

SCRUTINY BOARD (STRATEGY AND RESOURCES)

WEDNESDAY, 1ST JULY, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor M Harland in the Chair

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

CO-OPTEEs: Councillors B Anderson and P Truswell

9 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

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

10 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no items which required the exclusion of the press and public.

11 Late Items

In relation to agenda item 7, a supplementary agenda pack was circulated to the Board which includes a summary of questions submitted by Board Members in advance of the meeting.

12 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

13 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received from Cllr Diane Chapman and Cllr. Alan Lamb.

Cllr. Blake (Leader of Council) and Tom Riordan (Chief Executive) also relayed their apologies.

CHAIRS COMMENT

The Chair, Cllr Harland explained that due to technical difficulties the remote meeting of the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board on 10th June 2020 unfortunately had to be adjourned. Today's meeting would therefore be a continuation of the Board's discussion of the West Yorkshire Devolution Deal.

The Board's membership had therefore again been expanded to include the contribution of the Council's other Scrutiny Board Chairs too.

In acknowledging the apologies relayed by Tom Riordan and Cllr Blake, the Chair explained that the Council's Chief Executive had been called to an urgent meeting linked to his role in leading an important part of the national contact tracing programme during the pandemic.

The Chair explained that sadly Cllr Blake had recently suffered a family bereavement and therefore passed on the Board's condolences to Cllr Blake.

14 Minutes - 10th June 2020

RESOLVED – The minutes of the meeting held on 10th June 2020, were approved as a correct record.

15 West Yorkshire Devolution Deal - Consultation on the published scheme

Further to the meeting held on 10th June 2020, which was unfortunately adjourned due to technical difficulties, the Chair reiterated that this Scrutiny Board had maintained a watching brief on developments with Devolution.

It was acknowledged that since the West Yorkshire "minded-to" Devolution Deal was announced as part of the Budget on 11 March 2020, a lot of work and progress had been made, as summarised within the meeting agenda pack, and that essentially we were now at the position whereby the Scheme setting out proposals for changes to the governance and functions of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority linked to the Devolution Deal was being subject to public consultation. Details of this Scheme were also set out within the agenda pack for the Board's consideration and comment.

The Chair explained that following the Board's last meeting, Board Members were invited to share in advance any particular questions they would like to raise with regard to the West Yorkshire Devolution Deal. These had been presented to the Board as part of the supplementary agenda pack and the Chair thanked those within the Council and the Combined Authority for providing written responses to these questions in readiness for the meeting.

To help provide any further clarity and address questions from the Board, the Chair welcomed to the meeting the following:

- Councillor James Lewis – Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Resources
- Ben Still – Managing Director of West Yorkshire Combined Authority
- Neil Evans – Director of Resources and Housing; and
- Mike Eakins – Intelligence and Policy Manager.

It was noted that during the Board's meeting on 10th June 2020, Cllr Blake had already provided an initial introduction to the 'Minded to Deal' and the consultation, as referenced within the minutes of that meeting. The Chair therefore moved into inviting questions from Board Members.

At this stage, due to further technical difficulties encountered during the meeting, elements of the Board's discussion were not captured as part of the live webcast.

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

- Bus franchising could follow the example of Greater Manchester. However, there were challenges given that we are dealing with a number of large bus companies, and the funding required;
- Funding packages such as the £38m gain share could be used for transport and flooding issues. It was noted that the government arrangement to other cities with a mayoral role brings considerable financial advantages;
- Traineeships and apprenticeships were not an element of the 'Adult Education Budget' devolution deal element made available from government;
- Police funding would be ring-fenced with a separate pot of money to the general fund. However, Members also queried whether such funding could also be topped up? It was agreed that further clarity on this would be sought and fed back to Members;
- The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) responsibilities would become part of the powers assigned to the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA). The mayor has the capacity to devolve these powers to a deputy mayor who would be accountable to the mayor. However, it was noted that currently it was not known whether the Chief Constable would be accountable to the deputy mayor in addition to the Mayor and therefore further clarity on this was being sought and would be fed back to Members;
- PCC staff would be transferred to the MCA at the point of the mayor taking office and would be based at the Combined Authority;
- The Combined Authority currently has a gross revenue annual cost of £169m with some 550 staff taking £26m;
- Members noted that the £38m gain share was the biggest achieved by any MCA which also provided access to the £67m brownfield fund to be used across all five authorities. However, it had not been possible to inflation proof the £38m as it needed to be consistent with other MCA deals;
- Further clarity was sought on whether the MCA would be a statutory consultee for significant developments, and if so, what weight will be given to their view?
- Detailed points in relation to Black and Minority Ethnic Communities (BAME) and deprived areas were raised. It was outlined that the deal could be seen as a framework to set funding for priorities to address issues of inequality and deprivation, it would be up to the Mayor and Combined Authority to choose how to use this funding to prioritise issues at a local level;

- The Government had recently released £67m for brownfield funding which would allow further development of affordable housing at a local level;
- The definition of affected businesses had not been clearly defined by government and should anything come from Government on this issue Members would be informed;
- The Overview and Scrutiny Board within the Combined Authority would continue as it does now to address call-in on any decisions made by the MCA;
- It was noted that the treasury function of Leeds City Council was currently used by the Combined Authority for which a fee is paid. One of the benefits of the gain share agreement is that borrowing can be done against future gain share agreements. This would provide an income stream in the same way as assets do;
- It was advised that the Mayoral budget would have to be agreed by all five of the authorities. This would be done in a transparent way and would be in the public domain so that all are aware what the mayor's budget is and how it would be used;
- Where there are concurrent powers there would be one body that would exercise those powers. The Combined Authority would only take on powers if it was what an authority wanted. There would be an agreement on the powers of the MCA;
- The Government are keen for mayors to have powers across the Key Route Networks. It was noted that there is already a Key Routes Network across West Yorkshire. The operational work will not change, there are standards in place to ensure that the networks are as consistent as possible. This work will be overseen by the mayor;
- Wellington House has been owned by the Combined Authority since the 1980's. A review had taken place for the refurbishment of the building to bring it up to standard. Wellington House would be used to accommodate the mayor;
- Scrutiny arrangements would continue with council decisions going through Executive Board with a watching brief by the scrutiny boards of Leeds City Council.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and explained that she would work with the Board's Principal Scrutiny Adviser to capture the key points raised during the meeting and to ensure that requests for further information are followed up after this meeting.

The Chair reminded the Board that, where considered appropriate, individual Scrutiny Boards may also opt to convene further meetings within the consultation timeframe to examine specific issues in more detail.

The Chair also reminded the Board that it was still intended for the views of Scrutiny to be captured within a composite report, which would be signed off by all Scrutiny Board Chairs, to be submitted and considered ahead of any submission which may be made to the Secretary of State.

RESOLVED –

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Wednesday, 22nd July, 2020

- (a) That requests made for further information are followed up after the meeting.
- (b) That the Chair works with the Principal Scrutiny Adviser to capture the key points raised during the meeting in order to inform a composite report from Scrutiny, which would be signed off by all Scrutiny Board Chairs, to be submitted and considered ahead of any submission which may be made to the Secretary of State.

CHAIRS CLOSING COMMENTS

The Chair thanked all for their attendance and contributions.

The Chair also took the opportunity to thank Angela Brogden, Principal Scrutiny Adviser, for her work with the Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) as she was moving to take up a new supporting role with the Council's Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board. The Chair wished her well in her new role.

The Chair introduced and welcomed Rob Clayton who would be taking over the role of Principal Scrutiny Adviser to the Board.

The meeting concluded at 16:15

16 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board will be on Wednesday 22nd July 2020, 11.00 am (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 10.30 am)