

SCRUTINY BOARD (CITY DEVELOPMENT)

TUESDAY, 7TH SEPTEMBER, 2010

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, J Elliott, G Harper,
J Jarosz, G Latty, R Pryke, M Rafique,
M Robinson and S Smith

B Woroncow (Co-optee)

39 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the call-in meeting.

40 Late Items

The Chair agreed to accept the following document as supplementary information:-

- LeedsCard and BreezeCard entry into Tropical World and Home Farm – Report of the Director of City Development (Agenda Item 7) (Minute 43 refers)

The document in question was not available at the time of the agenda despatch, but circulated by e mail and made available to the public on the Council's web site prior to today's meeting.

41 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

42 Call-In of Decision - Briefing Paper

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report regarding the procedural aspects of the call-in process.

Members were advised that the options available to the Board in respect of this particular called-in decision were:-

Option 1 – **Release the decision for implementation.** Having reviewed the decision, the Scrutiny Board (City Development) could decide to release it for implementation. If this option was chosen, the decision would be released for immediate implementation and the decision could not be called-in again.

Option 2 – **Recommend that the decision be reconsidered.** Having reviewed the decision, the Scrutiny Board (City Development) could recommend to the Director of City Development that the decision be reconsidered. If the Scrutiny Board (City Development) chose this option, a report would be submitted to the Director of City Development within 3 working days of this meeting. The Director of City Development would reconsider the decision and would publish the outcome of their deliberations

on the delegated decision system. Where the Director believes that the original decision should be confirmed, it must be referred to the next Executive Board for a decision.

Where the Director agrees with the views of Scrutiny, a new delegated decision form would be submitted indicating ineligible for Call-In.

In cases where the Director believes that the original decision should be confirmed, and in their view urgency prevents them from submitting the decision to Executive Board, the approval of the relevant Executive Board Member would be required before implementation. This Executive Member approval together with the reasons for urgency would be included in the new delegated decision form.

The Director and relevant Executive Board Member would also be required to attend and give their reasoning to the relevant Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED – That the report outlining the call-in procedures be noted.

43 Call-In - Review of Delegated Decision No D37181- LeedsCard and BreezeCard entry to Tropical World and Home Farm

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report, together with background papers, relating to a review of a delegated decision of the Chief Recreation Officer of 16th August 2010 in relation to approving a recommendation that free entry for LeedsCard and BreezeCard holders be replaced by a 20% discount from 1st September 2010 at Tropical World and Temple Newsam, Home Farm.

Appended to the report were copies of the following documents for the information/comment of the meeting:-

- Copy of completed call-in request form
- The Delegated Decision Notification – Chief Recreation Officer – D37181 – LeedsCard and BreezeCard entry to Tropical World and Home Farm dated 16th August 2010

In addition to the above appendices, a copy of the following document was circulated as supplementary information to assist the Board in their deliberations:-

- Report of the Director of City Development – LeedsCard and BreezeCard entry into Tropical World and Home Farm

However arising from discussions, the Board decided not to take this supplementary information into account as the information was not included within the original delegation decision documentation.

The decision had been called-in for review by Councillors S Bentley, R Downes, M Hamilton, J Monaghan and A Taylor on the following grounds:-

“ The decision will disproportionately adversely affect the poorer and least advantaged residents, especially younger people of Leeds”

Councillors R Downes and S Bentley attended the meeting to present evidence to the Board and respond to Members’ questions and comments.

The following officers were in attendance:-

Richard Mond, Chief Recreation Officer, City Development
Sean Flesher, Principal Area Manager (West), Parks and Countryside, City Development

The Board then questioned Councillors Downes and Bentley, together with officers at length on the evidence submitted.

In summary, the main points raised by Councillors Downes and Bentley were:-

- the need to retain free entry into Tropical World and Home Farm for LeedsCard and BreezeCard users for disadvantaged groups, in the city, especially younger people and the elderly
- the need to take into consideration rising transport costs and the lack of direct bus services to some of these venues which makes a visit expensive even with free entry
- to challenge the assumptions made in the report concerning the likely fall off of visitor numbers and the anticipated increase in income as a consequence of the proposal to stop free entry with visitors who have a LeedsCard or BreezeCard
- clarification of the consequences of reduced attendance figures and charging an entry fee on secondary spend in these venues which would have an impact on the income and running costs and whether a detailed analysis had been carried out
- clarification of how residents and visitors would be informed of the new charging policy if it went ahead

In explaining the reasons for the decision, officers made the following comments:-

- an acknowledgement made that the original delegated decision documentation did not contain the full details
- the need to implement these admission charges in the current financial climate, in order contribute to balancing his budget in 2010/11

The Chair the invited questions and comments from Board Members and, in summary, the main areas of discussion were:-

- clarification of the loss of secondary spend at these attractions if charges were introduced

- the need to undertake 'swipe card' visitor research on the post codes of card holders to identify where visitors were from to aid knowledge of the social context in the decision making process
(The Chief Recreation Officer reported that progress was being made to introduce swipe card technology, but currently visitors simply show their card to gain free entry to these attractions and therefore there was no database of LeedsCard access on which to base research)
- clarification of the usage and proportionality of the LeedsCard and BreezeCard at other attractions
- around the accuracy of the likely revenue that would be made as a result of bringing in these charges at these facilities
- clarification as to whether or not the Government's recent withdrawal of free swimming charges for older people had a direct effect on the overall budget
(The Board agreed to refer this issue to the Director of Resources and Acting Deputy Chief Executive for a written response and for the reply being circulated to Board Members)
- clarification as to whether this issue was within the budgetary framework
(The Board's Principal Scrutiny Adviser responded and confirmed that it was within the budgetary framework)
- the concerns expressed that Councillor A Ogilvie, in his capacity as Executive Member for Leisure, had decided not to attend this Call-In meeting
- clarification of the financial position of Tropical World and Home Farm
- the threat to the viability of the LeedsCard and BreezeCard if free entry was withdrawn
- the proposed introduction of a 'City Card' designed to replace the 'LeedsCard' and how this would affect the current proposals
- clarification as to whether or not specific benefactors of Tropical World in particular had been consulted on the proposed admission charges
- clarification as to whether or not consideration had been given to charging LeedsCard holders and allowing free entry for BreezeCard holders at both facilities
- the fact that information was missing from the original report when the delegated decision was taken

Following this process, the Chair allowed the Call-In signatories to sum up.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked Councillors Downes and officers for their attendance and contribution to the call-in meeting.

RESOLVED- That the report and information provided be noted.

44 Outcome of Call-In

Following consideration of evidence presented to them, the Board passed the following resolution:-

RESOLVED – That the Delegated Decision of the Chief Recreation Officer on the LeedsCard and BreezeCard entry to Tropical World and Home Farm be referred back for reconsideration in view of the additional information provided by the Chief Recreation Officer which was not included in the report when the officer delegated decision was made, inadequate consultation and the introduction of a “City Card”.

(The meeting concluded at 1.20pm)