



Leicester  
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT SCRUTINY  
COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 13 MARCH 2014 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Cutkelvin (Chair)  
Councillor Gugnani (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Bhatti

Councillor Corral

Councillor Grant

Also present:

Councillor Russell: Assistant City Mayor, Neighbourhood Services

Councillor Sood: Assistant City Mayor, Community Involvement , Partnership  
and Equalities

\* \* \* \* \*

**100. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cleaver and Desai.  
Councillor Naylor also submitted his apologies as he was elsewhere on council  
business.

**101. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Cutkelvin declared for the avoidance of doubt that in respect of item  
8, Transforming Neighbourhood Services Programme – South Area, she had  
had contacts with various groups, and in particular groups that used the  
Linwood Centre and she had submitted a letter of representation (which had  
been included in the report). Councillor Cutkelvin added that she had been  
advised that she did not need to vacate the chair for this particular item of  
business.

## **102. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Members were asked to confirm the minutes of the previous meeting of the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission held on 13 March 2014.

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the meeting of the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission held on 13 March 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

## **103. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

### **Minute Item 93: General Fund Budget 2014/15 to 2015/16**

The Chair confirmed that a minute extract from the meeting was shared at the Overview Select Committee on 13 February 2014.

### **Minute Item 94: Impact of Welfare Reform**

The items as agreed had been added into the commission's work programme. These included:

- Representatives from the Job Centre Plus had been invited to the next meeting.
- An item on Food banks would be discussed at the next meeting.
- A site visit to the new customer service centre would be arranged in the near future.

The Chair also reported that there had been changes to the Fareshare scheme in that they were only able to provide a more limited range of food from April 2014. Assistant City Mayor Russell (Neighbourhood Services) advised that the organisation was struggling to meet the increased demand for its service and the city council were working as an authority to seek ways of providing support. She expressed concern that this would be a crucial issue if the changes went ahead as proposed.

### **Minute Item 95: Census Data Analysis**

It was reported that the census ward data had not been sent out to all councillors. The Chair asked for this to be checked.

### **Minute Item 96: Equalities**

The Chair confirmed that following concerns expressed by the commission, information relating to the Employees' Groups had been amended on the council website.

#### **104. PETITIONS**

The commission heard that just prior to the start of the meeting a petition from the Saffron Community Health Alliance in relation to the proposed closure of the Linwood Centre had been presented to the Assistant City Mayor for Neighbourhood Services. The petition would be submitted into the council system for processing.

#### **105. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE**

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations or statements of case had been received.

#### **106. LEICESTER CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU (COMMUNITY LEGAL ADVICE SERVICE)**

The Director of Care Services and Commissioning submitted a report that provided an update on the progress and development of the community legal advice service. The City Operations Director gave a presentation on the service and a copy of this is attached at the back of the minutes.

Members discussed the attendance figures at the outreach centres in the wards and the Operations Director explained that she could provide figures for the centres to show which were most attended and least attended. She added that they were trying to refer people from the main office to an outreach centre if there was one in their ward. If a particular centre did not appear to attract the expected number of people, it might be necessary to re-consider locations and session times. All locations for the outreach centres were checked with the ward councillors; however further feedback on appropriate locations would be welcome.

The Operations Director was asked to take into account that members of the public in deciding where to go for advice were not constrained by ward boundaries (they may not even know which ward they lived in), but might chose a venue that was most convenient.

Members commented that information relating to the cost of phone calls to the 0844 numbers was not included on the website and they felt that this information should be there. The Operations Director responded it was probably because the different providers had different charging tariffs; however she would look into this.

The Chair referred to the logging system for calls received and remarked that it would be useful to have a breakdown of the queries raised by members of the public, if this was not too time consuming. The Operations Director stated that she could provide a breakdown of queries relating to multiple issues if it would be useful.

RESOLVED:  
that the report be noted.

## 107. DEVELOPMENTS IN COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Director of Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that provided an update on the developments that were taking place in Community Services following the implementation of the organisational review.

The Head of Community Services explained that nine Community Engagement Officers had been recruited and were already making a positive impact. An update on their work would be brought to a future scrutiny meeting. In addition there would be a report updating on the findings of the scrutiny review into Partnership Agreements.

There was some discussion on the community centres usage figures. Members heard that currently the figures included everyone who came into the centre; this included staff and members of the public calling in with a query. This system did not accurately reflect the level of community use of a centre and there was a need to monitor the level of usage by groups rather than by footfall. It was anticipated that as a result of the work of the Community Engagement Officers, there would be more community groups meeting in the centres. The Chair remarked that the Overview Select Committee would probably want to consider some of the statistics and she requested that officers ensure that the method for compiling statistics was consistently applied across all areas of the city.

A query was raised as to whether all the groups within the partnership arrangement were receiving their payment on time. The Head of Community Services explained that there had been a delay but this was being addressed. Members discussed the changes to the fees and charges and heard that the new system of paying in advance was helping to reduce the amount of arrears. The Chair referred to the paye.net system and asked about the uptake of the scheme since it had been introduced. The Head of Community Services explained that he did not have that information to hand but he would forward it to her.

The Chair requested more contextual information in the report, in particular for members of the Overview Select Committee who might not be fully familiar with all the issues (for example the key access system).

### RESOLVED:

- 1) that the commission note the report and request that a further report be brought back to scrutiny in 6 months time;
- 2) that data collection be clearer and more consistent; and
- 3) that the report with information around the context of different schemes and usage figures be taken to the Overview Select Committee.

## **108. TRANSFORMING NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PROGRAMME - SOUTH AREA**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that provided an update on the Transforming Neighbourhood Services (TNS) programme and the engagement and consultation that had been carried out in the south area of the city.

Councillor Russell, the Assistant City Mayor for Neighbourhood Services presented the report and the Chair invited Karen Pickering and Maria Cook to address the commission and give their views on the proposed closure of the Linwood Centre.

Karen Pickering explained her background and her involvement in the area and in particular with the Linwood Centre and made the following points:

- Local people felt that they had not been adequately consulted concerning the change of use at the Linwood Centre.
- There were only two options on the consultation document; it did not give people an opportunity to choose an option that they wanted.
- People in the community had concerns about travelling to the Pork Pie Library; they felt it was not safe for them to access the building because of the traffic. Traffic calming would not change people's perceptions.
- The library was also on the top of a hill and difficult for people with COPD or disabilities to access.
- Members of the community felt that the Linwood Centre could be retained for community use by adapting the building to have the access control system.

Maria Cook then addressed the commission and explained that she had run the community café at the Linwood Centre on a voluntary basis for the past 8 years; the café was popular and yesterday she had had 36 customers. All the profit made by the café went to community groups. Ms Cook questioned whether there would be room for the café in the Pork Pie Library.

Assistant City Mayor Russell and the Director for Neighbourhood Services responded to the comments and queries raised and explained that there had been many opportunities for members of the community to give their views and people had been listened to. Attempts had been made to find solutions, however, for example, providing access control for part of the Linwood Centre would be problematic. The toilets were in a different part of the building and it would be difficult to ensure security. Shared use of the space would be unrealistic and not viable for workshop tenants. There would also be cost implications which would impact on the savings that needed to be made on the overall running costs, particularly staffing costs.

In respect of the Pork Pie Library, the commission heard that in terms of the current level of usage, there was sufficient space there to accommodate all groups from the Linwood Centre that would need space there. In respect of the concerns over road safety, following changes in traffic management, there had been significant reductions in the number of pedestrian accidents; however it was agreed that there was still a perception over road safety issues.

The Chair commented that whilst she fully understood the reasons for the review, she felt that there were options that could be considered for the Linwood Centre. She suggested that other services could be brought into the building, for example, the Housing Office could be relocated there.

In respect of the community café, a possible option was suggested that the café could be run from elsewhere, e.g. the Kingfisher Centre and as a social enterprise like other community cafes. However, the Chair commented that the café in the Linwood Centre was an asset and very popular. Some people came to the café and stayed all day. The Linwood Centre was the only large centre in the area. The Chair asked for Assistant City Mayor Russell and the City Mayor to re-visit the centre before the next Executive Briefing.

The Vice Chair commented that the report stated that the Pork Pie Library was not viable as a commercial building and he questioned whether this had been tested. It was explained that this had been explored, but it was a listed building which restricted this option.

Assistant City Mayor Russell responded that she was unsure as to whether the visit would be possible prior to Executive Briefing, however she assured the commission that they would work with the user groups to minimise the effects of the change. She added that she understood the concerns relating to the Pork Pie Library but the usage generally at the Linwood Centre was not high and while the café was popular, the numbers using the café other than groups / tenants based in the building were also generally low. There was a need to maximise use to make best use of the council's resources.

Comments were raised from members that the consultation leaflet was limited, with only two options offered and they asked for this to be addressed before the next phase of the programme was rolled out. Assistant City Mayor Russell responded that such feedback was helpful; the programme would be rolled out into the west area of the city next and the comments raised in respect of the consultation would be taken on board.

The Chair stated that the commission welcomed the community led approach to the programme and the addition of focus groups to the consultation process going forward. The Chair then thanked officers for the details in the report appendices.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the commission support the proposals but ask that the

Executive consider the following:

- 2) that the commission stress that care should be taken against raising expectations and in respect of this consultation, the possible closure of the Linwood Centre should have been clear from the outset;
- 3) that the commission stress the need to be sensitive to tensions between different community groups;
- 4) that artefacts in any buildings due to be closed, should be treated with sensitivity and the views of the users of the centres in respect of those artefacts should be sought.
- 5) that the commission request that the City Mayor and the Assistant City Mayor for Neighbourhood Services re-visit the Linwood Centre before Executive Briefing (scheduled for the following week), and if that is not possible, the Executive Briefing be postponed until the visit has taken place; and
- 6) that the consultation document be revisited before the next phase of the Transforming Neighbourhood Services Programme is rolled out.

#### **109. WARD COMMUNITY MEETING IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: FINAL EVALUATION**

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance submitted a report that outlined the lessons learnt, final evaluation results, recommendations and next steps following the pilot of the Ward Community Meeting Improvement Project.

The Assistant City Mayor for Community Involvement, Partnerships and Equalities presented the report and explained that the pilot project had commenced over a year ago, initially with four wards, before a further 6 wards were included in the scheme.

The Project Portfolio Manager reported that the pilot scheme had received mixed reviews, though had been generally successful in relation to officer involvement. The Ward Community Project had now transferred to fall within the remit of Community Services.

Members heard that all councillors had been encouraged to complete an evaluation form; these were attached in Appendix A of the report. The response had been mixed partly because the resources within the project team were limited. Members heard that a considerable amount of work had taken place on the 'toolkit' and the budget process had been streamlined. The Head of Community Services reported that he would bring a report back to the scrutiny commission in the autumn.

The Chair expressed disappointment that one of the evaluation forms had been omitted from the agenda and subsequently been tabled at the meeting. She asked for this to be circulated with the minutes.

Members considered the report; their discussion included points as follows:

- Concerns were expressed at the workload of the Neighbourhood Development Managers.
- Concerns were expressed regarding errors in the community meetings' publicity.
- The Councillor Guide was considered to be useful for some councillors.
- The ward meeting patch walks would not be suitable for all the wards. Concerns were expressed that as a multi-agency approach, they required significant staff resources.
- Some wards were better served with community facilities than others, which made it very difficult to move around different areas within the ward.
- Some wards had no council facilities in which to hold community meeting.
- The guidance for councillors was welcome; but every area worked differently and the final decisions in relation to the running of the meeting needed to rest with the ward councillors. The Project Portfolio Manager agreed and responded that the Neighbourhood Development Managers' and the Community Engagement Officers' role was important because they would help to facilitate what the councillors wanted. One of the findings of the pilot project was that the wards were different and one model would not suit them all.

The Chair commented that the commission had previously expressed concerns that councillors' expectations may be raised by the pilot project. Officers were asked whether they had met with the ward councillors involved in the pilot to ascertain whether their expectations had been met. Officers responded that the Neighbourhood Development Managers would be addressing this issue.

The Chair expressed concerns that if some of the ideas generated with the pilot ward councillors were to be introduced, the process of supporting the community meetings would be more labour intensive and she queried whether the Neighbourhood Development Managers would have the resources to deliver. The Head of Community Services responded that initially no major changes in resources were anticipated, however budget processes were being streamlined and the Community Engagement Officers would be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of funding applications.

The Chair summarised the discussion and asked for the Neighbourhood Development Managers to have a platform to discuss their findings from the first quarter's community meetings and to share good practice. This should be led by one of the managers who could then feedback to a future scrutiny commission meeting.

The Chair added that the honesty in the report was welcomed and the raw data



was appreciated. In respect of the community meeting action logs; concerns were expressed that some of the actions identified had not been followed through. The Chair also requested that the new community meeting budget guidance be brought to scrutiny and be made available for members of the public to view as well.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the commission note the report and request a further update be brought back in 6 months time;
- 2) that further work be carried out in relation to young people's involvement; and
- 3) that the community meeting funding guidance be brought to a future meeting of the scrutiny commission.

#### **110. SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME**

Members were asked to consider the scrutiny commission work programme.

RESOLVED:

that the work programme be noted.

#### **111. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm





## Leicester Advice Service

Helen Child, City Operations Director  
LeicesterShire Citizens Advice Bureau  
Helen.Child@leicscab.org.uk



## Performance, Q1-Q3

- Tier 1 – assisted information  
– 8,906 (9,000 expected)
- Tier 2 – generalist advice  
– 3,284 (4,950 target)
- Tier 3 – specialist casework & representation  
– 497 (450 target)



## Performance Analysis

- Tier 1 – delivery through face to face advice, telephone and email. Anticipate expected numbers will be met at year end.
- Tier 2 – improvement throughout the year. Late award hampered implementation. Development plan in place.
- Tier 3 – exceeding targets and expect to exceed annual target too.



## Outcomes

- Quarter 3:
  - £68,158 (annualised amount) realised in bureau
  - £14,569 (total) realised by employment specialist
  - Evictions prevented, court & bailiff action averted, increase in rent/council tax arrears put into repayment



## Needs Analysis

### Enquiries

- 33% welfare benefits
- 15% debt
- 11% employment
- 10% housing
- **8% relationships & family**
  - Emerging trend, likely link to cuts to family legal aid

### Demographics

- 26% identify as having a disability of LTC
- 70% clients of working age, only 10% under 24
- Ethnic diversity – more done to promote the service to hard to reach groups



## Outreach

### Performance

- Began in September 2013
- 258 seen between September and end December

### Locations

- Locations selected by LCC on a methodology based on family cluster, homelessness, health and welfare and economic activity



## Development Plan

- Premises – moved to 60 Charles Street in January 2014
  - Additional interview and back office space
- Contact Centre expansion
  - from April will have 20 seats
  - introduced phone queue in November
- Increased access by referral and email
- Volunteer recruitment and training
  - Now have on-site training facilities
  - 3 cohorts of advisers have been trained
- Smoother referral to outreach



## Partnership & Communications

- Partnership is key to delivery of best service to the client.
- Pilot organisation providing Crisis Support Vouchers
- Working with other welfare advice providers in SWAP and ALP
- Recruited a communications officer to raise profile with potential clients
- Offer of problem noticer training to Councillors and front line staff, delivery of training to carers about welfare benefits
- Campaigns – contribute to sanctions report via SWAP, highlighting rise in rent arrears in social housing, met with Ethical Trading Initiative regarding employment conditions in Leicester

We want to share our knowledge with as many Leicester residents as possible, and to contribute to the national and local debate to make life better for everyone



## Added Value

- Macmillan – won extended funding to continue to help people with cancer and their families
- Additional Money Advice & access to grant funds
- Ingeus – advice through the Work Programme
- Discretionary Fund - £800
- Volunteering & training – 25<sup>th</sup> person this financial year has just moved in to paid work



## How to Refer

- Councillors and partner agencies can refer clients to us directly
- This gives a more streamlined service for the client who will be contacted by us directly, and will not have to give their details multiple times.
- The referral process is currently by completion of a form which can be emailed or posted to us.



## Accessing our service

For clients accessing the service without a referral, we can be reached in the following ways:

### Face to Face

- LeicesterShire Citizens Advice Bureau, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, 60 Charles Street, Leicester LE1 1FB
- Monday- Friday 9.00-4.30

### Outreach venues

### Telephone

- 0844 417 1025 from a landline, Monday – Friday 9.30-4
- 0300 330 1025 from a mobile, Monday – Friday 9.30-4



## Offering online advice 24 hours a day

[www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)



- Covers the law in all four UK countries.
- Easy-to-use information in English and Welsh and other community languages.
- Handy fact sheets and sample letters to print.
- Signposting to trusted sources of further advice.



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## Ward Community Meeting (WCM) Pilot Project – Evaluation Form

The WCM pilot project was introduced to trial and develop an improved approach to the delivery and communication of Ward Community Meetings and to make them more accessible to members of general public. This evaluation questionnaire aims to assess the performance and impact of this project.

The findings from this exercise will be used to develop a detailed evaluation report which will be shared with pilot Councillors, NCSI Scrutiny Commission and help to shape the approach moving forward.

### **What motivated you to become involved with the WCM pilot project?**

- Before I became a ward councillor I went to lots ward and community meetings across the city and saw different approaches being used, saw turnout, issues, etc
- Was aware that the ward had low residents turnout – was keen to improve attendance figures
- Engagement from officers attending the meeting was poor
- Wanted to make the process better and more accessible
- Respond local need, being mindful of demographics
- Wanted to trial series of options to improve my ward meeting, new ways of engaging and increase attendance figures

### **Do you feel the project has met your expectations and the objectives of your ward's community meetings?**

- In first instance it's hard to say – expected some merging of WCM with Saffron Mgt Board, Police/JAGs, etc
- When I had met with Miranda – was led to believe that pilot would provide a 'shopping list' of different ideas and options to trial but this didn't happen
- Acknowledge that some improvements did take place i.e. less formal meetings, different room layout, agendas tightened, developed admin process, targeted publicity but unfortunately, communication and resident's attendance figures did not change, partly did, partly didn't.
- Would have been nice to have found a solution along the way.

### **What impact did your involvement with the project have on you as a ward councillor and on your ward?**

- Disappointed that WCM attendance did not improve
- I invited lots of people to attend, told them the ward was in the pilot, expectations were raised
- On a positive note, WCM did get good feedback on the resident forms from those who did attend
- Still need to find out what are the expectations from wider community
- Number of community issues that could be brought forward for discussion to the WCM are resolved at active resident group meetings, need to investigate how we can merge different layers of groups with the ward meeting so we are all effective with our time and efforts
- Despite pilot, there is no change to public perception of the ward meetings, so we need to continue work in this remit

### **What were the main barriers to the implementation of this project?**

- Honestly think it was a lack of officer time and resources in the pilot team, one person cannot cover 5 wards and give equal service to all
- Communication and expectation of councillors and officers differed
- Separate agenda between councillors and officers
- Pilot lacked strategic direction (as outlined in the Shaun Miles project plan)

### **How would you like your ward's community meetings developing in the future?**

- Explore use of engaging with residents using social media networks - Saffron and Eyres Monsell Face book page have 400/500 followers

- MSO officer commitment was fantastic but need more officer dedicated time to the ward
- Need regular dialogue/presentations from front line service officers i.e. housing
- Merge/dovetail ward meeting with other resident group meetings and community forums
- Need to keep investigating on how to improve attendance figures – maybe consider more radical options i.e. have 4 to 6 ward meetings a year, all with different styles i.e. one could be an open meeting, another a mini community walk about, another with an earlier time, like 4pm to get mums/dads/carers - speak to local schools and get them to put a leaflet in children's school bags to publicise the meeting, etc.
- Cllr and officer debriefs after each ward meeting to consider what worked well and what did not.

Tick as appropriate*	5	4	3	2	1
Did the WCM pilot project help to shape your ward's community meetings?			√		
Did you like the approach taken by your lead officer? – <b>need more resources</b>			√		
Would you have liked to see more significant change as part of the pilot?	√				

\* 5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree