

SCRUTINY BOARD (RESOURCES AND COUNCIL SERVICES)

MONDAY, 7TH NOVEMBER, 2011

PRESENT: Councillor P Grahame in the Chair

Councillors S Bentley, A Blackburn,
J L Carter, Dawson, C Fox, R Grahame,
J Hardy, A Lowe and C Macniven

36 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Ron Grahame declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 7, Financial Health Monitoring 2011/12 – Month six report, in his capacity as a Director of East North East Homes ALMO, a Member of the GMB Union, a Leeds Credit Union Member and a member of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (Minute No. 39 refers)

Councillor Hardy declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 7, Financial Health Monitoring 2011/12 – Month six report, in his capacity as a Member of West North West Homes ALMO, and as a Member of the GMB Union (Minutes No.39 refers)

37 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Chastney and Councillor R Wood. Notification had been received that Councillor C Fox was to substitute for Councillor Wood.

38 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd October 2011 be confirmed as a true and correct record.

39 Financial Health Monitoring 2011/12 - Month 6 Report

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which provided information for Financial Health Monitoring 2011/12 month 6.

The Board had agreed in October that the November meeting would focus on Children's Services.

The following Councillors and Officers attended;

Executive Board Member Children's Services, Councillor Blake,
Chair of Scrutiny Board (Children and Families), Councillor Chapman
Chief Officer (Financial Management)
Director of Children's Services
Head of Finance, Children's Services

Opening the discussion the Chief Officer (Financial Management) provided Members with a summary overview of the financial position of the Council at month 6.

The overall projected overspend at the half year stage was £7.2m, which was largely unchanged from last month.

In brief summary the issues discussed relating to the overall financial position of the Council were;

- The increased level of reserves
- Non achievement of assumed procurement savings for residential and nursing care packages within Adult Social Care
- Income shortfalls mainly relating to planning and building regulation fees, car parking, advertising and children's centres
- Projected surplus in the Housing Revenue Account
- The high levels of financial performance management in relation to council tax collection, non-domestic rates and Sundry income

In response to a question on phased budgeting the Chief Officer (Financial Management) explained the role of the monthly budget monitoring reports and the requirements of budget holders and reviewing officers to monitor budget projections against real time expenditure. The Board would be provided with month 6 actual overspend.

Following these general budget discussions the Board focused on Children's Services. A Document entitled, *Children's Services – Turning the curve on placements for looked after children*, referred to as the 'Plan on a Page' was tabled by the Director of Children's Services.

Whilst Members acknowledged the considerable improvements made by Children's Services which were now being evidenced by good external inspections, the following issues were raised and discussed;

- The number of externally provided residential and fostering placements in Children's Services and consequential budget pressures
- Opportunities to safely reduce reliance on external placements through smarter and better working with partners, increased preventative work and maximising the role of fostering and the City Councils 'offer' in relation to fostering.
- Scope to reduce the costs of external placements that continue to be needed
- Ensuring all partners made appropriate financial contributions to the service
- The need to set realistic budgets to meet demand whilst continuing to turning the curve on placements
- The importance of locality working in decision making and the development of a 'total place' culture in the delivery and funding of services.

Throughout the discussion Members were informed of, and acknowledged the work being undertaken by Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) in addressing a number of these issues and noted a general invitation given by the Scrutiny Chair, Councillor Chapman, for Members to observe this work.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To thank those members and officers attending for their input
- (ii) To note the Council's Financial Performance for month 6
- (ii) To receive the additional information requested

(Councillor Lowe left the meeting at this point at 11.20 am)

40 Large Casino - Approval of Revised Gambling Act 2005 - Statement of Licensing Policy 2010 - 2012

In line with the Budget and Policy Framework, the Director of Resources submitted a report referred from Executive Board presenting the revised Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Licensing Policy which contained a statement of the principles the Council would apply when making the determination of the large casino licence. In addition, the report also presented the Consultation Report which was the proposed Council response to the public consultation on the large casino section in the Policy, and the draft application pack.

The following officers attended the meeting and responded to Members questions and Comments:

Nicole Raper – Section Head – Entertainment Licensing
Susan Holden – Principal Project Officer – Entertainment Licensing
Rowena Hall – Executive Manager, Specialist projects, City Development

The main areas of discussion were;

- The role and remit of the Social Inclusion Fund
- The potential social effects on the city of a large casino
- The logistics of how applicants would monitor 'negative social, equality and health impacts' as written in the policy

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the Executive Board be advised that this Scrutiny Board recommends that Executive Board and full Council should be confident that there are clear economic benefits in having a large casino and that these benefits are not outweighed by any negative social/economic impacts.

- (ii) That Executive Board and full Council note the recommendations made by NHS Leeds during the consultation exercise

(Cllr Bentley left the meeting during this item at 11.45 am)

41 Fleet Services - Additional Information

The Chief Commercial Services Officer submitted a report which provided an update for Scrutiny Board on a number of issues raised at its meeting on 3rd October. These included;

- Vehicle down time issues, particularly for the Refuse service
- Progress on more sustainable fuelling strategies
- The financial performance of the service
- The exercise of powers to charge within Commercial Services
- The outcome of a visit by Scrutiny Members to Fleet Services on 21st October 2011

The following officers attended the meeting and responded to Members questions and comments:

- Julie Meakin – Chief Commercial Services Officer
- Terry Pycroft – Head of Fleet Services

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- The potential for merging Fleet Maintenance for Parks and Countryside with Fleet Services at the York Road depot
- Maximising income through more proactive advertising of MOTs for example, working with other public sector partners
- The need to discuss with Streetscene whether Vehicle off Roads are causing a problem and whether the spare vehicle threshold needed to be raised
- Alternative fuels
- Apprentices

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the report and appendices be noted and the officers thanked for their attendance
- (ii) That further information be brought back to the Board in February 2012 on the following topics:
 - Vehicle replacement programme and the consequences for introducing alternative fuels
 - The cost of Apprentices

- The further considerations taken in relation to expanding income through increased MOTs

42 Work Schedule

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which detailed the Scrutiny Board's work programme for the current municipal year.

Appended to the report for Members' information was the current version of the Board's work programme, the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 12th October 2011, together with an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st October to 31st January 2012.

RESOLVED – That the work programme, as amended, be approved.

43 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note that the next meeting will take place on Monday 5th December 2011 at 10.00am in the Civic Hall, Leeds (Pre- Meeting for Board Members at 9.30am)

(The meeting concluded at 12.20pm)