

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING)

THURSDAY, 7TH JULY, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor J Procter in the Chair

Councillors B Anderson, J Bentley,
A Blackburn, K Bruce, D Collins, A Gabriel,
A Garthwaite, P Grahame, A Khan,
M Lyons and K Ritchie

11 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance, particularly Councillor A Garthwaite to her first Scrutiny Board meeting.

12 Late Items

There were no late items.

13 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

14 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor G Wilkinson.
Notification had been received that Councillor B Anderson was to substitute for Councillor G Wilkinson.

15 Minutes - 9 June 2016

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2016 be approved as a correct record.

16 Matters arising from the minutes

Minute No. 4 – Minutes – 26 April 2016

The Board questioned whether the directorate had yet approached the LGA in helping to address the need for clearer recycling messages and marking on packaging. It was noted that this matter would be addressed later in the meeting when relevant officers were in attendance.

17 Lettings Policy Review - consultation update

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which presented an update following the recent consultation on changes to the current lettings framework.

The following were in attendance:

- Jill Wildman, Chief Officer (Housing Management)
- Mandy Sawyer, Head of Neighbourhood Services
- Rob McCartney, Head of Housing Support.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Clarification sought regarding the legal position when applying age related policies. The Board requested that the City Solicitor be asked to provide a response regarding this.
- The importance of effective engagement with Ward Members regarding local issues.
- Concern that the response from tenants to the consultation had been low. It was suggested that local housing officers be encouraged to address issues with tenants.
- Concerns associated with young families that were housed in high rise buildings.
- Development of the tenant transfer policy and the challenges in terms of balancing housing need and date of registration.
- Clarification sought regarding succession rights under the Housing and Planning Act. The Board was advised that fixed term arrangements only applied to the partner or spouse.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Board notes the progress to date with the lettings policy review consultation.
- (b) That the City Solicitor be asked to provide a response regarding the Council's approach to age related policies.

18 Tackling domestic violence and abuse - tracking of scrutiny recommendations

The Head of Scrutiny Support submitted a report which presented details of the progress made in implementing the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny inquiry into Domestic Violence as well as an update of the work taken forward as part of the Domestic Violence Breakthrough Project.

The following were in attendance:

- Superintendent Sam Millar, Chief Officer (Community Safety)
- Jill Wildman, Chief Officer (Housing Management)
- Rob McCartney, Head of Housing Support.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Acknowledgement of the progress made in relation to tackling domestic violence. The current focus was on prevention of repeat victims and raising awareness about developing healthy relationships.
- The importance of joined up working and the positive development of the Domestic Violence Board, chaired by the Director of Environment and Housing, Neil Evans.
- Development of a front level approach to identifying victims of abuse.
- The importance of ensuring a safe environment for those in housing need.
- The challenges identifying coercive and controlling behaviour. The Board was advised that further processes were being developed.

The status of recommendations were agreed as follows:

- Recommendation 5 – Status 4 – not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 7 – Status 2 – achieved
- Recommendation 15 – Status 4 – not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 16 – Status 2 – achieved
- Recommendation 17 – Status 4, not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 23 – Status 2 – achieved
- Recommendation 24 – Status 2 – achieved
- Recommendation 25 – Status 2 – achieved.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- (b) That the above status of recommendations be approved.

(Councillor K Bruce joined the meeting at 10.55am during the consideration of this item.)

19 Safer Leeds Plan 2016/17

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which presented the refreshed Safer Leeds Plan 2016/17 for the Board's consideration.

The following were in attendance:

- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Superintendent Sam Millar, Chief Officer (Community Safety).

The key areas of discussion were:

- Confirmation that there had not been a significant increase in reporting of hate crime across the city since Brexit, although careful monitoring was still required.
- Concern about some gaps in recruitment regarding PCSOs, particularly in terms of deployment of resources across Wards. The Board was advised that there were currently between 32-38 PCSO vacancies. The Board requested to be provided with an update regarding the current level of PCSOs deployed across all Wards and emphasised the importance that all vacancies were filled as quickly as possible.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Board notes the newly refreshed Safer Leeds Plan 2016/17.
- (b) That the Board receives an update regarding the level of PCSOs deployed across all Wards.

20 Performance Update

The Director of Environment and Housing submitted a report which presented a performance update surrounding those areas relevant to the Board's remit.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Environment and Housing Performance Information (May 2016) (Housing)
- Environment and Housing Performance Information (latest available 2016) (Community Safety, Waste & Environment).

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Lucinda Yeadon, Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability
- Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing
- Simon Costigan, Chief Officer, Property and Contracts.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Concern that Veolia had not met its 10% contracted level of recycling. The Board was advised that an action plan was in place to ensure that contract obligations were met. Board Members requested confirmation of the timescales for resolving issues.
- The importance of developing work with schools and other educational initiatives.
- The positive development of the Leeds Bins App.
- An update on changes to the in-house repairs service to resolve issues, which included revised reporting mechanisms, development of new performance indicators and a more robust service improvement

plan. It was requested that further details and progress made to date be reported back to the Board.

- Some concerns in relation to unauthorised encampments and the importance of joined up working in resolving issues.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Board notes the most recent performance information contained in appendices 1 and 2 to the report and the issues that have been highlighted.
- (b) That the Board receives further details and progress made to date regarding changes to the in-house repairs service.

(Councillor B Anderson left the meeting at 12 noon during the consideration of this item.)

21 Work Schedule

The Head of Scrutiny Support submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's work schedule for the 2016/17 municipal year.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Board's work schedule be approved.
- (b) That Councillor P Grahame be appointed as the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Housing) representative to attend the discussions on strategic commissioning at the Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) meeting on 18 July 2016.

22 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 22 September 2016 at 10.00am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30am)

(The meeting concluded at 12.45pm)