

SCRUTINY BOARD (STRATEGY AND RESOURCES)

MONDAY, 19TH JUNE, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor A Khan in the Chair

Councillors G Almass, H Bithell, S Burke,
D Chapman, B Flynn, T Hinchcliffe,
W Kidger, A Parnham and E Thomson

1 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

2 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no items excluded from the public domain.

3 Late Items

There were no late items.

4 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Councillor M Robinson sent his apologies.

Additionally, the Deputy Leader of Council and Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education, Councillor J Pryor was unable to attend as a visitor to the Board.

6 Minutes - 27 March 2023

Councillor S Burke moved, and Councillor G Almass seconded;

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on the 27th March 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

7 Matters Arising

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor provided the following updates to the Scrutiny Board (Strategy & Resources).

Minute 103 – Reference to the HR update sent to Board members on 13th June and the planned report from HR in July will give further information on this subject area.

Minute 104 – EDI Information – some of this has been shared with last year’s board with work ongoing with colleagues and Councillor S Burke on the actions noted. There was a suggestion of an EDI training session for this Board, and it was agreed that the Principal Scrutiny Advisor will follow up on this .

Minute 107 – The suggested work items raised from the last board in the previous municipal year listed under this minute have been incorporated in the draft work programme at appendix 1 to item 12.

8 Co-Opted Members

The Board received the report of Head of Democratic Services, which invited the Board to consider appointing co-optees.

The Board noted that it is not legally obligated to appoint co-opted members.

RESOLVED – That the appointments of co-opted members to the Scrutiny Board (Strategy & Resources) are noted.

9 Scrutiny Board Terms of Reference

The Board received the report of the Head of Democratic Services, which presented the terms of reference for the Scrutiny Board (Strategy & Resources).

In attendance for this item;

- Councillor James Lewis – Leader of Council
- Councillor D Coupar - Executive Member for Resources
- Rob Clayton - Principal Scrutiny Advisor
- Mariana Pexton - Director of Strategy and Resources
- Eve Roodhouse - Chief Officer Culture and Economy
- John Mulcahy - Chief Officer Elections and Regulatory

Mariana Pexton, the recently appointed Director of Strategy and Resources, provided a presentation which introduced the services that are in the Directorate and fall under the Board’s remit.

Challenges and opportunities for the Directorate were identified as:
Demographic changes, ongoing impacts of Covid-19, continuing increases in cost of living pressures, financial challenges and efficiencies, embedding digital approaches, improving customer experience, recruitment and retention, workloads and burnout, collaboration between services and organisations including anchor network, managing major risks, safeguarding, cyber threats and major incidents.

The Director of Strategy and Resources provided the strategic context for the work delivered within the Directorate. The Best City Ambition underpins the

city's work and includes the three pillars; inclusive growth, health & wellbeing and zero carbon. With the Organisational Plan (later on the agenda) being the main planning document for the council.

The Director of Strategy and Resources provided an oversight into how the Directorate works, as the Board has had several new members in the new municipal year.

The following services are delivered from within the Strategy & Resources Directorate's;

- Front line services often provided to the most vulnerable, alongside organisational leadership for key support services.
- Civic Enterprise – facilities management, passenger transport, catering, fleet, building and cleaning
- Integrated Digital Service – digital & technology strategy, information governance, digital change & inclusion and data analytics.
- Legal & Democratic - legal advice across council democratic and governance services including member support, committee support and the Lord Mayor's office
- Financial - budget, monitoring, treasury management, internal audit, council tax, business rates, core business transformation
- Freedom to Speak Up Guardian
- Human Resources

The Chief Officer Elections and Regulatory provided an overview of services that fall under the Board's remit;

- Entertainment licensing – licensing committee sets policy, licensing subcommittees make majority of decisions where representations received, personal licence holders, premises licenses, TENS, gambling and other licensable activities such as scrap metal
- Registrars – births, marriages and civil partnerships, deaths, citizenships
- Elections – conducting all polls, maintaining the register of electors
- Taxi and private hire licensing – licencing committee agrees policy, most decisions made by officers, PH operators, PH vehicle proprietors, PD drivers, HC proprietors, HC drivers
- Land and property search services – local land charges, searches, street registration

The Chief Officer Culture and Economy provided an overview of the areas of the City Development portfolio which are within the Board's remit;

- Culture programmes – culture strategy, Leeds cultural investment programme, Leeds Inspired.
- Leeds museums and galleries - 9 sites. 1.2 million objects, three collections of national significance – fine and dec art, natural sciences, industrial history. Key partners include arts council England, Henry Moore Foundation, University of Leeds and Royal Armouries

- Leeds arts events and venues – programmes on millennium square. £2.8million income generated. There were 76,000 visitors at free events in Millennium Square in 2022/23
- Leeds 2023 – a year of culture delivered by Leeds culture trust in response to disqualification from European capital of culture competition. Three seasons, awakening, playing and dreaming. Three strands – produce, partner, promote.
- Inward investment service – 1 manager for the service. Major investments recently supported include JP Morgan, Bank of England, FCA, Cubo, Snowflake, Cognizant, EMI north, PEXA, BBC and Padox. The service has an active investment pipeline representing over 3,000 jobs in the Leeds area.

The Committee sought clarity on the evaluation statistics to be gathered for Leeds 2023, and the Chief Officer Culture and Economy confirmed that these will be provided to the Board as part of the planned July report.

RESOLVED – That the Terms of Reference be noted.

10 Sources of Work

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report which invited the Board to consider and discuss potential areas of work in the 2023/24 municipal year.

The Board considered the work of last year as relevant to the continuing programme of work for the Board, with key previous work programme items such Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), procurement, Leeds 2023 and Elections updates remaining a priority for the Board.

The Board identified HR policy on sick leave for mental health as a priority and it was noted that a report from HR is planned for July that will cover some aspects of this.

The Board requested that the work programme could consider an item on the role of commissioned services and the pay and conditions of staff working for those services, who are not directly employed by the Council but who deliver key services on behalf of the council. During discussion of this, Councillor Parnham drew the Board's attention to the fact that he was employed as a Support Worker for a charity, which was commissioned to provide similar services. In response it was undertaken that further consideration would be given to how this matter could potentially be scoped within the remit of this Scrutiny Board.

The efficiency of the Council in utilising traineeships, especially as it relates to the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) agenda was identified as a possible area for work in 2023/24.

The Board considered the impact of artificial intelligence and how staff perceive this technology as a further possible item for the work programme.

RESOLVED – That the sources of work information and guidance provided are reflected upon for the Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) for the 2023/24 municipal year.

11 Performance Report

The Board received a report from Director of Strategy and Resources which provided a summary of performance against the on the 17 KIPIs covered by the Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Board.

In attendance for this item;

- Councillor James Lewis – Leader of Council
- Councillor D Coupar - Executive Member for Resources
- Mariana Pexton - Director of Strategy and Resources
- Mike Eakins - Head of Policy
- Andy Dodman - Chief Officer HR

The 17 KPIs, which fall in Strategy & Resources remit are drawn from five service areas:

- Human Resources
- Financial Services
- Customer Access
- Information Management & Governance
- Procurement & Commercial Services

It was noted that KPI number 5 as listed within the appendix included a mean hourly rate of 4.5%, with the correct figure being 3.8%.

The Board requested that the statistical breakdown of women working within the Council is replicated with other protected characteristics.

Board Members considered the various ways in which the pandemic has impacted the ability to accurately compare different datasets over different years.

The Board expressed concern at the number of complaints coming from families who have children with SEND. The Director of Strategy and Resources noted that this matter is for the Directorate of Children and Families, but that a note would be supplied to Members of the Board examining the detail of this issue.

The Head of Policy clarified that the ways in which customer service complaints had been recorded has changed, and therefore providing a year-on-year analysis has been complicated. There will be further analysis provided to the Board where possible.

Responding to a question on prompt payment of invoices the Director of Strategy and Resources considered ensuring 100% of due payments from the

Council to be paid on time may not be possible logistically and considered the current statistics to be relatively high.

The Board considered the issues with disclosing staff happiness and mental health results due to staff confidentiality and privacy, especially for those within smaller teams. The Director of Strategy and Resources informed the Board of some of the ways in which the Council supports staff with their mental health including;

- Mental health first aiders across the organisation
- Counsellors in the workplace
- Additional training and support for managers
- Freedom To Speak Up Guardian

Board Members noted that in addition to staff without digital access, there are staff without regular and sustained digital access, and that their needs ought to be identified and supported so that they can fully access the Council's mental health offer.

The Chief Officer HR offered to request colleagues in other cities exchange mental health statistics within their organisation so that Leeds City Council can assess its performance compared to others. The Leader of the Council clarified that Leeds City Council directly employs a larger number of employees than some other councils, for example three times the number as Sheffield City Council despite not having three times the population, which can make comparison difficult.

Responding to a board member's question it was noted that mental health waiting lists for NHS GP services were not considered possible for the Council to access for its staff, however Council occupational health service statistics will be examined.

Cross city analysis on the gender pay gap was also requested by the Board.

RESOLVED – That the performance information contained in Appendix 1, be noted.

12 Being Our Best - Our Organisation Plan for 2023 onwards

The Board received a report from the Head of Democratic Services which provided an opportunity to scrutinise and influence the implementation of the 'Being Our Best – our organisation plan for 2023 onwards'

The Plan when linked to the Best City Ambition, sets out the vision for Leeds City Council to be the best Council in the best City.

The plan is aimed at the 2000+ managers that work at Leeds City Council to support and assist them in bringing the best out of their teams to deliver the best services for residents of Leeds. A key priority in the plan relates to the

values and refreshed behaviours which provides the framework for how managers and staff should approach working for the Council.

The Director of Strategy and Resources informed the Board of the challenges involved with creating consistency across our managers given the wide variety of services and circumstances of council teams.

Responding to a question on support for the menopause, the Director of Strategy and Resources was of the view that empathy and support would be something general good managerial practice would facilitate and also agreed to provide a link to the guidance available on Insite.

It was also noted that the recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge is a linked work item to the Being Our Best Organisational Plan and that further agenda items on the Peer Challenge and the recommendations that came from it are likely to come to the Board later in the municipal year.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

13 Work Programme

The Board received the report of the Head of Democratic Services which set out the draft 2023/24 work programme for the Scrutiny Board. The report took into consideration suggestions made by the Board in 2022/23 for items to be carried forward into the current municipal year.

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor presented the item and noted that much of the discussion held under the Sources of Work item earlier in the meeting will need to be reflected in the work programme when it comes to the Board in July. The Work Programme item is the last item on each meeting agenda to enable Board members to shape the work programme for the Board.

The work programme is iterative and often changes and develops over the municipal year.

A request was made for budget action plans for each directorate to be brought to the Board for scrutiny as part of the work the Board does on the budget each year.

Contact Centre performance was also identified as an area of interest and whilst performance has improved, the Board believed that there is still an issue regarding online queries not being tracked for length of time to be resolved. The Advisor to the Board note that the Contact Centre will come back as an agenda item in 2023/24.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report are noted, and a revised work programme is brought back to the Board in July.

14 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next public meeting of the Board will take place on 17 July 2023 at 10.00am. There will be a pre-meeting for all board members at 9.30am.