



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2017 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Singh (Chair)
Councillor Govind (Vice Chair)

Councillor Cleaver
Councillor Cutkelvin

Councillor Dr Moore
Councillor Unsworth

Councillor Grant
Councillor Khote

Also present:

Sir Peter Soulsby
Councillor Andy Connelly

City Mayor
Assistant City Mayor - Housing

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47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Newcombe. Councillor Cleaver was his substitute for the meeting.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

49. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Glenfield Hospital Congenital Heart Unit

The Chair congratulated Glenfield Hospital and all those involved in canvassing support to the Congenital Heart Unit at the hospital. The Chair thanked NHS England for retaining the service and acknowledging the excellent work that was carried out there. Thanks were also extended to the Leicester Mercury for their support in the campaign and to Councillor Cutkelvin for leading the scrutiny challenge to NHS England on this and all of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Cutkelvin, Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission commented that she did not think that sufficient recognition had been given to the contribution that scrutiny and in particular the scrutiny officers had made in the campaign to keep the Congenital Heart Unit open. Councillor Cutkelvin thanked all the officers in Leicester City Council and in the County for all their work.

The Committee applauded the decision to keep the Glenfield Hospital Congenital Heart Unit open and endorsed the comments made.

50. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

that the minutes of the Meeting of the Overview Select Committee held 2 November 2017 and the Special Meeting of the Overview Select Committee held 20 November 2017 be confirmed as correct records.

51. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING

The Chair stated that the only outstanding action from those agreed at previous meetings was for a briefing note to be circulated to all Members when the outcome of the Government's consultation was finalised with regard to the Extra Care Schemes. This would be done after the consultation had closed in January and once the decision had been made.

The Chair also referred to the Economic Action Plan (EAP) and said that this had previously been subject to considerable debate. Councillor Dr Moore at an earlier meeting had asked a question about employment and the EAP, and had been sent an email giving details which demonstrated that there had been very considerable benefits arising from the EAP. Councillor Dr Moore was invited to read out the response given by officers to the question she had raised. Councillor Moore's update included the following information:

- Since 2011, 5160 jobs had been created. When the first EAP was launched, unemployment, specifically amongst the young was a major problem.
- Through the work outlined below and linked to other inward investment and business support activity, the Council had helped to substantially reduce the number of people unemployed for four years, by over 60% across all ages.
- There had been a reduction of over 70% in youth unemployment, a reduction from 3645 in June 2012 compared to 880 18-24 year olds in November 2016.
- Total unemployment was 12879 in June 2012 and 3785 in November 2016.

- Just over 550 jobs had been created within the retail sector through retail developments.
- Direct Leicester to Work Support mainly supported individuals to gain their first jobs which could include apprenticeship and graduate positions. The jobs ranged across various sectors, i.e. health, community organisations, city council and education etc.
- Over 1100 jobs had been created through business grant finance; these were mainly supported and created in the textile, manufacturing, food and drink and creative industry sector.
- A further 1000 jobs had been created within the professional and service sector through inward investment opportunities. Just under 100 jobs had been created through support in the Council's business managed workspace facilities.

Councillor Dr Moore added that this was an extremely good result which demonstrated the success of the EAP. Councillor Dr Moore was thanked for raising the question and she offered to email other Members with the above information.

52. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

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

53. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that there were no petitions.

54. TRACKING OF PETITIONS - MONITORING REPORT

AGREED:

that the report be noted and petitions referenced 17/09/2017, 14/07/2017/3 and 26/09/2017/1 marked 'petitions process complete' be removed from the monitoring report.

Action	By
Remove the petitions referenced 17/09/2017, 14/07/2017/3 and 26/09/2017/1 marked 'petitions process complete' from the monitoring report.	Democratic Support Officer.

55. CALL IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION - REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING PERIOD 4 2017/18 - SAVINGS ARISING FROM THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

The Chair introduced the Call-in of the Executive Decision in relation to the Revenue Budget Monitoring Period 4 2017/18 –Savings arising from the homelessness review. Disappointment was expressed that none of the elected members who had called in the decision were present at the meeting and Councillor Connelly, Assistant City Mayor Housing also expressed disappointment that they had not spoken to him before the call-in was made. He said he would not have agreed to the savings if he believed that they would have had a detrimental impact on homelessness services or rough sleeping in the area, and he confirmed that there had not been a detrimental impact as a result of this saving. The Assistant City Mayor added that homelessness and rough sleeping was a national disgrace but in Leicester they would continue in their endeavour to reduce both homelessness and rough sleeping.

Members considered the call-in and the report, and the ensuing comments included the following:

- The cuts being experienced by the council had been imposed on them by the Government.
- It could be seen that there was a considerable amount of interest in the approach to homelessness, particularly homelessness experienced by people with long term mental health issues.
- The Director of Housing and the housing service were commended for their very good work, but views were expressed that the Council did not always publicise the good work that they did and what help was available, both through the Council and voluntary services.
- A Member said that she welcomed the discussion on this issue and believed that it was legitimate for the Overview Select Committee to request the findings of the consultation on a new proposed Homeless Strategy. She believed that the increase in homelessness both locally and nationally was linked to austerity and questioned whether following the recent outreach work and street count whether there was a clearer idea as to which policies had resulted in people becoming homeless. In relation to mental health and homelessness, the Member referred to a dual diagnosis of people suffering from both mental health issues and substance misuse which prevented people from engaging in normal processes. She said that she would like to see a joined up service to help people suffering from those issues.
- In response to these questions, the Assistant City Mayor explained that a report would be going to the Housing Scrutiny Commission but he was happy for the Overview Select Committee to consider it as well. He believed that in order to tackle rough sleeping, there needed to be a significant increase in funding in mental health services as many of the

hard core rough sleepers had mental health problem, some of which related to drugs and alcohol. The mental health issues posed a significant barrier which impeded the council from being able to help them.

- The Assistant City Mayor had been out on the streets until 2am at a recent headcount, led by the De Montfort University and Action Homeless and suggested that Members might find it useful to invite someone from that campaign to come to a future meeting of the Overview Select Committee. The Chair thanked the Assistant City Mayor for the suggestion, commenting that this was something that Members might like to request.
- A Member questioned why there had been a call-in of the executive decision, if as the Assistant City Mayor had said, there was no detrimental impact on homelessness or rough sleepers. The Assistant City Mayor responded that the Member would need to raise that question with those Councillors who had called in the decision.
- The Chair stated that with the Government cuts, it was clear that the status quo could not be maintained and he believed that the Council's strategy was a good one.

The Chair then advised on the options open to Members, as detailed in the report. Councillor Govind proposed that the call-in be withdrawn. This was seconded by Councillor Unsworth and upon being put to the vote, the call-in was withdrawn.

Councillor Cutkelvin requested that the consultation on the new Homeless Strategy be brought to a future meeting of the Overview Select Committee. The City Mayor responded that he would be pleased to do this at a time that was convenient for committee members and they would look at how in Leicester, they could better make known what action was being taken by the Council on housing matters, in response to the constraints imposed by the government.

RESOLVED:

- 1) in accordance with Procedure Rule 12(g)(ii) of Part 4D of the Council's Constitution (City Mayor and Executive Procedure Rules), the call-in relating to part d) of the Executive decision taken by the City Mayor on 24 November 2017 on the Revenue Budget Monitoring Period 4 2017/18 be withdrawn by this Committee."
- 2) for the consultation on the new Homeless Strategy to be brought to a future meeting of the Overview Select Committee.

56. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

Changes to the City Mayor's programme as a result of input from Elected

Members.

Councillor Grant asked the City Mayor what the three biggest changes he had made to his programme over the past year as a result of input from elected members.

The City Mayor said that he hoped that Members would recognise that whilst engaging with scrutiny (not just the Overview Select Committee) he had been guided by issues that were a concern to Members and had sought to respond. He was particularly pleased with the model that has been adopted with the Highways and Transport Capital Programme which was almost entirely shaped by Members' feedback on ward issues. He would give more thought on specific issues but hoped Members would feel that the engagement that he and his colleagues had with them had made a significant difference.

Outer city estates

Councillor Unsworth stated that there were declining opportunities for employment in the outer city estates. Some people with traditional skills in manufacturing could no longer find appropriate work and did not have the confidence to acquire new skills. Government policies and spending cuts had impacted adversely on people and some families were no longer able to cope. Councillor Unsworth asked for a report on how the council could best serve those people who had little and needed more.

The City Mayor responded that Councillor Dr Moore had to ask questions to receive the information about the employment opportunities created as a result of the Economic Action Plan, he felt that perhaps more needed to be done to demonstrate what the Council were doing, for example in bringing investment into the city, creating jobs, apprenticeships and helping people acquire new skills. He suggested that they needed to be clearer in showing what the Government were doing to the City and what the Council were doing for Leicester.

Market Development Project

Councillor Cutkelvin said that an executive decision had been recently published, to purchase a property in the city centre in relation to the Market Development Project and she asked the City Mayor if he could provide further details on this.

The City Mayor responded that the City Council had managed to create a high quality public space in the market and were now working to tidy up the jitty from Horsefair Street to the Market Square. The Council already owned land there but now had the opportunity to consolidate and take ownership on a building on which they currently paid rent. There was perhaps the possibility of further development in keeping with what was happening in the market but due to commercial sensitivities he could not say more at the moment. He believed however that it was a good investment to make. The City Mayor added that the prime example of their intervention in the past was in St Martins where the

Council acquired some back-land to enable the development. The new scheme would not be as large as that in St Martins.

Councillor Cutkelvin stated that people had commented favourably on the improvements to the market following the demolition of the old indoor market, but had expressed strong concerns at what they considered to be an eyesore at the back of the Corn Exchange building. She asked if the City Mayor could provide an update on what was happening there. The City Mayor commented that they had been aware that a considerable amount of infrastructure would be revealed when the indoor market was demolished; and it was considered that the best way to hide the eyesore would be by building a high screen in keeping with the rest of the development. The situation was complex and something that contractors had found to be challenging, but there was now a contractor who was interested in taking on the work. Officers were carrying out the due diligence checks and it was hoped that work would commence within a few weeks.

Councillor Unsworth referred to the screen and questioned whether it could be utilised in a similar way to the 'skeleton' screens at the National Westminster Bank in London or in the Pompidou Centre in France. A further suggestion was for wall murals similar to those in Leicester's Cultural Quarter. The City Mayor responded that screens at the National Westminster Bank and Pompidou Centre were features by design but the back wall in question in the market was never intended to be seen. Exposed infrastructure included electricity substations and fire escapes, and he was of the view that the erection of the screen was the correct course of action.

Promoting the good work that the Council did

Councillor Cleaver referred to the concerns expressed by Councillor Unsworth and stated that a considerable amount of good work was carried out in Adult Social Care. In the recent snow, domiciliary care workers had been getting up early to make sure they could carry out their duties and there were no reports of people going without their care visits. The Council were not being proactive in making people aware of the good things they were doing. Councillor Cleaver asked if officers would send out tweets publicising up to the minute news of what the Council were doing. The City Mayor concurred that the Council were not as good as they should be in publicising the good things that were being done. He added that there were a lot of people who wanted to serve and make a difference and went above and beyond the call of duty.

57. REPORT OF THE FINANCE TASK GROUP

The Chair referred Members to the minutes of the meeting of the Finance Task Group where the four finance reports had been considered. The Director of Finance gave a brief introduction to each report and commented that the Task Group had welcomed the change of style in the Capital Monitoring Report which showed the progress being made on each different programme delivery. From the income collection report, it could be demonstrated that the Council collected 99% of the debt that was raised.

The Chair referred to the Income Collection Report and said that serious concerns had previously been raised in relation to debt arising from housing benefit overpayment. However this debt now totalled £18m which raised even more serious concerns, particularly in view of the fact that universal credit was due to be rolled out in Leicester in 2018. The Director of Finance responded that overpayments in housing benefit were being recovered but it was a slow process and some of the households with a low income found it very difficult to pay off the debt. She said that they would continue to try to recover the debt from individual households but believed that when Leicester moved over to Universal Credit, they would ask the Department of Work and Pensions to take on the debt. The Director added that some, but not all of the debt, would be collected. The City Mayor added that this was a systemic problem and Leicester's situation was very much in line with other similar urban areas. The problem did not just arise at local level but was related to the way the system worked, particularly around a change of circumstances.

A Member commented that while it was right that debts should not be written off, some people did get into debt and needed help in order to re-pay by an affordable amount each week. The Director stated that staff were sympathetic in pursuing debt and people were asked to talk to the council staff; however some people chose not to inform the council about any change to their circumstances because they knew that it would affect their benefit payment. The Council did not judge people and tried to be fair and equitable in all cases.

A Member referred to the increasing numbers of Looked After Children (LAC); the situation was volatile and created challenges in financial planning. She questioned whether scrutiny had looked into this issue and the related issues of out of area placements. Councillor Dr Moore, the Chair of the Children, Young People and School's Scrutiny Commission explained that the commission had looked into this area; the rising numbers in Leicester reflected the national trend. She had asked whether children were being taken into care unnecessarily and was reassured that this was not the case. Councillor Dr Moore added that it was expensive to put children in out of area placements and asked the City Mayor, if at some point in the future, he would be agreeable for the council to establish its own specialised 'in-house' provision. Councillor Dr Moore suggested that this could bring income to the Council. The City Mayor responded that he would talk to the Assistant City Mayor for Children, Young People and Schools but understand that this had been done elsewhere and had not proved to be an effective financial solution. Councillor Dr Moore added that it could be very difficult to find placements for children with behavioural problems and parents were frequently unwilling to put their child in a school a long way from home.

The Chair drew the discussion to a close and asked Members to note the reports.

AGREED:

that the Revenue and Capital Monitoring Reports Period 6, 2017-2018, the Mid-Year Review of Treasury Management Activities

2017/18 and the Income Collection Report April 2017-September 2017 be noted.

58. SCRUTINY COMMISSIONS' WORK PROGRAMMES

The Committee were asked to receive and formally endorse a scoping document for the Heritage, Culture, Leisure and Sport Scrutiny Commission's review into the Engagement with Leicester's Arts, Culture and Heritage Offer. Councillor Unsworth, Chair of the Heritage, Culture, Leisure and Sport Scrutiny Commission presented the scoping document and explained that the commission were carrying out some research into the topic and two meetings had been held already.

AGREED:

that the scoping document for the review into Leicester's Arts, Culture and Heritage Offer be endorsed.

59. OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair referred Members to the Overview Select Committee Work Programme.

AGREED:

that the work programme be noted.

60. PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Chair referred Members to the Plan of Key Decisions and asked them to consider whether there were any items that their commission might wish to scrutinise.

AGREED

that the Plan of Key Decisions be noted.

61. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.10pm.