



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORT AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY
SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 18 JULY 2024 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Waddington - Chair

Councillor Bajaj
Councillor Orton
Councillor Singh Sangha

Councillor Haq
Councillor Osman

In Attendance

Assistant City Mayor Councillor Whittle (Online)

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72. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Rae Bhatia – Cllr Orton substituted.

Apologies were received from Cllr Porter – Cllr Haq substituted.

Apologies were received from Cllr Barton.

Apologies were received from Cllr Batool.

73. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have had in the business to be discussed.

There were no declarations of interest.

74. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development, Transport and Climate Emergency Scrutiny Commission held on 20 March 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

75. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

76. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

Mr Vaitha asked:

It seems as though there are cars parked illegally on Narborough Road (between Upperton Road and Hinckley Road).

Nothing seems to be done. There do not appear to be parking tickets on the illegally parked cars although a few parking wardens can be seen walking on Narborough Road.

The illegally parked cars are causing Traffic jams and it takes twice the time to get past Narborough road.

I suggest that the Narborough Road area (between Upperton Road and Hinckley Road) becomes a 'Red Zone'.

The Director of Planning- Development & Transportation responded:

As well as being a busy commuter route into the city, Narborough Rd is also a thriving district centre home to essential retail shops and community facilities, all of which need to be serviced with deliveries. We also want to encourage visitors and shoppers to the area and our parking policy needs to reflect that.

Parking controls are in place to ensure parking is effectively managed along Narborough Rd and does not restrict traffic flow. Our parking enforcement staff patrol regularly throughout each day and report that, by and large, obstructive parking is not a major concern. Area Traffic Control also closely monitor traffic along Narborough Rd and parked cars are not generally a cause for concern.

Since January, 201 parking fines have been issued to cars parked illegally on Narborough Rd, but we also have to recognise the legitimate need of businesses for loading and unloading to take place. Parking bays are provided to help with this on Narborough Rd itself and short stay shoppers parking is

provided for in many side streets.

We are considering expanding the red route network on key routes in the city and consideration is being given to encompassing part of Narborough Rd into a red route between Hinckley Road and King Richards Rd Junctions. Further consideration can be given to extending this if clear evidence emerges of problematic parking preventing the free flow of traffic.

In response to a supplementary question regarding the Council being favourable to retailers over normal residents, the Director of Planning-Development & Transportation responded that the Council tried to balance the needs of retailers and residents. Some parking on side streets had been allocated for shoppers. Whilst it was acknowledged that there were some issues accommodating all needs for parking, The Council would monitor and establish whether it was necessary to carry out further action to better manage traffic and parking. Red routes were an option, but these were only used if there was a very good reason to do so. Any opposition to such a proposal would result in a public enquiry.

The Director of Planning Development & Transportation encouraged Mr Ashok to provide the Council with specific areas of concern so that traffic officers could be directed accordingly.

77. PETITIONS

Cllr Karavadra presented the following petition:

“We the undersigned are concerned citizens and urge Leicester City Council to act now to (1) Remove the 24-hour bus lane (2) Remove the camera pointing to Oakland Avenue as there are 2 cameras on a 0.8 mile stretch (3) Put a Keep Clear’ sign on Melton Road to make it safe for cars exiting Oakland Avenue”.

The petition was noted.

78. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION 2024/25

The Membership of the Commission was confirmed as follows:

Councillor Waddington (Chair)
Councillor Barton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Bajaj
Councillor Batool
Councillor Singh Sangha
Councillor Rae Bhatia
Councillor Osman
Councillor Porter

79. DATES OF MEETINGS FOR THE COMMISSION 2024/25

The dates of the meetings for the Commission were confirmed as follows:

18 July 2024
28 August 2024
6 November 2024
8 January 2025
12 March 2025
23 April 2025

80. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Commission noted the Scrutiny Terms of Reference.

81. EDTCE OVERVIEW PRESENTATION

The Director of Planning Development & Transportation, the City Transport Director and the head of Economic Regeneration gave an outline of the service areas that form part of the commission using the slides attached with the agenda.

Points in addition to those on the slides included:

- An active travel event had been held with schools and communities.
- An item on air quality was likely to come to the Commission.
- It was not yet known how the new government would fund transport and infrastructure.
- Highways worked with schools on school streets and parking issues.
- Business Support aimed to help support smaller businesses in the city.
- The LLEP had transferred into the City Council.

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

- Money had not been received from the previous government for buses through main capital Bus Service Improvement Programme. However, the Council had successfully bid for other funds, including funds to electrify buses.
- Bus improvements had also been invested in through the Transforming Cities programme, especially in terms of infrastructure.
- A bus improvement plan funding had been received and the Council would continue to support and invest in bus transport.
- Substantial improvement had been delivered. However, there was more to do, more money was needed, and the team were looking for funds to take forward plans into the future.

- Future bids for money for investment in bus transport would likely be different to past bids in so much that the government maybe considering multi-year applications done through a formula.
- Converting buses to electric power had led to savings in fuel costs. However, only half the fleet had been converted. It was hoped that all would be converted by 2030.
- The costs of the operators running the services had increased, this had initially been due to fuel costs but was now due to the need for operators to pay drivers more as many drives had left the service to drive Heavy Goods Vehicles. Therefore, driver retention needed to be considered.
- The bus network continued to be supported by the Council with government funding. If more money was received from the government, then more bus services could be added. As things stood, it was aimed to increase frequency and patronage, however, this was dependant on central government.
- In response to a query regarding Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points on terraced streets, this had formed part of the discussion in the recent task group on EV charging. Authorities who had trialled such charging points had been engaged with and both positives and negatives had been taken from these trials. It was recognised that provision of EV charging areas would need to be factored into future considerations.
- In response to a query on the site of the Marks and Spencer store scheduled to close, from the Council perspective it was necessary to consider the plan for the whole of the city centre (not just retail). Looking at the site of the former Debenhams, this had received permission to be used either for residential development, so owners were considering as to whether the site could be used this way. The M&S store was due to shut in August and the Council intended to discuss with M&S where they were with the property and would look into the potential for the site.
- In response to a question regarding the marketplace. The City Mayor had paused development, during which time the market continued to operate out of green dragon square. A number of options were being considered regarding where the market could operate from. There had been a lot of interest, and stakeholders and the City Mayor had met with market traders. No decision had been made as yet, however, there was an intention to conduct a consultation with stakeholders and with the Scrutiny Commission. A consultation process had been mapped out and it would need to be considered as to how scrutiny could have oversight within the timescale. It was suggested that a special meeting may need to be convened if the next scheduled meeting fell outside the timescale of the decisions.
- In terms of options for the marketplace, several alternatives had been put forward by different people, and these were being considered seriously by the Council.
- Air quality had improved consistently over a number of years. Electric busses had only been one aspect of this. Other aspects had included

encouraging the use of public transport, and walking and cycling. Additionally, technology on vehicles was improving and older, more polluting vehicles were being scrapped. The city had been under the EU emissions target for some time. There was potential to engage more fully with the issue of air quality in the future.

- The John Ellis building had been part of a joint scheme with the University of Leicester. The university had raised funds to build the Space Park and the Council had raised the funds to generate the site as it had been contaminated in terms of the foundations. The Council had put the land in at no cost and had invested in remediation works. The college had then brought money in to bring about the Space Park.
- Regarding the Riverside development, the water quality in the river was now much better and the service were not aware of any negative issues.
- Historically, Section 106 Money had been used to improve the riverside environment and Neighbourhood Services had run volunteer sessions to help keep the river clean and tidy.
- Responsibility for the river was a combination of the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water. The Council met with these organisations every quarter to raise issues, especially following flooding events that had revealed weaknesses in sewage and drainage systems. The Director of Planning- Development & Transportation was happy to pick up any issues raised.
- In relation to concerns raised about disabled access and the railway station development, it was reported that there had been extensive engagement with accessibility groups on disabled access. Local groups such as All In and LTAP had been worked with and this was still ongoing. There was also ongoing engagement on the issue though rail industry auditors. There were some matters outstanding, including the locations of toilets, and East Midlands Railway were being engaged on this. The planning application was in, and the consultation was happening and responses to issues raised were being prepared.
- Regarding the new government, it was still uncertain what they were looking to do. There had been discussion around the focus on devolution and how it would continue, however, the detail around this was not yet known. Many topics needed to be engaged with as it became clearer with the new government.
- Many different funding streams had been secured without being part of a multi-council arrangement. Joint plans with district councils had been looked at. A report was requested on the implications of the new government once they were clearer.

AGREED:

That the update be noted.

82. BUS LANE OPERATING HOURS - SCOPING DOCUMENT

The City Transport Director submitted a report providing members of the commission with a proposed scope for the review of the operating hours of bus lanes within Leicester, giving the Commission the opportunity to comment on the scope for the review, suggest items to include, and consider joining the working group.

A representative from Climate Action Leicester and Leicestershire, Nicola Royale, attended the meeting and asked the following with reference to this item and the subsequent item on EV Charging:

- How will the limited National Grid capacity affect the Council's plans for the city?
- How is the Council going to manage the competing demands for more electricity?
- Will the Council start building a network of car-free streets, specifically for cyclists, pedestrians and buses? This would both reduce the need for electric cars, support people who cannot afford cars to get around, and it would leave more of the available electricity to be used on heating homes – which is more essential than owning a car for most people in low-income neighbourhoods.

The following response was given:

- Had engaged with National Grid as part of the preparation of its Local Plan to ensure they see plans for future city development and could plan their infrastructure and any competing demands accordingly over the longer term.
- The Council's Draft Local Transport Plan that CAL was consulted on identified a transport hierarchy on page 36 that, in priority order, supported reducing the need to travel, Active Travel, zero emission bus travel, shared mobility and finally zero emission private vehicles. The plan also promoted accessibility for all including low-cost transport, acknowledging the low car ownership within many neighbourhoods.
- Ultimately modal shift to sustainable transport was preferred to simple conversion of petrol/diesel cars to EV as the latter would not address congestion and did not completely tackle air pollution.
- To support this strategy the council had invested substantial resources through its Connecting Leicester Programme over the past 13 years to deliver extensive pedestrianised streets and cycleways supporting

Active Travel, and bus infrastructure, including bus priority measures to encourage bus patronage.

- Over that period 25km of cycleway have been constructed and the central city centre streets have largely been rebuilt creating the largest Pedestrian Priority Zone in the country for walking and cycling.

The Chair introduced the item noting that the scope had needed to wait until government guidance had been produced. This had now been produced and a task group could now be organised.

The report was presented, and key points included:

- Bus lanes and similar priority systems enabled improvements to punctuality and reliability for passenger transport users and were a key part to ensuring bus services remained a viable journey choice.
- 21.9m bus services began within the city boundary in 22/23, and Leicester was ranked eleventh in the country for number of bus journeys.
- The majority of the network was commercially operated and was supported by a strong partnership between operators and the local authority.
- Leicester's bus lanes network was found mostly on 13 key transport corridors and supports the 44 main network bus services and other routes including the park and ride services, orbital, and intra-urban routes into county destinations and beyond. Most of these operated 24/7
- In terms of national context, the government had published a plan for drivers with stronger guidelines on bus lanes for local authorities. These guidelines could be found from p56 onwards of the document.
- In terms of scoping the scrutiny review, the review looked to consider the location and hours of operation of current and future bus lanes within Leicester and the impacts associated with the deployment and usage of bus lanes.

The Chair outlined the three-meeting approach for the review, with the first meeting looking at the issue at hand, the second hearing from stakeholders and the third drawing up recommendations.

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

- Opportunities to improve the service were always being looked at.
- The scope of the review would look at both current and future bus lanes.
- It was suggested that an effective and frequent bus service was necessary for the city and for bus lanes to make sense. This in mind, it would be useful to gain information on whether the government could

fund the city to increase the service.

Councillors were asked if they wished to take part in the review.

Councillors Bajaj, Singh Sangha and Osman expressed interest in joining the group.

Councillors Orton and Haq expressed interest on behalf of Councillors Rae Bhatia and Porter respectively.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a working group be convened on the issue.
- 3) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.
- 4) That members to be kept informed of any key issues related to this topic.

83. EXAMINING ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS IN LEICESTER - INFORMAL SCRUTINY

This item was deferred as the Chair of the task group was unable to attend the meeting.

AGREED:

That the item be deferred to the next meeting of the Commission.

84. LABOUR MARKET: WORKER EXPLOITATION - SCOPING DOCUMENT

The Head of Economic Regeneration submitted a report providing members of the commission with a proposed scope for a review of worker exploitation across Leicester's labour market and invite members of the commission to comment on the scope for the review and to consider joining the working group.

The Chair introduced the item and noted that this task group would likely take longer as it needed more analysis and work and more careful consideration. She further suggested that the group may wish to involve members from the Culture and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission as it was an issue that spanned the portfolios of both Commissions.

The Head of Economic Regeneration presented the report, and raised the following key points in addition to those in the report:

- This was an area likely to be of interest to all members of the

Committee, but also had relevance to several areas across the Council, including the executive and other Council services.

- The scope looked to broaden from the textiles sector to the economy as a whole.
- The scope recognised that the Council did not have powers to enforce or inspect workplaces.
- It was necessary to help the Council understand the issues and the roles it could play in the agenda.
- Professor Nik Hammer at the University of Leicester had been engaged and he had offered his support going forward in gathering data and compiling a literature review of where labour exploitation was likely to exhibit. He would also look at insights as where partner organisations saw this presenting itself.
- It was necessary to look at enforcement and the role the Local Authority could play.
- It was suggested that there should be focus on social care, nail bars, car washes, construction and hospitality, which were sectors in which worker exploitation was thought to take place.

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

- It was hoped that the work could produce proposals for the Executive to consider in relation to the issues.
- It was raised that it was necessary to take into account the effects of unemployment in communities should factories close and retailers leave the city. In response to this, the Chair noted that should the situation get worse, the Council may benefit from knowing how to allocate resources. She further drew attention to the employment hub and skills bootcamps.
- Money from the Shared Prosperity Fund would pay for the work that the University of Leicester was conducting.
- It was suggested that members of the Culture and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission be invited to take part in the working group.
- Further scoping could be conducted.
- The timings of this working group and the working group on 24-hour Bus Lanes would need to be considered.

Councillors were asked if they wished to take part in the review.

Councillors Bajaj, Singh Sangha and Osman expressed interest in joining the group.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a working group be convened on the issue.

- 3) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.
- 4) That members to be kept informed of any key issues related to this topic.

85. WORK PROGRAMME

Members of the Commission were invited to consider content of the work programme and were invited to make suggestions for additions as appropriate to be brought to future meetings.

- It was requested that an item on the implications of the new government come to the Commission so that there was a chance to look at opportunities and address areas of concern.
- It was reiterated that scrutiny needed oversight of any decisions regarding the marketplace.
- It was requested that a report come to the Commission regarding congestion caused by delivery cyclists.
- The item on ESOL and Skills Bootcamps needed to come to the Commission in March as this was when delivery of the current programme would have been completed.

The work programme was noted.

86. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no further items of urgent business, the meeting finished at 19:15.