

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OADBY RESIDENTS' FORUM HELD AT BARNABAS CENTRE, ST PAULS CLOSE, OADBY, LEICESTERSHIRE, LE2 4LZ ON MONDAY, 20 MARCH 2023 COMMENCING AT 7.15 PM

PRESENT

D M Carter Chair



Meeting ID: 2290

COUNCILLORS

S Z Haq
J Kaufman
Mrs L Kaufman

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

M Smith Community Safety & Youth Officer

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

PC A Collins Leicestershire Police
PC G Cree Leicestershire Police

103. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on Monday, 9 January 2023, were declared true and accurate.

104. POLICE UPDATE

Burglaries – 35 burglaries were reported in January and February. 4 arrests were made at 2 separate incidents at the end of February, and figures now show only 2 burglaries occurred in March.

Theft of Vehicles – This has reduced from 2 in January and February, to 0 in March.

ASB – There were 8 reported incidents of ASB in February and 7 in March. With the lighter evenings and increase is expected, and the Police are patrolling accordingly.

Theft from stores – 7 incidents were reported in January, 1 in February, and 0 in March.

Drug Stops / Person Searches – 7 drug stops or person searches took place in March.

NO2 cannisters – No reports of NO2 cannisters made to Leicestershire Police. PSPO in place across the whole Borough to address the use of NO2. Effects wear off very quickly from users so hard to test for. A member of public has raised issue with Lidl regarding use of NO2 in their lower car park.

A member of the public raised a query around ASB hotspot areas – Parklands / Brocks Hill overflow car park were raised in response due to drug use and loud noise from vehicles.

105. CHAIR'S UPDATES

30 minutes free parking at Brocks Hill for users of the car park. Believed to be planned for the Council Offices when open there.

Washbrook Lane – Decision awaited.

Memorial Stones – No update.

Voter ID – 4 May this year, Borough Council elections. Voter ID will be required in order for someone to be able to vote in person; this is photo ID such as a driving licence etc. Postal votes do not require photo ID. Individuals without photo ID can contact the Council for a voter ID certificate.

106. ARRIVA BUS SERVICE

Efforts were made to contact, and invite to this meeting, Simon Mathieson, Arriva's Area Operations Director for our area. Simon had previously been the point of contact for Arriva with concerns raised by Neil O'Brien MP regarding the bus service in Oadby and Harborough. These efforts were not fruitful and it now appears that Simon has left his post at Arriva. The Council will now make every effort to identify Simon's replacement at Arriva and invite them, or a suitable alternative, to the next meeting of this Forum.

107. CORONATION PLANS

The Council is in the initial stages of planning Coronation events in all three town centres in the Borough, and will be supporting and promoting events put together by other groups and organisations in the Borough. An event is being planned for Bell Street, Wigston and there is the potential of a fair operating on Blaby Road Park, South Wigston. Cllr. Haq noted that there will be an event on Ellis Park on the Bank Holiday Monday, 12 – 4pm. Various attractions, food, entertainment and stalls will be available.

A member of the public queried the lack of bunting etc. present in the Oadby town centre for the jubilee, and expressed a desire to see it present for the coronation events. Cllr. Haq has stated that the Council will try its best to source this.

108. ITEMS RAISED BY RESIDENTS

Pride of the Borough

Simon Lucas introduced himself and POTB to residents, and stated that Oadby & Wigston are now in the finals of the Britain in Bloom contest. POTB are organising this and to ensure that the town centres all look their best for the competition. Simon also highlighted the POTB membership scheme at a cost of £5, entitling people to discounts at around 50 businesses in the Borough. Proceeds of the POTB membership scheme are rolled back into the POTB activities, investing in the Borough environmentally.

Chicken Alley

Damaged water drain / sewage pipe – Severn Trent are proposing to remove a Lyme tree

to enable the repair to be carried out. Offered price to supply and replace the damaged tree.

Half Term Fun Fair / Sandhurst Street

Most of the residences that back onto the site this took place are bungalows, and one individual complained that there was a generator adjacent to their property that ran late into the night, disturbing residents. There were also complaints about the floodlights at the fair shining into properties at night. Advanced notification of the fair does not appear to have been received by residents. Query as to if this will be happening again, and was it an income generator for the Council. The Chair confirmed it was a revenue stream for the Council, and stated that there is learning to be taken away from the event to be brought to the attention of the relevant forums and officers / teams. M Smith will take this back to the Council's Comms Team, and Members will take this to their relevant forums.

Parking was also highlighted as a significant issue in the area; signage around the car park closure was non-existent and there were no marshals to address this further down Sandhurst Street. Congestion in the area was awful.

Lessons will be taken from this event and applied to any similar events taking place anywhere in the Borough.

Information was passed to the Mosque regarding this, but appears to have not been circulated amongst the Mosque community.

Sandhurst Street Car Park Lighting – Reported 5 months ago but no works have been carried out to date. Confirmed that these lights have to be serviced by Leicestershire County Council Highways. This has been chased up by Cllr. Haq with the County Council who have confirmed the works will take place in the next few weeks.

East Street Car Park

Potholes in the car park were raised as an issue for lowered vehicles; stated that the Council has started charging for parking to cover the maintenance cost of the car park but no work has been done. Only newly tarmacked areas are around the newly installed electric vehicle chargers. The chargers are noted to be underused, but utilised by residents who own an electric vehicle but with no at home charging available. Some of the car park is privately owned and maintained which also impacts upon maintenance.

Windrush Drive / Trent Close alleyway

Who is responsible for cleaning this? Lots of litter, and appears to be a magnet for ASB with individuals able to hide / congregate in the alley. This will be fed back to the Council's ASB Officer and Clean and Green Team. Recommended that if no improvement is seen in the next couple of months please report to the Ward Councillor for follow up.

Rubbish Bin outside Lidl

The bin outside Lidl at the bus stop has been removed. The Chair noted that the bin has been there for some time, and was beginning to overflow on a regular basis despite being emptied more regularly. As a trial this was removed to see if littering in the area reduced which has actually occurred now it has been removed. One school of thought in the Council is that if bins are removed individuals are encouraged to take their litter home with them; the placement of bins in the Borough is now being looked at by the Council's Corporate Assets Team.

New Street Roundabout / Severn Trent

The works appear to have now taken longer than the 5 weeks posted, with the works underway to replace the full length of the water main along the Parade and down to London Road. The works have slowed due to additional services that Severn Trent found below the junction, and the Council now has confidence that the works will continue apace now this obstacle has been passed. Concerns were raised by residents about the impact of the works on local traffic / school traffic when the works reach the A6 area.

Customer Experience Strategy / Consultation

Consultation has now ended, and a public report is being made available for residents to read. Elected Members have had a foresight of this, and the Council intends to develop a range of different tools to continue to effectively engage with residents; this will include the 'Our Borough' newsletter and an accessible Customer Service desk. Appointments will also be available at each of the town centres for residents to meet with Council Officers.

Council Response Times

Response times from the Council, including following Out of Office replies, are poor and can take several months. Recommended that going via Customer Services is the best route for this, rather than directly contacting Officers, as should the Officer not be available then Customer Services will follow up with other officers in the team where required.

109. JUBILEE TREE

Burton's Corner not appropriate due to the number of utilities in the area, and the existing statue. Proposed planting area by the Council's Tree Officer at the northern corner of Ellis Park near to the drinking fountain area.

110. FLUDES LANE

No update. Funding was secured for this, with Cllr. Gamble intending to follow up on the works after January's meeting of the Oadby Residents' Forum. Cllr. Carter will follow this up with the head of Corporate Assets at the Council.

If finances are the issue could this be supported by POTB or other coronation related funding? There is a view that Councils rush to spend any remaining funding at the end of the financial year; this is not the case locally with the Council operating a tight budget.

Businesses may be willing to support these works financially if required. Grant schemes are also available in the Borough, such as the Oadby Village Hall Fund, that can support capital projects like resurfacing works.

110a. LAND ADJACENT TO ST PETER'S CHURCH

The Council was approached regarding purchasing part of this land to provide access to a parcel of land behind the location. The Council was legally obliged to publicly consult on this, with over 600 responses received against disposing (selling) the land which the Council has now rejected the offer of. This was a fantastic piece of community engagement to maintain a community space in Oadby.

One POTB member maintains the sensory garden at this location, and a member has

expressed a desire to see a wooden bench installed at the top of the sensory garden bordered by a seasonal flower bed. A wooden bench is sought in order to mitigate temperature issues that metal benches present. The bench would be to recognise the King's coronation. There are currently three benches on the site for public use.

It was suggested that some of the existing benches are also moved back away from the road. This would be accepted to POTB in lieu of a new bench being installed. If a bench is investigated to be moved, and found to not be suitable, the forum may be able to look to replace it with a new bench.

It was noted that some Oadby businesses have expressed a desire to fund, and see installed, a statue of HM The Queen on this land in memorial of her. The businesses would fund this themselves and no funding is sought for this from the Forum. It was recommended that the businesses develop a proposal for this and approach the Council accordingly.

Concerns were raised that filling the site with benches or statues will reduce the concept of a reflective space / memorial garden within the area. The focus should be more on planting etc.

Suggestion put forward to install an air quality monitoring device at this location due to the road fumes; this will be passed to the Council's Environmental Health Team to investigate / progress. This is thought prudent now the land has been secured to continue as a memorial garden.

111. LAND ADJACENT TO FLORENCE WRAGG WAY

Mulberry Homes development; no update from an officers perspective at the Council. Cllr. L Kaufman summarised a recently held public meeting regarding this development. The development is not part of the Council's current Local Plan, and that with the public overwhelmingly stating 'no thank you' to the development, it is thought there is a very strong case for the development to not go ahead.

A query was made relating to this development where, if it were to go ahead, would an additional school be developed in the area to accommodate an increased population. A proposal was also made regarding school drop-offs in the area, and how an American style drop off system could be implemented in the area where cars enter school land, stop and drop off, before continuing their journey. Cllr. J Kaufman noted a recently held discussion that highlighted the need for another access route to the school sites to be developed in the long term. A change in school catchment areas also appears to increased the number of vehicles on the road at school drop off / pick up times.

Concerns were also raised around families renting properties in the school catchment area, and then moving out again once their child's / children's place at the desired school is confirmed. This has been raised with Leicestershire County Council as the education authority.

Parked cars on Coombe Rise are presenting difficulties at the start / end of the school day.

112. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Customer Service Excellence Strategy Update

Fludes Lane to remain on the Agenda

Regular update on the Council's financial state, i.e. how much funding is transferred from the Council's reserves to keep the Council afloat. A full update on this would not be suitable for a Residents' Forum, but a snapshot of the Council's finances would be desired. If a resident is particularly interested in the financial situation of the Council then they should look at the information relating to the PFD Committee and Budget made available publicly on the Council's website. It was noted that the public has the right to question the auditors of the Council regarding their budgets over the last 5 years. It is a statutory requirement that the local authority breaks even, and if this was not the case for Oadby & Wigston it would be public knowledge.

Central Government budget cuts to local authority funding have placed all Councils in difficult positions. Savings of £400k are required in the next financial year, and money has been taken from the reserves to balance the books in this financial year. Car park rates alone paid by the Council are £100k a year, and maintenance is around £140k per year. Once the money has been recouped from previous years improvements will be made to the car parks themselves with the additional income. The Council's budget setting details are available on its website.

Bushloe House – Up for sale with a preferred purchaser in place. The building is a listed building, and some of the trees in the grounds are subject to TPOs.

113. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Attendees were advised of a provisional date of Thursday, 13 July 2023 at 6:30pm for the next Oadby Forum, with a venue TBC.

This has now been amended to Wednesday, 12 July 2023 at 6:30pm, to take place at the Brocks Hill Council Offices, Washbrook Lane, Oadby, LE2 5JJ.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.26 pm