



Call-In – Groundwork Leeds

Introduction

1. On 9 November 2020 the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board considered a call-in led by Cllr Jonathan Bentley. The call-in related to a decision taken by [the Executive Board on 21 October 2020](#) entitled **Merger of Groundwork Leeds with Groundwork Wakefield and North Yorkshire and Leeds City Council's Future Role in Groundwork Yorkshire**.
2. The published agenda for the Call-In meeting, which includes both the original Executive Board report and the Call In request form can be found [on the meeting's webpage](#) along with a link to the archived webcast of the discussion.
3. A full list of attendees is included within the minutes which are available on the [on the meeting's webpage](#). However, for ease of reference, a summary of participants called as witnesses to the call-in is also provided below.

Leeds City Council Attendees

- **Cllr Mohammed Rafique**
Executive Board Member
- **Cllr Al Garthwaite**
Lead member for Parks and a trustee of Groundwork Leeds
- **Cllr Robert Finnigan**
Witness to the call in, Leader of the Morley Borough Independent Group
- **James Rogers**
Director, Communities and Environment
- **Tony Stringwell**
Recreation Development Manager
- **Michael Everitt**
Head of Finance
- **Mark Turnbull**
Head of Service

Groundwork Leeds Attendees

- **Adrian Curtis**
Chief Executive, Groundwork Leeds
 - **Trevor Lincoln**
Chair, Groundwork Leeds
4. The outcome of the call-in as set out in the published minutes was that members voted to **release the decision for implementation**.

Recommendations of the Board

5. The published minutes reflect further conclusions of the Board including a recommendation that:

Groundwork Leeds considers the publication of relevant documentation to its website to increase ease of access and transparency.

6. This recommendation was acknowledged in the meeting by the Chief Executive of Groundwork Leeds.
7. Members also requested an additional statement of recommendation be published to provide additional commentary to support the recommendation that:

Consideration be given to the extent to which Executive Board reports direct the general reader to wider sources of information, which may have influenced the historical development of policies, processes or decision making.



Call-In – Groundwork Leeds

Executive Board Reports

8. Central to the case of the lead signatory to the call-in was the question of whether sufficient information had been provided to decision makers – in this case Executive Board members - in relation to the decision entitled **Merger of Groundwork Leeds with Groundwork Wakefield and North Yorkshire and Leeds City Council's Future Role in Groundwork Yorkshire.**
9. In his call-in request Cllr Bentley specifically expressed his concern that the Executive Board report did not include evidence of *“an independent due diligence exercise prior to recommending dissolution of Groundwork Leeds and Groundwork North Yorkshire and transferring assets to Groundwork Wakefield, a risk assessment or legal advice on the merger process recommended or a clear options appraisal justifying the recommendation.”*
10. During the Board’s deliberations it was agreed by the majority of members that in most instances where concerns were raised elected members, officers or representatives from Groundwork Leeds could clearly demonstrate that the relevant information had been provided to decision makers and/or appropriate risk assessment had taken place at various stages over the last 3-5 years.
11. The view of the Board was that this was not, however, immediately clear to the general reader from the Executive Board report. Members went on to conclude that had such information been explicitly referenced in the Executive Board report a call-in may not have been requested.
12. Board members reflected more broadly upon whether the discussion highlighted a wider concern regarding the level of contextual information provided in Executive Board reports.
13. It should be noted that this does not refer to the legally defined provision of ‘Background Papers.’ Rather, members proposed that further consideration should be given to whether alternative mechanisms could be used to ensure general readers are directed to additional information that may strengthen their understanding of the recommendations or conclusions set out in such reports.
14. Members proposed that such a provision would create greater transparency and provide reassurance to those outside of the Executive Board that further evidence, information and risk assessment has been taken into account as part of the decision making process.

Next Steps

15. The Chair of the Environment, Housing and Communities Board sought a view from all Scrutiny Chairs as to whether similar concerns had been raised by members of their respective Boards.
16. It was subsequently agreed that Scrutiny Chairs would collectively refer the matter to the Head of Democratic Services, on behalf of their Boards,



Call-In – Groundwork Leeds

with a request that the issue be explored through appropriate corporate mechanisms and the results reported back to members.

DRAFT

DRAFT

**Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities)
Statement of the Board – The Volunteer Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic**



Follow us:
[Leeds City Council Scrutiny Unit Webpage](#)
[Twitter](#)