

SCRUTINY BOARD (STRATEGY AND RESOURCES)

WEDNESDAY, 10TH JUNE, 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

CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Councillors Anderson, Lamb and Truswell

CHAIRS COMMENT

The Chair, Cllr. Harland welcomed everyone to this remote meeting of the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board which was the first Scrutiny Board to be live webcast.

The Chair went on to say as well as being the first time that this Board is holding a public meeting remotely, the Board's membership has also been expanded for the purposes of today's discussion surrounding the West Yorkshire Devolution Deal as we welcome, as co-opted members, the contribution of the Council's other Scrutiny Board Chairs too.

1 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

2 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

3 Late Items

There were no late items.

4 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were made.

5 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

There were no apologies for absence from Board Members. However, apologies had been received from Tom Riordan, Chief Executive of the Council who unfortunately had not been able to attend the meeting.

6 Minutes - 24th February 2020

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 24th February 2020, were approved as a correct record.

7 West Yorkshire Devolution Deal - Consultation on the published Scheme

The report of the Head of Democratic Services provided the Scrutiny Board with details of the published scheme for the West Yorkshire Devolution Deal. The report invited the views of Scrutiny to feed into the formal consultation process.

In attendance at the meeting were:

- Cllr Judith Blake – Leader of Council
- Cllr. James Lewis - Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Resources
- Ben Still – Managing Director of West Yorkshire Combined Authority
- Mike Eakins – Intelligence and Policy Manager

The Chair informed the Board that unfortunately Councillor Blake needed to leave the meeting at 11.00 am to attend another meeting with Government Ministers. Councillor Blake was therefore invited by the Chair to give an initial introduction to the Board, along with Ben Still as Manager Director of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

As part of this introduction, the following points were made:

- With each of the five West Yorkshire councils and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) endorsing the West Yorkshire 'minded to' Devolution Deal, the Executive Board then met on 19th May 2020 to consider the outcome of the statutory Governance Review undertaken which had led to the development of a draft Scheme. In doing so, the Executive Board gave its approval to progress to the next phase involving public consultation on the draft Scheme.
- This Devolution Deal is subject to adopting the model of a directly elected mayor over the Combined Area (West Yorkshire) that is, becoming a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA). The first Mayoral election would be in May 2021.
- It was noted that while it was regrettable that the Devolution Deal does not reflect the initial ask in terms of having a broader geographical footprint, the Combined Authority - as an MCA - will continue to explore opportunities for further collaboration with partner councils, including

Harrogate Borough Council, Craven District Council, Selby District Council, City of York Council and North Yorkshire County Council, and across the whole of Yorkshire through the Yorkshire Leaders' Board;

- Linked to this, it was highlighted that the current pandemic had particularly emphasised the importance of positive collaborative working between all councils across the region and that this would therefore continue;
- Importance was now placed on focusing efforts on the Deal going forward and to be in a position to formally sign the Deal later in the year.
- The Deal details £1.8bn of government investment, which includes £38m per annum for 30 years into the West Yorkshire Investment Fund; £317m from the Transforming Cities Fund; having control over the £63m annual Adult Education budget; and becoming eligible to bid for a newly established Brownfield Housing Fund, with a £400m envelope. Such funding would feed into key local priorities such as transport systems, bus franchising, and creating a West Yorkshire Digital Skills Partnership.
- Leeds is also to receive a £25m fund for the development of the British Library North here in Leeds;
- It was also noted that the Mayor will carry out the functions conferred on the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire.
- The Board was reminded that the formal consultation of the scheme was launched on 25th May 2020 for eight weeks and closing on 19th July 2020.

In response to questions raised by Board Members, the following key points were made during the meeting:

Role of the PCC - the Board was informed that while it is proposed that the functions currently exercised by the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire will be exercised by the Mayor from 2021, there was still ongoing dialogue with the Home Office seeking further clarity on this. However, it was noted that a Mayor may delegate any PCC Function to a Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, as is the case in Greater Manchester, with the exception of functions reserved by Order in accordance with the 2009 Act as exercisable only by the Mayor. With regard to the existing Office of the PCC, which has approximately 60 staff, it was also explained that such staff would be transferred across to the Mayoral Combined Authority.

Council Tax and revenue raising powers - the Board was informed that the Combined Authority will continue to have the power to issue a levy to its Constituent Councils in respect of transport functions and that the Mayor would also have the power to issue a Council Tax Precept on behalf of the Combined Authority in relation to Mayoral Functions and PCC Functions, but this would be subject to scrutiny and amendment under the proposed procedure, as set out in the Scheme, relating to the Mayor's budget.

Mayoral scrutiny function – it was explained that the overview and scrutiny arrangements currently established for the Combined Authority will be

retained, but will be subject to any amendments and expansion required to reflect the introduction of the Mayor and any new statutory provisions. Linked to this, it was also noted that the Mayor and the Combined Authority may seek to enhance scrutiny and develop wider conference with all elected members in the Combined Authority's area to engage on key issues. It was highlighted that views around how best to achieve this were being particularly encouraged as part of the consultation process.

Due to technical issues, this remote meeting of the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board was formally adjourned at this point. The Board's consideration on the matter of the Devolution Deal is to be resumed at the next meeting of the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board on 1st July 2020.

8 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board will be Wednesday 1st July 2020 at 3:00 pm. (pre-meeting at 2:30 pm for all Scrutiny Board Members)