

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SOUTH WIGSTON RESIDENTS' FORUM HELD AT
SOUTH WIGSTON METHODIST CHURCH, BLABY ROAD, SOUTH WIGSTON,
LEICESTERSHIRE, LE18 4PB ON TUESDAY, 25 JULY 2023 COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM**

PRESENT

G A Boulter Chair



Meeting ID: 2520

COUNCILLORS

R H Adams
J K Ford
C S Gore
R E R Morris
C A M Walter

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

M Smith Community Safety & Youth Officer

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

PCSO Sanders Leicestershire Police

32. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 21 February 2023 were declared true and accurate.

Minutes were not made available to residents following the shift to paperless forums. A separate mailing list has been curated during the meeting to address this.

33. POLICE UPDATE

PCSO Sanders, PCSO for South Wigston, introduced herself to residents. Residents heard that crime has decreased significantly over the last three months, with burglaries and shoplifting reducing by 7 and 9 reports respectively.

ASB reports are at 7 currently, mostly around Gloucester Crescent One Stop. One group of young people brought to the attention of the police and have since not attended the area again. Another group was spoken to PC Breslin regarding their behaviour and the issue also seems to have resolved itself; parents were also involved.

Blaby Road Park – A few months ago multiple reports regarding motorcross bikes on the park, no reports since 5 June. Encouraged residents to report any issues through to the police to ensure that the police can address issues. Blaby Road Park has a waymarker in place that means any officers on patrol must spend a set amount of time in the park whilst on duty.

Leicester Riders are running basketball sessions through the holiday period on Monday's and Wednesdays organised by OWBC, with the Police also attending sessions to build rapport with young people.

Current beat priorities are ASB hotspots such as Gloucester Crescent and the railway footbridge.

A leaflet was provided to residents highlighting the methods items can be reported through to the police.

Speeding vehicles – Gloucester Crescent, Canal Street, Dorset Avenue – speed patrols are in operation with additional officers now trained in the use of speed guns.

Electric Scooters – The Police can issue Section 165 notices to riders of eScooters being used in an anti-social manner. The Police are taking an education route first, with scooters to be seized after a second offence. The police are not authorised to pursue riders of eScooters. The law was supposed to be changed this year but has been delayed for another 12 months. eScooters can only be used on private land with the landowner's consent.

Cars being left in a car park off of Windlass Drive with no MOT, no tax, or both. One vehicle has no registration plates attached. Report was relayed to OWBC but no action appears to have been taken. Council or public land the car can easily be sorted, but on private land the Council has limited powers. Drivers are also using this location as a place to take drugs (cannabis) and are leaving significant litter behind. Police note that the issue hasn't been reported to them previously, but the local beat team will now also patrol that area. Speeding vehicles can also be heard travelling along Countesthorpe Road at speed.

CCTV cameras are also set to be installed on Blaby Road Park near the Skate Park / MUGA by OWBC.

34. CHAIR'S UPDATES

Electrification of the Midland Mainline – The current works will be stopping at Spion Kop (Blaby Road) with a compound currently being built. Works will take place through day and night, including some of the piling works. A programme of works has been delivered to properties in the area by Network Rail.

Appointment Hubs – The Council is operating Appointment Hubs in the Borough, in the three town areas, with South Wigston's taking place on a Tuesday between 9am and 12 noon at Elliot Hall by appointment only. Face to face access is still available in a limited capacity at Brocks Hill. Appointments can be made via telephone call to the Council. There is no requirement to attend the Hub in your own area, so South Wigston residents can access Hubs in Wigston and in Oadby too.

Bus Service – The 47/48/49 bus routes are now being upped to a bus every 12 minutes by Arriva.

Blaby Road – An air quality monitoring station has been installed on Blaby Road in conjunction with Public Health due to an increase in 'Child Wheeze' in the local area. At the moment there is no area in the Borough that exceeds the PPM limit, but this is still being monitored.

Boundaries Commission – The parliamentary commission has already set the boundaries, with limited changes to the existing constituency which is now named Oadby, Wigston and Harborough.

HMP Fosse Way – Parking issues have now been resolved in the local area now that the prison's car park is open. Some planting is going on within the prison site to replace trees that were removed during the construction of the site. Residents raised concerns that some CCTV on the prison site is overlooking their gardens and properties. In terms of privacy for neighbouring properties it will be necessary to speak to colleagues in Blaby District Council who oversee the planning for the main prison site.

35. ITEMS RAISED BY RESIDENTS

Public Open Space Opposite Windlass Drive – What is happening with the public open space as the land is currently an eyesore? A resident stated that the land should have been made available to the Council once the last house was sold. The position is that the Council will not take ownership of the land until the landowner has brought it up to reasonable maintenance standard. The Council is in communication with the landowner regarding this, and the Chair has raised the issue with the Council's legal department to pursue further. There are also concerns raised by residents regarding access to the site, including potential access to travellers. The Council cannot secure the access to the land as the Council does not own it. There is a gate that the Council will enquire around securing. There is also a lack of dog waste bins / refuse bins on this side of the estate, but plenty on the canal side, this is resulting in bags of dog poo being hung in hedges. A suggestion was made for a bin to be installed on the pathway between Windlass Drive and Ervins Lock; OWBC would need to pay LCC to install the bin due to works on the public highway.

Balancing Pond off of Windlass Drive – A resident raised that residents along Windlass Drive that the management charges imposed on them to manage the small balancing pond on the road. Roughly £8k a year is spent on grass cutting only, and residents also contribute toward a cost of £202,500 for insurance of a wooden slatted fence and terrorism insurance. Residents would like to make it clear to purchasers of new build, freehold houses in the Borough where such ponds exist that these fees exist. A FOI has been made to the Council by residents regarding the decision to operate under this arrangement. The Chair notes that the developer opted to not pay Section 106 monies to the Council to maintain the land, but the developers instead opted to setup a management company for the area instead. This situation is not unique to the Borough, and occurs nationally. The Council was appraised of this approach by the developers in 2014-2016 whilst the houses were being built. The company is increasing the management charge year on year, with no limit on the total costs; unpaid charges could result in a charge being placed against the relevant property and could result in homes being lost. MPs will need to change the law to resolve this overall situation. Local Councillors are not happy with the situation but are powerless in the current situation. The new estate on Newton Lane is likely to be under the same arrangement as it's the same developer. Not all land on estates will be adopted by local authorities either when handed over by the developer, and residents could be charged for repairs to infrastructure in areas like this. Buyers of properties within the Borough do so entering with their eyes open and should have been advised of the service charges by their solicitors during the conveyancing process – if they are aggrieved then they should direct their complaints to their respective solicitors.

Paragon Building – Staff are being bussed by the company to other areas. There are no forward plans for the site as yet, and the Council is not aware of any works.

Flash Flooding – Water runs down off of the railway bridge and caused flooding during the last spate of heavy rain. LCC Highways clean drains under the guidance of a computer system, which passes jobs to a contractor to resolve. If the contractor can't do the job it is passed back to LCC Highways to address and resolve. There is also no contractor in place

to weed spray in the gutters, and the matter has been raised with LCC due to the state of some gutters in the Borough. Residual weedkillers cannot be used under new legislation, and whilst they should be sprayed twice a year they're likely only being addressed once. An OWBC officer cleared the weeds from the gutters along Blaby Road by hand recently, with their efforts being acknowledged by residents.

Dorset Avenue – A new camera pole was installed, but this has not been topped as yet so is unusable. The pole is to host a speed camera / sign. Additional white lining works have taken place on roads in the Borough.

Gloucester Crescent – A new pole was erected today near the shops, but no information was given as to what it is. The Council does not own this land, but its believed this is part of the fibre optic installation taking place in the Borough. Residents raised that some of the repair works that have taken place following installation, along Lansdowne Grove for example, are untidy and not to a good standard. It was noted that the company should be alerted to this to rectify it. Signage on Saffron Road / Gloucester Road does not state give way at the roundabout at this junction, unlike other areas, and this makes the junction risky. The County Council will, unfortunately, only amend road markings and signage following fatality accidents and not just car accidents. Saffron Road will not be widened following a review as part of the prison build. Drains outside of Tesco near the crossing on Blaby Road consistently block and result in pedestrians being splashed by passing traffic; this has been reported on several occasions but not dealt with – the Chair recommended that the next report made, the reference number is passed through to him to chase up.

Temporary Lights on Station Road – Traffic is horrendous, especially over the railway bridge. Permission for the lights ran out on 19 July but was extended, with works starting today (25/07). The works are to replace the traffic lights at the Pullman Road junction.

Pavement Parking – Parking on the pavement that blocks the pavement, such as where a wheelchair or buggy cannot pass, the Police will take action if they can witness the blockage. The County Council regard the pavement as part of the highway so can take action utilising their own wardens. Parking on corners can also be addressed by the police. On Lansdowne Grove some people are parking in such a way as to block driveways which was reported to the police; the police only have powers if a vehicle is blocking someone from leaving their driveway, not if it is blocking access to a driveway. The Highway Code covers not parking over a driveway as a courtesy. This would be another issue that residents would need to raise with their MP to change the law nationally around parking over driveways. Vehicles parked on / over double yellow lines can be handled by Civil Enforcement Officers; double yellows also cover the pavement next to the lines. Overhanging hedges on the pavement are also a matter for Highways, although works won't take place until August due to the nesting season for birds.

Resident Forum Budget – The Forum has a budget that can be utilised for the benefit of the local area. Residents have a list of items they would like to purchase, including barrier planters for flowers along the pedestrian rails near Tesco and along Blaby Road. Residents are frustrated that the area is looking "scruffy" with multiple takeaways, hairdressers, nail salons, and tanning salons. The Council does not have authority to block certain businesses opening in the area due to "market forces". The majority of shops that are opening provide a service that cannot be bought online. The Chair believes that £27k is left in the budget for the Forum, which M Smith will confirm. A vote was held with residents for £400 to purchase barrier flowers which was approved; M Smith will now progress this.

Parking Charges – Central Government used to pay 70% of the running costs of the Council, but now pay nothing. The parking charges generate money for the Council, which has reduced its own budget by £2m annually.

Oadby & Wigston Swimming Club – The club is facing increased costs following Covid and the increase in energy costs for heating the pool. A query was raised around available funding for this that M Smith will look into. It was suggested by Councillors that some Active Together funding may be available for this purpose.

Empty Shops / Untidy Shops – Grants are now available from the Council, up to 50% of the cost, to improve the condition of shop fronts in the Borough.

William Gunning Park play equipment – Funding is being sought through the UK Prosperity Fund to replace the equipment.

Promotion of Residents Forums – Comms Team utilise Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, the Council's website, the Borough noticeboards and digital displays to advertise the Forums. The Comms Team will be requested to look into using the Spotted pages on Facebook to advertise the Forum too.

Bushloe House Council Offices – The building is to be sold, and is currently under offer.

Countesthorpe Road Car Park – How much money has been made from this site? Councillors have asked for the figures in relation to this, and are waiting for them to be provided. A school parking permit costs £10 per year.

Alpha House – Planning application has been made to redevelop this building.

36. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None raised.

37. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 31 October 2023, 7pm – Fairfield Primary School, South Wigston (TBC)

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.15 pm