Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: WEDNESDAY, 8 JULY 2026 at 5:30 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor Joel (Chair)
Councillor Dave (Vice Chair)

Councillor Batool
Councillor Kitterick
Councillor March
Councillor O'Neill
Osman
Councillor Porter
Councillor Waddington
Councillor Zaman

Also present:

Sir Peter Soulsby — City Mayor

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## 224. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Halford.

## 225. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to disclose any pecuniary or other interests they may have in the business on the agenda.

Councillor March declared that her employer was named in the Crisis and Resilience Fund report as a funded organisation. She advised that she had taken advice from the Monitoring Officer and that the funding did not relate directly to her post. The Monitoring Officer's advice was that she could remain and participate unless a conflict arose, in which case she would withdraw.

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

No other declarations of interest were made at this point.

## 226. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Porter asked that the minutes be amended to record that the question asked of the City Mayor regarding Newarke Houses Museum had been asked by him, and to reflect the concern raised regarding the risk to the museum if ongoing funding was not maintained.

AGREED:

That the amendment be accepted.
That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2026 be confirmed as a correct record.

## 227. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE 2026/27

The Membership of the Commission was confirmed as follows:

Councillor Ashiedu Joel (Chair)
Councillor Bhupen Dave (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Melissa March
Councillor Misbah Batool
Councillor Sue Waddington
Councillor Elaine Halford
Councillor Syed Zaman
Councillor Molly O'Neil
Councillor Hemant Rae Bhatia
Councillor Abdul Osman
Councillor Nigel Porter
Councillor Patrick Kitterick

## 228. DATES OF MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE 2026/27

The dates of the meetings for the Commission were confirmed as follows:
8th July 2026
9th September 2026
2nd December 2026
11th February 2027
17th March 2027

## 229. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Commission noted the Scrutiny Terms of Reference.

## 230. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING

It was noted that the Committee had been updated via email.

It was requested that future changes to OSC meetings, cancellations, or items moved to briefings be communicated with relevant members.

## 231. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATION AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that four questions have been received:

1. Stephen Ashley asked: Whilst we welcome the opportunity to bid for capital funding, we are disappointed that we are simultaneously required to compete for revenue funding at a significantly reduced level.

   The Councils previous funding arrangements ended in April, leaving the Playgrounds operating in a period of uncertainty whilst awaiting the outcome of a competitive process, that even at its maximum level, provides only a portion of previous funding. During this period, organisations have been expected to continue to deliver essential services, retain experienced staff and reassure children and their families about their future.

   The Council has previously explained that the reductions in support were driven by constraints of the local government funding settlement. Given that the funding from Central Government has since improved, what consideration has been given to providing greater revenue support during the transition period to help safeguard these services and reduce uncertainty for the children, families, staff and trustees, who rely upon them?

   On behalf of Braunstone, Highfields, New Parks, St Andrews and Woodgate Adventure Playgrounds

   - The City Mayor responded that the pressures on local government had affected a wide range of services that the Council had previously been able to support. However, he noted that with the more supportive approach adopted by the current Government, the Council was able to give consideration to important areas such as the adventure playgrounds. He added that the adventure playgrounds had engaged positively with the Council and that support had been identified to address both capital requirements and transitional revenue funding over the next two years, helping them to continue operating and move towards longer-term sustainability.

2. Kevin Sherriff asked: Could the committee explain the rationale for funding pop up playschemes, which have limited indoor/outdoor space and modest user capacity, through HAF and overlooking a full time, open access, children's adventure playground with experienced staff, extensive outdoor play provision, and a dedicated play building which

attracts c120 children per day. The adventure playground is a trusted community service and is especially reliant on voluntary funding (like HAF) to provide holiday playschemes. It has been supporting local children and families for over 50 years including a well-established service offering nutritious food to all users free of charge.

- The City Mayor responded the HAF funding was a government-funded scheme with specific requirements and was not designed solely around the focus of the adventure playgrounds. He noted that the area of Highfields has been delivered by Westley Hall for a number of years and it intended to continue delivering in the coming year. The City Mayor added that the organisation provided a successful and cost-effective structured programme focused on HAF cohorts with consistent attendance and embedded support services.

3. Kevin Sherriff asked: Could colleagues also more clearly explain why HAP was asked and encouraged to apply for HAF funding by officers who recognised HAP's community standing, user reach and quality of service and at a time when HAF targets were reportedly not being sufficiently met. 4. Kevin Sherrif to ask: In the interests of transparency and more clearly understanding the funding criteria, decision making process and roles, is it possible to see the assessment criteria and scoring system used, including HAP's assessment and score and confirmation of the formal grant decision making process and those lead officers/members responsible for decision making.

    - The City Mayor shared that HAP had been encouraged to apply as part of an open and inclusive approach to maximise HAF delivery opportunities and explore how adventure playgrounds could contribute within the Department for Education guidance. However, he emphasised that funding decisions remained based on alignment with HAF requirements, value for money and deliverability.

4. Kevin Sherriff asked: In the interests of transparency and more clearly understanding the funding criteria, decision making process and roles, is it possible to see the assessment criteria and scoring system used, including HAP's assessment and score and confirmation of the formal grant decision making process and those lead officers/members responsible for decision making."

    - The City Mayor advised that Members would not have been involved in that decision and suggested that an FOI request would be the simplest route to obtain the relevant information. The Chair also indicated that officers could be contacted outside the meeting for further discussion

## 232. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reminded Members that robust challenge was an important part of scrutiny, but asked that officers and Members continue to treat each other respectfully when challenging or responding to reports.

## 233. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

## 234. TRACKING OF PETITIONS - MONITORING REPORT

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report which provided an update on the status of outstanding petitions against the Council's target of providing a formal response within three months of being referred to the Divisional Director.

The Committee considered the monitoring report on outstanding petitions. Concern was raised that two petitions had been recorded as having been chased a number of times without an officer response and this delayed responses to petitioners.

The petitions relating to Harrow Road, Westcotes, and neighbourhood conditions in the London Road, Victoria Avenue and Victoria Alley area, Stoneygate were highlighted, and it was requested that the lead councillor/contact details be reviewed and updated where necessary.

It was noted that the column showing whether ward councillors had been consulted was blank and reiterated the importance of ward councillor involvement in petition processes.

The Committee noted that petitions marked as complete could be removed from the monitoring report.

AGREED:

1) The status of outstanding petitions be noted.
2) Petitions marked as process complete be removed from the report.
3) Governance Services and relevant lead officers provide updates outside the meeting on the two red-status petitions where responses had been chased repeatedly.
4) The ward councillor consultation information in the monitoring schedule be completed for future reports.
5) The lead councillor/contact for the Stoneygate petition be reviewed and updated as appropriate.

## 235. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

The Chair invited Members to raise questions for the City Mayor.

The Chair accepted questions to be asked to the City Mayor.

1. The Young People's Council representative asked how young people would be prepared for voting in future elections, particularly with 16-year-olds being able to vote and with social media being a major source of political information.
    - The City Mayor welcomed the lowering of the voting age and stated that schools had a key role in preparing young people for civic participation. Although local authority influence over schools was limited, the Council could encourage schools, provide resources and offer people with knowledge of council and civic processes to speak to young people.

2. Councillor Porter asked about the proposed sale of land on Oxford Street for an electricity substation. He queried what alternative sites had been considered, whether best value had been achieved and the potential impact on nearby residents.
    - The City Mayor stated that substations were necessary in a growing city and that he was advised that the Oxford Street site was the only and best site identified in the relevant part of the city. He noted that some technical questions would be for the promoter, such as National Grid, to answer.

3. Councillor Osman asked about a lack of response to his query regarding environmental budget priorities in Leicester East.
    - The City Mayor asked Councillor Osman to forward the email so that he could chase a response.

4. Councillor Kitterick asked whether the Oxford Street land sale could be delayed or followed by a briefing for Ward Councillors and interested Members, so that issues about siting, design and residential impact could be understood before the planning stage.
    - The City Mayor agreed to facilitate a briefing.

AGREED:

1) The responses be noted.
2) Councillor Osman to forward his email regarding Leicester East environmental budget priorities to the City Mayor for follow-up.
3) A briefing be arranged for ward councillors and interested Members on the proposed Oxford Street substation land sale.

## 236. CRISIS AND RESILIENCE FUND

The Director of Finance submitted a report providing an overview of the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) that replaces the Household Support Fund (HSF).

The Head of Revenues, Benefits and Transactional Finance attended to present the report.

A presentation was given using the slides attached with the agenda pack. Additional points included:

- The Committee was advised that the Crisis and Resilience Fund replaced the Household Support Fund and elements of Discretionary Housing Payments from April 2026.
- The fund provided a longer three-year approach to tackling poverty, combining immediate crisis support with longer-term household resilience.
- The scheme included a single simplified application route for crisis payments, housing payments and council tax discretionary relief. The form was available continuously and applications could be made by residents, council staff, partner organisations, family or friends.
- The Committee was advised that crisis support awards would generally be between £100 and £250, with decisions targeted within 48 hours and payments made by BACS or Post Office PayOut vouchers.

In discussion with members, the following points were raised:

- In response to a query on food bank funding, delays in funding arrangements and whether food banks could continue to apply. It was agreed further detail would be provided outside of the meeting.
- In response to a query regarding the £400k staffing and administration allocation. Officers advised that this represented around 7% of the annual fund and was required to deliver prompt crisis payments, council tax support payments and discretionary housing payment functions.
- With regards to digital exclusion, language barriers and accessibility when completing applications. Officers advised that telephone support, voice-enabled forms, third-party applications, community support, family applications and translation/interpretation routes would be available.
- Members asked how the Council would benchmark outcomes and use the approximately £2m unallocated funding. Officers advised that DWP data and local comparisons would be used, that measurable outcomes would be developed and that proposals would be worked up over the summer period with a focus on longer-term resilience.
- Queries were raised regarding the cap on housing payments, use of discretionary housing support and homelessness prevention. Officers clarified that the CRF housing payment cap did not prevent the Council from considering other support from its own budgets where necessary.
- With regard to Citizens Advice funding, procurement, anti-fraud controls, third-party applications and the Equality Impact Assessment. Officers advised that the Citizens Advice funding was through an extension of an existing contract and that checks and balances were in place to verify applications, supported by counter-fraud oversight.
- Discussion was raised over whether ward-level or smaller-area data would be useful. The City Mayor suggested that MSOA-level data might

be more meaningful than ward data and officers agreed to explore this.

- A question was raised about how young people and families would be made aware of the CRF. Officers referred to social media, council services and third-party organisation and the City Mayor noted the importance of engaging community groups and places of worship for signposting.

AGREED:

1) The report be noted and comments be passed to the Director of Finance and the Executive.
2) A link to the CRF application form be circulated to all Members for signposting purposes.
3) Outcome measures and data on the operation and impact of the CRF be brought back to the Committee in approximately six months.
4) The Director of Finance request a note from the Director of Housing covering the wider housing support available to households, including discretionary housing-related support.
5) Council Tax Support Scheme matters, including the treatment of PIP and discretionary relief, be covered in the councillor briefing already being prepared.
6) The Equality Impact Assessment relating to the Council Tax Support Scheme be re-circulated to Members.
7) Officers explore whether CRF reporting can include useful small-area information, such as MSOA-level data.
8) Officers and the City Mayor consider further promotion of the CRF through community organisations, faith groups and routes accessible to young people and families.

The Chair to seek further advice from the Monitoring Officer on Members' for any future discussion on the Crisis Fund and Resilience Fund, particularly where funding to Citizens Advice or any organisation connected to a Member is discussed.

*Councillor March left the room for during the periods when her employer was being discussed.*

### 237. EXECUTIVE DECISION- REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING OUTTURN 2025/26

The Director of Finance submitted the final report in the monitoring cycle for 2025/26 and reports performance against budget for the year.

The Director of Finance presented the Revenue Budget Monitoring Outturn 2025/26 report to the Commission which was the final report for the monitoring cycle for 2025/26.

Members were advised that the final outturn showed an overall underspend, with the corrected addendum position noted by the Committee.

The main variances continued to relate to social care, vacancies, homelessness, supported accommodation and children's placements.

In discussions with members, the following was noted:

- Queries were raised regarding the reserves for local government reorganisation and the elections reserve. The Director of Finance explained that transition costs and the payback period had been considered in the LGR implementation proposal and that the elections reserve was the normal approach to the cost of local elections.
- Members asked about homelessness pressures and the £45m investment in temporary accommodation. The Director of Finance advised that the overspend would have been significantly higher without that investment and that homelessness remained a national pressure.
- In response to a question regarding the effect of global inflationary pressures, officers advised that contingencies were built into budgets and impacts would continue to be monitored.
- Concern was raised that underspends caused by vacancies could impact service pressures and affect staff wellbeing. The Chair noted that the healthy workplace survey would be included on a future agenda and a member agreed to email suggested detail for inclusion, particularly in areas where there are consistent challenges to fill the posts.
- In response to a question regarding supported accommodation costs exceeding Housing Benefits, the Director of Finance agreed to provide a note confirming the relevant figures.
- Members discussed electric vehicle charging infrastructure and the need to enable residents in terraced housing to charge vehicles safely. The City Mayor agreed to check whether a trial or pilot of pavement-gully style charging was planned and, if not, to encourage such a pilot.
- Issues were raised surrounding the Haymarket Shopping Centre surplus, planning income, the lack of cranes in the city skyline, planning fees, international recruitment and the Early Years and SEND positions and the importance of scrutiny challenge in monitoring budget performance.
- Members raised a point on homelessness costs and the statutory duties owed to different groups. The Chair requested that the question be passed to the Director of Housing and the relevant Executive Lead, with the response copied to OSC Members and the Chair of Housing Scrutiny.

AGREED:

1) The outturn position detailed in the report be noted.
2) Officers provide the supported accommodation funding gap figure.
3) The City Mayor check whether an electric vehicle charging pilot for terraced streets is planned and, if not, encourage one to be undertaken.
4) Councillor March email the Chair and Director of Finance with suggested wording/detail on vacancies and staff wellbeing for the healthy workplace survey item.

## 238. EXECUTIVE DECISION - CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING OUTTURN 2025/26

The Director of Finance submits a report presenting the position of the capital programme for 2025/26 as at the end of March 2026.

It was noted that it had been recommended to carry unspent budget forward to next financial year.

The committee and were invited to raise questions and comments. Key points to note were as follows:

- A question was asked on behalf of a Young People's Council representative regarding funding for upkeep of Youth Centres. Further information was requested on this so that a response could be provided outside of the meeting.
- Information on progress on the Railway Station development would come to members. The government had agreed to allow additional funding to ensure it could be developed in the way originally intended at no additional cost to the Council. The issue could be looked at again in scrutiny.
- A note could be provided giving background on the St Matthews Concrete Works.
- The £60m of asset sales would continue as per the budget approved at Full Council. The money form this was aimed to be invested back into the Capital Programme which would reduce borrowing costs and help with financial sustainability.
- In response to a question about St Paul's Church, it was relayed that the building remained in critical condition, after the company that owned it was dissolved. The Council were currently working closely with The Crown on a procedure that would support potential property transfer. This would need to be completed to establish next steps and clarify potential costs for the council.
- In response to a query on how Local Government Reorganisation would potentially impact projects, it was clarified that transition costs were considered as part of the proposal, including on IT, staffing and systems.

AGREED

1) That the report be noted.
2) That an update on the Railway station to come to a future meeting or briefing.
3) That the Rights and Participation manager to request specific examples of youth centres in need of repair and to enable a City Mayor response.
4) That a note be provided explaining the background to St Matthews residential property concrete works

## 239. INCOME COLLECTION OUTTURN 2025/26

The Director of Finance submitted a report detailing progress made in collecting debts raised by the Council during the year 2025-26, together with debts outstanding and brought forward from the previous year. It also sets out details of debts written off under delegated authority that have not been possible to collect at reasonable effort and expense.

Key points included:

- It was important to encourage households to come forward as soon as possible if they were struggling.
- The majority of debt was collected.
- Debt would continue to be collected after 31st March. People were often on payment plans and the Council would continue to work with them to recover outstanding debt.

The Commission were invited to ask questions and make comments and the officers to respond.

- Clarification was requested on recovery and enforcement options for long-term empty properties.
- A note could be provided on options considered regarding traffic/parking debts, including comparison of outsourced and in-house collection performance.
- The Chair suggested that equalities implications could be more substantial. This could be picked up outside the meeting.

AGREED

1) That the report be noted.
2) That a note be provided on why traffic and parking debt was brought in-house.
3) That equality implications in reports be reviewed.

## 240. REVIEW OF TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES 2025/26

The Director of Finance submitted a report reviewing how the Council conducted
its borrowing and investments during 2025/26.

It was noted that there had been significant borrowing during the year due to the use of reserves.

AGREED

1) That the report be noted.
2) That comments made by members of this commission to be

taken into account by the lead officers

## 241. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

The City Barrister and Head of Standards submitted a report providing a summary of the Scrutiny Annual Report 2025-26.
The Chair presented the report, the following was noted:

- The report highlighted the key achievements of the Overview Select Committee and each of the Scrutiny Commissions, together with some of the priority areas that would continue to be examined during 2026/27.
- The Chair was pleased with the breadth and quality of scrutiny that had taken place over the past year, with Members examining a wide range of issues affecting residents across the city.
- Alongside formal meetings, scrutiny had continued to make good use of task groups, briefing sessions and site visits, allowing Members to explore complex issues in greater depth and make informed recommendations.
- During the year, this included focused work on Community Asset Transfer, Adventure Playgrounds, the Council Tax Support Scheme and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, alongside significant scrutiny of health services, children's services and adult social care.
- It had also been encouraging to see the continued involvement of our Young People's Council representatives and co-producers, helping to ensure that a wide range of voices contribute to the scrutiny process.
- Scrutiny continued to play a vital role in the governance of the Council by providing constructive challenge, supporting policy development and helping to improve services for the people of Leicester.
- Commissions have already identified a strong programme of work for the coming municipal year and would continue to use a variety of approaches to examine issues of significance.
- The Chair thanked colleagues who had served as Chairs throughout the year, together with all Members who had contributed to the work of scrutiny.
- Th Chair thanked the City Mayor and Executive, officers across the Council and our partner organisations for their continued engagement and support throughout the scrutiny process.
- The report would be submitted to Full Council for approval.

AGREED

1) That the report be noted.
2) That the report be considered at Full Council.

## 242. OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme for the Committee was noted.

Members would be contacted regarding the change in date for the briefing on the Council Tax Support Scheme and the Housing Support Scheme.

## 243. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no other items of urgent business, the meeting closed at 8:09pm.