

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WIGSTON RESIDENTS' FORUM HELD AT COUNCIL OFFICES, BUSHLOE HOUSE, STATION ROAD, WIGSTON, LEICESTERSHIRE, LE18 2DR ON WEDNESDAY, 15 FEBRUARY 2023 COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT

G A Boulter Chair



Meeting ID: 2293

COUNCILLORS

L A Bentley
M H Charlesworth
K J Loydall

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

M Smith Community Safety & Youth Officer

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

PCSO M Chapman Leicestershire Police
PCSO E Sanders Leicestershire Police

28. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 2 November 2022, were declared true and accurate.

Page 5, Item 26: Query regarding access to Council services in Wigston potentially at Wigston Library. Confirmed that this was still be looked at as a venue for appointments with Council Officers, with Brocks Hill being a venue for drop ins with no appointments.

Page 6, Item 26: Air quality / pollution. Query raised regarding current sites of monitoring devices. Confirmed the permanently sited device at South Wigston near the cycle shop, and a number of redeployable devices around the Borough.

29. POLICE UPDATE

PCSO Chapman and PCSO Sanders introduced themselves to those present at the Forum.

Wigston Police Stats: In the past three months crime has dropped compared to the previous three month period. Since Nov – 16 Burglaries, 14 shoplifts, 11 drug offences, 60% in vehicle crime, 9% rise in knife crime which is now an operational priority, and linked to ASB hotspot areas in Wigston such as Bell Street, the Arcade, Willow Park and Central Avenue. Additional ASB hotspot around the Nautical William at Aylestone Lane, individuals involved identified and spoken to by police with no further incidents since.

A resident commented on how they are enjoying Neighbourhood Link. A number of those present stated they were unaware of Neighbourhood Link so an overview of the service was given by PCSO Chapman, and how it allows for non-emergency messages to be shared from, and with, the Police.

Newgate End was raised as an ASB hotspot area by Cllr Charlesworth, notably a property that is being utilised as a care home. It was confirmed that this is being dealt with by the Police and the Council in a multi-agency approach.

EScooters – Concerns in the Borough around the use of eScooters on footpaths etc. The Police approach was confirmed to incorporate seizure of eScooters if involved in ASB, otherwise the approach will be an education lead approach, informing the rider that they are not legal to use currently. It was noted by a resident that despite the no cycling signs in the lanes around Peace Memorial Park eScooters and bikes are routinely being used through and along there.

It was noted by Cllr. Loydall that earlier today (15 Feb) an individual was using the bowling green at Peace Memorial Park as a dog run, with two large dogs having been lifted over the fence / hedge and not on a lead. There has been some damage to the bowling green surface. The Police routinely patrol through the park and will keep an eye on this going forward.

CSP Survey. Shared with public when report complete. Prize draw for completing the survey online. Closure date is midnight on Sunday, 19 March 2023.

30. CHAIR'S UPDATES

Bushloe House – The building is currently up for sale, with the next Wigston Forum still anticipated to take place here in May 2023.

Severn Trent – The Chair has approach them regarding river and water quality, burst pipes etc. in the Borough. 14% of all rivers are "good ecological status". £12billion has been sent on sewer upgrades, and £100m is being invested in the water service per year. Sewer and storage capacity is being increased.

Query raised around capacity of existing water treatment plants in Oadby and Countesthorpe following the building of additional properties in the Borough – concerns of discharge into the rivers during storm surges etc. as the Borough has a combined sewer and storm system since Victorian times. Severn Trent are looking at the possibility of diverting storm water to storage reservoirs to prevent flooding and additional discharge into rivers. 80% reduction in the discharge of harmful chemicals into rivers from farms.

Wigston Contact Point – When the Council moves to Brocks Hill there will be a 'by appointment' contact point placed in Wigston.

31. COUNCIL TAX

Oadby & Wigston Council Tax will be going up by a total of £7.61 per year, an increase of 2.99% for a Band D property. LFRS will be raising their Council Tax precept by £5 per year, and the Police by £15 per year. Leicestershire County Council will be raising their precept by 4.99%, an increase of £72.50 for Band D property per year, with a meeting to be held to set this next Wednesday (22 Feb). LCC's increases incorporate social services.

If the County Council does not increase its precept by the maximum amount allowed by Central Government they are left unable to apply for additional funding from Central Government.

Oadby & Wigston received a lump sum of funding that has been ringfenced for improving the public realm and shopping centres in the Borough, and this funding cannot be used for other purposes.

The Police's precept is noted to be higher due to cuts to the Police's funding from Central Government pushing the shortfall on to the taxpayer. For Leicestershire 100 police officers have been cut, and police staff will need to reduce by 8%, due to the reduction in funding from Central Government. The Police and Crime Commissioner's budget is the only budget to have seen an increase, at £46,000 per year, and has also employed a Deputy PCC at £58,000 plus on costs per year. £57,000 in compensation was also paid in total to 6 panel members who left various panels set up by the PCC this financial year. Since 2011 the Leicestershire Police have seen a reduction of £38million in their budgets.

Previously Central Government provided 30% toward the costs of service provision for local government, but this no longer exists with Council's required to foot 100% of the costs. For Oadby & Wigston this was a reduction of £2million.

A query was raised as to the purpose of the Police and Crime Commissioner. A description of the role, including its responsibility to hold the Police's Chief Constable to account, was provided to those present. An explanation was also given as to how the PCC provides funding to Community Safety Partnerships and other local organisations, as well as setting crime and disorder priorities. There is a panel of Councillors across Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland that also hold the Police and Crime Commissioner to account. The PCC's Office also does a significant amount of statistical analysis on behalf of the Community Safety Partnerships across LLR.

The grants offered by the PCC were queried in regards to where the funding is raised from. It was confirmed that the PCC has a commissioning budget of around £1.4million; 56% of this is from Central Government, and 44% is sourced via Council Tax.

Even with all of the noted increases, Oadby & Wigston's Council Tax rate is still the lowest in the County. This is due to the Borough not having Parish Councils within its boundary. Properties on opposite sides of the South Wigston / Glen Parva boundary have a difference in Council Tax of around £60 per year more for Blaby properties due to this.

There Borough's size is seen by residents present as a boon to the Council, despite the low Council Tax rate, as it allows for services to continue to be managed effectively. Car Park charges assist with this, and there are no plans to change bin collections to anything other than weekly collections. Statistics are due to be published in the near future around the use of car parks in the Borough following the implementation of the car parking charge.

Monitoring for footfall around the town centres is in progress in order to accurately present the data around car park use etc.

32. VOTER ID

A Voter ID booklet was provided to all residents present at the meeting, detailing what forms of ID will be accepted at Polling Stations during the elections in May 2023. All ID must be photo ID.

Details were also given on how residents can apply for a 'Voter Authority Certificate', if they do not have any photo ID, with a deadline of 5pm on 25 April 2023 for applications to

be received.

Postal votes were noted as being a simpler option for those that do not have photo ID. It was confirmed that these votes are checked against a signature held on file to ensure they are legitimate, otherwise they are not counted. Signatures are collected upon registration for a postal vote.

Out of 45million votes cast in the last election there were only 33 cases of voter fraud. There is a worry that this approach will disenfranchise young people who are able to vote but do not have photo ID.

33. ITEMS RAISED BY RESIDENTS

Defibrillator: A resident raised an incident a few weeks ago in Bell Street, Wigston where a lady collapsed near Sainsburys and was assisted by a lady who works at Menphys. It was thought the lady was in cardiac arrest so the defibrillator near the William Wyggeston pub was fetched. This has raised a conversation around looking at sourcing a defibrillator to be situated on Bell Street. Barriers were noted from the previous attempt at this where Sainsbury's were 'difficult' around having it affixed to their store. The manager at Two Steeples has indicated they are happy to look at having a defibrillator installed on the pub building. There is an expected cost of £1,500 to purchase a defibrillator, with an additional cost for the cabinet to store it plus installation.

Residents present indicated that they are in favour of funding being made available from the Forum's budget to support this. An additional suggestion was made to relocate the defibrillator at Bushloe House to a new location once the Council moves to Brocks Hill.

Query was raised around where the defibrillator location was noted as Elizabeth Court was potentially a closer location to the William Wyggeston pub. It was suggested that a definitive list of defibrillator locations is collated, and is publicly available. Stickers for shops with 'nearest defibrillator location' were also proposed.

Bell Street alley between Boots and Co-Op: The condition of this is disgraceful with litter, graffiti and other detritus in the area. The buildings are privately owned and removal of graffiti requires the owners permission; this has been put to them before and has been unable to be actioned. The alley in question is owned by the owners of the old co-op building. The location will be passed to the Council's Operatives to see if it can be cleaned.

Paddock Street, Age Concern: Street cleaning is required. Location also to be passed to the Council's Operatives.

A query was raised around Age Concern in Wigston following the closure of their building in Paddock Street. Age Concern Oadby & Wigston did not offer the building to Age Concern Leicestershire, but instead to the national body who in turn passed it back to Age Concern Leicestershire. Planning permission is currently being sought to convert or demolish the building in favour of elderly person's accommodation. Demolition is likely due to a large amount of asbestos thought to be in the building.

If Wigston Records Office does relocate to County Hall from its base in Wigston town centre, a building would be available for Age Concern. There is likely to be a capital cost associated to this which means any conversations around the building, and Age Concern, are speculative.

Garden Waste Collections: Restart 27 February, with a £50 charge for the year. The service is suspended for three months during Winter due to a reduction in demand, with the added bonus of reducing the Council's carbon footprint by not running the garden waste collection lorries during this period.

The Council has a duty to become carbon neutral which in part has influenced the Council's move to Brocks Hill. This also has to extend to the Council's housing stock. It is not clear on the Council's website if properties fall within Week A or Week B, with only their next collection date showing. The Chair will chase this up to ensure clarity for residents.

Nautical William: Query raised around whether the comments for and against the planning application from outside the Borough will be counted when the application is considered. It was confirmed that this is a local decision that will be made by local people. There are a significant number of comments from as far a field as Manchester and London. It is believed some people are unwilling to make comment on the application as it is a legal requirement their names and addresses are published in addition to their comment.

34. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Residents were advised at this meeting that the next meeting of the Forum would take place on Wednesday, 17 May 2023 at the Council Offices.

Since this meeting took place, the meeting planned for May was cancelled due to the local elections, with the next meeting of the Forum now scheduled for Wednesday, 19 July 2023 at Thythorn Hill Community Centre.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.18 pm