

SCRUTINY BOARD (CITY DEVELOPMENT)

TUESDAY, 24TH JULY, 2007

PRESENT: Councillor R Pryke in the Chair

Councillors G Driver, J Dunn, P Ewens,
J Harper, M Lobley, J Monaghan,
R Procter, B Selby and N Taggart

12 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed to admit to the agenda the following three late reports not circulated at the time of agenda despatch:-

Agenda Item 9 (Minute No 17 refers) – City Development Department – background information relating to (a) Highways Services and (b) the Strategy and Policy Service, where the Department had failed to meet the statutory report publication deadline;

Agenda Item 10 (Minute No 18 refers) – Leeds Initiative Presentation – background information requested by the Board's Principal Scrutiny Adviser.

13 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made at this point in the meeting (please see later Minute No 18).

14 Minutes - 19th June 2007

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th June 2007 be confirmed as a correct record.

15 Minutes - Executive Board - 13th June and 4th July 2007

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Executive Board meetings held on 13th June and 4th July 2007 be received and noted.

16 Minutes - Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 4th June 2007

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4th June 2007 be received and noted.

17 Presentation by Chief Officers of the City Development Department

Further to Minute No 8, 19th June 2007, the Director of City Development and Chief Officers of that Department attended the meeting, and the Board

received brief presentations from the following Chief Officers regarding the work of their respective Divisions:-

Steve Speak, Chief Strategy and Policy Officer
Phil Crabtree, Chief Planning Officer
Paul Stephens, Chief Economic Services Officer
Paul Brook, Chief Asset Management Officer
Donna McDermott, Chief Design Services Officer
Helen Franklin, Acting Head of Highway Services

In brief summary, the main issues arising from the ensuing discussions were:

- Concerns regarding the current trend for **one or two bedroomed apartments** in the City Centre, **investment buying** and the number of **vacant apartments**, the lack of **family housing in the City Centre**, how this might be addressed and progress with the development of a **City Centre Development Action Plan**. Further information was requested regarding City Centre vacancy rates (item already included in Board's work programme for 16th October 2007);
- Current **planning performance** concerns, monitoring and improving the **performance of the Plans Panels** and proposals contained in the Planning White Paper, in consultation and in agreement with developers, to **remove major planning applications** (involving over 200 dwellings or more than 10,000 square metres of floor space) from the normal 13 week approval/refusal process;
- The City's need to respond to the **Government's future house building proposals**, due to be announced in the autumn;
- The amount of land in the City currently held by developers in '**land banks**' i.e. where planning permission had been granted but development had not yet taken place. Officers undertook to supply Members with details;
- **Protecting and preserving the City's heritage** when redevelopment took place, concern at the number of tall buildings in the City and the SDP guidelines in this regard and the development of a **Tall Buildings Strategy** and proposals to prepare Management Plans for the City's **Conservation Areas** and associated local planning guidelines;
- The proposed role of the newly-appointed **Climate Change Officer**;
- Asset management and forward planning difficulties – ex- Merlyn Rees High School site;
- The services available for **local businesses** wishing to start up or expand, as well as those associated with attracting new investment into the City;
- The **street lighting renewal PFI scheme** – the Board was invited to visit the Swillington Depot if it so wished.

In view of the time constraints at this meeting, Board Members were requested to forward all outstanding questions and queries to the Board's Principal Scrutiny Adviser, Richard Mills, who would forward them to the Department and arrange for all Board Members to be circulated with the responses in a 'Q & A' format.

RESOLVED – That the reports be received and noted and the further information requested be circulated to Members.

(NB: Councillor Taggart joined the meeting at 10.10 am during the consideration of this item)

18 Leeds Initiative Presentation

Further to Minute No 10, 19th June 2007, the Board received a presentation from Kathy Kudelnitzky, Martin Dean, Jane Stageman and Dylan Griffiths of the Leeds Initiative regarding the current work and future development plans of that organisation, the recognised Local Strategic Partnership for Leeds.

In brief summary, the main issues arising from the ensuing discussions were:-

- A list of City Councillors involved in the various strands of the Initiative to be circulated to all Board Members;
- The role of **District Partnerships**, how effective they were in actually influencing or changing policies, especially in terms of the Council's partner organisations such as the PCT, ALMOs and the Police, and how this might be improved by the proposed changes to the way **Local Area Agreements** operated, which would place a duty to consult and co-operate on these partner organisations;
- The perceived **remoteness** of the current set up in terms of the everyday lives of citizens, and even Councillors, and the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Inquiry into 'Narrowing the Gap', carried out in the last municipal year. It was confirmed that the need to improve the 'bottom-up' aspects of the Initiative's work was being developed;
- Hard copies of the powerpoint presentation to be circulated to all Board Members;
- Details of the numbers of citizens on **long-term incapacity benefit** to also be circulated to all Board Members.

RESOLVED – That the report and presentation be received and noted.

(NB: 1 Councillor Selby declared a personal interest in the discussion relating to long-term recipients of invalidity benefit, in his capacity as a chairperson involved in associated Tribunals

2 Councillor Harper left the meeting at 12.12 pm, Councillors Lobley and R Procter at 12.23 pm and Councillor Taggart (temporarily) at 12.23 pm during the consideration of this item)

19 20 mph Zones

Further to Minute No 10, 19th June 2007, Steve Speak and Andrew Hall, City Development Department, attended the meeting and outlined the rationale behind the strategy for introducing 20 mph zones in certain parts of the City.

In brief summary, the main issues discussed were:

- The fact that the existing zones and proposed zones were not, as popularly believed, associated with the immediate vicinity of particular schools, but were introduced, following appropriate consultation, to tackle **road casualty hot spots**, based on statistical information, with a view to reducing the number of road injuries;
- Such zones would not be introduced on major commuter or arterial roads;
- **Whole district schemes** which depended on enforcement rather than physical measures to slow traffic down were not popular with the Police. However, officers were having ongoing discussions with Portsmouth City Council, which had introduced some schemes which affected a wider group of roads. Members requested to be supplied with a note of the outcome of these discussions;
- Officers reported that analysis of the statistics showed that the introduction of whole district 20 mph zones relying on enforcement by the Police had much less effect in reducing accidents than where physical measures had been introduced;
- The need for improved **communication and consultation** with Local Members and the local community.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

(NB: Councillor Taggart rejoined the meeting at 12.47 pm at the conclusion of this item)

20 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted the Board's current work programme, together with a relevant extract of the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st July 2007 to 31st October 2007.

- **Flooding in Leeds** – Members resolved to invite to the next meeting Richard Davies, Head of Risk and Emergency Planning, David Sellers, Principal Engineer Land Drainage, Councillor Golton, the Council's representative on the State of the River Management Committee and an officer from the Gully Cleansing Team, to provide an update regarding the recent flooding problems in Leeds and progress on implementing the recommendations of the 2006 Scrutiny Commission Inquiry into flooding within Leeds;
- **Sustainable Schools** – Matter referred from Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) – Members resolved not to carry out an Inquiry of their own, in view of their existing work programme, but might be willing to join in a working group investigation, if this was instigated by the Children's Services Scrutiny Board.
- **Planning Performance and Plans Panel performance monitoring**, and proposals to remove major planning applications from the normal timescales for processing applications – further information to be provided to the Board later in the year.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above comments, the Board’s work programme be received and noted.

(NB: Councillor Monaghan (12.53 pm) and Councillor Dunn (12.57 pm) left the meeting towards the conclusion of this item)

21 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday 18th September 2007 at 10.00 am (Pre-meeting at 9.30 am)
(Councillor Ewens apologies to be recorded)