



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 1 MAY 2025 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Cassidy - Chair

Councillor Adata
Councillor March
Councillor O'Neill
Councillor Porter

Councillor Batool
Councillor Mohammed
Councillor Osman
Councillor Sahu

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117. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Kitterick - Cllr Sahu substituted.
Apologies received from Cllr Waddington

Cllr Pickering was present online

118. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to disclose any pecuniary or other interests they may have in the business on the agenda, none were declared.
agenda.

119. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on the 19th March 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

It was noted that Cllr Westley was erroneously noted as the substitute for Cllr Osman under the Apologies item. The substitute was Cllr Singh Patel (as correctly noted in the meeting attendance).

120. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair asked members to note that a session of informal scrutiny on

workforce representation would take place on the 14th May at 5pm.

The Adventure Playgrounds Task Group was also noted.

121. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATION 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.

122. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

123. TRACKING OF PETITIONS - MONITORING REPORT

Three petitions were marked as red:

Further update on Peebles Way petition:

For speed control measures/traffic calming, this had been mostly solved by inclusion in the 20mph programme, but the response was with Cllr Whittle.

Further update on the Oakland Avenue petition:

A site meeting had been scheduled with Cllr Dave and the Rushey Mead Ward Cllrs for the 9th May with officers that will formalise the response.

Items of relevance to both petitions went to EDTCE on 23rd April, so we will be in a position to close out one (Peebles Way) shortly.

Basketball Courts on Victoria Park

A pro-forma had been produced:

The proposed action was to support the petition request with the following response:

Developer contributions have been secured specifically for the purpose of providing a new full-sized basketball court on Victoria Park.

Detailed design proposals for the new court have been prepared and a planning application for this will be submitted in May.

The new court will be constructed a part of the wider MUGA investment programme scheduled to be completed by the end of December 2025.

Investigations will be undertaken to identify if additional maintenance works are required to address the concerns raised about insufficient traction provided by

the playing surface on the existing half-sized basketball court.

AGREED:

That members note the status of the petitions.

124. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

Youth Council Representative Mario Duda asked:

What is the City Council doing to improve social life for young people, especially teenagers because there has been a growing interest in including more investment in venues, bars and creating a safe night life in the city centre as there are a lot of coffee shops and corner shops, but not enough places that actually attract young people. With places like Fosse Park growing, how are we making the city centre more appealing and competitive?

The City Mayor responded:

- There were many positive amenities available to young people, but there was room for improvement.
- There was a national issue whereby financial cut-backs had resulted in a reduced youth service offer.
- Across the city, facilities such as the multi-use games areas and basketball courts were available, but budgets meant that staffing might not be available.
- Within the city centre, activities such as bowling, axe throwing and e-games were on offer.
- The recent Roman event had attracted a range of ages.
- The new skateboard park was almost in completion.
- Looking ahead, it was hoped that a youth-service could be reinstated at some point.

Youth Council Representative Mario Duda asked:

What specific plans are in place to protect and enhance green spaces in Leicester, and how will these efforts contribute to improving the overall quality and sustainability of the city centre?

The City Mayor responded:

- Leicester benefited from previous investments to the city parks, including Victoria Park, the East and Western parks and a series of smaller parks across the city.
- Previous waste lands had been converted into nature reserves, such as Aylestone Meadows and Watermead Park.
- Further opportunities to create green space would be explored.

- FA charity money had enabled the creation of high quality football pitches, some of which were 3G.

125. INDEPENDENT CARE HOMES IN LEICESTER CITY

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education provided an overview of the report. Key points to note were as follows:

- The report had been requested due to the number of planning applications received, particularly in relation to children's residential homes.
- The Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted had declined invites to attend the Scrutiny meeting.
- Of recent applications, the majority were submitted by companies or private individuals recently presenting as agents for children's care homes. Steps were in place to delve further to ensure risk assessment was in place and to manage any likely anti-social behaviour for prospective neighbourhoods.
- There were some current planning submissions for extensions to existing homes for the elderly or those with disabilities.
- Any questions that couldn't be answered by the executive could be forwarded to the DfE and Ofsted on behalf of the scrutiny commission.

The Chair welcomed questions and comments from members. Key points were as follows:

- The report had come to OSC, rather than to the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Scrutiny Commission, due to the wider ramifications.
- Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) had declined to attend the meeting, citing the overwhelming number of requests received from Local Authorities. Concerns regarding the DfE could be forwarded to the Secretary of state and any complaints regarding the CQC could be submitted via their complaints process.
- Matters concerning area saturation were of consideration. Under safeguarding ruling, Ofsted did not release information on the location of children's care homes. Details could be ascertained via the planning department to monitor saturation levels.
- The regulation and inspection of care homes came under the Ofsted remit. Work was underway to allow for further examination of practice within unregistered homes by the local authority.
- There was a combination of situations for children being placed within city carehomes. Those from Leicester would have a careplan delivered by a Leicester City Council Social Worker. Those placed within the city by another Local Authority (LA) were supported by the placing authority. Any concerns raised would be flagged to the LA or regulating bodies appropriately. Concerns often originated via community intelligence.
- Some LA planning committees granted permissions for limited time

periods which meant there was an inbuilt opportunity to review performance.

- Further analysis could take place to map the location of all children homed within the authority. This could be achieved through collaboration with Planning Colleagues and via in-depth data analysis.
- Multi-agency working with, for example the CQC and NHS, could be explored further, where there were individual issues within care homes.
- Strategies were in place to prevent profiteering, anticipated updates from central government were welcomed.
- Planning colleagues were looking into developing guidance on applications in line with commentary from Adult Social Care, and also around saturation levels.
- Upon reaching the age of 18, looked after children placed in Leicester by other LA's, usually remained under the responsibility of the placing authority. However, they may develop housing rights within the placed area. Many of these young people would have been unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- Planning colleagues were welcomed to come to scrutiny to clarify points raised.
- The most recent children's scrutiny report on placement costs would be circulated. Councillor Batool proposed that the Planning Department findings could come back to OSC scrutiny in 3 month's time, Councillor March Seconded this and members voted in favour of this proposition.
- A time limit on the change would mean that the planning consent would need renewal and reconsideration after a period when issues such as parking and anti-social behaviour have been better assessed

Recommendations:

- Planning look at the pattern of applications for these smaller care homes to try get a fuller picture.
- Officers to ensure mapping is done to know where children outside the care of LCC are being placed.

AGREED:

- That the report be noted.
- Assurances to be given to OSC that analysis of data as to where children are placed is being compiled and captured
- That the Planning Department come back to OSC in 3 month's time with details on the above points raised in the discussion.

Councillor Porter left during the consideration of this item.

126. CORPORATE ESTATE ANNUAL REPORT

The City Mayor gave a brief introduction to the item, noting the following:

- The corporate estate was a long-established element of the land and property portfolio that was not held for specific operational purposes. Specifics had been established under the local parliamentary act of 1956 and were incorporated from the 1971 local government act.
- The capital portfolio was now worth over £100m which brought in significant revenue.
- Continued reinvestments were required for maintenance and procurement purposes.
- Previously, annual reports were produced, with this was no longer being the case, it was deemed appropriate to bring a report to formal scrutiny.
- The Corporate Estate had enabled the development of Beaumont Leys and Hamilton.

The Director of Estates & Building Services provided an overview of the report. Key points to note were as follows:

- Yields had improved year on year, and results compared favourably against the national benchmark.
- Acquisitions such as The Haymarket Shopping Centre and The Heathers Industrial Estate had significantly increased the value of the portfolio.
- The industrial sector continued to be the largest in terms of both area and value.
- Occupancy of the estate was at around 95%.
- There were challenges with city retail sites, but returns had remained high.
- Running costs had been heavily impacted by inflation in 2023-24, made worse by the energy bill increases.
- Gross income had increased to £11.27m. This was attributed largely due to performance at the Haymarket Shopping Centre and a structured lease review.
- Rents were moving in line with the market.
- Several assets had been repurposed such as the previous council office space at Phoenix House which was now let to external providers.
- The estate totalled 1.5% of council revenue.
- Debt had reduced dramatically and would continue to be tackled.
- The next annual report was upcoming.

The Chair welcomed questions from members. Key points to note were:

- Cost savings would always present a challenge. The aim was to grow the portfolio mindfully, with an emphasis on sustainability.
- In terms of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG), there were nuances due to all of the different sectors covered.
- When letting properties, it was vital to consider whether it would be suitable for the area and community.
- The service charge rate was not flat; instead, service charges in multi-let buildings reflected the costs specific to each building.

- Portfolio administration fees were considerably high. A new computer system had been invested in which would improve the day to day running.
- Asset performance was monitored, disinvestments occurred when appropriate.
- Ownership of The Haymarket Shopping Centre meant that there was no longer a lease payment for the carpark and that revenue now came to the Local Authority. Also, leases were not required for the Sexual Health Centre and Haymarket Theatre.
- The Haymarket Shopping Centre was about 20% vacant. Community use had been popular.
- There were promising prospects for the City Centre with Loseby lane, vacant units were not expected to remain so for long.
- A breakdown of occupancy figures by area could be provided.
- Historically, key retail areas such as Beaumont Leys Shopping area, the Hamilton Shops and the St Martins shopping area had been possible due to the acquisition of the land.
- When considering lettings, security was sought, this could be in the form of a parent company or director guarantee.
- Cost cutting opportunities were a key consideration, the recovery of service charges was vital and capital bids to invest in the portfolio were made to reduce asset running costs.
- Figures for portfolio sites could be provided annually.

AGREED:

- That the report be noted.
- Examples of marketing strategies would be provided.
- A breakdown of occupancy figures by area be provided.
- Figures for portfolio sites be provided annually.

127. OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

It was noted that it was the final meeting of the municipal year. Members and Officers were thanked for their contributions.

AGREED:

- That the Forward Plan be noted.
- That members make suggestions and suggestions for items to be considered in the new municipal year.
- An item on planning issues for Children's Residential Homes come to scrutiny in 3 month's time.

128. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

No other business was discussed and therefore the meeting ended at 19:42

