

SCRUTINY BOARD (STRATEGY AND RESOURCES)

MONDAY, 26TH OCTOBER, 2015

PRESENT: Councillor K Groves in the Chair

Councillors S Bentley, D Cohen, C Dobson,
H Hayden, J Jarosz, J McKenna, D Nagle
and B Urry

25 Late Items

There were no late items.

26 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

27 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Sobel, Councillor T Wilford and Councillor R Wood. Councillor B Urry substituted for Councillor A Sobel.

28 Minutes - 28 September 2015

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

29 Fees and Charges

At the Board's September meeting Members held the first session of their Inquiry looking at fees and charges. The agreed terms of reference provided the rationale behind the Inquiry. These focused on the belief that a critical examination of fees and charges was an effective way to help ease budget pressures and focus spend and subsidy on the highest priorities and therefore help deliver the Council's Best Council Plan.

The October Executive Board report in relation to the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016/17 – 2019/20 stated that addressing an estimated budget gap of £146m by March 2020 would require the Council to take difficult decisions in order to reduce the Council's net spend. These decisions would very likely to include generating additional income through increasing fees and charges for services, potentially based on the ability to pay.

Members of the Scrutiny Board recognised this and asked for greater detail of current charges made by Directorates. The Board agreed to invite Directorate representatives to discuss with members areas where further analysis and consideration into possible new areas for income generation could be

undertaken. The Board also agreed to explore with Directorates the principles around charging including; policies for non-Leeds residents, the use of subsidy and differential charges

The following were in attendance to respond to Members' questions:

- Martin Farrington – Director of City Development
- Richard Ellis – Head of Finance, Environment and Housing
- Simon Criddle – Head of Finance City Development
- John Mulcahy – Citizens and Community.

In summary the main areas of discussion were:

- The Directorates responses to the questionnaire previously sent out to all Directorates.
- That every 1% increase in fees and charges equates to £1m additional income.
- The notion that two issues required debate; how much existing fees are raised and what new ones should be introduced.
- Key principles for inclusion in a revised fees and charges policy.
- The ease in which fees and charges can be paid, particularly for community lets.
- The need to work towards the complete recovery of cost and reducing subsidies where appropriate.
- The concept of introducing increased charges in January (rather than April) where possible.
- The analysis of, and the understanding of the unintended consequences of introducing some charges.
- The concept of geographical flexibility in the level of fees and charges and the criteria used to set those differential, for example deprivation or quality of provision.
- A range of new income streams taken up by other authorities but not currently by Leeds City Council.
- The aims and objectives of the Leeds card and its current discount structure.
- The role of Community Committees in setting community centre charges.
- Assurances that where fees can only recover costs, all possible overheads are included.
- The need for an IT Culture Platform that showcases the very best of Leeds, addresses concerns about the efficiency of numerous box offices but also offers the opportunity for advertising and marketing for the Public and Private Sector (which in turn supports the Culture Capital bid).

In terms of next steps the Board agreed that they should receive information on the following:

- Running costs of Community Centres and the actual income generated through fees and charges.
- Estimates of the potential income generated from those areas identified by the Directorate as potential new fee areas. These included;
 - Charging entry for Museum sites including City Museum
 - Charging entry to Leeds Art Gallery
 - Residents and visitor parking permits
 - Workplace parking levy
 - Charge for pre planning advice
 - Car parking charges at visitor attractions
 - Full sponsorship of bonfires and firework displays
 - Charging for replacement wheeled bins
 - Charge for kerbside garden waste collection
 - Charges for depositing inert waste at Household Waste Sites
 - Fees for parking at District shopping centres
 - Charging for bulky waste
 - Charges for pest control, e.g rats in homes
 - Where enforcement action is being undertaken against private landlords then relevant costs charged to the persons to whom action is being taken
 - Charging landlords for referring tenants onto them
 - Introducing private landlord registration scheme (Beyond HMOs)
 - Credit card administration fee.
- The total amount collected in voluntary contribution boxes in venues where charges are not levied.

It was also agreed that the Directors of Children's and Adult Social Care be invited to the Board's November meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the Board receive the requested information
- (ii) That the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development draft a more detailed note on the Board's current observations and recommendations
- (iii) That the Directors of Children's Services and Adult Social Care be invited to the November Board meeting
- (iv) That the Board receive a draft revised fees and charges policy for its consideration.

(Councillor Nagle left the meeting during the discussion on this item at 11.30am.)

(Councillor J McKenna left the meeting during the discussion on this item at 11.40am.)

30 Career Families

This item was deferred.

31 Work Schedule and Draft Terms of Reference

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which provided information regarding the Board's work Schedule. It was noted that the scheduled item on non-contract spend update would now be received in December rather than November.

Draft terms of reference were also submitted into an Inquiry into ICT resources.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the Board's work schedule be amended as discussed
- (ii) That the draft terms of reference be agreed.

32 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 23 November 2015 at 10.00am. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 12.10 pm)