

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 30 JANUARY 2025 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Cassidy - Chair

Councillor Kitterick  
Councillor O'Neill  
Councillor Porter  
Councillor Westley

Councillor March  
Councillor Osman  
Councillor Waddington

In Attendance

City Mayor – Sir Peter Soulsby  
Deputy City Mayor - Councillor Cutkelvin  
Assistant City Mayor - Councillor Sood (online)  
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**87. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rae Bhatia with Councillor Westley attending as substitute for Councillor Rae Bhatia.

Apologies would also be received from Cllr Adatia, he would join online.  
Apologies would also be received from Cllr Pickering, she would join online.

**88. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed.

Councillor March raised that she had an ongoing interest in the issue of Council Tax Support should the issue be raised in the meeting.

**98. REVENUE BUDGET 2025/26**

The Director of Finance submitted the Draft Revenue Budget 2025/26 which would be considered by Council on 19th February 2025.

The Overview Select Committee was recommended to consider the report, and the comments made by the Scrutiny Commissions, and to pass its comments on these to the meeting of Council for consideration.

The City Mayor introduced the item and noted the following:

- Since the report was published, news had been received that the government had been able to provide some support for Local Authorities, such as Leicester City Council, who were in precarious financial situations.
- Some Local Authorities had not received such support as it had been aimed at those in the most desperate circumstances who were dealing with rising demands in areas such as social care and homelessness.
- This support would enable the Council to avoid the necessity of asking the government of a Capitalisation Directive as described in the initial report which would have asked to sell assets in order to boost short term revenue.
- The support was tailored in such a way that there would be enough support to avoid a Capitalisation Directive but would not allow Councils to avoid making difficult decisions as reductions in the budget would still be needed.

The Commission were invited to ask questions and make comments for the officers and the executive to respond. Key points included:

- Queries were raised on the assets that would be disposed of.
- With regard to further questions about assets and a request for information on the value of corporate assets in terms of income generation, it was agreed that the Corporate Estate report could be circulated to members.
- It was clarified that the Council would no longer need to seek the emergency package of asking the government for permission to sell assets to fund revenue for the period covered in the report.
- It was clarified that officers regularly sold assets. It was agreed a regular report would be bought on the sale of assets to OSC.
- In response to questions about the original strategy, it was explained that the government support did not change other aspects of the budget strategy.
- In response to queries raised about the risk of a Section 114 notice, it was the understanding of the City Mayor that as long as the Council proceeded with a reduction in overall spend, a Section 114 notice could be avoided in the immediate future, however, the budget would need to be reduced. It was further clarified that within the three-year forecast, a Section 114 notice was not anticipated but there was still an underlying budget gap.
- With regard to a query about monies from the government support earmarked for Children's Services, it was clarified that his was to help with increasing demand. It was agreed further detail on Social Care Prevention Grant could be circulated to members.
- Issues were raised around adventure playgrounds:
  - Concern was raised that detail was not included regarding the parachute payment to adventure playgrounds and there was

keenness for the playgrounds to be protected and their staff to avoid redundancy.

- Further concern was raised that six months of funding was not sufficient for further funding solutions to be found.
- In response to this, it was anticipated that funding would cease halfway through the year, this was an extension on the originally planned funding.
- It was thought that Leicester was one of the few local authorities that continued to support adventure playgrounds.
- It was thought that other organisations would want the opportunity to step in to provide open-access play.
- Concerns around continuation were understood, and members would be engaged with on this in the weeks ahead.
- The revenue budget did not pre-judge a decision on this. The pressure to reduce spend was present, but the specifics would require a separate decision.
- The procedure for issuing decisions was explained.
- It was requested that the City Mayor look at how the Council can provide longer term funding for adventure playgrounds and to make a decision on the matter as soon as possible to help to avoid uncertainty.
- It was understood that a speedy decision would be welcome.
- It was suggested that if the Council was in a different situation with the budget, then this issue should be thought about again.
- It was suggested that in the past the Council had been able to avoid closure of facilities in similar situations. It was further suggested that funding for the playgrounds was a small part of Council spending.
- It was suggested that the adventure playgrounds were a unique aspect of the city that made it special. However, statutory frameworks did not account for it, so it would be under pressure. It was requested that this pressure be relieved.
- With regards to the reserves held by the organisations, it was noted that some would be better off than others and that in some cases, the money left in reserves was needed to pay for redundancies as they had been advised to make.
- It was suggested that external funding, such as Lottery funding, was unpredictable.
- It was noted that adventure playgrounds improved the lives of children.
- It was suggested that a working party could look at this issue.

#### AGREED:

- 1) That the recommendations for Full Council be noted by the committee.
- 2) That the comments of the Scrutiny Commissions be noted by the committee.

- 3) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account by the lead officers; and
- 4) That the City Mayor look at how the Council can provide longer term funding for adventure playgrounds and to make a decision on the matter as soon as possible.

*Councillor Westley left the meeting during the discussion of this item.*