

SCRUTINY BOARD (CITY AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS)

THURSDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor S Bentley in the Chair

Councillors B Atha, C Campbell, G Driver,
C Fox, R Harington, J Lewis, T Murray and
L Yeadon

15 Late Items

There were no late items as such, and the Board was issued with draft terms of reference for the proposed Inquiry into Skills that were agreed at a meeting of the Skills Working Group held on 22 September 2008. Minutes of the Working Group meeting were also distributed. This meeting took place after the agenda despatch and these documents were therefore not available at the time of agenda publication.

16 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Murray declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Items 8 and 9, Inquiry into Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector and Progress Report of the Board's Working Groups due to his position as Chief Executive of the Learning Partnership. He also declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9 due to his role as a governor of Thomas Danby College. (Minutes no 20 and 21 refer).

Councillor Driver declared a personal interest in Agenda Items 8 and 9, Inquiry into Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector and Progress Report of the Board's Working Groups due to his respective roles as Board Member of Belle Isle Foundation and a governor of Thomas Danby College. (Minutes no 20 and 21 refer).

Councillor Fox declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9, Progress Report of the Board's Working Groups due to his position as a governor at the Leeds College of Technology. (Minute no. 21 refers).

17 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Kendall, Pryke and Shelbrooke.

18 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2008, be confirmed as a correct record.

19 Regional Governance Arrangements

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report following a request of the Board to be provided with information on current regional governance arrangements. The report provided an overview of current regional bodies and proposals for future arrangements including the process of leading to a Single Integrated Regional Strategy for the region.

The Chair welcomed Catherine Hall, Senior Project Officer, Chief Executive's Department to the meeting.

The Board was informed of the Government's Subnational Review of Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR) and that a government response to this review had been expected this week but no announcement had been made at the time of today's meeting. The intention of the SNR was to introduce greater devolution and delegation to ensure decision making was carried out at the right level; the subsidiarity principle. It was not anticipated that the Government would be overly prescriptive in how governance arrangements would be implemented within each region.

It was stressed that the outline detailed in the report on the transitional arrangements post SNR were proposals from the region at this stage and that this may change once the Government's position becomes known.

In response to Members questions and comments, the following issues were discussed:

- Scrutiny arrangements at a parliamentary, regional and Leeds City Region level. In respect of the Leeds City Region it was reported that the Leeds City Region Leader's Board, had considered 5 options for scrutiny and it had opted to maintain the current arrangements of each authority holding their own Leader to account for decisions made at the Leaders' Board but that this was to be reviewed in April 2009.
- Financial Costs of the new arrangements and it was reported that though this was not explicitly stated, it was envisaged that regional changes would be cost neutral.
- Democratic accountability.
- Leeds City Council's contribution to Local Government Yorkshire and the Humber and the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly and it was reported that currently the contributions are £110k p.a. and £33k p.a. respectively.
- The process of developing the new integrated regional strategy and its possible effect on individual wards.
- Local Transport Bill and the decision of the Leeds City Region Leaders' Board to initiate a review of transport governance arrangements in the Leeds City Region in response to the Local Government transport Bill and the proposed creation of integrated transport authorities.

The Chair thanked Catherine Hall for her attendance.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the Principal Scrutiny Adviser arrange for Members of the Board to be provided with a link to the minutes and agendas of the Leeds City Regions Leaders' Board.
- (3) That the Senior Project Officer provide the Board with information on comparative scrutiny activity being undertaken in the Leeds City Region.

(Councillor Lewis declared a personal interest in this item due to his membership of the Yorkshire and Humber Employers Committee).

20 Inquiry into Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector - Session 1

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report regarding the Board's Inquiry into the Voluntary Community and Faith Sector (VCFS). Attached was the terms of reference for the inquiry along with a report of the Chief Regeneration Officer which focussed on how the VCFS supported Council engagement activity.

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- Sue Wynne, Head of Regeneration, Policy and Planning, Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Keith Lander, Deputy Area Manager, Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Matthew Lund, Corporate Consultation Manager, Chief Executive's Unit

It was reported that there were over 3,000 VCFS organisations across Leeds who all make a valuable contribution to services across the city. There was however, concern that some organisations could be competing against each other and instances of services being duplicated.

Sue Wynne addressed the meeting. She brought Members attention to potential opportunities and challenges of working with the VCFS organisations to enhance community engagement. A community engagement sub group had been established which included representatives of Leeds Voice, Leeds City Council and VCFS organisations. It was reported that there was a diverse range of VCFS organisations which required a varying range of resources and that the VCFS was encouraged to work collaboratively.

More work was planned with the VCFS to look at resourcing issues. There had been significant changes to funding with the end of SRB and NRF funding and there was a need to ensure that the VCFS was business ready for commissioning activities.

In response to Members questions and comments, the following issues were discussed:

- Advice was available through the Council's and Leeds Initiative's websites on funding and commissioning issues.
- £109 million in financial assistance was provided in Leeds for VCFS organisations. Members of the Board requested details..
- Concern was expressed that some smaller organisations would not have the capacity to compete under the commissioning process. It was reported that the level of information required from organisations would be appropriate for the level of funding and risk involved.
- Area Management teams supported VCFS organisations of all sizes. Support was available to assist with capacity building and also for new organisations.
- Monitoring of spending where grants have been made or services commissioned.
- How VCFS organisations could work together. An example of a federation of voluntary organisations that operated in Hull was given and the economic and empowerment advantages this brought.
- Getting organisations to operate as social enterprises and the funding available for this.
- Matthew Lund explained his role and how the co-ordination of engagement activity was being considered across Leeds. It was suggested that he gave the 'Talking Point' presentation to the Board.

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the report be received as Session 1 of the Board's inquiry.
- (2) That in accordance with Session 2 of the terms of reference for this Inquiry the Director of Leeds Voice and a representative of a VCFS organisation be invited to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Board (City and Regional Partnerships) to discuss relevant issues using case studies.
- (3) That Members of the Board be provided with a breakdown of the financial assistance which the Council makes to the VCFS from the latest audited approved accounts.
- (4) That the 'Talking Point' presentation be made at the pre meeting of the Board on the 23rd October 2008.

21 Progress Report of the Board's Working Groups

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which gave Members a progress report on the Board's Working Groups. Appended to the report was a copy of the notes of the meeting of the Skills Working Group held on 3 July 2008 and draft terms of reference for the Inquiry into Skills were also distributed.

The Chair welcomed Rob Norreys, Head of Regional Policy to the meeting for this item.

In brief summary the following issues were discussed:

- Concern as to whether scrutinising the future of further education in Leeds as part of the Skills Inquiry was appropriate as the reorganisation was going ahead and it was too soon to examine the outcome
- Inclusion of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) as part of the Board's inquiry.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the progress report on the Board's Working Groups be noted.
- (2) That the recommendations of the Board's Working Group on terms of reference for an Inquiry into Skills including the Local Area Agreement be approved.

22 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which outlined the Board's current Work Programme. Appended to the report were the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions and the latest Executive Board minutes.

It was reported that the Work Programme would be updated to take account of the Inquiry into Skills and the Inquiry into the VCF Sector. Further suggestions included the Local Transport Bill and potential re-organisation of the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and the Work Programme be amended as appropriate.

23 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 23 October at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Members at 09.30 a.m.)