

SCRUTINY BOARD (STRATEGY AND RESOURCES)

THURSDAY, 18TH JANUARY, 2018

PRESENT: Councillor P Grahame in the Chair

Councillors S Bentley, A Garthwaite,
R Grahame, P Harrand, J McKenna,
D Nagle, E Tunnicliffe, T Wilford and
R Wood

60 Late Items

The following late information was submitted to the Board:

- Agenda item 6 – Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) draft minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2017
- Agenda item 8 – Business Rates – Scrutiny Inquiry Update:100% Retention of Business Rates for 2018/19 – Pilot

The above information was not available at the time of agenda despatch, but was subsequently made available on the Council's website.

61 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

Councillor R Graham declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 7 – Employee Health and Wellbeing: Sickness Absence and Positive Intervention – as a member of the GMB Union and remained present during the meeting.

62 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Sobel and Councillor A Smart.

Councillor R Grahame was in attendance as a substitute member for Councillor A Sobel.

63 Minutes - 21 December 2017

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) meeting held on 21 December 2017 be agreed as an accurate and correct record.

64 Employee Health and Wellbeing: Sickness Absence and Positive Intervention

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Thursday, 22nd February, 2018

The Director of Housing and Resources submitted a report that provided an overview of the Council's Employee Wellbeing Strategy and setting out a range of information relating to sickness absence.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor James Lewis – Executive Member for Strategy and Resources
- Chris Ingham – Head of Health and Safety, Human Resources

The Executive Member and Head of Health and Safety gave a brief introduction to the report, the Council's Employee Wellbeing Strategy and the range of information relating to sickness absence.

The Scrutiny Board considered and discussed the information presented, with the main areas of discussion including:

- An outline of the Council's sickness procedures in relation to short-term and long-term absences.
- Training for managers to help manage sickness absence.
- The Council's average sickness absence levels in comparison to the national average and the general need for more comparative data.
- The Council's approach to managing the impact of mental ill-health related absence and long-term absences on all employees.
- The Council's Employee Assistance Programme.
- Approaches to help early identification where domestic violence or abuse may be affecting employees.
- The need for a range of additional information, including:
 - Specific service areas such as Children's Services and Waste Management.
 - Details relating to retirements on the grounds of ill-health.

RESOLVED –

- (1) To note the details presented in the report and discussed at the meeting.
- (2) That the additional information identified at the meeting be provided to the Scrutiny Board.

65 Business Rates - Scrutiny Inquiry Update

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report that provided an update and additional information relating to the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into Business Rates.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor James Lewis – Executive Member for Strategy and Resources
- Doug Meeson – Chief Officer, Financial Services

The Chief Officer, Financial Services briefly outlined the successful Leeds City Region 100% Business Rates Retention pilot, which had been led by Leeds City Council. Some of the main points raised included:

- An invitation to submit proposals to Government first emerged in August / September 2017.
- The Leeds City Region bid included the five West Yorkshire local authorities, plus York and Harrogate.
- Eleven new pilot areas were announced in late December 2017, which included the Leeds City Region proposals.
- The established Business Rates Pool Joint Committee, which was specifically concerned with spending proposals across the broad area of Economic Development and Growth.
- Details of the 100% Business Rates Retention proposals compared with the existing 50% retention scheme, including details of the changed level of government tariff and revenue support grant (RSG).
- The 100% Business Rates Retention scheme was expected to generate an expected gain for Leeds of around £7.5M.
- The next steps would include work to further develop the Business Rates Pool Joint Committee.

The Scrutiny Board considered and discussed the information presented, with the main areas of discussion including:

- The respective level of business rates per head collected across the seven local authority areas.
- The Business Rates Pool Joint Committee and the need for further details around the terms of reference of the joint committee and an outline of the governance arrangements.
- The impact of the anticipate gain on the Council's 2018/19 budget proposals.

RESOLVED –

- (1) To note the details in relation to the 100% Business Rates Retention pilot presented and discussed at the meeting.
- (2) That the further details identified at the meeting be provided to the Scrutiny Board for further consideration.

66 Work Schedule

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's work schedule for the 2017/18 municipal year.

The following matters were highlighted for inclusion within the Board's work programme and for consideration at a future meeting:

- The impact and implications for the Council arising from the recent collapse of Carillion.
- The funding of Out of Area Placements for Looked After Children and the actions taken to mitigate the overall impact on the Council's budget.

- A summary of the Business Rates Pool Committee, referenced as part of the Board's Business Rates inquiry.

RESOLVED – That subject to the inclusion of the matters identified at the meeting, alongside any on-going discussions and scheduling decisions, the Board's outline work schedule be approved.

67 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 22 February 2018 at 10.30am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 10.00am)

(The meeting concluded at 11:50am)