

SCRUTINY BOARD (RESOURCES AND COUNCIL SERVICES)

MONDAY, 22ND APRIL, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor P Grahame in the Chair

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

105 Chair's Opening Remarks

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

106 Late Items

There were no late items.

107 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting, however in relation to the item entitled, 'Community Centre Charges', Councillor Lowe drew the Board's attention to her role in Touchstone and this organisations use of Council's premises. (Minute No 114 refers)

108 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R Grahame.

Notification had been received for Councillor J Jarosz to substitute.

109 Minutes - 18th and 22nd March 2013

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings held on 18th March and 22nd March 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

110 Community Centre Charges

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submitted a report on current charging arrangements for the use of the Council Community Centre portfolio. This also included a suggested list of guiding principles as a basis for improving future charging arrangements.

The following were in attendance:

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

- Debra Scott – Head of Performance and Service Review, Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Trudie Canavan – Programme Management Officer, Environment and Neighbourhoods.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- The complicated and bureaucratic arrangements in place for the use of community centres.
- The apparent lack of transparency in how charging subsidies were provided to some organisations.
- The numerous charging rates and there complicated application.
- The involvement of numerous Directorates in the process and the consequential lack of accountability and plethora of bureaucratic recharges.
- The need for continued involvement of Area Committees in the process.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To agree the guiding principles outlined in the report in terms of providing a basis for future policy and procedures and as a means of bringing consistency and transparency to the charging arrangements.
- (ii) To request that officers come back to a future meeting of Scrutiny to report on progress made to address the identified failings in the current process.

111 Occupational Health and Safety

The Chief Officer (HR) presented to the Board a report setting out information as to how health and safety is managed within Leeds City Council.

The following officer was in attendance:

- Chris Ingham – Head of Health and Safety.

In brief summary, the key areas of discussion were:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Roles of Elected Members
- The role of staff training to reduce incidents of accidents and incidents particularly verbal and physical assaults
- Sensible Health and Safety
- How Leeds City Council manage Occupational Safety and Health
- Priorities for the future
- Performance.

Responding to a specific question it was agreed that additional training for Elected Members with regards to their roles and responsibilities should be developed by the Head of Health and Safety and Member Development.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To endorse the priorities identified for 2013/14
- (ii) To request that the Head of Health and Safety and Member Development deliver an appropriate training session for Members.

112 Agency workers, Overtime and Consultants

The Chief Officer (HR) submitted a report setting out progress on the cost of agency workers and overtime and also the position of consultants.

In brief summary, the main points of discussion were:

- How staffing budgets were built up.
- The budgeted FTE for 2013/14.
- The triangulation of Overtime/Agency spend and FTEs to better understand costs and activity.
- The level of enhanced overtime within the overtime bill.
- The need for Scrutiny to address its questions direct to Directorates.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the additional information requested
- (ii) To revisit this issue in the new municipal year.

113 Council Business Plan Review 2013-17

The Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Access and Performance) submitted to the Board the draft Best Council Business Plan 2013-17. The Scrutiny Board was asked to provide its views and feedback on the proposals.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Keith Wakefield – Leader of Council
- Tom Riordan – Chief Executive.

In brief summary, the main issues of discussion were;

- Clarification about the audience for the plan. It was agreed that this was primarily internal (both officers and Members) as it aims to provide a clear set of priorities for the council. But as we are a public facing organisation with links to the City Priority Plan and the Best City outcomes then it also had an external audience.
- The need to look at the language used to ensure it is clear and accessible.

- The need for targets/success measures to be more measurable with some related discussion about the balance between what we want to achieve by the end of 2013/14 verses what we want to achieve by March 2017.
- Members felt that they needed more detail on the accountability arrangements to enable them to better fulfil their role as a critical friend.
- Discussion about changing culture, the difficulties of doing this and the ways in which the draft plan might do this. This included discussion about all staff and managers needing to be more flexible and adaptable to changing needs; working better across the council and with partners; the need for the council to be more enterprising to find innovative solutions to the problems we face and that this is essential to achieving the savings over the next four years. There was recognition of progress in this area but also that there was work still to be done.
- Discussion around the mind-set and culture related to the objective on maximising income and trading. Members were keen that thought is given to potential un-intended consequences of trading where the council might be competing with local businesses.
- The need for the document to acknowledge that there will be some services the Council may stop doing.
- Specific gaps in the following areas:
 - No mention of mental health and in particular the employment issues related to this, whilst acknowledging that this is in the process of being agreed as an “obsession” in the Health and Wellbeing City Priority Plan.
 - No mention of using the Council’s assets effectively or of community asset transfer to community or voluntary organisations. There was also some discussion about the accountability and responsibility more broadly for the Council’s asset base with a view that this could be clearer.
 - Housing need - there was some concern about whether the targets around housing need especially for social housing go far enough to meet the needs of the city and a related concern about the leadership of this work going forward.

(Cllr Lowe and Cllr Bentley left the meeting at 11.30am during this item)

RESOLVED –

- (i) To thank the Leader and Chief Executive for their attendance
- (ii) Request that the comments made by the Board be considered by Corporate Leadership Team as the Best Council Plan is developed and that as part of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules, the comments of Scrutiny Board be submitted to Executive Board.

114 Work Schedule

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a copy of the Board's work schedule. An additional meeting has been called for 10th May 2013 to consider, 'West Yorkshire Governance Arrangements'.

RESOLVED –

- (i) To note the Board's work schedule
- (ii) That the following items be put on a 'pending' list to be considered in the new municipal year: Community Right to Challenge (Update), HR recruitment, translation services, community centre charges.

115 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note the date of the next meeting as Friday, 10th May at 10.00am.

(The meeting concluded at 11.55 am)