

SCRUTINY BOARD (RESOURCES AND COUNCIL SERVICES)

MONDAY, 14TH OCTOBER, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor P Grahame in the Chair

Councillors J Chapman, N Dawson,
R Grahame, J Hardy, A Khan, C Macniven
and R Wood

33 Late Items

In accordance with her powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed to accept the following supplementary information:

- Scrutiny Response to High Cost Lending (30 September 2013) (Minute No. 37 refers)
- Children's Social Care Requirements for Agency Workers and Overtime (Minute No. 39 refers).

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

34 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting, however, in relation to the item entitled, 'High Cost Lenders', Councillors R Grahame, N Dawson and A Lowe drew the Board's attention to their membership of Leeds Credit Union (Minute No. 37 refers).

35 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors S Bentley, J L Carter and A Lowe. Notification had been received that Councillor R Grahame was substituting for Councillor A Lowe and Councillor J Chapman for Councillor S Bentley.

36 Minutes - 30 September 2013

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

37 High Cost Lenders

Further to minute 28 of the meeting held on 30 September 2013, the Head of Planning Services, Martin Sellens, attended the meeting to discuss the role and influence local planning authorities had in restricting the proliferation of high street high cost lenders.

The Board also received formal response to the recommendations made by the Board following its meeting of 30th September 2013.

In summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- The national controls in relation to changes of use and the 1987 Use Classes Order as amended
- That planning permission was normally required to move from one class to another
- The classification of high cost money lenders (Class A2 with banks, building societies, estate agents, betting offices and other financial and professional eservices)
- The consequences of the newly introduced 'flexible uses', introduced by the government and effective from June 2013
- How elected members could monitor planning activity within their wards
- How local authorities could lobby government for more local planning control.

It was noted that within the Use Classes Order there was the "Sui Generis" (without classification) category. Permission was required to change the use of premises to a "sui generis" use. Currently high cost lenders fall outside this category. The Board recommended that the Council, with others, including Core Cities and the LGA, lobby government to put high cost lenders within the Sui Generis category.

Members received and noted the formal response to recommendations made following its meeting of 30 September 2013.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the advice given made by the Head of Planning Services
- (ii) To recommend that the Council lobbies government to change the use category in which high cost lenders sits in relation to the 1987 Use Classes Order as amended
- (iii) To note the response to recommendations made following its meeting of 30 September 2013 and request an update in April 2014.

38 Financial Health Monitoring 2013/14 - Month 5

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report which presented the financial health of the authority after five months of the financial year in respect of the revenue budget and the housing revenue account.

Doug Meeson, Chief Officer, Financial Management, was in attendance

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the report and information appended to the report
- (ii) To request written responses to questions raised in relation to budget monitoring, school transport savings and the Education Support Grant.

39 People Score Card

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report addressing the reduction of agency spend in Children's Services. The report, as requested by the Scrutiny Board, focused on Children's Social Care.

The following officers were in attendance and responded to Board Members questions and comments.

- Councillor Judith Blake, Executive Member (Children's Services)
- Steve Walker, Deputy Director (Safeguarding, Specialist & Targeted Services)
- Paul Harris, Deputy Head of Human Resources.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- The reasons for using agency workers
- Main areas of agency usage
- Turnover and recruitment figures and pay scales
- Maternity and sickness levels
- Proposals to address the use of social workers agency workers, including the 'Leeds offer to social workers'
- The reasons for the use of admin agency workers and the need to eliminate agency usage in this area
- The handover period between agency workers and staff
- The correlation between social work numbers and the reduced number of children in placements.

RESOLVED – To note the contents of the report and the current position.

40 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the draft work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

RESOLVED – That the Board's work schedule be updated to reflect the work areas identified during today's meeting.

41 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 18 November at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 11.45 am).