



Leicester  
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
CULTURE AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2025 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Zaman – Chair  
Councillor Halford – Vice Chair

Councillor Dr Barton  
Councillor Chauhan  
Councillor Haq

Councillor Cassidy  
Councillor Dave  
Councillor Waddington

In Attendance:

Assistant City Mayor – Councillor Dempster

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**167. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies were received.

**168. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have in the proceedings.

Cllr Chauhan declared that he uses the library facilities.

**169. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE**

The Chair advised the Commission that questions would not normally be taken from the public at special meetings of the Commission, however, questions had been accepted on this occasion as they were relevant to the agenda being considered.

Members of the public then asked questions and responses were provided as follows:

Tony Patel thanked Councillor Dempster for her work across the wards and

asked:

*We propose that the Council establish User Community Groups at Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre, Rushey Mead Recreation Centre, and the two libraries. These partnerships would help identify income-generation opportunities for each centre and assess the evolving needs of the local communities and how best to meet them.*

The Assistant City Mayor - Health, Culture, Libraries and Community Centres responded as follows:

- This partnership model fitted well with the proposals.

Hasu Saujani asked:

*We ask that the Council does not revisit the CAT (Community Asset Transfer) issue regarding Rushey Mead and Belgrave community centres and libraries in the near future. Instead, we urge the Council to commit to working in partnership with users, residents, and the wider communities of Rushey Mead and Belgrave.*

The Assistant City Mayor - Health, Culture, Libraries and Community Centres responded as follows:

- There had been a long and in-depth consultation process.
- Decisions had been made to ensure sustainability.
- Decision making had been informed by the consultation, data and sustainability of buildings.

Hasu Saujani asked:

*Does the Council have its own proposals to improve the financial sustainability of sites that remain Council-run, not including any potential impact on staffing? For example, measures to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and increase usage of the centres and libraries? If so, please could this be outlined?*

The Assistant City Mayor - Health, Culture, Libraries and Community Centres responded as follows:

- This marked the beginning of the process.
- Partnership was required with the 'Friends of' groups to move forwards.

Hasu Saujani asked on behalf of Bharti Mistry:

*Aside from the CAT policy, has the Council considered any other models for operating neighbourhood services (community centres and libraries) across the city? And if so, what were they?*

The Head of Neighbourhood Services responded as follows:

- Alternative options considered were outlined in the Assessment and Recommendations report.
- The alternative options considered included shared services – for example library stock buying, the creation of a charitable body to run services, and withdrawal of council services from more facilities. However, each of these options had been discounted.
- The initial engagement showed that people wanted geographical spread even if this meant reduced staffed opening hours to retain more facilities.

Tony Patel asked on behalf of Bharti Mistry:

*Will the Council commit to reviewing the current arrangements and future direction for Belgrave and Rushey Mead? We seek assurance of strong frontline service delivery, improved outreach, and increased activity — particularly for diverse communities where English is not the first language, as well as for elderly residents, young people, disabled users, and those experiencing loneliness and isolation.*

The Assistant City Mayor - Health, Culture, Libraries and Community Centres responded as follows:

- The extensive consultation had resulted into the series of proposals.
- Annual reviews would be in place to review data.
- The emphasis was on working with the communities.

Tony Patel asked on behalf of Bharti Mistry:

*Can we clarify what plans are in place for development at Rushey Mead library, including potential use of the capital budget?*

The Head of Neighbourhood Services responded as follows:

- At this time there are no plans in place for the capital development of the library.
- Rushey Mead Library had received recent capital investment in 2019 which had addressed maintenance issues.

Tony Patel asked on behalf of Mala Shah:

*How much capital does LCC have (please provide breakdown of how much allocated and how much is in reserve)?*

The Assistant City Mayor - Health, Culture, Libraries and Community Centres responded as follows:

- No figure has as yet been agreed for the delivery of the recommendations for libraries and community centres.

Tony Patel asked on behalf of Mala Shah:

*Please would the council & the Assistant City Mayor for Health, Culture, Libraries and Community Centres accept a thank you for the decision relating to neighbourhood services particularly for those in Rushey Mead & Belgrave; With the new changes now being proposed, how much saving is the council looking to make at:*

- A. *Rushey Mead library*
- B. *Rushey Mead recreation centre*
- C. *Belgrave library*
- D. *Belgrave neighbourhood centre*

The Assistant City Mayor - Health, Culture, Libraries and Community Centres responded as follows:

- The recommendations would deliver an overall saving of £1.57 million for Neighbourhood Services as a whole. Budgets are set for the service as a whole.

Tony Patel asked on behalf of Mala Shah:

*If the council is looking to make savings at Rushey Mead Recreation Centre, Rushey Mead Library, Belgrave Library and Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre, please do provide a breakdown of where the current savings are coming from?*

The Assistant City Mayor - Health, Culture, Libraries and Community Centres responded as follows:

- The recommendations state that savings for Rushey Mead Recreation Centre and Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre would be achieved through a 100% increase in income targets at these sites. Savings for retained libraries would be achieved through reduced staffing budgets as a result of reduced staffed opening hours.

The Chair advised that questions had been raised by Nizamuddin Patel who was

not present at the meeting. The questions were as follows:

*Following the consultation, it is noted that in Netherhall either the Neighbourhood Centre or the Armadale Centre (pending a condition survey) will be considered for CAT.*

*Is there a reason why both buildings can't be considered for CAT?*

Officers would respond with the following by email as follows:

- During the consultation members of the community proposed the Armadale Centre is the preferred building for community activities as it is of more robust construction. Netherhall Neighbourhood Centre is of less

solid construction and is more exposed to vandalism, having been subject to vandalism and extensive damage in past years. The land on which the Armadale Centre is located is currently planned for affordable housing. There is a requirement for housing in the area and therefore should the Armadale Centre be retained for community use, then the Netherhall Neighbourhood Centre plot would be required for housing.

Nizamuddin Patel:

*Can a timeframe be given as to how soon a condition survey can be completed and published of the Armadale Centre?*

Officers would respond with the following by email as follows:

- A condition survey of the Armadale Centre has been commissioned as a priority. It is anticipated the survey should be available within a matter of weeks.

## **170. ASSESSMENT & RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT FOR LIBRARIES AND COMMUNITY CENTRES**

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a report providing an update on the findings of the recent public consultation (April 2025 – June 2025) and to provide commission members with an update on the future recommended delivery model for Libraries and Community Centres.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services introduced the item and gave an overview of the 3 attached reports. It was noted that:

- Recommendations had been developed over the previous two years with an assessment on service requirements.
- A high-profile public engagement had taken place over twelve weeks in 2023 with subsequent background work.
- Two reports were published in November 2024, and a consultation on proposals took place between April and June 25. Feedback received and an Assessment and Recommendations report were provided in the separate reports pack.

In response to member questions and discussion, it was noted that:

- Members expressed appreciation for the engagement work undertaken by officers.
- The proposed changes to opening hours were to take effect from September 2026, with savings delivered over a two-year period via a mixed delivery model. Any increase in charges would not be introduced until September of the following year, allowing residents time to prepare. Charges would be phased in over a two-year period.
- The Community Asset Transfer (CAT) process could take approximately

12–18 months for those entering into it.

- Some buildings were considered unsuitable for Community Asset Transfer due to their poor condition and the cost of necessary upgrades. These buildings would need to be sold, with services relocated where appropriate prior to disposal. Work would ensue with the communities and Ward Councillors.
- Consideration of footfall and system transactions had informed the proposals for library opening times. Feedback from the consultation was used to amend the proposals for the final recommendations. Varied user needs were taken into account to support equity of access, with the aim of providing a well-distributed pattern of staffed hours.
- Arrangements would be made for existing community groups to continue accessing the facilities. Feedback from groups had been considered, and requests for staff presence on site for example for children's homework clubs or for community groups who are unable to self-access had been acknowledged.
- Officers confirmed that the consultation work was undertaken internally, without the use of external advisers or consultants.
- Inductions and training would be provided for users accessing the service during non-staffed hours.
- Members highlighted the benefits of libraries for schoolchildren completing homework. It was agreed that collaboration with schools could be advantageous. Regarding homework clubs, it was noted that while opportunities to engage with schools remained, current proposals adequately covered this provision.
- Members emphasised the need for clear information on opening times.
- Members stressed the importance of the community services for elderly people.
- Members noted the role of libraries and community centres in supporting individuals whose first language is not English. It was suggested that provision of international newspapers should be considered.
- Members suggested that once changes took effect, regular meetings with users should be held to gather feedback.

*Councillor Barton left during consideration of this item.*

The Chair proposed an amendment to the Assessment & Recommendations Report for Libraries and Community Centres as follows:

*The Culture and Neighbourhood Scrutiny Commission proposes that Section 1.18 of the Assessment & Recommendations Report for Libraries and Community Centres be amended to reflect the following. The Commission recognises the financial pressures facing the Council and the need to identify savings and notes that the Fosse Neighbourhood Centre (FNC) is a large and expensive building to operate. It also notes the Council's intention to dispose of the site.*

*The Commission proposes that the report clearly states that the Council will make every effort to dispose of the FNC to a suitable community organisation*

*for a nominal fee, so that all current services can continue to operate from the building. If this is not possible and the FNC must be sold on the open market, the report should confirm that the Council will secure suitable alternative accommodation within Fosse Ward for all services currently delivered from the FNC.*

*The Commission further proposes that the report states that all services will continue to operate from the FNC until alternative accommodation is identified, agreed, and ready for use.*

*In addition, the Commission requests that the report includes a clear expectation that if the FNC is sold, both the Council as seller and any future owner will ensure the site is properly secured and maintained, and does not become an eyesore, nuisance, or source of anti-social behaviour for local residents. There should also be a clear commitment that the site will be brought back into use and developed within an agreed and reasonable timeframe.*

*The Culture and Neighbourhood Scrutiny Commission asks that these amendments are incorporated into the final Assessment & Recommendations Report before it is submitted to the Executive for approval and sign-off.*

This proposal was seconded by Councillor Waddington.

A member vote took place, 5 were in favour and 2 against, and the recommendation was therefore carried.

AGREED:

- That the reports be noted.
- That the recommendation agreed by the commission be considered by the Assistant City Mayor and Executive before a decision is made.

There being no other items to discuss, the meeting concluded at 19:10.