Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2014 at 5:30 pm

PRESENT:
Councillor Dawood (Chair)
Councillor Senior (Vice Chair)
Councillor Chaplin
Councillor Cooke
Councillor Grant
Councillor Kitterick
Councillor Newcombe
Councillor Osman
Councillor Porter
Councillor Singh
Councillor Waddington
Councillor Willmott

Also present:
Sir Peter Soulsby City Mayor
Councillor Palmer Deputy City Mayor
Youth Council Representatives
Faduma Abdi
Arshad Daud

58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clarke and Westley.

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

60. CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair announced a change to the order of the agenda, in that item 13, The
Report of the Finance Task Group would follow item 9, the Corporate Plan of Key Decisions.

61. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair explained that further to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 October 2014, Councillor Porter had requested an amendment to item 49, Questions for the City Mayor – Members’ Allowances.

The original minute: ‘Councillor Porter asked the City Mayor whether there had been any discussions within Labour Group meetings as to increasing Members’ Allowances after the election. The City Mayor responded that such discussions had not taken place but there was no intention to increase allowances’.

Amendment to read:

Councillor Porter asked the City Mayor whether there had been any discussions within the Labour Group to increase Members’ allowances and the allowance for the City Mayor after the election. The City Mayor responded that the answer to the question was ‘no’.

RESOLVED:
that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview Select Committee held 16 October 2014, subject to the above amendment, be confirmed as a correct record.

62. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING

The Chair reported on progress on actions agreed at the previous meeting of the Overview Select Committee on 16 October, as follows:

• Minute item 49: Questions for the City Mayor – Child Poverty - the report of the Child Poverty Commission which had been originally due to be brought to the Overview Select Committee on 27 October, had been rescheduled for the next meeting on 15 January 2015.

• Minute item 51: Executive Response to the Report from the Workforce Representation Task Group – the requested briefing on the Council’s Equality Duty would take place at the next meeting on 15 January 2015.

• Minute item 53: Report of the Finance Task Group. A query was raised as to whether Councillor Osman had received the requested briefing on the Spinney Hill Park Restoration Project. The Director of Finance responded that the Director of Local Services and Enforcement had spoken to Councillor Osman and the relevant ward councillors about the project, which was now going through the planning process.

• Minute item 55: Overview Select Committee Work Programme. The first meeting of the Task Group to look at equality impact assessments and in particular, those relating to the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and
Transgender (LGBT) communities would take place on 22 December 2014.

The Chair added that all other actions had been completed.

63. **QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE**

There were no questions, representations or statements of case.

64. **PETITIONS**

There were no petitions.

65. **TRACKING OF PETITIONS - MONITORING REPORT**

Members considered the Tracking of Petitions Monitoring Report and Francis Connolly, Democratic Support Officer referred to petition 15/05/2014 which requested new safety measures to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on Vulcan Road. Members heard that although the status of the petition remained ‘outstanding’, a great deal of work was being undertaken to progress the petition. Members asked for a response pro-forma to be brought to the next Overview Select Committee agenda meeting.

Councillor Waddington referred to petition 16/09/2014 which requested the removal of rocks from the play area in the Rally Park and requested a response before the next Fosse Community Meeting.

Councillor Willmott asked for an update on petition 18/06/2014, which requested an outside gym and walking track in Rushey Mead Park. The Democratic Support Officer reported that an assurance had been given that a response pro-forma would be forthcoming and he agreed to chase this up. The Deputy City Mayor also offered to contact Councillor Willmott and ward councillors directly in response to this petition.

Councillor Wilmott also requested an update on petition 16/09/2014 which asked that ‘Yog Sandesh Health Magazine’ be provided in Leicester libraries in English, Gujarati and Hindi. The Democratic Support Officer explained that an update on this petition had been requested and he would contact the relevant officers again.

The petitions 11/06/2014, 30/07/2014, 31/07/2014 and 27/03/2014 were now complete and Members agreed to remove those petitions from the report.

**RESOLVED:**

1) that petitions 11/06/2014, 30/07/2014, 31/07/2014 and 27/03/2014, marked as ‘petition process complete’ be removed from the report;

2) that it be requested that a response pro-forma relating to petition 15/05/2014 be brought to the next Overview Select Committee agenda meeting;
3) that Councillor Willmott and the ward councillors be updated by the Deputy City Mayor on 18/06/2014
4) that Councillor Waddington be updated on the progress of petition 16/09/2014 prior to the next Fosse Community Meeting;
5) that updates be sought on the status of petitions 18/06/2014 and 16/09/2014.

66. REPORT OF THE FINANCE TASK GROUP

Councillor Singh, Chair of the Overview Select Committee Finance Task Group provided an overview of the Task Group’s discussion on the finance reports included within the agenda.

Members heard that there were on-going concerns relating to the period 6 forecast of £3.7m overspend in Adult Social Care; the judicial review relating to the programme of closure and sales of the Council's Elderly Persons’ Homes had delayed the programme and subsequently projected savings.

Councillor Chaplin, Chair of the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission reported that the new Strategic Director for Adult Social Care and Health had attended the previous meeting of the commission where the forecasted overspend had been discussed. The Strategic Director had just recently been appointed to post but had stated that her priority would be to address the situation and anticipated that an action plan would be drawn up by Christmas.

The commission had sought assurance that vulnerable people would be protected. It was noted that there had been a significant increase in demand for the service, but this was a factor which was outside the control of the council. Councillor Chaplin added that she recognised that there was a need for the budget to be controlled but the increase in demand was a significant problem and she suggested that it may be helpful to look at the strategic reviews in a different way. The meeting was informed that a special meeting of the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission would be arranged to consider the forecasted overspend on the budget.

The City Mayor responded that the increasing ageing population was adding to the pressure within Adult Social Care, and along with the very considerable budget reductions the government were imposing on the council, there were vast challenges faced by the council. The policy of a programme of planned strategic reviews however had been previously agreed at council.

The Chair of the Finance Task Group commented that the forecasted overspend was a concern for all members and the Director of Finance responded that an ear-marked reserve had been set up to help with the overspend. The Director added however, that the reserve did however consist of one-off monies.

In response to a query relating to the Care Act 2014, the Director of Finance reported that the Act had significant financial implications for the council and
although funding would be forthcoming via then Better Care Fund, this would not be sufficient to implement the requirements of the Act.

A further query was raised relating to housing benefit overpayments and the action that was being taken to make people aware of the need to inform the council should there be a change in circumstances. It was further queried as to how easy it was for people to do this. The Director of Finance responded that approximately 70% of benefit claims were made ‘on-line’ and she wanted to make the website very easy to use. It was important to make it easier for people to contact the council.

Further to a query relating to the restructuring of the council’s debt portfolio, the Director of Finance explained that there was no medium term opportunity for local authorities to restructure debt; however she believed that there was an issue as to how the council could safely earn more on their own investments. The current practice of lending to other local authorities was safe, but she wondered whether there were other smarter options.

A member noted that there was a forecasted underspend in Delivery, Communications and Political Governance and queried whether there would be increased support for Members. Members heard that savings had been achieved ahead of target, but reductions in the budget for 2015/16 meant that it would not be prudent to recruit additional staff.

A reference was made relating to the planned new bus station at the Haymarket, in that it was said that the new development would result in an increase in bus use. It was queried as to whether there was any evidence of this. The City Mayor responded that currently the bus station was not fit for purpose and offered little encouragement for people to use buses and he felt that the new development was certain to be a major contribution towards increasing bus use.

RESOLVED:
1) that Members note the report of the Finance Task Group;
2) that Members note that a special meeting of the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission will be held to consider the forecasted overspend on the service budget and look forward to being updated on the outcome.

67. CORPORATE PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Chair referred members of the committee to the Corporate Plan of Key Decisions and asked them to be proactive in using the plan as a monitoring mechanism. He also asked members to give early notice of any issues that they would like further information on.

68. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

Members of the commission were invited to raise questions with the City Mayor. The following questions were raised:
Motion on Palestine at Council 13 November 2014

Councillor Grant referred to the motion on Palestine that was raised at the Council meeting on 13 November 2014 and commented that coverage on this in the Leicester Mercury had referred to the motion as being anti-Jewish.

The City Mayor responded that he was unaware of this, but if that was the case, it would be a gross misunderstanding, as the motion was related to the behaviour of the Israeli Government. The City Mayor added that Leicester is a place which always supports all religions.

Councillor Grant referred to reports in the social media which stated that Mr Miliband was unhappy about the stance Leicester was taking in relation to this issue. The City Mayor reported that he was not aware of this, but would be very surprised if this was the case.

Water Bottles and Pedometers

Councillor Porter asked the City Mayor whether he was aware of the Deputy City Mayor’s proposal to give out water bottles and pedometers to staff.

The City Mayor replied that he was very supportive of health initiatives, and the Council would not be the first organisation to give out water bottles. The Deputy City Mayor explained that no decisions had been taken on this; just a decision to explore the costings. Investing in health and wellbeing of staff was a responsible thing for employers to do.

Food growing

Councillor Porter queried whether the City Mayor and the Deputy City Mayor agreed with spending £40k to employ someone to teach people to grow carrots.

The Deputy City Mayor explained that Councillor Porter could be referring to the employment of a manager for the council’s Local Food Plan. The remit of the post would be to help people to get involved in growing food and to help young people to eat healthily.

The sale of Bishop Street Post Office / Parking Tariffs

Councillor Osman queried whether any progress had been made relating to the sale of Bishop Street Post Office.

The City Mayor responded that it would have been helpful to have notice of that question as he didn’t have the details with him, but he would arrange for a response to be sent to Councillor Osman

Councillor Osman asked the City Mayor for clarification on parking tariffs
and it was agreed that information on this would be sent to him as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action to be taken</th>
<th>By whom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For an update on the sale of Bishop Street Post Office to be sent to Cllr Osman</td>
<td>Director of Investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For details of parking charges to be sent to Cllr Osman</td>
<td>Director of Local Services and Enforcement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Open Education Resources**

Councillor Grant referred to a new council policy for open education resources and open rights as a way of being more innovative and queried whether this policy could be introduced elsewhere to improve other areas of the council.

The City Mayor responded that he would be very happy to consider this and welcomed ideas.

**Pay and Display Meters**

Councillor Grant asked the City Mayor to reveal the usage of Pay and Display areas on Victoria Park Road and London Road, which he believed had resulted in many commuters moving into the Clarendon Park area.

The City Mayor responded that he would be pleased to arrange a meeting between Councillor Grant and the relevant ward councillors, who he believed were very satisfied with the new arrangements. Councillor Kitterick added that there were no parking meters on Victoria Park Road.

**The sale of Elderly Persons’ Homes**

Councillor Chaplin requested an update on the auction sale of Douglas Bader House, Nuffield House and Elizabeth House.

The City Mayor responded that a number of city council homes had been sold, including the elderly persons’ homes; these had all realised a higher figure than their guide price. The monies received would be re-invested into other services including better care for the elderly. Councillor Porter commented that sometimes a guide price was kept low in order to attract bids and he queried whether this had happened in this case. He further queried the address of one of the smaller homes that had also been sold in the auction. The City Mayor responded that did not have the details with him, but it was a small property which was not significant in relation to the total sale.

In response to a query, the City Mayor explained that further information on how the money raised from the sale of the corporate assets would be spent would be reported back to the Overview Select Committee.
Government Access to Elected Office Fund

Councillor Chaplin expressed concern that one of the local councillors, who had a physical disability, had said that she would not be able to stand again because she was unable to obtain support from the Government Access to Elected Office Fund to help her cope with her disability. The Deputy City Mayor explained that he thought that the decision needed looking at again and he had asked them to reconsider.

69. SCRUTINY COMMISSIONS' WORK PROGRAMMES

The Chair invited members of the committee to provide an update on one area of work from their commission.

Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission

Councillor Chaplin reported that a task group had been set up to look at equality impact assessments and in particular those relating to the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender communities. This would meet before Christmas.

Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission

Councillor Cooke reported the commission had held a special meeting to look at issues surrounding the closure of the Highfield’s Medical Centre. The council had now been given the powers to look at GP practices at a certain level, and this was to be welcomed.

It was apparent however that there was a lack of understanding as to how patients could be at the heart of any such decisions which had to be made. Patients had not been consulted regarding the re-location of either the Highfield’s Medical Centre or the Moira Street surgery and it was important to ensure that the patients’ needs were properly met. At the meeting, recommendations had been made to engage with NHS England, the Clinical Commissioning Group and the council itself to develop protocols and guidelines to ensure that any such decisions in the future would be handled better.

Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission

Councillor Willmott stated that he welcomed the decision regarding the Adventure Playground and requested that scrutiny needed to be involved in future. Councillor Willmott added that the commission would like to see permanent funding for Adventure Playgrounds.

70. RESPONSE FROM THE EXECUTIVE - ST NICHOLAS CIRCLE

Councillor Kitterick reported that there had been a very productive task group meeting to consider the St Nicholas Circle scheme and the dialogue with the
City Mayor had been appreciated.

The City Mayor responded that he had also found the meeting to be useful and would be taking on board some of the recommendations made by the task group.

71. **OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

   The Overview Select Committee Work Programme was noted.

72. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

   The meeting closed at 6.58 pm