

SCRUTINY BOARD (CITY AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS)

MONDAY, 21ST JULY, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor S Bentley in the Chair

Councillors B Atha, C Campbell, G Driver,
C Fox, V Kendall, J Lewis, T Murray,
A Shelbrooke and L Yeadon

6 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Murray declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 10, Inquiry on Voluntary Community Faith Sector – Draft Terms of Reference due to his position as Chief Executive of the Learning Partnership. He withdrew from the meeting during the voting and discussion on this item. (Minute no. 11 refers).

7 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Harington and Pryke.

8 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2008, be confirmed as a correct record.

9 Input to the Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which provided information and guidance to the Board on developing the work programme for the 2008/09 Municipal Year. Documents appended to the report included the Draft Memorandum of the Local Area Agreement, the Leeds Strategic Plan and the Council Business Plan 2008-11.

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- Councillor Andrew Carter, Deputy Leader of the Council
- Paul Rogerson, Chief Executive
- Jean Dent, Director of City Development
- Neil Evans, Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing

Councillor Carter addressed the meeting. He informed the Board that he represented the Council on a number of regional and sub-regional partnerships and there was a clear role for the Board to undertake work on developing relationships within the framework of partners. He reported that the Yorkshire and Humberside Assembly was winding up, but there was a developing agenda in the Leeds City Regions which considered issues such

as housing, transport and the economy. He reported that a focus on the City Region agenda would be welcomed as there was no scrutiny arrangement currently in place and concern had been expressed by all members of the City Regions regarding powers delegated to the Regional Development Agency. He also reported that Leeds was involved with the Core Cities Group which had direct contact with Government and also suggested looking at ways in which relations could be enhanced with neighbouring authorities.

Paul Rogerson, Chief Executive addressed the meeting. He raised the following points:

- Partnership working with Bradford and the Leeds/Bradford Corridor
- Government plans to transfer responsibilities to the Regional Development Agency.
- Single integrated strategies for spatial planning and economic development.
- Mechanisms of regional strategies.
- The need for effective scrutiny mechanisms for the Leeds City Region.
- Issues considered on a regional basis – transport, housing, planning, innovation and economic development.

Jean Dent and Neil Evans also addressed the meeting. The following issues were discussed:

- Requirements of the new Transport Bill – there would be new arrangements to replace the Passenger Transport Authorities.
- Partnership arrangements across the City including those with the Chamber of Commerce and the role of Enterprise Leeds.
- Housing – how to increase supply and utilise the use of land more efficiently.
- Worklessness and skills – Partnership arrangements under the Local Area Agreement with Job Centre+.
- Spending arrangements under the Local Area Agreements.

In response to issues raised, Members discussed the following:

- How to include local involvement when decisions were made at a regional level. It was reported that there was no weighted voting across the regional decision making process and Members expressed concern at this. It was suggested that population should be taken into account with voting to make decisions more representative towards local residents.
- Business rates – it was reported that the repatriation of business rates was not under consideration.
- Accountability at local level – it was reported that the removal of the District Partnership level had given greater accountability to Area Committees and this was reflected in the stronger development of Area Delivery Plans.
- Affordable housing and the social impacts of housing arrangements.

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance.

RESOLVED – That the report and discussion with officers and the Leader of the Council be used to inform the development and approval of the Board's Work Programme.

(Councillor Shelbrooke left the meeting at 10.55 during discussion of this item).

10 Request for Scrutiny Regarding University Fees

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development outlined a request for scrutiny that had been made by Leeds University Union concerning their fees campaign.

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- Mr Danial Adilypour, Education Officer, Leeds University Union
- Mr Rob Damiao, Community Officer, Leeds University Union

Mr Adilypour addressed the meeting and reported on concerns of the Leeds University Union regarding the current funding model for tuition fees and the potential impact of the consequences on Leeds, particularly if an increase in fees should be introduced following the 2009 review. Issues raised included the following:

- A recent report of the Scrutiny Board (City Development) had found that the student population of Leeds contributed to 10 % of the city's economic input and to 5% of employment.
- The Vision for Leeds had recognised Leeds as a city for students. Under the new model for tuition fees, more people had been choosing to study in their home towns and numbers of applicants for higher education funding had fallen.
- The Leeds Strategic Plan targeted an enhanced workforce. Much of the Leeds economy focussed on the strength of the Media, Legal and Financial Sectors. It was reported that a third of graduates went on to employment in Leeds.
- Fees could also be affected at other higher education establishments including Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds College of Art and Design and Leeds College of Technology.

In response to the issues raised and the request for University Fees to be scrutinised in further detail, Members discussed the following:

- Post 16 student levels in Leeds were not currently high enough to meet targets as outlined in the Leeds Strategic Plan and this would also affect the number of students moving into higher education. Difficulties attracting students from social or economic disadvantaged backgrounds also needed to be addressed.

- Bursary schemes and accessing funding – it was reported that there was a massive under spend on bursary schemes in Leeds. Administering of bursaries was overseen by the University, unregulated and felt to be a confusing system for those who wished to apply.

RESOLVED - That the Board establish a University Fees Working Group comprising Councillors Atha, Bentley, Kendall, Lewis and Yeadon to identify if an inquiry was appropriate and if so to draw up suitable terms of reference for consideration by the Board.

(Councillor Fox declared a personal interest in this item due to his position as a Governor of the Leeds College of Technology.)

11 Inquiry on Voluntary Community Faith Sector - Draft Terms of Reference

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted draft terms of reference for the Board's proposed inquiry into the Voluntary Community Faith Sector.

The Chair welcomed Sue Wynne, Head Of Regeneration Policy And Planning and Pat Fairfax, Community Issues Co-ordinator to the meeting for this item.

In brief summary, the following issues and suggestions for areas of scrutiny were discussed:

- This was a broad subject area and there were a number of key indicators in the Leeds Strategic Plan that linked to the Voluntary Community Faith Sector.
- The range of work across the sector at different levels and areas.
- Statutory duties carried out within the Voluntary Community Faith Sector.
- Resourcing issues.
- Neighbourhood networks.
- Case studies.

RESOLVED – That the terms of reference be agreed.

(Councillor Kendall declared a personal interest in this item due to her position on Care for Roundhay Elderly).

12 Progress Report of the Board's Working Groups

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which outlined the progress of the Board's Working Groups. Minutes of the Skills Working Group were appended to the report and minutes of the Small Business Working Group had been tabled.

RESOLVED – That progress on the Board's Working Groups be noted.

13 Current Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which outlined the Board's current Work Programme. Also appended to the report was a copy of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions and minutes of the latest Executive Board meeting.

Further to the earlier item regarding input to the Work Programme, Members discussed the following suggestions for addition to the Work Programme:

- Governance of Partnerships and democratic involvement.
- Single Regional Integrated Strategy.
- The relationship between local authorities and the Regional Development Agency.
- The Transport Bill.

Further discussion focused on decision making where partnership arrangements were involved and transparency and accountability for any decisions.

RESOLVED – That subject to the inclusion of issues suggested, the Work Programme be received and noted.

14 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 25 September 2008 at 10.00 a.m. (pre-meeting at 9.30 a.m.).