

## **SCRUTINY BOARD (CITIZENS AND COMMUNITIES)**

**MONDAY, 18TH JANUARY, 2016**

**PRESENT:** Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors C Anderson, A Blackburn,  
N Buckley, R Grahame, M Harland,  
G Hyde, J Illingworth, K Maqsood,  
K Wakefield and N Walshaw

### **47 Late Items**

There were no late items.

### **48 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

### **49 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes**

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors C Campbell and M Robinson. Notification was received that Councillor C Anderson was substituting for Councillor M Robinson.

### **50 Minutes - 9 November 2015**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2015 be approved as a correct record.

### **51 Leeds City Credit Union (LCCU)**

As requested by the Scrutiny Board in November 2015, the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) provided further information as to how the council can further support Leeds City Credit Union (LCCU) to significantly increase membership and lending capacity.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Steve Carey, Chief Officer Welfare and Benefits
- Dave Roberts, Financial Inclusion Manager
- Chris Smyth, Chief Executive of Leeds City Credit Union
- Janet Burr, Deputy Chief Executive of Leeds City Credit Union
- Paul Higgins, Finance Manager, Leeds City Credit Union

In summary, the key areas of discussion were as follows:

- Members noted the credit union's ambition to build its loan book to £20m by 2020 (currently £8m, up from £7m in 2013).
- Significant investment in systems and technology was considered a priority in order to attract new customers and particularly young people.
- Reference was made to the £38m investment by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in their Credit Union Expansion Project which aims to develop better back office systems. However, the Chief Executive of the LCCU explained that the buy-in costs were currently unaffordable and therefore the LCCU was exploring local alternatives to improve their systems.
- Members suggested that the LCCU also explore investment opportunities through EU funding projects.
- The Board raised the issue of providing ATM services as well as over the counter services and discussed the potential use of ATM commercial companies as a more cost effective alternative to purchasing ATMs.
- Particular emphasis was made around promoting the Credit Union as a good value for money alternative to banks and also many of the high cost lenders.
- Members particularly welcomed the expansion of the Credit Union School Savings Clubs within primary schools across Leeds. Linked to this, the Board recognised the role that Elected Members can play in their capacity as School Governors in promoting this initiative too.
- Reference was made to the role of the joint Development Working Group in considering how the credit union could develop actions appropriate to the needs of each of the council Directorates. However, Members acknowledged the need for more regular attendance from across all Directorates to better promote this work as well as generating greater awareness amongst frontline staff. The Board agreed to highlight this particular issue with directors and monitor progress in this regard.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked everyone for their contribution and requested that a further progress report be brought back to Scrutiny in the new municipal year.

**RESOLVED -**

- (a) That the Board notes the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- (b) That a further progress report be brought back to Scrutiny in the new municipal year.

## **52 Inquiry into Community Committees - Session 1**

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development reminded the Board of the agreed terms of reference relating to this inquiry and set out the purpose of this first inquiry session, which was to address the following areas:

- Clarity surrounding the role and capacity levels of Community Committees and their respective Area Support Team (these are now referred to as Communities Teams)
- The role of Community Committee Champions
- Performance management frameworks linked to Community Committees
- Examples of good practice across the Community Committees and mechanisms for sharing such practice.

A report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) was also appended to provide information pertaining to this first session.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Shaid Mahmood, Chief Officer for Communities
- Rory Barke, Area Leader (Corporate)
- Baksho Uppal, Area Leader
- Mick Ward, Interim Chief Officer, Commissioning, Adult Social Care
- Helen Freeman, Chief Officer Environmental Action
- Paul Maney, Head of Strategy, City Development
- Lucy Jackson, Consultant in Public Health
- Martyn Stenton, Area Head of Targeted Services

The key issues raised were as follows:

- Emphasising the importance of establishing good working relationships between Elected Members and their respective Communities Teams and Area Leaders.
- The need to strengthen links between Community Committee Champions and their relevant Executive Members to provide further clarity of roles.
- The role of the Communities Teams in publicising the work of Community Committees and a recognised need to publicise meeting venues effectively and follow up public requests to be kept up-to-date with information via email.
- The role of directorates in supporting Community Committee Champions as well as a recognised need for Champions to provide an appropriate level of challenge to their relevant service areas.
- Understanding the appropriateness and timeliness of bringing information to Community Committees.
- Exploring further opportunities for devolving services to Community Committees and strengthening links with other community partners (it was noted that these issues would be explored in greater detail at future inquiry sessions)

**RESOLVED** – That the Board notes the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities).

## 53 2016/17 Initial Budget Proposals

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which introduced the initial budget proposals for 2016/17.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor James Lewis, Executive Member for Resources and Strategy
- Councillor Mohammed Rafique, Executive Member for Employment, Enterprise and Opportunity.

The key areas of discussion were as follows:

- The Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) clarified that a further £135k of savings was now required from the Citizens and Communities Directorate for 2016/17 following the local government finance settlement announcement in December. It was noted that this saving would be achieved as part of the review of staffing costs.
- Members noted that the method of applying the proposed 10% reduction in the Well Being and Youth Activities funding was yet to be determined.
- Clarification was sought regarding the numbers of individuals paying Council Tax by direct debit as it was recognised that greater take up could help generate further efficiencies.
- The Board recognised that forthcoming welfare benefit changes, particularly in relation to the future roll out of Universal Credit, will result in future budgetary pressures and agreed to undertake further scrutiny of the implications surrounding these changes.

### **RESOLVED –**

- (a) That the Board notes the Executive Board's initial budget proposals for 2016/17.
- (b) That further scrutiny is undertaken in relation to the budgetary implications of forthcoming welfare benefit changes.

## 54 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development invited Members to consider the Board's work schedule for the municipal year. The Chair reminded the Board of forthcoming working group meetings in relation to Migration and the Board's Inquiry into Universal Credit.

**RESOLVED –** That the work schedule be noted.

**55 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2016 at 10.00 am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 am).

(The meeting concluded at 12.00 pm)