012, be agreed as a correct record.

5. POLICE UPDATE

PS Smart was invited to give an update on local policing issues.

He advised the meeting that statistical information showed a reduction in both burglaries and robberies. In respect of robberies he commented that the recent work at Rally had reduced crime numbers significantly. The work undertaken to improve CCTV coverage and increase lighting had proven to be effective.

With regard to detection rates he was pleased to report that of the four wards within the Hinckley Road policing area, the Fosse ward had benefitted from the highest detection rate.

The recent 'Problem Solving Plan' initiative had resulted in the reduction of anti-social behaviour in the Central Road vicinity following an increase of planned activities for young people. The operation of a mosquito alarm at a shop in the area was discussed and it was noted that recent regional government advice had suggested that the use of the alarm may have to cease. It was confirmed that the issue was the subject of a review being undertaken by the Council.

PS Smart confirmed that the police were of the opinion that the mosquito alarms were effective in reducing anti-social behaviour and the meeting supported this view.

It was agreed to invite the relevant officer from the Council to provide an update at a future meeting.

In reply to questions PS Smart agreed to monitor the misuse of play areas at night where youths were congregating and causing problems of noise and disturbance.

In conclusion the Chair referred to PC Andy Goadby who, in recognition of his excellent work, had achieved the award of Highly Commended in the “Beat Bobby of the Year” competition organised by Leicestershire Police. The meeting requested that their congratulations to PC Goadby be recorded.

6. HEALTHWATCH

Barbara Czyznikowska (LINK/Healthwatch) made a presentation to the meeting. She referred to the current changes in Health and Social Care arising from The Health and Social Care Act 2012, which was considered to be the biggest reform of the National Health Service since it began.

She reported on the principle provisions of the Act which included the change of the Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) to Healthwatch. Other changes included the abolishment of Primary Care Trusts, which would become Clinical Commissioning Groups and the formation of Health and Wellbeing Boards.

Barbara elaborated on the Leicester City Commissioning Group and the Health and Wellbeing Board and referred to the liaison work with the City Mayor where social need and aims and objectives were being mapped. She asked community representatives and members of the public to contact Healthwatch with any areas where it was felt that a gap in service currently existed.

At this point in the presentation a feedback questionnaire was circulated to the meeting in respect to of the ‘Healthwatch Leicester – Interim Vision’. Attendees at the meeting were asked to indicate whether they agreed with the Vision Statement and the questionnaire included a section for completion where consultees were asked to comment on any suggested alternative wording. An invitation to the Shadow Board’s engagement event was also circulated. It was noted that the development of a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Leicester had begun and the importance of this consultation exercise in the process was expressed. The recruitment and selection procedure for Board Members was explained and Barbara circulated contact details and encouraged the public to become involved.

At the conclusion of the presentation Barbara circulated an evaluation sheet which asked members of the public and community representatives to indicate what they felt the principle values of Healthwatch should be. As part of the evaluation attendees were also asked to complete their contact details in order that they could be invited to future public meetings.

Barbara was thanked for her presentation.

In reply to a question it was confirmed that the implementation of the changes would take effect from April 2013.

In respect of the new strategy it was confirmed that individual Boards would establish the most suitable model to reflect the needs of their locality and that there would not be a national model which Boards should follow.

7. LIBRARIES UPDATE

Adrian Wills, Head of Libraries, updated the meeting in respect of the situation with Fosse library.

He reported that since recent budgetary decisions, the way that the library would operate would have a dependency on Community Services staff and their deployment. This had led to a proposal to have one shared reception for the library and to serve the Fosse Centre's other functions.

Adrian explained that a scheme had been proposed which would create a new entrance to the building through the existing library. He informed the meeting that the scheme was currently being costed and estimates were being sought from contractors. Following this process a full feasibility study would be submitted to the City Mayor for determination. Should finances be made available it was reported that the scheme would be submitted to the Consultation Group and residents of the ward. This consultative process was considered to be vital given the proposed future joint use of the reception. If funds for the new scheme were not found then the Consultative Group would be involved in developing an alternative method of operation.

With regard to the opening hours it was noted that library's hours could be extended to cover most of the hours that the Centre was open, if the joint reception proposal was approved. This would involve the installation of a self-service machine and the details of the type of machine and its likely usage were explained. The final hours would also be the subject of debate by the Consultative Group.

Adrian was thanked for his update.

The proposed revised layout of the entrance was welcomed by the meeting. It was considered that the revised joint access would be more open and user-friendly than the present arrangement. In reply to a question it was confirmed that disabled access would not be affected.

In respect of the future operation and the issue concerning staffing and opening hours, the use of community volunteers was suggested. It was also noted that many other specific initiatives would be considered by consultees and principally by the Consultative Group, should the proposal be approved.

The range of current books was discussed and Adrian confirmed that a user survey could be carried out to determine the demand for new books. He commented that an injection of finance from the book fund could be sought to fund any new books required.

In reply to a question concerning organised transport for disabled users, it was confirmed that these journeys had been cut from the Council's service. It had been agreed that the journeys would be continued for one year, but following this extension period they would be withdrawn. The meeting discussed the alternative arrangements that could be made including use of voluntary agencies, increased use of the 'Bookbuses' and the delivery of books to homes. It was felt that alternative arrangements would need to be negotiated in the near future so that a sudden loss of service would not be realised by users.

In concluding the item concerning the new entrance and shared reception, the Chair welcomed the initiative and described the decision process. It was noted that the feasibility study and estimate of cost would be determined by the City Mayor in the near future.

Jean Burbridge, Libraries Service, circulated information concerning the 'Story Lab' initiative for children. She also advised on a forthcoming visit to the Wigston Records Office where a tour of exhibits relating to the suffragette movement, titled 'Votes for Women', was being organised. The current work of the crafts group within libraries was also reported on.

8. CITY WARDEN UPDATE

Jethro Swift, City Warden for the Fosse Ward, was in attendance to update the meeting on environmental and street scene enforcement issues.

Before commencing his report, a question was raised from concerned residents who were being charged for the removal of rubbish from land at the rear of their property. They informed the meeting that rubbish had been taken away by the Council but they felt it unfair to divide the cost and charge individual households which were affected. It was the residents' opinion that the Council should be more aware of the source of the fly-tipped rubbish and should not charge residents, particularly where it was obvious to them that residents had not been the responsible party.

Jethro was asked to clarify the position. He referred to the considerable work undertaken in removing rubbish from private land, commonly from the rear of premises and households. He advised the meeting that the responsibility for removing rubbish from private land lay with residents/owners. The Council would only become involved where the rubbish was considered to be causing a hazard and the cost of removal would then be passed on to residents/owners.

In respect of the particular case raised by residents, Jethro confirmed that the rubbish had been removed under this policy, whereby the rubbish was causing a hazardous situation and therefore steps were taken to have it removed. The policy of sharing the cost between residents affected and subsequent billing was explained.

The meeting accepted the Council's position in respect of the policy. It was noted that in most cases this was the fairest way of dealing with the issue. It was however not felt appropriate to charge elderly and/or infirm residents where it was clear they had not caused the fly-tip and could not reasonably be expected to clear the rubbish.

The Chair and Councillor Cassidy offered to meet with the residents concerned as Ward Members with a view to proposing a solution, in liaison with the City Warden. The meeting agreed to this as an appropriate way forward.

The residents were thanked for raising the issue and Jethro was thanked for his informative response concerning the implementation of the Council's policy.

Chris Nutting (Cleansing Services) provided an explanation of the policies which were implemented to deal with fly-tips on the highway and reported on the work undertaken alongside the City Warden Service. He referred to several initiatives where lockable gates had been erected at the rear entrances to private properties to prevent fly-tipping and reminded the meeting that rubbish deposited on private land was dealt with by Environmental Health.

In discussing fly-tipping generally, other problem sites within the ward were discussed. It was considered that the trend seemed to suggest repeat behaviour by perpetrators and Jethro was encouraged to increase surveillance of these areas.

Jethro was invited to provide his regular update on environmental issues.

He reported on the 'Bins on Streets' initiative where a successful operation had been undertaken in four streets within the ward. Although prevention had been the principle aim of the operation, several Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued following Final Warning Notices. It was reported that revised legislation meant that all pre-prepared Notices, advisory stickers and other pre-printed information was now out of date. Revised supplies were being ordered although a delay in the service would be experienced during the replacement period. The meeting noted the position.

In reply to a question concerning dog fouling, Jethro confirmed that the offence had to be witnessed in order for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued. In respect of problems of dog waste at the Rally Park play area it was suggested that fencing around the play area would solve the problem. In response it was reported that play areas were often not fenced-off as some dog owners would use the space irresponsibly to unleash and exercise their dogs in the fenced area.

In conclusion Jethro referred to the consultative meetings concerning Tudor Gardens and thanked all those involved. As a result of the meetings anti-social behaviour problems had been greatly reduced.

Jethro was thanked for his report and update.

9. DERELICT BUILDINGS UPDATE

Sarbjit Singh, Planning Team Leader, provided an update following his report to the previous meeting. He reported on the latest information concerning the following sites:

- Fiveways House – It was noted that the site had been tidied in preparation for the developer to start work. In respect of the on-street parking required for the flats, residents commented on the lack of current provision. Sarbjit reminded the meeting that the Council had refused the application but that approval had been granted following an appeal. The possibility of agreeing to car parking arrangements under a management agreement was discussed but it was noted that the applicant had impressed the appeal inspector with the view that most occupiers of the flats would not be car owners.
- Derelict Church – It was reported that fencing panels had been repaired and replaced to alleviate the problem of untidiness at the site. The sale of the land had recently been agreed and a planning application would be expected from the new owners in due course. It was not clear at this stage as to the likely future use of the building.
- Empire Pub – Sarbjit reported that a further planning application had been received for determination. The application was for a similar scheme to that previously approved involving a range of retail uses within several units, with first floor flats above. The meeting expressed the view that adequate car parking would need to be provided to serve a large scale retail development.
- Repton Street /Rugby Street factories – No progress could be reported as planning applications for the buildings were yet to be submitted. Sarbjit clarified the position concerning the Council's powers and advised that owners could not be contacted concerning their future intentions for the use of the buildings. Owners could only be approached in certain circumstances relating to safety and security issues.
- Planters adjacent to former Premier Screw – A member of the public in attendance gave a detailed history of the planters. He reported that they had been on site for over 20 years and had formed part of the company's original environmental scheme. It was considered that the planters could be cleaned up and repainted which would screen the current derelict site behind.

Chris Nutting (Cleansing Services) reported on future highway cleansing schemes which were currently being considered. He agreed that the site be investigated as part of this evaluation work and the meeting welcomed this approach.

In concluding his report Sarbjit referred to enforcement action which was ongoing concerning the car wash at Frog Island which was operating without permission. An appeal against the Council's Enforcement Notice had been submitted. He also updated the meeting concerning business rates and reported that where a building was not in use, it would be removed from the rating list. Vacant sites were unrated and it was noted that this policy led to a number of demolitions of buildings to ensure that sites were clear and would not be subject to rates.

Sarbjit was thanked for his report and update. It was suggested by the Chair and agreed that written updates to future meetings would be sufficient.

10. BUDGET

James Schadla-Hall, Members Support Officer, presented the Community Meeting budget.

He reported on the following two bids which had received funding through the fast track process:

- Rebuilding of Brick Arbour, Woodgate Residents' Association
- £450
- Woodgate Jubilee Party, Sharon Bromley
- £500

Geoff Forse, representing Woodgate Residents' Association, commented on the Association's application and updated the meeting on the work in progress to rebuild the brick arbour.

In respect of the Woodgate Jubilee Party it was reported that this had been cancelled due to bad weather and had been re-arranged to take place on 9th September 2012.

The meeting noted and supported the payments.

James Schadla-Hall submitted the following application for funding which was for consideration by the meeting:

- Community Fun Day, Cornerstone PCC
- £1000

Trevor Hesselwood, Treasurer of Cornerstone PCC addressed the meeting in support of the application.

It was reported that the event had been supported by the Beaumont Leys Community Meeting where a payment of £500 had been approved and that the Abbey Community Meeting were yet to meet to consider an application, also amounting to £500. It was explained that the application to this meeting was in the sum of £1000 as the event would benefit the Fosse Ward to a greater extent than neighbouring wards.

A full breakdown of the proposed expenditure was included in the application and the contingency measures which would be made in case of bad weather were explained.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported and £1,000 be allocated subject to final approval from the relevant Cabinet Lead.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Housing Budget

Marie Murray, Area Housing Manager, informed the meeting that finance was available for environmental improvements which would benefit Council tenants. It was noted that improvement schemes often benefitted the wider community and she asked the meeting to consider this source of funding for future community schemes.

Bus Users Forum

Geoff Forse reminded the meeting that he had been provisionally nominated to attend the Bus Users Forum representing the Fosse Ward. He reported on the discussions at the Forum's recent meeting and commented that a permanent representative on the Forum was required. He indicated that he was willing to continue his representation if the meeting was so minded to confirm his nomination.

RESOLVED:

that Geoff Forse be nominated to represent this Ward at future meetings of the Bus Users Forum.

12. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.58 pm.