

SCRUTINY BOARD (HOUSING AND REGENERATION)

TUESDAY, 28TH OCTOBER, 2014

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors D Collins, P Grahame,
J Illingworth, M Iqbal, J Pryor, K Renshaw,
A Smart and C Towler

27 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair advised that Richard Mills was leaving the Council under the Early Leavers' Initiative. The Board wished to place on record its thanks to Richard for his hard work and support to Elected Members over the years.

Members were also advised that Steve Ilee had resigned as Chair of Tenant Scrutiny Board. A report was being submitted to the November meeting of Tenant Scrutiny Board to agree the appointment of a new Chair for the remainder of the 2014/15 municipal year.

28 Late Items

There were no late items.

29 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

30 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors D Nagle and G Wilkinson. Notification had been received that Councillor K Renshaw was to substitute for Councillor D Nagle.

31 Minutes - 23 September 2014

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2014 be approved as a correct record.

32 Update report on maximising re-use

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an update on further progress with re-use organisations to support tenants in need.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel)
- Lorraine Wright, Housing Services Manager, Environment and Housing
- Janice Frost, Business Officer, Environment and Housing
- Tony Butler, Head of Maintenance Operations, Environment and Housing
- Tina Markey, Voids Service Manager, Environment and Housing
- Ali Ward, Leeds Furniture Re-Use Group / Emmaus.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Update regarding issues associated with the bulk purchasing of electrical items for re-use.
- A request for further information about using annual tenancy visits to establish whether tenants had access to cooking facilities and signposting arrangements to re-use organisations.
- A request that Ward Councillors be invited to attend Community action days.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (b) To explore storage options to enable the bulk purchasing of electrical items for re-use.

(Councillor M Iqbal joined the meeting at 1.40pm during the consideration of this item.)

33 Developing Community Lettings Policies

The Chief Officer (Housing Management) submitted a report which outlined the new approach to developing community lettings policies.

A list of local lettings policies was appended to the report for Members' information.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel)
- Liz Cook, Chief Officer (Housing Management), Environment and Housing
- Kath Bramall, Housing Manager (Lettings and Tenancy Management), Environment and Housing
- Lynne Hamshaw, Lettings and Tenancy Manager, Environment and Housing.

The main areas of discussion were:

- Development of a new and consistent approach to local lettings.
- A request that all properties should be considered, not just those with existing local policies in place.
- Concern about the eligibility criteria applied to the council housing waiting list, specifically in relation to applicants that already owned their home. It was suggested that this formed part of the overall review being undertaken.
- The need to simplify the process around age restrictions.
- Empowering Housing Managers to exercise local knowledge.
- Concerns associated with segregating different age groups.
- The support needs of some tenants.
- The criteria for access to sheltered housing.
- Development of pre-tenancy training to help manage expectations. The Board requested further information about this.
- Legal implications associated with defining local connections.
- A request that the draft policy be reported back to the Scrutiny Board prior to final approval.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (b) That the draft policy be reported back to the Scrutiny Board prior to final approval.

34 Monitoring of the Responsive Repairs Service

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which outlined arrangements for monitoring housing repairs.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Repairs and Maintenance Handbook – Leeds City Council guide to repairs service.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel)
- Steve Hunt, Chief Officer (Property and Contracts), Environment and Housing
- Tony Butler, Head of Maintenance Operations, Environment and Housing
- Robert Goor, Responsive / Planned Service Manager, Environment and Housing.

The main areas of discussion were:

- Clarification regarding levels of responsive repair priorities and other planned improvement work.
- Confirmation that the contract enabled a financial deduction to be levied if Mears did not meet its targets.
- Marked improvement in performance compared to the overall position 12 months ago.
- Concern about the small amount of repairs reported to the council on-line (approximately 1%) and acknowledgement of improvements to the on-line reporting facility.
- Concern about the impact of missed appointments on tenants, particularly those that had taken leave from work.
- Confirmation that a tenants' insurance scheme was in place and publicised in the Council's Housing Leeds newsletter, issued to all tenants.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

35 Work Schedule

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which detailed the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the current municipal year.

The following information was appended to the report:

- The Scrutiny Board's work schedule
- Minutes of the Tenant Scrutiny Board meeting held on 24 September 2014
- Minutes of the Executive Board meetings held on 17 September and 15 October 2014.

RESOLVED – That the work schedule be approved.

36 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 11 November 2014 at 1.30pm (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 1.00pm)

(The meeting concluded at 3.45pm)