

SCRUTINY BOARD (CITY AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS)

THURSDAY, 26TH MARCH, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor S Bentley in the Chair

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

64 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2009, be confirmed as a correct record.

65 Session 5 - Skills Inquiry

The report of the Resources Manager, Regeneration Service referred to the Board's Inquiry into Skills and outlined how partners are working together to tackle worklessness and improve Level 1 skills and under in Leeds and how they are commissioning and co-ordinating provision.

This report had been produced following concerns at the Board's last meeting as to what support was being given to those young people who have few or no qualifications. Members wanted to know how they could access further training and what support was available through our partner organisations.

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- Diana Towler – Job Centre Plus
- Cath O'Grady – Learning Partnerships
- Ruth Davany – Archway
- Julie Staton – Resources Manager, Environment & Neighbourhoods
- Val Snowden – Head of Jobs & Skills, Environment & Neighbourhoods

Diana Towler gave a presentation on "Worklessness – Making a Difference" The presentation focussed on the following areas:

- Welfare Reform
 - Reference was made to the Houghton Review of Worklessness which looked at the role of local authorities.
 - How to increase employment to 80% - the employment rate in Leeds was currently 73%
 - Changes to the benefits system
- Key Changes
 - Flexible New Deal programme
 - Work for benefit proposals

- Changes to benefits for lone parents and families with young children to encourage a return to work.
- Local Employment Partnerships – Agreement between Job Centre Plus and employers to move more disadvantaged people back into work.
- Reducing Child Poverty by reducing worklessness.
- The Story so Far:
 - Area Worklessness Groups – linked to Area Management wedges
 - Mapping employability and skills with activity of providers and partners – helping to co-ordinate activity, align funds and prevent duplication.
 - Worklessness Pilots in Gipton, Halton Moor and Osmondthorpe and New Wortley.

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

- Pathways for individuals to return to work – these could involve various partners to assist with debt advice, childcare, basic skills and many other issues. There was a need to simplify the process as far as possible.
- Issues for people on disability benefits.
- Effects on those who were in receipt of tax credits.

Cath O’Grady informed the Board of the New Opportunities Experience for Lone Parents. This outlined the pathway following referral from various sources through support from case workers and partner organisations leading to development of skills and ultimately employment and continued post employment support. An information sheet was circulated to all Members of the Board on this matter.

Ruth Davany informed the Board of the work of Archway. This focussed on the following areas:

- Leeds Youth Employment Network
- Employment support and benefits for 19-25 year olds.
- Support for those not in education, employment or training.
- How to encourage those with a lack of interest and low confidence.
- Links with Park Lane College and enabling key skills qualifications.

The Board’s attention was also brought to the following issues:

- The role of the Leeds Strategic Outcome Worklessness Group. This had helped people reach work in their own localities.
- The impact of the Houghton Review and the positive impact on the local authority co-ordinating role.
- How to get those without Level 1 skills trained and skilled for life – this was considered to be one of the most challenging issues.
- The LSC Capital Building Programme – it was reported that the new Leeds City College proposals remained a priority.

Further issues discussed in response to Members questions and comments, included the following:

- Learning Partnerships and Archway were commissioned by the Council and received funding from Yorkshire Forward and European Social Funds.
- Concern that the curriculum for the Leeds City College was still unclear and for those who did not have Level 1 skills – it was reported that the curriculum reform programme looked at foundation training and developing clear pathways through the training ladder. Issues surrounding the development of curriculums involved various partners.
- Employment rate figures related to those of a working age, normally between 18 and 65, who were in employment.
- Performance Indicators in relation to reducing those on benefits. These were monitored by the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP)

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance.

RESOLVED – That the report and the information presented be noted as part of the Board's Skills Inquiry.

66 Marketing Leeds Grant Agreement 2009/10

The report of the Chief Executive updated the Board on the proposed Marketing Leeds Grant Agreement for 2009/10 and the associated draft Business Plan and Activity and Events Summary.

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- Jean Dent – Director, City Development
- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement)
- Deborah Green, Chief Operating officer, Marketing Leeds

Members were informed of the decision to 'call-in' the Marketing Leeds Grant Agreement in September 2008. This call-in decision was subsequently considered by the Scrutiny Board (Central and Corporate Functions) who released the officer delegated decision to enter in to a Grant Agreement with Marketing Leeds for 2008/09. However, Scrutiny Board (Central and Corporate Functions) recommended that Scrutiny Board (City and Regional Partnerships) consider the agreement in detail before offices entered in to a further Grant Agreement with Marketing Leeds for 2009/10.

It was noted that the proposed business plan for 2009/12 was dependent upon funding from other parties as well as the Council. It was reported that the total budget for Marketing Leeds for the next year was approximately £1.5 million. This included a £400k grant from Leeds City Council. Yorkshire

Forward has now committed £2.4m of funding for the next three years subject to completion of the Grant Agreement.

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

- Outcomes as detailed in the report – Members attention was brought to key performance indicators and it was explained how these would be used to measure outcomes.
- Possible areas of overlapping/duplication of work with other bodies – it was reported that Marketing Leeds worked closely with Town Centre Management and other partners to avoid duplication. Areas of expertise had been identified for the relevant organisations to cover.
- Difficulty with measuring economic activity – perception studies were used and comparisons made with other cities.
- Aspirations for Leeds to be recognised as a city of European status.
- Leeds had been ranked as best value for money for locating businesses.
- Leeds needed specialist destination marketing to meet aspirations.
- Marketing Leeds did not undertake roles already carried out within Leeds City Council, but complemented services and provided a more specialist service.
- Members' attention was brought to the Activity and Events Summary in the report for 2009/2010 which identified the partners involved and the aims and activities over the next year. Particular reference was made to a recent visit to Milan for the Festival of Commerce and Culture of the fact that 165 delegates from Leeds attended.
- Promotion of Sport and Culture in Leeds and the benefits that sporting and cultural events can bring to the city.
- It was felt that Marketing Leeds as a separate organisation from the Council was better positioned to attract funding particularly from the business sector.
- Reporting procedures for Marketing Leeds – it was reported that in addition to regular reports and financial statements that an Annual Report was to be submitted to the Executive Board. This report would be available to all Members of the Council.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

67 Sustainable Communities Act

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development provided information on the Sustainable Communities Act and its implications for Leeds.

The report focussed on the following areas:

- Proposals to promote sustainability
- Preparing and considering proposals

- Submitting and judging proposals
- Local Sending Report

It was noted that the Secretary of State had invited local authorities to submit proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act and the deadline for any proposals was 31 July 2009.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That any comments from Members be submitted to the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development.

68 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 meetings held on 13 February and 4 March 2009.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

69 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 23 April 2009 at 11.30 a.m.