

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SOUTH WIGSTON RESIDENTS' FORUM HELD AT
FAIRFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL, CHESHIRE DRIVE, SOUTH WIGSTON, LE18 4WA ON
TUESDAY, 31 OCTOBER 2023 COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM**

PRESENT

G A Boulter Chair



Meeting ID: 2557

COUNCILLORS

R H Adams
C S Gore
R E R Morris

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

M Smith Community Safety & Youth Officer

38. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Page 6: The forum budget has been amended with an amount of funds being made available from the Council in lieu of the previously available pot. The funds available have been calculated against an average of expenditure through the Forums in previous years.

Page 6: Balancing Pond off of Windlass Drive / Public Open Space Opposite Windlass Drive – It is felt that the Minutes in this section were not a true representation of the discussion held, with words felt to have been added after the meeting had taken place, specifically the reference to “buyers entering with their eyes open” to purchasing properties.

39. POLICE UPDATE

Item deferred due to no Leicestershire Police representation.

40. LEICESTERSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE UPDATE

Item deferred due to no LFRS representation.

41. UKSPF COMMUNITY GRANTS

M Smith provided an overview of the UKSPF Community Grant Scheme from the attached PowerPoint presentation.

42. CHAIR'S UPDATES

Midland Mainline Electrification Works - Spion Kop will be closed in due course for up to four months with the bridge being removed as part of the electrification of the midland mainline. A pedestrian / cycle bridge will be installed during this period but there will be no vehicle crossing available. A consultation exercise will be run by network rail for these works but will only look at how the works may affect certain groups from an equalities

perspective. Works taking place at 10am today (31 Oct) caused significant disruption to traffic when one lane on Blaby Road was closed to enable joists to be lowered over the side of the bridge. The diversion route will be 7.5km long as the diversion must match the type of road that is closed.

Appointment Hubs – Details of the Appointment Hubs operated by the Council were shared with residents. Full information regarding these can be found on the Council's website.

Police – Reference was given to the reporting routes through Crimestoppers and other methods to pass intelligence to the Police. There are specific concerns within the community regarding drug dealing in South Wigston; intelligence regarding this is with the Police and Council to be actioned but there is public frustration that it is not being addressed. Councillors have confirmed that information passed to them regarding this has also been passed through to the Police upon receipt. Concerns were raised around a group of three men coming round the Saffron Road / Gloucester Crescent area in the early hours trying car doors. Residents also raised concerns around 8+ burglaries suffered by shops on Blaby Road; there is CCTV in relation to these that the police are already in receipt of. Residents expressed frustration that Police officers have been moved off of the South Wigston beat to other areas in Leicestershire, removing officers that have significant rapport with residents.

Homelessness – There is a large problem with homelessness in the Borough which is causing expenditure of £380k per year from the Council's reserve; this is due to only a small proportion of the costs being funded by central government. There is a national campaign taking place to address this, and legislation is going through parliament to stop 'no fault' evictions. 32 people are in temporary accommodation in the Borough as of this evening. Several landlords are selling their properties due to costs, and the Council is finding it difficult to rent private properties for homeless individuals as the cost of rent is higher than the funds the Council has available to put toward rental costs. It was noted that other Councils are in much worse positions regarding homelessness with some having to relocate homeless individuals to other areas of the Country. There is also 'competition' between local councils and central government for properties as the government is able to fully fund rentals for asylum seekers.

Council Budget – The Council is continuing to assess its budgets, and a 5% increase in Council Tax is expected next year. SEN transport and social care are high cost sectors for the County Council so they are also likely to increase their council tax amount. The Council has operated a recruitment freeze and lowered expenditure from £7m to £5m annually. Additional costs are expected however as Central Government has issued new guidance and legislation around recycling as part of waste management, with the type of waste that can be collected likely to change. Currently the Borough's recycling goes to CasePak for processing but it is unclear at this time if they will be able to process any new recyclable items under the new guidance. If they cannot process it then it is likely that the Council's recycling contract will need to go back through the tendering process. The Government has also suggested that recycling collections are put to fortnightly instead of weekly as the Borough currently has. There is also to be a new weekly food waste collection as per the Government, and that the collections must be in a dedicated vehicle. There is a gap in the Council's budget that it is working to close, with the budget having a deficit of £600k at present. The Council has previously written off small amounts of Council Tax and Business Rates owed.

Festive Events - Christmas Capers – Saturday, 2 December 2024. Road closures will be

in place for this along Blaby Road. 13 December – Mayors Carol service at Brocks Hill.

43. REMEMBRANCE EVENTS

11:40, Sunday 12 November – Wreath laying taking place at St Thomas' Church. Road closures in place. The Wigston Parade will be taking place at the same time also with road closures. Oadby's event will be taking place later in the afternoon.

11 November – 11am event in Peace Memorial Park, Blaby Road Park, and in Oadby with the maroon to be launched.

44. ITEMS RAISED BY RESIDENTS

Leicester City Council bankruptcy – As the City Council is on the verge of bankruptcy will this affect Oadby & Wigston? It is unlikely to impact the Borough. An overview of the bankruptcy process Leicester City Council is expected to experience, should they issue the notice, was given to residents.

Pavement Parking – Dangerous obstructive parking falls under the remit of the Police, with additional enforcement under the remit of Leicestershire County Council. Residents also heard that if you are blocked on your drive the Police will take action, but if you are blocked out of your drive there is no offence committed. Parked car on Norfolk Road junction of Northumberland, half on curb, facing against traffic full of rubbish with flat tyres – believed to be an abandoned vehicle – T74 MYB. MOT expired but vehicle is taxed, this means it is uninsured. PC Breslin was aware of the vehicle and offered to speak with the owner.

Bin Collections – Frustration that residents are asked to leave their bins out neatly for collection but bins are then often left scattered over the highway. A meeting was held with the Council's bin men last Thursday highlighting that bins should be returned to where they collected from. Cllr. Boulter will raise this matter with the relevant manager at the Council. Comments were also made that bin men are urinating in public. Additional comments were made that when the bins are upended on the wagon some waste falls out on to the highway that the crews are not clearing up.

Rats on William Gunning Park – Rats are in the bushes and hedges bordering the park and impacting residents whose properties back on to the park. One resident highlighted that they have had to purchase their own bait boxes to poison the rats, and has required the removal of their pond and bird feeders. The overgrown bushes and hedges also look very untidy and need the Council to attend to them.

Fairfield School – Complaint regarding the overgrowth of bushes and hedges bordering the school's playing field, with them now encroaching on to neighbouring properties. Some of this had been cleared previously, to the boundary, with areas denoted as a wildlife area. The school state that works took place to remedy this on Friday last week, with Cllr. Morris having been in receipt of photos supporting this. Residents noted that the clearance works were not extensive enough with not enough of the hedgerow being maintained. Cllr. Morris will raise this again with the school.

Balancing Pond off of Windlass Drive / Public Open Space Opposite Windlass Drive – Residents noted an increase in rats in this area as it remains overgrown. A letter

was received by residents from the property developers, Barratts, that was forward to the Council and to Dave Gill but no response has been received to date. The letter details how the developers and the Council appear to be at an impasse blaming each other for the handover of the land having not taken place to date. A request was made for a response from the Council to be provided to residents in the Windlass Drive area.

Residents are very frustrated at the lack of progress regarding this open space and the lack of information being made available to them from both Barratts and the Council. Residents in the Windlass Drive area note that they are effectively paying two lots of Council Tax as they are also paying a property management company for the open space. The Chair explained how the Council are unable to prevent developments taking place where a property management company will be operating at the completion of the building process.

Residents expressed further frustration that they feel their houses are becoming unsellable given the situation with the property management company, with residents having to develop their own 'help sheets' for neighbours who are looking to sell their property. Residents note that they were unaware of the property management fees when purchasing their homes, and that their solicitors were also unaware of Barratts ability to evict people from their homes for not paying those fees, or the value of the bills they were to expect. Some residents have taken additional legal advice at their own costs to vary the contracts they have in place with Barratts. Other residents noted that Barratts have sent copies of their bills for property management to several former addresses to reach them, with bills arriving after several months to years of occupying those properties without knowing they would be liable for the associated costs.

The Chair noted that the frustrations raised by residents in regard to Windlass Drive influenced how the Council approached the development of the new estate on Newton Lane. There were no grounds for the Council to refuse planning permission for the development at Windlass Drive with the inclusion of a property management company in lieu of Section 106 monies. The Chair will raise the question as to the legal status of developers being able to operate a property management company in lieu of Section 106.

Residents pay management charges to Barratts to cut the grass at the balancing pond and to maintain the bordering fence which is also covered by terrorism insurance which residents are also charged for. Residents believe that the Council was given the opportunity to adopt the pond which the Council rejected; the Chair refutes this. Residents have noted that some of their neighbours have taken it in to their own hands to mow the grass at the edge of the open space in some effort to maintain it as a barrier between the open space and the highway.

Members note that a response needs to be made to residents from Mr Gill in light of letters submitted to the Council, and that the lack of response is not in line with the Council's Service Standards. It has been noted that residents not present at this meeting have provided a statement to residents who are in attendance supporting the points raised.

Ash dieback was also raised as a concern around the back of Windlass Drive.

Fly-Tipping – How much does it cost the Council when flytipping is reported to them in laybys etc.? The County Council is currently reviewing its waste sites in Leicestershire, proposing to close Market Harborough, Somerby, and Shepshed, with the open hours of the remaining sites likely to be varied. The Borough Council is responsible for flytips in the Borough, not the County Council, with closures of tips likely to result in an increase of

flytipping.

New Bins – The bin was removed from the lamppost at the bottom of Crete Avenue and not returned. This has now resulted in an increase in litter at the location with residents now requesting a bin is reinstated here. There will be a cost associated with reinstating the bin; this was voted on by residents and agreed by the majority. A second vote was held to place bins along Windlass Drive and agreed by the majority.

45. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None Raised.

46. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, 21 February 2024, 7pm – South Wigston Methodist Church (TBC)

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.27 pm