

**SCRUTINY BOARD  
(CITY DEVELOPMENT)**

**25<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2006**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Cleasby in the Chair  
Councillors Grayshon, Harington,  
Hollingsworth, Latty and Millard

**102 Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the April meeting of the Scrutiny Board (City Development).

**103 Late Item**

In accordance with his powers under Section 100(b)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed to admit to the agenda as a late item of urgent business, the Scrutiny Board (City Development)'s Annual Report (Agenda Item 12, Minute No. 112 refers), in order to expedite the work of the Board.

**104 Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of Interest.

**105 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Barker and Hamilton. Apologies were also submitted on behalf of Councillor Atha who had however attended and contributed to the discussions at the pre-meeting.

**106 Minutes of Last Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> March be approved as a correct record.

**107 Executive Board Minutes**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2006 be received and noted.

**108 Overview and Scrutiny Minutes**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2006 be received and noted.

**109 Inquiry into Leeds City Region**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a covering report summarising the evidence the Board had so far received on the development of the city region concept nationally and locally. A report was attached from the Chief Executive's Department providing brief background information on the key issues of transport and skills which had been identified by the Council Plan as areas for development and which would be the particular focus of the April meeting. It was explained that connectivity/transport and skills/labour supply had been recognised by the Leeds City Region Partnership as two of the six fundamental areas where a step change was needed in order to boost overall economic growth in the region. The report also provided information

on the witnesses attending the meeting and information on recently published information.

Nicole Brock, Head of Regional Policy, Leeds City Council, introduced the session and the witnesses; to speak on how transport was not fully aligned with the labour market and travel to work patterns at a sub regional and city region level were John Jarvis, Northern Way Transport Project Director, Paul Roberts, Planning Manager at METRO, and Dave Gilson, Head of Transport Policy, Leeds City Council; to speak on interventions to improve skill levels and the mismatch between labour location and supply were David Hodges, Yorkshire and Humber Regional Skills Director from the Learning and Skills Council, Martin Dean, Senior Programme Manager from the Leeds Initiative, and Val Snowden, Head of Jobs and Skills from Leeds City Council.

Firstly John Jarvis gave a presentation on the Northern Way's Transport investment priorities for strategic projects across the three northern regional development agencies. Then Paul Roberts gave a Powerpoint presentation on how the transport agenda was being delivered in the sub region and city region. He spoke of the work underway to develop a new Vision for Transport across the city region and the newly formed city region Congestion Partnership which is likely to look to a potential TIF transport innovation fund bid.

Members asked questions and raised points on;

- whether the £18.5m of the £100m Northern Way Growth Fund was sufficient,
- transport connections across the Pennines,
- who provides the finance,
- the present capacity of the A65 Skipton to Leeds route,
- commercial transport,
- using the waterways for freight,
- whether there was a hierarchy of transport, reducing congestion and incentives to use public transport,
- overcrowding on trains,
- the need for a rail link to Leeds Bradford International Airport,
- whether there was dialogue with other city regions, and
- opportunities for involvement of individual Councillors.

Next David Hodges gave a presentation on the work of the Learning and Skills Council in Yorkshire and the Humber. David was joined by Martin Dean and Val Snowden who provided more information from the Leeds perspective.

Members asked questions on and were given more information on the issues around;

- the sharing and collection of data,
- funding,
- worklessness,
- involvement of employers in skills training,
- the Train to Gain initiative,
- the Junior Job Guarantee programme,

- bringing together skills and employment within Leeds, and
- how national policies were being translated into local initiatives.

Nicole Brock concluded the session by advising Members that a business case had been submitted by the Leeds City Region Partnership to Rt Hon David Miliband MP in February 2006, and was outlined in the document 'Your City Your Future'. An extract from this document, covering the agreed proposals for transport and skills which aimed to achieve a greater strategic fit at a city region level, was included in the report under Appendix 1.

The Chair thanked the witnesses for attending the meeting and for their presentations.

(Note: Councillor Harington left the meeting at 11.45am during the above discussions.)

**RESOLVED –**

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the presentations from the witnesses be noted.

**110 Members' Questions**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report outlining the provisions contained in the Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules for Members to ask questions of the Director who Chairs the corresponding Corporate Priority Board (in this case, Jean Dent, Director of Development) on a range of service issues.

The Board agreed that there were no questions to ask of the Director of Development at this meeting.

**RESOLVED –** That the report be noted.

**111 Planning a Better Future – Planning and Development Services**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a covering report summarising the background to the request for further information by the Board on the Strategic Review of Planning and Development Services. Attached was a report from the Director of Development explaining that the purpose was to consult with Scrutiny Board on the key issues that had been identified for attention in the attached draft final report 'Planning a Better Future – a Strategic Change Programme for Planning and Development Services in Leeds' and proposals to address these issues.

Jean Dent, Director of Development, gave a Powerpoint presentation and responded to Members' questions. Also in attendance from Development were Helen Cerroti, Development Project Manager, Sue Wraith, Head of Planning Services and Steve Speak, Chief Strategy and Policy Officer. Apologies for not being able to present the report were submitted on behalf of Ian Andrews, the report author.

Members were advised that Leeds City Council provided one of the biggest and busiest planning services in the country, receiving approximately 7,500 applications per year. The Section had generally met targets for the last three

years but at the cost of good customer service and high staff turnover. The reasons for change, a vision for the service and priorities for change were detailed. Finally the key themes to come out of the review to improve the service were outlined.

Members were advised that it was hoped that a review and action plan would be presented to the Executive Board in June and that the proposed improvements would be implemented on a phased basis. The Scrutiny Board's views were being sought on the report's findings at the meeting and Members would also be welcome to pass on any comments after the meeting to the Director before the middle of May.

Members generally expressed their support for the review and the seven key themes and recommendations. Certain aspects of the report were discussed in more detail and questions were asked in particular on the issues of Member training, the use of the private sector, the appropriateness of placing planning notices in the press and staffing. The Board's views in particular to solutions on staff recruitment, retention, training and remuneration were given.

**RESOLVED –**

- (a) That the reports and Members' comments be noted.
- (b) That progress on the solutions to the issues as outlined in the report be scrutinised at a future meeting of the Board.

**112 Late Item - Annual Report**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the first draft of the Scrutiny Board (City Development)'s contribution to the Scrutiny Board Annual Report.

Members expressed the view that the draft report should be amended to include more emphasis on the Board's concerns and recommendations on the topics discussed. The report should then be circulated to Members for approval before being submitted for inclusion in the Scrutiny Board Annual Report.

**RESOLVED –** That the Scrutiny Board (City Development)'s draft contribution to the composite Annual Report to Council be amended as above and circulated to Members for approval.

**113 Work Programme**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on the Board's Work Programme, together with the Forward Plan of Key Decisions pertaining to this Board's Terms of Reference covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2006, for Members' consideration.

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser advised that, as this was the final meeting of the municipal year, suggestions from Members for issues to be carried over into the next municipal year, in addition to those listed in the attached work programme, were being sought.

**RESOLVED –**

- (a) That the report and Appendices be noted.
- (b) That items on the Review of Planning and Development Services, Public Transport and Leeds Bradford International Airport be added to the outstanding issues to be carried over into the next municipal year.

The Chair thanked the Board Members for their participation over the year and the meeting concluded at 1.15pm.