

SCRUTINY BOARD (RESOURCES AND COUNCIL SERVICES)

MONDAY, 20TH JANUARY, 2014

PRESENT: Councillor P Grahame in the Chair

Councillors S Bentley, J L Carter,
N Dawson, J Hardy, A Khan, A Lowe,
C Macniven and R Wood

61 Late Items

There were no late items.

62 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

63 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

There were no apologies for absence.

64 Minutes - 16 December 2013

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

65 Executive Board Minutes - 18 December 2013

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Executive Board held on 18 December 2013 be noted.

66 People Plan indicators - Waste, Environmental Action, and Parks and Countryside Services

The Director of Environments and Housing submitted a report summarising performance against the five People Plan indicators for the following service areas; Waste, Environmental Action and Parks and Countryside.

The following were in attendance and responded to Board Members questions and comments:

- Councillor Mark Dobson, Executive Member, Environment
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Joss Ivory, Head of Human Resources.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- Staffing numbers and the reasons for increases and decreases within the three service areas.

- Agency staff, the reasons for use, the actual reduced spend and initiatives such as 'seasonal working' in Parks and Countryside to reduce need.
- Overtime and the initiatives to reduce spend including flexible working.
- Appraisals and current completion rates.
- Sickness absence, its impact on agency and overtime spend and initiatives to reduce current levels which were above the current corporate target.
- Other initiatives to improve service delivery and reduce spend, including, in-cab technology, a more flexible workforce, the removal of outdated working practices and improved training.

Members acknowledged the successes achieved by the Directorate and reiterated the need to drive down absenteeism to produce real savings and the need to create a flexible workforce with a 'one council' attitude.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the contents of the report
- (ii) To monitor progress of the five People Plan indicators via the established Scrutiny working group.

67 Initial Budget Proposals for 2014/15

In line with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, the Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report setting out the Initial Budget Proposals for 2014/15 within the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2014/15 to 2015/16.

The following were in attendance and responded to Board Members questions and comments.

- Councillor Keith Wakefield – Leader of Council
- Alan Gay – Deputy Chief Executive
- Lorraine Hallam – Chief Officer HR.

The main areas of discussion were:

- Income generation. The Board welcomed the creation of 'Enterprise Leeds' and fully supports the Council progressing opportunities to develop services with a range of markets.
- Staffing. The Board took the view that the level of external recruitment was too high and that continued efforts should be made to reskill existing staff wherever possible. The Board strongly supports the concept of a flexible workforce and would wish to see staff with skills that can be moved between Directorates. The Board continues to consider expenditure on agency staff to be too high.
- Assets. The Board concurred with the Leader that the issue of asset management remains a challenge. Scrutiny Board (Sustainable

Economy and Culture) would be asked to look at this issue in greater detail.

- Welfare Reform. The Board acknowledges the pressures faced by families due to welfare reforms. It welcomed the assumptions made in the budget over collection rates.
- Grants. Scrutiny Board will continue its work on grants particularly around value for money and the need to move away from grant giving towards commissioning.

The Board also considered the budget comments received from Scrutiny Boards (Housing and Regeneration), Sustainable Economy and Culture) and (Safer and Stronger Communities). It was noted that Scrutiny Board (Resources and Council Services) had been asked to consider the following areas of work in 2014/15:

- The living wage (referral from Sustainable Economy and Culture)
- The management of vacant posts (referral from Housing and Regeneration)
- Savings in procurement (referral from Safer and Stronger Communities)

RESOLVED –

- (i) To thank the Leader and officers for their attendance
- (ii) To submit the comments of the Board to the Executive in line with Council's Budget and Policy Framework procedure rules
- (iii) To programme into the Board's work schedule the areas of work referred by other Scrutiny Boards.

68 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the draft work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

RESOLVED – That the Board's work schedule be updated to reflect the work areas identified during today's meeting.

69 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 24th February 2014 10.00am (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30am)

(The meeting concluded at 12.25 pm).