



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2018 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Singh (Chair)
Councillor Govind (Vice Chair)

Councillor Bajaj
Councillor Cleaver
Councillor Cutkelvin

Councillor Porter
Councillor Westley

Councillor Dawood
Councillor Grant
Councillor Khote

Also present:

Sir Peter Soulsby City Mayor

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21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Gugnani.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

23. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair did not make any announcements.

24. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members were asked to agree the minutes of the meeting of the Overview Select Committee held 21 June 2018 and the special meeting held 5 July 2018.

Councillor Khote asked in respect of the meeting held 21 June 2018, the minute item 12. Questions for the City Mayor – Evington Leisure Centre, that the references to the Evington Leisure Centre be amended to read the Leisure Centre in North Evington.

AGREED:

that the minutes of the meeting held 21 June 2018, subject to the above amendment, and the minutes of the special meeting held 5 July 2018 be confirmed as correct records.

25. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING

The Chair stated that all the actions previously requested had been addressed.

26. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

There were no questions, representations or statements of case.

27. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

28. TRACKING OF PETITIONS - MONITORING REPORT

AGREED:

that the current position be noted and petitions referenced 21/12/2017, 19/04/2018, 21/05/2018, 3/06/2018 and 05/04/2018 marked Petition Process Complete be removed from the monitoring report.

Action	By
That petitions referenced 21/12/2017, 19/04/2018, 21/05/2018, 3/06/2018 and 05/04/2018, marked Petition Process Complete, be removed from the Petition Monitoring Report	The Democratic Support Officer

29. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

Members raised the following questions for the City Mayor.

CAGE

Councillor Grant said that concerns had been raised with him, that while the council had *quite rightly* * consistently expressed strong views about far-right extremism in the city, the council had not apparently expressed similar concerns about an organisation called CAGE. He said that CAGE had made at least three visits to the city in the past year, and he believed that it was an extremist organisation. Councillor Grant asked what the council were doing, bearing in mind that they had an officer working on issues of extremism.

The City Mayor responded that from his knowledge of CAGE, he disagreed with many of the views that they expressed but he did not think the organisation was subject to any restrictions.

Councillor Grant drew similarities with the English Defence League (EDL), an organisation about which the council had made its views clear. However, although people in CAGE were not demonstrating, they appeared to be invited by organisations within the city, whereas EDL came from outside the city. He was concerned that no-one was confronting CAGE on the statements they made. Councillor Grant said that this could result in vulnerable people being susceptible to extreme views and he questioned whether this was being dealt with appropriately.

The City Mayor commented that the EDL came to Leicester to cause disruption on the streets and the police advice in dealing with that organisation had been essential. He was not sure if the Police had given any advice on CAGE. The City Mayor added that he was apprehensive about stifling free speech and he believed it was better to combat extreme views with other arguments.

The Chair asked for the matter to be directed to the Assistant City Mayor for Community Involvement and for a detailed analysis and report on the issue to be brought back to the Committee. A member commented that the work being carried out in Leicester was robust and the Police would make it known if they had concerns.

The City Mayor added that he was happy to engage with Members and the Police on the issue.

Action	By
For the concerns relating to CAGE be raised with the Assistant City Mayor for Communities and Equalities.	Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance / Director of Neighbourhoods and Environmental Services.

**the minute text amended to include the words 'quite rightly' as agreed at the meeting of the Overview Select Committee held 1 November 2018.*

SALE OF LAND – NEW WALK CENTRE / KING STREET

Councillor Porter said that the site of the New Walk Centre / King Street was now looking much better but queried why the sale of the freehold land was sold for £24k, when it was worth more. Councillor Porter questioned whether the new owners would sell the land for a higher price and whether the buildings were leasehold or freehold.

The City Mayor commented that this had been fully reported, but he would be happy to forward the reports onto Councillor Porter, or any other Members at

their request. The professional advice given was that the site had negative value. The developers had now added value to the site where none had previously existed. They had invested approximately £20m into the site and had brought in new homes, retail shops and an open area. The council would seek to gain from that investment. The City Mayor added that it would be a matter for the site owners as to whether the two buildings on the site were now leasehold or freehold.

Action	By
For the reports on the sale of the New Walk Centre sites to be sent to Councillor Porter.	The Director of Finance.

ZERO HOURS CONTRACTS

Councillor Porter asked the City Mayor if he believed that zero hours contracts were a reincarnation of an ancient evil; a view expressed by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The City Mayor responded that he was very reluctant to agree or disagree with someone as eminent as the Archbishop of Canterbury.

BREXIT

Councillor Cutkelvin asked for information on the council's preparation for Brexit.

The City Mayor responded that it was very difficult to prepare because of the level of uncertainty. He would be proposing a motion at the next meeting of full council as he believed that there should be a referendum on the exit deal.

The Director of Finance added that they were waiting for guidance from the Government regarding the national impacts and the council were already looking at local impacts including recruitment and retention impacts.

Councillor Porter commented that in his view there could be significant benefits arising from a no-deal Brexit, such as free trade with the rest of the world which would help people on low incomes. Councillor Porter added there could be many new opportunities for the U.K. post Brexit.

UPDATE ON THE JOINT LOCAL SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) LETTER

Councillor Grant asked the City Mayor for an update on the Joint Local SEN letter that was sent out in the summer, following a review of the services. He asked whether he was still happy with the current strategic leadership for Adult Social Care and Children's Services given that concerns had been raised about a lack of strategic planning between children's and adult's services.

The City Mayor stated that he thought it worth noting that at the time the Ofsted inspection was carried out, there was a separate director for children's services. He had a very high regard for the new Strategic Director of Social Care and Education the teams which he led, and he was satisfied that the appropriate strategic lead was in place. It was very appropriate that the outcome of the review was listened and responded to and the Deputy City Mayor for Children and Young People's Services would be reporting to scrutiny on this issue.

DATA PROTECTION

Councillor Grant referred to a recent breach of data protection. He questioned whether a different approach to staff training was needed and whether the City Mayor had concerns that the council were not good custodians of information.

The City Mayor responded that he was very concerned about the data protection breaches and he had made it clear that this would not be tolerated. However, the council had taken the appropriate actions immediately and there was no evidence that the latest breach had resulted in any harm. The council were known to be vigilant in such circumstances.

The Director of Finance added that the council sent out a vast amount of correspondence and human error did happen, but the council were taking steps to deal with any such errors.

30. REPORT OF THE FINANCE TASK GROUP

The Chair introduced the Report of the Finance Task Group and referred Members to the minutes of the meeting held 30 August 2018, which had been included in the agenda pack.

Councillor Porter referred to the figures in the Revenue Budget Monitoring Report (Period 3) for Neighbourhood and Environmental Services and said that numerous complaints had been received relating to the lack of grass cutting and the number of weeds on paths. He said that it appeared there were insufficient staff to carry out the work and asked how many people in the Parks Service had been made redundant and by how much had the salaries budget been cut.

The City Mayor responded that those figures would be sent to Councillor Porter, but because of the very significant savings they were having to make between 2010 and 2020, there were now considerably less staff. Grass cutting was now taking place in a way that was beneficial to the environment and wildlife was being encouraged by leaving some of the grass uncut. Birds such as kestrels and raptors were now being seen in the city because they could find prey.

The Chair confirmed that he too had expressed concerns about the level of grass cutting.

Members agreed to note the Revenue Budget Monitoring Report, Period 3 2018/19.

In respect of the Capital Budget Monitoring Report (Period 3), the Chair congratulated officers on the way the report was presented and he thought that the Red Amber Green (RAG) ratings were helpful. He believed that the Capital Budget warranted scrutiny and he hoped that Scrutiny Chairs would continue to carry out that scrutiny in their own commissions.

Councillor Porter referred to the St George's Churchyard scheme and said that there had been very considerable opposition to proposals to fell the trees, including that from Heritage England. He asked whether the scheme would be abandoned or whether the trees could remain and be properly managed. The City Mayor responded that he did not know as he had no involvement in that area, but he would forward the query onto the Deputy City Mayor for the Environment, Health and Health Integration.

Councillor Cutkelvin asked whether some on-going issues with the building of the new Waterside School would impact on primary school places. The City Mayor said that the new Waterside School would replace Fosse and Slater Schools; a delay in building the new school would add pressures to primary school places but the council would be able to cope with the delay. He was currently awaiting a report on the issue.

Members agreed to note the Capital Budget Monitoring Report Period 3 2018/19.

AGREED:

that the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Reports Period 3, 2018/19 and the Report of the Finance Task Group be noted.

Action	By
For details relating to the cut in the salaries budget in the Parks Services since 2010, to be sent to Councillor Porter.	The Director for Neighbourhoods and Environmental Services
For an update on the St George's Churchyard scheme to be sent to Councillor Porter.	The Director of Planning, Development and Transportation.

Councillor Cleaver left the meeting during the consideration of the Report of the Finance Task Group.

31. SCRUTINY COMMISSIONS' WORK PROGRAMMES

There were no updates on the work of the Scrutiny Commissions.

32. OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair referred Members to the work programme and stated that the Annual Scrutiny Report would be brought to the next meeting. He had asked for a report on the Channel Shift Strategy and asked for information on what was happening at the Leicester General Hospital. The Chair made a request for the Deputy City Mayor for the Environment, Health and Health Integration to attend a future meeting when the update on the hospital was considered.

Action	By
To add Channel Shift and an update on the Leicester General Hospital (with an invitation for the Deputy City Mayor for the Environment, Health and Health Integration to attend) to the work programme.	The Scrutiny Policy Officer.

33. PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Chair asked Scrutiny Chairs to be mindful of items on the Plan of Key Decisions that related to their Commissions.

AGREED:

That the Plan of Key Decisions be noted.

34. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 6.30pm.