

## SCRUTINY BOARD (STRATEGY AND RESOURCES)

MONDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY, 2024

**PRESENT:** Councillor A Khan in the Chair

Councillors G Almass, H Bithell, S Burke,  
A Carter, D Chapman, S Firth,  
T Hinchcliffe, W Kidger, A Parnham and  
E Thomson

### 77 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

### 78 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no exempt information considered by the Board.

### 79 Late Items

There were no late items.

### 80 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

### 81 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received from the Executive Board Member for Communities in relation to Item 7 of the agenda pack.

### 82 Minutes - 15 January 2024

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 January 2024, be approved as an accurate record.

### 83 Matters Arising

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser highlighted the following areas as matters arising from the 15 January 2024 meeting of the Board:

**Min 71 – Financial Reporting** - Members have been provided with additional information on the HRA following questions from Board members at the last

meeting – the HRA now has a plan in place to address the reported overspend.

**Min 72 – Budget 2024/25** – A composite report summarising this Board’s discussion of the budget (and the other four boards) was submitted to Executive Board on 7 February as set out under this item in January and will also be in the agenda pack for the full Council meeting on 21 February 2024.

**Min 73 – Performance Report** – The information on the representative workforce KPI has been received and will be provided to the Board later this week.

**Min 74 – Best City Ambition Update** – Following the meeting the Chair sent a letter to the Leader of Council and Director of Strategy and Resources setting out the board’s views on the BCA 2024 update in accordance with the budget and policy framework.

#### **84 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Corporate Approach & Staff Networks Feedback**

The Board considered a report from the Director of Strategy and Resources providing an update on the Council’s approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) which includes input and feedback from each of the Council’s staff networks. This item follows previous work undertaken by the Board in previous municipal years which sought to hear directly about lived experiences working for the Council from the staff networks and also to review and comment on the Council’s wider approach to EDI.

In attendance for this item were:

- Cllr Debra Coupar, Executive Board Member for Resources
- Tom Riordan, Chief Executive
- Mariana Pexton, Director of Strategy and Resources
- Andy Dodman, Chief Officer HR
- John Ebo, Head of HR – EDI
- Vanessa Wenham, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian (FTSUG)
- Kat Denvir, LGBT+ Network Chair
- Terry Pycroft, DAWN Network Chair
- Maisie Roberts, DAWN Network Vice-Chair
- Lydia Anchen, Women’s Voice Network Chair
- Carole Gentles, Race Equality Network Co-Chair
- Hayley Lloyd-Henry, Race Equality Network Co-Chair
- Mej Chaudhry, Carers Network Chair
- Helen Saunders, Healthy Minds Network Chair
- Sasha Walton, Career Advancement Network Co-Chair
- Paul Leahy, HR Business Partner

The Chief Executive, Tom Riordan recorded his thanks for the work of the networks and in particular the Chairs who take on the responsibility in addition to their daily roles for the Council. It was noted that EDI is a key priority of the Council to reduce stigma and stereotyping and enable people to bring their whole selves to work and achieve their potential. It was emphasised that EDI is central to the Council and what it is trying to achieve on key issues such as having a workforce that reflects the diversity found in Leeds. It is not an easy agenda and sometimes there are difficult issues to address but progress has been made. The recent drive to provide mandatory EDI training to managers was highlighted as a key example of recent work but there is still work to do to ensure that progress continues.

The Chair of the Board, Cllr Khan also added his thanks and appreciation to the networks for the work they do and highlighted the diversity found in Leeds as a strength of the city adding to its vibrancy and contributing to its success.

The Board received a presentation setting out the Council's overall approach to EDI and the progress made since the issue was last considered by the Board in the 2022/23 municipal year. Key elements of this included:

- Details on the five workforce priorities on EDI – Training, Recruitment, Data Monitoring, Speaking Up/Discrimination and Progression
- Information on the five step Be Your Best training programme for the Council's 2,200 appraising managers, highlighting that the Council is now on the final step of the five step programme which is review and reflection of what the impact has been following this work
- Voluntary training has also been delivered to elected members with a focus on the committee chairs, Executive Board and other senior elected members
- The ongoing work of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian (FTSUG) including the challenges faced and overall aim to create a positive speaking up culture within the Council
- The role of the staff networks and the importance of their roles including the passion and commitment they bring to this agenda
- The ongoing role of the Recruitment Task and Finish Group, including embedding clear guidance for managers on inclusive recruitment & selection and the commitment to diverse recruitment selection panels
- The recently launched 18 month Aspiring Leaders Programme, which has recruited 16 aspiring leaders and is aimed at under-represented groups providing opportunities to build the skills & experience to become future senior leaders
- The launch of an EDI data dashboard which shows how diverse and representative the workforce is at the Council and offers opportunities to compare across different teams and services against wider averages both in Leeds as a city and the Council workforce as a whole.
- Details of priorities and next steps including completion of the five step Be Your Best Manager Training Programme, the Annual Equality Report to the July Executive Board, continued communications and engagement and ongoing support to the staff networks and FTSUG.

The Board also received a further presentation which enabled each of the seven staff networks to present their views on the Council's approach to EDI, including where things have gone well, ongoing challenges and priorities for 2024/25. Each network presented against these key areas providing details on lived experiences of their network members. All networks highlighted the positive way in which challenge has been received by council leadership and that progress has taken place over the past 12-18 months. Key points covered included:

- The Race Equality network highlighted the need for progression and representation at all levels in the Council, suggesting that at senior manager and wider management levels (above PO2) that is not always the case. Informal progression and succession planning were highlighted as areas that could assist with increased progression of ethnically diverse colleagues.
- The Women's Voice network were keen to emphasise internal changes including the new Chair and the potential for added capacity through ongoing development as a network. There is now a new steering group with more regular meetings and elected member and CLT representation. Priorities included: the need for a clear strategy to address gender equality in the workplace including a focus on women's life course/well-being and a desire to benchmark against other organisations in terms of gender equality.
- The LGBT+ Network highlighted the quick changes delivered to IT functionality around use of pronouns on MS Teams as well as benchmarking through completion and submission of the Workplace Equality Index as recent, positive work. A key concern of the network remains around the continued politicisation of LGBT+ identities and rights and the hostility and hate crime that can lead from this with impacts on staff in terms of depression which can impact on the workplace. There was a wider concern around consistency of approach in relation to LGBT+ inclusion and ownership the view being that the Equality Team or the Network itself run the overwhelming majority of the work.
- The Dawn Network highlighted the positive progress made since 2019 both internally and externally to the Council. Key challenges were around application and manager understanding of reasonable adjustments, the volume of disabled colleagues who are in the attendance and performance management processes with a focus on developing a refreshed disability strategy to address this and improving representation within the workforce to better reflect the city demographics through positive action initiatives and removal of barriers that disabled colleagues face on progression.
- The Carers Network highlighted the Super Families element of the network and the work they do. Work life balance was stressed as an issue with network members often having busy work and home lives. A key focus in the future is enhanced membership and ambassadors/allies, work on a survey with the DAWN and Healthy Minds network to better understand the challenges faced by colleagues and development of the Carer Confident Accreditation working with colleagues in HR on a submission for next year.
- Healthy Minds Network highlighted increased links to frontline staff through a men's and women's talking group established at Leeds Building Services

- and the Mental Health First Aider conference held in December 2023 to provide support to that staff cohort and with plans to run the conference again in April 2024. In terms of challenge a key issue raised was around staff being allowed the time off to attend some of the sessions offered by the network such as the 'How are You Feeling' events. Providing more support to the frontline was highlighted as a key ambition for 2024/25.
- The Career Advancement Network highlighted internal changes that have strengthened the steering group and should increase capacity of the network and external links being developed to run new programmes in 2024/25. In 2024 the network will be involved in the Aspiring Leaders Programme, will look to develop bespoke approaches to support for different services and relaunching the informal coffee mornings and events. The network will also continue to focus on support to individuals as requests arise.

In response to questions and comments from the Board the following issues were discussed:

- The Executive Board Member for Resources added her thanks to the networks for the work they do as well as thanking the DAWN Network Chair, Terry Pycroft, for his service as he will be retiring in March 2024.
- Members wanted to understand more about how the Council workforce reflects the wider demographics in the city and embedding change in the culture of the authority. The Board also wanted to know more about recognising meritocracy and ensuring that positive action does not become positive discrimination. In response the board heard that culture change is a key element of the work and embedding it in day to day activity and that all staff are engaged in the agenda, led by managers. On positive action, the approaches are taken based on the law and on the data available to the authority which highlights that some groups are clearly underrepresented, the new Aspiring Leaders Programme is based on analysis of data.
- The Board asked about the 0.8% of managers who have not yet had the Be Your Best Manager Training, whether staff who have protected characteristics think there has been positive progress and what will happen after step 5 in the be your best approach with an emphasis on developing a plan to move forward with once that programme has concluded. In response the Board heard that the manager training is mandated, and managers will not be able to wilfully avoid the training and the 0.8% will to some extent reflect staff turnover which will be followed up on through additional training sessions. Post step 5 the plan is still in development but there are plans to do service specific work to move the EDI journey on particularly in areas where the culture in the organisation varies, it will be a targeted, 'hot spot' approach. Capacity of the HR EDI Team is limited, having done the strategic piece for managers accountability is encouraged and managers are encouraged to own that through objectives rather than a continuous training journey. This is an issue of capacity as well as embedding accountability and the change in culture.
- In discussion it was noted that the elected members training was voluntary as opposed to mandatory but that it had been a positive cross party

- discussion on EDI, it was suggested that the report should note that it was voluntary for members as opposed to the approach with staff.
- In response to a question on liaison between the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian (FTSUG) and Trade Unions the Board heard that there is a positive working relationship between the FTSUG and Unions but there is room for improvement in terms of working together strategically through more attendance by the FTSUG at the Joint Trade Union meetings that take place.
  - On a wider point on FTSUG there are examples of staff who speak up that are not directly affected by behaviours but who have witnessed poor practice or behaviour.
  - The capacity of the FTSUG was also discussed by the Board. The idea of champions was mentioned but ultimately the workload would fall on the appointed FTSUG as a champion could not replace the role fully. There are links between the FTSUG and Internal Audit along with the role played by staff networks in referring cases to the FTSUG.
  - The Board were interested in the digital divide where some staff are harder to reach both through the staff networks and the FTSUG. Members were keen to know if the planned digital app work which would make functionality available through personal devices was still on track, to which the answer was in the affirmative linked to the Core Business Transformation developments.
  - Members wanted to know more about the impact of the work being done by the Council on EDI both through the workforce priorities initiative and the FTSUG particularly focussing on data and statistics to back this up in terms of reductions in negative behaviour and discrimination. A key question being; has there been a reduction in the volume of complaints and grievances as well as anecdotal evidence that improvements are being seen. In response, and also in answer to the question about those with protected characteristics and how they feel about the Council's approach to EDI, the Board were informed that the staff survey revealed positive data on whether services and teams take EDI seriously, there was a positive response overall and only slightly lower for those with protected characteristics, in the region of 8 or 9 out of 10 responders felt it was taken seriously.
  - The Board also asked about a trauma informed approach and what this means on the ground in terms of behaviour and does the Council have its own version of being trauma informed. The Board were informed that it is based on being compassionate, kind and understanding but also acting on issues, so compassion leading to action.
  - The Board also sought to understand more about allyship and how much value it brings. In response the Board were informed that allyship is seen as an activity and not just a title so activities such as examining of biases and delivering proactive work in support of networks. It was also added that allies can assist in identifying and challenging micro-aggressions in support of colleagues with protected characteristics.
  - In response to a query about ministerial statements on EDI linked to financial pressures, the Chief Executive was clear that any work on productivity plans would emphasise that there is confidence about the value of EDI work, with none discredited (as was suggested in some of the

statements) and that this is backed up with productivity and performance at the Council which compares well with other similar organisations. It was also noted that this challenge is welcome and it is why the EDI agenda is at the centre of the Council's activity as it can assist with improving experiences at work, reducing sickness and improving performance by allowing everyone to be their best. Whilst the data is positive this does not always match lived experiences and there is therefore more work to do on this in the coming months and years.

- In response to a question about the Aspiring Leaders Programme members were informed that the key difference with this programme, compared to others, is intention and clear priorities around outcomes in trying to deliver a more diverse position in future years at senior levels in the authority. It was made clear that there is no job guarantee through the programme, so it is based on merit but aimed at underrepresented groups and protected characteristics.
- The Board heard more about recruitment and the commitment to inclusion during the application process with inclusion at the heart of interview processes and trying to ensure that applicants feel it has been a fair and transparent process. It was also noted that diversity of thought is an important element of recruitment panels not all protected characteristics are visible. The Recruitment Task and Finish Group has been central in delivering changes in this area with the network leads well represented on this group.
- The Executive Member for Resources noted the past discussion that has taken place on EDI at Scrutiny. The organisation has clearly progressed during the time it has featured on the Board's work programme and is an issue that has clear commitment from senior leadership of the authority that has been developed quickly and is making a difference within the Council. It was also noted that there is still much to do in terms of improving staff experience across the piece and noted the ongoing role of scrutiny in terms of check and challenge of the work that is going on.

## **Approved**

The Board:

- a) noted the content of the report and the positive work that has been done on EDI over the past 12 to 18 months.
- b) Agreed to the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board providing formal comment on the ongoing EDI work being carried out by the authority, through a Scrutiny Board statement that would reflect the Board's consideration of this issue since the 2021/22 municipal year.

## **85 Leeds 2023 Update**

The Board considered a report from the Chief Officer Economy and Culture setting out an update on delivery of the Leeds 2023 programme in the second half of last year, governance arrangements and closedown of the Leeds Culture Trust, evaluation and impact, beyond 2023 and funding and

sponsorship. This follows consideration of an update report on Leeds 2023 at the Boards meeting on 17 July 2023.

In Attendance for this item were:

- Cllr Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture & Education
- Eve Roodhouse, Chief Officer, Culture & Economy
- Karen Murgatroyd, Executive Manager – Leeds 2023
- Kully Thiarai, Creative Director and CEO Leeds 2023
- Abigail Scott Paul, Director of External Relations & Strategic Partnerships Leeds 2023
- Richard Coram, Director of Finance & Operations Leeds 2023

The Executive Member for Economy, Culture & Education opened the item by passing on thanks for the work done by the Leeds 2023 team, noting that it will be the last time they attend scrutiny albeit the final evaluation report will return later in 2024. The Executive Member noted the hundreds of events that had been delivered, the excellent coverage received for the city and the lasting impact the programme will have in terms of inspiring people and economic benefits.

The Board received a presentation from Leeds 2023 setting out the unique Covid-19 impacted circumstances of the programme, the events that had taken place, the goals of the programme, the local and national media coverage, the partners that had taken part, creative engagement and learning and details on evaluation and legacy.

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

- The Board asked about neighbourhood hosts and how they integrated/interacted with existing community groups during 2023 and the plans for future work through communities and the neighbourhood hosts. In response the Board were informed that there will be a direct evaluation with the neighbourhood hosts and there is ongoing discussion between the Council and Leeds 2023 around future plans both through community groups and neighbourhood hosts. It was also noted that The Centre for Cultural Value (Leeds University) is conducting specific research on the neighbourhood hosts that will lead to a detailed, qualitative report on their roles. In addition, the neighbourhood host role was new and learning from it will be passed on to the Council around things that could be changed about the approach taken. It was also noted that plans on this and how to take it forward are still being developed a key issue being around funding of any future activity. The Paul Hamlyn Foundation were also to be approached in regard to funding a continuation of the neighbourhood host scheme, and they retain ambition to develop devolved approaches to this type of activity and understanding the impact of grassroots working. The Board also heard that the impact of the pandemic played a part in how the role developed as people were not allowed to meet in person for much of the planning phase.



- Members wanted to understand more about the various Boards that have played a part in the governance of the Leeds 2023 project and whether these are available to members to look at minutes and terms of reference with a view to scrutinising the work moving forward. It was noted that these will be available to scrutiny members and can be provided both retrospectively and going forwards.
- On the evaluation of the project, it was suggested that the organisations involved are culture focussed so it might be better to have more independent evaluation and analysis. In response members heard that the evaluation and research partners were obtained through a transparent procurement exercise and that having expertise in the field was a requirement to get value for money and have the necessary expertise. Some of the organisations, notably Open Innovations, had not been involved in culture projects previously and Leeds 2023 were one of the first culture based evaluations undertaken by them. Funding for evaluation was an issue and a consideration when procurement took place.
- In response to a question about the Northern Dreaming book that was to be provided to all children born in Leeds in 2023 the Board were informed that these were distributed through libraries, community groups and the book trust. Plans to work with maternity units were limited by GDPR constraints and pressures on maternity wards that made that difficult. A small number of books remain but the vast majority have been distributed, in total 13,000 books were produced to support this element of the project, with a handful of copies left.
- Noting the plans to continue to employ some Leeds 2023 staff beyond the 2023/24 focussed on closing down the Leeds Culture Trust, will be paid work and that it is accounted for in the closedown plans that are in place.
- On funding and Hibiscus Rising the Board wanted to know how much of the funding from the Council will be used for landscaping which was part of the £1.83m forward funding provided by the authority. The Board were informed that the landscaping costs moving forward are £46,000 over 15 years and will be provided through Green Spaces within the Council.
- Members asked about the loan linked to Hibiscus Rising and plans to recoup the loan made by the Council. Concerns were raised about whether the loan will be paid back in full as well as wider concerns about funding and cash flow. The Board were informed that front funding has taken place by the Council whilst the Leeds Culture Trust awaited the funds to come back. The Board were informed that due to the nature of the projects much of the funding is paid after the activity had occurred and that cash flow has been managed appropriately with expenditure matched against the timing of income to ensure cash flow is in place. In addition, it was noted that Trusts and Foundations hold a percentage of funding allocation back until final reports are received usually in the region of 10%.
- Specifically on the loans question the Board heard that there were different types of loan arrangements included in the funding for Leeds 2023. These included loans linked to tax relief payments. External analysis of the robustness of the tax relief claims has been carried out and advice has been provided on these which means that there is a high degree of confidence that the relief payments will be made. On Hibiscus

Rising, reports have been regularly provided to the Readiness Board throughout the process, but it is important to note that it is not the end of the process yet with fund raising going on and significant effort still ongoing to reach the fund raising target. One issue that has been encountered is linked to wider economic issues in Leeds and nationally that have led to some funding applications being unsuccessful due to organisations, trusts and foundations prioritising other grants to address the needs of communities with cost of living issues. The fund raising has not reached the target expected but efforts are still ongoing to reach a higher fund raising figure.

- Some members were keen to understand more about the number of events delivered through Leeds 2023 with a concern about delivery of value for money. In response it was noted that the final evaluation will provide fuller details on this but for example Leeds 2023 reached schools in each ward in the city and that once feedback is received from partners the number of events will increase and will feature in the planned future report
- The Board sought clarity on the Hibiscus Rising sculpture costs is it £1.83m or is that cost expected to increase. In response the Board heard that the £1.83m budget will be met. The cost of maintenance and upkeep of the sculpture will be £46k over 15 years and this function will fall to the Green Spaces team.
- The Board also asked about KPIs on funding and the doubling of funding provided by the Council through other sources. It was confirmed that the £11.9m raised in addition to funding from the Council does double the total amount allocated by the Council, which was £10.6m. Total core funding allocated by the Council was £4.07m with the rest of the funding allocation made up of funding replacement from Gainshare and Business Rate Pool funding.

**Resolved:**

The Board:

- a) noted the information provided in this report and the progress made.
- b) Noted that a final evaluation report will be provided to the Board in Autumn 2024.

**86 Work Programme**

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser updated Board members on the following:

- The March meeting is likely to be a busy agenda and it was agreed that the Chair and Adviser would go away and prioritise items mindful of the option to also recommend work items to the successor board in 2024/25, which had been the subject of discussion in the pre-meeting.

**Resolved:**

The Board:

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting  
to be held on Monday, 25th March, 2024

- a) Noted the Scrutiny Board's work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year.
- b) Agreed that in consultation with the Chair items would be prioritised for the March meeting following discussion at the pre-meeting.

**87 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The next public meeting of the Board will take place on 25 March 2024 at 10.00am. There will be a pre-meeting for all board members at 9.30am.

**Meeting concluded at 13.14.**