



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 16 AUGUST 2022 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Thalukdar (Chair)
Councillor Solanki (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Kitterick Councillor O'Donnell
Councillor Pickering

In Attendance:

Councillor Clair, Deputy City Mayor for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Regulatory
Services
Councillor Clarke, Deputy City Mayor for Transport, Clean Air, and Climate
Emergency
Councillor Dempster, Assistant City Mayor for Health

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Rahman.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to disclose any pecuniary or other interest they may have in the business on the agenda.

There were no declarations of interest.

18. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

1. That the Minutes of the meeting of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission held 28 June 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

19. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

20. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Chair invited Hannah Wakley to present a statement of case to the Commission. Ms Wakley expressed concern regarding the Council's use of pesticides and herbicides in parks and open spaces, with a particular focus on Glyphosate. The potential harms of Glyphosate were noted, it was also noted that numerous other Local Authorities had begun work to cease the use of Glyphosate.

In response to the statement of case it was noted that use of Glyphosate had reduced over recent years. It was also noted that work was ongoing to review the Council's use of Glyphosate, with the intention of producing an action plan to phase out use all together in the next 3 years. It was noted that sufficient substitute products for Glyphosate were not yet widely available.

A question had been received from Hannah Wakley which was considered in accordance with the Council's Constitution, Part E Procedure Rule 10.

The Chair invited Ms Wakley to present her question to the Members of the Commission as follows:

"We have noticed that the way herbicide is used seems to vary in different city parks; in some parks the base of every tree is sprayed and in other parks only small areas are sprayed, usually around the children's playgrounds. How is the application of glyphosate in parks and green spaces being monitored?"

In response to this question it was noted that the Council was required to keep track of the pesticides and herbicides it used. It was noted that the variation in use in certain areas could be related to trials for products which could replace Glyphosate. It was also noted that the possibility of avoiding treatment all together in certain cases was being considered.

The Chair thanked Ms Wakley for her statement of case and question.

21. CITY WARDENS AND ENVIRO-CRIME SERVICES OVERVIEW

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a presentation on the City Warden and Enviro-Crime work area. The Head of Standards and Development presented the item, it was noted that:

- Each City Warden had an assigned area, with patrolling Wardens supporting. Enviro-Crime Officers worked citywide.
- Enforcement could be civil or criminal.
- Enviro-Crime carried out detailed investigations of large-scale fly tips, scrap metal offences and other large incidents.
- The number of FPNs issued during 2020/21 dipped significantly,

numbers had returned to previous levels in 2021/22.

- Community engagement was ongoing, including a focus on university liaison to mitigate students leaving waste outside accommodation.
- Joint working was ongoing with numerous agencies including DEFRA.

In response to Members' questions it was noted that:

- Fines were based on income, companies guilty of offences received higher fines.
- The number of fly tips were generally decreasing, with the latest quarterly figures being 26% lower than the previous year.
- There were peak periods for fly tips, around Christmas time and when students moved out.
- The city saw much less large-scale fly tips than the county.
- Issues with waste in Council accommodation were the responsibility of the Housing Service. Enforcement was a tenancy issue.
- City Wardens did not have powers related to street drinking, Police were responsible for that.
- More senior City Wardens were mostly office based as they dealt with complex cases and correspondence from the public and Councillors.
- CCTV could only be accessed in cases where a custodial sentence is possible.

AGREED:

- That the Commission notes the update.

22. PEST AND DOG CONTROL SERVICES OVERVIEW

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a presentation on Pest and Dog Control Services.

The Head of Standards and Development presented the item, it was noted that:

- The Service was working with the Housing Service to develop systemic treatments of bedbugs and develop a working group on rat prevention. The aim of this was to reduce costs to the Council from external companies.
- A focus was on correct identification of issues so that the appropriate treatment could be used, this was to avoid potential environmental issues. Potentially harmful treatments were being phased out. Perimeter baiting would be ceased as soon as the initial issue was dealt with.

In response to Members' questions it was noted that:

- There were issues relating to large amounts of food being dumped outside for birds, this was leading to rat issues.
- The recent weather conditions had led to very fine breeding conditions for rodents.
- Work was ongoing with the Housing Service to educate tenants on pest

issues. A joint approach on rats had been developed.

- Issues with cats were outside of the portfolio of the Service.
- Numbers of exotic pets in the city were increasing,
- Mice did tend to congregate around specific areas, normally based on a food source.
- There was an increase in dog ownership during the pandemic, this had not yet led to a noticeable increase in strays.
- The team was moving to a new location to better enable response.
- Rats were considered a public health issue which is why rat treatments were provided for free.

AGREED:

- That comments made by Members be taken into consideration by Service Officers.

23. WASTE SERVICES - SERVICE UPDATE

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a presentation updating the Commission on the work of Waste Services.

The Head of Waste Services presented the item, it was noted that:

- The service encompassed waste collections and treatment, recycling centres, and encouraging behaviour change around waste.
- Black bins and orange bags were collected weekly.
- The recycling centres remained well used, the trade waste facility saw record customer numbers in 2021/22.
- The Gypsum Close Reuse Shop had been refurbished and fully reopened in May 2022.
- Behaviour change work involved public campaigns, school visits, and other events.
- Over 146k tonnes of waste were handled in 2021/22.
- Kerbside collections were uninterrupted over the whole Covid-19 pandemic period, Leicester was one of the few Councils to sustain the service over the period.
- The service was struggling with a record levels of orange bag requests.
- The recycling rate had recovered in 2021/22, in line with national trends.

In response to Members' questions, it was noted that:

- The backlog in bulky waste collections had been exacerbated due to national driver shortages. A recovery plan was being developed in collaboration with Biffa.
- Conversations were ongoing with regards to making it easier to get orange bags.
- The Council would need to work proactively with Biffa to resolve issues such as allowing space for cars to pass.
- A more structured annual communication plan was being developed,

with an aim to develop more active communications.

- Engagement with students would continue as new students come to the city.
- The option of short videos educating on Waste Services was being considered.

AGREED:

- That the Commission requests that comments made by Commission Members be taken into account by Service Officers.

24. NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a presentation updating the Commission on the work of Neighbourhood Services.

The Assistant City Mayor for Health introduced the item, noting that there had been a recent shift in executive portfolios and that she was now responsible for libraries and community centres.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services presented the item, it was noted that:

- Neighbourhood Services delivered community and library services.
- There was a network of 72 facilities, including 9 multi-service centres.
- The Service also included the Ward Engagement team.
- Neighbourhood Services were committed to the 4 universal offers developed by Libraries Connected.
- All facilities were closed during the Covid-19 pandemic, this led to a significant expansion of e-services.
- Staff were overwhelmingly redeployed to other services during the pandemic period, with facilities being used as test centres.
- The priorities for recovery from the pandemic were health and wellbeing, digital inclusion, supporting children's learning, and employment and careers.
- A customer survey was carried out in February 2022, the results showed a satisfaction rate similar to pre-pandemic levels.
- 14 events were held across facilities to mark the Platinum Jubilee, these were well attended.
- The number of active library users was increasing monthly.
- Community groups had largely returned to using facilities.
- The increase in use of e-books had continued after reopening.
- Engagement was good on children's programmes.

In response to Members' questions, it was noted that:

- The DWP work coach sessions were delivered in 8 facilities, explaining the 6% response in the survey.
- Libraries staff could support customers with issues accessing IT, staff had a crib sheet for regular issues.

- Survey results were available for each individual facility to see where they could make changes.

AGREED:

- That the Commission requests that comments made by Commission Members be taken into account by Service Officers.

25. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair noted that any suggestions for future items should be emailed to himself or the Scrutiny Policy Officer.

26. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.