

SCRUTINY BOARD (RESOURCES AND COUNCIL SERVICES)

MONDAY, 22ND DECEMBER, 2014

PRESENT: Councillor P Grahame in the Chair

Councillors J L Carter, N Dawson,
R Grahame, G Hussain, A Khan, A Lowe,
T Wilford and R Wood

50 Late Items

There were no late items.

51 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

52 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Bentley, J Cummins, J Jarosz, and C Macniven.

Councillor R Grahame substituted for J Cummins and Councillor G Hussain substituted for Councillor C Macniven.

53 Minutes - 24 November 2014

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November be confirmed as a correct record.

54 Initial Budget Proposals for 2015/16

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report setting out the Initial Budget proposals for 2015/16 within the context of the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2015/16 - 2016/17.

The following were in attendance to respond to Members' questions

- Alan Gay, Deputy Chief Executive
- Doug Meeson, Chief Officer (Financial Services)

In summary the main areas of discussion were:

- Confirmation that the forecast funding envelope, taking into account other funding sources was a reduction of £36.9 million.
- The huge range of proposals in each of the Directorates to achieve efficiencies of £23.4 million.

- The estimates level of reserves, comparisons with other Core Cities as a proportion of net budget and the measures being taken and considered to increase those reserves.
- The level of 'ear marked' reserves.
- The management of the proposed reduction of 475 fte posts.
- The current trend in business rate income and the levels of rate avoidance.
- The management of demand increases.
- The level of subsidy given to non-statutory services.
- How Leeds City Council ranks in terms of levels of fees and charges and the need to undertake further work in this area given that the council ranks low.

RESOLVED – That the Initial Budget Proposals be noted and any comments from this Scrutiny Board and other Scrutiny Boards be forwarded to the Executive for consideration at the February Executive Board.

55 How We Work - overview / summary

The Head of Business Improvement submitted a report providing an overview of the three main programmes of work making up the 'How We Work' agenda, namely; Customer Access, Better Business management and Changing the Workplace.

The following were in attendance to respond to Members' questions

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel
- Jane Watson, Head of Business Improvement

Members viewed a short film outlining the programme followed by discussion.

In summary the main areas of discussion were:

- The role of the Best Council design Team, chaired by Alan Gay and championed by Councillor Peter Gruen.
- The importance of the programme in terms of helping the Council deliver on its budget.
- The acknowledgement that many of the initiatives had been championed by this Scrutiny Board over a number of years, particularly with regards to the better use of assets, reducing duplication and greater integration.
- The use of an action tracker to measure progress of the programmes and the potential role for this Scrutiny Board in monitoring performance.
- The acknowledgement that this was a significant change programme and whilst directorates were responding more positively now there are still varying levels of enthusiasm and 'buy in'.

- The role Scrutiny could have in countering resistance to change and encouraging an increase in the pace of change.
- The need to engage with all staff groups on the change programme.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That this Scrutiny Board writes to the Chief Executive expressing its full support for the programme and its willingness to help drive change
- (ii) That the Head of Scrutiny works with the Head of Business Improvement in the drawing up of a future reporting back timetable.

56 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 including an update on the management of Community lettings.

57 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 26 January 2015 at 10.00 am (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 am)

(The meeting concluded at 11.40 am).