



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
HERITAGE CULTURE LEISURE AND TOURISM SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 10 JANUARY 2023 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Halford (Chair)

Councillor Dr Barton

Councillor March

Also Present

Councillor Clair, Deputy City Mayor

53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Dawood and Shelton.

The Chair noted that the meeting was currently inquorate, the meeting could still proceed as a briefing however the Commission could not take any formal decisions while inquorate.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they had in the business on the agenda.

There were no declarations of interest.

55. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

56. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

57. COUNCIL DRAFT BUDGET REPORTS

Councillor Barton arrived partway through consideration of this item, at this point the meeting became quorate.

The Director of Finance submitted a report on the Council's Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme budget for the financial year 2023/24.

The Head of Finance presented the Draft Revenue Budget first, it was noted that:

- The final details of the finance settlement with the Government had yet to be finalised, however is available the final details would be included in the report which went to Full Council.
- Important background context for the budget was the decade of austerity, the Covid pandemic, and the inflationary pressure on Adult Social Care Services.
- Other inflationary pressures were on energy costs, staff pay, and waste disposal.
- The Government had indicated that it would be making further spending cuts, with local government funding likely to see some of the worst cuts.
- Councils were now permitted to raise Council Tax by 5% without a referendum, this was proposed in the Draft Budget. Additional Council Tax would also be placed on furnished empty properties. Additional funding had been received to support those receiving Council Tax support, meaning that some would see a reduction in their Council Tax bills.
- The Fair Funding Review had been deferred to the next Parliament.
- The approach to achieving budget reductions was to make savings in a planned way. This had left an estimated £55m in reserves. The current budget gap was £33m, so this was the maximum that would be brought from reserves.
- Further savings were essential, present projections showed that without further savings, reserves would run out in 24/25.

In response to a Member question it was noted that the budget did not show the total spend versus income of each department and service. The budget showed the budgeted cost to the Council of each department and service after income.

In response to a Member question it was noted that savings in the budgets for Arts and Museums would not come from significant cuts to services but would instead come from a reduction in some running costs and a change in income targets.

The Head of Finance presented the Draft Capital Programme next, it was noted that:

- This was a 1-year programme, a longer-term programme was not currently possible due to the economic uncertainty.
- Spending of note for the Commission was £100k for parking spaces at Phoenix, £2.5m for supporting Multi-Use Games Areas, £340k for the purchase of and works at St Pauls Church, £185k for new heritage panels, and £50k for grants for the repair of historic buildings.

- Identifying any potential further funding streams was a continual part of the budgeting process.

In response to a Member question it was noted that the Council had been trying to work with the owners of St Pauls Church to get the necessary works completed for many years.

AGREED:

1. That the Commission notes the Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme for 2023/24.
2. That the Commission requests that further details of budget from each department in the Commission area be provided to the Commission, including details of income.
3. That the Commission requests further information on the purchase of St Pauls Church.

58. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Heritage, Culture, Leisure, and Tourism Scrutiny Commission held 8 November 2022 are confirmed as a correct record.

59. COST OF LIVING IMPACT UPDATE - SPORTS SERVICES

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance submitted a report on the cost-of-living impact upon sports facilities and services in Leicester.

The Head of Sports and the Leisure Facilities Development Manager presented the item, it was noted that:

- Utilities was the 2nd biggest expenditure for leisure facilities. A forecast calculated that £1.2m had been spent on gas and electric in leisure facilities compared to £718k in the previous year.
- The rise in costs came in at October 2022, and further increases were expected in the next financial year.
- Efforts were ongoing to reduce energy consumption, this included introducing pool covers, and air source heat pumps at some locations.

In response to Members' questions it was noted that:

- Leisure operators throughout the country were struggling with this, some Leisure Trusts were handing their facilities back to Local Authorities due to budget challenges.
- As part of efficiency work, opening hours had already been reviewed to be the most efficient. Further work on energy efficiency was ongoing

alongside Estates and Buildings Services.

- Government support for businesses struggling with utilities costs was available to Local Authorities, however the prices paid by the Council were not high enough to qualify for that support.
- It was hoped that solar panels could be put up at Aylestone Leisure Centre.
- The pressure from energy costs was being covered by the General Budget, however it was hoped that in future Sports Services would be generating lots more income.

AGREED:

1. That the Commission requests that Members comments be taken into account by Officers.
2. That the Commission requests a future update to the Commission on how energy efficiency measures have impacted costs.

60. WORK PROGRAMME

The Work Programme for the Commission was noted.

That Chair noted that the report from the task group had been circulated to Members and would now be expanded to a full report and would be presented to a later meeting.

61. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 6.29pm.