

Melton Community Forum

Wednesday 28 October 2015 : 6 p.m.

Council Chamber, Parkside

Present :-

Councillors

Byron Rhodes (BR), Joe Orson (JO), Pam Posnett (PP), David Wright (DR) John Wyatt (JW), Simon Lumley (SL), Pru Chandler (PC), Jeanne Douglas (JD), Alan Pearson (AP), Tina Culley (TC)

MBC Officers

Lynn Aisbett (LA), Harry Rai (HR), Sarah-Jane O'Connor (SJOC)

MINUTES

No.	Item
1.	<p>Apologies for Absence Apologies were received from Cllrs Graham MBE, Greenhow and Higgins.</p>
2.	<p>Minutes of last Meeting and Matters Arising The minutes of the last meeting held on the 2 March 2015 were accepted as a true record of the meeting. There were no matters arising.</p>
3.	<p>Public Questions</p> <p>1. <u>Empty properties</u> ‘The number of empty dwellings, business and domestic, that could be used for housing. Does the council have any powers to deal with these unsightly buildings?’</p> <p><i>In response, a presentation was given by Harry Rai, Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods and it was advised this would be available on the Council’s website following the meeting.</i></p> <p>2. <u>Healthy eating</u> ‘The area is famous for Pork pies and stilton. Is it about time to promote healthy eating by complimenting that fame with up to date nutrition publicity, complimented with less fast food outlets and more healthier restaurants/delicatessens/market stalls?’</p> <p><i>In response, a presentation was given by Harry Rai, Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods and it was advised this would be available on the Council’s website following the meeting.</i></p>

3. **Watercourses**

'I have spoken at past meetings of the riparian responsibility of my local council in respect of the maintenance and husbandry of the many natural watercourses which run through our small town from the occasional, winter only streams to the important flow of the River Eye as it runs on into the Wreake and eventually to the North Sea!

I am informed that Severn Trent no longer hold the brief for this particular, important, function and that the Environment are now responsible, so I would have liked to tell them that the Eye beneath Burton Road railway bridge is nothing but an overgrown and badly neglected mass of vegetation and ever increasing silt which apart from its obvious potential danger is a gross eyesore to the town.

Also, the occasional fast flowing brook which runs adjacent to Thorpe Road sports fields and turns sharply up past Tescos, is also a total mess, the quaint little paddling pool which has served many generations of children remains, but is almost obliterated by undergrowth. Not to mention the Scalford Brook which winds it way south and flows quite heavily at times beneath the Thorpe Road/Thorpe End junction and on to Petfoods, which is in places merely a trickle. Should we ever receive one of those five inches in a day rainfalls I could foresee great damage, notwithstanding the relief scheme at Brentingby which might not necessarily prove to be infallible. A doomsayer? not really, perhaps a realist (Austerity? Lack of funds?)'

The following response was made by Councillor Joe Orson, Chair of Rural, Economic and Environmental Affairs Committee

'It is correct that responsibility for the maintenance of the watercourses described are the responsibility of the Environment Agency.

We will ensure that these concerns are forwarded to the correct contact point at the Environment Agency and ask them to correspond directly with you regarding their response and future intentions.'

4. **Open Question Session**

(1) Fibre Broadband

'Fibre Broadband. Why is it not being rolled out to the whole of Melton?'

The following response was made by Councillor Joe Orson, Chair of Rural, Economic and Environmental Affairs Committee

'Leicestershire County Council has signed two contracts with BT to increase coverage across Leicestershire totalling £28m. As part of the Superfast Leicestershire programme we expect to increase coverage of superfast broadband to 95% of Leicestershire premises by the end of 2017. Within this, Melton Borough Council invested £360,000 to upgrade 9 areas in the Borough. Overall we expect to increase coverage in Melton Borough to 90% by the end of 2017. To date we have increased coverage to a further 5400 premises in Melton Borough as part the Superfast Leicestershire programme. Most recently we have upgraded Croxton Kerrial, Gaddesby and additional parts of Bottesford.

Additional areas coming live in the next few months include Harby, Old Dalby Queensway, Long Clawson, Somerby, Knossington, Wymondham and Eaton. As part of our procurement we sought maximum coverage across Leicestershire. Whilst we think we have secured good coverage, limited investment has meant that we cannot deploy to all areas. Deployment costs increase quickly by large amounts in rural areas. That said, the County Council's vision is to ensure that all premises can access superfast broadband speeds by the end of 2018. This will be a challenge, potentially requiring a range of solutions. The County Council is exploring, for example, additional commercial and public investment to increase coverage further. This could include further district funding, subject to the business case. More information about the programme is available at www.superfastleicestershire.org.uk.

(2) Living wage

'Given that ONS have stated that 37% of Melton's employers pay less than the living wage (£7.85), what as a Council will you do to encourage them to pay it? It was not that long ago that you put your own employees on the living wage which is a great example to set maybe this can be used to influence other local businesses to do likewise.'

The following response was made by Councillor Joe Orson, Chair of Rural, Economic and Environmental Affairs Committee

'We are proud that we as an employer set a good example in paying at least the living wage.

However, the challenge of low pay is not as straightforward as simply upping an hourly rate.

Through engaging our local businesses we are seeking to influence the behaviour of organisations to help them understand what the impact of the living wage will have on households who the Council are working with.

We are in talks with a number of local employers to discuss what skills their business needs for their current and future workforce and engaging local services to best equip employees with those skills, a higher skilled workforce will command a higher wage.

Our work with Sainsburys, Lidl, Tesco, B&Q & Premier Inn to support new employees into work and help them sustain the employment is paying dividends to those businesses and they now see the Council as a strategic partner for their future recruitment requirements using the skills of Me & My Learning.

It is through these channels that we can promote the Living Wage and this will bring a range of benefits to businesses in terms of their workforces, that is, it enables businesses to retain staff as their wages will be more attractive than an organisation which does not pay the Living Wage.'

(3) 'Sherrard Street will be dug up again, Severn Trent sent out information about compensation, will the Council support this'

LA advised that Severn Trent are allowed to undertake that work and our powers are limited. We will work with them to achieve a better service and whilst we can encourage them to make compensation payments we can not demand or tell them to do so.

BR agreed that the Thorpe Road works had taken a long time and advised that

the Council would approach them for their schedule of works.

(4) 'Is it right that bus drivers can have a key and access to the disabled toilets at the Bell Centre'

This question was taken back for further investigation.

(5) 'Warden controlled properties, are those on the ground floor eligible for free TV licence'

HR advised that for supported housing there is criteria for a concessionary licence.

(6) 'There are lots of food smells along Leicester Road area, can we try to understand why this is'

JO advised that he would ask that Environmental Health looked into the issues raised

(7) 'Will the grit boxes in the town centre continue to be use during the winter months?'

PP confirmed that the responsibility for the pavements was with MBC whilst highways was with LCC. The cost of filling up the git boxes can be expensive and issues arise when the grit is not being used for the purpose that is intended. BR requested that JO and HR took the matter forward.

JO acknowledged that it is not a straight forward matter which can have a high impact on the town centre. The comments were noted and there was an undertaking to do make best efforts to keep the town centre ice free.

5. **Next Melton Community Forum**

It was agreed that the next Community Forum be held in the Spring 2016.