

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING)

TUESDAY, 30TH JUNE, 2015

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors J Bentley, D Collins, A Gabriel,
P Grahame, A Hussain, M Lyons, J Pryor,
K Ritchie, B Urry and G Wilkinson

1 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Scrutiny Board's first meeting of the 2015/16 municipal year.

Members of the Board asked that their best wishes be sent to Angela Brogden, Principal Scrutiny Advisor, following her recent family bereavement.

2 Late Items

There were no late items.

3 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

4 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors M Iqbal and A Khan, with Councillors B Urry and A Hussain in attendance as substitutes.

5 Minutes - 24 March 2015

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the former Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration) meeting held on 24 March 2015 be approved as a correct record.

6 Scrutiny Board Terms of Reference

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the terms of reference for the Environment and Housing Scrutiny Board for Members' information.

Changes to Scrutiny Board terms of reference had been agreed by Full Council on 21 May 2015. It was noted that the changes resulted in the terms of references for all Scrutiny Boards being aligned to the Executive function of Directors.

The Chair, in preparation for the first meeting of the Scrutiny Board had sought clarification from officers on the implications, if any, that the revised terms of reference had on this Board's ability to look at certain housing matters, particularly those pertaining to housing growth, investment and mix.

The City Solicitor and Director of Environment and Housing were in attendance to provide advice in relation to the Board's terms of reference.

The basis of the advice provided by the City Solicitor was the interpretation of the Officer delegation scheme (Executive functions) for the Director of Environment and Housing and the Director of City Development, given that Full Council had agreed that Scrutiny Boards would be aligned to the Executive functions of Directors.

In brief it was the City Solicitor's advice, that the delegation scheme, in relation to the Director of Environment and Housing's housing functions should be interpreted to relate to the authorities housing management function, making best use of the Council's housing stock, facilitating new housing supply, in relation to HRA investment, and some role in delivering affordable housing. It also related to the condition and occupation of housing and the landlord functions carried out by Housing Leeds.

By contrast, the City Solicitor advised that the delegated functions of the Director and City Development and therefore functions which fell within the remit of the Scrutiny Board (City Development) should be interpreted as those covering, through the core strategy, housing growth, housing numbers and housing mix. This view was supported by the Director of Environment and Housing.

It was agreed by the Scrutiny Board that all matters should be available for Scrutiny by elected members, however, the Officer delegation scheme (Executive functions) as written in the Constitution were insufficiently clear as to which members should undertake the relevant scrutiny.

The City Solicitor advised that a review of the wording of the existing delegation scheme would be undertaken by the Head of Governance Services. Pending this review the Board asked that a list of the Director of Environment and Housing areas of responsibility be brought back to the Board's July meeting in order for members of this Board to be clear as to its remit.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted
- (b) That the Board receive in July a list of the Director of Environment and Housing areas of responsibility.

7 Crime and Disorder Scrutiny

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development informed the Board of its role as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee and included the Protocol between Scrutiny and the Community Safety Partnership in Leeds.

The report also made reference to the 'Principles for Engagement' document developed by the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel in liaison with the five local Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees. This was also attached for Members' information.

Whilst acknowledging the limited powers of Scrutiny in relation to the Police and Crime Commissioner, it was agreed that an invitation to attend Scrutiny would be made to Mark Burns-Williamson.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted
- (b) That an invitation be sent to the Police and Crime Commissioner to attend this Scrutiny Board.

8 Co-opted Members

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development sought the Board's formal consideration for the appointment of Co-opted Members.

The Board was informed that they could appoint the following:

- Up to five non-voting co-opted members for a term of office that does not go beyond the next Annual Meeting of the Council; and/or
- Up to two non-voting co-opted members for a term of office that relates to the duration of a particular and specific scrutiny inquiry.

RESOLVED – The Board agreed to consider the appointment of co-opted members on an ad-hoc basis for any inquiries where it was deemed appropriate.

9 Sources of work for the Scrutiny Board

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development provided information and guidance on potential sources of work and areas of priority within the Board's terms of reference.

The following were in attendance for this item and invited to share their views around potential areas of work for the Scrutiny Board this year:

- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor Mark Dobson, Executive member for Environmental Protection and Community Safety

- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing.

It was confirmed that a joint working group with Scrutiny Board (City Development) would be established to complete the work around housing mix, initially started by Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration).

Members of the Scrutiny Board also shared their views on potential areas of work for the Scrutiny Board this year.

The following areas of interest was listed within the following 'themes'

Housing Investment

- Empty Homes Strategy
- Standards within the private rented sector
- Use of right to buy receipts
- HRA growth, what, where, mix.

Housing /Environmental Management

- Recycling – addressing low participation rates in existing AWC areas and exploring viable options for non-AWC areas across the city
- Local Lettings Policy
- Estate Environment, including Car Parking, graffiti, streetscene
- Enforcement of tenancy agreements
- Multi storey management
- Briefings on housing management forums
- Revisiting the city's wider Waste Strategy.

Community Safety

- The role of Police Community Support Officers within the context of new integrated partnership working models, particularly within localities (i.e. Community Hubs and Partnership Working Areas) and future budget pressures
- Improving understanding of the significance of safeguarding issues linked to human trafficking, to help develop an effective multi-agency response
- Tackling prostitution in Leeds from a multi-sector perspective
- Understanding the scope of the city's powers in response to tackling legal highs
- Emergency accommodation for those fleeing violence.

It was noted that Scrutiny Board Adult Social Services, Public Health, NHS would be undertaking scrutiny around air quality, therefore it was asked that a member of this Board be invited to join that Board.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and discussion be noted.
- (b) That the areas of work listed above are taken forward by the Scrutiny Board during this municipal year.
- (c) That arrangements be made to set up the joint working group with Scrutiny Board (City Development) to complete the work on housing mix.

10 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the draft work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

The Chair suggested that the long list of topic areas identified by the Board would be better managed in grouped into themes, with a Board meeting being dedicated, where possible, to a particular theme.

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser was requested to work with the Chair to incorporate the areas of work agreed by the Scrutiny Board into its work schedule for the forthcoming year.

In addition, the Chair explained that tracking reports linked to previous inquiries undertaken by the Board will also be incorporated into the work schedule.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the Principal Scrutiny Adviser works with the Chair to incorporate the areas of work agreed by the Scrutiny Board into its work schedule for the forthcoming year.

11 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 21st July at 1.30pm (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 1.00 p.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 3.00pm)