



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2021 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Cassidy (Chair)

Councillor Gee
Councillor Halford

Councillor Porter
Councillor Westley

Councillor Joshi
Councillor Kitterick

In Attendance:

Sir Peter Soulsby
Councillor Sue Hunter
Councillor Vi Dempster

City Mayor
Assistant City Mayor
Assistant City Mayor

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21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed those present at City Hall and via Zoom and led introductions.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Govind and Councillor Thalukdar.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to disclose any pecuniary or other interests they may have in the business on the agenda.

There were no declarations of interest.

23. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair thanked officers and teams across the council for their ongoing work during the Covid 19 pandemic recovery.

The Chair welcomed the item on New Ways of Working and was pleased to

see some scrutiny commissions were undertaking member briefings and service overview sessions and noted that more general member development in relation to scrutiny was being arranged in Autumn.

24. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was noted that Councillor Porter was present on 15th July 2021 but did not received the notification of the reconvened meeting on 27th July 2021. The minutes were therefore amended to reflect Councillor Porter's presence on 15th July 2021.

AGREED:

That subject to the amendment above the minutes of the meeting held on 15th July 2021 and reconvened on 27th July 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

25. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING

Court Costs

Councillor Kitterick confirmed that he had received details from the Deputy Director of Finance regarding the council approach to applying for court costs, which were claimed at a flat rate. It was noted that this approach took no account of the ability to pay by businesses/individuals and suggested this may be worth examination of whether there was a better way to claim back costs.

The City Mayor thanked Councillor Kitterick for bringing this to his attention and supported that being further explored.

Vice-Chancellor's of University of Leicester and De Montfort University

It was noted that the minutes of the last meeting referred to invitations being extended to the Vice Chancellor's to attend meetings of the Overview Select Committee. It was clarified that this was an action to be taken forward however, it was intended the invite would be to a future meeting not as stated. It was also clarified that although the Overview Select Committee had a statutory role in holding Health partners to account, it could not compel the attendance of other external people in the same way.

26. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representation or statements of case had been received in accordance with Council procedures.

27. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

28. PETITIONS MONITORING REPORT

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report providing an update on the status of outstanding petitions against the Council's target of providing a formal

response within three months of being referred to the Divisional Director.

AGREED:

That the status of outstanding petitions and to remove those petitions marked "Petition Process Complete" from the report.

The Chair agreed to a change in the running order of the agenda to take the item Overview of New Ways of Working Programme next.

29. OVERVIEW OF NEW WAYS OF WORKING PROGRAMME

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance gave a presentation overview of the New Ways of Working programme.

The item was introduced by the City Mayor who observed that due to the Covid 19 pandemic new opportunities had arisen to accelerate changes positively that perhaps would have taken more time to do so before the pandemic.

During the presentation attention was drawn to the following points:

- The organisation was keen to achieve an agile work culture and environment and to improve its use of resources. Modern ways of working should also achieve financial savings too.
- Building on the lessons learnt during the Covid 19 pandemic one important point was around staff health and wellbeing, especially in how the council supported staff and their approach to deliver work. The pandemic had shown how quickly the organisation and workforce could adapt and make changes and there was more that could be done to leverage technology etc.
- The key aims of the programme were based around 3 strands: people and culture; technology and IT; and activity based workspaces.
- Surveys had been conducted with staff at three stages of the programme, this had helped determine role profiles, site specific activities, activities while in the office space and individuals' requirements such as special equipment or personal circumstances.
- Stage 1 had focused on the workforce profile and data showed that 15% of roles would always be office based, 37% were mostly out of office, 32% were always out of office and 16% were in and out of office. The survey data supported a 30% reduction in office desk space taking pre-Covid desk number of 2915 down to 2040 and the aim through a phased approach was to refine the workforce desk allocations and to realise efficiencies across 3 buildings: Phoenix House, Bosworth House and 10 York Road.
- The timeline for potential savings was set out noting that during the pandemic operational estate costs had dropped dramatically, most notably Bosworth House which was leased until 2023 and it was anticipated the closure of Bosworth House, 10 York Road and Phoenix House would save £0.95m by 2023 with York Road and Phoenix House then providing potential revenue income.
- In relation to workplace reoccupation, detailed work had been undertaken to map out allocation of space to key people and service

areas whilst looking to maintain stability although a third of staff would have to move much of this was service specific requests bringing teams closer and staff required to move would relocate from one city centre building to another so little or no impact on their commute. Building plans had been drawn up and were being overlaid with IT configurations needed.

- Work was also ongoing investigating changes to face to face customer activity in buildings, e.g. Youth offending; social care and coroner services.

Members welcomed the report and noted the next steps as set out in the presentation. During discussion, the following points were made:

In relation to providing appropriate IT support to those working from home or within an office it was noted at the beginning of pandemic as an organisation the council were able to move very quickly to sustain over 3000 people working from home and have invested in the resilience of the network and continued IT improvements.

There was concern at the loss of customer face to face services e.g. amalgamated housing offices, restricted opening times at the Customer Service Centre and some members noted that one of the most regular complaints from constituents was about not being able to see someone as well as concern around phone call response times.

The City Mayor thanked members for their comments and responded in relation to face to face customer services. The City Mayor was aware of comments regarding customer service and agreed that call times needed significant improvement and measures were being looked at to enable that to be improved. There had also been discussion around opening times of the Customer Service Centre but there had to be some balance as that would require reallocation of customer service staff who were answering calls. At the moment it was felt to be more beneficial to keep opening face to face on restricted hours and utilising staff to try and get call waiting times back down. It was noted that the volume of calls had increased dramatically causing the increased answering/wait times.

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance commented that the pandemic had presented opportunities to learn some positive things, and there was not just an assumption of reverting to old ways, however it was very much learning from everything and recognising some people still need face to face service. It was recognised that some discrete services such as Health Services, are necessary face to face but there were areas where we should have been offering online services sooner.

Reference was made to a national report that had come out today in which it was suggested around 80% of people were not happy about returning to work in an office and Members were reassured that there was mindfulness of people's situations being taken into account in relation to returning to the

office to work.

In terms of savings it was queried whether the Bosworth House lease could be renegotiated and/or terminated earlier to achieve a long term saving and officers agreed to investigate this. It was also suggested that any savings from buildings could be used towards achieving carbon neutrality and it was agreed there should be consideration of how some of the savings could be reinvested.

It was noted that as well as IT support, behaviours and people culture were also being considered and it was suggested that there should be more imaginative use of council buildings and that the flexibility of access would provide benefits for others too. Officers replied that they were seeing demand for more flexible work environments and workspaces to drop in and out of and officers were working on plans to develop the programme whilst taking manageable steps

Regarding “working from home” and environments which are not always conducive to working efficiently, where needed arrangements had been put in place to enable individuals to return to offices and staff had been supported to do that. In relation to handling staff return to work it was acknowledged that some were nervous and so autonomy was being given to teams to find solutions that work best for them. A lot of work had also been conducted around staff productivity; making sure staff have defined tasks, targets and quality performance conversations as well as manager and leader qualities to stop the view that staff could only be managed by presenteeism.

It was suggested that individuals working from home faced increased bills and queried how that might be met or balanced. In reply it was commented that some increased costs were offset by savings such as commuting.

The Chair enquired whether there was a piece of work to look at the impact on the local economy of new ways of working and was advised that officers were economy conscious and even before the pandemic there had been large parts of workspace unoccupied or underutilised. The programme was looking at demand for flexible workspaces and people still coming into City. Also, as staff had not seen each other for long periods it was noted more were making efforts to go out for lunch etc which would benefit the local economy.

The Chair thanked officers for the presentation and asked that a full update report be provided within 6 months to include full detail of equality impact as there may be some unforeseen circumstances of these changes.

AGREED:

That an update report on the New Ways of Working Programme be provided to a future meeting within 6 months including full details around equality impact.

18.36 Ivan Browne joins the meeting

30. COVID 19 VERBAL UPDATE

The Chair returned to the running order of the agenda.

The Director of Public Health provided a general update on the Covid 19 situation which included a focus on the impact of school re-openings and the vaccination programme.

Local Leicester picture showed hospital case numbers at 426 per 100,000 as of today, compared to the national picture of 308 cases per 100,000. Figures were relatively stable over past month and although Leicester was above average there had not been a sharp spike in cases.

In terms of a breakdown by age:

- Over 60's age group was seeing higher levels of hospitalisation/mortality and this was being monitored. Three weeks ago, over 60's was at 308 cases per 100,000 but that figure was coming down and was now at 211 per 100,000 which was higher than national but falling at rate of 9%.
- Those aged 17-24yrs (Uni age) 298 cases per 100,000 and below national at 395 per 100,000. It was noted that large numbers of students were due to return soon and public health officers were working closely with the universities to manage that. It was also noted that the rate of cases within this age group had been consistently below the national average.

A national area of focus was on the age group of 11-15 year olds. Leicester schools had returned earlier than elsewhere across the country and the rate of cases was 1053 per 100,000 this was higher than the national average of 704. It was felt the earlier return had impacted those figures and although it seemed a large number on a relative scale this was not as big a spike as it would seem, but it was being watched closely.

In terms of public health, officers remain focused on trying to maintain and keep hospitals functioning, and in the last week there had been a drop in hospital admissions from Covid. Whilst admission from Covid was not the main driver at moment the pressure on hospitals remained quite acute. With the start of other winter illnesses and respiratory illnesses, particularly in paediatrics, officers were seeing a lot of anxiety around those illnesses and presence of similar symptoms to Covid. The situation was very different from last year where there were lots of restrictions in place.

There had been a general increase in the number of deaths from Covid: 4 deaths 4 weeks ago; 6 deaths 3 weeks ago; 8 deaths last week and 9 deaths this week. This was a slow rise and gradual creep up which showed the vaccine was doing its job but there was concern that the number of deaths was going up and whether that was exponential.

In terms of overall positive cases there had been a significant dip around May 2021 to 139 cases per 100,000 and Leicester was going in right direction however since then and with the easing of restrictions there had been a gradual increase in cases, and now akin to 1500 new cases per 100,000 per week.

Regarding the number of deaths and what would normally be expected between Jan to March the figures were higher in the City than normal, April to July were below or around what would expect to see, with overall 1078 deaths in Leicester up to 31st July 2021 being Covid related.

In relation to the vaccination programme overall coverage of those over 50 years receiving 2 doses was at 83% and a single dose at 87%; of those over 60, 61% had received 2 doses and 70% a single dose but within those numbers there was huge variation around levels of coverage.

The number of vaccinations being conducted was falling and a lot of work around key messages was being done to get people to take vaccinations and there was more to do to be more effective at that. Across the City it was thought there could be as many as 100,000 that could be unvaccinated, but it was difficult to provide an exact figure as people were coming and going from the City. In context with the national picture:- over 50 year olds 89% of England population had received 2 doses, and in Leicester that was 83.3%. Leicester was not an outlier though and compared to Nottingham, Coventry, Birmingham we were middle of pack; 18-49 year olds 60% nationally had received 2 doses while in Leicester that was 52.2% and towards the top of comparators like Coventry and Birmingham that were around 45%

It was noted that the main areas with low uptake of the vaccination were student areas, the City Centre, West End and also areas such as Spinney Hills, Charnwood and Newfoundpool that had a low uptake in the population age group of 18-49 years.

The ensuing discussion included the following comments:

Referring to the announcement of a Covid booster combined with Flu vaccination the Director of Public Health advised that Clinical Commissioning Groups were starting the Covid booster programme next week using the Pfizer booster and there was confidence that there were sufficient supplies however there were some issues in terms of Flu vaccine supply. The vaccination programmes could not be delayed on basis of supply of another and those over 50 should therefore receive an offer of Covid booster and then wait for Flu vaccination to become available.

In relation to hospital admissions for Covid and whether those were vaccinated or not it was advised that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the population were vaccinated and $\frac{3}{4}$ of those in hospital were unvaccinated. 80% of those in ICU last week were unvaccinated so it was still important to make point that the vaccine mitigates the risk of more serious illness from Covid.

The Director of Public Health commented that in terms of guidance the stance is clear, Covid is not over and public health officers continue to ask people to take precautions, e.g. wear masks in buildings when moving around, albeit against the backdrop of challenge that everywhere else restrictions are being lifted. Regarding reliance on P3 masks those do have to be fit tested to ensure they are 100% protective.

The Chair commented that Covid was still clearly a worrying situation and thanked the Director of Public Health for the update.

AGREED:

That a further update on Covid 19 be brought to a future meeting.

31. TACKLING RACISM, RACE INEQUALITY AND DISADVANTAGE

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance submitted a report on Tackling Racism, Race Inequality and Disadvantage.

Councillor Hunter, Assistant City Mayor for Tackling Racism and Disadvantage introduced the report which arose following the response to the Black Lives Matter protests when it was agreed to establish governance arrangements and a programme of work in the form of an action plan around tackling racism, race inequality and disadvantage in Leicester with a particular focus on Black British, Caribbean, African and dual heritage communities.

The Chair welcomed and introduced David Shire, Race Equality Officer to the commission and invited him to give a brief outline of his background and the work he had undertaken in race equalities prior to taking on this role.

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance gave an overview of the report which provided the first update and covered progress on establishing the governance structures for this work, the development of the programme of work and a summary of some of the key actions to date.

It was noted that:

- A corporate internal steering group was now in place with senior representatives from all service areas and staff representatives too. The group met monthly and focused on themes each time, this week for example the theme focus was on museums and their work on exhibitions.
- An external steering group of community representatives had been established which will meet 3 to 4 times per year to maintain overview of progress.
- Appropriate resources would be recruited to support this work and drive key projects and activities. The new Race Equality Officer had been in post for a month and was building relations in the community. An area of focus would be how the council gathered and measured what it was doing with clear outcomes so there was a lot of work to be done around structure and resources.
- An action plan had been developed to bring together themes, headline

some of the work within those themes and show effort of colleagues.

- This work related to work across all departments and service areas and it was proposed in due course to bring further updates to OSC and other scrutiny commissions.
- Generally good progress was being made and the work was gaining momentum although more needed to be done around communication and improving communication with staff and wider communities.

The Chair welcomed use of an external reference group and the involvement with the DMU Stephen Lawrence Research Centre. The Chair also commented that external reviews of what the council were doing could be important to this piece of work too.

Members welcomed the initiatives being taken and during discussion made the following comments:

- Regarding public health and health inequalities it was suggested that the “data” explanation around tackling inequalities experienced by black people required some further explanation as there was more reasons for looking at services for black people than this suggested.
- Once this work was more established consideration should be given to new contracts with external partners ensuring their staff met the same standards set out in report for the council workforce.
- In relation to the people being engaged with and the external steering group it would be helpful to have the police on board and include senior police officers in those meetings.
- Regarding “themes” it was suggested there was a need to look at the disproportionate number of young people getting involved in crimes too.
- There was a need to continue to educate people of all ages as there were still people within communities with prejudice, it was also felt to be important to focus on younger children too, not just secondary school age.
- Ward councillors should be engaged in this work as they could highlight local issues.
- Noted that the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny task group were looking at inequalities in health service; collecting data was important but so too was trialling initiatives, providing meaningful job experiences and opportunities of experience that were not always there for people.
- Regarding development and roll out of a training programme on unconscious bias and anti-racism, there was concern that these were two separate things that should not be rolled together. The training should also be aimed at everyone and not just addressing middle managers.
- In terms of history and culture as well as raising awareness of Windrush Day consideration should be given to the Carnival which had issues and seemed to be over policed.
- In relation to the list of external reference group representatives it was noticed this did not include many young people, and more could be done to gain their buy in to the initiatives and to engage with schools, head

teachers and young people about their experiences, as younger people's experiences of racism/discrimination were likely to be different to older generations particularly around knife crime.

Responding to the various points made the Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance commented that:

Stakeholder involvement would be broader and would be part of the Race Equality Officer role to take that further.

Working with ward councillors was a good point and further consideration to engaging with them would be done.

Involvement of young people was a key aspect and the Race Equality Officer would be exploring that with colleagues and Leicester College. In terms of education, officers would also be asked to explore what was being done in primary schools.

In terms of the Youth Justice System involvement officers agreed to provide more information and details later.

The Race Equality Officer set out how this piece of work would be approached, and it was noted that approximately 60% would be about getting communities involved not just the external reference group. There would also be work to engage young people who might only be interested in one theme and begin by meeting people and using snowball effect to get them involved in other themes.

The Chair asked that a detailed update report be brought to the Spring 2022 meeting of OSC.

Councillor Hunter, Assistant City Mayor for Tackling Racism and Disadvantage thanked Members for their comments which would be taken on board.

AGREED:

That an update report be brought to the Spring 2022 meeting of OSC.

32. REVENUE MONITORING REPORT PERIOD 3

7.42pm meeting resumed.

The Deputy Director of Finance submitted the Revenue Monitoring Report, the first in the monitoring cycle for 2021/22.

The Deputy Director of Finance introduced the report, explaining that predictions at this stage of the financial year were always difficult especially with ongoing uncertainties around the pandemic and moving into winter.

Key points noted:

- The financial picture continued to be dominated by the Covid pandemic.

- Overspend was forecast at £7m, this was not unexpected and could be accommodated from one off sums made available for that purpose.
- Main income streams were being monitored closely to see how they recovered and to identify any potential long term future impacts.
- Despite the pandemic Adults and Children's services were forecasting to remain within their budgets, although Children's may have to call upon their reserves to a point to address the pressures set out in the report.
- City Developments and Neighbourhoods and Sports Services were forecasting overspends, this was mainly due to loss of income as a result of closure because of Covid.

Members were asked to note the emerging picture and approve the transfer of £3.3m of funding received from government to offset short falls in local taxation collection and additional business rates relief due to the pandemic, to an earmarked reserve.

The Chair invited Members to discuss the report.

The Deputy Director of Finance clarified that an earmarked reserve was an assigned or tagged pot that was kept aside for specific use. The funds had been reserved and as a reserve there would not be a specific time when that funding had to be used.

Reference was made to a forecast underspend on repairs and housing maintenance and the situation regarding empty properties/voids was queried and whether there were high levels of voids because they were awaiting repairs.

There was brief discussion on current Council Tax costs and queried whether there would continue to be an Adult Social Care precept on Council Tax if that service was anticipating an underspend.

The City Mayor responded that the government had allowed councils to transfer the burden of growing Adult Social Care costs to local taxation and latest reforms did very little to address this situation. It was the case that what the council had been allowed to do as a result of increase in the precept still fell short of the huge increase of Adult Social Care costs year on year.

Responding to the comments made on voids, it was noted that the Leicester Mercury on this occasion had published a confused story on the issue and they were talking about voids across the whole of the housing market not just council estate. However, Housing Scrutiny did regularly discuss voids across the council estate and there were not a significantly high number of vacant properties although the council did have an exceptionally high housing waiting list.

The Deputy Director of Finance replied that he did not have the exact number of vacant HRA properties, however generally the council had been buying properties to offset some right to buy losses. In terms of the underspend on repairs, certain materials and labour was in short supply so the service area

has experienced some difficulties. The Deputy Director of Finance agreed to provide more details to Councillor Porter outside this meeting.

Members noted that recent reports to Housing Scrutiny had also reflected the downward trend in terms of the number of void properties.

Returning to the comments made in relation to council tax it was noted that the ASC precept had raised about £3.6m and the ASC budget was raised by about £10m. Thus only £3.6m was funded through precept therefore although there was an underspend overall against the increased budget, the council still had to fund the extra costs. Announcements from the government last week suggested that next financial year there would be another Adult Social Care precept but at moment that was not clear.

The Chair referred to the rising costs related to Looked after Children and suggested this might be something for the Children Young People and Education scrutiny commission to explore further. Councillor Gee, Chair of Children, Young People and Education confirmed that could be taken up and included on future work programme of that commission.

AGREED:

1. That the emerging picture detailed in the report be noted.
2. That the Executive be recommended to approve the transfer of £3.3m of funding received to an earmarked reserve to offset shortfalls in local taxation collection and additional business rates relief due to the pandemic.
3. That the Deputy Director of Finance provide additional information on void properties and housing repairs to Councillor Porter.
4. That the Children Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee consider exploring the rising costs related to Looked after Children at a future meeting of that commission.

33. CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT PERIOD 3

The Deputy Director of Finance submitted the Capital Budget Monitoring Report, this was the first capital monitoring report of the financial year for the purpose of showing the position of the capital programme at the end of June 2021 (period 3).

It was noted that further update reports and an outturn report would be presented as the year progressed.

As reported previously there had been significant impact on the capital programme due to the Covid 19 pandemic with many schemes delayed. Increased costs of materials on schemes and supply were also now showing and so some schemes may start to forecast overspends.

Members were invited to make observations on the recommendations to the Executive namely:

- To note the total spend of £24m for the year to date,
- To note the following savings:
 - £7.1m for New School Places Policy Provision
 - £750k for Leicester Flood Strategy
 - £200k for Community & Environmental works
- To approve the transfers and additions as set out on page 70 and 71 of the report pack.

Members considered the report during which the following comments were made:

- Regarding funding additional external consultancy support to “land promotion work” it was queried what land promotion work was. Officers replied that in summary this related to the disposal of land where there might be a maximum capital receipt. The Deputy Finance Director agreed to provide further details to Councillor Kitterick outside of the meeting.
- More detail of Energy Efficiency Technology and feature lighting was sought. In response it was noted that the Energy Efficiency Technology was a long running programme and the council had recently bid for over £20m funding for energy efficient schemes, that had been added into the capital programme. The government had set a “spend it all” target of March 2022 so that was the reason for the figures given and the extended completion date.
- In relation to the demolition of Goscote House, it was suggested there might be opportunities with the building to make it into larger flats. The City Mayor responded that Goscote House had been the subject of a lot of deliberation which had been reported to Housing scrutiny. After careful consideration it was concluded the costs of refurbishment were far greater than could be justified as it had significant structural issues, notwithstanding that it has also been looked at by experts. Their overwhelming conclusion was it cannot be saved economically, and it would be better to put the money into new homes rather than try to save this building.

The Chair thanked officers for the report .

AGREED:

1. That the contents of the report be noted
2. That the recommendations for the Executive be supported.
3. That the Deputy Director of Finance provide further details on “land promotion work” to Councillor Kitterick.

34. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

1. Question from the Chair, Councillor Cassidy: “We support the City Mayor and Executive statement of 19 August welcoming those seeking refuge from the awful situation in Afghanistan and question the underfunding by the Government of the ‘refugee and asylum system’.

Please can you provide detail of plans to date made by the City Council and

our partners in respect of the resettling of Afghan Refugees in Leicester? And can we ask that updates be brought back to OSC and that more focused work on particular strands of the resettlement programme be carried out in due course by relevant scrutiny commissions?

The City Mayor responded that he intended to make sure that there were regular updates at OSC and other scrutiny meetings as necessary on this situation. The City Mayor also undertook to provide all members with an update in writing.

It was also noted that:

- The City already had a few hundred people from Afghanistan who had made Leicester there home over last decade.
- The Council had committed to finding ten homes for larger Afghan families with a commitment from the government to financially support that.
- Currently there were 76 people including 23 children staying in a hotel in the City.
- Council officers were doing everything possible to ascertain their positions, but the Home Office had not yet put in place a full process.
- Representative from the local Afghan community had been met and they were keen to help and provide support to those coming here and they had given advice and officers were developing their willingness to engage
- Health and wellbeing checks had been carried out and the 76 refugees visited and provided with GP details. Officers were on hand to help too.
- Contact had also been made with Fire services and the council Health & Safety to ensure appropriate safety standards were being met where the people were placed.
- It was not clear at moment whether their cultural needs have properly been assessed and were being met, however it had been impressed on officers that those needs should be addressed as well.
- Of 23 children 15 were in school, it was uncertain how many remaining were school age and that was being checked.
- Adult education service was also offering support with ESOL.
- One issue was financial support whilst there. The hotel had access to government support which allowed full board, but the council had been told there were no funds for personal items such as clothing, nappies, sanitary items etc so that was also being checked. It had been suggested that the government were providing pre-loaded credit cards, again this was something that needed to be checked.
- Officers had been proactive with VCS and faith sectors and there are some particular VCS and charities giving support to refugees in leicester and those are all welcome offers of help.
- The Home Office would continue to be pressed to provide necessary wrap around support as this was an area of concern and Members would be kept up to date.

The Chair thanked the City Mayor for his response and indicated that this

would be taken as a standing item on the OSC agenda for next 6 months to receive regular updates.

Members sought clarity on the schemes that would be supporting the refugees, the number of children being placed in schools and the number of refugees being homed.

The City Mayor confirmed that the refugees were being supported through the Vulnerable Person Scheme and the National Asylum scheme, the council was committed at this stage to provide homes for 10 larger Afghan families. Separate to that there were 76 people in hotels in the City and the immediate focus was that those 76 people were being properly supported, of those 15 were children in school and 8 others were being checked on whether they were of school age.

Members suggested that until the complex needs of the 76 people were known that the council could perhaps support each from community ward funds. The City Mayor rebutted that suggestion as the Home Office were responsible for finances and the funding should be with government not with the council or local people.

The Chief Operating Officer Alison Greenhill advised that the refugees placed in Leicester had been placed through the temporary bridging scheme whilst more permanent homes were found, that may or may not be in Leicester. Through the Home Office the council would ascertain where they wanted to live. Home Office agreements with hotels had been made without consulting local authorities so money was not only key issue, wrap around support was about longevity and for those that settle in Leicester to have wider community support. The council had made a generous offer to the Home Office and would support those families that choose to settle in Leicester.

2. Question from Councillor Porter “regarding the Haymarket, this has been an issue for many years. Can we have an update on where things are now regarding the Haymarket?”

The City Mayor responded that the Haymarket Theatre issue was one that dated from the creation of the Curve and had been difficult. Bringing the Haymarket back into use had been broadly welcomed and at a tiny cost compared to the Curve or a new building. The Haymarket was remarkably good value for money, and it was unfortunate that the consortium was so adversely affected by the pandemic and hadn't had an opportunity before that to build up any financial reserves.

At the moment the council was inviting people who had shown an interest to firm up their proposals and looking forwards as there was more opening up following the pandemic to try and reopen the building to the public.

The Chair thanked the City Mayor for responding to questions.

35. WORK PROGRAMME

Members received and noted the Work Programme.

- Session on Corporate Parenting to be added and hope to have some Young People attend the meeting to speak.
- Private Sector Housing item to come to November meeting.
- Extra meeting in January 2022 to be arranged to consider the Local Plan prior to its submission to Full Council

36. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.43pm