



Leicester
City Council

MINUTE EXTRACT

Minutes of the Meeting of the
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT SCRUTINY
COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2014 at 5.30pm.

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Cutkelvin (Chair)
Councillor Gugnani (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Bhatti
Councillor Corral
Councillor Grant

Councillor Cleaver
Councillor Desai
Councillor Naylor

Also present:

Councillor Russell – Assistant City Mayor (Neighbourhood Services)
Councillor Sood – Assistant City Mayor (Community Involvement, Partnerships and
Equalities)

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87. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

88. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Gugnani declared an Other Disclosable Interest in that he was secretary of the Leicester Council of Faiths.

Councillor Sood also declared an Other Disclosable Interest in that she was Chair of the Leicester Council of Faiths.

92. GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2014/15 TO 2015/16

The Director of Culture and Neighbourhood Services and the Director of Environmental Services submitted a report that requested the scrutiny commission to consider the draft budget proposals for 2014/15 to 2015/16.

Members heard that the budget approved in February 2013 had included a managed reserve strategy, which was designed to help balance the budget in future years. Councillor Russell, Assistant City Mayor for Neighbourhood Services explained that the managed reserves were in place to help manage the process when deeper cuts were required. There would be further savings to make and these could be taken a step at a time by the managed reviews.

Members raised various questions relating to the budget which were answered by officers and the Assistant Mayor. The following comments were made:

- How certain could people be about the cuts that were forecast going forward after this current budget, and how did the strategy support these?
- Strong concerns were expressed at the level of cuts that were necessary because of the government spending cuts and at how they would affect some of the most deprived families in the city.
- There was a concern that there might be an increase in charges for current services delivered through the Neighbourhood Services Portfolio to cover the budget savings. It was hoped that this could be avoided.

The Assistant Mayor explained that she had considered the charges within the Neighbourhood Services portfolio; there had been small increases in some of the services charges, such as libraries and the green waste scheme, whilst trying to ensure that the universal services such as rat control remained free of charge. There was a fine balance between increasing service charges to offset the need for further reductions and raising them to a level which might prevent people from using the service altogether.

- It was recognised that a lot of the savings in the portfolio had already been accomplished.
- Concerns were expressed that the details relating to the planned reviews were as yet unclear.

The Assistant Mayor responded that the scale of the cuts required were such that it was not possible to make all the savings at the same time. Managed reviews with consultation were needed so that the reviews could be tackled in an engaged way. The reviews were listed in the report, details would be brought to scrutiny and members would have an opportunity to make suggestions. Concern was expressed from a member of the commission that the only vote that members had was at

the budget debate at council. The Assistant Mayor responded that all member views were taken into account. She noted that because of the spending cuts, it might be necessary to make changes to the budget during the course of the year.

The Chair raised a query that there was no reference in the budget to the Infrastructure Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Ward Community Meetings and asked that they be included in the budget in future.

The Chair concluded the discussion and commented that the steps taken in managing the reserves and not only addressing the budget once a year was a sensible approach in light of the scale of the spending cuts that were necessary.

The reviews that the commission were most concerned about related to the Infrastructure Voluntary and Community Sector and Transforming Neighbourhood Services Review (TNSR) and the commission would continue to monitor those through update reports.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the commission note the report;
- 2) that the commission consider that the approach taken relating to managed reviews and in year budgeting to be wise and sensible;
- 3) that future reports on the budget include costs relating to the Community Involvement portfolio; including both the Infrastructure VCS and Community Ward Funds, and
- 4) that the commission continue to receive reports relating to the VCS and TNSR.

98. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm