

SCRUTINY BOARD (CITIZENS AND COMMUNITIES)

MONDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER, 2015

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors A Blackburn, Mrs A Carter,
C Dobson, R Grahame, M Harland,
J Illingworth, K Maqsood, M Robinson,
K Wakefield and N Walshaw

19 Late Items

The Chair circulated a letter from Councillor Matthew Robinson setting out a formal request for Scrutiny.

The Board also received a copy of the draft terms of reference relating to its forthcoming inquiries on Universal Credit; the development of Community Hubs; and the development of Community Committees.

The above information was not available at the time of agenda despatch, but was subsequently made available on the Council's website (Minute No. 22 and 27 refers).

20 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

21 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor C Campbell. Apologies for absence were also submitted on behalf of Councillor G Hyde, with Councillor C Dobson in attendance as substitute. Members of the Board asked that their best wishes for a speedy recovery be sent to Councillor Hyde.

22 Minutes - 27 July 2015

Further to Minute no. 17 'Work Schedule', the Chair highlighted the written request made by Councillor Matthew Robinson for the Board to look, with urgency, at the matters related to Leeds on immigration, refugees and asylum seekers, particularly in response to the current crisis in the Middle East and Mediterranean. In discussion with the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities), it was agreed that an update report would be brought to the Board's October meeting.

RESOLVED –

(a) That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2015 be approved as a correct record.

- (b) That an update report on matters related to Leeds on immigration, refugees and asylum seekers be brought to the Board's October meeting.

23 Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Licensing Policy

The Head of Elections, Licensing and Registration submitted a report presenting details of the review of the Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Licensing Policy. As a Budget and Policy Framework document, the Scrutiny Board was invited to consider and provide any comment on the draft revised Policy prior to it being formally approved.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Councillor James Lewis, Executive Member for Strategy and Resources
- John Mulcahy, Head of Elections, Licensing and Registration
- Susan Holden, Principal Licensing Officer

The key areas of discussion were:

- The health impacts of gambling – whilst acknowledging that health-related issues linked to gambling were being addressed under the current objective linked to protecting children and other vulnerable persons, Members questioned what work was being undertaken nationally to make public health a specific licensing objective under the Gambling Act? It was noted that the LGA continues to call for the introduction of a public health objective but also acknowledges that other new initiatives linked to local risk assessments are being progressed to help explore area-based vulnerability and gambling related harm.
- Local Area Profiles – the Board welcomed the introduction of Local Area Profiles aimed at informing local risk assessments. However, the Board identified the need for such profiles to be compiled in conjunction with local Community Committees as well as Community Hubs.
- Identifying the impacts of gambling on communities – Members agreed that further research is needed in this regard which would also help inform Local Area Profiling.
- Social Inclusion Fund – it was noted that Community Committees could apply for Social Inclusion Funding to help address any social impacts relating to gambling within their localities.
- Enforcement of the Policy – Members raised concerns regarding children accessing gaming machines and noted that applicants and existing licensees must satisfy the Council that there will be/are sufficient measures to ensure under 18 year olds do not have access to their premises. Reports of any breaches should therefore be reported to the Council.
- Members welcomed the ongoing partnership working with the LGA, the Gambling Commission and other local authorities in this regard.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Scrutiny Board notes the report.

- (b) That the Scrutiny Board agrees with the further amendment proposed by Licensing Committee at paragraph 3.12 of the report.
- (c) That the above issues raised by the Scrutiny Board are taken forward and where appropriate included in the revised Policy Statement.

24 Equality Improvement Priorities 2016-2020 and Equality Framework Reaccreditation

The Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) submitted a report on the Equality Framework Reaccreditation and invited the Scrutiny Board to consider and provide any comment on the draft Equality Improvement Priorities 2016-2020.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Councillor Mohammed Rafique, Executive Member for Employment, Enterprise and Opportunity
- Shaid Mahmood, Acting Chief Officer for Communities
- Pauline Ellis, Senior Policy and Performance Officer
- Beverley Benjamin, Executive Officer, Citizens and Communities

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

- Stonewall Accreditation – in response to Members' questions, it was noted that the Council had dropped out of the top 100 employers' index in 2014 as a result of more organisations, primarily private organisations, applying for accreditation and demonstrating greater progress in achieving an inclusive workplace. The Board was pleased to learn that the Council still continues to develop this area and has submitted a recent application to reapply for accreditation.
- Perinatal education – Members acknowledged the importance of improving perinatal education particularly for those in poverty and welcomed this as a new key priority.
- Developing a skilled and diverse workforce – Members felt that further work is still needed to create a diverse workforce and particularly in relation to improving opportunities to progress to middle and senior levels in the organisation. The Board was therefore pleased to note that a new Inclusion and Diversity Member Steering Group had been established to address this area.
- Sign language – Members emphasised the need to address the 2 week waiting time for an interpreter to support sign language users at Customer Services and also put forward a suggestion to provide a sign language interpreter at Full Council meetings.
- Income inequality – whilst acknowledging that the Council already monitors the diversity of its workforce based around salary grades, a suggestion was made for the Council to look into the feasibility of undertaking comparator research involving other large employers within the city.

- Inclusive design – the Board welcomed this as a key priority particularly in terms of having external input from the Council’s Equality Assembly and the Access and User-Ability Group. As part of this, particular emphasis was also made around including the Parks and Countryside programme of works.
- Children in poverty – whilst acknowledging that Free School Meals had previously correlated with many other indices, Members recognised the need to ensure that recent changes in eligibility were being reflected.
- Improving opportunities for children – in acknowledging the proactive work being undertaken by the Council around improving opportunities for Looked After Children, Members felt that this needed to be reflected more within the document.
- Learning outcomes linked to Free School Meals – Members felt that this focused heavily on GCSE outcomes and suggested exploring a broader range of progress measures.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Scrutiny Board notes the report.
- (b) That the above issues raised by the Scrutiny Board are taken forward and where appropriate included in the revised Equality Improvement Priorities.

25 Contact Centre Performance

The Head of Customer Contact (Contact Centre) presented an update report on contact centre performance and the centres of excellence model.

The Chair also highlighted that he and the Principal Scrutiny Adviser visited the contact centre on Friday 11 September 2015 and shared his observations from this visit with the Board.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Adam Quesne, Head of Customer Contact

The key areas of discussion were:

- Call answer rates – some concerns were raised around the decline of call answer rates, particularly involving housing related calls. In response it was noted that staff turnover had been exceptionally high and that any new members of staff need to be appropriately trained first.
- Career progression opportunities – as highly trained staff, it was noted that many Customer Service Officers will apply for higher grade jobs elsewhere in the Council and particularly within Housing Leeds. To help retain staff, Members agreed that more career progression opportunities within the contact centre environment are needed.
- Call answer rates – Members acknowledged that there will be peak times when customers will be calling the contact centre and noted that the

service is able to monitor call answer rates by time of day and is already aware of such peak times.

- Recruitment initiatives – to help address call demands during peak times, it was noted that a new recruitment initiative based around offering flexible contracts to cover peak times was also being progressed.
- Out of Hours Service – it was highlighted that a full review of this service was now being undertaken to reflect on the demand and level of service provided in response to the floods during August.
- Digital access – in welcoming the introduction and development of the new customer portal, Members requested to be kept informed of progress in this regard.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Scrutiny Board notes the report.
- (b) That a further update report on contact centre performance is brought back in February 2016.
- (c) That any other Board Members wishing to visit the contact centre should make arrangements through the Principal Scrutiny Adviser.

26 Summer Budget Welfare Reforms

Following a request from the Scrutiny Board in July, the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) provided a report setting out more detailed information about the welfare reforms announced in the Government's Summer Budget and the implications for the Council.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Steve Carey, Chief Officer Welfare and Benefits

The Chief Officer Welfare and Benefits explained that an error had been made in the report in relation to the implementation timeline for the reforms (paragraph 2.2 within the report). It was noted that the reference made to 'April 2017' should read 'April 2016'.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Universal Credit – Members acknowledged that the impact of these changes on Universal Credit entitlement will need to be considered as part of its separate inquiry this year.
- Support for children and families – it was highlighted that the proposed changes to the support provided for children and families do not acknowledge circumstances involving those families that foster and adopt children. As such, it was reported that the DWP is yet to provide clarity in this regard.

RESOLVED – That the Scrutiny Board notes the report.

(Councillor K Wakefield left the meeting at 11.45 am, during the consideration of this item.)

27 Scrutiny Reviews - draft terms of reference

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development highlighted that the Scrutiny Board had agreed to undertake the following inquiries this year:

- Universal Credit
- The development of Community Hubs
- The development of Community Committees

Following working group meetings during August to discuss the potential scope of these inquiries, the draft terms of reference relating to the above inquiries were presented at the meeting for formal approval.

The following were in attendance during this item:

- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)
- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Steve Carey, Chief Officer Welfare and Benefits
- Shaid Mahmood, Acting Chief Officer for Communities

RESOLVED – That the draft terms of reference relating to the Scrutiny Board's forthcoming Inquiries be approved.

28 Work Schedule

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

The following updates on areas of work were noted:

- That an update report on matters related to Leeds on immigration, refugees and asylum seekers will be considered in October.
- That an update report on contact centre performance will be scheduled for February 2016.
- That the Chair will liaise with the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) to consider how best to address concerns raised by a Member of the Board around Corporate Welfare.

RESOLVED – That the work schedule be updated to reflect the above areas of work.

29 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 12 October 2015 at 10.00 am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 am)

(The meeting concluded at 11.55 am)

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Monday, 12th October, 2015

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