

**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, 8 FEBRUARY 2024 COMMENCING AT 6.30 PM**

PRESENT

D A Gamble Chair



Meeting ID: 2589

COUNCILLORS

J K Chohan
F S Ghattoraya
S Z Haq
P Joshi
R V Joshi
J Kaufman
I K Ridley

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

PC A Collins Leicestershire Police
PCSO H Sanghera Leicestershire Police
M Smith Community Safety & Youth Officer

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

12. POLICE UPDATE

Burglaries have been the main concern for residents in recent months, 11 in November, 19 in December, usually between 6pm and 9pm but previously were in the early hours. A significant arrest was made in January and breaks have now dropped to 7 and 4 in January and February. The arrest was a gang from the West Midlands.

There have been no reports of ASB.

Shops along the Parade have been targeted with shop fronts being damaged; there have been 30 reports of this across the Borough and an arrest has been made.

Residents noted that they are facing difficulties contacting the police with phone calls to 101 not being answered. One individual noted they were on hold for 25 minutes. The 999 service has targets in which calls must be answered, the 101 service does not. Beat team contact details are on the Police's website and they are happy to be contacted directly.

A query was raised as to who complaints regarding the performance of the Police in regards to call answering are made; it was noted that the Police have a single complaints form and this is either filtered to the Chief Constable or the PCC.

Parking outside of the Sports Lounge on London Road; vehicles continue to park on double yellow lines despite a recent effort to further ticket vehicles. The Police have no powers to ticket vehicles for parking; this falls to Leicestershire County Council. 5 cars were noted to

be parked on the double yellows tonight and 1 wholly on the pavement. County Council enforcement officers do not work beyond 6pm and advise residents to talk to the Police instead; this is unable to be reported through the online Police system as the system does not allow parking to be reported as it's not a Police responsibility. Residents noted that this could be ASB as customers of the Sports Lounge hang around outside the bar and make it an intimidating location. The Chair asked for a report on this to be made to the Council's Licensing Committee. Residents also suggested that County Council Enforcement Officers work additional shifts to help resolve this matter. It was also noted that people have started to park on these double yellow lines during the day so it is being seen as "the norm"; this may be linked to the parking charges in the Borough as ASDA car park is also being used by non-customers.

A fatal accident took place on 6 November on Wigston Road; a public meeting was called regarding this with the Police invited but there was no attendance. Residents would like to see traffic calming measures installed along Wigston Road coming from the direct of the public houses at the Wigston Road roundabout. A bus shelter installed on this stretch of road also blocks the sight lines along the road which may have contributed to the accident in November. Residents have been informed elsewhere that no changes can be made until the Police inquiry has been completed; what is the timeframe for this? PC Collins noted that he has made his representations to the Sgts in charge of the matter, as the attending officer, and this is now heading to Crown Court. There is no timeframe for this as it may result in a prosecution.

A cyclist was involved in a collision on the same day; this was not as serious and was initiated by the cyclist.

Cllr. Ridley will speak with Council Officers regarding the bus shelter either being removed, moved, or replaced with a transparent or side-less option.

It was proposed that the layout of the roundabout is considered by County Council Highways looking at installing a central reservation.

The Chair proposed that a letter is drafted from the Forum to the relevant Council Officers regarding both the bus shelter and the roundabout.

Residents raised concerns around the speed at which vehicles exit the A6 and pass through Oadby town centre. Some residents suggested a 20mph speed limit is applied to the area from New Street to Rosemead Drive. Speeding vehicles on Brabazon Road was also raised.

Abandoned or untaxed vehicles are dealt with by the Council or the Police depending on their location. The DVLA have the power to deal with vehicles with no MOT or tax; the Police for vehicles with no insurance.

Residents around Manor High School have made complaints about parents picking up / dropping off children parking dangerously or illegally, blocking driveways etc. A request was made for the Police to visit the schools at these times of day; it was confirmed that the Police do this on rotation. Cllr. R Joshi has spoken with traffic officers regarding this and they have previously attended the schools, issuing a number of tickets to parents around Christmas time. A more regular patrol is potentially being planned for this. Cllr. R Joshi also noted that officers that had attended the school issuing tickets have experienced verbal abuse and intimidating behaviour from some parents. The school has provided praise to PCSO's Harks and Nad.

13. SAFER STREETS FUNDING

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.

Residents in eligible areas will be able to apply for 'Target Hardening Packs' consisting of items such as video doorbells, CCTV cameras, socket timers, and window shock and contact sensors free of charge under the Safer Streets scheme. Details of how to apply will be shared shortly through the Council's Comms channels and via the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Previous victims of burglary will be eligible for a 'Cocooning Pack' through Leicestershire Police and will be contacted directly by local officers.

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 further information regarding the CCTV cameras, the Safer Streets bids, and target hardening packs. M Smith noted that there will be 25 cameras, and 60 columns identified to host them.

A resident noted that 5 columns on the racecourse roundabout are not currently working; Cllr. Ridley had previously reported this only to be told by Highways that they're not a County responsibility. This was confirmed to be false as they fall inside the County boundary and were looked at; LCC state they are working but it appears the timers on them are not set properly. This will be reported again.

14. 2024-25 COUNCIL BUDGET

A summary of the results of the Council's 2024-25 Budget Consultation, which ran from 19 December to 16 January, is now available on the Council's website.

Cllr. Ridley noted to residents that Council meetings are public but YouTube viewing figures show that not many residents watch or attend them. The Council started looking at the budget some time ago being aware that many Councils are facing budget hardships. The Local Government Association surveyed all Councils in December and found the 1 in 5 Councils are likely to issue a 114 notice within 2 years. When a Council issues this notice the Council Tax cap is lifted; Council Tax is able to be raised by 10% if this happens, with Woking having raised their Council Tax by 8%. Other non-statutory services provided by the Council such as garden waste collections are stopped.

All of the Council budgets are available online; in 2010 the Council's Revenue Budget was £10m, in today's money that is £15m. The budget agreed by the Council is now £7.5m, significantly lower. Grants from Central Government were only announced in December, 3 months before the budget was due to be agreed, so the Council was forced to speculate.

Moving Council Offices saved money for the Council as maintaining Bushloe House was

expensive.

10% inflation rates have also affected the Council's costs around staff wages, fuel for vehicles, and other goods and services.

External Auditor fees have increased by 50% nationally due to increased regulation in auditing.

Council Tax can only be increased by 3% normally. Business rates are also a static charge.

Homelessness related expenses are a statutory duty and the cost of living crisis has increased homelessness; the bill to the Council was higher than expected. The Borough also has fewer Band D properties and above for Council Tax. The Borough does not have land able to be utilised to create business parks etc. either.

The Council, to balance the budget, has been looking at cutting staff (1 in 10) and increasing charges for services. Garden Waste services and car parking fees will be increasing.

The Council tries to benchmark itself against other local councils in terms of charges for services. The Garden Waste service charge is in line with Harborough, and the season tickets for parking are still the cheapest in the County. Season tickets are not advertised enough and Cllr. Ridley has asked Council Officers to amend this. Car parking tickets are cheaper for residents. Season tickets for the Borough cover specific areas; there are three zones in the Borough that cover leisure centres, Wigston and South Wigston, or Oadby – charges are currently 6 or 12 months but Officers have been asked to look at monthly permits due to how many households are budgeting. There is also one ticket for all car parks in the Borough. Residents of the Borough get a 50% discount on the car parking permits; this currently works out at £1 per week per permit zone. Certain car parks are designated as 'long stay' where vehicles can stay over 4 hours; vehicles with permits are still restricted by the maximum duration stay for the individual car parks.

Residents queried as to whether fines issued by parking attendants of the highway comes to the Council or not; these go to the County Council.

The Council will also be moving to fortnightly bin collections from September 2024; this is in line with the rest of the County where bins will alternate between black bins and recycling week on week. Residents questioned as to whether there would be an increase in the amount of waste they are able to put out for each collection. Councillors noted that households that already have additional waste above one bin's worth they can already apply to the Council for additional capacity and it is expected that this will continue. Residents were also concerned that with fortnightly collections black bags left with bins would attract wildlife. Cllr. Haq noted that the Council will develop criteria for larger households or those with disabilities being able to apply for a larger bin; details around this will be released in due course before September. Garden waste will be unaffected by this. Questions were asked about why the bins would alternate; this is due to two bin types requiring two wagons and two gangs, the cost saving comes from removing one of them.

Residents queried if the Oadby Tip would remain open. Kibworth Tip was expected to close which would have had a knock-on effect on Oadby Tip but this seems to have been saved. It is unclear if Oadby Tip's opening hours will be shortened as part of the County Council's budget review.

Residents noted that whilst some are in support of the parking charges it has driven vehicles out on to the highway; Primrose Hill is particularly affected by this. Residents queried as to whether Resident's Only Parking Permits could be rolled out in the Borough for a nominal fee; returning vehicles to the car parks and increasing the Council's revenue. The Council approached the County Council regarding a Resident Parking Scheme in the Borough, as per Sandhurst Street, as they are the responsible authority for this and were turned down by the County Council. Councillors noted that they are happy to assist in canvassing residents for support for a scheme and then approach the County Council with this information.

Residents asked for transparency around how much money the budget cuts and service charges have raised for the Council. This information is available online and will be linked in the public minutes of this meeting.

Residents queried as to where new trade is coming in to the area such as niche shops; there is an abundance of charity shops, takeaways, etc. Some of the shop units are too small to attract new businesses. It was noted by some residents that the 'dying town centre' phenomenon is a national issue in the wake of people's changing shopping habits. Oadby has better occupancy of shop units than many other town centres in the country. The Oadby Traders' drive to provide events in the Borough was noted as a positive for the area.

The Council's 151 Officer (Chief Financial Officer) has highlighted where the Council can make savings to prevent a 114 notice being issued, and the notice is unlikely if the Medium Term Financial Strategy is followed. The Council has not gone in to its reserves this year as it has previously to balance the budget. The Council is looking at purchasing two properties to aid in the reduction of homelessness related costs to the Council.

Residents noted the lack of activities for young people in the Borough, and stated that there is a lack of places where young people can attend independently. The Oadby Youth Centre was highlighted to residents. There are a number of different groups for young people in the Borough operated by the voluntary sector. Publicising of youth facilities in the area could be improved by the Council.

15. ITEMS RAISED BY RESIDENTS

- **Meeting Day to be Varied:** Request provided to Democratic Services ahead of the 2024-25 meeting calendar being finalised. May's meeting date has already been set.
- **Uplands Park Tree:** The tree failed during high winds and was brought down in the interests of safety and its shortened safe life expectancy. The tree has been left as 'coppice' as the Council's Arboricultural Officer is confident the tree will grow a new iteration of itself from the stump.
- **Installation of a Traffic Mirror at the corner of Uplands Road and Fairfield Road:** This is a matter for discussion with Leicestershire County Council Highways.
- **Allotments / Badger Issues:** More details to be sought before being raised with

the Council's Corporate Assets Team. Allotments on Brabazon Road are not being maintained; hedges are not being cut anymore. There is a waiting list for plots on the allotments; one is vacant and not yet re-let, it is now overgrown and in a poor condition. Residents noted difficulties in paying their allotment fees since September 2023; residents have visited the Council to resolve this, and phoned them, to no avail. Councillors will follow up on this. The badgers in the area are destroying crops and discouraging people from attempting to grow there; this is also affecting neighbouring gardens and the property of the vacant swimming pool. The badger's set can be moved but this can only take place in a certain window from July.

- **Planning Application for 39 Gorse Lane:** An application was put in to convert an existing 4 bedroom home into a residential care home for young people aged 8 – 18 years. There are concerns as to the suitability of the premises for this and Councillors have previously met with residents regarding this. The planning process with public input should still be followed, and Councillors have spoken to the Council's Planning Officers regarding this.
- **Works on upper part of the Washbrook course:** Work has been undertaken by Severn Trent; we're not aware of this and Severn Trent has been approached regarding what the works are and their purpose.
- **Fludes Lane:** Part of Fludes Lane has been resurfaced as per previous Forum meetings. This is not a permanent resurface and will be looked at again in the future for a more permanent surface. The bridge here has also been replaced.
- **Buses through Oadby:** Bus services in Oadby have not been consistent for some time; Councillors have spoken with Arriva regarding this on a number of occasions and found them to be very amenable. The bus service has been improved, ensuring that all the bus stops have timetables on them, old bus stops being removed, and improving the promotion of the bus service to households in Oadby. Buses now run both ways around Oadby preventing unnecessary travel for some bus users. The buses should arrive on the hour and half-hour. Residents noted the improvement regarding the bus stops having maps and timetables on them. Thanks were given by the Chair and Residents to Cllr. Kaufman for his work on this.
- **Town Centre Cleansing:** Residents wish to note the hard work of Ian Foster for cleansing the Oadby Town Centre. A letter will be drafted from the Forum to Ian to thank him for his work. Residents unanimously agreed that this letter should be written.

16. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None raised.

17. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Oadby Residents' Forum
Thursday, 8 February 2024, 6.30 pm

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Thursday, 16 May 2024 – 18:30 – Brocks Hill Council Offices

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.04 pm