



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: WEDNESDAY, 2 FEBRUARY 2005 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Connelly – Chair – Cultural Services Stream)
Councillor Mrs. Maw – Conservative Spokesperson
Councillor Sandringham – Liberal Democrat Spokesperson

Councillor Thompson – (Chair – Highways and Transportation Stream)
Councillor Panchbhaya – Liberal Democrat Spokesperson
Councillor Wann – Labour Spokesperson

Councillor Allen Councillor Seare
Councillor Green Councillor Shelton
Councillor Hall Councillor Tessier
Councillor Vincent

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56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor Green disclosed a personal prejudicial interest, as a member of the Overseas Working Party, in respect of Minute _ (Regeneration and Culture Department Draft Revenue Strategy for 2005/06 – 2007/08) relating to the reference under the corporate growth bid to the Overseas Working Party.

60. REGENERATION AND CULTURE DEPARTMENT - DRAFT REVENUE STRATEGY FOR 2005/06-2007/08

The Corporate Director, Regeneration and Culture and the Chief Finance Officer submitted a report that gave details of the Draft Revenue Strategy for the Regeneration and Culture Department. In addition an update to the Addendum report previously circulated was circulated and which contained a number of investment and savings proposals additional to those previously reported, and which had been presented for discussion by Cabinet Members.

The Chair, Councillor Thompson, requested that Members only consider those

budget proposals within the remit of the Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Committee. It was stated that the overall budget had already been considered by various scrutiny committees and would also be considered in full Council.

A member of the Committee expressed concern at the level of increase in budget to the Overseas Links Working Party and of the fact that no apparent justification for the increase had been quoted, apart from the fact that it had been a request of members. It was stated that the Overseas Links Working Party fell within the remit for Strategic Planning and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee but that the request for the increase in budget had originated from members of the Working Party. The aim was to utilise the additional funding to strengthen relationships and to help offset the massive cut in budget made during 2004/05.

A member of the Committee stated that there were a number of items within the savings section of the report that made reference to staff savings, although exact figures were not quoted and it was therefore difficult to assess the full effects. The Committee were informed that, whilst there were staff savings predicted, there were also a number of new posts envisaged within the growth section of the report, which would in fact exceed those posts referred to within the savings section. Full details of the departmental figures would be made available to the respective member.

Members questioned several other items within the growth items of the report relating to the use of reserves (5.7), the extent of the proposed increase of charges (5.8) and the nature of the savings at (5.10). Members were informed that the use of reserves involved no knock-on effects and was for one item only for one year. The proposed increase of charges were contained within a package of measures, within the Community Protection and Well-Being Division, to increase income generation and would entail above inflation increases, where possible, on standard fees and charges and enhanced charging for the provision of advice to businesses. Coupled with these increases more cost efficient charging mechanisms were also being investigated. Regarding the savings referred to at 5.10, these were to be made in certain minor areas of Highways Maintenance and areas such as office stationery.

A member stated that there should be more toilets in the City that had charges re-introduced, thus enabling adequate supervision and maintenance to be provided, this view was supported by several members of the Committee.

A member stated that he had concerns over the nature of the proposed increases to the Highways Maintenance Budget, which were proposed to be tapered over several years. To redress the balances lost in the Highways Maintenance Budget over the past few years an additional sum of some £2 million, over and above the full Local Transport Plan allocation, was required each year to ensure that the backlog of works could be completed.

The Committee generally supported the re-instatement of Community/ Recreation Transport but felt that more details regarding the full breakdown of

the proposed expenditure was required before a final decision could be made.

A Committee member sought further information on the further Cabinet suggestion to subsidise the Leicester Riders Basketball team for one year, 2005/06. It was suggested that full details of this proposal would be provided to members prior to the Council (Budget) meeting.

RESOLVED:

that Cabinet be asked to: -

- 1) re-look at the issue of funding to the Highways Maintenance Budget and not tailing the funding over a period of several years and, in so doing, help eliminate the backlog of highway and footway repairs over the period 2005-2011,
- 2) to delete the proposals relating to the deletion of toilet charges,
- 3) to delete the proposals relating to the reinstatement of free charges to the Guildhall, and;

that the Officers: -

- 4) submit a report to the pre-Council (Budget) Group Meetings detailing: -
 - i) a full breakdown of the proposed expenditure regarding the proposals to re-introduce Community / Recreation Transport; and,
 - ii) the background and current proposals to subsidise the Leicester Riders Basketball team.