



Leicester  
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 28 JANUARY 2021 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Thalukdar (Chair)

Councillor Ali  
Councillor Joshi

Councillor Govind  
Councillor Solanki

Also Present:

Assistant City Mayor Councillor Master  
Deputy City Mayor Councillor Russell

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**76. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Aqbany.

**77. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of interest.

**78. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission 26 November 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

**79. PETITIONS**

The monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

**80. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE**

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

## **82. COUNCIL DRAFT ANNUAL BUDGET REPORTS - REVENUE AND CAPITAL 2021/2022**

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the City Mayor's proposed budget for 2021/22. The Commission was recommended to consider and comment on the Neighbourhood Services element of the budget. The Commission's comments would be forwarded to the Overview Select Committee as part of its consideration of the report before presentation to the meeting of Council in February 2021.

The Director of Finance presented the report which set out the draft budget proposed at a time of extreme uncertainty. It was noted that over the last 10 years the general fund budget had seen a reduction of £100million per annum and future impacts were unknown.

It was noted that the draft budget is a one-year stop gap budget having minimal changes. The Adult Social Care budget has £10million growth recognising the increasing cost of and demands for adult social care, only £3million of which would come as funding through central government. Government is allowing Councils to increase their Council Tax by an additional 3% to provide further social care funding, although this does not meet the full cost in Leicester and places the funding burden on to local taxpayers.

It was noted that the Council are in a position to further support the budget with £20million from reserves. This was something that many other Councils are not in the position to do.

The Director of Neighbourhoods and Environmental Services noted that the £32million Neighbourhood Services budget is well managed and had been procurement savings of £60,000 however, the department is facing budget pressures on waste management. This is a result of increasing landfill charges and a rise in annual waste collected for landfill. Members of the Commission suggested that the Commission be updated on any departmental spending reviews being considered and that these be brought to an appropriate future scrutiny meeting.

During the discussions Members of the Committee shared their concerns with the rise in Council Tax and the pressures this would add to vulnerable families across the city. It was noted that Council tax increased annually by the maximum 2% and the Adult Social Care precept allowed Councils to increase Council Tax by an additional 3%.

It was noted that there were schemes set up to support those individuals across the city who may struggle with Council Tax: The Council Tax Support Scheme, supported up to 80% of Council Tax and the Council Tax Discretionary Relief Scheme supported those with short term hardships with a relief fund. Members of the Commission suggested that the Council should

ensure there is effective communication with residents and residents were assisted before enforcement action was taken and that data on families receiving support as a result of the increase in Council Tax be brought to a future Commission meeting.

Members of the Commission suggested that due to the circumstances a larger number of people were using the services provided online and that it would be helpful to those people if the services were easily accessible online. It was noted that services were already migrating online before the pandemic and during the pandemic there was a significant growth in online contact. It would be very helpful if Officers could directly include Commission Members to help support the online improvements and act as a critical friend.

**AGREED:**

- 1) That the Commission note the report,
- 2) That the Commissions comments be passed to the Overview Select Committee,
- 3) And that, the Director of Finance be requested to provide data on the impact on families as a result of the increases to Council Tax to a future meeting.