

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SOUTH WIGSTON RESIDENTS FORUM HELD AT THE BASSETT CENTRE, SOUTH WIGSTON ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2008

Present: Councillor Mrs S B Morris – Chairman

Councillors: G A Boulter, C Gore and Mrs J M Gore

Officers in Attendance: A Thorpe and G J Waterfield (Oadby & Wigston Borough Council) and R Dareling (Leicestershire County Council)

PC T Lehane , Ms L Spencer (Wigston Local Policing Unit)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P Hings.

Residents in Attendance: D Bevans, R Hurst, F & J Palmer, D Stone, J Watkiss, A Kenney, R Downing, K Lawrence, S Lawrence, K Hunt, M Frost, B Farmer, R Frost, P Ward, K Trowell, M Jelley, R Elliott, J Tipper, P Reeves, J Henwood, R Hughes, I Cosgrove, P McGarry, P Mason, A Thawley, T Wright and R Carter.

At the commencement of the meeting, Councillor Mrs Morris explained why the venue for the meeting had been altered at short notice. This had been due to a complaint being received concerning accessibility issues of the previously agreed venue, the Canteen at Jacobs Factory.

48. UPDATE REPORT

Councillor Mrs Morris informed the meeting of the current situation concerning a number of items that had been discussed at the last meeting of the Forum held on 12 June 2008.

i) Telephone Kiosks

Following the last meeting of the Forum the Council had written to BT indicating that they would wish to retain the telephone kiosk on Lansdowne Grove. To date no reply had been received from BT concerning a decision of this matter.

ii) Highway Matters

The meeting was informed that Clive Howe, the Area Highways Manager for Leicestershire County Council, had indicated that the untidy area in the Glenborne Road area had been inspected and the grass cut back. Also a request had been made that the trees be inspected and any necessary works carried out. Once completed it was intended that the Borough Council be asked to litter pick the area.

With regard to lorry speeds on Saffron Road, the meeting was reminded that isolated incidents of speeding should be reported to the police. A monitoring exercise carried out after the completion of the traffic calming scheme had

indicated that there was good compliance with regard to speeding in the area. However, the County Council would be prepared to carry out a further assessment, if, in the view of the meeting, the incidents of lorry speeding were not necessarily isolated ones.

With regard to cycling on the footway of Saffron Road, the meeting was reminded that such instances should be reported to the police in the first instance. However, Leicestershire County Council were developing a parallel route, on quieter roads for cyclists, linking South Wigston with Leicester, via Kenilworth Drive and Northumberland Avenue.

The dip in the road adjacent to the Railway Bridge on Saffron Road was being monitored. Work was being carried out by Network Rail in this area which may have an impact on the matter.

The Leicestershire County Council Clerk of Works was carrying out investigatory works in the local area relating to flooding issues.

With regard to parking enforcement issues on Saffron Road, the meeting were informed that this matter had been passed to the County Council's Parking Enforcement Officer for attention.

With regard to a possible residents' parking scheme in South Wigston, Councillor Boulter reported that the County Council would be consulting with residents over this matter in the near future, probably before Christmas. If any scheme were to be introduced it would be expected that residents would be charged £20.00 per annum for a permit. Presently, this scheme was eighth in a list of schemes for implementation throughout the County Council area.

The meeting noted that parking restrictions had been lifted on Canal Street in connection with the new South Leicestershire College development and that it was the intention that parking on Canal Street would be reviewed once the college development had been completed.

iii) Eco Town

It was reported that, as a result of the Boroughwide consultation carried out by the Council in June, nearly 3,500 responses saying no to the Pennbury proposals and only 300 saying yes had been received.

The latest news was that the Government had now announced that the Co-op would stay on the shortlist of schemes under consideration. Within a week of the consultation period closing at the end of June the Co-op produced detailed information setting out its proposals for the site for the first time.

At the same time, the Government announced that it would also extend the amount of time to assess all the new information provided by the Co-op and the final decision would now be taken by the Government in early 2009, rather than October 2008.

In July there was a ministerial visit from Right Honorable Caroline Flint MP. As well as a site visit, she met with local politicians and other stakeholder groups. A number of questions were asked regarding the eco-town process and Pennbury proposal.

It was noted that the next steps of the process were dependant upon the publishing of the Draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) on eco-towns by the Government, which was expected in the next month or so.

The meeting noted that the Council now had to try and fully assess the latest information, particularly around transport, finance and environment and also to go out to consult again.

In addition, the Council would carry on with its planning policy work through the Local Development Framework to ensure that if the Pennbury proposal does make the final shortlist, the Council is in the best possible position to deal with it through the planning system, on behalf of the Borough.

iv) Local Policing Issued

PC Tania Lehane introduced herself as a new member of the South Wigston Neighbourhood Beat Team. She had replaced PCSO Vince Preston, who had moved to the Wigston Neighbourhood Team.

Tania could be contacted by telephoning 0116 222 2222, Fax 0116 2485426 or by email at Tania.lehane@leicestershire.pnn.police.uk.

The meeting noted that the three police priorities in South Wigston, the prevention of criminal damage and violent crime in each of the areas of Blaby Road Park, Gloucester Crescent and Dorset Avenue were receiving attention. It was reported that there remained traffic problems on the Fairfield Estate and the police were liaising with the County Council over this matter.

Attention would be turned in due course to the problems of anti-social behaviour in the areas of Crow Mills and to the rear of the Jacobs Factory.

An update was then given on the levels of burglary, damage to motor vehicles, robberies, thefts from motor vehicles and thefts of motor vehicles in South Wigston since the last report in June 2008. Crime figures for the Oadby and Wigston area were the lowest of any area within Leicestershire and crimes committed within the area had the highest likelihood of detection in the whole County, as well.

PC Lehane went on to talk of the Leicestershire Constabulary's involvement in the Government's Pilot Restorative Punishment Initiative.

She undertook to give attention to problems of youths drinking in the area of Northumberland Avenue in the evening. The meeting noted that she would be undertaking a 'patch walk' with the Council's Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator, to identify and tackle issues within the Fairfield Estate area, on the following day.

Ms Linda Spencer then went on to inform the meeting of the further development of 'No Cold Calling Zones' on the Fairfield Estate, which now involved a total of nine roads.

The meeting also noted that the Wigston Police Station was now open 7 days a week from 8.00 am until 10.00 pm.

Concern was expressed on the continuing problem of cyclists on pavements on the Saffron Road Area and it was agreed that this matter be discussed at the next meeting.

49. LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PARTICIPATORY BUDGET

Mr R Downing of the County Council addressed the meeting on the subject of the County's Sustainable Community Strategy and to the decision to provide a budget for each local Forum with the County. The South Wigston Forum had been allocated £20,000 for the 3 year period from January 2009.

It was noted that it would be the intention of the County Council at future Forum meetings to allow those attending to vote on how the money should be spent, possibly by the use of voting hand sets, as used on television.

Discussion was held on the need for new or improved community facilities in South Wigston and Councillor Mrs Morris referred to the discussion on this matter that would be held by the Council's Policy Committee at its meeting on the 9 September.

50. CHRISTMAS CAPERS 2008

The meeting noted that Oadby and Wigston Borough Council would not be providing a Christmas Capers event in South Wigston in 2008 but Councillor Mrs Morris referred to proposals by local businesses to undertake the organising of such an event themselves.

A strong organising committee had been formed and Mr P Reeves spoke to the meeting of the committee's desire to organise something similar to that provided in 2007. However, he pointed out that to achieve this a budget of approximately £4,000 had to be found for this work.

Councillor Mrs Morris referred to the budget available to the South Wigston Forum during this year and of the availability of funds for a scheme such as this, if the meeting so desired. On being put to the vote, it was unanimously agreed that a grant of £4,000 made to the organising committee for the provision of a Christmas Capers Event in South Wigston in 2008, with authority also being given to members of the South Wigston Forum to agree a supplementary budget for this scheme, should it become necessary.

Mr Rob Elliott on behalf of the traders thanked the meeting for this decision.

Two members of the audience also agreed to be co-opted onto the organising committee.

51. WASTE MANAGEMENT STATION PLANNING APPLICATION

Councillor Boulter drew the meeting's attention to the fact that this planning application was now due to be considered by the County Council at a meeting at County Hall on 18 September 2008, commencing at 2.00 pm.

He spoke of the large scale of opposition to this planning application and to the possible impact that a successful application would have on South Wigston. The meeting was made aware of ways in which it could object to this application and a discussion was held on the need for members of the public to attend this meeting to show their support in opposition to this proposal.

It was noted that three traffic surveys in the area had already been carried out in connection with this application and the site meeting of Members of the County Council's Planning Committee was to be held on 16 September in this connection. Apart from Councillor Boulter, Mr R Elliott also offered to accept letters of objection at his shop at 19 Blaby Road, South Wigston, for onward forwarding to the County Council.

A general discussion then ensued on the effect of this possible development together with the possible effects of new proposals for the extension of the Glen Parva Borstal facility.

52. SOUTH WIGSTON REGENERATION

Councillor Mrs Morris read to the meeting a number of individual schemes that have now been completed in connection with the South Wigston Regeneration Programme and a further list of schemes soon to commence.

In addition to the schemes mentioned, attention was also drawn to the possibility of improving the towpath between the old County Arms, Glen Parva and the Navigation Inn at Kilby Bridge as a local attraction. The meeting noted that the Borough Council was in talks with the British Waterways Board on this subject.

53. BLABY ROAD PARK REGENERATION

The meeting was unanimous in the view that the railings fronting Blaby Road Park to Blaby Road should be retained.

Mr A Thorpe of the Borough Council indicated that as a result of the consultation process on this Masterplan a number of amendments had been made to the plan.

Alterations had been made to plans for the frontage of the park, the possible pavilion extension had now been removed from the scheme although this could be added again in the future and the proposals for a pond at the southern end of the park had been removed but replaced with a wild life/bog area, which was needed to aid the drainage of nearby sports pitches. In addition sports pitches on the park were to be moved further away from the Lansdowne Grove housing.

Mention was made of the shortage of team sports facilities within the Borough, particularly relating to cricket, rugby and football. Mr Thorpe reminded the meeting that there was provision for a cricket square and football on Blaby Road Park and mention was made that there was no provision for tennis courts locally.

In answer to a question concerning funding, Councillor Mrs Morris reminded the meeting that there was £120,000 available for the parks scheme and a Section 106 contribution in connection with the South Leicestershire College development would also be available, together with £400,000 for community facilities.

54. BUDGET SPENDING UPDATE

The meeting noted that there was an availability of £56,000 for spending on South Wigston Forum schemes in the current year together with the aforementioned £20,000 to be provided by the Leicestershire County Council from January 2009 for the following 3 year period.

A discussion was held on the possibility of providing close circuit television in South Wigston in order to enhance public safety in the area. The meeting was reminded of previous efforts to provide CCTV in the area when the Police had questioned the suitability in view of features in the area such as trees which made the effectiveness of such facilities questionable. PC Lehane undertook to obtain the current view of the Police on this subject in order that this matter can be considered at the next meeting.

In answer to a question about the provision a park warden on the Blaby Road Park or additional police patrols, Councillor Boulter reported that the cost of locking up the park each evening had been estimated at £6,700 per annum. This scheme had therefore not been pursued by the Council.

The meeting closed at 9.22 pm