

SCRUTINY BOARD (SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES)

MONDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER, 2011

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors R Grahame, K Groves,
M Hamilton, P Harrand, G Hyde, J Jarosz,
J Marjoram, C Townsley and N Walshaw

26 Late Items

The following late items of information were submitted:

- Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2011
- Item 8 – Financial Health Monitoring
- Item 10 – Draft Terms of Reference

27 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor E Taylor. Councillor J Hardy was in attendance as substitute.

28 Minutes - 7 July and 18 July 2011

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings held on 7 July and 18 July 2011 be confirmed as correct records.

29 Presentation on the Leeds Burglary Reduction Strategy

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development referred to the Board's terms of reference and that reducing burglary was a key area of review for the Board to undertake this year. The Chair had requested a presentation on the Leeds Burglary Reduction Strategy (2011-2015) and a copy of the report presented to Executive Board on Reducing Reported Burglary in Leeds was attached to the agenda.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Simon Whitehead - Chief Officer, Community Safety
- Ian Whitehouse – Chief Superintendent, West Yorkshire Police
- Martyn Stenton, Head of Localities and Safeguarding
- Liz Jarmin, Head of Community Safety Partnerships (Safer Leeds)

The Board was given a presentation on the Leeds Burglary Strategy 2011-15 which focussed on the following 6 key themes:

- The Nature of the Burglary Problem in Leeds

Minutes approved at the meeting
held on Monday, 10th October, 2011

- Our Vision for Tackling Burglary
- Six Key Strands of the Strategy
- Burglary Reduction Programme
- Work in Localities
- The Role of Local Members

Issues highlighted during the presentation included the following:

- The nature of the burglary problem in Leeds and the specific issues which compound its vulnerability to this type of crime i.e. high numbers of privately rented Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs); a large student population, with many students living in private rented accommodation; and an established social acceptance of burglary in a criminal subculture, where it is seen as a 'crime of choice'.
- Although total recorded crime had reduced by 13.6% over the last 3 years (11,699 fewer offences), sustaining progress in reducing burglary had proved to be problematic.
- Targets to reduce burglary, as set out within the Leeds Burglary Reduction Strategy 2011-15.
- Offender management – expanding the work of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) team, which have an excellent track record of working with young offenders. Following an earlier Scrutiny Inquiry on Integrated Offender Management, the Scrutiny Board is due to receive a separate progress report at its October meeting.
- Co-ordinated approach to crime prevention – target hardening work in specific problem areas and vulnerable communities, targeting prolific offenders, use of tracking devices and work with the ALMOs and private landlords to increase security measures in the rental sector.
- Burglary Reduction Programme 2011-13 – this had £1.3 million of funding from the Safer Leeds Partnership with £800 thousand of match funding from partners. 5 main projects were ongoing with partners.
- Work in localities and priority areas and the development of local action plans.
- Principles of Crime Reduction

In response to Members comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- In welcoming the presentation, the Board felt that other Members, particularly Community Safety Champions, would also benefit from some form of seminar on the Strategy.
- Reference was made to the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill and the potential impact of the reforms set out within the Bill. It was noted that the Scrutiny Board would be undertaking a separate review on this later in the year, once the Bill receives Royal Assent.
- Concerns were raised that there may still be pockets of high burglary rates within those Wards which are not being targeted as priority. It was agreed that the Super Output Area analysis would be checked to ensure that all hotspot areas are appropriately identified.

- Intelligence gathering – engaging communities and support to Neighbourhood Watch Schemes
- Seasonal increases in burglary – September and October saw rises with the returning student population.
- The role of Elected Members – Publicise through Area Committees and Community Forums.
- The role of Police Community Support Officers
- Targeting the stolen goods market through a combination of enforcement and prevention measures delivered through the Safer Leeds Burglary Task Force.
- Insurance mapping – reference was made to the impact of burglary rates on insurance premiums across the city and whether such information was being mapped and could be made available to Board Members.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the report and presentation be noted.
- (b) That no further Scrutiny involvement was required at this stage.
- (c) That the successor Scrutiny Board next year be recommended to keep a watching brief on the progress made in relation to the Burglary Reduction Strategy.

(Councillor Hamilton joined the meeting at 10.20 a.m. during the discussion on this item).

(Councillor Jarosz declared a personal interest in this item due to her employment with the Probation Service.)

30 Financial Health Monitoring 2011/12 - Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development informed the Board of the financial health of the Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate after the first four months of the 2011/12 financial year. A briefing note was attached which outlined the current position.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environment and Neighbourhoods

It was noted that the Resources and Council Services Scrutiny Board had agreed to establish a Budget Working Group and would be considering the budget of each directorate in turn. Members sought further clarification on the remit of this Budget Working Group and noted that the Chair was due to meet with the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development regarding this. In the meantime, the Board agreed to continue receiving the monthly financial health monitoring reports from the Environment and Neighbourhoods directorate.

Members sought clarity on figures detailed in the briefing note and it was reported that they were based on the projected financial position of the directorate and not actual positions. It was also stated that Period 4 position needs to set out in the context of a requirement for the Directorate to save £9m between 2010/11 and 2011/12.

In response to Members' comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- Transfer Payments – it was reported that the new funding arrangements for the Sheltered Wardens function would see Housing Benefit replacing Supporting People grant with the Housing Revenue Account picking up a more appropriate share of the costs associated with those tenants who are not eligible for Housing Benefit. The effective date for the implementation of the decision is November 2nd and it was anticipated that a saving of £1m would be delivered through this action.
- Car Parking Income – the Board requested more detailed information around car parking income and the impact of the recent changes in charges. A report will be brought to the Board's November meeting.
- Performance related pay – Members requested more detailed analysis around PRP to be reported back to the Board.
- Money received from recycling – this was currently nil due to price variables.
- Costs relating to the refuse vehicles fleet.
- Members requested that future update reports contain more detailed analysis and are presented in the form of a balance sheet. However, Members also wished to retain the narrative approach as adopted within the monthly financial update reports to Executive Board.

RESOLVED – That the report and discussion be noted.

(Councillor Townsley left the meeting during the discussion on this item at 11.30 a.m.)

31 Recommendation Tracking

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development set out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny review of Gypsies and Travellers Site Provision in Leeds. Members agreed the current position with all the recommendations outlined in the report with further information to be sent regarding Recommendation 10.

Further issues discussed included the following:

- Regional involvement and provision within neighbouring authorities.

- Consideration was being given to latest Government planning guidelines for travellers sites – City Development would be taking the lead on this.
- That focus is now placed on identifying permanent site options as temporary sites will serve to defer rather than resolve the challenge of unauthorised encampments

RESOLVED – That those recommendations that no longer require monitoring be agreed and that the Board continues to track the remaining recommendations.

32 Forthcoming Scrutiny Inquiries - Draft Terms of Reference

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented draft terms of reference for the following inquiries:

- Private Rented Sector Housing
- Fuel Poverty

Members were asked to agree the terms of reference.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the terms of reference for the forthcoming Scrutiny Inquiry into Private Rented Sector Housing be agreed
- (b) That the terms of reference for the forthcoming Scrutiny Inquiry into Fuel Poverty be agreed, subject to the inclusion of a reference made within the evidence gathering sessions to consider the levels of subsidies available for various forms of renewable energy sources, including existing government tariff initiatives (Feed-In Tariff, Generation Tariff and Export Tariff).

33 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development detailed the Board's work schedule. Also attached were copies of recent Executive Board Minutes and a copy of the Forward Plan relating to the Board's portfolio.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

34 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 10th October at 10.00 a.m. (pre-meeting for all Members at 9.30 a.m.)