

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OADBY RESIDENTS' FORUM HELD AT/BY WALTER CHARLES CENTRE, WIGSTON ROAD, OADBY, LEICESTER LE2 5QQ - WALTER CHARLES CENTRE ON MONDAY, 9 JANUARY 2023 COMMENCING AT 7.15 PM

PRESENT

N Alam Chair



Meeting ID: 2467

COUNCILLORS

D A Gamble
Mrs S Z Haq
J Kaufman
Mrs L Kaufman
Dr I K Ridley

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

M Smith (Community Safety & Youth Officer)

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

PC A Collins (Leicestershire Police)
L Monk (Leicestershire County Council)
PCSO E Sanders (Leicestershire Police)
PCSO H Sanghera (Leicestershire Police)
M Walters (Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service)

96. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr. D Carter and Cllr. L Darr.

97. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 16 August 2022, were declared true and accurate, with the following notes;

Jubilee Tree: Minutes of this meeting note that a 'feasibility study' is required regarding the placement of the tree, and that an update would be given on this at "the next meeting" which was originally scheduled for 27 October 2022 before being amended to 9 January 2023. This action was first mentioned as an action at the meeting held on 17 May 2022, but on neither occasion do the Minutes allocate it to an officer at the Council. On 14 December 2022 this was passed over to Michael Bennetto, the Council's Tree Officer, to action and cost.

Communication with Residents: A resident raised the need for the Council to "explore further ways to reach those not on social media and to get the views of residents". I believe that the Council's Communications Team are already looking at this as part of a wider review of the Comms Strategy, and that physical newsletters from the Council have already been delivered to households across the Borough at the end of 2022 as part of

this.

A resident raised concerns that the physical newsletter arrived after the closure of the CES consultation. The deadline for this was extended but notification of this was sent out via email which links back to the original comment regarding communication with residents.

31/31a Bus Service: An action was included in the Minutes for the Chair and Ross Levy to “explore key contacts and hold the operator [of the 31/31a bus service, Arriva] to account”. It is not clear if Ross Levy progressed this action prior to leaving employment with the Council, but I am aware that the 31/31a bus services specifically have been the focus of an article in the Leicester Mercury recently, with the Borough’s MP raising the issue directly with Arriva on behalf of his constituents.

The Chair wrote to the DVSA regarding this on 17 August 2022, but was informed by reply that this needs to be raised directly with Arriva as the bus operator. The Chair highlighted that two petitions has also been submitted to Arriva; one with over 500 signatures arranged by local councillors asking for the service to return to pre-pandemic service levels and timetable. The second petition, undertaken by residents themselves with over 200 signatures, suggested that if the service is to remain being run in a circular route, the service should be amended to a staggered service ensure greater accessibility. A resident noted that since 3 January 2023 the timetable has been revised to an hourly service, which is impacted by the roadworks on the Parade, Oadby, and is not providing a suitable service to the area. A ‘31x’ bus service also exists, but it is unclear where or how often this service operates. The bus stop outside of Cross Medical / Sainsburys remains out of operation, meaning people leaving Sainsburys with their shopping are unable to catch a bus from this stop – the X3 and X7 buses currently stop at this stop.

Leicestershire County Council did not receive £58m to support the bus services in the County, meaning that services are being reviewed with a view to cuts occurring to the service. Leicester City Council also missed out on funding applied for to further support bus services.

It was queried as to whether the petitions raised above have also been put to businesses in the area, including Sainsbury’s as previously mentioned. It was confirmed that as yet businesses have not been included in the public consultations.

The cost of parking in Leicester encourages bus use, but the bus service is not fit for purpose.

It was also suggested that the Council puts forward its own suggestions for bus routes in the Borough to Arriva for consideration; the view shared is that members of the public know the area better, and understand the needs of the area for a bus service better. This is unlikely to be able to proceed as Arriva’s decisions are informed by business need and feasibility.

ACTION: An invitation is to be extended to a representative of Arriva to attend the next meeting of this forum in February 2023. The current service levels and lack of drivers are to be considered as points covered with the representative. It was suggested that First

Leicester also be invited to potentially pitch their own service to the Borough.

Resurfacing of Fludes Lane, Oadby: The path on Fludes Lane was noted in the Minutes as requiring resurfacing as an outstanding task, delayed by the pandemic. The handrail and path were noted as being dangerous, especially for those with pushchairs or limited mobility. Ross Levy was to explore timescales for the completion of these works but it is unclear if this took place.

A budget of £20k is available for the works at Fludes Lane with the Borough Council, an additional request of £20k toward these works has also been made by the County Councillor for the area from his County discretionary budget to LCC Highways. Residents are understandably frustrated that these works, especially in two areas around the A6, have not been completed. The Council and the County Council should be held to account as to why these works have not been taken place, and timescales need to be confirmed for this ASAP. There were queries around who is responsible for the upkeep of the bridge on Fludes Lane as this sits on private land. The maintenance of public rights of way, bridleways and country routes, believed to be the responsibility of LCC, was also raised as it appears that they are not being maintained, with broken styes and overgrown vegetation. This is compounded by many of these paths running over privately owned land.

It was noted that LCC operates a number (0116 305 0001) where issues such as those raised above can be reported to them to action; this number is available on the LCC website and has previously resulted in works being actioned quickly.

A resident raised that a public right of way to the rear of Coombe Park is currently fenced off due to a building site. It is currently also impassable due to the mud along the route being churned up.

ACTION: OWBC Corporate Assets to be contacted regarding Fludes Lane and pressed for an update on the works.

98. **ITEMS RAISED BY RESIDENTS**

(1) In 2017 SLM took over the running of Brocks Hill for what I understood to be a 17 year lease. Could the Chair clarify what the arrangement with SLM currently is, and what it will be when the Council move into the building? Will SLM be in effect sub-letting to the Council, and if so, at what cost?

OWBC have allowed SLM to use the Brocks Hill site and lease the café. OWBC will be taking the site back at no cost. SLM will continue to lease the café.

(2) As part of the agreed refurbishment of the Brocks Hill building prior to, and as a condition of, their taking over the lease, I believe a sprung floor was installed at a cost of Circa £400k. Could the Chair indicate how many classes took place at Brocks Hill following that installation, and if they will continue?

Speaking to the General Manager at Everyone Active, the floor was adapted to be semi-

sprung to allow multi-purpose use of the room. The room has since been used for a variety of different functions both during the day and evening. An example of this is an existing cheerleading class moving over from Parklands to Brocks Hill 3 times a week. Upon OWBC moving into Brocks Hill, this room will not be open to the public. This may change over time.

The resident confirmed that a typo was made in this question, and that the figure should read as £104k.

(3) Could the Chair give an update on the Customer Service provision plans?

The Customer Service Experience Strategy consultation closed on 23rd December 2022, results are now being analysed and considered and will feed into the final strategy.

The main proposals are:

- To promote, encourage and support a digital-first model in acknowledgement that most customers prefer to self-serve using the council's digital offer – such as the website.
- To continue to provide an excellent supported service offer by telephone, email, virtual video appointment and similar.
- To increase our face-to-face offering, considering appointment hubs, and a reception facility at our new head office.

No decisions have been made at this stage, but we will be using the customer feedback from the recent consultation to direct our strategy.

We are driven to find to the correct balance between encouraging and advancing our digital customer service offer while also ensuring those that are unable to contact us in this way have direct access to the support they need.

Cllr. Ridley noted that there is a push from Members to see Officers conducting face-to-face meetings and appointments where possible, potentially operating out of libraries that is being discussed with LCC.

Cllr. Haq notes that a dedicated room will be present at Brocks Hill for face-to-face meetings with Officers and Members for members of the public.

Concerns were raised that only one bus route services Brocks Hill, and that this will be a barrier to residents attending the new Council Offices, especially those that live in Wigston and South Wigston. It was also noted that the offices themselves are situated up a hill, after a fairly long walk along Washbrook Lane and the car parks there, which may also put people off of visiting the offices.

An additional query was raised around the introduction of 30 minute free car parking spaces at Brocks Hill once the new Council Offices open. Members will look at the possibility of this going forward.

One resident raised concerns that Brocks Hill is not large enough to accommodate all of

the Council's staff, and that should officers be unable to afford to work from home it is not clear how they will be able to do so from the new offices. It was noted that the existing building is underused due to the size of the Council's workforce, and that a one for one duplication of the workspace is not required at Brocks Hill.

It was also suggested that Council staff working out of Brocks Hill park in the overflow car park at Parklands, leaving the spaces closer to the building free for members of the public. The car parking situation at Brocks Hill will be reviewed ahead of the new offices opening.

£1.2m loan was also queried; it was noted that this is to be repaid over 30 years with a very low interest rate, and has been amalgamated into the 'cost neutral' status of the new offices from the sale of Bushloe House. Brocks Hill is expected to save the Council £2m over the next 10 years.

(4) A meeting of the Brocks Hill Development Committee in June included an agenda item from which the public and press were barred. Could the Chair give a general indication what this item referred to?

The report comprised an update in respect of the Brocks Hill/Office relocation project. The exclusion of the press and public was on the grounds that the Agenda item involved the likely disclosure of exempt information (as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).

Jubilee Tree – In view of the passage of time would it not be more appropriate for this to now be a memorial tree? This can be discussed at a future meeting of the Forum once the Tree Officer has completed the feasibility study. It may be that a second tree is considered as a memorial.

Consultation on the sale of public land near St Peter's Church, Oadby – The committee responsible for this decision is meeting next month, with an update to be made available at the next Oadby residents forum following the committee meeting. This committee meeting is a public meeting, with details available on the Council's website.

Planning application for houses off of Florence Wragg Way, Oadby - Public meeting at Manor High School, 25 January, 6:30pm. Council Officers will also be in attendance. It was queried if the land covered by the application is part of land that was thought to be eventually gifted to the public. Concerns were also raised around how children on the new development would travel to school, with it believed they would be attending Brookside Primary School with no direct route to the school from the development.

Proposed five-a-side football development at Washbrook Lane, Oadby – No report on this has been received by the Council's planning committee so it is believed the application is for this is still live.

99. POLICE UPDATE

PC Andy Collins provided an update to residents concerning the current crime and disorder

stats in the Borough. In the last three months burglary dwellings have almost doubled compared to last year. Cllr Haq suggested a seminar or similar be put on for residents regarding target hardening for residential buildings; PC Collins is happy to facilitate this and distribute a number of free packs containing items aimed at deterring burglary.

Theft from motor vehicles (cat converter) has seen 9 reported in the Borough. ASB – no incidents in October, 2 Nov, 1 Dec. All dealt with by police and partners spoken to.

Theft from Stores – Decreased significantly on previous years.

Drugs related offences – Vehicles – 8 vehicles with cannabis. People – 16 people found with cannabis. This coincides with the Police's drink drive campaign. A cannabis factory was found on Briar Meads, with 2 further potential factories being investigated. A resident asked for the signs of a building being used as a factory; it was highlighted that blackout blinds being shut all day, bright lights being used at odd hours, and the noise of large fans being used to mitigate the smell of cannabis from within the location. PC Collins noted that he is happy for his email address (andy.collins@leics.police.uk) to be circulated to residents for reports of potential cannabis factories to be passed on to him.

Overall Oadby is very healthy from a crime and disorder point of view. Many of the perpetrators are thought to be travelling into the area from Peterborough along the A6, and this is being looked in to.

A resident raised queries regarding deliveries being left on, and stolen from, doorsteps. Advice was given about identifying a safe place or a neighbour where parcels can be left securely, and having a conversation with the delivery driver regarding this.

A Launde Road resident raised concerns with dangerous driving in the area at the Woodfield Road junction, including two lampposts having been brought down by vehicles in the last 5 years. Cars that have been parked on the road in this area overnight have also been struck by motor vehicles at this location, and buildings have also been struck on previous occasion. Police have confirmed they are aware of speeding in this area, with a speeding operation having taken place around the Manor Road extension – 73 tickets were issued over a four and a half hour period in this area in late 2022. The CSP is currently looking at purchasing speed activated signs to support police operations in this area. A resident suggested the installation of speed humps in this area but this would be a matter for the County Council. An additional matter of a parked car causing an obstruction at the corner of Launde Road / Uplands Road was raised which the Police will look into.

A query was raised regarding the use of loud fireworks and how the police enforce this; it was confirmed that the police do not take an active role in this unless they are being used in a dangerous / ASB manner.

100. LEICESTERSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE UPDATE

M Walters, Manager of Wigston Fire Station, spoke with residents about the free home fire

safety checks that LFRS offer to residents. A leaflet concerning fire safety in the home was also distributed to residents in attendance.

LFRS work with the Police, and other partners, to identify hotspot areas in the borough where a focus for resources and education should be placed.

LFRS also attend primary schools to speak directly with pupils about fire safety.

Fire crews are able to attend public events, such as coffee mornings etc., to speak with attendees about fire safety messages etc. The service's approach is very much education focussed with a view to reducing the number of emergencies in the Borough.

Of particular note was the use of older style 'multi-plug cubes' which are a greater fire risk than new 'strip style' multi-plugs. Other quick advice given involves having access to a telephone upstairs, and being aware of escape plans from properties during an emergency.

Fireworks – LFRS provide education around the safe use of fireworks, and are kept informed of large scale organised displays that are taking place across Leicestershire. An example of ASB firework use on Canal Street, South Wigston was given where a firework was intentionally launched inside a shop. Crews whilst out and about will stop and speak to young people who are seen to be setting off fireworks.

M Walters is happy for his email address (matthew.walters@leics-fire.gov.uk) to be distributed to enable people to invite fire crews to events across the Borough.

Thanks were extended to M Walters and the fire crews working out of Wigston Station for their work during the heatwave in summer 2022. It was noted that the number of calls to fires dramatically increased, with over 1000 calls being received each month and 2000 in July alone, with a major incident due to the number of calls being made to the service. Education proved helpful with this and without doubt reduced the number of calls that were received overall.

101. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Update on the sale of land near St Peter's Church, Oadby as raised earlier in the meeting.

Coronation plans in the Borough.

Planning application for houses off of Florence Wragg Way, Oadby.

102. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Attendees were informed at the Forum that the next meeting will be held on Thursday, 9 February 2023 at 7:15pm.

Due to a necessary change in Chair of this meeting, announced on Tuesday, 10 January, and to be decided on Tuesday, 7 February 2023, this meeting date is no longer suitable

and has been amended to **Monday, 20 March 2023 at 7:15pm**. The venue for this meeting is to be confirmed.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.55 pm



Chair

Monday, 20 March 2023

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