



Leicester  
City Council

**DRAFT MINUTE EXTRACT**

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

Held: MONDAY, 9 MARCH 2015 at 5:30 pm

**P R E S E N T :**

**Councillor Singh (Chair)**

Councillor Dr Chowdhury  
Councillor Waddington

**In Attendance:**

Councillor Russell, Assistant City Mayor - Neighbourhood Services

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**44. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bhatti, Corrall and Desai.

Apologies for absence due to other Council business were received from Councillor Gugnani.

Apologies for absence also were received from Councillor Sood, Assistant Mayor (Community Involvement, Partnerships and Equalities) as, although not a member of the Commission, she normally attended its meetings.

**45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Dr Chowdhury declared an Other Disclosable Interest in agenda item 7, "Working with the City's Voluntary and Community Sector to Support Engagement with Communities – Update", as he worked for a voluntary organisation that was a lead organisation in the delivery of a project discussed in the report. In addition, he was a director of the Council for Voluntary Services along with the Chief Executive of The Race Equality Council.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, these interests were not

considered so significant that they were likely to prejudice Councillor Dr Chowdhury's judgement of the public interest. He was not, therefore, required to withdraw from the meeting.

#### **54. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

##### **Executive Decision: Spending Review Programme – Welfare Advice Service**

The Chair submitted this item as urgent business, in accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rule 14, (Part 4E of the Council's Constitution), in order to undertake scrutiny of the issues arising from proposals approved by the City Mayor to achieve savings of £0.2 million per year from a review of the in-house welfare rights service, as part of the Council's spending review programme, before the service review started.

In addition, this decision had been taken on 6 March 2015, so the deadline for calling it in if needed was 13 March 2015. The issues therefore needed to be considered by 13 March, in case Members wished to call-in the decision.

The Chair verbally reminded the Commission that there had been unprecedented cuts to welfare benefits and that Universal Credit soon would be introduced nationally. He therefore felt that the decision to seek savings from the in-house welfare rights service needed to be scrutinised.

Councillor Russell, (Assistant Mayor with responsibility for Neighbourhood Services), advised the Commission that this decision had been taken in order to:-

- a) remove the duplication of work, as the Citizens Advice Bureau held the contract for the provision of welfare advice within the city and this had resulted in senior Council officers operating a "triage" service to signpost people to relevant commissioned advice services; and
- b) ensure that the most appropriate services were available in the community.

This decision had been made by the City Mayor, due to its cross-service nature.

Councillor Russell stressed that this decision related to advice services provided directly by the Council, not to the wider advice options available in the city. The Council worked closely with the providers of the wider services, but these were not being considered under this decision.

Councillor Russell offered to discuss with the City Mayor the possibility of scrutiny of the decision being undertaken, but stressed that it was the Commission's responsibility to determine what it wished to scrutinise. Scrutiny of reviews such as this was welcome, due to the additional value it could bring to decisions.

RESOLVED:

That the Assistant Mayor with responsibility for Neighbourhood Services be asked to discuss with the City Mayor the possibility of scrutiny being undertaken of the decision taken on 6 March 2015 regarding proposals to achieve savings of £0.2 million per year from a review of the in-house welfare rights service, should a request for such scrutiny be received.