



Leicester
City Council

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

Held: WEDNESDAY, 22 MARCH 2017 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Cutkelvin (Chair)
Councillor Gugnani (Vice Chair)

Councillor Dr Chowdhury Councillor Halford
Councillor Fonseca Councillor Hunter

In Attendance

Councillor Master, Assistant City Mayor - Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Sood, Assistant City Mayor - Communities & Equalities
Councillor Waddington, Assistant City Mayor - Jobs & Skills

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78. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Aldred.

79. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Gugnani declared an Other Disclosable Interest in agenda item 9, "Community Involvement Update Report", as he was Secretary of the Leicester Council of Faiths.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the interest was not considered so significant that it was likely to prejudice Councillor Gugnani's judgement of the public interest. He was not, therefore, required to withdraw from the meeting.

80. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission held on 25 January 2017 be confirmed as a correct record

81. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING

a) Community Asset Transfer Update

The Head of Neighbourhood Services provided an update on information available on the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy, in particular on the criteria used against which an organisation's suitability for Community Asset Transfer was considered.

It was suggested that a further update be provided at a future Commission meeting as the information was valuable to Members when discussing the issue with community groups.

b) Public Spaces Protection Order

The Head of Community Safety had been asked to provide Members with details of the local demographics of users of new psychoactive substances. As an update, it was reported that the collection of this data was continuing.

82. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The Chair advised that Caroline Jackson, Head of Revenues and Customer Support, had advised of a need to re-consult on the council tax reduction scheme.

It was noted that the Commission had expressed a desire to contribute and inform the consultation literature for 2017/18 and the communication/publicity plan. It was intended to consult in June and July 2017.

Members Workshops had also been convened on the following dates: 2 May 2017; 3 May 2017; and 9 May 2017. The Chair advised that she would also meet the Assistant Mayor separately from the Workshops to discuss the issue.

In respect of the poor response to the initial consultation, the Assistant City Mayor (Jobs and Skills) welcomed efforts made to increase participation.

The position and update were noted.

83. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

84. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations or statements of case had been received.

The Chair advised that, in view of members of the public present for individual items, and having regard to the attendance of Officers, she would re-order the agenda accordingly:

85. EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF GAMBLING ON VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

The Assistant City Mayor (Jobs and Skills) submitted a report which set out the Executive's response to the recommendations of the scrutiny review of the impact of gambling on vulnerable communities.

The Commission was asked consider and comment on the response.

It was noted that within Leicester there were 268 premises licensed under the Gambling Act and of those 63 were betting shops. The remainder were premises with permits for gaming machines, adult gaming centres and bingo halls. The review was initiated by Councillors concerned about the impact of gambling, and in particular that of B2 machines in Licensed Betting Offices, commonly known as Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTs), on vulnerable individuals and vulnerable communities.

The Scrutiny Commission had published its recommendations in April 2016.

The Assistant City Mayor commented on the considerable amount of work undertaken by Members and officers to formulate the recommendations and advised that this had been noted by Executive members.

It was reported that the Executive had welcomed the report and supported the recommendations therein.

In respect of the need to complete an area profile it was confirmed that meetings with stakeholder groups had been proposed to progress the issue.

In terms of the future consultation and the national impact of the review, it was reported that the findings of the review had been referred to Government and to local MPs. The findings of the review had also been referred to the

Government's All-party Group on Gambling and separately to the Local Government Association (LGA) who had recently begun a consultation on the issue.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked the Vice-Chair for heading the review and noted that the issue would be kept on the Commission's work programme, in order to receive updates. The work in support of the LGA, giving the report national attention, was particularly welcomed by the Chair.

AGREED:

that the report of the Assistant City Mayor (Jobs and Skills) and the decision of the Executive to support the findings of the review be received and welcomed.

86. CHANNEL SHIFT PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance submitted a report on the channel shift programme.

The report provided an update to the Commission specifically covering:

- Background and context for the programme
- Future programme management and delivery
- Progress in relation to the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system
- Self-service offer in neighbourhoods
- Channel shift across the Council

The Commission was recommended to review and comment on the report and to identify any issues arising from the work of the officer Task Group which could be appropriate for consideration as part of the channel shift programme.

The Assistant City Mayor (Neighbourhood Services) commented on the report and referred to the content in regard to the future programme management and delivery. He asked the Commission to note that the Head of Revenues and Customer Support, Caroline Jackson, had stepped down from managing the programme due to the wider demands of her Head of Service role.

It was reported that there were two Senior Project Managers who were reporting for an interim period to the Director of Delivery Communications and Political Governance on this programme. The intention was to appoint a Programme Manager to take the programme forward.

The Chair, Assistant City Mayor (Neighbourhood Services) and members noted the update and requested that their thanks and appreciated to Caroline Jackson be recorded.

In terms of the ongoing programme and the effectiveness of channel shift across the Council clarity was sought on the current 'live projects' and in particular to the telephony 'hard stops'. In response to questions, the Director

advised that a deliberate view was being taken to redirect customers to online services.

It was confirmed that the approach was being implemented with sensitivity and the Chair advised that a sensible and pragmatic approach would be required for many enquiries that were to be redirected, as some more complex issues could be better explained and dealt with by telephone in the first instance.

In respect of the publicity arrangements and promotion it was suggested that information on how to use the revised systems could be provided at future Ward Community meetings. Information could also be made available to members on a 'post-card' to explain the process to constituents.

The use of email signatures and the LoveLeicester app to promote the revised service information were also discussed. It was noted that the suitability of these proposals could be discussed further by the officer Task Group.

The need to ensure the availability of public access to services at community centres was debated, and it was a concern that there were currently no appropriate locations in the east of the city to allow access to a multiservice hub. The requirement to maintain links to the ongoing Transforming Neighbourhoods initiatives was noted in this regard.

In response to a question from the Vice-Chair, the Director referred to the equalities implications of non-English speaking residents accessing services and advised of the efforts undertaken to ensure that the services were inclusive.

In terms of the direct dial phones and use of self-service kiosks, that had been introduced and promoted previously, it was confirmed that the systems would be reviewed so as to not compromise or conflict with the current proposals.

The ease of setting and resetting passwords would also be reviewed, as it was reported that this had caused some users difficulties in accessing services. The effectiveness of the Wi-Fi and other internet access problems at some Council locations was raised and noted, together with issues concerning security and cybercrime.

In conclusion, the Chair advised that as the channel shift programme affected the whole of the Council, the report would also be submitted to Overview Select Committee and to separate Scrutiny Commissions to obtain an overview of the broader issues and to develop the future work stream.

The channel shift programme would also remain on the Commission's work programme and would be updated in due course, particularly concerning the consideration of the harder launch of the programme.

AGREED:

that the position and update be noted.

87. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT UPDATE REPORT

The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services submitted a report which outlined the services and activities involved in the delivery of community engagement over the past decade. The report also outlined the current support for community engagement particularly with regard to the Neighbourhood Services section.

The Commission was asked to note the historical information supplied and to provide comment on the community engagement activity currently promoted through Neighbourhood Services and other activity promoted through a wide range of Council services.

The content of the report was noted and in terms of the next steps it was considered by Members that the Ward Community and Engagement Officers had been well received across the city. The role would continue to support ward councillors and community engagement through ward events, working with partners on ward issues and administration of the ward fund.

The Assistant City Mayor (Communities and Equalities) thanked officers for the comprehensive report and referred to the ward community funds process that had been very successful in supporting communities, making particular reference to the revised decision making procedures and to the fast-track initiative.

In response to a question the Assistant City Mayor (Neighbourhood Services) advised that the level of funding to each ward could be sustained for the next municipal year and would continue for the foreseeable future.

It was reported that the Council would continue to develop partnerships with other organisations to maximise the impact of community engagement work. It was reported that as a component part of Transforming Neighbourhood Services, further engagement work and proposals for a detailed contact list of stakeholders and community groups in all wards across the city was being established, together with proposals to continue to align local community engagement initiatives with developing national policy.

In response to questions concerning use of premises by community groups, it was clarified that the community asset transfer policies had achieved different outcomes for certain buildings and remained a 'work in progress'. It was confirmed that the use of individual buildings could be reviewed to ensure this was in line with the lease terms where concerns were expressed by Members.

In conclusion the Chair advised that the issue would remain on the work programme and be reported to the Commission as an update in due course.

AGREED:

That the report and update be noted.

88. UPDATE ON THE TASK GROUP REVIEW "GETTING THE BEST OUT OF OUR SERVICES IN NEIGHBOURHOODS"

The Chair gave a verbal update on progress with the Task Group Review "Getting the Best out of Our Services in Neighbourhoods".

The Commission was advised of a number of site visits undertaken and to the ongoing work to collate findings and to identify emerging themes.

AGREED:

That the update be noted.

89. SPENDING REVIEWS

The Director of Neighbourhood Services; Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance; and the Director of Finance circulated an update on the spending reviews of services within the Commission's portfolio and not considered elsewhere on the agenda.

AGREED:

That the update be received and noted.

90. WORK PROGRAMME

The Commission's work programme was submitted for information and comment.

It was noted that the content would be refreshed for the 2017/18 municipal year.

AGREED:

That the work programme be noted.

91. CHAIR'S THANKS

Before closing the meeting, the Chair commented that it was the last scheduled meeting of the Commission for the 2016/17 municipal year. She thanked officers and Members for their support and contribution to the work of the Commission during 2016/17.

92. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm.

