

SCRUTINY BOARD (CITY DEVELOPMENT)

TUESDAY, 18TH DECEMBER, 2007

PRESENT: Councillor R Pryke in the Chair

Councillors P Ewens, M Loble, J Monaghan and B Selby

APOLOGIES: Councillors G Driver, J Dunn, J Harper, R Procter, A Shelbrooke and N Taggart

57 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

58 **Minutes - 20th November 2007**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th November 2007 be confirmed as a correct record.

59 **Minutes - Executive Board - 14th November 2007**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 14th November 2007 be received and noted.

60 **Members' Questions**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Andrew Carter, whose Executive portfolio covered Development and Regeneration, and Jean Dent, Director of City Development, attended the meeting to respond to Members' questions on matters within the remit of the Board, advance notice of some, but not all, questions having been supplied by Board Members and notified to the Leader and Jean Dent.

In brief summary, the questions asked related to the following broad areas:-

- **The general direction of the enlarged Department, which now also incorporated matters previously the provenance of the former City Services Department?**

It was stated that from a strategic planning and co-ordination of plans and services point of view, the merger made sense. City Development was not just about the planning service and the bricks and mortar which made up buildings, but also about recreation, leisure and culture, parks, transport and highway infrastructure issues – developing a holistic approach to City Development. It was equally important to get the right Chief Officers in position to implement the overall vision of Leeds as a world-class City and City-Region. A new Chief Highway

Services Officer had just been appointed, and a replacement for Denise Preston as Chief Recreation Officer was also being sought;

- **The degree of co-operation between the Council and its partner agencies, such as METRO, Yorkshire Forward and the Health Authority?** Reference was made to the healthy levels of consultation and co-operation between the Council and its partners, including also the Leeds Initiative and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The discussion encompassed areas such as recent developments in the health field, including issues with the development of facilities at St James' Hospital site, the future of the LGI, dialysis services in Leeds, ward closures at Wharfedale Hospital and health services in the West of the City;
- The Council's relationship with **First Bus** post the demise of the Supertram scheme, capacity and other problems with current rail companies, parking and access difficulties associated with Leeds Central Rail Station and strategic planning for a replacement integrated public transport system;
- The success of the current **Town and District Centre Regeneration Scheme**, and the prospect of it continuing in terms of smaller shopping centres in need of redevelopment;
- Progress on **Leeds as a City-Region** initiative, and the current emphasis on developing an integrated public transport system fit for the 21st century;
- The importance of a thriving **Leeds Market and Corn Exchange** to the overall appeal and success of the City, and as a means of encouraging relatively low-cost starter businesses for individual entrepreneurs, and the eventual possible re-development of the Market;
- **Gershon** savings required year on year by each Department, and how these targets were met by the City Development Department – a mixture of cost savings and increased income. The Chair requested a more detailed report back to the Board early next year;
- The **Strategic Planning Review** currently under way, and what this meant in terms of improved access to information for Members and the public, the training of both Plans Panel and non-Plans Panel Members, increased staff resources to improve the service and the practice of certain Area Committees of funding Local Planning Officer posts.

RESOLVED - That the Leader of the Council and the Director of City Development be thanked for attending the meeting and the manner in which they had responded to Members' queries and comments.

61 City Centre Area Action Plan - Preferred Options Consultation Responses

The Director of City Development submitted a report summarising the scale and nature of responses received during the formal public consultation stage on the City Centre Area Action Plan Preferred Options.

Robin Coghlan, City Development Department, attended the meeting, and responded to Members' queries and comments. In brief summary the main issues discussed were:-

- The need to take into account the development of a '**City Centre Vision**', which initiative emerged midway through the above formal consultation process. This might necessitate a repeat of the consultation process on the CCAAP Preferred Options if the 'Vision' exercise identified any major or significant departures from the CCAAP proposals;
- The **boundaries** of what was regarded as the 'City Centre', and whether or not it was possible to try to 'stretch' these boundaries.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

62 City Centre - Housing Mix, Vacancy Rates and Infrastructure

The Director of City Development submitted a report outlining some of the trends affecting the demand for and supply of flats and houses in the City Centre, vacancy levels and the availability of infrastructure to support a mixed population in the City Centre.

Robin Coghlan, City Development Department, attended the meeting and responded to Members' queries and comments. In brief summary, the main issues discussed were:-

- The case for the **infrastructure needs** of the City Centre to be evidence-based, and the mixed views being aired regarding whether the existing infrastructure catered for the needs of residents, both now and in the future? The two prevailing schools of thought seemed to be, let market forces dictate the type of City Centre population and facilities that you need, or try to plan now for more sustainable, mixed communities in the future, which required the provision of school places, doctors, dentists etc;
- **Vacancy rates** in City Centre flats, based on the sources available to the officers, in Autumn 2006, were approximately 14% when second homes and company lets were taken into account. Vacancy rates were higher for recently completed schemes. There was some anecdotal evidence of need for 3 bed-flats, or of people buying two flats and converting them into one larger one. There was also some demand for so-called 'crash pads' – small flats best compared to bedsits. There

was also anecdotal evidence of reluctance on the part of older people, seeking to down-size, to move into the City Centre.

- Provision of green spaces for residents and children, and the need to avoid over-development.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

63 The Local Economic Impact of Students in Leeds

The Director of City Development submitted an interim report, outlining the work currently being undertaken in conjunction with the local universities to try to identify the economic impact of students, and the universities themselves, on the local economy. It was proposed to submit a more detailed report in the New Year, which hopefully would also cover other issues, such as the **ultimate destination of the graduates**, and approximately how many stayed in Leeds post-graduation.

Chris Tebbutt, City Development Department, attended the meeting and responded to Members' queries and comments.

The Chair requested that representatives from University Student Unions be invited to attend a future Board meeting to comment on the work being undertaken.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted, and a further report back be added to the Board's work programme.

64 Section 106 Planning Agreements and Section 278 Highways Agreements

The Chief Planning Officer submitted a report explaining the use of S.106 Planning Agreements and S.278 Highways Agreements, the current levels of funds available for S.106 works and some of the proposed commitments to be met from those funds.

Phil Crabtree, Chief Planning Officer, and Steve Butler and Mike Darwin, City Development Department, attended the meeting and responded to Members' queries and comments.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

(NB Councillor Monaghan left the meeting at 11.55 am at the conclusion of this item).

65 Traffic Congestion - Key Locations

The Director of City Development submitted a report highlighting the key locations on the local major commuter routes which suffered congestion

problems at peak times, and identifying in brief what, if anything, was planned to try to alleviate the situation.

Andrew Hall, Transport Strategy Manager, City Development Department, attended the meeting and responded to Members' queries on such issues as High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes, traffic signal sequencing, bus lanes, so – called 'Red Routes', split pedestrian crossings and possible improvements to the Inner Ring Road. Mr Hall undertook to supply a composite response to Members' comments and forward this to the Board's Principal Scrutiny Adviser, for distribution to all Board Members.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted, and an update report be submitted in the next municipal year.

(NB Councillor Ewens left the meeting at 12.22 pm at the conclusion of this item, thereby rendering the meeting inquorate).

66 Town and District Centre Regeneration Scheme

The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods submitted a report updating the Board on the operation of and achievements of the Town and District Centre Regeneration Scheme since its inception in 2005.

Franklin Riley and Stephen Boyle, Environment and Neighbourhoods Department, attended the meeting and responded to Members' queries and comments. In brief summary, the main issues discussed were:-

- Reference was made to the earlier discussions with the Leader of the Council regarding the possibility of **extending the scheme in future** to smaller local shopping areas, for instance Street Lane and Moortown Corner. Officers indicated that the original list of possible areas for improvement, which had been pared down when priorities had been identified, included many of these smaller shopping centres, so some information was already held on such areas. If it was decided to extend the current scheme, then a review would be undertaken and Local Members would be consulted again;
- The consultation with and co-operation of local businesses, which often made financial contributions to improvement schemes, for example by updating shop frontages.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted

(NB Councillor Selby left the meeting at 12.30 pm, during the consideration of this item).

67 Performance Monitoring - BV165 - Percentage of Pedestrian Crossings with Facilities for Disabled People

The Director of City Development submitted a report updating Members on progress across the City in complying with the Government's local performance indicator BV165, the percentage of pedestrian crossings incorporating facilities for disabled people (eg dropped kerbs, tactile paving and audible and tactile signals). This followed an external audit carried out in July 2007.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

68 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted the Board's work programme, updated to take account of decisions taken at previous meetings, together with a relevant extract from the Forward Plan of key Decisions for the period 1st December 2007 to 31st March 2008.

RESOLVED – That subject to any changes necessary as a result of today's meeting, the Board's work programme be received and noted.

69 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday 22nd January 2008, at 10.00 am (Pre-meeting at 9.30 am).