



Leicester  
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
CULTURE AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2023 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Dawood - Chair

Councillor Chauhan  
Councillor Singh Johal

Councillor Halford

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**33. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Agath, Karavadra, Mohammed and Cutkelvin.

**34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**35. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

AGREED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 November 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

**36. CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair announced that invitations for Commission members to express interest in being part of the upcoming task group on Ward Community Funding had been sent out.

**37. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE**

It was noted that none had been received.

### **38. PETITIONS**

It was noted that none had been received.

### **39. ACTIVE LEICESTER STRATEGY ACTION PLAN**

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance submitted a report that introduced the emerging Active Leicester Strategy action plan, following the launch of the strategy in July 2023.

Councillor Bonham as Vice-Chair of Health Scrutiny, the Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance, the Head of Sports and the Sport & Active Recreation Development Manager attended the meeting to assist with the discussion.

Key points included:

- The strategy was set against a backdrop of dwindling resources, but it was thought that small changes in the way organisations and internal colleagues operated could make a big difference without needing new resources.
- The strategy approach aimed to galvanise support and encourage collaborative working.
- It was aimed to utilise internal communications networks within areas such as housing, education, and neighbourhoods to better reach people within the city.
- There was a role for the corporate marketing team, such as in Parks with walking trails, maps, and the environmental scheme. It was aimed to spread this further within some of the communication networks.
- Colleagues in public health had developed a one off non-recurrent grant for community groups and others to initiate sport and physical activity projects in line with the strategy.
- There was an emerging opportunity with Sport England to initiate change in the locality and get systems working better.
- A Health and Wellbeing hub was being piloted at Aylestone Leisure Centre which would make use of existing resources, for example, training staff to be more empathetic with service users, making the centre more welcoming and encouraging citizens to make use of it.
- Also being looked at were products, programmes and marketing, it was hoped to pilot a six-month free offer for a small cohort of 20-30 people, colleagues in Housing would be worked with so that the right people were engaged with.
- A seminar was being developed with a keynote speaker to encourage collaborative working internally across services. It was hoped to link this in with the place-based project coming up with Sport England.
- Once internal support was galvanised, external partners would be engaged.

The Committee were invited to ask questions and make comments. Key points included:

- The reasons behind the lower levels of inactivity in Western Ward and Knighton Ward were not known at this point although it was later clarified in the discussion that these wards were comparably better than others. It was noted that the definition of physical activity was wider than participation in organised sport, and as such it was possible that other forms of physical activity were being undertaken in these wards. Organisations were being encouraged to target less-active areas and various forms of physical activity were being encouraged as well as organised sport, such as active travel like cycling.
- The one off, non-recurrent funding would be an opportunity for existing sports groups to extend their activities into some of the priority groups that that were listed in the strategy or start something new for some of the priority groups. These opportunities would be publicly advertised and solicited through the Council network and levels of funding would be between £1.5k and £10k.
- Responding to a question about the sample size of the inactivity data in the city, it was clarified that it was taken from the Health and Wellbeing survey which was taken from around 2000 residents across the city. Later it was also brought to the attention of the Commission that there was also the annual 'Active Lives' survey from Sport England, which meant that up-to-date data was available each year.
- In response to a query about how to get people to be active when there was a deficit of local facilities, it was explained that there was an emphasis on encouraging behavioural change and promoting what was available. It was suggested that people could be pointed towards YouTube tutorials and encouraged to partake in other forms of physical activity such as walking. It was further suggested that work with Sport England was aimed to look at how to find local solutions with local groups and volunteers. It was understood that sustained behavioural change would take a long time, as it would take a long time to build confidence and trust. As such some of the work with Sport England was a longer-term commitment than had been seen previously.
- There was a ball-court improvement programme and ball-courts would be invested in across the city.
- It was acknowledged that other agencies in the city such as Leicester Riders were looking to extend their reach and were looking for ways that they could take responsibility for their assets in order for them to be useful for activity. This would be encouraged; however, it was acknowledged that the voluntary sports sector that provided opportunities throughout the city should not be forgotten about.
- In response to a comment about the lack of resources that grassroots

sports clubs had in comparison to large professional clubs, the scheme would look to encourage clubs to work together, and dialogue and collaboration would be encouraged.

- The hub at Aylestone Leisure Centre would be expanded to other hubs across the city if the pilot was successful. What worked in the pilot would be taken on board.
- Levels of inactivity in Leicester had not changed much in recent years. There were signs of improvement prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, however the pandemic had led to increased inactivity. Leicester was worse than the regional and national averages.
- In terms of definitions of inactivity, 'inactive' meant less than 30 minutes of physical activity per day and 'moderately active' meant 30-60 minutes of physical activity per day. 'very active' was 150 minutes a week. This in mind, a 35% rate of inactivity was high.
- A person who could get resources and creative thinking out of departments would be desirable as the keynote speaker at the seminar.
- Walking and jogging trails were available on the Council website ([Fitness on parks \(leicester.gov.uk\)](https://www.leicester.gov.uk/fitness-on-parks)), people could do these at their own speed. Additionally, there were information boards in parks showing routes.
- The Chair made the recommendation that should Sport England funding become available, grassroots/community sports clubs to be considered for priority over larger professional clubs with their own funding streams.
- The Chair made a further recommendation that the Active Leicester strategy action plan be brought back to the Commission following the findings of the seminar.

**AGREED:**

- 1) That the report be NOTED.
- 2) That the Active Leicester strategy action plan be brought back to the Commission following the findings of the seminar.
- 3) That should Sport England funding become available, grassroots/community sports clubs to be considered for priority over larger professional clubs with their own funding streams.

#### **40. TREE STRATEGY**

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a report to update the commission on the review of Leicester's Tree Strategy for the period 2022/23.

The Deputy City Mayor - Climate, Economy and Culture the Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services, Head of Parks & Open Spaces and the Trees & Woodlands Manager attended remotely the meeting to assist with the discussion.

It was noted that this was year four of the five-year tree strategy. There were 22 listed actions covering five key objectives. The strategy would be refreshed from April 2024.

The slides as included in the agenda pack were presented as well as an additional slide showing a map of projects by Ward. Wards with less planting would be considered for more planting.

It was further noted that Leicester was a regional and national exemplar. It had a diverse green canopy that included a number of rare trees and had increased the number of trees across the city over the years.

It was recognised that there was an issue of maintenance and that trees could create problems for residents. In these instances, the team worked hard to address these issues as they arose, however, it was necessary for the Council to work within its own policies.

The Deputy City Mayor - Climate, Economy and Culture noted that what had been achieved through the strategy was a testament to the team.

The Committee were invited to ask questions and make comments. Key points included:

- With regard to the potential damage and disruption that trees could cause, it was a question of getting the right tree in the right place. Some older trees were not in areas which would be replanted, such as when they were close to paths, highways and buildings. In such cases, the team would look to replant further away from paths, highways and buildings. Highways and street inspectors were worked with if trees became a hazard. Where trees were a nuisance, action would be taken where possible. Where there was fast regrowth on pollarded trees, the cycles may need to be reduced, however this may lead to other issues dropping off the schedule due to the lack of resource.
- Work on each site was determined over experience, species and target area, getting a full, detailed inspection on a 3-5/6-year cycle depending on the circumstances. In the interim period trees were looked at as and when issues arose.
- Apprenticeships had been undertaken in the past through a kick-start scheme for 16–24-year-olds. At this point the team had a full complement of staff, however if some staff were lost then apprenticeships would be considered. There were currently 10 apprentices working in Parks on a rolling programme, and a new apprentice had been employed in cemeteries. Apprenticeships were slightly more complicated in Trees and Woodlands due to the number of qualifications involved. However, groundwork could be done to send people on different courses.
- There was no ideal number for the density of trees, it was necessary to balance working with Planners and Highways.

- A draft paper on Ash Dieback was going to Lead Member Briefing in January. The issue had been underreported. 15% of trees in the city were Ash, all were infected, and it was thought that 80% of Ash trees would be lost as a result of this. The only ones that would not succumb were those with resistance. An effective treatment was not yet available. This municipal year around 200 trees would be felled depending on the progression of the epidemic. The felling of trees would gradually build year on year. There had been a lot of communications with the media and the paper in January would have an update and more statistics. There would be a comprehensive replacement scheme, but replanting could not be undertaken until the felling was completed over the next five to ten years. The priority was to manage danger. This was a significant issue and as yet there had been no specific government support announced.
- Community groups had been engaged and people were kept informed of developments.

AGREED:

That the report be NOTED.

#### **41. WORK PROGRAMME**

The work programme was noted.

#### **42. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

There being no further items of urgent business, the meeting ended at 18:52.