



Leicester  
City Council

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

Held: THURSDAY, 17 JANUARY 2019 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Khote (Chair)

Councillor Bhavsar  
Councillor Kitterick

Councillor Patel  
Councillor Porter

In attendance:

Councillor Clair – Deputy City Mayor with responsibility for  
Culture, Leisure, Sport and Regulatory Services  
Councillor Clarke – Deputy City Mayor with responsibility for  
Environment, Public Health and Health Integration

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**45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dr Chowdhury, Rae Bhatia and Sandhu.

**46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**47. MINUTES**

**AGREED:**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development, Transport and Tourism Scrutiny Commission held on 6 December 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

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

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

#### **49. PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

#### **50. CONNECTING LEICESTER - UPDATE**

The City Centre Streets Programme Manager gave a presentation updating the Commission on progress with the Connecting Leicester programme. A copy of the presentation is attached at the end of these minutes for information.

During the presentation, the City Centre Streets Programme Manager drew attention to the following:

- Ways of stopping refuse bins being left on the pavement in Marble Street would be investigated;
- The forthcoming scheme for York Road would include using a Traffic Regulation Order to restrict the flow of traffic along the road. It also was proposed to increase the width of the footways, which would create a link with the footway/cycleway through the new development on the site of the former New Walk Centre;
- In addition to the work scheduled for Market Place South and already undertaken on Friar Lane as part of the THI scheme, the remaining section of Friar Lane would be improved, to provide a link between schemes already completed;
- The decision on the bid for funding from the Transforming Cities Fund was due in February or March 2019. If the Council's bid was unsuccessful, ways of funding the work from the Council's existing resources would be sought, but as Leicester was one of only 10 cities invited to bid it was hoped that this situation would not arise; and
- Signing in Belgrave Gate would be considered separately to the improvement scheme, as part of work to declutter the area, but would be undertaken as soon as possible.

It was suggested that, although improvements under the Belgrave Gate North scheme were welcome, it would be preferable to remove the Belgrave Circle roundabout and create a crossroads junction. However, Councillor Clarke, (Deputy City Mayor with responsibility for Environment, Public Health and Health Integration), confirmed that the presence of infrastructure below the island meant that this would not be possible. Previous work in that area had

created a very useful open space, which would be improved under the proposed scheme.

Members noted that the objector to the proposed compulsory purchase of land in Mansfield Street had not attended the public inquiry into the Compulsory Purchase Order and questioned whether the objector had been informed of arrangements for the inquiry. In reply, the City Centre Streets Programme Manager confirmed that the objector had been given all of the details of the inquiry. In addition, the Council had worked hard over several months to communicate with the objector but had not received an appropriate response.

It was proposed that part of Belgrave Gate, Haymarket and Church Gate would be fully pedestrianised under the North City Centre Access Improvement scheme, with vehicles permitted on those roads to service premises. At present this could be done between 5.00 am and 11.00 am (9.00 am on Saturdays), but consideration was being given to reducing this time to 10.00 am on weekdays, to reduce conflict caused by increased footfall in the area.

Concerns were raised that disabled people would find it difficult to access premises in the areas to be pedestrianised under the North City Centre Access Improvement scheme. The City Centre Streets Programme Manager assured Members that a Healthy Streets Audit would be undertaken, which considered factors such as where tactile paving and smooth level surfaces needed to be placed to make sure that the area was as accessible as possible to everyone.

A survey of disabled parking also had been undertaken and, although this showed there to be spare capacity in the area, it was proposed to create additional disabled parking in the Haymarket car park. This was part of the aim of the scheme to provide a safe environment for everyone, (not just disabled people).

When schemes previously had been tried that allowed Blue Badge holders to use vehicles to access otherwise pedestrianised areas, it had been found that it was not possible to implement this properly, as the Council could not take action on moving traffic offences and the Police did not have the resources to monitor the schemes fully. When the North City Centre Access Improvement scheme was fully implemented, Mansfield Street would be open to all traffic, so disabled people could be set down and picked up there.

It was noted that the improvements to York Road necessitated the removal of parking for disabled people. Users of the Jain Centre on Oxford Street already had an arrangement with users of neighbouring premises to use their parking facilities and an agreement had already been made for the use of Newarke Street car park by disabled drivers. In addition, the Traffic Regulation Order had been relaxed to enable drivers with a Blue Badge in their vehicle to set down and pick up disabled people in York Road. A small number of objections to the proposed Traffic Regulation Order had been received, including a petition from users of the Jain Centre. This petition would be considered at the meeting of Council to held on 24 January at the request of a Ward Member.

AGREED:

- 1) That progress with the Connecting Leicester programme be noted; and
- 2) That the Director of Planning, Development and Transportation be asked to circulate Equality Impact Assessments for the schemes discussed at this meeting to all members of this Commission.

*Councillor Porter arrived at the meeting during consideration of this item*

## **51. BUSINESS SUPPORT - UPDATE**

Councillor Clair, (Deputy City Mayor with responsibility for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Regulatory Services), introduced this item, stressing the importance of the support that was provided for businesses in the city.

The Head of Economic Regeneration then gave a presentation, a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda, updating the Commission on the Business Support projects. During the presentation, he drew attention to the following points:

- The current business support projects delivered by the Council and partners had all been funded by the European Regional Development Fund;
- These projects included the Council led 'Collaborate' project, the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership's (LLEP's) Business Gateway and the 'Digital Growth Project' managed by the East Midlands Chamber;
- The Collaborate project had actively engaged with 475 businesses, with a £1.2m capital grant fund proving particularly popular. The popularity of the support being offered meant that targets already had been exceeded; and
- Work to identify further funding and business support was ongoing.

In response to concerns that businesses owned by Asian and Black people were not being reached with support, the Head of Economic Regeneration advised the Commission that these sectors were being reached. One example of this was the support provided to the textiles sector by the Collaborate project, where the lead officer had engaged with over 140 businesses, many of which had Asian business owners, so he was aware of the issues faced by those businesses. Opportunities also were taken to deliver events and workshops in community settings where this would increase engagement.

Some concern was expressed that identifying businesses by ethnicity was unnecessary, as any success in building any business should be celebrated and opportunities taken to learn from the owners of those businesses. In addition, a preference for providing repayable loans for businesses, rather than grants, was expressed, in order to make support services sustainable and to

ensure that an uncompetitive situation was created where businesses not receiving support found it difficult to increase their profits to match those of businesses receiving grants.

Some disagreement ensued on this. Members agreed that grants should be equally available to all businesses and noted that although the grants provided were small they could trigger success. However, businesses failed in all markets in many different circumstances and it could be difficult to identify whether lack of access to Business Support projects was a factor in this.

Members also asked for assurances that checks were made to ensure that businesses supported in the textiles sector had good health and safety practices and paid at least the national minimum wage. The Head of Economic Regeneration explained that the Council looked for independent industry accreditation with recognised auditing mechanisms to verify the credentials of businesses seeking support. No grants had been provided to businesses where illegal practices had been identified. Where such practices occurred, those businesses would be referred to the relevant enforcement agencies for investigation.

AGREED:

- 1) That progress with the Collaborate business support project be noted;
- 2) That the submission of the full European Regional Development Fund bid for the Growth Hub project be noted;
- 3) That the East Midlands Chamber's "Digital support for business" project be noted; and
- 4) That the Director of Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment be asked to ensure that reviews of the Business Support projects include analysis of diversity, such as the ethnicity of business owners using the support.

## **52. EMPLOYMENT HUB - UPDATE**

Councillor Clair, (Deputy City Mayor with responsibility for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Regulatory Services), introduced this item, welcoming the work being done through the project.

The Head of Economic Regeneration then gave a presentation, a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda, updating the Commission on the Employment Hub project. During the presentation, he drew attention to the following points:

- This was a sub-regional project with 10 formal partners;
- 20 applications to the Leicester Jobs Fund had been approved and 20 individuals appointed. This included individuals with disabilities, carers and

an ex-offender;

- Employer enquiries had spiked in May 2018, as this was when the project had been launched; and
- The project was working to increase the number of businesses and individuals registering their details on the new Employment Hub website as the project developed.

In response to a specific query from Members around the transport and logistics sector, it was noted that many businesses from this sector were in the county. Several of these already had engaged with the project, and officers would be happy to engage with any others that were interested. If there were several businesses from any particular sector that had similar needs, sector specific events could be organised, (as had happened with the social care sector).

The Head of Economic Regeneration confirmed that the contractual target for this project was to engage with 220 small and medium-sized enterprises, with 165 delivering an employment outcome. Long term tracking of individuals would be more difficult to do, and was not the intention of the project, due to data protection restrictions for details held by partner organisations and as the project would not be advised of the outcome of every vacancy. Officers would do their best to capture this information, but not all opportunities were created by the Council, many being created by the businesses themselves.

There was some concern that the project could unintentionally channel people in to low paid employment, but it was accepted that this could be to do with skill levels. Low paid employment could be a better option for some people than having to be on state benefits long-term, but it was recognised that it was important to encourage skills progression and higher-level apprenticeships, and to ensure that providers were providing high value opportunities, as increasing skills was the route to higher wages.

It was noted that the data being gathered through the project was sufficient to help individuals and business access the right support, both in order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation and to encourage participants to engage. A simple registration form therefore was used to gather information, but this meant that limited data was available on individuals. Consideration was being given to what other data could be collected and tracked through the project.

Members also noted that the low carbon industry had a low profile through this project. The Head of Economic Regeneration explained that most businesses engaging with the project were not in the energy sector and were more likely to identify themselves with another sector, such as manufacturing or engineering, than low carbon.

AGREED:

- 1) That the presentation be noted; and

- 2) That all Councillors be asked to encourage individuals and employers to engage with the Employment Hub project through the project's website: <https://www.leicesteremploymenthub.co.uk/>

*Councillor Kitterick left the meeting during consideration of this item*

### **53. GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2019/20 TO 2021/22**

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the City Mayor's proposed General Fund Revenue budget for 2019/20 to 2021/22.

The Director of Planning, Development and Transportation introduced the report, reminding Members that changes to service budgets were now driven by a well-established programme of service reviews. The report therefore reflected those that had been completed and anticipated those remaining to be done.

He remarked that the City Development and Neighbourhood Services already had achieved £18.7million of savings and had a target of £7.4million to achieve in Spending Review 4. Members noted that budget pressures in some of those services had required the department to make additional spending review savings. These had been achieved, so savings already achieved meant that the department was able to operate within its budget and could achieve further savings to support the corporate position.

In discussion on this report it was noted that:

- The Council had agreed to maintain a minimum balance of £15million of reserves, plus a number of ear-marked reserves;
- The administration of bus lane enforcement was undertaken by Nottingham City Council, which was a cost to this Council. As part of the need to continue to make savings, officers would be considering whether it would be financially beneficial to bring this work in-house;
- The technical services review was taking longer to implement than had been anticipated, as there had been some staffing changes in Property Services following appointment of a new director; and
- Forecast capital expenditure for Transport would fluctuate from the figure given in the report. For example, grants from the Transforming Cities Fund and the European Development Fund could add a significant amount to the current estimate of £27,588,000.

**AGREED:**

- 1) That the Director of Finance be asked to clarify to Members who the 40,000 people not accounted for in the figures given paragraph 2.2 of the Equality Impact Assessment are and whether this figure

includes students;

- 2) That the Director of Planning, Development and Transportation be asked to provide Members with a breakdown of how much from each fine received through bus lane enforcement is received by this Council and how much is passed to other bodies; and
- 3) That the Overview Select Committee be asked to take the comments of this Commission recorded above in to account when considering the City Mayor's proposed General Fund Revenue Budget for 2019/20 to 2021/22.

#### **54. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Commission's work programme was received and noted.

#### **55. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 7.29 pm