



Leicester
City Council

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

Held: MONDAY, 30 JUNE 2014 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Singh (Chair)
Councillor Bhatti (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Dr Chowdhury Councillor Desai
Councillor Waddington

In Attendance

Councillor Russell – Assistant City Mayor (Neighbourhood Services)
Councillor Sood – Assistant City Mayor (Community Involvement,
Partnerships and Equalities)

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Corral and Gugnani.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor Sood declared an 'other disclosable interest' in that she was Chair and Trustee of the Leicester Council of Faiths.

Councillor Dr Chowdhury declared an 'other disclosable interest' in that he worked in the voluntary sector. He added that he would not promote his own interests.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 May 2014 be agreed as a correct record.

It was agreed that in future meetings, any actions that had previously been agreed would be considered as part of the work programme and the work programme would be taken as an earlier item on the agenda.

4. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that there were no petitions.

5. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that there were no questions, representations or statements of case.

6. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE

The membership of the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission for 2014 /15 was noted.

7. DATES OF MEETINGS OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT SCRUTINY COMMISSION 2014-2015

The dates of meetings of the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission 2014 / 15 was noted.

8. LIBRARIES PRINTED MUSIC AND DRAMA SERVICE CONSULTATION

The Chair stated that he had decided to bring this item of business forward on the agenda due to the attendance of interested members of the public. He added that he had agreed that Cheryl Bennett from 'Making Music' could briefly address the commission on behalf of the interested parties.

Councillor Russell, The Assistant City Mayor for Neighbourhood Services, presented the report and explained that the council were facing extremely difficult financial times and it was necessary to look at ways of continuing the service whilst at the same time minimising the financial impact.

There had been a very good response to the consultation exercise and as a result of the consultation a number of different options had been suggested, along with differing suggestions as to how much should be charged for subscriptions. There would now be a further period of engagement where the council would talk to organisations such as Making Music and also other local authorities. A further report would be brought back to the commission before a final decision was taken.

A comment was raised that at £23,000 the cost of the service was relatively small when compared to the total budget. Assistant City Mayor Russell responded that the amount might seem modest, but it was the equivalent of a member of staff in a library and people wanted libraries to remain open longer. Other savings were also being sought in all the different areas within her portfolio. The meeting also heard that only 25% of the users of the service were by city groups and there was a need to look at what tax payers' money was being used for in the city. Assistant City Mayor Russell added that further reductions in the budget were expected and there was a need to find a sustainable solution to safeguard the music and drama library service.

In response to a question regarding service users, Assistant City Mayor Russell explained that 75% of the users were from the county and further afield. The meeting heard that Leicestershire County Council did not make a contribution to the service and the Assistant City Mayor Russell was asked to write to the country council to request a contribution towards the service.

The Chair invited Cheryl Bennett from 'Making Music' to address the meeting. Ms Bennett reported that many people would be affected by a reduction in service funding and she asked the council to work with Making Music in developing the next proposal as they had good examples as to how other authorities had responded to this challenge.

Assistant City Mayor Russell confirmed that she would be happy to work with Making Music and also in response to a request from a Member, agreed to circulate a postcode analysis of service users to all members of the commission.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the commission note the report;
- 2) that a letter from the Assistant City Mayor for Neighbourhood Services be sent to Leicestershire County Council to request a contribution towards the Printed Music and Drama Service,
- 3) that the City Council work with 'Making Music' in developing their next proposal;
- 4) that a postcode analysis of service users be circulated to all members of the commission; and
- 5) following the further consultation phase, an updated report to be brought back to the commission prior to a decision being made by the Executive.

9. OVERVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Councillor Russell, Assistant City Mayor for Neighbourhood Services presented a report that provided an overview of the key areas and services relating to the Neighbourhood Services portfolio. Members were asked to note the report

which would help them to set the commission's work programme for the forthcoming year.

A member of the commission commented that it was sometimes difficult for the councillors to know which officers to contact when they had queries from constituents. Assistant City Mayor Russell advised that members could contact Heads of Service and also use the Councillors' Enquiry Line. If they wished they were also welcome to copy in Assistant City Mayor Russell as well.

Councillor Sood, Assistant City Mayor, Community Involvement, Partnerships and Equalities then presented a report which provided an overview of the key areas and services relating to the Community Involvement element of the scrutiny commission.

The commission heard that the council sought to ensure that they had good information to help them in decision making. Information was taken from the Census 2011 and many people were involved in reaching out to communities to encourage them to participate to ensure that the census data was as accurate as possible. The council were working to understand better the channels that existed and to ensure an appropriate level of community involvement.

The Chair referred to the Equality Impact Assessment panels and questioned whether members of the commission could sit on the panels.

The Chair commented that it would be useful for members to be given budget information. As it was explained that the commission's portfolios were spread across different departments, he requested that members receive budget data by division instead.

Members noted that there were a number of planned reviews which fell within the two portfolios which would be brought to the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement (NSCI) Scrutiny Commission. Some of the planned reviews cut across different scrutiny commissions and in those cases it might be more appropriate to hold joint sessions. The reviews affecting the NSCI Scrutiny Commission were Transforming Neighbourhood Services (which was continuing), Welfare Advice Customer Support and ICT.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the overview of the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement, Partnerships and Equalities portfolios be noted: and
- 2) that budget data by division, relevant to the portfolio be brought to future meetings of the commission.

10. OVERVIEW OF THE TRANSFORMING NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PROGRAMME

Members of the commission received a power-point presentation on

Transforming Neighbourhood Services, a copy of which is attached to the back of these minutes.

Members heard that a 30% budget saving was an indicative amount to be saved from building and building related costs and this would then be followed by an organisational review to further reduce costs.

Members referred to the asset based focus of the review and requested a list of assets for the south and the west of the city, along with property costs.

The review of the south area of the city had concluded and the decisions made were being put into practice. £109,000 savings had been achieved which equated to approximately 30% of building related costs. Consultations were being held in the west area of the city and people were being asked to suggest viable solutions for the area. There had been a high level of response to the initial engagement in the west area, with over 400 people taking part.

The Chair commented that this was an important review which should also be considered at the Overview Select Committee as its outcome would affect everyone.

Members agreed that a report on the second phase of the Transforming Neighbourhood Programme should be brought back to a future meeting of the scrutiny commission.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the presentation on the Transforming Neighbourhood Services Programme be noted;
- 2) that a list of assets for the south and the west of the city, along with property costs be circulated to members of the commission;
- 3) that a report on the second phase of the programme be brought to a future meeting of the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission; and
- 4) the Overview Select Committee be also invited to review the Transforming Neighbourhood Services Programme.

11. COUNCIL TAX RECOVERY 2013/14

The Director of Finance submitted a report that provided members with key information relating to council tax recovery. Members heard that the report provided an update on the situation and a further report would be brought to the committee in August 2014.

Members considered the report and concerns were expressed that there had been a considerable increase in debt recovery activity between 2012/13 and 2013/14. Comments were made that this was a result of the current social

economic climate and that an increase in the discretionary payment funding was needed to help people clear the debt. Concerns were expressed as to whether people in owner occupied houses were being given appropriate assistance or advice. There were additional concerns that with an increase in collectable debt, there would be a knock on effect with people having less money for food, heating and clothing.

A query was raised as to the cost of issuing a court summons; the Head of Revenue and Benefits advised that she would look into this and respond outside of the meeting.

A query was raised as to whether an analysis had been carried out of who was able to pay but would not and the Head of Revenue and Benefits advised that this analysis would be included within the full report.

A query was raised as to the additional costs that would be incurred by the council tax payer if enforcement action was taken and were informed that they would have to pay £75 to the enforcement agencies which was paid in addition to the debt to the council. The Head of Revenue and Benefits explained that the council had negotiated a local agreement with the magistrates in an attempt to mitigate the costs where people were taken to court.

The Chair concluded that the commission had serious concerns relating to the current issue of council tax recovery including concerns that there were gaps in communicating with people in owner occupied houses as opposed to council owned housing. It was acknowledged that this was an issue that affected the whole of the city and Members agreed that the issue should be referred to the Overview Select Committee as it would give them an opportunity to look at the figures and develop further as appropriate.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that Members note the report and express serious concerns at the situation relating to council tax recovery;
- 2) for details of the cost of issuing court summons to be circulated to members; and
- 3) that the issue be referred to the Overview Select Committee.

12. COUNCIL POLICY AND FOWARD PLANNING PROGRAMME

The Chair explained that the Overview and Select Committee would be meeting with the City Mayor to consider possible future items for scrutiny commissions to review.

13. WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the scrutiny commission work programme and the Chair asked for any suggestions for future scrutiny items to be forwarded to him.

A meeting had been requested with the Lead Directors to establish when future reports would be forthcoming.

14. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Councillor Sood, Assistant City Mayor for Community Involvement, Partnerships and Equalities requested that the scrutiny commission meeting arranged for Monday 26 January 2015, be brought forward to 4.00 pm instead of 5.30pm. Members agreed to the change of starting time for this meeting.

15. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 6.20pm

Transforming Neighbourhood Services

Presentation to Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission

Liz Blyth & Scott Lewis
30 June 2014



Contents and Structure

- Background Information
 - Background and Aims
 - Vision Statement
- Approach
 - Methodology
 - Engagement and Consultation
- Progress to Date
 - South Area
 - West Area



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Purpose and Scope

- To provide the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission with:
 - An overview of the Transforming Neighbourhood Services (TNS) Programme
 - A description of progress to date and planned next steps

Transforming Neighbourhood Services

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Background - Scope

- Scope includes four service areas:
 - Libraries
 - Community Services
 - Adult Skills and Learning
 - Neighbourhood based customer service points
- Other services are recognised to play a major role in neighbourhood services and these are engaged with the project but not in the core scope, for example:
 - Housing Services
 - Children's Centres and Sure Starts
 - Youth Services (Youth Centres)
 - Sports Services
 - Adult Social Care



Background - Rationale

- The Council is facing unprecedented financial pressures as a result of reductions in national government funding. In order to meet these challenge we want to work with communities to plan how services will be delivered in neighbourhoods in future, building on experience in pilot projects with Aylestone, BRITE and St Matthews Community Centre.
- It is expected that the services involved in the scope of the project will be required to reduce costs by the region of 30% to help contribute to the Council's overall budget position. Achieving this requires a fundamental review.



A vision for neighbourhood working

Developing our neighbourhoods and communities is a key priority theme of the City Mayor's delivery plan. In which it states that by March 2015 the council will have "developed customer focussed neighbourhood facilities which provide integrated services to people in their community".

In order to contribute towards the achievement of this theme, the council's ambition for neighbourhood services is as follows

- **Customer Led Approach** - Services will be designed on the basis of effective engagement with our communities
- **Customer Focused Delivery** - Services will be integrated and delivered through buildings that are designed and located around the needs of people living in Leicester
- **Working in Partnership** - We will work with partners to enable the co-location of public services delivered in our neighbourhoods and communities
- **Spending money responsibly** - the overall estate will be of an appropriate size across the City and consist of good quality buildings that represent a good use of resources.
- **Regenerating communities** - we will maximise opportunities to use land and buildings to improve the physical environment in neighbourhoods and create opportunities to support communities



Transforming Neighbourhood services

APPROACH TO TRANSFORMATION



Approach to Transformation

- Overall two main areas of focus of the programme:
 - Asset based review
 - City split into 6 geographical areas, based upon clusters of wards, which will be reviewed sequentially
 - Staffing review

Note: Clusters of wards used are prior to any changes made by the Boundary Commission Review

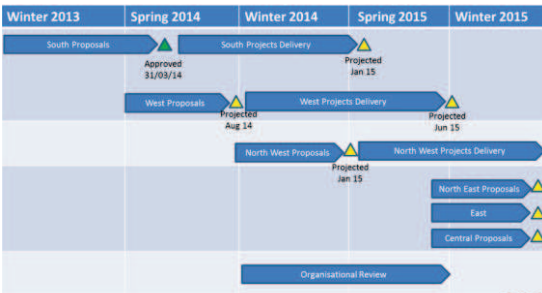


Asset Based Review - Areas

- **South Area**
 - Freeman, Eyres Monsell, Aylestone and Knighton wards
- **West Area**
 - Braunstone and Rowley Fields, Westcotes, Western Park and Fosse wards
- **North West Area**
 - Abbey, Beaumont Leys and New Parks wards
- **North East Area**
 - Chamwood, Belgrave, Latimer, Rushey Mead and Humberstone and Hamilton wards
- **East Area**
 - Coleman, Spinney Hills, Thumcourt, Evington and Stonegate wards
- **Central Area**
 - Castle ward



Asset Based Review - Timeline



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Asset Based Review – Proposal Development and Engagement

- In order to develop proposals for transformation in each area a two stage engagement process is being used:
 - An initial round of engagement with stakeholders both internal and external, service users and members of the public to develop draft proposals for the area
 - This includes:
 - Paper based and online questionnaire
 - Focus Group meetings based on local areas and age groups
 - Draft proposals are then evaluated and collated
 - These are then refined through a further engagement period prior to decision being taken

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Transforming Neighbourhood services

PROGRESS TO DATE



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Progress to Date – Early Work

- Fact finding from other authorities
 - Visits to Wolverhampton and Manchester councils
 - Research completed taking a nationwide view of approaches to neighbourhood services
- Analysis of current position
- Consultation and engagement with internal and external stakeholders
- Asset mapping and planning work
- A number of reports have been presented to the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny commission on TNS, these are all available on the Council's website: <http://www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=666>



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Progress to Date – South Area

Executive decision made on 31 March 2014 for the South Area:

- Install Self-Service Library facility at Eyres Monsell Community Centre
- Invest in Southfields Library to enable multi-service provision and transfer of services and groups into the building
- Linwood Centre to be converted into use as workshop space, extending on existing capacity and potentially creating jobs in the area
- Southfields Drive Community Centre to be demolished to enable housing development
- Transfer of Aylestone Library from existing building into Aylestone Leisure Centre, old Library offered for Community Asset Transfer
- Gilmorton Community Rooms to be monitored while encouraging more usage



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Progress to Date – South Area

- Southfields Library project is on track and due to submit listed building consent for improvement works
- Eyres Monsell self-service library project is on track, working with the community and stakeholders to agree how this will operate
- Old Aylestone Library building offered for Community Asset transfer in the first instance
- Detailed discussion with community groups over the move to Southfields library plus work to start the conversion of Linwood to more business/ workspace.



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Progress to Date – West Area

- Initial engagement stage completed ran from 31st March to 16th May
- Draft proposals compiled for consideration by the City Mayor and Executive
- Following this, second stage of engagement process to be undertaken (July – August)
- Final proposals to be presented to City Mayor and Executive for decision in late August



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Transforming Neighbourhood Services

PLANNED NEXT STEPS



Next Steps

- West Area - following community engagement, decision and implementation
- Staffing review to bring together services at the front line
- Moving on to reviews in the remaining 4 areas of the city ie start first stage of engagement process with stakeholders, service users and members of the community to develop proposals

