



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORT AND TOURISM SCRUTINY
COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2020 at 4:00 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Waddington (Chair)
Councillor Sandhu (Vice Chair)

Councillor Broadwell
Councillor Fonseca
Councillor Porter

Councillor Porter
Councillor Rae Bhatia

Also present:

Councillor Clarke - Deputy City Mayor Environment and Transportation
Sir Peter Soulsby – City Mayor

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75. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, reminding everyone that this was a virtual meeting, as permitted under Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020, to enable meetings to take place whilst observing social distancing measures.

At the invitation of the Chair, Members and officers present at the meeting then introduced themselves.

76. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Joel, who was absent on Council business.

77. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Broadwell declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in relation to agenda item 6, "Draft Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan", in that she had previously undertaken work for the Nuclear Industry Association and had spoken on climate change on that Association's behalf.

Councillor Broadwell also declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in relation to agenda item 6, "Draft Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan", in that she ran a business restoring and refurbishing electric bikes.

Councillor Porter declared for openness that he had concerns about the Climate Emergency that he previously had made public, (agenda item 6, "Draft Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan", referred), and had submitted a representation to a previous investigation in to practices in the textiles industry, (agenda item 10, "Leicester Textiles Sector (Modern Slavery & Labour Exploitation", referred).

Councillor Sandhu declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in relation to agenda item 11, "Draft Local Plan – Public Consultation", in that his wife owned a property in the city's Cultural Quarter. Councillor Sandhu advised that, if the Cultural Quarter was discussed during this item, he would remove himself from the meeting for that discussion.

Councillor Sandhu also declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in relation to agenda item 10, "Leicester Textiles Sector (Modern Slavery & Labour Exploitation", in that his wife worked in the textile industry. Councillor Sandhu advised that he would remove himself from the meeting during consideration of this item and would take not part in the discussion on it.

78. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Further to minute 70, "Task Group Review of Economic Development at Local Level", the Chair advised the Commission that the Task Group's report had been warmly received at Overview Select Committee. The Chair would be presenting the report to the Executive next week.

In relation to the same minute, the Director of Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment advised Members that the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership was in the process of developing an economic recovery plan, which would be considered by the Partnership's Board of Directors on 6 October. Members expressed the hope that the plan could be shared with members of this Commission, to help in the development of proposals for projects relating to employment and in any future submissions to central government for funding towards such projects.

The Head of Economic Regeneration also advised Members that to date there had been no change in the national position in relation to returning any remaining allocation from the European Social Fund, but monitoring of this would continue. In the meantime, the Recovery Plan would set out the

Council's strategic intent and how it would ensure that it was in a position to respond to any offers of funding.

Some concern was expressed that minute 70 did not fully reflect the discussion at the meeting, particularly in relation to the use of public funds in the city, but the Commission decided not to amend that minute. However, some changes were suggested to minute 71, "Economic Recovery Plan", in order to clarify the position reported at the meeting.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Chief Executive of the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership be asked to provide copies of the Partnership's Economic Recovery Plan to all members of this Commission; and
- 2) That the minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development, Transport and Tourism Scrutiny Commission held on 9 July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record, subject to the second paragraph of minute 71, "Economic Recovery Plan", being amended as follows (new wording in italics):

"The Director noted that the city's economic recovery had barely started before the city was placed in local lockdown. Although this increased the challenges faced, it was stressed that the city's investment development pipeline was strong still in place, with and that investors such as the universities, this Council and major other developers were still planning committed to do work major schemes such as those on site now at the Space Park, Waterside and the old Fenwicks building. It therefore was important not to let this stall "

79. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

80. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations, or statements of case had been received.

81. DRAFT CLIMATE EMERGENCY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Director of Estates and Buildings submitted a report presenting a draft three-year strategy for addressing the Climate Change Emergency declared in February 2019, along with a draft of the first version of a three-year action plan.

Councillor Clarke, Deputy City Mayor – Environment and Transportation, introduced the report, welcoming the development of the strategy and action plan.

The Service Manager – Sustainability reminded Members that, following the declaration of the Climate Emergency in February 2019, ideas for a strategy had been developed in-house. Consultation on these had run from November 2019 to March 2020, during which time over 4,000 individual responses had been received to the proposals in the plan.

The Council had first set targets to help address climate change in the early 1990s and currently was exceeding its target to reduce its carbon production by 50% by 2025. However, due to the Climate Emergency, the ambition now was to be carbon-neutral by 2030, which would be a steep reduction.

Councillor Clarke expressed disappointment that the Council's ambition did not appear to be matched by national policy, as the latter was needed in order to help meet the aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030. The Service Manager – Sustainability confirmed that lobbying government on the issues outlined in the Strategy and Action Plan was critical, as the Council could not achieve its targets without national government intervention in policy and funding schemes.

The Service Manager – Sustainability drew attention to the actions for the first year of the strategy and advised Members that actions for the following two years now were being developed. This included accessing as much funding as possible and linking the strategy to other work, such as the Economic Recovery Plan that was being developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Members welcomed the report and congratulated officers on producing the Strategy, which was ambitious, but set out a clear way for achieving the required outcomes.

The following comments were then made in discussion:

- How did this Strategy differ from previous ones?

Response from the Service Manager – Sustainability:

Although the city had achieved a lot since the 1990s, the Council now needed to drive a substantial step change that provided innovation in every aspect of people's lives.

- The government could be asked to fund district heating schemes, to help reduce emissions from housing, although it was recognised that these could be expensive to set up. It was noted that, as the national grid decarbonised, carbon savings from gas fired district heating schemes were falling and alternative energy sources for district heating would be required.
- Some renewable forms of energy were not acceptable. For example, biofuels drove a lot of deforestation. The Strategy therefore could be more specific about which forms of renewable energy were considered appropriate.

- 37% of households in Leicester not having access to a car created a potential to encourage use of alternative forms of transport. For example, people did not have to be physically fit to successfully use electric bikes.

Response from the Service Manager – Sustainability:

Electric bikes and vehicles were very relevant, but were not the only solution, as some air pollution came from car tyres and electric vehicles did not reduce congestion.

- Most electric cars used batteries made of cobalt, or blended cobalt, which was a very scarce resource.
- An electrification programme for the city's transport could be introduced, with overhead wires running along corridors.
- Although a lot of focus was put on transport, this only accounted for 25% of emissions in the city. 40% of emissions came from the business sector, but it was recognised that the Council's influence on this was limited.
- The further development of suggestions for employment and apprenticeships, especially in green jobs, would be welcomed. For example, retrofitting insulation to housing could be one area in which labour skills could be developed, with the current apprenticeship scheme operated by Housing services being used as a model for developing apprenticeships in green skills.

Response from the Service Manager – Sustainability:

Work would continue to ensure that proposals were developed to create green jobs and green apprentice opportunities, building on existing City Council schemes where possible.

The Climate Emergency Strategy had been developed in parallel with the Economic Recovery Plan that had been prepared in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and would continue to inform it.

- The Council could not achieve the targets set out in the Strategy and Action Plan alone, it needed the support of schools, businesses and individuals in the city.
- Leicester had been the country's first Environment City, but it had not maintained that focus, so should not keep the designation. For example, the percentage of emissions from construction needed to be addressed; lights often were left on in empty buildings; diesel lorries travelled around the city collecting waste; the level of recycling being undertaken was falling year on year; and under waste collection contracts the city's waste was being driven across the country, as well as being exported to other countries.
- The suggestion that carbon literacy training be provided for Councillors and other decision-makers was welcomed.

Councillor Clarke welcomed the comments made by the Commission and noted that:

- It could be hard to accurately identify the low carbon business sector, as many businesses identified themselves differently. However, the Council could consider doing more to help the development of a low carbon sector and encourage inward investment, particularly in relation to green jobs;
- The city had good transport connectivity, which could be monitored in conjunction with the Climate Emergency Strategy. The two local universities also were undertaking work in relation to this;
- Schools used a lot of energy and their sites had various transport needs, so various conversations were needed on how these issues could be addressed; and
- The Council was responsible for approximately 4% of emissions in the city, so needed to lead by example and work with partners to address the Climate Emergency.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Draft Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan be welcomed and all involved in its preparation congratulated on their work, the scope, ambition and firm proposals of the Strategy and Action Plan being particularly welcome;
- 2) That the Director of Estates and Buildings be asked to take account of the comments recorded above when developing the Draft Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan; and
- 3) That the Director of Estates and Buildings be asked to give further consideration to how the proposals contained in the Draft Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan can be translated in to proposals for green jobs.

82. ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT: CITY HALL & TOWN HALL

The Director of Estates and Buildings submitted a report summarising key findings of Accessibility Audits carried out in May 2020 for City Hall and the Town Hall.

The City Mayor introduced the report, reminding Members that, although these were flagship buildings, they were not the only Council buildings with public access. Access at both City Hall and the Town Hall needed to be improved, but it was important to ensure that the right work was being done. Comments from the Scrutiny Commission on the proposals therefore would be welcome.

The Head of Operations and Facilities Management noted that when City Hall was refurbished, it had been done so as to be as compliant as reasonably

possible with The Building Regulations Approved Document Part M 2006. Over time it had become apparent that this was insufficient, as set out in the report, resulting in the recommendation that various works be undertaken to improve accessibility. Details of these also were set out in the report.

As an employer, the Council was required to make reasonable adjustments to improve accessibility, as far as possible. The recommendations in the report in relation to the Town Hall therefore reflected its age and listed status. Consideration was being given to how these works could be done in parallel with clearing the backlog of maintenance work, but replacement of the platform lift to the Council Chamber would be progressed now, with the work being done in November 2020.

The Head of Operations and Facilities Management advised that it was proposed to consult the Council's Disabled Workers Group on the suitability of the proposed works.

At the invitation of the Chair, Maureen Peberdy, representing Labour Disability, provided feedback on the report, making the following points:

"I welcome the opportunity to talk to you today and the proactiveness of the Council and the Mayor to undertake this audit of the 2 main Council buildings in the City, the Town Hall and City Hall. Both buildings are currently unsuitable for disabled people.

I also appreciate his willingness to engage with disabled individuals and groups and thank him for the time he has taken to talk to me personally.

I have expressed my concerns about the ethos under which the audit has been undertaken. Oakland Group are not specialists in disability and the audit seems to have been undertaken not with disabled people in mind, but with the bare minimum to comply with the legal requirement required and cost influencing the recommendations.

Most of the recommendations are only "considered REASONABLY appropriate under the Act" and to quote from Oaklands Audit report they have undertaken a "snap shot" view – not a long-term view which is needed.

Their recommendation that remote IT access via an intranet would provide an acceptable solution if it allows access to a service without the need to physically alter the premises is both discriminatory, offensive and not in the spirit of the Act.

They state that the Act requires physical barriers should be removed but the Act requires much more than that.

The Audit states their recommendations are "suggestions and do not guarantee compliance with the Act". This should raise a red flag that this audit is unacceptable.

If this is going to be done properly it needs to be done under best practice, which may cost more but will be more fruitful and ensure the buildings are disabled accessible for the future.

Many of the points to consider say N/A, not applicable. But they are. Access is not just about physical barriers it is about lighting, seating, flooring to name just a few things. I was very disappointed in particular regarding the lack of lighting recommendations. The lighting in both buildings is very poor for those who are partially sighted or who have neurodiversity issues. All are crucial to get right. Its not good enough to have a handrail; that handrail has to be at the right height, pointing in a specific way at the end of it identifying the path of the next landing, it may even require 2 handrails at different heights. Steps must be clearly demarked, carpets and the colour of chairing needs to be based on the differential to the flooring, not to complement it.

There are mentions of signage issues, but this has to be specific both in presentation and place. There is no detail in the report.

I do not want to go into all of the specifics that I disagree with other than to comment on the lift in City Hall and the Town Hall.

The lift in City Hall down to the meeting rooms - The recommendations are that the lift to the main meeting rooms does break down a lot but it is acceptable. WRONG!

I am pleased to see that the Council have taken on board funding to replace that lift which is very welcome. However, what should have been stated in the audit report is why the lift keeps breaking down. It breaks down because it has a totally unacceptable weight limit for modern day heavy electrical wheelchairs. Many are in excess of 150kg, if you then factor in oxygen bottles etc., a 240 kg lift is clearly unacceptable. This has to be investigated further before just replacing any lifts.

That takes me onto the Town Hall. The platform lift to the main Council rooms is unsafe and dangerous. There have been accidents. With the same caveat as before, this does need replacing as a matter of urgency.

The report was long, but I could not find mention of the Viewing Gallery. I believe this is inaccessible and I would welcome comment on that.

Throughout the report there is mention of a Fire Audit. The escape plan notes that many things are not in place re disability escape routes and I urge this is also undertaken as a matter of urgency. I would strongly recommend NO Meetings at all take place in the Town Hall until this has been rectified, it is dangerous.

Before Covid I had met with Caroline Jackson [Head of Revenues & Customer Support] and officers at the Granby Street Customer Service

Centre. They had done some great work with local disability groups and the RNIB and were making some significant changes both in obvious physical barriers and not so obvious ones, like demarcation of floor colours.

I do not apologize for concentrating on the negative points of this audit, there are positive points but it is important we get it right. Overall, I am sorry to say I do not welcome the recommendations in this audit.

I know the Mayor and Officers are speaking to staff and I welcome that and suggest they also liaise with Caroline Jackson to share best practice.

I would also recommend Officers contact an Agency called Centre for Accessible Environments. They are specialists in Disability Environments, they can offer advice and support and along with their knowledge, the input of local groups and individuals I am confident the Council will have buildings that are accessible to all.”

Members welcomed the commitment to making the buildings accessible to everyone and the work being undertaken to achieve this. However, there was some disappointment that this work needed doing and Members asked for further clarification of the issue raised by Ms Peberdy about the fire certificate.

In reply, the Head of Operations and Facilities Management confirmed that, in common with all of the Council’s buildings, the Town Hall had a compliant fire safety risk assessment. This included arrangements for people management through independent access and egress. Processes for emergency situations were tested regularly. In addition, although the previous fire alarm system had been compliant, the new one installed had improved compliance.

The Service Manager - Accommodation and Workplace confirmed that all systems had reliance on human intervention for safe evacuation. No safe areas existed in the Town Hall, so people unable to evacuate via the staircase currently had to wait in refuge areas for manual evacuation. It was recognised that this created issues for personal dignity.

It was recognised that the Town Hall was a historic building and that ways in which it could be used in the future were being considered. It therefore was suggested that the proposals for its future use be scrutinised by this Commission, as its future use would influence the work to be done in the Town Hall to make it accessible.

The Commission welcomed the proposal to bring the skills needed for this sort of audit to be brought in-house and suggested that this could be enhanced through liaison with bodies such as the Centre for Accessible Environments.

The City Mayor thanked Members for their comments and expressed his determination that this work would proceed very quickly.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Director of Estates and Buildings be asked to take the comments recorded above in to account in progressing work to improve accessibility to City Hall and the Town Hall;
- 2) That it be noted that Estates and Building Services will commission further accessibility audits of Council sites and the proposal to develop a planned approach to support this requirement with its in house team in the future be welcomed, it being suggested that this be enhanced through liaison with bodies such as the Centre for Accessible Environments;
- 3) That the proposals that Estates and Building Services share the findings of Appendix A and Appendix B to this report with the Disabled Workers Group for comment and assign a member of its Facilities Management team to be part of this group be welcomed;
- 4) That the proposal that Estates and Management Services seek to include the priority works at City Hall in to the next appropriate capital programme for commencement as soon as possible be welcomed; and
- 5) That the Director of Estates and Buildings be asked to bring proposals for the future use of the Town Hall to this Commission at an appropriate time, to enable scrutiny to be undertaken of the ways in which these would influence the work to be done in the Town Hall to make it accessible.

83. DRAFT LEICESTER LOCAL PLAN - PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Director of Planning, Development and Transportation submitted a report outlining the revised timetable for the Local Plan, including provisions for consultation and scrutiny.

Members were reminded that an additional Special Meeting of this Commission would be held on 12 October 2020, at which the full Draft Local Plan would be scrutinised.

The Team Leader (Generic Planning) reminded Members that consultation on the Draft Local Plan had been due to start on 23 March 2020, but had been postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead, the consultation period had started on 14 September 2020, using the same documents as would have been used for the consultation in March.

The Team Leader (Generic Planning) and the Head of Planning drew attention to the following points:

- Additional evidence completed since March would be consulted on in parallel with the Draft Plan. However, it did not inform policies and

strategies in the Draft Plan and would be considered at the next stage of the Plan process;

- The White Paper “Planning for the Future” raised the possibility of substantial changes to the planning system, including proposals to abolish the duty to co-operate with other local authorities in the preparation of Local Plans. However, the Council needed to continue to work with neighbouring authorities, particularly in relation to its unmet housing and employment needs;
- The final Local Plan was due to be ready by autumn 2021. There would be further consultation before its adoption in summer 2022;
- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it had been necessary to change the way in which consultation was undertaken. Information on this was set out in the report; and
- The government was encouraging Planning authorities to not pause preparation of new Local Plans. This Council did not see any advantage in delaying preparation of a Plan for two years pending adoption of the proposals in the White Paper, so was continuing the process.

Members noted that further consultation would be undertaken on the Submission Plan produced in autumn 2021. All comments made on the current consultation would be forwarded to the Planning Inspector as part of that submission. It was noted that individuals could make representations for consideration at the subsequent Examination of the Plan, but it was the Inspector’s decision on who was called to speak. This was a change in procedure since the last Local Plan was adopted.

Some concern was expressed that people without internet access would not be able to engage in the consultation. In reply, the Team Leader (Generic Planning) advised that the consultation process had been adapted in response to restrictions imposed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. As well as web-based consultation, officers were happy to discuss the contents of the Draft Plan by telephone, or print hard copies of relevant parts of the Draft Plan for people, as it was recognised that many people did not have access to the internet.

In addition, notices had been put up in libraries advising of the consultation and hard copies of response questionnaires would be available there. Discussions also were underway in preparation for holding virtual Ward Meetings for Councillors who wished to have one. A presentation on the Draft Local Plan would be made at these, in order to provide a further opportunity for residents to give feedback.

It was questioned whether the White Paper “Planning for the Future” would be enacted by the time that the Local Plan was adopted. If it was, this could mean that the city could be required to provide 30% less housing than at present. In response, the Head of Planning advised that the government was consulting on

a set of proposals in relation to this, but had indicated that these were likely to change following consultation. Actual figures therefore were not known yet and it was very much in the interests of the City to secure an approved Local Plan in order to take advantage of any transitional period to the new system, which could take years to implement.

AGREED:

- 1) That the public consultation for the arrangements for this stage of the replacement Leicester Local Plan, including the revised timetable, be noted; and
- 2) That scrutiny of the full proposals contained in the replacement Leicester Local Plan be undertaken at the Special Meeting of this Commission to be held on 12 October 2020.

84. STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PLAN CONSULTATION

The City Transport Director gave a presentation on the recent consultation on the Strategic Transport Plan (STP). A copy of the presentation is attached at the end of these minutes for information.

The Director advised that responses to the consultation had been collated by Leicestershire County Council and a redraft of the STP was underway in response to these.

Some disappointment was expressed that the STP did not appear to have been revised to take in to account the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, a lot of people were now working from home and the opportunity could be taken to ensure the city benefitted from this. This included reconsidering how mass transit was provided, in view of the lower numbers of people now travelling in the city.

The City Transport Director agreed that ideas and tools developed needed to be flexible and of an appropriate scale. This could mean that more focus was given in the future to walking and cycling, (including the use of electric bikes), as these were all measures that could be scaled to what was appropriate for an area. However, at present it was not possible to predict what levels of congestion would be when the Covid-19 pandemic was over and whether they would have the same patterns as previously, (for example, peaks in the morning and late afternoon).

Elements of work currently being undertaken were in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, such as pop up cycle ways and changes to footway widths. A review of pop up measures would be starting shortly, in order to consider if there were opportunities to keep some of the measures for longer, or if some should be made permanent. The Council wanted to be innovative and use the situation as a catalyst for changes in the future.

Members felt that cycling in the city was improving steadily, but the provision of longer-distance routes could still be improved, (for example, through using old

railway track beds). This would improve commuting and leisure opportunities. The City Mayor welcomed this suggestion, noting that the County Council could be encouraged to consider co-operation with longer-distance routes that went beyond the city boundary.

In response to a question, the City Transport Director explained that affordability was considered to be very important. For example, multi-operator flexi tickets were available and it was hoped that increased use could be made of mobile phone platforms in the future, which would help reduce overheads.

In addition, a consultation was being undertaken on the possible introduction of a workplace parking levy. If this was introduced, it could provide longer-term income that could be reinvested.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Strategic Transport Plan be welcomed; and
- 2) That the City Transport Director and the Director of Planning, Development and Transportation be asked to consider the comments recorded above in developing the Strategic Transport Plan further.

85. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting adjourned at 6.09 pm and reconvened at 6.14 pm

During the adjournment, Councillor Sandhu left the meeting in accordance with his declaration of interest, (see minute 77, "Declarations of Interest", above)

86. LEICESTER TEXTILES SECTOR (MODERN SLAVERY & LABOUR EXPLOITATION)

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services and the Director of Tourism, Culture and Investment submitted a report briefing members on the city's proactive work around modern slavery and labour exploitation, particularly in Leicester's garment / textiles sector. The report also highlighted key areas that the Council and partners such as the police had identified as further areas for development and the steps being taken to address these.

Councillor Clarke, Deputy City Mayor – Environment and Transportation, introduced the report, noting that the sector and supply chain problems experienced were not unique to Leicester. He reminded Members that the Council had no legal powers to stop labour exploitation, but had a strong role in working with enforcement agencies to address the issues.

The Community Safety (Labour Market) Co-ordinator then introduced herself to the Commission and Councillor Clarke explained that this was a unique post nationally.

The Head of Community Safety and Protection explained that:

- The Council worked with key agencies, for example doing factory visits and assisting where possible. However, enforcement agencies did not always have a full understanding of each other's roles, so Council officers had compiled a handbook explaining these;
- Communication and engagement work was important and the Council was fully engaged with its community leadership role. It therefore was endeavouring to create a list of resources that were available, provide clear explanations of what exploitation and modern slavery were and identify easily understood pathways for reporting concerns;
- The Council hoped to launch work it was doing with the Crimestoppers organisation around exploitation and modern slavery at the Leicester Business Festival;
- Ongoing work included working with employers, to ensure they understood the law, and with employees, to ensure they were aware of their rights and knew what "good" looked like;
- It was hoped that Council front-line workers could be trained to spot signs of exploitation; and
- Officers also worked with organisations such as Hope for Justice, which had now agreed to have a base in the city. It was proposed that front line officers from Hope for Justice, who spoke community languages, would be available to discuss issues with anyone who had concerns about exploitation. Council officers also were working in communities with Citizens Advice, (for example, at schools), and visiting local safeguarding boards. Meetings were being held with Trades Unions and had resulted in an invitation being received to address the Trades union Congress General Conference in November 2020 on labour exploitation and modern slavery.

The Head of Economic Regeneration advised the Commission that work also was ongoing in relation to supporting the growth of the sector. Councillor Clarke chaired engagement with textile manufacturers and many of them had offered to help identify how the situation could be improved. This included discussing how good practice could be showcased and identifying how procurement opportunities and skills could be developed, and training provided on key issues.

Engagement also was ongoing with retailers, to find ways in which the manufacturing base in the city could grow, and with local universities and non-governmental organisations who could offer support to the sector.

The Head of Economic Regeneration explained that the Council led the local Growth Hub, which currently engaged with over 200 companies and accessed funds for them. The Hub therefore was an important route through which

companies could be helped to grow and show what “good” looked like.

Work also was being undertaken to establish a training initiative to help textile workers improve their skills. Before the current Covid-19 pandemic, a site had been identified at which the Council could work with Fashion Enter on this and funding had been approved for the programme, but due to the pandemic the programme had been paused by Fashion Enter, as it involved face-to-face contact.

A lot of work was being done with English as a Second Language (ESOL) providers, to help increase people’s confidence about coming forward to report concerns by improving their language skills. The community voluntary sector also provided support to the textile sector and some of those organisations wanted to also work on ESOL provision, as well as providing training and skills for the textile sector.

The Commission welcomed the holistic approach being taken to address exploitation in the textile sector and the progress made to date. However, it was known that some work places were very small, so not easy to identify, and at some very little, or no, English was spoken, so Members queried how this was overcome. No problems were encountered with many textile businesses, but for those that were hard to reach there were questions about what wages the workers were paid and how accessible the Community Safety (Labour Market) Co-ordinator was to those workers, particularly those with limited English.

It was suggested by a member of the Commission that the City Mayor should be leading on this issue, due to the importance of addressing the reputational damage done to the city by the way in which labour exploitation in Leicester had been reported by the media, and the fact that, although concerns about exploitation in the city’s textile sector had previously been raised, no action appeared to have been taken before now.

The City Mayor reminded all Members that enforcement powers lay with a number of different agencies, not with the Council, but this issue remained one of grave concern to himself and all Councillors. Awareness of, and action in relation to, this concern had started some time ago. The appointment of the Community Safety (Labour Market) Co-ordinator was only the latest indication of how seriously this situation was taken.

The following questions and comments also were put forward by members of the Commission:

- Recent media reports had suggested that, instead of paying taxes owed, some businesses were declared themselves bankrupt and then restarted under another name. To what degree was this happening in Leicester?

Response from the Head of Economic Regeneration:

The claims made in the media articles were not backed up by available evidence. Leicester had a higher proportion of workers in the textile

industry than a lot of areas, but the Community Safety (Labour Market) Co-ordinator was working closely with enforcement bodies to identify unethical and/or illegal practices, which could then be addressed.

- Was it known when the proposed training centre would start providing courses?

Response from the Head of Economic Regeneration:

The site and funding were already secured. A training provider was in place and wanted to start training as soon as possible, so the timescale depended on when Fashion Enter felt confident to start provision.

- Engagement with those vulnerable to exploitation could be challenging. The community / voluntary sector could be more effective at this than the Council and also could provide access to ESOL services.

Response from the Head of Community Safety and Protection:

It was recognised that people would not come forward if they were not approached in the right way. To help find the right avenues for communication, community officers from Hope for Justice and Citizens Advice would be undertaking outreach in the community.

Response from the Head of Economic Regeneration:

There were a large number of micro businesses in the city, (ie, with less than ten employees), and work was ongoing with over 200 of these. One way to work with harder to reach businesses, that had had some success, was through work with other businesses in the sector.

- Many working in exploitative environments feared deportation, as they did not have the required permits to work in this country. This could make them reluctant to complain about working practices. Was there any way in which this could be addressed?

Response from the Community Safety (Labour Market) Co-ordinator:

This was becoming more recognised as a problem. Non-Government Organisations such as Hope for Justice and Citizens Advice were not required to report illegality, but other agencies were required to do so, so had an important role to play in communicating with people in this position.

- Would the Council have to find additional resources for this work?

Response from Councillor Clarke:

The work being done by Hope for Justice was funded from its own budgets. The Council would provide resources where it could, but its main role was to provide support, clarity and strategic direction.

AGREED:

- 1) That this Commission's congratulates all involved in this work on what has been achieved and expresses the hope that the Council

will continue to work towards making significant improvements in working conditions; and

- 2) That the Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services and the Director of Tourism, Culture and Investment be asked to report further on modern slavery and exploitation in Leicester's textile sector as work progresses.

87. ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

The Director of Tourism, Culture and Investment submitted a report updating the Commission on work to develop an initial economic recovery plan for the city in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. He noted that:

- The plan had been delayed by the extended local restrictions imposed by the government on Leicester and a lack of information from the government;
- The plan would be co-ordinated with the Council's partners and with the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership's plan, which had recently been released for consultation;
- Resources would be committed to improving the city's image and actively encouraging new investment in the city;
- A focus of the plan would be youth unemployment, which was expected to get worse, as well as unemployment in other vulnerable groups. Ambitious targets would be set, through which the Council would provide leadership in addressing these issues;
- Space at the Adult Education Centre or other city centre facilities would be used to co-ordinate support for the "Kickstart" project and other initiatives to address youth unemployment, working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions;
- Consideration would be given to how the Council could improve its spending power, for example through the procurement process;
- A lot of work already had been done to support businesses. The Council had been very proactive in ensuring that grant aid reached businesses;
- Central government resource was critical. Approximately one-third of Leicester's work force, approximately 50,000 people, was directly supported by the government's furlough scheme or small business assistance programme;
- Conversations were being held with the Council's Sustainability team and other interested parties about how the city's economic recovery could support work being undertaken to address the Council's declared Climate Emergency. This included considering how "green jobs" could be provided;

- The Covid-19 situation continued to provide both challenges and opportunities. The Council therefore would continue to look at what could be done differently and to work with others to identify a “new normal” and how this could be achieved quickly. This included consultation with bodies such as the local universities; and
- It was hoped that the economic recovery plan could be published in October 2020.

Members agreed that the current emergency situation needed to be addressed. The city had a higher number of young people than some comparable cities and would face very significant problems when the government’s furlough scheme ended. For example, demand for help from food banks already was very high and was increasing. Production of an economic recovery plan therefore should not be delayed.

The City Mayor advised the Commission that the Council would continue to make representations regarding the ending of the furlough scheme and the three city Members of Parliament also were making representations.

The Commission agreed that central government support was vital to the city’s recovery and expressed concern that the ending of the furlough scheme could destabilise the economy. It was recognised that the Council’s resources were limited, but Members felt they should be used as strongly as possible. For example, it was possible that property prices and rents would drop substantially, due to reduced footfall. It therefore was asked whether this could be addressed by the Council financing the purchase of property, (for example, using funding acquired through the Public Works Loan Board), and leasing it out as cheaply as possible.

The City Mayor reminded Members that the Council already invested heavily in the city centre. Providing property at a below market cost would create a revenue cost for the Council. The Council already had been subject to a £150million reduction in grant from central government, so undertaking a project of the nature suggested would mean having to reduce expenditure in other areas.

It was noted that the Council had undertaken to acquire office space at the Charles Street Building Scheme if the developer was unable to let it and Members asked whether the Council would need to do this. The Director of Tourism, Culture and Investment confirmed that the developer of the scheme was very confident that they would be able to let the space. As such, they had not sought to exercise the option of the Council taking the space and believed that they would not need to do so.

Some concern was expressed that the city’s recent history would make it difficult to “talk up” the city and would not encourage potential investors to look here. The City Mayor stressed that the city currently was buoyant. For example, meetings were scheduled over the next few weeks with several new

businesses wanting to invest in the city. "Talking up" the city therefore would not be difficult to do.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted;
- 2) That the Director of Tourism, Culture and Investment be asked to consider the comments recorded above in the development of the economic recovery plan for the city; and
- 3) That the Director of Tourism, Culture and Investment be asked to report further to this Commission on work to aid the city's economic recovery once the economic recovery plan is published.

88. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

No questions were submitted.

89. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.32 pm

Overview of Presentation

- Key elements of Strategic Transport Priorities
- Covid-19 implications
- Next Steps

Link to Strategic Transport Priorities document:

[Strategic Transport Priorities](#)



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Draft STP in Context

- City & County partnership
- Reflects our synergies & shared priorities
- NOT a strategy document
- Supports Strategic Growth Plan (2018)
- Support future LTP's & Environmental Strategies 2020
- Identifies short /medium/long term transport priorities
- References A46 Expressway - County Council's Prospectus for Growth (02/19)



Draft STP – key themes

Theme 1: Travel between Cities

- Improved road & rail connectivity (esp. E-W)

Theme 2: Travel around Leicester

- Ensure residents, businesses and visitors can travel easily around and in and out the Leicester Urban Area.
- Provide accessible, reliable and affordable sustainable transport choices.
- Support economic growth, inward investment and job creation.
- Contribute towards delivering air quality, healthy living and positive climate change outcomes.
- Help to connect and create quality urban places in the city centre and neighbourhoods.

Theme 2: Travel around Leicester: Priority Examples

- **Short term (to 2025):** e.g. TCF – focussing on bus priority, cycling & walking
- **Medium term (to 2036):** Deliver high quality and well-connected transport interchanges & more bus / corridor improvements
- **Long term (to 2050):** Consider further mass transit options.



Further Themes

Theme 3: Travel around Leicestershire

- Sustainable/active travel; improved journey reliability & road safety

Theme 4: Travel around county towns and other urban areas

Theme 5: Resilient transport network

- Safe, smart, optimised, sustainable & maintained



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Covid-19 Implications for STP

- STP document drafted pre COVID 19.
- Transport may need to change to take account of the impacts of COVID-19,
- Must still support wider objectives around environment, public health, and economic growth.

Current view

- Draft priorities remain fundamentally sound
- Weighting applied to them might be altered.



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Next Steps

- **Public consultation: Feb to June 2020**
- **Initial redraft underway**
- **Takes account of consultation responses**
- **City / County target approval date: Oct 2020**

Note:

- **City's Local Transport Plan in development**
- **Will come to Scrutiny early 2021**



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