

SCRUTINY BOARD (RESOURCES AND COUNCIL SERVICES)

MONDAY, 19TH NOVEMBER, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor P Grahame in the Chair

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

47 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the November meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Resources and Council Services).

48 Late Items

There were no late items

49 Declarations of Interest

In accordance with paragraphs 19-20 of the Members Code of Conduct, the following declaration was made by Councillor Ron Grahame in relation to Agenda item 8 as a local authority appointed member of West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service (Minute No. 53 refers).

50 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

There were no apologies.

51 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED -That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th September 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

52 Executive Board Minutes - 17th October 2012

RESOLVED -That the minutes of the Executive Board held on 17th October 2012 be noted.

53 Financial Strategy 2013 to 2017

The Director of Resources presented to the Board a report updating Members on the development of the Council's financial strategy.

The following were in attendance:

Councillor Peter Gruen - Executive Member Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services

Alan Gay – Director of Resources
Doug Meeson– Chief Officer (Financial Management)

In brief summary, the main issues of discussion were;

- The development of a 'Budget Plus' approach to financial planning
- The need for Directorates to look at how services are delivered including in collaboration with partners and to offer challenge where appropriate
- The forecast of a £63m reduction in resources by 2016/17
- The need to look at income generation opportunities
- The robustness of the population data available and the methodology used by the Council to monitor population movement
- The impact service redesign will have on the deployment of staff and overall staff numbers
- The need to ensure the Council has an 'enabling corporate centre' supporting frontline staff
- The financial consequences of an increased number of Academy schools
- The robustness of the assumptions made in respect of growth in business rates, the Council tax base and levels of reserves
- The ability of the Council to capitalise on the New Homes Bonus
- Opportunities to access available European funding

RESOLVED

- (i) To note the contents of the report
- (ii) To request a further report on the Councils strategy to access the New Homes Bonus
- (iii) To receive the Executives initial budget proposals at the Board's December

54 Welfare Reforms Preparations

The Director of Resources submitted a report providing information on the preparations underway for the welfare reforms that come into effect from April 2013.

The following were in attendance:

Councillor Peter Gruen - Executive Member Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services

Steven Carey – Chief Revenues and Benefits Officer

Jill Wildman – Director of Housing Services, East North East Homes, Leeds

Paul Broughton – Chief Customer Access Officer

In brief summary, the main issues of discussion were;

- The development of a local council tax support scheme for Leeds.
- The Social Sector Size Criteria and the management of the consequences of its implementation
- The capacity of Council services to implement the required changes and to manage the consequential impact and the budget implication of any additional resources required

The Board congratulated Steven Carey and his team for the work carried out in this area.

RESOLVED

- (i) To note the expected impact of the benefit changes coming into effect from April 2013
- (ii) To undertake further work in relation to the management of the Social Sector Size criteria and to authorise the Chair and Head of Scrutiny and Member Development to programme this work into the Board's work schedule

55 Work Schedule

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a copy of the Board's work schedule. A discussion on potential work items was held.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To add to the work schedule the following items;
 - Social Sector Size Criteria
 - Payment of Staff off-payroll
- (ii) To authorise the Chair and the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development to refine and schedule these items as appropriate.

56 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note the date of the next meeting as Monday 17th December at 10am

(All meetings to take place in the Civic Hall, Leeds, commencing at 10.00am)

(The meeting concluded at 12.05 pm)