

SCRUTINY BOARD (CITY AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS)

THURSDAY, 26TH FEBRUARY, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor S Bentley in the Chair

Councillors B Atha, C Campbell, G Driver,
J Dunn, C Fox, R Harington, J Lewis,
R Pryke and A Shelbrooke

56 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed Councillor Jack Dunn to his first meeting of the Scrutiny Board (City and Regional Partnerships) who has replaced Councillor Lucinda Yeadon.

57 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Kendall.

58 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2009, be confirmed as a correct record.

59 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Further to the presentations that had been received regarding the new Leeds City College, it was reported that Peter Roberts had been appointed as principal of the new college.

Concern was expressed that the minutes of the last meeting were not open for discussion at the meeting of Council on 25 February due to the lack of time.

60 Session 4 - Inquiry Into Skills

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development, the Assistant Chief Officer (Planning, Policy and Improvement) and Director of City Development submitted reports regarding the Board's Inquiry into Skills. The reports focussed on the following areas:

- a) Local Area Agreement
- b) Skills Targets in the Leeds Strategic Plan

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- Dylan Griffiths – Project Manager (Policy), Policy, Planning and Improvement
- Paul Stephens – Chief Economic Services Officer, City Development
- Teresa Brookes - Skills Development Manager, Environment & Neighbourhoods
- Mandy Crawford-Lee – Learning & Skills Council

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

- The funding of 16-19 Further Education was to be transferred from the Learning and Skills Council to local authorities ring-fenced education budgets.
- Government policy on skills which is very much based on employer needs and is demand led.
- Government initiatives that focussed on employees:
 - Train to Gain
 - Apprenticeships
 - Skills Pledge
- Concern was raised regarding the meeting of targets that were set before the recent economic downturn. It was reported that the view of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) was to maintain current targets and aspirations and that employers and providers should also retain the same focus.
- Effects of the economic downturn on the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). The Council was due to be visited by CAA Assessors and it was felt that if it could be proved that everything had been done within reason and that aspirational targets had been set, that there would be no detrimental effect on the CAA results.
- How to multi-skill the workforce in preparation for changes in employment opportunities?
- How to address the training needs of the workless?, particularly those who have been in long term unemployment. This would involve working at a local level and would include various services and organisations including the local authority. There was a need to promote awareness of training that was available to hard to reach groups
- There was a focus on school leavers obtaining at least level 2 qualifications and there had been a recent increase in these figures. There was also an emphasis on getting employees qualified to level 2 and 3.
- Work would be undertaken with the new college in order that the curriculum matches as far as possible the demands of employers and provides the necessary skilled workforce in the city region now and in the future
- Responding to the economic downturn – Yorkshire Forward had taken a lead on this at a regional level and it involved working with all key partners including the Learning and Skills Council and Government

Office for Yorkshire and Humber. There was a recognition that there needed to be a better use of resources available for training.

- How to achieve Level 2 and 3 targets within the Local Area Agreement – there was responsibility not just on employers and providers, but on individuals undertaking training?
- How to encourage employers to identify and be aware of their skill needs and the training opportunities that are available especially to small and medium sized businesses?
- It was reported that Leeds City Council is undertaking its own skills census of qualifications within it's workforce which could be made available to the Board.
- Members were asked to participate in a small working group to meet with igen Leeds Careers Advisers.
- The Leeds Skills Board, Chaired by Councillor Andrew Carter and concerns that he had not been available to attend today's meeting

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the reports be noted.
- (2) That Councillors Bentley, Driver and Pryke form a working group to meet igen Leeds Careers Advisers on 11 March 2009 and others as appropriate.
- (3) That the Leader of the Council be invited to attend the next session of this inquiry on the 26th March or subsequent Scrutiny Board meeting on the 30th April 2009.

61 Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Inquiry - Draft Final Report and Recommendations

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report regarding the Board's completed Inquiry into the role of the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) in Council Led Community Engagement. A copy of the draft final report into the Inquiry had been sent with the Agenda for Member's consideration along with a summary of evidence considered during the Inquiry.

A late note was tabled of the meeting of the VCFS Working Group held on 16th February with the organisation Hope for Africa

The Chair welcomed Sue Wynne, Head of Regeneration, Policy and Planning and Julie Staton, Resources Manager to the meeting.

In brief summary, the following issues were discussed:

- Difficulty for and reluctance from some VCFS groups, particularly smaller groups, in applying for funding due to systems which were often felt to be too bureaucratic.
- It was reported that the Council had a framework and corporate group with representatives from all directorates to oversee grant funding to

the VCFS which promotes monitoring arrangements which are proportionate to the level of funding and risk.

- How to support communities to help themselves and empower local people?
- How the VCFS groups could often extend the reach of council consultation and engagement with hard to reach groups in the community and how to maximise these opportunities
- Sustainability of smaller VCFS groups, particularly where dependence on the running of the group may fall to one or two individuals.
- The dangers of small community groups becoming part of the main stream and not being as effective as a result.

In response to the draft report, Members suggested amendments in relation to issues that had been discussed.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the draft final report be agreed subject to recommendations 1, 3 and 6 in the draft report being amended in line with the discussion, and these amendments being circulated to Board Members for approval.
- (2) That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods formally respond to the Board's recommendations within 2 months of receipt of the Board's report.

62 Work Programme

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development provided Members with a copy of the Board's current work programme. Also appended to the report was a copy of the Forward Plan of Key decisions along with the minutes of the Executive Board held on 14 January 2009.

It was reported that the proposed item on Marketing Leeds had not been taken at this meeting due to a delay in the announcement of funding arrangements and this would be now taken at the March meeting

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

63 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 26 March 2009 at 10.00 a.m. (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 09.30 a.m.)