

SCRUTINY BOARD (RESOURCES AND COUNCIL SERVICES)

MONDAY, 9TH JANUARY, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor P Grahame in the Chair

Councillors S Bentley, A Blackburn,
J L Carter, B Chastney, N Dawson,
R Grahame, J Hardy, A Lowe, C Macniven
and R Wood

58 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Ron Grahame declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 7, Initial Budget proposals, as a Members of the GMB Union and item 8, Customer Access Strategy 2011- 2015, as a Member North West Homes (Minute Nos. 61 and 62 refers)

59 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

There were no apologies for absence

60 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Councillor N Dawson requested an amendment to minute no. 55 to include the wording; "short term changes to be completed by March 2012"

Board Members were supportive of the proposed amendment

RESOLVED – That with the inclusion of the suggested amendment the minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2011 be confirmed as a true and correct record

61 Initial Budget Proposals

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which set out the Executive's initial budget proposals for 2012/13 which had been submitted for review and consideration in line with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework procedure rules.

The Leader of Council, Councillor K Wakefield attended the meeting together with the following officers and responded to Members questions and comments:

- Doug Meeson – Chief Officer (Financial Management)
- Helen Mylan – Head of Finance (Corporate Services)

The Chair expressed her thanks to the Executive in providing to this Board the opportunity to comment on the Executive's initial budget proposals for

2012/13 which the Chair considered were the most detailed ever received by a Scrutiny Board.

In addressing the report Councillor Wakefield said that over the next four years the budget of the City Council would be reduced by 28%. It was therefore very important to obtain an early view from colleagues about the pressures and challenges. Some major decisions were required and it was important to receive all party agreement.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- Future of Local Government Finance
- The generation of income through Council Services
- The transfer of funding to Academies
- Asset management and the disposal of surplus premises
- Duplication of services within departments, rationalisation of service and pooled budgets
- Costs associated with foster caring/ children in care
- Funding for additional welfare / benefits advice in anticipation of increased activity as a result of welfare changes

The Chair thanked the Leader of Council for his attendance and his response to the Board's questioning

RESOLVED – To note the budget proposals contained within the submitted report and to provide a written response to the Executive detailing the views of this Scrutiny Board and those of other Scrutiny Boards

62 Customer Access Strategy 2011 - 2015

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which set out the draft Customer Access Strategy 2011 – 12 for the Board's consideration.

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

- James Rogers – Assistant Chief (Planning, Policy and Improvement)
- Lee Hemsworth - Chief Officer, Intelligence and Improvement
- Paul Broughton – Chief Customer Services Officer

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- Performance data relating to the Contact Centre
- The causes of increased activity within the Contact Centre
- Customer access issues
- The relationship between the Contact Centre and Directorates
- Introduction of new technologies

- The revenue requirements of the Contact Centre in the future
- The Capital requirements for the development of the Customer Access Strategy
- The funding of “spikes” in activity within the Contact Centre

RESOLVED –

- (i) To receive and welcome the Customer Access Strategy 2011 – 2015
- (ii) To note that the strategy had been developed around improving customer across the council and had involved collaboration with directorates and service areas through the Customer Strategy Board
- (iii) To consider specifically the Contact Centre at a future meeting

63 Calls for Publication of Employee Register of Interests

With reference to the meeting of 3rd October 2011 when this Board published its final report following an inquiry into employees’ declarations of interests.

The Board put forward a number of recommendations which were submitted and considered by the Executive Board at its meeting on 14th December 2011.

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which provides the Executive Boards response to this Boards recommendations

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the officer response to this Board’s recommendations
- (ii) To note the response of the Executive Board
- (iii) To monitor the implementation of the recommendations in line with the Scrutiny Unit’s recommendation tracking arrangements

64 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 Member’s information was the current version of the Board’s work programme, the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 14th December 2011, together with an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st January to 30th April 2012.

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

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Monday, 6th February, 2012

65 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note that the next meeting will take place on Monday 6th February 2012 at 10.00am in the Civic Hall, Leeds (Pre - Meeting for Board Members at 9.30am)