

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

THURSDAY, 5TH JANUARY, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, K Brooks, E Carlisle,
L Cunningham, A Khan, S Lay, A Maloney,
T Smith, J Tudor, P Wadsworth, J Lennox
and K Renshaw

43 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

44 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

45 Late Items

There were no formal late items.

46 Declaration of Interests

Further to Agenda Item 9 – Performance Monitoring, Councillor L Cunningham made the Board aware that she is a registered nurse employed by Forward Leeds, should the Board discuss drug and alcohol related contracts.

47 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor P Grahame and Councillor N Walshaw. Councillors J Lennox and K Renshaw attended the meeting as substitutes.

48 Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held Thursday, 10th November 2022 be approved as an accurate record, as well as noting the notes of the meeting held on Thursday, 1st December 2022.

Matters Arising

Further to the remote consultative meeting notes from the meeting held Thursday, 1st December 22, it was noted that the request to establish a working group to consider the community committees has been discussed with senior officers and will be scheduled once preparatory work has been completed by the service.

49 Financial Health Monitoring

The report of the Head of Democratic Services presented Financial Health Monitoring information, performance against strategic priorities that fall within the remit of the Board.

It was noted that it was presented by way of context to the Scrutiny Board's consideration of the initial budget proposals elsewhere on the agenda.

The appended Executive Board report provides an update on financial performance against the 2022/23 budget, which targeted resources towards priorities set out in the Best City Ambition.

The report also sets out some of the specific risks facing the Council as a result of the current financial climate and notes that at the end of month 7 it is anticipated the Housing Revenue Account will be a balanced budget.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor S Arif, Executive Member for Public Health and Active Lifestyles
- Councillor M Harland, Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor M Rafique, Executive Member for Environment and Housing
- James Rogers, Director Communities, Housing and Environment
- Kevin Mulvaney, Head of Finance

Further to a comment raised regarding budget pressures in terms of the cost of living, staff 2022/23 pay agreement and inflation, the Director of Communities explained that in terms of the financial health monitoring as set out in page 24 in the submitted report, this outlines a net saving for the service rather than an overspend.

The Scrutiny Board acknowledged the service commitment to work within the budget across communities and environment services.

RESOLVED – To note the contents of the submitted report and the projected financial position of the Authority at the end of Month 7.

50 Initial Budget Proposals

The report of the Head of Democratic Services provided the proposed budget for 2023/24 and provisional budgets for 2024/25 and 2025/26. This report sets out the context for formal consultation on the initial budget proposals that fall within the remit of the Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing & Communities).

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor S Arif, Executive Member for Public Health and Active Lifestyles
- Councillor M Harland, Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor M Rafique, Executive Member for Environment and Housing
- James Rogers, Director Communities, Housing and Environment
- Kevin Mulvaney, Head of Finance

It was noted that the Scrutiny Board will contribute to a composite statement, reflecting on the initial budget proposals, which will be submitted to the Executive Board in February. This will capture comments of Scrutiny Board members during this discussion as well as those made at an initial working group in December.

The Director of Communities, Housing and Environment introduced the report and drew members attention to the significant saving proposals as detailed in the submitted report.

Further to questions from Board Members, the following information was confirmed:

- Consultation around specific proposals will commence over the next fortnight and will be completed prior to the next financial year.
- The capital cost for car parking charges is contained within the financial implications review paper members have been provided with. There are a large number of car parks across Leeds, and implementation will be over the course of 2023 and 2024. In terms of charges, it was confirmed this will be approximately 40 pence for 1-2 hours. However, this will form part of the consultation process. It was also confirmed that an option to purchase season tickets will be explored, as will the timeliness of car park improvements, subject to an individual assessment basis. Information regarding car parking numbers can be provided.
- Discussions are on-going with voluntary groups regarding grants being cut by 10%.

Comments were raised regarding opportunities for the community to be encouraged to bid for funding for public events, i.e., bonfire events. It was acknowledged that more work can be done with local communities and local ward members.

It was noted that the Scrutiny Board had sought various assurances at its budget working group in December. This included assurances as to the progress with delivery of 2022/23 savings, the impact of current economic conditions on the proposals being presented and the way in which BAU productivity savings would be achieved.

RESOLVED – To:

- a) Consider aspects of the initial budget proposals for 2023/24 that fall within the remit of the Scrutiny Board.
- b) That comments and recommendations raised by Board Members during the Budget Consultation will be included in a composite statement bringing together the views of all five scrutiny boards. In line with the requirements of the Budget and Policy Framework this is to be provided to Executive Board for its consideration before the final budget proposals are referred to Council.

51 Performance Monitoring

The report of the Director of Communities, Environment and Housing provided a summary of performance against the strategic priorities for the council and city and other performance areas relevant to the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board.

Appended to the submitted report included:

- Best City Ambition Performance Dashboard (Appendix 1)
- Performance update (Appendix 2)

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor S Arif, Executive Member for Public Health
- Councillor M Harland, Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor M Rafique, Executive Member for Environment and Housing
- James Rogers, Director Communities, Housing and Environment
- Ian Strickland, Business Development Manager
- Lee Hemsworth, Chief Officer Community Hubs, Welfare and Business Support
- Paul Money, Chief Officer Safer, Stronger Leeds
- Gerard Tinsdale, Chief Officer Housing
- John Woolmer, Chief Officer Environmental Services
- Adam Crampton, Head of Property Management
- Tim Rollett, Intelligence and Policy Manager

The Business Development Manager introduced the report and explained that over time specific analytic information relevant to the Scrutiny Board can be provided in the next couple of months.

In responding to a question regarding accessing crime information, the Chief Officer Safer Stronger Leeds explained that elected members are able to access data sets from their Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs), and such information should be provided on a regular basis.

Board members raised the following key points:

Housing

Homelessness – further detail was sought about the differentiation of street homelessness and those without a home, or in temporary accommodation. To be provided with a breakdown and information on engagement. Officers confirmed that there are currently around 93 people in emergency accommodation, and 30 rough sleepers. It was confirmed that information can be broken down further. It was noted that the city's performance on homelessness is significantly above with core city averages. It was acknowledged that there are a number of 'ghost' tenancies in the city but these can be difficult to identify. Where such contracts have been identified data can be shared with members.

Claims for disrepair – it was confirmed they are accurately recorded on a weekly basis, and it is possible to report back to the Scrutiny Board on the number of disrepair cases on a quarterly basis.

Environmental Services

Bin collections – the Executive Member for Environment and Housing noted several persistent challenges for service delivery including obstructive vehicles preventing access, vehicular breakdowns, roadworks, and staff illness. However, the position in 2022 for missed bins, was considered good. Further to a question regarding the use of new technologies, it was confirmed that there will be an opportunity for improved in-cab technology to enable crews to take photographs of offending vehicles, and CCTV will be upgraded across all wagons to enable 5G capability.

Members were informed that the end of day report provides reliable information, and the service are looking to improve communications around the importance of reporting missed bins.

Work is on-going to look at re-designing routes so that they are more co-terminus with Community Committee boundaries, to provide localised performance information. Further to this, a member shared her positive experience of how responsive the crews in her area have been in relation to localised access issues.

Waste reductions – officers confirmed that whilst there are issues in terms of size, geography and varied housing types in Leeds, only 0.5% of waste in Leeds ends up in landfill. The service is continuing work to develop its new waste strategy, which will be informed by anticipated national announcements. Recent liaison with DEFRA has been positive, particularly with regard to potential options for new responsibilities for packaging producers.

A suggestion was made that positive information regarding the Recycling and Energy Recovery Facility be incorporated into the narrative of future performance reports.

Further to a suggestion around collecting data about the development of circular economies and reducing waste by re-using, it was confirmed that tonnage information and carbon measures for services the authority are contractually responsible for, is possible in some instances. In terms of statistics for projects where third sector organisations are responsible, it will be confirmed at a later date what information can be made available.

Safer Stronger Communities

Anti-social behaviour – it was acknowledged that ASB issues related to the use of motor carriages (including quad bikes) across Leeds continue to be an issue of concern. The authority is working in partnership with the police to reduce the number of cases and have engaged with a number of young people, including as part of operation Diesel Quest, to tackle motorbike crime specifically in East and South Leeds. The service will continue to take enforcement action where appropriate but prefer a more preventative

approach and to provide diversionary activities, often working with third sector organisations.

Further to a request for clarity on electric scooter guidance, members will be provided with information via e-mail.

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance.

RESOLVED – To note the submitted report, as well as the latest performance information as contained within the appendix and the issues which have been highlighted.

52 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Democratic Services presented the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the 2022/23 municipal year and therefore the latest iteration of the Board's work schedule for the remainder of the year appended to the report, as well as the latest Executive Board minutes from the meeting held on 14 December 2022.

It was noted that an additional remote, consultative Board meeting has been scheduled for Friday, 20th January 2023 at 10:30 a.m. to consider Reducing Gambling Harm.

RESOLVED – To note the contents of the report and work schedule.

53 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note the date and time of the next formal meeting as Thursday, 2nd February 2023 at 10.30 a.m. There will be a remote consultative meeting held on 20th January 2023 at 10.30 a.m.

The meeting concluded at 11:40 a.m.