



Leicester  
City Council

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

Held: WEDNESDAY, 9 APRIL 2014 at 5.30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Cutkelvin (Chair)

Councillor Bhatti  
Councillor Cleaver  
Councillor Grant

Councillor Desai  
Councillor Corrall  
Councillor Naylor

Also present:

Councillor Russell – Assistant City Mayor (Neighbourhood Services)

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**112. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gugani and Councillor Sood, Assistant City Mayor for Community Involvement, Partnerships and Equalities.

**113. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any interests they might have in the business on the agenda.

No such declarations were made.

**114. 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.

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

### **Minute item 103**

#### **(94) The impact of Welfare Reform**

- The Chair explained that in relation to the invitation for a representative from Job Centre Plus to come to a future meeting of the commission, it was felt that many members in general may have questions that they would wish to raise. Therefore instead of there being a presentation at the scrutiny commission, there would be a general briefing session which would be open to all councillors.

#### **The Customer Service Centre**

- The site visit to the Customer Service Centre had taken place and the Chair thanked the members who had taken part. Members had been very impressed by the new service centre and commented that it provided a pleasant open space with lots of natural light. There were also floor walkers to help manage customer expectations.

A Member remarked that he had received a complaint from a member of the public who had a relatively minor query, but it had taken several hours to get it resolved because she had ended up going to three or four different places. Assistant City Mayor Russell responded that this was regrettable but confirmed that there were a variety of signs and measures in place to help people decide where to go for help.

Concerns were raised by a Member that when he had visited the new centre recently on a Friday afternoon, there were so many members of the public waiting to be served, the queue went outside the door. He suggested that a different style of queuing or triage might be helpful.

In conclusion, Members of the commission were pleased with the new centre were of the view that it was a very considerable improvement on the previous facility.

#### **(95) Census Data Analysis**

The Chair explained that at the previous meeting, some Members had reported that they had not received the requested Census Data Analysis. Members confirmed that this information had now been received. The Chair advised that this data was also available on the council's website.

### **Minute item 106: Leicester Citizens Advice Bureau (Community Legal Advice Service)**

In relation to the concerns expressed over telephone charges to the service, a Member reported that nationally the Citizens Advice Bureau were seeking to simplify their telephone charging policy because there were so many different tariffs.

### **Minute item 104: Petitions**

In relation to a petition that had been received from the Saffron Community Health Alliance, prior to the start of the meeting on 13 March, the Democratic Support Officer explained that the petition had been submitted with very few signatures that could be verified in accordance with the Council's petition scheme. The hand written signatures gave postcodes without house numbers and the online petition gave addresses only as 'Leicester'. Rather than not accept the petition, it was felt to be better to treat it as a representation from 395 people. The different classification did not affect the way it was dealt with. Assistant City Mayor Russell confirmed that a letter was sent to the lead petitioner explaining the situation.

### **Minute Item 108: Transforming Neighbourhood Services Programme – South Area**

The Chair explained that in respect of the proposals for the possible closure of the Linwood Centre, following the meeting a letter was sent to the City Mayor. Assistant City Mayor Russell also confirmed that the Linwood Centre had been revisited by members of the executive as requested.

### **Minute item 109: Ward Community Meeting Improvement Project: Final Evaluation**

The Chair confirmed that the community meeting funding guidance had been added to the commission's work programme and that this would be brought to a future meeting.

## **116. PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Office reported that no petitions had been received.

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

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

## **118. UPDATE ON NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING**

Temporary Inspector 1995 Daniel Eveleigh, seconded to the Environment and Enforcement Division provided an update on Neighbourhood Policing. Temporary Inspector Eveleigh's update related to three main areas:

## Change Programme

Consultants KPMG were working with the Force Change Team to help bring out savings and to help ensure that working practices were efficient. While Leicestershire remained committed to Neighbourhood Policing, because of the need to make these savings, there would be a reduction in officers as part of natural wastage.

## Co-location

The importance of the role of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) was recognised and these were well integrated in communities. The Belgrave SNT was now located within the Belgrave Community Centre and an increase in visitors and visibility since the closure of the Melton Road Police Station had been reported. A similar exercise was taking place with the New Parks Police Station and options were being explored to locate the SNT to maintain their profile on the estate.

A member of the commission expressed disappointment that the New Parks Police Station would be closed; he stressed the need for the Police to find a new location very promptly. He added that the Police had previously been offered the opportunity to share the Fire and Rescue Service's premises in New Parks but this offer had been declined.

Members questioned what other police stations might be closing and also what criteria would be applied in any decisions to make such closures. Assistant City Mayor responded that she believed that footfall was one of the issues that would be taken into account, but this matter was still under consideration.

T'Insp Eveleigh also reported that the Leicester Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (LASBU) would be located at Mansfield House Police Station from June 2014. He emphasised that the Police did want to be embedded in local communities.

## Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Response Cars

The meeting heard that the Police were trialling a six month project to improve Leicestershire Police's response to ASB, with three cars on a late shift, seven days a week. The cars were dedicated to preventative patrol and responding to ASB incidents.

Assistant City Mayor Russell commented that positive steps were being taken in neighbourhood policy. She then provided a further update which included the following points:

- There would be an increase in the number of PCSOs
- The Safer Leicestershire Partnership had been successful in bidding for funding from the Police and Crime Commission's budget; funding had been put towards projects already, which included initiatives relating

to the night time economy and alley gates.

The meeting heard that a good model was operating in Eyres Monsell where the Community Centre was used by the Police. PCSOs were visible and good relationships were being forged with children there. A request was made however for the Police to be more pro-active in tackling obstruction on pavements.

The Chair questioned whether there were any trends or spikes in crimes or whether there were any outside influences affecting crime in the neighbourhoods. Assistant City Mayor Russell responded that overall there had been a very slight increase in reported crime and more austerity type crimes. However where increases had been identified, action was quickly taken through very good partnership working.

In response to a query relating to 'Stop and Search', T'Insp Eveleigh explained that the Police were very aware of the issues and sensitivities relating to 'Stop and Search' and very strict standards applied.

A concern was raised relating to residents' forums in New Parks where the Police had not turned up for meetings for at least 18 months. T'Insp Eveleigh agreed to pass that concern on, on behalf of the Member.

There was some discussion regarding parking, obstructions and enforcement. It was noted that the Economic Development, Transport and Tourism Scrutiny Commission were undertaking a review into Pavement Parking and it was hoped that the findings of the review would clarify some of these issues.

The Chair concluded the discussion and asked that an update, including an update on the findings of the consultants KPMG be brought back to a future meeting of the commission.

RESOLVED:

that the update be noted and for a further update, to include an update on the findings of the consultants KPMG on the Change Programme be brought to a future meeting of the commission.

## **119. FOOD BANK PROVISION IN THE CITY**

The Director of Finance submitted a report that provided details of the provision of food banks within the city and which outlined the work undertaken to identify and support the organisations delivering emergency food.

It was noted that a letter had been received from the Race Equality Centre (TREC) in relation to the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) included in the report. The Chair remarked that the feedback from TREC was welcome and explained that the EIA referred to the implications from the report, rather than being a full EIA. The Chair requested that this should be made clear in future reports. The meeting heard that a formal response to the letter would be sent to TREC.

The Head of Revenue and Benefits presented the report which members of the commission considered in detail. Members noted that 86% of Leicester's food banks were now primarily or solely dependent on FareShare Leicester for the supply of their emergency food provision. During 2013, FareShare had struggled to source long life food and had increasingly shifted its emphasis towards chilled and fresh food as this was more readily available from its wholesale partners. The change in the emphasis of the type of food provision meant that food providers needed appropriate storage facilities such as freezers or refrigerators, thus incurring additional costs and needing appropriate space. There were also regulatory implications to be taken into account as a result of the changes of the type of food provision. Some of the changes that FareShare were introducing, led to concerns by providers as to how they would operate in the future. Members were pleased to note that as well as support from the local authority, the food bank providers were also supporting each other.

The meeting heard that a questionnaire was being circulated to residents who used the food banks to gather information about the users and where the food banks were most needed.

Members expressed great concern at the number of people nationally who needed food parcels. The ensuing discussion included the following points:

- Members were pleased that the local authority was taking an active role in supporting food banks.
- It was questioned whether it would be possible to help people grow their own food; it was acknowledged that there was a long waiting list for allotments.

Assistant City Mayor Russell responded that as part of the Leicester Food Plan, they were looking at ways of supporting people to do this. The Head of Revenue and Benefits added that the council were trying tie in the work with the food banks with the initiatives that were taking place.

- The Chair questioned how many of the food banks operated on a referral basis only; the Head of Revenue and Benefits agreed to check and let the Chair know.
- Concerns were expressed for families that might be in desperate need for food. The commission heard that there was an emergency phone number and Co-op food vouchers and fuel vouchers could be provided very quickly. This emergency telephone number had been given to ward councillors and local organisations.
- A member commented that in Eyres Monsell, residents were being encouraged to grow their own food, through such initiatives such as a community garden, a community orchard and free seeds. A number of

events were also held where residents could obtain advice.

It was acknowledged that there were significant changes to the way that FareShare was operating. The commission heard that FareShare were sending out invoices to the organisations for membership renewal; if the payment was not forthcoming, they would contact the organisations to ascertain if there were difficulties.

The commission heard that food banks were also adding value to the food parcels they provided by offering cookery courses so that people could learn what to cook with the items they were given. They were also signposting to other relevant organisations to enable residents to access appropriate help.

The Chair concluded the discussion and stated that they welcomed the work that was taking place in respect of the food banks in the city.

RESOLVED:

that the commission note the report and recommend that:

- 1) that the local authority encourage the providers to keep accurate usage figures;
- 2) that the relationships and communication between the local authority and the providers should be maintained;
- 3) to continue to signpost to enable people to seek appropriate help; and
- 4) to support networking and to invite ward councillors to networking forums where appropriate

## **120. CITY WARDEN SERVICE**

Assistant City Mayor Russell presented a report that provided an update on the progress made by the City Warden Service implementing changes arising from a review of enforcement services carried out in June 2013.

Members considered the report and noted that the numbers of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) that were issued for the period September to March were lower for 2013/14 than for 2012/13. The commission heard that this was because of the time the wardens spent in training during that six month period in 2013/14. The numbers however had increased since then.

Members expressed appreciation of the 'before and after' photographs that had been included in the report, which demonstrated the significant differences the wardens were making in their neighbourhoods. The commission heard that some work in tidying up areas could take many hours in ascertaining who owned a particular area of land and also in following all the correct legal procedures.

Assistant City Mayor Russell explained that the city wardens were also working with other services such as Housing and the Handypersons' Service to make improvements in the community. Members of the commission were asked to contact their city warden if they were aware of problem areas around the ward. If possible, Members were asked to submit a photograph if possible, giving details of location as this was particularly helpful to the city warden.

Concerns were expressed over enforcement issues around nuisance parking and also the responsibilities of the city wardens in dealing with these. Assistant City Mayor Russell explained that some enforcement responsibilities lay with the wardens and some with the Police, and that there did need to be clarification of the responsibilities. The commission were reminded that there was a review into Pavement Parking ongoing at the moment; Assistant City Mayor Russell added that she would ask the wardens to constructively engage with the review.

The Chair stated that Biffa used to carry out special collections of larger items on Mondays and she questioned whether these would continue now that the new garden waste scheme had been implemented as those collections would also be on Mondays. Assistant City Mayor responded that Biffa had capacity to carry out both collections. The Chair commented that the local authority needed to continue to promote the bulk collection service.

RESOLVED:

that the commission note the report and make the following recommendations:

- 1) that final annual figures for fixed penalty notices be brought back to the commission when they are available; and
- 2) that there be clarity in relation to the role of the city wardens and parking enforcement.

## **121. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair stated that it was hoped to arrange a meeting with the groups that had entered into a partnering agreement. Members would be informed when the meeting was arranged.

It was planned that both the items on Partnering Agreements in Community Centres and the Voluntary and Community Sector Review would be brought to the next meeting of the commission in May. In addition the Ward Funding Guidance would be brought to a future meeting of the commission.

There were no suggestions for items to add to the work programme for the new municipal year.

RESOLVED:

that the work programme be noted.



## **122. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 7.25 pm