



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

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

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Cassidy (Chair)

Councillor Gee
Councillor Halford
Councillor Joel

Councillor Joshi
Councillor Kitterick
Councillor Porter

Councillor Thalukdar
Councillor Westley

In Attendance

Sir Peter Soulsby
Councillor Piara Singh Clair
Councillor Adam Clarke
Councillor Elly Cutkelvin
Councillor Vi Dempster
Councillor Kirk Master
Councillor Danny Myers
Councillor Rita Patel
Councillor O'Donnell

City Mayor
Deputy City Mayor
Deputy City Mayor
Assistant City Mayor

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54. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair led on introductions and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chair then announced the sad news of the passing of the Deputy Chair of the Committee, Councillor Ratilal Govind, who he described as a great colleague and friend to all, a kind and generous man who would be missed by many. The Chair then led on a period of silence for reflection.

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

With regards to agenda items, Councillor Halford declared that she was a council tenant.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the interest was not considered so significant that it was likely to prejudice the Councillors' judgement of the public interest. The Member was not, therefore, required to withdraw from the meeting.

56. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made an announcement to the Committee.

He thanked all Members and officers for their input into the scrutiny process over the course of the year. He said the past twelve months had seen all experience a greater sense of normality in many ways, and he was pleased that scrutiny had been able to turn its focus towards dealing with the many priorities faced by the Council and the city in addition to focussing on the ongoing pandemic. The Chair added it went without saying that the current picture across the country in respect of the level of the virus and the recent emergent of new variants was deeply concerning, and on behalf of the Committee he wanted to thank the City Mayor, the Director of Public Health and all involved in the continuing local response.

57. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10th November 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

58. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING

Members received a full set of updates, appended to the minutes for information.

The Chair noted the information on the actions arising.

59. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

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

60. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions has been received.

61. TRACKING OF PETITIONS MONITORING REPORT

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report which provided 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 the outstanding petitions be noted, and those petitions marked "Petition Complete" Ref: 21/09/01, 21/09/02, 21/10/01 and 21/11/05 be removed from the report.

62. COVID-19 - VERBAL UPDATE

Rob Howard, Consultant in Public Health (Medicine), was present in the meeting to provide an overview of the latest picture of ward trends, including Covid-19 infection rates and vaccinations. During the update, the following points were noted:

- The current situation in terms of overall rates had seen the rate increase slightly over a few weeks rates to 400 per 100k people. Previously the figure had been 365 per 100k people.
- The rates for over 60s had come down slightly.
- The rates for school age children though high had also reduced somewhat.
- The rates for 17-21 and 21-24 year olds had almost doubled in the past two weeks.
- Although the overall picture on a superficial level was giving a falsely reassuring picture, the city was on the precipice of an unprecedented increase in cases expected in the next few weeks along with the rest of the country who were somewhat behind London.
- One clue when looking at the rise of the new variant, was two weeks prior it was around 1% of cases, but now presented at 54%, so very soon the Omicron variant would be the vast majority of cases.
- It was known Omicron was more transmissible, but there was lots of uncertainty about the severity.
- Current efforts were focussing on the vaccination programme, with significant progress made as part of a huge campaign to boost vaccinations around the city.
- It appeared the new variant was doubling every two to three days but was expected to slow down. Nonetheless, the country was approaching a holiday period, with families expected to get together, and there was concern rates amongst the younger population would translate into the older population, particularly amongst the unvaccinated and the clinically vulnerable.
- An issue to be addressed as a system and as a city council was business continuity, a challenge that would likely see significant numbers of staff, particularly front line, absent through sickness and self-isolating.
- Everyone was working full out again to look at what could be done to prepare, to push the vaccination and booster programme, and was one of the most serious points of the pandemic to date.
- It was thought that because it was expanding so rapidly, the surge could also end rapidly. It was reported that in possibly one to two months, the city could be out the other side of the surge, though the damage that could be done in that period was unknown.

- Hospitals were preparing for surge capacity, though it was unknown whether it would be at a level at which they could cope, and further measures might need to be taken nationally, though it was clear there were disagreements with different interpretations on what needed to be done.
- It was generally recognised that it was a very serious time and situation and the Council continued to do all it could, including continuing contact tracing. So far in the city there remained a reasonable supply of tests.

The City Mayor provided an update on where the city was in terms of vaccinations. It was noted that the delivery of vaccinations was a matter for the NHS, and in general across the country they had done incredibly well. However, several months previously it had become obvious that the delivery performance in Leicester was lagging significantly.

The City Mayor continued that the Council had responsibility for the health and wellbeing of the city in general, and the scrutiny of health. Public Health was charged with the oversight of promoting the health of the public and encouraging and supporting measures to keep people healthy. The City Mayor had held over recent months a series of conversations with the NHS locally and had offered to provide them with information on the take up of vaccinations in the city, as it had become clear the NHS had struggled with the situation in Leicester.

The City Mayor referenced the latest figures which showed there were issues across the whole board in Leicester with delivering vaccinations one and two, as well as the booster vaccination. He reported that in ages 16-years plus of the population, only 66.7% had received vaccinations, which was 8.7% below the England average, and was reported to be more pronounced in some age groups than others, and in some parts of the city than in others and that overall figures were worryingly very low.

It was further noted that the latest figures for age 12-15 years showed the administration of dose one was a mere 28%, some 14.8% below the national average, and graphs drawn by Public Health of the delivery had been virtually flat over recent weeks after the initial surge. It had been said by the NHS that delivery was down to problems of consent from but did not explain why some schools had managed to deliver high levels of vaccination while others had very low levels.

The City Mayor noted the question of consent was a real issue given the complexity of the forms the NHS were using. It had been suggested that alternative forms be used but these had not been put into practice. He noted that it was even more concerning that, even with consent form, some children had not been vaccinated, and that coming towards the end of term, the levels of vaccination in children were many, many weeks behind comparable authorities and acceptable levels.

Looking more generally it was reported that dose one and two figures had barely changed over that past two months despite all the data shown and offers of help given to the NHS. As a result, the delivery of boosters in the city was,

even before the massive extension had been announced, lagging way behind the UK average.

The City Mayor offered to produce a number of graphs and data on the issue. He noted that he had sought so far to enter into constructive dialogue with the NHS but believed that Leicester had not been well served when it came to vaccinations.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions, and the following information was provided:

- Members said it was hard for elderly people with no access to IT in homes to book online for a booster, which was not the fault of the NHS or Council. Also noted that with the rollout of the booster it was not clear where people should go, with the NHS not working for those that had it, and for pensioners not being able to travel far as they could not afford transport. Members were frustrated with Government and believed that there should be easy access in each ward to gain dose one and two, and booster vaccinations.
- It had been reported in Eastern Eye there was a low take up of vaccinations by people of Indian and Asian backgrounds nationally. It was also noted that some walk-in centres in the city had run out of vaccines following long queues. Also, it was believed the qualifying time between vaccinations and booster had been confusing, resulting in people being turned away who were just a few days short of the qualifying time who might be discouraged from returning. The City Mayor responded that the excellent Public Health Team had developed a very good understanding of the presence of the virus in the community and were using that expertise to deliver the vaccine where it was needed, not identified in so far as Asian communities, but more in geographic areas in the city. He added the Team had sought to work with the NHS on how to work with communities, to help understand reluctance in areas, and to promote and make vaccines convenient in those areas, but still take up was extremely low, and there had been no significant impact.
- The City Mayor noted there were some good examples in the city of using centres across the city to deliver vaccinations, but were being done on a piecemeal basis, and not being applied as a result of the NHS promoting pharmacies, using Council facilities despite, or using St John's ambulance to deliver vaccines, and was intensely frustrating.
- With the rollout of boosters, ignored was the fact that that a third of people in the city had not received their second dose and the past few weeks and months had been a missed opportunity to increase those figures before promoting the booster. There was also serious concern around older people who were completely unvaccinated and would be much more at risk. Teams around the Council would continue to promote the vaccinations and booster as far and wide as possible.
- It was noted by a member that the NHS assumed everyone was computer literate and the only way people could complete consent forms. It was noted that some schools were providing paper copies under their own initiative, rather than relying on the NHS to do it.

- Members were shocked at how low the level of boosters in care homes was. Recent figures showed that 40% of care home residents had not received the booster vaccination even though they were in Priority Group 1. Figures were better than reported, however, with a delay in care homes completing a capacity tracker, with the Social Care Team ringing around care homes for up-to-date data.
- Members were assured there were no problems with the supply of Pfizer and Moderna and the issues wasn't the supply of vaccine but providing this to a sufficient number of people. Pharmaceutical companies were working rapidly on new types of vaccines as different strains of the variants appeared.
- People receiving the booster would not be effective for a couple of weeks, so thought was needed to be given with regards to business continuity over the next few weeks and the general message to give to the community to protect older and vulnerable people should continue.
- Members reported parents were finding it difficult to find out where they could take children under 12 years to be vaccinated. The City Mayor reported that the vaccination should have been offered in the first instance in schools and as it was the end of term, this would now be in the New Year. Outside of that setting the children would be able to receive the vaccination at the same centres as adults.
- Details in rates of vaccination uptake across the different neighbourhoods in the city would be provided to Members. Also noted was the Council and CCG websites had a list of walk-in centre, and people could contact their own GP surgeries for information.
- The vaccinations were currently approved for the over 12s. It was reported there was a lot of work going on around whether it would be approved for even younger age groups.

The Chair asked Councillor Kitterick (Chair, Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission HWSC) to look in more depth at the issues with the NHS. He responded by stating that the HWSC had looked at the item at a recent meeting, and Councillors had identified as a matter of urgency the location of community organisations, booster jabs and lateral flow test information should be circulated to Councillors, and that they be asked to identify where there were gaps in provision, and to indicate where a particular location would work very well and where it would not work.

The Chair of HWSC continued by explaining that there were a few areas that consistently had low vaccination uptake; namely the city centre and West End areas, particularly around Newfoundpool. He noted there were two hypothesis put forward on the low uptake. Firstly, there were people GP on lists who could have left and had not de-registered from their GP. There was a problem in ascertaining if that was the case and this was not a quick and easy process. The other hypothesis was some of the patients were so disengaged with their GP they had not bothered to respond.

The Chair of HWSC acknowledged that there would be something of a lag in engagement in those areas due to the younger population, but the sheer gap was not plausible and believed that a problem of GP provision in the West End

and city centre had been uncovered, and had been growing for many years prior to Covid. He added it was not an easy problem to fix, so had been difficult when the Government had requested vaccination rollout to be implemented.

The HWSC were aware of the issues and had raised them with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and two representatives of the CCG would develop an action plan. The decision on where to press the NHS needed to be made, but currently the absolute priority was the communication of where vaccinations, the booster and Lateral Flow Tests (LFTs) could be obtained, with information cascaded to local councillors who could provide the information to residents. The Chair of Health Scrutiny Commission asked that any pressure that the City Mayor could put on that information being distributed was most welcome.

The City Mayor thanked the Chair of the HWSC for the information and expressed frustration in the failure to get a joined up response. He added that the NHS priority was now the delivery of boosters, but expressed further frustration around the level of meaningful engagement with the Council on the fundamentals of delivering first and second dose vaccinations, and felt that this hindered progress with the local vaccination roll-out.

The Consultant in Public Health (Medicine) appreciated the frustration about some of the vaccines. He reported that officers had looked at campaigns for different groups, including the 12-15-year age group, the low delivery of which needed to be addressed before school commenced in the new year. It was noted there were a team of people working with communications to develop key messages that resonated with the younger groups.

In response to a member comment, the City Mayor stated he would seek to task the local NHS management with delivery of vaccinations and to monitor performance. He added it was appropriate for the Overview Select Committee (OSC) and HWSC to have much fuller data on vaccinations.

The Chair thanked the City Mayor and Officer. He praised frontline staff for all they were doing to protect the population. He asked that more detailed information as a written report be provided to the HWSC on 24th January 2022 and to the OSC on 10th February 2022. The Chair of HWSC would contact the CCG to request the information as a matter of priority.

AGREED:

1. That the update be noted.
2. Details of vaccination take-up rates across different neighbourhoods be provided to members
3. A written report be provided to HWSC on 24th January 2022, and to OSC on 10th February 2022.

63. AFGHAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME

The City Mayor provided a verbal update to the Committee on the city's continued support to those individuals based in the Home Office bridging hotel.

The following information was noted:

- There were currently 13 families being supported, with a total of 25 adults.
- All children were in school.
- All individuals (adults and children) were registered with a GP. One family was accessing specialist medical services for a serious condition.
- The Council had tried to raise awareness to families of what was on offer in the city. For example, tickets had been provided for Curve, which had been well received.
- Star Amal was working to arrange support for the families. Six IT tablets had been acquired from a local support agency for children. Work was ongoing with schools on how to support children requiring transport to schools. During inclement weather it was made sure that all children had a lift to school.
- The hotel operated a lanyard scheme and therefore gave the families the security they needed.
- When looking at resettlement, there were four families matched to accommodation in Leicester and these would be moving on 16 December 2021 and middle of January (three in private sector accommodation and one in housing association accommodation).
- There were two cohorts of families – those that were being settled in Leicester, and those that were staying in the hotel in Leicester that would move eventually to other locations.
- There was a significant need to find four-bedroom and larger properties. Star Amal were working with the Strategic Migration Partnership and were looking at offers to match families' needs. It was recognised there was a shortage of larger accommodation nationally.
- Star Amal were procuring mental health support for those in the hotel. The Richmond Fellowship had delivered a session on recognising anxiety and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- Leicester College and Leicester Adult Education Centre had formed a networking partnership to maximise the use of ESOL.

The Chair thanked the City Mayor for the update on the corporate effort and agency support for the families.

The Chair asked if there was a target limit of time the families would spend in the hotel. The Director of Housing responded there was no designated time, but as a result of the lack of four-bedroom accommodation, it had slowed down the movement of people in the hotel.

The Chair noted that if further information was received, it would be added as an agenda item at the meeting on 10th February 2022.

AGREED:

1. That the update be noted.
2. That upon the receipt of further information from officers, it be determined whether a further verbal update be brought to the Committee meeting on 10th February 2022.

64. CALL-IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION - ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY PORTFOLIO FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report relating to the Call-in of an Executive decision taking by the City Mayor on 22 November 2021 on the acquisition of a property portfolio for Affordable Housing. The decision had been called in under Rule 12 of Part 4D, City Mayor and Executive Procedure Rules of the Council's Constitution and subsequently the matter had been referred to the Overview Select Committee.

The Committee were recommended to either:

- a) Note the report without further comment or recommendation, which would have the effect of rolling the call-in forward to Full Council on 23 February 2022;
- b) Comment on the specific issues raised by the call-in, for forwarding to the next meeting of Full Council on 23rd February 2022;
- c) Resolve that the call-in be withdrawn.

Before presentation of the call-in, the Chair made the following statement:

"Members will be aware that the owner of the properties and the precise location of the properties has not been disclosed in the report. In order to protect the financial and business affairs of the Council, this detail remains exempt and will not be referred to during our discussion this evening".

The Chair invited the sponsor Councillor Kitterick to address the Committee during which he made the following points:

- Once the renovation and repair costs were added, the authority was looking to spend nearly £40million in total, and given the significance of this, felt that the amount of time given to study the transaction was inadequate.
- There was secrecy around the deal, and Members were happy to maintain the secrecy of the party. However, part of the secrecy was questioned, when the Council was in a situation where it was about to commit to a £40million deal. He stated that members and the people of the city had not been told who the purchase was from, what properties were being sold, and the tenants currently in the properties had not been told the transaction was happening.
- The property schedule showed property valuations but it had been agreed that individual addresses should not be published, though there had been a compulsory purchase order Executive Decision the previous day when two properties had been named.
- A further issue was a request had been made on a confidential, privileged basis and not to be shared or divulged, for the opportunity to have look at some of the properties and details of them to satisfy Members of the deal being made. He referred to requests of a similar nature being made previously by Members throughout their time on the Council, and

confidential reports had been viewed and not divulged in the past with confidences kept. He stated that in an case, the information would at some point be viewable on the Land Registry.

- There was a value for money argument. As a comparison, Hospital Close was purchased at £60,345 per unit, whereas the purchase under question was £71,761 per unit, which was around £10,500 more per unit than the Hospital Close transactions.
- Members had been given reassurances that the details did not need to be viewed as there were chartered surveyor reports. However, it was noted that property 24 showed a variation in the valuation of £200k, property 43 showed two variations with a difference in valuation of £436k, and finally in property 25 there was a valuation variance of £608k, and that opinion divergences into the high six figures was of particular concern.
- It had been reported that the properties were in fair condition, yet they needed £12.5m of repairs. Concern was raised that, on a £26.5million portfolio, having to do repairs of the amount reported did not sound as if the properties were in fair condition. It was added there was a possibility that the number of habitats would reduce from 371 following repairs.
- A further issue raised was that other options had not been examined. The transaction would represent a movement of tenants from a private landlord to the Council. Councillor Kitterick stated that the Council was the better landlord and therefore the movement of tenants to the City Council was to be broadly welcomed. However, he noted that the transaction did not add a single unit of housing to the councils housing stock, and that this was the hugely missed opportunity.
- A suggested alternative to use the £40m was for the Council or a contractor to build new units. Councillor Kitterick reported that a general estimate of £130 – 160k was needed to build a new unit (house), which would potentially add 245-300 brand new homes in the city adding to the Council's housing stock and could be built on the Council's own land. He also questioned whether other developers had been approached.
- Attention was drawn to Section 6.2, Legal Implications, page 42, in the report, which read *"This exercise has revealed that a number of the dwellings are currently used or works having been carried out without the benefit of planning permission. In addition, works to some dwellings have been carried out without having obtained building regulations approval."* It was noted the Council was the leading planning authority, and there was a reputational issue that a large transaction was being undertaken with a body that had shown little or no regard for planning or building regulations in the past. Also quoted was *"However, as the majority of breaches occurred some years ago and therefore enforcement action is no longer possible; and although there remains a risk of action for non-compliance the risk is considered low."* It was questioned if the Council would take enforcement action against a property it had just purchased.
- Much had been made to how the properties would be offered to people in the city to meet the need, but the issue there was some had sitting tenants.
- Members requested information on the student / resident balance.
- It was noted that a number of the properties were studios which were likely to be rented to single individuals. Those single individuals with no children no longer appeared on the Housing register, so Members would not want to

see those people displaced, therefore the amount of units that appeared to be available may not actually become available.

- Without knowing the properties, it was not known what planning permissions were attached to them. Members of the Committee had been informed that some of the properties were student lets, and indeed with student properties and lets there were restrictions such as accessibility to residents parking schemes which might be problematic for longer term tenants.
- It was not known if rents would be reduced in line with other council tenancies.
- If the Council were to spend £40million, the transaction needed scrutiny to look at how differently it could be spent.

The Chair invited Councillor O'Donnell as a signatory to the call-in to speak, and he made the following additional points:

- As Members, they needed to scrutinise every penny spent. Members were not against the transaction as such if the Council was getting value for money in spending the £40million.
- He questioned whether the Council wanted 300+ single accommodation units, or 250 homes for life built to a high standard.
- The commercial sensitivities over the transaction were understood, but councillors were being asked to support something they did not have all the relevant information on, and that this might result in making a very poor decision that did not enhance the city's housing stock.
- He requested that Overview Selection Committee Members, or a small group of Members, be allowed to look at the transaction in more detail confidentially and to defer the decision.

The City Mayor informed the meeting that throughout the whole process he and colleagues had been aware it was a very significant decision and had been careful to take the very best professional advice before arriving at it. He stated that he was committed to bringing into use more housing and the recommendation reached had been to take private properties and tenants into the remit of the Council to enable the properties to be properly managed in future with all of the safeguards that other council tenants had.

The City Mayor responded to the point made about the diversions in valuers figures and said that it would be odd if sometimes professional judgements did not sometimes differ, and what mattered was the aggregates of those figures brought the value of the purchases within the range for which Members were being asked to approve. He thought it correct that if the figures had been suspiciously close then that would have required further examination, and that the point of aggregate figures showed that the council was getting good value for money.

The City Mayor said it wasn't a choice being made between purchasing or building, because the Council was doing both, and was of the only authorities that would have a larger housing stock at the end of the four years than at the beginning, and at a time when Right to Buy was eroding stock, to have that

record was something to be proud of and would not be achieved by building alone.

Richard Sword, Strategic Director City Development and Neighbourhood Services, validated the point that the Legal Team, City Barrister, and Head of Law had confirmed what could legally be released and what couldn't. The Strategic Director then introduced and outlined the contents of the presentation (attached to the minutes for information).

During delivery of the presentation, Chris Burgin, Director of Housing, made the following points:

- There was a need for housing in the city, but what was little known publicly was the need for one-bedroom accommodation. Fewer than 900 properties became available each year, with only around a quarter of them being one-bed units, and even those with the highest needs had to wait on average four months.
- The Council continued to face pressures linked to housing demand from families and single people facing homelessness, with almost 5,000 approaching the Homelessness service in 2021. Whilst the Council continued to provide high-quality services and prevented 80% of those facing homelessness from becoming so, there was still a growing need for housing to meet a demand to meet the need alongside other housing demands as a growing city. The need had been exacerbated by Covid and the 'Everyone In' initiative linked to single people, and for which Leicester sustained the offer far longer than other authorities.
- There was an ongoing burden of Right to Buy scheme placed in the city and the Council. Since the 1980s, the Council had lost over 14,000 properties and each year continued to lose another 400 homes, with currently just under 20,000 homes remaining. It also equated to a loss of £7.1million each year in rental loss, which meant less money to invest in the Council's housing stock and wider obligations of improving council estate areas.
- The commitment in 2019 to meet growing demand for housing supply of 1,500 new Council social and extra-care homes for the city had driven the Council to work to find routes to achieve this. One point to note was the link to acquisitions and Right to Buy. There had been a recent change in legislation governing the scheme and the Council would from 2022 be capped at the level of acquisitions it would be able to undertake, as this could be no more than 50% of the overall new housing delivered for the city.
- In essence it meant that the existing funding from the Right to Buy scheme where the Council was able to utilise up to 40% against the purchase price would not be able to be used to complete such a purchase next financial year.
- Delivery to date was outlined on council, social and extra care homes, and good progress had been made in 2021/22. Subject to the acquisition of the new portfolio it was anticipated that the Council would achieve delivery of 1,263 homes by the end of 2021 and were on track to deliver 1,500 more by 2023. Efforts to date to meet this aim focused upon 575 new homes being delivered, meeting the family accommodation needs of two-three bedroom

properties.

- The proposed acquisition as previously referenced was mainly made up of one-bed accommodation with a small number of two and three-bedroom units. The proposal was for all units to become Council housing with any existing tenants signed up to be Council tenants and let at social rent levels, and subsequently let to people on the housing register.
- The Council was aware the portfolio had sitting tenants, with roughly 15 units unoccupied. The additional rental per year would be circa £1,545million and it was anticipated to generate an additional supply of up to 30 vacant units of accommodation each year for those on the housing register.
- The presentation set out the call-in questions submitted which were responded to in subsequent slides.
- The first response was to the question of how the transaction was initiated. Chris reported that the decision dated back to June 2019 when the owner produced a prospectus for its sale which became visible to senior staff in the Council, following which contact was made with the owner, and an exercise of sample site inspections randomly chosen by the Council. It then led to a request for more information from the owner and then technical, legal and finance pre-acquisition due diligence undertaken. Findings suggested the portfolio might be an opportunity to increase the supply of much needed affordable accommodation to meet housing need.
- When looking to see if it would be a good opportunity for the Council, alternative ways were looked at to utilise the funding to deliver new council and affordable homes in the city. The Council had also been working hard to establish a new homes building programme and was moving forward as quickly as possible, though there were clear limitations on land supply.
- There was a single unit acquisition process in place, but was resource intensive for housing and legal teams, often on purchases that did not complete.
- It was difficult to attract registered suppliers currently to the city due to limited land sites.
- The Council had made known its desire to purchase larger portfolios and had successfully completed the purchase some time ago of Pinewood Close in August 2019, and a number of UHL properties earlier in 2021.
- The Council continued to advertise to any landlords to consider the sale of their portfolios, including adverts in trade magazines for East Midlands property owners, but not all opportunities meet the needs of the city and of the Council.
- The Council also considered where relevant the purchase of Section 106 properties that had been built by private developers.
- Over the last three years, the Council had not limited any of the above options to generate affordable housing in the city and looked at the merits of every opportunity and was on its way to delivering 1,264 additional Council properties for the past year.

Matt Wallace, Director, Estates and Building Services, continued with the presentation, with the following points made:

- The Council's own Members of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (MRICS) qualified officers undertook the valuation of the portfolio.
- In addition, three independent condition surveys were undertaken to ascertain the likely cost and expenditure in terms of future maintenance of the portfolio. Valuations were undertaken by senior directors and partners of the organisations.
- Following the vendors asking price of £28.3million and the independent valuation of £27.85million, the purchase price was negotiated down to £26.6million.
- The Council's accountants had looked at the proposed purchase in terms of its financial model and affordability, and indicated the purchase would be paid back in 15 years, which was a short period when compared to 30 to 35 years for a new build scheme.
- Housing Finance had also looked at the scheme and determined it as value for money and affordable, given the Council's rental income and based the charges of social rent.
- It was agreed that the cost of units represented £70,000 to £75,000 compared to the cost of new build circa £130,000 to £160,000 per unit, and overall, it was quicker and cheaper to acquire existing buildings rather than build new units on a diminishing supply of available land.
- The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Red Book industry standards were explained. It was noted the 151 years professional institution was chartered by Royal Privy Council, and members acted with integrity and objectivity, in accordance with the RICS Code.
- Matt described how a Red Book valuation was undertaken and referred to the RICS industry standards. Redacted information was shown to provide confidence and show the level of due diligence that was followed, and how a surveyor used comparable figures such as capital yield, sold data and searches from a range of information and benchmarks to justify how they would reach a valuation.
- He explained that it was always better to use the valuations of three valuers on big transaction.
- The overall condition of assets was noted to be in good condition, with some new, some Edwardian, some Victorian. Some were vacant and, unlike Hospital Close, could be occupied immediately.
- Independent condition surveys identified improvement works of £12.5million over the next 10 years that would be needed, 50% of which would go into improving thermal efficiency, including windows, doors and heating systems.
- The Housing finance team reported capacity in the capital programme to undertake property improvement, which equated to around £3k per property on average. The acquisition would join the main LCC Housing capital programme, and condition data would form part of ongoing future maintenance programmes along with existing stock. All contracts were in place to enable preassembled supply chains to deliver the elements of the work.
- A property had been removed from the overall transaction, as there were some issues with planning permissions.
- Legal due diligence was undertaken at all stages of the development of the

transaction.

The Chair said he was very impressed by the professionalism of the staff who worked in the Council.

Members of the Committee discussed the call-in further which included the following comments. Questions were responded to by officers present.:

- A Member stated it had previously been recognised that there was a shortage of larger family homes. It was pointed out the Council owned a considerable amount of land at Ashton Green and had an allocation of 3,500 homes, with only 500 provided so far. The £30-£40million could be used productively to build family homes, and the transaction was a bad deal for the people of Leicester and those on the housing register.
- Normally students were in short-term tenancies and the idea of them being removed at the end of their tenancy agreement, whilst other people that lived there remained was discriminatory, and should be afforded the same opportunity to extend their tenancies. Members were informed that no tenants would be asked to leave the properties.
- The yields in the report read 7.4% or 7.8%. If the Council took ownership of the properties, the amount that would be charged in rent would be equivalent to what other council tenants paid. When looking at the actual costs of £26.62million, there was no stamp duty or land tax added, which took the figure to £27.4million. The 7.8% yield would give £2.1million, which meant that each property on average was producing £5,764 per annum in rental income. It was stated a house could be rented for 30% less than the current rental income predicted from the one bed flats.
- A Member thanked officers for the detailed report, who had been reassured by the presentation and provision of information. He added there was a housing crisis and a range of houses was needed and the only way to deal with the overcrowding position in the city was to purchase the type of properties in the portfolio on offer. He further stated that as a result of Right to Buy, the housing stock was being depleted. There was a corporate commitment to build 1,500 houses which the Council was committed to delivering. It was noted the tenants would be given the assurance and same protection as current council tenants.
- Members were informed that Companies House searches were a standard process of all properties the authority purchased to establish if there were any businesses operating from the premises.
- The Right to Buy (RtB) receipts and spending of them had changed and the authority had less to spend so the percentage of properties that could be bought was a lot less. Also, there was pressure to spend the money otherwise the money would have to be returned legally to the Government and the Council would lose it.
- Out of the £26.6million, almost £10.5million (40%) came from RtB receipts. From April 2022, the first in relation to the new regulations for RtB meant the authority would only be allowed to acquire the equivalent number of properties as new builds, which meant for the following year less than 200 properties. In turn the Council would not be able to buy a portfolio of 371 units from April 2022 utilising the RtB receipts, and the whole of the funding

would have to come from borrowing with the affordability aspect being reconsidered. Using the £10.5million RtB receipts meant there would only be interest chargeable to the proportion of the monies borrowed.

- With reference to student properties, when undertaking due diligence on the tenancy agreement with those tenants, they had within their clauses particular items that had to be serviced which the Council did not have, so referenced in the presentation was a special arrangement to cover that item, because it was a legal requirement that tenant had. The numbers of student tenants in the portfolio would be provided to Members of the Committee.

Councillor Kitterick was invited to make a final statement. He made a number of further observations including that there were not many students in the properties, there were only 15 vacant units, and there would only be a tenancy switch over of about 30 units per year for the people on the waiting list, yet the Members were promised 371 units.

Councillor Kitterick referenced points made by the Director of Housing that in 2022/23 by building new builds, 168 units would come online, and that in 2023/24, 188 units would be available. All of the units that may or may not become available over 10 years would be available in two years, which in his view indicated why the Council should go with new build.

Councillor Kitterick referred to a differential between valuations of property 25 of £608k. He had asked whether any recording of all the Land Registry purchase prices had been kept, which might also have provided extra reassurance. He spoke of the anticipated income of £1.54million which would pay back the principle sum over 16 years, and when including the renovation costs, a further eight years. He also asked for confirmation on who would undertake the renovations and was informed the payback period would be 15 years, with renovations undertaken by a mix of contractors and in-house staff. Councillor Kitterick went on to confirm contractors would charge 20% VAT, but with a new build deal the VAT would be fully reclaimable.

Councillor Kitterick ended that it was positive that the tenants would be brought under the Council umbrella with the Council being the best landlord in the city, but the strategy on the scale proposed was the wrong way to go, and the Council should examine new build as part of the kickstart to regeneration, and it was an opportunity to take the report to Full Council when looking at the Capital Budget, to give Members those few weeks for reassurance.

In response to a Member's question the Director of Housing reported the £10.5million RtB receipts going into the £26.6million deal could only be utilised for an acquisition until 1 April 2022. The RtB rules changed which put a cap on the fact only 50% acquisitions would be purchased based on new housing. The Council continued to utilise as much RtB receipts as it could for new builds. However, it was the last year the Council could undertake any significant acquisition deal and it would be more reliant on new builds from next year onwards.

It was further asked what type of units were vacant. It was reported the 15 units were vacant at a point in time and were mainly one-bedroom units, but as the vendor continued to operate the properties, it was not known what vacancies would be available on completion.

Councillor Cutkelvin, Assistant Mayor for Education and Housing, said that given the delivery of the project she would want updates to be reported to Housing Scrutiny Commission on a regular basis to ensure the Council was delivering on what had been set out before Members. She felt that that due diligence had been demonstrated throughout the process, and an immediate benefit was the rental income as the majority of the units currently had tenants. She added that with increasing Right to Buy, every time a property was lost it undermined the HRA budget and its capacity to deliver real change and improvement, not only within properties, but within neighbourhoods as well, so there was real benefit with using the RtB receipts. A further benefit added was the ability to upscale or retrofit the houses to make sure they met energy efficient standards, thus protecting residents against fuel poverty. There was a benefit to the broader neighbourhood in terms of having potentially sensitive letting policies should the Council want to in the local area.

Councillor Cutkelvin acknowledged the importance of new build but noted the construction industry was under huge challenge and the fact registered providers weren't attracted to Leicester currently and weren't yielding affordable homes was a reflection of the pressures faced by the construction industry. Also mentioned was the way the planning system was set up benefitted those who wanted to make a profit and did not benefit those who wanted to build affordable or social housing.

Members thanked officers for the thorough explanations given during the meeting. Noted was the use of the RtB receipts of £10.4million, with the balance of £16.2million of Council money to provide one and two-bedroom property of which there was a shortage of for constituents, and loss of the receipts if the transaction was not made. Reference too was made to homelessness in the city and people being made homeless by landlords who wanted to charge more rent, and the current tenants in the portfolio who would have their rents reduced at a time when people income was being crushed during the pandemic.

The Chair thanked Members who he said had given real consideration to the issues raised under the call-in which had been responded to very thoroughly by officers. He continued there were a lot of positives about the acquisition and not least that a number of people in the city would become tenants of the City Council and the properties would be restored or improved on in all sorts of ways, for example, in terms of energy efficiency.

The Chair said it was important that the Housing Scrutiny Commission monitor closely how the properties are restored and improved and supported those that needed housing in the city.

The Chair MOVED that:

“The call-in be withdrawn, with there being no further action or need for consideration at Council on 23 February 2022, and the original decision to take immediate affect without amendment”.

The Motion was **SECONDED** by Councillor Westley.

On being put to the vote the Motion was carried.

Councillors Kitterick and Porter asked that their votes against the withdrawal of the call-in be noted.

The Chair asked that all votes, therefore, be recorded for and against, and the results were as follows:

Councillors Cassidy, Gee, Halford, Joel, Joshi and Thalukdar voted **IN FAVOUR** of the withdrawal of the call-in.

Councillors Kitterick and Porter voted **AGAINST** the withdrawal of the call-in.

AGREED:

That the call-in be withdrawn, with there being no further action, or need for consideration at Council on 23 February 2022, and the original decision to take immediate affect without amendment.

That further information on numbers of student tenants in the portfolio be provided to Members of the Committee.

That regular progress on the portfolio purchase be reported to the Housing Scrutiny Commission.

Councillor Porter left the meeting at 8.23pm.

There was a short adjournment, and the meeting reconvened at 8.35pm.

65. PROPOSED STRATEGIC ACQUISITION OF THE HAYMARKET CENTRE, LEICESTER CITY CENTRE

The Strategic Director, City Development and Neighbourhood Services, and the Director of Estates and Building Services, submitted a report to the Committee for noting on the purchase of investment property through the use of investment property funding.

The City Mayor introduced the report. He informed the meeting the Council was in the process of investing £10million from the capital programme in a corporate estate acquisition, namely the Haymarket Shopping Centre.

It was noted the Council had invested in the corporate estate over generations in ways that brought income into the revenue budget of the Council, and in ways that had the added benefit of promoting the economic wellbeing of the

city. The corporate estate was already valued at over £100million and produced a contribution towards the Council's revenue of over £7million a year. It was at the heart of the investment in the Haymarket which was good value in terms of previous selling prices, with two major revenue benefits, namely, the rent from the properties, and because the Council was paying significant rent car park, the Haymarket theatre and the sexual health clinic.

Richard Sword, Strategic Director, City Development and Neighbourhood Services, made the following key points in addressing the committee:

- The Haymarket Shopping Centre sat on a four-acre site in the city centre. The Council had bought the complete unit and freehold at £9.5million, and this was a unique acquisition.
- The Council contributed 19% of all revenue to the site.
- One of the main leases was the 450-space car park which produced £2.586million of revenue per annum, with a net income of £1.443million.
- The Haymarket had ground leases which guaranteed income for the lifetime of a tenancy. Ground leases were usually with government clients, and there was no exercise break of that lease. The lease on the car park alone was worth £8.4million. With gearing, it was estimated that this could reach about £9.2-£9.6million.
- The centre had considerable tenants, such as, Greggs, B&M, Holland and Barrett, and Tesco Express.
- When the Council looked to undertake capital acquisitions, a number of aspects were looked at. One was to examine the strategic fit with the asset.
- There were also other footway and highway works in the area, as well as the strategic regeneration of the site long term, alongside the Travel Lodge development.
- The Centre was a good strategic fit which produced good income, which in turn projected frontline services and brought income into the Council using capital resources to create revenue which the Council was struggling with in the face of Government cuts.
- Extensive due diligence was undertaken on the property, with extensive comparison and a close look at long term liabilities.

Members were then given the opportunity to make comments, and questions were responded to:

- Noted were problems with retail, with units empty in shopping centres, with Highcross converting the old Debenhams area into residential accommodation.
- Noted was section 4.4.1 in the report, where rent arrears were currently at £673k and service charge arrears of £251k.
- It was questioned if the transaction was such a good opportunity why had it not been sold to someone else before, and if there was money to be made, why hadn't the previous owners filled the units.
- With the level of rent arrears, people were defaulting, which would leave the rent arrears for the empty premises being paid by the landlord.
- There had been little transparency in the decision and a high profile

- £10million expenditure should not be conducted in that manner.
- The Haymarket had only been owned for one month and the level of required upgrades was questioned.
 - There were a number of restrictive covenants, most notably restricting the use to retail with associated office or residential accommodation above. It was asked who owned the restrictive covenant, and how much would the Council have to pay to reverse it should it decide to do something different with the centre.
 - Concern was expressed that to make the transaction work, the Council would have to invest more money.
 - It was noted there was some type of cladding on the elevation facing Belgrave Gate. It was confirmed it was checked and found not to be ACM material cladding. A structural survey would be undertaken before purchase, with vendors reports and own assessments done.

The City Mayor spoke and said that, the site was currently trading well and formed part of an important offer for the city. He stated that the money the Council had invested was already being returned and was working well economically. He added he was very pleased able to acquire the centre.

A discussion took place between Members and it was suggested that shops were busier outside of the Haymarket. However, it was pointed out that one of the biggest online retailers (Amazon) was banning visa payments, and this would lead people to return back to shops. A Member noted that purchases made online were often of poor quality and people were using shops because they wanted to see the quality of the goods before purchasing.

Matt Wallace, Director Estates and Building Services, reported that 20% of the asset was not retail. It was noted the Council had data intel that showed footfall in the Haymarket Centre was strong and increasing each month, and weekly basket shoppers had continued to shop in the Haymarket. The intelligence was also underpinned by global retail experts Cushman and Wakefield, who suggested that the type of centre such as the Haymarket was experiencing a renaissance and served a certain demographic of the community who would continue to come into the town centre to do weekly basket shops.

The Strategic Director added it was unfair to compare the centre with Broadmarsh in Nottingham as that the latter had used a failed contractor. It was further noted the Haymarket was positioned next to the bus station which naturally drove footfall. He added finally an original point was the asset would pay for itself purchased with public money.

A Member said the city was fortunate to have the shopping centre, which was also a social meeting point to meet friends, which provided many different types of shops and was welcoming and generally bustling. He added that to acquire the property for just under £10million and from day one would recuperate the investment was not a situation that would make a loss, and the money would provide vital services for the city of Leicester. He said the challenge was to bring the Haymarket Theatre back to its former glory to be used and enjoyed by the people of Leicester.

A Member noted at 5.2.1 in the report the market rent valuation at £2,366,673 and asked what profit would be gained per annum. The Strategic Director reported it would be circa £1.1million net revenue.

The City Mayor said the services the centre provided, such as coffee shops, or Timpsons could not be provided online. He added that he was pleased that many members could see the benefits for the Council and for the City.

The Chair said the acquisition was an important strategic purchase and that he could see the importance of development over the years.

The Chair said the Committee was asked to note the report and recommended that the Committee support the strategic investment for the city. This was **SECONDED** by Councillor Joel.

Councillor Kitterick asked that his vote against supporting the acquisition of the Haymarket Centre be noted.

The Chair asked that all votes, therefore, be recorded for and against, and the results were as follows:

Councillors Cassidy, Gee, Halford, Joel, Joshi and Thalukdar voted IN SUPPORT of the acquisition.

Councillors Kitterick voted AGAINST the decision.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. The Overview Select Committee were in the majority in favour of the acquisition of the Haymarket Centre.

66. DRAFT EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2021/22 AND BUILDING A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE ACTION PLAN 2021/22

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance submitted a report to the Overview Select Committee which provided an overview of the draft refreshed Equality Action Plan (EAP) for 2021/22 and the related Building a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce Action Plan (BDIWAP) 2021/22. The Overview Select Committee were asked to note and make comment on the draft action plans for 2021/22.

Councillor Rita Patel, Assistant Mayor for Equalities and Special Projects, introduced the report, and made the following points:

- Since the last action plan was presented to the Committee, there had been a couple of changes to the Equalities Team, with Kalvaran Sandhu taking over as Head of Equalities Team, and David Shire joining as Race Equalities and Engagement Officer.
- The Corporate Equality Strategy was developed in 2018 and crossed four

years 2018 to 2022.

- A separate Workforce Action Plan had also been developed which afforded a specific focus on workforce equalities issues.

Kalvaran Sandhu presented the report, and noted the following:

- Some things had continued primarily because of Covid, but others would remain on the action plan around the EIA process and training etc, but a couple of things to note were the greater focus on embedding equalities early on in processes and in decision making.
- There had been a lot of decisions made during the Covid pandemic where services had to change slightly and this had formed a large part of the Equalities Team' work in undertaking support for a lot of EIAs and supporting the service changes over the past two years.
- There was more focus on work around disabilities, which would be picked up in the EAP, with the need for consideration for disability work across all Council services. Also the Team wanted to garner a better understanding and awareness raising around LGBTQ+ communities as well as some of the issues they faced. The above two communities were particularly vulnerable throughout Covid and would be key areas focussed upon over the next 12 months.
- The Team had also pushed to be more proactive around awareness raising and embedding early proactive processes when having to react to local or national equality-related issues, for example, Black Lives Matter, where big issues had a real impact locally.
- The workforce element of equalities related issues had been separated out into a plan to enable better focus. In summary there was a lot of data and evidence such as workforce data profiling, healthy workplace survey results, new starter and leavers feedback and glass door feedback that had led to the plan, and that work had gone on to increase knowledge of staffing concerns in relation to inclusion and diversity and what the authority was doing around those concerns.
- There was focus on two-way communication within the plan, maintaining open dialogues with employees and creating a culture of openness, with a push in driving leadership values in particular, a push towards succession planning and growing the workforce from within, and nurturing a diverse workforce to make sure it was representative.
- An Internal First recruitment process has been implemented, which would hopefully see people move up the ladder through succession and development.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions which were responded to as follows:

- In reference to page 76, item 1f, with equality monitoring what gaps had been identified and how would the experiences for staff, and stakeholders to the council be improved. It was noted as part of the Council's equality duty, it was something it wanted to improve across the board. It was recognised it was not just about undertaking EIAs, but talking to employees, colleagues, etc. Also the service analysis and improvement team who

undertake detailed reviews across different services have included an equalities focus in their methodology that would help reach areas in the authority not previously touched upon or which hadn't performed as well so they could then be offered better support.

- With reference to item 2e, it was said the organisation demonstrated its commitment to equality issues. It was asked how the Council would leverage its communications plan to make sure that it wasn't just fit for a certain demographic of people, and that the plan did not exclude certain demographics of the multilingual, multicultural city of Leicester. It was noted the approach had been sporadic in the past, so the authority wanted to make sure it had greater reach than it already did. It was noted the Race Equality Action Plan had been brought previously and the comms plan would build on some of that work, and would enable better focus on the other different areas so they wouldn't be missed. A key point was the communications plan would be the first time one would have been issued and was a good way to move forward.
- Reverse mentoring at 4.24 in the report was referenced, and it was asked how could it be ensured that the process of reverse mentoring benefitted the ethnic minority mentor rather than the senior level mentee who was supposed to be learning from the experience of what it felt like to be from different backgrounds because it needed to be ensured that the process was not a one-way learning experience. It was reported the reverse mentoring was part of the HR Action Plan and it was a valid point about the mentor also getting something out of the process. It was noted that a first pilot of this had already been run in partnership with the health service and so we had a tried and tested method in which had included Adult Social Care recently, and it was this approach that would be rolled out to the rest of the authority. It was further pointed out it was not just race focused but would look at disability and LGBTQ+ also. Built upon and fed into the process was previous mentors experiences from which feedback said they had also gained from the process.

Miranda Cannon, Director of Delivery, Communication and Political Governance, added that the programme consisted of a half-day training for mentors, with monthly peer support meetings with the Organisational Development Team, and a reflective learning session and evaluation session at the end of the mentoring also, so there was plenty of structure to support mentors built into the process.

The Assistant Mayor said she found the questions really heartening, as she had raised some questions about the mentoring scheme because of concerns that people already finding themselves in challenging positions would now find themselves being inadvertently exploited for the knowledge they had but would not be recognised or supported through that process, but she had been reassured the mentors would receive the necessary training and support.

It was also noted that as well as the accurate identification of gaps, officers were constantly horizon scanning, talking to people in different departments to see how processes could be improved and how to start to engage and empower people to find solutions and share best practice across the Council.

The Chair said he had lots of questions that he would put outside of the meeting with others if interested, with the Head of Equalities and Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance, to go through issues in depth to gain better understanding. He added it was important that the process be monitored and recommended a couple of sessions be arranged for Members to meet with officers.

The City Mayor said the suggestion was welcomed and asked that he take part in the sessions also as there were lots of business issues that required more consideration and some form of scrutiny.

The Chair thanked the officers for the report.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That further sessions be arranged for Members of the Overview Select Committee, City Mayor, Head of Equalities and Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance to examine the report in detail.

67. FINANCE UPDATE REPORTS

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(i) REVENUE MONITORING APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2021/22

The Deputy Director of Finance submitted a report which forecast performance against the budget for the year. The Overview Select Committee was recommended to consider the overall position presented within the report and make any observations it saw fit.

Members were asked to note all of the reports were for the first half of the financial year. The following points were made:

- The Revenue Monitoring report was showing an overspend of £4.9million which was less than previously reported at £7million in the first quarter period. The report came with a warning that the full impact the Covid pandemic on the financial year was not yet known.
- The loss of income in the report was mainly around City Development and Neighbourhoods and leisure centres.

The Chair noted the report.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted.

(ii) CAPITAL MONITORING APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2021/22

The Deputy Director of Finance submitted a report which showed the

position of the Capital Programme at the end of September 2021 (Period 6). The Overview Select Committee was recommended to consider the overall position presented within the report and make any observations it sees fit.

The Head of Finance presented the report and noted:

- Most of the projects on the Capital Programme were showing as 'Green' or 'Amber' on the budget sheets, but were still being impacted by slippage from the pandemic.
- Also noted for the last year was some projects were seeing some sort of additional costs related to materials which was a national issue and not just one for the Council.

The Chair noted the report.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted.

(iii) INCOME COLLECTION APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2021

The Deputy Director of Finance submitted a report to the Overview Select Committee which detailed progress in collecting debts raised by the Council during the first six months of 2021/22, together with debts outstanding and brought forward from the previous year. It also set out details of debts written off under delegated authority that it had not been possible to collect after reasonable effort and expense. The Committee was recommended to consider the overall position presented within the report and make any observations.

The Head of Finance presented the report and noted that:

- It reported on debt raised in the first half of the financial year and debt that had been brought forward. The report had an appendix which outlined debt that had been written off.
- With changing circumstances, some income levels were coming back quicker than envisaged, for example, Council Tax was coming back to pre-pandemic levels.

The Chair noted the report.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted.

(iv) MID-YEAR REVIEW OF TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES 2021/22

The Deputy Director of Finance submitted a report which reviewed how the Council conducted its borrowing and investments during the first six months of 2021/22. The Overview Select Committee was recommended

to note the report and make any comments to the Deputy Director of Finance or the Chief Operating Officer and the Executive as they wished.

The Head of Finance presented the report. The Committee was asked to note:

- The authority would not get as much interest as initially envisaged, as the interest base rate had been very low. However, the authority was doing better than some as it had locked in two-year investments prior to the pandemic with other local authorities, which had given a slightly better yield.
- There had been no new borrowing for the year.
- The Bank of England had recently slightly increased the base rate, which that should lead to approximately £0.5million additional interest for the year on investments.

The Chair noted that two of the Commissions would look at areas of budget as some point: Adult Social Care had been undertaking a task group review looking at the cost of care packages and CYPE would be looking at SEND cost of travel.

The Chair noted the report.

AGREED:

1. That the report be noted.

68. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

There were no questions for the City Mayor.

The Chair asked that questions for the City Mayor be sent in writing to the Chair or Democratic Support Officer before the meeting.

69. SCRUTINY COMMISSION UPDATES

(i) HCLT SCOPING DOCUMENT - WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN LEICESTER

The Heritage, Culture, Leisure and Tourism Scrutiny Commission submitted a scoping document on women's participation in physical activity and sport.

Councillor Halford, Chair of the Scrutiny Commission presented the report and the following notes were made:

- The HCLT Scrutiny Commission had agreed to carry out a task group review into the topic of women's participation in sports and physical activities.
- The scoping report set out the reasons and details of the review.

The Chair asked that the review consider discussing with Leicester City Football Club the women's team and the hockey club as partners locally any of the issues related to the review. Secondly he asked that the review contact the experts in the field based at the University of Leicester; John Williams and his team that would be very helpful to the Commission.

Members suggested the Commission also contact Loughborough University as a sporting facility.

The Chair thanked Councillor Halford for the presentation.

AGREED:

1. That the Task Group Review be endorsed.

70. OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Housing Scrutiny Commission's task group review of the role of the proposed Anti-Social Behaviour Team had finished and would be brought to the next meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair noted the work programme for the Committee, which would be looked at in terms of the number of important reports that needed to be brought to the Committee.

He added that it was likely that a special meeting would need to be arranged for the Local Plan, date to be confirmed.

The Chair thanked all of those that had been present at the meeting that evening.

71. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no items of urgent business, the meeting closed at 9.51pm.