

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SOUTH WIGSTON RESIDENTS' FORUM HELD AT
SOUTH WIGSTON METHODIST CHURCH, BLABY ROAD, SOUTH WIGSTON,
LEICESTERSHIRE, LE18 4PB ON TUESDAY, 23 JULY 2024 COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM**

PRESENT

G A Boulter Chair



Meeting ID: 2702

COUNCILLORS

C S Gore
R E R Morris
C A M Walter

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

M Smith Community Safety & Youth Officer

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

M Flynn Leicestershire County Council
PCSO D Judge Leicestershire Police

65. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Cllr. Gore noted that he was present at the previous meeting of this Forum but that the Minutes do not reflect this. These will be amended accordingly.

66. POLICE UPDATE

PCSO Judge introduced himself to the Forum, and gave some crime statistic updates;

- 18 reports of violent crime this month, 21 previous.
- ASB has decreased from last month despite being the holidays.
- Thefts from Shops have reduced.
- Criminal Damage and Public Order are down.
- There has been 1 report of weapon carrying.

Burglaries are experiencing a small spike. These are mostly residential properties targeted by people from outside of the area. Car keys have been a focus in these burglaries and some related arrests have been made. Cllr Boulter noted that locks for UPVC doors exist that are classed as 'non-snap' that, whilst more expensive, will stop entry being forced as is the case with recent burglaries. It was also noted that double glazing should be installed from the inside out, not the outside in, to further deter burglars.

5 ASB Warning Letters have been issued to young people in South Wigston; 3 young people have been issued with community resolutions, and 1 is potentially being charged with a weapons offence.

A resident raised a motorbike that is heading up and down Blaby Road Park every week night. PCSO Judge noted that the Police have seized two motorbikes from the park last month as they were stolen vehicles.

A resident noted that a group of 5 young people on bicycles with full face coverings were hanging around the Tesco car park tonight; this caused her unease. It was also noted by other residents that this is prevalent across South Wigston. PCSO Judge noted that he had spoken to a group he believes is the same group just prior to the meeting, some of whom removed their face coverings, and that the interaction was caught on camera.

eScooters were raised by another resident with several being seen to be carrying children along with an adult rider. Only Police Constables can seize them on the spot; PCSOs must give two warnings on separate occasions. Seized eScooters must then be recovered and stored by a recovery company which is at a cost, and several companies are now refusing to collect and store them. It is unclear if there is any specific legislation around pillion passengers on eScooters as there is around mobility scooters.

A speed awareness operation will be taking place in the coming weeks, utilising speed guns, where any other offences regarding vehicles will also be picked up.

67. CHAIR'S UPDATES

Changes to Bin Collections

J Wells provided background information on why the changes to bin collections in the Borough are necessary. The Council is currently working on the route mapping work for the changed collections, with an overarching plan of households retaining their same collection days. There may be some changes for communal bins but garden waste collections will be unaffected. The decision to make the change was made by the Council as part of a wider scheme of cost savings the Council has had to undertake; this is linked to a reduction in funding from central government.

Residents expressed a concern that waste will build up, including recycling, in bins. There was an opportunity recently for residents to purchase a 240ltr bin for £38.00 if they have a 140ltr bin.

The previous Government put forward Waste Reforms where they encouraged Councils to retain fortnightly collections; some Councils were looking at three-weekly collections.

From the end of March 2026 there will be a separate food waste collection provided as part of national reforms to waste collection. For businesses this starts in March 2025.

Legislation around packaging has changed for businesses where they will be encouraged, with financial penalties for not doing so, to reduce the amount of packaging they use for their products. The amount of recyclable packaging should also be considered. Monies raised by fines for businesses should be reinvested in local communities; this was under the previous Government however and it is unclear if it will continue.

Additional information will be made available to residents around what can and can't be recycled.

A return scheme for single use plastics is also being considered for the near future nationally.

Large cardboard items can be placed next to the recycling bins for collection by the Council's waste crews instead of filling the bins.

Residents raised concerns that their 240ltr recycling bin is filled weekly and that for fortnightly collections some recycling will end up in black bins. They did note however that they moved from an area with fortnightly collections and that they do work, but they had a larger bin in that area.

Refuse trucks can only take 6-7 tonnes of recycling before it requires emptying, and the transport of the waste to disposal / recycling sites does incur a cost for the Council. Sites can only take so much waste per Council a week before the wagons are required to go to an alternative location which is currently Bardon.

There is no incentive for districts and boroughs to collect waste in individual types (cardboard, metal, etc.) with co-mingling of waste to continue.

A resident raised a query around hard plastics and it was confirmed that they cannot usually be recycled.

Residents asked how the decision around the changes to waste collections was made with the number of concerns raised by residents. It was suggested that this was done under the assumption that any 'surplus' waste will be taken to the County Household Waste sites by residents. The changes are in line with waste services that are offered by other Councils within the County, and attempts have been made to identify issues with those services and address them from the outset in the Borough.

Assisted collections were promoted to residents who meet the criteria for them.

A resident asked if the cost-cutting was linked to Government instructions to spend money housing illegal immigrants in their communities. Cllr. Boulter confirmed that there were around 50 families in temporary accommodation in the Borough from all backgrounds that the Council is funding, and that there are no illegal immigrants housed in the Borough by the Council. If there were then this would be funded by central government and not local authorities.

Several years ago 70% of the costs of running the Borough was provided by central government but the majority of these costs must now be raised within the Borough through tax and reduced services.

The amount of recycling and other waste collected on the fortnightly basis must be weighed as per current arrangements and any large changes that may prompt change in the service will be assessed.

A redundancy plan is in place within the waste team where at least 5 redundancies are expected. A reduction in the number of vehicles operated will take place. Current vehicles do 2 miles to a gallon.

A presentation from the County Council will be made at the next meeting of the Forum around recycling as LCC holds the contract for disposal of waste; OWBC are the collection agency.

Spion Kop

Still planned for a four month closure next year.

It is not possible to lower the track due to the water table.

The removal of the middle of the bridge was considered as a shorter operation but it is unclear if this is possible.

Power to trains could also be potentially picked up from the other side of the bridge but Network Rail are uncertain if this is possible.

Roadworks are also planned for Station Road this coming August with a suggestion made that this is paused until the bridge is closed. Temporary lights are currently being installed at Pullman Road however so it appears the work will be going ahead as planned.

Residents expressed concerns that following the sinkhole that closed Blaby Road recently it has been proven that South Wigston is not equipped to deal with road closures of this magnitude; the Fairfield Estate will be gridlocked. It was noted however that the official diversion for the road closure must utilise the same type of roads as is being closed so the Fairfield Estate will only be utilised by drivers with local knowledge.

Tesco, Wickes and Lidl will struggle to trade with the bridge being closed and it is unclear if Network Rail has been in contact with them.

68. ITEMS RAISED BY RESIDENTS

- Illegal and dangerous parking on roads around Albion Street with apparently no enforcement. Speeding drivers on local roads as above and further towards the Fairfield Estate. **It was noted in the Police update that they will be addressing this in the near future.**
- Drain clearing on roads (lack of), with large puddles regularly. **Drains are cleared by LCC between 18 and 24 months on rotation. Newer drains have larger collection 'buckets' but a lot of the older ones don't. Any drains that are flooding should be reported to Bill and he'll arrange clearing.**
- Weed clearance on footpaths and local streets is poor. **This is the responsibility of LCC who spray twice a year; they can only use contact weedkiller to ensure that it does not enter the water table meaning that if it rains the weedkiller is then ineffective.**
- Litter picking and cleaning is insufficient. **This will be raised with the Council's team by J Wells. Residents noted appreciation for the Wombles working in the area.**
- Road condition of Saffron Road is poor, uneven and needs resurfacing. **This has been reported to LCC to address.**
- Lack of maintenance of verges on footpaths, canal side and Guthlaxton Cycle Path with overgrown hedges and growth. As is the tree at the corner of Glengate. **This has been reported to LCC Highways for action and should be addressed in the near future. The Canal and River Trust is responsible for the towpaths and reports to them will be made. The brambles along Spion Kop adjacent to the industrial estate were also raised as a concern; Bill will report this accordingly.**
- Bench within Bus Shelter near Jasmine Court (£300). **Funding request received by a local resident. Residents present at the Forum approved the funding**

to be released.

- Give Way signage at the junction of Safron Road and Gloucester Crescent. The three mini roundabouts have give way signs except the roundabout at the junction with Gloucester Crescent heading into South Wigston from Leicester. Cllr. Boulter will follow this up with County.
- Armed Forces Breakfasts and a support group for their families. A request was made for a grant of £300 to get the group off the ground. **Residents present at the Forum approved the funding to be released.**
- Fairfield Park – The house adjacent to the school has taken down the existing fencing that was installed with the building of the property. A new fence line has been staked out by the owner that appears to be a foot or more further into the park, effectively stealing public land. The soffits and fascias of the property already overhang the park. M Smith will make Planning aware of this tomorrow morning.
- Bin on Windlass Road – This is coming.
- Marquis of Queensbury – It has been bought by a consortium and is being renovated by the same company that did the Grand Hotel in Leicester.
- Alpha House, Countesthorpe Road – The windows at the top of the building are being refurbished. Once works have started there is no deadline for when it needs to be completed by. Planning permission is attached to the building for 20 flats but the use of the building may not change from offices.
- Martins Newsagents – This is owned by the bank following bankruptcy after Covid.
- Paragon Site – The trees on the site will be surveyed and a TPO likely placed on them. The site has been measured for development.
- A resident raised a complaint about the hedge encroaching onto the pavement on Station Road following the corner of Manor Street. It is currently difficult to pass on a mobility scooter.
- Resurfacing of Lansdowne Grove is also required; LCC Highways are responsible for this.
- Grass cutting – The County Council and most districts agreed to do 'No Mow May' last year going forward. The unseasonable weather caused grass to grow much quicker this year however and the Council's equipment was unable to cut it. The equipment has now been changed and, following the retirement of the previous tractor driver, a new driver has been hired enabling cutting to take place. The routine grass cutting is now taking place for OWBC; the County Council has reduced their cutting regime however. There are also a number of parcels of land in the Borough that the Council has previously maintained that it has now emerged it doesn't own; developers and landowners have been approached to now maintain their land and those that don't could be fined by the Council, or the land maintained by the Council and the developer charged for the work.
- Praise was raised for Eleanor, the Brocks Hill Ranger, for the work she has done maintaining the woodland to the rear of Windlass Drive.

- Bushloe House – Residents queried what is happening with the building. It is sold subject to contract with the owners having paid a £50,000 deposit. Historic England are currently working on the planning application for the proposed changes to the building. Proposed plans are for a nursing home and associated flats on site. Historic England are concerned that the new development will not be sympathetic to the Grade 2 listed section of the building. The funds from the sale will offset the costs of the move to Brocks Hill.
- The Cue Club – The owners of the club were present at the meeting and highlighted that they are trying to address the parking complaints raised in the Forum previously; patrons of the club have been signposted to use the Countesthorpe Road car park and avoid parking in the side streets and Memphis car park. Complaints had also been raised about noise from the venue at night; this has been disputed however and an invite made to all present at the meeting to pop in to the club and assess this. It was noted that the Club is trying as hard as possible to address the concerns raised but that, fairly to the owners, they are unable to control the actions of the patrons as they leave the premises. People smoking on the front of the premises was also raised and it was noted that again the club, without a dedicated outdoor smoking area, are trying to stay on top of the waste it generates. The owners also noted that they have been asked to put on a 'seniors club'; this will be taking place on set afternoons, free of charge.
- Mary Flynn highlighted the new mobile Food Pantry that is attending Albion Street every Thursday from 10:30 to 13:30. There is an eligibility criteria to be able to access the pantry, and there is a £5 charge to access it to then get £25-£30 worth of groceries including non-food items. Mary also promoted the 'Comm-Fest' event taking place this coming Saturday next to the One Stop shop on Gloucester Crescent as an extension of the Soft Touch Arts project; one of the graffiti project's artworks will be unveiled at the event. There will be stalls present at the event representing local groups and projects in the South Wigston area. A children wildlife competition being ran in conjunction with EMR was also promoted for young people aged 5-16 years.
- A resident noted that once a fortnight, 10am-12 midday, there is a food bank run by the Lions. This also serves as a social club for some elderly individuals and costs £1.50 per week to join. Cllr. Boulter noted that if anyone needs a food parcel this can be arranged through him.
- Archies Tractor Run – This will be coming back to the Borough this year as per last year.
- Christmas Capers will be taking place on 7 December; Blaby Road will be closed on this date.

69. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None raised.

70. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, 6 November 2024 – 7pm – Fairfield Primary School

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.23 pm