



Leicester  
City Council

MINUTE EXTRACT

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2014 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Dawood (Chair)  
Councillor Singh (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Cooke	Councillor Cutkelvin
Councillor Grant	Councillor Kitterick
Councillor Dr Moore	Councillor Newcombe
Councillor Porter	Councillor Waddington
Councillor Westley	Councillor Willmott

Councillor Clarke

Also present:

Sir Peter Soulsby	City Mayor
Councillor Rory Palmer	Deputy City Mayor

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**118. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Thomas and Councillor Osman. Councillor Clarke was Councillor Osman's Substitute for the meeting.

**119. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any interests they might have in the business on the agenda. No declarations of interest were made.

**129. GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2014/15 - 2015/16**

The Director of Finance submitted a report which detailed the City Mayor's draft proposed budget for 2014/15 to 2015/16. The City Mayor presented the report and explained that the budget was a reflection of the scale of the funding cuts. Service reductions were not proposed in the budget, but would arise from a series of spending reviews. These reviews would include engagement and consultation with service users, ward councillors and stakeholders.

The committee gave due consideration to the report and the following comments were made:

- Strong concerns were expressed at the level of funding cuts that were being faced by the council as a result of the reductions in the Government Revenue Support Grant.
- A suggestion was made that all sectors should be required to make 2% efficiency savings as an alternative to the planned spending reviews.

The City Mayor responded that taking a percentage approach to making funding cuts was in effect a crude way of dealing with sensitive issues, would require far more than 2%, and that a process of spending reviews with engagement and consultation was a preferable option.

- It was noted in the report that strategic directors had the authority to make virements and it was questioned as to how these were monitored and reported.

The City Mayor explained that virements were detailed in every quarterly budget report to the committee and were therefore open to questions and scrutiny.

- A member of the committee raised a query in relation to the cumulative budget cuts and it was agreed that the Director of Finance would brief the member outside of the meeting.
- A comment was made that the spending review process was a way of dealing with the budget cuts that provided time for the budget to be considered carefully, but there were dangers of delays and slippage with that approach.
- A query was raised as to the process when a scrutiny commission disagreed with the executive over the recommendations of a spending review. In such circumstances, it was suggested that the proposals be brought to the Overview Select Committee to allow members to re-examine the issue.

The City Mayor responded that the executive were sympathetic to the differences in opinions between scrutiny and the executive and there

were protocols in place for such eventualities.

- The meeting was asked to note that the Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission had considered the costs of adventure playgrounds and had put forward suggestions as to how efficiency savings could be made.

The City Mayor responded that the suggestions put forward could be explored.

- A comment was made that the government had offered increased funding to councils where they agreed not to increase council tax. The City Mayor was questioned as to whether he thought the council should have accepted these offers.

The City Mayor replied that these offers had generally been time limited. They had not been accepted because they would have led to a permanent loss of income.

The Vice Chair proposed the following resolution:

- 1) that the General Fund Budget proposals for 2014/15 to 2015/16 be noted pending the additions as per para 3.1 of the report;
- 2) that the Overview Select Committee express serious concerns at the level of cuts facing service sectors as a direct result of the loss of the Government Revenue Support Grant;
- 3) that the Overview Select Committee will continue to monitor the outcomes of the current and future Council Spending Review Programme and request the City Mayor to work with the relevant service scrutiny commissions as part of the consultation process.

Councillor Willmott moved that in addition to the above, a process should be established for resolving differences between scrutiny and the executive.

Councillor Waddington seconded the proposals and upon being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the General Fund Budget proposals for 2014/15 to 2015/16 be noted pending the additions as per para 3.1 of the report;
- 2) that the Overview Select Committee express serious concerns at the level of cuts facing service sectors as a direct result of the loss of the Government Revenue Support Grant;

- 3) that the Overview Select Committee will continue to monitor the outcomes of the current and future Council Spending Review Programme and request the City Mayor to work with the relevant service scrutiny commissions as part of the consultation process.
- 4) that the Overview Select Committee request that a process be established for resolving differences between scrutiny commissions and the executive.