

Scrutiny Board (Central & Corporate Functions)



Councillor Pauleen Grahame
Chair of Scrutiny Board
(Central & Corporate
Functions)

Membership of the Board:

Councillor Pauleen Grahame (Chair)
Councillor Sue Bentley
Councillor David Blackburn
Councillor Ben Chastney
Councillor Martin Hamilton
Councillor Alison Lowe
Councillor Neil Taggart
Councillor John Hardy
Councillor Kim Groves
Councillor Les Carter
Councillor Rod Wood
Councillor Angela Gabriel

The Chair's summary

Cllr Pauleen Grahame, Chair of Scrutiny Board (Central & Corporate Functions)

I would like to take this opportunity in introducing the annual report of the Scrutiny Board (Central and Corporate Functions), to thank all Members of the Board for their support throughout the year. Particular thanks go to our newly elected Members who have hit the ground running.

The Board has worked closely with the Leader this year looking at the financial challenges facing the authority. I was also pleased that we met with Tom Riordan soon after his appointment. I would hope that this trend continues next year.

As part of our performance monitoring remit we have received update reports on a number of issues. We are particularly pleased to see that the Chief Executive shares our ambitions for 100% appraisals.

We have made a number of positive contributions on issues of corporate interest, for example on void properties and the contact centre. We have also established Value for Money training for Scrutiny. We see this as an essential tool to help ensure that our Inquiries add value.

I look forward to seeing the role of scrutiny continue to develop and contribute to delivering a better service to the citizens of Leeds.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pauleen Grahame', written over a light blue dotted background.

Work of the Board

Budget and Information Management Monitoring

On a quarterly basis the Leader of Council attended the Board to detail the Council's overall performance. This also provided Members with opportunity to quiz the Executive Board Member on other areas falling within his portfolio.

The Board has also welcomed the Chief Executive on two occasions.

Procurement and Scrutiny

The Board continues to play an active role in helping procurement meet its financial targets.

The Board has continued to track recommendations made in previous inquiries.

Scrutiny and Value for Money Member Training

The Board initiated and trailed member training on the subject of how to undertake Value for Money Scrutiny reviews. It is the view of the Board that Scrutiny must add value and VFM methodology helps Members do that.

Contact Centre – Visit and Inquiry.

The Board recognises the pressures the Contact Centre has been under and whilst not unsympathetic to some of the criticism levelled at it, is hugely supportive of the staff who work there and the excellent service it provides. The Board has begun a piece of work monitoring the Customer Access Programme project. This objective of the project is to transform the way in which the council delivers services and interfaces with customers.

Budget Strategy 2010/11.

The Board has spent considerable time looking at the financial challenges facing the authority.

Along with other Boards we discussed the Executive's Initial Budget Proposals. The Board made two observations. First, Members are of the view that the process of internal recharges should be reviewed as to whether this is the most efficient accounting mechanism for the council to use. Secondly, Members reiterated the importance of scrutiny using VFM methodology when conducting reviews.

Void Property Process

The Board, at the request of North West (Inner) Area Committee, scrutinised how we manage the process of void properties and their disposal and the respective roles of Corporate Property Maintenance and Property Services. We have recommended that the two services come under one Directorate.

Outcome of recommendations made in 2009/10

The Board regularly tracks the progress of recommendations made in previous inquiry reports. This municipal year the Board tracked a total of 23 recommendations made in relation to procurement. A number of these recommendations dated back to 2006 when the Board undertook an Inquiry into 'when contracts go wrong'. Others related to the Boards May 2010 report on the use of Consultants.

The Board was pleased to note that these recommendations had now been implemented and therefore no longer required tracking.

The Board's full work programme 2010/11

Review of existing policy

- **Void Property Process**

Development of new policy

- **Vision for Leeds 2011 – 2030**
- **One Council Communications Project**
- **ICT**
- **Customer Access Programme**

Monitoring scrutiny recommendations

- **Various Procurement issues**

Performance management

- **Financial Performance Outturn 2009/10**
- **Questions to the Leader of Council – Financial Health Monitoring and Performance Information.**
- **Questions to the Chief Executive – New Strategic Plan 2011 -15**

Briefings and Visits

- **Contact Centre (Visit)**
- **DECATS**
- **Shared Services in West Yorkshire**
- **Approach to new Equality and Diversity Scheme 2011 – 14**
- **Impact of Housing Benefit Changes in Leeds**

Call Ins

- **Web and Internet Replacement**