



Leicester  
City Council

MINUTE  
EXTRACT

(viii)

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
FORUM FOR OLDER PEOPLE  
(CONSULTATIVE GROUP)

Held: 28 January 2004 at 2.00 pm

P R E S E N T

Councillor Smith – Chair

Councillor Getliffe  
Councillor Thomas

Councillor Mrs Maw  
Councillor Westley

Also in Attendance

Al Khalifa  
Philip Parkinson

Voluntary Action Leicester  
Eastern Leicester PCT

Officers in Attendance

Bhupen Dave  
Roanne Dearing  
Monica Glover

Charles Poole

Chris Randall  
Alistair Reid

Frazer Robson

Tim Ward

Steve Weston  
Elaine Yardley

Service Director, Adults  
Committee Services  
Education and Lifelong  
Learning  
Service Director, Democratic  
Services  
Transport Strategy Officer  
Service Director, Highways  
and Transportation  
Service Director,  
Environmental Services  
Education and Lifelong  
Learning  
Head of Waste Management  
Service Director, Older People

Consultees

John Boyce  
Roy Stuttard  
Alan Gratrix

Age Concern, Leicester  
Pensioners Rights Campaign  
Older Person

K S Sandhu  
Arthur Hassell  
John R Birks  
J Kendrick  
Rosemary Waters  
Ray Smith  
Wilf Corbett  
Jayne Good  
Sam Hames  
Y Cobb  
Ray Betts  
Freda Parker  
Joan Natzel  
Joyce Henry  
Yakub Gangat  
Annie Thompson  
Gina Brooks

Pensioners Rights Campaign  
Third Age Research Group  
Residents Association  
Older Person  
LARA  
Older Person  
Older Person  
Pensions Service  
Pensions Service  
Pensions Service  
Pensioners Rights Campaign  
Older Person  
Older Person  
LUCA  
Care and Repair  
Help the Aged  
OVS Community Partnership

## **1. WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting.

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Sonia Bray, Mr Chamberlain, Dennis Wale, Councillor Coles, Gurmel Singh and Pat Stuttard.

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting dated 3 December 2003, copies of which having been previously circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

## **5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

### Public Toilets

In response to concerns raised by the Forum, Steve Weston, Head of Waste Management, submits the following response:

"As background, the proposal to charge for the use of attended toilets at the Retail Market, St. Margarets Bus Station and Charles Street Bus Station has been taken by Members to create an income to assist in meeting the costs of

reopening 5 closed unattended toilets located on London Rd, Narborough Rd, Aylestone Rd, Western Park and Uppingham Rd.

It has never been the intention to charge disabled users and disabled facilities, accessed by Radar Key, are external to the barriers at all three locations. Cleansing Services will ensure that the disabled toilet in the Market alleyway between the Gents and Ladies entrances is clearly marked. Additional disabled facilities are within the toilets which can be accessed by alerting the attendant who will arrange free entry through the turnstile.

The company who provided the turnstiles have since been called back to the Market location to see if access can be improved for the ladies toilet where some of the problems have been experienced. As a consequence, the turnstile will be moved further inside the toilet adjacent to the attendant's office, which will improve access as there is a wider space for the gate area and enable the attendant to be on hand if there are any problems for users. "

This item was discussed further under the 'Questions' item on the agenda.

## **6. TRAFFIC PRESENTATION**

Chris Randall, Transport Strategy Officer was in attendance to answer specific questions relating to traffic issues which had been discussed at a previous Forum. The main issues which had been discussed were traffic calming, partnership working and future traffic patrols and it was agreed that a full response would also be provided in writing.

Questions were asked in particular regarding the traffic congestion around St Saviours Road, the number of bus routes which were around the area and the problems which resulted with the lack of parking areas. It was reported that there was a difficulty in trying to find a balance and that congestion was a common problem across the City and not a problem specific to the area. It was suggested by the Chair that Miss Waters should meet with the relevant Officer and undertake a site visit to discuss the problem in greater detail.

The Forum felt that problems associated with traffic and parking were a problem all over the City and although it was noted that this was a police responsibility, it was suggested that a joint presentation between the Highways and Transportation department and the Police should be given at a future meeting of the Forum. It was agreed that this would be looked into.

**Action by:** Chris Randall/Cllr Smith  
*Re- agenda topic for future meeting*

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

## **7. QUESTIONS**

The Chair advised the Forum that a number of the questions placed in writing related to Corporate Director's budget proposals for their departments. The Chair stressed that these were proposals only and that representations, including those of the Forum, could still be made prior to the Cabinet discussing the proposals. In addition the minutes of the Forum would be forwarded as part of the budget consultation process. He added that Councillor Coles, who was unfortunately ill, would also take forward the views of the Forum as Champion for Older People.

A number of written questions had been received in advance of the meeting and Officers were present to give answers.

### **Question 1**

*In the Leicester Mercury of 10/12/04 it was reported that late night revellers could face a fine if they spent a penny in the street. To alleviate this problem when nature calls the 'Keep Britain Tidy Campaign' organisation is urging party goers to use the 23 public toilets in Leicester which are open 24 hours a day. May a list of these be prepared and distributed at the meeting?*

*It is now over six weeks since the payment turnstiles were installed in the public toilets in the market hall. In respect of the gents the installation has made it impossible for wheelchair bound males to get to the disabled toilet. As no finance has yet been generated (supposed to be from 1/1/04) may these obstacles be removed immediately until more user friendly paying facilities are installed otherwise following this meeting I intend reporting this situation to the Equal Opportunities Commission as the City Council are preventing disabled people from using this facility. Your comments please.*

*For the past two weeks the public toilets on Knighton Lane/Saffron Lane Recreation Ground have been bolted and locked. On the past two Sunday mornings upwards of six football teams have been playing. The weather has been cold which plays havoc with peoples waterworks. Where are they supposed to get relief? Many players, officials, and spectators have used the trees. What an advertisement for visiting teams. Everyone would castigate travellers if they did this. I intend contacting the local Head of Health about this situation as I was under the impression that when local authority accommodation is provided basic level facilities must be included in the package. With some 132 players, 12 linesman and 6 referees they cannot all use the limited accommodation at the Aylestone Leisure Centre. Your comments please.*

### **Response**

Steve Weston, Head of Waste Management, and Frazer Robson, Service Director, Environmental Services were in attendance for this question.

A list of all the public toilets in the City, together with their opening times, was circulated to the Forum. It was noted that the number of 23 toilets which were open 24 hours quoted in the Leicester Mercury was wrong, however any

toilets with disabled access which were opened by radar key would be accessible to users 24 hours a day.

The Forum raised problems with the use by bus drivers of the toilets in the Clarence House Age Concern building and the resulting costs of this for the Charity. The Chair suggested that Age Concern may wish to have separate discussions with the bus companies re the use of Clarence House, and it was agreed that Frazer Robson would take this back for discussion with the bus companies to try and find a way forward.

**Action by:** *Frazer Robson*

It was noted that all disabled toilets could be accessed free of charge with a radar key, and although it was noted that not all disabled people carried a key, attendants had been instructed to allow free of charge access. Councillor Thomas stated that it was important that all facilities should be equally accessible, and that if this couldn't be guaranteed the barriers should be taken down. John Birks reported that he had recently toured the toilets in the City Centre and felt that the work was coming along well and that he had reserved the right to have a further tour in the future to monitor the work that was going on.

The Forum also raised concerns regarding the number of toilets which had been closed due to vandalism, and the amount of time it took to get them reopened. It was noted that improvements had been made by the use of a mobile repair unit, but that public safety was always the Council's priority. Councillor Westley asked for a report on how much vandalism occurred and where it took place.

**Action by:** *Steve Weston*

Frazer Robson told the Forum that the decision to introduce charging had been a political one, and that this would result in an increase in the number of attended toilets and that there were benefits in a general sense of an improving service. Steve Weston would shortly be carrying out a review with the aim of improving and upgrading or disposing of toilets to provide a better service. A sum would be available in this years budget to improve public conveniences, partly assisted by the charges, and there were a number of areas where improvements would take place.

## **Question 2**

*I would wish to know, why, in some Councillors opinion, the latest deficit has occurred in funds requiring a 14% increase in council tax to remedy this situation. It is obvious that it cannot have all happened since this present Council was elected so what was the situation before then, resulting in this problem. We are told by the mass media of various selected large items of deficit but this does not contain the whole answer for the deficit. The Government have said that they have provided extra funding but how does this compare with the 14% deficit stated by the Council?. The Council must be*

*aware that in the case of pensioners most are left in an impossible position of an increase of approx 2.8% in the state pension with a proposed increase of 14% in council tax.*

## **Response**

It was noted that this was a political issue and would be discussed fully at Council on 25<sup>th</sup> February, and that all member of the public would be able to attend.

## **Question 3**

*What are the different types of sheltered housing schemes in the City in operation? What is the Council's allocation policy in general and about ethnic minority elderly people in particular? What are the information agencies, advisers etc? What are the implications involved about the homeowner or occupier who wants to move to a sheltered accommodation scheme because the Council cannot look after themselves anymore?*

## **Response**

Martin Field, Development and Older Persons Services Manager, was in attendance for this question, and agreed to send a full response to members of the Forum in writing. It was noted that anyone had the right to make an application for housing, which would be assessed in accordance with the Councils equal opportunities policy. The Forum were also informed that a number of homeowners do come into sheltered accommodation, although there may be a cost to them. There was a good range of information on what was available and this could be distributed if requested.

John Boyce felt that this would be an excellent topic for a full discussion at a future meeting of the Forum, and that the Forum should have an impact on the long term strategy of housing for older people. Martin Field informed the Forum that there was an older persons housing strategy which was currently being consulted on which looked at the level of housing provision for older people in the City and agreed to bring this back to a future meeting of the Forum.

**Action by:** Martin Field/Cllr Smith

## **Question 4**

*Why is there not a public address system in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, much like the ones in the Committee Rooms in New Walk Centre? I am not asking for a high tech system to be fitted, just a microphone and speakers which will not mean major expense nor interfere with a Grade II listed building.*

## **Response**

Charles Poole, Service Director, Democratic Services, was in attendance for this question. It was reported that there was no date in the immediate future for the installation of a sound system in the Town Hall, although a planning application for the work had been submitted and approved (and was valid for 5 years) but the date that the work was carried out would be dependent on funding. It was noted that the Council had a duty to provide reasonable assistance and that the Council was moving towards this.

### **Question 5**

*How will the support needs of carers of people with dementia in Leicester City be met in the future if proposed cuts to the Alzheimer's Society funding go ahead?*

### **Response**

Bhupen Dave, Service Director, Adults, was in attendance for this question and informed the Forum that there were a number of ways in which the needs of carers could be met. Social Workers carried out assessments of both the carer and the cared for, and there were a number of carer support workers providing support for those accessing the services. It was stressed that no decision had yet been taken on these proposals, and all comments were welcomed.

Councillor Getliffe stated that he felt that it was important that the work which carers undertook was recognised and noted. It was also pointed out that Council funding was used to achieve match funding from other organisations, and reductions from the Council could result in reductions elsewhere.

Questions were asked about what research had been carried out into the proposed cuts, and if it was felt that the services provided by the Society were duplicated elsewhere in the City. It was noted that the decision was based on criteria applied to all organisations funded by the Council, and the fact that organisations should be a core service not provided by the City Council. The Forum felt however that the proposal to cut funding was a budget rather than a needs led decision.

### **Question 6**

*May we have details on the effect of any cuts on the luncheon clubs supported by Social Care which have been the source of much discussion at recent Forum meetings.*

### **Response**

Elaine Yardley reported that there were reductions proposed, based on merging some activities of some lunch clubs to ensure that issues surrounding under occupancy were addressed and the best possible use of resources was made. There was also a proposed reduction in some of the funding the Saffron Support for Elderly People Project which provided

volunteers to a lunch club. Each organisation at risk had been approached to ask why they thought they provided a core service and evidenced representations would be considered from organisations. Elaine Yardley undertook to send out more details regarding the proposals in writing.

**Action by:** Elaine Yardley

### **Question 7**

*Why are further education courses given at a concessionary rate to a range of benefit claimants but not to pensioners?*

Tim Ward and Monica Glover, from Adult Services in Education and the Lifelong Learning department were in attendance for this question. The Forum noted that a remission scheme was in place to target those on low incomes. For example, for courses resulting in a qualification, those in receipt of means tested benefit could sign up for free, while those in receipt of non means tested benefit paid only 25%. For those courses where there is no qualification, people on means tested benefit pay only 10% of the course fee while those on non means tested benefits pay 25%. Learner support is also made available to those who can show evidence of low income, but there is no universal remission scheme for over 60s. Sam Hames drew the Forums attention to the fact the new Pension Credit was a means tested benefit, and it was agreed that this would be looked at when the scheme of fees was revised.

**Action by:** Tim Ward

The Forum were in favour of encouraging learning for all, and felt that the fee and remission system discriminated against the elderly.

### **Question 8**

*There were two questions received on concessionary fares:*

*How can the City Council justify reducing the scope for concessionary travel by older people and impose an extortionate rise in next years council tax?*

*I have a Leicester City Council Senior Citizens travel pass – ½ fare. At the back of it are the Conditions of Use, the first condition reads like this 'this pass is available at all times on local bus and train services in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and Birmingham and some nearby towns in adjoining counties'. The other day I read in the Leicester Mercury that the Council is thinking about restriction on the use of this between 8.30 and 9.30 am for the pensioners, retired people and senior citizens. Will you please comment on this as I know a lot of us are given hospital appointments in between these times and some of us want to come in to town to buy fresh produce.*

### **Response**



Alistair Reid, Service Director, Highways and Transportation was in attendance for this question. It was noted that the Council exceeded the legal minimum in terms of the concessionary fares which were offered, and that in view of the budget, proposals were made to withdraw ½ price fares before 9.30am. The Forum were informed that consideration was being given to the issue of those pensioners being given hospital appointments before 9.30 am, and that there was a possibility of ½ price fares on production of a hospital appointment card although this would be dependent on negotiations with bus companies.

The Forum felt that it was unfair that the concessionary fare was being withdrawn before 9.30am and that it specifically penalised older people. It was agreed that the Forum would ask the Cabinet to look again at the issue of concessionary fares.

RESOLVED:

That the questions and responses be noted.

#### **9. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair thanked all those who had submitted questions, and the Officers who had attended to provide answers.

The Forum thanked Councillor Smith for the meeting and felt that it had been a useful exchange of views.

#### **10. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 4.05 pm.