



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CULTURE AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 19 JUNE 2025 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Zaman – Chair
Councillor Halford – Vice Chair

Councillor Cassidy
Councillor Dave

Councillor Chauhan
Councillor Waddington

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132. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Dr Barton and Cllr Haq.

133. 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.

134. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Culture and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission held on 3 April 2025 be confirmed as a correct record.

135. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION 2025/26

The Membership of the Commission was confirmed as follows:

Councillor Syed Zaman - Chair

Councillor Elaine Halford – Vice-Chair
Councillor Susan Barton
Councillor Ted Cassidy
Councillor Sue Waddington
Councillor Yogesh Chauhan
Councillor Bhupen Dave
Councillor Zuffar Haq

136. DATES OF MEETINGS FOR THE COMMISSION 2025/26

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

19 June 2025
21 August 2025
3 November 2025
22 January 2026
5 March 2026
16 April 2026

137. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Commission noted the Scrutiny Terms of Reference.

138. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Chair reported that the recent visit of the Commission to Jewry Wall Museum prior to it opening had been interesting both in terms of the historical artefacts and the modern technology used to bring it to life. The museum would open on 26th July and members of the Commission could attend a launch on 24th July.
- The Chair emphasised that the Commission was there to scrutinise and hold the executive to account, and asked the Commission to do this respectfully. He further asked that when members asked questions, that they be kept to the topic at hand and that any other issues be brought up with members and/or officers outside the meeting.

139. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

140. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

141. OVERVIEW OF CULTURE AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services gave a presentation using the slides attached with the agenda pack. Additional points included:

- It was likely that the City Centre Director would provide information on city centre performance at some point.
- The Festivals and Events team celebrated the city well and had a 28% increase in engagement, which was good in a post-Covid society.
- The divisions of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services and Tourism, Culture and Economy worked closely together.
- The Record Office was run jointly with Leicestershire County Council and Rutland Council.
- There were close links with place marketing and good work had been done with digital content.
- The Culture and Creative Industries Strategy had been recently developed and the Museum Service Vision was a part of this. It showed ambition for capital investment and work with communities as well as working with children, young people and schools.
- Leicester Museum and Art Gallery (LMAG) was being developed in terms of its climate change and social history galleries, and Jewry Wall Museum would open shortly.
- The capital investment in LMAG and Jewry Wall was aimed at creating memorable visits and providing an excellent visitor experience.
- Arts Council England had provided regular National Portfolio Organisation funding of £1.2m in regular funding of £400k per year, from 2023 – 31st March 2026 this was for fixed term posts in the service and a wide range of activities making collections more accessible, taking objects into the community, learning, volunteering and access initiatives. Another year of funding had just been confirmed (2026-27), and the level of this funding was to be confirmed by the funder.
- The Division of Neighbourhoods and Environment had a £45m budget over seven areas and the work of the division touched on all parts of the city. 50% of this budget went on waste services, this was a statutory service.
- The division was representative of the city in terms of ethnicity, age profile and gender split.

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

- In response to a query on whether the contract with Biffa would be renewed, it was explained that the Council were coming to the end of their contract with them and beginning an open-market procurement exercise. There was still a Private Finance Initiative PFI agreement with Biffa. A site visit to Biffa could be arranged.

- The majority of the Divisional budget for waste was spent on the contract with Biffa. The cost of the contract had only grown by inflationary amounts.
- In response to a query on the enquiry system and whether there would be a named individual in each department to take on directing queries, it was explained that it was being looked to move away from current arrangements and a decision would be arrived at on what the future could look like, and this would be communicated to Councillors. This may mean that there could be named individuals to direct enquiries, arrangements would be considered over the coming weeks.
- It was suggested that officers could aim for a turnaround time of five days to respond to queries.

AGREED:

- 1) That the presentation be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account by the lead officers.
- 3) That a site visit to Biffa be arranged.

142. KING RICHARD III VISITOR CENTRE CAFÉ BUSINESS CASE

The Director of Tourism Culture and Economy submitted a report on the business case for the new Café at the King Richard III Visitor Centre.

The General Manager of the King Richard III Visitor Centre (KRIII) presented the report.

Key points included:

- This was a £551k project to bring the café to the front of the site so that all visitors could make use of it.
- This would involve the conversion of space, lowering the floor and windows and creating a doorway to create a café seating area. Additionally, the existing reception area would be converted to be a café servery area as well as a place to sell tickets.
- There could be outside seating on the street.
- The existing café would be converted to an education space, this could also be hireable.
- This was an 'invest to save' scheme whereby expenditure would be reduced, and income would be increased and service on the site would be improved.

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

- In response to a request for assurances over the budget, it was explained that lots of work had been done to remove unknowns. Many surveys had been taken ahead of the project, and this proposal was the

second iteration. Costs and factors needed had been considered and factored in. Additionally, there was a £100k contingency and research and surveys had been conducted to avoid additional costs.

- It was requested that a report come back to the Commission 12 months following the opening of the new café to ascertain whether expectations had been met in terms of customer numbers and cost/benefit.
- It was noted that the existing café had a record year since the pandemic and income had increased 10% year-on-year.
- In response to a query on whether the King Richard III Society had any association with the site, it was clarified that the Leicestershire Branch of the Richard III Society met at the King Richard III Visitor Centre monthly and there was a section of retail sales that were their products. Additionally, there were connections with the national Richard III Society and associations with both their past Chair and their current Chair, and Phillipa Langley would be giving presentations at the site.
- In response to a query on the impact on the site whilst the works were taking place, it was clarified that the major works would take place in the temporary exhibit area, so this would minimise the impact on the rest of the experience. The rest of the site would not be affected until the breakthrough, which was aimed to take place during the winter period when the museum was closed.
- In response to a query about how the new café would be advertised, it was noted that the offer in the area included the museum as well as the tomb and the cathedral. As such, the cathedral was worked with closely and between the museum and the cathedral there were over 50k visitors per year.
- In response to a query about what would happen to the temporary exhibition space where the new café was to be situated, the information and stories in this area would be covered elsewhere in the museum.

AGREED:

- 1) That the presentation be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken
- 3) That a report come back to the Commission 12 months following the opening of the new café to ascertain whether expectations had been met in terms of customer numbers and cost/benefit.

143. PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDERS - PROGRESS

The Director of Neighbourhood & Environmental Services will deliver an update on the progress of Public Space Protection Orders.

The Deputy City Mayor, Housing, Economy and Neighbourhoods, introduced the item.

- She explained that the Community Safety team led the PSPO consultation, while the political messaging was managed by the City Mayor. The PSPO, which formed part of the Heart of Leicester action plan, already had a significant impact on the City Centre and had

contributed considerably to safer streets. However, she clarified that the purpose was to engage and educate members of the public, rather than to be punitive. The issuance of fines was intended primarily as a deterrent.

- The Deputy City Mayor further highlighted the partnership work undertaken in collaboration with the Police to ensure the success of the PSPO, including Operation Pedal Fast - an operation targeting the seizure of illegal bikes and scooters. She noted that by dispersing these behaviours in the City Centre, the Council was better positioned to focus on individuals who require support, such as those leading a street lifestyle despite having an active tenancy.

The Head of Safer Communities elaborated further on the report, stating that the PSPO went into effect in April and focused on the City Centre. She outlined the timelines of events from the education campaign to the Operation Pedal fast and the engagement of businesses, all of which complemented the PSPO. It was noted that:

- The PSPO covered offences relating to loitering and begging, microphones, loudspeakers, temporary structures, e-bikes (and other offences detailed in the presentation).
- The target hours of work were 8 Staff per day, split between the City Wardens and the Community Safety team.
- Thirty-eight signs had been installed at specified locations, alongside digital displays in April. There were plans to do this again for education and public awareness throughout the city.
- Since the PSPO came into force, three FPNs had been issued, a relatively low number compared to the level of engagement. This underlined the fact that the priority was engagement. However, there were challenges with issuing FPNs, including threatening behaviours, refusal to provide details, and lack of support from the police.
- There was a high risk of intoxication, but the team was also proactive in removing alcohol from people under the powers granted by the PSPO. Some individuals were also referred to outreach services.
- Opposition from preacher groups regarding the amplification aspect of the PSPO had also posed some challenges. It was, however, important to emphasise that the robust system governing protests and campaigns remained in place, and the intention was not to hinder any of these activities. Plans were underway to meet again with a religious group, following an initial meeting, to ensure sustained engagement.
- Press coverage had been generally positive.

Members commended the PSPO but expressed concerns that it might potentially stifle activities in the City Centre. In response to questions and concerns, the following points were made:

- Oversight was in place for the implementation of the PSPO, and contrary to the concerns about suppressing activities, its purpose

was to open up the City Centre in a regulated manner. Accordingly, the PSPO focused on amplification, rather than the total cessation of certain activities.

- To further reinvigorate the City Centre, a busking programme was being considered by the Festival Team, to sustain the environment that had been created by the PSPO.
- City Wardens were temporarily redeployed from their wards, with executive approval, to embed the PSPO in the City Centre. However, the team had identified that the use of City Wardens was not sustainable in the long term, and they were expected to return to their posts in July. Potential changes in future management were anticipated.
- When unable to issue FPNs due to threatening behaviours, the mandate of staff was to step away for their safety. However, staff could record incidents and report them to the Police for follow-up.
- Regarding concerns that ASB might have shifted from the City Centre to other parts of the city, it was acknowledged that dispersing encampments carried the risk of individuals relocating elsewhere. However, this also provided opportunities to continue engagement, discouragement, and support to help people move away from such behaviours.

Members expressed a desire to see the scheme expanded beyond the City Centre while requesting increased vigilance to ensure that the PSPO does not exceed its remit or unduly restrict the public's freedom of expression.

AGREED:

- 1) That the presentation be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.
- 3) That a follow up update to be presented at a future meeting.

144. HOUSEHOLD WASTE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY FINDINGS

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a report providing a summary of the Household Waste Collections Engagement Survey including the approach to the engagement survey, the key lines of enquiry in the form of its objectives and scope.

The Deputy City Mayor, Housing, Economy and Neighbourhoods, introduced the item.

- She explained that Waste services generated significant interest in the city because it was a visible service delivered directly by the Council to residents. The proposed changes to waste collection aimed to align with the growing trend of increasing recyclables, separating food waste, and diverting as much waste as possible from landfills. Many other local authorities had already begun adjusting their frequency of waste collection. However, with any changes made, the Council intended to

fully involve the community, recognising their feeling and opinions, and responding to their proposals. The first step toward this was the engagement survey which covered different themes.

- The Deputy City Mayor highlighted that the waste management services contract between the Council and Biffa was due to expire in 2028, and recommissioning under the current terms would be unaffordable by the council, particularly given the well-known financial challenges being faced by the council, and other local authorities in general.
- She further affirmed that the proposed changes were also driven by the new legislation requiring local authorities to focus on reducing the volumes of waste, increasing the proportion of recycling and collecting food waste. This presented an opportunity for the Council to educate the community about recycling, as the survey revealed certain knowledge gaps in this area; as well as make the new system more accessible and simplified.
- She acknowledged the difficulty of implementing these changes, particularly given that the current scheme was viewed as successful, and there was understandably hesitation and uncertainty about changing the frequency of collection. However, the engagement survey explored various waste-related issues and gathered valuable data on the perspectives and reality of the communities. The survey delved into topics such as willingness to pay for caddy liners, knowledge about recycling, indoor and outdoor storage space for extra bins based on size and type of houses, among others. The information gathered were informative and would be incorporated into future decisions.
- The Director for Neighbourhoods and Environmental Services expanded on the previous points and highlighted the following;
- Many Local Authorities were rolling out different collection streams, like food waste collection, etc., in alignment with the national change programme. Thus, Leicester City Council needed to procure beyond 2028 and adapt its approach to reflect national expectations.
- There was a need to further engage residents to provide them with the necessary understanding and knowledge, which was expected to become easier as the new collection regime became standardised. This knowledge would be key to securing resident support for the proposed changes.

Members commended the report and proposed the following;

- That the scheme be aligned with the Net Zero Strategy that was recently agreed at the Council. This was noted by officers.
- For the report to include a section that clearly outlines action points arising from survey responses, with timescales, recommendations, and responsible owners, to help members focus on key issues. Officers responded that while some actions could be implemented quickly, others would require fundamental service changes. Regardless, ultimate responsibility rested with the Director.
- A timetable and action plan to be brought in the future to update on progress.

In response to further questions, it was noted that;

- The team worked with schools to deliver messages to the children and hopefully contribute to behavioural change.
- The Council was incurring significant expenditure on the collection and treatment of household waste and recycling from the kerbside. The cost of processing food waste was also more than that of mixed recycling or disposal into a landfill.
- The use of blue bags to request additional recycling bags had shown improvement compared to the use of stickers. However, improved monitoring would be done to assess the effectiveness of the same.
- There were different methods for food waste collection, e.g. the modification of the vehicle body. The team was currently engaging with Biffa on implementing service changes, including food waste collection, which was expected to result in a cost increase of approximately £1.7 million.
- Regarding the request for a breakdown of the contract with Biffa, it was noted that the sum was a unitary charge, and it was not plausible to break down sums payable for recycling or residual waste as had been requested.
- On the possibility of exceptions for households requiring more frequent collections to prevent fly-tipping, it was explained that the engagement survey aimed to identify barriers and challenges faced by people in different settings. However, a one-size-fits-all all seemed most practical moving forward, with policy exceptions, which the Council would ensure were robust and captured vulnerable communities prone to fly-tipping.
- Regarding the consideration of the Council employing staff and managing waste directly, it was noted that an internal report had been examined, and the Executive concluded that such a proposal would be unsustainable in the current climate.
- A typical Leicester bin contained about 31% non-recyclable waste and 39% food waste. Additionally, around three-quarters of respondents did not fill their bins by the collection day. This information was critical for the residents to understand the broader context of the decisions that the council would take.
- The team was working on an evidence-based recommendation report, which would be circulated and presented at a future meeting.

AGREED:

- 1) That the presentation be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.
- 3) That Officers to return with waste management options for consideration by commission members.

145. WORK PROGRAMME

A Grassland Maintenance Report was added to the workplan to include areas

for sports and recreation.

The work programme was noted.

146. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no further items of urgent business, the meeting finished at 19:26.