



Cabinet – 01st April 2014

**Comments from the Liberal Democrat Group
On Snibston Proposed Future Offer**

We have a number of concerns with this report.

The report recommends consulting on a significant downsizing of Snibston. The main visitors centre and gallery would be closed down, leaving a much smaller offer based around the mining monument. This would result in a diminished appeal compared to the current centre that attracts almost 100k visitors a year, brings in around £650k of income and generates £10m per year of economic activity in the area.

Feedback we have received suggests that Snibston's principal attraction is the variety of different collections it displays which maximise its appeal to visitors. The report notes a drop in Snibston's numbers over the last two years, but does not make clear whether it has taken into account how temporary closures of part of the site, due to repairs and refurbishment, may have temporarily affected visitor numbers.

The report claims that downsizing Snibston will reduce costs by £550k but doesn't make it clear whether this figure accounts for an expected loss in income. It would be useful to know how the Council predicts Snibston's income to be under the proposed offer and the change in economic impact that it is expected to have in the area.

Other risks, such as the costs of storage and transportation of the exhibits and the effects of the National Coal Board Covenants have not yet been quantified. We think more detailed assessment of these risks would be helpful to inform participants in the consultation.

Also of concern is the absence of any mention of the work Winkworth Sherwood has been conducting on the options for delivery of Leicestershire museums, including the possibility of independent trust status. Given the importance of such work to the decision being made, we do not think that the consultation should commence until this work has been released.

At the budget meeting, we accepted that the savings must be made, but wanted to be sure that *all* the options had been considered in how to make them. Both the leader and the lead member emphasised that the proposals would go through a proper consultation process before any final decision was made. We believe that a consultation can only be considered proper if the participants have been presented with full information on the options open to them.



For that reason, we think it is important that more detail is provided on the risks of this project; its affect on attendance, income, economic impact, and liabilities; and for the work that's been done by Winkworth Sherwood to be released so a fuller consideration can be made on the options we can take to secure Snibston's future.

Comments by Dr Sarah Hill CC and Michael Wyatt CC on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group