



Leicester
City Council

MINUTE EXTRACT

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
CULTURE AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

Held: MONDAY, 29 JANUARY 2022 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Dawood (Chair)
Councillor Mohammed (Vice Chair)

Councillor Aldred Councillor Agath
Councillor Chauhan Councillor Halford
Councillor Karavadra Councillor Singh Johal

In Attendance:

Councillor Clarke – Deputy City Mayor (Climate, Economy and Culture)

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43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Cutkelvin.

44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillors Aldred, Dawood and Singh-Johal declared that they were members of Council-run gyms.

These declarations were made during the item on the Draft Capital Programme.

50. DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Director of Finance submitted a report detailing the proposed Capital Programme for 2024/25.

The Chair directed the Commission to the relevant parts of the document to Culture and Neighbourhoods.

Key points included:

- This was a one-year programme of schemes from grants, borrowing and the sale of assets. The programme was limited to one-year due to the uncertainty of resources, the impact of inflation and to ease pressure on revenue budgets.
- The Commission were given a rundown of expenditure relevant to Culture and Neighbourhoods, including:
 - £1 million for leisure centre refurbishment.
 - £200,000 for Park Depot relocation.
 - £48,000 for the relocation of the pest and dogs depot.
 - £245,000 for grounds maintenance equipment rendered.
 - £300,000 for the community garden gardens and allotments through the Growing Spaces project.
 - £195,000 for heritage interpretation panels
 - £75,000 for historic building grants.
 - £50,000 for festival decorations.
- The operational estate Maintenance Programme would help to maintain buildings out of which services operate.

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

- In response to a query about potentially trying to empower local organisations with the knowledge and experience needed to take over and/or run assets, it was noted that there was a fundamental branch review of everything in the Council and the use of community organisations was a part of this.
- Further to this it was raised that if assets were sold off then that would result in a one-off payment to the Council, whereas if they were held by the Council and leased to organisation then the Council would hold the asset whilst also raising revenue. In response to this it was noted that prior to any decision on asset sale, there would be consideration given to leasing.
- It was noted that in terms of service provision, it was sometimes possible for the third sector to help to deliver services on behalf of the Council, an example of this was the African Caribbean Centre where involvement with the voluntary sector had saved the council around £150,000 per year. Additionally, there were many third sector groups that showed potential to work with the Council and they were being encouraged to come forward as the Council were keen to work with them. Consideration was being given to whether such groups could be supported long-term, perhaps with a view to them eventually running a service (perhaps on behalf of the Council, however, this would take time.

Additionally, before an asset went on the market, it was considered as to whether it could be run by a community group.

- The University of Leicester was being worked with to help understand the potential of community groups working with the Council.
- It was noted that Leicester's Shared Prosperity Fund programme funded a bid from the University of Leicester to work with social enterprises in the city to develop business plans, organisational capacity and skills. Additionally, there was another £350k from the SPF programme for bids from Community Asset Transfer organisations. This could support investment in buildings for energy efficiency, essential repairs, works that could enhance revenue earning etc. This money could be spent in 2024/25. This was outside the Capital Programme.
- In terms of value for money on leisure centres, membership was increasing, so this indicated good investment. Energy efficiency was also being explored as a saving; an example was the solar arrays on Aylestone Leisure Centre. Customer satisfaction with leisure centres was good and there was a £0.5m overachievement in income as a result of an increase in usage linked to the capital scheme.
- It was requested that a report be brought to the Commission on engaging community organisations.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a report on engaging community organisations be brought to the Commission.
- 3) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account by the lead officers.
- 4) That the report be brought to Overview Select Committee prior to Full Council.