



Leicester
City Council

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

Held: TUESDAY, 20 AUGUST 2013 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

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

Councillor Bhatti
Councillor Cleaver
Councillor Corral

Councillor Desai
Councillor Naylor

Also present:

Councillor Russell – Assistant City Mayor (Neighbourhood Services)
Councillor Mrs. Sood – Assistant City Mayor (Community Involvement)

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30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Cleaver disclosed an Other Disclosable Interest in respect of Minute 34 – Community Services Charging Scheme, as she had been in discussions with local groups in her role as Ward Councillor.

Councillor Cutkelvin disclosed an Other Disclosable Interest in respect of Minute 34 – Community Services Charging Scheme, as she had been in discussions with local groups in her role as Ward Councillor. The Monitoring Officer stated that the nature of the interest would not warrant Councillor Cutkelvin vacating the Chair.

32. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

33. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, STATEMENTS OF CASE

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

34. COMMUNITY SERVICES CHARGING SCHEME

The Director Neighbourhood Services presented a report that set out information regarding the responses received to the new charging scheme for the Council's community centres. The report followed on from a report presented at the Commission meeting on 4 June 2013 that outlined the options, following a review of the current charging scheme in operation across the Council's community centres. The earlier report had outlined the adoption of a new simplified scheme to be introduced and applied in all Council community centres from 1st September 2013.

Councillor Russell, Assistant City Mayor gave a brief overview of the consultation process that had recently concluded and of the lessons to be learned following that process and the feedback received.

It had been apparent that the previous Charging Scheme was not transparent and the new scheme had been simplified with the aim of encouraging better use of facilities.

Members questioned that, as a result of the charging scheme being simplified, some groups using centres would have their charges reduced and other groups would be expected to pay more. As a direct result of this it was stated that it was likely that those groups facing increases would bid for ward Community Funding to cover their increased costs, as had already been witnessed in Rushey Mead Ward. It was agreed at the meeting that, in the short term such bids could be supported but that it would not be sustainable in the longer term. Councillor Russell, Assistant City Mayor, asked that Member's Support Officers should check with Community Services to ascertain whether the costs being requested by groups were accurate, and whether the groups applying were actually being subjected to increased charges, before the applications were passed to Ward Councillors.

The Scrutiny Commission considered the report in detail and raised a number of points that have been summarised in the recommendations set out below. An update on the issues raised by Members was requested to be brought to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Commission.

RESOLVED:

- i) Officers consider a re-classification of those groups that currently use community facilities and have expressed concerns at the level of charges they are expected to pay.

across been is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii) Officers consider that where a Community Centre has a 'lounge type' or communal area, consideration be given for the group to use the space for free or at a discounted rate to reflect the non-exclusive nature of these areas/ rooms. iii) Officers look to extend the same the transitional arrangements that have been offered to groups at the Rushey Mead Recreation Centre to similar groups the City, where if the group have historically not charged for the use of a room, transitional support extended from 7 months to 2 years.
undertaken from the within a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iv) Officers look to find ways of reflecting within the fees and charging scheme the voluntary nature of work by certain groups who do not currently benefit discount or payback scheme offered to groups partnership agreement. v) Officers to formalise ways of signposting community groups to appropriate sources of funding. vi) Community groups who have taken the time to write a written response to the consultation on the proposed Charging Scheme need to be given a formal response to their feedback, and that they are kept informed of the implementation and operation of the new Scheme.
effectively. of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vii) Following the recent problems experienced with the Charging Scheme consultation exercise, databases containing details of community groups using the centres be updated more regularly, and more consideration is given to the way we engage with these groups viii) An impact assessment is completed covering the usage of community facilities and also the financial implications for the period immediately following the implementation the new Charging Scheme. A report back to this Scrutiny Commission to be made in 6 months.

35. CUSTOMER SERVICES CENTRE RELOCATION

The Director Information & Customer Access presented a report that briefed the Scrutiny Commission about the move of the Customer Service from New Walk Centre, and the Revenue and the Revenue and Benefits front of house service from Wellington House.

The Scrutiny Commission was informed that the new facility would be based within the former 'Poundstretcher' store on Granby Street.

Members expressed views around whether adequate signage to the new facility would be provided and whether extended opening hours were being planned. Officers reported that signage to the new facility was being seriously considered and, although Saturday morning opening was not currently an option, extended hours on Wednesdays would likely be 9.30am to 6.00pm. Within the new facility a 'meeter and greeter' would be engaged to direct visitors to the appropriate area of the Centre and a number of self-help kiosks would also be available.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted and that a site visit be arranged for members of the Scrutiny Commission be as soon as possible after the new Customer Services Centre has opened.

36. CITY WARDEN SERVICE

The Director Environmental and Enforcement Services presented a report, supplemented by a presentation, summarising the changes to the City Warden Service following a review he had recently undertaken.

Councillor Russell, Assistant City Mayor gave an overview of the City Warden since its inception in 2008/09 and of how the service had developed. Members were informed that there was currently sufficient funding to operate 15 City Wardens across the City and more flexible working arrangements to meet demands were being looked at. It was stressed that City wardens would continue to operate foot/cycle patrols, with there being no intention to use cars for their day to day patrols.

Members were informed that following the review, plans were underway to build on the successes of the City Warden Service and take it to the next stage. Roles and responsibilities had been reviewed and changes identified would be rolled out gradually. Negotiations were underway to transfer the current (Vinci) Parking Enforcement staff to City Council terms and Conditions The aim being that when this happens the staff would be working alongside City Wardens.

Significant new work had been identified that could fall within the remit of City Wardens and included: -

- Rubbish on private land – currently some 1,000 complaints received each year
- Highways Licensing Enforcement – skips, scaffolding and hoarding licences, currently major issues around non-compliance and spillages on the highway
- Community Safety – City Wardens to work with slimmed down Community Safety Team
- Managing City Centre activities – available during core retail hours

The Scrutiny Commission welcomed the approach outlined although concerns were expressed around the training of staff and the managing of staff morale during the changes outlined.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted and that a further report be presented in 6 months on the progress being made with the City Warden Service.

37. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair reported that the next meeting of the neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission would be held at 5.30pm on Tuesday 3rd September 2013.

38. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.50pm.