



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CULTURE AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: Thursday, 8 October 2026 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Zaman (Chair)

Councillor Cassidy
Councillor Halford

Councillor Haq
Councillor Dr Moore

Councillor Pickering
Councillor Rae Bhatia

In Attendance

Assistant City Mayor Councillor Dempster

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231 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed those present.

Apologies were received from Cllr Barton – Cllr Halford substituted.

Apologies were received from Cllr Aldred – Cllr Dr Moore substituted.

Apologies were received from Cllr Dave. Cllr Rae Bhatia substituted.

Apologies were received from Cllr Joshi.

232 Declarations of Interest

The Chair noted that on the advice of the Monitoring Officer, if Councillors were members of leisure centres that were impacted by the proposal, they should declare it, but would not need to leave the meeting.

The Chair, Cllr Zaman, declared that he was a member of Braunstone Leisure Centre that was not affected by the proposals.

Cllr Haq declared that he was a member of Evington Leisure Centre.

233 Leisure Centre Needs Assessment (LCNA), Phase 3 Proposals and Public Consultation.

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submits a report on the Leisure Centre Needs Assessment (LCNA), Phase 3 Proposals and Public consultation. The Assistant City Mayor for Health, Culture, Libraries and Community Centres introduced the report.

Key Points included:

- Primary and secondary research had been carried out, and a set of proposals had been produced.
- One of these had been investment in Leisure Leys Centre. The building was in need of improvement, the gym needed improving, as did the front of the building, as people were sometimes queuing in the rain.
- The proximity of Beaumont Leys library to the leisure centre suggested that it could be more economically viable to have the library as part of the leisure centre, which would leave the library as a building that could be used for other things.
- Leicester Leys remained a popular leisure facility. The proposed investment in Leicester Leys would improve the facility and increase its appeal as a leisure destination.
- Regarding the future of New Parks Leisure Centre, data had shown that it was an under-used pool, and for every visit, the subsidy from the city taxpayer was around £6, whereas for the other leisure centres it was around £1 or less.
- Over 65% of Active Leicester users from the western ward use of Braunstone Leisure Centre and Leicester Leys as their primary leisure centre.
- If £4m was invested in New Parks Leisure Centre, around £3m would need to go into addressing maintenance and infrastructure issues such as the roof, electrics and the pool pump/plant, and therefore the customer would not see the benefit. The investment would address the maintenance of the building but not address the problems with usage and performance of the centre.
- It was noted that swimming was only a part of what the leisure centre offered. It was hoped to increase the 'dry' activities such as group exercise and Livewell by utilising and programme these activities in other community locations within New Parks.
- The squash club would need to use Leicester Leys should New Parks leisure centre close. However, data showed that residents of New Parks did not generally use the squash club. The situation would be similar with regards to canoeing, which could also be moved to Beaumont Leys.
- With regard to school swimming, five schools currently used the New Parks pool. Of these two were nearer to Beaumont Leys, so would have a better experience using Beaumont Leys pool should New Parks pool close. The remaining three had been engaged with, they currently walked to New Parks, but if they had transport, it would take the same amount of time to use a different pool, so their

timetable would not be disturbed in the event of New Parks pool closing. It was acknowledged that schools had difficult budgets, but financial assistance would be provided to support schools to cover the cost of transport.

- Meetings had been conducted with the public, and the consultation was live online. Capacity would be looked at in terms of meeting the needs of clubs and groups.
- Pool capacity had been looked at in relations to the number of residents in the city, and had been compared to other cities. Leicester was not over or under capacity. Should New Parks Pool close, it would not have a majorly detrimental effect on this statistic but would improve the budget by approximately £700k.
- The Council had a duty to make decisions on emotive issues; however, it was necessary to think about what was in the interests of the residents at the present time. It was considered that young people wanted different experiences, and whilst they needed the opportunity to learn to swim, which they would continue to be given, they also wanted fun and confidence in the water, which could be achieved through Leicester Leys.

In discussion with members, it was noted that:

- Members praised the comprehensive report but wished to hear more about the arguments in support of New Parks Leisure Centre. In response it was stated that the aim of the consultation period was to provide this. The report brought to the commission had provided the data and the consultation would provide public feedback, which would provide a comprehensive approach. The emotional nature of the issue was acknowledged.
- Members noted the findings regarding the changing trends towards traditional lane swimming and how this impacted the Council's thought process. Members were keen to find out more about the potential improvements that would be made to Leicester Leys. In particular, the currently decommissioned flumes, which members argued were a major attraction and added to the destination appeal of Leisure Leys. It was explained that the closure of New Parks would mean £8 Million could be spent on renovating Leicester Leys and recommissioning facilities such as the flumes.
- It was raised that Leicester's KS2 swimming attainment (the ability to swim 25m when leaving primary school) is lower than other Local Authorities in the region, which has an average of 72% compared to Leicester at 42%. A discussion took place about the non-correlation between location of a primary school and the swimming ability of pupils, with example given in the east of the city of schools that are within walking distance of council pools being as low as 21%, compared to those in the west that are further away being higher as around 65%.
- Concerns were raised about the potential health impacts that the New Parks Leisure Centre closure could have on the New Parks area, which was already struggling with low health outcomes. Concerns around the levels of swimming proficiency in Leicester were highlighted. Officers highlighted that proximity to a

swimming pool was not the underlying issue behind this statistic as notably, Rushey Mead Primary School had a swimming proficiency amongst its students of 20%, even though Cossington Street Sports Centre was nearby. It was stated that schools in the New Parks area were actively choosing Braunstone Leisure Centre over New Parks and those schools had much better averages for swimming proficiency, with Stokes Wood Primary School having 67% and Forest Lodge Academy 61%. More information could be provided on which schools used which pools.

- The topic of travel to other leisure centres was raised by members and the potential barriers this might cause. Officers stated that there were plans to re-site the dry gym equipment at New Parks Youth Centre, which was located opposite New Parks Leisure Centre meaning there was little disruption to local gym users. Regarding swimming pools, Braunstone Leisure Centre was located just over a mile from New Parks and Leisure Leys was two miles away and located at a popular shopping centre.
- The topic of LGR, which was currently on pause at the time of the meeting was raised by members and how a potential enlargement of the city boundaries would affect the leisure centres. The main concern was how the population increase could impact the leisure centres and if the Council had factored capacity into the report's findings. It was advised that the topic would be investigated and members communicated with regarding this.
- It was acknowledged that there would be trade-offs either way depending on which strategy the Council chose. It was detailed that New Parks Leisure Centre was running at a £430K a year deficit and was currently costing each resident a subsidy of £6.35 to support the facility. If New Parks was to remain open and receive a £4 Million investment, then a large majority of the funding would go on maintenance costs rather than improving the overall aesthetic and functionality of the pool. This investment funding would have to be taken away from the funding pot for Leisure Leys which would impact the level of improvements undertaken at the site.
- The Chair was interested to find out if any green schemes were planned as part of the refurbishment and upgrading of the leisure centres. Officers advised that the installation of Photovoltaic Panels had been conducted or were currently ongoing at several leisure centres with the aim of offsetting some of the utility costs at the sites. There were also plans to replace the facilities at several sites, such as boilers, which in some cases were over 50 years old. This again would help to offset utility costs and make the centres more energy efficient.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That points raised by members be taken into account.

The meeting ended at 7:05pm