

## **SCRUTINY BOARD (CITY DEVELOPMENT)**

**TUESDAY, 18TH MARCH, 2008**

**PRESENT:** Councillor R Pryke in the Chair

Councillors G Driver, P Ewens, M Lobley,  
J Monaghan, R Procter, N Taggart and  
P Wadsworth

### **94 Chair's Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised Members that the report on the Enforcement Unit (Compliance team) was now scheduled for the April meeting of the Board. Members were also advised by the Chair that the Board's draft Annual Report would be emailed to all Members of the Board for their comments and the final draft submitted to the April Board meeting for final approval.

### **95 Late Items**

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair admitted to the agenda the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2008 (Agenda Item 7, Minute No. 100 refers). This was due to the Minutes not having been given final approval until the day after agenda despatch and the Chair wished them to be considered before the April meeting of the Board.

### **96 Declaration of Interests**

Councillor Driver declared a personal interest in Item 9 – Inquiry to Review Consultation Processes – Session 3 – (Minute No. 101) as a Member of the Aire Valley Neighbourhood Renewal Board.

Councillor Taggart also declared a personal interest in Item 9 – Inquiry to Review Consultation Processes – Session 3 – (Minute No. 101) as he had carried out some work with the witness Mr Geoff Goodwill of Caddick Developments Ltd, although this was not in Leeds.

### **97 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Dunn, Harper and Selby.

### **98 Minutes of Last Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and that, in particular Minute Nos. 91 to 93 be ratified, as the meeting was inquorate at that stage.

## 99 Overview and Scrutiny Minutes

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2008 be received and noted.

## 100 Executive Board Minutes

Councillor Ewens commented on Minute No. 179 of the Executive Board meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> February concerning the Little London PFI scheme.

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> February be received and noted.

## 101 Inquiry to Review Consultation Processes - Session 3

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on Session 3 of the Inquiry to Review Consultation Processes. The report advised Members of the attendance of a representative from a second company who had been consulted by the City Development Department and who had contributed to the development of the Aire Valley Leeds Area Action Plan. Also attached to the report were two appendices outlining some consultation methods used by other local authorities in developing Area Action Plans and disposing of surplus school assets.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr Geoff Goodwill, Planning and Development Co-ordinator of Caddick Developments Ltd, to outline his company's involvement in the consultation process in developing the **Aire Valley Leeds Area Action Plan**. Also in attendance was David Feeney, Head of Planning and Economic Policy, City Development Department to respond to queries and comments from the Board.

Mr Goodwill was invited to address the Board on his opinion of the way in which the Council had consulted with organisations like Caddick Developments Ltd in developing the Aire Valley Leeds Area Action Plan. Mr Goodwill introduced himself and outlined his business and broader involvement in the Aire Valley corridor. He advised Members that from Caddick Development's view, the overall consultation process had been very effective, was well prepared and well resourced and had been conducted very professionally. He thought that the most difficult challenge was getting people involved who did not have a direct interest or involvement in the Plan. He stressed the uniqueness of the Aire Valley which had few residential properties within its boundaries. Mr Goodwill put forward the idea of identifying a champion within the local community in order to enthuse local people and increase participation. Mr Goodwill also suggested that because proposals for the Aire Valley were generally not controversial, that it had perhaps been more difficult to engage people to attend consultation sessions and public exhibitions.

Mr Goodwill, like Mr Beaumont at the last meeting, expressed concern that a number of issues which had been identified early in the consultation process had only now started to be worked on. He also made the point that the emphasis should be on delivery; that there was no point in producing documents that were so abstract as to be incapable of being carried out.

Members then discussed the issues raised by Mr Goodwill which were in brief summary:

- Achieving better **community engagement**.
- **Consultation fatigue**.
- Appropriate **venues** for exhibitions and consultation meetings and how they were **advertised** – convenient and accessible venues should be selected and areas of high footfall such as shopping centres.
- A **community champion** – Members expressed reservations with this idea.

The Chair then welcomed to the meeting Paul Brook, Chief Asset Management Officer, City Development and Tony Palmer, Team Leader, Education Leeds, to respond to queries and comments from the Board regarding **consultation around surplus school properties**.

Comparisons with other cities that had been included in the report were made, in particular with Sheffield and Bristol. Officers reiterated that capital receipts from the sale of schools in Leeds were reinvested in Education and the £40m primary review programme. Officers also expressed the view that the earlier the consultation process began the better and would prefer that gaps in service provision in particular communities were identified at an earlier stage, so that demand for buildings could be compared with availability.

Members then raised various issues with officers which were in brief summary:

- **Matching demand with availability** – the example of using a building at the former Merlyn Rees site for youth provision was given.
- Involvement of **Area Committees** that could be charged with regularly reviewing the need for community provision in their area, which could be extended to include the **industrial and economic needs of the city** – Members were advised by officers that there was an opportunity to take stock of industrial and economic needs through the core strategy of the Leeds Development Framework.
- The problems of **vandalism to and criminal activities** associated with boarded up vacant buildings.
- The need for individual **Plans Panels** to take into account the wider needs of the city.
- The difficulties in defining consultation best practice – Officers advised that Leeds was a Beacon Council.

The Chair thanked the officers and Mr Goodwill for attending the meeting and stated that the Board's final recommendations on consultation processes would be submitted to the April meeting of the Board.

## **RESOLVED –**

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the Principal Scrutiny Adviser take account of Members' comments as above and include them in the Board's final report and recommendations, which would be submitted to the April meeting of the Board.

(Note: Councillors Lobley and Monaghan arrived at 1.20pm and 1.42pm respectively during the consideration of this item and Councillor Ewens left the meeting at 2.05 pm at the conclusion of this item.)

## **102 20 mph Zones Programme Update and Additional Information**

The Director of City Development submitted a report providing Members with an update on the introduction of 20 mph zones in Leeds as part of the Local Transport Plan 2006-11, as previously submitted to the Scrutiny Board.

The report also detailed measures being examined to allow the programme to be expanded and accelerated through the Local Area Agreement and by making greater use of 20 mph speed limits, as well as the established 20 mph zone approach. As requested by Members, the report also referred to the wide introduction of 20 mph speed limits by **Portsmouth City Council**.

Andrew Hall, Transport Strategy Manager, City Development Department presented the report and responded to queries and comments from the Board.

The issues raised were in brief summary:

- **Blanket 20 mph Zones** – Members' opinion was split as to the introduction of these. Those in favour felt that they would minimise accidents if designed properly and humps were not universally liked, whereas those against felt that alternative methods to minimising speed should be investigated before there was a blanket approach to 20 mph zones.
- **Comparisons with Portsmouth** – There was a difference of opinion between Members as to whether Portsmouth's street layout was that much different to Leeds' and whether useful comparisons could be made.
- **Accident Prevention** – Some Members were of the opinion that there were some accidents that could never be prevented and money would be better spent reducing accidents elsewhere.
- **Enforcement** of 20 mph speed limits – the need to **educate** drivers on road safety rather than criminalising those that did not comply with speed limits was discussed.
- **Road Hierarchy** – Members were advised that a review of the Council's approach to speed limits had to be carried out by 2010 and there were occasions when it was necessary to interpret the road hierarchy differently depending upon circumstances, for example major estate roads.

- **Speed Surveys** – Members were advised that speeds were measured before and after 20 mph zones were introduced to assess their effectiveness.
- **Speed Humps** – Members were advised that sometimes it was necessary to fine-tune schemes either by modifying measures and/or incorporation of an existing scheme into a 20 mph zone.

The Chair thanked the Transport Strategy Manager for attending the meeting.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

### 103 Planning and Development Services Strategic Review

The Chief Planning Officer submitted a report providing Members with a progress report on implementing the solutions within the five improvement themes of the strategic review for Planning and Development Services.

The five improvement themes had been identified as:

1. Capacity building and working with the private sector
2. Realising a definitive officer view
3. Development and support for Plans Panels
4. Information and communication technology
5. Improved customer services

Phil Crabtree, Chief Planning Officer, City Development attended the meeting and responded to queries and comments from the Board.

The issues raised were in brief summary:

- **Scanning of Plans** – Members welcomed the availability of documents on the internet. The Chief Planning Officer advised that only about 10% of planning applications were currently submitted electronically, which was the reason why staff were employed to scan in the information. Correspondence was also scanned and this had the advantage of cost savings on storage and files not being mislaid.
- **Pressure on planning officers following a complaint being made** – The Chief Planning Officer requested details on the particular complaint raised by a Member. Members were advised that officers making decisions should be aware when there was a complaint being investigated.
- **Number of cases where officer recommendations were not accepted by Plans Panels** – Members were advised that performance figures were improving.
- **Compliance** – Members were advised that a full report on the Compliance Team would be brought to the April meeting of the Board.
- **Number of Calls received by the Development Enquiry Centre** – The Chief Planning Officer offered to provide a more detailed written response on the figures quoted in the report.
- **Timing of planning applications** – Members praised officers for bringing particular applications to Members' attention. The Chief

Planning Officer advised that the Department could not influence when applications were submitted but that officers were trying to work much more collaboratively with all interested parties.

- **Customer Care** – Members were advised that most complaints were received from householders. The remarks however in the comments book in the reception area of the Planning Department were mainly complimentary.

The Chair thanked the Chief Planning Officer for attending the meeting.

**RESOLVED** – That the report and Members' comments be noted.

(Note: Councillor Wadsworth left the meeting at 2.57pm during the consideration of this item.)

#### **104 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 1<sup>st</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser reiterated the Chair's comments at the beginning of the meeting that the report on **Enforcement** was now scheduled for the April meeting of the Board. Members were also advised that the draft final report on the **Inquiry to Review Consultation Processes** and the draft **Annual Report** would be circulated by email to all Members of the Board for their comments prior to the April meeting of the Board.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

#### **105 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Noted that the next meeting of the Board would be held on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April at 10.00am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.30am. Councillor R Procter's apologies for this meeting were also noted.

The meeting concluded at 3.12pm.