

SCRUTINY BOARD (CITIZENS AND COMMUNITIES)

MONDAY, 27TH JULY, 2015

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors Mrs A Carter, C Dobson,
R Grahame, G Hyde, J Illingworth,
K Maqsood, K Wakefield, N Walshaw and
Wilkinson

10 Late Items

There were no late items.

11 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

12 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors A Blackburn and C Campbell. Apologies for absence were also submitted on behalf of Councillors M Harland and M Robinson, with Councillors C Dobson and G Wilkinson in attendance as substitutes.

13 Minutes - 17 June 2015

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2015 be approved as a correct record.

14 2015/16 Quarter 1 Performance Report

The Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) submitted a report which informed the Board of the range of performance information currently available across the Citizens and Communities Directorate. This report provided examples of existing performance information to assist Members in considering current performance and determining what they would like to receive in future reports.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor James Lewis, Executive Member for Resources and Strategy
- Lee Hemsworth, Chief Officer for Customer Services
- Shaid Mahmood, Acting Chief Officer for Communities
- Steve Carey, Chief Officer Welfare and Benefits

- John Mulcahy, Head of Licensing and Registration

The key areas of discussion were:

- The development of a staff retention scheme aimed at addressing the high levels of staff turnover in the contact centre.
- The impact of Individual Electoral Registration. Members discussed ongoing efforts to promote registration, particularly in relation to the student population, and requested updates as part of future performance reports.
- Members requested that future performance reports detail the Discretionary Housing Payments made by Ward.
- Members sought information relating to the Leeds City Credit Union in terms of membership numbers and loan book value. The Board also acknowledged the broad range of products available through the Credit Union and recognised the need for wider promotion.
- Members requested that the Annual Equality and Diversity Report and Equality Improvement Priorities be considered by the Scrutiny Board once available.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Board notes the quarter 1 performance report.
- (b) That the additional performance information requested by the Board be provided in future reports.
- (c) That the Annual Equality and Diversity Report and Equality Improvement Priorities be considered by the Scrutiny Board once available.

15 Citizens@Leeds - Supporting Communities and Tackling Poverty

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development provided the Board with a copy of the update report to the Executive Board, dated 24 June 2015, in relation to the work undertaken under the Citizens@Leeds initiative.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Lee Hemsworth, Chief Officer for Customer Services
- Shaid Mahmood, Acting Chief Officer for Communities
- Steve Carey, Chief Officer Welfare and Benefits
- John Mulcahy, Head of Licensing and Registration

The key areas of discussion were:

- Helping people into work and potential opportunities to explore and maximise employment and skills resources.
- The need to work with the Department for Work and Pensions to gather more up-to-date performance information.
- Members acknowledged the announcement of further welfare reforms in the budget statement on 8th July 2015 and therefore requested that the

implications of these reforms on the Council's resources is considered by the Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Board notes the update report on the Citizens@Leeds initiative.
- (b) That a further update report on the implications of the new welfare reforms set out in the budget statement on 8th July 2015 is brought back to the Scrutiny Board as soon as possible.

16 Universal Credit

The Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) submitted a report on the preparations and potential implications linked to Universal Credit following the Scrutiny Board's agreement to undertake a review this year.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Lee Hemsworth, Chief Officer for Customer Services
- Shaid Mahmood, Acting Chief Officer for Communities
- Steve Carey, Chief Officer Welfare and Benefits
- John Mulcahy, Head of Licensing and Registration
- Dave Roberts, Financial Inclusion Strategy Manager
- Ian Hunter, Jobcentre Plus

The key areas of discussion were:

- Clarification of roles linked to the negotiation of a Delivery Partnership between the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Council.
- Concerns surrounding the in-built delay of 5-6 weeks for the first payment of Universal Credit.
- The implications for Housing Leeds with a potential risk of increased rent arrears.
- The Trusted Partner approach currently being trialled by DWP which would see social sector landlords empowered to make recommendations about which tenants should have their housing costs paid directly to the landlord (Members requested an update once available).
- The need to work closely with private sector landlords to help them to better understand and prepare for Universal Credit.
- The provision of Personal Budgeting Support as part of the claim process and the timeliness of offering this support.

The Chair informed the Board that a working group meeting would be held on Thursday 13th August to scope the Board's forthcoming review and that draft terms of reference would be brought back to the Board's September meeting for formal approval.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) be noted.
- (b) That draft terms of reference in relation to the Board's forthcoming review on Universal Credit be formally considered and approved at the Board's September meeting.

17 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development invited Members to consider the Board's work schedule for the 2015/16 municipal year.

The following updates and areas of work were noted:

- Reference was made to the development of the Communities Board with a greater emphasis around undertaking work within communities and away from holding traditional Board meetings.
- It was noted that working group meetings (dates to be confirmed) would be held during August to scope the terms of reference for the Board's forthcoming reviews around the development of Community Hubs and Community Committees.

RESOLVED - That the work schedule be approved.

18 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 14 September 2015 at 10.00 am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 am)

(The meeting concluded at 11.40 am)