



Leicester
City Council

Minute extract

Minutes of the Meeting of the
FINANCE, RESOURCES AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held : THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2003 at 5.30pm
RECONVENED: WEDNESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2003 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Bhatti - Chair
Councillor Mrs. Middleton - Conservative Spokesperson
Councillor Karim – Liberal Democrat Spokesperson

Councillor Draycott
Councillor Garrity

Councillor Renold
Councillor Willmott

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor Coley – Cabinet Link Member for Resources, Access and Diversity
Department (at the meeting on 4 September 2003)

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18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were requested to declare any interests that they may have in the business to be discussed and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Act 1992 applied to them.

There were no declarations of interest.

At the reconvened meeting on 8 October 2003, Councillor Mrs Middleton declared a personal interest in agenda item 6, 'Request for a Report to the Scrutiny Committee' as she had a son working in the Environment, Regeneration and Development department. Councillor Mrs Middleton was advised that the interest would only become prejudicial if matters directly affecting that individual were discussed.

33. REVITALISING NEIGHBOURHOODS

The Corporate Director of Cultural Services and Neighbourhood Renewal submitted a report presenting a range of options for consideration in relation to those aspects of the 'Revitalising Neighbourhoods' project selected for review. It was noted that the Cabinet had asked that the views of the Finance, Resources and Equal Opportunities Scrutiny Committee be sought, prior to consideration of the issue by the Council's Procedures Working Party, who would make recommendations to the Cabinet.

Councillor Willmott proposed that the scheme as originally envisaged should be allowed to run for 12 months before being reviewed and evaluated.

Councillor Willmott's preference for Neighbourhood Forums was based on encouraging local people to participate in the democratic process and take ownership of issues in their local areas. Councillors would attend Neighbourhood Forums and be involved but not have voting rights. The report also stated that Neighbourhood Forums were less costly than Area Committees.

Councillor Renold moved that Cabinet be recommended not to proceed with the Revitalising Neighbourhoods scheme and should look at establishing Area Committees of Councillors, reconsider the area boundaries, not employ Neighbourhood Co-ordinators and consider area advice centres as a separate issue.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Garrity. Councillor Mrs Middleton also stressed that local Councillors needed to be involved in Area Committees, particularly where there was the potential in the future for budgets to be devolved down.

Officers were asked to clarify why it was considered that Area Committees were a more costly option than Neighbourhood Forums. Although an exact figure could not be specified as the costs would depend on the type of committees and level of delegation, Area Committees were anticipated to be more costly because of the greater level of clerking and legal support that would be necessary to a formal body in comparison to a Forum.

Councillor Renold's proposal was voted on and carried by 4 votes to 3.

Members also discussed the issue raised in paragraph 3 of Appendix C regarding minimum standards across the City, and how services could be managed if significant elements of that service were to be made the responsibility of area committees and it was agreed that Cabinet be asked to explore what the implications of minimum service standards across the authority might be.

Councillor Willmott, seconded by Councillor Draycott, proposed that if Area Committees were introduced they should be based on option viii (a combined Area Committee and consultative body) outlined in appendix 2 of the report. Councillor Renold stated proposed a combination of options v and vi put in place, with Area Committees consulting with local groups on issues.

Councillor Renold's proposal was voted on and carried by 4 votes to 3.

The question of the arrangements for the City Centre was also discussed. Councillor Willmott moved, seconded by Councillor Draycott, that there be one Forum for the City Centre including both residents and business interests. The proposal was voted on with 3 Members voting for and 3 Members voting against. On the Chair's casting vote, the proposal was carried.

RESOLVED:

that the following be recommended to the Procedures Working Party:

- (1) That the Cabinet be recommended not to proceed with the Revitalising Neighbourhoods scheme and should look at establishing Area Committees of Councillors, reconsider the area boundaries, not employ Neighbourhood Co-ordinators and consider area advice centres as a separate issue;
- (2) that the model for Area Committees should be based on a combination of the options v and vi outlined in appendix 2 of the report;
- (3) that the Cabinet be asked to explore the implications surrounding minimum service standards; and
- (4) that the Cabinet be recommended to set up a single Forum for the City Centre, which would comprise residents and local businesses.