



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: TUESDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2016 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Singh (Chair)
Councillor Malik (Vice Chair)

Councillor Bajaj
Councillor Cleaver
Councillor Cutkelvin

Councillor Dempster
Councillor Grant
Councillor Khote

Councillor Dr Moore
Councillor Newcombe
Councillor Porter

Also present:

Sir Peter Soulsby
Councillor Rory Palmer

City Mayor
Deputy City Mayor

Youth Council Representatives

Krishna Patel

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57. THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The Chair announced that Lord Bach, the Police and Crime Commissioner would need to leave the meeting at 6.00pm to attend another appointment and therefore this item would be taken first on the agenda.

Lord Bach presented the Draft Police and Crime Plan 2017-2021, which had recently been considered by the Police and Crime Panel. He stressed that the plan was still at a draft stage. Lord Bach emphasised the need for the Police to work with local authorities, because without close partnership working, the Police would not be able to achieve what they hoped to do.

The Chair commented that Leicester had an excellent reputation for policing, but he was concerned about the impact of austerity measures. He sought

assurances around the visibility of officers and that the level of policing would continue. Lord Bach responded that unfortunately he was currently unable to give that assurance, but news of the government funding grant was due the next day when they would know more.

Lord Bach added that a new way of neighbourhood policing had been set up a few years ago, and the system worked well, but more Police Officers and PCSOs were needed.

In response to a query relating to priorities, Lord Bach stated that there was a need to get the balance right. He felt that this balance was slightly wrong, as too many Police Officers and PCSOs had been taken off the street to deal with issues such as online crime, domestic violence and child sexual exploitation. Policing issues had changed, but people still wanted the Police to be visible to the public.

Lord Bach was asked whether the Police would make a commitment to some of the city's community groups, such as the Adventure Playgrounds, the Monday Club and the Carers' Forum. More support, dialogue and if possible, funding, from the Police for these groups was requested. Lord Bach stated that his Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Kirk Master, had reminded him of the importance of community support. He did have some funding, which community groups could apply for.

A Member questioned whether in the light of funding cuts to the Police, it was the best use of such funding to appoint a Deputy. He asked how this could be justified. Lord Bach responded that he had given this matter serious thought, but he had decided to appoint a Deputy because of the very considerable workload that fell within the Police and Crime Commissioner's remit. Kirk Master had been appointed because of the vast experience he could bring to the role.

Councillor Dempster, as the Chair of the Health Scrutiny Commission said that she would be interested in inviting the Police to her Commission to hear about any steps they would be taking to address issues around mental health. She would also be interested to find out what the Police were doing to address domestic violence and the under reporting of some crimes. Councillor Dempster also said that she had seen an article on a group called the Demos Think Tank. This group had been into two city schools to help students interpret what they saw and read on the internet. She asked the Police whether they would be willing to work with local authorities to build on that work that was taking place. Lord Bach thanked Councillor Dempster for her comments and said that following the appalling murder of Kayleigh Hayward, a vast amount of work was taking place to prevent any recurrence of that tragedy. Any advice in relation to that was very welcome.

Councillor Cutkelvin raised concerns that there were not just issues relating to visibility, but accessibility as well, as she believed that this was a worsening problem. Over her years as a ward councillor, she had noticed a worsening Police attendance at resident group meetings and community events. Their

presence at such meetings and events was helpful in building up trust within the community. Lord Bach responded that the drop in attendance was a result of there being fewer Police Officers and PCSOs, but he accepted Councillor Cutkelvin's concern adding that it was important that the Police attended community group meetings.

Councillor Bajaj commented that to improve Police visibility, there was a need to restore the Joint Action Groups (JAGs). These were useful meetings attended by a number of stakeholders and members of the public, and information shared could be helpful to the Police. Lord Bach responded that he had attended a JAG meeting in Eyres Monsell which had not been very well attended. They were however important meetings and he would ask the Police if they could take any steps to increase attendance; however attendance was not entirely their responsibility. Councillor Cutkelvin added that she believed that attendance at JAG meetings deteriorated when grant funding was no longer made available through those meetings.

The Chair drew the discussion to a close and thanked Lord Bach, the Police and Crime Commissioner for attending the meeting.

58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

60. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made no announcements.

61. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview Select Committee held 3 November 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.

62. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING

The Chair reported on progress on actions agreed at the previous meeting:

In relation to a previous question about the Council's petition scheme, the Chair said that a response had been sent to Councillor Porter and it was confirmed that the authority's scheme was compliant with the law. Councillor Porter replied that he had received a response but not from the Monitoring Officer as requested. He expressed a view that the Council's scheme did not comply with legislation. The Chair responded that the advice given was that the Council's scheme was compliant with legislation and as such, he asked Councillor Porter to raise this himself with the Monitoring Officer.

In response to a question from the Chair, Councillor Newcombe confirmed that he had received the requested response relating to waiting times at the Customer Service Centre on Granby Street.

The Chair advised that other actions arising from the previous meeting had been dealt with.

Councillor Porter stated that at the previous meeting, he had raised a question relating to a person with visual impairment and a compulsory purchase order; however no response to this query had been received. Councillor Porter expressed concern that the person in question had requested a large print copy of the documentation from the council, but this request had been refused. He added that it was unfair to make a compulsory purchase order on a property where the resident might be going blind.

The Chair advised that this was a ward issue and as such, it was not appropriate to raise the query at a scrutiny commission meeting. He advised Councillor Porter that a response should be sought from the relevant Service Director instead.

Councillor Porter added that he had seen the person walking with the aid of a white stick and an escort, and therefore he believed that the issue was urgent. The City Mayor suggested that if the issue was urgent, it would have been more appropriate to raise it at the time as a ward councillor issue, rather than waiting for the next Scrutiny Commission meeting. Councillor Porter responded that he had only recently seen the person walking with a white stick, accompanied by an escort, and he believed that this was a disability issue rather than a ward issue.

The Chair stated that he had given his advice on the matter and therefore he was drawing the discussion to a close.

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

Members were asked to consider the Tracking of Petitions Monitoring Report.

Councillor Dempster commented that over 50% of the outstanding petitions related to highways issues. The Council had a parking strategy and she questioned whether the City Mayor could ask officers to try to get the message out that people needed to take more responsibility over where they parked their

cars. At a time when the budget had been cut by 40%, there would be more money to ease pressures in Adult Social Care and Children's Services, if that money was not being spent on trying to resolve parking problems. The City Mayor said that he agreed with the views expressed and would pass those on to the appropriate officers.

Councillor Porter reported that in respect of petition 22/09/2016, residents were happy with the amended proposals. He expressed a hope that those proposals would not change.

AGREED:

- 1) that the report be noted; and
- 2) that those petitions marked 'Petitions Process Complete', namely 26/10/2016, 11/11/2016, 05/04/2016, 11/04/2016 and 14/08/2016 be removed from the Monitoring Report.

Action	By
To remove those petitions marked 26/10/2016, 11/11/2016, 05/04/2016, 11/04/2016 and 14/08/2016 from the Monitoring Report	The Democratic Support Officer

66. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

The Chair invited Members to raise questions for the City Mayor.

Issues relating to autism

Councillor Cleaver, Chair of the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission asked the City Mayor whether he would agree that the work being undertaken by the Commission on autism needed to be supported by the Council. She hoped that Leicester would be noted for supporting people with autism. The City Mayor confirmed that he welcomed the work that was being carried out to draw attention to the needs of people with autism. He had previously been a special needs teacher and was well aware of the issues that people with autism faced. It was a condition that often remained undiagnosed, and if diagnosed, was not always well supported. The City Mayor added that he welcomed the attention that the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission was giving to this issue and also the fact that the Deputy City Mayor, as part of his portfolio, was looking at the way autism was identified and supported in adulthood

Poppy display in Leicester

Councillor Bajaj asked the City Mayor whether he would consider having a display of poppies, similar to that displayed at the Tower of London. The City Mayor responded that Leicester had twice expressed interests in taking the

poppies. The Magazine Gateway had been suggested to be a good location, because of its association with the Leicestershire Regiment. A decision was now awaited on the Council's most recent expression of interest.

Bid for the City of Culture 2021

Councillor Bajaj asked the City Mayor whether Leicester would be preparing to submit a bid to become the City of Culture 2021. The City Mayor responded that he thought this would be unlikely. Leicester's previous bid had failed and he thought that Hull, the successful bidder had needed the accolade more. The cost in preparing for that previous bid was well spent, but if a further bid was submitted, they would need to start again. The City Mayor added that he believed that Leicester had too many good things already taking place to argue that it needed to be made a City of Culture.

Economic Action Plan and investment in the neighbourhoods / street drinking

Councillor Cutkelvin stated that she welcomed the publication of the Economic Action Plan and noted that this included investment in the city centre. She thought that it was important to explain through the media, and through themselves as ward councillors, how much was also spent in the neighbourhoods. In respect of the City Centre, she had been talking to a well-known business man who had raised concerns about street drinking in Leicester. The City Mayor was questioned as to the action that was being taken to tackle this issue.

The City Mayor agreed that it was important to take every opportunity to remind people of the revenue and capital investment that was being made in the neighbourhoods. The bulk of council money was spent on delivering front line services and was spent in neighbourhoods.

The Deputy City Mayor responded to the question relating to street drinking, and he acknowledged that this presented a challenge in the city, although in this respect, Leicester was no different to other cities. Leicester was taking action in a number of ways, including giving support to those who wanted help and to aid this, an alternative venue to the Anchor Centre had been found. Officers were also working with premises licence holders and taking action to revoke the licence of any who acted irresponsibly. There was also a Public Space Protection Order, but enforcement of this was a responsibility of the Police. The Council needed to work with the Police, as they needed to use their powers to enforce the order.

City Council's procurement process

Councillor Cutkelvin raised a question relating to the council's procurement process and asked whether there was now an appropriate degree of proportionality. She stated that back in 2013, the Saffron Young People's Project (SYPP) had fallen foul of procurement because the process appeared to be disproportionate to what was a relatively small amount of money. The

SYPP had misunderstood the level of detail required. Councillor Cutkelvin asked whether there was a better degree of proportionality in the current procurement process.

The City Mayor responded that he had had concerns in the past that the Council's procurement process was disproportionate. This was now included in the Assistant Mayor for Jobs and Skills portfolio, and he believed that she would have made progress on this. He added that it was perhaps time to undertake a formal review of the process, to look at issues around procuring locally and proportionality. He added that he would talk to the Assistant Mayor about this.

Action	By
For the City Mayor to talk to the Assistant Mayor for Jobs and Skills about the council's procurement process	City Mayor's office

Youth Services

Councillor Cutkelvin said that she was aware that there was a recent briefing relating to the future of youth services, for staff at the Kingfisher Youth Centre, and asked whether the City Mayor could give any further information on this.

The City Mayor responded that he thought that the staff briefing was given prior to the start of the consultation exercise, which was due to commence in the new year.

Planning and Development Control issues

Councillor Cutkelvin raised a question relating to planning issues and expressed concerns that Members of the Planning and Development Control Committee, if voting against officer recommendation, were reliant on the advice of planning officers when formulating reasons for their decision. There had been a recent application for a takeaway on Evington Road where there were issues relating to the saturation levels for particular businesses on a stretch of road, but planning officers had been relaxed about approaching this saturation point. She asked whether in certain roads, there should be a clear political steer as to what the council wanted their streets to look like. Councillor Grant and Dr Moore also expressed their concerns relating to issues experienced by Members when voting against officers' recommendations.

The City Mayor asked for it to be noted that his home was on Evington Road, though not on the particular stretch of the road where the takeaway was located, but he could talk generally about the issue. He had recently met with officers to discuss the development of the local plan, and he had been made aware of the difficulties in the current financial climate of putting limits on the numbers of any particular use in any particular area. As part of the development of the new local plan, the potential for limiting takeaways would be considered but this was not something that legislation made easy.

The City Mayor added that when it came to the determination of planning applications at committee, it was the responsibility of officers, in their professional judgement to make recommendations, but it was not the responsibility of Committee Members to always accept those recommendations. It was appropriate for officers to point out what were or were not legitimate planning considerations. Where the Committee were putting forward legitimate or potentially legitimate concerns against officer recommendation, it was the duty of officers to assist the Committee in formulating the wording that expressed their concerns in terms that reflected appropriate planning guidance and legislation, and would be robust in case of appeal. The City Mayor added that he had no reason to suspect that officers were not already providing the committee with such advice.

Mobile CCTV cameras

Councillor Newcombe raised an issue relating to mobile CCTV cameras. He said that these could be brought into areas around the city as a temporary measure to tackle anti-social behaviour. There was a long waiting list for the use of such cameras, but the cost to purchase was approximately £6k which was a substantial amount of money if the cost was to come out of a ward community budget.

The City Mayor responded that a general review of CCTV cameras was being undertaken; the council had a number of different types of cameras, some of which belonged to the Housing service. He would ensure that these particular cameras were included as part of that general review. He added that the cameras were monitored and could be effective.

Action	By
For the City Mayor's office to ask for mobile CCTV pod cameras to be included in the general review of the city's CCTV cameras.	City Mayor's office

Weekend cleaning around shops in the outer estates

Councillor Newcombe expressed concerns relating to a lack of cleaning around shops in the outer estates during the weekend. The City Mayor suggested that Councillor Newcombe might wish to raise this issue with the Assistant Mayor for Housing.

Rutland Street / Granby Street junction

Councillor Newcombe expressed concerns that there were still no 'Give Way' signs at the junction at Rutland Street/ Granby Street. He stated that he had witnessed near collisions there.

The City Mayor added his concerns to those of Councillor Newcombe. The situation was being considered and he agreed that action needed to be taken there.

Local Plan

Councillor Porter asked about the update of the Local Plan and whether the council would be launching the consultation on the plan in February 2017. He said that it would be helpful if the plan included a policy on takeaways.

The City Mayor responded that officers were working on the timetable for the consultation, which he thought would probably start in February. Some information was already in the public domain however. The plan was complex and a great deal of work needed to be carried out but he had been assured that work on this was ongoing.

Compulsory Purchase Order

Councillor Porter asked what action the City Mayor was taking regarding a visually impaired resident and a compulsory purchase order. He believed that it was an important issue which had not been resolved. Councillor Porter was reminded that he had raised this issue earlier in the meeting. The Chair stated that he had already advised Councillor Porter on the action to take as this was a constituency issue.

67. REPORT OF THE FINANCE TASK GROUP

The Chair introduced the report of the Finance Task Group, the minutes of which had been circulated prior to the meeting of the Committee. Councillor Cleaver asked it to be noted that she had submitted her apologies for the Task Group meeting, but her apologies had been omitted.

Revenue Budget Monitoring - Period 6, 2016-17

The Chair commended the Corporate Resources Department's achievement of savings, but he expressed concerns that as part of those savings, it appeared that the Link publication would no longer be produced. He believed that the Link was valued by those people who were unable to access the internet.

The Deputy Mayor responded that there were other models, in line with the council's Channel Shift policy, which could better provide residents with up to date information and relevant information. Link, having been published three times per year, sometimes resulted in residents receiving out of date information; the magazine had also generally moved away from its focus on the neighbourhoods and local areas. New models were being considered and a grant programme had been set up specifically to support community publications. The Council were also looking at how information was being made available through community centres and libraries. The use of technology was crucial and 'Your Leicester', an electronic publication had recently been introduced. The Deputy Mayor added that digital exclusion was

now a very different issue compared to a few years ago, with the fastest growth in the use of smart phones and tablets being with people in their 60s and 70s.

The Chair referred to Adult Social Care, para 12.2, expressing concerns that approximately 93% of the budget was spent on care package costs. The Deputy Mayor commented that adult social care remained a big challenge; costs were going up and there was an increase in people living with dementia. He said that there was a crisis in adult social care funding and the National Health Service was also facing a huge financial challenge. Their dependence on each other was recognised. The Deputy Mayor added that the crisis in adult social care had not been acknowledged in the Government's Autumn Statement but more would be known on 15 December when the Government released its financial settlement. The Deputy Mayor expressed concerns that if the Government's response was to further increase the council tax precept from 2% to meet the rising costs of adult social care, it would not be a long term sustainable solution and would not meet the financial gap.

Councillor Cleaver, Chair of the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission expressed strong concerns about the stress that Government policy was having on vulnerable people who needed accommodation such as Extra Care Housing. Two new schemes to provide 157 such flats had been put on hold and she asked that the Council's message to those people was as compassionate and thoughtful as possible.

Councillor Cutkelvin referred to the Housing Revenue Account, para 11.3 which stated that right to buy sales were forecast to be twice those assumed originally in the budget. The Director of Finance reported that when the rules were relaxed about the right to buy, the increase in sales had been expected. However, income from the sale of council houses under the right to buy scheme did not meet the cost of replacement. There was also a problem in that social landlords were not building at the moment because of the uncertainty about the right to buy and the rent cap.

Councillor Porter asked whether the cost for the Council to build a replacement home at £110K included the cost of the land. He expressed a view that the Council owned land that could be utilised for housing stock. The Director of Finance confirmed that the building cost was around £110K, but she would need to check on the value of land. The council owned plots of land but these could incur significant infrastructure costs if that land was built upon. Local authorities were asking the Government to be more flexible in relation to right to buy receipts.

Councillor Dr Moore raised a number of questions relating to Education and Children's Services. Para 14.8 referred to there being issues relating to the number of internal foster carers. The Director of Finance explained that external foster agencies advertised that their rates for foster carers were more generous, but they did not always provide the support that the Council provided. It should also be recognised that people could not always afford to stay at home to foster children.

Councillor Dr Moore asked whether the Council had been approached to take any of the 3000 unaccompanied refugee and asylum seeker children who were being allowed to enter the UK. The Deputy Mayor responded that this was a voluntary scheme, but local authorities were expected to take part and had been actively encouraged to do so by the Home Office. The Council wanted to help those children but were also mindful of the resource pressures on Children and Young People services. There was a regional model to decide how an appropriate placement may be found for a child coming into the country, and local authorities may be informed that there was a child coming into their area a few days before, who needed a placement.

Councillor Dr Moore commented that she believed that the reliance on agency social workers in the Children in Need Service as detailed in para 14.11 was improving. The Director of Finance concurred that the situation in Leicester was improving however nationally more social workers were choosing to work with agencies. Councillor Dempster queried the detail in the report asked that the Children, Young People and School's (CYPS) Scrutiny Commission looked at this issue in greater depth. Councillor Dr Moore, Chair of the Commission gave her assurance that full details of this issue were brought regularly to the Commission and were being scrutinised.

Councillor Dempster, Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission, commended the setting aside of £50k in the budget to fund efforts to retain the children's cardiac services in the Glenfield Hospital.

Councillor Porter commented that several months ago, there had been some serious issues in Children's Services and he queried whether the same mistakes were being made again. The Chair of CYPS responded that the Commission thoroughly scrutinised the progress that was made and there were signs of that improvement in the qualitative data that was brought to the Commission.

AGREED:

that the Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – Period 6, 2016/17 be noted.

Capital Budget Monitoring - Period 6, 2016/17

Members considered the Capital Budget Monitoring Report for Period 6.

In response to a query relating to the percentage spend in the Capital Programme, the City Mayor stated that there were always times when local authorities could not deliver as many of the projects as hoped; but the Director of Finance shared his view that there was a need to be completely realistic as to what to include in the capital programme.

In response to a query relating to funding set aside for refurbishment children's homes and contact centres, the City Mayor stated that any unspent monies would go back into that budget. The Director of Finance added that there were complexities around delivering planned work, in particular relating to schools,

because of the number of buildings involved, the limited number of contractors and also because it was preferable to have the work carried out in the school holidays. The new Director of Estates and Building Services was taking a robust approach to future planning of capital works, so where money was set aside, there would be a more accurate timeline of when the project would be delivered.

AGREED:

that the Capital Budget Monitoring Report – Period 6, 2016/17 be noted.

Review of Treasury Management Activities 2016/17

The Chair advised that the Finance Task Group had not raised any concerns on the issues contained within the report.

AGREED:

that the Report on the Review of Treasury Management Activities 2016/17 be noted.

Income Collection April 2016 – September 2016

The Chair stated that he had a concern relating to the overpayment of housing benefit. It had been argued that it was the responsibility of the recipient to inform the council of any changes in their circumstances, but there was a substantial amount of debt and he felt that it should be assumed that the Council would need to write this off. The Director of Finance confirmed that the vast majority of debt arose because the household or individual failed to inform the council of their change in circumstances. It was their responsibility to do so. Re-payment of debt might be made as an attachment to benefit, and this could take a long time to repay. The Committee heard that the benefit office had a target to action a change of circumstances within 15 days and performance was currently at 15.2 days. The Director of Finance asked that if any Members had evidence that changes of circumstances were not being actioned within this timescale, they should let her know.

Councillor Dempster suggested that information should be included with every council tax mailing to remind people that if they received benefits and their circumstances changed; they needed to inform the council, because any overpayment would be recovered.

AGREED:

that the Income Collection Report April 2016 – September 2016 be noted.

68. SCRUTINY COMMISSIONS' WORK PROGRAMMES

There were no updates on the Scrutiny Commissions' work programmes.

69. OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview Select Committee Work Programme was noted.

70. CORPORATE PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Corporate Plan of Key Decisions was noted.

71. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm.