



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CULTURE AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2026 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Zaman - Chair

Councillor Dr Barton
Councillor Surti

Councillor Cassidy

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220. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Bajaj and Cllr Haq.

Apologies were also received from Deputy City Mayor Cllr Cutkelvin.

Cllr Surti substituted for Cllr Bajaj.

221. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

With relation to the report on Festivals and Events Grants Programme 2026/27, Cllr Dr Barton declared that he was the Chair of the Board of Governors for one of the organisations that held an event on Summer in the Square. It was not a paid position.

222. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Culture and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission held on 18 June 2026 be confirmed as a correct record.

223. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Chair reminded Councillors to be respectful.

- The Chair noted that members had received the papers in advance of the meeting.
- The Chair reminded Councillors that there would be a special meeting to discuss the Sports Needs Assessment.
- The Chair noted that recommendations from the Community Asset Transfer Task Group would be agreed by email.

224. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

225. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

226. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER ZONE 1 AND ZONE 2

The Director of Neighbourhood & Environmental Services submitted a report to the Commission which provided an overview on the work of the Public Space Protection Order Zone 1. The report also provided an overview of the proposed Public Spaces Protection Order for Zone 2 and plans to implement.

The Head of Safer Communities attended the meeting to help present and assist with discussions.

Key points to note included:

- The Head of Safer Communities detailed the work carried out in quarter 1 of the PSPO. During the first quarter, 180 incidents had been managed, there had been 51 breaches, with the majority being committed by the street lifestyle community and with no means to issue penalty notices and 129 needed no further action.
- Additionally, 24 vulnerable people were supported, and 7 people were given immediate medical assistance in the street which included the lifesaving administration of Naloxone to prevent a drug overdose.
- The zonal work of the PSPO was highlighted in the presentation. The zones selected were high footfall areas, the main routes into the city such as London Road and transport hubs. Regular communication was had with the Police to reduce the overlap of resources so that more areas could be covered.
- Two key projects undertaken as part of PSPO 1 were highlighted, those being Cank Street and New Walk/Upper Nelson Street. On Cank Street, PSPO Officers consulted with local businesses to understand the issues

and have since installed CCTV, gated off doorways and engaged in regular patrols. All of which has helped to reduce open drug use and rough sleeping on the street. On Upper New Walk/Nelson Street, the encampment on the Oval was moved on and work was carried out with businesses to make them more secure. It was noted that the work on both Cank Street and Upper New Walk/Nelson Street had received positive feedback from local businesses.

- While the work of PSPO 1 had focused on the city centre, PSPO 2 would target areas further afield. To better understand the areas of focus for PSPO 2 a 6 week consultation period with the public was started on 1st May 2026. Various forms of media were utilised to advertise the consultation period, this included Facebook posts, an appearance on Radio Leicester by the Head of Safer Communities and posters in LCC buildings.
- Following the consultation 1217 responses were received, including 12 from strategic partners. It was commented that many residents in the new PSPO 2 area welcomed the work to tackle anti-social behaviour however, there were strong concerns raised about the effectiveness of enforcement.
- The key issues highlighted were widespread concern about open drug use and dealing, street drinking and related behaviour, littering and fly tipping, noise nuisance and feeling unsafe walking home, particularly in the evenings.
- It was explained that the next step was to present the proposal for an executive decision.

In response to member discussion and questions, the following was noted:

- Members praised the good objectives of the work and asked if they could see a higher resolution version of the map shown in the presentation. The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services advised that this would be provided after the meeting.
- Members asked about the relationship between PSPO Officers and the Police and what powers PSPO Officers had. It was noted that local authorities must instate and lead on the implementation of PSPO's and that they can then delegate these powers to the Police, which the Council has done. It was noted that PSPO Officers could use the PSPO powers but did not have the powers of Police Officers. Members further queried whether PSPO Officers would be patrolling alone and it was

advised that Officers never patrolled alone.

- Members asked if there was direct number that they could provide to their residents if they witnessed anti-social behaviour in progress. It was noted that a number and website will be available for the public to report issues in their local area. However, the Director of Neighbourhoods and Environmental Services stressed that PSPO Officers were not a blue light service. The PSPO Officers were focused on operational projects and constructive work rather than responding to active incidents, which was the domain of the Police.
- The selection and funding of the PSPO areas was discussed, and members were keen to learn more about the processes. The fair funding settlement in the previous year allowed the Council to put more funding into the PSPO scheme and was used to increase the number of Officers in the team from 6 to 10. Additionally, it was explained that the areas were selected based upon reported data of incidents and that PSPO Officers shared a system with the Police to help better coordinate efforts.
- Members were interested to learn about the incidents which PSPO Officers had encountered during quarter 1 and what the escalation process was for cases that were progressed. The Director of Neighbourhoods and Environmental Services explained that in more involved cases a Joint Action Group (JAG) would be implemented with partner services such as the homelessness team, Police and homelessness charities. These groups helped to better coordinate effort on cases and address some of the root causes in individual cases.
- Members asked for greater clarity on how the PSPO 1 method would be implemented in zone 2. The Director of Neighbourhoods and Environmental Services outlined to the Commission that PSPO 2 would operate in a different manner to PSPO 1. As PSPO 1 covered a much smaller area, the Officers were able to patrol the area on foot but due to the size of PSPO 2 and the capacity restrictions of the team, PSPO 2 was planned as a targeted and data led project. Data collected regarding hotspots and areas of seasonal trouble, such as areas of Castle Ward during university fresher's week were detailed as target areas.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken

into account by the lead officers.

- 3) Officers to provide a high resolution map of the PSPO areas to members

227. BUSK LEICESTER – OVERVIEW

The Director of Tourism; Culture & Economy submitted a report which provided an overview on the new BUSK Leicester pilot initiative, covering March – May 2026 and proposed next steps.

The Head of Festivals and Events and Cultural Policy attended the meeting to help present and assist with discussions.

Key points included:

- The Busk Leicester scheme was introduced as a pilot scheme between March and May 2026 as part of the Heart of Leicester strategy. The aim was to create a simple, accessible and managed way for buskers to use appropriate city centre spaces while also balancing the needs of businesses, residents and visitors to the city.
- An online booking system was implemented for local artists to book a space at various, defined performance locations. On the system, there were clear terms and conditions outlining the responsibilities of performers, covering issues such as noise and consideration for local businesses. The City Wardens and PSPO Officers were also given access to the booking calendar, so they were able to support the scheme.
- During the pilot scheme, 117 bookings were made on the website and individual performers accounted for 80% of this. Gallowtree Gate proved to be the most popular site followed by High Street. A survey undertaken with artists and creatives showed that 92.3% of respondents believed Busk Leicester provided creatives with a space to perform in. A further 79% of respondents said they would use the scheme again, 76.9% of respondents agreed that Busk Leicester helped to animate the city streets, and 73% of the respondents said they were from Leicestershire.
- It was noted that Busk Leicester was still a pilot scheme and that lessons were learned throughout. A notable example was the movement of the busking positions on High Street following concerns raised by neighbouring businesses. The data from businesses was still being collated at the time of the meeting therefore conclusions could not yet be drawn regarding individual business experiences. It was commented that there were no concerns raised by the Police to date and they

indicated that more supported location could improve the look and feel of the city centre and possibly discourage unregulated activity.

- The next phase was focused on refinement and evidence based development of the scheme. The revised 2 hour performance slots for artists were maintained and the work with Leicester music board was continued to permanently embed the Busk scheme into Leicester's music scene. Potential new locations were assessed against audience potential, business impact and potential safety concerns. Highways were supportive and were involved in the planning as well as safety and road access issues.
- In summary, the scheme demonstrated demand, provided support to artists and creatives and provided practical evidence on how a managed busking scheme can work. The scheme also provided useful learning opportunities, feedback and a base to further develop the scheme in the future.

In response to member questions and discussion, the following was noted:

- Members raised questions regarding the nature of the booking system and if there were any costs for performers. It was advised that there were no booking fees for performers.
- The Chair asked how the service balanced the needs of the artists and the business owners. The Head of Festivals, Events and Cultural Policy explained that in the initial stages the service engaged with businesses to understand their disposition and then progressed from there. It was commented that the service was responsive to business's needs, but the business would have to make a reasonable argument, and a degree of trial and error was implemented.
- Members were interested to learn about the future of the project and whether they planned to expand outside of the city centre and incorporate other arts such as graffiti. The Head of Festivals, Events and Cultural Policy clarified that there were plans to expand outside of the centre and that they were using feedback from artists in the decision making. Regarding graffiti it was highlighted that the Council already had projects in place with Graff Werk which supported local graffiti artists.
- The topic of the booking schedule was raised by members and whether the service controlled the schedule. It was detailed that the system is left open to the artists, but the artists were unable to do block bookings.
- Members further asked how the service was managing artists who performed outside of the scheme. It was noted that they could not stop

artists performing in other areas with acoustic instruments, but they would prefer artists to use the Busk scheme. One of the main aims of the scheme was to address artists who were using amplifiers for their music as if artists used amplifiers in unapproved areas, then they would be in breach of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO).

AGREED:

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

228. FESTIVAL & EVENTS GRANTS PROGRAMME 2026/27 – OVERVIEW

The Director of Tourism; Culture & Inward Investment submits a report to the Commission on the 2026/27 Festivals and Events Grants Programme including background, new commissioning process and criteria, successful applications and awards. The report also outlines how the grants programme has evolved and its strategic relevance to the city.

The Assistant City Mayor for health, Culture, Libraries and Community Centres introduced the report and noted that where there was competition for resources, it was necessary to have a transparent process that was fair and could be understood. She acknowledged that moving to another system always had challenges, but this change had happened relatively smoothly.

She further reported that people had engaged well and the process had been open and transparent. She suggested that this was a good foundation for the Council to continue to develop. She highlighted the value of festivals to the city and individuals, and noted that some smaller events had a disproportionate impact in delivering for the city.

The Head of Festivals and Events and Cultural Policy attended the meeting to help present and assist with discussions.

Key points to note were as follows:

- The report provided an overview of the Festivals and Events Grants Programme for 2026/27, including the introduction of a new commissioning process, the assessment framework used, and the recommended funding awards for this financial year.
- Leicester City Council already delivered a number of major events directly, including Light Up Leicester, Riverside Festival, Diwali Day and the Abbey Park Bonfire. Alongside this, the Council supports external organisations to deliver a broader programme of festivals and events that contribute to the city's cultural, social and economic wellbeing.
- Following a review of the previous grants programme, a new

commissioning approach was introduced for 2026/27. The intention was to create a more transparent, robust and strategically aligned process, ensuring funding supports high-quality, inclusive and environmentally responsible festivals and events that deliver clear benefits for Leicester residents and visitors.

- The funding opportunity was publicly advertised in March 2026, with applications promoted through council communications, social media, local press and directly to previous recipients and local cultural organisations. This resulted in 68 applications requesting a total of approximately £927,000, significantly exceeding the available budget.
- Applications were assessed against published eligibility requirements and a detailed scoring framework. Criteria included cultural quality, community cohesion, participation and accessibility, environmental sustainability, economic impact, organisational capacity and value for money. Following eligibility checks, 33 applications were excluded for not meeting the published criteria, with the remaining applications scored and reviewed by officers.
- Originally, a budget of £165,000 had been identified for the programme. However, due to the strength of applications received and the strategic importance of festivals and events, a further £65,000 was approved, increasing the total programme budget to £230,000. This additional investment formed part of a wider increase in the Arts and Museums budget and reflects the Council's commitment to accessible cultural activity across the city.
- As a result, 20 festivals and events were recommended for support in 2026/27, with awards ranging from £5,000 to £45,000. The programme included established events such as Leicester Caribbean Carnival, Leicester Mela, Leicester Pride, Black History Month, Leicester Comedy Festival and Bring the Paint, alongside events celebrating dance, poetry, film, music, heritage and emerging communities. Together they represented a broad and balanced programme that reflected Leicester's diversity and supported participation across different communities and age groups.
- The programme was designed not only to support cultural expression but also to strengthen community cohesion, encourage civic pride, increase footfall for local businesses and ensure that free and low-cost cultural experiences remained available to residents during a period of continued financial pressure.
- All successful applicants would be subject to formal funding agreements, monitoring requirements and post-event evaluation. This included attendance data, financial reporting, evidence of outcomes achieved and, where necessary, audit and compliance checks to ensure public funding delivered measurable value.

In response to member discussion, the following was noted:

- In response to a query about whether there was any conflict with residents in the city centre, it was noted that no complaints had been received from residents about festivals and events negatively affecting the environment.
- In response to a query about whether events increased footfall for local businesses, it was noted that businesses welcomed the programme as it brought people into the city. Attendance data was asked for as part of the evaluation. A methodology was then applied to this data to get an estimate of the economic impact.
- Footfall trackers were in place, and software could measure hotspots to identify the number of people in that area of the city at a particular time. These trackers worked off mobile phone data and could look at the profile of the phone-user, this could be applied to particular events.
- Organisations needed to match-fund.
- In response to a request for clarification about the Monsters event, it was clarified that this was an event that had previously occurred in the city and would occur again. It featured large inflatable monsters on buildings. This would be during restaurant week and half-term and would tie in with restaurant promotions.
- In response to a query regarding reasons for refusal, it was noted that 33 applications had been ineligible. Some refusals had been due to match-funding requirements where organisations had asked for over the 50%. Other requirements had been attendance and participation of over 3000 as wide-ranging events were aimed for. Applicants who came through the eligibility tests were scored against the criteria based on how well they answered 17 questions, the scores were amalgamated and the best selected for funding. Some applications had been just below the threshold, and others further below. Feedback had been given where requested on how they could improve applications in future. It was hoped to re-open the application process in October.
- In terms of promoting grants, this was done through the usual Council channels and through local media. Community partners were also asked to help with communications.
- In terms of awareness of the events, there was a package put together, mentioned in social media and local media outlets. Additionally, interviews were conducted on local radio. Further to this, there were on advertisements on council buildings such as libraries and also on buses. The Council organised communications for the whole city, whereas the individual organisations targeted communications at particular communities.
- In terms of application support, officers were available if people/organisations had questions. Not many questions had been received, but there were a broad range of applicants. Even though some

applicants were ineligible, the applications were representative of communities in Leicester.

- The work was multi-layered and multi-faceted. For example, with events such as the Diwali celebrations, the majority of funds were spent on closing the road rather than the cultural content. In contrast, where events were on parks, the infrastructure costs were lower. Events were not always like-for-like. The return on investment was good.
- It was noted that some smaller festivals could go under the radar. Although some may have ward-funding.
- The What's On guide was no longer produced as there was a challenge around the cycle of applying for funding meaning that organisations could not always commit to do what they said they would do in six months' time as they did not know whether they would have the funding to deliver. In its place, Visit Leicester acted as a portal. When information came late, it was easier to turn it around on a digital platform. Additionally, it was not known what the take-up of the guide was, so it was necessary to think about value for money. Some events, such as Diwali and Light Up Leicester had printed material, but this was done on a case-by-case basis.
- Groups that had just missed out on funding were signposted to other options, including through the website. Groups who had missed out would get feedback, but would still need to re-apply and demonstrate that they could meet the criteria.
- Sustainability and inclusion forms were part of the feedback.
- Officers from the Festivals and Events team could not attend every event due to limited numbers, however, arts organisations that received grants would be surveyed and the data analysed. The survey had particularly high uptake at the Riverside Festival.
- The Festivals and Events team supported a rich and diverse mix of festivals, including working with smaller organisations across parks and in the city.
- In response to a question on whether commercial festivals brought in money that could subsidise the other festivals the Council gave grants to, it was clarified that this money helped, but did not make up all of the money involved. It was a mixed economy underpinned by the Council who put in more than 50% of the budget.
- The Festivals and Events Team were thanked. Work was being moved forward and there was an emerging vision regarding festivals. It was important to have ownership and dialogue as festivals were so important to the city. It was suggested that a further report come back to the Commission on the vision for festivals, exploring both larger and smaller festivals.
- The importance of festivals for the performers was highlighted.

AGREED

- 1) That the reports be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account by the lead officers.
- 3) That a further report be brought back to the Commission on the vision for festivals.

229. WORK PROGRAMME

It was requested that a further report on festivals come back to the commission.

The work programme was noted.

230. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no further items of urgent business, the meeting finished at 19:23.