

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

**MONDAY, 23RD FEBRUARY, 2015**

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

Councillors B Anderson, S Bentley,  
J L Carter, N Dawson, R Grahame,  
J Jarosz, A Khan, A Lowe and C Macniven

### **68 Late Items**

The following late information was submitted to the meeting:

- Reconfiguration of advice services and information provided by Sandy Goulding, former volunteer at Otley CAB (minute 72 refers)

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

### **69 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Cummins and R Wood.

Councillor R Grahame substituted for Councillor J Cummins and Councillor B Anderson substituted for Councillor R Wood.

### **71 Minutes - 26 January 2015**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

### **72 Leeds Advice Consortium - CAB Provision**

The Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) submitted a report providing the context for the recent reconfiguration of advice services undertaken by Leeds Citizens Advice Bureau.

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

- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Steve Carey, Chief Officer, Welfare and Benefits
- Joy Wetherill, Executive Officer (Advice Services).

In summary the main areas of discussion were:

- Confirmation that all decisions were made in accordance with the Council's Executive and Decision making Procedure Rules.
- Confirmation that Leeds City Council let the contract for the provision of city-wide advice and CAB designed and took the decisions regarding service reconfiguration.
- The budgetary and service context for the reconfiguration of advice services.
- The reconfiguration of services delivered from across the CAB network with an emphasis on telephone services and appointment-based outreach.
- The development of a telephone triage assessment process to increase overall customer contact.
- The level of consultation undertaken with affected ward councillors.
- The level of involvement with Outer North West Community Committee

**RESOLVED** – To receive a future report that updates on the development and performance of advice services across the city.

### **73 The Former Fir Tree School**

A joint report from the City Solicitor, Director of Children's Services and the Director of City Development was submitted providing the information and background leading up to the transfer of the freehold of the former Fir Tree Primary School site to the Khalsa Science Academy Free School.

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

- Councillor J Blake, Executive Member (Children and Families)
- Councillor R Lewis, Executive Member (Transport and the Economy)
- Councillor A Lamb, Opposition spokesperson (Children and Families)
- Ben Middleton, Head of Asset Management
- Paul Brennan, Deputy Director Children's Services
- Viv Buckland, Head of Strategic Development, Children's Services
- Catherine Witham, City Solicitor
- Mark Turnbull, Head of Service, Legal Services.

In summary the main areas of discussion were:

- Confirmation that there was nothing a Local Authority could do to prevent the government forcing a transfer of premises under a Scheme using the powers contained within the Academies Act 2010.
- Whether a Free School was covered by the provisions of the Academies Act 2010 and the efforts made by the City Council to obtain evidence from the Education Funding Agency of their powers.
- The unprecedented nature of the actions of the government in relation to taking 'forced' possession of the Fir Tree site.

- The length of time between the site becoming surplus to requirement and the transfer to Khalsa.
- The relationship between Leeds City Council and the Department for Education.
- Whether the Council had earlier opportunities to sell the site without reference to the Secretary of State.
- Any lessons that could be learnt from this experience.

**RESOLVED –**

- (i) That the Board note the contents of the report
- (ii) That in order to achieve closure on the matter, officers be asked to consider what, if any, lessons could be learnt from this experience.

**74 Work Schedule**

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the draft work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

**RESOLVED –** That the Board's work schedule be updated to reflect the work areas identified during today's meeting.

**75 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Monday, 23 March 2015 at 10.00 am (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 am)

(The meeting concluded at 11.40 am).