

SCRUTINY BOARD (CENTRAL AND CORPORATE)

WEDNESDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER, 2010

PRESENT: Councillor P Grahame in the Chair

Councillors S Bentley, D Blackburn,
B Chastney, M Hamilton, K Groves,
R Wood, B Atha, A Gabriel, M Lyons,
B Lancaster, J Marjoram and R Grahame

Apologies Councillor

24 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

Councillor J Procter raised concern regarding the officer recommendation to restrict the information as detailed in appendix 2 to Agenda Item 7.

Members were asked to determine whether to accept the officer's recommendation that the information should remain exempt and that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during this item. Following a vote by Board Members present, it was:

RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as containing exempt information on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceeding, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as follows:

Agenda Item 7 – Reductions in Grants: Implications for Services, Appendix 2 – under the terms of Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4. (3) (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) and on the grounds that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

25 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Gabriel declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 7, Reductions in Grants: Implications for Services due to her position as a trustee for South Leeds Health for All

Councillor Chastney declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 7, Reductions in Grants: Implications for Services due to his position as a Director of Hyde Park Source.

26 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bentley, Lowe, Taggart, Hardy and J L Carter. Councillors Atha, Marjoram, R Grahame, Lyons and Lancaster were all in attendance as substitute members.

27 Call-In of Decision - Briefing Paper

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development informed Members of the Call In arrangements in accordance with the Council's Constitution and the options of action available to the Board. It was reported that only the two following options were applicable to the Board:

- Release the decision for implementation
- Recommend that the decision be reconsidered

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

28 Reductions in Grants: Implications for Services

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development referred to the following decision of the Executive Board, that had been called in:

- Executive Board Minute 71(b) – Reductions in Grants: Implications for Service.

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- Councillors J Procter, B Anderson and C Fox – signatories to the Called In decision.
- Councillor R Lewis – Executive Member
- Alan Gay – Director of Resources

Councillors J Procter and B Anderson addressed the meeting and outlined the main concerns that led to the Call In of the decision. These included the following:

- The report offered no explanation of how the proposed cuts had been agreed, in particular the amounts concerned and it was questioned whether these proposed cuts would be done on a proportional basis.
- It was felt that the decision taken was not accountable and transparent.
- Of the organisations concerned, some of these had contractual arrangements with the Council. It was felt that where contracts existed, these should be honoured.
- There was no explanation of different options that could have been considered.
- Concern on how the cuts would affect the organisations – would these affect jobs?, the effect on other employment related issues including NEETS and worklessness.
- Were the cuts proportional across the City? – it appeared some areas would suffer more than others.

Members were issued with a further paper which contained updated information in relation to Appendix 2 and there was a brief adjournment whilst Members considered this information.

In response to the concerns raised, Alan Gay addressed the meeting. He reported that as part of the emergency budget announced on June 10, a report had been prepared for Executive Board regarding the spending implications for the Council. The Council was facing significant spending pressures and the report dealt with £15 million of reductions. Members were informed that discussions were ongoing with the affected organisations.

In response to Board Members comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- Concern regarding the future viability of the organisations affected.
- Reiteration that the organisations affected were being consulted.
- Geographic implications – would different parts of the City be more affected by these cuts than others?
- Further concern that the report did not address the future viability of the organisations involved nor did it address wider legal implications.

Councillor Procter was invited to summarise and reiterated the concerns that he had raised earlier.

RESOLVED – That the report and discussion be noted.

29 Outcome of Call-In

Further to the Board's discussion on the Call In of Executive Board Minute No 71(b), Members were asked to make a formal decision in accordance with the Council's Constitution and the options of action available to the Board as reported earlier.

Following a vote by Members, it was

RESOLVED – to release the decision for implementation.

(Councillor Marjoram requested that his vote against the decision to release the decision for implementation was recorded)

30 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 8 October 2010 at 10.00 a.m. Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 a.m.