

## **SCRUTINY BOARD (RESOURCES AND COUNCIL SERVICES)**

**MONDAY, 24TH FEBRUARY, 2014**

**PRESENT:** Councillor P Grahame in the Chair

Councillors S Bentley, J L Carter,  
N Dawson, J Hardy, A Khan, A Lowe,  
C Macniven and R Wood

### **70 Late Items**

There were no late items.

### **71 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

### **72 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **73 Minutes - 20 January 2014**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

### **74 Executive Board Minutes - 22 January 2014**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Executive Board held on 22 January 2014 be noted.

### **75 Grant Expenditure with Third Sector Bodies**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report presenting information in relation to grant expenditure with third sector bodies.

The following were in attendance and responded to Board Members questions and comments.

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services
- Dennis Holmes, Deputy Director, Adult Social Care
- Julie Staton, Head of Commissioning, Environment and Housing
- Mathew Sims, Head of Arts and Venue, City Development
- Simon Criddle, Head of Finance, City Development
- Philippa Toner, Senior Executive Manager, PPU.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- The criteria used to support individual grant giving and whether it supported the Council's Strategic objectives
- The difference between grants and commissioned services and the processes adopted to decide the most appropriate funding model
- Whether rigorous financial checks are undertaken on organisations receiving grants to assess their solvency
- The performance monitoring arrangements in place
- The governance arrangements for decision making
- The level of information given to elected Members regarding the funding of third sector bodies
- The ability to prevent double funding for the same project/outcome.

Members noted the current Contract and Financial Procedure Rules in relation to grants to external organisations. Members also noted guidance on this matter from the National Audit Office.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (i) To thank officers for the information presented
- (ii) To request that the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development draft up a statement on this matter, to be agreed at the Board's March meeting, reflecting the views and comments of the Board. It was agreed that the views of the Scrutiny Board would be submitted to Internal Audit who were currently undertaking work in this area.

## **76 Community Centres**

The Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) submitted a report detailing progress with the improved arrangements for the Community Centre portfolio.

The following were in attendance and responded to Board Members questions and comments:

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services
- Martin Dean, Head of Service (Communities)

The Scrutiny Board acknowledged that community centres play a valuable role in the city and that the current work undertaken at community centres supports the Council's wider objectives. The Scrutiny Board also agreed that it was appropriate for the council to support the effective running of the buildings maximising the income generated from users so that the costs to the council are controlled.

The Scrutiny Board supported the establishment of three price points for each space available, reflecting the facilities on offer:

- Point 1 – Full economic cost or ‘Market Rent’
- Point 2 – reduced community group rate
- Point 3 – Free.

The Scrutiny Board also supported proposals to simplify the lettings process by:

- Separating venues and community centres so that appropriate information is collected;
- Utilising the option to pay in advance by credit/debit card;
- Considering whether all the information currently collected is necessary, with a view to simplifying the process.

The Board continued to raise its concern over the standard of service received on occasion from the lettings service. The Head of Service (Communities) confirmed that this matter had been taken up with the relevant officer.

The Board noted the positive role Area Committee could have in relation to pricing.

**RESOLVED –**

- (i) To support the proposals outlined in the report.
- (ii) To receive a further progress report in the new municipal year.

**77 Members ICT Service Provision**

The Chief Officer (ICT) presented a report recommending a number of changes in relation to support and charges associated with using Council provided tablets for conducting Council business when abroad.

The following were in attendance and responded to Board Members questions and comments:

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services
- Andy Keightley, Business Relationship Manager
- Andrew Byrom, Support Services Manager.

**RESOLVED –**

- (i) To recommend that the savings resulting from the Members ICT Upgrade project be used to meet the data charges associated with the use of the Council-provided tablets abroad when the device is used to conduct Council business
- (ii) To recommend that the following changes to ICT support arrangements are introduced:

- The appointment of a dedicated Member ICT Support Officer to provide enhanced support as outlined between 3.3.12 and 3.3.14 of the report and,
- The opening hours of the Drop-In Centre within Civic Hall be extended to reflect those of the Service Centre i.e. 0800 to 1730, Monday to Friday.

**78 Work Schedule and Draft Terms of Reference - Decision Making and Due Regard to Equality**

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the draft work schedule.

**RESOLVED –**

- (i) That the Board's work schedule be updated to reflect the work areas identified during today's meeting.
- (ii) That the draft terms of reference for an inquiry into Decision Making and Due Regard to Equality be agreed.

**79 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Monday, 24th March 2014 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 11.20 am).