

SCRUTINY BOARD (STRATEGY AND RESOURCES)

MONDAY, 24TH FEBRUARY, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor M Harland in the Chair

Councillors G Almass, P Carlill,
D Chapman, L Cunningham, D Jenkins,
J McKenna, D Ragan, M Robinson and
S Seary

68 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection documents.

69 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

70 Late Items

There were no late items.

71 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

72 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr. H Hayden and Cllr. S Firth.

Cllr. D Ragan attended the meeting as substitute for Cllr. Hayden.

73 Minutes - 20th January 2020

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th January 2020, be approved as a correct record.

74 Matters arising

In relation to Minute 50 – Revenue Budget Update for 2020/21 to 2024/25 including proposed savings, heard at meeting held on 18th November 2019.

The Chair informed the Board that she had received a response from the Treasury in relation to the letter sent raising concerns on public works loans. Members were advised that it would be circulated for information.

75 Reducing emissions from staff travel

The report of the Director of Resources and Housing provided the Scrutiny Board with an update on the Council's position on staff travel, with specific reference to proposals that were reported to Executive Board on the Climate Emergency in January 2020.

In attendance for this item were:

- Councillor James Lewis – Executive Member for Resources
- Polly Cook – Chief Officer Sustainable Energy and Air Quality
- Alex Watson – Head of Human Resources

Members were advised that the proposals are intended to ensure that 'grey fleet' staff travel is zero emissions by 2030. To achieve this a range of measures are to be introduced and these would focus on:

- Adopting new approaches to using transport smartly and linking this to better journey planning and use of technology;
- Employment policy - changing the terms and conditions and offering new incentives to travel appropriately;
- Changes in working practices and culture.

As part of the introduction to the report, the following key points were highlighted:

- In 2018/19, lump sum, mileage and car parking claims relating to the grey mileage amounted to £3.25m;
- The Council is working with trade unions to find a way forward to achieve the aim of undertaking no grey fleet mileage in pure petrol or diesel cars by 2025, with a further target of having no mileage in private cars unless in zero emission vehicles by 2030;
- Existing initiatives aimed at promoting more sustainable modes of travel for staff include car leasing schemes, discounted travel schemes on both buses and trains and bike loans;
- A Travel Planning framework for work travel is being refreshed to set out a hierarchy of choices in order of sustainability under which staff should plan and make work journeys. Linked to this, there will be a single, accessible online travel planning portal;
- To build on earlier staff engagement exercises and help stimulate wider discussion, a Climate Emergency Staff Forum is also being set up.

In consideration of the report, Members' discussions focused on the following areas;

- The piloting of the Lift-Share car sharing App and the potential benefits of including Elected Members too;
- The piloting of a new Electric Vehicle pool car scheme;
- Incentivised passes on public transport including more flexible ticket options;
- Salary sacrifice arrangements and tax incentives;
- Actively promoting the benefits of using electric cars, which already includes free car parking at LCC car parks;
- The need for more charging points, particularly at staff locations, to further encourage electric car usage;
- Working closely with schools to promote sustainable travel options for teaching staff;
- Hiring of transport such as taxi's, minibuses and coaches for both staff and Members to undertake their roles;
- Exploring the use of electric motorbikes.

In conclusion, it was agreed that the comments and suggestions made by the Scrutiny Board would be reflected in a draft Statement and brought back to the next meeting for consideration and approval.

RESOLVED –

- (a) To note the content of report.
- (b) That a Statement is drafted to reflect the comments and suggestions made by the Scrutiny Board and is brought to the Board's next meeting for formal consideration and approval.

76 Update on Leeds City Council's preparations for the UK's exit from the EU

The Chief Executive presented a report to update the Board on Leeds City Council's preparations for the UK's exit from the European Union.

In attendance for this item were:

- Councillor James Lewis – Executive Member for Resources
- Mariana Pexton – Chief Officer Strategy and Policy
- Eve Roodhouse – Chief Officer Economic Development

The Board were provided with an update on the following points:

- The establishment of business roundtables with representative groups from across Yorkshire and the Humber. It was highlighted that while the feedback from recent sessions welcomed the avoidance of a 'no deal' exit, there were still concerns about the lack of clarity of the UK's future relationship with the EU after the transition period;
- Specific issues identified were agriculture, food and chemical sectors of the economy especially in relation to labour shortages and vulnerability to the scenario of significant regulatory divergence;
- The West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 economic survey reports noted that a lack of clarity over Brexit had led to a fall in consumer and business confidence. Since then, there has been a slight increase in domestic sales and business confidence, although investment levels remain low by historic levels;
- The Council will continue communicating with business through forums as future arrangements become clearer;
- The Council will continue to progress the local implementation of the EU Settlement Scheme as well as working with partners to monitor any potential community tensions, especially in the lead up to the local elections.

In responding to Members questions the Board were informed of the following points:

- Promotion of the EU Settlement Scheme was ongoing and a number of routes were being used including; community colleagues, Ward Members, Community Hubs, monthly communications from the Leader of Council and the Chief Executive. It was noted that Facebook was also proving to be a productive route for getting the message out;

- As community tensions continue to be monitored, it was noted that guidance on safety will be sent to Members during the election period;
- The Board acknowledged the variances across the different business sectors with regard to levels of concern linked to future supply chains and the labour market.

RESOLVED – To note the content of the report.

77 Devolution Update

The report of the Chief Executive provided an update for the Scrutiny Board on matters related to Devolution.

In attendance for this item were:

- Councillor Judith Blake – Leader of Council
- Councillor James Lewis - Executive Member for Resources
- Alan Reiss – Director of Policy, Strategy and Communications, West Yorkshire Combined Authority

During the Board's discussion, the following key points were raised:

- Particular emphasis was made around the urgency to engage with the Government to make swift progress on securing a deal in order to unlock funding to deliver transformational benefits across the region.
- It was therefore noted that discussions continue to progress with Ministers and officials to explore a potential devolution deal following a recent agreement to begin formal negotiations to create a devolution deal for the Leeds City Region.
- Further to the meeting that was held on 29th January 2020 with Ministers and West Yorkshire Leaders, it was highlighted that Simon Clarke MP has now been appointed as Northern Powerhouse Minister.
- The Board discussed the key benefits of devolution, as demonstrated elsewhere across the country, and noted the particular asks linked to a Leeds City Region deal in terms of tackling the climate emergency; creating an integrated, flexible and sustainable transport system; delivering a mass transit system for the region; and improving skills.
- With regard to transport issues in particular, references were made to the government commissioned Rail Review led by Keith Williams and also the independent inquiry, chaired by Lord Kerslake, into city and regional inequalities in the UK (The UK2070 Commission);
- It was highlighted that key issues surrounding the transfer of funding and associated governance structures were all being negotiated at present with cross party working across West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA).
- The Board acknowledged that this remained a complex and evolving process and that any proposed deal would also need to be subject to formal public consultation, including key partners and stakeholders.
- It was also noted that Members will continue to be updated on progress as part of the full Council meetings.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending.

RESOLVED – To note the content of the submitted report.

Councillors Cunningham, McKenna and Jenkins left the meeting at 12:10 pm at the conclusion of this item.

78 Work Schedule

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser presented the report of the Head of Democratic Services on the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the remainder of the current municipal year.

RESOLVED – To note the content of the report and approve the Board's work schedule.

79 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Scrutiny Board Strategy and Resources will be on Monday 30th March 2020, at 10:30am with a pre-meeting for all Members at 10:00am.

(The meeting concluded at 12:12pm)