



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CABINET

Held: MONDAY, 12 JULY 2010 at 1:00 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Patel - Chair
Councillor Dempster - Vice-Chair

Councillor Bhatti
Councillor Naylor
Councillor Palmer
Councillor Wann

Councillor Dawood
Councillor Osman
Councillor Russell
Councillor Westley

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Coley
Councillor Grant
Councillor Potter

Liberal Democrat Group Leader
Conservative Group Leader
Adults & Housing Task Group
Leader

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28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have in the business on the agenda and/or declare if Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

Councillor Bhatti declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of Item 9, "Fullhurst Community College Structural Solutions for National Challenge Schools – Land Transfer," as his daughter-in-law was a teacher at the school. He undertook to leave the meeting during consideration of the item.

30. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

The Leader stated that he was pleased to announce that Leicester's ambitious

plans to rebuild schools under the Building Schools for the Future Scheme was unaffected by the Government's cuts to the scheme.

CURVE

The Leader announced that Curve had won the International Architecture Award. This recognised the design by Rafael Vinoly.

31. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet, held on 21 June 2010, be confirmed as a correct record.

32. MATTERS REFERRED FROM COMMITTEES

Meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Board, 17 June 2010. REVIEW OF THE VEHICLE CROSSING POLICY

The above Committee agreed that Cabinet be asked to revoke the current policy and seek to adopt a policy that assesses each request on a case by case basis.

Councillor Osman responded, stating that he supported the request and asked Cabinet to consider to review the policy to bring it in line with more flexible policies.

Cabinet and Opposition Group Leaders expressed support of the proposal. It was noted that existing crossings that did not comply with the policy worked sufficiently well in certain areas.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet agrees to amend the policy to allow for a more flexible approach, with each request to be assessed individually.

33. REPORT OF THE ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY TASK GROUP: HOUSING REPAIRS REVIEW

Councillor Potter submitted a report that provided Cabinet with the findings of the Adults and Housing Task Group's review of the Housing Repairs Service in Leicester.

Councillor Westley, as Cabinet Lead, thanked the Task Group for the work done. He noted that repair times were reducing, and work was ongoing to improve further.

Concern was raised with regard to the length of time for some task group reports to progress from Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to Cabinet, and the Monitoring Officer was asked to look into improving this.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet notes the report of the Task Group and thanks Members and officers for the work that had been done.

34. REPORTS OF THE ADULTS AND HOUSING SCRUTINY TASK GROUP: HOME COME

Councillor Potter submitted a report that provided Cabinet with the findings of the Adults and Housing Task Group's review into HomeCome, a limited company set up by the Council in 2004 to create new affordable housing. She pointed out that, due to the current financial climate, additional information was included for Cabinet's approval.

Councillor Westley, as Cabinet Lead, thanked the Task Group for the work they had done, and pointed out to Cabinet that the scheme was self-financing.

Councillor Coley welcomed Cabinet's support for the scheme, stating that it provided much needed larger properties.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet supports the recommendation to instigate a mechanism to consult with HomeCome tenants on an annual basis, and thanks the Task Group for the work they had done.

35. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE SCHOOL BALANCE CONTROL MECHANISM

Councillor Dempster submitted a report that sought support for proposals for a new School Balance Control Mechanism to be introduced during 2010-11 that would apply to school balances held at 31 March 2011.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1) notes the report;
- 2) supports the proposed new School Balance Control Mechanism (Appendix 2 of the report) to be introduced during 2010-11 and applied to school balances held at 31 March 2011 and annually thereafter;
- 3) supports the intent of Schools Forum to promote the use of any clawed back excess school balances to support collaborative projects to improve educational and well-being outcomes for City learners; and
- 4) notes that the approval of the new scheme, taking into account these comments, will rest with the Schools Forum.

36. FULLHURST COMMUNITY COLLEGE STRUCTURAL SOLUTIONS FOR NATIONAL CHALLENGE SCHOOLS - LAND TRANSFER

Councillor Bhatti left the meeting during consideration of the following item.

Councillor Dempster submitted a report that updated Members on the Land Transfer process and sought approval for the disposal of the site to the Trustees at nil consideration in order to progress National Challenge Co-operative Trust Status.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet confirms approval for a disposal at nil consideration.

37. BABINGTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE STRUCTURAL SOLUTIONS FOR NATIONAL CHALLENGE SCHOOLS - LAND TRANSFER

Councillor Bhatti returned to the meeting.

Councillor Dempster submitted a report that updated Members on the Land Transfer process and sought approval for the disposal of the site to the Trustees at nil consideration in order to progress National Challenge Co-operative Trust Status.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet confirms approval for a disposal at nil consideration.

38. WORK EXPERIENCE AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL

Councillor Dempster submitted a report that provided an update on the work completed across the City Council to develop work experience and employment opportunities for children and young people and adults with learning disabilities across Leicester City Council.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1) notes the contents of the report and the progress made over the past 12 months;
- 2) notes the work currently taking place on mapping opportunities across the City Council and developing a database listing work experience placements across the council;
- 3) invites a further update in 12 months time.

39. STRUCTURAL REPORT ON NEW WALK CENTRE

Councillor Patel submitted a report that outlined the actions that the Council was required to take in the light of the conclusions of the structural report on New Walk Centre.

Cabinet accepted the comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, and noted a request from Councillor Grant that facts should be acknowledged clearly in future reports, such as a reduction in number of full time equivalent posts, the impact of adoption of IT which could reduce the number of workspaces required and the possibility of renting property being good value for money The Leader stated that this was an early report, and officers would be working on further detail.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1) notes the content and conclusions of the Ove Arup report and;
- 2) notes the commencement of an options appraisal project in response.

40. COUNCIL TAX DISCRETIONARY RELIEF - LOCAL DISCOUNTS

Councillor Patel submitted a report that proposed a framework for applying Council Tax Discretionary Relief under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (LGFA 1992) as inserted by Section 76 of the Local Government Act 2003 (LGA 2003).

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1) approves that the Chief Finance Officer is given delegated authority to determine applications for Council Tax Discretionary Relief in respect of individual cases of exceptional financial hardship;
- 2) approves that if an application for relief under Section 13A potentially relates to a class of property it will be decided by Cabinet following consideration of a report from the Chief Finance Officer;
- 3) requires a review of the framework guidelines every three years to ensure it remains fit for purpose (the first being in 2013.)
- 4) Requests that the Select Committee to receive an annual report on the use of these discretions.

41. NATIONAL SPENDING CUTS - RESPONSE

Councillor Patel submitted a report that advised that the Government had made

cuts to local authority grants in 2010/11 and planned to accelerate the speed of spending reductions between 2011/12 and 2014/15. It also sought a moratorium on certain new spending commitments.

Cabinet noted the comments of the Performance and Value for Money Select Committee, and stated that Cabinet would be responding robustly to the Government spending cuts and arguing the case for protection of Council services that were deemed to be most under threat.

The meeting noted that a sub-group had been established to assess exemptions from the moratorium. Members were assured that once decisions had been made, these would be made available.

The meeting discussed the potential impact on residents and particularly the most vulnerable. Members stated that their priority would be to protect frontline services and neighbourhoods. Members stated that they were proud that they had been able to make provision for free swimming sessions for under-16s to continue over the summer holiday, despite government cuts to the scheme.

Detailed discussion took place between Cabinet and Opposition Group Leaders regarding the Government's method of addressing the country's deficit and how this would affect Leicester. Cabinet members felt that the Government's in-year cuts were ideological and counter-productive.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1) notes that the Government has made cuts to local authority grants in 2010/11 and plans to accelerate the speed of spending reductions between 2011/12 and 2014/15;
- 2) approves a moratorium on entering new commitments, as described in the report, pending a review of previously agreed spending plans;
- 3) authorises the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Leader, to grant exemptions to the moratorium on grounds of the need for a quick decision (in practice, a group of three Cabinet members has been created for consultation purposes);
- 4) notwithstanding the loss of grant from Government, to maintain free swimming for children during the summer holidays.

42. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

RALLY PARK AND ABBEY MEADOWS STRATEGIC GREEN
INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

The Leader agreed to consider this item as urgent business on the grounds that an urgent decision was required by Cabinet because of the requirement to enter into a contract with the Growth Fund by the end of July 2010.

Councillor Osman submitted a report that noted external Strategic Green Infrastructure (SGI) funding secured for improvements to open spaces at Rally Park and Abbey Meadows and sought approval for the projects to be added to the 2010/11 Capital Programme.

Members fully welcomed the report and noted that it would attract developer contributions and revitalise areas that had deteriorated.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet notes and approves the Rally Park and Abbey Meadows SGI projects and for the £595,000 to be added to the 2010/11 Capital Programme financed by Growth Fund SGI Capital Grant.

BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE – UPDATED OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE

The Leader agreed to consider the item as urgent business on the grounds that the draft updated Outline Business Case and s151 supplemental letter were to be submitted to the Partnerships for Schools today. Cabinet approved the original Outline Business Case and s151 from the Chief Finance Officer in February, so they needed to be aware of the revised submissions.

Councillor Dempster submitted a report that informed Cabinet of the submission of an updated Outline Business Case (OBC) for the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme as required by Partnerships for Schools (PFS) and to highlight the key changes compared to the OBC approved by Cabinet on 15 February 2010.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet notes that:

- 1) the BSF programme in Leicester remains unaffected by the recent national review;
- 2) an updated Outline Business Case was to be submitted, with the inclusion of a) Crown Hills and City of Leicester Colleges as sample PFI schemes; and b) Hamilton Community College as a Design and Build Scheme for the purposes of the OBC presentation;
- 3) a supplemental letter from the Chief Finance Officer will accompany the update OBC.

43. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 1.49pm.