

SCRUTINY BOARD (STRATEGY AND RESOURCES)

MONDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY, 2017

PRESENT: Councillor K Groves in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, S Bentley,
H Hayden, J McKenna, S McKenna,
D Nagle, A Sobel, E Tunnicliffe, T Wilford
and R Wood

65 Late Items

The following supplementary information was submitted to the Board, in relation to agenda item 7 (Chair's update):

- Draft minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 8 February 2017.

66 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

67 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor D Cohen with Councillor B Anderson attending as a substitute member.

68 Minutes - 16 January 2017

RESOLVED – That the minutes from the meeting held on 16 January 2017 be approved as a correct record.

69 Chair Update

The Chair gave a brief update on some of the activity undertaken since the last Scrutiny Board meeting, including a meeting with the Chief Officer for Human Resources and the resulting intention to bring forward a report on Workforce Planning to the April meeting of the Scrutiny Board.

The Chair also made reference to the draft minutes of the Executive Board meeting, held on 8 February 2017, and specifically the comments submitted on behalf scrutiny in relation to the Best Council Plan and the initial 2017/18 budget proposals. The Board noted Executive Board's response to the comments and recommendations put forward.

RESOLVED – That the update provided by the Chair be noted.

70 Financial Health Monitoring

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which introduced the 'Financial Health Monitoring 2016/17: Quarter 3 (Month 9)' report, considered by the Executive Board at its meeting on 8 February 2017.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor James Lewis – Executive Member for Strategy and Resources
- Neil Warren – Head of Corporate Finance – Strategy and Resources
- Kevin Mulvaney – Principal Financial Manager, Strategy and Resources.

The Head of Corporate Finance gave an outline of the report, which presented a potential overspend of £0.9M, as at month 9 of the financial year (2016/17). This represented an improvement of £3m when compared to the previous position reported. There was an expectation that the budget would be brought into balance by the year-end.

The Board praised the finance team for its good performance in balancing the Council's budget during very difficult times. In discussed the information in more detail, a number of matters were raised by the Scrutiny Board, including:

- The number of looked after children (LAC) had not reduced during the financial year (as predicted) but had reached a plateau. The accounted for a significant proportion of Children's Services projected overspend for 2016/17.
- Concern that pressures in relation to LAC only accounted for approximately 50% of Children's Services projected overspend for 2016/17.
- Queries regarding the payment of 'retention fees' for Foster Carers in Leeds.
- Examples of other 'demand led' services, including Adult Social Care, where balanced budgets were forecast/ expected to be achieved.
- Involvement of local ward members in relation to decision-making processes within localities.
- Clarification in relation to the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit and associated discussions with the Schools Forum.
- The trend in Civic Enterprise Leeds and actions being taken in terms of retaining and increasing the number of catering service agreements with schools

At conclusion of the discussion, and on behalf of the Scrutiny Board, the Chair thanked the officers for their attendance and contribution to the meeting, and the continued efforts managing the Council's budget.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the information presented be noted.
- (b) That the Scrutiny Board continues to maintain an overview of the financial health of the Council throughout the remainder of the current municipal year.

71 Scrutiny Inquiry into ICT Resourcing - Recommendation Tracking

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which provided an update on progress against the Scrutiny Board's previous statement and recommendations in relation to its inquiry around ICT Resourcing and Capacity.

The following were in attendance for consideration of this item:

- Bev Fisher – Deputy Chief Digital & Information Officer

The Deputy Chief Digital & Information Officer introduced the report and gave an outline of progress against each of the recommendations within the report.

The following matters were discussed:

- The trend and current situation in relation to staff retention in critical service areas.
- Dialogue with other local authorities experiencing similar issues with recruitment and retention.
- That the recommendations were broadly categorised as:
 - Prioritisation (recommendations 1, 2 and 3) – continue monitoring progress.
 - The Leeds £ and effective use of resources across partner agencies (recommendation 4) – continue monitoring progress.
 - Staff recruitment and retention (recommendations 5, 6 and 7) – continue monitoring progress.
 - Specific recommendation relating to a particular contract (recommendation 8) – cease monitoring.
- More detailed discussions involving Human Resources (HR) were required in relation to staff recruitment and retention – particularly in critical service areas.

In concluding the discussion, the Chair thanked the officer for her attendance and contribution to the meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That specific consideration be given to ICT staff recruitment and retention as part of the wider report around workforce planning, scheduled for April 2017.
- (b) That future recommendation tracking be based on the broad categories outlined at the meeting.
- (c) That a further update report be provided in 6 months.

72 Work Schedule (February 2017)

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser presented the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the remainder of the 2016/17 municipal year.

The following items were discussed:

- Drafting a Scrutiny Board statement / report on commissioning with a target date of March 2017. The Principal Scrutiny Adviser outlined the requirements within the Scrutiny Board procedure roles for draft reports.
- Financial Health Monitoring to be undertaken throughout the year.
- An intention to hold a 'workforce planning' themed meeting in April 2017.

RESOLVED – That subject to comments raised at the meeting and any on-going discussions and scheduling decisions, the Board's outline work schedule be approved.

73 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 20 March 2017, at 10:00am (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9:30am).

(The meeting concluded at 11:10am.)