

Scrutiny Board

(City & Regional Partnerships)



*Cllr Sue Bentley
Chair of Scrutiny Board
(City & Regional Partnerships)*

Membership of the Board:

Cllr Sue Bentley (Chair)
Cllr Bernard Atha
Cllr Colin Campbell
Cllr Geoff Driver
Cllr Jack Dunn*
Cllr Clive Fox
Cllr Roger Harington
Cllr James Lewis
Cllr Tom Murray
Cllr Ralph Pryke
Cllr Alec Shelbrooke

* Cllr Lucinda Yeadon was a Member of the Board until 25th February 2009

DRAFT ONLY

The Chair's Summary

The Council in 2008 recognised the importance of reviewing how our partners are contributing to the outcomes, targets and priorities within the Leeds Strategic Plan by establishing this Scrutiny Board.

Whilst acknowledging the enormity of the task ahead we were able to concentrate our efforts for the first time on the effectiveness of our partnership arrangements. We have undertaken this work with vigour and enthusiasm.

I am grateful to all Members of the Board for their support, understanding and encouragement throughout the year. I know that the work we have undertaken thus far has added real value to our understanding of the complexity of this issue and contributed to the effectiveness of the areas we have considered.

A number of Members have served on several working groups and or visits and have given freely of their time which has been particularly helpful.

We have tried throughout the year in accordance with good scrutiny practice to maintain single item agendas for our Board meetings. In the main this has been achieved and has proved to be a valuable tool that allows detailed scrutiny of the

matter under review. It has also enabled witnesses to present their evidence and respond to our questions in a more relaxed and less pressured environment.

We undertook a detailed inquiry into the Role of the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) in Council led community engagement. This was extremely worthwhile and if our recommendations are accepted by the Executive Board will contribute to our Strategic Plan. Our witnesses included a number from the Voluntary and Health Sector who informed me how pleased they were at being asked to give evidence to the Board on this matter.

We held several sessions on our inquiry into skills 19 plus and heard from a wide range of witnesses including the Learning and Skills Council, Heads of FE Colleges, the National Director and Regional Director National Skills Academy Financial Services. This was an extremely complex and difficult inquiry but positive in outcome.

We considered the Council's contract with Marketing Leeds and reviewed its Business Plan for 2009 to 2012.

We also had a number of meetings with representatives of the University Student Unions and Pro-Vice Chancellors of Leeds University and Leeds Metropolitan University on University fees following a request for scrutiny. Our discussions were very beneficial in understanding the issues involved.

There were a number of issues that the Board was unable to pursue because of a lack of time including the development of scrutiny at a regional and sub regional level. I hope at least some of these might be considered in the new municipal year.

I hope that the practice of the Board in making external visits to our partner organisations can continue next year. They were always well received and supported and provided us with a real opportunity to hear from individuals and organisations operating on the front line. It also provided an alternative outlet for them to raise issues and concerns.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed to the work of the Board including witnesses, officers and scrutiny support staff.

Cllr Sue Bentley
Chair of Scrutiny Board (City & Regional Partnerships)

Inquiry on the Role of the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) in Council Led Community Engagement

We considered the published Empowerment White Paper, 'Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power' which sets out new expectations and opportunities for Local Government. We agreed that it was timely to undertake an inquiry into the role of the VCFS in Council led community engagement.

Our Main Recommendation

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods co-ordinates work across the Council to undertake a Compact for Leeds awareness and compliance self assessment. This will enable the Board to assess the extent to which Council services engage with and recognise the value of VCFS in developing and improving their plans and policies in order to deliver a customer based service.



Voluntary Action Leeds

Our other recommendations were:

◇ That through the VCFS Partnership Group the Director of Resources and the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

(a) reviews the period of funding attached to grant awards to VCFS organisations with a view to phasing in 3 - 5 year awards from April 2010 for appropriate schemes.

(b) identifies and provides appropriate support to enable VCFS organisations to develop planned exit strategies to better manage expiry of funding awards

(c) strengthens leadership and collaborative arrangements within the Council and in the VCFS to minimise the potential for the duplication of commissioned activity in order to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the services being provided by April 2010.

"The VCF Sector has been extremely successful in engaging with communities at grass roots level in areas such as South Leeds and Gipton but this dynamism, flexibility, vision and energy may be lost as a consequence of commissioning and procurement.

Cllr Geoff Driver
Member of the Scrutiny Board



Members of the Board and Leeds Voice meeting representatives of the organisation Hope of Africa



Our other recommendations continued were:

◇ That through the VCFS Partnership Group the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods identifies

(a) what further improvements could be made to simplify the current procedures and processes (including funding) and how the Council in conjunction with the VCF sector could better provide quality support including training and advice to local voluntary organisations.

(b) the impacts of current commissioning strategies on smaller organisations and identifies what safeguards could be developed to prevent losing the valuable services of these smaller organisations that provide a valuable service to the local community.

(c) the opportunities to develop federated or collaborative working across VCFS infrastructure organisations to extend support to a wider range of organisations within the sector and benefit both their organisation and their service user and maximise the impact of public and other resources.

(d) the opportunities to develop targeted information and support to community organisations to support their development and enable them to address local issues.

"The work done across the city by VCF Sector organisations is invaluable, over 3,000 of which are affiliated to Leeds Voice."

Cllr Sue Bentley (Chair)

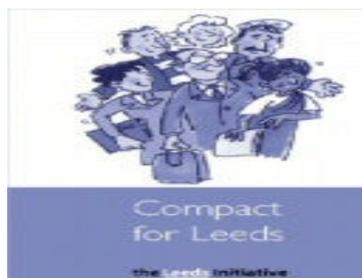
◇ That the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development arrange a seminar in 2009/2010 for members on the aims, benefits and use of Talking Point.

◇ That the Chief Officer, Executive Support considers how best to promote this service amongst officers and the wider community.

◇ That through the VCFS Partnership Group the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

(a) encourages all signatory partner organisations to undertake a self assessment to monitor awareness and compliance with the "Compact" Codes of Conduct and that this be monitored by the Council from January 2010.

(b) reviews the effectiveness of the "Compact" Codes of Practice in 2009/2010 in the light of changes in the environment and infrastructure, and that the outcome be reported to this Scrutiny Board.



◇ That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods identifies opportunities and initiatives that will further improve and enhance links with local VCFS organisations to support the delivery of the Area Committee's work in localities and that they be reported to this Scrutiny Board.

"It is becoming increasingly difficult for the VCF Sector to find sources of funding to maintain existing projects."

Ms Louise Megson, Chief Executive, St Luke's Cares

◇ That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods develops a time-tabled action plan to implement any changes identified in 2009/10 and submit these to Scrutiny Board for consideration.

Our other recommendations continued were:

◇ That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods supports the VCFS Partnership Group to map the available resource and expertise within the sector to improve the targeting and engagement of "hard to reach" groups.

◇ That through the VCFS Partnership Group the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

(a) encourages all signatory partner organisations to undertake a self assessment to monitor awareness and compliance with the "Compact" Codes of Conduct and that this be monitored by the Council from January 2010.

(b) reviews the effectiveness of the "Compact" Codes of Practice in 2009/2010 in the light of changes in the environment and infrastructure, and that the outcome be reported to this Scrutiny Board.



Scrutiny Board (City & Regional Partnerships)



Inquiry on University Fees

In July we considered a request for scrutiny from the University of Leeds Student Union concerning their University Fees campaign and the impact students have on the Leeds economy. We established a working group which met with the pro-Vice-Chancellors for the University of Leeds and Leeds Metropolitan University, the City Development department and representatives from the Student Unions. We issued a Statement with the following recommendations:

◇ That local MPs be asked to give their support to the view that there should be adequate funding of Higher Education without removing the cap on fees.

◇ To complement the above recommendation MPs and the Chief Executive of Education Leeds should be asked to support the introduction of a single national bursary system that is easy to understand and access

processes.

◇ That the Director of Children's Services and the Chief Executive of Education Leeds be asked to report back to this Board in April 2009 on what initiatives they are developing to promote greater coordination and cooperation and flexibility between Universities and the Council to help improve the information, advice and guidance provided to our young people, particularly in relation to university application processes and application for financial support.



Student Protest about University Fees

Inquiry into Skills 19 years Plus

The guidance for the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) indicates inspectors will explore and expect to see 'how well councils engage with, involve and empower local people to improve their skill levels.

We considered it appropriate that we assess our partnership arrangements in this context and how successful the drivers introduced by the Multi Area Agreement (MAA), Local Area Agreement (LAA) and the review of Further Education (FE) in Leeds would contribute now and in the future to improving skills across the city at all Skill Levels. In particular we wanted to identify what, if any, these new arrangements would have on improving hard to reach young people who have Level 1 skills or less.

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) is undertaking an inquiry on 14 - 19 year olds and we have restricted our inquiry to 19 years plus but inevitably there has been an overlap between the two.



connexions



Technorth Family Learning Centre



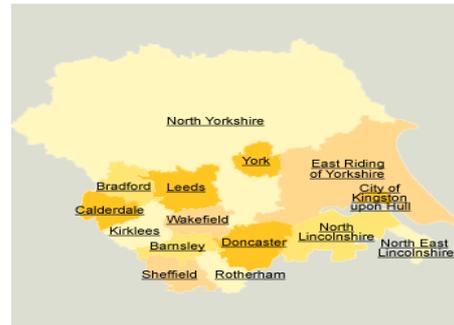
Presentation and Reports

We received during the course of the year a number of wide ranging reports and presentations as part of our monitoring and review role. These included:

- **Regional Governance Arrangements**

We considered information on current regional governance arrangements and details of the proposals and process leading to a Single Integrated Regional Strategy for the region.

The proposals will mean that the Regional Assemblies will cease to exist in their present form and responsibility for producing the new strategy will pass to a revised regional development agency working in conjunction with local authorities and city region and sub regional partnerships as appropriate.



- **Marketing Leeds**

We considered and reviewed the proposed Marketing Leeds Grant Agreement with the Council for 2009/2010.

We also received and commented upon the draft Marketing Leeds Business Plan and Work Plan 2009/2012 which included an activity and events summary proposed to be undertaken by Marketing Leeds in 2009/2010.

- **Leeds Initiative Narrowing the Gap Executive**

We were given an excellent presentation by Steve Williamson, Chair of the Leeds Initiative Narrowing the Gap Executive.

We had a detailed discussion on the challenges and priorities of the Narrowing the Gap Board. We looked at previous achievements and the work programme for 2009/2010.



The Board's full work programme 2008/09

Review of Existing Policy

- ◇ **Regional Governance Arrangements providing an overview of the**
 - Current regional bodies**
 - Future arrangements**
 - Single Integrated Regional Strategy for the region**
- ◇ **Inquiry into Skills 19 plus and the**
 - Local Area Agreement**
 - Multi Area Agreement**
 - Further Education Review**
- ◇ **Request for scrutiny by Leeds University Union concerning University fees**
- ◇ **Marketing Leeds Work Plan and renewal of contract with the Council in 2009/2010**

Development of New Policy

- ◇ **Inquiry into the Role of the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) in Council Led Community Engagement**
- ◇ **Sustainable Communities Act**

Briefings

- ◇ **Small Businesses Working Group**
- ◇ **Presentation by the Chair of the Leeds Initiative Narrowing the Gap Executive**

