



Leicester  
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORT AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY  
SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2023 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor O'Neill - Vice-Chair in the Chair

Councillor Batool  
Councillor Osman  
Councillor Whittle

Councillor Dawood  
Councillor Porter

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**36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Rae Bhatia and Cutkelvin.

Apologies were also received from the Chair, Cllr Waddington. Vice-Chair Cllr O'Neill chaired the meeting.

The Vice-Chair read out the following messages from the Chair:

“First congratulations to Kerry Grey and all the adult education staff for the "Good" rating. Adult Education opportunities are needed now more than ever so the report of the way ahead is welcome.

Secondly to say that our task group on 20mph streets has held two meetings and is going well and on track to report back at our next commission meeting. Constructive contributions from members ... stakeholders and officers.

Finally Happy Christmas to all and thanks for your work this year.”

**37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

Regarding the minutes from 18 October 2023, the clarity of the statistics showing an 18% increase in bus use due to a bus lane on Aylestone Road was questioned. It was questioned as to why other authorities who had put a lot of work into bus services had seen a smaller increase in bus use. It was suggested that other factors, such as increased bus services, had been more of a reason for the increased bus use than the bus lane on Aylestone Road.

Regarding the minutes from 16 November 2023, It was requested that it be noted that a point was raised concerning the relocation of some bus services to now stop at St Margaret's bus station which has had led to some people with limited mobility having difficulty getting into the city centre.

Other than the above it was:

AGREED:

That the minutes of the previous meetings held on 18 October 2023 and 16 November 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

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

It was noted that none had been received.

### **40. PETITIONS**

It was noted that none had been received.

### **41. ENERGY EFFICIENCY FOR HOMES**

*Cllr Dawood arrived at the beginning of this item.*

The Director for Estates and Building Services submitted a report on Energy efficiency schemes in private sector housing in the city.

The Service Manager for Sustainability attended the meeting to make the presentation and assist with discussion and the Team Leader for Energy Projects attended the meeting remotely to assist with discussion.

Slides were presented as attached in the agenda pack.

Key points included:

- A large percentage of housing within the city was terraced or semi-

detached and 36% was built before 1929. This meant that many of these had solid walls and as such were energy inefficient and needed work to bring up to standard, such as by applying external wall insulation with finishes that retained the character of the building.

- Co-benefits included:
  - Reducing fuel poverty and addressing the cost-of-living crisis – Vulnerable people in the UK spent a higher percentage of their income on energy than those in Europe.
  - Reducing damp and mould and improving internal air quality – Recent events as reported in the media had led to a big push on the issue.
  - Health benefits to residents – both physical and mental.
  - Climate justice – supporting vulnerable groups as climate change mitigation moved forward – lower carbon heating could mean higher costs, so there was a need to support the most vulnerable.
  - Creating local jobs in retrofit installation.
  - Improving the local economic buying power of residents – if residents had more disposable income as a result of lower energy bills, they could spend more in the local economy.
- There had not yet been much research into the impact on homes as the climate warmed, but a watching brief was being kept on research as it came in to ensure that retrofitting was appropriate.
- In a good retrofit, an assessment was undertaken both in needs of the physical aspects of the property and how the owners of the property were using that property. Following this a whole-house plan was prepared. Once that plan was complete, options were considered such as upgrading the fabric of the building, looking at heating options and looking at renewable technologies.
- Barriers to retrofit included:
  - Solid wall properties – these required internal or external insulation.
  - Inaccessible lofts.
  - Disrepair – such as loose gutters and pipes that would need to be fixed prior to external insulation being installed.
  - Homes in conservation areas – in these cases it was necessary to ensure that actions fitted the planning requirements.
  - The cost of redecoration following works.
  - Compliance with the requests of the occupant – some occupants may pay more for a brick-strip effect.
  - Overall costs – these had increased since the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.
  - Ensuring the availability of properly trained staff.
- If all retrofitting was completed as desired in the city, 86% of city properties could be brought up to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) level C or above, however, the cost of this would be prohibitive.
- In terms of grant schemes since October 2020 – Schemes had been difficult to administer and run and had taken time to get going. Figures

were relatively low for Phase 1. Whilst lots had been achieved in phase 2, this also covered social housing which was easier to achieve. The Local Authority Delivery (LAD) 3 had been the most successful scheme in both Leicester and nationally. This had been delivered well in the private sector. The Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) scheme was only available for off-gas properties, and there was no national scheme from the government for vulnerable houses on gas.

- ECO was a government efficiency scheme funded through energy company obligation. This was money from energy suppliers that installers could apply for and was not run by Local Authorities.
- In terms of achievements through the Green Homes Grant (GHG) and LAD schemes, LAD 3 had been the most successful. All of the money given to them had been spent and a further £1.3m had been bid for at a later stage and then used. Since it had been difficult to identify off-gas homes for the HUG scheme, the surplus money had been spent in LAD 3.
- Residents in New Parks who had benefitted from the schemes were happy, but it was recognised that there was more to do in terms of what was needed.
- The HUG 2 scheme was coming up, however, there were not many off-gas homes in the city.
- Schemes were promoted to landlords through libraries and neighbourhood centres. Stalls had been run in various locations and an email had been sent out showing the schemes available for Leicester residents.
- Warm Home Surveys would let householders know what needed to be done and would refer people to grant schemes. This was being promoted through multiple channels including local radio.
- The Council were working with EON on retrofit schemes. In addition, currently creating a scheme with EON using ECO funding on particular streets. This will reduce number of rogue installers as LCC is confident that EON installers will work to PAS2035 standard. and in line with Planning policies. Data would be obtained on what was being completed.
- Information on projects in progress, links and joined-up working, and how far was still needed to go, was presented in the slides as attached to the agenda pack.
- It was clarified that the figures had been updated since the slides had been produced. There were now 59 homes that had applied for the HUG 2 grant and 38 homes that have applied for the Warm Homes Survey. 647 Homes had now registered under ECO 4.

The Committee were invited to ask questions and make comments. Key points included:

- The take-up of grants from landlords had not been high, and of those that had enquired many had not followed through when they were

informed that they would need to contribute a third of the costs. Despite this, the Council were still trying to promote the scheme.

- External wall insulation had proven difficult to deliver within costs, and many had not been in favour of internal wall insulation when external wall insulation had not been possible. It was not thought that there would be much success in delivering internal wall insulation as it required lots of work with windowsills, shelves and sockets, which could be obstructions. The Planning team had tried to be flexible where possible and were trying to come up with as many compromises as possible to have external insulation.
- Many buildings had detail on their facades and contractors were being engaged to influence activity prior to planning applications. The Council led by example by demonstrating through council properties what could be achieved.
- A trial was being carried out by the Housing department retrofitting on a terraced house in a way that retained detail but also complied with the standard for retrofitting. Since all retrofits needed to meet the standard, this was important to address. Poor practice in other authorities had shown potential issues, such as water getting behind insulation that caused severe problems, therefore it was important to fully think retrofits through.
- In terms of property licensing, there was a condition for properties to be EPC level 3 or above to obtain a licence.
- Regarding concerns that landlords may have over losing more money than they got back, it was clarified that landlords only had to pay £3k before they could apply for an exemption.
- The slides laid out what would be achieved if all energy efficiency measures could be completed. However, it was reiterated that the cost was prohibitive. The exact figures would be obtained.
- In terms of barriers to retrofitting. Funding was an issue, however, there were other barriers such as disruption to tenants. However, as energy costs increased, people would not want to spend so much of their income on staying warm, therefore it was thought that retrofitting would rise up people's agendas. Even if all the desired funding was available, there would still be barriers, however there were ways of working with tenants to overcome them.
- The current level of EPC level C homes was 36% and the potential was 86% if all stock was retrofitted. This was an aspiration rather than a target and it showed the nature of the challenge.
- Some homes that had been upgraded early had been disqualified from future schemes.
- The figures were from the national data set and were not broken down by city. The most relevant data therefore was the data for the East Midlands.
- It was suggested that it might be useful for officers to come to Ward Community Meetings to disseminate information to tenants and residents, perhaps with a brief presentation on what could be offered

and what could be offered to that Ward in particular.

- Hydrogen-powered heating was not yet being considered as the technology was still in development, however the research was being followed closely. Many people had not wanted to take part in trials due to safety concerns. It was thought that the technology would not be available for a long time and as such heat pumps were unlikely to become obsolete in the near future. At this time there were not many other options than heat pumps.
- The team were not involved in delivering district heating but would endeavour to find out whether metering would be a big burden on tenant's budgets.
- Currently there were no schemes aimed at middle-income households. However, National Energy Action had held a conference and there were loan schemes available whereby loan companies offered low-interest loans to private householders to take measures and make repayments. There were currently no schemes from central government, however, it was thought that the Department of Energy were putting work into Green Finance and 'green mortgages' were offered by some banks. Additionally, energy advice could help to save money on intervention.
- Staff (including front-line staff) across the Council were working to keep the community informed. Part of the reason for the Warm Home Survey was to ensure that retrofits were done correctly, and advice could be given.
- Regarding issues with contractors conducting work before planning permission was granted, the Council were working closely with EON regarding where grants went and ensuring people had correct advice. The Council tried to be as involved as possible so as to mitigate issues. Installers were registered by the Council, but it appeared as though some had done work without informing tenants that planning permission was required. Both the Council and EON were working to ensure that tenants were informed correctly. If it became apparent that contractors were informing tenants incorrectly and including the Council logo on their leaflets, Trading Standards would be informed.
- The timeframe was to reach net zero by 2030, however, it was noted that the costs involved in reaching this would be high.
- It was not thought that all homes would be retrofitted by 2030, however, there was no alternative way of doing it as homes needed to be retrofitted. It was important that the Council did all it could before 2030.
- The idea of heating a person rather than a house (i.e. with electric blankets etc.) had been discussed with energy firms and the national grid. However, it was noted that to do so would risk damp, mouldy houses and the associated health risks. All options were considered to address the heating issue. It was requested that alternative options be laid out in future reports.
- It was difficult to obtain data on individual energy bills to assess the benefits of retrofitting and the relative benefits of different forms of retrofitting, however, modelling software appeared to favour external

insulation over internal due to thermal mass (bricks retaining heat after heating had been switched off). It was suggested that an attempt to gather such data could be made in relation to the works in New Parks.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the comments of the Commission be noted.

#### **42. DRAFT ADULT EDUCATION 'ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT'**

The Director for Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment submitted a report reviewing the 2019 Adult Education Service plan and to present the 2022-23 Adult Education self-assessment plan.

The Commission were also consulted regarding the draft Accountability Agreement, which laid out planning priorities and targets for 2024-25 and would form the basis of the service's Adult Education Budget contract with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

The Assistant City Mayor - Communities, Adult Learning, Jobs and Skills, the Director for Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment and the Head of Adult Education attended the meeting to assist with the discussion.

Key points included:

- The ESFA Accountability Agreement laid out priorities for use of funding for 2024/25. It was currently in the planning stage, and this was an opportunity for members to learn about the developments and for comments and suggestions that could be incorporated into the Adult Education and Skills Boot Camp programmes for 2024-25.
- An additional £2 million of Skills Bootcamp funding was being applied for.
- Many of the objectives in the plan for 2019-23 had been achieved despite the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The Self-Assessment report, as was required by Ofsted, highlighted the impacts post-Covid and had shown good progress with numbers of learners increasing by 28% and achievement by nearly 5%. New funding was being sought in order to get more funding for the long-term viability of the service. The Multiply programme had started and grants from Public Health to expand the service had been secured. Key strengths included a diverse curriculum, the way funding was used, and how additional funding was brought in. Partnership work was outstanding. The team were looking to how they could support other departments' agendas in adult education.
- Areas for improvement included a lower-than-expected attendance,

which was partly explained by sickness and learners having conflicting commitments. Another area for improvement was a shortage of tutors. A trainee tutor programme was under way as part of the Multiply programme, which was working well but was relatively expensive.

- Skills Boot Camps were being trialled.
- The Accountability Agreement that identified priorities was not due until June 2024, but had been brought to the commission well in advance.
- New key points in the Agreement included:
  - The Green Skills Agenda
  - The priorities set out in Leicestershire Learning and Skills Improvement Plan
  - Digital skills
  - The needs of small businesses
  - English as a Second Language (ESOL)
  - Healthy Living and Wellbeing as part of the Anti-Poverty Strategy
- Skills Bootcamps were short intensive courses with a minimum of 60 hours of learning over a maximum of 16 weeks. These were at Level 3 or above (equivalent to A-Level).
- Slides were presented (attached).

The Committee were invited to ask questions and make comments. Key points included:

- Most funding came from national funding, the Community Learning Grant and Skills Budget Funding with was paid according to results. Fees made up part of the funding but not the bulk. Grants were also sought in partnership with other services.
- The Multiply programme provided a flexible way for people to get to GCSE level in mathematics, but the Functional Skills qualification was more relevant to adult needs and had a real-world focus. There was one more year of funding which would be used in ways to ensure that people who had an interest would go on to achieve. Partner organisations were being worked with to engage people on that journey.
- A challenge to gaining skills in mathematics could be a lack of skills in English, as it was necessary for learners to understand the questions.
- Three training providers had signed up for the Boot Camps pilot. The residency criteria was the same as for the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). There was not a requirement to be unemployed to take part. All learners were self-referred.
- Where someone was listed as having no qualifications, it was possible that they had qualification(s) that might not be recognised in the UK. A programme of qualifications was offered and it was aimed to see as



much improvement as possible with what was available. Part of the role of the service was to inform learners of how overseas qualifications become recognised, however this was an expensive process for individuals.

- Around 80% of students were female and many of them were from ethnic minorities. This was often driven by the locations that the service worked out of.
- The Ofsted inspection was overdue, but it was not known when it would happen.
- The scheme for ex-offenders had become sub-regional and had its funding changed. Ex-offenders were still worked with, but data on them was not captured.
- Regarding employability and digital skills, this was based on a referral partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). There was a need to tailor the service so that people came on course. One qualification had a new online exam system, this had not worked well and required improvement.
- Linking with the previous item, it was noted that there was a need for retrofit assessors and a Boot Camp based at Nottingham Trent University trained such assessors. Boot Camps were free to the learner, although if they were employed then the employer made a contribution. Bootcamps were aimed at getting people better trained so as to obtain better roles, ideally with a job ready for them to move into. It was possible for people to gain qualifications independently for personal use, the cost was around £3k. A Boot Camp in retrofitting would be discussed.
- In terms of distinguishing between enrolments and learners, it was clarified that one learner could enrol on multiple courses.
- Regarding engagements with communities, there was a whole-city approach. There was a Local Skills Improvement Plan to provide more provision and more engagement was being sought. There were different providers in different locations, such as WEA, Leicester College and voluntary organisations. It was acknowledged that the system could be difficult to navigate.
- There was a need to seek additional funding for ESOL so as to support refugees and asylum seekers and to provide informal engagement with communities.
- It was clarified that 'surrounding areas' referred largely to the county of Leicestershire. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, there had been a decline in learners from the county coming to the city to learn. It was thought that this was partly due to people working from home and not coming into the city as a result. Statistics would be obtained.
- The service was delivering in more than 100 venues this academic year.
- The Local Skills Improvement Board was led by the Chamber of Commerce. One meeting had taken place made up of people from the county, people from universities, employer representatives and organisations. Under this came sector-focussed groups. Employer

voices were coming into the education system to shape the curriculum and a key part of this was to meet future needs. The National Careers Service had involvement. There were no elected member representatives on the board, although a link to the plan would be circulated.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the comments of the Commission be noted.

*The Chair agreed to an agenda variance, Informal Scrutiny Work was taken before EV Charging.*

#### **43. EV CHARGING**

The Director for Planning, Development and Transportation gives a verbal update on progress with informal work to inform the Commission of progress on current informal scrutiny and to help them decide about priorities for upcoming informal scrutiny.

It was noted that two meetings had taken place for the informal scrutiny on 20mph zones and that a final meeting was taking place in January. Two other informal scrutiny groups had now been proposed, on Electric Vehicle Charging Points and on 24-Hour Bus Lanes. The Commission were asked to decide the priorities for the next informal scrutiny.

It was further noted that the next informal scrutiny could not take place until the informal scrutiny on 20mph zones was complete. It was uncertain as to when guidance from the Department of Transport would come through. It was thought that the government may produce guidance on bus lanes in the future, however, there was none at this time.

By way of an update on the 20mph zones informal scrutiny it was reported that the first session considered baseline information on what was currently done and what could be done, the second meeting had looked at representations from other bodies, and the final session in January would consider recommendations to take to formal scrutiny.

AGREED:

That Electric Vehicle Charging be the next topic of informal scrutiny.

#### **44. INFORMAL SCRUTINY WORK - VERBAL UPDATE**

AGREED:

That the presentation on EV Charging be shown at the first informal

scrutiny meeting on the topic.

**45. WORK PROGRAMME**

The work programme was noted, including the arrangements on informal scrutiny that had been discussed at the meeting.

**46. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There being no further items of urgent business, the meeting ended at 19:41.



# Skills Bootcamps 2024-25

These are short, intensive courses that support individuals to change direction or update their skills. (minimum 60 hours, max 16 weeks, Level 3 (A Level) or above)

30% of the funding is linked to participants achieving a relevant job outcome (new job, new responsibilities, improved self-employment opportunities), therefore employer demand needs to be identified at the outset.

Approx. 500 places across Leicester and Leicestershire



# Priority Sectors

- **Digital** – cyber security, digital marketing, software development, data analytics
- **Technical** – advanced textiles / knitwear
- **Construction** – groundworks
- **Green Skills** – retrofit, agriculture
- **Logistics** – HGV driving
- **Creative industries** – sound and light engineering
- **Other** – up to 30% of the funding can be used for ‘other sectors’



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# Key questions

- Which industries offer potential for quick re-skilling?
- Which sectors are facing rapid changes?
- Which sectors have significant skills gaps/ recruitment challenges?



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# Next steps

- Confirmation of funding – end of Dec
- Expressions of interest – Jan/Feb
- Review of recruitment on 2023-24 pilot - Feb
- Procurement 24/25 – March
- Delivery from May 24 – March 25