



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Held: WEDNESDAY, 29 JUNE 2011 at 2:00pm

P.R.E.S.E.N.T.

Councillor Grant – Chair
Councillor Bhavsar – Vice-Chair

Councillor Aqbany
Councillor Connelly
Councillor Joshi
Councillor Unsworth

Councillor Bajaj
Councillor Glover
Councillor Newcombe
Councillor Willmott

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor Glover declared a personal interest in Item 4 'Kerbside recycling' as she represented a ward which was subject to the pilot of the scheme.

Councillor Glover declared a personal interest in Item AOUB 1 'Football Investment Strategy – Aylestone Playing Fields and Riverside College site' as she had previously expressed views in relation to the project's impact on Ellesmere College.

Councillor Newcombe declared a personal interest in Item AOUB 1 'Football Investment Strategy – Aylestone Playing Fields and Riverside College site' as he was a member of the Local Access Forum which had previously discussed the matter.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATION CENTRE: LEICESTER INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY PARK

A report was submitted which detailed the creation of a new Innovation and Technology Park for Leicester.

Councillor Cassidy introduced the report to the Board. He stated that the broad proposal was for the Council to acquire land from the East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) at the Leicester Innovation and Technology Park to construct the Innovation Centre. It was noted that the City Council had the prior option on any such land purchase.

Members were also informed that a high technology company were in advanced stages of purchasing an adjacent plot to the proposed Innovation Centre and that this would bring 60 jobs to the locality; 24 of which would be new posts. Councillor Cassidy stated that the Innovation Centre had the potential to create 150 jobs by 2015, across 36 small businesses. He was of the view that projects such as this would help to lead to higher levels of graduate retention within Leicester.

In respect of funding necessary to deliver the project, Councillor Cassidy confirmed that a bid of approximately £2million had been submitted to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to cover the costs associated with site construction. In addition, a sum of £622,000 had been allocated from the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF). It was further proposed that £2,766,000 be provided from the Council's capital receipts. The detailed source of the latter was questioned. In response, Councillor Cassidy advised that a detailed report on the composition of the Council's capital programme would be brought to the Board over the coming months. Further to this, the City Mayor made it clear that the Council frequently modified its use of capital resources, partly as a result of responding to opportunities such as this one. He also stated that this project would appear within the next version of the capital programme.

Members generally welcomed the proposals outlined in relation to the development of the Innovation Centre. The potential significant increase in job provision was especially welcomed.

In response to a question around whether the City Council could be purchased at the price it was paid for previously by EMDA, Councillor Cassidy confirmed that negotiations of the purchase of the land were ongoing and that officers would endeavour to make the acquisition at the lowest possible price. The City Mayor stated that although it would be worth attempting to negotiate a lower price, he had previously met with representatives from EMDA, and that as the value of such land transfers were directed by clear Government guidelines, it was not likely that the land would be acquired at a lower price.

Concern was raised around the eventuality of not acquiring the money sought from the ERDF, and it was whether any construction work would start prior to securing all necessary funding. The City Mayor reported that the project had

been composed on the assumption of receiving ERDF monies, but as with all projects of this magnitude, there was an element of risk and uncertainty. It was acknowledged that the total cost to the Council could not be confirmed at this stage but it was stressed that the Innovation Centre was a project of huge economic significance for the City. Further to this, Councillor Cassidy explained that all funding would need to be in place before construction commenced.

Further concern was raised over the potential value for money of the project, with it being cited to Councillor Cassidy that given the overall cost of the project being roughly £5million, and with the creation of approximately 150 jobs, that this would equate to around £33,000 per job. In response to this, Councillor Cassidy felt that this was not accurate as within fifteen years, it was anticipated that 600 jobs would be created, and that this would equate to approximately £6,500 per job if calculated in the same way.

It was also questioned whether it was thought that the proposal would have any further significant impact on the air quality levels along Abbey Lane. The City Mayor acknowledged that the Abbey Lane area had been identified as an air quality black-spot, but that a station monitoring point was also located there.

In response to a question which related to the projected occupancy rate of the business units within the Innovation Centre, the Director of Planning and Economic Development anticipated that the occupancy rate would be similar to that of the LCB Depot, which now has approximately 95% occupancy. It was also confirmed that the workspaces would be managed, but that such arrangements would be flexible accordingly to the level of dependency required for business support.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Board supports the proposals as detailed within the report; and
- (2) That Cabinet be asked to consider the comments made by the Board on the Development of the Innovation

4. KERBSIDE RECYCLING

A report was submitted which asked the Board whether or not to change the kerbside recycling arrangements in the City.

Councillor Russell introduced this report to the Board. She explained that the proposal to change kerbside recycling arrangements in Leicester was due to a decline in the participation of the green box recycling scheme, with many residents having expressed a desire to recycle a wider range of materials than the current green box system allowed. Further concerns raised in relation to the green box scheme related to storage, problems with manoeuvring them and issues of litter being dispersed following collection.

In response to the problems cited around the green box scheme and the difficulties experienced to increase recycling participation rates, BIFFA proposed new kerbside recycling arrangements which have been piloted in four wards, and this has been known as the orange bag trial. Councillor Russell stated that the advantages of the orange bag scheme included an increase in the range of materials being recycled at the kerbside, with only food and garden waste and clothing being omitted from the scheme.

The meeting was informed that the pilot project took place in Braunstone Park and Rowley Fields, Belgrave, Eyres Monsell and Evington, and generated pleasing results and was popular amongst residents, with participation rates increasing by approximately 20%. In particular, the scheme encouraged recycling amongst those who had not previously done so. Councillor Russell stated that it was now proposed to roll the scheme out across the whole of Leicester, and that it was envisaged that overall recycling and composting rates for the city would increase from 40% to 48%.

The Board were generally welcoming towards the concept of the orange bag scheme and were pleased with the outcomes of the pilot study. In respect of extending the scheme, concern was expressed in terms of whether it would be successful within areas occupied predominantly by students.

It was queried whether the green boxes currently used for recycling purposes would be retrieved by BIFFA if left outside properties. Councillor Russell reported that residents were entitled to retain their boxes if they wished. If residents wished to return them, then it was advised to do so by placing them for collection inside an orange bag.

It was felt that disposal of orange bags at night could attract pests such as foxes. As a Member of one of the pilot wards, Councillor Glover noted that there were a significant number of foxes in Braunstone, but that there were no particular problems during the pilot scheme. Councillor Russell also stated that residents were directed to present their waste outside properties on the day of collection. This was in part in alignment with the aim to de-clutter residential streets. It was further stated that a flaw of the previous scheme was that after collection, green boxes were left outside properties which led to a variety of adverse issues.

In response to a question around how the scheme would operate within blocks of flats, Councillor Russell confirmed that the initial roll out would not include flats, and stated that one particular recycling method could not suit all suits of property. It was pointed out that some blocks of flats had developed successful mini-recycling centres, and that alternatives such as this were worth considering. She explained that the most appropriate recycling arrangements will be in place for all flats within 12 months of the city-wide launch.

Councillor Russell agreed with members that educating residents around the changes to kerbside recycling was central in ensuring the success of the orange bag scheme. To date, it was explained that teams of officers had been educating residents within the wards that took part in the pilot study, and there

was a commitment to proceed with this work using staff from Biffa and the Council's Waste Management Team, as well as the City Wardens team. Councillor Russell explained that all Councillors would be asked to consider the proposed communication plan for the scheme, and that this was likely to take place in the coming autumn.

Concern was raised in connection with the transportation of waste materials to MRF facilities. It was felt that transporting materials via the road network could adversely affect CO2 emissions and it was questioned whether the canal network could be considered for such transportation purposes. In response, it was stated that this specific option had not been explored and that this would not be practical for a City the size of Leicester because of the volume of materials involved.

In response to a request, Councillor Russell agreed in the future to provide statistics in relation to recycling rates on an area basis. She explained that such figures would not be available on a ward level as the collection rounds often crossed ward boundaries.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Board supports the proposals as detailed within the report; and
- (2) That Cabinet be asked to consider the comments made by the Board on Kerbside Recycling.

5. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair agreed to accept the following two items of urgent business:

1. **FOOTBALL INVESTMENT STRATEGY – Appendix AOUB AYLESTONE PLAYING FIELDS AND RIVERSIDE COLLEGE SITE**

The Chair agreed to accept this as an item of urgent business in order to allow scrutiny of a decision to be taken by the Cabinet on Monday 4 July 2011.

A report was submitted which asked the Board to consider a revised football investment scheme at Aylestone Playing Fields and the Riverside College site, which replaced the original scheme which was withdrawn following failure to obtain planning permission.

The City Mayor introduced the report to the Board. He extended thanks to the Football Foundation for showing patience following the refusal for planning permission of the previous scheme, and for pledging financial support to the extent of £5million towards the provision of football facilities in Leicester. Additional funding for Football Investment Strategy had come from Leicester City Council, NHS Leicester City and

a number of other partners.

This revised proposal for Aylestone Playing Fields/ Riverside College site would result in an additional cost of 0.7m due to the additional cost of the new scheme. 70% of this would be provided from the Council's capital programme and the remainder being financed through prudential borrowing, with the associated interest repayments of approximately £21,000 to be paid for from savings identified in Sports Services.

Members heard that the outcomes from the Football Investment Strategy included the generation of 240 new football teams which would equate to 3,170 new players participating. The City Mayor explained that as a consequence of the previous proposal for football facilities at Aylestone Meadows being refused planning permission, it was therefore necessary to consider alternative options, and the proposal for the Aylestone Playing Fields/Riverside College site had in his view, the potential to deliver a better facility than the original scheme.

The City Mayor also reported that this proposal added value to the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Programme as it would enhance the sporting offer for young people with learning disabilities when Ellesmere College moved to the site. It was also noted that as a BSF site, Ellesmere College would also have an enhanced community role bringing additional benefits to the community. In response to comments stressing the need to ensure that the project is delivered at no detriment to the school, the City Mayor informed the Board that the project team had engaged in very productive discussions with representatives from Ellesmere College and that they were looking forward to accessing the facility once it was complete.

It was questioned whether this latest proposal had received support from residents living both in the local city wards and those within Blaby District Council who lived locally. Councillor Clair explained to Members that all residents close to the site within both authorities had been made aware of the proposal and dialogue with them was ongoing. The Interim Director of Cultural Services further stated that the authority had written to residents living in the vicinity, held two community meetings and a newsletter was also being distributed to keep people informed about the scheme.

In a response to a query, it was confirmed that although the proposal related to two separate sites, it was anticipated that one planning application for the proposal would be considered. It was also confirmed that the proposed strategy would encompass seventeen grass football pitches.

A question was asked around whether the Council were to approach Leicester City Football Club for a financial contribution towards the programme, citing the fact that the Club's ladies team planned to use the facility, and the club's commitment to engage in community

development. In response, the City Mayor stated that requesting funding from Leicester City Football Club was not presently proposed, and stated that the club were already actively involved with the Sports Trust, and hoped to look at wider ways of encouraging them to contribute to the development of the city.

It was questioned whether any further future options had been compiled should this current strategy not progress. The City Mayor stated that there was no reason to anticipate failure of the new scheme, and given the general positive response from all stakeholders, was confident that the scheme could progress. He also stated that he would not be confident of retaining the investment from the Football Foundation should this proposed scheme be withdrawn.

Although the proposed new scheme was broadly supported, members stated that they would not want the progression of this scheme to adversely effect existing service operation, such as the opening hours of leisure facilities. Officers stated that the finance required through prudential borrowing was unlikely to affect existing services, with the only savings identified from current services being in relation to the Council's support towards Fullhurst sports-hall which will not be required from 2012/13 onwards.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Board supports the proposals as detailed within the report; and
 - (2) That Cabinet be asked to consider the comments made by the Board on the Football Investment Strategy.
2. At the request of the chair, the City Mayor was in attendance to provide a briefing on the events that surrounded the decision to initially not grant the 9th/12th Royal Lancers a city centre parade on their return from Afghanistan.

The City Mayor explained to Members that he was initially provided with a briefing on the matter some weeks ago. He referred to the briefing notes which were provided to him at that time.

The City Mayor stated that on reflection, the briefing note did not provide an accurate picture of the request and did not give sufficient detail of the history of the relationship between the regiment and the city. He informed Members that in hindsight, the briefing note was not satisfactory and agreed that he should have probed particular matters which were not explicitly portrayed in the briefing note.

It was reported that the briefing note informed the City Mayor that freedom of the City was granted to those that had a strong local connection to the City and that the lancers were often recruited from

areas including Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire. The City Mayor explained that he then became more greatly aware of the regiment's strong local connection, and took a view that a home-coming parade would be appropriate to allow the people of Leicester to pay thanks to the work of the regiment.

The Chair thanked the City Mayor for providing the briefing, and suggested that in future, it may be beneficial for other members to provide an input when responding to such requests, and felt that in this particular case, a wider level of input could have assisted the City Mayor when deciding whether to grant a home-coming parade. The City Mayor agreed that it would have been beneficial to engage in wider discussion with his colleagues.

6. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 3:59pm.