

SCRUTINY BOARD (CENTRAL AND CORPORATE)

MONDAY, 6TH JULY, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor P Grahame in the Chair

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

12 Late Items

The Chair gave notice that in accordance with her powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, she had agreed to admit to the agenda a late item of urgent business. This related to a request for scrutiny submitted by Councillor J Illingworth in respect of two issues:-

- Record keeping and Access to Information concerns; and
- The Council's relationship with an organisation named 'Common Purpose'.

The reason for considering this as a late item of urgent business was to enhance and inform the debate.

13 Declarations of Interest

The following Members declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 8 – Gambling Act 2005 – Statement of Licensing Policy - (Minute No. 18 refers):-

- Councillors P Grahame, A Lowe and A McKenna in their capacity as members of Leeds casinos.

See also later Minute Nos. 15 and 16.

14 Minutes - 8th June 2009

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th June 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.

15 Recommendation Tracking

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a quarterly 'Recommendation Tracking' report updating Board Members on progress in respect of the recommendations arising from previous Scrutiny Inquiries in relation to Attendance Management, Procurement of Services and Member Development.

In addition to the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development, also in attendance at the meeting, and responding to Members' queries and comments, were:-

- Wayne Baxter, Chief Procurement Officer.
- Richard Moss-Blundell. Environment and Neighbourhoods Department.

In brief summary, the main issues discussed were:-

Procurement of Services

- The number of quotations normally sought for jobs

It was considered that six to eight quotes or tenders would be the optimum – depending upon the EU tendering procedure adopted. For tenders sourced from approved lists, it was normally six – three firms by rotation and three firms based on previous performance

- Whether a 'One Council Commissioning Framework' could be enforced across all directorates

It was explained that category management was a key element of the 'One Council Commissioning Framework' approach and was a methodology advocated as best practice in the public and private sector. Once the council had identified a best practice approach across a category of spend, it was anticipated that that approach would be enforced across all areas of the Council. The Council was currently leading the 'Smarter Procurement' work programme of the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Programme (RIEP), and had secured funding to develop a regional approach to Category Management. It was planned to develop the Council's own in-house approach in tandem with this development

- It was hoped that the RIEP approach would also benefit the Council in other key areas such as the Category Management, Contract Management Training and re-negotiation of existing contracts to achieve improvements or efficiencies
- Wayne Baxter undertook to arrange for Members to receive more detailed information in respect of PFI contracts from Dave Outram, Chief Officer (Planning, Policy and Improvement). He also undertook to ensure that Members were supplied with a report regarding developing the challenge element of the one-council commissioning framework, which was due to be considered by the Council Leadership Team on 28th July
- It was too early to assess or measure any tangible improvements or savings occurring from this direction of travel, but 'Savings' and

'Achievements' registers were being established in order that tangible evidence was available as progress was made

Attendance Management

- Action was continuing to progress the Board's recommendations, which had been endorsed by the Executive Board on 13th May 2009. All Departments were carrying out checks in conjunction with the Council's Business Support Centre (BSC) on the monitoring and progress of their own sickness absences, and also regarding the skills and competency levels of their managers in respect of attendance management
- Similarly, there was an increased emphasis on line managers engaging proactively with staff, not only in a supportive way, but also in respect of emphasising adherence to policies and procedures and instilling an attendance culture
- The direction of travel was showing encouraging signs, with an overall reduction in the total number of sick days recorded and good dialogue between management and the unions at senior level
- The pilot shift swap system, involving refuse collection staff, had been delayed by some 'service sensitivities', but all the groundwork had been done to enable this to progress as soon as these issues were resolved
- The Council's new dedicated Occupational Health Service had embedded, and was progressing issues such as the 'fit for work' initiative and discussions with local health professionals on this and other areas of mutual benefit

Member Development

No issues were raised under this heading

RESOLVED – That, subject to the above comments and requests for further information, the monitoring report be received and noted.

(NB:-

- 1) Councillor J Bale declared a personal interest in this item in his capacity as a Trustee of the Chartered Institute of Building;
- 2) Councillor J Lewis left the meeting at 10.33 am, during the consideration of this item.)

16 Council Business Plan - Performance Report - Quarter 4 2008/09

The Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement submitted a report which charted progress against a raft of both national and local performance

indicators in respect of services and areas which fell within the remit of the Board.

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

- Councillor R Brett, Leader of the Council and Executive Member (Central and Corporate Functions).
- Nicole Jackson, Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance).
- James Rogers, Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement).
- Doug Meeson, Chief Officer (Financial Management).
- Helena Phillips, Chief Officer (Resources and Strategy).
- Steve Carey, Acting Chief Officer (Revenues and Benefits).
- Alex Watson, Corporate HR.
- Heather Pinches, Chief Executive's Department.

In brief summary, the main issues discussed were:-

- In terms of the Council Business Plan Improvement Priorities, of the 39 listed for Central and Corporate functions, good progress was being made in 24 of these areas, and of the 15 indicators showing an 'amber' indicator, i.e. in need of improvement, 9 were indeed improving, with only 6 static. There were no 'red' indicators.
- It was agreed that Board Members would be separately supplied with more detailed information regarding indicators BP-23 and BP-25a, in particular how many 'top earners' were women from BME (black and minority ethnic) communities.
- NI-179 – Value for Money – it was reported that the Council was on target to achieve VFM efficiency savings of over £24m this financial year, largely on revenue items. This was against the Government's 3% target of over £28m, but this target did also include capital schemes. It was noted that Leeds, like other authorities, had found it difficult to identify efficiency gains from capital spending. It was recognised that delivery of efficiency gains was important not just in terms of national government targets, but also in the light of predicted future pressures on public finances.
- Adult Social Care - £2.6 million 'efficiencies' within the Support and Enablement Service – were these true efficiency savings, or had this figure been achieved by cutting services to vulnerable people? Further information requested.
- BSC-8 – Percentage of undisputed invoices paid by the Council within 30 days – performance during the year had been affected by a variety

of factors, such as incomplete information on an invoice, but the Council received very few complaints and the assumption was that generally the Council was regarded as a good payer and there was confidence amongst suppliers that the Council would pay its creditors..

- PFI project governance arrangements – it was explained that this related to internal project management issues and formed part of the ‘Delivering Successful Change’ initiative – it would not affect public consultation procedures.
- Employing disability status statistics – Members requested more detailed information on the outcome of the BSC employee survey carried out last year.
- Some concern was expressed at the very detailed and somewhat complicated current form of presentation of the Performance Monitoring information, and the necessity for the A.3 colour copies. The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development was requested to liaise with the report authors to see if, in future, a simplified document or summary could be produced showing key issues, trends and concerns.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above comments and requests for further information, the report be received and noted.

(NB:-

- 1) Councillor P Grahame declared a personal interest in this item in her capacity as a member of the Swardale Swarcliffe Eastwood Residents Association.
- 2) Councillor A Lowe left the meeting at 11:33 am, during the consideration of this item.)

17 Financial Performance - Outturn Report 2008/09

The Board considered the 2008/09 Financial Outturn Report of the Director of Resources, submitted to the Executive Board on 17th June 2009.

In attendance at the meeting, and responding to Members’ queries and comments, were Doug Meeson and Michael Everitt of the Resources Department.

In brief summary, the main issues discussed were:-

- The 17.8% under-spend in capital expenditure of the General Fund at year end. It was explained that, by its very nature, the capital programme was a 5 year rolling programme with slippage and carry-over for various reasons. A detailed report on the capital programme would be submitted to the July meeting of the Executive Board, and it

was agreed that this Board's Members should receive a copy of that report.

- Leeds Grand Theatre – It was explained that Leeds Grand Theatre, as well as being a charitable trust, was also a company limited by guarantee, of which the Council was the only shareholder/member. The Council had no strict financial liability for the operation of the theatre, although it could be argued that it had a moral responsibility towards it. The Council was also the guarantor in respect of the company's pension liabilities.
- The large amount of money being paid in Housing Benefit to private landlords across the City, and whether a different housing provision strategy might be beneficial. It was noted that this was a matter to be more properly considered by the relevant Directorate.
- Members requested to be supplied with further details of the £1.5 million under-spend on expenditure funded by the Area Based Grant.
- It was explained that as Aire Valley Homes ALMO had been responsible for the over-spend on the ALMOs capital programmes, it had made a £3.9 million contribution from its reserves towards the capital programme.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the above comments and requests for further information, the report be received and noted.

18 Gambling Act 2005 - Statement of Licensing Policy - Consultation Process

The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) submitted a report regarding the proposed review of the Council's current Statement of Licensing Policy and the proposed associated consultation arrangements.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

19 Development of a Corporate Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Solution

RESOLVED – That this item be deferred to the September Board meeting.

20 Work Programme, Forward Plan of Key Decisions and Executive Board Minutes

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted the Board's work programme, updated to reflect decisions taken at previous meetings, together with a relevant extract from the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st June to 30th September 2009 and a copy of the minutes of the Executive Board Meeting held on 17th June 2009.

The Board also considered requests for scrutiny submitted by Councillor Ewens (see Appendix 2 to the report) and Councillor Illingworth (Minute 12 refers).

RESOLVED:-

- a) That, subject to any changes necessary as a result of today's meeting, and the deferment of the next Recommendation Tracking update report from the September to the October meeting, the Board's work programme be approved.
- b) That the request for scrutiny submitted by Councillor Ewens be accepted, to be progressed by a Working Group, potentially comprising all Board Members, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development to circulate details regarding Working Group meetings.
- c) That, in respect of any possible Inquiry as requested by Councillor Illingworth, in respect of record keeping and Access to Information matters, this be the subject of further discussions with the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee as part of the planned wider discussions relating to the working relationship between that Committee and Scrutiny Boards, and a further item be brought back before this Board in due course.
- d) That a decision regarding Councillor Illingworth's request for scrutiny in respect of 'Common Purpose' be deferred, pending the receipt of further information and a briefing for Board Members.

21 Dates and Times of Future Meetings

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 at 9.30 am), except *11th January 2010 (2.00 pm, Pre-meeting at 1.30 pm).