



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
ARTS, LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: WEDNESDAY, 28 JANUARY 2004 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Clair - Chair
Councillor Mrs Maw - Conservative Spokesperson
Councillor Sandringham - Liberal Democrat Spokesperson

Councillor Green
Councillor Hall

Councillor Keeling
Councillor Seare

* * * * *

47. 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 applied to them.

No such declarations were made.

54. DRAFT DEPARTMENTAL REVENUE STRATEGY

The Corporate Directors of Regeneration & Culture and the Chief Finance Officer submitted joint reports seeking the views of the Scrutiny Committee on the draft revenue strategy for cultural and environmental services.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture outlined the budget proposals to Members and reported that in order to meet corporate savings targets, as well as making departmental savings, a number of difficult decisions had had to be made regarding services that were currently offered by both the Cultural Services and Neighbourhood Renewal Department and the Environment, Regeneration & Development Department. Members were informed that there were insufficient resources to maintain current levels of service and Members attention was drawn to the proposed budget reductions and cuts to direct services.

Proposed reductions to the voluntary sector were detailed to Members. It was explained that those that were facing reductions would be given time to identify other potential sources of income.

The Committee then discussed the budget proposals. Some Members expressed concern about the proposed changes to the museum services, in particular the proposals to turn part of the Abbey Pumping station into a museums storage facility, reductions in opening hours and proposed entrance charges to all museums in Leicester. It was pointed out that Abbey Pumping Station was one of the most popular museums in Leicester and such changes would undermine visitor numbers. Members sought clarification on the plans for the venue and plans to introduce charges and changes in opening hours to all museums.

Members also expressed concern regarding the proposal to end funding to recreational transport. Members highlighted that elderly and disabled people relied greatly on this service and they feared that such members of the community would be isolated without it and that it should be retained in some way for them. Members suggested that it would, however, be more appropriate if the Social Services Department took on the costs for that part of the service. Some Members also expressed concern regarding the proposals for burial and cremation services, the City Arts Provision, and the proposed reduction in funding to the voluntary sector. In particular it was stated by some Members that the voluntary sector provides a significant contribution to the community cohesion of Leicester, which would be put at risk as a result of these proposals. Further concerns were raised at the proposed cuts to the Consumer Protection Service and Health Promotion Services. Discussion was also had about the costs to the department of recycling fridge freezers.

The Corporate Director, Regeneration and Culture explained that feasibility studies were being undertaken to assess the suitability of Abbey Pumping Station for the storage proposals. She explained however that members should be aware that should it prove not to be suitable, savings would have to be identified elsewhere within the service. Assessments were being made to identify times when museums are visited, the results of which would be used to reassess opening hours. Any charges that were introduced for historic buildings would be modest and likely to be discounted for residents of Leicester.

The criteria for proposed cuts to the voluntary sector were outlined to Members and it was explained that the same criteria had been applied to the department's services also. Members were informed that the voluntary sector organisations that had been identified for proposed cuts were those that had the potential to be able to secure alternative sources of funding. In addition internal management savings of over £1 million had been identified following the reorganisation of the departments.

Councillor Clair, seconded by Councillor Hall, proposed the following motion:

“That the Scrutiny Committee rejects all the budget proposals and that Cabinet consider an alternative budget that will be put forward by the Labour group in the near future.”

Councillor Clair requested that voting be recorded.

Upon being put to the vote Councillors Clair and Hall voted in FAVOUR of the motion and Councillors Green, Ramsdale, Henry, Sandringham and Maw voted against the motion. The motion was therefore LOST.

Councillor Ramsdale, seconded by Councillor Sandringham, proposed the following motion:

“That the scrutiny committee

- (1) notes the budget proposals and recommends that cabinet be asked to consider funding recreational transport for the elderly and disabled from the Social Care and Health budget
- (2) is concerned that there is insufficient information regarding the budget proposals in respect of the museum service and that more information and the outcomes of the feasibility studies should be obtained before any decisions are made regarding the service.

Councillor Clair requested that the voting be recorded.

Upon being put to the vote, Councillors Green, Ramsdale, Henry, Sandringham and Maw voted in FAVOUR of the motion. Councillors Clair and Hall voted AGAINST the motion. The motion was therefore carried.

Councillor Sandringham, seconded by Councillor Ramsdale, proposed the following motion:

“That the Committee recommends that the receipts from the sale of any of the departments assets be reinvested into the department and that the receipts from the sale of the Saffron Lane Velodrome be earmarked for the athletics track”

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the budget proposals be noted and that Cabinet be recommended to consider funding recreational transport for the elderly and disabled from the Social Care and Health budget; and
- (2) that the Scrutiny Committee is concerned that there is insufficient information regarding the budget proposals in respect of the museum service and that more information and the outcomes of the feasibility studies should be obtained before any decisions are made regarding the service; and
- (3) that the Committee recommends that receipts from the sale of any of the departments assets be reinvested into the

MINUTES EXTRACT

department and that the receipts from the sale of the Saffron Lane Velodrome be earmarked for the athletics track.