

SCRUTINY BOARD (SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES)

MONDAY, 10TH NOVEMBER, 2014

PRESENT: Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors J Bentley, A Blackburn, J Dunn,
M Harland, P Harrand, J Jarosz, K Ritchie,
B Urry, P Wadsworth and N Walshaw

40 Late Items

There were no late items.

41 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

42 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor M Robinson, with Councillor P Wadsworth in attendance as substitute. The Chair informed the Board that Councillor R Grahame had been called away to another meeting in his capacity as a member of the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Chair also relayed apologies from Councillor M Dobson, Executive Board Member for Cleaner, Stronger and Safer Communities.

43 Minutes - 13 October 2014

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

44 Fuel Poverty Scrutiny Update

The report of the Director of Public Health and the Director of Environment and Housing outlined how the remaining eleven recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny Inquiry into tackling fuel poverty had been achieved, embedded into existing work programmes or are no longer relevant due to changes in policy.

The following were in attendance for this item:

George Munson, Senior Programme Leader
Robert Curtis, Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Team
Dawn Bailey, Health Improvement Principal - Health Protection
Sharon Brooks, Care & Repair

In consideration of the report, the following issues were discussed by the Board:

- National Strategy – the Board learned that, following the national review of fuel poverty by Professor Hills, the government recently consulted on a new fuel poverty strategy outlining new targets and approaches to tackle fuel poverty. In responding to this consultation, the Council is awaiting the publication of the new national Strategy.
- Energy Efficiency measures – Members discussed the preventative approaches taken by the Council, such as the Decent Homes Programmes and the Wrap Up Leeds free insulation scheme. It was noted that the Council is currently targeting hard to treat properties with insulation through the Green Deal Communities Programme.
- Tackling private rented properties – Members were pleased to learn about forthcoming regulations under the Energy Act 2011 to provide tenants with a right to request consent to energy efficiency improvements and a minimum energy efficiency standard for properties in the domestic private rented sector.
- Vulnerable households – Members discussed existing initiatives targeted at vulnerable households, such as the Warm Homes Service, managed by Care & Repair, and Green Doctor services.
- Fuel Poverty Member Champions – Members received details of the nominated Member Champions across the ten Community Committees tasked with driving forward the fuel poverty agenda locally.
- Bulk fuel purchase schemes - reference was made to the Board's earlier recommendation around bulk purchasing domestic heating fuel for householders (recommendation 20). It was noted that schemes across the country have largely been unable to obtain a below market rate, particularly following national drivers to simplify the range of energy tariffs that energy companies are allowed to offer. However, the Council is working with the Core Cities Low Carbon and Energy Portfolio Group to develop Core Cities owned energy suppliers with the aim of offering stable and fair energy tariffs to households.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted
- (b) The Board agreed that recommendation 20 was no longer relevant and to stop monitoring and that the remaining outstanding recommendations had been achieved.

(Councillor A Blackburn arrived at 10.30 am during consideration of this item)

45 Grounds Maintenance - recommendation tracking

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented an update on progress made in implementing the Board's recommendations linked to its earlier review on the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract.

The following were in attendance for this item:

Sean Flesher, Chief Officer Parks and Countryside
Simon Frosdick, Business Development Manager, Parks and Countryside

In consideration of the report, the following issues were discussed by the Board:

- The existing grounds maintenance contract – Members acknowledged that the Council was now 3 years into the 5 year contract with Continental and therefore had reached a pivotal point in terms of determining the future delivery of this service. The potential options available were discussed by the Board.
- Managing performance and maximising resources – Members discussed issues linked to performance i.e. staff allocation, recruitment and retention and the use of machinery. Linked to this, it was noted that opportunities had been identified to provide additional winter work to Continental in order to support staff and skills retention and also provide a balanced workload. Such works would include spreading woodchip mulch on some shrub beds to improve appearance and suppress weeds.
- Budget delegation – Members learned that whilst some Parish and Town Councils had enquired about taking up the option of budget delegation for service provision and management, none have done so once the scope of delegation and available budget had been advised.
- Role of Community Committees - it was noted that Community Committees receive annual performance reports on the ground maintenance contract, with more detailed briefings being offered to their Environment Community Champions. However, the Board requested that Community Committees are approached to get a clear steer as to the level of input that full Committees would welcome in the future.
- Elected Member requests for individual briefings – it was highlighted that individual requests to discuss issues or concerns with senior officers and Continental representatives would be followed up appropriately.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted
- (b) The Board agreed that recommendations 6 and 8 had now been achieved.
- (c) That the position status assigned to the remaining recommendations is a category 4 – Not fully implemented (progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring).

46 Peckfield Landfill Site - draft terms of reference for forthcoming Scrutiny inquiry

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented draft terms of reference relating to the Board's forthcoming inquiry regarding Peckfield Landfill Site.

RESOLVED – That the terms of reference for the Board's forthcoming inquiry regarding Peckfield Landfill Site be agreed.

47 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development presented the Board's current work schedule. The minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 15th October 2014 were also appended to this report for Members' information.

RESOLVED – That the Board's work schedule and the Executive Board minutes be noted.

48 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 8th December 2014 at 10.00 am. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 am)

(The meeting concluded at 11.55 am)