

HUMBERSTONE, HAMILTON & THURNCOURT AREA COMMITTEE

10 APRIL 2006

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT THE MEETING ON 30 JANUARY 2006

At the last meeting of the Area Committee the following questions were raised. These were passed onto the relevant officers after the meeting and the responses are below. The right hand column shows who answered the question.

Question 28:

Why is so much money being spent on re-paving Netherhall Road when Keyham Lane pavement (Tesco end of Keyham Lane) is so uneven and dangerous, especially for wheelchairs ?

Comments made at the Meeting

Councillor Mugglestone agreed to visit the site to assess the condition of the pavement referred to.

Response by Officers

Keyham Lane has a tarmac footway with a section from Chestnut Avenue past Fern Rise that has been slurry sealed, a process that was specifically designed to make the footway safer for the elderly or wheelchair users because of the adverse camber on the footway. The remainder of the footway looks a bit unsightly because of utility trenches and patches that have been done over the years. There is a slight camber in parts that could make it more difficult for wheelchair users but relaying the footway would not change this. The footway is basically sound, if not pretty, and there were no defects that needed repair when we checked it recently.

Keyham Lane is inspected regularly. If any defects are found we'll repair them.

The City Council operates a priority system for repairs to main footways because the City Council does not have enough money to do everything. The priority is based not only on condition but also on usage. Netherhall Road footway was in a poor condition and had a higher footfall than Keyham Lane because of the pedestrians using the shopping area, school, community facilities. It's also on a bus route. These are the reasons why it was resurfaced rather than Keyham Lane.

Alan Adcock,
Head of Highway
Management,
Regeneration and
Culture Department.

Question 29:

Leisure provision for local communities in West Hamilton
-I have lived there for the past 13 years and nothing gets done for adults/children ?

Comments made at the Meeting

Councillor Mugglestone stated that, until now, little provision for adults and children had been provided for West Hamilton, with various facilities planned having never been built. New Library now open and there were plans for changing rooms on the football pitch and a children's adventure playground. Later in 2006 a multi-sports pitch was being provided on the top car park.

Response by Officers

Changing Facilities – Hamilton Park

In the early 1990's two football pitches were provided on Hamilton Park (in the early 1990's) but have not been used by local teams for club matches because they have no changing facilities.

We submitted a bid in March 2005 to the Council's Capital programme 2005/06 – 2007/08 for changing facilities on Hamilton Park and this was approved by the Council, provided that the money would be available in 2007/08 and would be matched by a contribution from the Football Foundation.

We are putting together the programme for developing changing facilities on Hamilton Park. This will include how we will consult with the public securing the matched funding, the design and location of the changing rooms and contracting the building work.

Play Area

We have also got approval for a new neighbourhood play area in Hamilton. Once again, the money will be available in 2007/08 and we will put together the plan for consideration, location, design and build programme in the early Spring of 2007.

Multi-Purpose Ball Court Facility (by Hamilton Park)

We are going to use the money from the Trustees of Hamilton for a multi-purpose ball court facility on an existing car park adjacent to Hamilton Park. We have been granted planning permission and we have already ordered the equipment.

Construction is due to start at the end of March 2006 with an expected opening in April/May 2006.

Hamilton Community College

Money from housing development has helped towards the

Fabian D'Costa, Urban Design, Regeneration and Culture Dept.

construction of a new sports hall next to Hamilton Community College. This modern facility caters for a variety of sports and activities for children and adults and is open to the general public after school hours.

Hamilton Library/Community Hall

The Library/Community hall opened recently and is well used by local residents. The library offers a variety of services in addition to book lending, and the community hall is well used by local people as part of Adult Learning Services.

The City Council is examining ways of expanding the range of services provided in the Community Hall.

Question 30:

With all the Budget cut backs in the air, how are we (the City Council) to improve our services to combat the Government's agenda on Health and Obesity for children ?

Comments at the Meeting

A member of the public stated that, through his involvement with 'Healthy Schools in Leicester' he was aware that all schools were being encouraged to be healthy schools. Children were being encouraged to partake in more healthy activities. Parents should be encouraging their children to take advantage of the opportunities now available at all schools to help reduce obesity.

Response by Officers

The National Healthy School Programme (NHSP) is now actively working with over 90 schools in the City to support them in all aspects of health including healthy eating. The programme is included in the Children and Young People's Plan and LAA at a strategic level and is supported in the Primary Care Trust at Director of Public Health level and by the Head of Standards and Effectiveness in Education.

All schools have access to the government document 'Food in School Toolkit' and training is provided through the programme by the Leicestershire Nutrition and Dietetic Service and City Catering. Individual support by the community dietician is also available to schools involved in the programme.

Specific criteria are specified in the programme which schools have to show that they have effective practice and procedures in place to encourage healthy eating in school as part of a whole school approach.

The government have also made a grant available to local authorities for transforming school food and drink over a three year period. £180,000 has been allocated to this City. A large

John Whitby,
National Healthy
School Co-ordinator,
Education and Lifelong
Learning Department

proportion of this funding has been used by City Catering to improve the quality of ingredients. Part of this has been to provide a free portion of vegetables to all students in secondary schools who have a main meal. The remainder has been allocated to schools depending on the number of pupils on role. Although not ring fenced this money is for schools to identify how this should be used. Guidance has been issued on this.

The NHSP has been working with the Leicester Tigers and Children's Fund to support Primary Schools with a programme based on physical activity and healthy eating. Although very successful it has been restricted to targeted schools due to funding constraints.

The new nutritional standards for school meals are due to come into force in September 2006. The TEN Policy Briefing, 'Transforming School Food' published on 20 October 2005 sets out the Government's thoughts on this area.

The NHSP also works with the School Sports Co-ordinator Programme and the Exercise Alliance to promote more active lifestyles in schools and the community.

There is much going on in the following areas:

- A co-ordinated approach through Children's Service to encourage healthier eating and physical activity
- Health promotion in its widest sense to encourage healthier lifestyles
- Support for City Catering's efforts to improve the quality of school meals
- Support for programmes which encourage healthier eating and being physically active such as the Leicester Tigers programme (with sustained funding)
- Ensure that healthy eating is actively promoted at all City Council catering outlets, e.g leisure centres, council offices, vending machines etc
- A designated person to co-ordinate this area of work especially linking to public health and education e.g more funding for the dietetics service to schools
- Publicity and support to all members of the community about this issue e.g. cook and eat programmes
- Funding for resources in schools to promote physical activity and healthier eating
- Encouragement of food technology in primary and secondary schools

Also, the Government has a target of two hours high quality PE and sport and four hours of sport per week in and out of school for all 5-16 years olds by 2010.

Question 31:

Have we got Ward Councillors support to keeping the libraries at Humberstone and Netherhall open ?

(The Area Committee also sought clarification as to why the usage figures reported for Humberstone and Netherhall libraries were so low, even before the new Hamilton library opened.)

Comments at the Meeting

Councillor Scuplak reported that the City council were currently spending some £50k per year on keeping the two facilities open, whilst the cost per borrowing amounted to approx £60, with borrowings down to below 40 per month at each of the two libraries during December 2005. The new facility at Hamilton offered a much wider range of facilities with a steady increase of borrowings since opening. Regarding Thurnby Lodge Library, it was stated that the building was unsafe and that this facility would be re-located.

Response by Officers

Humberstone and Netherhall are two of a number of city libraries which have had very low use for a number of years. This was identified in the Review of libraries carried out for the Best Value review in 2000/2001.

Following the Best Value Review an improvement plan was put into place which put more staffing resources into smaller libraries and allocated community librarians to do outreach in the community and to promote the service as widely as possible in order to increase use. More books were also put into smaller libraries so that they would have newly published books and best sellers. They were also opened additional hours on Saturday afternoons in an attempt to encourage family use. Across the city, use of libraries has increased as a result of the implementation of the Best Value Improvement Plan and overall performance is now good. However the use of Humberstone and Netherhall has remained at a low level. Use of Netherhall increased for a short period after being relocated into a shop front library but then fell back again.

When a library does not respond to the increased time and resources put into it, there are few, if any options left apart from providing services from a different building in a better location. National research shows that people often want libraries to be kept open because they are a 'good thing' even when they themselves do not use them and when in practice only a very small percentage of the local population use the service. Local experience supports the national research. (Leicester is recognised as a city of high disadvantage with many hard to reach groups – 24% of city residents are active members of

Patricia Flynn, Head of
Library Services,
Leicester City Council.

libraries compared to only 5% of the estimated population of Humberstone.) Demographic change, building condition and location have a major influence on library use. Over time libraries that were once in a good location relative to the local community find that demographic and lifestyle changes, and the poor condition of a building can see library use decline. An extensive local non-user survey in Leicester found that many people did not actually want to use small old and unattractive buildings especially when they were not in a good and prominent location e.g. near shops, post-offices, doctors surgeries etc.

Nationally and locally there is very strong evidence that any new building in a good location will achieve very high levels of use which have been unattainable with the old building. This can be seen by the high levels of use of Hamilton and Braunstone new libraries.

Question 32:

How long will it take for improvements to be made to the junction of the A46/A47 Link Road and Scraftoft Lane ?

Comment at the Meeting

Councillor Allen stated that he and Councillor Mrs. Maw were meeting with officers on 31 January 2006 to discuss action to be taken. A member of the public requested that officers be also asked to look at the potential hazard of northbound traffic using this road and making a right turn at the roundabout near Tesco at Hamilton, and suddenly meeting stationary traffic waiting at the pedestrian crossing a short distance from the roundabout.

Response by Officers

Between 1st January 2002 and 31st December 2004 there were 15 accidents at the Hungarton Boulevard/Scraftoft Lane junction resulting in 18 casualties, of which 2 were serious and 16 were slight. None of the casualties were pedestrians or cyclists. 7 of the accidents involved right turners, 5 from Hungarton Boulevard into Scraftoft Lane and 2 from Scraftoft Lane into Colchester Road.

In 2005, up until 10th October, there had been a further 5 accidents at the junction, resulting in 5 slight casualties. 3 of these accidents involved right turners, 1 from Hungarton Boulevard into Scraftoft Lane and 2 from Scraftoft Lane into Hungarton Boulevard.

We have drawn up a scheme to enable the right turners to be separately signalled. This scheme will address the main accident problems at the junction.

Leicester City Council's Cabinet agreed the funding to carry out

Michael Jeeves,
Transport Development,
Regeneration and
Culture Department

the design work and initial consultations last year. We had intended to include the scheme in the 2006/07 Transport Capital Programme, which will be considered by Cabinet in March 2006. The scheme is likely to cost £250,000.

We will undertake a formal consultation with Ward Councillors, the Emergency Services and bus operators during February this year and consultations with residents will take place during April. Thurncourt Ward Councillors have agreed to host a consultation meeting for residents.

We do not expect the scheme to be started on site before Autumn 2006.

Question 33:

Can we have regular updates on Youth Centre usage at the Area Committee. This could be presented by the Senior Youth Workers in the two electoral areas (Humberstone and Hamilton, Thurncourt) ?

Response by Officers

As the Area Youth Work Manager for the East of the City I have instructed the Senior Youth Worker and the two full time Youth Workers from the Armadale Centre and Raven Centre to give feedback to the Area Committee about youth provision at the centres.

Mr. Gerry Burke, Area Youth Work Manager, Education Youth Service.