

SCRUTINY BOARD (SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES)

MONDAY, 22ND OCTOBER, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors A Blackburn, N Buckley,
R Grahame, M Harland, P Harrand,
G Hyde, J Jarosz, S Lay, K Mitchell and
N Walshaw

29 Late Items

There were no late items as such, however additional information was submitted in respect of Agenda Item 7, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority – Consultation on Proposed Changes to Emergency Cover in West Yorkshire.

30 Declarations of Interest

Councillor R Grahame declared an interest in Agenda Item 7, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority – Consultation on Proposed Changes to Emergency Cover in West Yorkshire due to his membership of the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

Councillor S Lay declared an interest in Agenda Item 8, Scrutiny Review of the Council's Relationship with Local Parish and Town Council's – Draft Terms of Reference due to his membership of Otley Town Council.

31 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor P Davey,

32 Minutes -10 September 2012

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

33 Scrutiny review of the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils - draft terms of reference

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented draft terms of reference in relation to the Scrutiny Board's forthcoming review of the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Councils.

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting for this item:

- Councillor Peter Gruen – Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services.
- Ian Cornick – Head of Civic & Member Support
- Heather Pinches - Executive Officer (Performance Management)

Councillor Gruen informed the Board that he was pleased to see the terms of reference for this proposed Inquiry. He acknowledged that working relations had generally improved since the introduction of the Charter between Leeds City Council and Town and Parish Councils, but not in all areas. He made reference to the associated links with the Council's current review of area working, which is recognising the key role of Area Committees in relation to neighbourhood planning. In view of this, it was suggested that the Scrutiny Board's review also explores how Area Committees are working with Parish and Town Councils in relation to neighbourhood planning

RESOLVED – That the terms of reference for the forthcoming review of the Council's relationship with local Parish and Town Council's be agreed.

34 West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority - Consultation on proposed changes to emergency cover in West Yorkshire

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development referred to the consultation exercise being undertaken by the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority on proposed changes to emergency cover in West Yorkshire. A copy of the consultation document was attached to the report along with a summary analysis of the predicted impact on response times.

Also circulated to Board Members was a letter from the West Yorkshire Brigade Secretary setting out the views of the Fire Brigade Union on the consultation proposals.

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting for this item:

- Steve Beckley - WYFRS Deputy Chief Fire Officer
- Nick Smith – WYFRS District Commander
- Geoff Maren – WYFRS Chief Finance Officer

The Board was given a presentation on the challenges that the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority faced up to 2020. Issues highlighted included the following:

- Members were informed of the overall budget reduction for West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority.
- That the cuts in the first two years have been heavily loaded towards metropolitan authorities, with West Yorkshire losing over 10% of its grant funding in the first two years.
- That at £38.82 per head of population per year, the Authority provides the lowest cost service of all the metropolitan fire and rescue authorities in the country.

- That the significant reductions in risk and demand present an opportunity to review service provision and be more innovative and efficient in the way services are delivered.
- An overview of the Authority's performance standard and Risk Based Planning Assumptions.

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

- That all blue light services are facing financial pressures – Members acknowledged that the emergency service partners continue to identify opportunities for collaboration.
- That the Association of Metropolitan Fire Authorities continues to lobby for more resources for the service.
- Reference was made to proposals for developing a shared site with Yorkshire Ambulance Service in Menston. However, such proposals have been postponed following the decision of Yorkshire Ambulance Service to undertake a wider strategic review of its assets.
- That new and proposed housing developments were being taken into consideration as part of the planning analysis. It was also reported that new properties were safer than old homes, with hard wired smoke detection systems and better fire protection generally.
- That the cost of building new fire stations is small in comparison to the actual savings to be made in terms of the running costs and the salaries of staff that work there.
- Exact locations for the proposed new stations had not yet been determined.
- Fire stations fall outside the legislation relating to community asset bids. However, the Fire Authority could be receptive to expressions of interest from communities.
- Development of a concordat with Leeds City Council – a meeting was to be held with the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods regarding this and work was also going to be carried out with private landlords to improve fire safety.
- The role of the local area reduction teams in delivering prevention and protection activities within communities.
- Pilot schemes with the Rotary Club and Neighbourhood Network Schemes in the North West Area that assist in delivering prevention services on behalf of the WYFRS.
- Work with Leeds Bradford International Airport – It was highlighted that LBIA had their own fire service and that the majority of incidents which require fire appliances from the WYFRS would be pre-warned. The WYFRS already has a specific plan for the airport, which would be reviewed in light of changes in fire cover.
- Flooding and siting of flood equipment. All fire appliances carry flood rescue equipment and there were also specialist resources within the district to deal with flooding incidents. There is also an understanding with other partners, such as Environment Agency, to get equipment to incidents.

- Fire service staff were allowed to undertake work elsewhere provided that it did not impact on their ability to undertake their primary role. However, permission must be sought and applications are initially directed to the District Commander for assessment.
- There were currently over 400 firefighters within Leeds and there would be 92 fewer posts should the proposals be implemented.
- The introduction of combined aerial rescue vehicles gave the same capabilities but with fewer staff.
- Work with private landlords and fire safety for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and student accommodation.
- The use of alarm systems and sprinkler systems.

RESOLVED – That the report and presentation be noted and draft comments of the Scrutiny Board be brought back to the Board’s next meeting for consideration prior to being submitted as part of the consultation process.

35 Grounds Maintenance Contract

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented a summary note of the second working group meeting which was held on 2nd October 2012 in relation to the grounds maintenance contract.

It was reported that the Board’s draft final report would be available for consideration at the meeting to be held in November 2012.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

36 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development informed the Board of its forthcoming Work Programme. Recent Executive Board minutes were also appended to the report.

The Board was informed that there would be reports on bereavement services, allotments and fuel poverty at the next meeting. It was also suggested that the Board explores how the 3 blue light services are working collaboratively across the City to help minimise the impact of the forthcoming budget cuts on communities.

37 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 12 November at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Members at 9.30 a.m.)