

SCRUTINY BOARD (SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES)

MONDAY, 13TH JANUARY, 2014

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors J Bentley, A Blackburn,
D Coupar, R Grahame, C Gruen,
M Harland, G Hyde, J Jarosz, M Robinson,
P Wadsworth and N Walshaw

61 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed to accept the following supplementary information:

- Bulky Waste Collection Service Policy – requested information from Scrutiny (Minute no. 67 refers)

The above document was not available at the time of agenda despatch, but was subsequently made available on the Council's website.

62 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting. In relation to the items entitled, 'Improving recycling through effective communication and education – recommendation tracking' and 'Bulky Waste Collection Service Policy – requested information from Scrutiny', Councillor R Grahame drew the Board's attention to his position as a GMB Union member (Minute No. 66 and 67 refers).

63 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Davey and P Harrand, with Councillors C Gruen and P Wadsworth in attendance as substitutes.

64 Minutes - 9 December 2013

It was noted that an error had been made within the draft minutes as notification of the Board's next scheduled meeting referred to its February meeting and not January. The Principal Scrutiny Adviser confirmed that this would be corrected.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the above correction being made, the minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

65 Initial Budget Proposals for 2014/15

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the initial 2014/15 budget proposals of the Environment and Housing directorate and the Citizens and Communities directorate. The Board was invited to raise any specific questions with regard to budget proposals that fall within its portfolio area.

The Chair reminded the Board that the Director of Environment and Housing and the directorate's Head of Finance had also attended a working group meeting on 11th December 2013 to discuss the budget proposals with Board Members. A summary note of this working group meeting had previously been circulated to all Board Members for information.

In consideration of the budget proposals, the Board was asked to agree any comments to be forwarded to the Scrutiny Board (Resources and Council Services) in the first instance, which would then inform a composite statement from Scrutiny to the Executive Board.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services
- Councillor Mark Dobson, Executive Board Member for Environment
- Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environment and Housing
- Chris Oxtoby, Head of Finance for Central and Corporate Services and Public Health

The key areas of discussion were as follows:

- Clarification of the budget proposals that relate to the Scrutiny Board's portfolio
- Clarification was sought of the local impact following the recent announcement that working age tenants in social housing who have occupied the same home continuously since 1996 could be due a refund worth on average at least £640 due to an oversight by the Department for Work and Pensions when drafting the new legislation. It was noted that further analysis was still being undertaken.
- The development of Community Committees to replace existing Area Committees – it was noted that the Scrutiny Board would be considering this in more detail at its February meeting.
- The need for quality assurance linked to the delegation of Youth Service funding to Area Committees.
- Pay pressures within the refuse collection services – linked to this it was noted that costs associated with covering staff training and appraisals is now being factored into the budget. The directorate is also building in further work around HR Support to the service, with particular focus on addressing staff absence

- The benefits of food waste collections and the ongoing work to explore options for making the expansion of these collections more economically achievable.
- Clarification that there are no predicted savings associated with golf courses during 2014/15 and that discussions surrounding the future of golf courses are still ongoing.
- Linked to the Board's current review of the role and deployment of Police and Community Safety Officers (PCSOs) in Leeds, it was agreed that a final working group meeting would be held on 22nd January 2014.

The Board also agreed to submit comments to the Scrutiny Board (Resources and Council Services) to reflect the following points:

- Reference was made to the proposed targets for procurement savings, particularly within the Citizens and Communities directorate. However, it was noted that such targets have been set corporately. The Board therefore requested that further analysis is undertaken by the Resources and Council Services Scrutiny Board of the corporate work undertaken by Procurement in determining savings targets for directorates in 2014/15 to demonstrate that all possible saving opportunities have been explored.
- In line with the proposal to reduce the general well-being budget by £200k in 2014/15, the Board noted that the allocation process linked to this reduction is still to be determined. Whilst acknowledging that further consultation will be undertaken with Elected Members to determine whether or not to change the existing approach towards allocating the well-being funding to Area Committees, the Scrutiny Board emphasised the importance of undertaking immediate consultation with Area Chairs as such reductions may influence the commitment of an Area Committee towards any long term funded projects.

RESOLVED –

(a) That the Principal Scrutiny Adviser, in liaison with the Chair, provides formal comments to the Scrutiny Board (Resources and Council Services) to reflect the above key points raised by the Board.

(b) That a final working group meeting would be held on 22nd January 2014 linked to the Board's current review of the role and deployment of PCSOs.

66 Improving recycling through effective communication and education - recommendation tracking

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development set out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny review aimed at improving recycling through effective communication and education.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Councillor Mark Dobson, Executive Board Member for Environment

The key points raised during the Board's discussion were as follows:

- Linked to recommendation 4, it was highlighted that there should now be the opportunity through Housing Leeds to adopt a consistent approach in providing clarification to tenants about the recycling options available to them.
- Linked to recommendation 6, it was noted that whilst engagement with Elected Members has improved since the introduction of a dedicated e-mail address (MembersRefuseQueries@leeds.gov.uk), further work is still needed to ensure that relevant and accurate responses are being relayed back to Elected Members. The Board requested to monitor this particular recommendation in the next 3 months.
- Further clarification was sought of the Council's policy in responding to missed collections, particularly where assisted collections have been missed.
- Clarification was also sought regarding those households that had not received notification of the Christmas collection dates after it was noted that some data errors had been made.

RESOLVED –

(a) That the draft progress status assigned to each recommendation be approved.

(b) That the Board receives a further update on the recommendations within 6 months, with the exception of recommendation 3 which is to be brought back within 3 months.

67 Bulky Waste Collection Service Policy - requested information from Scrutiny

Further to minute no. 58, the report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development reminded Members of the request made by the Board to receive additional information prior to making any formal comment back to the Executive Board surrounding the proposals for changes to the policy for bulky waste collection across the city. This information was appended to the report for Members' consideration.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Councillor Mark Dobson, Executive Board Member for Environment
- Tom Smith, Locality Manager (South and Outer East Leeds)

In consideration of this report, the following issues were discussed:

- Potential impact of the temporary closure of Kirkstall Road Household Waste Sorting Site for redevelopment.
- The Council's dedicated approach towards managing waste within multi-storey flats. The Board was particularly pleased to note the planned introduction of sprinklers within the Council's multi-storey flats.

RESOLVED – That the Scrutiny Board notes the content of the report and supports the proposals for changes to the policy for bulky waste collection across the city.

68 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the Board's latest work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

As well as acknowledging the working group meeting to be held on 22nd January 2014 in relation to the Board's review of PCSOs in Leeds, the Chair also reminded the Board of the following forthcoming working group meetings:

Determining appropriate waste collection options for non AWC areas

That a working group meeting would be held on Tuesday 14th January at 11.00 am to discuss the scope for this particular piece of Scrutiny work and also receive a briefing on the work already undertaken by the service in this regard.

Tackling Illegal Money Lending

That a working group meeting would be held on Thursday 16th January at 11.30 am to discuss how the Council can assist the Illegal Money Lending Team to improve local communications to raise the profile of existing advice and support services and encourage more residents to report illegal money lending activity.

Inquiry into domestic violence and abuse:

That a working group meeting would be held on 21st January at 12 pm to continue discussions around raising greater awareness amongst young people.

RESOLVED – That the Board's work schedule be updated to reflect the Board's discussion today.

69 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 10th February 2014 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 11.40 am).