

SCRUTINY BOARD (STRATEGY AND RESOURCES)

MONDAY, 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2015

PRESENT: Councillor K Groves in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, S Bentley,
C Dobson, M Harland, H Hayden, J Jarosz,
J McKenna, D Nagle, T Wilford and
R Wood

17 Late Items

There were no late items.

18 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

19 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Cohen, Councillor B Anderson substituted and Councillor Sobel, Councillor M Harland substituted.

20 Minutes - 20 July 2015

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

21 Matters arising from the minutes

Minute 14 – Effective procurement and contract management

The Chair reported that since the last meeting contact had been made to those in charge of various feeder systems to request that PPPU had access to these in order to manage and have greater insight into spend. Progress had now been made in obtaining access. PPPU to provide an update report in November.

The Chair also reported that the Chief Officer Human Resources would be attending the October meeting to discuss career families.

Minute 15 – Work Schedule

The Chair advised that draft terms of reference for an Inquiry into ICT resources would be circulated to Board Members, prior to formal approval at the October meeting.

The Chair also advised that 'Commissioning' would be discussed at the December meeting.

Representative to attend Scrutiny Board (Citizens and Communities)

The Citizens and Communities Scrutiny Board had agreed to use its October Board meeting to discuss matters relating to immigration, refugees and asylum seekers. As such, the Chair of the Scrutiny Board, Councillor Barry Anderson, extended an invitation to all Scrutiny Boards to send a representative, if thought appropriate, to participate. It was agreed that Councillor Hayden would represent Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources).

22 Fees and Charges

At the Board's July meeting, members agreed to undertake an Inquiry into income generation. The agreed terms of reference provided the rationale behind the Inquiry. These focused on the belief that a critical examination of fees and charges may be an effective way to help ease budget pressures and focus spend and subsidy on the highest priorities. As part of the first session of this Inquiry, the Head of Scrutiny Support and Member Development and the Head of Revenue Savings Programme submitted a joint report providing a broad outline of current fees and charges and associated issues. The report also contained comparative analysis of the Core Cities fees and charges using 2013/14 'Value for Money' profile data.

The following were in attendance to respond to Members' questions

- Doug Meeson, Chief Officer (Financial Services)
- Steve Clough, Head of Revenue Savings Programme.

In summary the main areas of discussion were:

- The financial context in which the Council is operating and the pressures faced as a result of grant reduction, demand and inflation.
- The key findings arising from the comparative analysis of the Core Cities fees and charges including the fact that Leeds is ranked 5th in terms of all income from fees and charges per head of population (php) (£207 php compared with highest £262 php and average £210 php).
- That overall, the Council's income per head of population is £3 lower than the average, which equates to £2.25m per annum.
- That every 1% increase in fees and charges equates to £1m additional income.
- The importance of having a clear understanding of costs and subsidy and the acknowledgement that where the Council chooses not to recover full costs the tax payer is effectively subsidising the service.
- The importance of undertaking business cases and cost benefit analysis when increasing or introducing new fees and charges and the need to understand unintentional consequences.
- The need to understand collection rates and collection costs.

- Whether there should be geographical flexibility in the level of fees and charges.
- The services provided to schools and whether any of these services are currently subsidised.

In terms of next steps the Board agreed that they should receive detailed information on the current type and level of fees and charges by Directorate. The Board also requested that officers bring forward suggestions for new fee areas. A questionnaire would be sent to Directors asking various questions prior to them being invited to attend Scrutiny.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the Board note the contents of the report.
- (ii) That Directors be sent a questionnaire in relation to fees and charges prior to their attendance at Board.
- (iii) That the Board receive detailed information regarding fees and charges for each Directorate.
- (iv) That officers report back on the level of subsidy provided to schools for services received.
- (v) That officers report back to this Board on options for new fees and charges.

23 Work Schedule

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which provided information regarding the Board's work schedule.

Draft terms of reference were also submitted into an Inquiry into income generation.

RESOLVED – That the Board's work schedule be noted.

24 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 26 October 2015 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 11.30am).