



Leicester  
City Council

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

Held: WEDNESDAY, 27 AUGUST 2025 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Waddington – Chair  
Councillor Cassidy – Vice Chair

Councillor Bonham  
Councillor Porter

Councillor O'Neill  
Councillor Rae Bhatia

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**166. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

Cllrs Waddington and Rae Bhatia would need to leave the meeting at 7pm.

**167. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have had in the business to be discussed.

There were no declarations of interest.

**168. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

In the item on the minutes from the previous meeting, it incorrectly said the previous meeting was 23 April 2024, when in fact it was 23 April 2025.

**AGREED:**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development,  
Transport and Climate Emergency Scrutiny Commission held on 25<sup>th</sup>  
June be confirmed as a correct record subject to the above correction.

## **169. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair relayed the below from the City Transport Director:

- The City Transport Director would once again like to thank members of the commission for their engagement with the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).
- Ward councillors would be invited to attend sessions in September as part of our wider public engagement and consultation approach - these would be arranged at parliamentary constituency level, given that many routes ran through or adjacent to wards.
- Officers were reviewing the possibility of issuing paper maps, again at parliamentary constituency level, to ward councillors. This was likely to be done on a request basis to minimise financial and environmental impacts, but would be an open invitation.
- Details would be shared of the consultation platform and how ward councillors could make comments via that should they wish to.
- Officers would bring the results of the public engagement to the commission when available, subject to arrangements and scheduling with the commission.

The Chair announced that they would be leaving the meeting at 7.00 pm due to another commitment. It was also noted that Councillor Rae Bhatia would be leaving at 7.00pm. The Vice Chair assumed the chairing of the meeting for the remainder of the session.

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

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

## **171. PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

## **172. MARKET PLACE - VERBAL UPDATE**

The Director of Tourism, Culture and Economy gave a verbal update on the Market Place. It was noted that:

- A public consultation had been conducted with around 1700 respondents, and just over 60 per cent supported locating the market in front of the Food Hall/ Corn Exchange, equating to more than 1000

people.

- The consultation had provided input into the future use of the area, with strong public support for creating a major new flexible event space in front of the Corn Exchange.
- During the consultation process, a special Scrutiny meeting was held in December 2024 to discuss the proposals. Comments had been fed in to inform the scheme.
- The planning application for the public realm scheme in front of the Corn Exchange had been submitted on 2 June, and this included drainage, lighting and infrastructure. This application was validated by planners on 27 June and was currently in consultation.
- Archaeological investigations were underway, as was standard for a capital scheme of this nature, and findings were due shortly.
- Subject to planning permission being granted and a formal decision to proceed, work could start on site this autumn, and the project was still on track to complete by December 2026.
- The market would continue to operate on Green Dragon Square in the meantime.
- Work by the National Grid was being planned, which would install a new electrical substation within the rear of the Corn Exchange building. This would provide an electrical supply to serve the wider area. This required a planning application to be submitted, and subject to planning approval works could get underway.
- Enabling works to facilitate this work by the National Grid were required, and disruption for these works will be carefully managed.

In discussions with Members it was noted that:

- Clarification was requested regarding whether contractors had been instructed to undertake the works. It was reported that the original contractor for the scheme was already procured. The contractor currently on site had undertaken demolition and preliminary works, although no final decision had yet been made on proceeding with the full scheme.
- Questions were raised on the future of market stalls and traders. It was reported that the market had been relocated to Green Dragon Square, with approximately 20 stall holders and 16-unit traders continuing to operate from that location. The majority of stallholders had been retained, while a small number had chosen to leave or retire.
- It was confirmed that Green Dragon Square would remain in use as the market site until the end of 2026, at which point it would revert to its previous use as an events space.
- The public realm planning application had been submitted, with a decision currently expected at the end of September 2025. This element would provide paving and infrastructure to support the operation of the market. The market structure element required further ongoing development.

- Concerns were raised about the importance of retaining the market's traditional variety of goods. The current proposal emphasised food and related products for the permanent market, although following suggestions from commission members there were plans to hold a programme of speciality markets to allow for a varied offer including pop-up markets. Ongoing engagement with unit traders that need support was continuing to identify options within the wider city and ensure continuity of trading opportunities.
- Some members considered that a market without sufficient variety would not fully meet the needs of the public and suggested the commission may need to continue to advocate for a more diverse offer throughout the year.

AGREED:

- 1) The commission would be kept updated on progress with the project.
- 2) That comments made by members of this Commission be taken into account.
- 3) The commission noted the update.

### **173. GET LLR WORKING PLAN**

*The Commission agreed to an agenda variance. The item on Get LLR Working Plan was taken before the update on the Leicester and Leicestershire Business Skills Partnership.*

*Councillor Rae Bhatia joined the meeting at the opening of this item.*

The Director of Tourism, Culture and Economy submitted a report providing an overview of the development of a Get Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Working Plan.

The Regeneration Programmes & Projects Manager joined the meeting to assist with the discussion of this item.

The Chair encouraged members to read the Government White paper 'Get Britain Working', as it had some interesting aims in helping people start work or return to work and to remove barriers to getting into work such as health issues and lack of opportunity.

The report was presented and key points included:

- The Government agenda was aimed at addressing the challenges in the area for economically inactive people.
- This was a 10-year plan, so there would be time within the plan for

review as the area may change.

- The timescale from the government was very tight for the preparation of the initial plan, so the Council were pushing forward in developing the plan as much as possible in the timescale.
- A taskforce had been established in conjunction with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Integrated Care Board (ICB), Leicestershire County Council and Rutland County Council.
- It was aimed to raise the employment level to 80% in the region over time. At this point in time, this would require supporting 35,000 people in the region into work.
- Table 1 of the report showed current employment statistics for the region.
- Table 2 of the report showed that the majority of economically inactive people were looking after family or were long-term sick or had mental health issues or muscular-skeletal issues.
- Retirement had increased.
- The number of people leaving school without skills was an issue to note.
- Labour market analysis sat behind the priorities laid out in the report.
- It was necessary to map service provision so that alignment could be explored, and it was important to engage with wider partners and organisations
- It was necessary to identify priorities and goals in the plan, along with key actions, in the first year. Other necessary actions would most likely be identified throughout the process, and the plan would include a regular review of progress.
- An initial outline summary of the plan was prepared for the end of June. It was aimed to produce a draft of the plan in the coming days and aiming for approval and publication by the end of September 2025.

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

- It was necessary to recognise that there was a challenge to get a plan together in the tight timescale required by DWP. It was necessary to note that this was a live piece of work and had not yet been completed. Scrutiny comments would be helpful to inform the plan at this stage.
- Work was being undertaken to gather data, and different organisations had different data with no organisation having the complete picture, therefore, it was necessary to try and assemble a clear picture from the data available.
- The final document would be presented to the Business Skills Partnership Executive shortly. The DWP requires the plan to be signed off by the Upper Tier local authorities and the ICB.
- A number of actions were necessary, including bringing together a network on how to approach delivery of the plan, perhaps through a working group to address issues.

- It was stressed that this plan was the start of a process rather than an end. It was trying to build a shared view of what the labour market looked like, and an awareness of what potential interventions in the labour market could be. This would come down to choices on priorities and focus and lobbying the government for resources to deliver.
- The government wanted areas to have a plan, and this would need to be followed through with resources. The DWP wanted this as a 10-year plan, so there was a long-term focus.
- Part of the plan would be delivered by the new Connect to Work programme across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, funded by the DWP, aimed at supporting economically inactive people of all ages into work. This would support people going into employment and would include inclusive recruitment practices for employers. People would also be supported once they were in work to help them stay in work.
- The WorkWell programme was working with GP surgeries to identify people in employment but on long-term sickness absence, to support the long-term sick to return to work. This was managed by the ICB and NHS.
- It would be good if these related programmes could be aligned, and the Council was facilitating this and working together for example to coordinate referrals.
- Data did not exist for all of the information about the labour market that might be useful; however, progress had been made in gathering data which might identify potential for further research. The plan incorporated the information known, but other areas for research could come to light.
- The Get Britain Working white paper had commented on hidden pockets of unemployment, such as people who had decided not to look for work for a variety of reasons. Some of these people could potentially get back into productive work with the right support.
- Getting people into work could help reduce the welfare bill and also raise people's quality of life.
- It would be important to work closely with employers to identify companies who wanted to engage with these cohorts of people and provide opportunities.
- The draft plan could be shared with members of the Commission, and members were invited to submit comments to inform the final plan.

#### AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.
- 3) For the draft plan to be shared with members of the commission and comments be invited

#### **174. UPDATE ON LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE BUSINESS AND SKILLS PARTNERSHIP**

The Director of Tourism, Culture and Economy submitted a report to update the Commission on the development and delivery of the Business and Skills Partnership for Leicester and Leicestershire. It was noted that:

- The role of the Business and Skills Partnership and its corresponding Business Board was to work with businesses and stakeholders to drive economic growth and deliver relevant business support initiatives at a regional level across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.
- The partnership's role included a focus on dedicated enterprise zones across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, including MIRA Technology Park near Hinckley, Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park (LUSEP) and Charnwood Campus in Loughborough.
- As well as delivering skills and apprenticeship support through the Leicester and Leicestershire Careers Hub, delivering the government funded business support service (Growth Hub) alongside the locally funded Create Growth programme, and supporting local economic growth planning.
- The work was aligned with the emerging government plan, which set out a focus on priority growth sectors, national policy and ideas on infrastructure, environment and places. School places and national business growth priorities were highlighted alongside local growth hub support.
- A business board had been formed to provide a business voice into local decision making, with a private sector chair and representation from different sectors.
- Innovation and collaboration with university partners on employment and business skills were highlighted, with sub-groups being established to focus on different areas and programmes as they developed.
- Funding was in place to support elements of employment and business skills as national policy developed following the closure of the Local Enterprise Partnerships including the LLEP in 2024.

In discussions with Members, the following was noted:

- Concern was raised that several successful local businesses were not represented on the board, despite their national recognition and the valuable insight they could provide on running successful businesses.
- It was acknowledged that it was not possible to include every business, as some national and global companies did not always wish to engage, but there were opportunities to review this and reach out to additional representatives and business organisations across the city and county if

there were any obvious omissions.

- Suggestions were made for other businesses that could be approached, including large retailers and employers that originated in Leicester, and it was agreed that the team would review who had been contacted so far and consider further representation.
- Leicester was highlighted as having a distinct economy compared with the county, with many smaller businesses and a diverse workforce, some of whom did not have English as their first language. Members emphasised the importance of reflecting this in board representation if possible.
- It was suggested that the business board should not seek to create a parallel structure to the existing business representative bodies such as the East Midlands Chamber or the Federation of Small Businesses. Their involvement in the board would help to address the challenge of how to maximise representation from a broad range of diverse businesses and sectors.
- Members stressed the importance of the board making a positive difference and delivering tangible benefits for local people, and assurance was given that the board aimed to support programmes of work in transition, business support and small business development, with a focus on ensuring growth translated into meaningful outcomes for local businesses.

**AGREED:**

- 1) That the Commission note the report.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.

## **175. UPDATE ON WORKSPACES CAPITAL FUNDING**

*Councillor Waddington left the meeting prior to the consideration of this item.*

*Councillor Rae Bhatia left the meeting prior to the consideration of this item.*

*Councillor Cassidy Chaired the meeting from this item onwards.*

The Director of Tourism, Culture and Economy gave a presentation to update the commission on Workspaces Capital Funding using the slides attached.

Additional key points included:

- The Council had been growing a very successful workspace portfolio over many years, and in particular in the last 18 months.
- Dock 3-5 opened in Autumn 2024 and was focussed on innovation technology businesses, with a mix of office space and light commercial



space.

- Dock 3-5 funding had come from the Levelling-up fund in which one scheme per MP could be applied for, the project of the MP in question had been support for the Enterprise Zone at Space City around the National Space Centre. The Council had been required to provide match funding.
- The initial grant-payment was non-repayable, and the Council could generate revenue and create jobs from the workspace. It could also generate a surplus that could be invested in Council services.
- The city also had a strength in creative design. Pilot House had previously been the largest undeveloped building in Council ownership in the city centre and had been underused for many years. The council had been successful in securing significant Levelling-up funding for this and had provided match-funding, to transform the building into Canopy, with a focus on the creative design sector.
- Canopy was undergoing fit-out works, particularly by the external café-bar operator and associated electrical works.
- Canopy had created 26 workspaces both large and small which were already proving popular. The target occupancy for Canopy was 40% within the first year of opening, and it was already at 38% occupancy several months before opening. This was the best early performance for a new workspace scheme to date.
- The focus was on developing a community of like-minded businesses that could be supported and could support each other.
- Canopy had conference facilities and an exhibition gallery and workshops, so it would be a platform for growth.

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

- At optimum occupancy (90%), the whole portfolio was expected to generate a surplus of £600k per year for the Council. This had been factored into the budget savings profile for the Council. This did not cost the Council in terms of revenue, but at scale it could generate a surplus that could be re-invested into Council services.
- In terms of target revenue – the turnover was expected to rise from £1.6m to 3m once the new workspace schemes were fully occupied.
- Canopy had a letting policy around creative design. Efforts were made to avoid replicating the LCB Depot, and people could choose where they were best suited. Nine companies had signed up so far, one of these was rg+p, who had been the architects of the scheme who had previously been at risk of leaving the city. Another company in Canopy were a leather conservation company from Northamptonshire who had a strong partnership with De Montfort University and would be establishing a repair shop in Canopy to restore leather objects.
- The Council were in conversation with Leicester start-ups to support

scalable technology businesses who may want to move in.

- Companies wanted to be part of an entrepreneurial community, and this was being established at canopy.
- Members could visit the site and would be invited to the launch.

AGREED:

- 1) That the presentation be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.
- 3) The members would be invited to the Canopy launch events

## **176. WORK PROGRAMME**

Members of the Commission were invited to consider content of the work programme and were invited to make suggestions for additions as appropriate to be brought to future meetings.

It was requested that the Commission consider concrete blocks in the carriageway for cycle lanes and why there was no consultation on them.

The work programme was noted.

## **177. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There being no further items of urgent business, the meeting finished at 19:14.

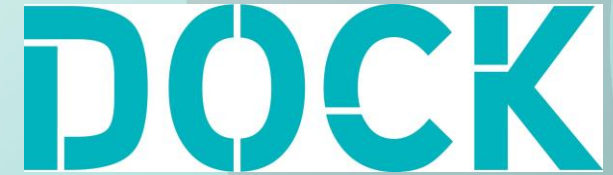
# EDTCE Scrutiny Commission Workspaces Capital Funding 27<sup>th</sup> August 2025



Minute Item 175

# Workspace Growth 2024-25

- Growth from 6 to 10 business workspaces – **90%** growth
- Dock 3/4/5 – opened Sept 2024
- Canopy – opening Oct 2025
- Total **238,000 sq ft** lettable space
- Turnover **£1.6m** to **£3.0m**
- **307** tenant businesses
- **1500** direct jobs supported







## Dock 3-5 Capital Funding

Levelling Up Fund*	£12.2m	72.6%
Leicester City Council	£1.1m	6.6%
LLEP	£3.5m	20.8%
Total	£16.8m	

\* Part of total Levelling Up Fund grant of £19.433m



# C A N O P Y



# Canopy Capital Funding

Levelling Up Fund	£9.9m	67.8%
Leicester City Council	£4.7m	32.2%
Total	£14.6m	





C A N O P Y





CANOPY

