



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORT AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY
SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: WEDNESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2021 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Joel (Chair)
Councillor Sandhu (Vice Chair)

Councillor Malik

Councillor Rae Bhatia

Councillor Porter

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30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fonseca, Councillor Singh Johal and Councillor Valand.

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Vice Chair declared that he had a conflict of interest at Item 9 on the agenda as he operated a business around the St George area but would be participating in the meeting with an open mind.

Councillor malik declared that the voluntary organisation that he was associated to had made a bid to the Community Renewal Fund as a partner organisation, but he would be participating in the meeting with an open mind.

32. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Economic development, Transportation and Climate Emergency from 18 August 2021 and 7 September 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

33. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Chair invited Nicola Royale to introduce the question to the Commission on the Workplace Parking Levy.

“Climate Action strongly feels that the cost of each parking space should be the

same or slightly higher than the cost of an annual bus ticket. Currently an adult flexi bus ticket is at a cost of £620.00, considerably higher than the cost proposed for parking spaces in the Workplace Parking Levy. Do you propose that the annual parking space is higher than the annual bus ticket and if the price of bus tickets continue to rise, would there be a mechanism to ensure the Workplace Parking Levy rises with them?”

The Director for Planning and Transportation provided a response to the question. It was noted that the consultation exercises had been carried out and ended on 17 September 2021 but were grateful for further comments. Any further comments helped the development of a full business case for the Workplace Parking Levy and the related work on the Local Transport Plan. It was noted that there had not yet been a settlement on the final figure for the charge, but a figure had been suggested to stimulate the conversation.

There were different considerations, including the average annual bus ticket but also considerations related to affordability and the department were still in the process of working through this. The current challenge was to consider all the factors and see where all the information leads to in terms of a final view on the charge.

It was suggested that in terms of indexation, there would be indexation of charges and this was a current practice in Nottingham.

As a follow up to the response provided by the Director for Planning, Development and Transportation, Nicola Royale noted that if the introduction of a Workplace Parking Levy was an incentive to get people out of their cars and using sustainable forms of transport, the cost of a parking space had to be more expensive than the cost of an annual bus ticket.

In the absence of Margarett Lewis the Chair introduced the question.

“to ensure a modal shift away from cars to a more sustainable forms of transport, it is imperative that car drivers are given incentives to switch. May we ask if the Workplace Parking Levy will be used to pilot subsidising fares for key groups such as school children and those on benefits and if not, why not?”

The Director for Planning Development and Transportation provided a response to the question raised. It was noted that, the workplace Parking Levy was still in its early stages and the comments were welcomed. It was agreed that if this was going to be successful then significant investment would be required in the modal shift away from cars into public transport, walking and cycling. This would be incentivised through the WPL charge itself to employers but also the investment of the money that would be generated by the Workplace Parking Levy to invest in bus services. The WPL investments would

also help improve cycling infrastructure, pedestrian routes and improvements in both the central parts of the city and also local neighbourhoods. It was absolutely the case that the service would like to incentivise modal shift but in terms of specific subsidies, these were subject to ongoing consideration.

34. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer noted that none had been received.

35. ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN - UPDATE

The Assistant City Mayor for Jobs, Skills Policy Delivery and Communications introduced the item on the Economic Recovery Plan. It was noted that the report served two purposes, to update the Commission on the economic recovery plan and also to reflect and respond on how this work responded to the Scrutiny Review carried out by the Commission. Members that were involved in producing the report were thanked.

It was further noted that the proposed economic activity should reward the people of Leicester with good well-paid employment.

The Head of Economic Regeneration provided an update on the Scrutiny review and delivered an update on progress. It was noted that the recommendations from the scrutiny review had helped plan the strategic direction of the plan. The primary recommendations included a greater use of statistical data when developing services and policies. Availability of up to date data during the pandemic had been challenging, but the team had been developing an Economic Development Dashboard to keep the data and information available.

It was suggested that as a result of the pandemic there had been a significant increase in youth unemployment and the Scrutiny Review had recommended a direct response to this. The Scrutiny Review also recommended interventions at a more local level and this was being addressed.

The Review also recommended embedding inclusive growth into the economic strategy planning and this was something that had been addressed in the recovery plans.

As part of the discussions it was noted that:

- The Kickstart Scheme would be available from a broad range of industries and organisations across the city
- Members suggested that the interventions outlined in the report had the potential to have a positive impact on economic recovery though time would tell on how effective the plans would be
- Engagement with the VCS sector was important as the sector had previously played a vital role. Officers suggested that this was particularly dependent on funding and overall, there had been positive engagement with the VCS Sector including well attended workshops
- It was noted that the on-site construction hub would be advertised

through the Employment Hub. There would be more information on this once it went live

- The department were working on reaching further into communities to raise the profiles of the initiatives available
- The Director of Tourism, Culture and Inward investment noted that business support programmes were targeted at SME organisations and this allowed for VCS sectors to participate.
- It was noted that working in partnership with community-based organisations provided partner organisations to bring their expertise on sectors to develop future plans and strategies

The former Chair of the Economic Development Commission thanked the Chair and Officers for the invitation to the Commission meeting. It was noted that the purpose of the Review was to examine how the disadvantaged and economically excluded neighbourhoods in the city could be levelled up and noted the report accurately summarised the recommendations from the review.

The Member asked how work would be targeted towards neighbourhoods that the data demonstrated had the greatest needs and how will the data be used to develop policy and programmes targeted at the most deprived communities.

Officers noted that the targeted work was sometimes hindered by resources but outlined some of the current schemes based in neighbourhoods. This included the Construction Hub and its geographic location north of Beaumont Leys would be attractive to people from the surrounding area and as part of the work travel restrictions have also been considered to make it more accessible. The Fashion Technology Centre based in North Evington would also benefit a local area which accommodates a significant textiles workforce. The Youth Employment Hub would be based in the city centre but with a broader network reaching into communities e.g. with DWP workers based at local libraries.

It was further noted that projects were located at various locations across the city and data collected from participation at these projects would provide for more targeted communications. The project around the Economic Dashboard had allowed for data to also be accessed from the DWP from their live monthly updates and these were the types of resources available to develop policy going forward.

Members of the Commission suggested that the training made available should be focussed on sectors where there was a current need and that were well paid to benefit the people of Leicester. It was noted that the initiatives were in various different sectors and would help close the gaps such as pay inequality.

Following the Chair's questions, it was noted that the Youth Employment Hub would be located in the city centre as it had a large footfall of young people and one of the main criteria to attract the youth was visibility. Further information would be made available once a new location had been confirmed.

It was also noted that there were no findings as of yet from the REACH programme and this would be communicated to the Commission in the future.

Officers also noted that although, virtual delivery of services continued, some face to face delivery was returning. Some of the virtual events would continue as they had proved to be successful and these services would be retained to reach broader audiences.

AGREED:

- 1) That Members of the Commission note the recommendations from the review; and
- 2) That Officers be requested to update the commission in the future on the improvement of the Neighbourhood Retail Scheme across the city.

36. LEICESTER BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2021-2031

The Deputy City Mayor for Environment and Transportation introduced the item on Leicester's Bio-Diversity Action Plan (BAP) and how important it was in a compact city like Leicester.

The Senior Nature Conservation Officer and the Generic Planning Team Leader delivered a presentation on the Bio-Diversity Action Plan 2021-2031.

As part of the discussions Members of the Commission welcomed and appreciated the work done to construct the plan. It was queried whether the Local Plan would supersede the BAP and suggested that the BAP should be integrated within the Local Plan. The Director for Planning Development and Transportation reassured Members of the Commission that both plans were being developed together, integrating the BAP with the Local Plan, so the priorities and the objectives were consistent.

In response to the concerns raised by Members on the guidance in the plans, it was noted that the points raised were important points and these were embedded within the local plan and not were not just informal guidance's but also supported the Local Plan policies. Although there was a need for continued development to meet the needs of the city it was important to balance these with biodiversity across the city to benefit the city.

The Director for Planning, Development and Transportation noted that it was critically important that this plan was cross cutting and integrated with other plans across the different services in the Council. Regular updates to the Commission would provide information on the progress made to reach the targets set out within the documents.

It was noted that the detailed plans were covered across part 1 and part 2 of the plans including comparisons of the Bio-Diversity present across the city currently and what will be created in the future and Members were invited to request further information if it was required.

Although information on pesticides was not available at the Commission meeting, the Parks and Green Spaces team would have this information. Pilot

schemes and trials to reduce the use of pesticides across many local authorities had been undertaken and the plan proposed to reduce the use of pesticides in Leicester by 50% in the future.

It was further noted that people across the city had been engaging more with nature during the lockdown and species of wildlife had also remerged. Local environmental groups had been successful in increasing the number of participants and projects and had ran their own sessions to engage with a wider audience and these trends had continued following the lockdown.

AGREED:

- 1) Members of the Commission were recommended to note the Bio-Diversity Action Plan; and
- 2) That the Officers be requested to note the comments raised by Members of the Commission.

37. TRANSFORMING CITIES - GREAT CENTRAL WAY

The City Centre Streets Programme Manager delivered a presentation updating the Commission on the Transforming Cities Programme.

It was noted that:

- Phase 1 of the works to Great Central Way between Evesham Road and Bede Park had commenced and were completed in March 2021
- Phase 2 of the work which linked Kingsway to Meridian Leisure Park was in progress and details of the proposed work were given
- Engagement with Ward Councillors for phase 2 of the works would take place during October 2021 and public engagement would follow in November 2021. It was proposed that the City Highways Team would be on site in Spring 2022
- The schemes were funded through the Transforming Cities Fund.

38. CONNECTING LEICESTER - ST GEORGE ST/GRANBY ST

The City Centre Streets Programme Manager delivered a presentation updating the Commission on the Connecting Leicester Scheme.

It was noted that the St George Street and Granby Street schemes were funded through the governments Getting Building Fund for improvements around the city's Cultural Quarter.

The Granby Street scheme proposed to pedestrianize Granby Street between Northampton Street and Central Ring Road. This would also see highway improvements to Northampton Street. The proposed works would also see alterations to the cycle lane on Granby Street.

The work on Granby street was proposed to be on site in January 2022 and discussions continued on bespoke street furniture options. The Traffic Regulation Order had been advertised and there were no objections to the

pedestrianisation of Granby Street.

The works on St George Street would enhance access to the Cultural Quarter, with high quality link to the railway station and a public amenity for locals. The scheme had gone out to tender and the next steps were to re-engage with key stake holders, issue the Traffic Regulation Order, complete the first phase of work by spring 2022 and consider the design and delivery of subsequent phases.

The City Centre Streets Programme Manager shared images of the progress on works within the City Centre as part of the Connecting Leicester scheme.

As part of the discussions it was noted that the granite used previously at the clocktower had been reused for maintenance work around other parts of the city centre.

It was also noted that the schemes have improved the infrastructure for walking and cycling yet still provided ample parking spaces in an effective way including potential locations for electric vehicle parking.

AGREED:

- 1) That Officers be requested to provide future updates to the Commission;
and
- 2) That Officers be requested to note the comments made by Members of the Commission.

39. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair noted that any suggested items for consideration on the work programme could be sent to the Chair or the Scrutiny Policy Officer.

40. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no other items of urgent business the meeting closed at 8:06pm.

