



Leicester  
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2015 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Singh (Chair)  
Councillor Dempster (Vice Chair)

Councillor Dr Barton  
Councillor Chaplin  
Councillor Cleaver  
Councillor Dawood

Councillor Dr Moore  
Councillor Newcombe  
Councillor Patel  
Councillor Porter

Councillor Senior  
Councillor Shelton  
Councillor Thomas  
Councillor Willmott

Also present:

Councillor Rory Palmer  
Sir Peter Soulsby

Deputy City Mayor  
City Mayor

Youth Council Representatives

Arshad Daud

\* \* \* \* \*

**58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Grant and Guled Yakub, Youth Council Representative.

**59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**60. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **Draft Budget**

The Chair announced that the Government was expected to issue councils with their grant settlement around 17 December 2015, and because of this, the draft budget would not be publicly available until the middle of January 2016. It was intended that this would be brought to Labour Group and then to the Overview Select Committee meeting on 28 January 2016. It was considered to be unlikely that the other scrutiny commissions would be meeting prior to that and therefore the Chair extended an invitation for all scrutiny commission members to attend the first part of the meeting when the budget would be discussed.

An email would invitation would be sent round to scrutiny commission members and members would be asked to indicate if they were interested in attending.

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

AGREED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Overview Select Committee held on 15 October 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

## **62. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING**

### **Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service – Integrated Risk Management Plan**

The Chair reported that he had asked officers to write a letter to Mr Chandler the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer / Chief Executive Officer of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, on behalf of the Overview Select Committee. The letter affirmed that at the previous meeting of the committee, members were unanimous in their view that the Leicester Central Fire Station should not close.

Councillor Chaplin stated that the issue of joint working had also been discussed; however this did not just relate to joint working with blue light agencies but to sharing services and provisions, such as personnel and communication services with other authorities.

### **Report of the Finance Task Group – Adult Social Care Intermediate Care Facility**

Councillor Palmer, Deputy City Mayor with responsibility for Adult Social Care, Health Integration and Wellbeing, and the Strategic Director, Adult Social Care provided an update on the Intermediate Care Facility as requested at the previous meeting.

- Currently there were 40 intermediate care beds in Preston Lodge; during the previous year the occupancy rate had been approximately 60% which meant that the facility was underutilised.
- The aim of intermediate care was for the person to step down from

needing a hospital bed, before being able to return home. However, the statistics showed instead that almost half of the people died, went into care or returned to hospital.

- The evidence was that there could be better outcomes by providing that intermediate care in people's own homes and an ambitious programme of Extra Care provision could be driven forward by re-allocating £6.7m from Intermediate Care to Extra Care as part of the capital programme.

A member commented that the planned intention was welcomed and previously at Adult Social Care Scrutiny, Members had queried whether a 60 bed Intermediate Care Facility was needed. He questioned whether the to be site used was that previously allocated for the Intermediate Care Facility.

The Deputy City Mayor responded that the decision taken was based on a needs analysis undertaken at that time, but since then the demand pattern had changed. In respect of the site, they would be looking at a number of options including multiple sites.

Councillor Chaplin queried that if the situation changed so quickly over a period of two years, what would happen if it changed again. The Deputy City Mayor explained that there would still be intermediate care beds at Preston Lodge if they were needed.

Councillor Chaplin, as Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission asked for information to be brought to the commission as the work on this progressed.

Queries were raised as to how extra care in people's homes would be delivered; there were concerns that insufficient time was allocated for domiciliary care. Comments were made that it was important to help people to be as independent as possible, but care at home could not be left to district nurses. The Deputy City Mayor agreed that it was important to help people remain independent and explained that this care at home would be the responsibility of the Reablement Service. Intensive support would be available where appropriate for people sent home after their discharge from hospital. For some however, this would not be an option and they might need to go to Preston Lodge for intermediate care.

Councillor Cleaver, Chair of Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission commented that she agreed with what was being proposed alongside the correct care provision and good supportive services. She looked forward to this coming to the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission in due course.

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

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

## **64. PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

## **65. TRACKING OF PETITIONS - MONITORING REPORT**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report that updated Members on the monitoring of outstanding petitions.

Councillor Willmott referred to petition number 28/04/2015: 'Petition requesting the Council to relieve the burden of a high commercial rent for a charity and place of worship'. He understood the need for the council to protect its income from commercial properties but asked the City Mayor to give the same consideration to this group as he had to other similar groups who businesses were transferred for a small sum of money.

The Chair invited Rupa Soni on behalf of the petitioner to address the committee. Ms Soni thanked the committee for considering the petition and stated that the group were increasing the number of activities they offered day by day, which was benefitting the community. The committee were asked to reconsider the petition.

The City Mayor responded that the City Council had hundreds if not thousands of commercial lettings across the city and a number of those were to religious or community groups. The council also had a separate policy that would enable a community asset transfer for some of the commercial buildings. However, this did not apply in this case. The lease was a commercial lease and the tenants had willingly entered into a commercial agreement. He recognised that the charity found it difficult to pay rent; he had been asked to consider a community asset transfer but unfortunately this would set a precedent and was not possible.

Councillor Chaplin asked whether there was a policy she could refer to as requests of this nature were received on a frequent basis. The City Mayor advised that the Community Asset Transfer policy had previously been discussed at the committee and was available on the council's website. This particular group in question did not qualify. Councillor Willmott questioned whether there may be a point in the future where circumstances might change with the building moving from the commercial to a community portfolio, whereby a Community Asset Transfer could be considered. The City Mayor responded that he had looked at this but saw no reason why in future the categorisation of the building would be anything other than commercial.

Councillor Porter referred to petition 6/10/2015-4: 'Petition opposing the proposed speed ramps and speed humps on Middleton Street'. He wished to make it clear that the petition opposed the speed humps and not the 20 mph speed limit. He asked whether there could be discussions with the police so that they would not object to 20 mph zones if there were no speed humps. Councillor Porter questioned whether the police would enforce the speed limit which would remove the requirement for speed humps.

Arshad Daud, Youth Council Representative referred to petition 18/11/2015-2: 'Petition requesting the Council to remove the 24/7 bus lane on Lutterworth Road and Aylestone Road or amend the bus lane restrictions to Monday-Friday at peak times only. Arshad asked whether officers were looking to amend the restrictions or remove the bus lane. Graham Carey, Democratic Support Officer responded that this was a new petition and he had no further information at this time; however the petition would be considered as it stands, to either remove or amend the bus lane restrictions.

Members then agreed to remove those petitions marked as petition process complete from the report.

**AGREED**

that those petitions referenced 28/04/2015, 06/08/2015 and 28/08/2015 and marked as petition process complete, be removed from the report.

**66. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR**

Councillor Porter asked the City Mayor whether he would like to apologise for the way he spoke to a member of the public who asked a question at a recent meeting of the full council. He thought that some people believed that the City Mayor had been aggressive.

The City Mayor replied that the person who had asked the question had probably been given more council time in consideration of the issues she had raised than any other individual. He had reviewed the webcast and believed that he had remained polite throughout and given a robust and appropriate response given the subject matter and persistence of the questioner.

Councillor Dr Barton stated that she had met someone at Visit Leicester who had said that it was the best Tourist Information Centre he had experienced for service. He had travelled by boat into Leicester and had asked whether there could be additional mooring pontoons. Councillor Barton suggested that it would also be helpful to those people who visited Leicester by boat, to provide facilities for providing water as currently there was nowhere for them to fill up.

The City Mayor responded that he was very pleased that boaters were now coming into Leicester. Providing further moorings, in addition to those in Castle Park was a priority and would be included as part of the Friar Mill Development. Part of that provision would include a water point and possibly a refuse point as well.

Councillor Cleaver commented that Castle Gardens was very attractive and offered a valuable opportunity to show some quality art work, perhaps focussing on the history of Leicester. The City Mayor thanked Councillor Cleaver for this suggested and commented that waterways were important in a number of areas around the city and a good asset to Leicester.

Councillor Dr Barton referred to the empty buildings on Western Park and said that enquiries had been received from people interested in using those buildings but they appeared not to have received a reply.

The City Mayor responded that he shared her concerns about the empty buildings, particularly in relation to the old Western Park School. This was a unique listed building and because of this it was proving difficult to find an appropriate long term use for the school. Officers were working to find solutions for this building as well as the other empty buildings on the park.

Councillor Dr Moore asked the City Mayor whether he had any advice as to the essential arguments that Members could use at Planning and Development Control Committee when considering applications which would involve the demolition of a historical building to make way for a new building. There had been a recent application involving a building on London Road which had links with Arthur Wakerley.

The City Mayor responded that he was not a member of the Planning Committee but understood that the general advice was that it was a balance between what would be lost and what would come in its place. Arthur Wakerley was an important person to shape the city in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There was a considerable architectural heritage from him in the city, not least in North Evington. He added however that he was not fully familiar with the particular building on London Road that had been subject to a planning application.

The Chair commented that he had sat on the Planning and Development Control Committee and he was not aware of any other committee that took its decisions with so much diligence.

## **67. REPORT OF THE FINANCE TASK GROUP**

The committee considered the Report of the Finance Task Group which had met on 25 November 2015 to consider the four reports attached to the agenda.

The Chair referred to the Income Collection April - September 2015 report and stated that the overall council performance was very good in terms of debt collection. He added however that the overpayment of housing benefit caused some concern, as the current debt stood at £15m and he questioned whether the council were pro-active enough in informing people of the need to tell the council about any change in their circumstances. The Director of Finance replied that this was an area of concern, but the council did actively inform people in receipt of benefits of the need to tell the council of any change of circumstances. Of that figure, £5 had already been collected; just under £7m had been invoiced and approximately £3m was due to be invoiced. Universal Credit would be implemented in Leicester from January and Leicester would cease to be a benefit administering authority; it was believed that the Department of Work and Pensions would be the only body which would have the authority to collect that debt and they would therefore be asked to take responsibility for that.

Councillor Porter said that he believed that there had been occasions when payments had continued to be made direct to a landlord even after the tenant had moved out. In addition he understood that there were also times when the landlord then sub-let the property to private tenants. He asked what measures were in place to recuperate that overpayment from the landlord. The Director explained that if a landlord continued to receive benefit where the tenant was not there, this would be fraud. The claimant also had a responsibility to inform the council. The Director asked Councillor Porter to inform the council if he was aware of any such happenings, but added that the council would not be able to report back to the councillor on their findings.

A Member asked the Director how quickly a change of circumstances would be actioned and what progress was being made in establishing a single point of contact. The Director responded that any change that was likely to result in a reduction in benefit, would normally be actioned straight away in order to prevent the recipient accruing a debt. It would normally take about 15 days to action a change that would result in an increase in benefit. This figure however was currently standing at about 21 days. The Director confirmed that work was progressing on establishing the single point of contact and added that service provision worked better where this was established from the start.

In respect of Universal Credit, it was noted that this would start in January 2016 for new claims for single people; it would not apply to pensioners. The Department of Work and Pensions were aiming for a full roll out of this benefit in 2018.

Councillor Cleaver expressed her appreciation to the Director of Finance and the department. Some of the changes to benefits had left people, particularly those in poverty and with mental health issues, in very difficult circumstances and the department had worked very quickly to help those affected. Councillor Cleave asked for her thanks to be formally noted in the minutes.

Councillor Willmott referred to a forecasted overspend of £188k in the Coronial and Registrars service due to an increased workload primarily from Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding (DoLs) orders. He stated that Leicester seemed to have a much higher number of DoLs than other authorities, and there was some controversy as to how effective they were. Councillor Willmott requested an investigation as to what lay behind this overspend.

Councillor Chaplin referred to the Adult Social Care element of the Revenue Budget Monitoring Report and stated that last year at scrutiny, concerns were raised that decisions would be made based on budgetary issues as opposed to need. She requested that a higher percentage of the council budget be allocated to Adult Social Care because people were in need in this particular service area. The Deputy City Mayor responded that decisions were based on need and this year, an extra £3m had been found due to the needs of people in the system. Allocating additional funding into Adult Social Care would result in less money for other service areas and this would be a political decision. However decisions would be based on need and ensuring that people had the

best possible quality of life.

Councillor Dr Moore stated that the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission would be considering the financial data at their next meeting. There were concerns at the rising number of Looked After Children who needed external placements and it had been suggested for the commission to set up a task group to try to understand the reasons for this and whether for example it was a result of the financial climate.

AGREED:

that the report of the Finance Task Group be noted.

## **68. SCRUTINY COMMISSIONS' WORK PROGRAMMES**

Members of the Overview Select Committee were asked to endorse the following Scoping Documents:

### **Primary care workforce review (Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission)**

Councillor Chaplin, Chair of the commission presented the scoping document and explained that it linked in with the Mayor's delivery plan for a Healthy and Active City. There were reports of people struggling to obtain doctor's or practice nurse appointments and the aim of the review was to highlight some of the issues with the primary care workforce in the city.

It was noted that there were no comments from the Executive Lead on the scoping document but the Deputy City Mayor confirmed on behalf of the Executive that he was happy for the review to take place.

AGREED:

that the committee endorse the scoping document for the Primary Care Workforce Review

### **The Impact of betting shops on local communities within Leicester (Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission)**

Councillor Dawood, Chair of the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission, had had to leave the meeting early due to another appointment, but the Chair confirmed that he had read the background notes relating to the review. It was noted that the comments from the Executive Lead had also been omitted from the scoping document.

AGREED:

that the committee endorse the scoping document for the Impact of betting shops on local communities within Leicester.



## **69. OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

AGREED:

that the Overview Select Committee work programme be received and noted.

## **70. CORPORATE PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

Members were asked to consider the Corporate Plan of Key Decisions. Councillor Barton referred to the planned decision relating to the Mandatory Credit Union Accounts and Direct Debits. Councillor Barton expressed a concern that some people on low incomes were very cautious about direct debits and in view of this she requested an alternative for people who were in that situation.

## **71. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 7.15 pm.