

SCRUTINY BOARD (STRATEGY AND RESOURCES)

MONDAY, 25TH JULY, 2022

PRESENT: Councillor A Scopes in the Chair

Councillors G Almass, S Burke, P Carlill,
S Firth, B Flynn, C Gruen and K Ritchie

15 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

16 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exemptions.

17 Late Items

There were no late items.

18 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

19 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received from:

Cllr Diane Chapman
Cllr Mahalia France-Mir

20 Minutes - 20 June 2022

The minutes of the meeting of 20 June were noted.

An update was provided by the Principal Scrutiny Advisor in relation to information requests detailed in minutes 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

21 Digital Strategy Update

Those in attendance for this item were:

- **Cllr Coupar** (Executive Member)
- **Neil Evans** (Director, Resources)
- **Leonardo Tantari** (Chief Officer, Digital and Information Services)
- **Stephen Blackburn** (Innovation Lead)

Leonardo Tantari (Chief Officer, Digital and Information Services) and Stephen Blackburn (Innovation Lead) provided an overview of the new digital strategy for the city. Members were informed that digital transformation work is underway to transform how the Council, in partnership with the Leeds

Health and Care Partnership (LHCP), uses data and technology to improve services. A planned programme of innovation was outlined.

Stephen reiterated that a 'digital first' - as opposed to a 'digital only' – approach will be adopted and that any digital offer will be complementary to existing channels of engagement with the Council. He informed the Scrutiny Board that the Digital Strategy is intended to be a person-centred policy that reflects the life-cycle approach set out in the Best City Ambition.

The Scrutiny Board discussed the challenge of recruiting talent to fill an additional 110 roles within IDS and the potential to work with partner organisations to provide temporary “elastic capacity”.

Stephen highlighted the three digital priorities for the city: System Flow, Core Business Transformation and establishing a Security Operations Centre. The Scrutiny Board was informed of the importance of ensuring the city's 'digital foundations' are right. This includes ensuring the Council is collecting, using and protecting the right data, and continuing to prioritise the 100% Digital Leeds programme.

Members raised the following matters:

- **Security Operations Centre:** Clarity was sought about how the centre will be resourced. The Board was informed that to provide 24/7 protection 365 days a year the Council will need to work with a partner to deliver the service. Leonardo noted that there is regional interest in establishing a facility and it is anticipated to be a joined-up initiative with other organisations. The enhanced security benefits of a 'cloud first' approach were discussed.
- **Digitising social care records:** A 2021 Government white paper pledged to ensure 80% of social care providers have a digitised care record that can connect to a shared care record by March 2024. Members sought reassurance about progress towards this target in Leeds and were assured funding has been released for the initial stages of this project, with further funding options being explored for the later stages.
- **Shared Care Record:** Members were informed that the development of the Leeds Care Record in recent years puts the city in a stronger position to move to the enhanced Shared Care Record. A new Shared Care Records Board has been established for Leeds.
- **Working with health partners:** Officers acknowledged the challenge of creating capacity amongst health care professionals to enable the introduction of and training on new technology. The scale of data that requires digitalisation was discussed along with the challenge of integrating different systems.

- **Digital Academy:** Members welcomed the establishment of a digital academy to upskill LCC staff in areas such as data intelligence, cyber security and cloud technology. The potential to increase entry routes for new employees was explored. It was noted that staff retention is a persistent challenge for digital employers. Salary was acknowledged as a challenge in the current market. It was suggested more could be made of the opportunity to work on large-scale transformation projects within the public sector.
- **Digital infrastructure and hardware:** The challenges of accessing reliable connectivity and hardware, particularly in some areas of the city, were explored. From a Council perspective members sought clarity about the use of a wider range of devices in future to increase the agility of the workforce. Leonardo also highlighted the closer links being established between the recycling of devices and the 100% Digital Leeds team.
- **Digital Inclusion:** Attention was drawn to the community-based partnership activity of the 100% Digital Leeds team. A full update on this programme of activity is received by the Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth Scrutiny Board on an annual basis. It was agreed that the Principal Scrutiny Advisor would circulate the most recent 100% Digital Leeds update to members of the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board for information.
- **Impact on staffing numbers:** Neil Evans noted that the organisation has lost around 2,000 staff over the last ten years but still faces a growing budget challenge. It is anticipated that in-year pressures such as a pay rise above the 2% assumed in the 2022/23 budget will exacerbate this situation. To protect public services the organisation will need to change. This will include increased automation, enabling more self-service and re-training staff.
- **Digital Leeds Labs:** Further information was sought about solutions that have previously been developed through innovation labs. Stephen Blackburn agreed to provide further information about 'Leeds Social Housing Picker.'
- **Digital and Data ethics:** Members sought clarity about how the development of data and digital ethics will help embed strong governance and a 'person centred' approach to assessing new technology and/or data use.
- **Citizen Access:** Cllr Coupar reiterated that digital innovation will complement existing channels of communication for Leeds citizens. She highlighted the demand for greater self-service and automation

options for standard transactions, to increase flexibility and ease of access for some members of the public.

The Scrutiny Board highlighted the need to continue benchmarking and sharing best practice with other organisations.

Members noted the need to avoid developing bespoke versions of standard systems to avoid increased costs for maintenance, integration and upgrades.

The Scrutiny Board recommended that investment in digital services is prioritised corporately to ensure that transformation programmes can be progressed across all directorates.

RESOLVED:

Members of the Scrutiny Board:

- Agreed to support the approach being outlined in the digital strategy, the digital transformation approach, and the innovation programme.
- Agreed to continue to provide oversight of the broader digital work being delivered by IDS by receiving future update reports at this Scrutiny Board.
- Requested that the Principal Scrutiny Advisor circulate the 100% Digital Leeds update, as provided to the Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth Scrutiny Board in April 2022.
- Requested further information about Leeds Social Housing Picker.
- Recommended that investment in digital services is prioritised corporately to ensure that transformation programmes can be progressed across all directorates.

22 Agile Working and Estate Realisation

Those in attendance for this item:

- **Cllr Coupar** (Executive Member)
- **Neil Evans** (Director, Resources)
- **Graham Sephton** (Head of Human Resources)
- **Angela Barnicle** (Chief Officer, Asset management & Regeneration)
- **Leonardo Tantari** (Chief Officer, Digital and Information Services)

Graham Sephton introduced the paper by providing an update on the Council's Future Working Programme. He noted the previous work of the Scrutiny Board in this area and reiterated the importance of the 2021 Best

Place to Work Pledge. Graham highlighted the most recent staff survey results from May 2022 and the proposed approach to further estate realisation.

The Scrutiny Board explored the proposed approach to future hybrid working and noted the links to the previous discussion on the new digital strategy.

Members agreed with the principal that hybrid working arrangements must strike a balance between staff preferences, services needs and LCC resources. Members were informed that senior leaders have reported service performance as having been maintained or enhanced by current working arrangements.

The Board discussed the expectation that staff will spend regular time with their teams in the office. Reassurance was received in relation to arrangements for new employees and it was confirmed that staff will always be able to come into the workplace if they so wish.

Other matters raised by members included:

- **Quality and maintenance of estate:** The cost of maintaining the Council's estate was discussed in the context of the current budget challenge. It was noted that not all buildings provide good quality accommodation for staff, and many are now surplus to requirements. Graham outlined the ambition to have fewer but better used buildings. It was noted that buildings that are disposed of are typically redeveloped for a different purpose.
- **Monitoring of the impact of hybrid working:** It was confirmed that performance reports are regularly provided to CLT, the Executive Board and Scrutiny Boards. In addition, risks are reported to officer oversight groups that meet regularly.
- **Workstation Assessments:** Graham reassured members that where requests were made for a home-based workstation assessment, these would be carried out quickly. He noted that most employees who had been previously office based, received rapid support in response to the pandemic to enable them to work safely at home. Well-being has been prioritised during the most recent rounds of appraisals.
- **Market appropriate approach:** Neil Evans highlighted that the Council is not alone in having adopted new working arrangements since the pandemic. It informed members that organisations across the city and country are working in different ways and LCC staff are keen to retain the flexibility to work from home given performance has been maintained.

- **Independent analysis:** Angela Barnicle outlined the Council's involvement with a UKRI project being led by the University of Leeds. Along with other public and private organisations the Council is sharing data about what hybrid work looks like, how people build networks and establish careers. It was agreed that the first paper that has been published would be shared with the Scrutiny Board.
- **Identification of risks:** Members highlighted the importance of being provided with clear information about the potential risks to inform their scrutiny. Ways in which to capture the views of service users within performance monitoring were discussed.
- **EIA report:** Members requested sight of the Equality Impact Assessment associated with future working arrangements once it is available.

RESOLVED:

Members of the Scrutiny board resolved to:

- Note the contents of this report
- Note the Best Place to Work pledge made to all staff.
- Consider the results from the most recent Future Working Survey conducted in May 2022.
- Note the latest update on rightsizing the council Estate and how the Future Working programme can contribute to our zero carbon ambitions across the city.
- Request that the Chief Officer for Asset Management and Regeneration shares the initial UKRI research paper published by the University of Leeds.
- Request sight of the Equality Impact Assessment associated with future working arrangements once it is available.

Councillor Flynn left the meeting after consideration of this item.

23 Recruitment and Retention update

Those in attendance for this item were:

- **Cllr Coupar** (Executive Member)
- **Neil Evans** (Director, Resources)
- **Andy Dodman** (Chief Officer, Human Resources)
- **Claire Matsen** (Head of Human Resources)

Andy Dodman introduced the report outlining the current workforce challenges particularly in relation to recruiting talent. He asked members to note the scope and scale of the work currently underway, which includes both short and longer-term interventions.

Andy noted that the recommended approach is cognisant of the Council's five-year People Strategy and the aspiration to increase diversity within the workforce.

Members raised concern about increasingly competitive salaries emerging as a result of the high inflation environment.

It was noted that the Council remains committed to the National Collective Bargaining Framework and continues to uplift its pay-scales in line with the Real (Leeds) Living Wage rate. Neil Evans noted that the range of functions within the Council brings added complexity in terms of equality assessments.

For services where there is acute pressure on recruitment HR colleagues are exploring the possible use of market supplements, retention payments and other benefits.

Members were informed that there is a significant variation in vacancy rates across the Council. The Board sought clarity about which services are experiencing the greatest pressures. IDS was provided as an example of one such service, as was Adults and Health.

The Board explored the wider benefits of working for the Council such as professional development, career progression and working for a values-based organisation.

Members welcomed the work that is underway to develop a wide range of entry routes into the Council. Officers were asked whether it would be feasible to explore an intermediate apprenticeship offer for those leaving FE establishments.

It was suggested entry routes could be broadened further by focusing on core competencies for some roles rather than more traditional job descriptions. The objectivity of recruitment panels was discussed and members sought clarity about retention rates in comparison to other organisations.

Claire Matsen confirmed that in some areas unsuccessful applicants are signposted to organisations that can help them to develop their skills to meet entry level requirements.

It was confirmed that processes such as exit interviews are being strengthened to enable the organisation to better understand why people are choosing to leave the organisation.

Improvements in diversity and inclusion were welcomed and it was confirmed that officers are looking at ways in which to capture more detailed information about diversity in the early stages of recruitment.

Members sought assurances about the support being provided to applicants with disabilities to ensure as wide a range of people as possible can access employment opportunities.

Members suggested that public sector organisations in the city may benefit from sharing experiences and best practice to further increase the diversity of their respective workforces.

RESOLVED:

The Scrutiny Board resolved to note the content of the report and workplan.

24 Area Based Income

The following individuals were in attendance for this item:

- **Cllr Coupar** (Executive Member)
- **Neil Evans** (Director, Resources)
- **Richard Ellis** (Deputy Chief Officer, Financial Services)

Richard Ellis introduced the report, drawing attention to three tables, which detail Council Tax and Business Rates income by ward.

It was noted that the report had been submitted to the Scrutiny Board in response to a member request in 2021/22.

The Scrutiny Board was informed that information about expenditure could not be provided on a ward basis. The Council does not account for expenditure on a ward-basis or equate expenditure to areas from which income is generated. The allocation of Government resources also depends upon a city-wide needs-based assessment. The Board discussed the challenges of understanding expenditure on a ward basis.

It was noted that only a small proportion of the Council's expenditure relates to 'universal services' with over 60% of expenditure relating to Children's Services and Adults Social Care.

It was noted that the information about income is not provided regularly in the format requested by the Scrutiny Board due to the level of data manipulation required to produce it.

RESOLVED:

It was resolved that:

- The ward-based analysis of Business Rates and Council Tax income receivable by the Council in 2021/22 be noted.

- The Principal Scrutiny Advisor will re-circulate a graph from the Chief Officer for Financial Services, which illustrates trends in Government grant receipts over the last decade.

25 Work Schedule

The work programme was noted.

26 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next public meeting of the Scrutiny Board will take place on **Monday 26 September at 10am**. There will be a pre-meeting for all Scrutiny Board members at **9.45am**.