



Leicester
City Council

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

Held: THURSDAY, 1 OCTOBER 2015 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Dawood (Chair)
Councillor Gugnani (Vice Chair)

Councillor Corrall Councillor Cutkelvin
Councillor Halford Councillor Hunter
Councillor Khote
In Attendance

Councillor Master, Assistant City Mayor - Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Sood, Assistant City Mayor - Communities & Equalities
Councillor Waddington, Assistant City Mayor - Jobs & Skills

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15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Corrall declared an Other Disclosable Interest in agenda item 10, Leicestershire Citizens Advice Annual Report, in that a friend of his worked in the service.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the interest was not considered so significant that it was likely to prejudice Councillor Corrall's judgement of public interest. He was not therefore, required to withdraw from the meeting.

17. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the meeting of the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission held on 13 August 2015, be confirmed as a correct record.

18. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minute Item 9. Call-In of City Mayor Decisions – Highfields Community Association

Members considered responses to questions raised at the previous meeting of the commission on 13 August 2015. A copy of this information is attached to the back of these minutes.

Members queried alternative provision for those children under the age of five, who previously attended the Highfields Centre. The Director of Culture and Neighbourhood Services responded that officers in Children's Services had engaged in the process to help parents / carers find an alternative provision for their children.

A Member asked whether staff from the Highfield's Centre had been given another placement elsewhere. The Director explained that the manager in Early Years services had been liaising with officers in Children's Services and she felt that a conclusion would be reached soon. The Chair would be updated on the outcome.

In respect of enrolment numbers, Members expressed concerns that while some of the other centres in the area were being used, the numbers on roll for courses relocated from the Highfields Centre, were down to just 70, compared to 152 in 2014. In addition a third of the year had been lost for some classes as the academic year commenced in September.

The Director explained that the information she had been given showed that some of the learners had enrolled in other locations, such as the Adult Education Centre and St Matthew's Neighbourhood Centre. Enrolments were still up for the city as a whole. Efforts were being made to contact those people from Highfields who had not enrolled on courses elsewhere.

The Chair stated that a significant assumption was being made that learners from the Highfields Centre were enrolling in classes in an alternative provision.

19. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

20. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations or

statements of case had been received.

21. PRINTED MUSIC AND DRAMA SERVICE

The Director of Culture and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the Transfer of Libraries' Printed Music and Drama Service. The report updated the Commission on details of the decision to transfer the printed music and drama service to a regional service developed and run by Nottingham City.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that the City Council had helped to shape a proposal for a regional offer, which would be based in Nottingham but with access at different points. The Council had worked with Making Music, local groups and Nottingham City Council, to arrive at these proposals. There were a number of advantages with the proposal, which included improved I.T. and a transport service to bring materials from Nottingham to Leicester. Organisations would pay more to access the service but the new system would offer stability, a more modern service and something that would last.

Barbara Eifler, the Executive Director of Making Music addressed the meeting and explained that the organisation was the umbrella group for amateur groups in the UK. Many had commented on the excellency of the past service and people were aware of the pressures that faced the council. They were also aware that the service provided was not a statutory requirement. Their view was that the solution offered was very good and they were grateful to officers involved for their hard work in finding a solution. Some of the groups such as those in Newtown Linford and Lutterworth had expressed concerns that it would cost more to access the service. However, groups were pleased with the arrangement for materials to be delivered to Fosse Library.

A Member asked why Nottingham City Council was chosen to run the music and drama service and the Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that it was due to service priorities. Nottingham had a strong focus on the arts and this was a direction that they still wanted to go.

Officers were asked whether they had consulted on using Fosse Library as the collection point for materials. The Head of Services explained that they had originally considered a city centre venue but Fosse was convenient for parking. As part of the consultation, a question had been asked about access.

A Member questioned whether support was available for the visually impaired. The meeting was advised that an assumption had been made that people with a visual impairment already have use of standard accessibility software to access the service. In the consultation an open ended question had been asked, but there were no responses relating to a disability such as this. As part of the consultation responses, the Council had been asked to offer training on the new online system, and this had been agreed.

The Chair concluded the discussion and stated that while it was unfortunate that there would have to be a shared service going forward, it was important

that the service continued. Budgetary constraints meant that changes needed to be made. The Chair added that it was important to acknowledge the work of the officers and Ms Eifler in this process.

RESOLVED:

that the Commission support the decision to transfer the Leicester Libraries' printed music and drama service to a regional service developed and run by Nottingham City.

22. TRANSFORMING NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

Members of the Commission received an update on the progress of the Transforming Neighbourhood Services (TNS) Project. The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that the challenge was to find manageable solutions to ensure that as many of the Council's key services were retained as possible. The TNS project had already been implemented in the south and west neighbourhood areas of the City. The next area to be considered would be the North West of the City where consultations had already taken place.

Substantial consultation exercises had taken place to establish which services were more important and which buildings were used. Consideration was being given as to whether savings could be made on Council buildings. In some areas, multi service centres had been created, such as the Pork Pie Library and St Matthew's Centre. The meeting heard that this initiative was proving to be very successful with increased usage and more community groups working together.

The Director of Culture and Neighbourhood Services explained that it was a gradual process; from commencing consultations to building up to a set of proposals. Scrutiny had played an important role in the process and its contribution was valued.

A Member questioned when the eastern part of the City would be included in the TNS project, and was advised that it was a step by step process and could possibly be in the second half of 2016, after north-west and north-east areas. The Member expressed disappointment about the delay. The Head of Neighbourhood Services responded that he understood the concern, but problems had arisen in the cities where too many changes were carried out too quickly.

Officers were questioned about the process of consultation and were advised that they talked to and listened to residents at numerous different venues; they had also met with focus groups. Where groups had a particular concern, efforts had been made to find a solution. A finding from the consultations was that people were more concerned with the services than the actual buildings. A Member spoke of the importance of speaking to the right people, and the Head of Service responded that any help Members could give, in identifying the right groups would be very welcome.

Members referred to the Community Asset Transfer scheme and were informed that the scheme was one of the outcomes from the Localism Act. The Council needed to save money and could do this by saving on property costs. A group involved in the transfer would take responsibility for the costs associated with the running of the building. To help groups do this, the Council involved a Government Organisation called Locality whose role was to provide specialist support. Members questioned what would happen if the group who had taken transfer of the asset could not fulfil their obligations. Officers explained that there was an ongoing relationship with the groups and the Council would talk to them about any concerns. There was an option to end the lease if, for example, the organisation concerned could not fulfil their responsibilities.

A Member expressed concerns that a previous consultation exercise in his ward, had omitted the relevant councillors, who had only received an update afterwards. The Head of Service acknowledged that there was a need to improve the process of consulting with the ward councillors. In response to further questions, Members were advised that in the criteria for groups applying for the community asset, was a requirement that they should be a local group and also that the asset should be accessible to other community groups. A Member cited an example of a community group that had denied access to other groups however the meeting was informed that the Council had intervened quickly to rectify this issue.

RESOLVED:

that the Commission:

- 1) note the update on progress on the Transforming Neighbourhood Services Project;
- 2) ask officers to note the need for engagement with ward councillors on the Transforming Neighbourhood Services Project
- 3) request that details on the progress of the Community Asset Transfer Scheme be brought to a future meeting of the Commission.

23. ANNUAL UPDATE ON EMERGENCY FOOD USE IN THE CITY

The Head of Revenue and Customer Support presented a report which updated the Commission on the provision of food banks within the city and the work carried out to identify and engage with the organisations. Members were referred to the recommendations detailed in section 3.16 of the report, which were made in respect of the Council's Food Plan Strategy.

A Member referred to the report and stated that the Braunstone Park and Rowley Fields Ward was referred to by three different titles; he asked officers to try to be consistent in future.

It was noted that FareShare subscriptions had increased substantially and Members asked whether the council could help with the cost of membership. The Head of Revenue and Customer Support stated that the amount of the subscription charge was decided by FareShare; some of the organisations had in the past received help from their ward community meeting budgets to pay the subscription.

Councillor Waddington, Assistant City Mayor, Jobs and Skills suggested that an action plan be drawn up in respect of the report's recommendations. If the Commission agreed to this, report could be brought back to the Commission showing the progress on meeting the recommendations.

Members expressed concerns over the need for foodbanks, at the increase in their number and usage and that further demand was anticipated in the medium term. Councillor Khote asked for details of the uptake in usage of foodbanks in the North Evington Ward. The Head of Revenue and Customer Support explained that the majority of food banks were independent of the council's involvement and therefore it was not possible to supply detail of this nature for this or any ward in the city.

Comments were made that the report referred to the old wards and ward boundaries that were in existence prior to the changes brought about by the boundary commission which took effect in May 2015. The Head of Revenue and Customer Support responded that the report analysis was undertaken prior to the boundary changes, however the changes would be reflected and acknowledged in the next annual update.

Councillor Sood, Assistant City Mayor, Communities and Equalities, referred to the role that faith groups were taking in relation to emergency food provision. While their contribution was acknowledged in the report, she believed in general, their contribution was not fully recognised.

The Chair thanked the Head of Revenue and Customer Support for the extensive report and expressed concerns about the need for such emergency provision. He questioned whether demand could be measured in the different wards around the city. The Head of Revenue and Customer Support explained that there were practicalities around measuring demand because the organisations were not council run and did not always provide the council with those details.

RESOLVED:

that the Commission agree:

- 1) that an action plan be drawn up in respect of the recommendations set out in section 3.16 of the report; and
- 2) request that the next annual report on emergency food use, take into account the new wards and boundaries.

24. LEICESTERSHIRE CITIZENS ADVICE ANNUAL REPORT

Members were asked to consider a report from the Leicestershire Citizens Advice on their City Advice Services Contract Performance 2014-2015. Richard Mason, Chief Executive was present along with Dawn Evans whose role focussed on the operation of the service in the city.

Members heard that during the year they had dealt with 28,000 enquiries; this related to a substantial increase in the number of people accessing their services. An increasing area of work was related to foodbanks. The service adopted a holistic approach and tried to offer a 'one stop shop' on a range of services including employment issues and advice on benefits and issues relating to debt.

Councillor Waddington, Assistant City Mayor, Jobs and Skills, stated that this fell within her portfolio and she felt that the report was lacking in information. She would have liked to have seen a more in depth analysis of the work carried out, including outcomes, the views of service users and a highlighting of the people who had sought help. Members agreed and also requested that the report should include some anonymised case studies. Mr Mason responded that he would be happy to develop the report in that fashion.

A Member recalled that targets had been set in relation to the number of service users who were seen in their own localities (as opposed to the city centre). She questioned whether those targets had been met and whether the locations used were the most appropriate. The Head of Benefits and Customer Support responded that they had initially struggled to meet the targets, but had been successful during 2014/15. They did have the postcodes of the service users, so they were able to map to check on usage in the different localities. A suggestion was made that the Citizens Advice Service should give consideration into providing a service in some of the multi-function centres that had been set up as part of the Transforming Neighbourhood Services Project.

Members heard that the service provided opportunities for volunteers and queried their role and responsibilities. Ms Evans explained that when a member of the public phoned the centre, a volunteer would answer the call and make an assessment. The training for volunteers was robust; in depth knowledge was required and not all volunteers would be given telephone duties as some had skills more suitable to other roles. In addition all telephone calls were monitored.

Members queried whether an audit of advice provision in the city was being carried out and whether anything had been done since Leicestershire Citizens Advice Service had been awarded the contract. The Head of Benefits and Customer Support explained that the service only came under her remit earlier this year. She assumed that the original review would have captured what advice was available in the City at that time; a city wide review would take place at pre-tendering of the contract. However in the meantime, she was able to undertake some analysis on the outreach and localities outcomes, and a report could be brought back to a future meeting, possibly in the new year, but

it would not be an in depth study.

It was noted that the annual report had not been seen by the Assistant City Mayor for Jobs and Skills, prior to its submission to the Scrutiny Commission. It was agreed that in future, the reports should be sent to the relevant Assistant City Mayor first before its submission to Scrutiny.

RESOLVED:

that the Commission:

- 1) request that future City Advice Services Contract Performance Annual Reports should include an in depth analysis and case studies;
- 2) agree that future reports should be submitted to the relevant Assistant City Mayor, prior to its submission to the Scrutiny Commission; and
- 3) request a report from the Head of Benefits and Customer Support on the outreach and localities outcomes for the contracted advice provision in the city.

25. WORK PROGRAMME

There were no comments on the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission Work Programme.

26. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm.

Minute Item 18

Highfields Centre

Summary of information following the request at Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission on 13 August 2015

1. Enrolment numbers for the Adult Skills and Learning courses relocated from Highfields Centre

	2014 (Highfields)	2015 (ACC, Spinney, St Peters)
ESOL	94	57
IT	24	Due to start after Oct half term at Spinney Hill Primary following IT suite refurbishment
Supporting Teaching and Learning	13	Due to start Jan 16. Start dates are staggered across the city.
English	11	13
Dressmaking	10	0 - will be re-advertised and offered in January.
Cake Decorating	n/a	0 - new for 2015. Will be re-advertised and offered in January.
Total	152	70

Some learners will have enrolled in other locations. Overall enrolment numbers are up for ESOL in neighbouring centres as indicated below:

ESOL	2014	2015
Adult Education College	337	403
St Mathews NC	68	75
Total	405	478

Overall, enrolments have increased in the city, up from **3372 enrolments in 2014** to **3516 enrolments in 2015** to date. Enrolments are still coming in and the service will also continue to follow up any learners who we would have expected to re-enrol.

2. Arrangements for the children who had previously attended the Highfields pre-school

<p>Confirmed places 7 x confirmed places starting between the 28th August and the 2nd September at 5 different pre school settings: Little Mumins, Rahma Childcare, Al-Islamia, Wesley Hall and Kiddy Planet.</p>
<p>Places offered 2 x places have been offered at the Al- Islamia preschool which are awaiting take up confirmation from parents. The reasons they have not been confirmed as yet is that one family is currently in Pakistan and the other family is waiting to have a home visit.</p>
<p>Ongoing 1 family has had a family bereavement therefore they have decided that their cousin will provide childcare at this stage. They anticipate they will look at settings in the future, a list of providers has been emailed to the family.</p>

Not required

- 1 family have now decided to wait for 3 year place at Uplands Infants or Highfields primary. They are on a waiting list for Barnards Close for 2 year funding and would not consider any alternatives.
- 1 x child's parent has contact several providers but has been told to ring back when places available. Possible place at Uplands and on waiting list for Kiddiplanet. LCC staff have encouraged the parent to widen search. Child currently can't attend anywhere at the moment anyway as he has just broken his arm.

No contact yet established

- Although letters have been sent, there has been no response from one family. This may be due to incorrect/outdated numbers given. Records are being cross referenced with registration data within the Children, Young People and Family Centres in the Central cluster so a home visit can be made to assess their current situation and support required.

Liz Blyth
29 September 2015