



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
ST MATTHEWS AREA FORUM

Held: Tuesday, 20 January 2004 at 7.00 pm
At 88 Manitoba Road

PRESENT

Jean Williams - In the Chair

Jennifer Finlavson
K. S. Walia
Angela Lennox
Carole Jasilek
Bill Knapp
Councillor Karim

Tennant / Resident
SMCAG The What Lab
St Matthews Project
Prince Phillip House
St Matthews Police
Local Councillor

In Attendance

Hash Pragji
John Crookes
Mike Watson
G Burke

Community Development Officer
LCC Education Department
St Matthews N H O
Community Learning Manager

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Lucy Pathon and Liz Anderson. It was noted that Rev Mandy Ford and Ann Gilbert had notified that they would be arriving at the meeting late.

3. PROPOSED LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL BUDGET

The Town Clerk reminded employees of the Council in attendance at the forum that under the Council's political conventions rules they should not comment or offer their own views about the budget proposals. Employees of the Council were advised that should they have comments or opinions they could be expressed through either their trade union representative or via their line management.

John Crookes introduced the budget proposals and explained to the forum that raising educational standards was one of the Council's key priorities. In order to meet the needs of schools, which were facing significant financial pressures, and to meet corporate wide savings targets it had been necessary to reprioritise spending

MINUTE EXTRACT

from lifelong learning and to assess voluntary sector grants against the Council's core priorities. In addition to this, management efficiency savings were proposed and a review of premises was being undertaken. The Forum was advised that consultation was taking place on the draft proposals, the Corporate Director would consider comments received before making his final recommendations to Cabinet, which would then make a recommendation to Council. It was emphasised that no decisions had yet been made and the meeting was reminded of the various ways in which people can engage with the consultation process.

The members of the Forum expressed their concern with the consultation arrangements for the proposed budget. It was asked that the Forum's views on the budget be passed to Cabinet but that it be noted that they did not feel that the meeting constituted a formal consultation.

Members of the Forum explained that they felt the cuts to the voluntary sector would have an extremely negative impact on the St Matthews Estate. The positive work, results and impact of the voluntary sector were emphasised by the Forum and it was explained that the voluntary sector works in partnership with a variety of agencies offering vital services to the community. Concerns were expressed that community cohesion would suffer as a result of the proposed cuts, leading to additional social problems and unrest on the estate. It was felt that the proposed cuts were being targeted at minority and vulnerable communities and that the needs of these communities would have to be met by other organisations that would be unable to fill the gaps in provision. In addition it was suggested that the Council's commitments under the 'Every Child Matters' Green Paper would be unable to be fulfilled.

Concerns were also raised at the impact the cuts would have on the community through job losses and it was felt that the cut off point of funding would not enable statutory redundancy notice periods to be given.

It was agreed that Cabinet should be informed that the Forum did not support the budget proposals and felt the following potential savings should be incorporated that would enable a reprieve of the voluntary sector when it is reconsidered:

Postponing Property Improvements / growth	£3.5 Million Saving
Postponing Job Evaluation	£1 Million Saving
Park and Street Wardens	£2 Million Saving