



Leicester
City Council

**MINUTE
EXTRACT**

Minutes of the Meeting of the
RESOURCES AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 6 APRIL 2006 at 5.00pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Willmott - Chair
Councillor Renold – Liberal Democrat Spokesperson
Councillor Porter – Conservative Spokesperson

Councillor J Blackmore
Councillor Hunt

Councillor Karim
Councillor Kitterick

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104. 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.

Councillor Willmott declared that he held an employment contract with the Audit Commission but this did not include Leicester City Council.

115. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The Chair commented that he had requested that a discussion be held at the Committee with regard to the forthcoming Government proposals for local government reorganisation. The Assistant Chief Executive circulated a range of information released under the Freedom of Information Act relating to meetings held between the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and council Chief Executives.

The Chair also circulated his own discussion paper which considered issues such as 'double devolution' and options for the city under any local government re-organisation. It also included two recommendations regarding the closer working with surrounding districts or expansion of the city and giving support to the double devolution principle.

Members of the Committee gave support to the idea of expanding the city. Concerns were expressed that Nottingham had advanced plans to expand their boundaries to create a city with 700,000 residents which would distort the three cities working agreement. It was also felt that expansion of the city would allow

for greater control on planning and employment matters.

Other members of the Committee thought that these proposals were a good opportunity for local government to obtain more powers from central government which would reinvigorate interest and give people the feeling they have more influence over matters that affect them. Views were also expressed about the size of the potential increase of the city, but it was felt that the government already had a clear idea about future boundaries. It was also suggested that changing the voting system would also assist with raising people's interest in local government.

Another member of the Committee made some comments. He was pleased that there was a consensus from the Committee in favour of double devolution. He didn't feel that there should be a debate about where boundaries should be redrawn. He did however feel that the concept of the city expanding should be established with the government, who had currently only stated that they were looking to retain existing authority boundaries subject to local negotiation. He also commented that research such as the Employment Land Study had indicated that the city faced difficulties in providing employment sites, which could be made difficult in future if detailed negotiation with the County Council was required. He also noted that there were difficulties with providing high quality transport links to the motorway and the large-scale residential developments taking place just outside the existing city boundaries.

The Committee considered ways in which to take the matter forward and the following was agreed.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the Committee gives its support to the principle of double devolution;
- (2) that a letter be sent from the Committee to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, as a matter of urgency expressing it's views with regard to the expansion of the city;
- (3) that the Cabinet be requested to ask officers to develop a body of evidence which would support the expansion of the city which could possibly include the Employment Land Study, the Local Transport Plan and the Housing Needs Survey.