



Leicester
City Council

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

Held: THURSDAY, 22 APRIL 2021 at 4:00 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Waddington (Chair)
Councillor Sandhu (Vice Chair)

Councillor Broadwell
Councillor Fonseca

Councillor Joel
Councillor Porter

Councillor Rae Bhatia

Also in attendance:

City Mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby
Deputy City Mayor for Environment and Transportation Councillor Adam Clarke
Assistant City Mayor for Jobs, Skills, Policy Delivery and Communications
Councillor Danny Myers

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134. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Valand.

135. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Vice Chair Councillor Sandhu noted that as he had an interest to declare as his wife worked in the textiles industry, at the beginning of the item he would leave the meeting.

Councillor Broadwell noted that as she ran a business restoring and building bicycles she had an interest in items that relate to cycling.

136. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development, Transport and Tourism Scrutiny Commission 4 March 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

It was noted that the Special Meeting that had been planned to discuss the accessibility and disability item, would no longer go ahead as there was no time to arrange this in this calendar of meetings. The disability and accessibility item would be postponed and added to the work programme for the new municipal year.

A request had been made for further updates and data on the city's economic recovery plan. It was noted that this data was now being collected to be explored and analysed at a future meeting.

Feedback had indicated that the proposal to close Buckminster Road was not popular to local residents and Officers should include alternative options when the consultation is carried out. It was noted that residents can formerly object and comment on the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to close Buckminster Road and other parts of the proposal being considered after it had been introduced. This will give residents up-to a six-month period to submit objections, with all representations being considered before taking any final decisions on permanent changes.

It was noted that Experimental Orders give the opportunity to analyse the practicalities and closely monitor the TRO, all Members would receive information on how to channel any information in regards to the proposals and detailed sessions would be arranged with the local Members to discuss the proposals.

137. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

138. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer noted that none had been received.

139. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

The Monitoring Officer noted that none had been received.

140. TCF SCHEME: CONNECTING LEICESTER - BEAUMONT LEYS PARK AND RIDE

The Director of Planning, Development and Transportation submitted a presentation on the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) scheme and Connecting Leicester – Beaumont Leys Park and Ride.

The City Centre Streets Programme Manager delivered the presentation outlining the proposals and as part of the discussions it was noted that:

- One of the attractions to the scheme would be to ensure the park and ride

service into the city centre is as fast as possible to encourage users to leave their private cars and use the service. Intermediate stops on the service would detract users as the fast service would be compromised.

- Further considerations into bus priority measures along the major corridors into the city centre were being investigated to make improvements to public transport network as a whole in order to bring the same benefits to residents across the city.
- Current reflections into the governments Bus Strategy and looking into opportunities there to develop thinking around the local transport plan. A tram like bus network in the city was an attractive idea and that was something that would be considered in light of the Bus Strategy and opportunities that open up to create cross city movements.
- A press release and a consultation would allow residents in the nearby locality that would be most affected to be contacted to allow them to make comments on the proposals. Further considerations for an exhibition of the proposed plans at the adjacent Beaumont Shopping Centre were under review.
- The primary bus service into the city centre would continue to be the 74 service, which is the fastest route into the city whilst the 14 and 14a service would link the park and ride service to the Glenfield Hospital.
- The car park at the site would be exclusively for the park and ride service users and not an overfill for the adjacent site at the Beaumont Shopping Centre.
- The cost of the scheme to the City Council was the cost of the construction at the site, which was partly funded by the TCF Scheme. The bus services already operating were commercially viable. It was suggested having additional uses of the services would make them more attractive. The only obligation to the Council after this would be the maintenance of the car park.
- This scheme was part of a package which was submitted to the Department of Transport, which was well received, and the Council were successful in funding for the proposed schemes. It was suggested that the council had to undertake these sorts of schemes in order to reduce the reliance on use of the private car getting people to use other forms of transport.
- Studies were being undertaken into what steps would be most beneficial use of the adjacent land to provide for the extended bio-diversity and replacing the green space which would be lost by constructing the car park and these details will be included in the consultation.
- There were 15 spaces proposed for electric vehicle charging points, with the potential of adding more spaces in the future.

- The consultation was due to take place in May 2021 with the potential to start work in late summer. The construction period would be approximately a year for a scheme of this nature.

AFREED:

- 1) That the Members of the Economic Development, Transport and Tourism Scrutiny Commission thank the Officers for the presentation and look forward to the outcomes of the Consultation.

141. UPDATE ON LEICESTER'S TEXTILE SECTOR (MODERN SLAVERY AND EXPLOITATION)

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services and the Director of Tourism, Culture and Investment submitted a report and presentation updating the Commission on Leicester's textile sector.

The Chair invited additional Members to the Commission participating for this item to introduce themselves.

The Deputy City Mayor for Environment and Transportation introduced the item and noted that the publication of the 2019/20 annual review of the Leicester Labour Market Partnership had also been incorporated. It was noted that the council were in a long-standing role in supporting the textile industry and intervening when allegations into exploitation had arisen and the results from 2019/20 was a testament to the ongoing work prior to then. Concerns were raised last summer with two issues that have hindered the work, the use of the word slavery and the pandemic impacting market issues within the textile sector.

The Assistant City Mayor for Jobs, Skills, Policy Delivery and Communications introduced the Fashion Technology Academy as an example of the approach to economic recovery that will help drive the sustainable regeneration of the textile sector.

The Director for Neighbourhoods and Environmental Services, the Head of Community Safety and Protection, the Head of Enforcement from Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), the Head of Economic Regeneration and the Chief Executive of Fashion Enter, delivered the presentation updating on work to support Leicester's Textile Sector . As part of the discussions it was noted that:

- There was a very specific, legal definition of Modern Slavery and what was going on in the city did not meet that definition. However, there were still issues in the market within the city with concerns of labour abuse and exploitation.
- Data was being collected to provide analytical information including the number of engagements with individuals being collected by the Community Safety Labour Market Coordinator was collecting to bring forward to future Commissions.
- Work was ongoing with the trade unions to ensure workers felt supported and had a voice. Information on definitions of Modern Slavery

was available on the government website and issues arising with minimum wage had been referred onto HMRC.

- The Fashion Technology Academy lease runs for 2½ years and enabled the delivery of a pilot training initiative. This included delivery of Levels 1 to 5 qualifications in garment skills, Level 2 to 4 level apprenticeships, a Level 1 course in Worker's Rights and Labour Exploitation, and ESOL and employability courses delivered by the Council's Adult Learning Service.
- Members suggested that a date should be arranged to visit the site for interested Members.
- Updated work to assess the size of Leicester's textiles sector had been commissioned by the LLEP. It was suggested there were at least 600 and potentially up to 1000 textile factories within the city.
- The GLAA were aware that the issues from last summer were not unique to Leicester or the textile industry and there were similarities within other industries nationally.
- There was a licensing scheme proposal from the British Retail Consortium along with another separate proposal to establish a Garment Sector Adjudicator.
- Members of the Commission shared their concerns with the environmental impact the fast fashion industry has on the climate and the alleged accusations on the big companies worldwide. It was noted that the Council were in an intervening role to try and improve the sector for the benefit of the city and its residents.
- The GLAA had experience and arrangements with other agencies to support provide support for the vulnerable and exploited workers. Although the investigations may have not met the threshold for modern slavery, there were still other areas the GLAA could impact on. It was suggested that once the GLAA had completed its work in Leicester, there would be some prosecutions for other offences the GLAA investigate.
- Recruitment for the Fashion Technology Academy would be with other partner organisations and ESOL delivery was being incorporated into the programme. Exploring the options available for people who were entitled to the funding for the ESOL programme and how it can be accessed and support for those who were not eligible. A training session for ESOL tutors was being organised to look at recognising the signs and symptoms of modern slavery or exploitation.
- The Building Control Team did intervene when required to do so for inspections on buildings, but the development of grant funding would encourage companies to reinvest and improve. Lobbying government for additional investment for the sector would be an opportunity for companies to innovate and be more productive.
- Homeworkers were frowned upon within the industry as it was very difficult to control aspects such as right to work, safety and product quality. Homeworkers would be encouraged to access support from the Fashion Technology Academy.

AGREED:

- 1) Members of the Commission thanked those involved in the progressive work over the last few years and;
- 2) That the Head of Community Safety and Protection be requested to provide information on the number of people that have approached CrimeStoppers.

142. INFORMATION ON COMMUNITY RENEWAL FUND AND OTHER INITIATIVES

The Director of Tourism, Culture and Inward investment introduced and delivered the report.

It was noted that this was a one-year pilot transition programme and Leicester City Council were identified as the lead authority to promote the programme and endorse project bids up to £3 Million for the city.

Information sessions had been organised for potential project applicants with programme criteria encouraging bids for supporting people into employment, developing skills, supporting businesses and also investing in communities and place.

Although, the rules and guidance along with short time frames made it very difficult for smaller organisations to deliver the projects, some organisations may have the potential to expand on existing projects.

The Economic Regeneration team would be coordinating along with the Assistant Mayor for Jobs, Skills, Policy Delivery and Communications, prioritising what projects would be put forward following initial assessment and screening exercises. The final decisions would be made by central government on which projects, if any, were supported.

The Director for Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment noted that, the Levelling Up Programme, which was a capital programme set up to run to March 2025 was worth £4 billion for England. Noted there was no guaranteed allocation for Leicester, but it was identified as one of the 100 priority 1 areas.

The deadline for the first round of bidding was June 18. The council has the opportunity to bid for much larger capital, infrastructure projects. The number of projects an area could bid on was dependant on the number of constituency MP seats in the area. This gave Leicester the opportunity to submit 3 projects (up to £20 million) along with one other transport scheme (potentially £20 - £50 million). It was anticipated by government that there would be a second round of bidding but there were no details yet released.

As part of the discussions it was noted that:

- Work was underway with the City Mayor and the Executive Team developing a list of initial priorities for the first round of bidding. It was noted that MP's will be contacted for support including non-city MPs for the transport project.
- Ambitious plans to meet the strategic objectives were being considered

and there was an opportunity to bring these back to the commission at a later date.

- Although a tram system was over budget in relation to the funding that was proposed it was noted that the development in battery technology for new electric vehicles was an alternative approach.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Director of Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment be requested to provide this Commission with an update at a future date.
- 2) And that the Director of Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment be persuaded to present this report at a future Overview Select Committee meeting.

143. CORPORATE ESTATE MANAGEMENT

The Director for Estates and Building Services submits a report on Corporate Estate Management.

The City Mayor introduced the item and noted that the report had important corporate implications. The Corporate Estate was an important part of the council's activities, more recently the council used its assets creatively for regeneration and development on behalf of the city and this was an ongoing report that would be presented to scrutiny annually.

The Head of Strategy and Business Performance noted that:

- The report was modelled on other property portfolio reports and benchmarked on other business reports which looked into performance and market outlook. Although, this report was late due to the pandemic, the new report would be delivered in summer 2021.
- the Council had long invested in the commercial property market and therefore had a very stable portfolio that presented a low risk in terms of the overall contribution to the budget. The Corporate estate was valued at £114 million which brought a gross income of £7.1 million, this represents a good yield of 6.25%.
- Occupancy across the portfolio was very high as a result of good relationships with tenants. Suitable spaces for smaller businesses was an area that would be looked into in the future and that, some underperforming assets had been sold to produce capital receipts.
- The difference between the corporate estate and the regeneration estate was essentially, that the corporate estate was a diverse portfolio, with a range of both, long- and short-term leases. This helps balance risks and is managed as a commercial operation. The economic regeneration workspaces are managed workspaces that are held to focus on growth of priority economic sectors.

As part of the discussions it was noted that Officers managed a substantial

portfolio incredibly well and the fact the council outperformed other comparable portfolios was down to the Officers skills and competence. Over the decades the Corporate Estates initiatives had helped develop areas such as Beaumont Leys and the development in Hamilton.

A revised retail strategy was being put together to consider the options for retail development in the city. This was a two-stage process, firstly, the guiding principles to help city centre retailers get back on their feet and the commercial element of the estate and managing that commercially. The second stage would be looking at key factors and case studies, bringing back the strategy to the Commission would help answer questions Members may have on plans of developing the commercial property portfolio.

The valuations of the portfolio were done in accordance with Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors global standards. Any Officers that were qualified, have to abide and conform to those requirements and it was also confirmed that the valuation of the estate as a whole was also subject to annual audit.

The Director for Tourism, Culture and Inward investment noted that the new Dock workspace at Pioneer Park was a new addition and was already 50% let, work was well underway with the Gresham Apart hotel would also feature a 10,000ft work space which would be operational from September. Some of the options that were being considered for the Levelling Up Fund would potentially include additional workspace schemes.

The Deputy City Mayor for Environment and Transportation noted that corporate estate had a real role to play in reducing the carbon footprint of the city and the council. Over 50% of the council's emissions came from the buildings and reducing the carbon footprint could also reduce the revenue costs of running those buildings.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be welcomed and Officers were requested to present the report to the Overview Select Committee.
- 2) An updated report be brought to the Commission at a later date.
- 3) And Officers be thanked for their continuous efforts.

144. WORK PROGRAMME

AGREED:

That the work programme be noted.

145. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair noted that this was the last meeting of the municipal year and thanked Officers for their efforts.