



Leicester
City Council

Extract

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Held: THURSDAY, 22 JANUARY 2008 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Westley – Vice-Chair (In the Chair)
Councillor Mugglestone

Councillor Corrall	Councillor Hall
Councillor Hunt (for Cllr Suleman)	Councillor Joshi
Councillor Naylor	Councillor Russell

Co-opted Members

Mr Edward Hayes – Church of England Diocese

Standing Invitees

Rebecca Barrow	Youth Representative
Jess Evans	Youth Representative

Also In Attendance

Councillor Dempster	Cabinet Lead Member for Children, and Schools.
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304. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Blackmore and Follett, Cem Turhan and Edward Hayes.

305. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor Corrall declared a personal interest in Appendix B, 'Housing Revenue Account – Budget 2009/10' and Appendix C 'Housing Capital Programme 2008/09 and 2009/14' as he had relatives who were Council tenants.

Councillor Westley declared a personal interest in Appendix B, 'Housing Revenue Account – Budget 2009/10' and Appendix C 'Housing Capital Programme 2008/09 and 2009/14' as he was a Council tenant.

320. NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT – THE NEXT STEPS

The Service Director, Democratic Services, submitted a report that considered the next steps to be taken to build on the early successes of Ward Community Meetings as a vehicle for effective community engagement.

In addition to the recommendations included in the report, the Service Director, Democratic Services explained that an extra recommendation would be presented to Cabinet asking officers to develop further proposals to use additional funding to support Ward Community Meetings from the community engagement allocation within the Working Neighbourhood Fund and / or from resources and skills that may be released as a result of decisions to be taken by Cabinet on the future of Neighbourhood Management.

The Service Director, Democratic Services summarised the key points of the report. It was noted that the number of attendees varied between different wards, and that there had been much higher attendances at meetings when a major issue that affected the ward was being considered. On average, however, the attendance at the majority of meetings clustered between 20 and 40 persons. He further stated that publicising the meetings and creating a sound feedback mechanism were fundamental to the future successes of community meetings. Furthermore, he reported that officers had with the Members Development Forum responded to training needs, particularly in terms of chairing meetings.

A Member of the Board was of the opinion that the health community was not appropriately engaged through these meetings. It was stated that senior officers from the NHS often attended, when front-line workers may well be more appropriate. In response to this, it was reported that the Cabinet Lead Member and officers were to meet with officials from the NHS to address the issues that had been raised. A Member also commented on the difficulties of getting similar engagement with the bus companies. The Service Director, Democratic Services, agreed to feedback to the Cabinet Lead Member these comments from Members around poor engagement by bus companies.

A number of members expressed concerns with regard to the future of the neighbourhood management structure. In particular, the structure in New Parks was cited as an exemplar model, and had provided significant benefits to the area. The service Director, Democratic Services acknowledged the points raised and was keen to reach a way forward that both would maintain the principles within neighbourhood

management as well as integrate with and link to the activities of Ward community meetings.

With regard to publicity, a member expressed concern around the despatch of posters and fliers a week before the meeting. In response, it was reported that a calendar of meetings was being created for the next municipal year which would allow all dates of future meetings to be publicised at a much earlier stage. In addition, it was stated that e-mail was being used increasingly as a way of keeping members of the public informed.

One Member referred to difficulties with engaging different communities within the ward he represented. The Service Director, Democratic services acknowledged that this could be an issue and was in part a product of the Ward Boundary Review which had, in some areas, combined distinct communities within one ward and encouraged community meetings being held in as many different parts of the ward as possible.

In terms of processing budget applications, one Member of the Board felt that it was often difficult to determine which strand of the three funding streams the application was most suited to. Councillor Hunt, seconded by Councillor Westley proposed that a recommendation be made to Cabinet to consolidate the three separate streams into one overall budget. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

In response to a further point in connection with the carry forward of budgets, the Service Director reported that, particularly in this first year, which was also initially one of setting up governance arrangements etc, it was difficult for all Ward Community Meetings to all spend their full allocation of funding. Cabinet would, therefore, be asked to consider the carry forward situation as part of their Revenue outturn report.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the report be noted; and
- (2) that Cabinet be asked to consolidate the three separate funding streams currently available to each Ward Community Meeting into one overall budget.