

SCRUTINY BOARD (CITY DEVELOPMENT)

TUESDAY, 2ND NOVEMBER, 2010

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, B Atha, M Coulson,
G Harper, J Jarosz, G Latty, J Lewis,
R Pryke, M Robinson and S Smith

B Woroncow (Co-optee)

73 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the call-in meeting. He apologised for the late start of the meeting which was due to the main Board meeting not concluding it's business until 12.50pm.

74 Declaration of Interests

The following personal interests were declared at the meeting:-

- Councillor G Latty in his capacity as a library card holder (Agenda Item 8) (Minute 77 refers)
- Councillor M Robinson in his capacity as a library card holder (Agenda Item 8) (Minute 77 refers)
- Councillor S Smith in his capacity as a library card holder (Agenda Item 8) (Minute 77 refers)

75 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors D Atkinson, J Elliott and M Rafique.

Notification had been received for Councillor J Lewis to substitute for Councillor D Atkinson and for Councillor M Coulson to substitute for Councillor M Rafique.

76 Call-In of Decision - Briefing Paper

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report regarding the procedural aspects of the call-in process.

Members were advised that the options available to the Board in respect of this particular called-in decision were:-

Option 1 – **Release the decision for implementation.** Having reviewed the decision, the Scrutiny Board (City Development) could decide to release it for implementation. If this option was chosen, the decision would be released for immediate implementation and the decision could not be called-in again.

Option 2 – **Recommend that the decision be reconsidered.** Having reviewed the decision, the Scrutiny Board (City Development) may decide to

recommend to the decision maker that the decision be reconsidered. If the Scrutiny Board chooses this option a report will be submitted to the Executive Board.

In the case of an Executive Board decision, the report of the Scrutiny Board will be presented to the next available meeting. The Executive Board will reconsider its decision and will publish the outcome of its deliberations within the minutes of the meeting. The decision may not be Called In again whether or not it is varied.

RESOLVED – That the report outlining the call-in procedures be noted.

77 Call-In - A New Chapter: A Fresh Direction for Leeds Libraries and for Integrated Services

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report, together with background papers, relating to a review of a decision made by the Executive Board on 13th October 2010 in relation to 'A New Chapter: A fresh direction for Leeds libraries and for integrated services'.

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents for the information/comment of the meeting:-

- Copy of the completed call-in request form
- 'A New Chapter: A fresh direction for Leeds libraries and for integrated services' – Report of the Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer submitted to the Executive Board meeting held on 13th October 2010
- Relevant extract of the Executive Board minutes of 13th October 2010

The decision had been called-in for review by Councillors R Procter, B Anderson, M Lobley, J Mathews, and P Wadsworth on the following grounds:-

- Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers
- Respect for Human Rights
- A presumption in favour of openness
- Clarity of aims and desired outcomes
- An explanation of the options considered and details of the reasons for the decision

Councillors R Procter and P Wadsworth attended the meeting and gave evidence to the Board as to why they had called this item in and responded to Members' questions and comments.

The following representatives were also in attendance:-

Councillor A Ogilvie, Executive Member with portfolio responsibility for leisure
Martin Farrington, Acting Director of City Development
Catherine Blanshard, Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer, City Development

Minutes approved as a correct record at the meeting held on Tuesday, 7th December, 2010

In summary, the main points raised by Councillors R Procter and Wadsworth were the need:-

- to recognise that libraries do contribute to the cohesion of any community particularly when so many services and facilities were being closed
- to look at more creative ways of providing library facilities
- to consider the use of other more suitable buildings for libraries which are less expensive to maintain particularly those identified for possible closure in the New Chapter report
- to consider whether some library facilities could operate from other services provided by the Council or private sector that would make the service more cost effective

In explaining the reasons for the Executive Board decision, Councillor Ogilvie and officers made the following comments:-

- that this was not about library closures but about engaging local people in discussion about the viability of buildings and potential alternative service delivery
- the New Chapter Report was well presented and was the outcome of two years work involving the collection and analysis of a vast amount of data concerning all 53 libraries operated by the Council
- that usage in some libraries is declining and that many people use more than one library
- that it was estimated that the library service required a £3.5m capital injection and a further £800,000 in revenue just to standstill and that this money was not forthcoming. Consequently difficult choices about the future of the library service would have to be made
- that the consultation to be carried out would help to identify more clearly where changes, improvements and rationalisation of library provision could be made that would give a fresh direction to the library service and provide a modern and more cost effective service
- that a full and detailed mapping exercise had been undertaken and that a vast amount of data supported the rationale for what was being proposed
- that a number of libraries operated with only one member of staff and this would need to be addressed in order to comply with Health and Safety guidelines

The Chair then invited questions and comments from Board Members be put to Councillors R Procter and Wadsworth, the Executive Board Member and officers on the evidence submitted.

In summary, the main areas of discussion were:-

- clarification behind the specific reasons for Call-in of this decision and the need to ensure that consultation was open to all interested parties

- clarification as to why the Call-In signatories were requesting a delay in the consultation process
- a view that the scope of this consultation was too narrow
(The Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer reassured that all libraries were involved in the consultation and viability sheets would be available for every library as part of the consultation)
- clarification of when the equality impact assessment was undertaken
(The Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer responded and stated that the phase one Equality Impact assessment had been undertaken in 2007 and 2008, and this was reviewed each year. A further report would be required following the consultation on the final proposals)
- a view that because the New Chapter report identified 20 libraries whose viability was in question that many would feel that the Council had already made up its mind
(The Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer responded that the consultation involved all libraries and the process was transparent and open. A wide range of data was considered for every library building and a line was drawn where data showed that buildings were potentially not viable over a number of elements and where change needed to be considered)
- the suggestion that the existing mobile library service would be cut in order to provide funds to introduce new mobile services where libraries are closed
(The Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer assured Members that there would not be a cut, but an enhancement of provision was planned for this service)
- the view that information being provided was selective and that all the mapping and data that was available should be included in the consultation document
(The Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer directed Members to 11.1.1 of the report which outlined the data considered and that this was applied to every library)
- clarification of the timescale of the consultation process and a view that the consultation period was too short and needed extending and that the criteria which had been applied to determine libraries which were being suggested for possible closure should be included in the consultation document
(The Executive Member identified that the date of early December had been set if the call in started on 25th October offering a 6 weeks consultation however after discussion at Executive Board this had been extended to mid December. The Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage advised that these dates were no longer relevant)
- the need for more detailed information on library opening hours, borrowing figures and the mobile library service
(The Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer explained that there were sheets of data (viability sheets) for each library identifying this information which would be used in briefings of ward members and would be available in every library and downloadable on the web)

- the concern expressed that the statistical information contained within the Executive Board report should have been standardised in order to allow easy comparison of data between one library and another
(The Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer responded that the data used for each library was highlighting the specific issues with that library and each building had different problems as they served very different communities)
- the need for the Board to be supplied with graphs plotting issues for each library
(The Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer agreed to forward this information to the Principal Scrutiny Adviser for dissemination to Board Members)
- the need to make more use of volunteers in the library service
(The Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer responded that the service had 150 volunteers working in the service, mostly working with the Libraries At Home service and there was a co-ordinator employed to manage this. The service also worked with young volunteers for peer mentoring and story times)
- reference to paragraph 11.1.3 of the Executive Board report and concern as to who had decided that some libraries which were not performing at a high level, but contribute to the cohesion of the community, should be seen as viable buildings. The criteria being used for this should be included in the consultation document and provided to Members of this Board
(The Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer responded and referred to 11.1.1 which showed the list of data and information which was used for all libraries and against which some demonstrated that while they didn't perform on some elements overall they were used more by more local people and so contributed more to the community. It was agreed to forward more detailed information to the Principal Scrutiny Adviser for dissemination to Board Members)
- a suggestion that work was already underway in identifying alternative library buildings which was referred to by the Leader of the Council at the last Council meeting
(The Acting Director of City Development stated that as far as he was aware, no meaningful work was being undertaken in this regard)

Following this process, the Chair allowed the Call-In signatories to sum up.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked Councillors R Procter and Wadsworth, together with Councillor Ogilvie and officers for their attendance and contribution to the call in meeting.

RESOLVED- That the report and information provided be noted.

(Councillor B Atha left the meeting at 1.50pm during discussions of the above item)

78 Outcome of Call-in

Following consideration of evidence presented to them, the Board passed the following resolution:-

RESOLVED-

a) That the decision be referred back to the Executive Board for reconsideration on the grounds that the scope of the consultation document was too narrow, the depth of information provided insufficient and the timetable for consultation too short.

b) That prior to making a final decision, the Executive Board extend the consultation period and include the criteria which had been applied to determine libraries which were being suggested for closure and that all the available data for each of the Council's libraries be included in that document.

(The meeting concluded at 2.25pm)