



Leicester  
City Council

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

Held: WEDNESDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2018 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Gugnani (Chair)  
Councillor Thalukdar (Vice Chair)

Councillor Govind  
Councillor Halford  
Councillor Hunter

In Attendance:

Councillor Clair, Deputy City Mayor with responsibility for  
Culture, Leisure, Sport and Regulatory Services

Also present:

Councillor Cassidy (Member for the Fosse Ward)

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**27. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Aqbany and Councillor Waddington.

**28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

## 29. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Commission received the minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2018.

Further to minute 19(a), "Progress on Actions Agreed at the Last Meeting – Minute 11, Portfolio Overview", the Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services advised the Commission that a meeting had been held on 4 September 2018 to discuss the way in which ward community funding was working and how issues could be addressed.

Further to recommendation 5 of minute 19(a), the Director advised that the new CCTV suite within the data centre was not open yet. It was anticipated that it would be operational in November 2018 and that the Commission could visit it in December 2018.

In relation to minute 19(b), "Progress on Actions Agreed at the Last Meeting – Minute 12, Waste Management Services Overview", the Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services advised that two patch walks had been held. One of these had identified problems with alley gates. For example, a number had been left open, exposing businesses and residents to unnecessary risk, and on others broken locks would be replaced.

On the other patch walk, the Head of Standards and Development had considered problems caused by paan spitting and educational work that was being done to combat it. Before Diwali, some street washing also would be done to improve their appearance.

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Halford advised that, further to minute 20(b), "Chair's Announcements – Film on Waste and Recycling within the Community", work on the film was progressing. The creators of the "Leicester Wyvern" river monster had provided some footage that would be included in the film.

The Chair advised that the draft scoping document supported under minute 23, "Review of the Community Asset Transfer Strategy – Draft Scoping Document", had been submitted to the Overview Select Committee for endorsement. Dates had been set for meetings of the Task Group that would undertake this review and all members of the Commission were encouraged to attend.

AGREED:

- 1) That the minutes of the meeting of the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission held on 5 September 2018 be confirmed as a correct record; and
- 2) That the Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services be asked to circulate the notes of the meeting held on 4 September 2018 to discuss the way in which ward community funding was working and how issues could be addressed.

### **30. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair made no announcements.

### **31. PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

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

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

### **33. HINCKLEY ROAD EXPLOSION - LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL RESPONSE**

The Chair reminded the Commission that court proceedings had arisen from this incident. The Commission could not discuss these, or speculate about what caused the incident, or why, so all Members were asked to refrain from such discussion.

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance gave a presentation on the City Council's response to the Hinckley Road explosion, explaining that:

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance gave a presentation on the City Council's response to the Hinckley Road explosion. The presentation included explanatory background about the Council's Emergency Planning function and the role of the Council in relation to major incidents.

The Director went on to explain that lessons learned in the response to the Hinckley Road major incident were:

- There had been excellent multi-agency team working based on well-established relationships along with an excellent response from volunteers, including those from the local community;
- The importance of putting the victims and the families at the forefront of all decisions taken;
- Practical arrangements for those who had had to leave their properties, often with nothing other than the clothes they were wearing, had generally worked well, including the provision of temporary accommodation in a number of cases;
- The importance of considering and managing the resilience of staff and others involved in the response as such incidents could be very testing of personal resilience;

- Consistency of key messages was important and people valued personal contact in the delivery of these messages through, for example, letters and face to face contact;
- Establishing who lived in the properties affected and identifying them was a problem. The properties affected were privately owned houses of multiple occupation and leased to residents and businesses, but lessons were learned in how this information could be gathered more effectively in the future;
- Vulnerable people in the area had been identified very quickly;
- Finding translators at night had been challenging although practical solutions had been found, often utilising the language skills of the Council's own staff and of volunteers;
- The Council was not used to working in a response-type structure. In the future, normal chains of command needed to be removed from the situation and clear lines of incident command followed; and
- Things would always happen that had not been anticipated, so flexibility was needed. For example, in this incident, arrangements needed to be made for people who had had to leave their properties to receive post and get bank cards to give them access to their bank accounts. It also transpired that there were water courses running under the road, which would have been problematic if blocked.

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Cassidy, one of the Ward Councillors for this area, addressed the Commission in his capacity as Chair of the Hinckley Road Recovery Committee, making the following points:

- There was no set guidance for how events of this nature should be responded to, but lessons learned from national experience were used;
- The day after the incident, a public meeting had been held at Dovelands School. This had been crucial in addressing the many rumours circulating, (especially on social media), and in helping young people who were trying to find out what had happened to friends;
- Three of the victims had close connections with English Martyrs' Catholic School, so it had been very important that the School was treated as part of the official response to the incident;
- The response by English Martyrs' Catholic School to the incident had been exemplary. Actions taken included holding a small service soon after the incident;
- A Community Recovery Committee was established to provide a link between local people and agencies and the Council led Recovery Co-ordination Group. It also offered a channel for information to feed to

residents and businesses. The Committee was a multi-agency body, but also included community and business representatives;

- A patch walk had been held a week after the explosion, as it was felt to be very important to get around the area to meet people and hear their concerns. The Police had accompanied the Ward Councillors on the walk. As the site of the explosion was on the border of other wards, the Ward Councillors for those wards also had taken part;
- Although the response to the explosion was based on ward boundaries, it became evident that some very strong communities existed in the area that did not follow ward boundary lines;
- It was felt to be important that meetings of the Community Recovery Committee were held locally, so they were held in St Anne's Church Hall. This was where people had gone on the night of the explosion, so had a connection to the event;
- Local priorities for the Community Recovery Committee were identified from the results of the patch walk;
- Following a further visit to the area with a number of Council officers and Ward Councillors, a number of opportunities to improve the area were identified. These would be incorporated in to an action plan;
- In order to support and inform the local community, a well-attended Community Ward Meeting was held at the Sir Charles Napier Public House on 12 July 2018;
- An important aspect of communication was managing expectations, as some things would not happen until some time after the incident; and
- The Community Recovery Committee would not be holding any further meetings until after the current court proceedings in relation to the explosion had been completed.

In conclusion, Councillor Cassidy advised that this had been a challenging time, but he had felt fortunate to have had the close support of officers from the Council and other agencies. He suggested that, as part of the role of local councillors as community leaders, it would be useful for Member development training in the future to include work on community leadership in difficult times.

On behalf of the Commission, the Chair thanked everyone who had been part of the response to this explosion for their work.

Some concern was expressed that the Community Recovery Committee was pulling out of the area during the trial, but Councillor Cassidy assured the Commission that, although the Committee would not be meeting during the trial, its work in the community would continue. Councillor Cassidy stressed that the Committee did not deal with individual trauma, but considered things

from a community perspective.

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance also assured the Commission that educational psychologists worked closely with schools and young people in situations such as this. It was known that symptoms of post-traumatic stress could occur some time after an incident, so a health resilience partnership, (a sub-group of the Resilience Partnership), was considering what was needed in relation to this.

It was recognised that the site of the explosion was now empty, which could attract anti-social behaviour, but as the site was privately-owned it would be for the owners to determine what would happen to it. The Council was in dialogue with the site owners, so the concerns of local people about potential anti-social behaviour could be passed on.

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance advised that Ward Councillor involvement in the response to this incident had worked well, so any support and encouragement that could be given to Councillors to undertake preparedness training would be welcome. Member development training on emergency planning was planned for the next Council year.

The Commission noted that a Community Recovery Committee was not established after all incidents. Any of the partner organisations could declare a major incident and when this was done tactical and strategic co-ordinating groups were set up. These groups determined whether the circumstances of each incident warranted setting up formal recovery groups, based on the individual circumstances of that incident. Ward Councillors should always be key in that dialogue.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Commission's thanks be extended to all involved in the response to the Hinckley Road explosion for their work, both at the time and ongoing; and
- 2) That the Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance be asked to make the owners of the explosion site aware of concerns about the possibility of anti-social behaviour happening at the explosion site while it remains empty.

### **34. GAMBLING POLICY - CONSULTATION**

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a report setting out the Council's Gambling Policy for the coming three years. Councillor Clair, (Deputy City Mayor with responsibility for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Regulatory Services introduced the report, noting that this Policy would be considered at the Council meeting to be held on 15 November 2018, for implementation in January 2019.

The Head of Regulatory Service advised the Commission that the amended Policy was based on the previous one. As it was operating successfully, no

significant changes were proposed. However, comments on the draft Policy had been sought and those received to date were submitted with the report.

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services drew attention to the licensing objectives set out in the report, which formed the basis of the licensing decisions for gambling establishments. The Director highlighted that a priority item in the work programme of the Council's Regulatory Services (Licensing Team) over the next year was to develop the Local Area Profile that gambling premises operators should refer to in making their risk assessments. This would be available to the Commission for scrutiny when complete if Members wished.

In response to Members' concerns that it had taken a long time to start work on the local profile, the Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services said he supported the need to progress this and it was important to remember that Regulatory Services had undergone a Spending Review which involved changing from having three heads of service to one and subsequent changes in, for example, Licensing to ensure delivery against work programmes. The local profile, although not a statutory requirement, was seen as a service priority and was in the work programme going forward into the new municipal year.

The Commission suggested that the cumulative impact of gambling establishments should be considered by the City Council's Gambling Policy. The Head of Regulatory Service explained that the Gambling Policy set out how the Council regulated individual premises. The legislation did not allow for cumulative impacts to be considered when a licence application had been made. Councillors' concern about the impacts of concentrations of certain businesses such as gambling premises and fast food take-aways was something they could consider referring on to Planning Officers for consideration and feedback as appropriate. They currently were developing the Council's Draft Local Plan and would be best placed to advise further on this particular matter.

In response to Members' enquiries, the Head of Regulatory Service advised that responsibility for promoting "responsible gambling" lay with gambling businesses. In some areas of the country, gambling was becoming seen as a public health issue. In Leicester, the licensing team did not have cause to work with officers from Public Health on individual premises, but the public health aspects of gambling were considered as part of the licensing process of a gambling premise.

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services advised that the Council regulated premises, not the people using them. A previous review of gambling by this Commission had recommended that people could be signposted to help. As previously discussed, this was not a role for any specific council service, but would be done as and when needed by the service being alerted to a person needing help. People also could self-regulate by asking establishments to turn them away if they tried to gamble.

Members also queried why certain types of establishments were included in the list of licensing functions at section 8 of Part A of the draft Gambling Policy when such establishments did not exist in the city. In reply, the Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services explained that the list showed what the Council was required to consider in discharging its functions, so was not specific to Leicester.

In addition, the locations discussed under section 2 of Part B of the Policy showed what was considered to be generally unsuitable for each type of establishment. It was stressed that each application was considered on its merits, but these locations were a guide.

The Head of Regulatory Service advised that the locations listed in section 2 of Part B of the Policy showed applicants what the Council considered to be a generally unsuitable location for each type of establishment. It was stressed that each application was considered on its merits and these locations were a guide.

**AGREED:**

That the Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services be asked to:

- a) include the community impact of betting shops, especially in areas with establishments such as religious venues, in the proposed local profile;
- b) present the local profile to this Commission for scrutiny when complete; and
- c) amend paragraph 5(a) of Part A of the draft Gambling Policy to refer to authorised activities, (not authorities activities).

**35. WORK PROGRAMME**

The current work programme for the Commission was received and noted.

**36. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 7.03 pm