



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORT AND TOURISM SCRUTINY
COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2018 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Khote (Chair)
Councillor Rae Bhatia (Vice Chair)

Councillor Dr Chowdhury
Councillor Kitterick

Councillor Patel
Councillor Porter

Councillor Sandhu

* * * * *

*Prior to the commencement of the formal meeting, the Chair commented on the recent sad loss of Councillor Mo Chohan.
The Commission stood in a minute's silence as a mark of respect.*

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Bhavsar.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Kitterick and Porter declared interests in Item 6 'Call-in of Executive Decision - Putney Road Scheme' as they had previously objected to the scheme. It was confirmed that following consultation with the Monitoring Officer, their previous objections did not preclude them from speaking or voting on the matter.

26. MINUTES

AGREED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 6 September 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

27. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no Petitions had been received.

28. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer advised that a statement had been received, copies of which were circulated with the Agenda, including an abstracted version.

The Chair provided an explanation of the process to be followed, advising that there would be a maximum of five minutes for the members of the public to make their statement.

Mr Robert Ball and Dr Douglas Smith of the 'Putney Road Say No' campaign were then invited to address the Commission.

As the submission was very detailed, Mr Ball and Dr Smith began by referring to the abstract of the key points in summary.

In making their statement to the Commission, Mr Ball and Dr Smith referred to the reasons which justified a call-in of the scheme, which was to be considered as the next item on the Agenda for the meeting.

The Commission were asked to note that the call-in was made based on the discrepancy between the public record and the actual consultation and was the starting point of the submission. However, each reason was closely linked with the others and the statement was made to help the Commission to fully understand the concerns. The Commission noted that the submission started with the specific reason for the call-in, but also covered a further three reasons, because they were all closely connected, namely:

- The public record of the consultation has been altered to remove claims about reduced rat-running in Clarendon Park

It was considered that there was an important discrepancy in the public record of the consultation. Specific predictions made in the consultation about reducing rat-running in Clarendon Park did not appear in the formal record in the report on the consultation. The specific pages were appended to the submission and were also identified and discussed in the accompanying text. It appeared that this discrepancy had arisen because of the second reason given for call-in.

- The consultation was seriously misleading about reducing rat-running

It was considered that the first report of the traffic modelling in the funding bid document identified a risk of increased rat-running in Clarendon Park. All subsequent public statements about the scheme claimed that rat-running in Clarendon Park, and elsewhere, would be reduced by the operation of link road, or by the scheme.

Many of these statements linked the claims directly to the traffic modelling. Specific predictions of reduction were made for Clarendon Park Road. Similar claims about reducing rat-running were made in the presentation to the Scrutiny Commission. The final statement in the Executive Decision report effectively withdrew all these claims by stating that the traffic modelling showed the impact on rat-running would be neutral. This meant that the modelling showed no reduction in rat-running in Clarendon Park. It was suggested therefore that the Executive Decision report contradicted every public statement about the link road or the scheme. It also left a clear inconsistency with the specific predictions made in the consultation.

It was expressed that this was seriously misleading to the public taking part in the consultation, as the claims about rat-running were known to have influenced views of the scheme. The inconsistency with the specific predictions in the consultation also appeared to be the reason for the discrepancy in the public record.

- The traffic modelling evidence showed the link road was not needed

It was considered that the traffic modelling evidence showed that the link road did not work and that there was no real demand for the link road. The Commission were asked to take consideration of the detailed comments in the statement concerning the suggested benefits of the scheme, these concerns were identified as the most important conclusions of the submission. It was expressed that if the scheme was to reduce rat-running it could only be by achieved using the link road, the local access could make no contribution to reducing rat-running. The link road would only function in one period so its possible impact on rat-running was limited. The link road also claimed to reduce rat-running by creating faster and shorter journeys. If it was to reduce rat-running it must do this. The traffic modelling showed that journey times increased when the link road was used. Journeys were not faster. Measuring distances on maps it had not been possible to find any shorter journeys which would reduce rat-running in the areas where it was claimed. Journeys were therefore neither faster nor shorter.

In concluding their address to the Commission, Mr Ball and Dr Smith commented that the above reasons were why their campaign was indicating that neither the full scheme, nor the link road part of it, could reduce rat-running.

They suggested that without a reduction in rat-running there was no benefit to local people affected by the scheme, only more traffic. They asked the Commission to accept that this was why the consultation was seriously misleading.

The Chair thanked Mr Ball and Dr Smith for their statement.

The City Mayor was invited to comment. He referred to advice received from Officers on the positive impact of the scheme and referred to technical data from the modelling exercise which supported the proposal.

The Chair commented that the discussion on the call-in was to be considered as the next item of business and asked Mr Ball and Dr Smith to return to the public gallery.

At this point, Councillors Kitterick and Porter expressed concern that they would not have the opportunity to put questions to the members of the public that had attended to present their statement.

The Democratic Support Officer confirmed that in Scrutiny Procedure Rules as defined in the Council's Constitution, it was the Chair's discretion to determine the extent of participation by members of the public at meetings.

The Chair confirmed that as the call-in was the following item, she had advised that there would not be a discussion between the Commission members and members of the public.

In concluding the item and in response to a question, she indicated that she was content for her ruling to be recorded.

29. CALL-IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION - PUTNEY ROAD SCHEME

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report which detailed the Executive decision taken by the City Mayor on 5 October 2018 relating to the Putney Road Project.

It was reported that the decision had been the subject of a five-member call-in under the procedures at Rule 12 of Part 4D, (City Mayor and Executive Procedure Rules), of the Council's Constitution.

The report confirmed that the options for the Commission were to:

- Note the report without further comment or recommendation.
- Comment on the specific issues raised by the call-in; or
- Resolve that the call-in be withdrawn

The Chair referred to previous discussion on the scheme by the Commission making particular reference to the consideration on 12 July 2018 where the proposals had been endorsed. A Minute extract from that meeting was appended to the report.

Councillor Kitterick, as proposer of the call-in, was invited to address the Commission.

Councillor Kitterick referred to the motivation leading to the call-in and to the statement made at the previous item from the 'Putney Road Say No' campaign.

He reiterated his frustration that members of the public had not been allowed to answer questions from the Commission to support their opinions. He made particular reference to the unanswered questions concerning rat-running in Clarendon Park and commented that the call-in offered the opportunity to clarify those issues.

He expressed concern that, as pointed out in the statement made earlier by the members of the public, it appeared that documentation had been altered. The technical advice for the changes in consultation materials had been received and noted.

In discussing the expected changes in behaviour of drivers and suggested alternative routes, it was accepted that certain routes could be identified, but that this was a subjective issue that could not be defined at this stage.

Councillor Porter commented on the amendments to the consultation documents and asked the City Mayor to respond.

The City Mayor referred to his previous advice where technical information had meant that aspects of the scheme were discounted throughout the process, and that there was absolutely no intention or attempt to mislead the public.

In terms of the traffic movements and the study undertaken as part of the modelling exercise, concern was expressed at the figures. It was suggested that discrepancies were evident at the vehicle numbers identified.

In response, the City Mayor indicated that clarification of the technical data within any report could be sought from Officers prior to meetings.

In response to a further question, the City Mayor confirmed that there were no proposals to either widen Victoria park Road or alter the Mayfield Road roundabout following any introduction of the Putney Road Scheme. He also confirmed that any relevant data could be provided to Commission members on request.

The Chair commented on the previous discussion on the scheme at the Commission's meeting held on 12 July 2018 and asked that a proposal be made in accordance with the options outlined in the report.

Councillor Kitterick MOVED and Councillor Porter SECONDED:

“That the Putney Road scheme be withdrawn, and alternative options be considered”

On being put to the vote, the motion fell.

Councillor Patel referred to previous discussion on the scheme at this Commission and at Full Council with debate on a petition.

Councillor Patel MOVED and Councillor Sandhu SECONDED:

“That the call-in be withdrawn by resolution of this Commission”

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried.

AGREED:

That the call-in of the Putney Road scheme be withdrawn.

Councillor Kitterick and the City Mayor left the meeting following this item.

30. PROCUREMENT AND SOCIAL VALUE - UPDATE

The Head of Procurement submitted a report, which provided an update on progress on tasks being carried out to finalise, adopt and implement the Social Value Charter.

Assistant City Mayor Councillor Myers was invited to present the report.

Councillor Myers referred to the table in the report which set out in detail the timetable to complete and launch the Social Value Charter, including engagement with Senior Staff and Lead Members.

The expected timetable and further engagement was noted and welcomed.

In response to a question from the Chair, it was confirmed that Commission members would be able to forward any comments or amendments directly to the Head of Procurement before the launch date.

In this regard, the requirement to ensure that concerns around social care issues were being met was highlighted.

Councillor Myers confirmed that the balance of the requirements against ensuring that service was not compromised were taken into consideration as part of the ongoing process.

In response to a question concerning Brexit and suggested inflationary pressures, it was accepted that the impacts were not yet known but knowledge of the issue had not been ignored.

AGREED:

That the report and update be noted.

Councillor Myers left the meeting following consideration of this item.

31. STRATEGIC GROWTH PLAN

The Head of Planning submitted a report which enabled the Scrutiny Commission to consider the revised Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan as it progressed towards adoption.

The full Strategic Growth Plan document was attached as an Appendix to the report.

The Head of Planning gave a presentation outlining the key aspects of the Plan and commenting on the likely impacts on future policy for the city.

In response to questions the following issues were noted:

- In terms of housing need, it was confirmed that individual district authorities would be responsible for policies to ensure provision, and that the SGP provided overall context. The local need would be addressed as part of individual authority's Local Plans.

In terms of the city's requirements, statistics on the level of provision against Government expectations were positive.

- The distinction of 'green wedge/green space' was noted, with an increased level of protection of open areas being encouraged.
- The increased development opportunities along the improved A46 corridor were noted.
- The positive investments in the city centre were noted, it being reported that the city enjoyed a good record of delivery and received high levels of enquiries from potential developers.

In conclusion. It was confirmed that more detailed information would be submitted in future reports on the progress of the Local Plan.

AGREED:

That the report be noted and that the Strategic Growth Plan be supported.

32. NEIGHBOURHOOD ROAD SAFETY

The Head of Highways gave a presentation outlining the key issues relating to neighbourhood road safety.

It was noted that local road safety issues were often a high priority for residents, and engagement with Ward Councillors, the City Mayor and MP's outlined issues including the following:

- Adult and child pedestrian and cyclist safety
- Concerns around traffic levels and speeding
- Dangerous road and footway layouts
- Inconsiderate and dangerous parking
- “School run” parking & road safety

In respect of the above, Commission members referred to known issues in their Wards, the details of which were noted for further investigation.

The presentation included photographs of situations where improvements had been made in respect of the programme’s development and its work streams, together with the roll out of 20 mph zones.

In response to a question, the research concerning air pollution was raised as it was considered that increased traffic calming measures could lead to poor air quality. In response it was noted that the proposals in the presentation were principally to improve road safety and a balance with air quality was always considered.

AGREED:

That the presentation and update be noted.

Councillor Rae Bhatia left the meeting during consideration of the above item.

33. BUSINESS SUPPORT UPDATE

This item was deferred.

34. WORK PROGRAMME

The Commission’s Work Programme was submitted and noted.

35. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm.