

Council to get £26,000 for poison probe



OADBY and Wigston Borough Council has been awarded Government cash so it can investigate land which has been contaminated with poisonous chemicals.

It will spend the £26,000 testing samples of soil in parts of Wigston's Little Hill Estate. , About 30 gardens on the estate were found to have quantities of potentially-harmful toxins that were above the re-

commended Government levels in 2007.

Councillor Bill Boulter, chairman of the council's services committee, said: "It will be used to pay for someone to analyse the soil, but this is just the first stage.

"We are still looking into who is responsible and that will be part of the next stage of the process.

"Fortunately there have been no reports of ill-health in the area but we need to see how the contaminants can be taken out of the land.

"There are lots of different ways to do it, and one way could be excavating the ground."

The testing will begin in the summer.



An old photograph of the Great Wigston Gasworks

The amount awarded to the council is £10,000 less than the £36,000 it asked the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for.

Councillor Boulter said the authority would "have to make up the rest of the money to £36,000", and said how that would be done would be "determined by the council in the next few weeks".

The authority is in the pro-cess of identifying those who should bear the cost of cleaning up the land.

That could include companies or individuals linked to the site.

But if its search is not successful, taxpayers or those living in the affected homes could end up footing the bill.

The contamination is the legacy of the old Great Wigston Gasworks, which closed in the 1950s.

It was there for 100 years and left behind chemicals and metals which could be harmful.

People living on the affected site have previously been given advice which includes not allowing their children play to with the soil, making sure soil is not brought into the house by leaving dirty shoes outside and not wearing dirty clothes indoors.

A resident of an affected home in Pochins Close, who did not want to be named, said: "It's been going on for such a long time, it's something pretty serious.

"If you go out and do a bit of gardening you have to put on clean clothes once you get in.

"We're not allowed to grow anything to eat in our garden at all - it's a worry if you have children.

"We are all worried we'll have to pay to get rid of it ourselves, but the council are the ones who gave permission to build the homes - so they need to do something about it."