



Leicester  
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: WEDNESDAY, 15 JANUARY 2020 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Thalukdar (Chair)

Councillor Ali  
Councillor Aqbany

Councillor Govind  
Councillor Solanki

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**33. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joshi and Councillor Khote.

The Chair wished Councillor Khote a speedy recovery.

**34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**35. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

AGREED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 30 October 2019, be agreed as a correct record.

**36. PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

**37. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE**

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

### **38. GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2020/21 TO 2021/22**

The Director of Finance submitted a report setting out the City Mayor's proposed budget for 2020/21 to 2021/22. Members of the Commission were asked to consider the proposed budget that would be proposed at Council in February.

It was noted that the proposed budget was set for a year and the General Fund Budget was proposed on a year on year basis. Fundamental proposed changes were to be considered by Parliament last year, but the fair funding review was side lined due to the uncertainty with Brexit. However, the Councils approach by having a managed reserves strategy has served us well and has allowed the Council to be prepared in uncertain times.

In relation to this particular Commission the Director of Finance noted that the Revenues and Benefits division were under financial pressure as the Department for Work and Pensions continued to cut the grant provided to the Council to administer housing benefit. The case load however has not significantly reduced. The service was able to integrate roles within staff to meet the demand and reduce cost. Channel shifting the service online as much as possible was also a means of meeting the service demands.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services noted that the area currently delivers 28 services such as Community Safety, Waste Management, 2 Household Waste Recycle Centres and others. The funding received through the General Revenue Fund Budget, paid for and delivered a lot in the city. The service was living within its means and had still been able to achieve an effective delivery of services. The past year had seen a food-outlets with a hygiene rating of 5 double, a 90% satisfaction levels of neighbourhood buildings and a 14.9 reduction in fly tipping cases. Although nationally fly tipping cases were on a rise, the city were able to reduce the number of local fly tipping cases as a result of a robust strategy and the great facilities the service had on offer, including the weekly waste collection service and a further recruitment for two additional City Wardens.

During discussions, members were concerned with what impact the proposed budget would have on the delivery of service and how the increase in Council Tax would benefit the service. It was suggested that channel shifting was part of the strategy to reduce cost and still maintain the level of service. The increase in Council Tax which was slightly under 4% was a means of recuperating the 50% loss in government funding. It was noted that business rates were set by a national multiplier and 50% of these rates were retained locally.

Members of the commission were assured that there were not specific areas that would see improvements rather it was a transformation process and all areas would see continuous improvements to existing services.

**AGREED:**

- 1). That the report be noted;

- 2). That the Director of Finance be requested to consider the comments made by Members of the Commission;
- 3). That the minute extract be shared with the Overview Select Committee and Council; and
- 4). That the Information on the Council's website regarding Council Tax increase for properties that have added extensions and planning advice to inform of possible increases to Council Tax to be shared with Councillor Ali.

### **39. COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN**

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a presentation updating the Commission on the Community Safety Partnership.

The Deputy City Mayor introduced the presentation and asked Members of the Commission for feedback on what they would like to see prioritised and if they had any suggested amendments to the plan being proposed.

The presentation outlined the partnership's vision, priorities and the steps being considered going forward.

Members of the Commission were pleased with the level of work delivered by the Service in tackling Street Lifestyle issues. It was noted that homelessness was a factor that contributed to this agenda and the service were praised for bringing the number of people on the streets down since the commencement of the project. Members were concerned with how they could get involved and where information to support victims was available.

Members of the Commission were concerned that the street lifestyle issue was not just an issue that was city centre based and shared their concerns about it spreading to other areas of the city. It was noted that the city centre pilot that had been launched two years ago was now a city-wide initiative, taking a person-centred approach to tackle street lifestyle. The service has been able to make a big difference and continue to do so with no additional resources, with the work receiving national interest. Officers welcomed members to feedback; both negative and positive on this work as this would help improve service.

During the discussion Members raised concerns with Goscote House and its future. Members were pleased to see the work with the former International Hotel underway but believed that this had resulted in the ASB issue being moved from one disused building to another. Officers explained that an Abandoned Building Task Group had been established to deal with and manage these concerns.

Members of the Commission were pleased to hear that the service were prioritising and working with partners (e.g. HMRC, Health & Safety Executive) to target issues around modern-day slavery. The pilot scheme which was in its early days was focussed on the garment industry. Members of the commission added that there were many other industries where this was an issue. It was

hoped that the scheme would help identify how and what forms of support could be provided through frontline staff.

Members of the commission suggested that the priorities noted in the presentation were still key areas of work and should continue to be prioritised. Additionally, Members' feedback on the plan was that an additional priority should be added around cyber fraud. Officers noted that this was definitely an area to be considered as this had become a key issue.

Officers shared their concerns with many areas of local issues that are not reported and encouraged members to use avenues such as the Ward Community Meetings and the Community Gold Meeting (27 January 2020) to report these issues to officers.

**AGREED:**

- 1) That Officers be commended for work being done and is reassuring and hope the work continues to support those that are vulnerable in the new plan;
- 2) That the Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services be requested to provide the results on the pilot on modern day slavery and this item to be added to the work programme;
- 3) That the Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services be requested to take into consideration comments made by members, particularly cyber fraud, support outside of the city centre being enhanced and information being disseminated to ward members;
- 4) That the Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services be requested to send an invitation to the Community Gold Meeting to Members;
- 5) That the Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services be requested to further update the Commission in a years' time on how progress is being made on priorities outlined;
- 6) And that the presentation be noted.

#### **40. PUBLIC SAFETY TEAM 2019 UPDATE AND 2020 FORWARD PLAN**

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a presentation updating the Commission on the Community Safety Team's work over the past 12 months and the proposed regulatory interventions for 2020.

The Deputy City Mayor introduced the report and presentation to the Committee and noted that the report sets out the plan for 2020 and 2021. Members were informed that the landscape of public safety is ever changing and that the service regulated a wide range of regulatory legislation governing public safety.

Overall, the service aimed to prevent and protect those living or visiting the city from activities that could endanger their safety.

During the discussions Members raised their concerns with security at upcoming concerts in the city. As the concerts would be outdoor events members were concerned with the security of these events. Officers assured members that this was a multi-agency approach and event organisers and safety advisory groups were responsible for safety during events.

Members shared their concerns with the noise level of fireworks and what the services role was in terms of the sale of fireworks. It was noted that the service's role was to prevent illegal storing and sale of fireworks and during this process the decibel level of fireworks were also checked. Although the service had no control over when people do the fireworks, communities who run events were visited on regular basis to ensure private events are compliant.

Rogue traders and street garages were also raised as an area of concern, following recent fires in residential areas in the city. Members were concerned with the knock-on effect these had with neighbours and residents. It was noted that these were enforced by the Health and Safety Executive and many other areas such as planning were also involved. If Members were aware of any such establishments, they were advised to communicate with the City Wardens Team.

Members of the Commission shared their concerns with new vape shops and beauty salons run from residential properties. It was suggested these were opening across the city and whether the service had any means of managing the these. It was noted that the service were aware of many beauty salons and payed regular visits to the ones they were aware of and worked of intelligence on new venues. In relation to vape shops, the service were aware of the continuous growth of this area within the city. It was also noted the legislation was limited and had not been able to keep up with the growth in vape shops.

AGREED:

- 1) Congratulate the Public Safety Team on the work carried out in the city;
- 2) That the Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services be requested to Inform Councillor Govind about the level of noise in relation to the fireworks being sold, and;
- 3) With an increased demand potentially leading to an increased impact on public safety the Director of Neighbourhoods and Environmental Services be requested to further update the Commission in a years' time.

#### **41. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME**

Members were asked to forward any suggested items for consideration on the work programme to the Scrutiny Policy Officer.

**42. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

There being no other items of urgent business the chare declared the meeting closed at 7:43pm.