

SCRUTINY BOARD (STRATEGY AND RESOURCES)

MONDAY, 25TH JANUARY, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor K Groves in the Chair

Councillors S Bentley, D Cohen, C Dobson,
H Hayden, J Jarosz, J McKenna, D Nagle,
A Sobel, T Wilford and R Wood

51 Late Items

There were no late items.

52 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

53 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

There were no apologies for absence.

54 Minutes - 21 December 2015

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2015 be approved as a correct record.

55 Scrutiny Inquiry into ICT capacity (Session 1)

The Head of Service delivery ICT submitted a report which addressed the areas of focus for the first session of the ICT Inquiry, namely;

- Review of the capacity and related costs within ICT Services allocated to maintenance of current IT systems and infrastructure which support the Council, the current service levels achieved/support hours covered and whether these are sufficient.
- Review of the capacity available in ICT to deliver projects, the use of 3rd party suppliers and contract staff to support project delivery and the number of projects being requested.
- Review of the effectiveness of governance arrangements within Directorates - are they successful in filtering project demand and in assessing the value of proposed projects

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

- Bev Fisher, Head of Service Delivery

Minutes approved as a correct record
at the meeting held on Monday, 22nd February, 2016

- Roger Green, Portfolio Manager.

Introducing the report, officers described the work of Leeds City Council ICT Services. In brief, work fell into three categories; 'keeping the lights on', that is work undertaken to keep ICT systems (infrastructure and applications) up and running through proactive maintenance and reactive fault resolution.

Secondly 'small projects', keeping up with software updates released by vendors; adding additional functionality to existing systems to improve business efficiency or implementing new technology solutions and thirdly major Council projects that include ICT systems and data.

Approximately 70% of ICT effort is focussed on 'Lights on' and 30% available for project work.

In summary the main areas of discussion were:

- The volume of active major and small projects.
- The capacity of the ICT service to deliver both 'lights on service' and projects.
- The number of service users supported by ICT Services and number of devices and the increase between 2013-14 and 2014-15.
- The results of the 2015 benchmarking.
- ICT staffing budget, the management of vacancies and the use of agency staff.
- Issues around recruitment and retention and the concerns that ICT services in the Council could not compete in the market and so were in danger of not being able to provide a robust service. (this would be the focus of session two)
- The governance arrangements in place to review project requests which require ICT resource.
- The processes undertaken by Directorates to determine their ICT requirements and the level of challenge provided in that decision making process in relation to overall Council priorities.
- Collaboration with other public bodies in the city.

Whilst not part of the agreed terms of reference the Board discussed the recent floods and ICT resilience. Members were concerned that at a time when communication with constituents and others was at its most essential, email and leeds.gov.uk was down for a period. This raised serious concerns in the minds of members around risk management, the robustness of the Council's ICT infrastructure and contingency planning.

Concluding the discussion the Board, whilst acknowledging that further evidence gathering sessions were to take place, did agree that some initial observations and conclusions could be made around the management of project prioritisation and the lack of corporate challenge and coordination and also the potential benefits of a peer review.

RESOLVED –

- I. To receive and note the information provided to address session one of the Inquiry
- II. That the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development write to the Head of Service delivery detailing the Board's initial observations and conclusions.

56 Career Families

At its July meeting, the Board discussed the role of contract managers in delivering the Council's procurement strategy. During these discussions contract management and the organisation of contract management in the Council, including levels of training and the scope to improve contract management within directorates through the encouragement of professional standards and 'career families' for contract managers was considered. Subsequently the Chief officer (Human Resources) was invited to attend Scrutiny to explain the concept of career families.

The following were in attendance to respond to members' questions

- Councillor James Lewis, Deputy Leader of Council
- Lorraine Hallam, Chief Officer (Human Resources)
- Carol Gill, Head of Human Resources

By way of introduction, the Chief Officer (Human Resources) explained that currently there were over 2,800 different job titles being used across the council and numerous job descriptions. Career families are a way of describing and grouping together jobs that have similar characteristics. Jobs in the same family may do similar types of work even though the tasks, processes, systems and tools used may be different. It was explained that career families would facilitate a more agile and flexible workforce and help the council to meet and respond to changing service needs more quickly. It was noted that eight career families had been developed.

Members were advised that career families would help employees manage their own career aspirations as each family would have a number of different levels, described in simplified form and would clearly set out what was needed to reach the next level.

In response to a question the Chief Officer (Human Resources) stated that career families was not a form of job evaluation. This process had been undertaken with trade union colleagues as part of the national agreed job evaluation scheme which had resulted in the current list of job roles and job descriptions.

Other areas of discussion included;

- The development, with trade unions, of a flexibility protocol to allow staff to move easily around the Council.

- The development of a culture whereby staff see themselves as working for Leeds City Council' rather than a particular directorate.
- The importance of providing staff with support and training when asked to move into different roles.
- The need to review where training budgets should sit to ensure maximum support is provided to staff.
- The need to ensure that departmental budgets and internal recharges do not become a barrier to work force flexibility.
- Confirmation that references and good practice has been drawn from other authorities during the development of career families.

Concluding the discussion the Board asked for six monthly updates.

RESOLVED –

- I. To note the development of career families
- II. To ask for an update report in six months.

57 Work Schedule

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which provided information regarding the Board's work schedule.

RESOLVED – That the Board's work schedule be noted.

58 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 22 February 2016 at 10.00am. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30am)