

**SCRUTINY COMMISSION
11TH DECEMBER 2023**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Rattray)
The Vice Chair (Councillor Needham)
Councillors Seaton, B. Gray, Lennie, N. Taylor
and Fryer

Councillor Jones (Cabinet Lead Member for
Climate Action, Net Zero, Property and Assets)
(Secretary of the Labour Group)

Head of Economic Development and
Regeneration
Economic Development and Regeneration
Manager
Democratic Services Manager
Head of Assets and Property
Democratic Services Officer (SW)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Harper-Davies

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. She also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

67. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 13th November 2023 were approved.

68. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS, AND OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

No disclosures were made.

69. DECLARATIONS OF THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

70. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURES 11.16

No questions were submitted.

71. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF ANY SPECIFIC FINANCIAL MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED BY CABINET

There were no items of this nature on the Cabinet agenda for the Commission to consider.

72. CABINET ITEMS FOR PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

73. EXEMPT - REGENERATION PROSPECTUS

An exempt Cabinet report of the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration was considered under item 13 of the agenda.

74. ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (AMS) 2024 TO 2030

A Cabinet report of the Head of Assets and Property to seek Cabinet approval following a review and update of the Asset Management Strategy to reflect the corporate changes in the organisation and the commitment to a more agile, energy efficient and commercially focussed use of operational fixed assets, was submitted (item 7b on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Lead Member for Climate Action, Net Zero, Property and Assets the Head of Assets and Property assisted with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion:

- i. The Assets Management Strategy intended to make the best use out of the existing space of the council, to make better return on assets and to generate income where appropriate.
- ii. The strategy did consider future increases in staff numbers. The increase in staff as a result of the changes to the Revenues and Benefits service would be accommodated.
- iii. The assets included in the strategy would be reviewed in stages. The portfolio of assets was too large to be contained within one review. Key assets would be reviewed first, followed by commercial property and combined use property. Each phase was expected to take approximately two to three years to complete.
- iv. The Asset Management Strategy did not intend on reducing the customer-facing presence of the council. The Scrutiny Commission was assured that customers were the council's priority and that there would be minimal impact on customers as a result of the Assets Management Strategy.
- v. The Scrutiny Commission would have an opportunity to further scrutinise the reviews associated with the Assets Management Strategy through the pre-decision scrutiny process.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet be informed that the Commission supports the recommendations as set out in the report of the Head of Property and Assets.

Reason

The Commission, having carefully considered the report, felt the Cabinet should approve the recommendations set out.

75. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - CABINET RESPONSE

A report of the Cabinet was considered setting out its responses to the recommendations of the Commission on pre-decision scrutiny items, was submitted (item 8 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager assisted with the consideration of this item.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet's responses to the Commission's recommendations be noted.

Reason

The Commission was satisfied that it added value where appropriate and welcomed the Cabinet's consideration of the Commission's views and recommendations as part of its decision making process.

76. SCRUTINY PANELS

A report of the Director of Finance, Governance and Contracts to consider updates on the work of scrutiny panels, was submitted (item 9 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager and the Democratic Services Officer assisted with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion:

- i. Members were expecting two briefing notes on topics that had previously been suggested as scrutiny panels. The Dementia Friendly Council and Loneliness briefing note was being drafted by officers and was expected to be received by members within the next week. The Brownfield Sites briefing note was being drafted by members and would be received by members in due course.
- ii. Members had requested two member development sessions on topics that had previous been suggested as scrutiny panels. The Tackling Substance Misuse member briefing session was likely to be delayed due to a change in the staffing structure at the Police. The HMOs member briefing session was being worked on by officers and was expected to take place in early 2024.
- iii. It was highlighted that there was an item on the agenda for the Cabinet meeting at Leicestershire County Council scheduled for 19th December 2023, regarding 'Improving Passenger Transport through Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus and Network North Funding'. It was suggested that this could be useful for the Public Transport Scrutiny Panel to review and therefore it was agreed that this be raised at the Public Transport Scrutiny Panel meeting to be held on 13th December 2023.

- iv. It was suggested that it may be beneficial for the Housing Needs Scrutiny Panel to look at Section 21 orders as part of their scope. It was also suggested that the panel looked at the areas with Additional Licensing Schemes and whether there was a link to Section 21 orders. The Democratic Services Manager highlighted that the Scrutiny Commission would be asked to approve the scoping document for the Housing Needs Scrutiny Panel at their next meeting and that these issues could be raised during the discussion of that item.

RESOLVED

1. That the Scrutiny Commission reviewed the progression of scrutiny Panels.
2. That the 'Improving Passenger Transport through Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus and Network North Funding' Leicestershire County Council Cabinet item be highlighted for interest at the meeting of the Public Transport Scrutiny Panel on 13th December 2023.

Reasons

1. To ensure timely and effective scrutiny of the matter/subject.
2. To enable the Public Transport Scrutiny Panel to decide if they would like to review the report at their next available meeting.

77. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Director of Finance, Governance and Contracts enabling the Commission to review and agree the scrutiny work programme, was submitted (item 10 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager assisted with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion:

- i. The scrutiny work programme attached as an appendix to the report had not been updated prior to the publishing of the Scrutiny Commission agenda, as the meeting of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee was held only two days prior.
- ii. The Democratic Services Manager stated that the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee had made some changes to their work programme. The Car Parking Strategy Update scheduled for 5th March 2024 was originally a verbal update, but a written update had since been requested, to include any car parking data. In addition, the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee added a further item to their work programme for the 5th March 2024; Homelessness and Reducing Rough Sleeping Strategy, as this had an amber RAG status. This report was to include an impact assessment on the reducing of funding for the Falcon Centre.

RESOLVED

1. That the Scrutiny Commission review the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Work Programme and make any amendments the Commission feel necessary.
2. That the Scrutiny Commission agree that the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Work Programme be updated in accordance with the decisions taken during consideration of this item and any further decisions taken during this meeting.

Reasons

1&2. To ensure timely and effective scrutiny of the matter/subject.

2. To ensure that the information contained within the Work Programme is up to date.

78. SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Director of Finance, Governance and Contracts to enable the Scrutiny Commission to review its own work programme, including considering the list of forthcoming Executive Key Decisions in order to schedule items for pre-decision scrutiny, was submitted (item 11 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager assisted with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion:

The Interim Charnwood Transport Strategy Cabinet report had been deferred from the Cabinet meeting on 14th December 2023 and was expected to be submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 8th February 2024, and therefore, submitted to the Scrutiny Commission meeting on 5th February 2024.

RESOLVED

1. That forthcoming Executive Key Decisions or decisions to be taken in private by the Executive, set out in Appendix 2 to the report, and scheduled scrutiny of those matters, be noted.
2. That the Commission's current work programme be noted.

Reasons

- 1 To ensure effective and timely scrutiny, either to provide Cabinet with advice prior to it taking a decision or to ensure that the Council and external public service providers and partners were operating effectively for the benefit of the Borough.
2. To ensure effective and timely scrutiny.

79. EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED that members of the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest of disclosing the information.

80. EXEMPT - REGENERATION PROSPECTUS

An exempt Cabinet report of the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration was considered for pre-decision scrutiny (exempt item 7a on the agenda filed with these minutes). The Head of Economic Development and Regeneration and the Economic Development and Regeneration Manager assisted with the consideration of this item. A summary of the Commission's discussion on this matter is provided in the exempt minute (Scrutiny Commission Minute 80E. 2023/24).

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 15th January 2024 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Commission.
3. The following meeting participants attended the meeting virtually: Councillor Nat Taylor, the Lead Member for Climate Action, Net Zero, Assets and Property, the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration, the Head of Assets and Property, the Economic Development and Regeneration Manager. All other meeting participants physically attended the meeting.