

Your Community, Your Voice

Record of Meeting and Actions

Monday 11 March 2013

6:00 pm

Held at:

Wesley Hall Community Centre, 76 Hartington Road, Leicester

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.

<p>Ward Councillors and General Information</p> <p>Members of the community raised issues with Council Officers and their Ward Councillors</p>	<p>City Warden and Community Safety</p> <p>The City Warden and Community Safety Officer provided details of their activities</p>
<p>Champion Boxing Club</p> <p>The Champion Boxing Club provided information and displayed details of their activities</p>	<p>Welfare Reform</p> <p>Information was provided on changes to the Welfare and Benefits system</p>

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.

35. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Dawood was elected as Chair for the meeting.

36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this time.

38. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the previous Spinney Hills Ward Community meeting held on 3 December 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

39. WELFARE REFORM CHANGES

Reiza Khan, Welfare Rights, gave a presentation on the proposed changes to the benefits system which were to be implemented from April 2013.

During the presentation Reiza made particular reference to the following key points:

- Council Tax Benefit would be replaced by Council Tax Support from April 2013 and local authorities would receive 10% less government grant for the scheme leading to recipients paying more towards Council Tax. It was estimated that this could impact upon 40,000 people in the City.
- There would be a Benefit cap of £500 per week for families and lone parents (£350 for singles) which would particularly affect families with 4 or more children.
- Housing Benefit paid to people of working age would be changed to reduce the level of eligible rent by 14% for 1 extra bedroom that was unoccupied and by 25% if two or more bedrooms were unoccupied. The level of benefit would then be calculated on the lower amount of eligible rent.
- The Disability Living Allowance would be abolished in April 2013 and replaced with a new scheme that would cut out the lowest level of allowances. Current recipients would be gradually re-assessed from the old system to the new points based system.

- A new system of Universal Credits would come into operation from April 2013. Universal Credits were designed to simplify the current large number of means tested benefits into one payment. New claimants and existing claimants with changed circumstances would transfer to Universal Credits in October 2013. Existing claimants, who could benefit from Universal Credits, would be transferred from April 2014 and remaining claimants would be transferred from the end of 2015 to the end of 2017.
- Some of the existing premiums, including disability and carers allowances were to be abolished. It was envisaged that claimants would not be worse off at the point of change over; but there would be a gradual reduction in the level of benefits over a period of years.
- The qualification criteria affecting Pension Credits were also changing. In future, Pension Credits would only be available when the youngest person in the partnership reached pensionable age.
- Future Payments would be made monthly and be paid direct to the claimant and only one claimant per partnership. It would then be the claimant's responsibility to pay their rent and Council Tax.

Reiza referred to the appeals process and to the high levels of appeals which had already been received. It was reported that Incapacity Benefit appeals had caused significant pressures as medical evidence was required to process each case. It was also reported that the process being undertaken to assess whether people were fit for work had received a large amount of criticism.

In reply to questions Reiza confirmed that details of the proposed changes had been issued to all people that were likely to be affected with their council tax bills.

The need to ensure that information was disseminated effectively was raised and it was noted that many people in the Ward who would be affected did not use English as their first language. The links to the offices of the Department of Work and Pensions were reported.

In conclusion and having regard to the concerns reported above, Councillors and members of the community asked that as well as regular meetings with the Department for Work and Pensions, separate contact be made with them by officers of the Council to ensure that relevant information and support is provided to residents of the Ward.

In closing the report it was noted that further help and assistance could be obtained by contacting the Welfare Rights Helpline - 0116 2568211 or the Revenues and Benefits Service - 0116 2527006. The Community Legal Advice Service also provided advice.

Reiza was thanked for his attendance and report.

40. TRANSPORT STRATEGY UPDATE

Robert Bateman, Team Leader, Highways & Traffic Design, updated the meeting with transport issues concerning the Ward.

He referred to the proposed works to open up Vulcan Road following consultation with residents and commented on the delay in commencing the physical works which had been due to the necessary legal process.

It was suggested by the Chair that, in view of the delay with the physical works, residents be informed that the scheme had been approved and advised of the likely commencement date.

Robert reported that double yellow line parking restrictions at various junctions were to be extended to prevent problems currently being experienced by refuse collection vehicles. These junctions included those within the streets recently made into one-way streets as part of highway improvement works in the Ward.

Members of the community thanked Councillors and Officers for the successful introduction of the one-way scheme and requested that the Mere Road area also be considered for a similar highway improvement scheme, possibly by the introduction of parking restrictions.

In respect of the recent road gritting operations, the primary and secondary gritting routes were described in response to concerns raised. It was suggested that the roads around Hartington Road be considered for inclusion on the list of approved secondary routes, it was also noted that grit bins were located in that area for residents' use.

In reply to a question the differences between the extension of existing parking restrictions, the introduction of restrictions as part of a wider scheme, and the introduction of new restrictions were explained.

It was clarified that the Traffic Regulation Orders required for new restrictions were often held in lengthy priority lists and this explanation was reported as the probable reason for the delay affecting the suggested introduction of restrictions in the Apollo and Atlas Road area.

The requirement to ensure effective enforcement was highlighted and problem areas where greater enforcement action was required were raised by residents. These problem areas included locations where cars were parked adjacent to traffic calming measures and road humps which led to an unreasonable restriction of the carriageway.

In conclusion the Chair reported that a 'patchwalk' site visit was to be convened where Ward Councillors and community representatives would meet to walk around the Ward with officers to identify traffic and transport problem areas.

The transport update was noted and Robert was thanked for his attendance.

41. POLICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE

It was reported that due to an operation in the Ward the Police representatives were unable to attend the meeting. The apology was noted.

Nazira Vania, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator, Community Safety Team, referred to her ongoing crime prevention work in the Ward undertaken in liaison with the Police.

She commented on the consultation exercise undertaken prior to the removal of hedges around Spinney Hill Park and reported that instances of anti-social behaviour had reduced as a result of the hedge removal works. In reply to questions Nazira referred to the overwhelming support of residents to have the hedges removed following the consultation and commented that she understood that some of those residents consulted had wanted the hedges to remain.

In conclusion Nazira reported on the youth intervention work which was looking at the needs of young people and advised of activities being run. She reported further on the possible formation of the Highfields Late Lounge which was a proposal for a youth engagement project to provide activities targeted at preventing anti-social behaviour.

In the absence of the Police it was reported and noted that the crime statistics for the Ward were available online on the Police website.

Nazira was thanked for her attendance and report.

42. CITY WARDEN SERVICE

Darren Evans, City Warden for the Ward, informed the meeting of his enforcement and educational activities and reported on the numbers of fixed penalty notices issued.

He commented in particular on the work being undertaken to reduce fly tips, dog fouling and cars for sale on the street. In respect of the St Matthews area he advised that a litter-pick and clean-up had been undertaken in liaison with Housing Officers and residents.

In conclusion Darren informed the meeting of a reward which had been offered for information relating to recurrences of graffiti and he displayed a poster showing the graffiti 'tags' concerned.

In response to comments and questions it was suggested that a greater number of litter bins could be provided in some areas. It was considered that careful consideration of the location and design of bins would help to prevent littering. It was also proposed that the litter-pick and clean-up activities could be extended to other areas of the Ward including Spinney Hill Park.

Darren was thanked for his attendance and report.

43. WARD COMMUNITY BUDGET

A) CHAMPION BOXING CLUB

The Chair introduced representatives of the Champion Boxing Club who had displayed information, including awards and certificates, at the Information Fair prior to the formal part of the meeting.

Mr Muzza Ali was invited to address the meeting. He informed the meeting of the Club's activities since its formation in 2010 and referred to the work undertaken with youngsters to improve their fitness through non-contact boxing. Muzza commented that the Club also educated youngsters on the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse and on the benefits of healthy living and diet.

Members of the community were encouraged to visit the club and details of the training programmes for both boys and girls were made available.

Muzza was thanked for his attendance and for addressing the meeting.

B) WARD COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Member Support Officer provided an update on the latest position with regard to the Ward Community Budget.

The following applications for Ward Community Grant funding had been received:

Application 1 (3010)

Applicant MBCOL

Amount £ 500

Proposal IT Equipment Support

Summary Replacement computer for designing and producing educational publications and day to day office use

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in the sum of £ 500

Application 2 (3012)

Applicant Highfields Community Association

Amount £ 2000 (£ 6000 between 3 Wards)

Proposal Highfields Festival 2013

Summary Highfields Festival and activities for the community to be held on 29 June 2013

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in the sum of £ 1000

Application 3 (3014)

Applicant iReach

Amount £ 420

Proposal iReach Charity Fete

Summary An event to raise money for the Ethar Relief charity who deliver aid to East Sudan

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in the sum of £ 420

Application 4 (3015)

Applicant Champion Boxing Club

Amount £ 500

Proposal Boxing Award Booklets

Summary Booklets containing information covering healthy living, exercise, drug and alcohol awareness and boxing learning programmes

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in the sum of £ 500

Application 5 (3016)

Applicant Matwad Volleyball Club

Amount £ 500

Proposal Club equipment and tournament

Summary New club kits and sundry equipment, together with the organisation of a tournament for clubs from across the midlands.

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in the sum of £ 500

Application 6 (3017)

Applicant Somali Advice and Information Services (SOMINFOS)
Amount £ 948.66 (£ 2846 between 3 wards)
Proposal Monday Advice Sessions
Summary Weekly sessions over 26 weeks to advise the Somali community on issues such as housing, education, training and employment

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in the sum of £ 500

Application 7 (3018)

Applicant St Peters and Stoughton Street Tenants and Residents Assn.
Amount £ 1000
Proposal Photocopier
Summary Photocopier required by the Tenants and Residents Assn. to enable work to be carried within the premises

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in the sum of £ 1000

Application 8 (3019)

Applicant Somali Community Parents Assn. (SOCOPA)
Amount £ 1980
Proposal Space 4 Youth
Summary Sporting events, leisure activities and study support events for young people aged 7-16 years

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in the sum of £ 750

Application 9 (3020)

Applicant The Spark, Arts for Children

Amount £ 150 (£ 900 between 6 wards)

Proposal 'Shiny' Performance Event

Summary An interactive performance event for early years children (6 months – 4 years) and their families

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in the sum of £ 150

Application 10 (3021)

Applicant Residents of Hart Road, Vulcan Road and Keythorpe Street

Amount £ 795

Proposal Alley Gates Project

Summary New gates to secure alleyways to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and repairs to existing gates in Keythorpe Street

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in the sum of £ 795

Application 11 (3022)

Applicant Khidmah Organisation

Amount £ 2500

Proposal Khidmah Sports and Comm-Unity Event

Summary Community based leisure, sports and social activity including community information stalls to build partnerships

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in the sum of £ 1000

Application 12 (3023)

Applicant Community Football Academy

Amount £ 450

Proposal CFA Open Day and Presentation

Summary Open evening and awards ceremony for children aged 5 – 13 and their families to promote the Academy

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in the sum of £ 225

Application 13 (3024)

Applicant Sahara Centre

Amount £ 307.50 (£ 1730 between 5 wards)

Proposal Health awareness day

Summary Health awareness day celebrating International Women's Day to be held in March at AK Fitness women's only gym

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in the sum of £ 307.50

Applicant 14 (3025)

Applicant SAMATUS International Development Organisation

Amount £ 1577 (£ 3154 between 2 wards)

Proposal Saturday Youth Event

Summary Week-end events for young people to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour

RESOLVED:

that the application be deferred pending further consultation with the Council's Youth Services and the Community Safety Team

Application 15 (3026)

Applicant Global Hands Leicester City Council

Amount £ 700 (£ 2100)

Proposal Global Hands CommUNITY Day

Summary Community day organised by a multi faith youth group to enable people from different cultures to discover their commonalities

RESOLVED:

that the application be supported in the sum of £ 500

Application 16 (3027)

Applicant Residents of Sabarmati and Azad House

Amount £ 500

Proposal Coach Trip

Summary Coach trip (coach hire and refreshment costs) to encourage interaction and discussions around different beliefs and cultures

RESOLVED:

that in view of the date of the proposed event, the application be approved in principle, with a view to it being approved under the fast-track procedures in the ensuing 2013/14 financial year

Application 17 (3028)

Applicant HASDO – Horn of Africa Services and Development Org.

Amount £ 294.82 (£1179.30 between 4 wards)

Proposal Educational Awareness Evening for the Somali Community

Summary A seminar to promote educational awareness in the community to allow youngsters to realise the choices available to them

RESOLVED:

that the application be deferred pending further consultation with the Council's Education Department

Application 18 (3029)

Applicant St Matthews Tenants Assn.
Amount £ 500
Proposal Fruit Trees for Front Gardens and Public Places
Summary Planting of around 100 fruit trees to enhance the appearance of the estate

RESOLVED:
that the application be supported in the sum of £ 500

Application 19 (3030)

Applicant Mehmaan Lunch Club
Amount £ 1500
Proposal Lunch Club
Summary Setting up of a weekly lunch club for elderly residents of the community to be held at the Memon Centre

RESOLVED:
that the application be supported in the sum of £ 1000

Application 20 (3031)

Applicant Gandal Media
Amount £ 1380
Proposal Drug and Alcohol Awareness
Summary Three one-day awareness sessions for Somali families to prevent problems caused by drug and alcohol misuse

RESOLVED:
that the application be deferred

Application 21 (3032)

Applicant Community Safety Team

Amount £ 2000

Proposal Highfields Late Lounge

Summary The late lounge is a youth engagement project that provides activities targeted at preventing anti-social behaviour

RESOLVED:
that the application be deferred

Application 23 (3034)

Applicant She-Phe-Lah Pringle-Bridges

Amount £ 500

Proposal Leicester's Got Raw Talent

Summary An event which aims to give young people a chance to perform and show their talents on stage

RESOLVED:
that the application be deferred

44. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business.

45. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm.

