

SCRUTINY BOARD (CENTRAL AND CORPORATE)

MONDAY, 4TH OCTOBER, 2010

PRESENT: Councillor P Grahame in the Chair

Councillors S Bentley, D Blackburn,
B Chastney, A Lowe, J Hardy, K Groves,
J L Carter, R Wood and A Gabriel

31 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest at this stage of the meeting.

32 **Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors M Hamilton and N Taggart.

33 **Minutes -**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2010 be conformed as a correct record.

34 **Questions to the Chief Executive**

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development reminded the Board of its request to invite the Chief Executive, Tom Riordan to today's meeting to discuss issues similar to those discussed with the Leader on a quarterly basis which have included the Council's strategies with dealing with the emerging financial landscape and the likely organisational changes necessary to meet those likely financial and service delivery changes.

The Chair welcomed Mr Riordan to the meeting.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- Public sector accountability – Mr Riordan informed the Board that he considered his role to be a Champion of Public Sector Accountability and referred to his previous position as Chief Executive of Yorkshire Forward and involvement with Local Government partners in terms of accountability. He highlighted the role of Elected Members and the decision making processes of the Council and also the need to ensure that officers understood their roles and objectives in respect of accountability and transparency.
- Regulation and inspection – reference was made to a reduction in the amount of monitoring and assessment of council services previously

instilled from Central Government and the continuing challenge to maintain a regulation and inspection framework.

- Holding policy makers to account – Mr Riordan referred to the role of scrutiny and audit and also the role of these to focus on the improvement of services.
- The Council faced a 25% reduction in spending over the next 4 years and this would have an impact on staffing and the overall size of the Council. There was a need to identify where efficiencies could be made and investigate other opportunities such as the provision of joint services with other authorities.
- Devolution of services to Area Committees. It was felt that Area Committee provision across Leeds met public needs and there was an issue of whether any services could be managed at a more local level. Funding for services devolved to Area Committees may not reflect previous amounts as the provision of service could be different. These issues were currently being reviewed with locality pathfinders.
- There was not a definitive list of priorities for the Council at this stage but work was being undertaken across all directorates to identify priority areas of work.
- It was reported there was a need to work more effectively with neighbouring authorities and investigate the possibility of shared services and information.
- Further issues discussed included IT systems and provision, Senior Managers salaries and provision of stocks of salt for adverse weather conditions.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked Tom Riordan for his attendance.

RESOLVED – That the report and discussion be noted.

35 DECATS (Delivering Efficient Corporate and Transactional Services)

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement) outlined the DECATS (Delivering Efficient Corporate and Transactional Services) programme in Leeds and highlighted the key findings which would inform the delivery of the council's broader change programme. Leeds City Council was one of 15 local authorities that had participated in the national DECATS programme which was aimed at supporting local government to deliver significant efficiencies whilst protecting front-line services.

The Chair introduced James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement) to the meeting for this item.

James Rogers addressed the meeting and emphasised that this was still work in progress and highlighted the stages of the programme as detailed in the report. Members attention was brought to the data gathering exercise used to identify options which were then shaped into a long list of opportunities for the subsequent outline business case as summarised in the report.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- Providing council services to bring in further revenue – it was reported that the Council could not trade for profit and would have to establish external companies. It could, however charge to cover costs.
- Use of the Leeds City Council Call Centre and One Stop Centres. It was recognised that there was some room for efficiencies and this would include looking at how private sector providers operate. Further discussion included the requirement to have suitably qualified staff, the need to reduce complaints and the need to reduce service failure which resulted in high levels of calls.
- Commissioning and procurement – it was recognised that there was significant scope for making further savings in the way the Council procured goods and services.

RESOLVED – That the report and discussion be noted.

36 Shared Services in West Yorkshire

The report of the Director of Resources made reference to the exploration of a number of shared service options by West Yorkshire Authorities in light of the current financial challenges facing all local authorities.

The Chair welcomed Alan Gay, Director of Resources and Clare Elliott, Policy Officer, Association of West Yorkshire Authorities to the meeting.

Alan Gay informed the Board of the role of the West Yorkshire Collaborative Working Group (CWG) which had been considering a manageable list of projects to explore. This group, which was made up of the Council's Corporate Directors, supported the direction which had been set by Chief Executives and Council Leaders across West Yorkshire. It was also reported that funding had been received from the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP) to assess the viability of collaboration on services. Further issues highlighted included discussion with other organisations across the county including health partners, Police and Fire Authorities and the mapping of assets across the city.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- Offices and other accommodation – there was a major ongoing project particularly across the City Centre and reference was made to associated issues such as home working.
- Leeds City Region – The Leeds City Region was the pathfinder for the governments Total Capital and Assets project which looked at ways in which public sector assets could be used more efficiently. Shared services were not being considered at a Leeds City Region level.

- How services would be provided and whether this would be done by a joint West Yorkshire body or an individual authority. It was reported that at this stage all options were possible.
- Further issues discussed included the need to develop protocol for information sharing; commissioning and procurement; shared IT systems and potential obstacles such as differing policies between the West Yorkshire authorities on their regulatory functions.

The Chair thanked Alan Gay and Clare Elliott for their attendance.

RESOLVED – That the report and discussion be noted.

37 One Council Communications Project

The report of the Head of Communications outlined the ‘One Council Communications Project’, which would review the arrangements for the communications functions of Leeds City Council and make recommendations for change.

The Chair welcomed Andy Carter, Head of Communications who joined James Rogers in presenting this item to the Board.

It was reported that many of the communications functions carried out within Leeds City Council were decentralized and there was the full time equivalent of 70 staff performing communication duties across the Council. With respect to the Corporate Communications Team their role consisted of producing the About Leeds newspaper, press releases, internet/intranet publication and marketing work amongst other things. Members’ attention was brought to the scope of the ‘One Councils Communication Project’ that addressed communications activities across the whole Council.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- Potential costs of communications as currently operated council wide as opposed to a central communications operation. This would be one of the issues addressed in the project.
- Protocol on press releases.
- Measuring the success of marketing – methods varied on the type of event/service that was measured.
- Cost of marketing and procurement issues.
- Destination Marketing – it was recognised that this was a key issue and a report from Marketing Leeds was due to be considered by the Scrutiny Board (City Development)

The Chair thanked James Rogers and Andy Carter for their attendance.

RESOLVED – That the report and discussion be noted and a further report be brought to the Board in January 2011.

38 Scrutiny Board (Central & Corporate) - Work Programme, Executive Board Minutes and Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development outlined the Board's forthcoming Work Programme and also included the Forward Plan of Key Decisions and recent Executive Board minutes.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and work programme be amended accordingly.

39 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 1 November at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 a.m.)

The meeting concluded at 11.55 a.m.