



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2018 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Singh (Chair)
Councillor Govind (Vice Chair)

Councillor Bajaj
Councillor Cleaver
Councillor Cutkelvin

Councillor Dawood
Councillor Khote
Councillor Porter

Councillor Westley

Also present:

Sir Peter Soulsby
Cllr Danny Myers

City Mayor
Assistant City Mayor, Entrepreneurial
Councils' Agenda

Youth Council Representatives

Gary Concepcion
Dev Sharma

* * * * *

50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Gugnani.

The meeting was informed that Councillor Dawood would be late.

A warm welcome was given to a representative of the Young People's Council.
A second representative arrived during the course of the meeting.

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

52. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair referred to Brexit and said that he would want a report brought to the Overview Select Committee on the Council's position, once a conclusion had been reached.

53. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview Select Committee held 1 November 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

54. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING

The Chair reported that there were no outstanding actions.

55. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that there were no questions, representations or statements of case.

56. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

57. TRACKING OF PETITIONS - MONITORING REPORT

The Chair commented that the current status of all petitions was either 'Green' or 'Amber' which he said was a very good position to be in.

AGREED:

that the Tracking of Petitions Monitoring Report be noted

58. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

Councillor Porter asked how the City Mayor could justify spending money on illuminating empty buildings when according to his own Councillors in the Labour Group, vulnerable families in Leicester were having to choose between heating their homes or feeding their families. He asked why the money was not being given to those vulnerable families instead.

The City Mayor explained that there was a difference between capital and revenue expenditure. Expenditure on the lighting of buildings was mostly capital expenditure and part of the investment that was being made to ensure that Leicester remained proud of its heritage. The people of Leicester were suffering from very severe funding cuts from the current and the previous government and those cuts were far in excess of the small amounts spent on celebrating the historic environment of the City.

Councillor Porter referred again to poor and vulnerable families who had to choose between heating their homes or eating and asked how the City Mayor could justify granting £150k towards a private landlord for premises which had been turned into a restaurant. He asked whether it would not have been preferable to use tax payers' money towards helping those vulnerable families.

The City Mayor re-iterated that there was a difference between revenue and capital money. Capital funding had resulted in inward investment far in excess of the initial investment and had brought jobs and wealth into the city. Capital funds could not be used for the provision of revenue services or to provide direct support to vulnerable families. The City Mayor added that he would not comment on the particular investment that Councillor Porter had referred to because that decision had been made by others and not himself.

A representative from the Youth Council asked whether the City Mayor would support increased representation from Young People, although he recognised that considerable participation already took place. The City Mayor welcomed the question and stated that the Council would like to give young people more opportunities to participate and they wanted to ensure that their voice was heard. Any suggestions from young people as to how their participation could be increased would be very welcome.

59. REVISED JOINT HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

Councillor Porter left the meeting during the consideration of this item of business.

The Acting Director of Public Health submitted a report that presented the draft Revised Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2024. The Committee heard that there was a focus in the report on preventative work and the report had been well received at the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission.

Members considered the report and comments made included the following:

- The report was welcomed, however more smoking cessation sessions were needed in Beaumont Leys and the NHS appeared to be cutting back on them.

The Acting Director responded that smoking cessation was one of key areas where Public Health could improve people's health and they were looking to offer services in more convenient places such as in Haymarket Health. A concern was raised that such sessions were needed in the areas where people lived as not everyone could come into the city centre.

- A Member said that air quality in Leicester did not appear to have improved and questioned whether the Council could encourage increased use of electric vehicles and for example allow them to use bus lanes and give drivers of electric vehicles free parking. The Acting Director responded that air quality was a national and local issue. They were working with Sustrans and trying to encourage people to cycle and walk more. Public Health were

very committed to working towards improving air quality and they were also working with colleagues in Highways and Transport services to do so.

- It was noted that there was a reference to decent homes standards in the report, and concerns were expressed that there were many families living in overcrowded conditions which had a detrimental impact on their health. A request was made that consideration was given to the problem of overcrowding.
- The Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commissions said that health and wellbeing and the prevention agenda cut across all scrutiny portfolios and as such was everyone's responsibility. All the health partners appreciated that the strategy was a very important piece of work.
- The strategy was praised but it was questioned how it would be monitored. The Acting Director confirmed that there was an underlying infrastructure and they would be looking at key indicators as part of the monitoring.
- A representative from the Youth Council referred to some work they were doing on supporting young people in the city and on issues relating to mental health, and he invited the Acting Director to take part as an expert witness. The Acting Director confirmed that he would be very pleased to participate in this work and he added that trying to ensure the right start for all young people was an integral part of the strategy.
- A Member commented that there was a significant increase in drug use and anti-social behaviour in the Beaumont Leys Ward, which was spreading across the city and the Police appeared to be unable to cope. People felt intimidated and were afraid to leave their homes. The Acting Director responded that social isolation and the fear of crime were linked, and the strategy made it clear that everyone needed to work together because all the partners had a role in delivering the health outcomes.

The Chair drew the discussion to a close and asked Members to note the strategy and the dates of the consultation period.

AGREED:

that the Revised Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the dates of the consultation period be noted.

60. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

Councillor Dawood arrived during the consideration of this item of business.

Members received a power point presentation that provided an overview of Leicester City Council's Digital Transformation Programme (DTP), a copy of which had been included in the agenda.

Councillor Myers, Assistant City Mayor for the Entrepreneurial Councils' Agenda introduced the presentation and said that the Council's public on-line

spaces were key to delivering its core responsibilities and one approach towards improving this was through the Digital Transformation Programme. Another approach was through 'Smart Cities' which provided a broader strategy for the whole city and he would be pleased to bring this other strategy to a future meeting of the Overview Select Committee.

The Assistant City Mayor explained that 'Smart Cities' referred to how data was used and how it transformed lives on a day to day basis, for example how people applied for jobs, interacted with each other and commerce etc and also how they moved about the city. The Digital Transformation Programme set out how the council enabled this, through access to its services on-line and how the back office was managed.

The Assistant City Mayor stated that he wanted to tackle digital exclusion because people who were not comfortable 'on-line' could be excluded from a range of social and economic activities. He also said that it was important to encourage interaction on-line, because it could free up capacity to enable officers to hold those important conversations with individuals where they were needed. The Assistant City Mayor referred to on-line channels such as 'My Account' and 'Love Leicester' and invited Members to contact him if they identified any areas which they felt needed to work better.

Members then considered the power point presentation which was presented by the Digital Transformation Lead officer. During the ensuing discussion, comments and queries raised included the following:

- A Member expressed strong concerns about the aim to reduce the percentage of payments made face to face to a base line figure of 33%. She said that a council officer might be the only person that an individual might have an opportunity to speak to. Additionally, when she herself had been unwell, she was unable to carry out on her transactions online. Concerns were expressed about the effect that a reduction in face to face contact would have on individuals. Members heard that the programme would free up officers' time to enable face to face contact with those people who needed it and may be more vulnerable.
- A Member commented that she remembered that some of these issues had been discussed three years ago and it appeared that limited progress had been made. The Member added that she recalled at the time they were told that Leicester was about ten years behind other authorities and she questioned whether this was still the case. It was suggested that it had been a mistake in only having officers present and providing support for two weeks after the self- service machines were put in place. The machines she saw around the city were not being used and she said it would be interesting to see the figures for the numbers of people accessing council services through self-service machines. A doubt was expressed that the figures would be as good as hoped.

The City Mayor responded that the delivery of the programme was a significant piece of work, and while Leicester was not at the fore front of 21st

century technology, it was not at the back either. He invited Members to visit the Customer Service Centre on Granby Street and see the work that was taking place, as the level of support offered to people using self-service machines was excellent and officers were very proactive in helping people.

- It was noted that there were some issues in delivering the digital transformation programme in Sports Services and the City Mayor acknowledged that there was a long way to go to make it truly digital. A Member commented that she recalled about three years ago, that Members at a Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission were told that Sports Services were further ahead in the digital transformation programme than the other services.
- A representative from the Youth Council asked whether consideration would be given to 'mystery shoppers' being given opportunities to test the quality of the digital offer.

The Digital Transformation Lead Officer confirmed that this is what they wanted to do and also for customers to continue to check that the digital offer was customer focussed. The meeting heard that there was an accessibility directive to ensure that the font, colour and background all met certain standards, and this directive was being applied to online forms and the website.

- In response to a question raised about the security of people's data, the Lead Officer explained that robust security checks were applied to the system and they were doing as much as they could to ensure that the system was as safe as possible.
- A Member asked whether more P.C.s would be made available across the city and the Lead Officer responded that they had visited different libraries across the city and noted that some P.C.s were not used as well as they could be. The reason for this was unclear but while they were not looking to increase the number of PCs, they might re-distribute them or see how they could raise awareness or make them more accessible.
- A Member noted that 25% of contacts were on-line or self- service and asked whether applications for school admissions were included in this figure. The Lead Officer responded that she believed the figure related to people requesting a council service and did not include school admissions, but she would check. Members heard that not all forms were yet on line. It could be seen that some users abandoned their on-line enquiry before the transaction was completed and they would be looking at the reasons for this.
- A Member questioned whether the Digital Transformation Programme might create jobs or require fewer members of staff and the Digital Transformation Lead Officer responded that it was a mixture. A lot of councils were offering re-deployment or providing opportunities for people to re-skill if their job became redundant. As an example, someone whose work mostly involved data input could be offered the chance to re-skill as a data analyst.

- In response to a query as to when officers anticipated the programme would end, Members heard that there was no end date because technology was always changing with new initiatives becoming available. Leicester had not modelled their programme on one single local authority but remained alert as to what other cities were doing.
- Officers were asked about the risks involved in the programme and were told that there was a risk that it did not generate the anticipated savings, but the Digital Transformation Board met every 6 – 8 weeks to monitor progress and to provide strategic direction and focus.
- In response to a question about the retention of data, Members heard that there were different statutory requirements as to how long data could be retained depending on the service area.
- Members heard that where people were submitting an online form, there were plans to provide an escalation message, so that if there was a slippage in the stated timescale, a message would be sent to the enquirer and officers would also receive a message to highlight the issue.
- A Member commented that there were many people in her ward who did not speak English and were not confident users of the internet. Officers were asked how these people could be helped. The Digital Transformation Officer replied that the Equalities Team were looking at ways to help people with different needs and they were also looking for volunteers and charities to provide support to people who experienced problems using I.T. There was also an option to use Google Translate for people who had little English. She added that they needed to make more people aware that this facility was available.
- A Member said that she welcomed the term 'Digital Transformation' as opposed to 'Channel Shift' but asked that the reference to 'Developing corporate customer-centric standards' as detailed in the power point presentation under Citizen-focussed approach, be revised in more user-friendly language. The Lead Officer confirmed that she would do this.
- A Member of the Youth Council suggested that the use of alternative technology such as augmented reality could result in savings in staffing costs.
- In response to a question about the budget for the digital transformation programme, the City Mayor explained that there was not a dedicated budget, but it was about using existing budgets differently and that would result in savings in some areas. The programme was on-going however as previously explained and there was therefore no definite figure for expenditure or savings. The Digital Transformation Lead Officer explained that the Government had said that every 10p invested in Digital Transformation would result in £15 return.

The Chair drew the discussion to a close and asked Members to note the update.

AGREED:

that the update on the Digital Transformation Programme be noted.

61. REPORT OF THE FINANCE TASK GROUP

The Chair presented the minutes of the meeting of the Overview Select Committee Finance Task Group held 29 November 2018. The Task Group had met to consider the following four reports:

1. Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – Period 6, 2018/19
2. Capital Budget Monitoring Report – Period 6, 2018/19
3. Mid-Year Review of Treasury Management Activities 2018/19, and
4. Income Collection Report: April 2018- September 2018

The Chair stated that the reports had been vigorously examined by the Task Group and the Director of Finance should be particularly congratulated on the council's borrowing and investment as detailed in the Review of Treasury Management Activities.

The City Mayor referred to the Capital Monitoring Report and stated that an additional £1.158m had been allocated to Leicester to be spent on road maintenance. This information had been received too late to be included in the report considered at the Task Group. Although the additional funding was very welcome, it fell very short of what was needed to repair and maintain the road network. The City Mayor said that it was his intention to ensure that the money was spent on areas of high priority on the city's major transport routes and on the road network in Leicester's neighbourhoods. The City Mayor said that an additional recommendation regarding this would be included in the decision note following its consideration at this meeting.

The Chair of the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission asked the City Mayor whether he could talk to the other City Mayors and agree to write to the Government requesting additional funding for Adult Social Care and Children Services. The City Mayor expressed strong criticisms of the Government's funding in this area and stated that councils were doing their best to manage increasing need with limited funding. The meeting heard that the Secretary of State had been asked when the Adult Social Care Green Paper would be available, and he had responded that it would be available 'soon'. The Director said that at the moment, they had the in-year allocation of additional monies but no certainty of the proposed funding mechanism for Adult Social Care and Children's Services in the long term.

The Chair drew the discussion to a close and asked Members to note the reports.

AGREED:

that the reports be noted.

62. SCRUTINY COMMISSIONS' WORK PROGRAMMES

Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission

The Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission presented the NHS Workforce scoping document and said that the review was being undertaken because the Commission had asked about the risks and challenges that the NHS faced, both locally and nationally, and had consistently been told that the biggest risks were the workforce. The Commission did not yet have an overall view of the number of pressures that the service faced.

The Chair invited Members to endorse the NHS Workforce scoping document.

AGREED:

that the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission NHS Workforce scoping document be endorsed.

Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission

The Chair of the Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission stated that a scoping document was agreed by the Commission earlier in the week and had therefore missed submission to this meeting of the Overview Select Committee. The title of review was 'To explore the reasons for educational underachievement of African heritage pupils and white working-class pupils in Leicester'. The Chair asked if the scoping document could be endorsed in order that work on the review could commence.

The Committee agreed for the scoping document to be endorsed in order that work could commence on the review.

AGREED:

that the scoping document, to explore the reasons for educational underachievement of African heritage pupils and white working - class pupils in Leicester be endorsed.

63. OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview Select Committee Work Programme was noted.

64. PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Chair reminded the Chairs of the different Scrutiny Commissions to regularly check the Plan of Key Decisions and where appropriate to request reports be brought to Scrutiny, prior to decisions being made by the Executive.

65. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

With the permission of the Chair, the Chair of the Adult Social Care Scrutiny

Commission said that she wished to express her thanks for the way officers had responded very promptly to a concern she had raised with them. The concerns had arisen from families who had a child with autism who needed a quiet time to go shopping or to visit Santa. The Chair had thought that it would be too late to put anything in place this year, but the officers had responded very quickly, and extra sessions had been provided which met the needs of those families.

66. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm.