



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2019 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Cassidy (Chair)
Councillor Joel (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Dawood
Councillor Joshi
Councillor Khote

Councillor Kitterick
Councillor Porter
Councillor Waddington

In Attendance:

Sir Peter Soulsby – City Mayor

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23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Halford and Councillor Westley.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

25. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made no announcements.

26. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview Select Committee held on 20 June 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

27. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING

AGREED:

- 1) That, further to minute 13, “Questions for the City Mayor – Shops near the Market Place that are due to be demolished”, the City Mayor be asked to consider whether these properties, and others such as them, could be offered on short term leases for start-up businesses; and
- 2) That, further to minute 15, “Capital Budget Monitoring Outturn 2018/19”, the Director of Planning, Development and Transportation be asked to circulate the expected timetable for the implementation of the Putney Road scheme.

Action	By
Consideration to be given to whether the five properties in Market Square that are due to be demolished, and others such as them, can be offered on short term leases for start-up businesses	City Mayor
The expected timetable for the implementation of the Putney Road scheme to be circulated to all members of the Committee.	Director of Planning, Development and Transportation

Councillor Joshi arrived during consideration of this item

28. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations or statements of case had been received.

29. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer advised that there were no petitions to report.

30. TRACKING OF PETITIONS - MONITORING REPORT

Members considered the Tracking of Petitions Monitoring Report and noted an update, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Members were reminded that when a petition was listed as Complete, it had been processed in accordance with the Council's procedures and officers were ready to provide a response to the petitioners.

AGREED:

That the petitions marked 'petition complete', namely 11/01/2019, 19/02/2019, 26/02/2019, 07/03/2019, 12/03/2019, 29/04/2019, 28/05/2019,

10/06/2019, 17/06/2019 and 23/07/2019 be removed from the Monitoring Report.

Action	By
Petitions marked 'petition complete', namely 11/01/2019, 19/02/2019, 26/02/2019, 07/03/2019, 12/03/2019, 29/04/2019, 28/05/2019, 10/06/2019, 17/06/2019 and 23/07/2019 be removed from the Monitoring Report	Democratic Support Officer

31. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

The following questions were put to the City Mayor at the meeting:

a) Parking Bays for Disabled Drivers

Councillor Joshi stated that he understood that parking bays for disabled drivers were no longer being installed and asked if there was any progress on changing this decision, as many requests for these bays were received by Ward Councillors.

The City Mayor advised that he was not aware that they were not being installed and asked Members to provide details of any examples of this in order that the circumstances could be investigated.

Action	By
Members to advise the City Mayor of any examples of which they are aware of requests for parking bays for disabled drivers being refused, in order that their circumstances can be investigated	All Members

b) City Centre Parking for Councillors

Councillor Porter noted that City Councillors received free parking in the city centre and asked if this was appropriate when the Council was considering introducing a Workplace Parking Levy (WPL).

In reply, the City Mayor reminded Members that, at present, only the potential for introducing a WPL was being considered. All comments would be considered and if a WPL scheme was introduced the system developed would take comments into account.

c) Putney Road Scheme

Councillor Porter asked whether the Putney Road scheme had been deferred until a scheme had been agreed for the Evesham Road boundary road.

The City Mayor advised Councillor Porter that the Putney Road scheme would be considered under minute 33, "Capital Budget Monitoring – Period 3, 2019/20", below.

d) Potential Evesham Road Boundary Road Scheme

Councillor Porter asked whether progress had been made with developing proposals for an Evesham Road boundary road scheme, or whether this had been abandoned.

The City Mayor reminded Members that he had repeatedly stated that there was no Evesham Road boundary road scheme. However, a proposal for a road that crossed the edge of Aylestone Meadows was being considered, to provide some relief from traffic for Aylestone. This would be considered by the Economic Development, Transport and Tourism Scrutiny Commission, including in the context of the forthcoming consultation on the developing Local Plan.

Councillor Porter noted that currently there was no highway line across this land and questioned why it would be considered by the Scrutiny Commission.

The City Mayor explained that the road scheme that would be considered by the Scrutiny Commission had been requested for many years by people in Aylestone, due to significant problems with traffic. It would be very expensive to provide a boundary road and it was not considered to be a realistic possibility that funds could be found for such a scheme in the near future. The development of the Local Plan therefore provided an opportunity to consider if one could be justified at any point. Other roads in the city had similar problems with traffic, (such as Upperton Road and Middleton Street), but no funding was available for schemes to alleviate traffic on them either and no bids for any had been made.

The Chair reminded Members that this Committee's work programme included consideration of the draft Local Plan, which also would be considered at relevant Scrutiny Commissions and by full Council.

32. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING - PERIOD 3, 2019/20

The Director of Finance submitted a report giving an early indication of expected performance against the revenue budget for the year, explaining that it set out the position at the end of the third month of the financial year. No forecast of future performance was included, as the aim at this stage of the financial year was to provide awareness of areas in which financial pressures were being identified. The report for the next quarter would show the half-year performance and would include a spending forecast.

The Committee expressed some surprise that the Delivery, Communications and Political Governance division and the Human Resources division were forecasting underspends and questioned what the Digital Transformation Team would be doing.

In reply, the Director for Delivery, Communications and Political Governance advised that the underspends related to vacancies in the Human Resources function and reductions in non-staff expenditure, (such as printing costs). The Digital Transformation Team had been established for a fixed period and was not part of the Council's core establishment, so was unbudgeted. Therefore, where possible, underspends were used to cover the cost of the team, which would be looking at how the best use of technology could be made in delivering the Council's services. Confirmation of the number of staff in the team and the costs involved could be provided for Members.

Some concern was expressed at the forecast overspend in Coronial Services and Members queried how this would be accommodated in future spending forecasts. In reply, the Director of Finance explained that, although technically part of the Council and funded by the Council, the Coroner was an officer of the Crown. The Council therefore could not ask her to reduce the work being done. However, the current Coroner had been very effective at reducing costs.

Some concern also was expressed that investment by Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment services had not yet resulted in Leicester becoming a destination city and that Leicester Market was deteriorating, including problems arising from anti-social behaviour around the Market.

In response to this, the City Mayor advised the Committee that the Market continued to provide quite a significant income. However, the Market was changing and investment was being made in the area around it to acknowledge this change. Problems had been experienced with anti-social behaviour around the Market throughout its history, but it was hoped that the continued investment would replicate the success of the redevelopment of the meat and fish areas. The Council was determined that the Market would not close and this investment would help ensure that this did not happen.

Members also expressed some concern that reviews such as that for Technical Services had been delayed, which inevitably delayed any savings that would be made. The Director of Finance explained that if this was to have an impact on the services it would be expected that the Director would report it through the monitoring reports submitted to the Committee.

Attention was drawn to the anticipated pressures on the Housing General Fund in relation to temporary accommodation. This was part of the wider issue of homelessness, so it was suggested that it could be useful to have a briefing on these issues and budgetary pressures.

When considering Adult Social Care services, the Committee queried how much the Council would save by changing the disregard rules for certain allowances. The Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission had been advised that people could have to pay more towards their services, but at that time the financial profiling of the savings that this would achieve was not set out. Members noted that any changes would be made following the current public consultation on possible options, information on which could be provided.

The increase of long term Adult Social Care service users was noted. The Director of Finance explained that there had been an increase over the last 5 – 10 years. People continued to enter and leave the system and previously these numbers had been fairly equal. However, people were now needing these services earlier in life and were living longer, leading to an increase in long term service users. It was not possible to predict future trends, particularly in a city such as Leicester, but the numbers appeared to be more stable at present. However, it was anticipated that pressure would continue as people lived longer with significant health issues. There currently were no plans to change assessment criteria for care packages, but the government's long-awaited Green Paper on adult social care could consider this issue.

In response to a question about potential savings from the review of Sports Services, the Director of Finance explained that this review related to the staffing structure, how facilities and buildings were managed and how to create a more commercial focus for the services. The Committee noted this, but was concerned that users of leisure centres were being encouraged to sign up to monthly direct debit payments and could no longer pay per session. This was of particular concern in relation to the move towards community prescribing by medical services, which included using leisure centre facilities. The Director of Finance reassured members that the Council's facilities still accepted cash as a means of payment and asked for further information to be provided by Members if they had received complaints relating to this.

The Committee sought an assurance that the use of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserves to meet budget pressures in Education and Children's Services was being managed properly. The Director of Finance explained that there was national pressure on the High Needs Block of the DSG, as all areas had seen an increase in the number of children with special needs. The DSG reserves had been used to fund this Block. This issue would be considered as part of the budget preparation process for 2020/21, but it was recognised that children with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) had very specific needs, which the Council was obliged to meet, and schools sometimes needed additional financial support to assist in managing children's behaviour.

The following information also was requested during discussion on this item:

- Figures for the income from the new bus shelter advertising contract; and
- Details of anticipated income from the new charges to be introduced for pre-planning application meetings and discussions.

AGREED:

- 1) That the position presented within the report be noted; and
- 2) That the following information be provided for Members by the Directors indicated:

Action	By
Confirmation of the number staff in the Digital Transformation Team and the costs of that Team to be circulated to all members of the Committee	Director for Delivery, Communications and Political Governance
Figures regarding income from the new bus shelter advertising contract to be sent to all members of the Committee	Director of Finance
Information on anticipated income from the new charges for pre-planning application meetings and discussions to be sent to all members of the Committee	Director of Finance
A briefing to be provided for Members on the anticipated pressures on the Housing General Fund in relation to temporary accommodation	Director of Housing
Information on the options available, and likely implications of these, in relation to changes in relation to the current consultation on financial assessments	Strategic Director Social Care and Education

Councillor Kitterick left the meeting during consideration of this item.

33. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING - PERIOD 3, 2019/20

The Director of Finance submitted a report showing the position of the capital programme for 2019/20 as at the end of Period 3. The Director reminded Members that this was a rolling programme, it being unusual for a capital project to start and finish in the same year.

Members' attention was drawn to the Red rating for the Haymarket House Car Parks and Lifts project. The Director of Finance advised the Committee that there had been some delay to this project due the original contractor going in to voluntary administration. A new contractor had just been appointed.

The project consisted of a number of schemes and the contractor that had entered administration had been appointed for hotel development. This did not affect the Council financially, as this work was being funded by the owners of the Haymarket. The Car Parks scheme was progressing well.

The Committee welcomed the progress that was being made with the projects identified in the report, but noted that the forecast completion date for the Jewry Wall Museum Improvements project now was March 2021. The City Mayor confirmed that the Green rating previously reported was for the first element of the

project. Consideration was now being given to whether it would be more economical to finish the project as one scheme, or to continue it in phases.

In response to a question, the Director of Finance explained that the Finance System project related to the Council's accounting system. A new provider had been procured, due to the ending of the previous contract, but the new system had failed to meet the Council's needs. The project rating had now moved from Red to Green, as it had been possible to negotiate a new contract with the existing supplier.

It was noted that the Goscote House Demolition project was rated as Red as the difficulties of the scheme in relation to the site emerged. The method of demolition was restricted due to the compact nature of the site, so it would have to be dismantled layer by layer, making this a very complex project.

The St Leonard's Tower Block Lift project was rated as Amber, due to complexities in gaining agreements to the work being done, as some of the residents in the block were tenants and some were leaseholders. However, progress was being made towards being able to undertake this work.

The Committee queried whether modelling was still being done on the Leicester North West Major Transport Scheme. The Director of Finance advised that this referred to two schemes. The element relating to work being done on Blackbird Road / Ravensbridge Drive was nearing completion, but Leicestershire County Council was back on site at Anstey Lane / A6 to undertake further modelling. The City Mayor also advised that work still needed to be done to shape the scheme in the "five ways junction" / Woodgate area.

It also was queried why Waterside Primary School was included in the list of projects substantially completed, when the school was not nearing completion. The Director of finance advised that the project in the list referred to the feasibility study for the school, which was now substantially complete, but did not refer to the building of the school.

AGRRED:

That the position presented within the report be noted.

Action	By
The completed feasibility study for Waterside Primary School to be sent to members of this Committee when available	Strategic Director Social Care and Education

Councillor Porter left the meeting during consideration of this item

34. EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2018/19 PROGRESS UPDATE AND DRAFT EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2019/20

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance submitted a report providing an update on progress against actions identified in the Equality Action Plan 2018/19 and an overview of the draft refreshed Action Plan for 2019/20.

The Equalities Manager introduced the report, making the following points:

- The Action Plan would help the Council deliver inclusive and responsive services;
- Good feedback had been received from the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) workshops held to date;
- Deaf and hard of hearing service users had been invited to use the Customer Services in Granby Street, to help identify how deaf awareness training and other recommendations could be developed and the Council's work on the British Sign Language Charter progressed. This was an ongoing area of work;
- Two important areas of focus for the coming year would be digital inclusion and the new City Listening Project;
- It was hoped to expand the successful "Don't judge a book by its cover" (human library) event. A Lived Experience Panel would support this;
- Work to address the under representation of officers from black or minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds at the most senior levels of the Council was ongoing;
- Work also would continue to raise awareness of the guidance for supporting trans staff;
- The Plan outlined the Council's commitment to improve access to work. This included the intention to introduce a portal offer by the end of next year to enable staff to self-serve to get reasonable adjustments made to their working environment; and
- Problems previously had been experienced with obtaining information from voluntary and community services about digital support on offer in Leicester, but approaches were now being made to social workers and some mapping was being undertaken in the community.

The Committee welcomed the work being done through the Action Plan and the robust way in which equality challenges were being addressed. The offer of an EIA workshop for Chairs and Vice-Chairs also was welcomed.

It was questioned how service users could engage in digital transformation. The Equalities Manager explained that it was recognised that this was a wide subject,

so as a first stage work was ongoing to map current provision of digital services in the Council. Work also was being done on communicating with service users more effectively about the services and improving sign-posting to services. The next phase of the work would be to decide how this should be monitored.

In response to a question on how the private sector assisted people without IT skills and equipment and those experiencing language barriers, the Equalities Manager explained that various companies, such as banks, had programmes of assistance. This also could come from “social value”, which the Council now looked for in contracts it procured. In the meantime, work was underway to identify the channels currently used to reach people and the range of help that they needed. The Equalities team was working with the Smart Cities team to embed this in the latter’s work.

Some concern was expressed that, despite stated intentions to the contrary, the recruitment of senior staff from BAME backgrounds had regressed. The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance advised the Committee that the City Mayor chaired a group of officers and Councillors considering BAME representation. A lot of work had been done to remove unconscious barriers from job descriptions and anonymised short listing was used. A report giving further information on this could be presented to the Committee in due course if wished.

The City Mayor confirmed that the overall composition of the Council’s workforce was generally representative of the city, but not at senior level, although it was recognised that recruitment at that level tended to be from a national pool of candidates. The Council was not complacent about this and acknowledged the need to encourage existing staff to apply for senior roles.

Members reported that feedback they received as Ward Councillors was that some residents found various barriers to accessing services. It therefore was suggested that it would be useful to have a central point to report these occurrences to, so that opportunities people were missing, or situations they were having difficulties with, could be used to inform future work. The City Mayor undertook to advise the Assistant City Mayor with responsibility for Equalities and Special Projects of this suggestion.

In summary, the City Mayor welcomed the work that was being done and thanked the Council’s employee groups for their support of it.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted;
- 2) That the Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance be asked to provide this Committee with a report at an appropriate time on work being done to improve black and minority ethnic representation at senior officer levels in the Council;
- 3) That the Assistant City Mayor with responsibility for Equalities and Special Projects be asked to liaise with Members to consider the suggestion that a central point be established to which incidences of

people experiencing difficulties accessing aspects of the Council's work can be reported and used to inform future work; and

- 4) That the Equalities Manager be asked to advise the Council's employee groups of the City Mayor's appreciation of those groups' input to the development of Equality Action Plans.

Action	By
A report on the work being done to improve black and minority ethnic representation at senior officer levels in the Council to be made to the Committee at an appropriate time	Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance
The Assistant City Mayor with responsibility for Equalities and Special Projects to be asked to liaise with Members to consider the suggestion that a central point be established to which incidences of people experiencing barriers to accessing services can be reported and used to inform future work	City Mayor
The Council's employee groups to be advised of the City Mayor's appreciation of those groups' input to the development of Equality Action Plans	Equalities Manager

35. SCRUTINY COMMISSIONS' WORK PROGRAMMES

a) The Viability of a Community Lottery

The Committee was asked to receive and endorse the Scoping Document for a review to consider the viability of a Community Lottery. The Chair of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission stressed that this review would be considering the viability of such a lottery and options available, to inform a future decision on whether to proceed with introducing one.

The Committee welcomed the inclusion of the ethical and social aspects of operating a lottery in the review, particularly in view of concerns that gambling was a problem for some people.

Some concern was expressed that close attention needed to be paid to the equalities implications of introducing a lottery, as there was a view that lotteries were a tax on less affluent people to fund services for those people. This needed to be reflected in the research undertaken during the proposed review.

AGREED:

That the Scoping Document for a review to consider the viability of a Community Lottery be endorsed, subject to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission being asked to amend the title of the review to refer to the viability and appropriateness of a Community Lottery.

Action	By
The Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission to be asked to amend the title of its proposed review to refer to the viability and appropriateness of a Community Lottery	Chair of Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission

b) Economic Development at Local Level

The Chair of the Economic Development, Transport and Tourism Scrutiny Commission reported verbally that the Commission was preparing to undertake a review of the development of job creation, skills and investment plans for parts of Leicester that were economically excluded, including opportunities for local businesses and for young people to engage in positive activities. It was hoped that work on this review could start before the next scheduled meeting of the Overview Select Committee, so it was intended that Scoping Document would be circulated to the Committee in advance of its next meeting.

AGREED:

That the review of Economic Development at Local Level be supported in principle.

36. OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received and considered its current work programme.

AGREED:

- 1) That the work programme be noted; and
- 2) That a Special Meeting of the Committee be held at an appropriate time to receive a presentation on the main Local Plan issues prior to consultation on the full detailed draft Plan.

Action	By
A Special Meeting of this Committee to be arranged to consider the main Local Plan issues prior to consultation on the full detailed draft Plan	Democratic Support Officer

37. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.32 pm

