

CENTRAL & EAST 2 – NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCIL
(Park, Dogsthorpe and East Wards)

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday 17 December 2009

Present:

Cllr Y Lowndes (Chairman)
Dogsthorpe: Cllr A Miners & Cllr B Saltmarsh

Also present:

Mike Heath, Commercial Services Director
Steven Pilsworth, Head of Corporate Services
Amy Brown, Solicitor
Colin Miles, Lawyer
Adrian Chapman, Head of Neighbourhood Services
Cate Harding, Neighbourhood Manager (Central & East)
Anne Smith, Independent Member of Standards Committee
Lindsay Tomlinson, Senior Governance Officer

30 members of the public attended including representatives from the Police and local youth groups.

1. Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Cllrs C Ash, M Collins, S Goldspink, P Kreling, J Peach & M Todd

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 There were no declarations of interest

3. Minutes from the previous meeting and matters arising including the naming of the Neighbourhood Council

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2009 were agreed.

4. You Said, We Did

4.1 The Neighbourhood Manager reported that enforcement issues around planning, parking and highways that had been reported within the Millfield and Park areas were being dealt with by the Neighbourhood Panel and the delivery team. There had been a lot of enforcement activity in the area which had proved very successful in dealing with the issues.

4.2 A public meeting had been held on 15 December to discuss the issues around Junction 8 Roundabout works of the Paston Parkway at Parnwell. Local residents had raised concerns that the works should have provided for a footbridge rather than signalisation, that Parnwell residents should have been consulted directly on the plans and that the junction will not operate successfully if implemented as proposed.

4.3 The Neighbourhood Management team was working closely with the relevant departments to resolve lighting issues on Parnwell Way.

4.4 Members of the public present at the meeting raised the following concerns in respect of highway works:

- More lighting is needed in Redmile Walk
- Roadworks should be carried out at night rather than during the day
- Whether Welland Road would be closed during work on the traffic calming scheme

5. Area Specific Issues

5.1 Greater Dogsthorpe Partnership

The GDP was a four year project which was due to end on 31 March 2010. The Neighbourhood Manager advised that the mainstreaming of Neighbourhood Management meant that the activities already established by the GDP would be merged in to the work of the Neighbourhood Management team. The longer term vision was that eventually all neighbourhood teams would be based within their locality. It was hoped that the Neighbourhood Management Centre in Central Avenue could be retained for as long as possible. All staff currently working within the GDP would be transferred to the Neighbourhood Management team.

5.2 Bus Service in Parnwell

This had been raised as a concern by local residents. The Neighbourhood Manager advised that an infrastructure review was under way and that a survey was shortly to be carried out, involving visits to properties in the area to establish concerns and gather evidence to support the request.

6. Council Budget 2010-2011

6.1 The Council's Head of Corporate Services gave a presentation on the Council's budget process which included the following points:

1. The financial settlement for 2010/11 had been received but there was no clear picture regarding future grant funding beyond the next financial year;
2. Government grant of £77 million for 2010/11 was £4 million less than the Council was entitled to receive using the local government funding formula;
3. A Council tax increase of 2.5% was proposed which sought to keep taxation low whilst continuing to deliver key services; and
4. The Council was eager to obtain the views of the public on its spending priorities for the forthcoming year.
5. each Neighbourhood Council would receive £25,000 to spend on improvements to their local area for the coming year. The works chosen to receive funding would be determined by the Community Action Plan.

Locally, it was planned to refurbish and then reopen Hereward School and to refurbish the John Mansfield Centre.

Members of the public present at the meeting raised the following queries:

- How can old age pensioners be expected to cope with the rise in Council Tax?

Response: we are aware of the impact for those on fixed incomes and also on those who have lost their jobs. The Council Tax increase is one of the lowest in the country, but we understand that it will have an impact. We have made every effort to keep the increase as low as possible.

- Why was the decision taken to change the working week for refuse collectors? Local residents are still finding that their bins are not emptied. Will there be a review of the new system?

Response: The 4 day working week has been found to work better around Bank Holidays, it is more efficient and it saves money. The decision has been made and won't be reviewed. It has proven successful; we have re-routed 70,000 properties and rationalised routes which saves on vehicles and fuel. Although there have been some initial teething problems, overall the new

system is working very well. We now need to concentrate on education people on how to separate their waste.

- Could the Council make savings by having only 1 councillor per ward rather than 2 or 3 as we have in some areas?

Response: that is a political question and not appropriate for officers present to answer.

- Concern was expressed at the plans to close public conveniences in Dogsthorpe.
- What proportion of the budget is set aside for maintenance of roads, footpaths and general maintenance of the area?

Response: the Council provides lots of services and covers a very large area, and there is pressure on limited resources. If an area feels that it is not being properly provided for then this can be fed into the Community Action Plan.

- How much money is being set aside to improve schools, particularly primary schools?

Response: there are a range of issues which are being addressed including capital investments and putting money into raising standards at secondary level. Many of the investments in the primary sector will come from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

- What is happening to residents' parking charges? The cost of city centre parking was decreased last year and residents feel they are having their charges increased to subsidise this.

Response: all charges are explicitly set out within the budget papers – the information will be fed back to the Neighbourhood Council.

7. Standards Briefing

Ms Anne Smith of the Council's Standards Committee gave a presentation on the work of the Committee and explained the Members' code of conduct.

Ms Smith added that few complaints were received about the conduct of councillors and whilst there was a formal process for investigating complaints, every effort was made to investigate matters informally if possible, should a complainant agree with this approach.

It was agreed that the presentation be noted.

8. Community Action Planning

The Neighbourhood Manager led a consultation exercise involving all members of the public who were present at the meeting to identify service priorities for inclusion within the Community Action Plan for the Neighbourhood. It was identified that there would be further public engagement including public surveys and a road show prior to the finalisation of the Community Action Plan in March 2010.

It was agreed that the priorities identified at the meeting be included within the development of the Community Action Plan.

9. Open Session

Members of the public present at the meeting raised the following questions:

- Can we please have lighting in Central Park along with seating and a shelter for young people to use?
- The football pitch at Cerris Park needs re-surfacing.

- There has been media interest in recent moves by the police to deal with people operating a human slave trade locally – what is happening? *(A representative from Cambridgeshire Constabulary confirmed that work was ongoing and that houses in multiple occupation were being looked at in conjunction with the Council.)*
- The Council is to be commended for its use of graffiti artists in the Bretton area – are there any areas in this part of the city that could benefit from this initiative?
- The car park in which the Alma Road public toilets are located has been closed which causes a parking problem and danger at the junction. Many of the local commercial properties are fast food cafes with no toilets of their own which compounds the problem.
- The junction of Dogsthorpe Road and Alma Road is very dangerous, parking for the Islamic School compounds the problem. Clearance is very tight and could cause problems for emergency vehicles.
- Could lighting and seating be provided in the Sycamore Avenue area? Police often stop youths who congregate in the area and the seating would give them somewhere to go.
- There have been problems with flytipping and graffiti in Dogsthorpe, particularly at the rear of Branston Rise.
- Traffic is very fast in Broadway, Princes Gate and Park Road. More taxi firms are using these routes and as short cuts and it is becoming difficult for children to cross the roads.
- Central Park is becoming very badly littered on Sunday evenings and Monday mornings. There are also cases of dog fouling, despite local residents' pleas to people to use the provided bins.
- We need more affordable housing in the Park and East wards. Currently the only affordable housing can be found in the Hampton area. We need regeneration of our local areas.
- Could graffiti boards be provided in the Dogsthorpe area?
- More needs to be done to prevent cars blocking school accesses – the problem is putting children at risk.
- Could more be done to encourage children to walk to school, for example by introducing walking bus schemes? This would make children fitter and cut congestion and pollution.

10. Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on Thursday 8 April 2010 at 7.00pm at the Thomas Deacon Academy.

CHAIRMAN
7.00pm – 8.45pm