



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 20 JUNE 2019 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Cassidy (Chair)
Councillor Joel (Vice Chair)

Councillor Dawood
Councillor Joshi
Councillor Khote

Councillor Kitterick
Councillor Porter
Councillor Waddington

Councillor Westley

Also present:

Sir Peter Soulsby
Councillor Myers

City Mayor
Assistant City Mayor, Policy, Delivery
and Communications.

* * * * *

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Halford.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Westley declared in relation to agenda item 11, Tracking of Petitions Monitoring Report, that he had signed petition reference 10/06/2019 (Petition for action regarding the ongoing problem with the parking of non-residential vehicles predominantly during the schools' hours and safety issues).

Councillor Joshi declared an Other Disclosable Interest in that his wife worked for the Reablement Service in Leicester City Council.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, these interests were not considered so significant that they were likely to prejudice the Councillors' judgement of the public interest. Councillors Joshi and Westley were not therefore required to withdraw from the meeting during consideration and discussion of the agenda items.

3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair explained that his aim was that the Overview Select Committee would prove to be of real value to the Council and that the Committee's scrutiny work would help towards the development of good policies.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview Select Committee held 4 April 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

5. PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED AT THE LAST MEETING

The Chair reported that there were no outstanding actions from the previous meeting.

6. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Members were referred to the Terms of Reference for Scrutiny Committees and asked to note that the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement Scrutiny Commission had changed its name to the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission.

The City Mayor commented that there had been an intention to align the Scrutiny Commissions with the Executive portfolios. He added that the Commissions may wish to retain the current arrangements or at the end of the municipal year, re-align them more appropriately with the responsibilities of the Executive Members.

AGREED:

- 1) that the Terms of Reference for Scrutiny Committees be noted;
and
- 2) that at the end of the year, Members give consideration as to retaining the current scrutiny arrangements or to more appropriately align the Scrutiny Commissions with the responsibilities of the Executive Members.

7. MEMBERSHIP OF THE OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE 2019/20

AGREED:

that the membership of the Overview Select Committee for 2019/ 20 as detailed in the agenda be noted.

8. DATES OF MEETINGS OF THE OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE 2019/ 20

AGREED:

that the dates of meetings for the Overview Select Committee for 2019 / 20, as detailed in the agenda be noted.

9. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

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

10. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that there were no petitions.

11. TRACKING OF PETITIONS - MONITORING REPORT

Members considered the Tracking of Petitions Monitoring Report and noted an update, which was circulated prior to the meeting. Members agreed that the petitions marked as complete should be removed from the Monitoring Report.

AGREED:

that the petitions marked 'petitions complete', namely 05/11/2018, 14/06/2017, 28/09/2018, 13/02/2019 and 11/01/2019 be removed from the Monitoring Report.

| Action | By |
|---|----------------------------|
| That petitions marked 'petitions complete', namely 05/11/2018, 14/06/2017, 28/09/2018, 13/02/2019 and 11/01/2019 be removed from the Monitoring Report. | Democratic Support Officer |

12. IMPLEMENTING THE CITY MAYOR'S MANIFESTO

The Committee received an update on the implementation of the City Mayor's Manifesto and a copy of the presentation is attached to the back of these minutes. The City Mayor introduced the presentation and stated that the manifesto was ambitious and challenging and there was a need to establish how it would be delivered and scrutinised.

Councillor Myers, Assistant City Mayor for Policy Delivery and Communications then delivered the presentation and explained that there were 97 identified commitments within the manifesto. Each of the 97 commitments had been allocated to an Executive Lead and a Division and the majority of those had now been allocated to a Scrutiny Commission. There were some issues still to clarify but once all the commitments had been confirmed, a list would be distributed to all Members. Each Scrutiny Commission would have their relevant items on their work programme and there would be two sessions at the Overview Select Committee where the overall achievement of manifesto objectives would be considered.

During the ensuing discussion, comments and queries were raised which

included the following:

A Member raised a concern that the manifesto only included issues that everyone was agreed upon, such as protecting libraries and ending period poverty. Also, that there would be a lack of critical scrutiny as it was a Labour party manifesto, which would be scrutinised by Labour politicians. It was noted that a period of four years until the next election, was being allowed to deliver all the manifesto commitment. It was questioned as to whether four years was needed to deliver these commitments.

In response, comments were made that while some of the commitments seemed easy to deliver, they were not straightforward. If they were, they would have already been implemented. Further comments were made that the Committee would also be scrutinising officers, as they as well as the Executive would be delivering the manifesto. A Member emphasised that delivery of the manifesto would entail a significant amount of work and therefore it was expected that it would take about 4 years to implement.

The Chair extended an invitation to Councillor Porter who had expressed concerns about the manifesto and effective scrutiny, to meet with him outside the meeting to address those concerns. The Chair assured Councillor Porter that his role in scrutiny was important, particularly as he was the only opposition Member.

Overall, Members welcomed the presentation and the opportunity to scrutinise the implementation of the manifesto. It was agreed that Members would look at the issues that pertained to their own Scrutiny Commissions.

AGREED:

that the presentation on the City Mayor's Manifesto be welcomed and it be agreed that the individual Scrutiny Commissions would look at the issues that pertained to their own work programmes.

13. QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY MAYOR

The following questions were raised for the City Mayor

Grass Cutting

Councillor Porter asked if the Council had a schedule of work for grass cutting. He had received complaints regarding overgrown grass and weeds on pavements.

The City Mayor responded that the Council had reduced some of their environmental regimes. This had been necessary because of the need to make budgetary savings. The new schedule had made economies but importantly at the same time, it had protected and preserved the local ecology which had benefitted as a result. The City Mayor stated that details of how grass cutting and weeding etc was scheduled would be sent to all Committee members.

| Action | By |
|---|---|
| For the schedule of work relating to grass cutting and the removal of weeds from pavements, be sent to Committee Members. | The Director of Neighbourhood and Environmental Services. |

Shops near the Market Place that are due to be demolished

Councillor Porter said that he had read in the newspaper that there were five shops in the Market Place that were due to be demolished. He said that Leicester was promoted to be one of the most entrepreneurial cities in the Country and questioned whether the shops could be offered on a short term lease for start- up businesses instead, perhaps on a 18 months trial basis.

The City Mayor responded that the Council had acquired the shops and it had been suggested that they were demolished in order to provide a link through to St Martin's. There were no firm proposals so far, but if there were, they would be brought to Scrutiny for full consideration. The City Mayor added that while there were no firm proposals, he favoured the suggestion to make the link through to St Martin's.

Leicester as a Welcoming City

Councillor Dawood referred to Windrush and incidences where Government legislation resulted in people having to leave the Country even though they had been born in the UK. He questioned whether more could be done in Leicester to show that it was a welcoming City and whether the City Mayor would support an event with the aim of promoting Leicester as a place of welcome.

The City Mayor responded that Leicester was a place where people were welcomed, and they wanted to make it clear that people were valued. He said that he would be happy to talk to Councillor Dawood about this and welcomed suggestions as to how this idea could be progressed.

Social and affordable Homes

Councillor Westley made reference to 1500 new homes that were to be built in Leicester and asked about the inclusion of social or affordable housing.

The City Mayor responded that there was a statutory definition of what constituted an affordable home. The Council had a commitment to make 1500 more homes available and the Council's own Housing Company would be important in delivering this. The City Mayor added that he thought the Housing Scrutiny would want to look at this further and consider whether the need of people in desperate circumstances was being met.

In response to a further question, the City Mayor said that work was being undertaken to bring empty homes back into use and those empty homes were not included in the 1500 new homes.

E.U. Nationals and Elections

Councillor Joshi expressed concerns that on the election day, there were many E.U. Nationals who wanted to vote but were turned away. He said that there was a need for the Council to be more pro-active in helping people understand the process.

Councillor Myers, the Assistant City Mayor for Policy, Delivery and Communications suggested that the most effective means to communicate about the election process was through Council Tax letters as these went to every household. It was agreed that this should be given further consideration.

| Action | By |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| For consideration to be given to ways of ensuring E.U. residents understand how to vote and the possibility of using the Council Tax letter which goes to every household. | The Head of Revenue and Benefits. |

14. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2018-19 OUTTURN

The Director of Finance submitted a report which set out the Council's financial performance against its revenue budget for the financial year 2018 /19. Members considered the report and raised a number of comments and questions which included the following:

- It was noted that there was an underspend in Adult Social Care despite there being an increasing demand for the service. The Director of Finance explained that the Council had invested properly in the service. They tried to forecast demand and a considerable amount of modelling took place. The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education had looked at the modelling and had managed to deliver the savings earlier than anticipated. A concern was raised that a letter had been sent out in March 2018 from the Council in relation to the Adult Social Care Precept, stating that £125m was required for Adult Social Care but the report stated that £104m had been spent. The Director confirmed that by law, all the money raised through the precept had been used for Adult Social Care and she had signed a letter to confirm that. The City Mayor requested that an explanation of Adult Social Care Revenue Spends to be sent to all Members of the Overview Select Committee.
- In relation to Education and Children's Services, a Member commented that the number of children taken into care in Leicester was higher than average and he questioned the reason for this. The City Mayor responded that Leicester was an urban area with issues of deprivation and density problems, which other areas did not experience.
- It was noted that there had been a considerable reduction in the number of

children who needed child protection plans and the reason for this was questioned. The City Mayor commented that the service had dramatically turned the situation around and he suggested that this was something that the Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission might want to consider. It was agreed that information on the number of Children in Care and the reduction of child protection plans be circulated to Members of the Committee.

- It was noted that there was an underspend of £246k in public health, which the report stated was partly due to a decline in the take up of sexual health services; an issue that was mirrored nationally. A Member pointed out that reports in the national media indicated that the numbers of Sexually Transmitted Diseases were increasing, and he asked whether it was known why there appeared to be a decline in take up of the services in Leicester. The City Mayor responded that the new centre in the Haymarket had resulted in financial savings but the reason for this decline was unknown. The City Mayor asked for an explanation to be sent to Members.
- In relation to Crisis Support Grants, a concern was raised that there had been insufficient funds available to help people as they were discharged from the Bradgate Unit. The Director of Finance responded that there was a clear policy in place and it would be illegal for the Council not to support an individual who was eligible for assistance, whether or not the funding was available.
- A concern was raised about the number of schools carrying a negative balance in their budget. The Director of Finance responded that the Council would support any schools facing a negative budget. However, this was becoming an increasing problem and issues around negative budgets were difficult to resolve.

AGREED

that the overall position presented within the report be noted and actions taken as detailed below:

| Action | By |
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| For a clear explanation of Adult Social Care Revenue spends to be sent to Members of the Committee | Chief Accountant |
| For information on the number of Children in Care and the reduction of child protection plans be circulated to Members of the Committee. | Strategic Director Social Care and Education |
| For an explanation regarding the decline in take up of sexual health services in Leicester to be sent to Members of the Committee. | Director of Public Health |

15. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING OUTTURN 2018/19

The Director of Finance submitted a report which showed the position of the capital programme at the end of 2018/19. Members considered the report and raised a number of comments and queries, which included the following:

- In respect of the Jewry Wall Museum, a Member sought assurance that the scheme would proceed and queried how much additional funding was needed as it was noted that an appropriate source of funding was being sought. The City Mayor responded that the works to that listed building were substantial and he would ask officers for a realistic time frame. It was noted that the project had a 'RAG' rating of 'Green' when it should be 'Amber' to indicate that successful delivery was probable by November 2020 rather than likely. It was too early to know how much money was needed.
- A Member questioned when they would see the outcome of the Waterside feasibility study. It was agreed that this would be sent to Committee Members when it was available. The City Mayor asked for the relevant ward councillors to be kept up to date.
- The Chair of the Economic Development, Transport and Tourism Scrutiny Commission asked for the Economic Action Plan to be brought to that Commission.
- A Member commented that sprinklers had now been installed in some tower blocks and questioned whether there were plans to roll them out into the other tower blocks in the city. The City Mayor confirmed that sprinkler installation was being rolled out into the other tower blocks.
- It was noted that according to the report, the Putney Road scheme was not expected to start in the summer of 2020 due to the 'complexity of the project'. A Member questioned the nature of those 'complexities' and as that information was not to hand, it was agreed that a response should be sent to Members of the Committee.

AGREED:

that the overall position presented within the report be noted and actions agreed as follows:

| Action | By |
|--|-------------------------------|
| For a realistic time frame for completion of the Jewry Wall Museum Improvement project to be sent to Members of the Committee, and for the project 'RAG' rating to be changed to 'Amber' from 'Green'. | Chief Accountant |
| For the Waterside feasibility study to | Director of Capital Projects. |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>be shared with Members of the Committee, and the relevant Ward Councillors, when it is available.</p> | |
| <p>For details of the 'complexities' regarding the Putney Road scheme to be sent to Committee Members.</p> | <p>Director of Planning, Development and Transport.</p> |

16. INCOME COLLECTION APRIL 2018 - MARCH 2019

The Director of Finance submitted a report that detailed progress made in collecting debts raised by the Council during 2018/19, together with debts outstanding and brought forward from the previous year. The report also set out details of debts written off under delegated authority, where it had not been possible to collect after reasonable effort and expense. Members considered the report and a number of comments and queries were raised which included the following:

- A Member expressed a concern regarding the level of uncollected debt or debt written off in respect of parking fines. The Director responded that the changes relating to the vehicle tax display had impacted nationally in respect of unregistered vehicles and false addresses, and some debts were extremely difficult to collect. The Council kept a list of repeated offenders and also offenders in certain areas where officers were working pro-actively.
- A Member asked whether officers challenged claims of insolvency where debts were owing to the Council. The Director of Finance confirmed that they did challenge claims of insolvency and deliberate tax avoidance.
- A Member questioned how the Council dealt with cases of rent arrears arising from Universal Credit. It was acknowledged that some tenants were under severe financial pressures because of the new benefit system. The Director of Finance explained that Housing Officers had been stationed in every Job Centre Plus (at the expense of the Council), to help manage the process. Officers had also identified the most vulnerable households and had worked with them to help manage the impact.
- Councillor Porter referred to bus lane enforcement fines and asked how much revenue from those fines had been paid to Nottingham County Council. The Director of Finance responded that she would arrange for that information to be sent to Councillor Porter.
- The Chair requested information on the number of people who were evicted for non-payment of rents. The Director of Finance confirmed that this information would be forwarded onto him.

AGREED:

that the overall position presented within the report be noted and

actions agreed as follows:

| Action | By |
|---|-------------------------|
| For information on the revenue from bus lane enforcement that was paid to Nottingham County Council be forwarded to Councillor Porter | The Chief Accountant |
| For information on the number of evictions due to non-payment of rents, to be sent to the Chair | The Director of Housing |

17. REVIEW OF TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES 2018/19

The Director of Finance submitted a report that reviewed how the Council conducted its borrowing and investments during 2018/19. Members considered the report and in response to a question, the Director of Finance explained that there was a mix of investments. Most of the investments were in the money market funds and were very safe, as it was important that the security of investments took priority over the rate of interest.

AGREED:

that the report be noted.

18. STATUTORY GUIDANCE ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN LOCAL AND COMBINED AUTHORITIES

The Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities May 2019, from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government was circulated to Members for their consideration and comments.

Members welcomed the guidance and generally found it to be helpful. The Chair asked for suggestions as to how members of the public could be encouraged to engage more in the scrutiny process. The City Mayor added that he and his colleagues on the Executive would welcome an opportunity to consider how scrutiny could be improved. It was acknowledged that some people might find it intimidating to come to meetings and they might prefer to submit evidence instead.

A Member commented that she thought that there would be better contributions from members where agendas were smaller.

A Member suggested that the Council website should be made more user friendly; so for example any information on spending in excess of £500 would be very easy to find.

Officers were asked to provide a report on any implications arising from the Statutory Guidance.

AGREED:

that the Statutory Guidance be welcomed and for a report on the implications arising from the guidance to be brought back to the Committee.

| Action | By |
|---|---|
| For a report on the implications of the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities to be brought back to the Overview Select Committee | Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance and the Scrutiny Support Manager. |

19. SCRUTINY WORK PLAN 2019-2020

Members considered the Scrutiny Work Plan 2019-2020 and noted that this would change, to incorporate for example, issues relating to the City Mayor's manifesto.

AGREED:

that the Scrutiny Work Plan 2019-2020 be noted.

20. OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

AGREED:

that the Overview Select Committee Work Programme be noted.

21. PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

Members considered the Plan of Key Decisions and it was noted that the headings referred to the previous manifesto rather than the current version. It was agreed to look at the possibility of updating the plan with the new priorities.

The Chair commented that the inclusion of the Plan of Key Decisions on the agenda provided an opportunity for Members to be pro-active and discuss issues prior to any decision being made. The Chair added that he would like an item on the Smart City Strategy to be brought to the Committee.

AGREED:

that the Plan of Key Decisions be noted, and actions taken as detailed below:

| Action | By |
|---|--|
| For the Plan of Key Decisions be updated with the new priorities | The Democratic and Civic Support Manager |
| For the Smart City Strategy to be included on the Overview Select Committee Work Programme. | The Scrutiny Support Officer |

22. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm.

Manifesto Delivery

Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 20th July, 2019

Manifesto

- The Mayor and Council were mandated by the 2019 local elections to deliver on a radical and challenging manifesto
- The manifesto contained 97 identified commitments, some
 - are ongoing commitments of pre-existing work – i.e., protect libraries
 - are clear, single actions – i.e., period poverty
 - are new ongoing, commitments – i.e., 1500 new council, social or extra care homes
 - require collaborative working between Exec and Scrutiny – i.e., anti-poverty review, future provision of social care
- The Mayor, his Executive and the Council's Scrutiny Ctte's need to establish a means of both supporting and scrutinising the delivery of these commitments

Immediate Process

- Each of the 97 commitments have been allocated Exec leads to deliver and Scrutiny Cttes to monitor and support delivery
- Exec leads will meet with corresponding Scrutiny Chairs to determine
 - Targets against which delivery can be achieved
 - A suitable rolling, programme of scrutiny and review for each Ctte that both supports and challenges delivery
- The product of these discussions to be agreed by each Scrutiny Ctte

Ongoing Process

- Each scrutiny Ctte will to a work programme where delivery is suitably supported and scrutinised and this feeds into...
- Two OSC sessions a year attended by the City Mayor and relevant Exec leads which will consider overall achievement of manifesto objectives
- As well as progress against those commitments of a cross cutting nature - such as equalities, the climate emergency and our anti-poverty strategy

