

SCRUTINY BOARD (STRATEGY AND RESOURCES)

THURSDAY, 21ST DECEMBER, 2017

PRESENT: Councillor P Grahame in the Chair

Councillors S Bentley, A Garthwaite,
R Grahame, P Harrand, J McKenna,
D Nagle, A Smart, E Tunncliffe, T Wilford
and R Wood

49 Late Items

The following late information was submitted to the Board:

- Agenda item 6 – Minutes from the Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) meeting held on 29 November 2017
- Agenda item 12 – Minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 13 December 2017.

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

50 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

51 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor A Sobel.

Notification had been received that Councillor R Grahame was to substitute for Councillor A Sobel.

52 Minutes - 29 November 2017

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2017 be approved as a correct record.

53 Best Council Plan Refresh for 2018/19-2020/21 - Initial Proposals

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which introduced the initial proposals around the Best Council Plan Refresh for 2018/19 – 2020/21, presented to Executive Board on 13 December 2017.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor James Lewis, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Strategy and Resources
- Coral Main, Head of Business Planning and Risk.

The Executive Member gave a brief introduction to the item, reminding members that all Scrutiny Boards were being consulted on the initial proposals agreed by Executive Board in December 2017.

The Scrutiny Board considered and discussed the proposals presented, with key areas of discussion including:

- A suggestion that reference to recycling be added under '21st century infrastructure'.
- A further suggestion that sexual violence and harassment be added under 'increased self-reporting of domestic violence and abuse incidents'. The Board was advised that Safer Leeds had undertaken to address this issue.
- A specific focus on affordable housing, including the development of modern construction technologies to support more people onto the housing ladder.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above comments, the Executive Board report and the initial proposals for the Best Council Plan for 2018/19 – 2019/20, be noted.

54 Initial Budget Proposals for 2018/19

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which presented the Executive Board's initial budget proposals for 2018/19.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor James Lewis, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Strategy and Resources
- Doug Meeson, Chief Officer (Financial Services)
- Richard Ellis, Head of Finance (Communities and Environment, Resources and Housing, Corporate Finance).

The Executive Member and Chief Finance Officer gave a brief introduction to the initial 2018/19 budget proposals agreed by Executive Board at its meeting in December 2017.

The Executive Member reminded members that all Scrutiny Boards were being provided with an opportunity to comment on the initial budget proposals.

The Scrutiny Board considered and discussed the proposals presented and the key areas of discussion included:

- Clarification that an application had been approved for Leeds City Council (LCC) (as part of the Leeds City Region Business Rates Pool) to pilot 100% business rates retention in 2018/19.
- A request that the Board be provided with more details of the Council's business rate relief scheme, including details of list of eligible business types.
- Concern about the impact of universal credit on vulnerable tenants.
- The impact of the UK exiting the European Union.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Executive Board's initial budget proposals for 2018/19 be noted.
- (b) That the above request for information be provided as part of the Board's ongoing inquiry into Business Rates.

55 Financial Health Monitoring 2017/18 - Month 7

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which introduced the Financial Health Monitoring 2017/18 – Month 7 report, presented to Executive Board on 13 December 2017.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor James Lewis, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Strategy and Resources
- Doug Meeson, Chief Officer (Financial Services)
- Richard Ellis, Head of Finance (Communities and Environment, Resources and Housing, Corporate Finance).

The Executive Member and Chief Finance Officer gave a brief introduction to the report, considered by the Executive Board at its meeting in December 2017.

The Scrutiny Board considered and discussed the details presented in the report, with the key areas of discussion including:

- Ongoing funding pressures in relation to looked after children and adult social care.
- Progress of the route efficiency work being undertaken in relation to collection of waste and recycling.
- Funding arrangements for the Department of Education's Partners in Practice and its impact on the Council's budget.

RESOLVED – That the Board notes the Financial Health Monitoring report for 2017/18 – Month 7.

56 Performance Reporting to Scrutiny Board – Effective Procurement

The Director of Strategy and Housing submitted a report which presented a summary of performance information in relation to effective procurement.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor James Lewis, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Strategy and Resources
- Paul Hyde, Executive Commercial Accountant, Projects Programmes and Procurement Unit
- Dominic Bailey, Senior Portfolio Officer, Projects, Programmes and Procurement Unit.

The Executive Member and Officers present gave a brief introduction of the report.

The Scrutiny Board considered and discussed the information provided in the report, with the key areas of discussion including:

- Social values of procurement derived from contracting with local suppliers and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).
- Concerns associated with the management of contract waivers. The Board was advised that Corporate Governance and Audit Committee had been requested to review some of the issues in relation to this.
- The need for more in-depth training across directorates, particularly in relation to management of contract waivers.
- A request that the Board be provided with more detailed tracking information.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the performance information provided in the report be noted.
- (2) That the additional information requested be provided to the Scrutiny Board.
- (3) That a specific report on the use of contract waivers be presented to a future Scrutiny Board meeting.

57 Performance Reporting to Scrutiny Board – ‘Can Do’ Culture and Recognition in Leeds City Council

The Director of Strategy and Housing submitted a report which presented a summary of performance information in relation to ‘can do’ culture and recognition in Leeds City Council.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor James Lewis, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Strategy and Resources
- Graham Sephton, Head of Human Resources
- Sue Podmore, HR Business Partner, Human Resources.

The Executive Member and Officers present gave a brief introduction to the report, including how this reflected the Council's overall vision and values.

The Scrutiny Board considered and discussed the information presented, with the main areas of discussion including:

- Training and development to enable staff to take greater ownership of issues, particularly on the frontline.
- Concerns about stress at work and the support available to staff. The Board was advised that it was to receive an update on sickness management at the January Board meeting.
- Connectivity of the workforce, including regular access to ICT and the associated training.

RESOLVED – That the Board notes the performance information provided in relation to 'can do' culture and recognition in Leeds City Council.

58 Work Schedule

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's work schedule for the 2017/18 municipal year.

The following updates were noted:

- To receive future updates on fostering placements and the industrial strategy.
- To note a working group meeting with the Valuation Office, provisionally scheduled for Monday, 22 January 2018

RESOLVED – That subject to any on-going discussions and scheduling decisions, the Board's outline work schedule be approved.

59 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 18 January 2018 at 10.30am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 10.00am)

(The meeting concluded at 12.40pm)