

SCRUTINY BOARD (STRATEGY AND RESOURCES)

MONDAY, 20TH JANUARY, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor M Harland in the Chair

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

54 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

55 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

56 Late Items

There were no late items.

57 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

58 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

There were no apologies.

59 Minutes - 18th November 2019

RESOLVED - The minutes of the meeting held on 18th November 2019, were approved as a correct record.

60 Matters Arising

Minute No: 49. Embracing Digital Technology Solutions – Tracking of recommendations

It was noted and welcomed that the suggestion put forward by the Scrutiny Board for Elected Members to receive more training and guidance to help identify and deal with potential spam/malice emails had been raised as an issue for consideration by the Member Development and ICT Working Group at its meeting on 14th January 2020.

Minute No: 50. Revenue Budget Update for 2020/21 to 2024/25 including proposed saving proposal.

The Chair confirmed that Board Members had received the comparative information requested in relation to planning charges of other core cities.

It was also acknowledged that on 2nd December 2019, a joint letter of the Chair and Executive Board Member Resources was sent to Government to relay the concerns expressed by the Board regarding the impact of the Public Work Loan rate increase. A copy of this letter had been circulated to Board Members for information. However, Board Members were advised that to date no reply had been received.

61 Social Value in Procurement - Social Value Guidance Update

The report of the Chief Officer Financial Services provided the Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) with an update as to the progress towards finalising the Social Value Guidance document for commissioners being developed by Procurement and Commercial Services (PACS). The report also sought the views and support from the Scrutiny Board in terms of ensuring that the priorities listed in the guidance captures Members requirements with regard to Social Value and that the guidance is fit for purpose.

In attendance at the meeting were:

- Councillor James Lewis – Executive Member for Resources
- Neil Evans – Director of Resources and Housing
- Victoria Bradshaw – Chief Officer Financial Services

In consideration of the report and guidance document, the following key points were raised:

- *The intention to strengthen the existing wording of the guidance document* – the Board acknowledged and welcomed the intention to strengthen the wording in the guidance document surrounding the expectation on commissioners to consider what opportunities exist in any contracting opportunity to deliver added social value and to give an explanation where it is not deemed relevant to any contract activity.
- *Acknowledging the key priority areas in respect of delivering social value* – as reflected in the guidance document, the Board noted that, as a minimum, commissioners are required to think about the appropriateness of integrating the 3 main priority areas in respect of Employment and Skills; the Environment; and Education. In addition to this, they should also be asking suppliers to consider for themselves what else they can do to be not just entrepreneurs but to be ‘social value entrepreneurs’ in Leeds.
- *Providing support and advice to specific service areas* – the Board noted that while the document had been developed to provide general advice to commissioners, there were lead staff members within Procurement and Commercial Services working within specific service areas to offer more detailed advice and support where needed.

- *Impacts on smaller businesses* – while it was noted that smaller businesses would still be able to offer social value within their own contracts (i.e. being a local employer), the Board was assured that such businesses would not be disadvantaged as the guidance was principally aimed at contracts above £50k.
- *Determining social value thresholds* – the Board acknowledged that while the type of contracted activity will have an influence in determining appropriate social value thresholds, the guidance document suggests a minimum weighting of 10% for all contracts above £50k.
- *Contract monitoring and assuring the delivery of social value benefits* – the Board was informed that the Executive Board will receive quarterly procurement updates as part of the Financial Health Monitoring Report. In helping to ensure greater consistency across the piece, the Board was also informed of proposals to introduce a new system that will require sign up from contractors to enter relevant monitoring details into the system.
- *Social Value Board* – It was acknowledged that the new Social Value Board will include representation across all directorates.
- *Working collaboratively with partners* – the Board discussed the positive collaborative working involving anchor institutions to maximise joint procurement opportunities.

RESOLVED –

- a) To note the content of the report; and
- b) Support the adoption of the Social Value Guidance document.

62 Performance Reporting: Culture and An Efficient, Enterprising and Healthy Organisation

The report of the Director of Resources and Housing, Director of City Development and Director of Communities and Environment provided a summary of performance information relating to the Best City Priority: Culture and on Best Council Ambition: An Efficient, Enterprising and Healthy Organisation.

In attendance for this item were:

- Councillor James Lewis – Executive Member for Resources
- Neil Evans – Director of Resources and Housing
- Tim Rollett – Intelligence and Policy Manager
- Cluny Macpherson – Chief Officer Culture and Sport
- Lee Hemsworth – Chief Officer Customer Access and Welfare

Members acknowledged that the performance indicators were the same as those used in previous years.

Board Members discussions focussed on the following points:

- Staff sickness – it was suggested that the way in which this figure is calculated might be better if shown in calendar days lost rather than FTE;
- Age profile of Council employees, including reasons for the ageing workforce and how the Council was addressing this issue;
- Number of disabled people employed by the Council and work which is ongoing to increase the numbers. It was recognised that the Council is doing good work with disabled employees, it has an established network group and has gained an award in this area;
- Footfall at events hosted by the Council, including how figures are collated and monitored. Concerns were raised in relation to public safety at large public events such as Light Night. Members acknowledged that the event had been larger than usual and were advised that the Council was already on with planning for the event next Autumn. Members were advised that a safety management company were used to assist at such large events;
- Gender pay gap and how the Council are addressing this issue;
- GDPR targets especially with regard to Subject Access Requests. It was noted that demand for this service continues to increase and further staffing has been brought into this area to meet demand and targets;
- Digital Inclusion and the work ongoing to increase usage of the internet at libraries and community hubs;
- Members were advised that an Annual Report which highlights work on complaints, customer service and GDPR was due to go to Corporate Governance and Audit Committee on 27th January 2020;
- Board Members were pleased that the staff appraisals were almost at 100%. However, they were of the view that numbers were low on the staff survey and suggested that HR be invited to a meeting to discuss issues and work to increase numbers.

RESOLVED - To note the content of the report and appendix.

(Councillor Firth joined the meeting at 11:20 during this item).

63 Financial Health Monitoring 2019/20 - Month 7 (October)

Agenda Items 9 – Financial Health Monitoring 2019/20 Month 7 (October) and 10 – Initial Budget Proposals for 2020/2021 were considered together by the Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources)

The reports of the Head of Democratic Services provided Members of the Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) with information regarding the projected 2019/20 financial health position in those services areas that fall within the Board's remit at Month 7 (October), and the Executive Board's initial budget proposals relating to service areas that fall within the remit of the Scrutiny Board.

In attendance at the meeting were:

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Monday, 24th February, 2020

- Councillor James Lewis – Executive Member for Resources
- Neil Evans – Director of Resources and Housing
- Victoria Bradshaw – Chief Officer – Financial Services

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

- The Board noted that the budget proposals for 2020/21 are based on the assumption that the Council will deliver a balanced budget position against the approved 2019/20 budget;
- With regard to some of the projected variances reported in Month 7, the Board particularly noted the significant staffing underspend within City Development (£1.661m) primarily linked to recruitment difficulties within Asset Management and Regeneration and also Highways and Transportation, which the Council is working to address.
- Having now received confirmation from Government that the 75% Business Rate Retention Pilot will not be continuing, the Board noted the successful outcome of the Council’s application submitted on behalf of 13 of the members of the current North and West Yorkshire Pool to form a new pool operating under the national 50% scheme in 2020/21.

RESOLVED –

- (a) To note the content of the submitted reports and appended reports submitted to the Executive Board.
- (b) That the Board’s comments are reflected as part of the Scrutiny submission to Executive Board for its consideration.

64 Initial Budget Proposals for 2020/2021

This item was considered alongside agenda item 9 – Financial Health Monitoring 2019/20 – Month 7 (October). Minute No: 63 refers.

65 Best Council Plan Refresh 2020/21 to 2024/25

The report of the Head of Democratic Services provided the Members of Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) with an opportunity to consider the proposals to refresh the Best Council Plan for the period 2020/21 to 2024/25.

In attendance at the meeting were:

- Councillor James Lewis – Executive Member for Resources
- Tim Rollett – Intelligence and Policy Manager

During its discussion, the following key points were raised:

- The Board noted that the proposals to refresh the Best Council Plan retained the key priorities for the city, whilst including new focus on the Climate Emergency as one of the three pillars of the Plan and its objectives along with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Inclusive Growth Strategy;

- The Board particularly acknowledged the role of the Corporate Risk Register in providing assurance that any risks associated with not meeting the objectives of the Best Council Plan were constantly being monitored.
- The Board also acknowledged that the regular presentation of the financial health report to the Executive Board and Scrutiny, as well as the six monthly performance reporting to Scrutiny, facilitated regular monitoring throughout the year.
- The Board felt it would be helpful to research and reflect how Leeds' approach in developing and performance monitoring its own Best Council Plan objectives compares with that of other core cities.
- Members were advised that comments would be provided to Executive Board for consideration in February prior to the submission of the proposals to full Council on 26th February 2020.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report be noted
- b) That the Board's comments are reflected as part of the Scrutiny submission to Executive Board for its consideration.

66 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Democratic Services was presented by the Principal Scrutiny Adviser to the Board and requested Members consideration of the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the remainder of the current municipal year.

Board Members were advised of the following joint working groups:

- Joint Scrutiny Working Group with the Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth Scrutiny Board and the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board on 27th January 2020 at 2pm to consider Disposal of green spaces in the context of the Council's declared climate emergency; and
- Joint Scrutiny Working Group with the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board to consider issues in relation to Aireborough Leisure Centre. Once a date for the meeting has been confirmed it will be communicated to Board Members.

In consideration of the work schedule, the following suggestions were made by Members of the Board:

- To receive a further update report (ideally at the Board's next meeting) on local preparations surrounding Brexit, including references to international and domestic inward economic investment linked to the Board's remit.
- To schedule a performance update report in relation to Elections.

RESOLVED – To note the content of the report and agree to update the work schedule to reflect the Board's discussion.

67 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) will be on Monday 24th February 2020 at 10.30am. A pre-meet for all Members will be held at 10.00am.

The meeting concluded at 11:50am