



Report of Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board

Date: 10th March 2014

Subject: Improving communications aimed at tackling illegal money lending - response to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. The Scrutiny Board agreed to undertake a piece of work this year to explore how the Council can assist the Illegal Money Lending Team in raising the profile of existing advice and support services and encourage more residents to report illegal money lending activity. The Board agreed to hold an initial working group meeting to which all Board Members would be invited to attend. This meeting took place on Thursday 16th January 2014.
2. Last month the Board considered a report summarising the key issues arising from this meeting and the proposed recommendations from the working group. As such, the Board endorsed the recommendations arising from this piece of Scrutiny work.
3. It is the normal practice to request a response from the relevant Directorate(s) to the Board's recommendations once published. Details of this response are set out within this report for the Board's consideration.

Recommendations

4. Members are asked to consider the response to the recommendations arising from this piece of Scrutiny work and decide whether any further scrutiny involvement is required at this stage.

1.0 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 Last month the Scrutiny Board considered a report summarising the key issues and proposed recommendations arising from its working group meeting on Thursday 16th January 2014 which focused on improving communications aimed at tackling illegal money lending (see appendix 1). As such, the Board endorsed the recommendations arising from this piece of Scrutiny work.
- 1.2 It is the normal practice to request a response from the relevant Directorate(s) to the Board's recommendations once published. Details of this response are set out within this report for the Board's consideration.

2.0 Background information

- 2.1 At its July meeting, the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board raised concern about illegal money lending activity within Leeds and expressed an interest in undertaking further Scrutiny of the activities being undertaken by the Council and its partners to address this issue. The Board therefore received a report in September 2013 from the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) which summarised the work already undertaken by the Council and its partners, including the national Illegal Money Lending Team. It also provided details of a Leeds action plan that had been developed by the Illegal Money Lending Team in conjunction with the Council and other partners.
- 2.2 The Scrutiny Board welcomed the level of activity being undertaken in addressing illegal money lending in Leeds. However, it was felt that communications surrounding this area of work needed to be improved. A suggestion was therefore made to develop a separate communications workstream/plan linked to the Leeds Action Plan.
- 2.3 The Scrutiny Board agreed to undertake a separate piece of work to explore how the Council can assist the Illegal Money Lending Team in raising the profile of existing advice and support services and encourage more residents to report illegal money lending activity. The Board agreed to hold an initial working group meeting to which all Board Members would be invited to attend. This meeting took place on Thursday 16th January 2014.
- 2.4 In February, the Board considered a report summarising the key issues arising from this meeting and proposed recommendations from the working group for consideration by the Scrutiny Board. These recommendations were formally endorsed by the Scrutiny Board.

3.0 Main issues

- 3.1 It is the normal practice to request a response from the relevant Directorate(s) to the Board's recommendations once published.
- 3.2 The Scrutiny Board emphasised the importance of having a lead Directorate take ownership in developing and promoting a clear and consistent approach across the Council and other partner organisations towards tackling illegal money lending. In view of the clear links with the Council's overall Financial Inclusion Strategy and the relationship already built up between the Illegal Money Lending Team and the

Council's Financial Inclusion Team, the Scrutiny Board considered it appropriate for the Citizens and Communities Directorate to take a lead in terms of implementing the recommendations arising from this piece of Scrutiny work.

- 3.3 An initial response to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations has therefore been provided by the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) and is set out below. This includes the views of the Directorate on the recommendations, action and timescales in responding to the recommendations or the reasons for not agreeing with the recommendations.
- 3.4 Representatives from the Citizens and Communities Directorate will also be attending the Scrutiny Board's meeting today, along with representatives from other appropriate Directorates and the Illegal Money Lending Team.

Response of the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)

Recommendation 1

That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works closely with the Head of Communications and Engagement and the local Illegal Money Lending Team LIASE Officer to develop a marketing communications plan to complement the existing High Cost Lending marketing campaign. This plan should sit alongside the Illegal Money Lending Team Leeds Action Plan and be revised on an annual basis.

- 3.5 Work has already been commenced on developing such a plan and this should be in place by mid-March.

Recommendation 2

That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works closely with the Financial Inclusion Team, Advice Leeds and appropriate Directorates, to develop a comprehensive training toolkit aimed at up-skilling frontline staff to enable them to have the knowledge and capacity to detect those individuals in financial crisis and signpost them to appropriate support and advice services.

- 3.6 A toolkit is currently being developed to coincide with a major launch in March of a city wide campaign aimed at publicising support for citizens facing financial problems. In line with recommendation 1, support for illegal lending victims can be incorporated within this work.

Recommendation 3

That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works closely with the Director of Public Health and Director of Adult Social Care to explore how best to raise the profile of tackling legal and illegal lending amongst frontline staff within the health and social care sector and equip them with the knowledge and capacity to detect vulnerable individuals in financial crisis and signpost them to appropriate support and advice services.

- 3.7 The content of the toolkit referenced in recommendation 2 require to be incorporated within the staff training programmes of the Directorates referred to in this recommendation. Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) will discuss with the Director of Public Health and Director of Adult Social Care, how this work can become part of the training plans of appropriate front line staff. Although not specifically referenced in this recommendation, it would also be appropriate to discuss similarly with the Director of Children's Services in order to include front line staff in that Directorate particularly Children's Social Workers.

Recommendation 4

That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works closely with the Director of Children's Services to determine an appropriate route for promoting the education package developed by the Illegal Money Lending Team into Leeds Schools.

- 3.8 Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) will discuss with the Director of Children's Services what the most appropriate route is, perhaps working through clusters, to develop a mechanism for disseminating this information to schools.

Recommendation 5

That the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) works closely with the Chair of the Member Development Working Group to explore how best to deliver training to Elected Members to enable them to have the knowledge and capacity to detect those individuals in financial crisis and signpost them to appropriate support and advice services

- 3.9 Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) will discuss with the Chair of the Member Development Working Group how the toolkit referred to in recommendation 2 can be incorporated into appropriate training materials to support Elected Member development.

3 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 The responses set out within this report include the views of the relevant Directorate(s) in consultation with the relevant Executive Board Member.
- 4.1.2 Where other internal or external consultation processes have been undertaken with regard to responding to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations, details of this will be referenced against the relevant recommendations.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration.

- 4.2.1 Where consideration has been given to the impact on equality areas, as defined in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme, this has been referenced against the relevant recommendation. As part of the formal recommendation tracking process, the Scrutiny Board will continue to ensure that due regard has been given to the impact upon equality areas where appropriate.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 The scrutiny recommendations are complementary towards achieving our best council outcome to 'improve the quality of life for our residents, particularly those who are vulnerable or in poverty', as set out with the Best Council Plan 2013-2017.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

- 4.4.1 Details of any significant resource and financial implications linked to the Scrutiny recommendations will be referenced against the relevant recommendation.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 This report has no risk management implications.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 Last month the Scrutiny Board considered a report summarising the key issues and proposed recommendations arising from its working group meeting on Thursday 16th January 2014 which focused on improving communications aimed at tackling illegal money lending.
- 5.2 The Board endorsed the recommendations arising from this piece of Scrutiny work and a response to these recommendations has been provided for the Board's consideration at today's meeting. Any recommendations which have not yet been completed will be included in future recommendation tracking reports to enable the Board to continue monitoring progress.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 Members are asked to consider the response to the recommendations arising from this piece of Scrutiny work and decide whether any further scrutiny involvement is required at this stage.

7.0 Background papers¹

7.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.