

SCRUTINY BOARD (SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES)

MONDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY, 2014

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors J Bentley, A Blackburn,
D Coupar, P Davey, R Grahame,
M Harland, G Hyde, J Jarosz, P Latty and
N Walshaw

70 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed to accept the following supplementary information:

- Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development regarding the Scrutiny review of the role, number and allocation of PCSOs in Leeds (Minute no. 74 refers)
- Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development on improving communications aimed at tackling illegal money lending – working group summary note (Minute no. 77 refers)

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

71 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

72 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P Harrand and also Councillor M Robinson, with Councillor P Latty in attendance as substitute.

73 Minutes - 13 January 2014

Further to minute no. 65, Members requested a further update regarding the analysis work being undertaken to determine how many local working age tenants in social housing may be due a refund worth on average at least £640. James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities), responded to this request and informed the Board that work undertaken to date has reduced the number of potential cases from 600 to approximately 300. However, it was noted further analysis of these cases was still required to determine their eligibility for a refund.

Further to minute no.66, the Chair confirmed that Board Members had received a response from the Chief Officer Waste Management following the Board's request for further clarification regarding those households that had not received notification of the Christmas refuse collection dates.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th January 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

74 Scrutiny review of the role, number and allocation of PCSO's in Leeds

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development related to the Scrutiny Board's recent review on the role, number and allocation of Police Community Support Officers in Leeds. This review was undertaken via working group meetings held during November and December, with a final meeting taking place on 22nd January 2014. Attached to this report was a summary note of the key findings arising from this review. This summary note also presented the advice of the working group that met on 22nd January 2014 in respect of the Scrutiny Board's response to the Executive Board.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services
- Chief Superintendent Sam Millar, Chief Officer Community Safety

The key areas of discussion were as follows:

- The Board received a budgetary update from the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services and the Director of Environment and Housing. It was highlighted that the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has proposed a two year agreement which would see an increase in the PCC's overall contribution towards the cost of PCSOs. Currently the Council funds 30% of the costs of PCSOs and under the current proposals this will reduce to 21% with a proportionate increase in the PCC contribution. As a result, the grant payment to West Yorkshire Police will reduce by £454,000 whilst retaining 165 PCSOs in Leeds.
- In light of this budgetary update, the Scrutiny Board acknowledged that the budgetary proposals considered as part of this review were no longer relevant and that this should be reflected within its final report.
- Reference was made to the West Yorkshire Police Force Policy regarding PCSOs. A request was made for Board Members to receive a complete copy of this Policy.
- The Director of Environment and Housing provided further clarification regarding the budgetary proposal surrounding cost reductions of £200k to be realised in the Enforcement and Anti-Social behaviour teams. It was noted that this was to be achieved through the deployment of resources, linked closely to a review of the duties of PCSOs.

Members considered the advice of the working group that met on 22nd January 2014 and agreed the following conclusions:

Allocation model for Council funded PCSOs in Leeds

As the Scrutiny Board was unable to reach a consensus in relation to the allocation model for Council funded PCSOs in Leeds, the Board agreed to reflect both advisory positions in its recommendation to the Executive Board. In doing so, it would be made clear that position two had reflected the majority view of the Scrutiny Board.

However, the Board agreed to amend the wording of position two to indicate that this particular model should apply a minimum baseline of 4 PCSOs within each ward.

The role of PCSOs

The Scrutiny Board supported the advice of the working group and agreed to recommend to the Executive Board that it supports the principle of enhancing the role of PCSOs to maximise environmental enforcement resources and ensures that any additional functions placed upon PCSOs is managed effectively in view of the expectations already placed upon them.

The Board also agreed to recommend that the Executive Board supports the principle of moving towards more locally deployable bases and developing a more integrated partnership approach between police and other partners within neighbourhoods to enable decisions being taken collectively around how best to deploy resources to address a particular problem within a community

Members acknowledged that there would be ongoing consultation with the Police and other key stakeholders surrounding the principles for change identified during this review and the practicalities associated with these principles. The Board therefore agreed to actively monitor feedback from this consultation.

RESOLVED – That the Principal Scrutiny Adviser, in liaison with the Chair, finalises the Scrutiny Board's report to reflect the key findings arising from this review and the above conclusions agreed by the Board.

75 Strengthening the Council's relationship with Parish and Town Councils - Tracking of scrutiny recommendations

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development set out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny review aimed at strengthening the Council's relationship with Parish and Town Councils.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services
- Kathy Kudelnitzky, Chief Officer Communities
- Martin Sellens, Head of Planning Services
- Ian MacKay, Team Leader, Local Planning East
- Chris Pilkington, Deputy Chief Officer of the Yorkshire Local Councils Associations
- Rory Barke, Area Leader, East North East.

The key points raised during the Board's discussion were as follows:

- Recommendation 1 – Members noted the continued delays relating to the launch of a national Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme. This Scheme is now expected to be launched by May 2014.
- Recommendation 3 - Members acknowledged the ongoing work being led by Area Leaders to establish clear pathways and protocols between local councils and Area Committees and recognised the importance of obtaining commitment from all contributors in this regard.
- Recommendation 6 – Particular reference was made to the Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule. It was noted that local councils have now been consulted and that the draft was due for submission in February 2014 and adoption late 2014.
- Members also noted that both the Planning and Highways Supplement documents were considered at the citywide Parish and Town Council Annual Forum on Monday 27th January and received positive feedback. Local councils also received a presentation on the roadworks.org website. It was noted that both Supplements will be reviewed throughout the year as part of the commitment to continuing improvement.
- Members discussed the progress made in relation to recommendations 7 to 11 and agreed to change the progress status for these recommendations to 'achieved'.

RESOLVED –

(a) That the progress status assigned to recommendations to 7 to 11 be amended to 'achieved'.

(b) That the Board receives a further update on the recommendations within 6 months.

76 Briefing and Consultation on design principles for Community Committees and Community Engagement

The report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) invited the Scrutiny Board to comment on the design principles for Community Committees and Community Engagement as part of a wider consultation process.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services
- Kathy Kudelnitzky, Chief Officer Communities
- Rory Barke, Area Leader, East North East.

In consideration of this report, the following issues were discussed:

- Members noted that the consultation process focuses on the design principles for Community Committees and that each Community Committee will be tasked to establish their own working practices based on agreed principles.
- It was noted that Elected Members would be fully engaged in identifying the names and brand identities for the new Community Committees. Some initial designs were shared with Members during the meeting.
- Where reference was made to reducing the number of formal decision-making Community Committees to four a year, it was highlighted that this was a recommended minimum number. Members therefore advised that this is communicated more clearly.
- Members reiterated the importance of strengthening community engagement and emphasised the need to develop smarter and more cost effective methods of publicity and also identify more localised venues to improve accessibility to meetings.
- Members emphasised the importance of Chief Officers across all directorates to also engage proactively with Community Committees and therefore recommended that this forms part of the design principles too.
- Members also recognised the need to undertake a more detailed assessment of the staffing and resources needed to ensure the long term sustainability of any future new arrangements.
- It was noted that Elected Members will be given the opportunity to attend a number of relevant workshops that will be scheduled during March 2014. However, it was highlighted that any briefing requests made separately by Area Committees will also be accommodated.

RESOLVED –

(a) That the Scrutiny Board notes the content of the report and supports the design principles for Community Committees and Community Engagement.

(b) That the above comments made by the Scrutiny Board are formally fed into the wider consultation process.

(c) That the Scrutiny Board will continue to monitor progress in relation to the development of Community Committees.

77 Improving communications aimed at tackling illegal money lending - working group summary note

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development referred to a piece of work recently undertaken by a working group of the Scrutiny Board to improve communications aimed at tackling illegal money lending. The Board received a summary note which referred to the working group meeting held on 16th January 2014. This highlighted the key issues arising from this meeting and the proposed recommendations made by the working group for the Board's consideration.

James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities), was in attendance for this item and highlighted his support to the proposed recommendations set out within the working group summary note.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Scrutiny Board notes the working group summary note and endorses the findings and recommendations arising from the work undertaken to improve communications aimed at tackling illegal money lending in Leeds.
- (b) That a response to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations is brought back to the Board's March meeting.

78 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the Board's latest work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

The Board was reminded of the forthcoming working group meetings linked to its inquiry into tackling domestic violence and abuse.

Session 6 – Monday 24th February 2014 at 10 am. This session will be considering how the Council and partners are challenging wider cultural attitudes that tolerate domestic violence and abuse and to explore opportunities for engaging communities, particularly BME communities, to be more proactive in supporting victims.

Session 7 – Monday 3rd March 2014 at 9.30 am. As the last evidence gathering session of the inquiry, the focus will be around the role of the Council and Trade Unions in raising awareness of domestic violence and abuse amongst employers across the city, including Council staff.

Members also acknowledged and welcomed the recent announcement made by the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner that an additional one million pounds is to be invested in tackling domestic violence across West Yorkshire. However, it was noted that details were yet to be confirmed in terms of how this funding will be allocated across the districts.

RESOLVED – That the Board's work schedule be updated to reflect the Board's discussion today.

79 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 10th March 2014 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 11.50 am).