



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE AND TOURISM SCRUTINY
COMMISSION

Held: WEDNESDAY, 27 MARCH 2013 at 5.00pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Waddington – Chair

Councillor Bhatti – Vice-Chair

Councillor Bhavsar Councillor Cassidy
Councillor Chaplin Councillor Dr. Chowdhury
Councillor Naylor Councillor Porter

Also in Attendance

Sir Peter Soulsby – City Mayor
Councillor Clair – Assistant City Mayor (Heritage, Leisure and Sport)
Andrew Smith – Director
Brendan McGarry – Property Development Principal Valuer
Rachael Mkanza – Senior Planner
Sarah Harrison – City Centre Director
Jerry Connolly – Member Support Officer

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77. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Shelton.

78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Cassidy declared interests in the business to be discussed, as he was on the board of Leicester Promotions as a member and on the board of the LLEP.

79. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a) The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Budget Meeting of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Commission and Transport and

Climate Change Scrutiny Commission held on 7th January 2013 were presented to the Scrutiny Commission and Members were asked to confirm them as a correct record.

The Chair said she had not seen the budget for the Economic Action Plan, but Phase 2 Economic Action Plan budget was due to be decided in May 2013, and the Phase 1 budget could be viewed retrospectively at that time. The Chair asked that the Scrutiny Commission be presented with all budgets at the Budget Meeting to enable them to be scrutinised.

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Joint Budget Meeting of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Commission and Transport and Climate Change Scrutiny Commission held on 7th January 2013 be agreed as a correct record.

b) The minutes the Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Commission meetings held on 16th January 2013 and 6th February 2013 were presented to the Scrutiny Commission, and Members were asked to confirm them as a correct record.

Councillor Dr. Chowdhury stated he had sent in apologies for the meeting on 16th January 2013 and asked for the minutes to be amended to include his apologies.

The Chair drew attention to Minute Item 64 in the minutes of 16th January 2013, and informed Members that the Curve, Phoenix and De Montfort Hall would be asked to attend a future meeting with their three-year business plans, as well as information on other recommendations made. Councillor Cassidy asked that a report on Phoenix be brought to the Scrutiny Commission as soon as possible, as the venue was moving forward on a Dentistry project.

The Chair drew attention to Minute Item 65 in the minutes of 16th January 2013, and asked at what stage was the development of gipsy and traveller sites in the city. Andrew Smith, Director Planning and Economic Development, informed the meeting that the scheme was being developed, and a planning application would be submitted in the next few months.

The Chair drew attention to the resolutions in Minute Item 75 in the minutes of 6th February 2013, and informed the meeting that she was waiting for information from officers.

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Commission held on 16th January 2013, be agreed as a correct record, subject to the amendment of Councillor Chowdhury's attendance.

that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Economic

Development, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Commission held on 6th February 2013, be agreed as a correct record.

80. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS OR STATEMENTS OF CASE

It was reported that no questions, representations or statements of case had been received.

81. PETITIONS

It was reported that no petitions, in accordance with the Council's procedures, had been received.

The Chair announced that the agenda items would be heard out of order.

82. MARKETING OF HAYMARKET

The Director of Property submitted a report on the Marketing of the Haymarket Theatre, and was presented by Brendan McGarry,

The report outlined the reasoning behind the decision to dispose of the lease for the Haymarket building, which currently costs the Council £209,000 a year. Brendan described the building as being purpose built as a theatre, which was split-level, and had inflexible concrete tiers. He said the building also structurally supported shops and the car park for the shopping centre. He said works on the building, such as removal of asbestos, had resulted in damage to the building, and there were no services or toilets. He added that the building did not have a ground floor and there was no disabled access. It would require around £2million to put the building back into any sort of use, and the sheer cost of taking on the building was prohibitive to potential users.

The City Mayor said that continuing to carry the annual costs of the building, and to invest £2million in refurbishment costs, was not a good use of the Council's money, added to which there was a doubtful outcome on whether or not someone would take over the lease. He said it was very difficult until there was a particular person interested in the building, to know what to do to make it suitable for them, but was willing to be flexible to provide an incentive to prospective purchasers. He said he was intensely aware he was dealing with public assets, the proper procedure would have to be followed first to try and sell before offering any incentives. He added he did not know why the My Place scheme was cancelled under the previous administration. Members suggested alternative uses for the building, but the lease included a restrictive user clause for use. It was suggested a re-marketing strategy was required to attract potential users. The City Mayor invited Members to visit the site. The Chair suggested inviting the media on visit to aid the publicity campaign.

The Chair summarised that:

1. A visit to the site would be organised.
2. Members called for a new marketing strategy to be drawn up.

3. Further recommendations would follow.

The Chair thanked the City Mayor and officers for the thorough answer that had been given.

RESOLVED:

1. that the report be noted.

83. SCOPING DOCUMENT FOR REVIEW ON TOURISM

The Chair of the Scrutiny Commission presented a scoping document for the proposed scrutiny review on the effectiveness of current and planned strategies to encourage tourism in Leicester. Sarah Harrison, City Centre Director was present to provide a response.

The Chair asked that suggestions of what could be included in the review be provided by Members, and the following points were raised:

- The use of local communities and businesses to deliver tourism events, including direct tourism spend and jobs created;
- Local heritage;
- What make Leicester residents proud;
- Other attractions, including the County, for example, Twycross Zoo;
- As part of Leicester's past, consideration should be given to the development of a textile museum.
- How does the Council build on recent findings, current offers or future offers that bring people into the city, for example, the Comedy Festival, National Rail Museum, the Story of Leicester;
- Market research should be undertaken to gather evidence that investment would increase tourism;
- Travel to and parking facilities in the city;
- Emphasise differences and uniqueness of attractions in the city;
- Build on the Richard III findings and exhibition;
- Issues around place marketing and place management, and tourism-related asset development.
- Need to look at the impact on the City as a whole and not just the City Centre;
- Provision gaps – the Riverside development, leisure facility on Corah's site, large arena.

Sarah said she found the comments useful and positive. She said the review would look at place marketing, leisure and business tourism, and residents and students would be targeted. She added tourism was a growing industry and it was important to involve young people and school leavers with regards to future employment opportunities, as tourism was a good industry for this age group and also for people who need to work part-time. She added that the Richard III findings and subsequent exhibition was a springboard to develop the tourism industry in Leicester.

The Chair said the scoping document would be amended following discuss, and that a timetable for the review would be developed to gather external and internal evidence.

RESOLVED:

1. that the scoping document be agreed.

84. CITY DEAL UPDATE

Andrew Smith, Director Planning, Transport and Economic Development presented a report on the Leicester and Leicestershire City Deal proposal, and answered questions from Members.

Andrew informed the meeting that an expression of interest was submitted to Government in January 2013, and it had been agreed that the Leicester and Leicestershire City Deal proposal could be taken forward. The Government had asked that the City Deal negotiations be concluded by the end of 2013, and key dates and information on the final deal were outlined in the report.

Andrew said that a key element of developing the City Deal proposal was the engagement of the private sector. He said that next steps would be for the City Deal officer group to meet to discuss the timetable for development of the final City Deal. This could draw from the Government's core package which covers the areas of infrastructure, labour market and skills, and private sector growth. Andrew said the City Deal already provided an opportunity to bid for two funding sources, with potential investment in cycleways and grant monies for businesses.

Andrew noted that a LLEP officer would be seconded to manage the City Deal development programme and her role could be backfilled through the LLEP.

Members asked what the environmental impact of the proposal would be, for example, through additional freight. Andrew said environmental issues would need to be addressed in respect of any physical development proposals associated with the City Deal. He added the City Deal may provide an opportunity to provide Grade A quality offices in Leicester to attract and retain companies into the city.

Members stated that public transport prevented people in Leicester from reaching some parts of the county. Andrew stated that some of the sites under discussion in the county were close to the city boundary, though a strategy for getting people to the sites using public transport would be developed.

The Chair thanked the Director for the update, and requested that a regular update on the City Deal development be provided to the Scrutiny Commission.

RESOLVED:

1. that the update be noted.
2. that a regular update on the Leicester and Leicestershire City Deal proposal be provided to the Scrutiny Commission.

85. LEICESTER EMPLOYMENT LAND

Following a request from the Scrutiny Commission, the Director Planning, Transport and Economic Development presented a report on the employment land and premises requirements for the city, and approaches the council and its partners were taking to unlock and bring forward employment land and premises for business development in line with the recently adopted Economic Action Plan.

Andrew informed the meeting that employment land studies were undertaken, from which key issues were identified. A map of the location of employment land in the city or near the county boundary was circulated. The map showed clusters of lower-quality employment land in the city, and no Grade A land in the city, though there was an opportunity for the development of Grade A property on Council land at Dover Street and New Walk Centre sites.

The report also stated that larger scale employment land could only be accommodated on the periphery of the city, but supply was 50 hectares short of requirement for land within the City's boundaries. The City Mayor added the Council would look at ways of collaborating beyond boundaries to develop sites.

The report also outlined Council workspace development, for example Makers Yard on Rutland Street, which had proved to be very popular. The report outlined other developments in the city and opportunities for grants and funding to the Council for further developments. Andrew said a bid had been made for ERDF grant to develop a Food and Drink Park on Lewisher Road, as part of the Economic Action Plan, which would bring together food and drink manufacturing businesses, though the project was at a formative stage.

Members asked if other non-visible infrastructure, for example broadband, was in place to support Grade A development. Andrew said that 93% of the city was covered by fast broadband. He added that there might be opportunities for home-working that could be explored. Members asked that an update, which looked at issues regarding the supporting infrastructure, be brought to a future Scrutiny Commission meeting.

The Chair said the report had covered supply of Grade A office space, but asked if there was a demand. Andrew responded that up-to-date studies had looked at the employment land, and evidence for demand had been provided as evidence for the bid for European Funding, and would be provided to the Scrutiny Commission for information.

The Chair thanked the officer for the update.

RESOLVED:

1. that the report be noted.
2. that information on infrastructure support and demand be brought to a future meeting.

86. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (i) There would be a private agenda item on the City of Culture bid. The City Mayor invited Members of the Scrutiny Commission to have a seminar with writers of the bid outside of the formalities of the Scrutiny Commission meeting, and have input at an early stage of the process.
- (ii) There would be a seminar on Census data, namely changes in the population and the economic impact of the changes. All Members would be invited and would be held over the next month, details to be confirmed.

87. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.46pm.