

SCRUTINY BOARD (STRATEGY & RESOURCES) - CONSULTATIVE MEETING

MONDAY, 21ST JUNE, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor A Scopes in the Chair

Councillors P Carlill, D Chapman, S Firth, S Hamilton, A Hutchison, J McKenna, M Robinson and S Seary

1 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair informed the Board that this was a consultative meeting and that any decisions taken would be ratified at the next formal meeting of the Board.

2 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

3 Minutes - 22 March 2021

RECOMMENDED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held 22 March 2021, be approved as an accurate record.

4 Matters arising from the Minutes

Minute 97

The letter to Central Government had been re-issued and a response was awaited. Councillor M Robinson had agreed to follow this up.

Minute 99

It was reported that a third of employees who had left under the Early Leavers Initiative had been desk based and further information will be sent to board members on this.

5 Scrutiny Board Terms of Reference

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented the Board's terms of reference for information.

Members attention was brought to the appendices to the report which outlined the remit and responsibilities of the Board.

RECOMMENDED – That the Board's terms of reference be noted.

6 Co-opted Members

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report which sought the Board's consideration for the appointment of Co-opted Members.

The report outlined the procedures for appointing Co-opted Members. It was reported that this Board had not previously had Co-opted Members and potential circumstances for seeking Co-opted Members were discussed. It was not currently planned to seek any nominations for co-optees to the Board.

RECOMMENDED – That the report be noted.

7 Performance Update

The Directors of Resources and City Development submitted a report which provided a summary of performance information against the strategic priorities for the Council and City related to the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board as well as information relating to the Contact Centre and Digital Access.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor D Coupar, Executive Member
- Councillor M Harland, Executive Member
- Andy Dodman, Chief Officer, Human Resources
- Tim Rollett, Intelligence and Policy Service
- Eve Roodhouse, Chief Officer, Culture & Economy
- Graham Sephton, Head of Human Resources

The Board was informed that the report detailed performance information to demonstrate progress in delivering priorities of the Best Council Plan.

Members were invited to make comment and ask questions on the report. The following was discussed:

- Support for staff who were carers – There was an active Carers Staff Network which provided support and activities. Staff had been surveyed to identify areas where further support could be given. There was guidance for managers to support staff who were carers.
- Sickness – there had been a slight increase in absences due to mental health. There was some concern as to whether changes in working practice had impacted on figures and reference was made to Musculo-skeletal problems. It was reported that specialist kit and equipment had been issued to staff working from home and the figures were being monitored.
- Concern that the Council's workforce was not representative in terms of young people, BAME or people with disabilities. There were various actions that had been taken to address these concerns including apprenticeship schemes and the launch of the Race Equality Plan. The BAME survey would be coming to the Board later in the year when it could be discussed more fully. Disability was covered as part of the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.

- Identifying and providing support for those with additional needs. This could be picked up in various ways including return to work surveys and appraisals.
- Issues covered by the Race Equality Plan included recruitment and selection, career development and how support could be provided to BAME colleagues.
- Apprenticeships – there were approximately 770 apprentices across the council covering a diverse range of positions. These included existing staff and new starters. It was aimed to target specific groups for apprenticeships. These included care leavers, people living in priority neighbourhoods and NEETs.
- Further information was requested with regards to absence due to mental health reasons.
- Council Tax collection.
- Gender pay gap – this was currently at 6% and would reduce over the next 12 months. There were various development and training initiatives to support female staff. There was also further conversation around the structure of the workforce and how that affected the pay gap.
- Call centre contact – meetings were due with the Business Support Centre and information the Board would like could be requested for inclusion in a report to a future meeting.

RECOMMENDED – That the report and latest performance information be noted.

8 Scrutiny Inquiry - Agile Working and Estate Realisation

The Director of Resources and Housing submitted a report that provided an update on the latest consultation and planning around Future Working arrangements at Leeds City Council. The report provides an updated position on staff views in relation to home and office working as part of the Board's ongoing focus on the principles that underpin how the Council will organise its services both now and in the future.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Andy Dodman, Chief Officer, Human Resources
- Graham Sephton, Head of Human Resources
- Mark Mills, Head of Asset Management
- Bev Fisher, Deputy Chief Officer, Digital Information Services

It was reported that there had been a recent focus on returning to the workplace and long term changes to working practices. A pledge had been made to all staff to improve their workplace environment. The last staff survey had shown that there was a desire for some staff to continue working from home and there was a need to balance the preferences of staff, service needs and what could be provided in terms of buildings and resources.

Members were invited to make comment and ask questions. The following was discussed:

- Approximately 600 to 800 people had continued to attend the workplace throughout the pandemic.
- The development of a set of corporate principles regarding working practices.
- Health and safety guidance and support for people working from home or elsewhere.
- Working arrangements would be constantly reviewed taking account of staff preferences along with customer and service requirements.
- Making the best use of the buildings and resources available.
- How new ways of working may impact on staff development and progression.
- Surveys had shown that the level of staff wanting to work from home had remained the same as last year.

RECOMMENDED:

- a) To note the contents of the report, as well as Members comments;
- b) To note the Best Place to Work pledge made to all staff;
- c) To consider results from the recent Staff and Chief Officer surveys and how these are shaping Future Working arrangements;
- d) To note the ongoing uncertainty regarding when and how the transition back into the workplace will be allowed for office based staff

9 Digital Information Services - Vision, Project and Programme Management

The Chief Digital Information Officer submitted a report that focuses on the future vision for Digital Information Services (DIS), including considerations of project and programme management approaches and current key programmes of work.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Leonardo Tantari – Chief Officer, Digital Information Services
- Bev Fisher – Deputy Chief Officer, Digital Information Services

Issues highlighted from the report included the following:

- Provision of digital services for the Council, CCG and other city projects.
- Work on the digital roadmap to improve skills of staff and citizens.
- Provision of online services.
- Working remotely and use of mobile devices.
- Transition to cloud storage and Microsoft 365.
- Information management and governance.

- Bringing in the technology and installation of equipment to facilitate hybrid meetings.

In response to comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- Work with young people and SMEs.
- Making use of the apprenticeship levy for digital upskilling.
- Prioritisation and capacity issues.
- Making sure the workforce is up to speed.
- Use of agency and contract workers – this was due to a current skills gap within the service and also linked to the the market rate for what are specialist staff.

In summary, it was suggested that further information be brought to the Board on the following areas:

- Prioritisation of projects
- Resource and Capacity Management
- Workforce Planning
- Digital skills
- Self Service – this could be linked in with Call Centre

RECOMMENDED:

- a) To note the contents of the report;
- b) To note the comments put forward in relation to the proposed future vision and plans for DIS.

10 Sources of Work for the Scrutiny Board

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report on potential sources of work and areas of priority within the Board's terms of reference.

The following was raised:

- How Electoral Services is adapting to changes in voter behaviour.
- The economic situation across the city.
- Council tax collection and expenditure varies across the city.
- Communication and engagement with residents around corporate issues.

RECOMMENDED – That the contents of the report, along with Members comments, be noted.

11 Work Programme

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented the draft work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year. This included the traditional

items of Scrutiny work which involves performance monitoring, recommendation tracking and Budget and Policy Framework Plans.

It was noted that Customer Contact had already been scheduled for September. Further issues raised would be included in the work schedule.

RECOMMENDED – That the draft work schedule be noted.

12 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 19, July 2021 at 10.30 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 10.00 a.m.)