

## **SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)**

**WEDNESDAY, 13TH MARCH, 2019**

**PRESENT:** Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, H Bithell, D Collins,  
A Gabriel, P Grahame, P Gruen,  
M Harland, A Khan, S McCormack and  
P Truswell

**70 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents**

There were no appeals.

**71 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public**

There was no exempt information.

**72 Late Items**

There were no formal late items of business, however the Board received the following supplementary information:

Agenda Item 11 – Scrutiny Inquiry into kerbside collection and recycling of domestic waste – Draft Scrutiny Inquiry Report.

**73 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

**74 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes**

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Wilkinson, Bentley and A Blackburn.

**75 Minutes - 25 February 2019**

**RESOLVED** - That the minutes of the meeting held 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019 be approved as a true record.

**76 Update on Universal Credit (UC) full service in Leeds**

The report of the Chief Officer, Customer Access and Welfare provided an update on the Government's introduction of full service Universal Credit (UC), the impacts across the city and how front line services are continuing to support people affected by the UC programme/system.

The following were in attendance:

- Lee Hemsworth – Chief Officer Customer Access & Welfare
- Dianne Lyons – Citizens Advice Bureau
- Allison Long and Rebecca Elling – Job Centre Plus
- Diane Gill – Senior Policy Development Officer
- Susan Murray – Head of Customer Contact
- Kevin Bruce and Mandy Sawyer – Housing Management
- Cllr. D Coupar – Executive Member for Communities

Key issues identified in discussions with the Board included:

- The changes implemented by the Government to the way UC claimants are to be supported. The funding has moved from Local Authorities nationally to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) the Local Authority will still provide support where possible to customers where possible with UC claimants being signposted to CAB. Members heard that CAB in Leeds have up to 9 full time advisors working with UC and it was reported that CAB are dealing with 300 enquires per month.
- Members queried whether the Government or MP's had seen the related scrutiny report, or acknowledged the impact that the implementation of UC was having in Leeds, and that this wholesale change of what was previously a good support network would be disruptive for all. Members were informed the Executive Board Member, has written to the Government and DWP and met with local MP's to discuss concerns.
- Concerns were raised that it would be difficult for members to direct residents when assisting with complex UC queries without a network of contacts and it was requested that the local authority work with CAB to monitor the effect of the introduction and that evidence be reported back to Scrutiny.
- The provisions in place for residents with language barriers and training in place for staff to assist. Members heard that CAB Leeds & Chapeltown offer a free interpreting service to all residents, and are working with partners to identify venues that can be accessed by the public.
- Clarity was sought on the primary location of staff. Members were informed the city centre office provides advice in 30 locations around the city and is open 5 days a week with telephone access also.
- Clarity was sought on the approximate waiting times for appointments. Members were informed that UC claimants are prioritised and residents can also use the Job Centre Plus to make claims.
- The capacity and provisions in place to assist people digitally.
- The Chair also agreed to undertake to write to the Government, to raise the concerns of the Board regarding the revised support programme.
- The Board identified that an update position regarding universal credit and how well the new support system was being embedded, should be scheduled into the 2019/20 work programme.

**RESOLVED** – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Noted the contents of the report.
- b) Noted the information provided at the meeting and the issues identified for further consideration.
- c) Resolved to write to highlight the concerns of the Board.
- d) Recommended that the successor board schedule a further review on the new Universal Credit – impact and support arrangements, be scheduled into the 2019/20 work programme.

## **77 Reducing Repeat Customer Contacts through Tackling Failure Demand - Tracking of scrutiny recommendations/desired outcomes**

The report of the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support and the Director of Communities and Environment set out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny inquiry into Reducing Repeat Customer Contacts through Tackling Failure Demand.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Lee Hemsworth – Chief Officer Customer Access & Welfare
- Susan Murray – Head of Customer Contact
- Wendy Alinson – Development and Improvement Manager
- Cllr D. Coupar – Executive Member for Communities

The status of the recommendations as set out in the report, were agreed as follows:

- Recommendation 1 - Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- Recommendation 2 - Achieved
- Recommendation 3 - Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- Recommendation 4 - Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- Recommendation 5 - Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- Recommendation 6 - Achieved
- Recommendation 7 - Achieved
- Recommendation 8 - Achieved
- Recommendation 9 - Achieved
- Recommendation 10 - Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)

Key issues identified in discussions with the Board included:

- In relation to Recommendation 3, Members requested additional information regarding the requested service changes. Members were informed that the use of available technology was maximised in regard to sending out information, to prevent cost issues and confusion regarding housing repairs.
- Clarity was sought regarding the number of missed calls; Members were informed that work is on-going to ensure measures are in place, to mitigate this issue, through the recruitment of additional staff.

**RESOLVED** – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Noted the contents of the report.
- b) Approved the status of the recommendations as set out above.

## **78 Community Hubs - General Update and Tracking of scrutiny recommendations/desired outcomes**

The report of the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support and the Director of Communities and Environment set out a general update regarding community hubs and also provided the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny inquiry into the development of Community Hubs.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Lee Hemsworth – Chief Officer Customer Access & Welfare
- Susan Murray – Head of Customer Contact
- Cllr D. Coupar – Executive Member for Communities

The status of the recommendations as set out in the report, were agreed as follows:

- Recommendation 2 - Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- Recommendation 3 - Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- Recommendation 4 - Achieved
- Recommendation 5 - Achieved

Key issues identified in discussions with the Board included:

- Clarity was sought regarding the status of phase 4 of the implementation. Members representing Burmantofts and Richmond Hill and Cross Gates and Whinmoor sought to clarify when focus would be provided in their respective wards. Members were informed that phase 4 is a nominal phase. It was also highlighted that development in the east of the city would be linked to the ELOR development. The Board noted the partnership arrangements with CCG and City Development to identify suitable areas going forward.
- Members raised the need for Ward Members to be better informed on the progress in the development of the community hub programme in their wards.
- In relation to Recommendation 2, the Board queried the involvement of Parish and Town Councils in terms of the roll out of the Community Hub Network. The Executive Member informed the Board a charter is being introduced, and will provide guidance on how to engage and communicate with the wider community.
- The Board acknowledged the value of community hubs and the social value being delivered from the established hubs.

**RESOLVED** – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Noted the contents of the report and information provided at the meeting.
- b) Approved the status of the recommendations as set out above.

## 79 Migration in Leeds - Annual Update

The report of the Director of Communities and Environment provided an update on Strategic Migration Board activities and an exploration of the national arrangements applying to EU citizens in Leeds.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- David Brown – Head of Migration Yorkshire
- Shaid Mahmood – Chief Officer Communities
- Henriette Mahamane – Leeds Migration Support
- Samantha Powell – ESOL Strategy Manager
- Michelle De Souza – Domestic Violence Service Manager
- Cllr D. Coupar – Executive Member for Communities

The Chief Officer Communities introduced the report and informed Members a report is due to go to Executive Board in July 2019. Officers in attendance highlighted matters including:

- The positive feedback in terms of the rollout of the EU Settlement Scheme and the pilots in Leeds around how the scheme works.
- The work undertaken to provide support to victims of modern slavery.
- The delivery of local projects such as ESOL
- The Asylum Dispersal Contract – the transition is underway and the change of providers from G4S to Mears Group.

The Chair thanked officers and the Executive Member for their hard work on the programme.

**RESOLVED** – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Noted the contents of the report

## **80 Draft Scrutiny Inquiry Report - Inquiry into Kerbside Collection and Recycling of Domestic Waste**

The report of the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support provided an update on refuse collection and recycling service, including current performance. Members received a draft Scrutiny Inquiry report for consideration.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Sandra Pentelow – Principal Scrutiny Advisor
- Helen Freeman – Chief Officer Environmental Services
- John Woolmer – Deputy Chief Officer Waste Management
- Cllr D. Ragan – Deputy Executive Member

The Chief Officer Environmental Services was invited to provide advice to the Board prior to agreeing the report. The Board was advised that advice has been sought from the Executive Board Member in advance of the meeting.

The Board considered the appended Inquiry Report and suggested that the following be included:

- In relation to recommendation 2, Members requested that the narrative had stronger reference to the DEFRA Waste strategy regarding the recycling of plastics and ethical purchasing.
- In relation to recommendation 3 the Chief Officer Environmental Services requested that the provisional date of July 2019 be extended. The Board agreed that the date for the Director of Communities and Environment to outline a plan which identifies the approach to meeting the 2020 recycling rate of 50% can be discussed and agreed with the Scrutiny Chair.
- In relation to recommendation 8, a change was requested so that the Director of Communities and Environment is asked to bring an action plan in January 2020, which outlines how all existing problems will be resolved, to the Scrutiny Board rather than an progress update.
- In relation to recommendation 15, a change was requested by the Chief Officer, Environmental Services which would enable the Director of Communities and Environment to bring an progress update to the Scrutiny Board in July 2019 rather than reporting the outcome.

**RESOLVED** – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Approved the draft Inquiry report subject to the amendments to recommendations as outlined above.
- b) Agreed that the final version of the inquiry report be approved the Scrutiny Chair before publication.

## 81 Work Schedule

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's work schedule for the 2018/19 municipal year.

Appended to this report for Members' information was a copy of the Board's completed work schedule and the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

The Board also considered the provisional meeting dates for the next municipal year which were agreed in principle subject to membership changes at the next Annual Meeting of Council. The Board also acknowledged the developing work programme for the 2019/20 municipal year.

In conclusion of the meeting, the Chair took the opportunity to thank Board Members, officers and the relevant Executive Board Members for their support and commitment throughout the year.

**RESOLVED** – The Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities):

- a) Noted the matters outlined in the report.
- b) Agreed the overall work schedule (as presented at Appendix 1) as the basis for the Board's work for the remainder of 2018/19.
- c) Considered the provisional meeting dates for 2019/20 which were agreed in principle.

d) Considered the draft work schedule (as presented at Appendix 3).

**82 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

It was noted that precise dates and times are to be confirmed in due course.