

## SCRUTINY BOARD (CENTRAL AND CORPORATE)

MONDAY, 9TH JUNE, 2008

**PRESENT:** Councillor M Dobson in the Chair

Councillors B Atha, S Bentley, B Chastney,  
J Dowson, P Ewens, A Lowe, B Selby and  
P Wadsworth

### 1 Chair's Welcome

The Chair welcomed Members and officers to the first meeting of the new Scrutiny Board (Central and Corporate) in the 2008/09 municipal year.

### 2 Declarations of Interest

No Member declarations of interest were made.

### 3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors P Davey and G Latty.

(NB: Councillor Selby was temporarily absent at the commencement of the meeting and rejoined the meeting at 10.03 am during this item)

### 4 Input into Work Programme 2008/09 - Sources of Work and Establishing the Board's Priorities

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report covering the Board's terms of reference, and outlining possible sources of work which the Board might wish to consider incorporating into its work programme for 2008/09.

Also enclosed with the agenda were copies of the **Audit Commission Corporate Assessment Report**, dated May 2008, and the associated action plan, the draft performance indicators associated with the **Council's Draft Business Plan 2008-2011** (copies of which were distributed at the meeting) and a report from the Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement regarding the 2007/08 Quarter 4 key performance indicators.

In attendance at the meeting and responding to Members' queries and comments were James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement), Nicole Jackson, Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance), Alan Gay, Director of Resources, Doug Meeson, Chief Officer

(Financial Management), Lorraine Hallam, Chief Officer (Human Resources) and Steven Carey, Head of Leeds Benefits Service.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:-

- The comment contained in the Audit Commission Corporate Assessment Report regarding a lack of a strategic approach to services and the needs of **Over-50s** in the population. It was explained that this comment was linked to a recent Government initiative, discussions were taking place regarding how this issue could be addressed and it was likely that this matter would be picked up by the Scrutiny Board (Adult Social Care);
- **Cover pricing** – this term related to a practice prevalent amongst contractors competing for local authority business, whereby they effectively operated as a cartel to keep prices artificially high;
- The **Council Business Plan 2008-2011**, and the themes and priorities contained therein. It was agreed that the review and monitoring of the Business Plan should be a regular agenda item for the Board;
- The need for Members to have information regarding the total amount of resources the Council received from Central Government, and in relation to which services, and for this to then be broken down into Ward-based information, for instance Highways and Streetscene, to enable Members to see where money was being spent. The increased role and importance of Area Committees in terms of monitoring the implementation of the Local Area Agreement and the Leeds Strategic Plan priorities at local level was emphasised;
- **Equality and Diversity** – the Board might wish to monitor and review progress against the new Council Equality and Diversity Strategy recently approved by the Executive Board, for example in terms of the Council's record as an employer of women, BME staff and people with disabilities. It was agreed that as part of this particular strand, the Board should receive an update on the recruitment action plan for people with mental health difficulties, which was the subject of an Inquiry last year by the Scrutiny Board (Resources);
- **Managing Attendance policies and procedures** – similarly, it was agreed that the Board would like to follow through on the work carried out last year by the Scrutiny Board (Resources), and incorporate issues such as work place stress, to see if trends could be identified, and the extent and costs of using agency staff. It was requested that Richard Moss-Blundell's (Head of HR, Environment and Neighbourhoods) analysis report, submitted to the Scrutiny Board (Resources) on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2008, be re-circulated to this Board's Members;
- **Out-sourcing of services** – it was accepted that it would be inappropriate for this Board to investigate the details of particular contracts or services which had been 'out-sourced', but it could look at broader issues and concepts, such as what arrangements were in place for options/costs appraisals before decisions were taken, the TUPE arrangements regarding staff transfers and the monitoring and review arrangements in respect of these type of contracts to ensure that the Council was achieving the expected value for money service originally envisaged;
- The use of **consultants** by the Council, and the associated costs;

- The current **Job Evaluation** exercise – situation report and update;
- **Workforce Planning** – and in particular the Council's role in offering job offer guarantee schemes and apprenticeships for young people;
- **ALMOs** – preparedness for inspections?
- **Budget process** – the Board's role in seeking to align budget allocations to strategic priorities, linked to the Council Business Plan and Leeds Strategic Plan;
- **Electoral matters** – polling stations and electoral registration;
- **Revenue collection** methods and statistics.

The Chair thanked the officers for their attendance. The Board would now go on to consider its actual work programme for 2008/09.

(NB: Councillor Lowe was temporarily absent at the commencement of the meeting, and rejoined the meeting at 10.15 am, during this item).

## 5 **Work Programme 2008/09**

Subsequent to the last item, the Board gave consideration to its 2008/09 draft work programme.

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report outlining the Inquiry selection criteria set out in the Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules, and attaching a skeleton work programme containing details of the proposed dates of the quarterly financial monitoring reports.

- **ALMOs** – A working group\* to be established to look into the preparedness of the ALMOs for their forthcoming inspections, dates to be canvassed by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development;
- **Cover Pricing** – working group\* to be established to look into local implications/safeguards, dates to be canvassed by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development;
- **Workforce Planning** – Head of Scrutiny and Member Development to arrange a working group\* meeting with Lorraine Hallam to explore issues and the need for further possible meetings;
- **Equality and Diversity Strategy** – in the first instance, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development to arrange a lunchtime briefing session for all Board Members with Lelir Young, Head of Equalities;
- **Mental Health employment action plan** – Board to receive an update report regarding this employment action plan, previously approved by the Scrutiny Board (Resources);
- **Budget monitoring and planning** – Report to July 2008 meeting regarding the 2007/08 outturn figures, in addition to the normal quarterly financial monitoring reports;
- **Council Business Plan 2008-2011** – to be a regular update agenda item;
- **Attendance Management Policies and Procedures** – to be included in the work programme to follow-on from the previous work carried out by the Scrutiny Board (Resources);

- **Revenue Collection** – Steven Carey, Head of Leeds Benefits Service, to be invited back to a future meeting to update the Board on the latest position, and in particular the performance of the ACADEMY system;
- **Elections/Electoral Registration** – report in due course on progress in implementing the recommendations of the Electoral Working Group of Members;
- **Out-sourcing** – schedule into work programme for Inquiry into the broad aspects of this policy;
- **Consultants** – use of and value for money – schedule possible Inquiry into work programme.

It was agreed that the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development, in consultation with the Chair, should draw up a **provisional work programme** for submission to the next Board meeting. In the meantime, working group dates and the lunchtime briefing session would be canvassed and confirmed.

(\*Working Groups to comprise all Members of the Board, with the proviso that not all Members will be able or required to attend all meetings, due to their other commitments).

## 6 Dates and Times of Future Meetings

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2008

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup>\* September 2008**, at 14.00 (Pre-meeting at 13.30)

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2008

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2008

Monday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2009

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2009

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2009

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009

All except \* at 10.00 am (pre-meetings at 9.30 am)

\*Please note change of date and time for this meeting from original schedule.