



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CABINET

Held: MONDAY, 24 APRIL 2006 at 6.00pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor R Blackmore - Chair

Councillor Coley	Councillor Gill
Councillor Farmer	Councillor Metcalfe
Councillor Grant	Councillor Mugglestone
Councillor Suleman	

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269. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were requested to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Act applied to them.

No declarations were made.

270. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Town Hall Tours

The Leader reported that the Town Hall tours would re-start on Monday 8 May and would take place on the second Monday of each month, starting at 10 am. Admission was free and full details were available from the Town Hall.

A-Z Guide to Services

The Leader reported that the new A-Z Guide to Council Services would be delivered to every house in the city from 8 May.

Highfields Community Centre

The Leader reported that he had received an update on progress regarding the management arrangements for Highfields Community Centre. He reported that political responsibility for Community Centres had now passed to Councillor Gill and that he was liaising closely with other Cabinet Members to effect a smooth handover. The Leader asked Councillor Gill to update the meeting.

Councillor Gill reported that Councillors and Officers had been meeting with the Highfields Community Association to try to agree the way forward for the long-term management and funding of the Highfields Community Centre.

He noted that there was a long and complex history to this service and that he was committed to bringing the situation to a positive outcome. He stressed that the most important issue was working with the community to ensure maximum use of the excellent facilities for the good of the whole community.

He noted that the management of Community Centres had now been passed to the Corporate Director of Adult and Community Services and that he proposed to ask the Corporate Director to bring forward a report to Cabinet setting out a detailed project plan and timetable to achieve three things:

- Put the service on a secure financial footing with a robust business plan for the future
- Identify the route needed to achieve a model of Community Governance for this service, subject to detailed legal and financial appraisal and in the context of the views of funding bodies
- Developing a model contract for services between the Council and HCA should the Council agree to implement Community Governance. This would include finance, quality assurance and community involvement in specifying and monitoring services.

The project plan should also include detailed timescales for this work and identify points at which Cabinet approval will be needed.

In addition, he proposed that the Council and Highfields Community Association should jointly appoint an independent facilitator to oversee the production of the business case and associated tasks.

It was noted that the Corporate Director had met with the Highfields Community Association and would continue the dialogue with them following this meeting.

271. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2006, having been circulated to Members, be taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

272. MATTERS REFERRED FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

- a) Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee - 6 April 2006

Local Government Reorganisation

The following was agreed at the above meeting.

- 1) that the Committee gives its support to the principle of double devolution;
- (2) that a letter be sent from the Committee to the Office of the

Deputy Prime Minister, as a matter of urgency expressing it's views with regard to the expansion of the city;

- (3) that the Cabinet be requested to ask officers to develop a body of evidence which would support the expansion of the city which could possibly include the Employment Land Study, the Local Transport Plan and the Housing Needs Survey.

Councillor Blackmore made the following statement of Cabinet's position:-

'The Cabinet recognises that there are considerable advantages to be had by expanding the City to take in the whole of the Leicester conurbation, advantages which would accrue both to the current City and to those areas added to the City. Not least an expanded City offers the opportunity for a co-ordinated policy over issues such as transport, planning, housing, regeneration and retail, policy which is more difficult to achieve across local authorities, and space within which to carry out that policy.

However, the Cabinet recognises that the desired outcomes can also be achieved through increased collaboration between all local authorities serving the population of central Leicestershire.

The Cabinet believes that local government is not simply about the efficient and effective delivery of local services. There is a need for a common local identity within any local government area. There is no evidence that there is the slightest desire on the part of the population living outside of the City of Leicester but within the Leicester conurbation to be absorbed into an expanded City. Indeed, such evidence as there is shows widespread antipathy towards an extension of the City boundaries.

In the light of this, the Cabinet will not be supporting any expansion in the City and seeks increased collaboration between the City Council, the County Council and neighbouring district councils to the benefit of all who live, work and socialise in the Leicester conurbation.'

- b) Housing Scrutiny Committee - 6 April 2006

Integrated Services Review

The following was agreed at the above meeting.

That the Scrutiny Committee submit the following proposals to Cabinet for its consideration:

That Cabinet, with immediate effect, makes a full review of it's decision to transfer the anti- social behaviour unit from the Housing Department to the Adult and Community Services Department, in view of the fact that Members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee have asked a series of questions in respect of the Unit remaining in the Housing Department.

The Housing Scrutiny Committee strongly believe that all aspects of crime and disorder should be contained within the Housing Department on the grounds that over 85% of referrals to the anti-social behaviour come from Housing officers. Furthermore, Members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee were at no point consulted around the transfer of the Unit.

Councillor Grant noted that the Integrated Services Review had been a detailed and lengthy review which had been scrutinised by the Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee who had not commented on the above aspect of the proposals. As the departments were now in existence, the comments of the Housing Scrutiny Committee were too late. However, he noted that the arrangements for Scrutiny Committees next year, which were currently out for consultation, included Anti Social Behaviour in the terms of reference of the Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee.

273. UPDATE OF THE 2003 HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Councillor Metcalfe submitted a report informing the Cabinet of the increased shortage of affordable housing based on an update of the 2003 Housing Needs Assessment.

The relevant minute of the Housing Scrutiny Committee on 6 April had also been circulated to the Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the decrease in the supply of affordable housing in Leicester due to a marked downturn in the number of local authority and Registered Social Landlord lets, be recognised;
- (2) that the increase in the annual net affordable housing requirement for Leicester from 272 in 2003 to 1,181 in 2006, be recognised;
- (3) that 1,181 be accepted as Leicester's annual net affordable housing requirement; and
- (4) that in view of the worsening shortage of affordable housing and the success of Homecome in tackling that shortage, demonstrated in Appendix C of the report, it is recommended that any surplus housing capital resources identified by monitoring during the year, beyond those required to meet the decent homes standard, be added to the Capital Programme provision for Homecome to provide more affordable housing.

274. CITY GROWTH STRATEGY

Councillor Farmer submitted a report which summarised the key findings and

actions of the City Growth Strategy and highlighted the strategic, operational and financial implications for City Council policies and services of the strategy.

The relevant minute of the Strategic Planning and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 5 April had also been circulated to the Cabinet.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture reported the following amendments to the report:-

Paragraph 2.2.4. (Page 6) in the main report, regarding policies to attract and retain young people.

Since the Cabinet report was published it has been pointed out that the City Council and its partners in the Leicester Economic Action Partnership do have a policy to attract and retain young people. One example of this is the Incubating Graduate Employment scheme, run jointly by the City Council and other partners and funded through the European Social Fund.

Secondly,

Paragraph 2.2.5. (page 6) in regard to a “no net loss” target for jobs and businesses: while there are resource and legal restraints on the City Council in regard to providing assistance to struggling businesses, it remains City Council policy to do whatever it can within these restraints to help them.

The Corporate Director asked Cabinet to disregard the two paragraphs in the report and accept her apologies if the report unwittingly misled Members. She noted however that the substantial arguments in the report remained unchanged.

RESOLVED

- (1) that the involvement of local businesses in the city growth strategy and the shared interest in the development of leicester be welcomed;
- (2) that the City Growth Strategy be endorsed in principle and supported to the extent possible within existing Council budgets and its implementation and co-ordination through the Leicester Economic Action Partnership be sought;
- (3) that the role that regulatory services can provide in the development of local enterprise be commended to private sector partners;
- (4) that approval be given to working closely with the private sector to attract the resources necessary to increase the economic prosperity of Leicester; and
- (5) that the Cabinet Lead for Strategic Community Renewal and Safety be authorised to liaise between the City Growth Strategy Board and members of LEAP, with a view to building an effective partnership between the two bodies.

275. CHILDREN'S CENTRES PHASE 2 PLANNING PRIORITIES (2006-08)

Councillor Suleman submitted a report outlining proposals for the extension of Children's Centres and seeking agreement from Cabinet with regard to issues in relation to the establishment of a further 8 main centres between 2006-2008.

In response to a query from Councillor Farmer, Councillor Suleman stressed the need for and intention to include ward councillors in any consultation process.

The relevant minute extract of the Education and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 13 April had also been circulated to the Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the placing of phase two children centres in the named communities as set out in paragraph 4.3 of the report, be approved;
- (2) that consultation on potential sites commence within the named communities including through the use of Area Committees;
- (3) that the capital strategic approach detailed in appendix 1 of the report be approved and the release of capital expenditure to conduct feasibility studies that will inform an option appraisal; and
- (4) that a further report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young Peoples Service be received outlining the strategic direction in the context of integrated services

276. FESTIVALS AND EVENTS STRATEGY 3 YEAR PROGRAMME: 2006/07 - 2008/09

Councillor Mugglestone submitted a report regarding a proposed Festivals and Events Strategy.

The relevant minute of the Arts, Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 12 April had also been circulated to Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the report be noted and all necessary decision making in respect of those festivals in Categories 1 and 2, where decisions are required prior to the next Cabinet meeting, be delegated to the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture, in consultation with the Cabinet Lead and a further report on those festivals in Category 3 be brought to the next meeting of Cabinet; and

- (2) that under the provisions of Cabinet Procedure Rule 12 (d), no 'call-in' of the decision be allowed because of the urgency of the need for a decisions with regard to some festivals.

277. ECO MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT SCHEME

Councillor Mugglestone submitted a report outlining progress towards the corporate environmental improvement targets and presenting the draft text of the eighth EMAS public statement and proposed actions for inclusion in the 2006/07 action programme.

The relevant minute of the Arts, Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 12 April had also been circulated to Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the progress towards the EMAS targets during 2004/05 as detailed in the report be noted
- (2) that the minor amendments proposed to the EMAS targets for 2004/05 as detailed in appendix 4 of the report, be approved
- (3) that the implementation of the proposed 2006/07 action programme as detailed in appendix 3 of the report, be approved
- (4) that the draft text for the 8th EMAS Public Statement be approved as detailed in the report; and
- (5) that a further report be received which considers a more rigorous standard of low energy consumption in new council buildings

278. DEVELOPING AN ANIMAL FRIENDLY PURCHASING POLICY

Councillor Blackmore submitted a report introducing a report from the Member led Animal Friendly Working Group which asked Cabinet to agree a way forward for a new policy framework to help the Council become a more animal friendly organisation.

The relevant minute extract from the Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee on 6 April had also been circulated to Cabinet.

The Leader also welcomed Councillor Sandringham, Chair of the Working Group and invited her to comment on the report. The Leader also commended the other Members who had contributed to the work of the group and the lead officer.

Councillor Sandringham briefly spoke about the work of the Working Group and also referred to the comments of the Scrutiny Committee who had recommended that work be undertaken to look at the monitoring of 'animal friendly' procurement. The Cabinet supported this additional recommendation.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the direction of travel for a new policy set out in section 3 in the report be approved;
- (2) that the action plan set out in section 4 of the report be approved;
- (3) that a piece of work be agreed to create dummy specifications for entering into a contract to purchase some goods and entering into a contract to procure a service to enable the Council to take stock of the issues presented and determine safe and legal ways to continue to pursue this policy direction in a meaningful way;
- (4) that the Animal Friendly Working Group be asked to continue to lead this work; and
- (5) that a monitoring system be initiated and an annual report submitted to the Resources and Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee.

279. EFFICIENCY REVIEW OF PROPERTY

Councillor Coley submitted a report which informed Cabinet of the progress of the Review of Centrally Located Admin Buildings and seeking a decision on which strategic option should be followed.

The relevant minute extract from the Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee on 6 April had also been circulated to Cabinet.

Councillor Coley thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their comments. He stressed however that 'affordability' had to be the overriding consideration in relation to any option and referred to exempt supplementary information circulated to Cabinet by the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee be thanked for their constructive recommendations;
- (2) that, whilst Option 1 may be the least desirable in terms of regeneration and service delivery, it remains the most financially realistic;

- (3) that Options 2 and 4 be not pursued;
- (4) that Option 3 be market tested and judged against Option 1 as a benchmark and Option 5; and
- (5) that, should the Council vacate the New Walk Centre site, options be developed for that site which maintain the economic viability of that part of the city and which increase its vibrancy.

280. TWINNING WITH HASKOVO

Councillor Farmer submitted a report which considered twinning links with Haskovo, in Bulgaria. He noted that the policy of the current administration was that there should be no net increase in twinning links and therefore the Overseas Links Working Party would be asked to review all of them. In particular, the Working Party was asked to consider the existing link with China and its appropriateness in the light of the serious human rights abuses in that country. Councillor Farmer also referred to a letter received from the British Ambassador to Bulgaria which supported links. Councillor Metcalfe referred to the productive housing links that already existed with Haskovo and the imminent likely accession of Bulgaria to the European Union.

Under this item, reference was made to a current human rights issue in Haskovo. The Leader undertook to liaise with the Chair of the Working Party as to whether it was appropriate to write the relevant person in Haskovo in relation to the issue.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the support of the British Ambassador to Bulgaria be noted and that the City of Leicester should move towards twinning with the Municipality of Haskovo in due course
- (2) that the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture develop a project encouraging closer technical co-operation between the two administrations in the current financial year; and
- (3) that the Overseas Links Working Party be asked to review all current twinning arrangements and report back.

281. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF HOUSING DEPARTMENT'S SERVICE DIRECTORS

Councillor Metcalfe submitted a report seeking Cabinet's approval to the outcome of the review of the organisational structure and functions of the Housing Department.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the following changes to the establishment of the

Housing Department be approved:-

DELETE THE FOLLOWING POSTS:

Service Director (Renewal & Options)
Service Director (Technical Services)
Service Director (Management & Hostels)
Service Director (Resources)

Establish the following posts:

Service Director (Accommodation & Tenancy Support)
Service Director (Renewal, Options & Development)
Service Director (Technical Services & Financial Support)

- (2) that the allocation of functions shown at Appendix 2 of the report be approved; and
- (3) that the slotting-in proposals outlined at paragraph 3.6 of the report be noted.

282. FEES FOR LICENSING OF HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

Councillor Mugglestone submitted a report asking Cabinet to agree a fees and charging mechanism to be applied to the licensing of houses in multiple occupation.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that a standard fee of £510, plus additional unavoidable costs where appropriate and in consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member, be charged for all HMO licences;
- (2) that the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Culture be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member, to review the fee once all the relevant statutory provisions are in force; and
- (3) that the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Culture be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member, to annually review the fee to allow for salary and overhead inflation.

283. EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY - COMPULSORY PURCHASE OF 37 HOLYWELL ROAD

Councillor Metcalfe submitted a report proposing that a Compulsory Purchase Order was sought on the above property under the City Council's Empty Homes Strategy. It was noted that the property had been vacant for 13 years. He also reminded Cabinet that Compulsory Purchase was only a small part of the Empty Homes Strategy and that other work was ongoing to bring empty

properties back into use.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that under Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981, 37 Holywell Road, Leicester be made the subject of a Compulsory Purchase Order, as outlined in Appendix D, in order to secure its improvement, proper management and occupation as a residential dwelling; and
- (2) that approval be given for the necessary capital expenditure from the Empty Homes Strategy line in the Housing Department's agreed Capital Programme.

284. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The Leader reported that he had agreed to take an item of urgent business as follows:-

'Waste Management Regulations Update'.

The reason for urgency was to meet the consultation response deadline of 2 May. The report wasn't included with the main agenda despatch as not all relevant information was available.

The report was recommended for consideration on the private agenda because it involved the likely disclosure of 'exempt' information.

285. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following report in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, because it involves the likely disclosure of 'exempt' information, as defined in Paragraph 5 (information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings) under Section 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) and taking all the circumstances into account, it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the information as exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

WASTE MANAGEMENT REGULATIONS UPDATE

286. WASTE MANAGEMENT REGULATIONS UPDATE

Councillor Mugglestone submitted a report on the implications of changes to the Waste Management Regulations.

RESOLVED:

that the recommendations in the report be approved, subject to the Leader also being consulted on the communications strategy.

287. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 7.25 pm

