

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING)

TUESDAY, 12TH JANUARY, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors J Bentley, D Collins, A Gabriel,
P Grahame, R Grahame, A Khan, J Pryor,
K Ritchie and G Wilkinson

59 Late Items

There were no late items.

60 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

61 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors M Iqbal and M Lyons. Notification was received that Councillor R Grahame was substituting for Councillor M Iqbal.

62 Minutes - 8 December 2015

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2015 be approved as a correct record.

63 Effective lettings and tenancy management

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented a further update in relation to effective lettings and tenancy management proposals. As part of this, a copy of the previous detailed report provided to the Scrutiny Board in November was appended for ease of reference.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member (Communities)
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Liz Cook, Chief Officer (Housing Management)
- Jill Wildman, Head of Housing Management
- Mandy Sawyer, Head of Neighbourhood Services
- Kathryn Bramall, Housing Manager.

The Board received a brief presentation focussing on; the rationale for reviewing existing policies and procedures; Housing and Planning Bill changes; and the key elements to effective lettings and tenancy management.

The Board was invited to provide any comment on the proposals at this stage to help inform the report to Executive Board in February 2016.

The key areas of discussion were:

- The importance of ensuring a consistent approach towards conducting checks on previous criminal and anti-social behaviour when letting council properties. Members noted that guidance regarding this had been provided to all Housing Officers and therefore requested that a copy of this guidance be forwarded to the Scrutiny Board.
- Achieving a consistent approach through effective staff training programmes.
- Confirmation that the Council was awaiting further details regarding selling off high value homes to fund affordable housing development.
- Clarification provided regarding higher rent levels for households earning over £30k.
- Development of family friendly blocks and other appropriate high rise provision. The Board was assured that following the wider policy consultation process, more localised consultations around specific blocks would be undertaken and involve Ward Councillors.
- Confirmation that most Annual Home Visits (AVH) were made by appointment. Unannounced inspections were undertaken when there were concerns about tenant behaviour.
- The Board acknowledged the need for greater consistency and transparency in relation to local lettings policies generally. In particular, the Board discussed the local connections criteria that will also form part of the wider consultation process for review.
- The Board requested that the director's report to Executive Board in February clearly sets out the directorate's commitment to further consult with Scrutiny regarding the details of any revised local lettings policies prior to approval. It was noted that the proposed consultation timeline indicated that Scrutiny would be consulted on final proposals in July 2016.
- The Board emphasised the importance of promoting harmonious communities and particularly recognised the need to encourage community engagement amongst residents within new build homes delivered through the Council House Growth programme.
- The importance of pre-tenancy training and ensuring that it was accessible, e.g. development of on-line learning.
- Development of sheltered and extra care housing provision in Ardsley and Yeadon.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and presentation be noted.
- (b) That the guidance provided to Housing Officers be forwarded to the Board for information.

- (c) That the report to Executive Board in February 2016 includes a commitment to re-consult Scrutiny on details of any revised local lettings policies prior to approval.

64 2016/17 Initial Budget Proposals

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which introduced the initial budget proposals for 2016/17.

The following information was appended to the report:

- 2016/17 Budget Strategy
- Savings Options for Directorates 2016/17

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Debra Coupar, Executive Member (Communities)
- Councillor Mark Dobson, Executive Member (Environmental Protection and Community Safety)
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Richard Ellis, Head of Finance, Environment and Housing.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Increasing income through potential upgrading of cafe facilities at Golden Acre and Temple Newsam.
- Development of payment options at Council owned car parking facilities. The Board was advised that a 'park mobile' app had been successfully introduced. It was noted that there had been a 50% take up at Woodhouse Lane car park.
- Whether there was scope to increase the number of fixed penalty notices issued in relation to littering and dog fouling. The Board was advised that the Council employed a private firm that had responsibility for issuing fixed penalty notices in the city centre. It was not considered viable for the firm to operate in other parts of the city.
- A suggestion that the role of parking enforcement officers be extended to include reporting instances of dog fouling and littering.
- An acknowledgement of the positive work undertaken by locality teams.

RESOLVED – That the Board notes the Executive Board's initial budget proposals for 2016/17.

65 Community Safety Related Matters

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which provided an update on a number of community safety related themes that were presented to the Board in October 2015.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Mark Dobson, Executive Member (Environmental Protection and Community Safety)
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Superintendent Sam Millar, Chief Officer (Community Safety).

The key areas of discussion were:

- A request that the Board be provided with an update on recent legislation in relation to New Psychoactive Substances (NPS).
- An assurance that Ward Members were to be consulted prior to the decommissioning of CCTV cameras. The Board was advised that alternative technologies were also being explored. It was suggested that the Board be provided with an update on potential options to be delivered by LeedsWatch.
- Concern regarding the functioning of some cameras.
- A request for feedback regarding the Cross Green Industrial Estate scheme.
- Confirmation that the Police and Crime Commissioner is committed to match fund any partners wishing to invest in additional PCSOs on a 50/50 basis and will make this offer clear to other public bodies, i.e. parish and town councils.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the update on community safety related themes be noted.
- (b) That the above updates and requests for information be provided.

66 Work Schedule

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's work schedule for the 2015/16 municipal year.

The following updates were noted:

- That the April Board meeting had moved to Tuesday, 26 April 2016 at 1.30pm.
- A working group meeting on PCSOs had been scheduled for Thursday, 21 January 2016.

It was also suggested that the February Board meeting included an update on flooding and general performance issues and that recycling and the waste strategy be discussed as part of the April Board meeting.

RESOLVED – That the work schedule, as amended, be approved.

67 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 2 February 2016 at 1.30pm (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 1.00pm)

(The meeting concluded at 3.40pm)