



Leicester  
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 18 JANUARY 2007 at 5.00pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Farmer - Chair  
Councillor Kitterick – Labour Spokesperson  
Councillor Renold – Liberal Democrat Spokesperson  
Councillor Porter – Conservative Spokesperson

Councillor Bhatti

Councillor Clair

Councillor Saleh

\* \* \* \* \*

**85. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**86. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have in the business on the agenda, and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

There were no declarations.

**87. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Councillor Porter requested that the rewording he requested as part of Minute 67, Old Town Development Partnership be included in these minutes. These are detailed below:-

*“A Member of the Committee expressed a number of concerns. He felt that regeneration in this area of the city had already pushed ahead since 2002 and the riverside now was very different now from what it was like back then. He mentioned the comments made by the Leicester Regeneration Company (LRC) where they felt that regeneration was progressing well at the Riverside area. He felt that the support from the Council to the Riverside regeneration should be the provision of open space which could allow other developer contributions in the area to deliver infrastructure improvements. He also noted that the LRC had commented that the focus of regeneration efforts should be around the railway station. He was of the opinion that investment would come into the area*

*with or without the Old Town Development Partnership proposals. Overall he felt that the proposals were not beneficial to the Council or the city. Other members of the Committee disagreed with this member on the principle of having development on this site and said that they would welcome it.”*

It was also requested that a comma be included in Minute 78, Local Development Framework: Revised Local Development Scheme, Resolution (1) after the word ‘which’. It was also requested that in Resolution (3) of the same Minute, the word ‘resourcing’ being included prior to ‘corporate priority’.

**RESOLVED:**

that the minutes of the Economic and Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee held on 7 December 2006 having been circulated to the Committee be confirmed as a correct record subject to the above amendments.

**88. PETITIONS**

The Town Clerk reported that there were no petitions.

**89. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, STATEMENTS OF CASE**

The Town Clerk reported that there were no questions/ representations or statements of case.

**90. DRAFT REVENUE STRATEGY FOR THE REGENERATION AND CULTURE DEPARTMENT**

The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture and the Chief Finance Officer submitted a report seeking the views of the Scrutiny Committee on the draft revenue strategy for the Regeneration and Culture Department which have been requested by the Cabinet Member.

Members of the committee discussed the Performing Arts Centre (PAC). In terms of the management of the project, members of the Committee felt that the Chief Executive should take a leading role. Other more general concerns were raised about the input of senior managers in the project. Officers commented that the Cultural Quarter Project Manager reported to a project board. The Chief Executive, the Town Clerk and the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture were members of this board. Further points were raised about the PAC. One member felt that his query regarding the size and cost of the originally proposed theatre and the actual size and cost had not been correctly responded to. Committee members also expressed concern that they had not seen a copy of the business plan for the PAC. The Acting Corporate Director commented that he undertook to find out the current position on the business plan and report back to committee members as a matter of urgency. The Chair noted that he had invited the Cultural Quarter Project Director to attend the meeting to discuss the PAC in private session as an item of urgent business. He felt that these issues may be clarified at that point.

A member of the committee raised concern about the 60% reduction of the existing revenue budget for local environmental works and investment in streets. It was felt that this gave the impression that the Council was over focussed on the city centre.

Members of the committee also considered the Haymarket Car Park. It was felt important to retain this as a strategic asset and if potential buyers were aware the Council was to sell then a lower price would be achieved. Other members of the committee felt that fuller consideration should have been given to the proposal to sell the car park lease before it was proposed for sale in a budget strategy. Officers commented that it was previously intended to sell the car park lease as part of the PAC funding strategy. It was previously thought that a rent increase and repair of dilapidations would make retention of the lease too expensive. However it was ascertained that these costs were not as high as it was previously thought, therefore it was agreed to retain the car park lease as a strategic asset. It was however intended to put the Haymarket Theatre lease for sale on the open market.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) that the committee expresses its disappointment to Council that it had not seen the Performing Arts Centre business Plan;
- (2) that the committee recommends that the Chief Executive take personal charge of decisions relating to the Performing Arts Centre;
- (3) that the Committee recommends that Council delegates decision making powers on the Performing Arts Centre to the Chief Executive;
- (4) that the Committee expresses its concern at the proposed reductions to Local Environmental Works;
- (5) that a finalised and clear response be provided for the question regarding the difference original proposal for a theatre that cost £26 million for an 18,000 square foot theatre and the actual theatre which was costing £59 million for a 12, 500 square foot theatre.

**91. IMPROVING AND ENHANCING SHOPFRONTS IN LEICESTER**

The Service Director, Planning and Policy submitted a report providing information on the powers and controls available to the council to improve the appearance of shop fronts in the city, including shops in the conservation areas. The report included information on the potential capital and revenue costs of setting up and running shop front grant schemes.

The Committee considered the report and a Member suggested that

improvements should be made to the whole of the building façade rather than just the eye level shopfront. The Committee also discussed the possibility of concentrating on improving shop fronts covering the whole of an area, rather than providing funding for isolated shops. Officers informed the meeting, that previous schemes had focussed on specific areas, for example in Hartington Road, with success. Shopkeepers had been encouraged to participate in the scheme, by being made aware of the benefits that such improvements would be likely to bring. Officers had provided technical support, though this had proved to be fairly labour intensive. It was hoped that a Heritage Regeneration Officer would be recruited to support the initiative.

Members were informed that there had been a recent meeting of the Shadow Business Improvement District Company. Following this meeting they intended to submit a bid to the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership for funding to improve shop fronts. Officers hoped that the Council could work with the Company on this Project.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the Committee recommends that Officers develop a programme to improve the facades of buildings on shopping streets in the city, including the provision of advice and grant aid, and seeking the involvement of owners to generate support for this programme; and
- (2) that consideration be given to a joint initiative with the Shadow Improvement District Company; and
- (3) that a bid for money in the next 3 Year Capital Programme be submitted to support this programme.

## **92. BRAUNSTONE HALL - PROTOCOL FOR INVOLVEMENT OF BCA IN MARKETING**

The Corporate Director of Resources submitted a report which outlined the protocol agreed with the Braunstone Community Association (BCA) for their involvement in the marketing of Braunstone Hall.

A Member of the Committee requested that information should be given to any prospective purchaser of Braunstone Hall on possible investment costs and returns. An Officer responded that this would be very difficult to provide as it depended on how the purchaser wished to develop the Hall. The Hall was being offered on the open market and there was a whole range of possibilities for its development.

A Committee Member enquired whether the BCA were happy with the approach that the Council was taking on marketing the Hall. Officers confirmed that they were.

RESOLVED:

- that the report be noted.

### **93. PLANNING APPLICATION STATISTICS**

The Service Director, Planning and Policy submitted a report giving the performance information on the speed of determining planning applications.

A member of the committee noted that the performance of the planning service had improved, particularly on major planning applications and officers were to be congratulated for this. It was however hoped that lessons would be learnt about how to avoid poor performance in future.

Members of the committee queried the figures contained within the report in the table on page 2. It was felt that table indicated that the percentage improvement in performance was as a result of fewer major applications being submitted in comparison to the similar period in 2005. Therefore it was thought that the work rate of officers remained the same but it was a larger percentage of a lower number of applications. There was confusion over this point at the meeting. The Acting Corporate Director undertook to provide a written response to members which explained the figures in more detail.

A member of the committee commented that Leicester had many more major applications than other authorities according to some research he had undertaken.

A member raised a query regarding the cost to the Council of the two successful appeals noted in the report. The Acting Corporate Director undertook to provide this information to members of the committee. Other members of the committee felt that the issue of appeals needed a wider discussion at the committee. It was requested that an item of business be submitted to the next meeting.

A committee member requested that the report author attend the meeting in future to discuss the report.

RESOLVED:

that an item of business on the Council's approach to appeals be submitted to the next meeting.

### **94. 2006/07 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - PERIOD 7**

The Chief Finance Officer and the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture submitted a joint report to the Committee to update members on the progress of the capital programme for 2006/07 up to the end of October.

A member of the committee queried the £162,000 forecast to be spent on the Riverside. He thought that there was due to be a consultation taking place on expenditure of funds on the Riverside. He requested that an officer attend the next meeting of the Aylestone, Eyres Monsell and Freemen Area Committee to explain the position. The Acting Corporate Director undertook to ensure that this happened.

A committee member thought that virements had taken place which hadn't shown up in this report. He noted funding for alley-gates as a particular example. The Head of Finance commented that the budget which is detailed in the report are exactly as it was approved previously by Council. Another member of the committee thought that alley-gates were part of revenue funding.

A committee member expressed a general concern about the level of slippage detailed in the report and requested that concern about this be expressed to Cabinet and a report be submitted to the committee about how it was to be addressed. Officers commented that whilst there was a level of slippage, some of what was recorded as slippage was actually funded by using external funding and Council's money was re-phased to be spent on other projects or at a later stage.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the committee expresses its concerns to Cabinet about the level of slippage in Regeneration and Culture Department Capital Programme;
- (2) that the committee receives a report at a future meeting that details how the slippage situation will be improved.

#### **95. 2006/07 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING - PERIOD 7**

The Chief Finance Officer and the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture submitted a joint report showing a summary position comparing spending with the budget.

A Member questioned whether there was likely to be an overspend on the budget, when the recruitment exercise in Planning and Policy Division was completed and vacancies filled. An officer confirmed that these vacancies had been budgeted for.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

#### **96. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME FOR MUNICIPAL YEAR 2006/07**

The Chief Executive submitted a report on the on-going Municipal year work programme for the committee and consideration for items they would wish to consider in the following year.

Members of the Committee indicated that they would not hold a meeting of the Committee in March or April of this year due to the forthcoming election.

It was requested that the previously produced report on women in the workplace be submitted to the next meeting of the committee.

It was also requested that persons from groups representing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Black, Minority, Ethnic communities be invited to the meeting to discuss the City-wide Construction Project report to discuss under representation of these groups in the construction industry.

RESOLVED:

that the comments of the committee be noted.

## **97. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair agreed to accept an urgent item of business on to the agenda as follows:-

### **DISCUSSION ON PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE**

The reasons for urgency given were that the issue was due to be discussed at full Council and the committee would not meet again prior to this meeting.

The item was to be considered as part of the private session.

## **98. PRIVATE SESSION**

RESOLVED:

that the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following reports in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, because they involve the likely disclosure of 'exempt' information, as defined in the Paragraphs detailed below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and taking all the circumstances into account, it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the information as exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

#### Paragraph 3

Information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

#### Paragraph 5

information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings and in the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

### **PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE**

## **99. PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE**

Members of the Committee had a discussion about issues regarding the Performing Arts Centre (PAC).

The Cultural Quarter Project Director undertook to provide the Committee with a full response regarding the query about the cost and the size of the originally planned theatre and the cost and the size of the actual finished theatre.

Members of the Committee explored the reasons for the recent increase in money allocated to the PAC project. Also discussed was the level of senior management involvement in expenditure of this money.

Members of the Committee considered the information on the PAC which had been circulated to them in advance of the full Council meeting on 25 January.

Members also noted that they would want an opportunity to discuss to discuss the business plan of the PAC. Members asked that they see this document when it was completed.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the Committee wishes information relevant to the decision being made at Council on 25 January, be made available to Councillors;
- (2) that the Town Clerk should make this information available;
- (3) that the Policy Officer to the committee should seek clarification from the Information Commissioner about whether Councillors have the right to see commercially sensitive information if it relates to a decision which they are involved in taking.

## **100. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 7.25pm

