

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 12th SEPTEMBER 2024

Item 15 – Franklin Park Incident

Purpose

To receive an update concerning the incident at Franklin Park, a summary of action taken to support the community, and to discuss any ongoing matters.

Police Statements

The following is the most recent public statement issued by Leicestershire Police:

Boy, 14, charged with murder of Bhim Kohli (4th September 2024)

“A 14-year-old boy has been charged with murder following the death of Bhim Kohli. Mr Kohli, 80, died on Monday 2 September following an incident in Franklin Park, Braunstone Town, the previous evening (Sunday 1 September)”.

“The youth, who cannot be named for legal reasons, has been remanded into custody and is due to appear at Leicester Youth Court sitting at Leicester Magistrates' Court tomorrow (Thursday 5 September)”.

A person has been charged with an offence and will be appearing in court. Nothing should be posted that could prejudice upcoming proceedings and care should be taken over any comment made.

Town Council Response

It has been a deeply difficult and traumatic time for local residents, Councillors and staff as the community tried to comprehend the circumstances of the death of Bhim Kohli. The ages of the victim and the alleged perpetrator, along with the time of day and location left many stunned and apprehensive.

The Leader of the Council undertook media interviews on Tuesday and Wednesday, conveying that nothing like this had happened before and that the Town Council would be here to support the community.

Work on how the Town Council intends to support the community in practice has begun and the initial response centres around facilitating the community to express its thoughts and messages to the family in a way that provides for them to have privacy and space.

The incident, necessary Police cordon, and the associated media interest, has caused days of activity at Franklin Park and Bramble Way. As such the Council's aim, working closely with the Police, has been to ensure the family's privacy is

respected and for Franklin Park and the adjacent neighbourhood to be returned to some normality.

On Thursday 5th September, with the support of the family, the Council made the Civic Memorial Garden at Braunstone Civic Centre available for residents to lay flowers to remember Bhim Kohli and to show their love and support to the family. Flowers laid at Franklin Park were also moved to the Civic Memorial Garden and a sign explaining the reasoning was put up at the Bramble Way entrance to Franklin Park. A public statement to the same effect was also issued.

Also, on Thursday 5th, the Council became aware that a member of the public was organising a candle lit vigil at Franklin Park and had shared this on social media and with local media outlets.

The Town Council, working with the Police and family, offered the Civic Memorial Garden for this purpose, which the organiser accepted. The vigil took place on Friday evening between 7pm and 8pm. Mr Kohli's daughter felt able to attend to thank the community for their support and to view the floral tributes and messages.

On Tuesday 10th September, with the support of the family, a book of condolence opened at the Library to enable residents to share their memories of Bhim Kohli along with showing their love and support for his family. The completed book will be passed to the family at an appropriate time when they feel ready to receive it. Both the Deputy Mayor and Deputy Leader have added their messages to the book. There will be an opportunity for Councillors to do the same at the forthcoming meetings this month.

Going forward, the Town Council has spoken with the Neighbourhood Police Area Commander, the Neighbourhood Mental Health Engagement Officer for Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, and the Local Area Coordinator concerning how partners can work together to support and reassure the community in the medium to long term.

The Police continue to have a higher profile in the area and will be contacting the Town Council this week to discuss their plans to engage with residents, hold beat surgeries, and link in with other activities which are being organised in the community.

The Council are actively working with the NHS Partnership Trust to make arrangements to engage residents to support them with any anxieties and mental health needs. Two sessions are being planned (Thursday 12th September at Braunstone Civic Centre and Wednesday 18th September at the Library). At the time of writing, publicity was being finalised for release. The NHS will also be skilling the Council's Reception and Library staff to signpost residents to support services. Further information about support services and access to them will also be publicised and promoted at upcoming events.

One of those events is Apple Day on Saturday 5th October at Franklin Park. With the event being a month after the incident and taking place at the top of the park

near the car park, play area and orchard, the decision was that the event should go ahead to bring the community together. The local police beat team are keen to attend since it is an opportunity for them to show a presence and engage. The Local Area Coordinator is also planning to be available for part of the event. The family have been engaged and are aware of and understand the Council's thinking.

During the week after the incident, the Management Team came together quickly to discuss the issue and consider options for the Council's approach which was then discussed with the Leadership. The response of staff during the week included tidying and preparing the Memorial Garden for flowers and for the vigil; assisting at the vigil with signposting and ensuring that everyone was able to pay their respects in a dignified manner; arranging meetings and attendance at the vigil, and putting together and publicising, and responding with statements for the press and public.

Further Updates

Any further updates during the week will be reported at the meeting.

Recommendations

1. That the report be noted; and
2. that the *Town Council Response*, as set out in the relevant section of the report, be endorsed and future actions supported.

Reasons

1. The incident on Franklin Park on Sunday 1st September and subsequent death of Mr Kohli had been deeply difficult and traumatic for the local community.
2. To endorse both the action taken to support the community, and to support the ongoing approach and future actions proposed.