



Leicester  
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 24 MARCH 2022 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 Westley

In Attendance:

Sir Peter Soulsby  
Councillor Piara Singh Clair  
Councillor Danny Myers

City Mayor  
Deputy City Mayor  
Assistant City Mayor

Also in Attendance:

Rupert Matthews

Police and Crime Commissioner

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**90. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Thalukdar.

**91. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

Councillor Westley declared an interest in agenda item 15. Scoping Document – Housing Crisis in Leicester, that family members were council tenants.

Councillor Halford declared an interest in agenda items to be discussed that family members were council tenants.

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

## **92. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair announced that, as the scrutiny programme for 2021/22 was drawing to a close, he wanted to thank the Overview Select Committee Members for their work on the Committee. He also thanked each of the Committee Chairs for their work on the Committee, for leading varied and interesting programmes of work. He further noted there were still several pieces of task group and review work that were concluding.

The Chair thanked the City Mayor for his full participation with the Committee, along with Executive colleagues who had addressed the Committee when required. His thanks also went to all of the officers who had reported to OSC and the Commissions over the past year, and to Scrutiny and Democratic Support staff.

The Chair informed the meeting the annual report would now be compiled which would summarise scrutiny's activity and outcomes throughout the year. He added that he looked forward to seeing scrutiny continue to examine key and emerging priorities and to carry on engaging with local decision makers, both within the City Council and beyond.

Thanks came from Members of the Committee to the Chair for the way he had conducted the meeting over the year.

## **93. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

## **94. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING**

The Chair informed the meeting there were no actions arising from the last meeting that required an update on their progress, and several issues had been referred to future meetings, and captured in the current work programme.

## **95. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE**

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations and statements of case had been submitted in accordance with the Council's procedures.

## **96. PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received in accordance with the Council's procedures.

## **97. 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.

The Democratic Support Officer circulated an update on a petition that had been completed since the publication of the report.

AGREED:

That the status of the outstanding petitions be noted, and to remove those petitions marked 'Petition Complete' Ref:21/11/03 and 21/12/01 from the report.

## **98. POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

Mr Rupert Matthews, Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (PCC), was invited to address the Overview Select Committee about his work in the role to date and his priorities for the future.

Mr Matthews touched on the role of the PCC, what it was and wasn't entitled to do, during which the meeting was informed that:

- The role of PCC was to decide the 'what' and it was the role of the Chief Constable to decide the 'how' of local policing. The public held both the PCC and the Chief Constable to account. Operational matters were the decision of the Chief Constable.
- The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Police and Crime Panel scrutinised the work of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC).
- The Police and Crime Plan, which each PCC had to produce when they first took up office, was a living document and set out the broad parameters of what the PCC expected of the Chief Constable. The Plan was largely based on the elected PCC's manifesto.
- There were a mass of national guidelines, rules and regulations about what the police were / were not allowed to do, for example, the Home Office mandated how many officers should be licensed, trained and fully updated to carry firearms, which was not a decision that could be made locally, but had cost implications locally for training those officers and having the requisite number of weapons.
- Mr Matthews then went on to pay tribute to Simon Cole, who had left his role as Chief Constable the week prior to the Committee meeting, a role he had held for nearly 12 years. He added Mr Cole had been a tower of strength for the police and community and would be very much missed.
- It would be the PCC's duty to recruit a new Chief Constable, the system for which was largely mandated by the Home Office, though there was room for local discretion and variation on how a Chief Constable was selected and

recruited. The PCC would involve local elected representatives in the city and county to play an advisory role in the process as it was important the voices of elected representatives for the people in the city and county had an opportunity to be heard.

- The Plan had been put out to consultation to the public, the P&CP and the Chief Officer Team of Leicestershire Police. Many changes had been made to produce the first draft of the Police and Crime Plan which was used to produce the final draft, and printed copies would be sent to the council over the next week or so.
- The Peelian Principles still underlay the modern concept of policing by consent, for example, the police are the public, and the public are the police. The PCC said it was essential to draw recruits from as wide a selection of the public as possible, and that the police force is made up as near as possible that they were representative of the communities that they served.
- Public support and confidence in the police had fallen over the past few years, largely to do with incidents and activities not involving Leicestershire Police. The PCC wanted to see support and confidence in the police increase. The PCC would bring a series of reports to the PCP on this which would be public documents, with more detail available from the OPCC.
- The PCC was looking to have further public engagement with the Police, Police Cadets and community.
- There were certain aspects of crime of particular interest to the Members and public they represented, for instance, knife crime with a number of incidents of knife attacks recently with some fatalities. There were several ways to deal with the issues, including police action on the streets, through intelligence and responding reports and calls from the public. The work of the Violence Reduction Network was noted which the city and county were fortunate to have as not all police forces received funding for it. The VRN and PCC were involved in crime reduction work, victim support and navigation of the criminal justice system.
- Over the coming months and years the PCC looked forward to supporting the work of the city council with the police on crime and victim support.
- The Chair fed back that he believed that one person was not an adequate way to undertake the public sector equality duty on an EIA and spending review as there was previously an Ethics, Integrity and Complaints Committee which had previously produced the Diversity and Inclusion report. The Chair asked if the Committee was to be replaced, and if so when would that be. The meeting was informed that the new members of the new body had been appointed, with the date for the first meeting in the not-too-distant future. The role of this body would be advisory and would receive matters referred to them from both the Police and OPCC, such as how the Police were operating, and were they doing so in an ethical way with due regard to equality. It was further noted that the Committee itself could raise issues and concerns with both the PCC and the Chief Constable. With regards to EIAs internal system which the PCC had inherited, he stated he was happy to go back and look system if the Overview Select Committee was not satisfied with the system.

The PCC then received questions from Members and was provided with the following information:

- The Chair welcomed the opportunity of the involvement of Members in the appointment of the new Chief Constable, and he hoped there would be an opportunity for the different communities to have some input in the process. He added that the key point for many was the public sector equality duty, and that for the OPCC it could be seen there was a lot of policies and spending in relation to equality which was important. It was noted that the policies and budget of the Council were scrutinised through Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), which were very detailed on all equality issues. The Chair asked, when the OPCC was working across the city and county with the different communities and different needs, how was its work and implications assessed. The PCC informed the meeting that the OPCC had a member of staff that routinely looked at everything the OPCC did and drew up an EIA, with only issues of concern being brought to the attention of the PCC, which had been on two occasions over the past 12 months for additional information. A Member then asked how the OPCC could have subjective interpretation of the EIAs when one person had singular oversight of the EIAs and could minimise some of the issues that could be seen differently by another set of eyes. The PCC said he would write to the Chair with more information on the OPCC EIA Policy.
- The PCC had instigated a policy called 'Community Thursdays'. The whole of the force area had been divided into twenty districts which meant in theory the PCC could visit each of these twice a year, to meet a diverse range of people and organisations, in various locations. All councillors and MPs for each area would be written to with an invitation to meet the PCC at the various venues. Members of the community, Members and MPs can contact the PCC directly with issues of concern, through contact details on the website. The PCC also had a proactive social media policy.
- A Member noted that vacancies had arisen in the post of Chief Constable, and in the posts of Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and senior staff in the OPCC, and that an advisor was currently under investigation. It was stated it was crucial that any PCC needed staff in its office and good advisors. It was recognised that the Chief Constable had retired, and that not all of the senior management team had left since the election of the PCC, and there was a full-time acting Senior Finance Officer pending recruitment of a permanent Senior Finance Officer, which had been delayed due to the pandemic.
- Members further noted the OPCC had discretionary grants in its budget, and it was asked what the split was between the city and county. The PCC informed the meeting there were three aspects to the grants. Grants were reserved for people zones, with one people zone in the city and two in the county with none in Rutland, with grant monies split equally between the three zones. The PCC was looking to create two new people zones dependent on funding and was a decision to be made and would affect how grant monies were split up.
- Another grant went to community safety partnerships, including the Safer Leicester Partnership in the city. Through a funding formula, the money was divided between the partnerships and varied in amount. The City of

Leicester received most of the grant monies, whilst money in the County was distributed to the districts.

- £300k per year had been allocated for distribution through a bid process, and was open to any organisation, which each request being looked at on its own merits, value for money, the track record of the organisations delivering that sort of a project and so on. Staff would then produce a score card which was viewed by the PCC and the decision made whether or not to grant funding.
- The PCC was asked about the recruitment and engagement of communities with reference to the PCC's draft plan, where one of the short-term priorities was ensuring the recruitment of officers was representative of the diverse communities within Leicester. He was asked that during his time as PCC, how many recruitment exercises had taken place and how many recruits were there from BAME communities, with information to be broken down for each community. The PCC responded that central government had had an operational uplift across the country, and meant there would be 20,000 more officers across the country at the end of the recruitment process by the end of the next financial year. Leicestershire Police had been recruiting continuously since funding had become available in 2020. The PCC's predecessor instituted a policy which aimed at having one in four new recruits coming from an ethnic minority, with a view to having a police force having a balanced ethnic mix. It was reported that to date of the 178 additional officers recruited in the current financial year, 14% had come from ethnic minorities against a target of 25%. An initial paper on recruitment and retention had been taken to the last the P&CP. However, the PCC stated he was still not satisfied with it as it did not provide detail on what the police were actually doing to recruit more ethnic minority officers, and had asked for another report which would be reported to the next P&CP meeting in June. He added there was a second stage around retention, as anecdotally across the country more ethnic minority than white police officers were leaving the police force around four to five years after joining. It was noted the percentage of recruits from ethnic minorities had increased every year but was not at the 25% target being aimed for. Detail on what was being done around retention would also be reported to the P&CP meeting. Following a request the PCC agreed to provide a breakdown of recruitment numbers by ethnic groups to the Chair and Members.
- A Member referred to reports in the media about problems within the police force at a national level, and what measures the PCC was putting in place to address any problems with the culture in the police force. The PCC responded that Leicestershire Police had very firm guidelines and guidance on issues such as racism and misogyny, and that since he had taken office there had been a number of disciplinary procedures taken against officers, not all in the public domain. In looking at each of the disciplinary cases the PCC was satisfied that Leicestershire Police were dealing with issues in a robust fashion, that procedures were fit for purpose, and that Leicestershire Police held themselves to a very high standard. It was noted that the P&CP could ask for a report on disciplinary which would be a public document.
- A Member referred to the drop-out rate of BAME officers and asked if there were any early indication as to why they were leaving the Police so early on. The PCC stated that this was a national rather than exclusively a local

trend, and said he was not aware of any formal study of exit interviews, and anecdotal information was fed back to the PCC by the Black Police Officers Association or the National Association of Police and Crime Commissioners who were also concerned. He did, however, note that one factor mentioned to the PCC more than most was those officers from communities that do not have a long history of members joining the police force felt they were not supported in their role when dealing with members of their community who were hostile towards them, and were not receiving support from the police to enable them to deal with the issue which was stressful for them.

- The Chair stated the community, businesses and partners had drawn attention to a planned cut in police numbers, and it was assumed that resources were being withdrawn from the city and being placed in and Rutland. The PCC assured the meeting that there had been no cuts in police numbers, but there had in fact been an increase in numbers since he had taken up office, and no cuts were planned, but the funding of police was dependent on national government. It was added that the former PCC had put in place a medium-term financial plan for five years that would have seen police numbers rise to 2,342. However, when the PCC had looked at the plan in which there had been a delayed takeover due to pandemic, he found that if the original budget had been followed, then all available reserves would have been spent by the end of 2024, and there would have been a funding gap of £3million by 2025. It was also found there was also a level of capital expenditure not budgeted for, part of which was moving police staff from the Purple Book system to the Hay system and was expected to cost somewhere in the region of £3million over a three-year period. Further, the call management system was old and some of the equipment was not functioning properly, with nothing in the budget to replace that. The PCC therefore had taken the decision that it would have been reckless to recruit 200 police officers more than the government was giving essential funding for and recruited 100 police officers above the government funding which had come from the precept but had stopped at this point. The figures would be looked at in two years-time as to whether to recruit and had avoided a £3million shortfall.
- Police numbers in the city were not being reduced. Central Government was providing more funds to have more officers than at any time over the past six or seven years, and Leicestershire was in the fortunate position to have more police officers deployed across the area.
- A specific rural crime unit had been established which currently consisted of three full-time officers, and the PCC wanted to increase it to eight full-time officers.
- The PCC discussed training and, as an example, had introduced training for call handlers to recognise language that rural people used when reporting a crime, such as fly grazing and hare coursing, and to ask the farmer specific questions to ascertain if criminal damage was occurring. The PCC was seeking to address the concerns of people in rural areas, who had been neglected in recent years, and that this was down to staff training rather than the deployment of officers, and also down to equipment, for example, four-wheel drive vehicles would be provided to enable officers to police rural areas better.

- The PCC spoke in terms of full-time equivalent of officers, but the Home Office had used actual head count, so there was a mis-match of about 70 officers between full-time equivalent and actual officers. The PCC had also lobbied the Home Office about the funding formula used for police forces which included disparate information, for example, average size of a domestic dwelling, whereas the number of business premises wasn't taken into account at all. It was noted the Government was committed to the figure of an extra 20,000 police officers, and once they had been recruited, trained and deployed on the streets the Government would look at increasing the police numbers.
- The PCC said that there were adequate police numbers but the answer to whether there could be more was also yes. He added that as long as any crime was unsolved or a criminal unpunished or if any victim felt they had not received justice then more should be done, and not just from the police force but other aspects of the criminal justice system such as Magistrates Court, restorative justice and so on.
- With regards to response times to phone calls, Leicestershire Police were better than average. In terms of how quickly the police arrived at a reported crime, it varied dependent on the nature of the crime. For example, a Category One crime where physical violence may be imminent, the Police were classed as good at the last inspection, but clarified that further information would be provided to the Chair and Members.
- In relation to beat officers, the Leicestershire Police had gone through two reorganisations; one seven years ago to make the police more efficient in its use of resources and more effective when responding to serious crime. In doing so in three or four years it was realised that by becoming more effective in its response, the Police had rapidly lost contact between local officers and local areas and communities, had become centralised and they were losing local knowledge. The Police two years ago then developed the Target Operating Model (TOM) to place police local geographically. At the same time the training of recruits and retraining was changed to emphasise the importance of forming good relationships with people, e.g. newsagents who know what is going on in an area.
- The Community Active Scheme, first trialled in the St Phillips area and Lutterworth areas in the County, had been very successful in involving local members of the community and volunteers in going out and educating the local community, speaking the correct language, and in coming from the same cultural background they understood the cultural norms of the community, which was in large part teenage boys.
- The Violence Reduction Network had just had a three-year funding formula agreed by Central Government, allowing for more long-term planning on what they were doing.
- With regards to stop and search it was reported that guidelines for the Police were only to 'Stop and Search' if they had good reason to believe a person was carrying a knife or similar or strong evidence of engaging in a criminal activity. There were however, two sides to stop and search. Firstly, the Police could make the maximum possible use of stop and search so that anyone carrying a knife would be stopped and the knives retrieved. Or secondly, if people were routinely stopped and were not engaged in criminal activity, who were not carrying knives and were perceived to be stopped



unfairly, it could damage community relations. There were some communities that historically had not had a good relationship with the police force and stop and search was seen as a factor of that. It stated that stop and search relied on the personal judgement of the individual officer, and training and experience had a lot to do with getting it right.

- There was a debate on whether there was more hate crime, or whether victims of hate crime were more confident in reporting it as they now felt they would be taken seriously compared to a few years ago. Repeat training of officers was putting more emphasis on hate crime, and it was important the law-abiding public had faith in the police taking it seriously.
- The meeting was informed that, with regards to news reporting on Mr Beale (an advisor for the OPCC), he was not being paid £100,000 per year, but was paid on a day rate, was a personal matter of payment, and that his contract was public but not the figure paid. It was reported that should be legally declared was available on the OPCC website, and was a requirement for all contractors. The meeting was told Mr Beale was a former Chief Constable of two police forces and highly experienced of police matters, and had a lot to contribute. Mr Beale was under investigation for charges unknown.

The Chair thanked the PCC and Members for the thorough discussion. The Chair summarised the discussion with a motion:

- The Committee expressed serious concern with regard to the level of commitment that the PCC had for policing and for the protection of community safety in the city, particularly in light of his reversal of the decision taken previously to increase policing numbers in Leicester. The Committee asked the PCC to strongly reconsider his decision at the earliest possible opportunity in order to provide the level of policing that it felt was necessary for the city.
- The Committee asked the PCC to look urgently at the way in which his office gave regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty and strongly recommended that the OPCC carry out formal Equality Impact Assessments when developing policy and setting budgets.
- The Committee asked for a clear breakdown based on ethnicity in respect of the 14% of BME employees within the constabulary.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Joel. On being put to the vote the motion was carried. Councillor Porter voted against the motion.

The City Mayor also gave thanks to Simon Cole, and stated he was very grateful for his service in the City, County and Rutland as Chief Constable. He added that Simon had been particularly inspirational as a leader to the local police, and had been particularly active and determined to engage with and understand the many different communities in the city and county, and to reflect that in how policing was carried out the area. The City Mayor joined the Committee in wishing him well for the future and saw him go with a lot of gratitude.

The Chair moved that the Committee wished to thank the former Chief Constable, Simon Cole, for many years of dedicated service to policing in Leicester. The Committee wished him all the very best in his retirement from the constabulary.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Joshi, and on being put to the vote the motion was carried.

**RESOLVED:**

That:

- The Committee expressed serious concern regarding the level of commitment that the PCC had for policing and for the protection of community safety in the city, particularly in light of his reversal of the decision taken previously to increase policing numbers in Leicester. The Committee asked the PCC to strongly re-consider his decision at the earliest possible opportunity in order to provide the level of policing that the Committee felt was necessary for the city.
- The Committee asked the PCC to look urgently at the way in which his office gave regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty and strongly recommended that the OPCC carried out formal Equality Impact Assessments when developing policy and setting budgets.
- The Committee asked for a clear breakdown based on ethnicity in respect of the 14% of BME employees within the constabulary.
- The Committee wished to thank the former Chief Constable, Simon Cole, for many years of dedicated service to policing in Leicester. They wished him all the very best in his retirement from the constabulary.

**99. ENHANCING WOMEN'S SAFETY IN LEICESTER**

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a report which provided the Overview Select Committee with details of current community safety work around supporting a safer Leicester for women and girls. The report also highlighted how programmes of work were being developed with respect to this agenda and put in place to enhance support for women and girls both at home and in public spaces.

The Deputy City Mayor, Councillor Clair introduced the report which talked about the safety and women of girls. The report also updated on areas of work reported previously to the Committee on the night-time economy and Safer Streets (parks & open spaces), and provided information on Home Office funding to the OPCC and local authorities to address issues of crime and the fear of crime faced by women and girls.

Officers reported that the safer streets element on parks was identified by police based on highest crime and anti-social behaviour statistics, and eight parks and open spaces in the city were identified as needing intervention, and a programme of works was developed and completed, with the last few CCTV cameras having been installed, with city centre operators monitoring and recording footage from the cameras.

Members agreed with the focus on women and girls safety and asked if there was further progress on tackling issues in areas such as St Margaret's underpass. They also highlighted that the need for education was paramount in changing the behaviour of men towards women and girls. Officers reported there was a large campaign planned around behavioural change.

Members also noted the reference to SIA registered door staff who were key in making women feel safer during the night-time economy but there was a lack of faith that women had in the door staff. It was asked if there was further work planned with SIA door staff for improving safety and confidence of women to approach SIA staff.

The agenda item was partially taken, but due to technical problems the Committee was unable to engage fully with the officers online. It was agreed to bring a further report back to a future meeting of the Committee that would also provide more detail on the provision of door staff in serving the night-time economy and respond to issue raised regarding the safety of St Margaret's underpass.

**RESOLVED:**

That:

1. The report be noted.
2. An update report be brought to a future meeting to include detail around the provision of SIA door staff and training and respond to the issue raised regarding the safety of St Margaret's underpass.

## **100. COVID-19 VERBAL UPDATE**

The City Mayor provided an overview of the latest picture of ward trends, including Covid-19 infection rates and vaccinations. The presentation is attached for information, and the following points were noted:

- Delivery of vaccinations in the city had virtually stalled and was well behind what was being achieved more generally in England.
- The delivery of vaccinations in two particular settings very worrying:  
1/ delivery in schools. There were some exceptions but had vastly failed.  
2/ elderly persons care homes, which was causing considerable concern.
- There was no criticism of NHS management, but that there was a systemic failure as a result of how the Government had formed and reformed the service over many years.
- There were concerns over the integrated care system, as it was very difficult to marshal the NHS locally to deliver vaccinations.
- The science on the slides showed clearly geographical communities where levels of deprivation were significant and levels of vaccinations were very low, and that the Director of Public Health had spoken on the links between deprivation and vaccinations on several occasions.

The Chair noted that the pandemic was not over and the City Mayor and Director of Public Health were keen to emphasise the fact.

Members asked what the Council could do to encourage people to get vaccinated. The City Mayor stated that detailed discussions had been held with the NHS to discuss ways in which the Council could help them, for example, through using pharmacies, which had been used in one or two places in the city and had been very successful. Discussions had taken place with the NHS on the extent to which the model could be used elsewhere.

Councillor Kitterick, Chair of Health Scrutiny Commission, stated the Director of Public Health had provided a report with a full breakdown of areas of deprivation and vaccination take up. It had been noted the people had fallen ill with Covid quite evenly across the city, but the effect on those with Covid was noticeable based on health inequalities in the city.

The City Mayor, Councillor Cassidy and Councillor Kitterick would discuss the sharing of information to all Members.

RESOLVED:

That:

1. The update be noted.
2. The City Mayor, Councillor Cassidy and Councillor Kitterick discuss the sharing of the Report of the Director of Public Health and information therein on the links between the areas of deprivation and vaccination take-up.

## **101. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES UPDATE**

The Director of Delivery Communications and Political Governance submitted a report which summarised the strategic priorities and commitments of the Council.

The Overview Select Committee received a presentation at the meeting from Councillor Myers, Assistant City Mayor for Jobs, Skills, Policy Delivery and Communications, which set out a summary of progress against the key strategic priorities based on each theme for the period 2019 to 2023. The following points were highlighted:

- Within the strategic priorities, there were 95 commitments.
- The pandemic had inevitably impacted on the delivery and feasibility of some areas and there had been redirection of resources, though excellent progress had been made.
- A summary position was provided:
  - 56 (59%) were completed / embedded
  - 29 (31%) were ongoing
  - 6 (6%) had been delayed by Covid-19 - primarily building or Public Health related
  - 4 (4%) were no longer appropriate or feasible, namely, establishing a local lottery, EV Taxi scheme, Unison ethical care charter (prohibitive

in terms of cost) and the affordable undertaking service, as there had been government change and would expose the Council to financial risk.

- A fair city – there was noticeable flexibility to provide financial support through various grant schemes and tax reduction scheme. Fuel poverty had been identified in the city long before it became a news issue. There was an anti-poverty focus including the launch of a strategy with a raft of measures. The Council had maintained its commitment over the holiday hunger programme, had invested in council estates, continued with the front wall improvement scheme, and provided jobs and skills investment with the upskilling of fashion and textiles in the city, and construction hub.
- There had been a challenge around business engagement which was largely down to the pandemic, and the communication channels and relationship with the business community became largely administrative through the business grant schemes. Coming out the other side of the process the authority was much more aware of the wider business community, with more data available and relationships were being re-built.
- Homes for all – £89million had been invested with a council homes improvement programme. The authority had reduced overcrowding in council properties, over 2,000 adaptations had been made to homes, and a private landlord licensing scheme was in progress. There had been further enhancement of homelessness services with wrap around services, and a positive working relationship with St Mungo's was in place.
- 838 Council homes had been provided but there would be a struggle to meet the 1,500 target due an increase in the cost of land and pandemic impacts.

The Chair asked if the target of 1,500 homes would be achieved by 2023 at its end point. The City Mayor responded that he was frustrated that a deal previously proposed and discussed at OSC had fallen through, which had included as part of the mix the building of new and the purchase of some homes. He added that it had required the Council to rethink the mix of construction and other types of accommodation, but work would continue on what could be achieved in the time available, though this would be challenging. It was noted, however, that the number of actual homes being provided in the city was many times that number.

Members welcomed the strategic way forward but noted that affordable housing in the city wasn't affordable any more with the financial crisis being faced in the city, and that long-term commitment to providing social housing was needed, along with the commitment to reduce overcrowding. The Assistant City Mayor said the authority faced a continued uphill struggle against the Right to Buy scheme.

- Connecting Leicester – achievements included the introduction of rapid transit bus corridors, 20mph programme delivered, investment in the cycling network and increased cycling numbers, consultation on a workplace parking levy and the establishment of a Transport Access Group, which had informed a lot of developments across the city. The Council had been incredibly successful in securing funding to deliver the improved transport

infrastructure. A challenge faced was the capacity to deliver programmes to specification with the rising cost of materials post-pandemic.

Councillor Porter asked with regards to the workplace parking levy what the reduction in carbon emissions would be in Leicester as a direct result of the scheme. The City Mayor responded there had been a commitment to consult on the workplace parking levy and a response to the consultation process would be provided in due course which would provide answers to the questions raised by residents and the effects of the scheme.

- Sustainable Leicester – weekly bin collections had been maintained; the city had extended its tree canopy coverage with 17,001 trees planted; there had been major investment to deliver 96 new electric buses on 21 main routes and the council fleet conversion to electric was being progressed.
- A challenge had been the provision to providing free drinking water in public spaces due to the redirection of public health resource, but attention had returned back to the priority to deliver.

*Councillor Porter left the meeting at this point.*

- Health and Care – the Council had protected leisure services and invested in facilities, had piloted the community connectors approach, worked hard to provide employment opportunities for children who are looked after, and maintained the daily mile in schools. Covid 19 had impacted on programmes, for example, learning to swim and the mapping of heart defibrillators.
- Lifelong learning – there had been designated provision for special educational needs, free WiFi was being rolled out across council buildings, and library services had been protected. Challenges had included numbers accessing the Adult Education Service but were now returning to pre-pandemic levels up to around 7,000 people (86%).
- A city to enjoy – investment had been made in parks across the city, with a highly successful festival programme despite the pandemic, for example, Light Up Leicester. The Visit Leicester, Story of Leicester and Museums websites had been updated, with improvements in branding to encourage visitors to the city. New workspace and business support had been developed, for example, the Gresham building. It was noted that before the pandemic it had been observed there was the need for more flexible working, and the challenge was adapting workspace to meet the needs of the ways of working during and post-pandemic.

Members asked if for the foreseeable future staff would work at home rather than in the workplace. Councillor Myers responded the Council was looking at its estate and working patterns, as were other organisations post pandemic.

- Safe and inclusive city – there was a city-wide knife crime strategy, and a focus and investment in women's safety brought into focus by the murder of Sarah Everard. The city continued to support refugees and asylum seekers and had played a huge role in the Afghanistan resettlement scheme, and were poised to do the same with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The

Council had further worked on the restorative justice commitment. A challenge had been the progressing of hate crime work with schools due to pandemic impacts.

- Further key achievements were:
  - Securing over £2billion investment in major regeneration schemes.
  - City investment via successful £46million levelling up funding bids, whereby the Council had been successful in all three bids, for Pilot House, Space Park, and Leicester Railway Station.
  - The Council had been successful in all five bids for community renewal fund monies totalling £3million for community projects to support skills and employment.
- Leicester's response to the pandemic had led the way, including the food hub at De Montfort Hall. The way Leicester had led the way during the pandemic had been pitched nationally.
- There had been a huge response and team of officers working during the pandemic, and the Assistant City Mayor, Councillor Myers thanks everyone who worked at the City Council for their work whilst facing the most significant crisis for generations.

The Chair noted that it was important that scrutiny commission Chairs look at the commitments and where appropriate, to discuss them at Commission meeting.

The Chair thanked the Assistant City Mayor, Councillor Myers for the report.

AGREED:

1. That in conjunction with Scrutiny Officers and Lead Directors, scrutiny commission Chairs consider the extent to which the Council's commitments be covered in work programmes for the next municipal year.

## **102. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING, APRIL - DECEMBER 2021/22**

The Deputy Director of Finance submitted a report to the Overview Select Committee which was the third in the monitoring cycle for 2021/22 and forecast the expected performance against the budget for the year. The Committee is recommended to consider the overall position presented within the report and make any observations it sees fit.

Amy Oliver, Head of Finance, provided the following information:

- The current position was in line with the previous position reported to committee, showing an overspend £8.4m.
- As had previously been reported there was a significant income loss as a direct consequence of COVID, particularly in City, Developments and Neighbourhoods. The costs associated to the pandemic were manageable within the one-off sums the Council had set aside to support the pandemic.
- It was noted Adult Social Care were forecasting an underspend of £7million which would be used to offset the overspend in Children's Services. As an explanation for the underspend, the budget mostly comprised of the cost of

packages for the care of individuals. Each year, the cost increased due to increasing numbers of people receiving services, the changing needs of those already in receipt of packages and the contractual fee increases (essentially the increase in the national living wage and other price inflation).

- The Council had used a model for a number of years to set the budgets which has proved robust with actual gross package costs close to budget. The model was based on the trends of cost increases both from the increasing needs of people already receiving care and the growth in numbers newly receiving care. Unsurprisingly the pandemic had a significant impact on these trends with greater reluctance to access services, in particular during the lockdowns and there were nearly 100 fewer people in residential care at the end of March 2021 compared to the start of the pandemic.
- The impact of COVID in 2020 had continued into 2021/22. Whilst overall numbers receiving care at the start of 2021/22 was in line with the budget set, there had been fewer package cost increases than previous years and fewer people in residential care.
- The cost pressures in SEN home to school transport related to the £1million saving built into the budget for 2021/22 in anticipation for a new framework contract being in place with fixed taxi charge rates at a unit rate. Unfortunately, prior to the contract going live the providers refused to take on the individual contracts awarded at the new framework rate. Therefore, the Council was left with no option but to abandon the framework. A new contract was starting from mid-April with existing contracts being honoured until the summer term. In addition, to the framework being abandoned the unit costs for SEN transport had significantly increased 26% higher than 2020.

In response to Members' questions, the following information was provided:

- With regards to the total overspend of £8million related to one-off costs arising from the pandemic and continued losses of income, but were accommodated with monies set aside at last year's outturn position. Money from the 2022/23 budget one-off funding had also been set aside as the effects of Covid were still having an impact.
- The Adult Social Care underspend of £7million forecast was set in Autumn 2020 at which time it was unclear how the pandemic would develop during the remaining months of 2020/21.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report.

AGREED:

1. That the overall position of the budget be noted.

### **103. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, APRIL - DECEMBER 2021/22**

The Deputy Director of Finance submitted a report to the Overview Select Committee to show the position of the capital programme at the end of December 2021 (Period 9). The Committee was recommended to consider the



overall position presented within the report and make any observations it sees fit.

Amy Oliver, Head of Finance, presented the report and drew Members' attention to the following:

- The report contained two decisions:
  - St Margaret's Gateway – an additional £800k to be funded from monies set aside for potential additional costs on current schemes associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.
  - Green Homes scheme – an additional £1.6million was being asked for to be funded from government grant.

Councillor Kitterick asked for a position update on Jewry Wall Museum which was costing £15million that covered the latest contractual procurement and financial issues. He also asked that updates be provided on Abbey Pumping Station and Leicester City Football Club planning decisions.

Councillor Clair, Deputy City Mayor responded, and confirmed that he expected that Jewry Wall would come within budget. He further informed those present that there had been some sickness and the requirement for officers to take leave within the Planning team. It was further reported there had been an issue regarding technology and equipment in planning. He added there was a commitment to providing more resources in planning and a progress report had been requested.

Councillor Kitterick welcome the opportunity to receive briefing note on the planning process and timescales taken when currently dealing with planning applications in light of delays.

The Chair noted the current position on the budget.

**AGREED:**

That:

1. The current budget position be noted.
2. An update report on the Jewry Wall Museum be circulated to scrutiny members that covered the latest contractual procurement and financial issues.
3. A briefing note on the planning process and timescales taken when dealing with planning application be circulated to scrutiny members.

#### **104. SCOPING DOCUMENT- HOUSING CRISIS IN LEICESTER**

The Overview Select Committee was asked to receive and endorse the Scoping Document 'Housing Crisis in Leicester' (Housing Scrutiny Commission).

Councillor Westley, Chair of Housing Scrutiny Commission introduced the document. He stated that it was recognised that there was a housing crisis and

welcomed what the Council was achieving to the best of its ability in providing affordable housing but stated that levelling up did not work.

The scoping document set out the purpose and aims of the review to look in the long term at purely social housing. It was recognised that the needs of the population in Leicester had increased, with impacts on health, education and working life, and a lack of a decent home for people led to complications.

The Chair of Housing welcomed Members who were not on the Housing Scrutiny Commission to give evidence and take part in the review as the issue was city-wide and would be a complex and challenging study. The working party would also need to look at the issue of available land, and how the Right to Buy policy had undermined the housing stock over the years and could not be sustained.

The Chair felt that it needed to be defined what a housing crisis was, but acknowledged the review was scoped in such a way that it did not cover everything. He suggested one thing that could be looked at further on was the impact it had on families and individuals without housing.

The Chair noted the review and endorsed it with a definition of housing crisis to be determined.

AGREED:

1. That the Housing Scrutiny Review of the housing crisis in Leicester (definition to be determined) be endorsed.

## 105. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

1. Question from the Chair, Councillor Cassidy:  
*It goes without saying that we all want to do everything we can to support those suffering as a result of the perilous situation that has unfolded in Ukraine. Can the City Mayor outline the lines of support that the City Council and our partner agencies can provide in terms of distributing aid and in offering refuge to those fleeing the conflict?*

The City Mayor responded to the question and made the following points:

- He recognised it was an important question and all were aware of the unfolding tragedy as a result of Russian aggression. The city was proud of its past in supporting refugees and would support those fleeing Ukraine.
- An online registration for the sponsorship scheme had opened and responses were being registered. It was noted the Home Office handling of the situation was far from enthusiastic and effective. The sponsors and guests were being asked to put themselves forward and be matched. Sponsors would be enhanced DBS checked.
- There were a number of important functions along with the responsibility to safeguarding, checking properties, guests and sponsors, and checking accommodation.

- Advice would also be provided with specialists, public health services, mental health services, and education personnel on hand.
- School places would be found for children and employment sought for adults.
- As part of next steps, council representatives would be meeting with Ukrainian community representatives and Association of Ukrainians in Britain.
- The city was proudly diverse and there would be challenges but were not unsurmountable.

The City Mayor stated the Ukrainian community locally had been utterly brilliant, and he paid tribute to the work of Councillor Russell, Deputy City Mayor, who had been working with the Ukrainian community.

The Council was working to deliver immediate support needs and longer term needs for those that might be in the community for some time to come. Members would be kept fully briefed as the situation developed.

The Chair thanked the City Mayor, officers working on supporting the Ukrainian refugees, and Councillor Russell who was providing excellent care to the community. It was further noted that the generosity of the people of Leicester had been tremendous, with a van load of essential goods having left for Poland. Thanks were also given for Councillor Cank who was coordinating a response.

The City Mayor thanked Councillor Cassidy for his constructive and appropriate Chairing and scrutiny. Further updates on the situation in Ukraine and work with the community would be provided.

#### **106. OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The work programme for the Committee was noted.

#### **107. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

There being no other items of urgent business, the meeting closed at 8.56pm.