

SCRUTINY BOARD (CENTRAL AND CORPORATE)

MONDAY, 8TH JUNE, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor P Grahame in the Chair

Councillors J Bale, S Bentley, P Ewens,
M Hamilton, A Hussain, V Kendall, J Lewis,
A Lowe, A Parnham and D Schofield

1 Chair's Welcome

The Chair welcomed Members and officers to the first meeting of the Board in the 2009/10 municipal year, and Members and officers introduced themselves.

2 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors B Chastney and A McKenna.

4 Minutes - 6th, 9th and 29th April 2009

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings held on 6th, 9th and 29th April 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.

5 Changes to the Council's Constitution in relation to Scrutiny

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted an information report regarding recent changes to the scrutiny function, approved at the Annual Council Meeting on 21st May 2009. These related to Councillor Calls for Action provisions, arrangements for the scrutiny of crime and disorder matters, scrutiny of matters referred by the Local Involvement Network (LINK), the successor bodies to the Patient and Public Involvement Forums, responses to Scrutiny Board Inquiry reports and scrutiny of the Council's partner organisations.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

6 Co-opted Members

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report relating specifically to the recommendations of KPMG (the Council's external auditors) in respect of the appointment of co-optees onto Scrutiny Boards, submitted as

part of their review of the Council's overview and scrutiny function carried out during their 2008/09 audit of the Council.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the Board consider on an ad hoc basis the need to appoint co-optees as and when the need may arise in relation to a particular Inquiry.

7 Input to the Board's Work Programme 2009/10 - Sources of Work and Establishing the Board's Priorities

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report to assist the Board to develop its work programme for the 2009/10 municipal year. This included an executive summary of, and the improvement priorities identified in, the Council's Business Plan 2008-2011, a list of work undertaken by this Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the past five years and a copy of the Board's Terms of Reference, together with a relevant extract from the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st May to 31st August 2009 and a copy of the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 13th May 2009.

In attendance at the meeting and responding to Members' queries and comments were:

Councillor Richard Brett, Leader of the Council and Executive Member (Central and Corporate Functions)
Alan Gay, Director of Resources
Nicole Jackson, Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance)
James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement)

In brief summary, the main points of discussion were:-

- The challenging budget set by the Council for 2009/10, the need to achieve the efficiency savings identified if the budget was going to be met, and how the Board's work might assist in this respect.

Reference was made to the Board's Inquiry last year into managing staff attendance, and how following through on its recommendations would assist to achieve the envisaged cost savings in this area.

Reference was also made to the Council trying to establish an 'efficiency framework', in order that it could better compare its costs against other organisations;

- Support Services – The Council was striving to achieve efficiency savings of 2% per year over 5 years, and was now in the second year of this initiative. It was suggested that this was an area the Board might like to look at. Commercial Services was also suggested as a possible source

for scrutiny. Reference was also made to a proposal for the Board to look at the Council's Customer Services, in particular the Call Centre operation.

Whilst some of these might be areas the Board wished to look at, subject to a clearer brief, it was emphasised that the Board would also wish to look at more strategic issues as set out in Paragraph (f) of its terms of reference – 'to review outcomes, targets and priorities within the Leeds Strategic Plan, and to make such reports and recommendations as it considers appropriate'. Amongst these might be progress in promoting Leeds as the heart of a City Region, notwithstanding the need to avoid cross-over with the City and Regional Partnership Board.

- Other possible areas for Board involvement discussed were the Council's involvement in carbon trading, assisting in the proposed review of services to the disabled, how volunteering might be harnessed to assist the Council, public consultation and engagement concerns and links to the Council's Business Plan, zero-based budgeting as part of an efficiency framework, information governance, the current performance management framework review forming part of the Council's Business Transformation plans and knowledge sharing – both internally and with the Council's partners and voluntary organisations. Also referred to was trying to connect the Board's work to that of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, and managing conflict with the need for the Council to effect efficiencies, balanced against the knock-on effects for staff and the Council's suppliers.

In conclusion the Chair thanked Councillor Brett and the officers for their attendance and the manner in which they had responded to Members' queries and comments.

RESOLVED – That the report, and the contributions made during the discussion, be taken into account when the Board is finalising its work programme and deciding its priorities.

(NB: Councillor Hamilton left the meeting at 10.54 am and Councillor Kendall at 10.55 am during discussion of this item)

8 Executive Board Response to Final Scrutiny Board Reports

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report regarding the response of the Executive Board to three recently submitted Board Inquiries, in respect of Member Development, Attendance Management and Procurement of Services. All the Board's recommendations had been agreed by the Executive Board. All the recommendations would now be monitored under the Recommendation Tracking System, and the Board would receive its first progress report at its July meeting.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9 KPMG - Scrutiny Review - May 2009

Final minutes - approved at the meeting
held on Monday, 6th July, 2009

Further to Minute No 6, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report relating to the recommendations of KPMG (the Council's external auditors) in respect of their review of the Council's overview and scrutiny function, carried out as part of their 2008/09 audit of the Council. This report was being submitted to all Scrutiny Boards in this cycle, and any comments would be referred to the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee.

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development drew Members' attention to the management response to KPMG's comments. With regard to the suggestion about drawing up a 'job specification' for Scrutiny Board Chairs, this was regarded as reasonable, and it was proposed to do this as part of the Council's bid to achieve 'CharterPlus' status for Member Development. However, in terms of the suggestion that Chairs should be selected by political groups on the basis of who best met the job specification, this idea had not been accepted, as it was recognised that political groups had their own criteria, which might include national party rules.

In respect of attendance levels for Board Members, the pressures on Members were referred to, together with the difficulties which some Members experienced with their employers in terms of getting time off. Any Member experiencing such difficulties, or unsure of their rights, was advised to contact the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development. Earlier start times for Boards was also mentioned.

There was an acknowledgement of the truth in respect of KPMG's comments regarding the current role and effectiveness of Scrutiny Boards in Leeds, and the unsatisfactory nature of the current relationship between Scrutiny Boards and the Executive. The view was expressed that Scrutiny Boards needed to be more challenging of the Executive, akin to Parliamentary Select Committees, and also needed to develop their policy formulation role.

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development also referred to the fact that he and the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee would be liaising with the Scrutiny Board Chairs' Advisory Group to ensure further appropriate Member input.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the above comments, the report be received and noted.

10 Determining the Work Programme 2009/10

Further to Minute No 7, the Board received a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development regarding the criteria for determining its proposed work programme for the next year, and including a skeleton work schedule, which highlighted the dates for budget scrutiny, quarterly performance monitoring reports and recommendation tracking updates.

In addition to the issues discussed under Minute No 7, the following issues were also referred to as matters which Members felt might warrant further investigation, if possibly not in some cases a formal Inquiry –

- Taxis – Further information regarding the arrangements for a recent consultation meeting with the trade at Civic Hall, Leeds
- The Council's use of consultants – the Board's previously agreed Terms of Reference for a proposed Inquiry to be circulated to Members for comment
- Customer Services / Contact Centre, and in particular the problem of repeat calls on the same issue
- Management Information Systems, and their compatibility
- Commercial Services, subject to a more defined brief
- Community engagement and consultation, particularly prior to decision taking
- The translation and interpretation services currently offered by the Council
- Carbon Trading and the Council's involvement
- The proposed review of services for the disabled, which should encompass all disabilities e.g. mental and deaf, blind and visually impaired services
- The corporate performance management framework, including an efficiency comparator system
- HR job guarantee schemes and job training/provision for 16 year olds
- 2010 – the Year of Volunteering in Leeds – and if, how and where volunteering fitted into the Council's service provision.

RESOLVED – That the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development, in conjunction with the Chair, draw up a draft work programme for discussion with the Board.

11 Dates and Times of Future Meetings

Monday 6th July 2009
Monday 7th September 2009
Monday 5th October 2009
Monday 2nd November 2009
Monday 7th December 2009
Monday 11th January 2010*
Monday 1st February 2010
Monday 1st March 2010
Monday 29th March 2010

All at 10.00 am (Pre-meetings 9.30 am) except *start 14:00 (Pre-meeting 13.30)