



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2022 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Cassidy (Chair)

Councillor Gee
Councillor Halford
Councillor Joel

Councillor Joshi
Councillor Kitterick
Councillor Porter

Councillor Thalukdar
Councillor Westley

In Attendance

Sir Peter Soulsby
Councillor Piara Singh Clair
Councillor Elly Cutkelvin

City Mayor
Deputy City Mayor
Assistant City Mayor

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72. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

73. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor Westley declared an interest in agenda items to be discussed that family members were council tenants.

Councillor Halford declared an interest in agenda items to be discussed that family members were council tenants.

Councillor Joshi declared an interest in the agenda items to be discussed that his wife worked for the Reablement Team, Leicester City Council.

Councillor Thalukdar declared an interest in agenda items to be discussed that a family member was a council tenant.

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

74. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no chairs announcements.

75. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

76. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING

Members received a full set of updates, appended to the minutes for information.

The Chair noted the information on the actions arising.

It was reported under Minute 64, Call-In of Executive Decision that information was still awaited on the number of student tenants in the property portfolio. The information would be made available to Members when available.

77. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

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

78. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

79. TRACKING OF PETITIONS - MONITORING REPORT

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report which provided an update on the status of outstanding petitions against the Council's target of providing a formal response within three months of being referred to the Divisional Director.

The Democratic Support Officer circulated an update on two petitions that had been completed since the publication of the report.

AGREED:

That the status of the outstanding petitions be noted, and to remove those petitions marked "Petition Complete" Ref: 21/04/03,

21/06/01, 21/09/03, 21/10/02 and 21/11/01 from the report.

80. COVID-19 UPDATE

The City Mayor delivered a presentation which contained data on the delivery of Covid-19 vaccinations in Leicester (attached to the minutes for information).

The City Mayor, prior to his delivery of the presentation, acknowledged the effort, energy and expertise that had been used by the NHS both locally and nationally, in order to deliver vaccinations at a time when they were under enormous pressures as a result of Covid-19 and enormous backlogs as well. He added he wanted to make it clear that what he was going to present was not a reflection or any sort of criticism on the efforts that had been made locally. Referring to the integrated care system, he added that he had enormous sympathy with the task that lay ahead to integrate the care system with the NHS into a single entity. He added that if there was any criticism to be had it was of the system within which they have been seeking to make vaccine delivery work.

During the presentation the following points were made:

- When comparing the delivery of vaccinations in Leicester with the delivery of vaccinations across the whole of England, there was a significant gap in those that were 12 years plus.
- There were significant geographic inequalities in uptake across the city, and the NHS had been asked to focus on the where the geographic inequalities were and seek to promote the take up in those areas in the city where it was known there were significant number of people who hadn't had a vaccination.
- There had been considerable improvements over the last few weeks, but there was very slow delivery of the vaccine in care homes. There had also been a very significant lag in the delivery of vaccines in schools.
- Vaccine delivery in the run-up to Christmas showed mainly booster vaccinations were being given. The period after Christmas showed that vaccinations one, two and booster numbers had dropped significantly. A graph showed doses one, two and the booster vaccinations for 16years plus over time. The Office for National Statistic target was one for which the city should be aiming, and was significantly higher than Leicester figures.
- It was noted that by August 2021, the delivery of the vaccinations one and two had flattened off.
- It was noted on the booster delivery for 16years plus, figures plateaued in the middle of December 2021, and was a long way off delivering even 80% of the population.
- A graph outlining vaccination numbers in Leicester and England showed the percentage variances in different age bands and showed how far Leicester was behind nationally.
- The 12years plus chart was highlighted as an example for the whole of the eligible population in the city. The figures showed the city was 7.5% behind for first dose, 8.9% second dose, and 13.7% for the booster.

When breaking the lower age range figures down further to 12-15years, the gap was even greater at 10.7% behind for first dose.

- A chart for doses one administered to 12-15 year olds in Leicester showed the target of delivery of dose one by November 2021 fell a long way short of what was being delivered and had plateaued by December 2021.
- It was believed that uncertainty nationally was affecting delivery. It was noticeable that some schools in the city had very few vaccines being delivered whilst others received very high numbers. It was believed that this was in part as a result of the effort put in and encouragement to get consent forms signed. It was very clear where the NHS had worked with schools, they had been able to deliver the vaccines.
- The slide on vaccination status by MSOA area was included to show the points made about the concern over geographical disparities in the delivery of vaccinations, with the grey part of the bar showing numbers of people in that particular part of the city with no vaccinations at all, with significant high numbers in Leicester city centre, West End, Westcotes and Stoneygate North.
- Discussions had been held with the NHS locally to ask them to focus on those particular areas with higher numbers of unvaccinated people, but there was criticism of the system and its ability to adapt itself in a flexible way to respond to what public health officials were identifying as areas where they could make the most impact.
- The chart with 50+ population showed Super Output Areas (SOAs) that should be targeted in Spinney Hill Road, Stoneygate, Westcotes and the West End. Again, the information had been supplied to the NHS but there had been difficulties getting the system to adapt.
- Delivery in care homes was a concern. Here numbers of eligible people for vaccination were known, but delivery had not met the Government's stated target date when residents should have received a booster vaccination. It was acknowledged that considerable efforts had been made to ensure the booster was delivered, but the blue line showed actual delivery locally fell a long way short of the target in November and remained so.
- 44% of staff had received a booster and it was suggested that more could have been done earlier to get staff vaccinated, given that many other urban areas had better rates.
- There had been good examples of pharmacists going out into community venues and delivering vaccinations, which showed the vaccinations could be delivered in challenging circumstances.

The Chair stated he was shocked by the fact that data could be obtained that showed where problems were and there seemed to be a lack of acknowledging the data and was problematic that the council was not getting the responses from the health service that it should be.

The City Mayor responded that it seemed to be systemic that the NHS could not deliver as effectively as public health officials were. He believed that the establishment of integrated care system would seek to look at those problems to try to get the NHS aligned at local level and properly integrated.

Members were then given the opportunity to comment and ask questions:

- It was noted that only 6% of agency staff in care homes had had booster jabs which seemed incredibly low.
- In terms of working in schools and care homes, it was asked if there was any data on children, especially in schools, who had developed natural immunity. It was stated the Omicron variant spread easily which might explain the low take up in vaccinations because of natural herd immunity.
- It was noted in Leicester city south, it showed the highest level of people not having received vaccinations. It was asked how many students made up the number who may have received vaccinations at home? The Chair of Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission stated that the city centre was composed of a transient population whereby people did not de-register from their GP when moving on, leaving a number of 'ghost' patients on the roll, and that he was engaging with the Clinical Commissioning Group about the issue to identify those non-patients

The City Mayor acknowledged that the city centre population was transient, but the fundamental point was there were a number of areas in the city where there was a disproportionate under delivery of the vaccination, with the possibility of engaging in targeted work being missed.

Members expressed disappointment about the issue around complexities in the completion of parental consent forms which appeared to be a recurring challenge going forward and asked what resources could be used to assist parents to help them better understand. The City Mayor responded that it had certainly been the case that of late the NHS had acknowledged the consent forms being used were not the only way to gain consent and a note from parents was enough. He added it was clearly possible for the NHS to work with schools to get consent and vaccinate through collaboration, but what was lacking was consistent support. He added as an example that it was interesting adjacent secondary schools had delivered dramatically different proportions of the children vaccinated.

Councillor Kitterick left the meeting at 6.15pm.

Members thanked the Director of Public Health and Team, and the City Mayor for the regular updates on the Covid-19 virus and vaccination programmes which had been important for Members. It was suggested that low uptake of the vaccination had partly been through not appropriately utilising social media and had this played a huge role in preventing people having the vaccinations.

Members noted the vaccination uptake in care home residents which, according to the latest figures, was at 83%. Concern was raised with just 44% take-up of the vaccination by staff. The deadline for staff to have had vaccinations had been November 2021, but had changed since. An issue had arisen with social care services having lost so many care workers because they had not been vaccinated before the deadline or had chosen to leave the service.

Members observed that vaccination take up in 12-15year old children was 14% and that this was lower than the national average. Members asked if the data showing ethnicity of non-take up could be provided so that those groups could be worked with. The City Mayor responded that when looking across ethnicity of vaccination that some variations could be seen, but was not the most significant variable, and by focussing on geographic areas had been the most effective way of getting more vaccines in more arms. He added that elected representatives were well placed to help the NHS to identify 'influencers', such as sports people or religious leaders, as trusted voices in those wards and communities to encourage take up of vaccinations.

Ivan Brown, Director of Public Health, noted the point that one of the challenges faced was flexibility in the NHS not only at local level but at national, and if a blanket approach was taken, it did not serve the entire population. A lot of discussion had been had around trying to increase levels of flexibility in the system, and in order to do that had been to provide them with data on areas, communities and taking the vaccination to the people, such as care homes, going back into schools and with a much more flexible approach, and using mobile units going into localities not taken to before. The data being brought around schools seemed to be moving in the right direction, but against a backdrop where it was becoming increasingly difficult compared to several weeks ago.

The Chair noted the Prime Minister's move to weaken restrictions against Covid-19, and felt that this would make it more difficult to convince people there was still a problem and should therefore get vaccinated. The City Mayor responded by stating that there was also serious concern with the dropping of testing, which meant Public Health would lose the ability to track the virus.

The Director of Public Health also raised concerns around testing. Firstly, because there was still a high proportion of people who were clinically vulnerable, who would be concerned and would want to know if they had to continue to isolate, which was a major challenge. Secondly, if there was no capturing of data and testing, it would not be known if there were any new variants, and this could lead to a return of testing in hospitals and would limit what Public Health could do and what could be shared in the community.

He added that Public Health colleagues had always been as cautious as possible, and he did not believe there would be a rush to bring staff back to the office. There would remain precautionary messages to people to stay as safe as possible, reminding them of the basics to protect themselves and loved ones the importance of vaccinations, and if sick to encourage people not to go into work or schools and to continue to good work that had been undertaken in the city to place it in the lower third of the number of cases, through contact tracing and testing.

The Chair said he believed the City's public health was in very safe hands, but felt that there was some uncertainty now the government had relaxed controls. The Chair supported the work of the Director of Public Health and his team for

their continued work.

The Chair thanked the Director of Public Health, City Mayor and officers for the update.

AGREED:

That the update presentation and supporting information be noted.

81. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (INCLUDING CAPITAL PROGRAMME) 2022/23

The Director of Housing submitted a report which set out the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget (including Capital Programme) for 2022/23, which would be considered by Council on 23 February 2022. An extract from the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on 10 January 2022 was also considered.

The Overview Select Committee was recommended to make any comments on the report, in particular the proposal for delivering a balanced budget and the proposed rent increase.

The Director of Housing delivered a presentation (attached for information) which picked out highlights from the report and additional pertinent information:

- The Housing Revenue Account Budget was made up of income from council tenant rents and service charges. The money was used to provide the repairs service, fund the work of the Income Management Team, the Housing Officers and the STAR service. It was also used to invest in stock through the Capital Programme and to make improvements to the environment of the Council's estates.
- The investment made into properties, and that planned for the future, ensured all council homes were of high quality, compared with other tenure types in the city, and the wide range of services provided demonstrated the Council was one of the best landlords in the city.
- The HRA had faced financial challenges, with reducing income levels over time. It was reported that since 1981 the Council had lost in the region of 17,000 properties through Right to Buy (RtB). If those properties were still held in the Housing Revenue Account, then there would be an additional £63m of income each year.
- Additional financial pressures were felt between 2016 and 2020 by the government requirement that rents be reduced by 1% each year. Whilst tenants benefited from a reduction in their weekly rent during this period it led to an overall loss of income to the Housing Revenue Account of £3.1m per year.
- The continuing financial pressures, such as a rise in employee costs, were taken into account when drawing up proposals for the HRA budget for 2022/23, and difficult decisions had been made to ensure there was money to continue to provide services that were a priority for tenants.
- The Council would do everything it could to protect tenants and had

therefore chosen not to charge rents which exceeded Local Housing Allowance rates and meant that tenants would never be charged more than the benefits they received for housing, for those on full Housing Benefit or those who had all their housing costs covered by Universal Credit (UC).

- There was a proposed 4.1% increase in core rents, with on average tenants paying just over £3 more rent a week. It was known that about 50% of tenants were on full housing benefit or had their full housing costs covered by UC. For these households the increased rent would be covered by their benefit entitlement in full.
- The Council had a long history of providing support to tenants who faced financial difficulties, much more than was in place for people in other tenure types. Support would continue, particularly for those who were adversely impacted upon by the proposed rent increase. The HRA funded the Income Management Team which was there to support tenants in financial difficulties. Housing Officers also carried out welfare visits to vulnerable council tenants, and the STAR service provided support to tenants with more complex needs, where financial difficulties may be just one issue that required support. Those services brought in over £2m additional income for tenants.
- Slides provided comparison of average rents for council tenure and the private sector in Leicester, comparator authorities, and other East Midland authorities, and showed Leicester City was amongst the lowest rents.
- Whilst garage rents were set separately to dwelling rents it was proposed to increase those in line with the core rental increase at 4.1%.
- Service charges should be set with the intention of recovering the full cost of providing the service. Currently, tenants and leaseholders were benefitting from charges which were set below the cost of delivery, and it was proposed to increase service charges by 2% with the impact on tenants and leaseholders being dependent on what additional services and improvements they had received in their home. Also, the majority of service charges were covered by Housing Benefit and UC, for those that received the full entitlement.
- Hostel rents and service charges were calculated to ensure that expenditure was fully re-couped. Costs for the service were expected to increase by 2.5% in 2022/23 so an equivalent increase in rents and service charges was proposed.
- For District heating the proposed increase was 7.29% to cover massive increases in wholesale energy prices, which was on average £1 more per week.
- Feedback from tenant representatives was contained in Appendix G of the report. They were supportive of the proposed rent increases for garage rents and service charges and thought that garage rents could possibly be increased more than was proposed. They also thought overall the proposed increase in the district heating charge was fair.
- Some tenant representatives did have some concerns over the level of the proposed core rent increase and would prefer to see a lower rent increase. However, it was made very clear by the tenant representatives that they absolutely did not wish to see any cuts in the Housing services provided or investment being made to Council housing and the estates.

- In terms of the next steps the final decision on the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2022 / 23 would be made at the Full Council meeting on the 23 February 2022.

Councillor Westley, Chair of Housing Scrutiny Commission (SC), reported the HRA had been considered at the last Commission meeting on 10 January and had fully supported the proposals. He stated the HRA was a huge single figure in the council's budget and for that reason alone needed to be considered carefully.

It was reported that during consultations on the budget a question had been asked 'Your suggested rent increase would cut more than £750,000 from the budget. What would you cut?' It was noted that no cuts in budget were suggested, but there were plenty of ideas for increased spending, for example, on safety and security, environmental works, increased staffing, and further house building. He believed the responses from tenants and leaseholders indicated no-one felt there was waste or inefficiency within the budget and echoed the sentiment, which was supported by further information from within and outside the city.

The Chair of Housing SC also noted the Council's rents were cheaper by a significant amount than housing association rents within the city, and a lot cheaper than private sector rents, and cheaper than the vast majority of similar authorities around the country. He added that being cheap was not by itself an advantage or a virtue, as the Council had to deliver effective services and programmes for the thousands of families who lived in our rented homes across the city.

It was reported that some of the most vulnerable people on the lowest incomes were council tenants and would find they were being affected by cuts in UC and other benefits. The Chair of SC stressed that moving forward to support the many that were living on the breadline, he wanted to see a hardship fund created, that would incrementally rise year on year as need arose, for example, those not on UC and working, but were still on the breadline through the rise in the cost of living and heating bills.

The Chair of Housing SC continued that the HRA supported teams which helped those vulnerable people directly, and the proof was in how few evictions had been imposed, but where there were evictions, they had overwhelmingly been caused by antisocial behaviour issues or refusal to make contact with officers trying to help them. He added that the Housing department worked with, not against, council tenants, helped create and support communities across the city, and helped to create and sustain jobs.

The Chair of Housing SC reported that the points made were the views set out at the Housing SC meeting, and he was pleased to report that Members had unanimously supported the HRA budget proposals and that he hoped the Overview Select Committee reinforced the view. He additionally paid tribute to the Council's enforcement team who work tirelessly to keep people in their homes with food on the table.

Councillor Porter commented that with regards to waste and inefficiency, the number of void properties being left empty had lost the Council in excess of £1million in rent. He added that with the 4.1% increase in rent, 50% of people would be impacted in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, with increased fuel bills, Council Tax increases, and people were having to make some very difficult decisions.

Councillor Porter made further reference to the call-in of an executive decision (Acquisition of Property Portfolio for Affordable Housing) at the meeting of the OSC on 16th December 2021, and to page 50, Appendix D to the report, whereby it cost on average £96.69 for a bedsit in the private sector and £57.64 for a council bedsit which was 40% lower than the private sector. He noted it cost £97.51 to rent a four-bedroom council property and that the council would be better spending money on building new property rather than purchasing bedsits, to provide housing for families.

Councillor Gee, responded that as a Member of the Housing SC, it had been discussed that 50% of tenants would be on full UC, with 20% on partial housing benefit who would pay slightly more in rent, and the remainder did not receive benefits. He added council tenants wanted to be kept to good standard and upgraded, but unfortunately they could see nothing in the budget that could be cut. He added that there were property voids and loss of income during the pandemic but had been unavoidable as subcontractors had been furloughed, but voids were almost back to normal levels. The Director of Housing confirmed it had been challenging and at one point, only one worker at a time had been allowed into properties, but contractors were now being utilised as capacity increased in order to bring more voids into use. It was noted the rental loss would show slightly higher this year, but the mitigating reasons behind it were understood by many people.

The Director of Housing responded that with regards to the 50% of people of tenants that would be affected by the rent increase, 20% would get a proportion of the increase covered. He added that the 30% of the tenancies not on benefits and who might struggle with the increase of £3 per week would receive support from a number of teams. He added that, whilst it was not a pleasant increase, he was reassured the Council had those teams to work closely with people who might struggle during the current economic climate to enable them to manage. He noted the Income Management Team had done a very good job over the years to support people economically, and nobody had been evicted during the last year, and there had only been seven incidents of evictions due to rent arrears, which was put down to non-engagement with officers and support offered to them. It was explained that as soon as someone went into arrears, assistance was offered to help them manage their finances, for example, to spread out arrears, to help them apply for the discretionary rent relief fund and council tax discretionary relief scheme, the Income Management Team had brought in over £500k in additional income for people, to help people cope with challenges. It was also reported the STAR team had brought in over £1m to assist people struggling.

The Director referred to the purchase of units discussed at the previous meeting, which would generate an additional £1.4m income into the HRA back into the account. He had also stated that whilst there was a need for family homes, there was also a need for bedsits and one-bedroom flats to support the 'Everyone In' initiative.

The Chair stated there had been good debate and welcomed the views of the Housing SC because it was very clear that Members had looked at the budget thoroughly.

He proposed that the recommendations in the report be endorsed for Full Council. Members agreed with the proposal. Councillor Porter asked that his decision against the proposed recommendations be noted.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. The recommendations be endorsed for Full Council.

82. DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET

The Deputy Director of Finance submitted the Draft Revenue Budget 2022/23 which would be considered by Council on 23 February 2022. The draft minute extracts detailing the respective Scrutiny Commissions' discussion on the draft Revenue Budget report were included with the report.

The Overview Select Committee was recommended to consider the draft budget and the comments made by the Scrutiny Commissions, and to pass its comments on those to the meeting of Council for consideration.

The City Mayor presented the report and confirmed the report had been considered by all Scrutiny Commissions, with overall broad support for what was proposed. He noted that any comments could be taken to Full Council.

As the report had been discussed extensively elsewhere, the Chair asked Members to present their questions:

- Councillor Porter asked for clarification on the Adult Social Care precept on Council Tax and asked what percentage it was. He also referred to the report at 4.11 (a) 3% and 5% increase and asked what the figures were. He added this his understanding was as a result of the pandemic there was a dramatic fall in people going into care homes, which might have been through people not wanting to move into care homes because of Covid-19, or perhaps people passing away due to the virus, and noted was a large number of care homes that had closed or were struggling to survive because the customer base had reduced. He asked that with regards to the ASC precept which was reported at approximately £8million per year, and it had been reported there was a surplus of £6million in the budget, were people being misled that the ASC precept needed to be added and he asked for more clarity on the figures. Finally, he noted the government had announced that all Council Tax payers within bands A-D would receive

money and how it would be paid.

The City Mayor noted the Council had been permitted to raise additional funds locally to contribute to the growing costs of adult social care. He reported the amount raised locally to meet rising costs fell a long way short each year to meet the rising costs, and in consequence the costs of care put a further squeeze on the diminishing budget and services beyond children's and adult social care across the council, with increased numbers and the costs of care packages falling many short of many millions of pounds and growing. The costs were significantly greater than the income. It was agreed that some years Adult Social Care managed to spend less than was budgeted for, however this was because the Council took a prudent approach to budgeting for ASC each year and added significant growth to provide for the likely costs. Whilst the authority was having to budget for an increase in ASC spend every year, it was not allowed to raise the funds necessary to fill that gap. The Government had increased National Insurance from April 2022, for which the funds raised would go in the first instance to the NHS. In reality, the Adult Social Care sector nationally had a workforce on very low wages who were delivering care in a very challenging but very skilled job.

The Deputy Director of Finance confirmed the precepts had averaged 1% or 2% a year, with the current 2021/22 financial year at 3%. For this coming financial year, councils would be allowed to increase Council Tax by 1% plus any unused precept. In Leicester's there was no unused precept to be added.

It was noted that 1% ASC precept in Council Tax generates £1.8m, approximately 1/10th of the £16million that would be added to the ASC budget to meet expected costs. At a previous meeting of Overview Select Committee when considering a budget monitoring report, it had been noted the ASC budget underspent, due to the prudence of the Council when budgeting. Also, the budget could sometimes be underspent because demand was not as forecast, package costs had not increased quite as much, or there may be unplanned additional external funding received towards aspects of the service. However, it did need to be recognised that the council was prudent in increasing its budget significantly each year to avoid overspend; this was not the case for a number of councils around the country that had overspent on ASC. It was reinforced that the precept was far less than the growth included each year.

The Chair noted that minutes on the budget had been received from each Scrutiny Commission. Chair of the Commissions were invited to speak about the relevant sections of the budget.

Councillor Joshi, Chair of Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission, noted the department had a year on year growing increase in provisions and care facilities, which placed a huge pressure on finances. It was reported Members of the Commission had engaged extensively in the sectors of the scrutiny commission, with long discussions on the budget reports, and minute extract of the last meeting was appended to the report at Appendix D1. He said it was important that the minutes and recommendations in the minutes of ASC be

included in the budget item for Council.

The Chair of ASC drew to Members' attention the challenge in finding £1.9m in savings, Members had looked at it following reviews of care and it was pointed out that it would only be possible if the resource for reviews was in place immediately with no delay, as costs were rising all the time, and the service would be in the same situation next year, and so on. Members had also discussed the cost of care and care packages which was concerning. It was noted Leicester was different to many other cities, with a higher demand of care services, an ageing population with ever increasing needs, combined with poverty, deprivation and high house prices, and shortage of care workers since the pandemic began.

The Chair of ASC also expressed concern over the delays in the Extra Care scheme, and Members urged for progress on the provision of the service within Leicester City. Members had also recognised the need to work closer with NHS partners so that the partnership continued to work in a crucial way for the future, especially following social care reforms, where the NHS would gain more and adult social care less. Has highlighted previously, with the increase in National Insurance contributions it was hoped ASC would benefit, but looked not to be the case, with the government not giving enough resources to meet proper levels of standards in ASC.

It was reported that the additional cost of care packages would be £42million, and Members had requested consideration be given to two options to bring some services in house to cut down on costs. It was noted that Members were currently undertaking a review into the cost of care and report would be compiled in the near future.

The Chair of ASC stated that a crisis did exist and would carry on for many years unless the government provided a huge amount of resources and money where it mattered into a sector where the pandemic had had a huge impact. He ended that he requested Members of the Overview Select Committee to support the recommendation put forward by the Scrutiny Commission.

The Chair of ASC requested Members to support the recommendations as outlined in the minute extract at Appendix D1 to the report to be taken to Full Council on 23 February 2022.

The Chair moved that the Overview Select Committee endorse the recommendations in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Westley and agreed by Members. Councillor Porter asked that his decision against the proposed recommendations be noted.

AGREED:

That:

1. The report and comments from Members of the Overview Select Committee, and comments from Members of the Scrutiny Commissions be noted be passed to the meeting of Council on 23 February 2022.

83. DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Deputy Director of Finance submitted the draft Capital Programme for 2022/23, which would be considered at the meeting of Council on 23 February 2022. The draft minute extracts detailing the respective Scrutiny Commissions' discussion on the draft Capital Programme report were included.

The Overview Select Committee was recommended to consider the draft report and the comments made by the Scrutiny Commissions, and to pass its comments on those to the meeting of Council for consideration.

The City Mayor introduced the report, and noted that it was in sharp contrast to the Revenue Budget which had been cut significantly and affected the services that could be provided to people. He added heavy emphasis had been placed on the Capital Programme which looked at things that would make a difference to individuals, to households and to neighbourhoods, hence the strong commitment to invest in schools, roads, and neighbourhoods, and to ensure the Council was doing all it could to use the budget constructively for the benefits of the community across the city.

The Chair noted the position to report to Full Council and endorsed the recommendations in the report. He thanked the City Mayor and Officers for preparing the programme, which was still progressive in spite of recent times. This was seconded by Councillor Westley, and agreed by Members of the Overview Select Committee. Councillor Porter asked his decision against the proposed recommendations be noted.

AGREED:

1. That the report and comments from Members of the Overview Select Committee, and comments from Scrutiny Commissions and be noted and passed to the meeting of Council on 23 February 2022.

84. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2022/23

The Chief Operating Officer submitted a report that proposed a strategy for managing the Council's borrowing and cash balances during 2022/23 and for the remainder of 2021/22 (Treasury Management Strategy). Members of the Overview Select Committee were recommended to note the report and make any comments to the Chief Operating Officer that they wished, prior to Council consideration.

The Head of Finance presented the report and it was noted the strategy set out how the Council would manage its cash balances and borrowing throughout the year. It was reported there were no significant changes to the report.

The Chair noted the report.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted.

85. INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2022/23

The Chief Operating Officer submits a report which defined the Council's approach to making and holding investments, other than those made for normal treasury management. The latter were described in the annual treasury management strategy. Members of the Overview Select Committee were recommended to note the report and make any comments to the Chief Operating Officer as wished, prior to Council consideration.

The Head of Finance presented the report. It was noted the Strategy focussed on the borrowing that may be undertaken during the year where a return was expected on the monies. It was reported there were no significant changes to the report.

The Chair noted the report.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted.

86. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

The agenda order was changed.

1. Question from the Chair, Councillor Cassidy:

'We recently learnt that more than 30,000 households in Leicester are struggling to pay fuel bills and we know that prices are to rise sharply again this year. We also know that certain areas of the city are amongst the worst-hit in the country. What are we doing as a local authority and what more can be done to support those households who are experiencing or are in danger of experiencing fuel poverty?'

The City Mayor responded to the question and made the following points:

- It was recognised that fuel poverty was a significant challenge for the city, which would only get worse as fuel and other basic living costs continued to increase. The new National Insurance Levy to be introduced to support adult social care would place a heavier burden on citizens, and protections around debt collection and benefit reductions in place for the pandemic were to be removed and were hitting households very hard. Citizens Advice had estimated that from April, when the energy cap increased, one-third of a person's benefits would be required for energy bills.
- The Council has provided help earlier in the financial year from the Local Covid Support Grant, and then more recently through the Household Support Fund, though it was acknowledged that these were Government funded schemes for the current financial year only. Around 70% of the Household Support Fund was being awarded towards fuel costs. Across both schemes, £1.5m had been awarded to over 5,000 households towards fuel costs by the end of December 2021. Awards would continue to be

made until the scheme closed at the end of March (or earlier, if fully spent). Citizens Advice Leicestershire had been complimentary of the Council's approach of focussing awards on fuel, which had significantly mitigated the fuel crisis in the city to date. The awards included top-ups for pre-payment meters, direct credits to suppliers' accounts and paying off arrears.

- The Council also supported households in crisis through the Community Support Grant. The Holiday Activities & Food Programme (HAF Programme) had also used Government funding to provide food during the school holidays for children who were eligible for free school meals. Vulnerable households would also be supported through the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme and Council Tax Discretionary Relief scheme.
- Help and advice with regard to energy was available from EnergyWise based at the Community Advice and Law Service. Debt advice was available from Citizens Advice Leicestershire and included where energy costs were a primary cause of debt. The Council had also commissioned benefits advice sessions and sessions for jobseekers in libraries.
- Other national support included cold weather payments for people on certain benefits for when the temperature dropped below zero for a week, the warm homes discount for pensioners and others on a low income, and the winter fuel payment for pensioners.
- For council tenants, practical advice on energy saving measures was available from the Housing Division. Vulnerable tenants were supported by STAR, for example, to move to a supplier which offered the warm homes discount and to claim other financial support. Council tenants on the district heating scheme were protected from short term price fluctuations as the Council had bulk purchased gas and energy in advance. The HRA budget report presented earlier proposed to increase charges by just over 7% for 2022/23, but was significantly lower than those not on the scheme.
- The Council has been successful in securing funding from the Green Homes grant to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions in private sector rented and owner-occupied properties, where the owner/occupier was on lower income. For example, £4.5m had recently been received from a National Grid scheme, which was installing first-time gas central heating systems in around 100 homes. The Council would bid for any new funding that became available.
- Funding had also been received for council housing and there was an on-going programme of energy efficiency improvements. The Council was benefitting from the work done over a number of years, and related back to the HRA account, with the insulation of homes and double glazing.
- All new affordable housing was being built to an EPC rating of A and solar power generation was maximised.
- Looking ahead to the new financial year starting in April 2022, the Government had announced a £200 discount on all electricity bills, which would later be repaid over 5 years. The City Mayor said there would be the possibility that bills would remain high whilst people were being asked to repay the loan. It was noted a £150 payment to people living in properties in council tax Bands A-D would be paid through the Council and was expected to help up to 125,000 households in the city (96% of the total properties).
- There would also be discretionary funding of £144million nationally in England to provide support for vulnerable people and individuals on low

incomes that did not pay council tax, or for those that paid for properties in the higher bands E-H but were still facing hardship. The city might expect to receive around £1million. However, this amount would be less than a third of the funding received for the Household Support Fund, so would not go as far as needed.

- The City Mayor said it was going to cause real hardship, with people having to make the decision to pay for heating or eating. The Council would continue to make the case nationally that proper support needed to be provided to people across the city struggling with costs such as fuel, food and rent costs.

2. Question from Councillor Gee:

'With the government's announcement of a council tax refund of 150 pounds for band A to D, are the government replacing this money centrally – in full or in part? And if not, what effect could that have on services?'

In response it was noted:

- The Government would reimburse councils.

3. Question from Councillor Gee:

'Have the council had to send out new council tax bill for bands A to D and if so how much has that cost? And if there has been a cost has the government said if they will refund us?'

In response it was noted:

- It would be billed as a Council Tax Energy Rebate and would be a one-off payment. It was noted it was a rebate payment and not a reduction on Council Tax, therefore, it did not require the bills to be reduced, and the Government would supply the wording to go on the bills.
- It would operate outside of the Council Tax system, but the Council would use its data to identify eligible households (around 125,000).

87. FINAL HOUSING SCRUTINY TASK GROUP REPORT

The Overview Select Committee was presented with a report from the Housing Scrutiny Commission Task Group which examined the proposal to establish a team within the Housing division to deal with cases of anti-social behaviour.

The Committee was recommended to receive the report and note its contents.

The Chair of Housing Scrutiny Commission presented the report and provided the following information:

- The final report was presented for the task group exercise that examined the proposal to establish a central housing anti-social behaviour team.
- It was a fairly short review which spanned two meetings and arose from previous scrutiny on the proposal, where it was felt that much more

detail was required for the Commission to be able to provide a viewpoint.

- The Commission had made it clear what was required from officers for the task group work. Officers from Housing and from CrASBU were thanked for the information they provided and for their level of engagement in the work.
- It was noted there had also been input from other key witnesses including tenant representatives and the police, who were also thanked for their input.
- It was reported the review had resulted in 11 recommendations being formed, many of which related to the need for robust communication of the changes and the implications that they would have on tenants. Others related to the need for wider staff training and for assurances that information would be adequately shared amongst all relevant agencies.
- It was further noted the Police were limited to what information they could share with the Authority, but through working in partnership they would be able to share more sensitive information with the new team.
- Crucially the task group wanted to see increased help for victims with full support throughout the process.
- Moving forward, the implementation of the new team would be monitored by the Commission with regular reports.
- The full set of recommendations were detailed under 1.2.1 of the report. As a result of the work, the Chair of Housing Scrutiny Commission and task group colleagues were confident that the proposal would be successful in addressing the needs of tenants faced with anti-social behaviour, and it was hoped the recommendations were seen as helpful and would be strongly considered when the new structure was being finalised.

The Chair asked that the Overview Select Committee endorse the recommendations of the Housing Scrutiny Commission.

The Chair supported and endorsed the recommendations to go to the Executive for their comments.

The City Mayor welcomed the report which he stated he would give it serious consideration.

AGREED:

1. That the recommendations contained in the Housing Scrutiny Commission task group report be endorsed for forwarding to the Executive for comment.

88. OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme for the Committee was noted.

The Scrutiny Support Manager, in consultation with the Chair, would like at the

allocation of the reports for future planned meetings.

- It was noted at the next meeting on 25th March 2022, the Police and Crime Commissioner had confirmed his attendance.
- A Special Meeting would be arranged if required to discuss the Local Plan.

89. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

With there being no further items or urgent business, the meeting closed at 7.57pm.