



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CULTURE AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2025 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Mohammed Vice-Chair-in-the-Chair

Councillor Aldred

Councillor Haq

Councillor Singh Johal

Councillor Modhwadia

In Attendance:

Deputy City Mayor Councillor Cutkelvin
Assistant City Mayor Councillor Dempster (online)

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111. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Halford.

Apologies were received from Cllr Joshi – Cllr Modhwadia substituted.

Apologies were received from Cllr Chauhan – Cllr Gopal substituted.

112. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

There were no declarations of interest.

113. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Culture and Neighbourhoods

Scrutiny Commission held on 15 January 2025 be confirmed as a correct record.

114. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Vice-Chair in the Chair noted that the Chair had now joined the executive and would no longer Chair the Commission. The Vice Chair would Chair the meetings until the end of the municipal year.

The Chair noted that members of Economic Development, Transport and Climate Emergency Scrutiny Commission had been invited to the meeting to help with the discussion on the item on Project Harmony and Public Space Protection Order Updates, as the topic was relevant to their Commission.

115. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

116. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

117. PROJECT HARMONY AND PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER UPDATES

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services and The Head of Safer Communities presented a report to provide the Scrutiny Commission with updates and an overview on the work of Project Harmony.

Members of the Economic Development, Transport and Climate Emergency Scrutiny Commission had been invited to the meeting to assist with the discussion of the item.

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services and noted that the report looked at what was being done to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in the city centre.

The Service Manager for Safer Communities presented the report.

Key points other than those on the slide (attached with the agenda pack) included:

- A partnership approach was taken.
- Significant patch walks took place, looking to disrupt ASB where possible. An example of this was an encampment that had been covered in graffiti and waste. This had been cleared up and the people involved had been engaged with and given support from different

agencies.

- An incremental approach was taken. It was aimed to work with individuals on a trauma-support basis, signposting to services where possible.
- Legal proceedings for injunctions for aggressive beggars were underway.
- The Community Safety Partnership Bus was used for events where staff would engage with people, distributing leaflets and advice, both in estates and in the city centre.
- Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) were a power the Council had under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, aimed at protecting people from ASB in public spaces. It aimed to restrict activities associated with ASB by issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) of £100. If these were then breached and a prosecution was made, this could go up to a £1000 fine.
- Consultations had taken place regarding: Loitering, begging, charity and subscription collectors, e-scooters, alcohol, loudspeakers and temporary structures. The results had been collated and the implementation phase was commencing. Signage was being put up ready for enforcement.
- The Steet Lifestyle Operational Group (SLOG) discussed problem individuals and how they could be supported.

The Deputy City Mayor for Housing, Economy and Neighbourhoods added that the PSPOs were a good step forward, but further consultation would be necessary on other parts of the city in order to avoid displacement from the city centre. The scheme needed to be joined up with partners such as the Police. Further to this it was acknowledged that this was a difficult space to work in, however it was good that the approach was trauma-informed as the people dealt with were vulnerable, with potential issues such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Therefore, it was necessary to take people's circumstances into account and protect public safety at the same time.

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services added:

- Patch walks took place around once a month with up to thirteen officers, including partners.
- With all interventions, when taking an incremental approach, it was necessary to understand issues. As such, the Homelessness team were often the first point of contact. Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) partners were also involved.
- The steps up the incremental approach could happen quickly. Where it was right to move on people perpetrating ASB, it was necessary to deal it there and then.
- There had been some recent good results. Encampments around Churchgate had been approached firstly by the Homelessness Team and then by the Community Safety Team. This had then been followed up by the City Warden who had moved these people on with permission

from the manager of a nearby bank. This was then followed up by Community Safety and the Police. Cleansing Services had then cleaned the area. This was an example of effective action that happened regularly.

- Not every encampment could be dealt with as it happened. A trauma approach was necessary as there was a need to understand who these people were and why they were there. Sometimes they were allowed to remain so that support could be given to get them back into society.

The Committee were invited to ask questions and make comments. Key points included:

- All enquiries to Community Safety were screened the same day. This was then dealt with either on the day or within five days, depending on the risk involved. The first port of call was the Outreach Team who would see the person involved. If this was in the city centre it would usually be on the same day, if it was on the outskirts of the city, it would usually be the following day. It was necessary to find out if these people had accommodation and the reasons as to why they were on the street. It was also necessary to find out what their needs were and what effect their ASB had on those visiting the area.
- If they refused to move, then the action taken depended on the circumstances as each case was different. If they were in a tent it was classed as an encampment and the incremental approach was taken. If they still refused to move, the next step would be taken.
- There was a strong principle on the homelessness service. Regularly, when people were seen who were rough sleeping, they did not wish to engage with authority. However, these people would not be given up on and multiple attempts were made to engage with them. If enforcement action was necessary, then it would be proceeded towards, however, attempts to engage were made first.
- It could get to a point where an injunction was sought, however, engagement was pursued first, and the desired outcome was to get people into housing. Some people did not engage by choice, and this could result in an injunction. Partners and the Police were worked with effectively to move people on.
- It was understood that bikes and e-scooters were a problem in the city centre. It was understood that a number of e-bikes had illegal modifications, when it reached this stage, it became a police issue.
- Any electric cycle with power over 250W was illegal. Additionally electric bikes needed to be plated as a manufactured product, pedal assisted and equipped with lights. The Police had countered the issue with 'Operation Pedalfast', whereby the City Centre Force had been taking them off the road. A total of 64 had been taken off the road so far this year and had been crushed. Other forces had also taken them off the road. From a Council perspective, the public had been consulted

with and the Council could deal with the ASB aspect of cyclists in the city. If a PSPO was enforced, then the owner of any bike or scooter at the root of ASB in the city could be issued with an FPN. If the FPN was broken, then the case could go to magistrate's court and a £1000 fine could be issued.

- It was for the Police rather than the Council to remove illegal cycles and scooters from the streets. When this was done there could be serious consequences for the owner, such as nullification of road insurance and points on a driving licence.
- Many of these e-bikes were used by delivery riders, and modifications were made to allow faster delivery to make more money. As such, businesses were being engaged with on business ethics to ensure that there was support for the riders in the fast-food industry. It was necessary to persuade businesses that control on e-bikes was good for the city.
- The rules were clear as there were signs in the city to say that such modifications were illegal.
- Part of the issue was that the nature of the high street was changing and as such there were more takeaways in the city centre as it was a strategic location for them. It was hoped that this could be counterbalanced by more housing in the city centre.
- It was acknowledged that stretched police resources made the situation more difficult.
- The situation regarding illegal e-bikes was not unique to Leicester, and a change in legislation would be needed to address this, in part due to the ease of purchasing modification kits.
- With regard to conventional bikes using pavements, work could be done when a PSPO was brought in to ensure that authority was delegated to the right officer. It was hoped to have more powers and staff to work on this. Once illegal vehicles were dealt with, other types of behaviour could be looked at.
- With regard to a query about the possibility of extending the enforcement area east of London Road (e.g. Gotham St and Conduit St) it was suggested that this could be considered as the final order had not yet been written and here was still an opportunity to shape it., however it was noted that the area would need to stop somewhere as many issues would be local and the order could not be pushed out across the city. There had been 95% support for the PSPO, and 56% of respondents suggested there were issues that were similar where they live. As such there would need to be a separate consultation on a second zone.
- In response to a question on how additional officers would be paid for, it was reported that there were vacancies that could be recruited into, and these staff could be given the delegation to enforce PSPO. Officers were trying to be creative with the limited budget.
- Councillors could join on patch walks to help them understand the issues.
- With regard to a query on homelessness, it was explained that the

'Everybody In' campaign during the Covid-19 lockdown had meant that many individuals who had not previously engaged with Council services chose to take part in the scheme. Including those with complex mental health issues and potential drug and alcohol issues. It had then been necessary to find more permanent accommodation for these people and some of these people had not necessarily been ready to live on their own. Work had been conducted on using community assets such as multi-service hubs, additionally, Police and Housing had worked together to tackle localised issues. Work had come to fruition on housing provision and work was being developed for those better suited for temporary accommodation. Work had been seen on a smaller scale whereby people had gone through homelessness and had gone into temporary accommodation before going into permanent accommodation. More housing options were needed to service this. It was aimed to have gone through the process of identifying individuals and getting them into more permanent accommodation. This had come about as a result of the pandemic.

- The concentration of Cuckooing incidents in Thurncourt should not be a problem again. The Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Team) worked well and had prevented offenders from finding new victims.
- The existing set of city wardens and similar roles in place could be trained and provided with PSPO powers.
- Analysis of the implementation of the PSPO could be provided to Scrutiny.
- Consideration would be given to how to publicise that PSPOs are in place and how incidents could be reported.
- In terms of how people could access services online, QR codes were sent out which people could scan and report through. They could also call customer services. Staff at libraries could offer help and support to those who had issues with technology.
- It was necessary to think about local issues and how they could be dealt with and who was the right person to deal with them.
- It was suggested that it was necessary to think about legislative and cultural changes. It was further suggested that more support was needed from the government and the Police. It was also necessary to think about changing demographics.
- A multi-agency approach was needed to tackle issues.

AGREED:

- 1) That the presentation be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken.
- 3) That an update report be brought to Scrutiny.
- 4) That members be provided with analysis of the results.

118. COMMUNITY SERVICES & LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT: ENGAGEMENT REPORTS

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services introduced the report which presented the findings of the needs assessment of the previous year.

Engagement with residents had explored how to best meet their requirements.

Regular engagement was anticipated moving forwards, due to the positive outcomes of this work.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services gave an overview of the report. Key points to note were as follows:

- This was an overview of engagement work over 18 months, incorporating two substantial reports.
- The assessment was scoped around neighbourhood services, buildings and facilities. This included 25 libraries, community centres and multi service centres.
- There was a strong push for communities to be involved in running a local setting.
- Ward funding was not considered in the report, as this had come to scrutiny in the previous year.
- The programme followed a strategic planning approach as laid out on the Government / DCMS website.
- Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act, there was a statutory duty to provide a comprehensive library service. The Local Authority determined how to best develop this provision.
- The main public facing engagement work had taken place between July and September 2023, this was the initial primary research and public engagement.
- The engagement and secondary research reports were published in October 2024.
- Consultation on transformation proposals was planned for the first half of 2025.
- Engagement had been scoped to explore 4 considerations:
 - Where greatest needs were within the city and how these mapped to current service provision.
 - How people were using community services and libraries.
 - What residents thought about future Neighbourhood Services needs.
 - Models and good practice.
- There was a significant response to the engagement work which included a public engagement survey, a children's version of the survey, 12 focus groups and stakeholder interviews.
- Representation had been positive with engagement from all communities. More women had responded than men, the largest group respondents by age were in the over 65 age group. A separate survey

for children and young people under 16 showed respondents spoke multiple languages, with English being the most frequently spoken language (92%), then Gujarati (60%). Many spoke more than one language.

- The greatest concerns raised by residents were cost of living, physical health and mental health.
- When asked what residents wished to change for their future, responses included wanting to become more physically active and to meet more people.
- The post-Covid impact on physical and mental health was noted. Library and community centres were well placed to support in this.
- Residents felt the most important things on offer at libraries were books, digital services, social space, advice / information, children's and family activities.
- At community centres people wanted to attend community groups, to meet people and experience events.
- People most needed health and well-being support from the centres and libraries.
- It was evident that residents perceived libraries as being much more than books and reading. A high value was placed on Core Universal Offers and Children's provision, for example school holiday activities were in high demand.
- Regarding models and good practice, respondents thought the council should explore multi-service centres, involving community organisations more in running services, and reviewing opening hours to match peak demands.
- Secondary research was based on service and benchmarking data.
- Neighbourhood Service Centres were broadly based in the areas of greater disadvantage within the city according to mapping should the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.
- In terms of demographics, there were more female library users than male. Children and young people aged 0 – 19yrs were disproportionately high users of libraries, with people returning to use the libraries when they had families.
- Trends since lockdown showed a strong usage recovery over last 4 years.
- Patterns of use had changed with the public tending to bring their own devices to use within the facilities, and far fewer using the public access computers.
- There was a significant and consistent growth in usage of e-resources.
- Residents were well served in terms of facilities. Access to libraries and community centres with 30 minutes bus or 20 minutes walk was very good.
- National benchmarking showed that there were more library service points for Leicester than most other "near neighbour" local authorities. Leicester had the highest opening hours of all comparator local

authorities.

- Regarding Community Centres, many neighbouring local authorities were no longer directly running community centres.
- The Central Library tended to be used by residents from across the whole of the city.

The Chair invited questions from the commission, Responses to note were as follows:

- The review had not currently resulted in the creation of specific targets. The needs assessment had shown areas of higher need in the city and the services people needed most from libraries and community centres. Upcoming proposals would be based on this work after wider consultation.
- Footfall was measured electronically. When comparing centres, it was necessary to bear in mind that some were multi-use centres and opening times differed.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That future proposals be brought to scrutiny.

119. WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was noted.

120. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no further items of urgent business, the meeting finished at 7:07pm.