



Leicester
City Council

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

Held: WEDNESDAY, 19 JANUARY 2022 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Joel (Chair)
Councillor Sandhu (Vice Chair)

Councillor Malik
Councillor Porter

Councillor Rae Bhatia
Councillor Singh Johal

In Attendance

Councillor Clarke – Deputy City Mayor, Environment and Transportation
Councillor Myers – Assistant City Mayor, Jobs, Skills, Policy Delivery and
Communications

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51. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fonseca and Valand.

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to disclose any pecuniary or other interests they may have in the business to be discussed on the agenda.

Councillor Malik declared an interest in agenda item 6, Community Renewal Fund, in that he worked for an organisation which was part of one of the Consortium which had been successful in the funding program.

Councillor Porter declared an interest in agenda items 7 and 8 that he was not in favour of bus lanes but believed he should not be excluded from any debate in terms of the agenda items.

Councillor Joel declared an interest in agenda item 6, Community Renewal Fund, in that she knew Zinthiya Ganeshpanchan from Zinthiya Trust who was present at the meeting, having worked with her previously around domestic violence.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, these interests were not considered so significant that they were likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgement of the public interest. The Members were not, therefore required to withdraw from the meeting.

53. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Porter stated he should be recorded as being in attendance at the last meeting of the Economic Development, Transportation and Climate Emergency held on 15 December 2021.

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of Economic Development, Transportation and Climate Emergency held on 15 December 2021 be confirmed as a correct record, subject to the amendment above.

54. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations or statements of case had been received in accordance with Council procedures.

55. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

56. COMMUNITY RENEWAL FUND

The Director for Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment submitted a report which updated the Commission on the successful application to the Community Renewal Fund. Members of the Commission were recommended to note the report and make any comments to the Director for Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment should they wish to.

Councillor Myers, Assistant City Mayor for Jobs, Skills, Policy Delivery and Communications, introduced the report and drew Members' attention to the following information:

- Para 3.12 – 3.14 gave a wider context to how brilliantly Leicester had done in securing all five bids and the amount of money it had attracted. It was testimony to the good work done by the Council to turn around a very complicated process quickly, and to exercise good judgement across the 29 projects submitted.
- He thanked the City of Leicester and the organisations that had contributed to that process and come up with compelling projects.
- The projects will benefit the city with some vitally important work.

Mike Dalzell, Director Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment noted the range of projects supported allowed for a focus on businesses, communities and

individuals. He noted feedback from East Midlands Chamber of Commerce, one of the project partners, that the city was by far the most advanced of the local authority areas in the region. The council had agreed contracts with the government, individual contracts with each project, had agreed payment mechanisms and first payments had been sent.

It was reported that Government had been looking for innovative projects and they could help guide what the future UK Shared Prosperity Fund was going to look like. Given the good collaboration between the various projects, there was real enthusiasm for lessons to be learned and new approaches to be tried. There was an important evaluation thread throughout, and it was hoped that by the end of the projects in June there would be concrete suggestions and ideas on what could happen next.

Zinthyia Ganeshpanchan, CEO for Zinthyia Trust, who is leading the She Inspires Business Playbox partnership, was invited to address the meeting and noted:

- Their project partnership consisted of five not for profit organisations, providing business start-up support as well as employment support to women primarily from ethnic minority communities who had been impacted by the pandemic and post-pandemic.
- Carbon emissions were an important focus for the start-up business support being delivered as part of the project.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and were responded to as follows:

- It was noted that in paragraph 5.1 in the report that £59,000 would be used to cover the cost of the council acting as accountable body for the CRF programme to ensure the five projects were adhering to the regulations of the funding, progress reports were made to government, evaluations were being undertaken etc. The money would come into the Council's Economic Regeneration service budget to fund contract officers working on the programme.
- It was asked how success would be measured. It was noted the council team would work with each project to demonstrate and evidence that outputs had been achieved. Output targets had been set for each project by government, and there was a requirement for a formal evaluation of each project to be undertaken.
- Ms Ganeshpanchan further noted that Zinthyia Trust has a robust monitoring system as part of the project, that could record every individual assisted and their 'distance travelled'.

It was noted that the Leicester Textiles Renewal project would be delivered by the city council. Members suggested that although a lot of support was being targeted at workers to deliver garment skills and training, the management of those businesses needed support too, for example, with Health and Safety. It was noted that workers could be working in a badly managed environment.

In response Councillor Clarke, Deputy City Mayor for Environment and Transportation, informed the meeting that over the past few years European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) had been used to engage with over 200 textile businesses, supporting them to grow, including with free impartial advice and access to grants. Textile businesses had received webinars and events training online, particularly during Covid, which included support for ethical and legal compliance, alongside general business growth and support topics.

Peter Chandler, Head of Economic Regeneration Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment also noted the project complemented other general programmes of support to businesses being delivered through the Growth Hub and that support for businesses was central to the new Community Renewal Fund project. As part of the programme the Council was recruiting a cohort of initially 20 businesses to join a development programme, working closely with partners Fashion Enter and De Montfort University to help the businesses to develop. Small grants would be made available to those businesses to help them to implement innovations to develop and grow their business, including specific support from the Fashion Technology Academy.

A capacity register was being established for retail buyers, to determine capability and manufacturing volumes for the various businesses.

Officers were in contact with retailers and e-retailers who had their own auditing systems, as well as audit providers to ensure consistency on those compliance and audit regimes. Also noted there had been a whole series of workshop programmes via the Growth Hub to show what 'good' looked like and this project could offer support and practical assistance to companies on compliance.

Members found the feedback encouraging but noted some workplaces may not be compliant with HSE, and that some landlords and business owners did not understand the legal requirements.

Councillor Clarke informed the meeting the council's work covered these areas and that it had been well documented in the Leicester Labour Market Partnership annual review. This included what the City Council was doing but were also working with those other agencies that had powers to enforce on labour market and modern-day slavery issues, including the GLAA, HSE, HMRC and Leicestershire Police. It was noted the Council has established the Leicester Labour Market Partnership and funded a coordinator role. Members were encouraged to report any issues they encountered to the Leicester Labour Market Partnership and the relevant agencies.

Councillor Clarke informed the meeting that the annual review report for the past year was currently being compiled and would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee. At the request of the Chair, the report for the previous year would be circulated to Members as a refresher of information.

Councillor Porter raised the following concerns over the textile industry in

Leicester:

- The typical business model within the textile industry was to focus on price, with retailers being forced to produce fabric at cheaper and cheaper prices, creating a downward spiral.
- Businesses should be encouraged to produce higher quality garments, made from sustainable fabrics.
- The Council should inspect dye house businesses to ensure they were not producing noxious fumes or emitting discharges into the sewage system or waterways.

Councillor Clarke responded that the Council did not absolve itself from responsibility in terms of pollution but was the responsibility of the Environment Agency. He acknowledged that what had been described quite rightly was an entangled regulatory system that was very difficult to unpick, and a legal framework and policy environment that was not working for the country. He added he had been pushing Government to bring forward its own stated manifesto pledge to develop a single enforcement body for the labour market and would continue to lobby MPs to do so.

In addition, Councillor Clarke supported a campaign to establish a garment trade adjudicator or 'watchdog' who could be appointed to ensure that manufacturers did not become victims of supply chain pricing pressures. He agreed that change was needed both for the issues of workplace exploitation, and on the environmental concerns, so the best possible garments were made in Leicester in the best possible working environments.

Members suggested that when working with auditors, environmental issues were considered alongside other factors such as health and safety, pay and rights of workers.

The Chair asked how best practice regarding CRF programmes could be identified and how the city compared with other authorities and how often evaluation updates would be brought to the Commission. It was noted that the city council was already in contact with other local authority Economic Regeneration teams elsewhere in the region and were exchanging information about recording information, outputs etc. In terms of evaluation, a group including representatives from all projects was already working together on evaluation. It was suggested that there be a further report to the Commission after the interim review which will take place just after the end of March and then towards the end of July following the end of the programme.

The Chair thanked the officers, Councillors and community group presenting the report. The Commission was asked to note the report.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. The current Leicester Labour Market Partnership report be circulated to Members of the Committee.
3. Community Renewal Fund evaluation updates be brought as

soon as feasible following the March 2022 interim review and at the end of July 2022 after the programme concludes and final evaluation reports have been prepared.

57. CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS TO THE LEICESTER TRAFFIC REGULATION (BUS LANE AND BUS GATES) (GROBY ROAD) (AMENDMENTS) ORDER (NO.8) 2019

The Director of Planning, Development and Transportation submitted a report to the Commission to consider unresolved objections to The Leicester Traffic Regulation (Bus Lane and Bus Gates) (Groby Road) (Amendment) Order (No. 8) 2019. Members were asked to give views to the Director to be taken into account when reaching a decision on whether or not to implement the proposed Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and install the bus lane.

John Dowson, Major Transport Projects Manager, presented the report and drew Members' attention to the following:

- There were a number of popular buses that frequently used Groby Road, in particular Arriva 26, 27 29 services and University Hospitals Leicester bus services.
- Delays varied during peak periods for buses but could be up to eight or nine minutes. With the installation of a bus lane, it would allow buses to bypass queues, making them more reliable and consistent and provide assurance to passengers.
- The proposal had been advertised and objections had been received. There was concern from a resident about access to their property. It was explained that it was permissible to drive short distances in the bus lane for access.
- Objections had been received from Ward Councillors Bhatia, Cassidy and Waddington, who had raised concerns with the length of the bus lane, impact on residents, and the linkage and timing of the bus scheme with the Five-Ways junction scheme. Discussions had been held with the Councillors concerned.
- The Council had submitted a strong business case for the bus lane, and the Government had agreed to fund the work through its National Productivity Investment Fund.

Councillor Bhatia was invited to elaborate on objections he had made on behalf of residents, and made the following points:

- He was not in objection to the bus lane as such but believed there was a cumulative impact of several issues and he wanted all issues to be taken into account.
- He believed the 24 hours, seven days a week operation of the lane could not be justified based on the frequency of the buses at off peak times and residents could benefit from use of the lane off-peak.
- The Five-Ways junction works proposed the removal of the right-turn into Blackbird Road from Woodgate and could force traffic to continue straight to turn right onto Medina Road from Groby Road. This could cause queueing

problems on Groby Road if drivers had to wait behind those turning right into Medina Road.

- There was proposed to be a new school entrance on Garland Crescent. Account should be taken on effects on the filter lane to turn right into Garland Crescent and this would need extending and may have an impact if traffic were queueing back up Groby Road.

The officer noted the concern around the 24/7 hours for the bus lane. It was reported that EDT Scrutiny Commission in 2015 had examined bus lanes at a policy level and had felt it appropriate where possible for bus lanes to be 24/7 on the grounds it that gave greater clarity to drivers, in particular on radial routes in and out of the city, rather than having drivers querying whether or not it was in operation. It was reported that where there were other 24/7 lanes they operated better, and were always designed so there was no disbenefit for peak traffic. He added that the overall importance of bus lanes were to ensure that route that buses were reliable. He also said buses were also a big part of making the city carbon neutral.

It was further reported that Medina Road and the Five-Ways scheme were moving to a point where the scheme could be consulted upon again and there would be a programme for that and further opportunity to discuss those proposals. It was acknowledged that with all the schemes in that part of the city, including the new school, the Council had to plan for all of the traffic as best as it could.

The Chair asked that another meeting be arranged with Councillor Bhatia to clarify the points made, as some time needed to be given to consider how the points could be resolved or responded to. She added that feedback on the information from the follow-up meeting be shared with Members of the Commission. The Director of Planning, Development and Transportation confirmed a follow-up meeting would be arranged as it was important to get the scheme right and that there was a common understanding of the benefits, and what some of the issues might be that arise from the project.

A Member asked that if the 24/7 bus lanes were to provide greater clarity, why there were so many people being fined by using the lanes, and he asked to see evidence to support the statement. It was noted Saffron Lane bus lane was peak period only, and everyone could understand timings on a sign. He said that to have no timings at all might be confusing to drivers. He added that to really deter motorists from using the bus lane it should be made more obvious cameras were being used and being enforced with signage to make the scheme more honest. He added that Nottingham City Council ran the scheme and had to generate significant funding every year in order to make the scheme self-sufficient. He also noted traffic queueing had a resultant pollution and congestion caused by the bus lane in Aylestone.

The officer addressed the points, noting that the signing of bus lanes and camera enforcement conformed with national requirements for road signing and directions and were legal, and if a driver wanted to appeal a charge issued, they could do so. It was noted the lining and signing was part of an adjudication

process in appeals and was external to the city council, and enabled that lining installed according to regulations, to be critiqued. He added that the enforcement of bus lanes by camera ensured lanes were not unduly driven in, and helped to keep lanes clear for buses to ensure they worked as intended.

The Director of Planning, Development and Transportation added that in terms of the effectiveness of enforcement, there was a correction of behaviour in drivers after an initial period, and could be evidenced and showed they had the impact expected, He picked up on the point about Nottingham City Council and targets. He said there were no targets from Nottingham, that Leicester City Council made the decisions on where the cameras were installed, how they operated and the enforcement decisions, and Nottingham processed back-office tasks only.

Councillor Clarke said he would be happy to discuss with officers signing used compared with other parts of the country, and to look at that in the round, and to make comparisons to respond to the Members points.

The Chair thanked the officers and Councillors for their comments in input.

AGREED:

That:

1. The report be noted.
2. A meeting be arranged with Councillor Bhatia to clarify points in objection made. Information from the meeting to be provided to the Chair.
3. The Deputy City Mayor, Councillor Clarke, to provide comparable information on signage for bus lanes from other areas of the country to be provided to Members of the Commission.

58. CONSIDERATION TO OBJECTIONS TO THE LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL (MELTON ROAD A607, LEICESTER) (24 HOUR BUS LANE) TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER 2021

The Director Planning, Development and Transportation submitted a report to the Commission to consider unresolved objections to the Leicester City Council (Melton Road A607, Leicester) (24 Hour Bus Lanes) Traffic Regulation Order 2021. Members were asked to give views to the Director to be taken into account when reaching a decision on whether or not to implement the proposed Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and install the bus lanes.

Steve Richards, Senior Project Manager, presented the report and drew Members' attention to the following:

- As part of the Transforming Cities Programme the Council had advertised the proposal to extend the existing bus lanes on Melton Road towards Lanesborough Road, and from Lanesborough Road to Troon Way junction. The proposal was to improve bus journey times during busy periods. The Council had received six objections, and in summary were around operating

the bus lanes 24/7, congestion concerns, potential impact on air quality, U turn opportunities along the road, and the impact of larger vehicles having to turn into the bus lane in order to make a U turn.

- To address some of those concerns the scope of the scheme had been extended to improve the U turn facility at Oakland Avenue, which would enable more vehicles to wait and not obstruct through traffic.
- The scheme had been designed so the capacity of the signal junction at the Troon Way / Watermead Way junction was capacity neutral, i.e. it would not have an effect on the number of vehicles that would be able to travel through the junction at any one time.
- The objectors had been offered an opportunity to talk about their reasons for objection, but the offer was only taken up by one person, who took the opportunity to reiterate their views on why it was not appropriate to introduce the bus lane on that stretch of the road.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions which were responded to as follows:

- The main delays for buses were during the relevant peak hours, inbound in the morning and outbound in the evening. However, it was noted that Melton Road was a busy road throughout the day and traffic trends had changed in recent times, with an extended period of high traffic movement from midday around the city through to the early evening peak. Therefore the buses would be able to bypass any queuing traffic generated on Melton Road.
- In terms of passenger numbers, reference was previous experience of the Aylestone Road bus lane had seen an increase in 13% passenger use as a result of the introduction of the bus lane, and it was anticipated that there would be a similar increase in passenger numbers on the proposed Melton Road given the residential development to the north of Melton Road with Rushey Mead and Thurmaston village, etc..
- The current U turn facility was considered to be substandard. The proposal was to improve the reservoir for the right turn to enable turning vehicles to move out of the way of through traffic and create a safer environment
- A Member asked if additional camera warning signs could be used to prevent drivers entering the bus lane.

Councillor Clarke made reference to Arriva being pleased with the performance of buses on the A426 corridor, and he was also pleased that electric buses in the shape of Park and Ride had been introduced on the A426 as the first electric buses, and the plan was to electrify every single bus service in the city. He added that in looking at public transport, buses were a priority and crucial in generating the modal shift in order to meet the outcomes needed in terms of air quality, the climate emergency, and he was also proud the city would have the first UK net zero bus station.

He added there was a plan for an expansive network of tram like buses to serve every community in the city, including employment areas. The discreet bus lane projects should not be looked at in isolation, but as part of a network that the city hoped would deserve to be compared with some of the best

European models. Councillor Clarke added that when declaring the climate emergency in February 2019, it was done to make tough decisions that would improve the lives of people in the city, today and for the future.

Councillor Clarke also referenced the bus service that had been introduced from Broughton Astley to Leicester as a result of the introduction of the A426 bus lane and would circulate evidence to Members of the Commission to that effect.

In discussing the 24/7 element of bus lanes around the city, Councillor Bhatia queried if a similar system could be adopted as smart motorways, when a red sign would notify drivers that the bus lane was in use, and green meant a motorist could use the bus lane, which he believed would save confusion for the driver.

Andrew Smith, Director of Planning, Development and Transportation said he always welcomed smart solutions to highways issues and would take the suggestion back to the team for discussion. However, an important fact around bus lanes was the need to follow prescribed rules, how bus lanes were set out, and how they were signed. He explained the rules were tried and tested national rules so there was an understanding of the rules across the country, and users should understand the rules wherever they may be. He added that with the introduction of new technology, there needed to be considered the cost of running it and break down.

The Chair noted the comments made and asked that Councillor Clarke provide the requested information on the A426 passenger numbers to Councillor Porter, and officers take on board the suggestions made by Councillors Bhatia and Porter.

The Chair thanked the officers and Councillors for their comments and input.

AGREED:

That:

1. The report be noted.
2. Councillor Clarke provide requested information to Commission Members on passenger numbers on the A426 corridor.
3. The suggestion of using technology to reinforce bus lane signage be taken by the Director of Planning, Development and Transportation.
4. The suggestion of including camera enforcement signage on bus lanes be considered.

59. TRANSFORMING CITIES FUND

The Director of Planning, Development and Transportation submitted a presentation to update the Commission on the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) updates. Members of the Commission were recommended to note the presentation and make any comments to the Director of Planning,

Development and Transportation of they so wished.

Steve Richards, Senior Project Manager, delivered the presentation, and provided an update on the Braunstone Gate and Parker Drive / Beaumont Leys Lane schemes:

- For Braunstone Gate, it was a progression of the Covid Scheme introduced in 2020. The idea was to improve the footways to make it a more attractive environment and safer route, particularly for cyclists, by reducing through traffic movement.
 - There had been some challenges with bus companies and officers were working to find a solution that would allow the proposal to be taken further forward.
 - Next steps would include consultation with businesses in January / February 2022. A meeting had previously been held with some businesses earlier and feedback received would be reviewed and considered.
 - It was proposed to start on site in May, with City Highways constructing the scheme.
 - Artist impressions were provided to give Members an idea of the scheme being aimed for. There was also potential for a possible scheme being introduced for the evening which would close the central part of the street to vehicle movements to allow the food and beverage businesses to expand out into the street and create an environment where people felt safe and wanted to spend time in.
 - Access to Braunstone Gate from the leisure centre would be restricted to bus only to encourage walking and cycling links from the West End to the city centre. The plan showed the scheme in more detail.
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- For the Parker Drive / Beaumont Leys Lane scheme, the intention was to improved pedestrian cycling along Blackbird Road.
 - There were various constraints on different parts of the project, as there were lots of mature trees on the two corridors which were being kept, and a shared facility was being provided.
 - The section on Parker Driver had a very wide footway which would provide a segregated facility, and the junction with Somerset Avenue would be improved to reduce the crossing distances for pedestrians and cyclists.
 - Construction would take place between April to December 2022 by City Highways. The budget estimate was just under £1million and would provide a link to a number of TCF schemes, namely the A50, Anstey Lane South, Buckminster Road, the A6 and Beaumont Walk.
 - The report contained a number of photos and images of plans to highlight the proposed improvements. Ward Councillors had also been provided with information for their review and comment on the scheme.
 - Consultation with external stakeholders and Ward Councillors would start towards the end of January and February 2022, with the intention of being on site Spring 2022.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions and information was provided as follows:

- It was queried how residents would access Bede Street, what vehicles would be allowed on Braunstone Gate during the day if it was buses only in one direction, bollards were shown with vehicles up to them, and what would happen to the two taxi stands on Braunstone Gate. It was acknowledged there would be challenges to possible pedestrianisation of part of Braunstone Gate on Friday and Saturday evenings, and it was recognised that access to Bede Street would need to be maintained at all times. Clarity around Bede Street would be provided in the future before any work was done.
- The report had shown traditional signing, and officers would explore the opportunity to use electronic signs to change the message when the road was closed to through traffic.
- When previously engaging with businesses in the area, one taxi company was in favour of the scheme as they saw it as an opportunity to generate more patronage for their business by have greater numbers of people in the area.
- It was further explained that buses and cyclists only would be allowed onto Braunstone Gate from Duns Lane, but in the other direction from Narborough Road there would be no restriction of travel. It was further noted the left turn from Western Boulevard would be closed to create a lower trafficked street and encourage better walking and cycling without introducing a formal cycle lane. Vehicles exiting Bede Street would be able to turn left or right onto Braunstone Gate. The only section that would be for buses only would be the entry point at the leisure centre end to Braunstone Gate.
- Councillors queried how residents on Bede Street would access their property if the bollards were in use on Braunstone Gate. It was explained the message on the signage would be looked at, for example, access for residents only on Friday and Saturday evenings. It was noted that phase one of the scheme would not include those bollards which could be introduced retrospectively.
- Members asked for clarity on the Parker Drive scheme up to Heacham Drive from Halifax Drive. It was responded there was a temporary cycle lane on Beaumont Leys Lane, and the intention was to convert the footway from the filling station up to Beaumont Walk, to be a shared facility for the short term, which could be reviewed as and when demand for cycling increased, and further work would continue funding permitted.

Councillor Clarke, Deputy City Mayor for Environment and Transportation, said the Braunstone Gate scheme was an interesting challenge that had been discussed by members of the community. He added that the issues were not unsurmountable as bollard entry had been introduced for businesses in the city and the Council had experience of thinking through those types of problems. He added that it was a fantastic part of the city, and with being so close to the university and city centre, with vibrant businesses that deserved the sort of environment being proposed, and there was a keenness in the community to regenerate the area. Members welcomed the scheme and added that a cultural change was welcomed by the community. Members also noted it would generate the night-time economy for the economic benefit of the city.

Members made the raised the following observations and concerns and responses were made:

- It was asked what, if any, comments had been received from the police made in terms of how they thought that crime and anti-social behaviour would be reduced as a result of the proposed scheme.
- Members were further keen to stress that proper consultation should take place with groups representing people with mobility or disability issues who had in the past felt excluded as a result of some of the schemes introduced. It was confirmed that the Council regularly consulted with representatives of mobility, disability and visually impaired groups.
- Clarification was sought on the legal process for implementing a traffic ban on a road if at certain times access would be required for deliveries. It was noted there would not be a ban on vehicles. The closure would be proposed, but if there were objections it would go to a public enquiry in front of an inspector, where all parties would be invited to present their case. The decision of the inspector would be binding on both parties.
- It was confirmed that traffic entering from Narborough Road would be able to travel the full length of Braunstone Gate.
- The Chair asked if there would be any adverse impact on the area with increased footfall. It was noted that the aim of the scheme was to increase footfall, to encourage people to access the facilities for entertainment, eating and drinking, as well as providing a safer environment to encourage cycling.

The Chair asked that the Commission note the report and officers note the comments made by Members.

AGREED:

That:

1. The report be noted.
2. Officers to provide clarity around access to Bede Street prior to any work commencing on the scheme.
3. The Director of Planning, Development and Transportation note the comments of Members.

60. DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23

DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2022/23

The Deputy Director of Finance submitted a report the purpose of which was to describe the City Mayor's draft budget for 2022/23. The Commission was recommended to consider and comment on the City Development and Neighbourhoods Element of the budget. The Commission's comments would be forwarded to the Overview Select Committee as part of its consideration of the report before presentation to the meeting of Council on 23rd February 2022.

Amy Oliver, Head of Finance, presented the report. It was noted the revenue budget looked at the day to day running costs of the Council, and cost of individual divisions,

and as had been for a number of years, was focused around the decade of austerity the Council had experienced, the current pandemic that had affected some of the budget reviews that would have taken place, and the current social care funding crisis.

Members were asked to note the budget presented showed a funding gap for the next financial year and the years after, which was forecast to rise to £50million for 2023/24. For 2022/23 the budget gap would be met from reserves, but for 2023/24 the project gap could no longer be managed by the Reserve Strategy. The report talked about a budget review to try and bridge the gap.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions, and the following responses were given:

- It had been reported across the country that as a result of Brexit and the pandemic that a large number of people had left the country. It was asked that, in terms of Leicester's population and the money received from Council Tax, had the Council seen a decline in the tax received from vacant properties? The meeting was informed that Council Tax was based on the properties rather than the number of people living in the city, and there were also various discounts given for example single people households that would impact on the Council Tax due.. It was further noted that if a property became vacant then the owner continued to be liable for Council Tax after the first month.
- Members were informed the Council Tax base had increased slightly for the past financial year which was helping the Council's budget. New builds were also adding to the tax base, for example, schemes such as Ashton Green.
- Members referred to section 4.23 in the report, and the £4.3million income shortfall in City Development and Neighbourhoods. It was reported that the shortfall was being met with Government grant received to support the authority through Covid.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. Information on Council Tax changes per population be provided to Members.

DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23

The Deputy Director of Finance submitted a report the purpose of which was to provide information to the Commission on the draft Capital Programme for 2022/23. The Commission was recommended to consider the report and comment on report. The Commission's comments would be forwarded to the Overview Select Committee as part of its consideration of the report before presentation to the meeting of Council on 23rd February 2022.

Amy Oliver, Head of Finance, presented the report.

The Chair asked that at section 3.19(c) in the report, it mentioned £250,000 had been

set aside for festive decorations, and as reported was a higher than usual amount. It was noted the authority was given money to help with the impact of Covid, and it was identified that some of the schemes, such as improving the decorations, would help with the regeneration of the city and assist with economic recovery, so rather than the £50,000 as usual for the annual programme, additional money had been invested upfront, and would help upgrade decorations around the city, and they would be more environmentally friendly.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted.

61. WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was noted.

HGV Training initiatives to be added to the work programme. Officers to explore and promote to under-represented communities. The Director of Planning, Development and Transportation to pursue with officers and to share information on initiatives.

62. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members were asked to note the Special Meeting of the Commission on 24th February 2022 to discuss the Workplace Parking Levy.

There being no other items of urgent business, the meeting closed at 7.46pm.