

SCRUTINY BOARD (INFRASTRUCTURE, INVESTMENT & INCLUSIVE GROWTH)

THURSDAY, 16TH JULY, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor P Truswell in the Chair

Councillors N Buckley, L Cunningham,
N Dawson, K Dye, J Goddard, R Grahame,
M Shahzad, J Taylor and P Wadsworth

The Chair referred to the recent death of Councillor C Hall. In paying tribute the Chair said Councillor Hall had been appointed to Leeds City Council in 2018. Councillor Hall represented the residents of Rothwell, and had a particular enthusiasm for transport issues within scrutiny discussions. The Board respectfully held a 1 minutes silence on behalf of Councillor Hall.

11 **APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no appeals.

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

There were no exempt items.

13 **Late Items**

There were no formal late items.

14 **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

Other Interests

Councillor M Shahzad wished to bring the Boards attention to Agenda Item 8, Inclusive Growth Update (Minutes No 18) – Councillor M Shahzad held a private hire driving license.

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

There were no apologies for absence received.

16 **Minutes - 25 June 2020**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held 25 June 2020 be confirmed as an accurate record.

17 **Update from the Director of City Development**

The Board received a verbal update from the Director of the City Development regarding decision's relating to the Covid-19 pandemic response and the initial phase of the subsequent recovery plan, as such information related to the remit of the Board.

The Board also received an update from the Chief Officer (Highways and Transportation) including a specific update on the Commonplace consultation.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor James Lewis, Executive Member
- Martin Farrington, Director of City Development
- Gary Bartlett, Chief Officer (Highways and Transportation)
- Sue Wynne, Chief Officer (Employment and Skills)
- Eve Roodhouse, Chief Officer (Economic Development)

The following had been highlighted:

- City centre – there had been a significant increase of footfall by 50% of the normal average and implications with the economy remain evident. Recovery on footfall was linked with the reopening of non-essential shops and restaurants. Retail was under stress nationally and in Leeds in terms of closures. 9 Street Marshalls have been introduced in the city centre to manage the reopening of schemes particularly on Greek Street.
- Discretionary Grants Scheme – the scheme closed 28 June 2020 and 954 applications had been received. Additional resources had been deployed to help with the management of applications, and it was reported that 287 applications had been approved and paid out.
- Major Grants Scheme – 146 million had been distributed by the Council and a significant amount of work had been undertaken in the business rates team with support from economic services.
- Transport/Traffic – flow of traffic had increased to 80% of the normal average, with a morning reduction by 40%. Bus provision would increase, and capacity had been increased to 50%. The Temple Green park and ride facility remains a NHS testing facility, whilst discussions are ongoing regarding the reopening of Elland Road.
- Planning – Plans Panels had resumed remotely. Site / Building Control and Enforcement visits had also resumed.
- Flood alleviation scheme – 21 million pounds had been secured from DEFRA for the delivery of the second phase of the scheme. Additionally, 1.32 million had been secured to enhance natural flood measures.
- Connecting Leeds – demolition of bridge closures will continue following reconstruction.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- Retail recovery and district centres – it was recognised there were long term challenges in terms of managing impacts from the pandemic from a social view, and infection rates are being monitored alongside Public Health colleagues. The Council are liaising with big retailers and key account contacts to ensure the transition in resuming to normal activity would be safe. Members were informed local data wasn't available in terms of closures and spending levels, however information would be followed up on a national basis and provided to the Board.
- Public Transport – it was recognised that the relationship between footfall and encouraging people into the city centre was key, and challenges had been identified as to how this would be done safely; the

current position of the pandemic created an opportunity to plan for recovery and how public transport would facilitate that. It was confirmed that LCC would be working in close conjunction with West Yorkshire Combined Authority regarding the financial investment of bus provision.

- Discretionary Grants Scheme requests – whilst acknowledging the businesses whom did not qualify for funding, Members were informed of a phase two approach to target businesses that have not been able to secure funds through the existing grants scheme; the areas of the criteria would be explored to ensure businesses are provided with an opportunity to be supported. Members would receive ward level information in terms of pay outs.
- Emergency active travel fund allocations – projects to be implemented by August and active travel measures have been undertaken by colleagues.
- Connecting Leeds – the Commonplace consultation is still active. In responding to a question regarding additional schemes particularly in outer areas, Members were informed of details regarding the A65 scheme, Schools Street programme, plans to promote active travel and proposals for cycle parking facilities in order to aid cycling across the city.

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the update and discussion be noted;
- b) Requested that the information outlined in the minutes, be provided as requested.

18 Inclusive Growth Update

The report of the Director of City Development set out the approach to the Inclusive Growth Strategy within the context of the city's recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Eve Roodhouse, Chief Officer (Economic Development)
- Sue Wynne, Chief Officer (Employment & Skills)

The following had been highlighted:

- Significant impact of the Covid-pandemic on the economy;
- Significant drop of workers on the payroll system nationally and there had been an 86% increase of people claiming Universal Credit (UC) since March;
- Data would be made available on a ward level basis regarding UC;
- Biggest drop in GDP in April;
- The supply of mattresses by a local firm to new emergency hospitals around the country;
- Digital Health businesses have thrived in recent months;

- Safe reopening of city centre and district centres;
- Business Support programmes;
- Framework for Recovery.

Members were informed that a revision had been made to the report. It was confirmed that 1,140 people had been supported into work in the first quarter.

In response to comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- Communications – the possibility of an app based solution was being explored and would monitor footfall and carpark availability.
- Further information was requested regarding the provision of PPE for taxi drivers in Leeds.
- Night time economy and re-opening of hotels – Visitor England had produced research regarding the changes of behaviours due to the pandemic and it was confirmed there may not be as much activity due to the uncertainty of jobs and people being on furlough. Additionally, it was confirmed hotels in Leeds would be reopening along with the appropriate restrictions.
- Impacts on apprenticeship schemes – it was confirmed that nationally there had been a drop in apprenticeship schemes. However, 62 local residents had been supported into an apprenticeship in the first quarter. Local providers and businesses are offering apprenticeships, and this information would be made available to schools and Career Leeds. Members would receive details regarding this.

Councillor J Lewis (Executive Member) reflected on the comments raised and emphasised that grants for businesses had been turned around quickly, and work is being undertaken to set up new systems for grants to help support businesses. The Board were informed that through Councillor Blake's role as Chair of the Core Cities Network, lobbying has been undertaken for additional support to businesses.

RESOLVED –

- a) To note the contents of the report and comments made during discussions;
- b) Requested that information outlined in the minutes, be provided;
- c) To support the approach taken to continue to deliver Inclusive Growth across the city within a framework for recovery from the coronavirus crisis.

19 Digital Inclusion

The report of the Chief Digital and Information Officer provided an update on the Council's and the City's digital response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report highlights the approach of the joint NHS and LCC Digital and Information Service, through the Smart Leeds, City Digital and 100% Digital Leeds teams working together as one team with partners across Leeds.

The following had been appended to the report:

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Wednesday, 23rd September, 2020

- Library Service initiatives (Appendix 1)
- Dementia Pathfinder (Appendix 2)
- Digital Health Hub (Appendix 3)
- Digital Health Champions (Appendix 4)
- Feedback on grant funding (Appendix 5)
- Digital Access West Yorkshire (Appendix 6)
- 100% Digital Leeds evaluation and Return on Investment (Appendix 7)

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Lewis, Executive Member
- Dylan Roberts, Chief Digital and Information Officer
- Stephen Blackburn, Assistant Solution Architect
- Jason Tutin, Digital and Learning Manager
- Lucy Jackson, Public Health Consultant
- Val Hewison, Chief Executive Carers Leeds
- Sarah Fox, Coproduction Coordinator, Leeds Mental Wellbeing Service

The Chief Digital and Information Officer introduced the report, and raised the following key points:

- Inequality in impact of the pandemic between the poorest/most excluded groups and the rest;
- The importance of community based groups, networks, independent, third sector and volunteers in the combined response to different groups in Leeds;
- How a rapid and new approach to digital technology and literacy has been critical to the continuity of public services – including GPs & the Council - & businesses;
- How digital literacy and digital technology was critical for many people to access basic services, family, support groups, shopping, to be able to continue to work.

LCC colleagues and partners were invited to address the Board. The following information had been highlighted:

Leeds Mental Wellbeing Service

- The impacts of the iPad lending scheme;
- Digital champions training;
- The pandemic exacerbated health inequalities and the black lives matter movement;
- Therapy sessions conducted online;
- Language barriers;
- The benefits of digital inclusion to the most excluded service users.

Carers Leeds

- The impacts on unpaid carers across the city;
- Distribution of iPads to the most vulnerable;
- Built on relationships and supported the use of technology to help empower carers and take control of health and wellbeing;
- Set up dementia support groups on Zoom;

- Identified the positives of digital inclusion and wished to take this forward in the future.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- Feedback from service users – challenges had been identified with digital exclusion including the accessibility of equipment, language barriers and wellbeing barriers. There had been some successes with face-to-face contact and phone calls, particularly with young adult carers.
- Affordability of broadband – The Leeds Full Fibre Programme; Council and health service buildings across Leeds are set to be upgraded to full fibre, to help combat the digital divide experienced in some of the city's most disadvantage communities. Members noted an update would be provided at a future Board regarding an outline plan for the areas to receive this connectivity. Additionally, tablet lending schemes could be accessed.
- Mental health inequalities and social exclusion – It had been acknowledged that there wasn't a 1 size fits all approach and that the ambition for 100% Digital Leeds was that everybody should have the opportunity to take part digitally, without it being an informed choice.

The Chair thanked officers and partners for their contributions, and wished Dylan Roberts well for the future, in his new role.

RESOLVED –

- a) Endorse the approach that as part of the Council's ongoing digital response to the sustainability of the City post COVID, the DIS continues to set priorities, direct the work and provide overall governance for Smart Leeds and 100% Digital Leeds, with the DIS also continuing to report progress to this Board.
- b) The central coordination, convening, connecting and enabling role, across public sector partners and the third sector, of DIS, with the 100% Digital Leeds Team as an integral part of that approach, has been essential during the crisis. The 100% Digital Leeds team currently sit on the Library Service structure, it is recommended that this integrated approach to digital engagement is sustained and strengthened based on the return on public value and outcomes exemplified in this report and previous reports to this Board.
- c) Endorse the approach that if external funding comes to an end, (which is unlikely for the next 18 months) it is recommended that this work and teams are considered a priority as part of the budget setting process based on the returns on investment to the community, Council and NHS. Detailed evaluation and Return on Investment figures for 100% Digital Leeds featured in the previous report to this Board in February 2020.

20 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Democratic Services presented the Board's work schedule for the remainder of the current municipal year. The Executive Board minutes for the remote meeting held 24 June 2020 had been appended to the report.

21 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.
Date and Time of Next Meeting

23 September 2020 at 10.30 a.m. (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 10:15 a.m.)