

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SOUTH WIGSTON RESIDENTS' FORUM HELD AT
MAIN HALL, SOUTH WIGSTON METHODIST CHURCH, BLABY ROAD, SOUTH WIGSTON,
LE18 4PB ON WEDNESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2024 COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM**

PRESENT

G A Boulter Chair



Meeting ID: 2596

COUNCILLORS

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

M Smith Community Safety & Youth Officer

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

PC C Fear	Leicestershire Police
M Flynn	Leicestershire County Council
PCSO A Haq	Leicestershire Police
PCSO C Hayter	Leicestershire Police

47. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

A correction to the Minutes of the Previous Meeting was proposed by a Resident in respect of Windlass Drive. This has been attached to the Minutes of this meeting as an Appendix for clarity for residents.

48. POLICE UPDATE

The Police Officers in attendance introduced themselves to the residents present.

The Police noted that they are working very closely with the Council and have seen significant investment in crime prevention items including CCTV.

The Police highlighted that an Eastern European group were arrested within the last few months who were linked to a spate of burglaries in the area.

Properties that back on to parks or car parks have seen an increase of being targeted by criminals who are accessing the properties from these locations; advice was given around making sure that fences are in good order and that anti-climb paint and thorny plants are utilised to deter entry. Residents were encouraged to ensure that ladders around their property are also secured, and advised that light timers etc. are a good deterrent to burglaries as it appears that someone is still in the property. Smart bulbs and other technology, including doorbell cameras, were also highlighted.

Residents were encouraged to report anything suspicious to the Police and highlighted that registration numbers of vehicles are always beneficial.

Neighbourhood Link was also promoted to residents in the meeting.

The South Wigston Beat Priorities are speeding vehicles, with work ongoing with the Road Safety Partnership including Fatal Four events looking at mobiles, seatbelts, speeding and alcohol. speedorsafety.com was promoted as a resource. ASB is a priority too, especially around Tesco and Blaby Road Park; work has taken place with SWHS including the use of a knife arch in previous years. ASB on and around Gloucester Crescent was also noted and it was highlighted that work has taken place with the IMPACT Team to address this. Motorbike use in this area has also been reported as an issue. CCTV will be providing full coverage of Blaby Road Park in the near future. Vehicle Crime is another priority including theft of tools from vehicles and the theft of catalytic converters. The Police are able to provide anti-tamper number plate screws free of charge from Wigston Police Station.

Burglaries Dwellings – 2022 35 incidents, 2023 42 incidents. Compared to Wigston this was 141 2022 and 2023 74, Oadby 2022 89, 2023 88. In January for South Wigston there were 2 reports of burglary other than dwelling and 2 of a dwelling. In February there is one report of each on record. Shoplifting was queried and was noted that its not classed as a burglary unless they are entering and taking from a non-public area. Police were asked to provide some details around reported shoplifting in South Wigston at a future forum. The success rate in relation to burglaries was question by a resident; Officers highlighted that the investigations can take time i.e. in the gathering of CCTV and forensic evidence so success is hard to quantify. The Oadby Burglary arrests were used as an example of how success is usually a bigger picture case where a whole gang is arrested and property recovered.

Vehicle crime has seen 4 reports this year to date.

Noise complaints, especially in respect of neighbour disputes, are increasing and advice was given to report these matters through to the Council were Environmental Health can investigate.

A resident raised concerns of noise from a gym neighbouring their property around 6:30am – 7am including banging of weights etc. and music coming from the property. This is a gym on Saffron Road – Varneys.

The use of CCTV was highlighted as being ineffective by a resident due to face coverings. It was noted that many young people are using eScooters wearing all black, and residents queried as to why the Police are not seizing the eScooters from individuals instead of the current approach of education. The use of eScooters and eBikes was highlighted as an issue due to their anti-social use such as wheelieing down the middle of the road etc. The feeling is that control has been lost around the use of eScooters as legislation is unclear.

A resident asked how long the Police take to collect CCTV as they saved footage on 23 December that has yet to be reviewed. Officers took details from the resident to look into this.

49. THE WALL - SOFT TOUCH ARTS

D Myers gave an overview of The Wall project that Soft Touch Arts are starting shortly in South Wigston. Soft Touch Arts have worked in New Parks for around 12 years and seen great successes that they are looking to emulate in South Wigston. Sessions will start on Monday 22 April at Blaby Road Park, focussing on 11-25 year olds engaging in art and

music. Sessions will also take place at William Gunning Park and within SWHS. Outreach work will be taking place beforehand supported by other agencies such as the Police and the IMPACT Team.

Young People who attend these sessions are hoped to engage in sessions then running out of Elliot Hall to see artwork developed for the Pladis Factory Wall on Blaby Road Park. This is the section of wall near the Skate Park / MUGA on the Park.

The project has been part funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and links into ASB related work in the area.

This is hoped to be a project that sees long term engagement from young people across several different youth provision opportunities in the area.

50. COUNCIL BUDGET 2024-25

OWBC is, like most other Councils, struggling for finances.

As of last week there were 50 families in temporary accommodation that will cost the council the best part of £100,000 which has not been budgeted for. This is a statutory requirement of the Council to provide temporary accommodation. If the temperature drops below freezing for a certain number of days the Council is also obligated to provide temporary accommodation to the homeless.

If the Council cannot issue a balance budget a Section 114 notice will be issued such as in Birmingham. If this happens a Government inspector will take control of the Council which the Council is also billed for.

To avoid this the Council has made a number of decisions to provide a balanced budget.

The Government is introducing mandatory food waste collections as a separate waste collection; this was to be funded by the Government but now the Council is expected to fund this and the required vehicle. The collection of soft furnishings also now comes with an additional cost to the Council due to POPS, and as they cannot be stored in the dedicated vehicle overnight there are additional costs involved. The food waste will be collected in caddies which is similar to a scheme that previously ran in the Borough but was stopped due to costs; this will be a statutory requirement of the Council to provide the service regardless of uptake from residents.

Collected food waste will be utilised as part of biogas generation for electricity generation.

The Council is having to reduce the number of officers it employs and is hoping to do so through voluntary redundancies.

Car Parking charges will also be increasing and waste collections are likely to go to a fortnightly basis. The charge for green waste collections will also be increased. OWBC does not profit from the garden waste collections but LCC may do as the disposal agency who compost the waste.

Changes to national recycling guidance may see the current contract for the Borough where OWBC collect, LCC act as the disposal agency, and CasePak as the contractor change. This could result in additional charges in respect of fuel etc. for the Council's wagons as they may have to travel further to unload the collected waste.

The Council is also required by central government to reduce its carbon footprint which the Council must also fund.

The Council is trying to pre-empt the decisions a Government Inspector would do should a section 114 notice be issued and trying to provide a balanced budget through the least impactful options.

A resident questioned if the recycling collections could be made fortnightly but black bin collections remain weekly as this has taken place in other areas. The Council's approach has not been finalised as yet with the change to take place in September 2024. The Council has to account for the additional houses built in the Borough and the requirement of bigger bins for some houses in the Borough; there is a concern that should bins be full and residents place black bags of extra waste next to them this could see an increase in litter and pests. Special arrangements may be made for larger families as part of the options the Council are considering.

51. COUNCIL TAX 2024-25

Council Tax for the Borough will be decided during a meeting taking place tomorrow. The County Council precept will be raised by 2.99% and then 2% for Social Care; this is an increase of £71.80 per year just from LCC. The OWBC increase will be £7.38 per year, Police £13.00 and LFRS £6.60. The 2.99% increase by OWBC is the most the Council is allowed to increase it by.

The Chair noted that Jennos Coffee House at Brocks Hill will be expanding which is in the interest of the Council as the Council takes a cut of the profits from the café as well as rent etc. Jennos is a very well used facility.

The Council is also hiring out the Council Chamber to external groups to raise additional funds.

Within the Council's Local Plan a public consultation will be coming out shortly to look at land to accommodate an additional 240 houses per year. 52 of these houses are from Leicester City Council's allocation as they are unable to meet the required numbers. OWBC is currently achieving the 240 houses per year but the consultation is intended to safeguard green spaces in the Borough.

The Chair suggested that Planning attend the next meeting of this Forum to further explain the Local Plan to residents.

52. FORUM FUNDING REQUESTS UPDATES

Agreed at the Council's PFD Committee meeting on Tues, 6 February;

Oadby & Wigston Swimming Club - £400.00

Barrier Flowers - £400.00

53. SAFER STREETS GRANT

The Borough was selected as a 'Safer Streets' eligible area by the Office of the Police and

Crime Commissioner in line with Home Office guidance. This enabled the OPCC to submit a bid, developed with input from the Oadby & Wigston Community Safety Partnership, for Home Office funding to address crime and disorder, with a specific focus on Burglary, in the area. The OPCC highlighted an area of Oadby in the Brocks Hill Ward where a large percentage of this initiative will be focused.

The Safer Streets funding has also enabled a significant enhancement to the redeployable CCTV systems utilised by the Community Safety Partnership, with 15 extra units having been ordered, and works to take place to allow identified street light columns to host the units. Additionally two ANPR equipped speed indicator display units have also been ordered for deployment around the Borough to both combat speeding vehicles in hotspot areas and to detect vehicles linked to crime traveling through the area.

M Smith provided an overview of how the ANPR units will collect evidence over a greater period of time than the Road Safety Vans. This will inform any longer term solutions required in hotspot areas. M Smith asked that residents continue to report concerns of speeding vehicles to inform deployment of the ANPR units.

54. CHAIR'S UPDATES

Spion Kop (Station Road / Blaby Road) Closure – Due to the electrification works Spion Kop will need to be removed and replaced resulting in a 7.5km detour whilst works take place. Work is expected to start in June 2025 for a five month period. This is fortunate as a period of the works will take place during the school summer holidays. A footbridge will be provided at the location for pedestrians and cyclists. The official detour will take traffic out to the Pork Pie Roundabout and back in again. The railway track cannot be lowered due to the height of the water table, and the cables cannot be run under the bridge and still provide clearance to trains. Residents were concerned that some traffic will ignore the detour and opt to travel along Countesthorpe Road damaging the road surface and causing more traffic to pass a residential area; lorry detours will likely be dedicated and enforced by the traffic authorities.

D-Day 80th Anniversary – 6 June a beacon will be lit at Brocks Hill at 9:15 to coincide with national events of remembrance.

Vibrations from the Fosse Way Prison Build – The building work is taking place in Blaby District but is affecting Oadby & Wigston residents, including seeing nearby cracking. OWBC Officers are monitoring this.

Teenage Wheeze / Air Pollution – Monitoring stations have been installed along Blaby Road to monitor air quality in the area. Work is also taking place with the schools and the Health Service in regards to this.

Pigeon Factory – Renovations have finished and tenants have started to move into the building. The building has proved attractive to people who regularly commute to Birmingham due to its proximity to South Wigston Railway Station. The building was previously compulsory purchased by the Council as the owner could not be identified.

55. ITEMS RAISED BY RESIDENTS

Boundary Commission – A resident raised a query as to whether the Ward boundaries will be changed, and could this see Oadby & Wigston disappear into a bigger authority?

The Chair highlighted that this is highly unlikely to happen and would be subject to consultation with residents by the Boundary Commission.

Waste Bin on Windlass Drive – This is part of the bids that went through the Council’s PFD Committee and was approved.

Alpha House – The roof blew off of the building recently and is in a terrible state. Planning has been approved for the building to be converted to flats and works are currently taking place at the location.

Bushloe House Council Offices – A £50,000 deposit has been paid by the interested buyer; the sale is subject to planning permission due to its Grade 2 listing. The older part of the building is to be retained with the newer sections demolished. The trees on the site are covered by a TPO so will be retained. Any new building has to increase biodiversity by 10%. The building was built in 1854.

56. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None raised.

57. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, 28 May 2024 – 19:00 – Fairfield Primary School (TBC)

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.10 pm

Corrections to South Wigston Residents' Forum Minutes of Meeting that took place 31st October 2023. All words in red are corrections / clarifications.

Throughout this section of the Minutes, it is clear the drafter did not truly understand the position on the Waterside Gardens Estate vis a vis the balancing pond thereon and separately, the Public Open Space. The drafter confuses the two areas.

Residents pay a rent charge to FirstPort Property Services who were appointed by the developer, Barratt Homes North Midlands Ltd to cut grass and repair the wooden slatted fence at the balancing pond situate the first corner on Windlass Drive. Residents do not pay them to maintain the Public Open Space. The Public Open Space is currently not maintained and has been left to deteriorate now for 7 years due to an impasse between the relevant parties involved. The residents pay full council" tax and on top, an annual rent charge for partial maintenance at the pond. Severn Trent Water maintain the pond workings, pipe work and head walls.

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**, (not Barratt's. It was from the landowner, J.H Hallam and Son Limited) 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. This last sentence should be re-written to say -** The letter details how J.H.Hallam & Son Limited and the Council appear to be at an impasse regarding the handover of the area from Barratt's to the Council. The letter stated that J.H. Hallam & Son Limited have been frustrated over the last 10 years or so, by the fact that the Public Open Space Area has not been dealt with in accordance with what was originally intended and agreed within the Section 106 Agreement. Barratt's were given a licence over the area and under the S106 Agreement, were obliged to maintain the area for a period of 12 months after the last house was occupied. At this point, a lease was to be entered into by OWBC to carry on with the maintenance provided that Barratt's had maintained the area to an acceptable standard. Nothing has happened now for 7 years since that first 12 months maintenance ended. 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** (not Barratts - it should say J.H.Hallam & Son Limited) 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. (This sentence should read:- Residents on Windlass Drive, Cutting Close and Keel Close note that they are effectively paying two lots of Council Tax, as they are also paying a property management company for the maintenance at the balancing pond situated on the first corner of Windlass Drive).** 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** (these last three words should be replaced with the words - the true extent, implications and meaning

of a "rent charge" being applied. They were only told there would be an annual fee to cut the grass and repair the wooden fence at the balancing pond) when purchasing their homes, and that their solicitors were also unaware of Barratt's (words to be added here "and Barratt's appointed managing agent, a company called FirstPort Property Serviced Ltd's) 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** (the word "contracts" should be replaced by - "TP1 - "Transfer of Part of Registered Title" which forms part of the property's land registry documents" **they have in place with Barratts.** (These last 6 words should be struck out). Other residents noted that **Barratts** (again this is the wrong party - it should say "FirstPort Property Services") 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** (again the wrong party - it should say "FirstPort Property Services") to cut the grass at the balancing pond and to maintain the bordering fence which is also covered by (add the words "property damage, public liability and") terrorism insurance which residents are also charged for. Residents **believe** (this word should be removed and replaced with the words - "were told by Barratts") 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.