

SCRUTINY BOARD (INFRASTRUCTURE, INVESTMENT & INCLUSIVE GROWTH)

WEDNESDAY, 3RD APRIL, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor A Marshall-Katung in the Chair

Councillors N Buckley, B Flynn, M Foster,
J Garvani, S Hamilton, M Millar,
M Shahzad, N Sharpe and I Wilson

97 APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

98 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no exempt information.

99 Late Items

There were no late items.

100 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

101 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received from Cllrs S Lay and A Hussain.

102 Minutes - 28 February 2024

RESOLVED: The minutes of the 28 February were approved.

103 Inclusive Growth Update

The Chair introduced the item noting that the refreshed Inclusive Growth Strategy had been launched in September 2023. Members were advised that the update at the meeting would therefore provide an outline of some of the progress made since September 2023 in relation to the themes of the Strategy and its nine 'big ideas.' However, a full 'one year on' update will be provided in the Autumn.

The Chair noted that members of the Scrutiny Board had also previously asked to be kept updated on the development of the social progress index and recent changes to this tool had therefore also been included in the accompanying report.

Individuals in attendance for this item were:

- Cllr Jonathan Pryor (Executive Member)
- Eve Roodhouse (Chief Officer, Culture and Economy)
- Grahame Ponton (Senior Economic Development Officer)

Eve Roodhouse delivered an introductory presentation, which included:

- National, regional and local economic context
- Delivery highlights since September 2023 including the Leeds Apprenticeship Fair, which attracted 11,000 visitors in February 2024.
- Inclusive Growth Partnership events and progress with the Leeds Anchors network
- The increasingly embedded approach to using the SPI to inform Council policy.
- Updates to Leeds Social Progress Index
- The overall SPI score for Leeds, scores for individual wards and trends in the dimension scores.

Cllr Marshall-Katung welcomed the progress set out in the report and presentation. She noted that she and Cllr Shahzad had attended the Leeds Apprenticeship Recruitment Fair on behalf of the Scrutiny Board.

The Chair further noted a previous request to consider the Council's approach to adult skills as part of the 2024/25 work programme. It was confirmed this would be included in an annual update on the Future Talent Plan.

Clarification was sought as to when a business would be judged to be in "critical financial distress" as per the report from Begbies Traynor Group.

Further information was sought about the number of young people not in employment or education due to long-term health conditions, including a more detailed age profile and the predominant nature of the health conditions reported.

Officers committed to providing further information at a future meeting but confirmed that they anticipate a correlation between those figures and known areas of deprivation where key stage 3 attainment is lower than in other areas of the city and the number of young people is growing more rapidly.

Members queried how the Council could work with anchors to explore how best to tackle barriers to work for some people with long term health conditions. Eve Roodhouse confirmed that work has begun to explore correlations between employment data and health data to identify where additional support could be most effectively targeted.

Eve informed the Scrutiny Board that the Anchors Executive Group is already looking at ways to share best practice – for example, in relation to supporting employees with mental health concerns.

The Scrutiny Board considered trends in productivity and queried whether a return to more office-based work could contribute to improving the city's productivity. In response, it was Cllr Pryor highlighted that the Council needs to balance the benefits of people working together in an office with the need to be able to compete in a labour market where opportunities for flexible working are increasingly regarded as a significant benefit by employees.

In considering a new mass transit system in Leeds, members were assured that officers from Council teams including highways, regeneration and economic development were working with partners in West Yorkshire Combined Authority on the outline business case. It was noted that any mass transit system has a role in ensuring that businesses in Leeds can access a larger labour market to help drive economic growth.

Eve Roodhouse highlighted that private sector investors continue to show confidence in Leeds and that this is in part due to a consistent approach from the public sector to city development.

Members requested further information about the graduate retention levels at a future meeting.

Concern was expressed about the long-term impact on outer areas if resources are targeted at areas where the Social Progress Index suggest deprivation is highest. In response, Cllr Pryor reiterated that as part of its inclusive growth ambitions, the Council's aim is to facilitate the delivery of amenities where they are needed most, and the SPI provides an evidence base to inform associated decision making.

Reflecting on the drop in the index points for the dimension of 'opportunity', Eve noted that the period covered by the SPI now includes the years of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is anticipated that downward trends in the SPI scores are likely to reverse once later data can be taken into account.

The economic disbenefit from women being excluded from the workplace was explored with members noting that they would like to consider this in further detail at a future meeting.

Eve Roodhouse provided an overview of the Innovation Arc, its anticipated impact on productivity and ambitions for associated spatial planning.

The Chair thanked the team for their work and for the time presenting an update to the Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED:

- a) Members noted progress made in delivering the collective ambitions set out in the Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy.
- b) Members noted the updated Social Progress Index 2024.

- c) Members noted that a One Year On report to Executive Board setting out progress on the delivery of Inclusive Growth will be published in the autumn, with the option to also provide an update to this Scrutiny Board.
- d) Members expressed an interest in considering several issues in more detail during 2024/25 including young people not in education or employment due to long term health conditions, Women in Work, graduate retention levels in Leeds and the development of a Mass Transit system.

104 100% Digital Leeds

The Chair introduced the item, noting that the accompanying report provides an update on the 100% Digital programme since April 2023.

Those in attendance for this item were:

- Jason Tutin (Head of 100% Digital Leeds)
- Amy Hearn (Digital Inclusion Manager)

Amy Hearn delivered a presentation setting out the development of the 100% Digital Leeds team and its approach to digital inclusion. The presentation covered the following issues:

- The potential of digital inclusion to deliver personal benefits for those who might be the least confident in the use of digital technology.
- The estimated scale of digital exclusion in Leeds.
- The community-based approach of the 100% Digital Leeds team.
- The scale and location of the team's community engagement across the city.
- Quantitative indicators that illustrate the scale of activity of the 100% Digital Leeds team over the last 12 months.

Jason Tutin highlighted the importance of digital inclusion as an enabler in the context of the cost-of-living crisis. He provided illustrative examples of some of successes of the last 12 months including securing funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support 3rd sector interventions, delivering support regarding online safety for Leeds Older People's Forum, facilitating interventions to improve the functional numeracy skills of adults through the Multiply scheme and enabling the gifting of data to people identified as being in need.

Jason highlighted the importance of the convening role of 100% Digital Leeds in bringing partners and stakeholders together to identify funding, reduce duplication of resources and maximise the impact of available funding. He also outlined the way in which 100% Digital Leeds works with Leeds community Foundation and Leeds Digital Charity Ball to increase the funding available to third sector organisations to support digital inclusion.

Reflecting on the financial challenges facing citizens, public sector bodies and third sector partners, members queried whether this had impacted on how the team prioritises its work. In response, Jason advised the Board that the focus of the team has increasingly been on developing relationships with organisations that can provide more specific insights about where interventions could make the biggest difference to local people. He cited the Multiply programme as an example of where support can deliver immediate benefits for people but can also provide longevity of learning by enabling people to access digital devices on an ongoing basis.

Members queried how other organisations might be able to contact the team, particularly where they are based in communities where English may be a second language for many residents. Jason confirmed how organisations can contact the team and reiterated that introductory discussions are always welcomed.

Members sought clarity about the installation of the infrastructure required for superfast broadband and the rates of take up amongst residents. Jason noted the difficulty in accessing data about take up rates due to commercial sensitivity.

The Scrutiny Board explored links between digital access and employment and health inequalities. Jason advised the Scrutiny Board about ongoing research that is being led by University College London and which aims to assess the impact of digital health hubs on health inequalities in deprived communities. Draft recommendations suggest that the approach of 100% Digital Leeds to cross sector partnerships will be identified as an example of best practice, which should be shared and strengthened.

Amy Hearn provided an overview of the development of digital health hubs and work to support digital inclusion in primary care. She referenced ongoing work with Leeds Community Healthcare and Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust. She informed the Scrutiny Board that enabling patients to engage with health care systems via digital routes can provide significant personal benefits for service users including those with mobility issues or mental health conditions.

Members welcomed the inclusion of testimonies from partners and stakeholders in the accompanying report. They sought clarification about how the academic research discussed was capturing the views of service users as well as service providers.

The Scrutiny Board considered the way in which volunteers can be recruited to support digital inclusion programmes. Jason outlined the ways in which tech businesses can better connect with community organisations through Leeds Digital Volunteering Partnership. Amy provided an overview of work with organisations including Voluntary Action Leeds and Forum Central.

The Chair shared her positive experience of the gifting of SIM cards to people using a community food pantry in her ward and highlighted the impact that had had on the lives of her constituents.

Members were asked to contact the team if they could suggest organisations or communities that may benefit from engagement with the 100% Digital Leeds team.

The Scrutiny Board thanked Jason, Amy and their colleagues for their work.

Members recommended that a further update is considered by the 2024/25 Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED:

- a) Members reaffirmed their approval of the 100% Digital Leeds community-based approach to increasing digital inclusion across the city.
- b) Noted the achievements of the 100% Digital Leeds programme over the last year and endorsed the plans for the continued development of the programme under the leadership of the 100% Digital Leeds team in IDS.
- c) It was recommended that a further update is considered by the 2024/25 successor Scrutiny Board.

105 End of Year Statement

The Chair reminded colleagues that at the end of each municipal year, every Scrutiny Board publishes an end of year summary. The statements are published on the Council's website and feed into the Annual Report on Scrutiny, which is considered at July's Council meeting.

The summary includes the work programme for the municipal year with links to the meeting webpages and webcasts. It also includes a statement from the Chair reflecting on the key priorities of the Scrutiny Board over the last year.

The Chair reiterated her thanks to all of Board Members for their engagement and challenge over the last year – and noted this is also reflected in the summary.

RESOLVED:

Members approved the publication of the Scrutiny Board's end of year statement.

106 Work Schedule

Members were asked to note and recommend the draft work programme for 2024/25.

It was noted that any other items of business that members wish to be recommend for inclusion within the work programme should be sent to the Principal Scrutiny Advisor, who will ensure they are considered by the successor board in June.

Members requested clarity regarding the access of motor vehicles to bus lanes in Leeds in order to inform a decision about whether the issue should be revisited by the Board in 2024/25.

RESOLVED: Members noted the draft work programme for 2024/25.

107 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Scrutiny Board will take place on **26 June 2024** at **10.30am**. There will be a pre-meeting for all Board members at **10.15am**.