

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OADBY RESIDENTS' FORUM HELD AT CIVIC SUITE,
BROCKS HILL COUNCIL OFFICES, WASHBROOK LANE, OADBY, LEICESTER, LE2 5JJ ON
THURSDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2025 COMMENCING AT 6.30 PM**

PRESENT

S Z Haq Chair



Meeting ID: 2741

COUNCILLORS

J K Chohan
F S Ghattoraya
J Kaufman

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

M Smith Community Safety & Youth Officer

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Sgt. M Body Leicestershire Police
L Monk Leicestershire County Council

40. APOLOGIES

Cllr. N Alam
Cllr. L Darr
Cllr. D Gamble
Cllr. I Ridley

41. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Page 6: Bluebell Lane should be Bluebell Close.

42. POLICE UPDATE

Sgt. Body attended the Forum and provided a quick update to residents on recent crime figures. There have been 2 burglaries in the Borough since the start of the year, with the low number likely linked to the Safer Streets work undertaken in the Borough with the Community Safety Partnership. There has been 8 vehicle related crimes reported such as theft of number plates etc.

Residents raised eScooters as an ongoing concern in the Borough, and what the policy is in relation to their use. eScooters remain illegal to ride on public land or the highway, and can only legally be used on private land with the landowners consent. The action taken by Leicestershire Police in Leicester City Centre was also referenced, asking if it was really necessary to seize eScooters and eBikes. eScooters are not road legal as they cannot be licenced or insured; insurance cannot be taken out for them as they are not a registered vehicle, but are classed as a vehicle as they are mechanically propelled. eScooters can only be used on public land in areas where an established scheme is in place such as Nottingham. Some eBikes are classed as legal up to a certain speed or wattage, and must be 'pedal assist'.

Abandoned car on the Morwoods raised by residents – reported to the Council, with a notice placed on the vehicle by OWBC stating it was being investigated. The car moved on the day the notice was issued, but was moved to one of the one hour parking bays where it has remained since. No tickets appear to have been issued to date on this. This is indicative of how often parking is being checked by Civil Enforcement Officers in the Borough.

Churchill Close, to the rear of the urgent care centre – Cars were parked on the grass here and were seen to be being issued with tickets. The grass is churned up here seemingly by residents in the flats parking vehicles here. Is this land County Council owned?

43. CHAIR'S UPDATES

Oadby & Wigston Local Plan

The government, just before Christmas, changed the housing targets for the Borough which meant new build properties grew from 249 (including LCC overspill) up to 388 properties to be built per year. These 388 are just for OWBC and do not include any LCC properties. If the difference between the two numbers was less than 100 properties the current Local Plan could continue, as the difference is greater for OWBC a new Local Plan is required. The government noted that although the Council was in the advanced stages of the Local Plan for 249 hours per year, specifically infrastructure requirements, a new Local Plan assessing requirements for the 288 properties needed to be created. This will be open to public consultation as per the previous plan. There is a concern that the Borough will run out of the space required to keep up with this building rate, and may need to declare its own unmet housing need for other neighbouring Councils to pick up. Residents were encouraged to engage with all public consultation on the Local Plan as and when the opportunity to do so arises.

Residents queried if there will be any pressure put on developers of new properties under the Local Plan to be ecofriendly and last at least 50 years. National Planning Policy is the main guidance for this that the Planning Team can insist upon in terms of ecofriendly / sustainable developments. There is a risk that if the instance of the Planning Team is too great a development may be considered unviable, and not built which would mean the housing target may be missed.

A resident queried if the Local Plan on the Council's website is current given the above information as residents are still be consulted on it. Feedback gathered on the plan contained on the website still stands and will be taken into account in the development of the new Local Plan. Consultation on the new Local Plan is likely to not be as extensive as the previous plan given the 18-month deadline set by the government.

Residents requested an update be provided on the Council's website featuring key milestones around the development of a new Local Plan. Frequent updates, in the form of 'short and sharp' statements, regarding the Local Plan would also enable greater residents involvement.

A request was made for the key dates in relation to the consultation over the Local Plan to be shared. These can be shared via the Forum mailing list once available but should also be included in wider Comms work by the Council. The Planning Team are thought by residents to keep a database of residents who have expressed an interest in receiving planning update via email.

Some residents from the Stoughton Road area note that they feel that they are more affected by the Harborough Local Plan, and asked if there is a mechanism in place that allowed Harborough to consult Oadby & Wigston residents on their plan. It is unclear if a mechanism exists but Harborough do run public consultations which our residents can participate in. Oadby and Wigston's Planning Team will be asked to publish any Harborough consultation dates they become aware of via the cross-boundary working.

Potential Restructure of Local Government

The Government announced devolution proposals prior to Christmas in a white paper. The government wants to see the creation of huge mayoral authority covering LLR. The government expects these authorities to cover populations of 1.5 million each; under which will sit unitary authorities which would see district and borough councils abolished. The proposals for these authorities in LLR is unclear at present. Leicester City and Rutland are already unitary authorities. There is a minimum size of a population of 500,000 people for unitary authorities. Devolution is intended to remove the current two-tier local government system.

There are concerns that unitary authorities would result in less contact with elected representatives and that Council offices would be further away from some communities.

Current proposals are that these authorities are realised by April 2028. Local councillors are working proactively to ensure that Oadby & Wigston gets the best possible outcome from this, including greater representation for our residents, local services, and maintaining our identity.

There is a noted fear that Oadby & Wigston will be absorbed into Leicester City as part of a suspected deal between them and County Hall. It is speculated that large chunks of the suburbs will be handed over to the City Council in turn for their support in becoming a unitary authority. What is proposed to be a better option is the formation of two unitary authorities in Leicestershire, with OWBC joining Harborough, Blaby and Hinckley. It was stressed that there is still no certainties around this workstream anywhere in LLR.

The County Council has wanted to create a unitary authority for some time but this was blocked by the City Council.

Residents noted concerns that it is not clear currently if they will have a say in the development of unitary authorities. The government noted that there will be no vote on this, but that proposals need to be made by November to them. The government will then run its own consultation based on the proposals it receives.

Elections will still go ahead for County Council in May 2025 as LCC was not successful in their application to the government to cancel the elections as part of fast-tracking devolution.

It is expected that a caretaker authority will be in place by 2027 as this is when the next local elections are scheduled to take place.

Councillors have queried already if the Local Plan will be affected by devolution. No answer was available at this time so the development of Local Plans will continue as business as usual. Expanding on this a query was raised as to how Harborough's published local plan will interact with Oadby & Wigston's; it was confirmed that as the site for development is cross-boundary there are close working links with the Planning Teams for each authority

over this matter.

In 1973 there was one unitary authority with local authorities sat below them, these split which cost a significant amount of money and now further money is going to be spent undoing this under devolution.

Councillors have tried to point out to Leicester City that taking over Oadby & Wigston will not solve their housing issues, and will not provide them with any opportunities for retail developments, due to land constraints in the Borough.

Queries were raised about which authority would collect Council Tax for developments along the Oadby & Wigston and Harborough border. Council Tax will be paid to whichever authority is responsible for the land on which the property is built, which that authority providing Council services to those residents.

Health and Education authorities are consulted in respect of new developments, and needs assessed in respect of funding contributions by the developer to local schools.

44. ITEMS RAISED BY RESIDENTS

Flooding

Flood questions to be noted here in the Minutes if available by publication and answered for the following meeting of the Forum. OWBC works closely with LCC and provides information and support to them as required under flooding.

Residents raised concerns of the impact of building works on flooding in the area; residents are concerned that any water entering the Washbrook from those developments will cause more flooding.

OWBC has, alongside other Leicestershire Councils, written to the government asking for more funding support to address flooding responses and prevention. Additional powers have also been requested to include flooding as a concern within planning applications, and looking at the inclusion of proper flood defences. Letters were sent in January and February. OWBC's Planning Team have confirmed that at present they don't have any powers to address flooding on existing developers, but can ask new developments to take flooding into account. The County Council has also been lobbied to clear the drains, with £500,000 allocated by them to do so more often, reducing the risk of flash flooding. The County Council has also made a pot of funding available for access to flooding support and prevention resources.

Insurance quotes are usually higher for properties that have experienced flooding, creating a cycle when flooding reoccurs. This is something the government has also been lobbied over.

Could the planning authority insist that all new build properties have water retention measures installed alongside soakaways as a means to reduce flooding? The ask can be made of new builds but cannot be insisted upon. Residents have noted that they are losing confidence on how the Council addresses flooding when worsened by new building developments.

Cllr. Kaufman noted that he had been emailed a 50 page report on flooding compiled by residents in Oadby. This report was noted as being very helpful, and an ask was made as to where it would end up. The report focused on flooding around the Washbrook and the Mulberry Home developments within the Washbrook catchment area. The report is a

"marker in the sand" as to the current state of the catchment area. Other residents have noticed that land within this area is now being farmed differently, with cereal more frequently in rotation, leaving more surface water running off of the field. All riparian landowners along the Washbrook were consulted and all have noted that the water is running faster and higher. The report has been sent to the Local Lead Flood Authority, local Councillors, the MP, and other bodies with a stake in the welfare and wellbeing of residents that live along the Washbrook. Around 20 properties flooding in January 2025, which was less than the previous year. Any developments on the fields within the catchment area need to have significant flooding defences included. The report has been passed by Councillors to the Council's Planning Team.

A query was raised as to whether the Council monitors the level of the Washbrook. A resident noted that there is a flow gauge on the Severn Bridge but it is unclear who installed or monitors this. M Smith has been asked to find out who is responsible for this gauge. Data collected from monitoring the Washbrook levels would be of use to the Planning Team to assess the impact of new developments on it, and insist that the Washbrook levels are not worsened by the developments.

The watershed for the Washbrook is thought to follow the Oadby & Wigston boundary, and is likely why the boundary was decided as such.

A query was raised as to if the Council can control gardens etc. being paved over as this also contributes to flash flooding. There is a ratio for this included in building controls, but it is unclear if there are restrictions for front gardens under planning.

Water runoff from the roads into the Washbrook also contributes, and sees more water flood into Knighton Park which is under the control of the City Council. Queries will be raised about how / if the County Council and City Council liaise regarding flooding and water routes. Cllr. Gamble has been reporting flooding issues to the County Council on a regular basis.

A query was raised around blocked drains on private roads. These would be the responsibility of the landowners to rectify. If flooding results due to this inaction it could result in a civil action being brought against the landowners.

Speeding Vehicles in the Borough

M Smith provided an update on the ANPR SIDs, and how to report speeding hotspots online to the Police.

Pavement Parking

Parking on corners was raised with Sgt. Body as this could be a police issue due to causing an obstruction. Enforcement of this comes down to officer time and capacity for the Police.

A request has been made by the Community Safety Partnership Chair, Cllr. Loydall, for a meeting to be held with LCC Civil Enforcement Officers and the local Police to confirm for residents clearly which agency has responsibility for the various problem parking reported. The working hours for the Civil Enforcement Officers will also be addressed as a concern within this meeting.

Concerns were raised again about parking outside of Bru on The Parade, Oadby. Drivers are arguing this doesn't cause an obstruction due to the width of the pavement. Grant funding is being looked into to fund planters and other street furniture to restrict pavement parking along the Parade. The Parade is the first area that will be looked at but other areas of the Borough will then be reviewed.

Residents expressed a concern that the plan for the Cyclops junction outside Epic Accessories will make it easier for vehicles to park on the pavement. These concerns will be raised with the County Council as the Highways authority.

5G Football Pitches planning application

This has gone to appeal which is still outstanding.

Paved Route from Brabazon Road to the Council Offices

Residents noted that there does not appear to be a direct roadway to walk up to the Council Offices without walking on the grass or through the car park for a section of it. This will be looked into.

Potholes in the corner of Copse Close and Launde Road

A matter for LCC Highways, passed on accordingly.

45. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Updates from Oadby Traders re. their events were requested for future Forums.

46. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting remains to be confirmed as it will fall inside the new financial year.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.07 pm