

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

6:00 pm, Monday, 17 September 2012

Held at: Coleman Primary School, Gwendolen Road.

Who was there:

Councillor Aqbany
Councillor Dr Chowdhury
Councillor Dawood

INFORMATION SHARING – ‘INFORMATION FAIR’ SESSION

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 service representatives.

Ward Councillors and General Information	Police Issues
Members of the community could talk to their local Councillors and raise general queries.	PC Bailey was present to answer queries relating to Policing issues in the Ward.
Spinney Hills Park	Multi Access Centres (MACs)
Officers from Parks Services provided information on the improvements to the park.	Information was provided by Highfields Multi Access Centre on the work of the (MACs)
Home Energy Advice Service	City Warden Service
Information was available on schemes operated by the Home Energy Advice Centre	The City Warden was present to discuss current issues within the Ward. .

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.

13. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Dawood was elected as Chair for the meeting.

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Nazira Vania and Priya Thamotheram.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dr Chowdhury declared that he worked on a voluntary basis for various community organisations which regularly used the Multi Access Centres.

16. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillors were asked to agree the Minutes of the previous Spinney Hills Community Meeting.

RESOLVED:

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Spinney Hills Community Meeting held on 18 June 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

17. MULTI ACCESS CENTRES IN SPINNEY HILLS WARD

Aiyub Zamakda circulated information concerning the work of the Highfields Multi Access centre.

It was noted that the service provided a range of services which contributed to the national agenda to reduce worklessness, improve skills and increase local enterprise.

The H-MAC team provided individual assessment and support to clients in order to address particular needs and barriers. The appointment of a Personal Adviser offered structured information, advice and guidance sessions so that clients were better equipped to make informed decisions about training guidance and employment opportunities.

The Highfields MAC contributed to the Multi Agency Agreement through increased employment opportunities for local people which developed higher skills levels and promoted business growth.

The work of the MAC in relation to the National Indicators was also described, which involved a reduction in working age people who were out of work and receiving benefits, and an increase in qualifications gained by the population of Highfields.

In respect of the types of services provided, Aiyub described the key process of engagement with local people, so that they could access services. Promotional events were held which publicised activities and strengthened links with community groups. As an example of this, it was reported that the H-MAC services had been promoted through the jobs fair during the Highfields Festival. H-MAC also helped to promote services at the Educational and Training Fair organised by the Adult Skills and Learning Service.

The range of advice and support skills for skills development, enterprise and work were listed, which included individual employment support with the dedicated adviser through to help with compiling CVs.

Aiyub reported that the service was in much demand in the locality and commented on the large caseload numbers which were being delivered. The range of advice services included welfare benefit, housing, immigration, nationality, debt, education and other general advice. Over 1600 clients had been dealt with and most queries had concerned welfare benefits, immigration or tax benefits.

Links with other initiatives were important and Aiyub referred to the Future Jobs Fund initiative in this respect, which was aimed primarily at unemployed people aged 18-24 years. The coordination of the local Highfields Adult Learning and Business development services (HALABS) was also referred to where a directory of services had been produced.

In conclusion Aiyub commented on the targets of the H-MAC and advised the meeting of the agreed future service developments.

Aiyub was thanked for his presentation.

Bina Patel was invited to address the meeting in respect of the work of the St Matthews Multi Access Centre.

She reported that the MAC was based in the heart of the St Matthews estate at Malabar Road, providing pre-employability information, advice guidance and support for unemployed people. Since September 2010 the centre had engaged with over 2000 people and supported over 700 clients.

With a recent relocation the promotion of the MAC had proven that a need for the services existed, however staff numbers and hours had been cut. Bina reported on the continuing challenges faced by the service and confirmed that despite the challenges the service was growing.

As part of the Adult Skills and Learning Service, Bina referred to the courses which were offered and to the growing uptake of places on those courses.

One of the key parts of the service was the Work Club. As one of the first MACs to offer such a club it had been quickly recognised that this was a popular and effective way for clients to access services. The Club was able to continue through increased funding and was now a successful part of the MAC service in St Matthews and had become a concept which had been rolled out to other MACs across the city.

The growing relationships with partner organisations were referred to and local community projects had been undertaken where client experiences and general feedback had been positive, leading to many clients returning to the MAC for additional support as they felt necessary.

Bina was thanked for her presentation.

The Chair thanked Bina and Aiyub for their presentations and congratulated them on their work. He made particular reference to the growth of the MACs services, having regard to the challenges encountered.

In reply to questions, it was noted that the proposed changes to the benefits system had led to an increase in clients who had expressed concern at the likely implications to them. The increase in NEETS (people Not in Education Employment or Training) was also referred to and concern was expressed in this regard, it being noted that the increase had also led to a greater number of people seeking the services of the MACs.

The Chair closed the item with a request that an update on the work of the MACs be provided at a future Ward Community Meeting.

18. BENEFITS AND ADVICE SERVICE

Advice was provided on the ways in which access to the Benefits service was provided, including the advice line, outreach services and various points of contacts.

The principle problems being experienced concerned the removal of some incapacity benefits. The changes in the system had led to the requirement for applications under employment and support allowances and the migration and transfer of benefits had resulted in a large gap in the thresholds concerning qualification.

The significant increase in the amount of requests for advice concerning this change had caused problems for the Benefits Service, who were the first point of contact for those individuals affected. It was also reported that those persons who did qualify also required significant advice during the transfer period as their cases were under review.

The appeals process was described and it was noted that this was a lengthy and complicated procedure involving medical evidence which required determination at appeal tribunals. A lengthy backlog of cases had arisen due to the specialist nature of the appeals process.

Changes to the disability living allowance had also caused considerable concern where a revised system involving two separate rates of allowance had been proposed dependent on the level of care required.

The introduction of universal benefits was proposed and it was reported that the intention was to ensure that the benefits system ran more smoothly. It was noted

that these universal benefits would be means tested to ensure that they did not allow for individuals to be better off through the benefits system than if they worked. It was considered that the criteria for means testing would detrimentally affect many individuals with genuine needs.

The meeting discussed the expected social problems which would arise from hardship enforced on the community, including a rise in crime and the deterioration of health, including mental health. It was felt that the most vulnerable members of the community would be affected by the proposals.

In conclusion the meeting noted that a significant amount of useful information concerning the changes to the benefits system had been published on-line. Community representatives were advised to refer to this information to find out more about the likely impact and effects of the proposals.

19. POLICE ACTIVITY - UPDATE

PC Bailey presented crime statistics for the Ward.

He commented on a recent warrant executed at an address on Buxton Street which had led to a conviction and a sentence of 18 months imprisonment of an individual. Publicity information concerning the conviction was circulated and the meeting noted the result, which showed that Police were committed to tackling drug dealers in the area.

In respect of anti-social behaviour generally, PC Bailey referred to the work undertaken around the Dunlop factory site, which was being regularly monitored. Some concerns with fly-tipping at the area had continued and work in liaison with the City Wardens had resulted in regular clean ups. The problems had recently been exacerbated by food-stuffs being tipped and the obvious hygiene concerns this had caused to local residents was reported. PC Bailey commented on the importance of regular reporting of such problems to ensure that concerns are effectively dealt with.

The anti-social activities around Vulcan Road were continuing and a Multi-Agency meeting had been convened to agree a coordinated approach to tackling the problems. A request for a Section 30 Dispersal Zone was being considered whereby groups could be moved on from the area concerned. An increased police presence had been implemented to minimise the problems of groups congregating and the need for the Dispersal Zone in this regard was highlighted.

The Chair thanked PC Bailey for his report and advised that the application for the Section 30 Dispersal Zone would be supported by the community.

20. COMMUNITY SAFETY - UPDATE

In Nazira's absence this item was deferred, it being noted however that PC Bailey had covered issues of concern in his Police report.

21. CITY WARDENS - UPDATE

Darren Evans, City Warden for the Ward, reported on his current activities.

He circulated information which provided details of the Olympic Clean Up initiative, together with clean-up operations in Cecil Road, Earl Howe Street and Holland Road.

The Sure Start Fun Day and the Spinney Hills Fun Day had been attended by the Wardens Service and it was noted that the discussions and liaison with families at those events had been extremely worthwhile.

Darren reported on the success of the painting project in Taylor Road as part of a Community Payback scheme. The improvements to the area had been recognised by the Leicester Mercury who ran a news story on the project.

The ongoing regular work and patrols included fly-tips, Section 93 Notices, dog fouling, cars for sale, and bins on streets. Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued and Darren updated the meeting on his work arising from these patrols.

In conclusion Darren circulated the Ward Action Plan from August 2012 to Jan 2013 for information.

The Chair thanked Darren for his report and congratulated him on the amount of work achieved.

22. WARD COMMUNITY BUDGET

Anita Patel, Member Support Officer, presented the Community Meeting Budget and submitted the following applications for consideration:

Application 1: Education Research Project for Somali Youths in Leicester and Surrounding Area

Amount requested: £500

RESOLVED:

that the application be not supported at this time pending further information to be submitted by the applicant.

Application 2: Somali Advice and Information Service

Amount requested: £662.50

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in the sum of £400 to cover the venue and equipment hire costs.

**Application 3:
Positive Vibrations (UK)**

Amount requested: £500

RESOLVED:
that the application be not supported.

**Application 4:
North Neighbourhood Sure Start Children's Centres**

Amount requested £2,888

This request was withdrawn by the applicant.

**Application 5:
African Caribbean Centre**

Amount requested: £500

This request had been approved by Ward Councillors under the fast-track procedures.

23. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business

24. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8:10 pm.

