

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WIGSTON RESIDENTS' FORUM HELD AT THYTHORN HILL COMMUNITY CENTRE, HORSEWELL LANE, WIGSTON, LEICESTERSHIRE, LE18 2HR ON WEDNESDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2024 COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT

G A Boulter Chair



Meeting ID: 2838

COUNCILLORS

L A Bentley
F S Broadley
M H Charlesworth
J K Ford
C S Gore
K J Loydall
C J R Martin

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

M Smith Community Safety & Youth Officer

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

73. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Entry to Tennis Courts on Willow Park – No update available.
Bench on Willow Park – Pending committee approval.

74. POLICE UPDATE

No update available due to no representation.

75. FIRE SERVICE UPDATE

No update available due to no representation.

76. CHAIR'S UPDATES

Spion Kop – The bridge has been subject of conversation for 18 months. Originally the bridge was to be demolished as the tracks could not be lowered due to the water table; this would have resulted in a closure for 4 months. Network Rail have now decided lowering the tracks is viable and the closure will only be to one lane of traffic at a time. The parapets on the bridge will also need to be raised as part of the works. Residents expressed concerns that Network Rail will be unable to lower the tracks due to flooding witnessed recently; a pump has been discussed by Network Rail.

Remembrance Service – 10 November at All Saints, Peace Park on 11 November.

Christmas Light Switch On – 30 November, free parking after midday.

Bins - In 2012 the Government introduced a scheme where Council's could apply for funding to continue with weekly bin services for up to 5 years. OWBC were successful in bidding for £1.5m which has now concluded; this is why collection changes have occurred since September. The Revenue Budget was £16m in 2023 and is now £7m in 2024.

77. ITEMS RAISED BY RESIDENTS

a) Dog Waste Bins - Replacement and Maintenance

The law has changed and dog waste can now be placed into 'normal' waste bins; due to this dog bins are being phased out which will reduce the number of bins the Council needs to empty, saving money. Residents raised concerns that some dog bins that will be removed do not have a normal bin nearby; it is likely a small number of normal bins will be provided in their place. For the new Meadows estate the bins should be placed by the developer, not the Council. Also on the new Meadows estate the residents will be paying a fee to a property management company, set up by the developer, to see grounds maintained. Councillors noted that this is frustrating for residents but is subject to National legislation, which change required to be made by Central Government. Bins will have stickers placed on them noting that dog waste is accepted within them – residents requested extra promotion around this by the Comms Team.

b) Fortnightly Bin Collections

Residents queried as to why there was a charge for the new bins in the Borough where other areas were given their larger bins for free. The new scheme was developed by Officers at the Council who contacted neighbouring councils for details of how they run their collections. If OWBC was to supply everyone with a new larger bin free of charge it would cost the Council nearly £1m. Councillors note that they believe the new collection scheme is 95% successful, with further improvements coming, with no concerns at present.

c) Damages at Wigston Cemetery

CCTV is being placed at the cemetery, with solar powered cameras fitted to a column that has recently been installed there. Damage at the cemetery has dramatically reduced with no issues reported at present. The Chair reminded residents that the new Room of Remembrance is open at Wigston Cemetery.

d) Auction of Land on the Meadows Estate

The parcels of land were auctioned off by Jelsons when they were made aware by the Council that the Council had erroneously been maintaining the grassed areas and trees upon them. Jelsons opted to sell the land off rather than pay for the maintenance of the spaces. Purchasers of the land must maintain it as public open space and, as all the trees have TPOs on them, the trees must also be maintained. If the land is not maintained the Council has powers to enforce this. It is unclear who purchased the land but this can be found out in 6 months time when the title is updated. Councillors noted a hope that the protections afforded to the land under the Local Plan are continued under the new Local Plan when developed. Residents expressed that the Council should be robust in maintaining the land's status as public open space, and enforcing where necessary. Proof of commitment to, and enforce under, the Local Plan is demonstrated through the refusal to build houses outside of Thython School.

e) Speeding Traffic on Newton Lane, Wigston

No speeding vehicles at present due to the temporary lights in place; residents note however that there is no work seemingly taking place in this area. Some works may be

linked to conditions LCC put in place around road improvements following the development of the new estate further up Newton Lane under Section 278 legislation. There is a speed indicator display on Newton Lane that residents believe vehicles are speeding past to see their higher speeds displayed. The width of the pavement along some points of Newton Lane, and the surrounding roads, is raising concerns about the safety of pedestrians with how fast some vehicles are going. The speeding along Newton Lane will be noted to the Police to address via the Road Safety Team processes.

f) Speed Limit Signs near Cooks Lane, Wigston

Residents raised concerns that along this road you go from 30mph to 40mph and back to 30mph in a short distance where there has been significant developments. Narrow pavements are also a concern in these areas. Councillors noted that this has been raised for the attention of LCC who have stated that the speed limits in this area will be addressed and amended.

g) Link between the Barratt and Bowden Meadows Estate near Cooks Lane, Wigston

This has now been resolved with the developers ensuring there will be 'relatively severe' traffic restrictions put in place here which should deter traffic from using this as a cut-through. Plans for this are available on the Council's website as part of the planning process. There will be a narrowing of the crossing area put in place utilising bollards and raised curbs to deter its use as a cut-through, however tractor access must be maintained. Residents queried if Cooks Lane could be pedestrianised but LCC have decided this is not appropriate.

h) Brocks Hill Country Park Wind Turbine

The wind turbine does not appear to be working at present which residents have expressed surprise with. The turbine was put up in 1991 but it was found that the foundations had been installed upside down; this resulted in the original turbine falling over. This was rectified but a part then broke within the turbine which cannot be replaced as the manufacturer no longer trades. The current turbine is also now not tall enough to capture the wind due to the growth of existing trees around the area. There are no plans currently in place to remove the turbine but it is a point of interest for residents.

i) Public Toilets

Residents expressed frustration that the only public toilets seem to be at Peace Park but are rarely open. The public have been directed previously to Sainsburys but the toilet here is often out of order. The Chair noted that all of the Council's toilets were closed during Covid, and that Peace Park's toilets are the only ones that are in operation but only Mon-Fri. The matter has been raised with the relevant Director at the Council to consider facilities under new Government funding in the next financial year. Costs are just for building toilets but also maintaining them; this has been an issue with Junction Road which were subject to significant vandalism. The Council did ask local businesses if they would be happy to open their toilets to the public in exchange for funding but several businesses declined this. Residents noted that 'paid access' toilets are utilised in other areas and, whilst frustrating to have to pay, this means that a necessary public facility is made available. Some of the toilet blocks in the Borough were previously offered for sale but no buyers came forward.

j) Local Authority Social Housing

Residents spoke on the amount of new housing that is being built as a good thing, but highlighted the increases in private rental rates in the Borough given the lack of Council housing available. Housing Support Grants are costing Councils nationally a lot of money which residents feel is going straight into the pockets of private landlords. The Chair noted

that as of this evening the Council is supporting 76 families in temporary accommodation; some of which are in B&B accommodation. The Council has to support these by law and to date this has cost in the region of £600,000 from the Council's budget. The Council has recently bought two properties to add to its housing stock but under guidance the Council has to, at present, sell 4 properties to pay for the purchase of 1 property as only 25% of the proceeds of the sale can be used to purchase another property. The Council has approx. 1200 properties that it owns at present. Representations have been made through the LGA to see legislation around this changed.

k) Advertising on Digital Noticeboards

Residents noted that they believe if a voluntary organisation wants to advertise on the boards there is a cost of £50. Members were unaware of this as they believe it should only be businesses being charged. The Comms Team will be asked about this and an update given at the next Forum. Some residents noted that they have not been charged for advertising events on the boards within a set period of approx. 7 days prior.

l) Development of Phase 2 Housing near Kilby Bridge

Access to this site was queried by residents; the Council has put conditions in that access must be via Welford Road to avoid Cooks Lane becoming congested with work vehicles. The Council has limited powers to stop vehicles legally using roads; there are contractor powers that the Council is utilising however. Residents also enquired about the building of the primary school on this site, which is covered by the publicly available plans; this is expected to be built by 2029 and will not utilise all of the available Section 106 monies. The school will have 210 places to cater for the new estate, cutting down on traffic in the area. There are no powers available to force the developer to start this school build sooner. The lack of buses in the area was also noted within the Phase 1 development; the developer has made funding available for this but a bus company cannot be forced to service the area. The bus service will likely appear once further works have been completed. Residents queried if there was a new GP surgery to be built here but local GPs have noted already that they can absorb the new expected capacity.

m) Bushloe House

Remains under offer with planning permission being sought. Historic England are putting several objections in about the planning which the Council has sought legal advice over; it is felt the objections are unreasonable.

n) Penbury Eco Town

Residents raised the Eco Town plans being shared by the local MP, although most of the development appears to sit on Harborough District. It appears that the Eastern edge of the Borough would be covered by this development. The development is big enough to have on site schools, GPs, and shops as part of the build. All of the fields that run from Kilby Bridge to the A6 have been optioned for development. The excess houses that OWBC were required to build on behalf of the City Council were raised; this would have been required under the previous Government but not under the new one, although the number of houses the Borough is required to build has also increased. Grants used to be available to bring terrace houses up to a modern standard but these no longer exist. Councillors noted that some authorities tried to challenge how many houses they were to build through their Local Plans; these were rejected by the Inspector who brought in external services to draft a new, acceptable Local Plan at the cost of the authority – all local authorities are legally bound to produce a 5 year forward plan. Residents note a general acceptance that houses need to be built but are growing increasingly frustrated with the lack of supporting infrastructure being built for the new houses and estates – roads are expected to be gridlocked under new developments if they go ahead as planned.

o) Insulation Grants

The Council do still offer these grants with the next round opening soon.

78. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Recycling input from the Council
- Hedges that encroach onto the footpaths across the Borough (Residents were encouraged to contact their County Councillor about this as LCC will send a letter to the landowner giving 21 days for the issue to be fixed)
- Pavement Parking – Cars and larger vehicles parking fully on the pavement causing obstructions (This is a matter that has been raised with the Police on multiple occasions with no resolution available)
- Levelling Up Funding – It is unknown if anymore funding will be made available from Central Government
- Christmas Market – These are going ahead as planned with no restrictions expected to be placed by Leicester City Council
- Roadwork Diversion Signs – Signage appears to be remaining in place for an extended period after works have been completed. This will be raised with LCC.

79. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

19 February 2025, Thythorn Hill Community Centre, Wigston, 7:00pm

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.16 pm