



Leicester
City Council

**MINUTE
EXTRACT**

Minutes of the Meeting of the
STRATEGIC PLANNING AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: MONDAY, 13 MARCH 2006 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor A. Vincent- Chair
Councillor Kitterick- Labour Spokesperson
Councillor Porter–Conservative Spokesperson

Councillor Corrall
(for Cllr Thomas)
Councillor Renold

Councillor Garrity
(for Cllr. Henry)
Councillor Waddington)

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98. 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.

Cllr. Garrity declared a personal interest in report D, 'Planning Application Statistics' as she was Chair of the Development Control Committee.

103. REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS ADVICE PROJECT

A briefing note from the Head of Advice and Economic Development was circulated with the agenda for the meeting which outlined the current position with regard to the Refugees and Asylum Seekers Advice Project (RASAP). Members of the Triumvirate invited representatives of the project to the meeting to explore the current funding position.

The Chair welcomed Iris Lightfoote from Leicester Racial Equality Council and Tahera Khan from RASAP.

Iris Lightfoote, commented with regard to the funding of RASAP. Home Office funding was spread around different areas of the country and it was considered fortunate that the project had received the £240,000 funding it had since 2002. She noted that whilst there were reducing numbers of asylum seekers coming through NASS, the government agency, there was still a need to provide services for large numbers of people in the city.

Tahera Khan commented that the figures that had previously been mentioned with regard to a 50% reduction in caseload for the RASAP project was incorrect. She noted that there had only been a reduction in 19 cases from the year 2001 to 2005. There were still needs for people referred from other cities and people coming back to Leicester who had previously made connections to the city amongst others.

Councillor Renold, noting the success of the project, moved the following recommendation:-

- 1) that the Committee gives its support to Cabinet in approaching the Home Office for further funding for the project;
- 2) that Neighbourhood Renewal Funding be sought and that work be undertaken to actively seek other funding sources; and
- 3) that the Council provide interim funding for the project until a longer term solution has been found.

Councillor Waddington wished to add the following on to the third recommendation ‘, however if the proposed avenues for funding the project prove unsuccessful, then the Council underwrites funding for the project’. She noted that Nottingham City Council had taken on a similar project in their city. She also commented that it was disappointing that the Leicester Partnership strategy on new arrivals hadn’t been seen by the Committee. The Service Director, Regeneration commented that the strategy would be approved by the Partnership this week and would be available following that.

Members of the Committee raised the issues regarding match funding for the project, particularly the loss of the Asylum Seekers Unit in the Housing Department. The Head of Advice and Economic Development informed the meeting that the Home Office wouldn’t have been aware of the loss of Asylum Seekers Unit when they considered RASAP’s funding application, it therefore had no bearing on the application.

Members of the Committee also gave consideration to figures regarding the casework that RASAP was dealing with. It was noted that RASAP dealt with large numbers of clients who weren’t under the responsibility of the government agency NASS. The project assisted people who had no other help to get accommodation, benefits and employment.

The Committee noted that it would cost £130,000 to fund RASAP for one year. It was also noted that there was potentially Neighbourhood Renewal Funding available for RASAP. Should this be possible, it may be available from June 2006.

The Chair requested that a clear mapping exercise be undertaken about what support was potentially available for RASAP and what the needs of the project actually were.

The Committee voted on the motion and the following was agreed.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the Committee gives its support to Cabinet in approaching the Home Office for further funding for the project;
- 2) that Neighbourhood Renewal Funding be sought and that work be undertaken to actively seek other funding sources; and
- 3) that the Council provide interim funding for the project until a longer term solution has been found however if the proposed avenues for funding the project prove unsuccessful, then the Council underwrites funding for the project.