

SCRUTINY BOARD (SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY AND CULTURE)

THURSDAY, 20TH DECEMBER, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor M Rafique in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, D Cohen, M Lyons,
P Wadsworth, R Harington, M Ingham,
J McKenna, B Urry, J Chapman and
J Marjoram

74 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

75 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no resolutions to exclude the public.

76 Late Items

There were no late items.

77 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

Councillor Urry declared a significant other interest in Agenda Item 10
Scrutiny Inquiry – Bus Services in Leeds, Minute 83 refers.

78 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

There were no apologies for absence.

79 Minutes - 22nd November 2012

RESOLVED – The minutes of 22nd November 2012 were approved as a correct record.

80 Scrutiny Inquiry - The Role of Leisure and Culture in Public Health

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which provided an update to the planned inquiry on the role of leisure and culture in promoting public health. Specifically the update was in relation to the Council being given the opportunity to bid for Sport England funding from the 'Get Healthy, Get into Sport' fund.

In attendance to answer Member questions were:

Councillor A Ogilvie – Executive Member for Leisure;
Mark Allman – Head of Sport and Active Recreation; and

Ed Mylan – Chief Officer Resources and Strategy

Members considered that any measure which helps get people into sport was positive and that all barriers to participation should be broken down. Members also used the example of Birmingham where leisure centres have undergone changes to attract more people to use them.

Members also debated the chances of the bid being successful.

RESOLVED – That the expression of interest submitted to the Get Healthy, Get into Sport Fund be noted.

81 2012/13 Q2 Performance Report and Strategic Financial Plan 2013/14 to 2016/17 including initial Budget Proposals for 2013/14

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report presenting the quarter 2 performance report and also the initial 2013/14 budget proposals relevant to the Scrutiny Board's portfolio, which were attached to the report.

In attendance to answer Member questions were:

Councillor R Lewis – Deputy Leader of Council;
Councillor A Ogilvie – Executive Member for Leisure;
Martin Farrington – Director of City Development;
Paul Maney – Head of Strategic Planning, Policy and Performance;
Ed Mylan - Chief Officer Resources and Strategy; and
Simon Criddle – Head of Finance (City Development).

Members debated various aspects of the current market for housebuilding and the council's role in responding to some of the current challenges, including the viability of sites; jobs and skills issues; and the quality and speed of processing of planning applications.

Members stressed the need for good engagement with local ward members in ensuring that the opportunities and benefits from large developments taking place within the city centre are felt more widely.

At this point in the meeting the Chief Officer Resources and Strategy outlined the initial budget proposals for the City Development Directorate.

The Board supported the proposal to protect the net budget for Employment and Skills throughout the four year financial planning period, given the vital importance of work in this key area. Members noted that the net budget did not reflect significant amounts of external funding to support this priority, for example through the City Deal.

Members noted that the continuing pressure of rising prices for energy and water use will be tackled partly through a planned review of and reduction in the Council's asset portfolio.

The Board also noted the ongoing 'spend to save' programme to improve energy efficiency of buildings.

Members discussed the savings created by the Early Leavers Initiative with officers and the opportunities that it gives for staffing structures to be reviewed.

Street lighting was also raised and Members discussed the positives and negatives of reducing the number of hours that lights remain on.

RESOLVED –

- (a) that the quarter 2 performance information and the issues highlighted within the report be noted; and
- (b) that the comments made about the 2013/14 budget proposals be forwarded to the Executive Board through the Scrutiny Board (Resources and Council Services).

82 Leeds Local Development Framework - Natural Resources and Waste Development Plan Document - Inspector's Report

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which considered the Natural Resources and Waste Development Plan Document, as part of the Council's budget and policy framework, prior to it being submitted to the Executive Board for recommendation to full Council that it be adopted.

In attendance to answer Members questions were:
Councillor N Taggart – Chair of the Development Plan Panel;
Steve Speak - Deputy Chief Planning Officer; and
David Feeney - Head of Planning and Economic Policy;

Members broadly supported the document.

The Board expressed concern that the document had not come before them at an earlier stage in its development and the limited time allowed to study its implications. Members noted the commitment to present future Development Plan Documents (including the Aire Valley Action Plan and the site Allocations Strategy) to the Scrutiny Board for comment prior to a publication version being presented to the Executive Board. Members agreed this was an appropriate response.

The Board acknowledged the role of the Development Plan Panel in providing a thorough oversight of the development of the document over a period of years.

The Board noted that the section of the document relating to 'making and protecting space for flooding' would inform the Board's forthcoming inquiry into flood risk management.

The Board also noted the update from the Chair of the Development Plan Panel and City Plans Panel in relation to the consideration of the incinerator planning applications and the opportunity for Members' input.

RESOLVED – that the Natural Resources and Waste Development Plan Document be noted.

83 Scrutiny Inquiry - Bus Services in Leeds

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report introducing the second session of the inquiry into Bus Services in Leeds. Two reports were attached which provided evidence for the session. The first was a report on the camera enforcement of bus lanes and the second was a report from the Director of City Development which also incorporated information provided by Metro.

In attendance to answer Member questions were:

Mark Jefford - Parking Manager, Environment and Neighbourhoods;
Andrew Hall – Acting Head of Transport Policy;
John Henkel – Director of Passenger Services, Metro; and
Dave Pearson – Assistant Director of Transport Services, Metro.

Members expressed support for enforcement against any vehicle using a bus lane illegally. However comment was also made that the amount of bus lanes made it difficult for licensed private hire vehicles to drop customers off at locations where a bus lane is in place.

Members also noted that greater emphasis should be placed on enforcing 2 + lanes to encourage car sharing. Members were informed that only the Police could enforce these lanes.

Members agreed that cameras in bus lanes helped make them more efficient.

At this point in the meeting Members moved on to discuss Bus Services in Leeds.

The proposed Quality Bus Contracts were raised and Members explored how it was considered by Metro that these contracts would be of benefit to customers. The Partnership Offer from the bus companies was also discussed and how this was being further explored.

Better Bus Areas were discussed, which would reform the way the Bus Services Operators Grant is paid. Members discussed whether this would increase competition and improve the service to customers.

Members discussed various aspects of service quality including frequency and reliability of services and the range of complaints received by Metro.

They were informed of some of the work being undertaken by bus companies to develop new strategies, and reminded of some of the external factors, such as fuel costs and congestion, affecting services.

Members considered that priority should be given to addressing ticket prices and reliability in order to get people to use buses again in light of other options available. If fares were addressed it was felt that congestion in the City could be reduced.

The ticketing system was highlighted by the Board, with a consensus that simplification and integration of the types of tickets across the differing companies would go a long way to encouraging people back on to buses.

Encouraging children onto buses was also seen as a priority by Members with the integration of the Breeze Card seen as a way of getting children to use buses. However Metro informed the Committee that the Breeze Card was not currently compatible with the system used by Bus Companies.

The Board discussed what was happening elsewhere in relation to other areas pursuing quality contracts and partnership approaches.

Members noted the proposed cut in services to the Outer North East in the early morning as part of the network review. It was explained to Members that average passenger use was looked at to determine service provision and where a subsidy of £3-£4 per customer is reached the service is taken away.

The poor provision of night services was also raised. Members were informed that due to lack of funding it was impossible to provide such services in Leeds.

The Assistant Director of Transport Services confirmed that network review proposals were being considered and that during January and February public consultation will take place on these.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

(Councillor Marjoram left the meeting at 11:40am during discussion of this item. Councillor Akhtar left the meeting at 12:15pm during discussion of this item)

84 Work Schedule

The Board received a report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which considered the Board's work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

Members agreed to a request for scrutiny in relation to the impact of the current roadworks on the M62. Members agreed that a working group should be set up and that the Highways agency should be invited to attend, along with representation from City Development.

It was also agreed that the April meeting of the Board be re-scheduled due to a clash with the Regional Flood Defence Committee meeting which affects the Board's external witnesses for the flood risk management inquiry.

RESOLVED –

- (a) that the work schedule be noted;
- (b) that the Forward Plan be noted;
- (c) that the April meeting be re-scheduled in consultation with Board Members.

85 Date and time of next meeting

10am, Thursday 24th January 2012.