

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SOUTH WIGSTON RESIDENTS' FORUM HELD AT
SCHOOL ROOM, SOUTH WIGSTON METHODIST CHURCH, BLABY ROAD, SOUTH
WIGSTON, LEICESTERSHIRE, LE18 4PB ON WEDNESDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2025
COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM**

PRESENT

G A Boulter Chair



Meeting ID: 2745

COUNCILLORS

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

M Smith Community Safety & Youth Officer

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

M Flynn Leicestershire County Council

77. APOLOGIES

Cllr. R Morris

78. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Countesthorpe Road Car Park – Figures for this site cannot be identified individually. A request was made for the total income from the car parks in the Borough, broken down by cash, permits, etc. to be provided at the next meeting instead of this.

79. POLICE UPDATE

Cllr. Loydall spoke on the shoplifting experienced by the One Stop on Gloucester Crescent. This has been raised with Insp. Perry by Cllr. Loydall. There is allegedly one individual who has perpetrated a lot of the theft who has been caught and is 'on the radar'; Police are awaiting CCTV evidence from the shop to confirm involvement. A site meeting at the One Stop has also been requested with the Police and Council, with the Police able to take details from young people present and visit home addresses. Cllr. Loydall is meeting with the local beat teams on a regular basis to discuss issues in the Borough, and a specific meeting has been requested to focus on shoplifting in the Borough. New powers have been proposed by the Government that the Council are aware of, and will aim to make use of should the Bill receive ascent. A proportion of the shoplifting is thought to be perpetrated by foreign nationals who, when sentenced, return to their home country.

80. CHAIR'S UPDATES

Devolution

The Chair covered the Government's intention to abolish Borough and District Councils,

removing two tier Council arrangements, and replacing them with unitary authorities. The County Council has signalled their intention to resurrect the 2019 unitary authority proposals, suggesting one authority ran from County Hall. District and Borough Council Leaders have put a separate proposal together suggesting two authorities, one north and one south, for the County. Leicester City Council's will remain the same under both plans; there were suggestions previously that these boundaries would have expanded including Oadby & Wigston. Within the next three years devolution will take place. The District and Borough Council's proposal will be publicly consulted on in due course; the County proposal is already open for consultation but the questions ask appear to have a bias toward supporting one unitary authority.

County Budget

The Chair confirmed that the County Council will be increasing their Council Tax by £79.92 per year, Oadby & Wigston increasing by £7.60, the Police precept increasing by £14, and the Fire precept by £5. It was noted that despite the increase in the Police precept that the number of Police Officers is actually decreasing; some PCSOs are also being made redundant. The Police Response Units are now based at Market Harborough with no officers responding from Wigston Station for the Borough. An assistant Police and Crime Commissioner is being recruited at a cost which could be saved instead.

Spion Kop

Railway line to be lowered this year.

Homelessness

It is estimated that by the end of this financial year there will be 100 families housed in temporary accommodation by the Council. Homeless individuals cannot be kept in bed and breakfasts for longer than 6 weeks by law. This year homelessness will cost the Council £1m, from a total budget of £6m. The government will not subsidise accommodation costs for bed and breakfast, and private rentals are not within the Council's budget. 100 houses on the Newton Lane new build will be coming on to the market in due course but this is not enough to address the problem. The Council's budget has been balanced this year; the Government has now stated that Capital Receipts (Assets) can be sold off by Councils to aid balancing budgets. Bushloe House has had a £50,000 deposit paid for it, and a planning application is to be submitted for determination shortly, once approved the new buyers will take control and the full income of the sale will be made available to the Council. The Chair noted that another authority is selling a park as an asset, and stated that OWBC will not be doing this. Some areas of land in Wigston town centre can be sold off. Homelessness will increase if the Government does not step in and put safeguards against no fault evictions into law.

Flooding

Flooding in the Fairfield Estate was raised in the previous meeting; this was raised with LCC and officers have been out to inspect sites and undertake works. William Gunning Park is mostly clay with little drainage however so water runs off of the surface; works are being considered that may rectify this. A resident raised flooding she experiences in her garage due to water run off from the park. Large issues are also caused by flooding closing some routes out of the Borough including Crow Mills and the Blaby railway bridge. The County Council is the Lead Authority for flooding in the Borough; some works to address flooding are delegated to Severn Trent whilst LCC handle other works.

Proposal for Blaby Road Park

There are proposals that Members have become aware of to see Blaby Road Park redeveloped to include football and cricket pitches under a private company as a commercial venture, and potentially see the pavilion redeveloped to include a cafe. This is

being heard by officers at the Council and Members have not been consulted on this to date. The lease of the park is proposed for 25 years. Members are concerned about the bowls club which is nearly 100 years old, and how the proposals will impact public access to the park. The maintenance of the site currently costs the Council £19,000 per year. There are 14 members at the bowls club, some of whom don't live in the Borough, who do pay membership fees but the income generated is low. The proposals for the park include FA spec football pitches which would include pitch lighting; this will impact neighbouring properties. This is an ongoing conversation and Members are being open with this as rumours are likely to spread quickly.

Oadby Waste Site

Operating hours will be changing at this site, including later evening openings. The site is currently 9am-4pm, with changes to include being open until 7pm. The sites will still operate a 5-day schedule with changes being made countywide.

81. ITEMS RAISED BY RESIDENTS

Windlass Drive Car Park

Residents from Windlass Drive raised concerns with the condition of the car park just off of the road which is under the control of Hallams. This was the main building compound for Barretts whilst the estate was being built. Residents on the estate pay fees to maintain the balancing pond. After 12 months following the last house being built the lease of the land should have been handed over to the Council; this has not yet happened 9 years after completion. The car park remains Hallam's property due to this and is now experiencing fly-tipping on a weekly basis including NO2 cannisters both large and small, examples of which were shown; users are usually arriving and leaving in vehicles so involved in drug driving. Other litter includes small drugs bags and significant litter from McDonalds. Wombles are trying to keep the area clean but as the land is still owned by Hallams, and is classed as private land, there are limitations on what actions can be taken to resolve or address the issues reported.

The Chair noted that the Council will not take ownership of the land until it is in a reasonable standard; this is something that the landowner refuses to do resulting in a stalemate. The land is largely overgrown and is not maintained by the landowner. The Chair proposed seeking means to gate off the car park, with the Chair offering to approach the landowner to see this happen.

It was noted that residents have paid for van permits to take the fly-tipping experienced, including an armchair, to the tip. The Chair notes that the Council does have the power to serve a notice on the landowner re. the fly-tipping but this can take some time to complete.

Wombles are litter-picking every other night and collecting at least a bag's worth of rubbish from the car park.

Residents are pushing for the Police to regularly attend the site and undertake roadside drug tests for vehicles visiting the site. There were suggestions that the McDonald's receipts may be utilised by the Police to identify the owners of vehicles that regularly visit the site and litter.

A query was raised as to how long it will take for the promised bin to be installed on Windlass Drive; the Chair noted that this is still coming but the bin audit in the Borough is still taking place. It was noted that one of the Wombles was verbally abused by a driver who stated, incorrectly, that it is the Wombles' fault through the work they do that the

Council is reducing the number of bins in the Borough, and the number of street cleansing staff employed by the Council being reduced.

Long Street School

A resident queried what the future of the Record's Office currently occupying the building is to be as it is believed to be at capacity. The Chair noted that the County Council are looking at converting space at County Hall to become the new Record's Office, with a timescale of 2 years given to secure an appropriate space for the records to be stored appropriately. The Record's Office building itself is locally listed.

Food Pantry

M Flynn introduced herself as the Local Area Coordinator for South Wigston and spoke about the need for food banks. A food pantry has been developed in South Wigston for £5 a month membership providing up to £25 worth of food and other products, such as hygiene products, per week. Additional services are linked in with the food pantry to ensure that people are aware of, and receiving, the support they're eligible for. The Food Pantry runs at Elliot Hall on a Thursday, 10am-1pm, and also works as a social space. The pantry will also hold a stock of 'formal clothes' that can be borrowed to aid with job interviews etc., and plans are being made to host a barber or hairdresser on site too. Food insecurity is a large issue so residents were encouraged to signpost anyone they're aware of who may be struggling to the food pantry. The Food Pantry is now in its 13th week, with 46 members, and is open to anyone who lives in the Borough. Eligibility to access the Food Pantry is checked. Nappies, sanitary wear, etc. is also available through this service.

Albion Street Mural

Residents expressed praise for the mural that has been completed on Albion Street, highlighting it as a wonderful piece of art. The Chair noted that there will also be some street furniture changes along Blaby Road as part of the same project, paid for by Central Government. Residents raised the concrete benches that have been installed on Bell Street are not fit for purpose; Members noted that the new benches are not finished with wooden slats and backs to be installed – South Wigston's benches will not be in this style

82. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Recycling – Changes are coming to recycling, as well as food waste collections. Central Government has provided funding for vehicles for the food waste collection but no money to pay the staff to operate them. Food waste bins will be a small caddy in the kitchen with a larger bin outside, and weekly collections..

83. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

TBC as the meeting will fall inside the new Financial Year – likely to be June 2025.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.09 pm